

EXPLORE SINGAPORE

# Your Ultimate Guide to Tiong Bahru

Discover a side of Tiong Bahru you never knew - heritage sites, historical landmarks and of course a whole bunch of food stops!

*Walking tour  
Estimated duration  
between 3 - 4 hours*



# About Tiong Bahru



Tiong Bahru may now be a foodie haven and hipster's mecca, but it wasn't always so hip. In fact, its name comes from a mash-up of Hokkien and Malay that means "new cemetery".

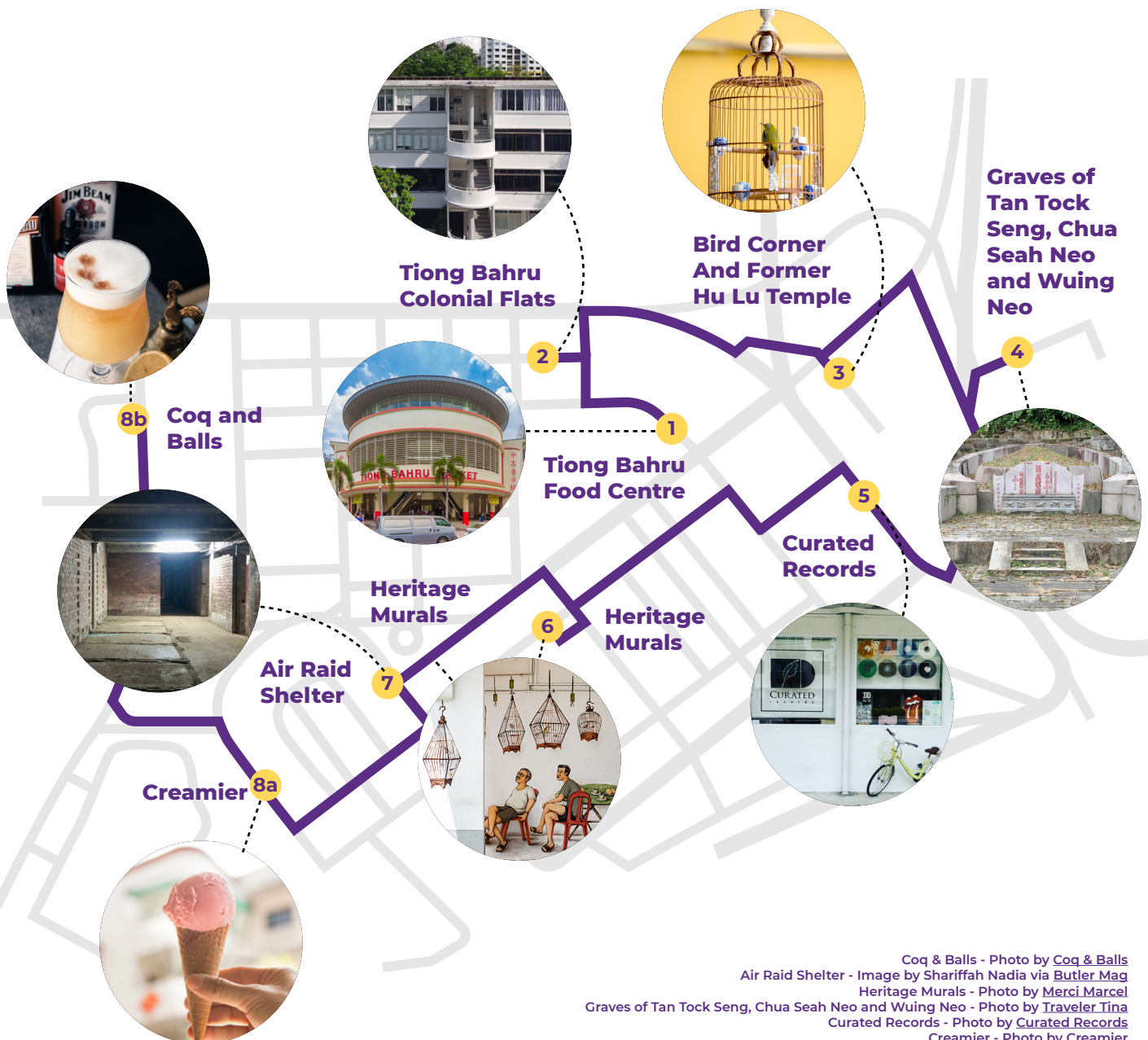
It's come a long way from its cemeterial origins, though. Today, it's a place worth seeing both for its present and past.

With this guide, we'll take you on a half-day walking tour to explore it. You may see a side of Tiong Bahru you've never seen before!

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# Where are we going?



Coq & Balls - Photo by [Coq & Balls](#)  
Air Raid Shelter - Image by Shariffah Nadia via [Butler Mag](#)  
Heritage Murals - Photo by [Merci Marcel](#)  
Graves of Tan Tock Seng, Chua Seah Neo and Wuing Neo - Photo by [Traveler Tina](#)  
Curated Records - Photo by [Curated Records](#)  
Creamier - Photo by [Creamier](#)



# What will you need to bring?



Comfortable attire and footwear for walking



Sunblock, sunglasses, cap or hat



Insect repellent



A bottle of water or beverage



Umbrella or poncho in case it rains



Camera if you're into photo ops



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# Have a Hearty Singaporean Meal at Tiong Bahru Food Centre

30 Seng Poh Rd,  
Singapore 168898

Opening hours  
Mondays to Sundays:  
9am - 8pm

Tiong Bahru Food Centre is a hot spot for foodies. The two-storey building hosts a wet market downstairs, but go upstairs and you reach a hawker's haven.

You'll find stalls that sell traditional Teochew shark meat nuggets, fried Hokkien mee, fishballs, and char kway teow!

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## History of Tiong Bahru Food Centre

The current Tiong Bahru Food Centre is actually the second largest hawker shelter here. There was a previous one built in the 50s, and it was made of wood and zinc.

That earlier building, called the Seng Poh Road Market, was built shortly after World War II. At the time, a flagging economy led to a spike in unemployment. That meant more people were opening hawker stalls for alternative sources of income.

The old market building was demolished in 2004, though. Then, the building we now see was put up two years later.



## Want to Hear Something Cool?

The food centre is actually known worldwide. In fact, it's been visited by a fair number of internationally acclaimed chefs including Anthony Bourdain, who included it among his stops when he had a 24-hour layover in Singapore.

Japanese-born Australian chef Tetsuya Wakuda comes here often too for breakfast at Old Tiong Bahru Bak Kut Teh. In fact, staff are already familiar with his regular order. He's even brought other chefs along on occasion, like Justin Quek.

This gives you an idea of just how respected Tiong Bahru is in the culinary or foodie community. Including the wet market stalls on the ground floor, there are more than 250 stalls here, and nearly all are worth a visit!



**Food, food, and more food...**

# Shiok ah!



**Have your main meal there! Here are some of our personal favourites we'd recommend.**

#### **Jian Bo Shui Kueh**

This restaurant serves soft Teochew shui kueh or water rice cake with a twist: sesame seeds are added to the pickled radish for added flavour. This is one of our favourite breakfast foods in Singapore and has also been awarded a Michelin Plate!

#### **Hong Heng Fried Sotong Prawn Mee**

Another stall recognised by the red book, this Bib-Gourmand food hawker offers a stock-drenched version of Hokkien fried noodle that you should try if you love umami dishes. The rice vermicelli and noodles come with bits of squid, prawn, and savoury pork belly for a memorable mix of flavours.

#### **178 Lor Mee**

Yet another stall with a Michelin Plate, 178 Lor Mee made our list thanks to its amazing fish nuggets and lor mee tasting of rich garlic and chilli. Worth noting is that the lor mee or noodles in gravy include actual shark meat and pork.





**Want to grab  
some light  
bites for the  
rest of your  
day?**

#### **Tiong Bahru Pau**

Another of Tiong Bahru's stalls with a Michelin Plate, this hawker serves superb teochew dumplings that may come with red bean paste, taro paste, or jicama filling.

#### **Tiong Bahru Fishball**

If you like fishballs, you definitely need to try the ones here. They come in an amazing variety, from otah to wolf herring fish balls and cakes, and are made from fresh fish as well.

#### **Fresh Juice Ice Blend**

Need a quick and healthy drink to wash down your snacks? Stop by Fresh Juice Ice Blend, which even lets you customise your smoothie.

#### **Teck Seng Soya Bean Milk**

If you're craving bean milk, we strongly recommend Teck Seng Soya Bean Milk because it has a stunningly light and smooth curd... so smooth that it's almost criminal.





**Looking for a different type of snack? Venture out a little to buy some baked pastries or ice lattes!**

#### **Tiong Bahru Bakery**

A great spot for classic European pastries or meals. This is the place to go if you want a quick buttery, flakey croissant, or perhaps a nice and filling roast beef sandwich.

#### **Plain Vanilla**

If you feel like going to a simple, quiet cafe, this is your stop. They make their mains and pastries daily and offer an almost quaint, simple atmosphere.

## **Fun Fact**

#### **Tiong Bahru Market (on level 1 of the food centre)**

If you choose to visit in the morning, you'll find the wet market bustling with shoppers picking out the freshest produce.

This market was here long before the hawker stalls, by the way. Both it and the stalls also used to be housed in a more modest building that was eventually replaced with the one you see today.





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# Take a Stroll Along the Colonial Flats

Tiong Bahru Road

Tiong Bahru's colonial flats are actually the oldest flats on the island. They were built after the Singapore Improvement Trust chose to develop Tiong Bahru in a bid to relieve some of the congestion in Chinatown.

They began building the actual housing structures in the mid 30s, with the first block of flats built at the end of 1936. Interestingly enough, you can still see these flats today where Tiong Bahru Road and Tiong Poh Road meet.

It's definitely worth a short walk to see these old establishments, especially if you're an architecture buff. You'll notice that they boasted rather interesting designs that hark back to the late Art Deco movement.





## About the conservation flats

The Singaporean government has actually put measures in place to ensure preservation of the flats' unique character. For instance, it's not allowed to alter the buildings' facades in such a way as to depart from the original design or style.

This means that we and later generations will be able to enjoy the appealing architecture of these edifices even in the future. Characterised by touches of Streamline Moderne and International Style, they reveal a Singaporean re-imagining of Art Deco design from that period.

For example, a visit to these flats reveals a lot of high ceilings and wide, airy balconies. The reason was simple: such designs helped residents deal with the island's tropical heat and humidity, adapting the International Style to local needs.





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# Visit the Bird Corner and Former Hu Lu Temple

3 Seng Poh Rd,  
Singapore 168891

Bird corner was so-named because there used to be a famous pet bird shop in the area, as well as a coffee shop where bird owners used to hang their bird cages while socialising.

The bird corner came about because the owner of the coffee shop started it to encourage more people to stop by his place. Today, you can still see the racks and numbered tags for bird cages in the corner, although the birds and their owners have definitely decreased.

Nonetheless, this remains an important piece of Singaporean heritage. Some avian enthusiasts still hope to revive the tradition of hanging up birdcages again at that junction.

Photo by [Culture Trip](#)

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# Hu Lu Miao

# Gourd Temple



Hu Lu Miao or Gourd Temple is another of Tiong Bahru's landmarks. While it may be known as Gourd Temple now, its original name is Weizhen Miao or Temple of Awe.

It only became known as Hu Lu Miao because of the gourd-shaped furnace outside it, used for burning joss paper.

Some say that locals actually took refuge in this temple during World War 2. Legend claims it was completely untouched by the air raids during that time.

The temple no longer stands there - it was demolished to construct a hotel. The gourd for which it became known, though, remains as a symbol of longevity and a reminder of the old structure.



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# Visit the Graves of Tan Tock Seng, Chua Seah Neo and Wuing Neo

254 Outram Rd,  
Singapore 169051

Image by Aleksandra Tofil via Peryferie

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# Who is Tan Tock Seng?



Photo by Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Tan Tock Seng barely needs introduction to Singaporeans of a certain age. One of the island's most famous businessmen and philanthropists, he was responsible for the construction of the Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

He passed away in 1850 but left behind several descendants, including his son Tan Kim Ching. This son was said to have reinterred his father's remains later on for preservation, burying them next to the tomb of his own wife, Chua Seah Neo.

Today, the graves of Tan Tock Seng and Chua Seah Neo are considered part of Singapore's heritage. You can find them at Outram Road in Tiong Bahru, along with the grave of Tan Tock Seng's granddaughter-in-law, Wuing Neo.



Image by Aleksandra Toril via Peryferie



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# Support Local at Curated Records

55 Tiong Bahru Rd,  
Singapore 160055

Opening hours  
Tuesday to Sunday:  
1pm - 8pm  
Closed on Mondays

If you're a music-lover, Curated Records should be among your pit stops in Tiong Bahru. It's an independent record store carrying old-school vinyls from rock and indie bands.

You can go to this quaint shop to browse an extensive collection of records ranging from the old to the new. Don't worry if you're more into contemporary music, though. They get vinyls arriving each week from the latest stars—including Kpop groups like Black Pink!

## Did you know?

### Historical Bukit Ho Swee Fire

The Bukit Ho Swee Fire is a blaze that started along Kampong Tiong Bahru Road and eventually consumed every house in Bukit Ho Swee.

This was in the early 60s, when houses in that village were simple wooden-and-zinc ones. Paired with high winds and overcrowding, the structures of that time made it possible for the fire to reduce 250 acres of buildings to ash.

This also spurred the government to come up with a stronger public housing solution, leading to the HDB flats we now know today.



The background is a purple-tinted mural depicting a street scene in Tiong Bahru. It shows a man on a bicycle on the left, a woman in a sari in the center, and a man at a food stall on the right. Signs for 'Pasar' and 'LAKSA' are visible. A clock and a date marker '12' are also part of the mural.

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# One for the 'Gram: Go Mural Hunting

You'll find street art scattered all around Tiong Bahru, but you'll find some real treasures along Eng Watt Street and Seng Poh Road!

The murals here show why Tiong Bahru is considered the estate where new meets old, as you'll find heritage themes abound. Street artists often depict classic scenes of SG life from the 60s to the 80s.

From murals of the famous Bird Corner to ones of street hawkers and goats, there's something to inspect at every turn.

Image by Zhang Jianyong via Art + Travel of YC

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# Tiong Bahru Murals



**"Pasar and the Fortune Teller"**  
by Yip Yew Chong  
73 Eng Watt Street,  
Singapore 160073

3



**"Bird Singing Corner"**  
by Yip Yew Chong  
71 Seng Poh Lane,  
Singapore 160071

1



**"Home"**  
by Yip Yew Chong  
74 Tiong Poh Road/Eu Chin  
Street, Singapore 160074

2





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# Explore Singapore's First Air Raid Shelter

Blk 78 Guan Chuan Street

Blk 78 Guan Chuan Street is also known as Horseshoe Block to locals: that's because of its unique shape.

What's probably most interesting about this place is found in its basement, though. Here you can find the Tiong Bahru Air Raid Shelter, a curious piece of history left over from an unpleasant time.

The shelter was designed to provide a safe haven for residents whenever air raids happened in World War II. Locals simply ran to it whenever the sirens would go off.

Image by Lim Jun Tian via Visit Tiong Bahru

[monsterdaytours.com](http://monsterdaytours.com)



# Today at the shelter.



Image by Kua Chee Siong via The Straits Times

Today, the shelter looks much the same as before, with only very minor repairs. The area was never one of the main targets of the Japanese during the bombings too, so there was very little damage to it during the war.

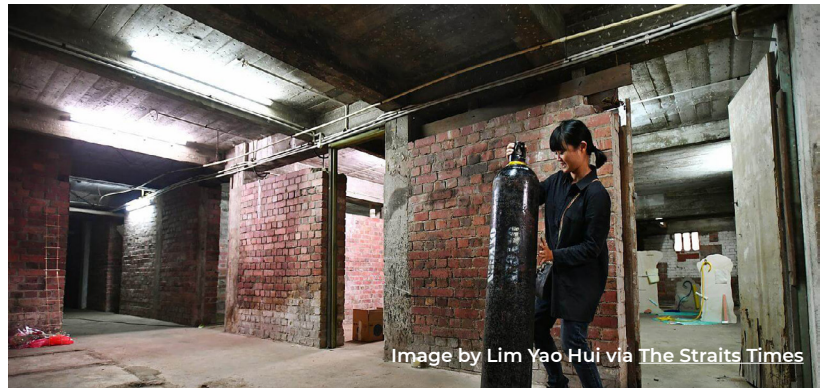


Image by Lim Yao Hui via The Straits Times

You can learn quite a bit about the shelter just by reading the plaques outside it. They provide a lot of details about how it was used during the war.

Bear in mind too that you may need to check if the shelter is open before you visit, as it is sometimes closed, open only for guided tours, or being used as a gallery for local artists.



A narrow alleyway in Tiong Bahru, Singapore, with white buildings and a mural on the right wall. A person is walking away from the camera down the center of the alley. The scene is overlaid with a purple tint.

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# Wind down at --- ?

The best way to end your tour of Tiong Bahru is with a food stop to replenish all the energy you used walking around!

Depending on the time you complete the tour, you can choose to head to a cafe for a nice and quiet break or to a restaurant for a full meal. Here are some options!

Photo by [The Dead Cockroach](#)

[monsterdaytours.com](http://monsterdaytours.com)





Photo by Burpple

## Option 1: Creamier

1D Yong Siak St,  
Singapore 168641

Opening hours  
Tuesdays to Sundays:  
12pm - 10.30pm  
Closed on Mondays

Chic and modern, this cafe offers handmade goodies ranging from ice cream to pastry. Coffee and tea are prepared here with a deliberate and rewarding process.

If you're looking for a snack in particular, though, we recommend the seasonal ice creams and the delicious waffles.



Image by Foodie W via Burpple



Photo by Honey Combers

## Option 2: Coq & Balls

6 Kim Tian Road Kai Fook  
Mansion, 169246

Opening hours  
Mondays to Sundays:  
12pm - 10.30pm

Come here for a drink with some unpretentious but good pub fare. You can get Thai cuisine, pasta, and pizza to munch on while sipping on some of your favourite beers or whiskies!





**MONSTER**  
DAY TOURS

# Ending note

And that wraps up our walking tour of Tiong Bahru! We hope you had fun discovering places you may not have seen before in this vibrant little place.

Check out [monsterdaytours.com](http://monsterdaytours.com) if you want more guides on exploring other precincts in Singapore!

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