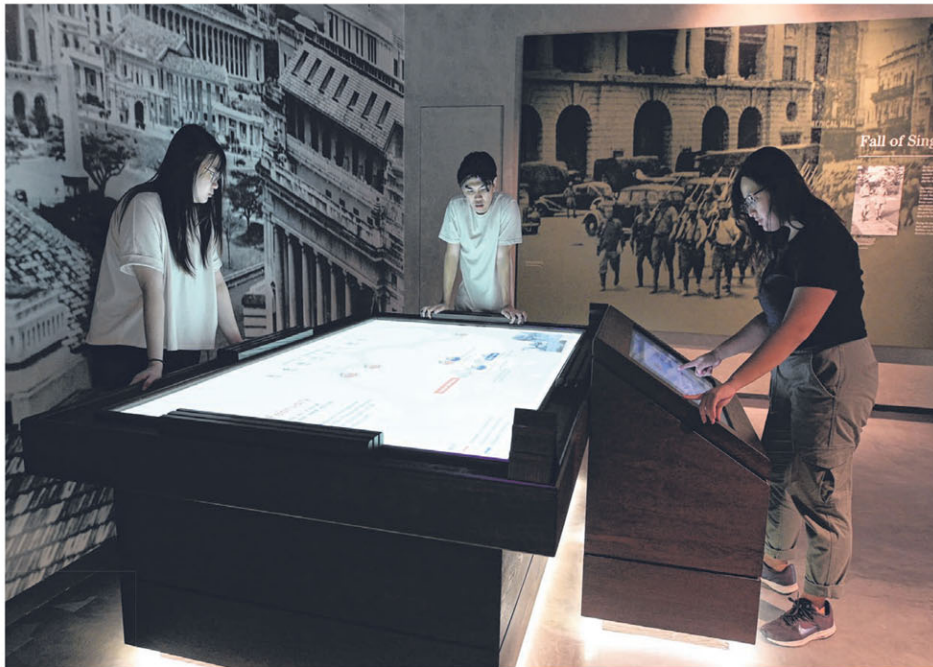


## Five new and upcoming features

The hilltop Fort Canning Park that is steeped in history has been given two major upgrades, with more to come. A new heritage gallery and Spice Gallery were opened yesterday, while a children's play area is set for enhancement works. Here are some new features and programmes to look forward to in the park.

### 1 How was Fort Canning Park named?

- Known by several names over the course of its centuries-long history, the hill that is today called Fort Canning Park takes on the name of the fort that was constructed on it from 1859.
- The fort was named after Viscount Charles John Canning, the governor-general and the first viceroy of India.
- One section of the new Fort Canning Heritage Gallery focuses on the hill's history as a military base, and features an interactive digital projection that depicts troop movements during the events leading to Singapore's fall in World War II.
- Also on display are archaeological finds that shed light on what life was like for soldiers and their families on the hill until 1972, when the military vacated the area and it became a public park. These include ceramics and a toy.



### 2 Spicy origins

- Several panels in the new Spice Gallery recount Sir Stamford Raffles' vision of developing Singapore into a spice island, where spices were grown and traded.
- While the plan was short-lived, with "nutmeg mania" in Singapore lasting only a few decades, many of the island's early spice and cash crop cultivators are still remembered today through road and place names.
- One panel in the Spice Gallery highlights some of these roads, such as Somapah Road in Changi, named after Hunmah Somapah, an Indian landlord who once owned a coconut plantation in the area.



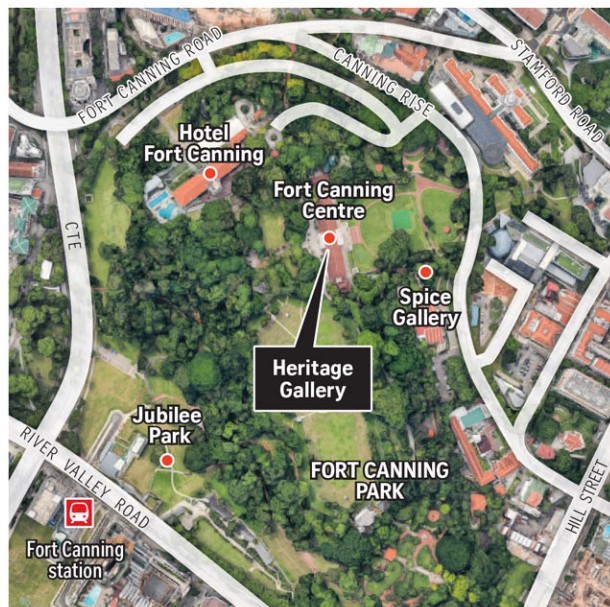
### 3 180 plant varieties

- With the new Spice Gallery, the enhanced Spice Garden now has more than 180 plant varieties, including various herbs and spices.
- They include crops previously grown in Singapore for trade such as pepper and gambier, as well as a variety of plants used in Eastern and Western cooking such as chives, cardamom, oregano and rosemary.



### 4 Ancient ceramics

- Besides the heritage gallery, the conserved Fort Canning Centre – a former British army barracks built in 1926 – also has a 210 sq m gallery space on its third level.
- It will host two exhibitions by the Society for Chinese Ceramics Studies, with the first running from Oct 7 to Feb 10 next year, focusing on glazes and forms throughout 5,000 years on Chinese ceramics, and the second from Feb 24 to June 30 next year, on Song and Yuan Dynasty ceramics. Admission will be free.
- Between now and Sept 11, visitors can get a preview of the first exhibition through a display of 12 artefacts, including a celadon glazed barn jar (left) from the third century that has several moulded statues of a seated Buddha on it.



### 5 Improved play areas

- Improvement works for the Jubilee Park playground – located next to Fort Canning MRT station – will commence next year and be completed progressively from 2024.
- National Parks Board group director for Fort Canning Park and Istana division Ryan Lee said there will likely be more adventure and nature-play elements, which may include play mounds and a rain garden where children can play in water.

PHOTOS: NG SOR LUAN, NATIONAL PARKS BOARD, LIANHE ZAOBAO, VICKY LIM YEN NGOH, NPARKS FLORA & FAUNA WEB, GOOGLE MAPS STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

# Two galleries open at Fort Canning Park

## Heritage Gallery charts the hill's history from 14th century; Spice Gallery covers spice trade

Ng Keng Gene

They may appear unremarkable and are each barely as long as a finger, but two 14th-century ceramic pieces found in Fort Canning Park were among the standout finds from archaeological work done in 2018 and 2019.

The two light olive-green shards from Thailand's Sawankhalok area are on display at a new Heritage Gallery in the hilltop park, along with other artefacts retrieved in recent decades from the park. Collectively, they back up the notion that Singapore's history spans at least 700 years.

Yesterday, the National Parks Board (NParks) opened the Fort Canning Heritage Gallery, which occupies part of two levels in Fort Canning Centre, a conserved building built in 1926 as British army barracks.

The board also opened a new 350 sq m Spice Gallery in the park's Spice Garden, which tells the history of Singapore's spice trade.

At a launch event at the centre, National Development Minister Desmond Lee said the Heritage Gallery charts Fort Canning Hill's history and the important roles it played in Singapore's story, from the 14th century until today.

Mr Ryan Lee, NParks' group di-

rector for Fort Canning Park and Istana division, said the new gallery will be a good starting point for visitors to understand the park's history and context, before exploring its gardens further.

He added that NParks is also planning to revamp the play areas in Jubilee Park from next year, and that a feasibility study to have a lookout point constructed on the hilltop will be completed by the year end.

Located on a hill, Fort Canning Park is thought to have been home to ancient royalty in the 14th century, including Sang Nila Utama, the Srivijayan prince credited for naming Singapore.

In 1822, modern Singapore's founder, Sir Stamford Raffles, started a botanical and experimental garden on the hill to test if economic crops such as nutmeg and cloves could withstand the island's climate. The military fortified the

hill from 1859 and used it until the 1970s, when it became a public park.

These changes are traced through the five zones in the new Heritage Gallery, which showcases the hill's history through artefacts that were uncovered on it in archaeological studies since the 1980s. Archaeologists and historians John Miksic, Kwa Chong Guan and Goh Geok Yian were consulted on the gallery's design.

Dr Miksic, who has conducted more than 10 archaeological studies on the hill since 1984, said having a Heritage Gallery in the park has been a decades-long dream.

He said that prior to the gallery's launch, visitors to the archaeological site on the hill did not have access to much information that contextualises it, but now they can get a comprehensive overview of the hill's natural and cultural heritage

through the gallery.

Dr Goh added that the gallery will be a valuable educational resource, while Mr Kwa highlighted a section of the gallery that reminds visitors that Fort Canning Hill's status as a park and heritage landmark was not always guaranteed – archaeological finds in the late 1980s halted earlier plans to turn the hill into a tourist attraction.

Meanwhile, the enhanced Spice Garden has more than 180 varieties of plants and tells of Singapore's short-lived spice plantations in the 1800s which were wiped out by pests or hampered by poor soil. Despite this, Singapore remained a centre for the spice trade, and spices today form an important part of local food culture that visitors can learn about in the gallery.

In the garden, the Spice Gallery is located within a pedestrian ramp

and underpass, and visitors will find in the underpass three displays fashioned like shophouse units to look like a traditional spice shop, a spice trading office and a coffee shop.

Spice business Nomanbhoy & Sons, which was established in 1914, supported the gallery through a donation.

Between now and Sept 4, NParks will be holding Festival at the Fort, a series of free programmes such as movie screenings and activities for children. More information is available at [go.gov.sg/festivalatthefort2022](http://go.gov.sg/festivalatthefort2022)

The Heritage Gallery is open daily from 10am to 6pm, except on the last Monday of each month, while the Spice Gallery is open daily from 7am to 7pm. Admission is free.

[kenggene@sph.com.sg](mailto:kenggene@sph.com.sg)