Complex by Tradition: Shophouses of Southeast Asia

“Who could anticipate or provide for such a succession of hopes and schemes? Only an unimaginative man would think he could; only an arrogant man would want to.” – Jane Jacobs, The Death and Life of Great American Cities

So argues Jacobs for the indispensability of aged buildings, asserting their economic and cultural value. As urbanization accelerates around the world, cities today are battling a crisis of livability. In the face of global commerce, development is in danger of losing regional specificity, history, and walkability. Particularly in developing countries, large swathes of significant, human-scale vernacular forms are being razed or slated for demolition at alarming rates. The shophouses of Southeast Asia exemplify this trend.

The shophouse is a particular instance of the age-old, universal mixed-use typology, with roots in the age of New Imperialism. Distinguished by narrow fronts, elongated rears, and adaptation to the local climate through features like internal courtyards, the shophouse migrated from China along with entrepreneurs and European ornamentation with Chinese form. Historically shophouses dominated the city centers of the region, weaving a vibrant urban fabric. Today, collections of shophouses are adapted and preserved around the region to varying degrees and meet the modern city landscape in different ways. With this research I seek to understand the contribution of shophouses to contemporary urban life. I propose visiting ten urban centers of varying sizes and characters to study and analyze the streetscape, with inspirational graphics such as Louis Kahn’s Power Relations and the Urban Built Environment.

Estimated Budget

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cost</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accommodations</td>
<td>$2,700 @ $60USD/night</td>
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<tr>
<td>Airfare</td>
<td>$1,000/RT US + $700 local</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Transportation</td>
<td>$675 @ $15/day</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>$1,350 @ $25/day</td>
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<td>Misc Daily Expenses</td>
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<td>Sketchbooks and supplies</td>
<td>$200</td>
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<td>Post-travel production</td>
<td>$700</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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</table>

Select Bibliography


Itinerary

sampling of neighborhoods and sights listed
6.5 weeks

SFO >> CGK

Day 01-05 Jakarta, Indonesia
Lapangan Banteng, Kota Tua Jakarta
CGK-KNO 2h 20m

Day 06-08 Medan, Indonesia
Galot Suburoto Street
Ruko and RuKan - home with store/office
KNO-SIN 1h 25m

Day 09-14 Singapore
NUS ‘Baba House’ @ No. 157 Neil Road
Boat Quay, Bugis, Kampong Glam, Chinatown
Little India - ‘chophouse’
Blair Plain, Jalan Besar, Beach Road
Shuttle train (5m) or bus (45m) to Johor Bahru

Day 15-16 Johor Bahru, Malaysia
Johor Bahru Kowong Siew Heritage Gallery
Jalan Harimau Tarum
Bus to Melaka 2h 30m

Day 17-19 Melaka, Malaysia
City center/Heritage area
Jonker, Heeren and adjacent streets
Bus to Kuala Lumpur 2h

Day 20-23 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Old Town, Tuanku Abdul Rahman
KUL-PEN 1h

Day 24-27 Penang, Malaysia
George Town UNESCO site, Armenian Street
PEN-BKK 1h 50m

Day 28-31 Bangkok, Thailand
Rattanakosin, Chinatown
BKK-PNH 1h 10m

Day 32-36 Phnom Penh, Cambodia
French Quarter, Sisowath Quay, Wat Phnom
PNH-DAD 3h 40m, Bus Danang to Hoi An 40m

Day 37-40 Hoi An, Vietnam
Old Town UNESCO site
Bus to Danang 40m, DAD-HAN 1h 15m

Day 41-45 Hanoi, Vietnam
Ba Dinh, Hoan Kiem, French Quarter
HAN>> CHI