



Tours to offer visitors a more local experience of S'pore

At 11am yesterday, Ms Mary Grace Lucero sat in the sidecar of a vintage Vespa for 30 minutes, visiting the nooks and crannies of Kampong Glam.

The 28-year-old tourist from the Philippines stopped at the Sultan Mosque and learnt about its history, saw the Malay Heritage Centre, and took pictures in front of colourful murals in Haji Lane as part of her \$30 tour package.

It is one of a series of trips the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is planning with tour agencies to give tourists a more local experience instead of just visiting the country's iconic landmarks.

This is part of STB's new branding strategy of "Passion Made Possible", which was unveiled yesterday. As part of the new campaign, STB has worked with operators to refresh 16 tours, as well as introduce four new ones. The Vespa ride is for those who enjoy exploring – the three other fresh offerings involve a walking tour of next-generation hawkers, a shopping escapade to bou-

tiques in Kampong Glam, and, for tourists interested in the country's businesses, to the Singapore Maritime Gallery and urban farms.

Mr Gwee Leong Woon, managing director of Betel Box Asia, which began offering the Vespa tours on Monday, said: "Places like Vietnam have Vespa tours, but sightseers have to be a pillion rider. We decided to use vintage Vespas restored by hand and fitted with sidecars."

It has seven scooters in its fleet and offers either 30-minute spins or half-day tours in locations such as

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Joo Chiat, Chinatown, Kampong Glam and Little India. Tourists who pick the Joo Chiat package will visit Geylang Serai Market, swing by a popiah stall to try their hand at wrapping one, and check out the views from a Housing Board block.

STB is also partnering hotels.

Amara Sanctuary Resort Sentosa, for instance, will take guests around Sentosa to show them the last two World War II air raid shelters here, and tell them about Singapore in colonial times.

Parkroyal on Pickering will have an augmented reality app showing how their architectural features pioneered green hospitality here.

At Village Hotels, local designers will create a special room each at its hotels in Katong, Changi Village, Albert Court and Bugis to reflect the personality of the precincts. Guests booking these rooms will receive a booklet on interesting areas around the hotel, and coupons to try out local food – such as Katong laksa for those putting up at Village Hotel Katong, or roti prata at Zam Zam for those staying at Village Hotel Bugis.

Said Ms Lucero, who is on a four-day trip here with three friends: "It is actually my third time in Singapore but this was my first time visiting Haji Lane.

"Going around in the Vespas was really nice and fun. The ride was Instagram-worthy!"

Kok Xing Hui