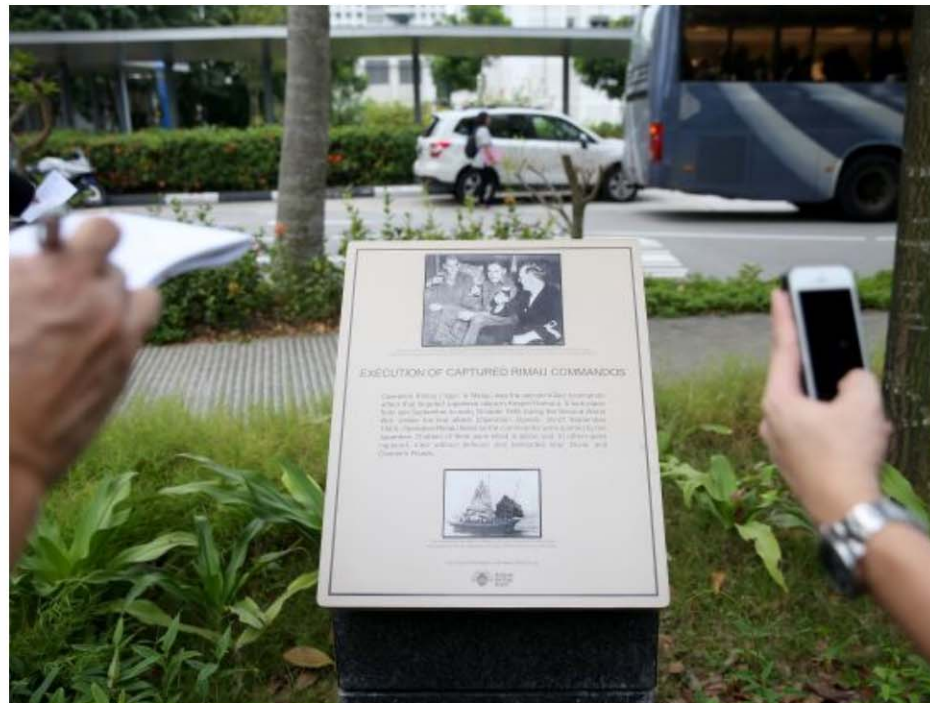


New World War II tour will visit 11 S'pore sites



The execution of captured Rimau Commandos happened here at National University of Singapore University Town during World War II. Photo: Koh Mui Fong/TODAY

*See Singapore in a new light in
these NHB guided tours*

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SINGAPORE — In a fast-paced age, it's easy to lose sight of the past. This is perhaps particularly so in Singapore, with its gleaming buildings and constant search for progress.

But a tour will have visitors viewing familiar roads and places in a new light.

Titled *The Last Days Of Empire: Japanese Advance Along Bukit Timah Road, 1942*, this tour is organised by the National Heritage Board (NHB) to mark the 75th anniversary of the fall of Singapore. Although it was launched last year, it was then only available to students. It is the first time that the tour is open to the general public.

Participants can expect to travel "in a straight line" and walk among sites starting from the National University of Singapore University Cultural Centre to Ulu Pandan Road and Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, said one of the tour guides, Dr Mohamed Effendy, who is a NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences faculty member.

At Bukit Batok Nature Park along Lorong Sesuai Road, participants will learn of how Japanese soldiers and civilians congregated for special events at Chureito shrine, which was destroyed after the Japanese occupation.

And at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve, they'll picture how a group of Chinese volunteers made their last stand, fighting and dying in the last phase of the battle for Singapore.

The tour, said Dr Effendy, “naturally flows to important battle sites crucial to Singapore history”.

Other sites include Ngee Ann Polytechnic, where Japanese soldiers travelled through on bicycles with wheels made from bamboo as they drew closer and closer to British lines. And it was at NUS University Town where Australian soldiers stood courageously as they faced their impending execution for their involvement with Operation Rimau.

There will be a total of 49 tour runs, featuring some 11 sites and structures in Singapore, including key military installations such as the Alexandra Barracks and Labrador Battery.

Besides these tours, NHB has also worked closely with community partners Museum Roundtable (MR) museums and heritage experts to launch a series of WWII Programmes. These include activities at MR museums such as HistoriaSG which will show rarely-seen Japanese wartime propaganda material, as well as public talks on topics related to the war.

The Last Days tour falls under the larger umbrella of the NHB’s Battle for Singapore 2017 event.

“The various tours and programmes of Battle for Singapore 2017, done in partnership with war veterans, heritage experts, and everyday Singaporeans, celebrates a spirit of togetherness, and the poignant stories of survival and courage,” said Director of the Museum Roundtable division at NHB, Angelita Teo.

These programmes are part of their effort to help Singaporeans understand the importance of resilience and unity that was displayed by our forefathers during the war years. “They are an invaluable part of our intangible heritage, and must be passed down through the generations,” she added.

Tour participants will also be given the chance to check out the Former Ford Factory at National Monument which has re-opened after a year-long-revamp. The new exhibition will feature archival materials and interactive experiences.

“You hear these records, you come to this places, and you visit the battle sites. It becomes an amazing thing to see the sacrifices that have been put in by all these people in defense of Singapore,” Dr Effendy said, adding that he hopes the programmes will inspire visitors to do their own research of the war.

Tours will run from Feb 16 to March 12. Sign-ups for the tours will begin on Feb 6. To make a booking, visit www.museums.com.sg.