

# Sweet sixty

As Singapore marks 60 years of independence, **Tamara Hinson** takes a look at what's new

**S**ingapore will be celebrating its 60th anniversary of independence this year – on August 9 to be precise – and there's never been a better reason to sell a visit to this southeast Asian city-state. Whether it's for the swanky new hotels, the spruced-up parks and nature reserves or the developments taking place at its cruise and ferry terminals, first-time visitors and returning travellers will discover that even at 60, Singapore is showing no signs of slowing down.

## HOT HOTELS

Raffles Sentosa Singapore was due to be the hottest opening of 2024, although its unveiling was pushed back to March 1. There are, however,

plenty of other new hotels to get excited about. Stylish jet-setters will love The Standard, Singapore, which opened in November 2024. This sleek design hotel has art deco vibes and vast expanses of greenery befitting of its location – it's just a short walk from the Singapore Botanic Gardens. Rooms are compact but innovatively designed – even the Cosy Single Pool View rooms at just 21sq m have Nespresso machines. Rates for single rooms start from £162 per night, room-only.

Another opening that shows growing demand for hotels outside the downtown core is the Mandai Rainforest by Banyan Tree, which will be Banyan Tree's 100th property when it opens in April. Nature will be a key theme at this 338-room hotel – guests ➤

# DESTINATIONS

ASIA | SINGAPORE

SG60  
EVENTS

Your guide to art-focused anniversary celebrations to mark Singapore's 60th year

### Experience at the Glass Rotunda National Museum of Singapore (July)

This immersive multimedia journey will look at the factors that have shaped Singapore's global presence, highlighting the importance of the sea across centuries of history.

### Singapore Stories: Pathways and Detours in Art National Gallery Singapore (from July)

This exhibition will explore Singapore's history through art from the 19th century to the present day, featuring stories of Singaporean artists and how their works reflect a changing society.

### Singapore Biennale 2025

(October to March 2026)

This six-month festival celebrates Singapore's evolving identity using public art, transforming familiar landmarks, green areas and shopping centres including Fort Canning Park and the Rail Corridor.

National Gallery Singapore



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Cyclists at Rower's Bay Park; afternoon tea at The Capitol Kempinski; Singapore Grand Prix

PICTURES: Shutterstock/DerekTeo, b-hide the scene



will be surrounded by lush greenery and there will be sustainability-focused activities on offer.

Back in the city centre, the Orchard Road area remains a vibrant base for those who want to spend their evenings strolling the busy streets of Singapore's diverse neighbourhoods. Here, Grand Hyatt Singapore emerged from a two-year renovation last July with a more contemporary feel. One of the most significant additions is the resort-like Terrace Wing, where rooms – including the supersized Garden Studios – overlook cascading waterfalls and sprawling gardens. A Grand Wing will follow in the first half of the year. New restaurants in the hotel include Le Pristine Singapore, helmed by Dutch chef-entrepreneur Sergio Herman.

Another great option for clients who prefer to stay downtown is Mama Shelter Singapore, which will be this wallet-friendly hotel chain's first Asia property when it opens in mid-2025. The 110-room property will be on Killiney Road, close to Orchard Road.

Numerous hotels will hold events to celebrate SG60, but Fairmont Singapore's tribute is especially notable – a high tea inspired by beloved Singaporean artist Lim Tze Peng, who died recently aged 103 and was a recipient of Singapore's highest arts accolade, the Cultural Medallion. Available until March 31, highlights of the Ode to Art afternoon tea, served at Anti:Dote, include a praline calligraphy brush and macarons adorned with miniature versions of his paintings.

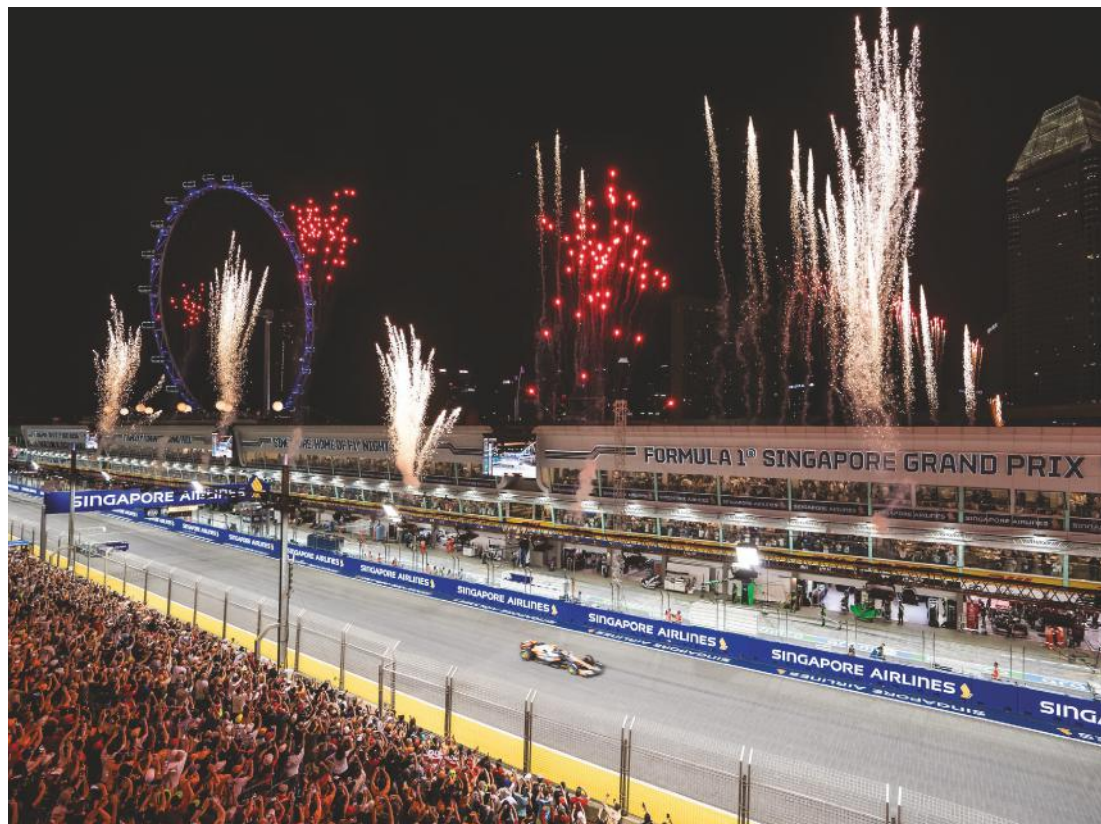
“Afternoon tea-loving clients can get a taste of history with a Hainanese Kurobata pork chop sandwich and a pandan scone

Afternoon-tea-loving clients should also consider those on offer at The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore, currently offering a taste of history courtesy of its beautiful Singapore Heritage Afternoon Tea. And no, not with servings of notoriously stinky durian fruit, but rather local delicacies such as a Hainanese Kurobata pork chop sandwich and a pandan scone.

### GREEN SCENE

Singapore has never looked greener, whether it's the Rail Corridor, a cycling and hiking trail in the footprint of a former railway (current projects include the restoration of the former Tanjong Pagar railway station), or the revamped Jurong Lake Gardens, famous for their Chinese and Japanese gardens that date back to the 1800s and which were given a major spruce-up in late 2024.

Equally spectacular is the Sisters' Islands Marine Park, unveiled last October. Highlights here include Singapore's first floating boardwalk, which ➤



ABOVE: This year's Singapore F1 Grand Prix takes place on October 3-5 PICTURE: Moonrise Studio

allows visitors to admire the coral reef, and the Ocean Network Express Coastal Forest Trail lined with observation decks.

### SPORTING FIXTURES

Sports tourism is growing apace around the world, and this year, Singapore wants in. In recent years, it has hosted the inaugural Olympic Esports Week, the Professional Triathletes Organisation and World Table Tennis, among others. In 2024, culture minister Edwin Tong announced the creation of a \$165 million Major Sports Event Fund to boost Singapore's appeal as a host for sports events and gigs.

But for many, the main event is the annual Singapore Grand Prix, which takes to the city's streets in early October. It benefits from two new grandstands (Sheares and Promenade) added in 2023, while the addition of a fourth DRS (drag reduction system) zone means more thrills and spills for an F1 race already famously eventful. Clients

keen to elevate their experience should consider staying at Swissôtel The Stamford Singapore, just a few metres from the circuit. Guests can dine on food prepared by world-renowned chefs and the numerous indoor and outdoor spaces include cosy bars and neon-drenched terraces overlooking the track.

### SHOWSTOPPERS

Singapore isn't only investing in sports tourism – it's going all out to attract musical superstars too. And its efforts are paying off because, hot on the heels of Taylor Swift's run of concerts last year, there will be performances by Norwegian singer Aurora and Irish band The Script in the coming months.

There's even more in store, as musicians will soon be able to strut their stuff at one of Asia's most high-tech concert venues. "Singapore hosted an unprecedented number of major concert events in 2024," says Allen Howden, general manager of The St Regis Singapore. "The

government is planning to transform the current Singapore Indoor Stadium into a new indoor arena – it will be a flagship live music venue." The arena, set to hold up to 18,000, is expected to open in 2026.

### ALL AT SEA

From December this year, as part of a five-year collaboration between the Singapore Tourism Board and Disney Cruise Line, new cruise ship *Disney Adventure* – featuring characters from both Disney and Marvel – will homeport in Singapore.

There is also significant investment in the Tanah Merah and HarbourFront ferry terminals, making travel to the Singaporean island of Pulau Ubin, as well as to Indonesia and Malaysia, more straightforward. Biometric gates and Smart Path Bag Drops are also being added at these terminals to make passengers' journeys smoother.

Singapore might be turning 60 this year – but it's proving to be as innovative as ever. **TW**

## ASK THE expert



**John Parker,**  
product manager,  
Premier Holidays

"The new and unique Mandai Rainforest Resort by Banyan Tree is exciting me the most. Situated in the eastern part of Mandai Wildlife Reserve and overlooking Upper Seletar Reservoir, the 338-room resort's offerings include 24 elevated seedpod-shaped treehouses set among the trees. The concept of the resort is sympathetic to the existing vegetation and is designed to be unobtrusive, sitting below the upper canopy layer of the surrounding trees."



Mandai  
Rainforest  
Resort

### BOOK IT

**Premier Travel** offers a four-night room-only break at the five-star Swissôtel The Stamford, with private transfers and return flights with British Airways, from £1,399. [premier-travel.co.uk](http://premier-travel.co.uk)

**Kuoni** offers four nights in a Deluxe Room at The Capitol Kempinski Hotel Singapore, with breakfast, transfers and Singapore Airlines flights on selected dates in November, from £1,849 per person based on two sharing. [kuoni.co.uk](http://kuoni.co.uk)