Squiz The World goes to... Singapore

Each fortnight, we give the world globe a spin, and see where we land. Then we take the kids of Australia on an audio excursion to visit that country and its people.

I'm Christie Kijurina, and today on Squiz the World we're visiting a country where chewing gum is banned, the day is12 hours long all year round, and people walk faster than almost anywhere else in the world.

Can you guess? Strap yourselves in to the Squiz Kids Super Fast Supersonic Jetliner as we take off and take a squiz at Singapore.

JUST THE FACTS

Singapore is a tiny country with a huge personality! Found at the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, it's made up of one main island and more than 60 smaller ones. At just 710 square kilometres, you could fit ten Singapores inside Tasmania—but Singapore has ten times the number of people, with nearly 6 million calling it home.

Being so close to the equator (just 140 kilometres away!), Singapore is hot, humid, and tropical all year round. Temperatures stick between 25°C and 31°C, and it rains a lot—especially during the monsoon season. It's like living in permanent summer, but with a raincoat handy!

While most of Singapore's rainforest has made way for buildings and homes, some of its incredible animals and plants are still around. You might spot long-tailed macaques swinging through trees, monitor lizards sunbathing by a pond, or playful otters splashing around. You might even catch sight of a slow loris. The world's only venomous primate... look it up!

Singapore is also famous for its orchids, which are celebrated as the floral symbol of the nation. You'll find thousands of varieties on display in gardens across the city, showing just how special this flower is to Singaporeans. But, it's not just flora and fauna. The people of Singapore are pretty amazing too!

LET'S GET CULTURAL

Singapore is a giant cultural melting pot. About three-quarters of its people are Chinese, and there's a mix of Malays, Indians, and Eurasians too. That's why Singapore has four official languages: being English, Mandarin, Malay, and Tamil.

This little island has been important for hundreds of years, thanks to its location between the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Way back in the 13th century, it was called Temasek or "Sea Town". Then, in the 14th century, a shipwrecked prince spotted

what he thought was a lion on the island—so he named it Singa Pura, which means Lion City!

During the 1800s Singapore came under British colonial rule and became one of the world's most important ports. But life wasn't always smooth sailing. During World War II, it was occupied by Japan, and after the war, it briefly joined Malaysia before gaining independence in 1965.

Today, Singapore is a shiny, modern city that still celebrates its history in places like Chinatown, Little India, and Kampong Glam. It's a mix of old traditions and futuristic skyscrapers—a place where history and modern life come together! And If you've seen the 2018 movie Crazy Rich Asians you'll know exactly what I mean.

Now that we've learned a bit about Singapore's diverse cultural landscape, it's...

TIME FOR SCHOOL

Going to school in Singapore is serious business! Kids start primary school at age six, and it lasts for six years. Classes are taught in English, but students also learn a "Mother Tongue"—which could be Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil—depending on their family background.

At the end of primary school, students take a big test called the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Exam). It's a major milestone that helps decide where they go for secondary school. Schools also put a big focus on STEM subjects—science, technology, engineering, and maths—and encourage kids to join robotics clubs, sports teams, or arts programs. And everyone wears brightly coloured uniforms with their school's badge!

Plus, there are over 50 international schools in Singapore, where many Australian and New Zealand kids study. Why? Well, Singapore is a global hub for businesses, so lots of families from overseas—called expats—move there for work. So, if you're going to school in Singapore, hello from us!

And if you are living in Singapore, you'll know all about the rules and regulations. Let's find out all about them in....

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

So, Singapore is not just a bustling city—it's a place where rules and routines keep everything running like clockwork. Did you know that Singaporeans are some of the fastest walkers in the world? On average, they walk at over 6 km/h!

And, being on time is a big deal here, especially since the transport system runs to a super-strict schedule. But here's a funny twist—if you're carrying a durian (a spiky fruit with a super stinky smell), you might get fined for taking it on the train! Durian is a love-it-or-hate-it fruit that smells so intense, it's banned from public transport—along with chewing gum and smoking. Yep, chewing gum is illegal in Singapore, all in a bid to keep the streets squeaky clean.

And when it comes to breaking the rules, the punishments can be harsh. Vandalism, for example, can result in caning—a very painful punishment where a long, thin stick is used to hit you on the bottom. Some say it's too harsh, but others credit these rules for making Singapore one of the safest and cleanest cities in the world.

And here's another strict rule: all male citizens must serve two years in the army, navy, or air force when they finish school. Phew—that's a lot of rules! But they help keep Singapore ticking like one very well-oiled machine.

Now I think it's time to talk about something way more pleasant. Is anyone hungry? I think it might be...

DINNER TIME

In Singapore, food is life! Sharing meals is a big deal, and families often sit down to eat together at home, especially for dinner. It's a time to catch up and enjoy dishes served "family-style," where everyone helps themselves from shared plates in the middle of the table. Dinner usually happens around 7–8 p.m., though some families eat a bit later.

Eating out is just as important as eating in! Singaporeans love visiting hawker centres—open-air food courts filled with affordable and delicious meals from every culture. These are popular spots for dinner, and they bring people from all walks of life together over amazing food.

Thanks to its cultural diversity, Singapore's food is a mix of Chinese, Malay, Indian, and Peranakan (Chinese-Malay fusion) cuisines. The national dish of Singapore is Hainanese Chicken Rice, loved for its simple yet flavourful combination of poached chicken, seasoned rice, and chilli-ginger sauce. I've stuck a link to this delicious recipe in your episode notes. There's a bit of work in it but it's totally worth it! Whether you're sharing a meal at home or enjoying a feast at a hawker centre, eating in Singapore is all about connection, community, and incredible flavours!

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening.

Question 1 What does "Singa Pura" or Singapore, mean? (City of Lions)

Question 2 What is the name of the stinky fruit that is banned on Singapore's public transport? (Durian)

Question 3 What is Singapore's national flower? (The Orchid)

That's all we have time for today. Thanks for staying curious about the world, and joining me on this incredible trip to Singapore.

Now get out there, and have a most excellent day. Over and out.