

# Your Guide to civicdistrict treetrail



The Civic District Tree Trail takes you through Singapore's historic Civic District. As you marvel at the beautifully conserved buildings along the 3 km-long trail, you will come across many majestic and interesting trees, some of which have stood tall for several generations and witnessed the transformation and progress of Singapore through the years.

The trail starts from under the lush canopy of majestic Rain Trees in front of the Istana, and then leads you on to explore trees such as the Angsana that was retained during the development of the School of the Arts. You can also admire the aerial root system of an Indian Rubber tree in front of the National Museum of Singapore and the beautiful Saga trees within the compound of St Andrew's Cathedral.

You will enter into a green tunnel along Connaught Drive, where some trees are more than 130 years old! While at Esplanade Park, learn about the significance of the area planted with five Angsana trees. The trail then leads you to a beautiful Tamarind tree at the Waterboat House Garden before ending under a grove of Singapore White Frangipanis at Raffles Landing Site.

## Tips for a safe and enjoyable trip

- Dress comfortably and wear suitable footwear.
- Wear a hat, put on sunglasses and apply sunscreen to shield yourself from the sun.
- Drink ample fluids to stay hydrated.
- Take care when crossing roads and watch out for oncoming traffic.



Difficulty level: **Easy**



Distance: **3km**



Walking time: **2.5hrs**



**nparksbuzz**

Share your love for nature with us at  
**#nparksbuzz**







**1** Rain Trees



**3** Angsana



**6** Bodhi Tree



**7** Indian Rubber Tree



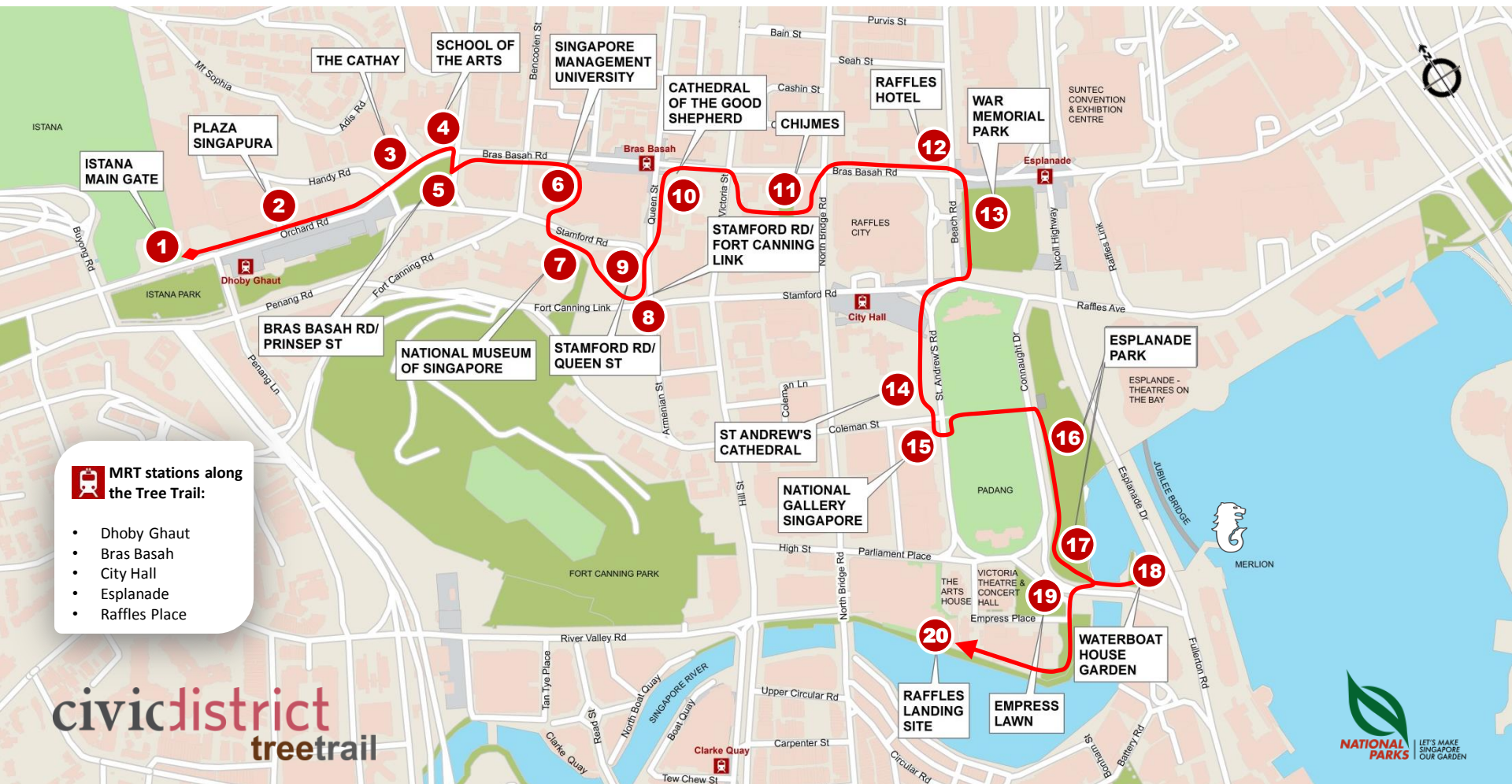
**11** Tamalan Trees



**15** Royal Palms



**18** Tamarind Tree







1. Istana Main Gate – Rain Trees



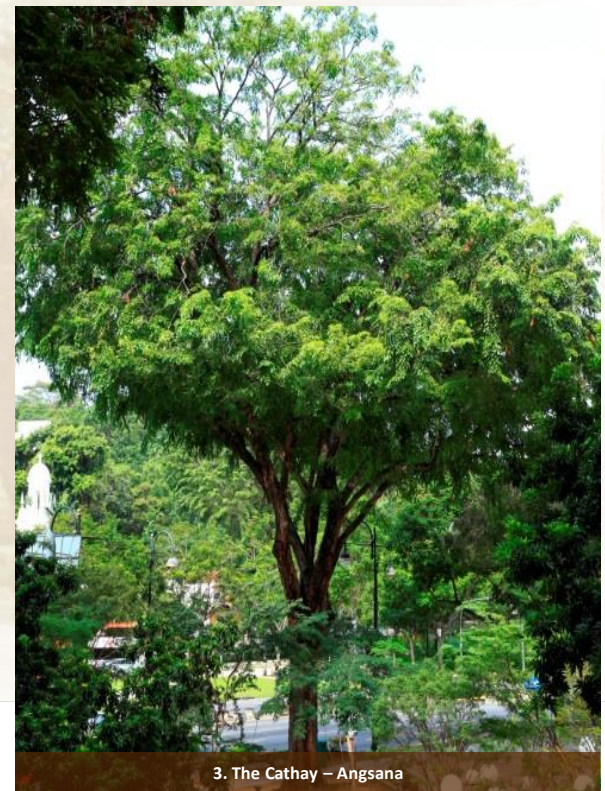
2. Plaza Singapura – Flowers of a Leopard Tree



4. SOTA – Leaves of a Bodhi Tree



5. Bras Basah Road / Prinsep Street – Flowers of a Trumpet Tree



3. The Cathay – Angsana

## START POINT

### ► 1 Istana Main Gate

Begin your journey by admiring the lush foliage and wide-spreading crown of the Rain Tree (*Samanea saman*). The main gate of the Istana is graced with a cluster of these majestic trees.

The Rain Tree originates from South America and was first introduced to Singapore in 1876. It is a popular shade tree, and widely planted along Singapore's major roads and expressways, as well as in our parks.

The leaves of the Rain Tree consist of leaflets which fold up before impending rain and in the evening. This is why the Malays call it Pukul Lima, meaning '5 o'clock'. It is common to see native epiphytes such as the Bird's Nest Fern (*Asplenium nidus*) and Pigeon Orchid (*Dendrobium crumenatum*) embellishing the branches of Rain Trees.

### ► 2 Plaza Singapura

The area in front of Plaza Singapura is planted with Leopard Trees (*Libidibia ferrea*). The common name is derived from the distinctive smooth trunk which is light grey to whitish-yellow and mottled with brown spots, resembling the hide of a leopard. The tree also produces clusters of bright yellow flowers.

The Yellow Flame Tree (*Peltophorum pterocarpum*), planted along this stretch of Orchard Road, is a common wayside tree that produces brilliant yellow flowers.

### ► 3 The Cathay

The two mature trees here are a Yellow Flame and an Angsana (*Pterocarpus indicus*). The Angsana is a large deciduous tree that can grow up to 40 m in height. It has a characteristic drooping, dome-shaped crown with faintly fragrant yellow flowers. This particular Angsana has hosted numerous tree climbing competitions.

### ► 4 School of the Arts (SOTA)

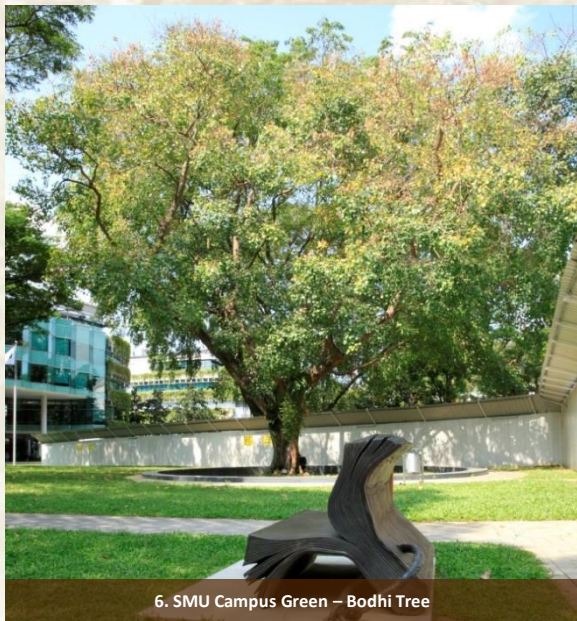
The grand Angsana sitting on the steps leading to SOTA is about 40 years old. It was retained during the redevelopment of the site and incorporated into the building's design.

Near the road junction is a mature Bodhi Tree (*Ficus religiosa*). It has heart-shaped leaves which have long extended 'drip tips'. It is said that Buddha attained enlightenment under a fig tree of this species hence its common name.

### ► 5 Bras Basah Road / Prinsep Street

Stop to admire the Trumpet Tree (*Tabebuia rosea*), which gets its common name from its large trumpet-shaped flowers. Although not related to Japan's famous cherry blossom trees, it is sometimes referred to as 'Singapore's Sakura', as its crown becomes covered in beautiful pink or white flowers when in full bloom.





6. SMU Campus Green – Bodhi Tree



7. National Museum of Singapore – East African Mahogany



8. Stamford Road / Fort Canning Link – Leaves of the Star Apple tree



7. National Museum of Singapore – Leaves of the Indian Rubber Tree



9. Stamford Road / Queen Street – Rows of Golden Penda trees

#### ► 6 Singapore Management University (SMU) Campus Green

Here, you can find a majestic Rain Tree estimated to be over 80 years old! It was conserved and transplanted into this location during the development of SMU. There is also a venerable Bodhi Tree that was conserved during the site's development – it was protected in place during construction and integrated into the Campus Green landscape.

#### ► 7 National Museum of Singapore

Admire the interesting aerial roots that descend from the Indian Rubber (*Ficus elastica*) tree in front of the National Museum of Singapore. This tree has been endorsed as a Heritage Tree, as it can be seen in photographs taken in 1955 – evidence that it is more than 60 years old!

The Indian Rubber used to be an economically important crop in this region as its latex was tapped and processed into a type of rubber. It can be distinguished from other fig trees by its young leaves which are enclosed in a red sheath.

Near the escalator leading to Fort Canning Park is an East African Mahogany (*Khaya nyasica*). This species has a tall, straight trunk, grows to more than 60 m in height and produces small, white and sweet-scented flowers. Its durable timber is often used to make furniture and the oil extracted from the seeds is traditionally used to kill head lice.

#### ► 8 Stamford Road / Fort Canning Link

As you continue along the trail, look out for the Star Apple (*Chrysophyllum cainito*) tree. This tree can be identified by the underside of its leaves, which is golden brown with a satin-like sheen. The timber is used for indoor furniture and its fibre can be made into good quality paper. Different parts of the tree are also used for medicinal purposes.

#### ► 9 Stamford Road / Queen Street

Around the bend down Stamford Road is a row of Golden Penda (*Xanthostemon chrysanthus*) trees. This popular ornamental tree was first introduced to Singapore in 1982 and is fast growing, requiring minimal maintenance. Its attractive yellow flowers attract butterflies, bees and birds.

Along Queen Street are beautiful Trumpet Trees that bloom in pink, mauve or white. Trumpet Trees can grow up to more than 30 m tall and usually flower in April and August, after a prolonged dry spell.





10. Cathedral of the Good Shepherd – Angsana

#### ► 10 Cathedral of the Good Shepherd

A row of large shady Angsanans lines the perimeter of the cathedral. The Angsana is widely distributed in Southeast Asia, where it grows naturally on flat coastal plains behind mangrove swamps or along inland rivers in forests where the dry season is not pronounced.

The Yellow Rain Tree (*Samanea saman* 'Yellow') is a variant of the common Rain Tree and has yellow foliage instead of green. The variation in leaf colour is due to a genetically recessive gene. A row of these attractive trees is planted in the centre divider of Victoria Street which runs alongside the cathedral.



10. Cathedral of the Good Shepherd (along Victoria Street) – Yellow Rain Tree



11. CHIJMES (main entrance) – Common Red-stem Fig

#### ► 11 CHIJMES

##### Main entrance

Marvel at the architectural grandeur of CHIJMES and its beautiful landscape. At the corner of the entrance along Victoria Street is a Red Flame (*Delonix regia*), a tree with large striking red flowers and long, flattened seed pods. Spot the Common Red-stem Fig (*Ficus variegata*) with fruits (figs) that are borne in clusters along the trunk and main branches. Look also for the *Diospyros buxifolia*, a native evergreen tree that can grow up to 30 m tall.

##### Inner courtyard

Walk through the compound and enjoy the fragrant flowers of the Creamy Yellow Frangipanis (*Plumeria rubra*). Traditionally, different parts of this tree are used for medicinal purposes.

Take a rest under the shade of the Tamalan Tree (*Dalbergia oliveri*) at the inner courtyard of CHIJMES. This tree produces purplish-white flowers in small clusters and brown, flattened, narrow pods containing one to three seeds each. Its timber, known as Burmese Redwood, is used to make furniture.



11. CHIJMES (inner courtyard) – Tamalan Trees



12. Raffles Hotel – Traveller's Palm and Chinese Fan Palms

#### ► 12 Raffles Hotel

Stroll down Bras Basah Road and look for the iconic Traveller's Palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*) that is a symbol of the Raffles Hotel. It is believed that in the past, the Traveller's Palm was a welcome sight to thirsty travellers, who could drink the rainwater collected in the base of the leaves.

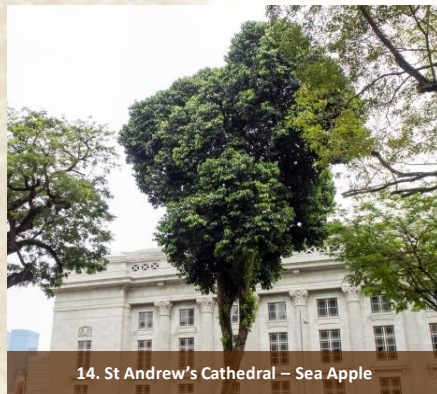
Although called the Traveller's Palm, this plant is not a true palm but a closer relative of Bird of Paradise plants (Strelitziaceae family).

You can also find a row of Chinese Fan Palms (*Livistona chinensis*) near the main entrance of the hotel. This attractive slow-growing palm is commonly planted in Singapore and sometimes known as the Fountain Palm as its drooping, fan-shaped leaves give it a fountain-like effect.

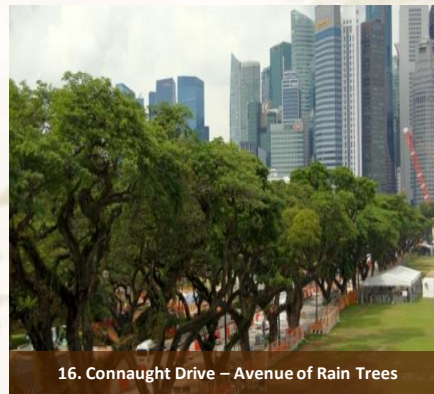




13. War Memorial Park – Belinjau



14. St Andrew's Cathedral – Sea Apple



16. Connaught Drive – Avenue of Rain Trees



16. Esplanade Park (near the Cenotaph – Fruits of the Cannon Ball Tree)



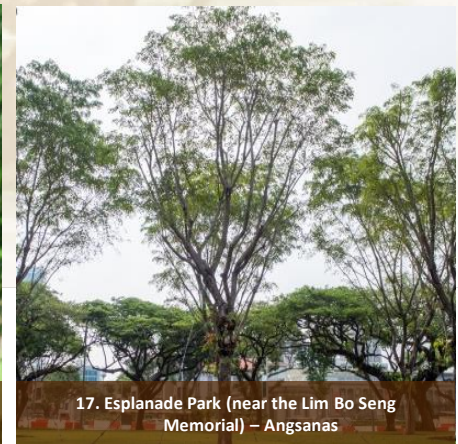
14. St Andrew's Cathedral – Golden Shower Tree



15. National Gallery Singapore – Royal Palms



16. Esplanade Park (near the Cenotaph) – Trunk of the Leopard Tree



17. Esplanade Park (near the Lim Bo Seng Memorial) – Angsanas

#### ▶ 13 War Memorial Park

The walkways along the park are lined with Belinjau (*Gnetum gnemon*) trees. Native to Singapore and other parts of the region, this evergreen tree can grow to more than 20 m tall. The flesh of the mature seeds is used to make *belinjau* crackers, a type of Indonesian snack.

#### ▶ 14 St Andrew's Cathedral

Enjoy the walk through the compound and look for the Golden Shower Tree (*Cassia fistula*), which produces clusters of long, hanging, bright yellow and fragrant flowers. Nearly all parts of the tree have medicinal properties.

Admire the beautiful row of Saga (*Adenanthra pavonina*) trees also planted in the compound. You may find some hard, red and shiny seeds on the ground which symbolise love and yearning in Chinese culture. Close by are Sea Apple (*Syzygium grande*) trees; these produce white, showy flowers and fruits that are eaten by bats and birds.

As you exit the compound towards Coleman Street, check out the Rain Tree with a trunk circumference of at least 8 m, making it one of the largest Rain Trees in Singapore!

#### ▶ 15 National Gallery Singapore

The row of Royal Palms (*Roystonea regia*) outside the National Gallery Singapore has been an iconic feature in the landscape for many years. They appeared in the background of many photographs taken during the first National Day Parade held at the Padang in 1966. The palms were removed when the Gallery was undergoing refurbishment. However, a new row was reinstated when the project was fully completed in 2015, lending its full glory back to the overall landscape.

#### ▶ 16 Esplanade Park Near the Cenotaph

Look out for the interesting Leopard Tree with a beautiful low crown near the Cenotaph. Stand under the crown of this old tree and admire the distinctive colourings on its smooth trunk.

Next to it is a Cannon Ball Tree (*Couroupita guianensis*) which, unusually, bears its flowers and fruits on thick long stalks that grow directly from the tree trunk. The large, fleshy flowers are attractive and fragrant. Its fruits are round and hard, resembling cannon balls, hence its common name.

#### Along Connaught Drive

Walk along the 'Avenue of Rain Trees' found on both sides of Connaught Drive. Some of these magnificent trees with beautifully gnarled branches have been around since the mid-1880s when they were planted as saplings along Connaught Drive, then known as New Esplanade Road, following land reclamation near the Padang during that time.

A total of 22 Rain Trees along this stretch were endorsed with Heritage Tree status in 2015. This marks the largest number of trees in a single avenue to be endorsed under NParks' Heritage Tree Scheme.

#### ▶ 17 Esplanade Park

##### Near the Lim Bo Seng Memorial

Near the Lim Bo Seng Memorial is a cluster of five Angsanas. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, this was a popular dating spot known affectionately as 'Gor Zhang Chiu Kar' in Hokkien, or 'under the shade of five trees'. Unfortunately, the original trees were affected by the Angsan Wilt disease in the early 1990s and had to be removed. To bring back memories of this landmark, the five mature Angsanas that you see here today were sourced from Upper Serangoon Road and transplanted here in 2015.





18. The Fullerton Waterboat House Garden – Tamarind tree (top) and its flowers (bottom)

#### ► 18 The Fullerton Waterboat House Garden

Providing shade to many visitors at the entrance of the garden is a Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*) tree. This tree has been standing here for more than 70 years, and was endorsed as a Heritage Tree in 2008.

The Tamarind is a slow growing tree that is widely cultivated for its sweet-sourish fruit pulp. Known as '*asam*', the pulp is commonly used in Southeast Asian and Indian Cuisine, and is also an ingredient in Worcestershire sauce.

The tree is native to tropical East Africa and India, and requires a monsoon climate to thrive.



19. Empress Lawn – Rain Tree flowers (top left), seed pods (top right) and row of transplanted Rain Trees (bottom)

#### ► 19 Empress Lawn

The eight mature Rain Trees that you see on the lawn here were conserved during the realignment of Fullerton Road and creation of the space in front of the Victoria Theatre and Concert Hall. This conservation effort was a challenging feat as each tree had a root ball measuring up to 6 m in diameter and weighed more than 70 tonnes!

A team of arborists worked to ensure that sufficient preparatory works were done, including trenching of the root balls, application of growth stimulants to encourage development of the trees' roots and proper pruning to help minimise transplanting shock.

#### ► 20 Raffles Landing Site

The Singapore White Frangipanis (*Plumeria obtusa* 'Singapore White') planted around the statue of Sir Stamford Raffles add greenery to the area. The species is native to tropical America, and this particular cultivar can grow up to 12 m tall. It produces large white flowers with a yellow centre and waxy petals that form a funnel. The flowers are especially fragrant in the night, attracting moths. The variety of Frangipani with white flowers was specially chosen to be planted here to complement the white statue of Raffles.



20. Raffles Landing Site – Singapore White Frangipani (top) and its flowers (bottom)

**We hope you have enjoyed your walk on this trail. If you wish to get up close and personal with more plants, embark on the Trees of the Fort Trail at Fort Canning Park.**

[www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides](http://www.nparks.gov.sg/eguides)  
[www.facebook.com/nparksbuzz](https://www.facebook.com/nparksbuzz)