

GARDENS BY THE BAY SINGAPORE



Singapore is known for many things; a slightly authoritarian, yet efficient government and the ruby red Singapore Sling cocktail, best enjoyed at the famous Raffles hotel. Clean, vibrant and modern Singapore outshines many of its neighbors as the world's premiere Entrepôt, a bustling port city without equal. Sitting a single degree north of the Equator it's a tropical locale where afternoon rain is a daily occurrence and new skyscrapers rise like steam. The airport is considered the world's finest. When Singaporeans set out to create something new you can expect organizational excellence and innovation. Thus, its no surprise that Gardens by the Bay is now one of the world's premiere horticultural attractions.

Opened in 2012 on 250 acres Gardens by the Bay is administered by the Singapore National Parks Board. It was envisioned by Prime Minister Lee Haines Loong as part of the "City in a Garden" concept. Fifty million people visited in the first five years of operation. A notable accomplishment for any public garden.



Part city park, sculpture garden, botanical garden and waterfront oasis Gardens by the Bay feels big and grand at every turn. That's simply because it is. Several canals bisect the site creating many lovely bridges and walkways leading to shops, restaurants, intimate courtyards and vast tropical landscapes.

The grandest attraction is surely the twin conservatories, the Flower Dome is the largest in the world. Next to it is the Cloud Forest dome. For the regular garden visitor, a big question comes to mind: this is Singapore why have a conservatory in the heart of the tropics.

Well, these conservatories are cooled. That's right- massively air conditioned. The Flower Dome is essentially a Mediterranean climate, pleasantly cool and dry compared to the weather outside. The Cloud Forest Dome is somewhat cooler and very moist, as if you're at 6000 feet elevation in neighboring Malaysia. A huge waterfall punctuates the lobby. Visitors can stroll up a series of elevated trails that weave in and out of the faux mountain planted with thousands of cloud forest species. At times the elevated walkways are strikingly high as one looks down on large Australian Tree Ferns like a little clubmoss.

The Flower Dome can consume an afternoon all by itself. Multiple levels provide viewpoints across the structure. Eucalyptus trees mingle with the culinary olive, nearby a neatly tended bed features several shrubs endemic to Western Australia. The New World is also represented with a stunning display of Cacti and Yuccas cultivated to perfection.

Like some horticultural displays at Disney World, most of the gardening staff work the night shift from 11pm to 7am. Its just too busy to work in the gardens during the day. Wondering the world's largest conservatory also fosters the wonder of modern architecture. In several locations the domes bend and sway with seemingly little visible support.

No visit to Gardens by the Bay is complete without taking-in the Super Trees, especially at night. The built “trees” form a grove of arboreal sculpture unique in the world.



Massive trunks covered entirely in staged plants sweep up toward the tree crown as it spans out in silvery dendritic tendrils. Several of the trees are connected by a spacious

canopy walkway with commanding views of the entire space. Each evening the trees come to life as a high-tech light show set to classical and modern music. Young and old visitors alike are mesmerized by the thirty-

minute show.

The combination of stunning equatorial horticulture with the conservatories, Super Trees, sculptures and other amenities makes Gardens by the Bay *the* attraction in Singapore. Not too far away from the bay is the UNESCO World Heritage site Singapore Botanical Garden, notable for a huge orchid collection and research facilities. Further afield is the Jerong Bird Park with one of the world’s largest aviaries. Singapore is a remarkable little nation-state with four official languages and what may well be the world’s greatest horticultural attraction in Gardens by the Bay.

From the BGT Team- More info at- www.gardensbythebay.com