

TIONG BAHRU TALES

Trace the evolution of one of Singapore's oldest neighbourhoods.

Few neighbourhoods showcase how old meets and coexists with the new in Singapore the way Tiong Bahru does. This residential estate, which was built in the 1930s and is one of the oldest of its kind in Singapore, is well-loved by locals for its art deco apartment blocks and shophouses, its idyllic charm and the vibrant new dining and lifestyle concepts that have set up shop here in recent years.

This beautiful estate is just a short walk away from **1 Tiong Bahru MRT station**. Take the station's Tiong Bahru Plaza exit, then cross Tiong Bahru Road and turn left. Walk for a few minutes until you see Kim Pong Road, which

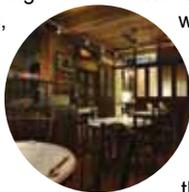
takes you into the estate and right up to one of the most distinctive buildings in the neighbourhood—the long, horseshoe-shaped block 78 along Moh Guan Terrace. (In case you were wondering about the road names, most of the streets in Tiong Bahru are named after early Chinese pioneers in Singapore.)

The first thing you'll see at block 78 is **2 Hua Bee**, a *kopitiam* (coffee shop) which has been serving up delicious mee pok noodles for over 70 years. Its iconic status, along with its old-school setting with its signature marble tables and wooden chairs, is so admired that an

enterprising restaurateur has co-opted the space to house **Bincho** at night. Enter Bincho through the back door, and you'll find yourself in a snazzy chrome-filled den where you can order yakitori bites to go with potent, Japanese-inspired cocktails.

Next door is popular brunch spot **3 Flock**, a favourite with coffee-lovers in the neighbourhood, while around the corner are even more great

eateries: **4 Open Door Policy**, **5 Forty Hands**, **6 Plain Vanilla** and **7 Ikyu**. Open Door Policy serves absolutely delicious, upscale western fare with a twist—think unconventional dishes



Hua Bee



A typical apartment in Tiong Bahru



like bright pink beetroot risotto and spicy lamb spring rolls—while Ikyu is just unconventional, serving up a stylish, modern take on sushi and other Japanese dishes.

After your meal, coffee specialist Forty Hands is a must-visit for an excellent cuppa, or pop by Plain Vanilla for some of the best gourmet cupcakes in town.

You can also wander into design boutique

8 Strangelets, which stocks one-of-a-kind furnishings and accessories from around the world, or pick up tasteful picture books for children and adults from **9 Woods in the Books**. For more stylish shopping, turn left for one of **10 Nana & Bird's** two outlets in Tiong Bahru (the other one is on Eng Hoon Street), a tightly-curated indie boutique—it's difficult to resist picking up hard-to-find additions to your

wardrobe or home here.

Keep walking to Seng Poh Road, which runs through the heart of the estate and is flanked by the lovely

11 Seng Poh Garden (keep an eye out for the lovely Dancing Girl sculpture).

The two major attractions along the street are **12 Tiong Bahru Community Centre**—possibly Singapore's first centre providing community amenities and services—and

13 Tiong Bahru Market.

The latter is one of the most popular hawker centres in Singapore; look for the queues for the famous *lor mee* (noodles in sticky gravy) and chicken rice here. If you happen to be here during the Chinese 7th Month, you might just be lucky enough to catch the lively annual residents' dinner and auction.

If you need to take a breather from all that walking,



Tiong Bahru Market

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nip into the charming

14 Flea & Trees, an eclectic boutique with plenty of girly vintage frocks and statement jewellery to snap up.

Or get a fantastic, value-for-money massage at **15 Nimble/Knead**, one of the best independent spas in town, which boasts an unusual industrial aesthetic and full-featured treatment rooms in shipping containers. Men can also head to hip grooming parlour **16 We Need A Hero** for more pampering—they offer a smorgasbord of haircuts, shaves, hair removal and other services.

Ready for more gastronomical delights? Check out the much raved-about **17 Loo's Hainanese Curry Rice** along Eng Hoon Street, an institution that shows how long locals are willing to wait for good food. It's not uncommon to see long queues for this meal of

rice, sliced pork chops and addictive curry sauce.

On the same stretch you'll find plenty of buzzing eateries catering to the young and hip. One of them is famed French baker Gontran Cherrier's

18 Tiong Bahru Bakery, which is perpetually crowded thanks to their can't-stop-at-one croissants.

Also worth checking out is **19 Two Face Pizza & Taproom**, a *kopitiam* by day and pizzeria by night, similar to Bincho in concept, but a lot more laidback.

At this quirky spot, you can join in the local regulars as they enjoy craft beers and pizzas that cleverly use local ingredients, like Chinese salted fish in place of Sicilian anchovies.

At the junction of Eng Hoon Street and Tiong Poh Road

is **20 Qi Tian Gong Temple**.

This Chinese temple is almost a century old, and is said to be the first in Singapore to be dedicated to the Monkey God, the protagonist of classical Chinese novel *Journey to the West*. There are over 10 statues of this curious deity, which worshippers believe to bring good luck, quick wits and prosperity. Every 1st and 8th Month of the Chinese calendar there are vibrant celebrations of the Monkey God's birthday, including lion and dragon dances and street opera performances.

Finally, venture on to the outer edge of the estate, along Tiong Bahru Road. This part of the estate is home to niche lifestyle offerings like **21 The French Bookshop** and fixed gear bike shop **22 Cycle Project Store** as well as several seafood restaurants.



Tiong Bahru Bakery



Qi Tian Gong Temple

But for a really interesting look at the estate's heritage, stop by ☺ **The Dispensary** for some coffee and cake. The café used to be a Chinese medical hall, and the owners have cleverly preserved some of the traditional elements, like weighing scales and a medicine cabinet, which you can admire along with vintage trinkets like enamel cups and ornate fans. It's the perfect way to end your Tiong Bahru adventure on a sweet note.



The Dispensary

ADDRESS BOOK

CYCLE PROJECT STORE

#01-53, 55 Tiong Bahru Road.
☎ (65) 9457-6343.
www.cycleprojectstore.com

THE DISPENSARY

69 Tiong Bahru Road.
☎ (65) 6536-0225.
www.thedispensary.com.sg

FLEA & TREES

#01-10, Blk 68 Seng Poh Lane.
☎ (65) 8139-1133.
www.facebook.com/FleaTrees

FLOCK

#01-25, 78 Moh Guan Terrace.
☎ (65) 6536-3938.
www.flock.sg

FORTY HANDS

#01-12, 78 Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6225-8545.
www.40handscoffee.com

THE FRENCH BOOKSHOP

#01-53C, 55 Tiong Bahru Road.
www.the-french-bookshop.com

HUA BEE/BINCHO

#01-19, 78 Moh Guan Terrace.
☎ (65) 6438-4567.
www.bincho.com.sg

IKYU

5 Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6223-9003.
www.ikyu.com.sg

LOO'S HAINANESE CURRY RICE

#01-49, Blk 71 Seng Poh Road.

NANA & BIRD

#01-02, 79 Chay Yan Street.
☎ (65) 9117-0430.
www.nanaandbird.com

NIMBLE/KNEAD

#01-28, 66 Eng Watt Street.
☎ (65) 6438-3933.
www.nimbleknead.com

OPEN DOOR POLICY

19 Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6221-9307.
www.odpsingapore.com

PLAIN VANILLA BAKERY

1D Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6465-5942.
www.plainvanillabakery.com

QI TIAN GONG TEMPLE

44 Eng Hoon Street.
☎ (65) 6220-2469.
www.qitiangong.com

SENG POH GARDEN

77 Seng Poh Road.

STRANGELETS

7 Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6222-1456.
www.strangelets.sg

TIONG BAHRU BAKERY

#01-70, 56 Eng Hoon Street.
☎ (65) 6220-3430.
www.tiongbahrubakery.com

TIONG BAHRU COMMUNITY CENTRE

67A Eu Chin Street.
☎ (65) 6323-5838.

TIONG BAHRU MARKET

30 Seng Poh Road.

TWO FACE PIZZA & TAPROOM

#01-46, 56 Eng Hoon Street.
☎ (65) 6536-0024.
www.twoface.sg

WE NEED A HERO

#01-86, 57 Eng Hoon Street.
☎ (65) 6222-5590.
www.weneedahero.sg

WOODS IN THE BOOKS

3 Yong Siak Street.
☎ (65) 6222-9980.
www.woodsinthebooks.sg

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