



**SUTD IN CHANGI**

**Four ancient Chinese structures**

**What:** Good news for Chinese architecture buffs: Four life-sized antique Chinese structures (above) donated by film star Jackie Chan are on display at Singapore University of Technology and Design's new campus. Dating back to the Ming (1368 to 1644) and Qing (1644 to 1912) dynasties, the buildings include a pavilion, an opera stage and two houses named Da Tong and Du Zhe after places in China's Zhejiang province. **Where:** Located around the campus, 8 Somapah Road

**Info:** Go to [www.sutd.edu.sg](http://www.sutd.edu.sg)

**Owl Cafe**

**What:** Owl Cafe's newest outlet (right) at the university might look like another snazzy cafe with its mosaic tiles, wooden tables and metal chairs, but its menu keeps to classic kopitiam offerings. Items include kopi (from \$2.80), kaya toast (\$2.80) and white curry noodles with chicken or char siew (\$8.80). **Where:** 01-203, Level 1, Building 2 **Open:** 8am to 7pm on weekday and 9am to 3pm on Saturday. Closed on Sunday **Info:** Go to [www.owlcafe.com.sg](http://www.owlcafe.com.sg)



# SCHOOL'S COOL

University campuses are now filled with notable museums, galleries and food and beverage outlets



**Gurveen Kaur**

More than 750 visitors thronged the Kent Ridge campus of National University of Singapore (NUS) on Tuesday – not for a university open house day, but to visit its newest attraction on its first day of business: Singapore's first natural history museum.

The Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum, filled with more than 2,000 animal and plant specimens, is the \$46-million development that has been drawing crowds since its public opening earlier this week.

Its biggest highlights are genuine fossils of diplo-docid sauropod dinosaurs, known by their nicknames Prince, Apollonia and Twinky. The high-profile museum has blasted new life into the university in the west of Singapore, but it is not the only crowd-pulling new feature on campus.

Tertiary institutions are now incorporating cutting edge museums and swanky art galleries as well as hip eateries and bars to become arts and lifestyle destinations in their own right. At the north-western end of NUS' Kent Ridge campus, where the natural history museum is, are other attractions such as the NUS Museum, live performance venue University Cultural Centre and Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music.

Professor Yong Kwet Yew, NUS vice-president for campus infrastructure, says the buildings were grouped together in one zone to allow for "a critical mass" of cultural activities for the campus community and the public.

These activities include art exhibitions, concerts and festivals. The University Cultural Centre and NUS Museum alone draw more than 300,000 visitors a year – with half coming from the public – and this figure is set to increase with the opening of the new natural history museum.

Over at Nanyang Technological University (NTU), which is well-known for its academic excellence in engineering and business, an arts and culture scene is emerging too.

The campus in Jurong West has three cultural institutions – the ADM Gallery housed within the School of Art, Design and Media, the Chinese Heritage Centre, and the Art Gallery at the National Institute of Education.

Adding to that is an upcoming lifestyle hub at the North Spine, or the northern end of the complex. When it opens in the second half of the year, it will boast food and retail outlets including Peach Garden Chinese Restaurant and KFC Coffee, which are already open for business.

Associate Professor Kwok Kian Woon, NTU associate provost for student life, shares that the development is part of the university's transformation into a "univer-city" or "mini-city".

"Having trendy food and beverage outlets and cultural attractions are a boon not only for NTU's students, faculty and staff, but also for our campus visitors," he says.

On the other end of Singapore in Changi is the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD), which has four beautiful antique Chinese buildings donated by film star Jackie Chan, a must-see for Chinese architecture buffs. Food-wise, these universities are also fast becoming foodie havens.

In the main NUS campus as well as within its residential college University Town (UTown), there are at least 15 restaurants and cafes. At NTU, there are more than 10. SUTD, which is celebrating its official opening next Friday, is quickly catching up with Owl Cafe, which opened a week ago, and two more cafes set to open this month.

Some of the establishments even price their items at least 10 per cent cheaper than those in their outlets across the island. Ms Kweh Leng Kiam, 48, who owns three eateries in NUS, saw that the campuses were lacking in an F&B concept.

"When I visited my daughters at their universities in Manchester and Sydney, the campuses had bars and cafes which offered everyone an environment where they can relax over good food and drinks. I wondered why we didn't have that concept here in our campuses," she says.

Soon after, she set up Alcove, Asian Restaurant. Bar at NUS in 2011 followed by Western breakfast joint Late Plate a year later and halal Asian restaurant Spice Table by Pines in UTown last year. She says business is good at all three outlets and at least 20 per cent of customers are the public. She plans to extend operating hours for Spice Table past 11pm to attract the supper crowd.

For Mr Danny Fang, 48, owner of modern American restaurant Spruce, universities were the ideal location for him to expand his brand and explore a smaller bistro setting. Spruce has opened three outlets in NTU alone since last year.

He says: "University students nowadays are more food savvy. They don't mind forking out more for a good cuppa so we figured why not open on campuses." "With three dining options, it's also an alternative for residents and office workers in the area, who want Western food or drinks in a less crowded space away from the mall setting."

Students have plenty of reason to cheer with the diverse range of cultural and food choices when in need of a break from their studies. But some think the increased number of public visitors are a bane. Final-year NUS student Koh Wan Ting, 23, says: "The campus is already crowded with students and would get even more packed if more members of the public come by to eat or check out the museums."

Still, the crowds in campuses are no comparison to that in the malls for marine engineer Rajvin Dave Singh, 28. He drives to NTU at least twice a week for lunch in the late afternoons from his office in Tuas.

He says: "There are many options to choose from on the campus from fast food to food court to cafes. The food is cheaper and the best thing is that it isn't as crowded as in a mall. I can enjoy my meal and relive happy memories of my days as a student in NTU."

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**NUS KENT RIDGE CAMPUS**

**Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum**

**What:** Dinosaur fossils, a leatherback sea turtle, a king cobra and a 3.7m-long tusk from the "unicorn of the ocean", the narwhal – these creatures are some of the more than 2,000 specimens on show at Singapore's newest museum (above). Because of the crowds, guests are limited to 1 1/2-hour time slots to explore the 2,500 sq m exhibition space. The museum is split into two sections: the main biodiversity gallery and the heritage zone where visitors can explore Singapore's natural history and treasures. **Where:** 2 Conservatory Drive **Open:** 10am to 7pm (last entry at 5.30pm) from Tuesday to Sunday. Closed on Monday **Admission:** \$20 for adults and \$12 for children aged three to 12. For Singaporeans and permanent residents, tickets cost \$15 for adults and \$8 for children. **Info:** Book tickets from Sistic at [www.sistic.com.sg/events/lkc2015](http://www.sistic.com.sg/events/lkc2015). No sales at the door

**NUS UNIVERSITY TOWN (UTOWN)**

**Bing Bing Ice Cream Gallery**

**What:** This relaxed ice-cream shop within a bookstore (right) serves comforting flavours such as Belgian chocolate and sea salt caramel and almond. Prices start from \$3.50 a scoop. **Where:** Located inside Bookhaven bookstore, Stephen Riady Centre, 2 College Avenue West **Open:** Noon to 10pm daily **Info:** Go to [www.icecreamgallery.com](http://www.icecreamgallery.com)



**Hwang's Korean Restaurant**

**What:** For a taste of authentic Korean fare at reasonable prices, head down to Hwang's Korean Restaurant (above) for favourites such as spicy barbecued chicken (\$6.50) and ginseng chicken soup (\$7.50). All the marinades and kimchi are prepared by Mrs Joo Hwang Kyung Won, head chef and co-owner, who is from Seoul and has been in the restaurant business for more than 20 years.



ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

**Where:** Town Plaza, 1 Create Way **Open:** 10.30am to 10.30pm from Monday to Saturday. Closed on Sunday **Info:** Go to [www.facebook.com/hwangskoreanrestaurant](http://www.facebook.com/hwangskoreanrestaurant)

**Spice Table by Pines** **What:** A family-friendly halal-certified restaurant

the top level of the three-storey space, which offers a rare peek into the museum's collection, where objects not displayed in the exhibitions are laid out in an open-storage format.

**Where:** University Cultural Centre, 50 Kent Ridge Crescent **Open:** 10am to 7.30pm from Tuesday to Friday and 10am to 6pm on weekend. Closed on Monday **Admission:** Free **Info:** Sign up for the museum's mailing list at [cfa.nus.edu.sg](http://cfa.nus.edu.sg) to receive updates

**Platypus Food bar**

**What:** Platypus Food Bar (below) is a green gem for health-conscious diners in the area. Customise salads by choosing a food box (from \$5.90); high-protein and high-carb ones are offered. You can add mains such as poached miso salmon and Mexican black bean pork to the salad. **Where:** Level 1, Block S16, Faculty of Science, Science Drive 2 **Open:** 8.30am to 8pm from Monday to Friday and 8.30am to 3pm on Saturday. Closed on Sunday **Info:** [www.platypuskitchen.com](http://www.platypuskitchen.com)

**NUS Museum** **What:** Just next to the natural history museum is this older, richly eclectic museum, home to a diverse collection ranging from classical Chinese and Indian artefacts to South-east Asian art. It also has more than 1,000 of the late Singaporean sculptor and Cultural Medallion recipient Ng Eng Teng's artworks. **Info:** Make sure to check out the resource gallery on



PHOTO: NUS

**NTU IN JURONG WEST**

**New Lifestyle Hub**

**What:** Stray far from the madding crowd by visiting Nanyang Technological University's new Lifestyle Hub, a commercial centre. Tenants that are already open for business include Peach Garden Chinese Restaurant and Starbucks. To open in the second half of the year, the hub will be sheltered by a semi-transparent bubble roof, adding a touch of sci-fi chic to the plaza and making an oasis away from the hustle and bustle of the city. **Where:** North Spine, 50 Nanyang Avenue **Info:** Go to [www.ntu.edu.sg](http://www.ntu.edu.sg) for updates on the hub's opening



**ADM Gallery**

**What:** Situated within one of the most prominent buildings in the university, the ADM gallery (above) is a showcase of photography, film-making or design disciplines taught in the School of Art, Design and Media (ADM). Besides the upcoming ADM Show 2015 opening next Friday, where the final works by the graduating batch of ADM students will be displayed, the gallery has also played host to exhibitions by both



PHOTOS: NTU

local and international artists, such as visual artist Tan Kee Sek and photographer Nate Larson. **Where:** School of Art, Design & Media, 81 Nanyang Drive **Open:** 10am to 5pm from Monday to Friday and noon to 3pm on Saturday. Closed on Sunday and public holiday **Admission:** Free **Info:** [www.adm.ntu.edu.sg](http://www.adm.ntu.edu.sg)

**Spruce** **What:** Fans of modern American food have triple the reason to head west as Spruce restaurant has set up three different concepts within NTU – a casual bistro-bar, beer garden and cafe (above) – and

at lower prices compared to their other outlets. Its signature Spruce Burger, comprising a juicy homemade beef patty and melted cheddar cheese, costs \$14 instead of the usual \$18. **Where:** Spruce bistro at Wee Kim Wee School of Communication & Information, 31 Nanyang Link; Spruce bistro petit at Campus Clubhouse, 01-01, 50 Nanyang View; Spruce bistro bar at Nanyang Auditorium, 01-01, 50 Nanyang Avenue **Open:** Spruce bistro: Weekdays from 8am to 9pm and 9am to 6pm during term break; Spruce bistro petit: 4 to 10pm daily; Spruce bistro-bar: Weekday from 11.30am to 9pm **Info:** [www.facebook.com/SpruceBistroNTU](http://www.facebook.com/SpruceBistroNTU)