

The Battle of Neighborhoods (Week 1) – Part 1

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Singapore is an island city-state off southern Malaysia. It has a total land area of 721.5 square kilometers with a current population of about 5.86 million based on the United Nations estimates. It has a tropical climate with multicultural population. It is also highly urbanized and densely populated with plenty of high-rise buildings.

Singapore is one of the fastest growing economies in Southeast Asia and is the fourth most important financial center in the world. In 2018, it ranked second in global competitiveness by the World Economic Forum (WEF), just behind the United States, and took the fifth spot in the AT Kearney Global Cities Outlook which assesses cities across the world based on four parameters: personal well-being, economics, innovation and governance. The Singapore government is actively investing to transform the island-state into a 'Smart City' equipped with cutting-edge technology and a nationwide digital platform. In addition, it is the 5th least corrupted country and has one of the best labor force in the world.

This island city-state itself has an excellent public transport system served by buses and the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT). Crime rate is low and English is the main working language. It is also a city that loves to eat. There is an eatery out there for every budget from noodles at one of the many Hawker stalls to fine dining at some of the top and most expensive Western and Asian restaurants in the world. As it is a cross-roads for Asia, Singapore is a travel hub for Asia with thousands of flights coming in and going out of Changi Airport. Birthday and weekend breaks are common to places such as Malaysia and Hong Kong or to more exotic locations in Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, Indonesia etc.

As attractive as it may sound, Singapore is a very highly competitive society. It is akin to survival of the fittest. It has flourished by attracting talents from around the world. It is a brilliant country to live in for the skilled and talented. Salaries are extremely lucrative with plenty of opportunities to wine and dine, and travel around the region. It is no doubt that Singapore will continue to attract talents across the world.

However, according to Mercer's 24th annual Cost of Living Survey, Singapore took the fourth spot as the world's most expensive city for expatriates. Therefore, for those who are planning to venture into Singapore, it will be beneficial to know the various neighborhoods in Singapore, how affordable are the accommodations, and what are the amenities around those neighborhoods for lifestyle conveniences. This will provide an idea of the pay package required to join the glamorous expatriate community in Singapore.

1.2 Purpose

The objective of this project is to have a better understanding of the neighborhoods in Singapore by clustering them into groups with similar characteristics. Together with the information on rent, it is hoped that the results will serve as a guide on the choice of neighborhood to live in taking the pay package into consideration.