

EXPLORING CHINATOWN ON FOOT

Taking a walk in Chinatown can be a breeze if the walkways are continuous and well-connected to surrounding places.

by Eleanor Kor

This is exactly the vision URA had in mind when it planned a 1.5km long network of walkways, which will link up frequently-used pedestrian routes in the Kreta Ayer and Telok Ayer areas of Chinatown.

There will be two major loops - one through Kreta Ayer and the other through Telok Ayer. The Kreta Ayer loop will extend from the proposed Pagoda and Trengganu Malls (Kreta Ayer Malls) which are currently under construction by Land Transport Authority and URA, to Smith Street and along South Bridge Road. This will link up with the Telok Ayer loop which will go around Club Street, Ann Siang Hill, Telok Ayer Street and Cross Street. (See map below).

The need to link up

With its rich history, five national monuments and charming conservation shophouses, Kreta Ayer and Telok Ayer are interesting places to explore on foot. However, the walkways in these two areas today are not continuous and certain stretches of the route are neither easily accessible nor conducive for pedestrians to walk.



Amoy Street today.



What it will be like in the future.

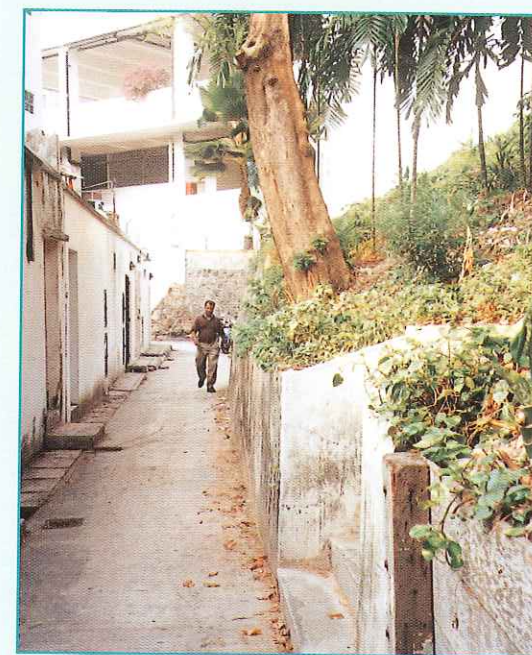


Already completed/existing
Under Construction
Existing Links To Be Improved
Connectors
Future People's Park MRT Station

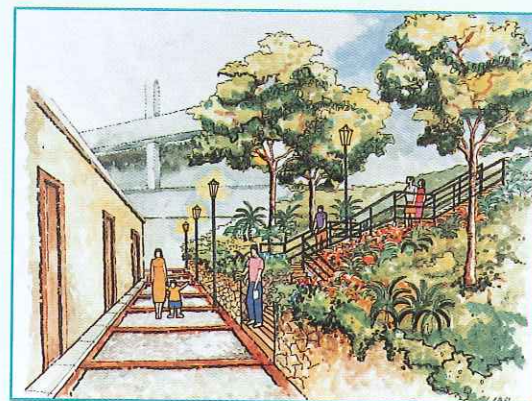
Transforming an ordinary backlane into a landscaped walkway.



Backlane behind Amoy Street shophouses in the past.



... today



... in future.

The pedestrian routes which URA has planned will take visitors through an interesting network of sidewalks, five-footways, staircases and backlanes. The route will also link up the five national monuments in Chinatown: Al-Abrar Mosque, Thian Hock Keng and Nagore Durgha Shrine along Telok Ayer Street in Telok Ayer to Sri Mariammam Temple and Jamae Mosque, along South Bridge Road in Kreta Ayer.

With so many attractions, visitors will be encouraged to explore the area on foot and spend a longer time in Chinatown.

More on Kreta Ayer Loop

The construction of Kreta Ayer Malls, which form part of the Kreta Ayer loop, started in June this year. Work is scheduled to be completed by the end of this year, in time for the festive celebration of the Chinese New Year. By then, shops and restaurants along these streets will be able to spill-over their activities onto the streets. Customers can stroll safely along the malls without having to compete with the vehicles. Evening bazaars, street performances and outdoor eating will fill the place, bringing back more street life to Kreta Ayer.

More on Telok Ayer Loop

Across the street, works on the Telok Ayer loop will only begin early next year, after the Chinese New Year, to avoid disruption to business. The existing open sidewalks along Ann Siang Hill and Ann Siang Road, McCallum Street and part of Club Street will be tiled. There are also plans to improve the walkways and staircases behind the Amoy Street shophouses. The backlane will be widened from the present 1.2m to 2.5m. More lighting will be installed. Trees will be planted along the Telok Ayer Street, and parking lots designated for tourist coaches along Telok Ayer to discourage random parking of these large vehicles. When the implementation is completed, visitors and tourists will find Telok Ayer a more pedestrian-friendly area to appreciate the historical built heritage.

When all is done ...

When the two loops are completed, pedestrians will be able to walk comfortably from Kreta Ayer to Telok Ayer, to the future China Square which is currently under construction and even to the Central Business District at Cecil Street and Robinson Road, enjoying the charm and ambience offered by these areas. 