Coming up: Singapore's Capri

By KOH BOON PIN

THE Southern Islands will not be developed into another Sentosa.
Instead, they will be transformed into an Asian version of Capri, an idyllic island resort off the west coast of Italy.

As the Singapore Tourism Board’s redevelopment consultant, Mr Bernard Spoerry, envisions it, it will be a Capri without cars.

To get around the roads planned for the three islands—St John’s, Lazarus and Renget—visitors and residents will probably have to use bicycles, golf carts or a tramline system, like that in San Francisco.

Capri’s low-rise buildings will be mirrored on the Southern Islands where buildings will, at most, be four-storeys high.

Said Mr Spoerry at a press conference yesterday: “It’s not going to be a theme park or a funfair. It will be a place where people can have a normal lifestyle.”

The plan is to transform the Southern Islands into a coastal botanical haven where people can live in harmony with nature and yet have modern conveniences such as fresh water, telecommunications and electricity.

Half-a-million people a year are expected to visit the S$280-million development by 2007, compared to the 1,000 the islands now attract.

Stressing that 80 per cent of the islands, which now cover 88 ha, will remain untouched, the STB is confident the flora and fauna there will not be destroyed by the traffic.

Ms Pamela Lee, STB’s senior director of special projects, said: “There will be different areas with different levels of accessibility. Not everyone will want to go the distance.”

Meanwhile, the tourism body has engaged the National University of Singapore (NUS) to conduct a study of the islands’ ecological features and assess the feasibility of creating a haven for endangered species.

Dr Elizabeth Taylor, deputy director of the Tropical Marine Science Institute in NUS, said: “The 200 species of flora on the islands will be a gentle introduction to the biodiversity of this region and is a marvellous educational opportunity for children.”