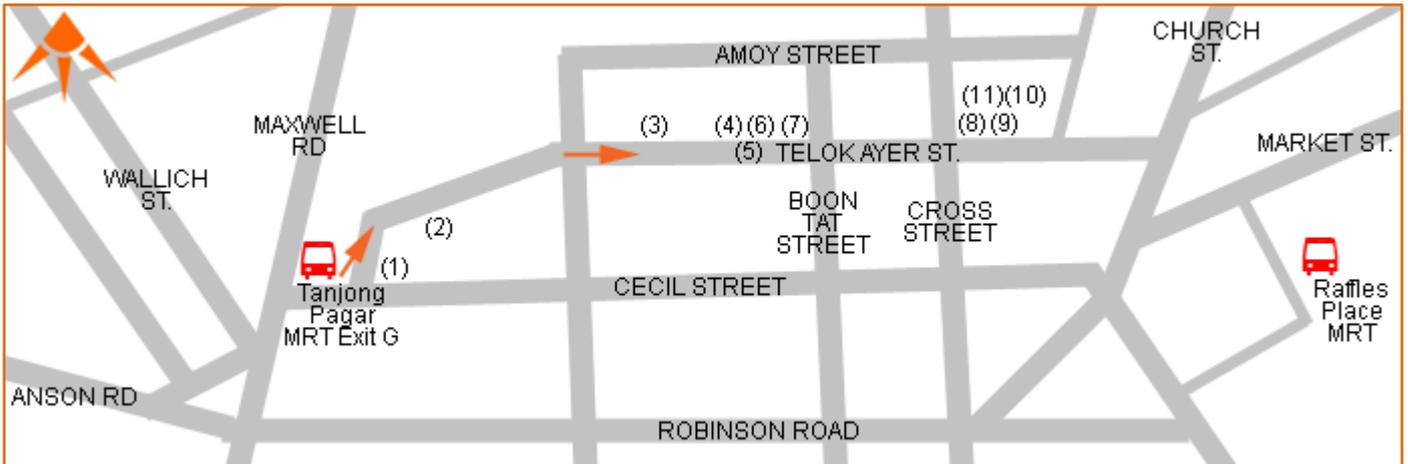


Telok Ayer Walkabout



Out of the Tanjong Pagar MRT Station Exit G, across the road you will find a story board on **Gan Eng Seng School (1)**. In 1885, Gan Eng Seng founded a free school for poor boys in Singapore. Initially named the Anglo-Chinese Free School, it was among the earliest schools to offer a bilingual education. The school moved to its first new building about 50 metres behind the Telok Ayer Chinese Methodist Church in 1893. It became known as Gan Eng Seng School in 1923. After World War II, its principal, Percival Frank Aroozoo, was determined to re-open it. The school found a home in 1951 at Anson Road. It was re-sited to Raeburn Park in 1986.

The origins of the **Chinese Methodist Church (2)** may be traced to a rented shophouse at No. 12 Japan Street (now Boon Tat Street). In 1913, the Church bought a piece of land at the junction of Telok Ayer Street and Cecil Street. A tent was erected on the site. The Church continued to grow but the tent was soon in a dilapidated state. The Church had to move temporarily to Fairfield Methodist Girls' School at Neil Road.



Chinese Methodist Church

Meanwhile, a zinc hut measuring 6m by 10m in floor area was constructed on the same site and in Sep that year, the Church resumed its worship at Telok Ayer. In 1921, more land was acquired at an adjoining site. The zinc hut was demolished and a three-storey building was built on the larger land by a French firm, Bross and Mogin. It was built on its present site in 1924.

Al-Abrar Mosque (3) began life in 1827 as a thatched hut. Its modest structure gave rise to its other name, given by its Indian Muslim congregation – Kuchu Palli, meaning 'small mosque' in Tamil. The Indian-Muslim worshippers at Al-Abrar Mosque were mostly from the Coromandal Coast of southern India, known as Chulias. From 1850 to 1855, the humble hut was transformed into a brick and plaster structure, with a simple Indian-Islamic theme. In 1986, extensive renovations were carried out, resulting in the mosque that stands here today.



Al-Abrar Mosque

The prayer hall was extended by one floor, increasing the mosque's capacity from 300 to 800. Craftsmen, specializing in mosque architecture, were brought in to design the new elements and to ensure that they blended with the old features.

Thian Hock Keng (4) began as a humble joss house in 1821-22. It was erected in honour of Ma Zu Po, the Protector of Sojourners, & Chinese immigrants would go there to offer thanks for a safe passage. Between 1839 & 1842, the joss house was rebuilt as Thian Hock Keng Temple by philanthropist Tan Tock Seng. This Temple is supported entirely on bricks and wooden posts, with no nails in any part of the main structure. In the main prayer hall, the shrine of the Queen of Heaven occupies the central place. She is flanked by Guan Ti, the God of War, and Bao Sheng Da Di, the Protector of Life. In the rear courtyard is an altar to Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

Telok Ayer Walkabout

Telok Ayer Street (5) is also known as Gwan Sun Koi (Gwan Sun Street), it once bordered Singapore's original shoreline. Once the most important street in Singapore for the numerous commercial, religious and clan association buildings found here. Telok Ayer Street appears in George Drumgoole Coleman's 1836 *Map of Singapore* as *Teluk Ayer Street*. The Chinese name for Telok Ayer Street refers to the Chinese temple on this street – *da bo gong miao jie*. Telok Ayer Street became one of the first streets in Chinatown and formed the backbone of development of the Chinese immigrant community in early Singapore. Pre-war houses can be found along Telok Ayer Street.



Telok Ayer Green (6) commemorates the Malay, Indian and Chinese communities that settled in this area, Telok Ayer Green is a quaint little park filled with sculptures of the street's former inhabitants as well as various signboards detailing its history.

Originally known as Shahul Hamid Durgah, **Nagore Durgah Shrine (7)** was built by South Indian Chulia Muslims in 1828 – 1830 on land granted by the British government. A shrine originally erected in honour of an Indian holy man. But now a place of worship and a cultural centre for the Tamil Muslims, it was declared a national monument in 1974.

Established in 1822-23, **Ying Fo Fui Kun (8)** is one of the first clan associations in Singapore. At a time when development in Singapore was in its infancy, Ying Fo Fui Kun's clan house was amongst the first buildings in Telok Ayer, where the island's earliest Chinese settlement was located. It began life as a temple, serving the needs of Hakka immigrants from Jia Ying prefecture. Its founder, Liu Runde, envisaged Ying Fo Fui Kun as a public institution that would not only provide welfare services – the conventional role of a clan association – but also act as a

kinship bridge between the Hakka community in Singapore and China. In 1905, Ying Fo Fui Kun opened what was then considered a modern Chinese school. Ying Fo Fui Kun's clan house has since been rebuilt several times, but it has always remained at its original site in Telok Ayer.



Built in 1843-44, the eclectic style two-storey building has a small open-air courtyard. On the ground floor are meeting and administration rooms, while the upper level houses an altar dedicated to Guan Ti. A popular deity revered by many clan associations, Guan Ti embodies the qualities of courage and loyalty – two virtues close to the hearts of the early Chinese immigrants.

Fuk Tak Chi (9) was one of the first Chinese temples in Singapore; it had its beginnings here as a small shrine set up by Hakka and Cantonese immigrants in 1824. The entrance gate and its immediate section was designed and built according to the formal style of the old magistrate courts in China. This signified the power of the temple and its authorities in mediating disputes. As its importance grew, it also functioned as an association that looked after the interests of the two dialect groups. The patron deity is the Earth God or Dai Bak Gong (in Cantonese) – a popular deity with the Chinese here. In July 1994, the operation of the temple ceased on this site and the management was relocated.

Fuk Tak Chi Museum was officially opened by Dr. Richard Hu, Minister for Finance and MP for Kreta Ayer-Tanglin GRC, on 19 November 1998. Hour of operation is from 10am to 10pm daily, free admission. Fuk Tak Chi Museum aim is to highlight the history of Chinatown from the time of the earliest Chinese migrants. The museum is a showcase of the colourful history of the Telok Ayer Street and the vibrant culture of Chinatown.

Fuk Tak Chi Museum is part of **Far East Square (10)**, a unique enclave located in the very heart of Singapore's central business district. The grand opening was by his Excellency Mr. Ong Teng Cheong, President of the Republic of Singapore, on 30 March 1999. It is a heritage conservation project with a vibrant mix of restaurants, cafes, and pubs, as well as shops, pushcarts and kiosks. A 30-month long development project consists of the conservation 61 units of traditional shop-houses, of which 2 are national built heritage (Fuk Tak Chi Temple and Chui Eng Free School) and the construction of two new buildings for commercial activities. Designed and built according to the Chinese concept of geomancy. A stroll along the Heritage Trail offers a glimpse into the lives of early immigrants.



Chui Eng Free School

Chui Eng Free School (11), also known as the Chinese Free School. Built in 1845 and endowed by Tan Kim Seng, a wealthy Straits Chinese merchant, the school was for boys in the Hokkien community. It closed down in 1954. With the development of Far East Square, this premise is reinvented as a commercial food outlet.