



TALES FROM TWO CITIES

ATHENS



SINGAPORE



In Scoot's "Tales From Two Cities", we ask two writers from across the globe to craft a travel itinerary for each other, based on their insights as natives. This month, writers from Athens and Singapore switch itineraries for a local experience like no other

WORDS & PHOTOS ■ BRYAN YEONG & ELENA SERGEEVA



EXCHANGE TRAVELLER PROFILE

Elena Sergeeva

Age: 34

Occupation: Travel Blogger

Home Country: Greece

THE GOAL

To savour Singapore's array of culinary delights, as well as to see its futuristic megapolis and majestic gardens first-hand.

THE ITINERARY

Day 1

- Head to Gardens by the Bay, a 101-hectare nature park.
- Check out Marina Bay Sands' luxury buildings and retail offerings.
- Marvel at Spectra, a free-to-public outdoor light and water show.

Day 2

- Explore Chinatown and the Indian temples nearby.
- Sample the signature Chicken Rice dish at Maxwell Hawker Centre.

Day 3

- Stop by National Orchid Garden, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Walk along Esplanade Theatre strip, passing by the iconic Merlion Park.

DIVERSE ENCOUNTERS

Hailed as the most expensive city in the world, Singapore surprisingly boasts free and exciting things to do. Thanks to an exceptionally detailed itinerary, efficient transport system, and the help of kind locals, I got to explore the Little Red Dot's alluring culture and stunning modernity, while experiencing the vibrancy of its naturistic side.

SERENITY IN A MODERN METROPOLIS

On my first day in Singapore, I headed to the thousands of plant species at Gardens by the Bay, and was instantly in awe at how the towering buildings and natural attractions coexist harmoniously. The Cloud Forest was adorned with magical floral displays, high-rise evergreen trees, and an impressive waterfall – all fantastic testaments to Singapore's "garden city" identity.

Before sunset, I strolled towards the Supertree Grove to get a bird's eye view from the 22-metre-high bridge of the OCBC Skyway, where I

District. In my mind, this formed a vivid and charming impression of Singapore's harmonious balance; an equilibrium between city and nature that exists in this modern metropolis.

On my third day, I trooped to the National Orchid Garden – Singapore's first and only UNESCO World Heritage Site. I was captivated by the exotic collection of orchids on display. The VIP Orchid Garden showcases outstanding hybrids that represent closer ties between the country and other nations.

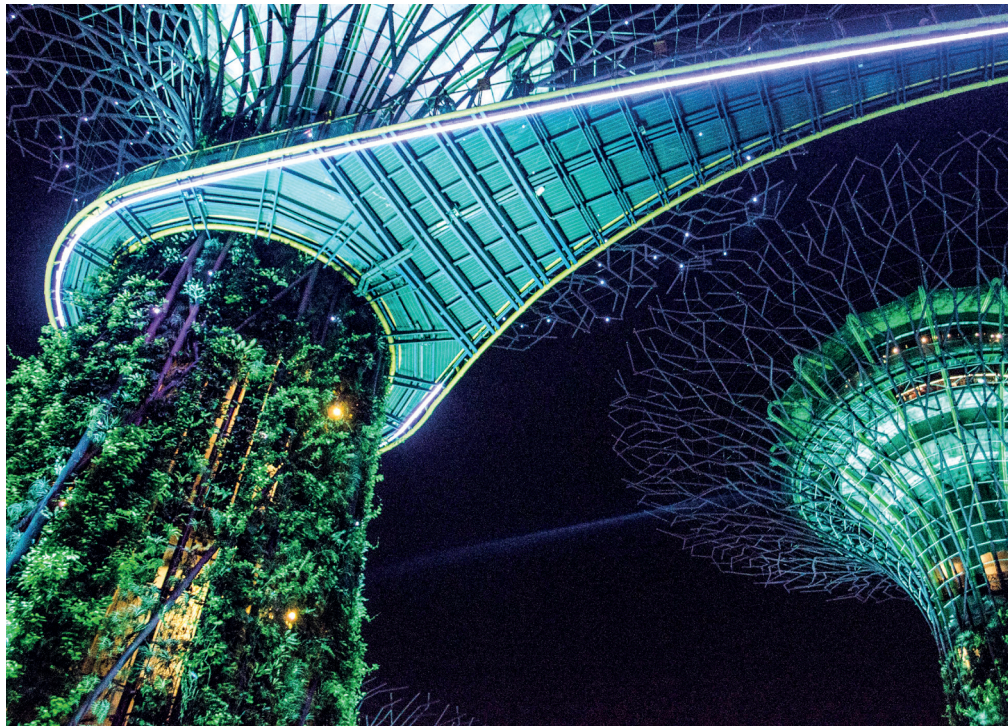


ABOVE:
Kampong
Glam Area

witnessed the dazzling Garden Rhapsody light and sound show. Then, I headed to Marina Bay Sands to watch Spectra, another visually-pleasing outdoor light and water show that is not to be missed.

The city's abundant expansive parks, promenades, and bike lanes all add up to the numerous recreational possibilities. Another factor that astonished me about the city was the sound of birds singing as I made my way through the skyscrapers of the Central Business





TASTING THE LITTLE RED DOT

As frequent travellers may already know, one of the best ways to get accustomed to a destination's culture is through its food. My itinerary made sure that I indulged in the best culinary experiences Singapore has to offer. For Singaporeans, eating mouth-watering cuisine is a favourite pastime. I also noticed that locals tend to patiently queue up for good food no matter how long the lines are (which I followed suit by diligently lining up for 20 minutes to try the Tian Tian Chicken Rice at Maxwell Hawker Centre).

For breakfast, I went to Ya Kun Kaya Toast to try the quintessential kaya toast – a popular snack of charcoal-toasted bread spread with butter and *kaya* (a jam made from palm sugar, coconut milk, and pandan), served with two runny soft-boiled eggs. Also, I highly recommend not leaving Singapore without sampling a serving of *satay*, an Indonesian dish of grilled meat (usually chicken, beef, or mutton) served with peanut sauce.

SEE YOU LATER

As I flew out of Singapore and watched the hundreds of docked ships twinkle in the night, I was grateful for this revelatory journey. Indeed, the country is filled with warm-hearted people who possess passion and respect for their history, culture, and natural environment.



LUXURY URBAN RETREAT

Featuring elegant serviced apartments set in the Central Business District, Oakwood Premier OUE Singapore offers easy access to Singapore's main attractions and cultural districts. Their luxurious one-bedroom apartments (the one I stayed at) provide a homely feeling, with spaces that are decked with top amenities including a mobile phone with a customised Oakwood application to help guests conveniently navigate around Singapore. Other facilities include an infinity pool, fitness centre, bar, and meeting room.

oakwoodasia.com

ABOVE:
OCBC Skyway
CIRCLE:
Satay by the Bay
LEFT:
Sri Mariamman
Temple



EXCHANGE TRAVELLER PROFILE

Name: Bryan Yeong
Age: 26
Occupation: Writer
Home Country: Singapore

THE GOAL

To soak in two perspectives of Greek culture – the majestic mythology of the Acropolis of Athens, as well as the laid-back atmosphere of the seaside town of Vouliagmeni.

THE ITINERARY

Day 1

- Head to the Acropolis of Athens citadel area to get accustomed with the archaeological and historical sites, and also visit the Acropolis Museum.
- Walk through the bustling Monastiraki district and sample Greek cuisine.

Day 2

- Take a scenic coastal drive around Vouliagmeni and the Athenian Riviera.
- Witness a breathtaking sunset from the Temple of Poseidon.
- Traverse around the Glyfada neighbourhood for a taste of the local scene.

BEYOND IMAGINATIONS

Like the majority of fellow Singaporeans, my familiarity of anything Greek-related extended as far as what I had seen on the big screen – *Hercules*, *Clash of the Titans*, and well, the *Percy Jackson* series. As this was my first visit, I wanted to see the capital city through fresh eyes. Stepping out of the airport, I was embraced by the cool breeze of Spring, an overwhelming anticipation in my heart as I set off to discover the mystical city of Athens.

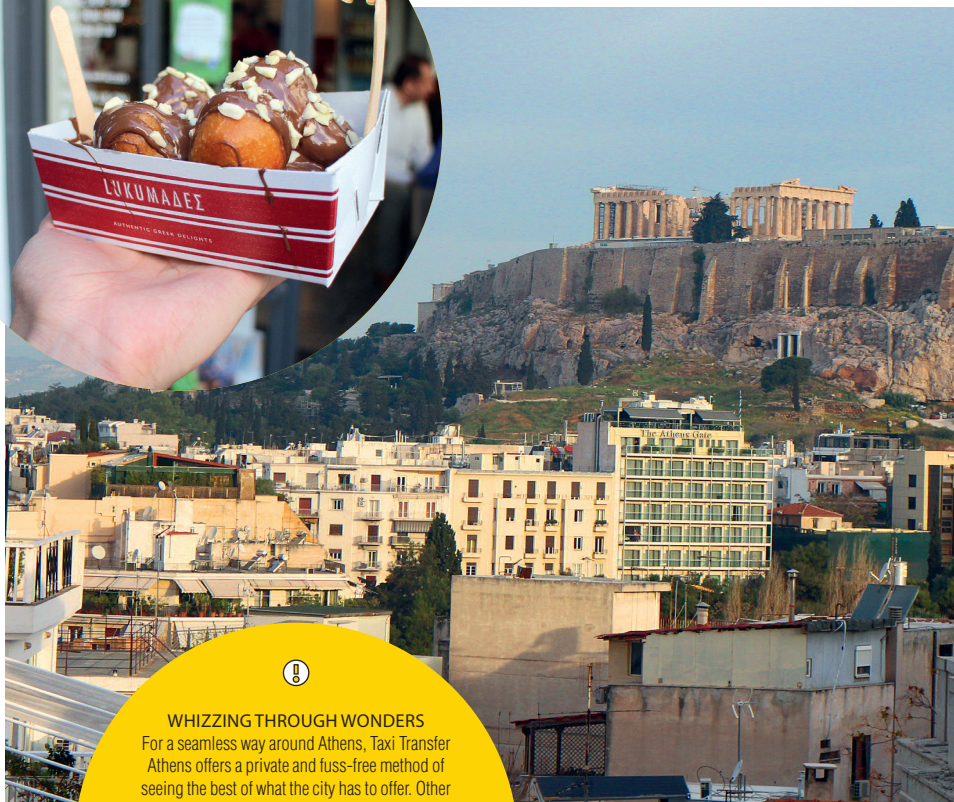
TRAVELLING BACK IN TIME

My priority of the day – as for any first-time visitor – was to explore the historic area of the Acropolis of Athens, but I couldn't help taking a quick detour to check out the Panathenaic Stadium first. A sizeable crowd had already gathered outside its entrance, and it was astounding to be up close to a stadium made entirely from marble – Greece's most famous material – and where the first ever modern Olympic games was held. It had barely been two hours since I landed in Athens, but here I was, already having my first brush with captivating ancient history.

Raring for more, I travelled across the streets towards the Acropolis of Athens. Despite being atop a hill, the climb up is hardly tiresome. I strolled carefully through its sacred grounds, not wanting to miss a thing. Quickly spotting the queue that likely never ends outside the entrance to Acropolis and the South Slope, I happily paid the fee in exchange for the visually rewarding treat within. The spectacular walk inside had me witnessing significant archaeological wonders such as the Theatre of Dionysus, Old Temple of Athena, and of course the Parthenon – the latter of which

THIS IMAGE:
Temple of Poseidon
OPPOSITE CIRCLE:
Lukumades
OPPOSITE RIGHT:
View from Athens
View Loft





WHIZZING THROUGH WONDERS

For a seamless way around Athens, Taxi Transfer Athens offers a private and fuss-free method of seeing the best of what the city has to offer. Other than airport transfers, specific taxi tours are also available, with options to visit locations ranging from the city centre to further sites like Delphi and Ancient Olympia. I was promptly picked up for my half-day tour to the Temple of Poseidon, as the driver Manolis pointed out interesting facts about different locales along the way, before concluding the day with a glorious sunset by Cape Sounio.

■ taxitransferathens.gr



glistened under the sun, emitting a golden glow from various angles. Continuing my history lesson in Greek mythology at the Acropolis Museum just across from the attraction, I marvelled at the artefacts and relics that shed further light on Greece's illustrious past.

On my second day in Athens, I found myself in the seaside area of Vouliagmeni. Thanks to a reliable taxi service, I was able to capture sights of Lake Vouliagmeni, an all-natural lake where crowds ranging from families to couples visit to swim alongside fishes and towering views of the adjacent cliffs. At the ardent recommendation of the locals, I headed to Cape Sounio to catch the spectacular sunset atop the Temple of Poseidon. Aptly named after the God of the Sea, the viewpoint is located at the southernmost tip of Athens overlooking vast blue waters.

GREEK GRUB OUT

After cruising down the busy footpaths of the Pláka neighbourhood, I made a pit stop at one of the many Greek eateries that serve up drool-worthy plates of gyros (grilled meat served with flatbread) and

souvlaki (skewered meat wrapped in a pita bread). For a sweet post-meal snack, I popped by Lukumades at Aiolou Street for their fried dough balls drizzled in various sauces – a favourite among locals. What better way to cap off my visit than dinner at SAH (sah.gr), a Mediterranean-Greek restaurant bar that thrills with an extensive menu, irresistible aesthetics, and live music on select nights.

BIDDING ADIEU (FOR NOW)

While my visit to Athens was considerably brief, it was nonetheless fond, and left a lasting impression on me. From the grandeur of the many sites I laid eyes upon, to the warm disposition of the locals that assisted every enquiry I had, I was completely won over by the city's completely unique, yet welcoming presence. For a city whose allure can be heavily attributed to its days of yore, its beautiful past is the main reason why Athens will always have a place in my future – I fully intend to return some day.



ALTERNATIVE ATHENS ACCOMMODATION

Athens View Lofts

Instead of conventional hotels, opt for one of six high-rise apartments that offer grand views of the Acropolis within your skyline at Athens View Lofts. Checking in to Athens View Loft 03, I was immediately mesmerised by the cosiness of the monochromatic interior and the luxurious balcony that tempts you to stay outdoors with its charming views of the Acropolis. Within walking distance from main attractions such as the Placa and Syntagma square, and fully equipped with spacious balconies and breakfast essentials, Athens View Lofts genuinely provide a home away from home.

■ athensviewlofts.gr

Somewhere Hotel

Scenic sights and subtle elegance greeted me upon check-in at Somewhere Hotel, situated in the seaside town of Vouliagmeni. The boutique hotel is brand new at barely two years old, but promises to spoil guests like a timeless classic. Take a dip in the outdoor pool by the lush, sprawling lawn or work up a sweat in their indoor gym, before enjoying the ocean views from the comfort of your room.

■ somewhere-hotels.com/vouliagmeni