

Museum fees draw flak

The ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands charges \$17 for children and denies re-entry for all

corrie tan

Famous museums around the world do it. Some landmark museums here do it. But the latest such institution to open here last month, the Marina Bay Sands ArtScience Museum, does not.

And that is make entry for children as affordable as possible, or even simply make it free for them.

The ArtScience Museum - which in earlier reports was positioned by its director Tom Zaller as kid-friendly - charges a \$17 entry fee for children aged two to 12 years. Those over 12 pay the adult fee of \$30. In comparison, children under six years old get to visit local institutions such as the National Museum of Singapore and the Singapore Art Museum for free.

And parents are not pleased over the hefty prices for their little ones to get their fix of science and arts at the distinctive, lotus-shaped museum.

Mother-of-two Eleanor Yew, who is in her 30s and a vice-president at Citibank, feels that the prices for children are expensive. Her children are aged nine and four. She says: "At that age, their English is not very advanced, so I will have to be the one explaining the museum exhibitions to them."

"For a family of four, and if my helper goes along, that's more than \$100 in tickets, which is not what every family can afford. I can afford it, but I will think twice before I go."

Mrs Emily Oon, 49, an educational trainer and mother of three children aged 19, 13 and nine, feels the same way. She says: "For two-year-olds, and even for nine-year-olds, I think the artefacts on show will be too profound for them. For my 13-year-old son, it might be a bit more relevant because he's in secondary school. But for him to pay the adult price of \$30 is really expensive."

A family of two adults and two kids (between two and 12) would end up pay-



The museum currently runs three exhibitions. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK

ing a total of \$94 to step through the museum's turnstiles, regardless of how long - or short - they stay.

In comparison, at the world-famous Louvre Museum in Paris, all visitors under 18 get to enter for free if they present valid identification. The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain, has free admission for children under 12.

What is more, the ArtScience Museum has a single admittance policy. Once you leave the museum, you will not be re-admitted - unless you pay for re-entry.

The phrase "single admittance" is printed on all admission tickets, along with the time of entry. Visitors said the no re-entry rule is not fair, given that the \$30 admission fee covers three blockbuster shows which they said would take more time than usual to view.

Librarian Monica Phillips, 62, here on a holiday from Australia, says: "I don't like that idea. What if you're bringing children in and they need to eat? There should be clear signs that there is no re-entry. Because if you don't know that and leave for lunch, well, that's quite an expensive lunch."

At the museum, the tiny basement cafe, SweetSpot Coffee, sells mostly light

snacks such as cookies and pastries, as well as coffee and tea. But a stone's throw away outside are The Shoppes at Marina Bay Sands, where food options abound.

All the same, some museumgoers were unfazed. Shipping assistant Amanda Lim, 34, says: "I think that no re-entry is a normal procedure for any museum."

The Singapore Art Museum gives visitors stickers which allow them to come and go as they like throughout the day.

Those buying tickets to other National Heritage Board museums, such as the National Museum of Singapore, can present their tickets to get back in without paying extra, as long as it is on the same day.

Those are public and national museums, whereas the ArtScience Museum is privately owned. However, a check with some of the private museums here found similar re-entry policies.

The Mint Museum of Toys on Seah Street allows visitors to come back on the day of ticket purchase if they present their tickets on re-entry. The museum charges \$7.50 for children aged two to 12, half the price of the adult admission fee. It also has cheaper family packages.

Art Retreat Museum, a private museum in Ubi Crescent, has free admission for all visitors. It showcases artworks by both local and international artists, such as Cultural Medallion recipient Lim Tze Peng and Chinese modern art master Wu Guanzhong.

This policy of free re-entry also goes for established museums such as The Museum of Modern Art and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, both in New York City.

While there is no extra cost to see the special exhibitions at the ArtScience Museum - such as current show Shipwrecked: Tang Treasures and Monsoon Winds - visitors such as Ms Phillips still feel that the price for children is steep. She was at the museum with her 11-month-old grandson.

She suggests reducing the price of children's tickets to a third of the cost of the adult tickets, or having family packages and passes available at discounted prices.

She says: "That would make this museum, which is fascinating, more attractive to families."

Marina Bay Sands did not comment explicitly on the two issues, but a spokesman said: "Since our opening, we have hosted members of the public, teachers, students, celebrities and tour groups and received positive feedback overall."

"We appreciate feedback from the public as part of our ongoing commitment to deliver quality entertainment to people of all ages."

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What do you think of the admissions policies at the ArtScience Museum? Send your views to stlife@sph.com.sg

look it

THE ARTSCIENCE MUSEUM

Where: Marina Bay Sands
When: 10am to 10pm daily. Last entry at 9pm
Admission: \$30 (adult), \$27 (senior citizens 65 years old and above), \$17 (children aged two to 12), \$10 (school group, minimum 25 students), \$24.50 (group sales, minimum 25 tickets), from www.marinabaysands.com/
ArtScienceMuseum, Marina Bay Sands box offices and Sistic (call 6348-5555 or go to www.sistic.com.sg)
Info: Call 6688-8868 or go to www.marinabaysands.com/ArtScienceMuseum

AsiaOne polls draw over 120,000 votes

nicholas yong

Two home-grown businesses - Chinese restaurant Crystal Jade Golden Palace, Paragon, and travel agency Chan Brothers - have emerged as two of AsiaOne readers' favourite products and services this year.

They were among almost 100 brands and products that came out tops yesterday at the annual AsiaOne People's Choice Awards 2010, now in its third year and bigger than ever.

AsiaOne, Singapore Press Holdings' news and lifestyle website, has 100 million page views each month.

The winners were selected via an online poll from an initial list of almost 3,400 local and international products and services, and the awards were presented by the chief executive officer of International Enterprise Singapore, Mr Teo Eng Cheong.

The poll attracted about 120,000 votes, mainly from Singaporeans. This year's awards were the largest so far with 31 categories, five more than last year. Thirteen new ones were introduced this year after organisers responded to readers' feedback on the need to diversify the categories, while others were removed.

The new categories included health supplements, hair-styling products, body care products and DSLR cameras. Among the top five categories which received the most votes from readers were wellness providers, Chinese restaurants and private schools.

Bagging the top award three times consecutively in their categories were Singapore Institute of Management (Best Private Schools) and POSB Everyday Card (Best Credit Cards).

Among the other winners was Tatsuya Japanese Restaurant, which was honoured as the best Japanese restaurant. The Canon PowerShot S95 was also picked as the best compact camera.

AsiaOne editor Adrian Tay notes that its readers are an "opinionated" lot who "vote for only what they fancy".

"So it does not matter if yours is an international brand or a humble hawk. Ultimately, it is the end-users' impression and what they feel about a particular brand or product that matters," he says.

He also hoped that the awards would connect AsiaOne's trade partners and strengthen their presence with readers.

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