

# TimeOut

## KUALA LUMPUR



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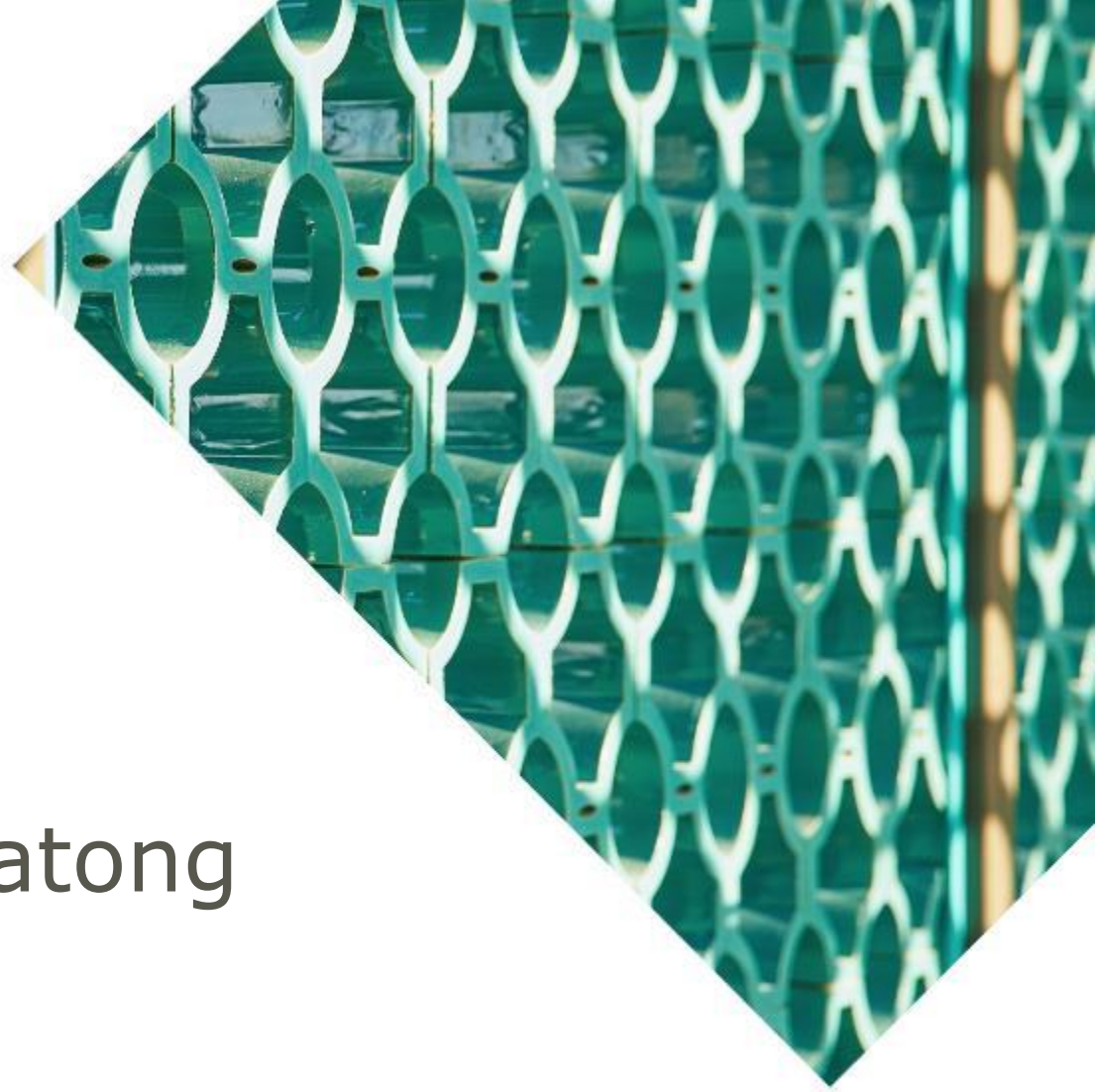
### GUIDE TO LUK-LUK

- + Night-time hangouts
- + Food finds along the MRT line
- + Capturing Malaysia's design history
- + Katong's Peranakan treasures

# BIG NIGHT OUT

- The hottest live music venues
- Where to find the best gins, whiskies, wines and more

As featured in  
Time Out Kuala Lumpur



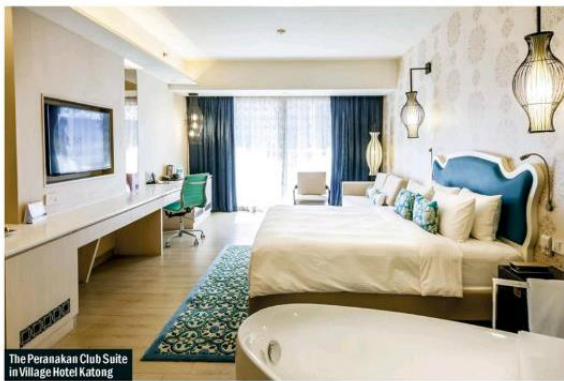
# Village Hotel Katong

# Travel

Edited by John Lim

## Uncovering Katong's secrets

Not many people would think to spend a day in Katong, but as *John Lim* discovers, there's a lot more to the area than its famous laksa



The Peranakan Club Suite in Village Hotel Katong

### KATONG ISN'T A TYPICAL TOURIST DESTINATION.

A suburban area dominated by low-lying residential buildings, refurbished shophouses and malls from the '70s, Katong appears out of sync with Singapore's rapid and dynamic progress. But those seeking to dig deeper into the nation's Eurasian and Peranakan culture and heritage will find Katong filled with little gems that make it worth spending the day here.

### Katong's history

What was once a fishing village, the Katong area houses Singapore's largest remaining assemblage of Peranakan architecture, having once been the idyllic seaside area where wealthy Peranakans and Eurasians built their villas and mansions. Since the 1960s, Katong has extended from its seaside front all the way to East Coast Park following the government's land reclamation efforts. Today, Katong continues to be a rich man's area – explaining the old buildings, easier-going traffic and sparsely located train stations that are two to three kilometres away from each other.

### Where to stay

One of the best places to explore Katong from is the **Village Hotel Katong** (25 Marine Parade, +65 6344 2200/[stayfareast.com](http://stayfareast.com)). It's housed in the same building as Paramount Hotel, a landmark building in the '70s before Far East Hospitality took over the reins in 2013, renamed it Katong V and spent SGD30 million to refurbish it into an upscale mixed development comprising a three-storey retail mall and 12-storey hotel. Much of the building's structure remains untouched – the tiled exterior, low-ceilinged retail mall (now occupied by a FairPrice supermarket, cafés and boutique shops) and single-file escalators recall a time when Singapore was barely in its teens. Inside the hotel, however, the Peranakan-inspired rooms have been completely refurbished to provide the modern necessities and luxuries of tourists or families seeking a quick getaway from Singapore's hustle and bustle.

Aside from the usual amenities, the hotel also provides a cell phone that offers complimentary 4G internet, allowing you to make calls back home and navigate your



Laksa Janggut

way around Singapore. Those with more cash to splurge can opt for the 41sqm-large Peranakan Club Suite, which has enough space to include a balcony and bathtub next to the bed to give you an unobstructed view of the TV screen – after all, what's luxury if you can't take a bath while watching live sports?

### What to eat

You can't experience Katong without having Katong Laksa. The milky white soup noodle dish is a type of laksa lemak, with the noodles cut into bite-sized lengths that you can eat with just a spoon – no chopsticks needed, nor are they provided (asking for a pair will get you a puzzled stare). Those seeking the original Katong Laksa will need to go to Roxy Square, where the **Laksa Janggut** stall (50 East Coast Road) has been serving the dish since 1950s, and whose founder, named 'Janggut' after his protruding strands of facial mole hair, came up with the idea of cutting up the noodles. The soup here is lighter compared to the other versions of Katong Laksa served in Singapore, most notably by **328 Katong Laksa** (51 East Coast Road), which claims to



Peranakan shophouses on Koon Seng Road

be the country's 'No 1 laksa' after beating Gordon Ramsay in a laksa cook-off organised by the SingTel Hawker Heroes Challenge.

Katong's food scene is more than just laksa, however; just across the street from Katong V is the **Birds of Paradise Gelato Boutique** (63 East Coast Road, +65 9678 6092/[fb.com/bopgelato](http://fb.com/bopgelato)) which specialises in all-natural flavours you wouldn't find elsewhere. Two flavours that got our attention was Spiced Pear and Masala, the former a refreshing combination of pears, cinnamon and star anise, while the latter is a gelato version of the spiced tea found at Indian eateries. Other best-selling flavours are Strawberry Basil, White Chrysanthemum and Vanilla Fig, which all go well with the house-made thyme-infused ice cream cone. For those who need their nasi lemak fix, head to **Ponggol Nasi Lemak Centre** (238 Tanjong Katong Road), where you can have Chinese-style nasi lemak with slices of luncheon meat, Nyonya acar pickles and fried dried shrimp.

### What to do

Katong is an area steeped with Peranakan and Eurasian history, which is best experienced by visiting lesser known museums, galleries and heritage centres. Start off with a visit

to the **Kim Choo Boutique Gallery** (60 Joo Chiat Place, +65 6344 0830/[kimchoo.com](http://kimchoo.com)), which is run by Kim Choo Kueh Chang, a family business selling Nyonya rice dumplings at outlets in Joo Chiat Place and East Coast Road. The family also runs **The Artiste Residency** (106 Joo Chiat Place), which is where you'll find Edmond Wong – a third-generation family member running the business alongside his two older brothers – conducting in-house guided tours, cooking workshops and collaborating with the arts community to produce Peranakan-inspired plays and art productions.

Another place to drop by is **The Intan** (69 Joo Chiat Terrace, +65 6440 1148/[the-intan.com](http://the-intan.com)), a shophouse residence owned by Alvin Yapp that was awarded a private-museum status by the National Heritage Board in 2011. The genesis of the museum was almost accidental – it started when Alvin started displaying his extensive collection of Peranakan furniture, costumes and trinkets after returning from living abroad in 2006 – although he emphasises this is 'not a full-time job, it's merely a hobby'. Guided tours need to be made in advance, and ends with either a Peranakan-themed dinner or tea.

To understand the history and heritage of Singapore's

Eurasian community, visit the **Eurasian Heritage Centre** (139 Ceylon Road, +65 6447 1578/[eurasians.org.sg](http://eurasians.org.sg)), which houses a small but informative museum that details the history of Singapore's Eurasian community from the 1500s, through to the turbulent times of Japanese-occupied World War II, and how they helped shape Singapore's culture, arts and administrative structure. Visitors can drop by for free, but you can ask a local volunteer to guide you through the exhibition for a nominal fee of SGD5 per person. Once you're done with the exhibit, drop by **Quentin's** (139 Ceylon Road, +65 6348 0327/[quentins.com.sg](http://quentins.com.sg)) below for an authentic Eurasian meal. ■

Those seeking to dig deeper into the nation's Eurasian and Peranakan culture and heritage will find Katong filled with little gems



Edmond Wong, in front of The Artiste Residency

## Best things to do in Katong, Singapore

Not many people would think to spend a day in Katong, but we discover there's a lot more to the area than its famous laksa

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By John Lim

Posted: Wednesday September 20 2017



Peranakan shophouses on Koon Seng Road

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Kim Choo Nonya rice dumplings

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Peranakan shophouses

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