



A hand-drawn map of Singapore serves as the background for the top half of the page. It features various street names such as 'RACE COURSE', 'KERBAU RD.', 'VEERASAMY RD.', 'CUFF ST.', 'KAPOR RD.', and 'ROWELL RD.'. A red box is drawn around the central text area. A red line with a square marker containing the number '2' points to a location on the map. In the top left corner, there is a small illustration of two people on horseback. A stylized 'G' logo is visible on the left side of the map.

# THE Vagabond Club

SINGAPORE

— — —  
A Tribute Portfolio Hotel

GARCHA  HOTELS

LITTLE  
INDIA

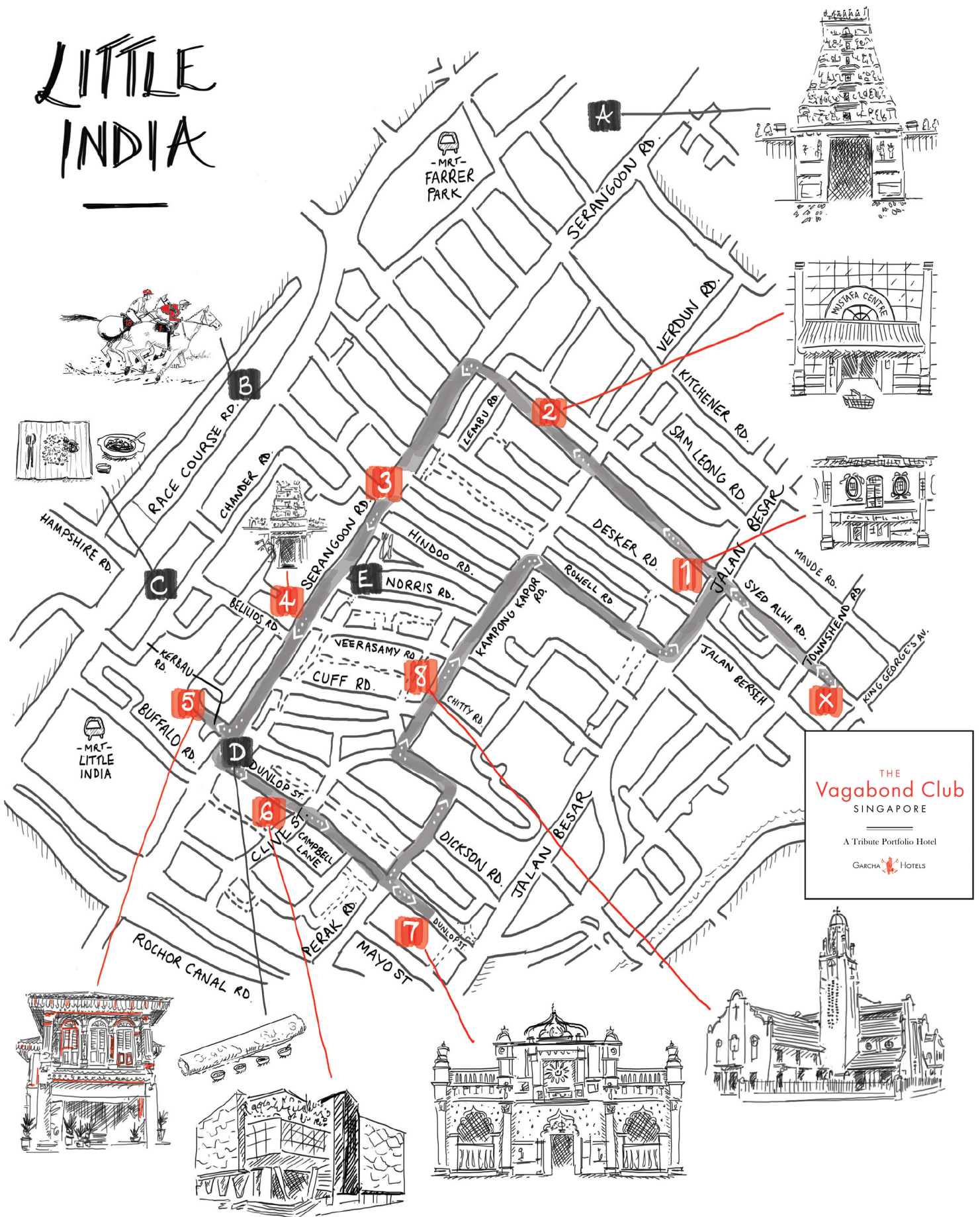
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A hand-drawn map of the Little India area in Singapore. It shows streets including 'CLIVE', 'CAMPBELL LANE', 'PERAK RD.', 'MAYOST', 'DICKSON RD.', 'JALAN B...', and 'ROCHOR CANAL'. A red line with a square marker containing the number '7' points to a location on the map.

7

# LITTLE INDIA



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GARCHA HOTELS

- 1 Shophouses
- 2 Mustafa Centre
- 3 Serangoon Road
- 4 Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple

- 5 The Tan Teng Niah House
- 6 Indian Heritage Centre
- 7 Masjid Abdul Gafoor
- 8 Kampong Kapor Methodist Church

## POI (Points of Interest):

- A Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple
- B Farrer Park (Race Course Road)

## Eat & Drink:

- C Banana Leaf Apolo: 54 Race Course Rd
- D Komala Vilas: 12 Buffalo Rd
- E Thye Chong Restaurant: 168 Serangoon Rd

## LITTLE INDIA

Walk out the door of the Vagabond, turn left and bam, you're in Little India, Singapore's most colourful and unpretentious neighbourhood. In the early 19th century, it was a swampy place of sugar cane fields, brick kilns, and lime pits tended by Indian immigrants and convict labourers brought by the British to build up Singapore. By the 1860s the area was the heart of the island's cattle trade, drawing Indian businessmen and workers. Today's Little India is a vibrant mishmash of century-old shophouses that are home to restaurants, vegetable stands, garland sellers, traditional spice grinders, and small shops selling everything from plastic bangles and gold jewellery to saris and sandals. It's especially lively on Sundays, when the island's Indian and Bangladeshi construction workers head here for their day off.

**1 – Shophouses** - Working at home isn't a new idea. The Chinese started doing it in the 18th century in "shophouses" designed with a shop at street level and living quarters above. The idea migrated to Singapore in the 19th and 20th centuries and took on a life of its own. Some of the most striking in Little India are a row of pastel-painted Rococo shophouses with large ox-eye windows on Syed Alwi Road, near Vagabond. Stroll along Norris, Rowell, Desker, Kitchener and Petain roads to see more adorned with ceramic tiles, coloured glass and ornamental plasterwork in floral motifs.

**2 – Mustafa Centre** (145 Syed Alwi Road) is a sprawling shopping Mecca cobbled together from various buildings, including a shiny new wing covered in what looks like silver fish scales. Founded by an Indian businessman in 1971, Mustafa has achieved a sort of celebrity status in the Singapore retail sphere, partly because it's open 24 hours a day. Mustafa is both beloved and chided for its chaotic labyrinth of aisles and departments crammed with everything from gold jewelry to clothing, food, electronics and household goods.

**3 – Serangoon Road** is Little India's backbone and one of Singapore's first roads, dating all the way back to 1828. The nearby Rochor Canal was built a decade later to irrigate farms growing betel nuts, vegetables and sugar cane, and later the water and fodder fostered a vigorous cattle and dairy trade — note Buffalo and Kerbau roads (the latter Malay for "buffalo"). Europeans also staked a claim in cows, including I. R. Belilios, a Venetian Jew from Calcutta, and the Dutch-Eurasian Andre Desker, both memorialized in Little India street names.

**4 – Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple** (141 Serangoon Road) has a ferocious "patron saint," the Hindu goddess Kali who represents both destruction and power. Images and statues of her fill the interior, including one of Kali ripping out the insides of her victims (with her teeth) and in another, sharing a peaceful family moment with



her sons Ganesha and Murugan. Kali has always been popular in Bengal, in eastern India, the birthplace of the labourers who built the first temple on the site in 1881, and who looked to the fierce goddess to protect them from harm. Singapore's many Bengali construction workers still worship there today.

**5 – The Tan Teng Niah House** (37 Kerbau Road) today sports a curious psychedelic paint job, but when it was built in 1900 it was a dignified white-washed 8-room villa for prominent local Chinese businessman Tan Teng Niah who had several confectionery factories along Serangoon Road and a rubber smokehouse on Kerbau. A century ago there were many more mansions like this in the area, with courtyards, bamboo-style tiled roofs and the swinging doors popular at the time.

**6 – Indian Heritage Centre** (corner of Campbell Lane and Clive streets) is a brand new four-story museum showcasing the history of Singapore's Indian communities through historic photos, artefacts and changing exhibits, with a focus on the contributions of early Indian pioneers in Singapore and Malaya, including South Indian businessman P. Govindasamy Pillai and Parsi entrepreneur Navroji Mistri. The ultra-modern museum, which contrasts sharply with the old shophouses surrounding it, invites visitors to use their mobile phones or the centre's hand-held devices to listen to commentary about the exhibits.

**7 – Masjid Abdul Gafoor** (41 Dunlap Street), a frilly century-old mosque with an interesting Victorian and Arab flair, is straight out of a Disney fairytale with its Corinthian columns, Doric pilasters, cinquefoil arches and painted glass cupolas. A hexagonal tower is capped with the classic onion dome, and ringed by minarets like candles on a cake. When the green-and-cream-coloured mosque was built, the neighborhood was called Kampong Kapor, or "village of lime," due to nearby lime pits supporting the brick-making trade.

**8 – Kampong Kapor Methodist Church** (1 Kampong Kapor Road) was built in 1930 and those days catered to a mostly Peranakan or Straits Chinese (locally born Chinese) congregation, though today services attract all ethnic groups. The whitewashed Art Deco style church, near both mosques and Hindu temples, is a testament to Singapore's religious diversity.

**POI – Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple** (397 Serangoon Road) is where devotees of the South Indian Hindu festival of Thaipusam start their 3-km procession every January or February, shocking the unacquainted with the metal skewers that pierce their cheeks and tongues. The temple dates back to the 1880s and its ornate five-story gopuram was added in 1979 and is dedicated to Lord Vishli.

## LITTLE INDIA (cont'd)

**POI – Farrer Park** (Race Course Road) might look pretty humdrum today, but Singapore's first racecourse was where all the action was in mid 19th century Singapore, when horse racing was all the rage. Many Europeans moved into the neighbourhood just to be nearby. Dunlop, Cuff, Dickson and Clive Streets were named for the families who once used these streets as private lanes to their estates. In 1935, the racecourse was moved to Bukit Timah.

**POI – Banana Leaf Apolo** (54-58 Race Course Road and 48 Serangoon Road) is the spot to try the traditional way of eating Indian food – with your hands. Dal, rice, veggies and various meats including tandoori chicken, mutton curry and chicken masala, are piled on to banana leaves, to be scooped up with your fingertips. Supposedly the food tastes better that way, though it might be a bit of a challenge for newbies who order the fish-head curry.

**POI – Komala Vilas** (3 locations: 76-78 & 82 Serangoon Road, and 12-14 Buffalo Road) opened its humble doors more than half a century ago and the South Indian vegetarian joint continues to serve cheap and tasty dosas – crepes made of lentils and rice that you tear into pieces and use as a tool to eat curried vegetables. Other choices include a thali, a medley of veg favorites served on a stainless steel tray or banana leaf.