

# Get drunk on the history of Boat Quay

THE stretch of Boat Quay along the Singapore River is dotted with numerous bars and restaurants. As the late afternoon approaches, the bars fill up and service staff, armed with menus, emerge from the restaurants to beckon tourists eagerly. With the night buzz that Boat Quay is famous for, it is easy to forget it once held much of Singapore's history and was once a bustling port and trading point for merchants from Asia and beyond in the early-19th Century, when Singapore was under British rule.

The Tipple Exchange, a new walking tour through Boat Quay created by Journey and supported by the National Heritage Board, cleverly blends historical content with quality beers.

Although touted as Singapore's very first historical pub walk, teetotalers need not shun away from The Tipple Exchange—visitors can choose to get drunk on nuggets of interesting historical tales instead.

Our guide for the day, Ms

Savita Kashyap, peppered her tales of yore with wit and humour, not to mention old photographs, images and extracts from documents.

The three-hour walk kicked off at UOB Plaza. We crossed the 140 year-old Cavenagh Bridge that links the north and south banks of the Singapore River and ventured into the Singapore River Gallery within the Asian Civilisations Museum, where we heard stories of the early immigrants who built Singapore with much sweat and blood.

We strolled down the north bank of the river and over Elgin Bridge while learning more about the Eighth Earl of Elgin who lent his name to the bridge, and Sir Stamford Raffles, founder of modern Singapore.

Next, our group weaved through the little alleys away from the more popular stretch of Boat Quay and into Circular Road. Ms Kashyap brought our attention to architectural details perched high upon the res-

tored shophouses and narrated the stories behind them. Despite having been to Boat Quay so many times, I must admit I had never noticed those details—I must have been too busy pounding my beer mugs.

## Brief stops

To rest our feet and soothe our parched throats, we made brief stops at three pubs selected for their rich history and background. While we savoured their signature beers and ales, Ms Kashyap continued playing her role as the unrelenting storyteller.

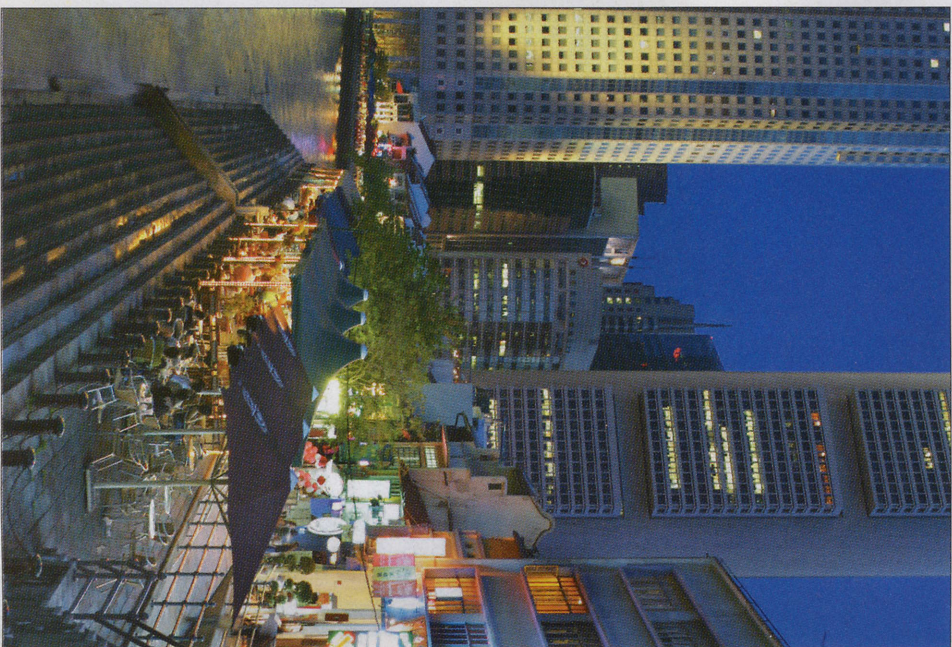
I appreciate how the walking tour does not simply regurgitate historical content from school textbooks or tourist literature. With the addition of the pub visits, this walking tour has the potential to draw historical buffs and visitors who just want an evening of fun. It would have been better, however, to start the tour earlier to avoid ending past dinner time.

**VERDICT:** A frothy and cool way to serve up a history lesson.

I ended that evening feeling bloated from a tummy full of ale but with newfound respect for Singapore. Although a young nation by international standards, this little red dot has indeed come a long way. — **Karen Yue**

*The Tipple Exchange is conducted every Saturday from 17.20 to 20.30. Comfortable shoes are recommended wear. The starting point is Salvador Dalí's Homage to Newton sculpture at UOB Plaza.*

*To get there by train, alight at Raffles Place MRT Station, take exit G; and if by taxi, alight at UOB Plaza along Chulia Street. The tour ends at Molly Malone's Irish Pub at Circular Road. The tour costs \$825 (US\$18) for adults and \$815 for children. Beers are priced separately and can be bought at a discount of \$86 each. Contact Ms Charmaine Goh, tel: (65) 6325-1631, e-mail: [discover@journeys.com.sg](mailto:discover@journeys.com.sg), website: [www.singaporewalks.com](http://www.singaporewalks.com).*



Singapore Tourism Board

Boat Quay: the tour includes brief stops at three pubs.