

SECRET SHOPPER



LAZY DAY OUT: The retail space (above) and the nail parlour (below) have a low-key charm.



Chill out over coffee and a mani-pedi

The question that often plagues me and my girlfriends on a day out is: "Where should we go next?"

Maybe we are lazy cheapskates, but we hate combing multiple malls to find a quiet, quaint cafe to chill out after a spot of shopping and mani-pedi.

Too often, we end up settling for a crowded cafe in coffee franchise chain while we are weighed down with shopping bags.

Then I visited Manicurious.

This is a nail parlour, cafe and retail space all in one shop – perfect for a lazy girl's day out.

Signature style

Don't be fooled by the name. I initially assumed that the retail space of Manicurious only sells nail polish.

I didn't see a single bottle of nail polish – not at the retail side, anyway.

Instead, there are bags, laptop cases, accessories and watches.

And just like the shop's interior, the items are minimalist, understated and yet eye-catching.

Manicurious carefully curates its products, including – as the saleswoman proudly tells me – items from local labels like Uyii, which makes tote bags.

Maybe it's because my shoulder aches from lugging my laptop around, but a sleek, navy laptop case from local label Fabrix immediately catches my eye.

Another local brand is L'ile Aux Ashby, which makes animal-shaped brooches. I'm a fan of such cute accessories and had to restrain myself from squealing in delight.

In fact, I found a few squeal-worthy items across the store.

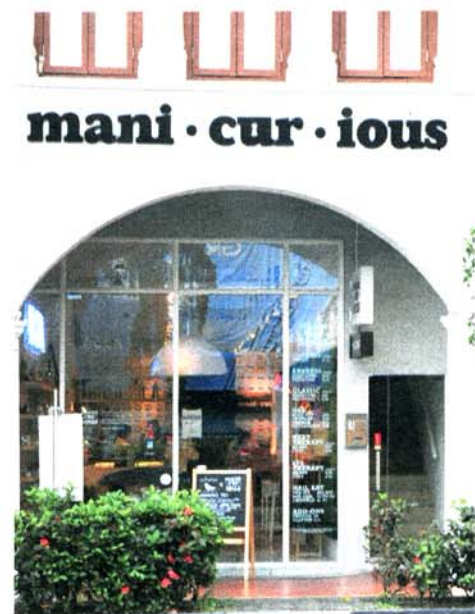
Price point

The prices fall within my budget.

The string and button envelope laptop case costs a reasonable \$79. It's a sturdy bag that's not too bulky – my pet peeve with laptop cases.

CHECK IT OUT

WHAT: Manicurious
WHERE: 41 Beach Road
WHEN: Mondays to Saturdays, 11 am - 9pm
HISTORY: Founded by three Singapore Management University graduates, Manicurious opened last year.
WEBSITE: www.manicurious.sg



PICTURES: NURJANNAH ZULKIFLI, MANICURIOS

A sexier alternative which I considered buying is the leather laptop bag at \$219.

The accessories are simple and minimalist, and yet make a statement.

Take, for example, the small triangular brass earrings, hand-painted in different colours, which cost \$32.

Sure, they are a little pricier than normal, especially given the small size, but they are well-designed and unique.

Of course, the main reason for coming to this store might be to get your nails done.

You can get your nails to match your new purchases. It's \$15 for a 15-minute express manicure or \$28 for a 40-minute classic manicure, if you're not in a rush.

After shopping and manicures, a little refreshment should be in order.

The cafe (that seats about 12) offers a \$10 set that includes coffee and a slice of pie by local artisan bakers Windowsill Pies. The pies are tasty but are too small.

Store layout

The warm lighting and white walls, paired with wooden shelves and tables, give a comfortable, homely vibe.

The retail section takes up the front of the store, the small cafe is positioned in the middle with the nail parlour at the back.

The space is well-planned, so there's no chance of tripping over people's feet while fawning over the bags and accessories.

Service

The friendly and helpful saleswoman greeted me with a smile as soon as I entered the store – a major plus and, from my experience, something too many stores still lack.

While she stayed nearby in case I needed help, she didn't hover over me.

Aside from pointing out the local labels on offer, she also singled out certain things that I wouldn't have noticed otherwise, like how the printed tote bag I was oohing and aahing over was reversible.

Verdict

Located at a quiet area near Raffles Hotel, the combination of shopping, eating and getting your nails done makes it a great place to hang out and catch up with some of your gal pals.