

Photo Journal

① Official Program Event

Dignity Kitchen

Visiting Dignity Kitchen left a strong impression on me. The restaurant functions not only as a workplace but also as a meaningful space where people with disabilities can actively engage with society. I felt that it provides an environment that nurtures a sense of community, which is essential for human happiness. The initiative itself struck me as deeply socially significant. Seeing the founder and staff working with passion and energy that exceeded even the intense heat made me reflect on myself. Living comfortably in Japan, I realized I have often postponed challenges, and this visit motivated me to take action with greater courage.

City Gallery

Visiting the Singapore City Gallery gave me a deeper understanding of how carefully the city has been planned and developed. I was impressed by the long-term vision behind land use, housing, and environmental design, which showed how urban planning can shape both economic growth and everyday life. The detailed models and interactive exhibits made the city's transformation easy to visualize. I especially felt that Singapore's success is not accidental but the result of strategic decision-making and strong governance. The visit helped me realize how important thoughtful urban design is in creating a sustainable, efficient, and livable society.

② Singapore's Light and Shadow: Urban Prosperity and Hidden Inequality

Singapore is often described as one of the most successful and modern cities in the world. Known for its clean streets, strong economy, and futuristic skyline, it represents a model of rapid urban development in Asia. However, behind this global image lies a more complex reality. Through field observations conducted around Marina Bay, Gardens by the Bay, the central business district, Little India, and Chinatown hawker centers, this report explores the contrast between visible prosperity and less visible social inequality. By examining both the “light” and the “shadow” of Singapore’s urban landscape, it becomes clear that rapid economic success has created a highly efficient but uneven social environment.

The “light” of Singapore is immediately visible around Marina Bay Sands and its surrounding areas. The iconic architecture of Marina Bay Sands (Photo 1) represents wealth, tourism, and global ambition. Visitors from all over the world gather there to experience luxury shopping, high-end hotels, and world-class entertainment. Nearby, Gardens by the Bay (Photo 2) showcases Singapore’s commitment to environmental innovation and urban design. The futuristic Supertrees and carefully maintained green spaces reflect a city that has invested heavily in aesthetics, sustainability, and global branding. Walking through the Marina Bay office district (Photo 3), one can observe modern skyscrapers, advanced infrastructure, and highly organized urban planning. The area feels structured and corporate, with polished buildings and orderly public spaces that emphasize Singapore’s status as a major financial hub. These spaces present an image of success, efficiency, and order that reinforces Singapore’s reputation as a global city.



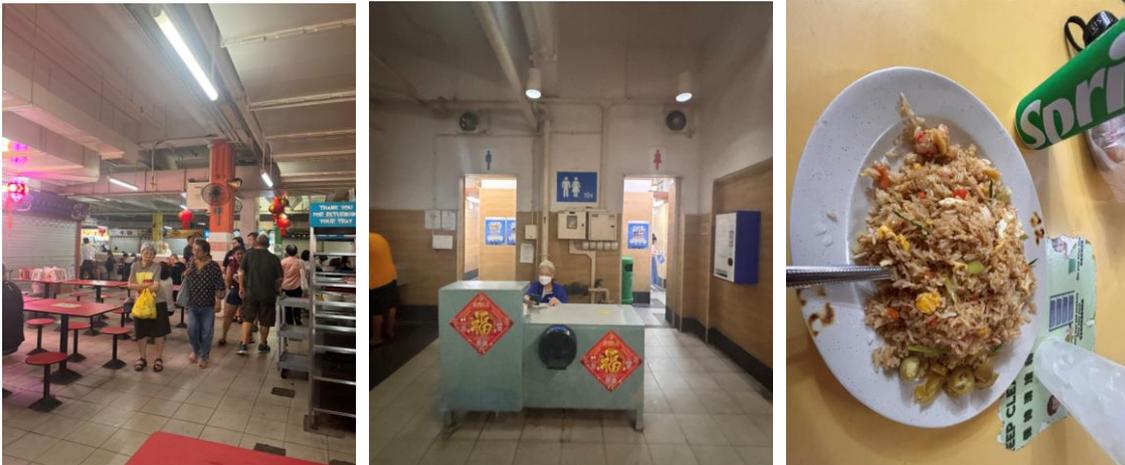
▲ (Photo1-3)

However, moving away from the polished waterfront reveals a different side of urban life. In Little India's backstreets (Photo 4), the atmosphere changes significantly. Compared to the highly regulated and clean financial districts, these alleys feel more crowded and less maintained. Small shops, older buildings, and informal gathering spaces create a sense of economic diversity but also hint at social stratification. Many migrant workers spend their free time in these areas, highlighting the presence of a labor force that supports Singapore's development yet remains less visible in official narratives of success.



▲ (Photo 4)

Chinatown's hawker centers (Photo 5) provide another example of this "shadow." While hawker culture is celebrated as a UNESCO-recognized heritage and an affordable food system, close observation reveals a high number of elderly workers and individuals who appear to rely on low-income jobs. Some older vendors continue working well past retirement age, which suggests both resilience and economic necessity. Additionally, the hawker center's restroom system (Photo 6), which requires payment for entry and even for basic items such as tissue, reflects a highly regulated urban environment where even essential services are commodified. Although the fees are small, they highlight how daily costs can accumulate for individuals with limited income.



▲ (Photo5-6)

Despite these contrasts, Singapore’s urban design also demonstrates significant elements of social innovation. Hawker centers themselves provide relatively affordable food in a city known for its high cost of living, helping maintain social stability. Public infrastructure remains safe and organized even in lower-income areas, reflecting strong governance and urban planning. Rather than presenting extreme poverty, Singapore’s “shadow” is characterized by subtle forms of inequality that exist within a highly controlled and efficient system.

In conclusion, Singapore’s urban landscape reveals both extraordinary prosperity and more hidden forms of inequality. The shining skyline of Marina Bay and the innovation displayed in Gardens by the Bay represent the nation’s remarkable success. At the same time, the backstreets of Little India and the realities observed in Chinatown’s hawker centers remind us that not all residents experience this success equally. Singapore’s development model has produced a clean, efficient, and globally admired city, yet careful field observation shows that economic growth and social challenges coexist. Understanding both the “light” and the “shadow” allows for a more balanced and realistic perspective on one of Asia’s most celebrated urban success stories.