



# The Lion's share

Singapore has been ranked as the world's third most competitive country and is constantly reinventing itself. Gary Bowerman explores the city that never sleeps

History may well chart 2010 as a landmark year for Singapore. Since 2005, when this tiny island at the base of the Malay Peninsula announced plans to diversify its appeal and double visitor numbers by 2015, Singapore has been constantly reinventing itself. And 2010 witnessed the stepping up of the Lion City's regeneration as a corporate and leisure destination.

The year began with the launch of two highly anticipated 'integrated resorts' – Marina Bay Sands and

Resorts World Sentosa. These multi-functional resorts combine world-class hotels with museums, theatres, fine dining, conference and exhibition facilities, upscale brand shopping, a Universal Studios theme park (Resorts World) and a 200-metre-high Sky Park observation deck (Marina Bay Sands) – plus Singapore's first licensed casinos.

In August, Singapore successfully hosted the inaugural Youth Olympic Games ([www.singapore2010.sg](http://www.singapore2010.sg)). The first new event

sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 80 years, the 13-day Youth Olympics welcomed 5,000 young athletes and 320,000 spectators from around the world.

The good news didn't stop there. In July, Singapore achieved one million visitor arrivals in a single month for the first time. Then in September, Singapore predicted that its GDP would grow by a staggering 13-15 percent this year, and the World Economic Forum ranked Singapore as the



world's third most competitive country, after Switzerland and Sweden. Add these new attractions and achievements to the existing world-class infrastructure, including excellent hotels, transport and visitor attractions, ubiquitous high-speed Internet connectivity and an airport frequently voted the world's best, and Singapore's status as Asia's hottest commercial hub seems assured.

**SLEEP** Singapore's spectrum of hotels ranges from

deluxe five-star palaces to a burgeoning portfolio of boutique abodes in restored heritage buildings. **The Ritz-Carlton Millennia** ([www.ritzcarlton.com](http://www.ritzcarlton.com)) affords stunning views over Marina Bay, plus extensive conference and meeting facilities and signature Ritz-Carlton service. Opened in late 2007 near the Orchard Road shopping centre, **St Regis Singapore** ([www.stregissingapore.com](http://www.stregissingapore.com)) is the classiest act in the downtown district. Vast marble bathrooms, a surround-sound TV, music and DVD system and 24-hour butler service are some of the in-room comforts, while the grand public spaces house a fine collection of international art. Occupying a pair of renovated Chinatown shophouses is the über-chic **New Majestic** ([www.newmajestichotel.com](http://www.newmajestichotel.com)) design hotel. Each of the 30 rooms has been thematically styled by a local designer, fashionista or celebrity, making it Singapore's most eclectic sleepover. If you prefer serviced accommodation, **Treetops Residences** ([treetops.com.sg](http://treetops.com.sg)) are located just a short walk from Orchard Road. The

**Top Left: The original Merlion in Merlion Park; Left: Luxurious sanctuary of St Regis Singapore Above: Poolside at The Ritz-Carlton Millennia Right: Treetops Residence retreat**



one, two- and three-bedroom fully-serviced apartments boast a range of services, including an outdoor swimming pool, gym, tennis courts and sauna.

**DINE** Singapore's multi-ethnic history and culture – and a devout passion for eating – make it a gourmand's playground. Singaporean Chinese cuisine is often given extra zing by the addition of Southeast Asian spices, while Malay, Indian, Indonesian and Thai restaurants abound. For contemporary Chinese cuisine, **Jing at One Fullerton** ([www.jing.sg](http://www.jing.sg)) serves up inventive treats like Caviar Peking Duck and Stewed Mee Sua with Mini Abalone and Greens in Crab Roe Sauce

**Below: A novel experience at the ever-evolving Orgo Bar & Restaurant on the roof terrace at Esplanade-Theaters on the Bay**

complemented by fine views across Marina Bay. **Spice Peranakan** ([www.spiceperanakan.com](http://www.spiceperanakan.com)) specialises in authentic home-cooked Peranakan dishes (a fusion of Chinese and Malay preparations and flavours) such as Ayam Buah Keluak and Sotong Sambal. Style-savvy local celebrities and city shaker-makers reserve tables at Kha ([www.kha.sg](http://www.kha.sg)), an exotically-designed modern Thai restaurant replete with dark wood walls, teak floors, and large glass windows. One of the hottest spots for Singaporean cuisine is **Makansutra Gluttons Bay** ([www.makansutra.com](http://www.makansutra.com)) where hand-picked hawker stalls serve favourite local dishes like oyster omelette and fried carrot cake beside the Esplanade waterfront.

**DRINK** From the popular strip of pubs lining Boat Quay to sophisticated cocktail

lounges, Singaporean nightlife has improved markedly in recent years. The expansive outdoor terrace of **Brewerkz** ([www.brewerkz.com](http://www.brewerkz.com)) at Riverside Point is a great spot to sip a home-brewed lager or hoppy real ale beside the Singapore River. **Hacienda** (13a Dempsey Road) is a chic alfresco garden bar set amid the leafy calm of Dempsey Road. The bartenders mix a mean martini, and the adjacent Hacienda Café serves light bites. Cocktail connoisseurs will enjoy the iconic **Orgo** ([www.orgo.sg](http://www.orgo.sg)) lounge, where Japanese mixologist Tomoyuki Kitazoe serves up masterfully shaken, organic-inspired concoctions to a discerning clientele. Sophisticated and stylish, and located in one of Singapore's most famous heritage landmarks, is the **Fullerton Hotel's Post Bar** ([fullertonhotel.com](http://fullertonhotel.com)) – named after the building's previous incarnation as Singapore's main post office. A popular after-work watering hole for bankers and office workers, it is a hotbed of local gossip and news.

**RELAX** Downtime in Singapore is very pleasurable – provided you can handle the sticky tropical humidity. This green city-state is endowed with several parks and gardens, including the bounteous **Singapore Botanic Gardens** ([www.sbg.org.sg](http://www.sbg.org.sg)), whose Orchid Garden showcases more than 1,000 varieties of the national flower. Set to open in 2011 are the 101-acre Gardens by the Bay ([www.gardensbythebay.org.sg](http://www.gardensbythebay.org.sg)), at Marina Bay, slated as a world-class landscaped tropical garden. Singapore also boasts several excellent museums. The **Asian Civilisations Museum** ([www.acm.org.sg](http://www.acm.org.sg)) exhibits one of the world's finest collections of ancient Asian artworks, sculptures and cultural artifacts. The history gallery at the **National Museum of Singapore** ([\[www.nationalmuseum.sg\]\(http://www.nationalmuseum.sg\)\) is an interactive journey through the complex history of Singapore and the Malay Peninsula. \*\*Memories at Old Ford Factory\*\* \(\[www.s1942.org.sg\]\(http://www.s1942.org.sg\)\) is a former car factory converted into a museum documenting the World War II surrender of Singapore by colonial British forces to the Japanese that was signed here in 1942.](http://www.nationalmuse-</a></p>
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**MEETINGS** Boasting excellent conventions facilities, such as **Suntec Singapore** ([www.suntecsingapore.com](http://www.suntecsingapore.com)), myriad luxury hotels, and driven by the proactive Singapore Exhibition and Convention Bureau, Singapore is Asia's foremost MICE and corporate events destination. In fact, it has been ranked as the 'Top International Meetings City' for three consecutive years by the Union of International Associations. Between 2010 and 2016, some 160 association conferences are already booked, including the 2010 American Association of Petroleum Geologists Annual Conference, the 2013 International Congress on Ultrasonics, and the 2016 International Conference on Social Work in Health and Mental Health.

**CORPORATE** Top sporting events are increasingly attracted to Singapore. Since 2008, the Lion City has hosted the spectacular **Singapore Grand Prix** ([www.singaporegp.sg](http://www.singaporegp.sg)) each September. The calendar's only night race winds around the floodlit Marina Bay and historic Civic District. Several leading hotels overlook the circuit and offer special promotions and events during F1 weekend. **The Singapore Turf Club** ([www.turfclub.com.sg](http://www.turfclub.com.sg)) hosts the country's richest horse races, the Singapore Airlines international Cup and the KrisFlyer International Sprint, each May.

