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Lorna Whiston Study Centres.



What goes into organising a local tour? Dionne Loh and Kim Min Ho chat with Savita Kashyap, Manager (Business Development) of local tours company Journeys.

Lovely Little India!

Dionne: You have so many interesting local tours on offer. What are your most popular tours?

Savita: The Little India Walk and the Kranji War Cemetery Walk. The Little India Walk is colourful and is great for kids and adults. The Kranji War Cemetery Walk attracts people from Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain and India because many of them or their relatives.

Min Ho: Should Singaporeans go on these tours too?

Savita: Yes! Foreigners get an insight into Singapore's culture and Singaporeans get to understand their own history. These tours also prove that Singapore is culturally rich, contrary to popular belief!

Dionne: How do you organise these tours?

Savita: It's fun but complicated. You have to do a lot of research. With shops and buildings, you have to ask the authorities permission to show tourists around. And to understand the background or history of a place or a belief, you have to talk to the people working or living in that particular area. Every bit of information our tour guide passes on to tourists (foreign and local) is true!

Dionne: Tell us something funny that has happened on your tours.

Savita: Some years back, I was mistaken for a child by the tourists. They were surprised when I told them I was their tour guide!

Min Ho: Which buildings covered in your tours do you find special?

Savita: I love the Singapore shophouse, because it has Malay, Chinese and Indian influences in it.

Dionne: What qualifications does a tour guide need?

Savita: We don't look at paper qualifications! You need a passion for history, sharing, a love for reading and meeting up with people. Also, be prepared to work during weekends!

Min Ho: How do you rest your aching feet after each tour?

Savita: That's a good one - haha! Well, at the end of my tours, we end up at a coffee shop. We rest and have a drink, and it's a chance for the tourists in my group to ask me more questions about Singapore. And sometimes, I go for foot massages!



Take time to smell the garlands!



Wow! Gold!

Dhobis, Saris and a Spot of Curry

Stops along the Little India Walk include a spice shop, sireh and garland shop, parrot astrologer, Tekka Wet Market, Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple and Little India Arcade. Dionne and Min Ho tell us what they like best about the tour.

Dionne says...

The two places I like best are the henna shop in Little India Arcade and the Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple.

From what I gathered from our tour guide, Geraldine, henna tattooing is very popular among the Hindus and Muslims. Henna tattoos are pretty designs drawn on hands and feet for special occasions, like weddings. Henna is made from plants and the design lasts about two weeks. The henna shop is beautifully decorated and the staff come up with simple, yet beautiful patterns from \$5. Maybe I should come back here for a henna tattoo or two during the holidays!

The Sri Veeramakaliamman Temple is full of fascinating stories! The layered roofs on the temple have stories sculpted on them. I like the story of how Ganesh got his elephant's head.

Min Ho says...

I loved watching the 'fortune teller parrots' in action. There are many fortune tellers with trained parrots along the streets of Little India. For a small fee, the trained parrot will come out of its cage and pick a card that tells your fortune.

I also enjoyed listening to Geraldine tell us about the practices in the temple, like how devotees place a white ash mark to their foreheads to remind themselves that material goods do not matter when one goes to the grave. And why mango leaves are hung at the entrance of the temple - to keep out evil spirits and insects!

Dionne and Min Ho interview tourists, Mrs Clare Powell and her daughters, Georgia, eight and Gabby, five.

Dionne: How did you find this tour, Mrs Powell?

Mrs Powell: It was interesting and informative and I liked the temple best.

Dionne: Where are you from?

Mrs Powell: I'm from the UK but I've been in Singapore for about two years now. This is the first time I've been on a local tour like this, though.

Dionne: Would you recommend the Little India tour to your friends and family?

Mrs Powell: Definitely!

For more information on
The Original Singapore Walks,
call Journeys Pte Ltd
at 6325-1631.



Roving reporters!

Eleven-year-olds Kim Min Ho and Dionne Loh, from Lorna Whiston Study Centres, think that travelling and soaking in different cultures is just cool. Curious and charming Min Ho hails from Seoul, Korea and has been in Singapore for just eight months. He says: "Singapore is so clean and wonderful. I love going to school here, playing basketball and watching everything on Kids Central." Cool and confident Dionne loves playing computer games, playing with her dog and snuggling up to great shows on Channel 8. She says: "This assignment is a chance for me to know more about a part of my own country!"



Paying respects to the tree spirit...



Your fortune told by Polly...



You like Little India? Great!