

Singapore is a fascinating country. Despite covering an area less than half the size of London, it has a vibrancy and dynamism to match any other advanced nation. With cutting-edge businesses, world-class shopping malls and an incredibly high-performing education system, Singapore is always an interesting place to visit.

I went to Singapore with Jenny, Reach's Director, to visit schools which attend our summer schools or work with us on tailor-made courses each year, as well as schools which were interested in attending in the future. It was great to meet with the schoolteachers again, many of whom have been working with us for many years. After a week discussing our recent summer courses as well as courses coming up in 2015, we were left very much looking forward to welcoming the next batch of students to Cambridge!

We found time in between meetings to explore, shop, and – my favourite activity – eat! Singapore must rank among the best places in the world for shopping; there seem to be luxury malls on most streets, and each is equipped with a food court to provide for every taste and appetite. Offering cuisine from a wide variety of cultures and traditions, you can return to the same food court day after day and eat an entirely different type of food each time. The one thing which will always remain the same is the quality: the food in Singapore, wherever it's from, is universally excellent. With my capacity and propensity for large-scale meal consumption, this was ideal.

For a relatively tiny country, Singapore has remarkable diversity. Some of the most interesting places to explore are those dedicated to particular national groups: Chinatown and Little India are particular highlights, with beautiful buildings, fascinating history, and – of course – more great places to eat! As a (very) amateur photographer, there are innumerable sites to snap. My favourite photos are those I took of Chettiars' Hindu Temple and Buddha Tooth Relic Temple, but there were many, many more!

Chettiars' Hindu Temple, Singapore

We were also able to visit specific places of interest. We chose two very different places to visit the Saturday we were there: the Changi Chapel and Museum, and the Red Dot Design Museum. Changi

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Museum was harrowing, containing information about and artefacts from the old Changi Prisoner of War camp. The Chapel is a replica of one built by prisoners within the camp. Reading about how they kept hold of hope through the worst of experiences was moving and inspiring.

The design museum was eye-opening in a very different way. Featuring over 1000 exhibits from over 50 countries, it displays the very best of contemporary product design. From eco-friendly public toilet systems to the latest foldable bicycles, it was a veritable smorgasbord of technological wizardry. The innovations on show were not just high technology for high spenders, however: many of the items on show were ingenious but affordable devices which could make a real difference to ordinary people's everyday life.

Sticking with the theme of pioneering design, Singapore is also notable for its incredible skyscrapers. Attracting the cream of the business world, it boasts urban views to match even those of Hong Kong or New York. Here you can see my attempt to capture this in a photograph taken across Marina Bay to the business district.

The view across Marina Bay to the business district

The astonishing experiences don't even end when you reach the airport. Singapore's airport, Changi, is no ordinary airport, not least because it contains – wait for it – a butterfly garden! The world's first airport-based butterfly garden, it is home to over a thousand butterflies. The airport also has a cactus garden, a sunflower garden, an "enchanted" garden, and an orchid garden. As if that wasn't enough, I was delighted to discover that it also features its very own food court. What better way to say goodbye to Singapore than enjoying its most celebrated culinary experience one last time?

Written by Luke, Academic Coordinator

We are always keen to visit new countries to tell teachers and students about our programs – if you would like us to visit your school please let us know! Please email info@reachcambridge.com

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