

# SINGAPORE TREASURES

unusual stories, extraordinary memories, special encounters, just another unique day in Singapore

## Rats in the taxi

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Chinese New Year was on the way and the whole of Chinatown was glowing red and golden. The streets were buzzing with people, all getting prepared to usher in the new year: The Year of the Rat.

We'd been wandering around town, but were now in a taxi on the way home. We being me, my boyfriend Peter and two visiting friends.

>From the look of it our taxi driver was taking Chinese superstition very seriously, his dashboard had been turned into a complete shrine and good luck charms were dangling from the rear mirror. Whatever bad luck would come his way, he clearly got himself covered. But what he didn't know was that even more luck had stepped into his car that day ...

While chitchatting away we revealed to him that he was in special company. Not just one but three rats had boarded his taxi. Peter and our two Dutch visitors were all born in 1972, which meant they were all rats. Driving around town with three rats on the eve of the Year of the Rat, if that wouldn't bring in extra luck then what would?

Well, at least our taxi driver seemed to think that way, beaming and chuckling at the thought of all good fortune coming his way.

But it got even better. To tickle his superstitious senses some more Peter started telling him about the unusually high amount of numbers 8 we had been blessed with in our life. Our house is on number 8, our postcode contains two numbers 8 (and a 9) and best of all our phone number contains three 8's and two 9's. Mr taxi driver was beyond himself.

He couldn't believe the amount of good luck that had fallen upon us. "So that phone number ah, how much you pay??", he asked. "Well, euh.. nothing, we just got it that way", was our honest reply. "Worth lot of money, lah", he added with what seemed like dollar marks in his eyes.

To steer the conversation away from the boringly tiring money topic, we asked if he believed that meeting such lucky people would have a positive impact on his own luck as well. Oh yes, he certainly thought that would be the case. And as he was a very likeable guy we, in turn, were very happy to share our 'luck' and wished him lots of prosperity for the year to come. Especially in the gambling department, as he'd told us he often played cards with his fellow taxi drivers (secretly, because his wife was not to find out) and that he religiously filled in his 4D every week.

All the superstitious talking had made us quite curious about our own faith, so we asked if being a rat in the Year of the Rat and the lucky numbers in our life would mean we had a great year ahead of us as well. "NO", he said decisively, "you are not Chinese, so for you it doesn't work."

"Well, thank you very much!" Isn't that's what you'd call superstitious discrimination?

Still a bit disillusioned we reached our destination and paid the fare. When we handed our taxi driver the \$10 bill, he thankfully glanced at the serial numbers on the bottom of the dollar note. "Next time", he said, "I will use those numbers to fill in my 4D. That will surely bring some good luck!"

"Have a nice day."