



TOA PAYOH HERITAGE TRAIL

MAP & SUGGESTED ROUTES

The Toa Payoh 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.



Toa Payoh town under construction, 1967. Courtesy of Housing & Development Board

SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

From iconic Housing & Development Board (HDB) blocks to places of worship and public amenities, these three thematic trails will bring you on a journey featuring the evolution of public housing design as well as the history of religious and community institutions in Toa Payoh. Select a route and explore the heritage buildings, sites and structures of Toa Payoh today!

Of Public Housing & Shared Spaces (1.5 hours on foot, 4.5 km)

As the first town planned and built entirely by HDB, Toa Payoh has been at the forefront of the evolution of public housing in Singapore. This trail explores the architectural development of HDB blocks, communal spaces and town planning, which reflected the needs and aspirations of Singaporean homeowners over the decades.



Begin your journey at **Block 53, The "VIP Block"** on Lorong 5. Block 53, as well as the surrounding blocks, were among the first blocks built in Toa Payoh town. Built in 1967, the 19-storey block is known for its distinctive Y-shaped design and the prominent cylindrical water tower on its roof. It later gained its reputation as a "VIP block" after visits from prime ministers, presidents and monarchs in the 1960s and 1970s.



Make your way north along Lorong 4 onto Lorong 1, heading west to **Block 116**. Along the way, keep an eye out for the dragon playground built in 1985 across the road along Lorong 1. Known for its unusual bat-shaped design, Block 116 is unique as most blocks were built based on a linear design in the early 1960s. Both Block 53 and Block 116 also feature extended corridors, a characteristic of early HDB designs that have become less common today.



After exploring Block 116, head south via Lorong 1 to **The Peak @ Toa Payoh** (Blocks 138 to 139B). The Peak is an HDB redevelopment project completed in 2012 that incorporates features such as roof gardens and mid-tower communal spaces. Continue along Lorong 1 to **Block 157**, which

is situated at the junction of Lorong 1 and Lorong 2. A landmark block dating back to the 1960s, the curving Block 157 is one of the longest semi-circular blocks in Singapore.

Next, walk from Lorong 1 onto Lorong 6 to reach **Toa Payoh Town Park**, which houses a 25-metre-tall Look-Out Tower conserved by the Urban Redevelopment Authority. Completed in the 1970s, the popularity of this park led HDB to set aside sizeable plots of land for parks in each public housing town that followed. The park's scenic lake, bridges and diverse plant life were often the backdrop for wedding photos during the 1970s and 1980s.

Cross Lorong 6 and walk through the HDB Hub towards Toa Payoh Central. Look north for majestic views of **Central Horizon** (Blocks 79A to 79E), which can be distinguished by the golden 'crowns' on each block. Built in the 1960s, the original 10-storey Block 79 was one of the longest residential blocks in Singapore then at 296 metres. Block 79 was redeveloped in 2003 as part of the Selective En bloc Redevelopment Scheme into the award-winning five 40-storey blocks to cater to new housing needs.



At the town centre, you will find four landmark point blocks of the **Former 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games Village** (Blocks 175, 179, 191 and 193). Before executive apartments and maisonettes, point blocks were the most desired HDB flats due to the size and privacy their designs afforded. These point blocks housed athletes during the 1973 SEAP Games and were later sold to the public fully furnished.

Lastly, head east along Lorong 5 and Toa Payoh East, then south through the carpark of Block 29, to **Toa Payoh Dragon Playground**. Designed and built by HDB, this playground with its terrazzo-clad head and ringed body has become one of the most recognisable icons of Singaporean culture.



Of Faiths & Beliefs (2 hours with public transport, 6 km)

From its kampong past to the present, religious institutions have been an enduring presence in Toa Payoh. This trail takes you to the temples, mosques, churches and institutions that represent the diverse communities which lived, worked and worshipped in Toa Payoh.



Start your journey at **Lian Shan Shuang Lin Monastery**, the oldest Buddhist monastery in Singapore. Completed in 1909, the monastery includes the Hall of Celestial Kings and Mahavira Hall, which were collectively gazetted as a National Monument in 1980. The monastery compound also houses Shuang Lin Cheng Huang Temple, which is a Taoist temple managed by the Buddhist monks of the monastery.



After viewing the monastery, proceed north towards Lorong 8 to **Sri Vairavimada Kaliyamm Temple**. Originally located along Orchard Road, this Hindu temple relocated to Toa Payoh in 1982. The temple's primary deity is Kali, whose sculpture occupies the central position in the temple's majestic *gopuram* (entrance tower).

Head north towards Lorong 8A via Lorong 7 to **United Five Temples of Toa Payoh**. Completed in 1974, this Taoist temple houses five temples founded during Toa Payoh's kampong past. United Five Temples was the first in Singapore to bring together temples from different Chinese dialect groups and enshrining different deities within one compound.



Then head west via Lorong 6 to **Toa Payoh Seu Teck Sean Tong**. This temple enshrines Song Da Feng as its primary deity and has practiced Taoist, Buddhist and Confucian traditions since its establishment in 1942. It also includes a facility that houses ancestral tablets and a Traditional Chinese Medicine Clinic which provides free medical care to all, regardless of race or religion.

Next, take a stroll down Lorong 6 towards Braddell Road to **Masjid Muhajirin**. Opened in 1977, this mosque was the first to be built with support from the community and the Mosque Building Fund, which comprises contributions from working Muslims across Singapore. Featuring geometric and floral motifs characteristic of Islamic design on its



exterior wall claddings and barricades, the mosque shares its grounds with the headquarters of the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) and Madrasah Irsyad Zuhri Al-Islamiah today.



From Masjid Muhajirin, take a bus from across Braddell Road or walk south via Lorong 6 and Lorong 4 to the **Church of the Risen Christ**. This Catholic church was established in 1971 and has traditionally offered Mass in English, Mandarin and Tamil. In recent decades, it has also drawn parishioners from Myanmar, Indonesia and the Philippines.



Head west along Toa Payoh Central to **Toa Payoh Methodist Church**. This institution has its roots in a free clinic and kindergarten established by a group of Christians in the late 1960s. The church building was constructed in 1973 using funds raised by the Methodist community.

Finally, cross Lorong 2 and head east into the town centre to the **Tree Shrine at Block 177**, also known as Ci En Ge. Since the kampong past of Toa Payoh, the banyan tree where the shrine is located has been regarded as sacred. Today, the shrine is dedicated to the Taoist deities Tian Gong, Guan Yin, Datuk Kong and Tua Pek Kong.

Of Community Institutions & Common Spaces (0.5 hours on foot, 1.5 km)

Through the decades, community institutions and common spaces have left an indelible mark in the memories of Toa Payoh residents and visitors. This trail brings you to the institutions and spaces that continue to play an active role in the sporting, cultural and social lives of residents and Singaporeans.



Start your journey at **Toa Payoh Sports Complex**, which comprises Toa Payoh Stadium, Sports Hall, Sports Centre and Swimming Complex. The complex was constructed in time for the 1973 Southeast Asian Peninsular (SEAP) Games. Over the decades, these sporting facilities have been well-used by athletes in competitions such as the National Schools' Swimming Championships, as well as for community activities.



Head north on Lorong 4 to **Chung Hwa Medical Institution**, which opened in Toa Payoh in 1978. Established as a free Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) clinic at Chung Shan Association in 1952, community members from all walks of life contributed funds to construct the current building. It has since expanded its research and development into various TCM fields and continues to provide low-cost treatments to patients from all backgrounds.



Next, proceed along Lorong 4 and head west by Toa Payoh Central to Block 179 of the **Former 1973 SEAP Games Village**. This point block was one of four that athletes stayed in during the 1973 SEAP Games and the

proximity of the blocks to everyday amenities such as cinemas and hawker centres allowed them to experience a slice of Singapore life. Today, the block is better known for hosting games of checkers (known regionally as "dum") at its void deck, which regularly brings together enthusiastic players and spectators alike.



Take a short walk west along the town centre's pedestrian mall to the **Tree Shrine at Block 177**, also known as Ci En Ge. This tree shrine was built by devotees at the foot of a banyan tree which has been regarded as sacred since Toa Payoh's kampong past. The shrine is situated in the heart of the daily bustle of Toa Payoh Central and has attracted worshippers from beyond Toa Payoh.



Finally, head north on Lorong 2 to reach **Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA)**. SFCCA was founded by seven clan associations and formally inaugurated in 1986. Having moved its headquarters to Toa Payoh in 1997, SFCCA promotes Singaporean Chinese culture through events, exhibitions and publications, funds scholarships and bursaries for underprivileged students and inmates. SFCCA also houses a heritage gallery which allows visitors to explore the history of diverse groups in the Chinese community, as well as local Chinese festivals and cultural practices.

Of Public Housing & Shared Spaces
Of Faiths & Beliefs
Of Community Institutions & Common Spaces



HERITAGE SITES IN THE SUGGESTED SHORT TRAIL ROUTES

- 
 BLOCK 53, THE "VIP BLOCK"
- 
 CHUNG HWA MEDICAL INSTITUTION
- 
 CHURCH OF THE RISEN CHRIST
- 
 FORMER 1973 SEAP GAMES VILLAGE
- 
 LIAN SHAN SHUANG LIN MONASTERY
- 
 MASJID MUHAJIRIN
- 
 SINGAPORE FEDERATION OF CHINESE CLAN ASSOCIATIONS
- 
 SRI VAIRAVIMADA KALIYAMMAN TEMPLE
- 
 TOA PAYOH DRAGON PLAYGROUND
- 
 TOA PAYOH METHODIST CHURCH
- 
 TOA PAYOH SEU TECK SEAN TONG
- 
 TOA PAYOH SPORTS COMPLEX
- 
 TOA PAYOH TOWN PARK
- 
 TREE SHRINE AT BLOCK 177
- 
 UNITED FIVE TEMPLES OF TOA PAYOH

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.

©2023 National Heritage Board. All rights reserved.



Scan here to learn more on Roots.gov.sg