

Yule love this

Find the Christmas spirit at any of these festive celebrations

The Boys' Brigade Sharity Gift Box *Until 19 Dec; daily. The main gift box is outside Takashimaya Shopping Centre; other donation boxes are located outside several NTUC FairPrice outlets (www.bbsgb.org.sg).* Chances are you'll do a fair bit of receiving this festive season, so here's your chance to give something back. The Sharity Gift Box project has been running for 21 years and provides food, supplies and gifts to Singapore's less privileged citizens. You can choose to donate daily necessities, or fulfil a specific wish of a child, elderly person or family.

Christmas in the Tropics *Until 2 Jan. Orchard Rd to Marina Bay (1 800 736 2000, www.visitsingapore.com).* MRT: Orchard. Orchard Road has been converted into a real-life Candyland, complete with a 'Sweet Family' ready to pose for pictures and help get everyone in a festive – and spending – mood. Stores stay open extra late (see 'The sweetest deals', enclosed).

Christmas on Ice at Central *Until Dec 24; various times. The Central, 6 Eu Tong Sen St (6532 9922, www.thecentral.com.sg).* MRT: Clarke Quay. Ice skating in the heart (and heat) of Singapore? It might just be enough to make you believe elves really exist. Two troupes – Zirkus Zirkus and Fantastique – will be performing throughout the month.

Paragon Celebration *2-21 Dec; 10.30am-9pm. Carols 3-5pm. Paragon Shopping Centre, 290 Orchard Rd (6738 5535, www.paragon.sg).* MRT: Orchard. If you're shopping at the Paragon, you undoubtedly have a little to spare for the needy, so be sure to stop by the Charity Gift House on Atrium 2 and donate to *The Straits Times' School Pocket Money Fund.* Any donations over \$15 entitle you to a free gift. You can also enjoy live Christmas carols while shopping every Friday to Sunday between 3 and 5pm.

Spirit of Christmas Float Parade and Concert *19-24 Dec, 6-10.30pm; 25 Dec, 3-11pm. Orchard Rd/Plaza Singapura (www.visitsingapore.com).* MRT: Orchard or Dhoby Ghaut. You may have to stay up late on Christmas Eve to catch a sleigh gliding through the air, but you can see several other holiday-themed floats and Nativity scenes in this nightly parade. Plaza Singapura will be offering an interactive Christmas Village, and the Grand Concert brings the season to a crescendo on Christmas Day along Orchard. *MF See Music and Classical listings for more festive events.*

Listings

How to use the listings

This section consists of the month's events listed by genre plus a selection of the island's many visitor attractions. For current exhibitions and events at Singapore's cultural and history museums, see **Museums**; details of fine-art institutions and art galleries are in **Art** listings. **Ⓞ** Denotes an event for which tickets are available through Sistic (6348 5555, www.sistic.com.sg). ***** Denotes an event we particularly recommend.

► Before a day denotes a closing date; after a day denotes a starting date.

How to be listed

Listings must arrive in writing by the **Monday five weeks** before publication. We need the following details: address, phone number, nearest MRT, dates, times, prices and details of the event. Listings can be sent by post or emailed to listings@timeoutsingapore.com. Listings are free but, as space is limited, inclusion is not guaranteed.

Events

*** FREE The Cacao Show** *2-7 Dec; 10am-10pm. The Centrepoint Atrium, 176 Orchard Rd (9487 4644, www.thecacao.com.sg).* **Ⓞ Somerset.** The Centrepoint folks are really kicking the sweet theme up a notch. Actually, they're kicking it up a few storeys, with a giant chocolate tree sculpture that will vie for Guinness Book of World Records status (7.5m tall). As you ogle, satisfy your cravings at the wine- and chocolate-pairing workshops.

*** FREE The Secret Affair of the Asian Elephant** *13 Dec; 10.30am-1pm and 2-4.30pm. Singapore Botanic Gardens, Botany Centre, 1 Cluny Rd (6471 7361, www.sbg.org.sg).* **Ⓞ Orchard, then bus 106, 123, 124.** Elephant conservationists will gather to discuss the endangered gentle giants whose survival they work to ensure. The day features lectures, film screenings, Q&A sessions and photo exhibits. There will also be an auction and lucky draw for a free facial.

*** FREE Sports and Fitness Expo** *4-7 Dec; noon-8pm. Singapore Expo Centre, Hall 5, 1 Expo Dr (6820 2220, www.singaporeexpo.com.sg).* **Ⓞ Expo.** Making a New Year's resolution to get fit? Then don't miss this sports show featuring exhibitors from across the health and fitness universe, including health clubs, equipment retailers, training services, sports-insurance providers, nutrition-product purveyors and more. A simulated golf course, biking trail, fencing area and indoor scuba pool will let you try your hand at a variety of sports, while martial arts demos will get you motivated to really 'kick' it into high gear.

*** Masters of Disguise** *Until 4 Jan; 9am-9pm. \$22.90; children \$14.60. Underwater World Singapore, Sentosa, 80 Siloso Rd (6275 0030, www.underwater.com.sg).* **Ⓞ HarbourFront, then Sentosa Express.** 'Squishy' might be the name you'd give an octopus or squid, but to scientists, they're known as cephalopods. This new exhibit lets you come face to face with a variety of these impressive creatures, including the mimic octopus, which can make itself look like a variety of poisonous aquatic species, from sea snakes to stingrays.

Stocking filler

Casio GPR-100 GPS-enabled watch
Some of us are born with a bad sense of direction. Beginning this Christmas, you can strap on Casio's latest GPS-enabled watch and never lose your way again. \$608. Available at City Chain, #01-08 Peranakan Place, 180 Orchard Rd (6733 2006).



Get your kicks Practise your moves at the Sports and Fitness Expo

Festivals

*** FREE Ben & Jerry's Chunk Fest** *6 Dec; 2-11pm. Fort Canning Green, Fort Canning Park (www.benjerry.com.sg).* **Ⓞ Dhoby Ghaut.** Three words: ice cream festival. A few more words: an all-day carnival with 12 flavours on offer (prices the same as in Ben & Jerry's Singapore shops); music by local bands EIC, Good Fellas and more; roving crystal ball, tarot card and palm readers; and an ice cream-eating contest. Go – don't argue. Just go.

Asia on the Edge *Until 6 Dec; various times and locations (www.asiaontheedge.com).* Co-sponsored by The Arts House and PICO, this festival shines the spotlight on Asian thinkers, writers, artists and culinary greats as they reflect on and celebrate their heritage and homelands.

Talks and walks

Food and Culture Series

The Salon, National Museum of Singapore, 93 Stamford Rd (6332 3659, www.nationalmuseum.sg). **Ⓞ Dhoby Ghaut or City Hall.** This series of talks and interactive events celebrates the joys of eating and drinking well.

*** Instant Wine Expert** Swilling chardonnay at a party doesn't make you a wine expert (although by the end of the night, you might be telling everyone it does). Attending this workshop just might. You'll learn the tricky task of pairing wine with Asian food through tasting and tipling with TOS's own wine expert and co-author of *Wine with Asian Food – New Frontiers in Taste*, Edwin Soon. 5 Dec; 7pm, \$35.

*** Christmas Holiday Food and Traditions** The holidays are no time to cut calories, so come celebrate all that's yummy this time of year with Australian-born etiquette consultant Raelene Tan. She'll discuss the lore behind some popular customs and recipes, such as why spices are featured in almost all Christmas food and drink. Holiday treats will, of course, be served. 14 Dec; 3pm, \$25.

*** FREE Of Mr Men and Little Misses: Storytelling Sessions** *6 & 7 Dec, 2pm & 4pm. Compass Point, Sengkang Library, Level 4, 1 Sengkang Sq (www.nlb.gov.sg).* **Ⓞ Sengkang; 13 & 14 Dec, 2pm & 4pm. Northpoint, Yishun Library, Level 4, 930 Yishun Ave (www.nlb.gov.sg). **Ⓞ Yishun.** With names like Mr Tickle, Mr Strong and Little Miss Naughty, you may wonder what the characters in this children's series are really up to. But don't worry: the action is above-board and little ones will delight in hearing their adventures narrated by Junior Reading Ambassadors from the National Library Board.**

*** FREE HortPark Guided Tour & Plant Sale** *27 Dec, and every last Sat of the month. HortPark (Bamboo Labyrinth), 33 Hyderabad Rd off Alexandra Rd (6471 5601, www.nparks.gov.sg).* **Ⓞ HarbourFront, then bus 61, 93, 100, 166 or 963.** Check out one of 20 themed gardens – such as the Recycling Garden, Living Walls and Herb & Spice Garden – with a guide who will fill you in on all the leafy details. When you've finished, take some green home by visiting the plant sale corner. Register up to 15 minutes before the tour.

Critics' choice



Masters of Disguise

Underwater World Singapore, daily until 4 Jan

An octopus that can imitate 15 other creatures? Come see the Robin Williams of the sea. See Events.

Laughter Exercise

HortPark, every Tuesday

Instead of laughing at the idea of exercise, laugh as you exercise! See Workshops.

Sports and Fitness Expo

Singapore Expo Centre, 4-7 Dec

A chance to get inspired to get fit – or just to ogle all the hard bodies who already have. See Events.

Instant Wine Expert

National Museum of Singapore, 5 Dec

Better than flying reindeer: this bit of Christmas magic will make you an instant oenophile. See Talks and walks.

Ben & Jerry's Chunk Fest

Fort Canning Green, 6 Dec

It's the Woodstock of ice cream – kind of. Eat your way around the all-day ice cream festival. See Festivals.

Workshops

*** FREE Laughter Exercise** *Every Tue; 6.30pm. Gardening Hub at HortPark (Bamboo Labyrinth), 33 Hyderabad Rd off Alexandra Rd (www.nparks.gov.sg).* **Ⓞ HarbourFront, then bus 61, 93, 100, 166 or 963.** Yoga is hot these days with new variations bursting on the scene almost monthly (including, um, Hot Yoga). The latest craze is Laughter Yoga, which promises to release stress, rid your body of toxic chemicals, increase endorphins and tone muscles. It's also supposed to work a treat on asthma and allergies, proving once and for all that laughing really is the best medicine.

Heart of Musicals *1-4 Dec, 9.30am-5.30pm; 5 Dec, 9.30am-9.30pm; 6 Dec, 2.9-3.0pm. \$450 (includes meals and two tickets to a private show). Esplanade Rehearsal Studio, 1 Esplanade Dr (6828 8389, www.esplanade.com).* **Ⓞ City Hall.** Know someone who's mad about musicals? Here's their chance to learn how to tell a story using words, song and dance, like a fledgling Rodgers or Hammerstein. They even get to make like a star at the end of the course by performing in a private show.

Zoos and gardens

Jurong BirdPark

2 Jurong Hill (6265 0022, www.birdpark.com.sg). Daily 9am-6pm. \$18; children \$9. Ⓞ Boon Lay, then bus 94 or 251.

*** Daily; 10.30am & 2.30pm (Bee-Eater and Starlings), 10.30am & 3.30pm (penquins), 2pm (pelicans): Feeding Frenzy** Birds (like Singaporeans) are at their happiest when eating. Time your visit to the park and you'll get to see a variety of birds catching their meals – literally (Waterfall Aviary, Penguin Expedition, Pelican Cove). Free.

*** Daily; 8.30am (breakfast), 9.15-9.45am (show): Early Bird Breakfast Show** They say the early bird gets the worm, and you just might want to let them have it at this interactive breakfast. Instead, you can choose from a variety of delectable dishes