



Shoppers, diners and appreciators of art and technology – Singapore offers something for everyone, says **Sunita Bhamray**



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ST READERS' CORNER

LAKSA CHRONICLES

Just like their favourite dish, the Laksa – a contrasting blend of spicy coconut curry in noodles, Singapore too, is a remarkable mix of diverse races amalgamating together to create a quintessentially vibrant nation.

Seen as only a small red dot on the world map, Singapore, which got its independence only a few decades ago, is a mighty economic hub to reckon with today. It attracts a sizeable amount of tourists all year round due to its congenial weather conditions and constantly evolving tourist attractions.

I first arrived here as an expatriate wife in 2003, when Singapore was hit by the SARS epidemic. It was a dismal spell for all. The streets were desolate, the hospitals overflowing and the economy decimated. But in a matter of a few years, Singapore bounced back and how? Multi-billion dollar structures like the iconic Marina Bay Sands, the Resorts World Sentosa, Gardens by the Bay, all sprung up in quick succession, each vying for the top spot in the traveller's itinerary!

The Marina Bay Sands Resort, with three outstanding buildings topped by a physics-defying, gigantic boat-shaped structure, boasts of restaurants, an infinity pool and the capacity to hold 3000 people at one time.

One aspect of Singapore's architecture is their matchless and dramatic designs. They have singularly avoided the race of building the tallest structure to prove their might and instead taken recourse to using the aesthetic element to draw in crowds. Take for instance the recently inaugurated Gardens by the Bay, which has mammoth glass domes growing plants from diverse climates, all grown in close proximity, aided by state of the art temperature control technology. Also worthy of mention is the spectacular Super Trees Grove, consisting of 10 stories high steel frameworks made to look like trees. The centermost tree being crested by a swanky restaurant easily transporting the visitor to a surreal wonderland! Another 'not to miss' is the exotically designed Art-Science museum resembling a multi-petalled, flower like, edifice playing host to exhibitions and art installations from world over.

The distinct feature about Singapore is that it caters to a wide palate. Not everything is ultra luxe. The Clarke Quay and Boat Quay are popular dining out haunts flanking the Singapore River. Originally serving as warehouses to the river trade, from around the turn of the century, these have been very artfully recreated. A midnight stroll by the river

gives the heady feeling of sitting at a tapas bar in Barcelona or feasting on Turkish ice-cream entertained by an agile bellydancer in the heart of Eastern Europe. The quaint Dempsey Hill area too, was once home to stodgy army warehouses and now serves as an interestingly themed food haven for all.

A place for the young and old, to have a time of their lives, is the Resort Worlds and Universal studios at Sentosa island known for its hair-raising rides as well as tamer ones for the weak-kneed. In the meanwhile, as the kids frolic, a quick spin at the slot machines at the luxurious casino's nearby, could ensure a well deserved but potent gambling fix for the grown ups!

Well known as a shopper's paradise, Orchard Road is a 2 km retail stretch of one splendid mall competing with the other. High-end brands and regulars sit in a unique juxtaposition, offering something for all pockets. The yuletide season every year has the entire road decorated with magical lights so even if the dollar exchange rate has nipped at one's budget, a dash at window-shopping down the road could prove as an equally worthy reprieve.

Incredible in every way! Offering amusement of every conceivable variety and most importantly a very short flight away! If the travel plans haven't been made yet, then 'Singa- pura', Singapore, the land of the Merlion awaits you!



SINGAPORE DELIGHTS: (clockwise from top right) The Super Trees Grove, The Art-Science Museum and Gardens by the Bay

ROADIES

Sail along....

Equipped with a spacious cabin and a good engine, Chevrolet Sail U-Va gives a good ride, says **Abhijeet Hingway**



The brand name Sail, is not new to those who have followed General Motors since their launch in India 1994. It was a station wagon variant of Corsa back then. General Motors failed to succeed with Opel branded products due to fuel efficiency issues and high maintenance cost. After that came the brand Chevrolet and they introduced the U-VA – a premium hatchback to compete in an already crowded category. U-VA did not do well thanks to its ordinary looks and performance. So now, out went the Aveo and in came the U-VA Sail. I got to drive the diesel variant.

A first look at the Sail and you find it quite boring and bland. The earlier U-VA was much better. Sail displays typical Chevy features with the twin slatted grille emblazoned with a gold emblem. The lower fascia is nicely detailed with fog lights integrated. Sail has clear and neat body line and there are no unnecessary exaggerated features. The angled headlights wrap around the nose quite nicely and the raised window line enhances sporty look. The rear is very bland and vertically aligned tail-lights

look dated. The 12-spoke wheels too at 14 inch look a tad smaller compared to the overall posture of the car. An up size on the rim diameter would add a lot more character. The front seats are quite comfortable and tall enough to give a high seating. The rear doors open wide enough for easy ingress and egress. The back seat gives some space



beneath for general storage. Boot space is good to swallow 248 litres of luggage. In terms of safety, the Sail flaunts two front airbags and ABS on the top-end variant.

Sail is powered by the most trusted and widely used 1.3 SDE (Small Diesel Engine), better known to us as Fiat's Multijet unit that generates power

of 78PS at 4000 rpm and a torque of 205Nm at 1750 rpm. There's also a bit of turbo lag, but you need to get used to it. The engine gets into fire with a typical diesel clatter but as you increase the rpm, it reduces its intensity. Once in power band, you can pick up the pace without using the gearbox. The Sail takes 15 seconds to reach 100 kmph, and by 23 seconds you reach 120.

On a drive, as you gather speed, Sail offers more power with decent stability. There is a nose heavy feeling throughout the drive but it doesn't affect the drive quality. Sail has an amazing ability to float over bad roads, thanks to long-travel suspension, that's been brilliantly set up, and the tall 175/70 R14 tyres.

The steering is quite light and reminds of Chevy Beat. It is of help in city but at high speeds one needs to hold the steering carefully. In city driving, the button press horn that activates only at specific location, irritates. They can be more efficient!

Sail is an absolute value for money car with large and spacious cabin, unbelievably good ride quality and a good engine. At Rs 5.8 lakh (diesel), backed by a three-year warranty, the Chevy Sail is serious contender in the hatchbacks.

Engine:	1199cc, in-line 4-cylinder, 16-valve DOHC, Petrol	1248cc, in-line 4-cylinder, 16-valve, Diesel
Max Power:	86PS @ 6000 rpm	78PS @4000 rpm
Max Torque:	113Nm @ 4400 rpm	205Nm @1750 rpm
Drive:	Front-Wheel Drive	Front-Wheel drive
Bore/stroke:	69.5/79	69.7/82
Compression ratio:	10.5	16.5
Gearbox:	Five-speed manual	5-speed manual



PETROL

Suspension Front McPherson Strut with Coil Spring and Stabilizer Bar
 McPherson Strut with Coil Spring and Stabilizer Bar
Steering Type: Rack and pinion, power assisted
Type of Power assist: Hydraulic
Turns lock to lock: 2.95
Turning circle: 10.3m
Wheels: 14 x 5.5
Tyre Size: A175/70/R14
Brakes (F/R): Ventilated discs with front caliper
 Ventilated discs with front caliper
Front Disc Size: 240 mm
Rear Disc Size: 240 mm
Dimensions
Overall Length: 3946 mm
Overall Width: 1503 mm
Overall Height: 1690 mm
Wheelbase: 2465 mm
Track (F/R): 1462 mm / 1457 mm
Boot Space: 248 litres
Ground Clearance: 174 mm
Fuel Tank Capacity: 42 litres

DIESEL

Suspension Rear Semi-independent Suspension with Coil Spring
 Semi-independent Suspension with Coil Spring
Steering Type: Rack and pinion, power assisted
Type of Power assist: Hydraulic
Turns lock to lock: 2.95
Turning circle: 10.3m
Wheels: 14 x 5.5
Tyre Size: A175/70/R14
Brakes (F/R): Drum Brake
 Drum Brake
Dimensions
Overall Length: 3946 mm
Overall Width: 1503 mm
Overall Height: 1690 mm
Wheelbase: 2465 mm
Track (F/R): 1462 mm / 1457 mm
Boot Space: 248 litres
Ground Clearance: 168 mm
Fuel Tank Capacity: 42-litres

