







## In the beginning....

Katong/Joo Chiat has its beginnings in the early 19th Century where coconut plantations stretching from Geylang River to Siglap Road and humble attap-roofed *kampung* (villages) dotted the landscape. Up to the 1950s, the area was an idyllic seaside retreat for the wealthy.

Joo Chiat Road was a simple dirt track running through the plantations from Geylang Serai to the sea in the 1920s. It was named after Chew Joo Chiat, a wealthy land-owner and philanthropist, who bought over large plots of land in Katong and was known as the “King of Katong”.

In the 1920s and 1930s, many communities moved eastward out of the city centre to make Katong/Joo Chiat their home. This resulted in bungalows, shophouses and places of worship being built, a reflection of the multi-cultural and varied Katong/Joo Chiat community.

The rebuilding of the nation after World War II and the independence of Singapore, transformed the façade of Katong/Joo Chiat. To retain its rich architecture and heritage, over 800 buildings in the area have been conserved.

In February 2011, the National Heritage Board designated Joo Chiat as Singapore’s first Heritage Town in recognition of the community efforts in heritage conservation.

## Begin your adventure now!

Nothing beats getting up close and personal with the sights, smells and flavours of Katong/Joo Chiat. Trace your own route through some of the many treasures you can discover in this walking guide. A morning start is a great choice to capture the colourful and magical charm of this area.

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**The heritage marker in front of 112 Katong Shopping Mall gives an introduction to the area**



### Did You Know?

“Katong” refers to a species of sea turtle no longer found in Singapore.



Conserved terrace houses



Church of Holy Family

## Stroll past some of Singapore's most unusual terrace houses

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### • Conserved terrace houses, 150 East Coast Road

These single-storey terrace houses stand beside a former sea wall where the beach used to be. What makes these homes unusual is that the living area is built on raised ground to protect against the rising tides then. The architectural style is also unique, an eclectic mix of traditional local architecture infused with Western influence, seen in the elaborate fascia boards and decorative plaster motifs.



## Imagine Christmas Eve in 1936...

3

### • Church of the Holy Family, 6 Chapel Road

The Church of the Holy Family, a pre-World War II parish church was a focal point for the Eurasian community of Katong/Joo Chiat. Its origins date from 1902, with the first chapel built in 1923. The first Christmas mass to be held in Katong/Joo Chiat took place here in 1936. Today, it continues to serve the spiritual needs of the local Catholic community. The building was re-built in 1999, while the front sculptures have been retained from the original church structure.

## Step back in time for hot, piping breakfast

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### • Chin Mee Chin Confectionery, 204 East Coast Road

One of the last remaining Hainanese coffeeshops of old, this popular confectionery retains an authentic, 1950s ambience. Whet your appetite with the rich strong coffee, hot kaya buns and yummy sugar rolls.



#### DID YOU KNOW?

Kaya is a traditional custard jam made from eggs, sugar and coconut juice.



Chin Mee Chin Confectionery







## Shop for all things Peranakan

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- **Katong Antique House, 208 East Coast Road, Tel: 6345 8544**

The Katong Antique House is a veritable museum of Peranakan artefacts, showcasing family heirlooms and antiques collected by its genial owner, Mr Peter Wee. Make an appointment with Peter and let him regale you with stories from his grandfather's days. Then marvel at intricately woven *kasut manek* or beaded slippers, charming furniture and wedding costumes.



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

A traditional Peranakan bridal costume is said to weigh as much as 5 or 6 kilograms.

## Peek into the legendary Grand Hotel

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- **Former Grand Hotel, 25 & 26 Still Road South**

In 1917, Moona Kader Sultan, a wealthy Indian cattle merchant built the Karikal Mahal, or the Grand Hotel as it was later known. Originally a complex of four houses, the luxurious gardens were split into two with the construction of Still Road in 1973. Part of the former hotel at 26 Still Road South has been gazetted for conservation. This grand dame remains a looker, retaining much of her Victorian splendour with charming turrets, ornate façade plaster decorations and breezy bay windows.



Former Grand Hotel



Former Joo Chiat Police Station



### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Secret societies were common in the early days of Joo Chiat and it was usual for parangs (curved knives) and pistols to be hidden in attap houses in the event of gang fights.



Katong Antique House

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## Explore Singapore's former lock-up for triad gang members

- **Former Joo Chiat Police Station, 86 East Coast Road**

This former Joo Chiat Police Station was built in 1928 to serve the burgeoning Joo Chiat community. The architectural style of this building is similar to many government buildings built at that time. It was said that Singapore's most infamous once frequented this former police station. Today, part of the complex has been conserved. It will now be restored as part of the future hotel development – Singapore's first Hotel Indigo and Holiday Inn Express Singapore Katong which will open in 2016, together with food and beverage outlets and retail shops.





## Visit one of Singapore's oldest Indian temples

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### • Sri Sempaga Vinayagar Temple, 19 Ceylon Road

The Indian temple reflects Joo Chiat's eclectic mix of cultures. Its history dates back to 1875, when an early Ceylonese Tamil pioneer built a small attap-hut like temple under a *Sempaga* tree, where a statue of the Lord Vinayagar (Elephant God) was said to be found. While the temple complex was re-built after damage was done during World War II, the main shrine remains intact and unscathed. The 21-metre high Rajagopuram makes it one of the tallest Indian temples in Singapore. The temple was marked as a historic site by the National Heritage Board in 2003.



Sri Sempaga Vinayagar Temple



Sri Sempaga Vinayagar Temple



## Stop for a soupy, spicy treat

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### • Nyonya Laksa Stall, East Coast Road

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### • Former "Red House" Bakery, 75 East Coast Road

If your walk has made you hungry, this is a perfect opportunity to try the famous Katong *laksa*, a tangy, spicy dish!

Further from the *laksa* stall stands the former Katong Bakery & Confectionery, also affectionately known as the "Red House" Bakery, once famous for its Swiss rolls and curry puffs. Originally built as a private residence facing the sea and operated as a bakery for 80 years, it

closed in 2003. Project developer, Warees Investments Pte Ltd is now set to relive the iconic Red House as a bakery once again come 2016, forming part of a retail wing of The Red House that integrates the social enterprise element.



Former Red House Bakery







## Check out the origins of the former Tay Buan Guan Katong Shopping Centre



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- **Former Tay Buan Guan shop, now Rumah Bebe, 113 East Coast Road, Tel: 6247 8781**



The faint TBG print on the shopfront of 113 East Coast Road is the only sign of its once bustling former occupant, the Tay Buan Guan shop. The Tay Buan Guan department store grew from this humble shophouse to a multi-storey shopping centre located to the rear of East Coast Road, and was one

of Singapore's best-loved shopping hubs. Established in 1948 by Tay Leck Teck, it stocked a wide range of products unavailable elsewhere.

This shophouse is now known as Rumah Bebe (Bebe's House), a Peranakan arts and crafts store cum museum. Try on a custom-made *kebaya* or a *batik sarong*, and catch an interesting beading demonstration. Feel like cooking up a storm? Find out more about Bebe's cooking classes or buy ready-to-cook spices for some nyonya-style meals back home.



Rumah Bebe

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- **Kim Choo Kueh Chang, 60 Joo Chiat Place**



Kim Choo Nyonya Dumplings

Located just beside Rumah Bebe stands Kim Choo, set up in 1945 by Mdm Lee Kim Choo herself. Do not miss the intense flavours of Nyonya Kueh Chang, pastries and cooking sauce that many covet. Here, you can also find Peranakan lifestyle items or

even consult their in-house fashion designer to customize your own *kebaya* to suit your personality.







## Indulge in multi-ethnic cuisines

End your leisurely walk along East Coast Road with a meal if you have not already done so. East Coast Road is a much-loved food stop for Singaporeans. Chicken rice and chilli crab stalls jostle for space with the popular duck rice and fish ball noodle stalls. One can also find popular East Coast Road popiah, Japanese food and North Indian cuisine here. If you still crave for more variety, take a bus to Joo Chiat Road to try other Indian-Muslim and Malay favourites. There are other food delights such as Durian Puffs at Puteri Mas (475 Joo Chiat Road) and Mackerel Otah available along Joo Chiat Road.



### DID YOU KNOW?

"Tau kwa pau" is an interesting dish unique to Katong, available at coffee shops at the junction of East Coast Road and Joo Chiat Road. It consists essentially of fried beancurd skin stuffed with various ingredients, such as minced meat, egg, cucumber, and beansprouts, and is served with special chilli sauce made from chilli, vinegar and braised duck gravy.



## Mesmerise your tastebuds

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### • Nam San Otah, 261 Joo Chiat Road

A Muslim owned Halal food company established in 1999, Nam San Otah is known for the production of Banana Leaf Mackerel Otah and Nasi Lemak. Each Otah is individually hand wrapped with the greatest care and freshly made daily in the 24-hour run kitchen.



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### • Puteri Mas Durian Puffs, 475 Joo Chiat Road

Founded 14 years ago by Chef Irene Lim, her fascination with delicacies and Peranakan culture has made her pick up traditional recipes from her Nonya mother. Puteri Mas is well-known for their soft and palatable Golden Durian Puffs, swiss rolls and Nyonya kuehs and cookies.







## Drop by Katong's gathering point at the Community Club

- 15 • Joo Chiat Community Club, 405 Joo Chiat Road
- 16 • Former Joo Chiat Maternal and Child Health Clinic, 341 Joo Chiat Road

Once a humble wooden hut with simple facilities like a library, boy's club and basketball court, the Joo Chiat Community Club has since been extensively renovated. Today it's still a meeting point for the community.

Walk further down Joo Chiat Road and you will find a prominent red building opposite Marshall Lane. This former Joo Chiat Maternal and Child Health Clinic was established in 1907 to counter Singapore's high infant mortality rate. After World War II, the clinic began to focus on treating a nation devastated by the Japanese Occupation.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
The Late Zubir said (1907-1987), composer of Singapore's National Anthem "Majulah Singapura" lived at 109A Joo Chiat Place.



Joo Chiat Community Club



Former Joo Chiat Maternal and Child Health Clinic

## Feast your eyes on exquisite architecture

- 17 • Shophouses along Koon Seng Road

The colourful *Peranakan* culture and influence can be seen in the two rows of pre-war shophouses along Koon Seng Road. They are outstanding examples of Singapore's architectural heritage. The designs are exceptionally ornate and the details exquisite, showcasing a fusion of East and West influences.

**DID YOU KNOW?**  
A typical shophouse is often narrow but very deep, due to the limited structural spans of timber available in the pre-war years, which were typically 5 m to 6 m long.







## Enter the Chinese temple of mercy and philanthropy

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### • Kuan Im Tng Temple, 62 Tembeling Road

The Kuan Im Tng Goddess of Mercy Temple was built in 1921, but has been renovated twice since. It plays a big role in the community life of Joo Chiat/Katong. Its ornate façade and front doors are flanked by circular windows, surrounded by yellow, white and blue mosaic symbols of the Eight Immortals. The green roof tiles are Chinese-made and its roof ridges are adorned with statues of dancing dragons with the celestial pearl, symbolising prosperity and good fortune. The main prayer hall of the temple is dedicated to Guan Yin (Goddess of Mercy), Confucius and the Sun and Moon Gods.



Kuan Im Tng Temple



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### • The Intan Museum, 69 Joo Chiat Terrace, Tel: 6440 1148

Started in 2003, the Peranakan heritage private home-museum owned by antique collector Alvin Yapp strives to celebrate its rich culture and heritage. The Intan, which in Malay translates to 'rose-cut diamond' was honoured 'Best Overall Experience' in the Museum Roundtable (MR) Awards in 2011.



If you are longing for delectable Peranakan cuisine, book an appointment to enjoy a tea or dinner session prepared by Alvin's mother. Following that, discover a collection of precious historical antiques through a guided tour of the house.



#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

At the junction of Upper Everitt Road and Joo Chiat Terrace, Penang-based Lithuanian mural artist Ernest Zacharevic created a 2-storey tall mural of 2 boys playing.

session prepared by Alvin's mother. Following that, discover a collection of precious historical antiques through a guided tour of the house.

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## "Selamat datang" (Welcome) to the Malay way of life

### • Masjid Khalid, 130 Joo Chiat Road

As you walk by this Malay enclave, you will notice the distinct Malay influence from the shops, the attire of the residents and the food found here. Behold the serene Masjid Khalid (Khalid Mosque) amidst the undulating rows of shophouses. Built in 1917, the place was originally intended as a place of worship for Indian Muslims, but is today one of the gathering points of Joo Chiat/Katong's Malay community. It was recently renovated in 1998.

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### • Joo Chiat Complex, 1 - 2 Joo Chiat Road



#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Masjid Khalid can actually hold 2,500 worshippers during its Friday prayer sessions.

If you intend to catch a ride on the MRT train, walk up along Joo Chiat Road past the Masjid Khalid mosque where you will chance upon the amazing Joo Chiat Complex. The complex features an intriguing array of Malay textiles and

foodstuff, to complement the popular Geylang Serai Market just across the street. Once a museum-styled exhibition site promoting Malay cultural activities, the Malay Village will transform into a civic centre



#### **DID YOU KNOW?**

The word 'Wisma' refers to a complex, house or building. Carrying the meaning of 'house', Geylang Serai signified as the 'abode' and origin of the Malay Settlement back in pre-modern Singapore.

called Wisma Geylang Serai come 2017. The hub of the precinct will house a community club, Malay Heritage Gallery and commercial facilities along with a 19-m wide pedestrian mall for street activities particularly during the annual festive Ramadan period.



Masjid Khalid



Joo Chiat Complex





Eurasian Community House

## Who are the Eurasians?

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- Eurasian Community House, 139 Ceylon Road, Tel: 6447 1578

The Eurasian community has played an integral role in the history of Singapore. With their unique blend of European and Asian culture, Eurasians were adaptable and thus the middlemen between the British and locals in the early days of Singapore. Most Eurasians lived in Katong and Joo Chiat, a trend even until today, and contributed to the rich culture of the area.

Established in 1919, The Eurasian Association is a voice for the community and helps the less fortunate through their education, welfare and community development programmes. The Eurasian Community House located at 139 Ceylon Road is home to the Eurasian Heritage Centre, a modest museum comprising of three galleries, open from Tuesday to Sunday, 9am to 6pm.

Immerse yourself in the history, culture and lifestyle through The Eurasian Experience tours. While at it, you may have a chance to participate in a traditional Eurasian folk dance and enjoy a variety of unique Eurasian flavors from Quentin's Eurasian Restaurant. You may obtain more information from [www.eurasians.org.sg](http://www.eurasians.org.sg)

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## Check out other delightful gems..

- Lotus at Joo Chiat, 89 - 103 Joo Chiat Place

Take a leisurely walk up Everitt Road to Joo Chiat Place to see an architectural masterpiece. The Lotus at Joo Chiat apartments are a fine example of integrating old shophouses with new flats, and were built in the 1930s in the Late Shophouse style. This development received the Urban Redevelopment Authority's Architectural Heritage Award in 2002 for their excellent restoration.

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- St Hilda's Anglican Church, 83 Ceylon Road

The St Hilda's Anglican Church, built in 1934, is sandwiched between Ceylon and Fowlie Roads. Designed after a simple English parish church style, it features a conical tower built in the Victorian tradition. Look out for the beautiful stained glass in the chapel. Today, St Hilda's has a tightly-knit community of parishioners, serving whole households from grandfathers to their grandchildren.

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- Bethesda (Katong) Church, 17 Pennefather Road

Built in the mid-1930s, the single-storey Bethesda (Katong) Church at 17 Pennefather Road has a cruciform plan and a hipped gable roof. It houses 3 congregations, including a Peranakan one.



Lotus at Joo Chiat



Bethesda (Katong) Church



St. Hilda's Anglican Church







## Architectural Heritage Award Winners

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### • 51 Joo Chiat Terrace (AHA Winner, 2012)

The original doors, windows, decorative mouldings and motifs of the façade of this Late-style residential terrace have been faithfully returned to their original state. The textured colour glass on the fanlights of the second-storey windows have its broken pieces replaced with old pieces of similar colours sourced from antique shops.



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### • 89 - 123 Joo Chiat Place (AHA Winner, 2002)



Now called the Lotus at Joo Chiat. New pintu-pagars were commissioned to recover the traditional residential appearance of each shophouse unit fronting the main road.

Missing and cracked decorative tiles were also restored with great care.

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### • 92 - 102 Joo Chiat Place (AHA Winner, 2009)

Notice the plaster details carefully restored to their crisp appearance and a traditional colour scheme to unify the whole row. A matte surface for the five-foot way enhances the air of 'old-world charm.



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### • 19 Koon Seng Road

(AHA Winner, 1999)

The main façade of the two-storey terrace house of the Late Style had many delicate features. These included timber fanlights with coloured glass, polychromatic patterned tiles and a rich array of moulded plaster details.



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### • 152A - 152J, 152 - 164 Tembeling Road

(AHA Winner, 2005)



The twelve 2-storey Late Style terrace houses and four 2-storey Art Deco units have been restored to house the communal facilities of a residential development. A careful choice of traditional pale colours has brought the architectural features, elements and relief the front façades to life.

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### • 299 - 309 Joo Chiat Road (AHA Winner, 1996)



Located along the main road, the development retains the six 2-storey shophouses of the Late Style and integrates a 4-storey extension at the rear. The overall effect is that of a cosy

budget hotel, Hotel 81, with a sensitive awareness of the past.

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### • 25 Chapel Road (AHA Winner, 2010)

This single-storey bungalow is a rare-survivor of a once common housing form. It was voluntarily conserved and has been revived at the owner's and architect's initiative. Key



features retained include the intricate floral mouldings, colourful 'Peranakan' tiled risers on steps, an open verandah, the original floor timbers and hand-made glass of the windows.

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### • "Lucky" Shophouse, 125 Joo Chiat Place

(AHA Winner, 2013)

With thoughtful integration of the past and the present, the former The Lucky Book Store has been restored and reinvented as a modern family home. This delightful outcome is a high impact, budget-friendly transformation that lays bare



and celebrates much of the building's past for both the community and the inhabitants. It received the Jury Commendation for Innovation at the 2014 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards.





## Architectural Motifs

The various motifs applied on the façades are often derived from mythical figures. Flowers and birds abound often act as accompaniments to the splendid relief stucco decoration on the façades which reflected the wealth and status of the owners.

- **Guardian Lion**

Chinese guardian lions are mythical beasts which is believed to have powerful protective powers. It can be found in the panels just below each shophouse window.

- **Floral**

Imported from France, England and Belgium, these fine ceramic tiles with floral or geometrical designs gives the houses a distinctive look which came to be known as Singapore Eclectic. The degree of a shophouse's ornamentation depends on the owner and the prosperity of the family.

- **Flying Dragon**

The dragon is a good natured and benign creature often living in seas, rivers, lakes or clouds. The mythical Chinese dragon, a symbol of power and good luck to the Chinese symbolizes benevolence, prosperity, longevity and the renewal of life.

- **Deer**

Known for their speed, grace, endurance and long life, deer are graceful animals that are thought of as symbols of longevity and wealth.



## Inside The Shophouse

Shophouses are a distinct part of Katong/Joo Chiat's identity and are an important building type in Singapore's architectural heritage. They form the majority of conservation buildings. Their origins can be traced back to the time of Sir Stamford Raffles in 1822.

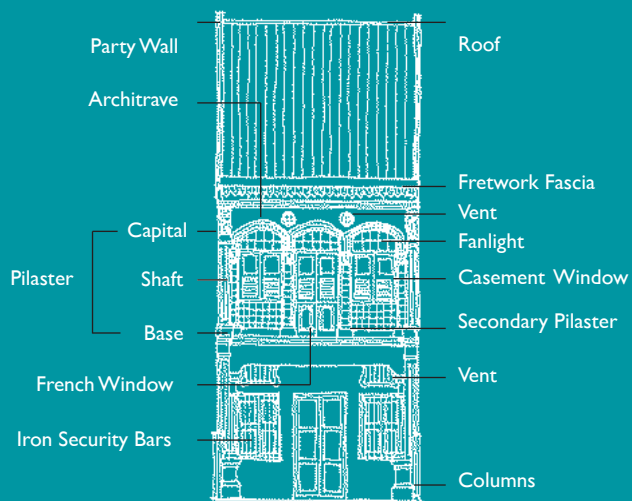
Shophouses share a basic generic design, with a narrow frontage, typically four to six metres, and a depth of at least two to three times the width. They are simple buildings of two or three-storey heights. While some were used solely as residences, a shophouse can have business premises on the lower floor and a residential dwelling above, making it ideal for small-scale family businesses.

Broadly, there are six styles of shophouses: Early, First Transitional, Late, Second Transitional, Art Deco and Modern Styles. They reflect the technology of their times, and the tastes and cultures of their owners.

## Party Walls

Shophouses are separated from one another by party-walls which are load-bearing and support the floors and the roofs. The party walls rise above the walls and roof to prevent the spread of fire.





## Fascia Boards and Fretwork

This is an influence from traditional Malay building design, where timber fascia boards and fretwork decorate the eaves of the roof.

## Façade Decorations

The main face of the house is often decorated with designs in plaster and tiles.

## The Five-Foot Way

The five-foot way is formed by projecting the upper floor to act as a covered passageway for pedestrians. It protects pedestrians from the sun and rain, and also serves as a sheltered space for social activities.

## A story that needs to be told...

Once a sleepy rural district, today's Katong/Joo Chiat is like an exciting dish, with delightful cultures, delicious flavours and rich architectural heritage. Katong/Joo Chiat is alive, with intriguing stories to tell. Talk to any resident, and who knows what you may unravel...



To get "up close and personal", you could stay in one of several new backpackers hostels now found in Joo Chiat. Hostels like Betel Box\* backpackers hostel even provides guided walks and food tours for residents and tourists.

\* [www.betelbox.com](http://www.betelbox.com)







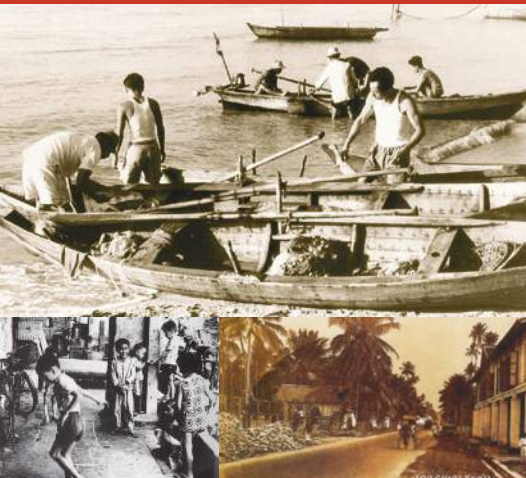
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Amidst modern buildings and high-rise apartments, Katong/Joo Chiat continues to exude the charm and beauty of yesteryears. A melting pot of Peranakan Chinese (Straits Chinese), Eurasian, Malay, Indian, and Chinese cultures, this area could well be “Little Singapore”. Shop, eat and explore within this treasure trove of rich history, beautiful architecture and picture-perfect *kopi tiams*, *nyonya* food stalls and multi-ethnic eateries.

Joo Chiat Road & East Coast Road are significant “spines” in Katong/Joo Chiat where the buzz and activity lies. Katong has always been associated with a larger area in eastern Singapore, including the quieter residential districts of Mountbatten, Telok Kurau, Siglap and Marine Parade.



Photos courtesy of National Archives of Singapore



NOT TO SCALE