

MEDIA RELEASE

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**EXPERIENCE CHANGI'S MYSTIQUE AND CHARM ON THE
NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD'S NEWEST HERITAGE TRAIL**



Changi Beach

Singapore, 26 March 2024 – Changi is known for its relaxed coastal vibes, good food and the world-famous Changi Airport. Beneath the surface, however, is a much more fascinating, complex, and sometimes dark history. The tales of historical sites, events and the communities associated with the area will be uncovered in the new *Changi Heritage Trail* by the National Heritage Board (NHB).

2 Featuring 23 heritage sites and six heritage trail markers, the *Changi Heritage Trail* will tell the stories of Changi through the memories of its community, trace its evolution across different eras, and shed light on its cultural, social, economic and military heritage over the




centuries. Trail-goers will get to explore iconic landmarks and discover the diverse narratives of Changi, from the hardships endured by prisoners of war during the Japanese Occupation to the vibrant mix of cultures of the kampongs in the area.

3 Mr Alvin Tan, Deputy Chief Executive (Policy & Community), NHB, said: “Through our heritage trails, NHB hopes not only to showcase the unique history of neighbourhoods, but to also leverage our trails to bring heritage closer to the community; facilitate community participation through the contribution of stories and photographs; enhance place identity; and in this case, encourage Singaporeans to explore Changi and rediscover its unique charms.”

Coastal lifestyle

4 As a coastal area, fishing and other maritime activities shaped the economy, society and cultures of the kampongs in Changi. For the communities of kampongs Ayer Gemuroh, Mata Ikan and Beting Kusah, fishing was their livelihood, as were *berkarang* (coastal foraging) and the making of *kapur* (lime-based whitewash). These activities required deep knowledge of the seascape, weather patterns and monsoon winds, which was passed down through generations and formed the base of numerous aspects of community life.

5 Fishermen of the Changi coast generally headed out to sea after dusk, and their return in the mornings brought the villages to life. Mdm Isiah Majid, who grew up in Kampong Ayer Gemuroh, recalls: “[The atmosphere at the beach was] just like a fish market, with people [gathering around each] boat to buy their fish. It’s a joyful moment, with children swimming and [playing] in the sea... while the adults are bargaining for their fish.” Archival images of this way of life can be found below:

	<p>Fishermen off Changi coast, 1970s</p> <p><i>National Museum of Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>
	<p>Painting by Cultural Medallion recipient Chua Mia Tee titled <i>Malay fisherman at Changi Beach</i>, 1977</p> <p><i>Donated by Times Publishing Limited, National Gallery Singapore collection, courtesy of National Heritage Board</i></p>
	<p>Kelong off Changi Beach, 1958</p> <p><i>Courtesy of Royal Air Force Changi Association</i></p>

Sun, sand, sea: Leisure in Changi

6 During the colonial period, Changi was a popular leisure destination with its quiet and calm beaches, cool sea breeze, and as a point from which to sail to nearby islands or favoured fishing locations. Changi was then lauded as “Singapore’s Lido”, alluding to the well-known Lido di Venezia in Italy, because of its fresh air and forested environment. Its appeal as a resort for

colonial society was also highlighted by European visitors, as recorded in a diary entry from 1860 which detailed a visit to Changi: “*Changhee* is a sort of Singapore Brighton — a place where everyone goes to for a picnic. It only consists of a few small fishermen’s huts, a government traveller’s bungalow, and another bungalow a little higher up belonging to a Joint Hock Company.”

7 The construction of a wooden bungalow known as Changhee Hut made Changi a popular location for colonial society for their holidays due to its picturesque surroundings. This popularity led to the construction of more bungalows in the area, with private investors renting them out as resorts, further cementing Changi’s reputation as a leisure spot. Images of Changi’s early years as a leisure destination can be found below:



Photograph of Changi Beach, 1929

Stanley T. Tanner Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Bungalow in Changi, c. 1880s

Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Aerial view of bungalows in Changi, 1985

Courtesy of National Archives of Singapore

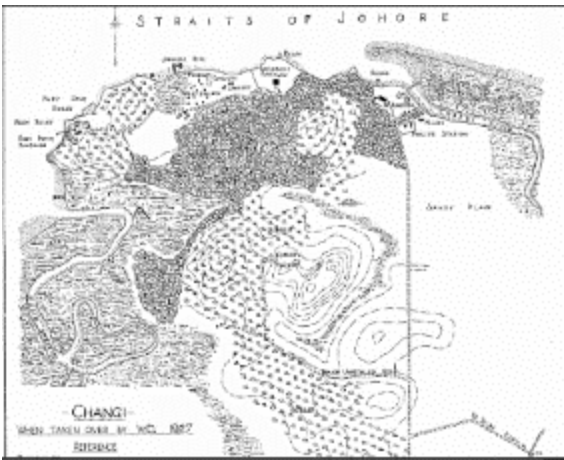
Fighting for peace: Military sites in Changi

8 After the 1920s, Changi went through significant transformation to become a strategic military and penal hub. With Sembawang confirmed as the location for the United Kingdom's new naval base then, another site was needed for a cantonment (military quarters) and artillery emplacements to house troops and guns that would protect the naval base. Changi was a natural choice to be part of the defence of Singapore due to its command of the eastern approach to the Johor Strait, as well as its distance from the city and major residential areas. The Gillman Commission was established in 1927 to plan and develop the Changi Cantonment. Following this, the United Kingdom's War Office began acquiring land in Changi and transforming its landscape to make way for concrete gun emplacements, airfields, hangars, barracks blocks and other facilities.

9 After the development of Changi Cantonment came Changi Prison, built in response to overcrowded conditions at Pearl's Hill Prison and Outram Prison in the early 1930s. This prison would eventually house Western civilians and prisoners of war during the Japanese Occupation. Some of the plans and photos of Changi Cantonment can be found below:



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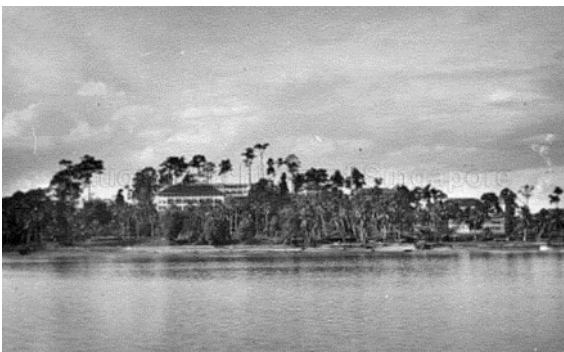
Sketch made by Colonel Malan of the Royal Engineers of the Changi Point area, 1927

Courtesy of The Institution of Royal Engineers



Map showing Changi Cantonment, Changi Village, and other landmarks of the area, 1939

Courtesy of Singapore Land Authority



View of Changi Cantonment from the Johor Strait, 1938

RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



Entrance to Changi Prison, 1946

*National Museum of Singapore collection,
courtesy of National Heritage Board*



Aerial view of Changi Prison, 1950s

*RAFSA Collection, courtesy of National
Archives of Singapore*

Explore Changi's history and heritage

10 To cater to the varied interests of trail-goers, the *Changi Heritage Trail* features three thematic routes:

- **Bungalows and Beaches in Changi** (1 hour with public transport), 4km — This route will cover the bungalows, sailing and beach clubs, and chalets in Changi.
- **War and Peace in Changi** (1.5 hours with public transport), 7.6km — Explore the history of different military buildings in Changi with this route, including Changi Prison, Changi Chapel and Museum, and the former Changi Cantonment.

- **Gateways and Communities in Changi** (2 hours with public transport), 12km — Find out more about the communities of Changi and the places in which they lived, worked, and played.

11 The *Changi Heritage Trail's* companion guide and map can be downloaded from <https://go.gov.sg/roots-changi-heritage-trail>. The map will be made available in all four languages from June 2024. Limited printed copies of the companion guide will also be available at Siglap Community Club, Changi Chapel and Museum, and Asian Civilisations Museum.

12 For more information, please refer to:

- [Annex A](#): Thematic trail routes of the *Changi Heritage Trail*
- [Annex B](#): List of heritage sites in the *Changi Heritage Trail* and information on heritage markers
- [Annex C](#): Five fun facts about Changi
- [Annex D](#): List of heritage trails developed by NHB

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About the National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit.

NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, safeguards and promotes intangible cultural heritage, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the






past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

CHANGI HERITAGE TRAIL — THREE THEMATIC TRAIL ROUTES

The *Changi Heritage Trail* features three thematic trail routes of varying distances, which trail-goers can embark on in their own time:

Bungalows and Beaches in Changi 1 hour with public transport, 4km	
<p><i>The natural beauty and coastal pleasures of Changi have been drawing visitors to the area since the mid-1800s. Discover Changi's collection of bungalows, beach resorts, and clubs with their coastal views, and explore the holiday houses built and frequented by colonial officials and the stretch of chalets well-loved by Singaporeans today.</i></p>	
	<p>Set off on your trail adventure at the former home of Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, a Neo-Classical bungalow that is today part of Civil Service Club@Changi (CSC@Changi) at 2 Neverathon Road. Completed by 1920, this is the oldest building in Changi, and is representative of the popularity of bungalows and leisure activities in Changi since the early 19th century. Since its construction, the building has served as a holiday home, a school, a hotel, and a clubhouse.</p>
 <p>[Please note that only those who have hired the space can enter the Cottage.]</p>	<p>From the clubhouse, proceed along Netheravon Road to Changi Cottage. Built in 1950, the Cottage is well-known as the location where Singapore's founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew recuperated and worked after the tumult of Singapore's independence in 1965. The Cottage is now part of the CSC@Changi resort and can be rented by the public.</p>
 <p>[Please note that only restaurants and cafes in the</p>	<p>Continue along Changi Point Boardwalk to reach Changi Sailing Club and then Changi Beach Club further down the path. Originally established as social and sporting clubs by soldiers of Changi Cantonment, and later Royal Air Force (RAF) Changi, Changi Sailing Club (founded in 1936) and Changi Beach Club (founded in 1950) operate as private members' clubs today.</p>

<p>clubs are accessible to the public.]</p>	
	<p>Upon exiting Changi Point Boardwalk, you will come upon the chalets at Fairy Point. The chalets, which include those at 7 Gosport Road, 3 and 4 Catterick Road as well as 10 and 14 Leuchars Road, were built between 1927 and 1929 as accommodation for senior British military officers. Fairy Point Chalets 6 and 7 (3 and 5 Andover Road respectively) were also military quarters built in the 1920s on the site of a former bungalow known as Fairy Point, which gave this area its name.</p>
	<p>Like the British soldiers of the past, head to Changi Village for food, drinks, and entertainment, or cross over from Sungei Changi to Changi Beach for a picnic. Around this area, there are many staycation options, from hotels to chalets. Alternatively, you may take a bus from Changi Village and visit Cosford Container Park for more food and drink, and to enjoy views of airplane landings at Changi Airport.</p>

<p><u>War and Peace in Changi</u> 1.5 hours with public transport, 7.6km (not including optional route)</p> <p><i>Changi is a site of memory for diverse communities as it developed from a secluded corner of the island into a British military base and subsequently endured the Japanese Occupation. Explore Changi's military heritage and learn what life was like at the military base and as Allied Prisoners of War (POWs) and survivors of the Japanese Occupation.</i></p>	
 <p>[Please note that Changi Prison is a restricted area, please only visit the information board along Upper Changi Road North.] <i>Image courtesy of Singapore Prison Service</i></p>	<p>Start your exploration along Upper Changi Road North, where you will find an information board outside Changi Prison, the last penal institution built by the colonial government. Established as a response to overcrowding in Pearl's Hill Prison and Outram Prison in 1936, the prison was also used as a place of interment for POWs during the Japanese Occupation. The prison underwent redevelopment in the 1970s and 1980s, and a stretch of the original prison wall, entrance gate and two turrets were preserved and gazetted as a National Monument in 2016.</p>



Cross the street and take a bus to **Changi Chapel and Museum**. Built on part of the former Changi POW camp, this museum features diverse narratives about the Japanese Occupation and reflections from POWs. These stories are presented through personal artefacts and recollections, as well as recreations of the well-known Changi Murals and St. George's Church.



[Please note that the buildings in this area are not accessible to the public and can only be viewed from the outside.]

Cross the street, take a bus and alight at Cranwell Road to visit the grounds of **Former Changi Cantonment and RAF Changi**. Completed in 1937, Changi Cantonment (later RAF Changi) was a British-built military base that guarded the approaches to the Naval Base at Sembawang and the Johor Strait. Later, Changi Cantonment became RAF Changi, the air headquarters of the post-World War II British Far East Command.



[Optional] From Cranwell Road, you may walk to Hendon Road to view the buildings numbered 33-49A. Located on both sides of Hendon Road, these buildings, formerly the barracks for unmarried RAF soldiers, feature architectural adaptations for tropical weather, such as high ceilings for ventilation and hipped roofs.



[Please note that the buildings in this area are not accessible to the public and can only be viewed from the outside.]

From Cranwell Road, walk along Netheravon Road and you will come across the **Former Changi Hospital**, another building from the RAF Changi era. Located on the top of the hill, this building was completed in 1962 and served residents until 1997 when Changi Hospital was merged with Toa Payoh Hospital and relocated to Simei. Take a break at the numerous cafes and restaurants nearby, some of which are housed in former barracks and quarters, or enjoy well-loved hawker favourites by taking a bus to Changi Village.



[Optional] From Netheravon Road, you may take a detour to Halton Road via Sealand Road. Along Halton Road are the former residences and quarters of the British military, including warrant officers' quarters at 46 and 50 Halton Road and quarters for married personnel at 51 Halton Road. Examples of the latter also stand at 38 and 598 Sealand Road, as well as numbers 54 to 60 on Upavon Road. From here, take a bus along Loyang Avenue to Changi Village.



From Changi Village, cross over Sungei Changi to reach **Changi Beach**. This was one of the many sites where the Japanese military carried out the Sook Ching massacre. Learn more about Sook Ching at Changi Beach through World War II information boards in the area.



[Optional] You may wish to take a bus to visit the Singapore Navy Museum. Along the way, you will be able to see the **SAF Ferry Terminal**, where national servicemen are ferried to Pulau Tekong for their basic military training. At the **Singapore Navy Museum**, you can learn more about the history and heritage of the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN), the navy's operations and defence roles, and check out guns and weapons systems from some of RSN's pioneer ships.

Gateways and Communities in Changi

2 hours with public transport, 12km

Changi has long served as a meeting point for diverse communities and cultures, even before the development of Changi Airport in 1981 transformed the area into an international gateway. Explore the legacies of these communities, and the places where they lived, worked and played.



Begin your journey at **Changi Point Ferry Terminal**. Built in 2005, the ferry terminal replaced two longstanding wooden jetties used by boat operators and fishermen for decades. Today, many Singaporeans and visitors associate Changi with boat trips to Pulau Ubin. This practice likely began in the 19th century, with local fishermen ferrying passengers to Pulau Ubin, Pulau Tekong, and other islands, as well as to parts of Johor.



From the Ferry Terminal, cross the footbridge over Sungei Changi on the left of the terminal. This concrete footbridge was constructed in the 1930s, replacing a timber bridge, and leads from Changi Village to **Changi Beach**. Once frequented by colonial day-trippers and the servicemen of nearby RAF Changi for leisure activities, Changi Beach has become a popular vacation spot for members of the public in the post-World War II era.



Walk back towards **Changi Village** and its well-loved hawker centre. Built in 1975 by the Housing & Development Board, this hawker centre and market exemplifies Changi Village's reputation as a foodie destination. The hawker centre is famed for its various *nasi lemak* stalls and Charlie's Corner. This small restaurant and bar is run by the third generation of the family that previously operated the popular western food restaurant, Changi Milk Bar, between the late 1940s to early 1970s.



Walk along Changi Village Road to reach **Sree Ramar Temple**. This Hindu temple, completed in 1946, traces its history to a tree shrine regarded as sacred by Hindu residents of Changi Point. Today, the temple houses sanctums to Ramar, Hanuman and deities of both the Vaishnavite and Shaivite traditions, as well as shrines dedicated to non-Hindu deities Buddha and Guan Yin.



Take a bus to **Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple**. Founded in 1939, this Taoist temple enshrines Shui Wei Sheng Niang, 108 Brother Deities, and other deities. The temple was established by residents of the former Yan Kit Village, which was located in the same area, and it continues to maintain longstanding connections with the Hainanese community while also welcoming worshippers from other communities.



From Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple, head to the last stop, **Changi Airport**. Built in 1981, the airport continues to expand today, with Terminal 5 and a third runway slated for completion in the 2030s. Here, you'll find a plethora of eateries, cafes and restaurants, as well as galleries highlighting the history of the airport at the Changi Experience Studio.

LIST OF SITES FEATURED IN THE CHANGI HERITAGE TRAIL

- 1. Bungalows and Leisure in Changi**
2. Changi Cottage
3. Changi Sailing Club
4. Changi Beach Club
- 5. Former Changi Cantonment and RAF Changi**
- 6. Changi Village**
7. Changi Beach*
8. Changi Prison*
9. Changi Chapel and Museum*
10. Former Changi Hospital
11. SAF Ferry Terminal
12. Singapore Navy Museum
13. Changi Point Ferry Terminal
- 14. Sree Ramar Temple**
- 15. Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple**
- 16. Changi Airport & Changi Control Tower**
17. Sungei Changi
18. Sungei Selarang
19. Former Kampongs of Changi
20. Former Schools of Changi
21. Batteries of Changi
22. Former Changi Forest Reserve
23. Changi Point Ferry Terminal



Heritage sites featured on trail markers are in **bold** (*note that some sites have existing markers/information boards from other trails and agencies).

FIVE FUN FACTS ABOUT CHANGI

Before the British arrived in 1819, Changi had already been the subject of contestations between colonial powers. The early 17th century witnessed significant naval battles off the coast of Changi between the Dutch and Portuguese.



Engraving depicting the Dutch-Portuguese naval battle, with Changi located on the top left, 1603

Courtesy of National Library Board

The natural beauty of Changi also inspired European artists and writers. Austrian diplomat and naturalist Eugen Von Ransonnet painted two depictions of Changi during his visit to Singapore in 1869.



Painting by Eugen Von Ransonnet titled "View in Changi (Singapore)", 1876



*National Museum of Singapore collection,
courtesy of National Heritage Board*

By 1845, a bungalow known as “Changee Hut” was built in the area, making Changi a popular holiday destination. Soon after, many other bungalows were built in Changi, and staying in these holiday houses and chalets is still popular today. The oldest building that survives from that time is the clubhouse of CSC@Changi, which was built before the 1920s and owned by Jewish businessman Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh.



Former bungalow belonging to Ezekiel Saleh Manasseh, which is the clubhouse of Changi Sailing Club @ Changi today, 2024

Courtesy of National Heritage Board

During the Japanese Occupation, many sought refuge in Yan Kit Village. Despite the village’s proximity to a military base and artillery batteries, it did not suffer bombardment during bombing raids. The temple’s worshippers believed this to be due to divine protection.



Temple in Yan Kit Village, undated

Courtesy of Yan Kit Village Chinese Temple



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Changi Milk Bar was a popular western restaurant and bar in Changi Village, which military personnel from the nearby RAF Changi military air base would frequent. Today, the grandson of Changi Milk Bar's co-founder, Charlie Han, runs Charlie's Corner in Changi Village Hawker Centre.



Changi Milk Bar, 1947-1948

Courtesy of Royal Air Force Changi Association

LIST OF NATIONAL HERITAGE BOARD HERITAGE TRAILS

1. Bukit Timah Heritage Trail
2. Yishun-Sembawang Heritage Trail (*to be refreshed as the Yishun Heritage Trail at a later date*)
3. Ang Mo Kio Heritage Trail
4. Balestier Heritage Trail
5. Jalan Besar Heritage Trail
6. Kampong Glam Heritage Trail
7. World War II Heritage Trail
8. Tiong Bahru Heritage Trail
9. Queenstown Heritage Trail
10. Resilience Trails
11. Toa Payoh Heritage Trail
12. Jurong Heritage Trail
13. Singapore River Walk
14. Jubilee Walk
15. Bedok Heritage Trail
16. Little India Heritage Trail
17. Tampines Heritage Trail
18. Orchard Heritage Trail
19. Pasir Ris Heritage Trail
20. Hougang Heritage Trail
21. Sembawang Heritage Trail
22. Sentosa Heritage Trail
23. Woodlands Heritage Trail
24. Changi Heritage Trail

For more information, please visit <https://www.roots.gov.sg/nhb/trails>.