

SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

From its origins as American Consul Joseph Balestier's sugarcane plantation in the 1840s, Balestier has evolved into a multi-faceted neighbourhood with landmarks established by diverse communities and faiths. Through the three thematic trails below, discover the precinct's history and heritage, including lesser-known sites hidden in its many side lanes.

Historical Landmarks of Balestier (45 mins; on foot)

Balestier Road is home to many historical sites, from colonial-style villas to traditional shophouses and temples. This thematic trail introduces you to some landmarks that have shaped Balestier Road from its early days to the recent past.



Start your journey at **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall**. This colonial-era villa was once the Southeast Asian headquarters of Dr Sun Yat Sen's Tong Meng Hui (Chinese Revolutionary Alliance). This National Monument now houses galleries showcasing the role of overseas Chinese communities in the 1911 Chinese Revolution. Next, visit **Maha Sasanaramsi Burmese Buddhist Temple** located beside the villa at Tai Gin Road. Established at Kinta Road in 1878, the temple relocated here in 1991 and houses the largest marble Buddha statue outside Myanmar.



After viewing the temple, walk through Zhongshan Park and turn left at Balestier Road. At Boon Teck Road, you will see a **water kiosk** with two dispensers. This kiosk is provided by **Thong Teck Sian Tong Lian Sin Sia**, a Buddhist-Taoist temple established in 1950. The kiosk offers water and tea at no charge as an act of charity and is probably the last of its kind in Singapore. Feel free to enjoy a refreshing sip of water or tea here and visit the temple, located a short distance from the kiosk.



Return to Balestier Road, where you will find, at the junction of Jalan Kemaman, the **Kwan Yow Luen shophouses**. Built in 1928 and designed by local architect Kwan Yow Luen, who was well-known for designing traditional shophouses, these richly ornamented shophouses feature detailed plaster stucco figures, including two symbolic Sikh guards, on their facades.



Next, cross the road to **Balestier Market**, a former rural market built in 1922 to house roadside vendors. It was converted into a food centre in the 1990s and conferred conservation status in 2003. You may wish to grab a bite here before continuing down Balestier Road. When you reach Pegu Road, turn in to find a row of conserved **pre-war terrace houses** and a single-storey building that used to house the **former School Dental Clinic**, which operated from 1963 until the mid-1990s.

Continue your journey down Balestier Road towards the Kim Keat Road junction where you will see two contrasting landmarks. The **Sim Kwong Ho shophouses** across the junction were built in 1926 and are outstanding examples of Chinese baroque architecture, with colourful tiles and elaborate plaster stucco work. Facing these shophouses is **Balestier Point**, which was completed in 1986 and inspired by the work of Canadian architect Moshe Safdie.



Finally, continue down Balestier Road until you reach **Goh Chor Tua Pek Kong Temple**. Established in 1847 by Hokkien workers of Joseph Balestier's sugarcane estate, this temple is the area's oldest surviving landmark and the only visible legacy of Balestier's once vast plantation.

Faith, Film and Food (1.5 hours; on foot)

The Balestier area is home to many places of worship, traditional food trades as well as landmarks from the Golden Age of Malay Cinema. This thematic trail brings you to religious buildings, a former movie studio as well as "makan places" around the neighbourhood.



Begin your journey at **Goh Chor Tua Pek Kong Temple**, which was founded in 1847 by Hokkien workers of a nearby sugarcane estate owned by Joseph Balestier, the first American Consul to Singapore. Located beside the temple is one of the last surviving free-standing wayang stages in Singapore.



Next, walk up Balestier Road and cross the road at the Whampoa Drive junction. Along Whampoa Drive, you will pass a row of conserved post-war shophouses. This row is the location of **Sing Hon Loong**, a traditional bakery which has been making bread for more than half a century. After the shophouses, you will see a single-storey building housing the **Handicaps Welfare Association**. This building served as **Rayman School** from 1953 until 1984. It is the only surviving legacy of the former **Rayman Estate**, built in the 1940s by the Singapore Improvement Trust to provide homes for former residents of urban slums.

Cross Whampoa Drive to reach **Whampoa Makan Place**, which occupies the site of the former **Rayman Market**, built in 1952 for residents of **Rayman Estate**. In 1973, it was replaced by **Whampoa Market**, which later expanded into the present-day **Whampoa Makan Place**. You may wish to grab some food here before continuing on to **Kim Keat Lane**, where you will find another traditional bakery, called **Sweetlands Confectionery**, offering freshly baked loaves.

At **Kim Keat Road**, turn right to reach **Masjid Hajjah Rahimabi Kebun Limau**. Opened in



1964 to serve Muslim residents of the Balestier area, this mosque was rebuilt in 1984 and named after a philanthropist who contributed to its reconstruction.

Cross **Kim Keat Road** and enter **Whampoa Park Connector** for a pleasant stroll along **Sungei Whampoa**. Many rattan factories were once located by this river. At **Jalan Ampas**, you will find **Phang Pheng Mei Temple**, a former Buddhist vegetarian hall which was once home to female devotees. A short distance from the temple is **Shaw Organisation's former Malay Film Productions studio**, where movie stars such as **P Ramlee** and **Maria Menado** made films during the Golden Age of Malay Cinema in the 1950s-60s.

Return to the **Park Connector** and continue on towards **Jalan Kemaman**, where you will find another former vegetarian hall called **Chan Chor Min Tong**. This hall was founded in 1926 and housed male devotees. The building is not open to public, but you can take the lane right of the compound to view its garden, which is filled with medicinal plants. The lane leads to **Boon Teck Road**, where you will find **Thong Teck Sian Tong Lian Sin Sia**. Established in 1950, this temple provides religious and charitable services, including a **water kiosk** at the junction of **Balestier** and **Boon Teck** roads that offers free water and tea.

Turn left after the kiosk and you will see the **Kwan Yow Luen shophouses**. Built in 1928 by local architect **Kwan Yow Luen**, these shophouses provided the backdrop to **P Ramlee's** classic 1955 film **Penarek Becha** ("Trishaw Puller"). You can admire their facade before crossing the road to **Balestier Market**, Singapore's only surviving rural market. Built in 1922 to house roadside vendors, this conserved building is now a popular food centre where you can grab a bite before heading home.



*Phang Pheng Mei Temple and Chan Chor Min Tong are not open to public.

Building Balestier (2 hours; on foot)

Balestier is a showcase of architectural diversity with its temples, shophouses as well as various buildings that used to be part of **Tan Tock Seng Hospital**. This thematic trail brings you to some of these landmarks, many of which continue to serve the religious, residential and healthcare needs of the community.

Begin your journey at **Goh Chor Tua Pek Kong Temple**, which was established in 1847 by Hokkien workers employed at **Joseph Balestier's** sugarcane estate nearby. Built in a southern Chinese style, this temple is the area's oldest surviving landmark and the only visible legacy of Balestier's former estate. Across the road from the temple, you can also see two **Art Deco apartment blocks**. Built after the war, these buildings feature eye-catching corner facades with bold vertical fins typical of **Art Deco** design.



Walk up **Balestier Road** until the **Kim Keat Road** junction. On your left stands **Balestier Point**, a mixed-use high-rise completed in 1986 and inspired by the work of Canadian architect **Moshe Safdie**. Across the road, you will see the **Sim Kwong Ho shophouses**. These conserved shophouses were built in 1926 in an ornate style known as **Chinese baroque** and feature elaborate plaster stucco work and colourful tiles.

Next, turn into **Pegu Road** and you will find, on your left, a single-storey building that was once the **former School Dental Clinic**, which operated from 1963 until the mid-1990s. **Pegu Road** is also the site of a row of elegant **pre-war terrace houses** that were conserved in 2003. A lane next to these houses leads to **Martaban Road**, which features another row of conserved **pre-war terrace houses**, including one (13 **Martaban Road**) that used to house orderlies from **Tan Tock Seng Hospital**.



Continue up **Martaban Road** towards the **Minbu Road** junction to reach the old **Tan Tock Seng Hospital** grounds. On the left, you will see the rear of the **former Middleton Hospital** (now **Communicable Disease Centre**), which opened in 1913 to treat patients with infectious diseases. On the right, you will see the **former Mandalay Road Hospital**, which treated **Tan Tock Seng Hospital's** tuberculosis patients in the 1950s.



At the end of **Martaban Road**, turn left into **Mandalay Road**. After the car park on the left, you will find a stately **black and white bungalow** that once housed a **Medical Superintendent** and is now a private residence. Across the road is the **former nurses' quarters** (now part of the **Lee Kong Chian School of**

Medicine), a neoclassical building built in 1924. Next to it is the new **Clinical Science Building**, which has a terrace concourse from which you can enjoy a panoramic view of the area.

Next, walk back down **Mandalay Road** and turn into **Bassein Road**. On your left stands **Chan Chor Min Tong**, a former Buddhist vegetarian hall founded in 1936 as a cloister-like home for female devotees. You can admire its **Cantonese-style architecture** before continuing up **Bassein Road**. Turn right after **Jalan Tan Tock Seng** and you will find, on your left, a row of **former pavilion wards** (also known as **Nightingale wards**) that housed patients after **Tan Tock Seng Hospital** relocated here in 1909. Facing the wards on your right are **black and white houses** that once housed the hospital's senior doctors.



After viewing the pavilion wards, turn right at **Minbu Road** and head towards the car park on your left. Take the path on the right of the car park to reach **Balestier Market**. Built in 1922 to house roadside vendors, it was converted into a food centre in the 1990s and conserved in 2003 as Singapore's only surviving rural market building. You may wish to grab some refreshments here before continuing on your journey.

Next, cross **Balestier Road** and walk towards **Jalan Kemaman**. Turn into this lane and you will find another former vegetarian hall, also called **Chan Chor Min Tong**. This differs from the **Bassein Road** hall as it housed male devotees. Take the lane on the right of the hall to view its garden, which contains many medicinal plants. The lane will bring you to **Boon Teck Road** and **Thong Teck Sian Tong Lian Sin Sia**. Established in 1950, this temple provides religious and charitable services, including a **water kiosk** at the junction of **Boon Teck** and **Balestier** roads, which offers free water and tea for passers-by.

After this, continue up **Balestier Road** until you reach **Zhongshan Park**. Walk through the park and you will see the final stop, **Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall**. Built in 1902 as a merchant's home, this villa later became the **Southeast Asia headquarters** for **Dr Sun Yat Sen's** Chinese revolutionary movement. You have now completed the longest route in the **Balestier Heritage Trail**! You can cool down by exploring the galleries here which highlight the 1911 Chinese Revolution from the perspective of the overseas Chinese communities.

Optional: You may wish to continue up **Balestier Road** towards the junction of **Thomson Road**. Facing **Jalan Datoh**, you will see a row of **single-storey terraced units** built in the 1940s by **Ngee Ann Kongsi**. Today, this conserved row is known for its variety of shops, including **Loong Fatt Tau Sar Piah**, a coffee shop that opened here in 1948. After this, take a bus at **Thomson Road** to **Church of St Alphonsus (Novena Church)**. This religious landmark is known for its **Saturday novenas**, which began in 1949 and after which the surrounding area and nearby **MRT** station were named.

*Both Chan Chor Min Tong halls are not open to public.

MAP & SUGGESTED ROUTES HERITAGE TRAIL BALESTIER

The Balestier Heritage Trail is part of the National Heritage Board's ongoing efforts to document and present the history and social memories of places in Singapore. We hope this trail will bring back fond memories for those who have worked, lived or played in the area, and serve as a useful source of information for visitors and new residents.



National Heritage Board



























Supported by



Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth



HERITAGE SITES IN THE SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| 
ART DECO APARTMENT BLOCKS | 
BALESTIER MARKET | 
BALESTIER POINT | 
BOON TECK ROAD WATER KIOSK | 
CHAN CHOR MIN TONG (AT BASSEIN ROAD) | 
CHAN CHOR MIN TONG (AT JALAN KEMAMAN) | 
CHURCH OF ST ALPHONSUS | 
FORMER MALAY FILM PRODUCTIONS STUDIO | 
FORMER MANDALAY ROAD HOSPITAL | 
FORMER MIDDLETON HOSPITAL | 
FORMER NURSES' QUARTERS | 
FORMER PAVILION WARDS | 
FORMER RAYMAN SCHOOL |
| 
FORMER SCHOOL DENTAL CLINIC | 
GOH CHOR TUA PEK KONG TEMPLE | 
KWAN YOW LUEN SHOPHOUSES | 
MAHA SASANARAMSI BURMESE BUDDHIST TEMPLE | 
MASJID HAJJAH RAHIMABI KEBUN LIMAU | 
PHANG PENG MEI TEMPLE | 
PRE-WAR TERRACE HOUSES | 
SENIOR POLICE OFFICERS' MESS | 
SIM KWONG HO SHOPHOUSES | 
SINGLE-STOREY TERRACED UNITS | 
SUN YAT SEN NANYANG MEMORIAL HALL | 
THONG TECK SIAN TONG LIAN SIN SIA | 
WHAMPOA MAKAN PLACE AND FORMER RAYMAN ESTATE |

For more information, please download the Balestier Heritage Trail Companion Guide from www.roots.sg.

All information contained in this trail map is provided in good faith, and every reasonable effort has been made to ensure that the information is accurate and up to date at time of print. Accordingly, NHB makes no warranty or representation relating to the trail map and all information contained therein, and users relying on any of the information contained in the trail map shall do so at their own risk and diligence.

©2018 National Heritage Board. All rights reserved.