

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Shaped by many voices, told across seven centuries: the Singapore History Gallery at the National Museum of Singapore reopens its doors on 10 October 2026

Marking its first full revamp and the completion of the Museum's three-year restoration, the People's Museum invites Singaporeans to find their own place in the living story of a nation



Singapore, 29 September 2026 – The National Museum of Singapore reopens its flagship **Singapore History Gallery** on 10 October 2026, presenting a fresh, people-centred narrative that explores the formation and continued evolution of a Singapore identity. Visitors are invited to engage with over 700 years of history through thoughtful presentations of historical artefacts and narratives, elevated by immersive, interactive multimedia spaces.

2 The reopening anchors the Museum's **139th Anniversary Celebrations: Stories of Everyday** – with festivities and activities running from 10 to 18 October and the debut of **Stoney**, the Museum's new mascot inspired by the storied Singapore Stone. The occasion also marks the completion of the Museum's three-year restoration works while it continues with the phased revamp of the rest of its permanent galleries, slated for completion in early 2027.

3 “The reopening of the Singapore History Gallery is a milestone that carries deep meaning for us. It is the culmination of years of work, shaped by the voices of our communities and grounded in our belief that Singapore’s story belongs to everyone who has lived it,” said **Chung May Khuen, Director of the National Museum of Singapore**. “Opening on the weekend of our 139th anniversary, it is a reflection and affirmation of our enduring mission as the People’s Museum – a place where every visitor, regardless of background, new and returning alike, can find themselves in the living tapestry of Singapore’s story.”

Timeless Tales Told Anew: Our History Through the Voices of Those Who Lived It



4 The revamped gallery continues the story that begins in the Shaw Foundation Glass Rotunda's immersive installation, *Singapore Odyssey: A Journey Through Time*, forming an integrated narrative experience. After travelling back in time through regional myths and historical maritime milestones, visitors will continue into the Singapore History Gallery for a chronological and in-depth exploration of Singapore's story that traces how the nation's identity has been shaped over seven centuries and reflects on what it means to be Singaporean today.

5 At the Gallery's entrance, dynamic soundscapes and visual previews set the stage for the journey ahead – one that unfolds across seven zones and brings together new and never-before-seen artefacts, and fresh research alongside immersive multimedia spaces and interactive touchpoints.



6 Woven throughout the Gallery are voice input stations, a new addition that invites visitors to share their reflections on the presented stories and perspectives. At each station, visitors are invited to record their personal responses to a question relevant to the main theme of each section of the exhibition. These visitor contributions come together to shape the concluding experience at the end of the Gallery.



7 The experience begins with **Fluid Beginnings (1300s–1800s)**, where a newly commissioned *jongkong* boat model welcomes visitors into the Gallery, drawing a thread between Singapore’s maritime heritage and the living communities who carry it forward today. The section invites visitors to explore a region defined by the sea, where ships, goods and people moved constantly through Singapore’s waters, weaving the island into a vibrant maritime network that shifted with trade, politics and power. Visitors encounter artefacts that speak to the island’s deep cultural roots and its place within the Malay world, from sacred figurines and manuscripts to treasures recovered from a 14th-century shipwreck in Singapore’s own waters. Taking pride of place is the iconic Singapore Stone, whose layered and still-unfolding history can be discovered through an accompanying digital interactive.



8 **Colonial City (1800s–1930s)** charts Singapore's shift from a fledgling trading post into one of Asia's most dynamic port cities. The section opens by grounding visitors in the world that preceded British arrival, before tracing the rapid growth that followed Raffles' declaration of Singapore as a free port, drawing merchants, migrants and labourers from across Asia whose toil and enterprise built the colony's prosperity. Maps, early photographs, prints and more capture the physical transformation of the island, while everyday objects and stories of traders and immigrants who made Singapore home provide insight into a city both cosmopolitan yet marked by inequality. Visitors can try their hand at lifting and pulling a recreated rickshaw through a phygital interactive, before the section turns to the political awakenings taking shape as global currents of nationalism reached Singapore's shores and its diverse communities began to imagine a future beyond imperial rule.



9 The narrative turns to **Fall of the Fortress (Late 1930s–1940s)**, which examines the rupture of Singapore’s social fabric during the Japanese occupation alongside the resilience it forged. The section opens with the mounting tensions of the Sino-Japanese War, with propaganda posters and war photographs capturing how distant conflict drew residents into opposing camps. Visitors can trace the arc of that tension through an interactive display of a painting by Force 136 veteran Tan Chong Tee, presented next to the original. The painting chronicles key events of the Sino-Japanese War from 1937 to 1939 and the mounting pressures that brought the war to Singapore’s shores. The section then follows the swift collapse of Britain’s “impregnable fortress” through personal effects, military artefacts and letters that bring the human cost of the campaign into sharp relief. Visitors can then step into the moment of surrender at an interactive Morse code station, before the section concludes with the aftermath of the occupation and the stirrings of a Malayan identity.



10 The push for self-determination is detailed in **Towards a New Identity (1950s–1960s)**, which captures the hard-fought journey toward self-governance while also exploring the artistic awakening that formed the backdrop to the birth of a sovereign nation. The section opens with post-war Singapore society grappling with poverty and colonial discontent, where artists and activists channelled their aspirations into woodblock prints, literature and theatre that gave voice to the ordinary people. These energies spilled onto the streets through student demonstrations and labour strikes, while a new generation of local leaders emerged to contest competing visions for Singapore’s future. Anchoring the era’s civic heartbeat in this zone is Zubir Said’s piano, the instrument on which he composed “*Majulah Singapura*”, displayed in the Gallery for the first time. The section culminates in a multimedia recreation of Lee Kuan Yew’s televised press conference announcing Singapore’s separation from Malaysia, inviting visitors to sit with and contemplate this pivotal moment.



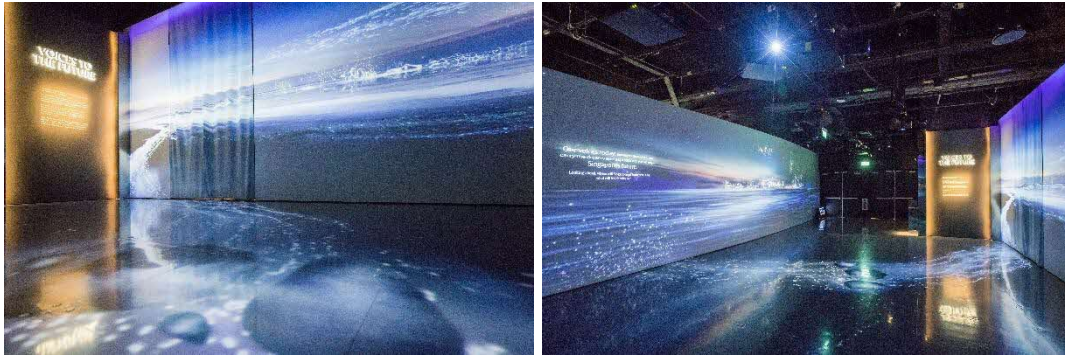
11 **Becoming Singapore (1960s–1980s)** traces how Singaporeans built new lives alongside major government reforms to the economy, housing and education. The industrialisation of Singapore is brought to life through everyday artefacts from Fairchild Semiconductor that capture what it meant to be part of a generation of workers – many of them women – who found new livelihoods in the factories that transformed Singapore’s economy. This spirit of adaptation extends to the experience of high-rise living, embodied in a restored HDB lift accompanied by a poem that captures the mix of enthusiasm and anxiety that came with leaving *kampongs* behind. As rising incomes brought modern conveniences and a new generation came of age under a revised bilingual education system, a shared Singaporean identity gradually took shape. The section closes with a recreation of a typical void deck where visitors are invited to take a seat and read Arthur Yap’s poem “*2 mothers in a h d b playground*” – an intimate snapshot of everyday life in a nation finding its footing.



12 In **Becoming Singapore (1960s–1980s)**, the Gallery shifts to a colourful exploration of lifestyle and leisure that defined bolder urban identities and aspirations. Visitors step into the section through a passageway inspired by Orchard Road, complete with street lamps and signboards, setting the tone for an exploration of how Singaporeans expressed themselves through food, fashion, film, sports and nightlife. Food culture comes alive through a phygital Hawker Table installation, where visitors can tap and rotate food items to unlock stories about Singapore’s hawker culture. The section also traces how independent filmmakers brought Singlish to life on screen and homegrown designers made their mark on the world stage. Sports brought Singaporeans together in shared moments of national pride, and visitors are invited to join in at a station featuring archival footage of the Great Singapore Workout. The section closes on the eve of a new millennium, capturing a city on the cusp of change and a people ready to meet it.



13 The journey concludes with **Looking Global (2000s–Present)**, tracing how Singapore grew into a major financial and maritime hub and world-class metropolis defined by its diverse and dynamic people and a cityscape in constant reinvention. Visitors first encounter *The Lion City 2012–2026*, a timelapse by photographer Keith Loutit that compresses nearly 15 years of Singapore’s development and redevelopment into two and a half minutes, before moving to an interactive mural charting Singapore’s place in global networks of trade, travel and communication. The section traces how Singaporeans have engaged with the world, from technological innovations with global impact to efforts in sustainability and humanitarian aid, while turning to the more personal question of what it means to belong to a city that never stands still. The section closes with *Who Are We Today?*, a film featuring candid conversations with residents of diverse backgrounds that poses the Gallery’s central question to the visitor, inviting them to reflect on their own place in Singapore’s ever-evolving story.



14 The journey culminates in a cinematic concluding experience that carries visitors from Singapore's past into its future. An immersive visual draws together Singapore's past to present in the form of a connected landscape, while a projected river sends glimmers of voices contributed by visitors drifting toward the walls. Shaped by the values, beliefs and aspirations gathered at the voice input stations throughout the Gallery, this collective vision produces a unique skyline of a future Singapore, accompanied by a reflection crafted from visitors' own words.

Beyond the Gallery: Celebrate 139 Years of National Museum of Singapore



Discover the
stories of everyday
139th Anniversary Celebrations
10 – 18 Oct 2026 | 10am – 7pm

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS
Reopening of *Singapore History Gallery*
Living & Design Market • Performances •
Craft activities • Meet & greets

FREE ENTRY TO GALLERIES
For locals and PRs.

15 The spirit of shared conversation extends into the halls of the Grand Dame through **Stories of Everyday**, the Museum's 139th anniversary celebrations running from 10 to 18 October 2026, with programmes and activities themed around the lived experiences of everyday Singaporeans across generations.

16 A highlight of the festivities include *The Living Archive: A Living & Design Market by Of Wonder Wander* with a curated selection of ceramics, stationery, accessories, food and more. Guests can also look forward to a refreshed vendor line-up on 14 October. A special interactive installation, *The National Living Room* at the Museum's Platform space, recreates a living room of the past, featuring objects and stories from Singaporeans that breathe life into a house and transform it into a home.



17 Setting the celebratory spirit in stone is the official debut of **Stoney**, the Museum's charming new mascot inspired by the Singapore Stone, a National Treasure on display at the Museum. Stoney's story begins as he awakens on the banks of the Singapore River with no memory of where he came from. Longing to find his true kin, he embarks on an islandwide trek

through modern Singapore – a journey that ultimately leads him home to the National Museum of Singapore, just as the doors of the revamped Singapore History Gallery swing open to welcome him.

18 Visitors to the reopening celebrations can look forward to meet-and-greets with Stoney, photo opportunities with a larger-than-life Stoney installation on the Museum’s lawn and even take Stoney home in the form of a keychain plush, available at the Museum Martket by Abry store for \$13.90 from 10 October onwards.

19 The celebratory mood continues throughout the Museum with a diverse slate of programmes for all ages, including contemporary dance performance *Searching Blue*《寻蓝》 by T.H.E Dance Company, HistoriaSG heritage talks, roving historical figure performances and community music jamming with Ann Siang Sounds.

20 This milestone opening serves as a prelude to the Museum’s complete unveiling, with the full reopening of the Level 2 *Life in Singapore Galleries* slated for early 2027 in time for the Museum’s 140th anniversary.

21 For more information, visit go.gov.sg/shg2026nms or the National Museum of Singapore’s [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) pages to find out more.

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- **Annex A: About the Singapore History Gallery and Exhibition Highlights**
- **Annex B: Stories of Everyday – the National Museum of Singapore’s 139th Anniversary Celebrations**
- **Annex C: Stoney – the National Museum of Singapore’s new Mascot**



For media enquiries, kindly contact nmsteam@tateanzur.com.

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About the National Museum of Singapore

With a history dating back to 1887, the National Museum of Singapore is the nation's oldest museum with a progressive mind. Its galleries adopt multi-perspective ways of presenting history and culture featuring important artefacts that tell the stories of Singapore and the world to redefine the conventional museum experience. The Museum is home to thought-provoking exhibitions and hosts exciting events all year round including the Singapore Night Festival. For more details, please visit www.nationalmuseum.nhb.gov.sg/.