

Life

D **OLD DRILL HALL IN BEACH ROAD**
Swanky ballroom with
military memories
D2&3

OPEL MOKKA COMPACT SUV
Competent, entertaining
and a good-looker
D16

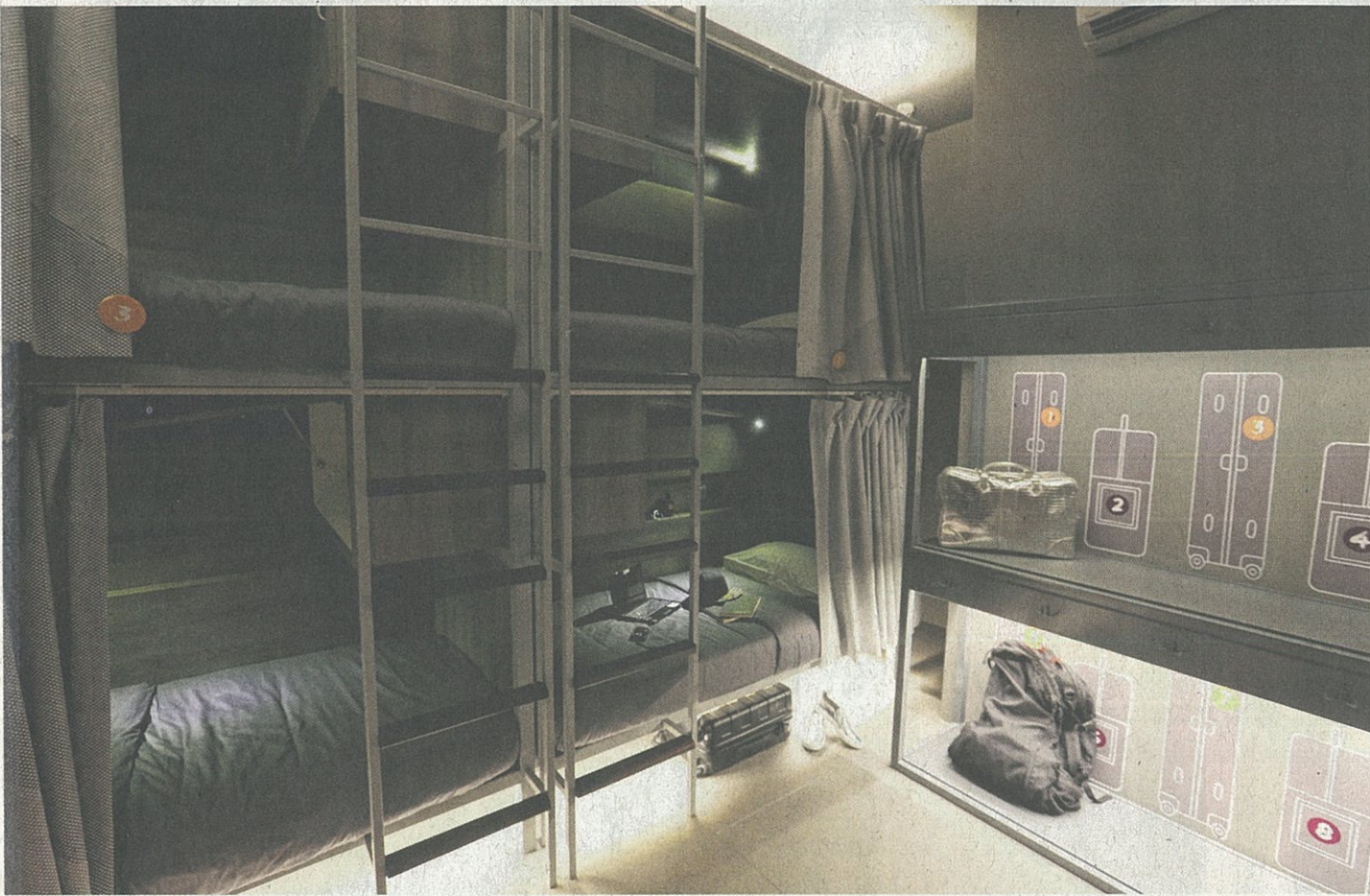


Local storeys

The sleek Warehouse Hotel (right), crafted from an old godown along the Singapore River, has dim interiors and decor that hint at its vice-tinged past.

Natasha Ann Zachariah highlights new independent hotels that play off their locales.
D4&5





A dormitory (left) in Coo; and the bistro (above) on the first level. ST PHOTOS: LAU FOOK KONG

Coo way for like-minded millennials to meet

COO
Where: 259 Outram Road

Tiong Bahru, an enclave that mixes retro charm and cool design-centric businesses, has no shortage of quirky boutique hotels. But a new hostel hopes to tap into a different demographic: the millennial traveller on a budget.

Housed in a four-storey conservation shophouse in Outram Road

and comprising 11 rooms with 68 beds, Coo blends nostalgic references with techie frills.

All over its walls and ceiling are graphic prints featuring “kopitiam uncles”, Tiong Bahru’s iconic Art Deco architecture, local kueh and “Bob”, a neighbourhood tabby cat.

In a bistro on the first level, an abstract map of Tiong Bahru fashioned out of neon lights is suspended from the ceiling.

The four-month-old hostel takes it one step further with a social media-like “digital interest matching tool” to get guests mingling even before they arrive.

Once travellers have booked their stay at the hostel, they can log on to Coo Connect to create a profile. They can find others who will be staying there at the same time and link up with like-minded travellers to plan activities or chat.

The idea, says Coo’s founder Silas Lee, 51, taps on millennials’ love of digital connectivity.

The former head of corporate banking for Asia Pacific at Barclays bank, who is running a hostel for the first time, says: “The end game is to get people to interact face-to-face rather than just being a keyboard warrior. It is about connecting like-minded people and encouraging them to explore common interests.”

The interiors were designed by Mr Colin Seah, 44, founder of award-winning multidisciplinary firm Ministry of Design, who also did the branding.

The design mixes cheekiness with clever functionality. For example, hallways to the rooms are plastered with house rules such as “Your mom ain’t here, clean up after yourself”.

Instead of a key card, guests are given wristbands so there is a lower

chance of them losing their keys.

The bunk beds are like cubicles where guests can draw the curtains for privacy. There are also lockers in the cubicles for valuables. Guests can hop on free bicycles provided by the hostel to explore the area.

Promotional prices start at \$30++ for a single bed in an eight-bed dormitory and go up to \$50++ for a single bed in a four-bed dormitory with an ensuite bathroom.