

Your Guide To St John's Island Trail

Welcome to St John's Island and the Sisters' Islands Marine Park!

The Sisters' Islands Marine Park is Singapore's first Marine Park. It includes the two Sisters' Islands as well as the western reefs of St John's Island and Pulau Tekukor. The Marine Park was established to promote outreach, education, research and conservation of Singapore's coastal and marine environment.

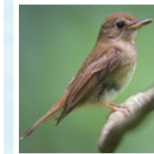
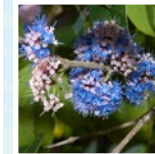
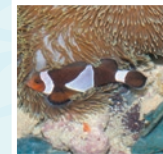
On St John's Island (which is managed by the Singapore Land Authority), visitors can learn more about the Marine Park at a Public Gallery in the Marine Park Outreach and Education Centre, a collaboration

between the National Parks Board and the Tropical Marine Science Institute, National University of Singapore. The Public Gallery forms part of the St John's Island Trail, which introduces visitors to the island's rich history, natural habitats, Heritage Trees and abundant wildlife.

This guide will lead you on an exploration of St John's Island. On your journey, we hope you will have many enriching encounters with both nature and history, and will return soon to enjoy the sights of Singapore's first Marine Park.



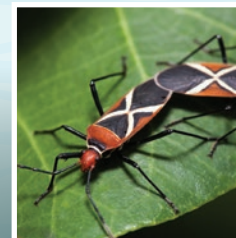
Top row, left to right:
Neptune's Cup Sponge (*Cliona patera*),
Blue Land Crab (*Discoplax hirtipes*)



2nd row, left to right:
Clown Anemonefish (*Amphiprion ocellaris*)
Delek Air (*Memecylon edule*)
Brown-chested Jungle Flycatcher (*Cyornis brunneatus*)



3rd row, left to right:
Icon Sea Star (*Iconaster longimanus*)
Tiger-tailed Seahorse (*Hippocampus comes*)
Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*)



Last row, left to right:
Cotton Stainer Bug (*Dysdercus decussatus*)
Hawksbill Turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*)

How to get there

Regular ferry services to St John's Island are available from Marina South Pier, twice on weekdays and up to five times on weekends and public holidays. To reach Big Sister's Island, visitors can charter a boat from Marina South Pier or West Coast Pier.

Walking time: 1 – 1.5 hrs

Difficulty level: Easy to moderate

Distance: 2.8 km



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ST JOHN'S ISLAND TRAIL SITE MARKERS

- 1 ST JOHN'S ISLAND
- 2 SINGAPORE'S FORMER 'QUARANTINE ISLAND'
- 3 MANGROVES
- 4 COASTAL FORESTS AND LAZARUS ISLAND
- 5 BIRDS
- 6 REPTILES AND AMPHIBIANS
- 7 INSECTS AND SPIDERS
- 8 HERITAGE TREES
- 9 MARINE RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION IN SINGAPORE
- 10 THE INTERTIDAL ZONE
- 11 ROCKY SHORES AND PULAU TEKUKOR
- 12 MOLLUSCS
- 13 CRUSTACEANS
- 14 FISHES
- 15 CORAL REEFS

-  **Heritage Tree**
Do note that some of these Heritage Trees are not in publicly accessible areas.
-  **Mangrove**
-  **Toilet**
-  **Power house**
-  **Lifeguard tower**
-  **Changing room**
-  **Marine Park Outreach and Education Centre / St John's Island National Marine Laboratory**



Your Guide To St John's Island

Start

1 St John's Island

St John's Island was known to navigators even before modern Singapore was founded in 1819. Erédia, a Portuguese-Eurasian explorer, marked 'Pulo Siquijan' on a map he made in 1604. This was probably a misspelling of the island's Malay name, Pulau Sekijang, which means 'Barking Deer Island'. European sailors later corrupted 'Sekijang' into 'Sijang' and finally, 'St John's'.

2 Singapore's Former 'Quarantine Island'

The British established a quarantine centre on St John's Island in 1874. The quarantine centre, which closed in 1973, housed and treated passengers who arrived on ships with infectious diseases such as cholera, smallpox and plague. In 1948, parts of the island were converted into a detention centre for political prisoners including C. V. Devan Nair, who later became Singapore's third President.

Between 1955 and 1975, St John's Island also housed an Opium Treatment Centre. In 1976, the island was converted into a holiday resort with swimming lagoons and campsites. Today, the island serves as a base for marine research with the establishment of the St John's Island National Marine Laboratory in 2002 and the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore's Marine Aquaculture Centre in 2003.



Left: Collared Kingfisher (*Todiramphus chloris*)
Below: Feral Peafowl (*Pavo cristatus*)

3 Mangroves

A small patch of mangroves, which are trees that have adapted to life in the sea, has established itself by the seawall at St John's Island. This patch is dominated by two species: Bakau Pasir, which has prominent prop roots, and Tumu, which has knee roots that protrude above the ground. Both species produce long fruits called propagules, which begin to grow even before they fall off the parent tree.

Once prized for their wood which makes excellent charcoal, mangroves today are increasingly valued as nurseries for young fish and as living 'seawalls' that protect coasts from storms.

4 Coastal Forests and Lazarus Island

Next to St John's Island lies Pulau Sekijang Pelepah, which was renamed Lazarus Island in 1899 when a lazaretto (quarantine hospital) was built on it. Today, the island, which was linked to St John's Island in the early 2000s, is home to a rich coastal hill forest with plants such as the Delek Air, Common Rhu and Sea Almond.

5 Birds

St John's Island is a haven for birdwatchers. The Brahminy Kite regularly soars over the island as it hunts for prey. Birds that stalk fish by the water's edge include the Striated Heron and Great-billed Heron. Other common birds on the island include the Oriental Magpie Robin (*Copsychus saularis*), sunbirds, kingfishers, nightjars and even a few Feral Peafowl.



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan



The island was used as a quarantine centre until 1973. Courtesy of The National Archives, United Kingdom.



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Bakau Pasir (*Rhizophora stylosa*)



Photo credit: Rita Tan

Knee roots of Tumu (*Bruguiera gymnorhiza*)



Photo credit: Rita Tan

Propagule of Tumu



Lazarus Island is also known as Pulau Sekijang Pelepah (pelepah is Malay for palm leaf).



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Delek Air (*Memecylon edule*)



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Common Rhu (*Casuarina equisetifolia*)



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Sea Almond (*Terminalia catappa*)



Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur indus*)

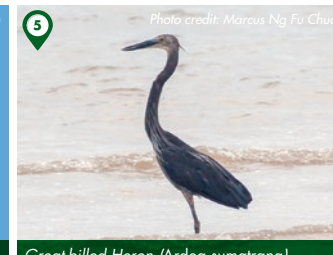


Photo credit: Marcus Ng Fu Chuan

Great-billed Heron (*Ardea sumatrana*)

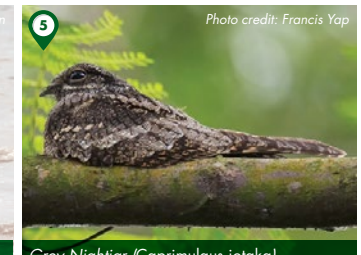


Photo credit: Francis Yap

Grey Nightjar (*Caprimulgus jotaka*)

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6 Reptiles And Amphibians

St John's Island is home to several species of reptiles and amphibians. Snakes found on the island include the arboreal Paradise Tree Snake (*Chrysopelea paradisi*), Gold-ringed Cat Snake and House Wolf Snake. Sea turtles such as the Hawksbill Turtle can also be found in the waters of the Marine Park, and a turtle hatchery is planned at Small Sister's Island. Amphibians on the island include the Banded Bullfrog.

7 Insects And Spiders

Insects (which have six legs) and spiders (which have eight legs) form part of the island's terrestrial invertebrate community. The Golden Orb-web Spider often spins its huge web at the forest edge, which is also a habitat for many species of moths, butterflies, beetles and dragonflies. There is even a Marine Spider that lives on coral reefs and feeds on small marine creatures.

8 Heritage Trees

St John's Island is home to 10 trees that have been marked by the National Parks Board as Heritage Trees for their exceptional size and botanical, social, historical, cultural and/or aesthetic value. The island's Heritage Trees include: two Tembusus, four Sea Figs, a Tempinis, a Machang Pulasan, a Penaga Laut (*Calophyllum inophyllum*) and a Common Pulai (*Alstonia angustiloba*). Do note that some of these Heritage Trees are not in publicly accessible areas.

9 Marine Research And Conservation In Singapore

The Sisters' Islands Marine Park is dedicated to research, education and outreach programmes involving Singapore's marine biodiversity. The Marine Park hosts regular public intertidal walks at Big Sisters' Island and also serves as a base for research and conservation projects on endangered species such as the Giant Clam (*Tridacna gigas*), Neptune's Cup Sponge (*Cliona patera*) and marine turtles.

10 The Intertidal Zone

The intertidal zone refers to the parts of the seashore that are exposed when the tide is low. During low tides, you can explore the swimming lagoons but do wear covered shoes for safety. Animals and plants that you may encounter include seagrasses, Common Sea Stars, fiddler crabs (*Uca* spp.), sea cucumbers and hermit crabs.

★ Marine Park Public Gallery

Visit the Public Gallery of the Sisters' Islands Marine Park Outreach and Education Centre to learn more about marine biodiversity and conservation in Singapore. The Public Gallery is housed within the St John's Island National Marine Laboratory.

Opening hours:
Weekdays: 10 am to 2.30 pm
Saturdays: 10 am to 3.30 pm
Sundays and Public Holidays: 10 am to 5.30 pm



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11 Rocky shores and Pulau Tekukor

Natural rocky shores and cliffs can be found on the northwestern tip of St John's Island. This habitat is home to rare trees such as the Nyireh Laut and Tongkat Ali as well as marine life such as limpets and reef worms. The western reefs of Pulau Tekukor are part of the Marine Park. This rocky island was once known as Pulau Penyabong (Duelers' Island), as it was said to be an ancient battlesite.

12 Molluscs

Molluscs, which include snails, limpets, clams and cockles, usually have one shell (gastropods) or two shells (bivalves). The Marine Park is home to the Fluted Giant Clam. This locally Endangered bivalve, which can reach 45 cm long, is being studied and bred for restoration in local reefs. Some molluscs, such as slugs, nudibranchs, octopuses and squids, lack shells.

13 Crustaceans

Crustaceans include crabs, prawns, lobsters and barnacles. These animals are mostly aquatic but some species, such as the Land Hermit Crab, have adapted to life on land. Fiddler crabs (*Uca* spp.) can be commonly seen feeding at low tide. In 2015, the Blue Land Crab (*Discoplax hirtipes*), which was last recorded locally in 1938, was rediscovered on St John's Island.



Left: Onch slug (*Onchididae*)
Below: Flagfin wrasse (*Pteragogus flagellifer*)

14 Fishes

Fish from tiny gobies to black-tip reef sharks abound in the waters of St John's Island and the Marine Park. Some species, as filefishes and the venomous Estuarine Stonefish, are well-camouflaged among rocks and seaweed. Colourful fishes such as butterflyfish, wrasses and anemonefish dwell in the reefs. During low tide, you may see mudskippers foraging on the mud.

End 15 Coral Reefs

Corals are tiny sea anemone-like animals that produce skeletons of calcium carbonate, which make up the foundation of a coral reef. Coral reefs can be found in the waters around the Sisters' Islands, Pulau Tekukor and St John's Island. These habitats, which provide a home and food for thousands of marine species from sea sponges to feather stars and dolphins, have been called the rainforests of the sea. Singapore has more than 250 species of hard corals.

