



rediscovering OUR HOMETOWN

Text and photos by Dr Chie Zhi Ying, Deputy Editor

Dr Chie is a family physician working in the National Healthcare Group Polyclinics. She also holds a Master of Public Health from the National University of Singapore and is a designated workplace doctor. She enjoys freelance writing and writes for Chinese dailies *Lianhe Zaobao*, *Lianhe Wanbao*, *Shin Min Daily News* and health magazine *Health No. 1*. She can be contacted at chiezhiying@gmail.com.



In the blink of an eye, 2021 has flown past and 2022 is upon us. As Singapore continued to reopen its borders with more Vaccinated Travel Lanes underway, many of us looked forward to travelling overseas late last year. But before you jumped in to book your much awaited overseas trip, you might have recalled that your SingapoRediscoverers vouchers were still lying idly, waiting for you to redeem them. With that

in mind, I trawled through the list of tourist attractions, staycation spots and activities online to use my vouchers on, and was bombarded with an overwhelming list of to-dos.

A floral wonderland at night

The enthralling night scene of the Floral Fantasy and the OCBC Skyway at Gardens by the Bay caught my eye. Before I knew it, we were at the entrance of the Floral Fantasy; the cool temperature (a much needed respite from the sweltering night heat) and a sea of lush greenery and vibrant colours greeted us as we entered. It was as though we were instantly transported to a magical garden filled with hanging round bouquets, creative floral arrangements amid floral fountains, crystal clear waterfalls, winding cobbled paths and meandering lakes. As the picturesque scenery of vibrant flora in perfect lighting unfolded, the colours and sounds of nature exploded all around me. It was as if I had stumbled upon some beautiful celestial gardens tucked away mysteriously in a corner of

the universe. As I walked, I took in the serene beauty around me with bated breath, fully immersed in the magic and wonder in the air. There were lovely wooden benches, plush sofas, stone edges and cobbled sidewalks for one to pose comfortably with the captivating floral creations and majestic birds like eagles and peacocks. There was even a vivarium with a variety of frog species in various shades of colours, but mind you, these are very poisonous creatures indeed. What a surreal escape from the busy life we had!

The next destination was the OCBC Skyway, an aerial walkway suspended between the Supertrees about seven storeys above ground. We took the elevator up after queuing for some time and when we came out, the mesmerising sight of the Singapore Flyer, Marina Bay Sands and the shimmering city skyline greeted us. It was simply enchanting! Walking against the strong winds of the night at this height in open air, one could feel the walkway trembling and swaying lightly with each step. For everyone's safety, there is a limit to the number

of people at any point of time with personnel patrolling the entire area. The OCBC Skyway was amazing; for those who have a fear of heights, however, a note of caution before you head up to it.

Seeking thrills and spills

That was it for the night activity, now how about something fun and thrilling for the day? Having been to Universal Studios Singapore (USS) almost a decade back when it first opened in 2011, I recalled the long snaking queues that lasted for hours to get onto any rides under the hot sun during the June school holidays. Fast forward to 2021, I decided to revisit USS with my sister for some thrilling fun. When we finally ventured into the theme park and glanced around, to our surprise, there were hardly any park goers in sight. This was in July 2021 and many parents may have been wary of bringing their little ones out for amusement rides during the pandemic.

We first made our way to something gentle to build some momentum, and found ourselves at “Madagascar: A Crate Adventure”, which is a water ride in a tunnel. We sat back as we cruised down a dark tunnel until we were greeted by the cute characters of *Madagascar* as they sang and danced animatedly at every turn under the spotlights. We also took slow moving rides like “Treasure Hunters”, “Dino-Soarin” and “King Julien’s Beach Party-Go-Round” which were kids-friendly.

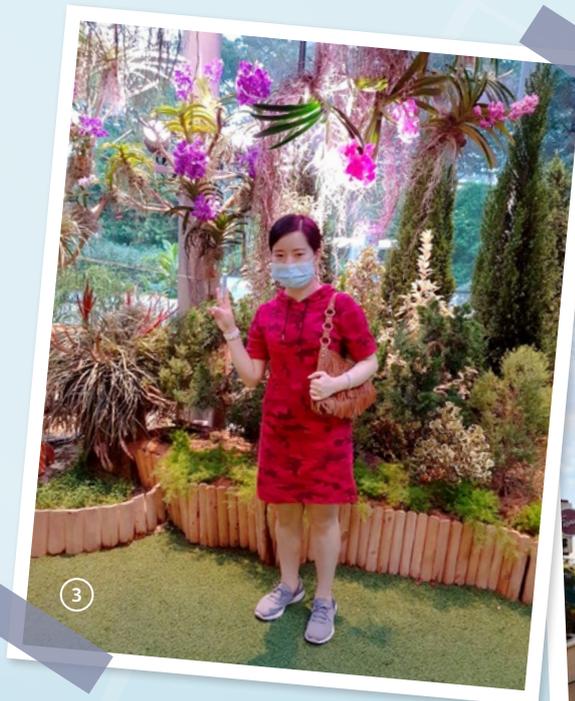
Having warmed up, we proceeded to the “Jurassic Park Rapids Adventure”, one of my favourite rides of the entire park. With just me and my sister seated in a gigantic float, we held onto the handgrips as we floated down the rapids swiftly. It was exhilarating, bouncing and floundering in the rapids with water swishing all over us! En route, we waved at the T-Rex and other dinosaurs roaring at us amid dense primitive forests. At long last, we plunged into a pitch dark tunnel, drifting through it in complete darkness for quite a while until we spotted some red radar lights. All of a sudden, we felt the gigantic float sliding onto a platform and we were hoisted steadily upwards, with loud blaring alarms and red lights swarming around us in all directions. It was a tad scary and then before we knew it, a door in front of us opened abruptly with smoke billowing from all directions. And boom! We were pushed out into the bright open air through a slide. We could not help but scream in thrill as we landed with a great splash into the pool below.

The “Enchanted Airways” was up next, and I pictured it to be a slow moving ride for kids. But alas, I was so wrong! When the roller coaster went up a steep incline at the start, my heart started to sink and a sense of dread overwhelmed me. But what could I do except to hold on tight and mutter some prayers before a mixture of fear and excitement hit me? True

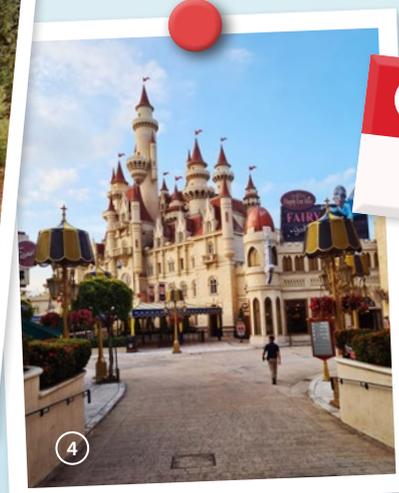
enough, the roller coaster did a steep drop downwards and I heard people shrieking all around us! To make it worse, the roller coaster mercilessly did sudden side turns, ups and downs at such breakneck speeds that I thought I was going to fly out of my seat! The ride was so adrenaline pumping and mind boggling that my screams were stifled. What a thrill! This mini roller coaster gave us a mild taste of the two “Battlestar Galactica” rides, which I gladly steered clear of.

Moving on, we jumped into “TRANSFORMERS The Ride” which we had not taken before as it opened one year after I visited USS the last time. It was a long walk through meandering robotic corridors before we started our ride. Wearing 3D glasses with our eyes glued to the screen in front of us, the car we were in seemed to be flying, bouncing, swerving and doing all sorts of manoeuvres as we took on the role of Transformers saving the city! It was so realistic that my heart was in my mouth throughout the ride as we jumped from heights, bounced up again and sprinted all over!

The SingapoRediscovered vouchers were just a starter to the fun array of things we could do on our sunny island, especially on short breaks. Have fun exploring Singapore and I wish everyone a very Happy New Year ahead! ◆



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Legend

1. Meandering sidewalks among lush greenery
2. The OCBC Skyway with the Supertrees lighting up in the enchanting city skyline
3. Dr Chie with the sea of flora
4. The Far Far Away Zone at USS with its castles and unique street