

Bustling Balestier

First launched in 2006, the Balestier Heritage Trail has been updated to provide a fuller picture of the area's heritage, including its lesser-known history. The sites have been split into three thematic routes that allow Singaporeans to explore different facets of the area. Here are some highlights:



Former pavilion wards

Tan Tock Seng Hospital moved to the Balestier area in 1860. These former wards trace their beginnings to 1909, and have a unique architectural design based on an idea by British nurse Florence Nightingale, which called for greater air circulation and good lighting for the benefit of recovering patients.

Balestier Plain

Prior to serving as a sports field for groups such as the Singapore Indian Association and the Ceylon Sports Club, Balestier Plain was a landing field. The first commercial flight to Singapore – a Royal Dutch Air Service (now KLM) plane – landed there in 1927, en route to Jakarta.



The Chan Chor Min Tong vegetarian hall

During colonial times, immigrant women would find refuge in vegetarian halls – Buddhist home-cum-temple establishments – after coming to Singapore to work. The occupants were required to be vegetarian and remain single. These places, including Chan Chor Min Tong, were usually established by migrants from Shunde district in Guangdong province, in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Facts and figures

Total number of sites

56

Total number of heritage markers

16

The story behind Balestier: The Balestier we know today is a busy, multi-faceted precinct known for its abundance of food options, lighting shops, old industries, as well as residences, medical facilities and educational institutions. The area is named after the first American Consul to Singapore, Mr Joseph Balestier, who once owned a large sugarcane plantation there. According to the National Heritage Board's research, the colonial authorities took over the land and divided it into plots for purchase by the public following the plantation's decline and Mr Balestier's departure. This led to the gradual transformation of the area.