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Singapore is like the eye of cleanliness in the tornado that is third-world Asia. It represents a remarkable oasis of order. As you immerse yourself into SE Asia, the sensual assault is all consuming. The tastes, smells, and sights you will encounter will constantly reward and occasionally attack you. If only there was a way to eliminate the sensory overloads that can intimidate many potential travelers. Singapore is the way. Asia, in general, is like your favourite thriller movie where you can't take your eyes off of the screen for fear of missing



something remarkable and then suddenly having to close your eyes in horror when the movie you exceeds your limits. Singapore is the Disney version of that movie. A place Asia thrives, yet despite the intensity of the storyline you just know that nothing bad could happen to you there.

Today, we spent seven hours taking two walking tours, Chinatown and the waterfront. I have already forgotten 98% of what we learned but the experience will

The Marina Bay Sands Resort in the background of the Gardens by the Bay

remain forever in my memory. The one thing Carol and I remember from being here 45 years ago was a parking lot on Orchard Road that, in the evenings, turned into a hawker centre which is a collection of individual food booths. We have vivid memories of devouring fried oysters and eggs (no idea what kind of eggs). Today, for health reasons, the famous hawker restaurants have become more permanent but are still outdoors, cheap, delicious and popular. There are 114 such locations in Singapore. The cook at one such establishment a few years ago became famous by beating Gordon Ramsey in a cooking competition. His booth, where you pay 4 dollars for a meal of chicken and rice, has been awarded 1 Michelin star. There are also hundreds of indoor 'foodcourts' which are the more modern version of the hawker centres. It doesn't seem like any of the 5.6 million residents of Singapore eat at home. Why would they?

The key to Singapore's success has been tolerance, respect, and rules. Despite the human density of the city-state, there is virtually no crime, no litter, and no tension here. They do have capital punishment and caning, but those are rarely required. Living in a densely populated environment, with over 20,000 people per square mile compared to 10 people in Canada, requires authority and acceptance. It's like the difference between choosing to live in a condominium or having an acreage. One requires rules and the other is an autocracy. Singapore is the equivalent to a massive condo complex. There are 10 official religions in Singapore. Temples, mosques, and churches are everywhere. You are not allowed to gather in groups of 5 or more people for any potentially subversive purpose. You are not allowed to be critical of any ethnic groups or the government. You may publicly speak out but first, you need to submit your speech to the authorities and have it approved. Ad-libbing is a potential crime.

Attempting to provide for a sustainable society in such constrained conditions is a massive task that requires tremendous vision and has little margin for error. As such, the whims and desires of a few have no consideration when attempting to secure a positive future for the entire city-state. It appears that in Singapore, the individual is considered but not heard unless perhaps you are one of the Crazy Rich Asians, which is a real thing and not just a movie. The two grandsons who now represent the richest family in Singapore have a net worth of 11.9 billion dollars. Unfortunately, we didn't run into either of them at the hawker centre we ate supper at tonight. They must have been at one of the other ones.

Singapore, Monaco and the Vatican are the only three city-states in the world



The only things that Singapore exports are orchids, the national flower.