

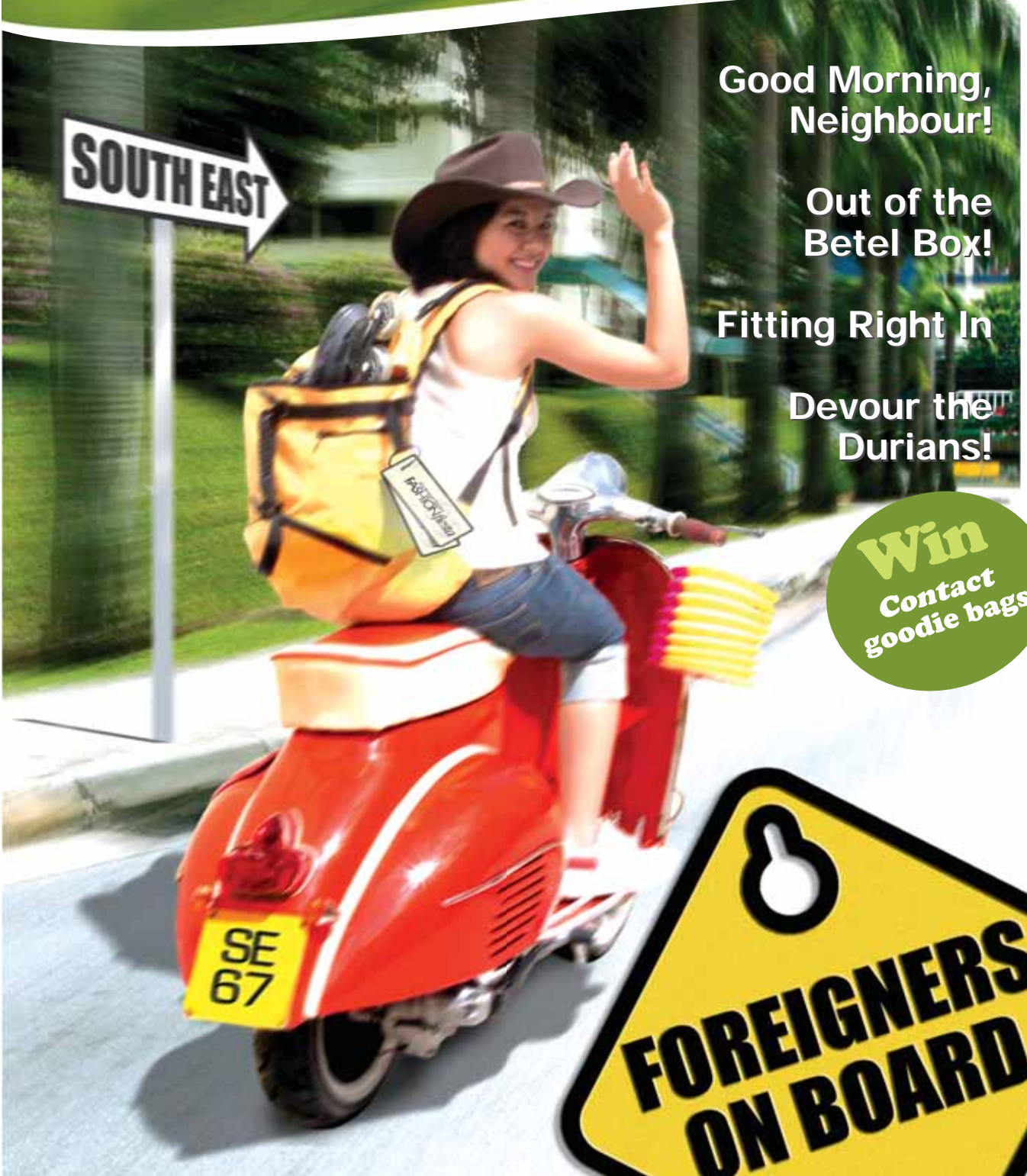


Contact

a community magazine of the south east district

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**Good Morning,
Neighbour!**

**Out of the
Betel Box!**

Fitting Right In

**Devour the
Durians!**

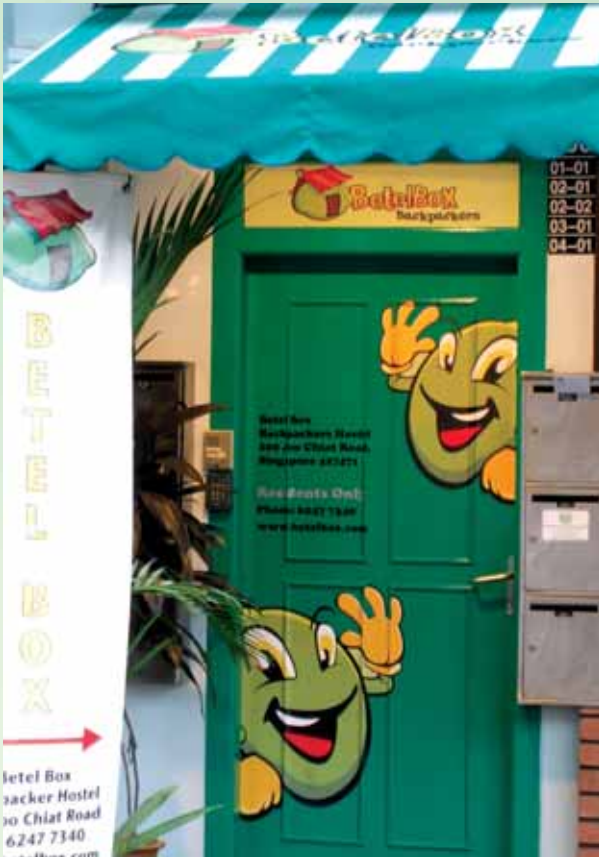
**Win
Contact
goodie bags!**



OUT of the betel box!



Tourists are trooping down to the South East for a slice of authentic Singaporean life! They're living among the locals, wandering in the District and trying out our famous foods! Contact explorer Betel Box backpackers hostel to learn what makes the District so appealing.



Backpackers at the Betel Box hostel in Katong are living it up in the South East District. They are exploring Housing Development Board (HDB) estates, going on cycling trails along East Coast Beach, and even taking bumboats to Pulau Ubin.

Betel Box's founder, 32-year-old Mr Tony Tan observes that while the South East has always

managed to attract her fair share of tourists, having backpackers actually stay in the District is a recent phenomenon. So why did this young entrepreneur choose Katong as home for his hostel?

Mr Tan explains, "Katong is just minutes away from the city. It's convenient and has beautiful architecture and a clear cultural identity. This means that the area has tremendous potential as a tourist hub."

Housed in a conserved 1920s Singaporean shophouse, Betel Box has served over 300 travellers since 2003. Mr Tan says, "Backpackers are generally young and university-educated. They want to appreciate the heritage and culture here and are keen to interact with the locals in order to do so."

Mr Tan would bring them on his Katong Foodwalks, where they can learn "how Singaporeans work, live and play" while tasting local culinary delights along the way.

And that is not all. He would encourage the backpackers to have a feel of the housing estates by eating at hawker centres and chilling out with retirees who spend their free time playing Chinese chess at the void decks.

And this is exactly what Japanese undergraduate Kato Shiho has done.

The 19-year-old says, "Most of my Singaporean friends live in the South East District and they would bring me around their housing estates. Once, they even brought me to Geylang to taste durians! So I got to experience an authentic slice of Singapore!"

With the District in such advantageous and attractive location, Mr Tan is confident that more foreigners will choose to stay and play in the South East when they are in Singapore.

He hopes that his initiative in setting up Betel Box backpackers' hostel would create the community space for more locals and foreigners to meet and share stories.

