

Headline	Adventure is out there		
MediaTitle	The Star		
Date	18 Dec 2021	Color	Full Color
Section	StarTwo	Circulation	175,986
Page No	1T03	Readership	527,958
Language	English	ArticleSize	2238 cm ²
Journalist	Chester Chin	AdValue	RM 113,063
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 339,190



Venture out of the urban areas in Selangor and you will be rewarded with a variety of natural and cultural experiences.

Photo: Tourism Malaysia

By CHESTER CHIN
lifestyle@thestar.com.my

THE richest state in the country certainly has no problem attracting visitors, both local and international. In fact, over the years, Selangor has consistently been one of the most visited states in Malaysia.

That success shouldn't come as a surprise, though. Selangor after all is the gateway into Malaysia thanks to the presence of three main entry points: Kuala Lumpur

International Airport, KLIA2 and Port Klang.

(There is also the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, which is more popularly known as the "old Subang Airport", but that is mainly used for short commercial flights within the peninsula, as well as for cargo shipments and helicopter usage.)

Of course, it also helps that Selangor has no shortage of interesting travel experiences to entice both domestic and international tourists.

"A holiday in Selangor is filled with non-stop fun, entertainment and adventure. This is one of the most developed states in the country," said Tourism Malaysia in a virtual brochure.

The agency went on to list a broad list of attractions in the state. These include "the glow of fireflies, watch intriguing festivals, have a terrific time at the theme parks, go on a shopping spree or enjoy the sights and sounds of nature".

However, there's a chance of

these experiences missing from the radar of travellers as they flock to the more glitzy Kuala Lumpur.

Geographically, Selangor completely surrounds KL, and tourists sometimes overlook the many districts within the state, for the capital city.

It was something that Indian travel writer Devesh Joshi detailed in his account of a trip he took to the state in 2017, while travelling around the peninsula.

"After staying in downtown KL

for a few nights, and comparing it with my time in the neighbouring state of Selangor, I realised that KL was, after all, never meant for me," Devesh wrote in his blog FootLoose Dev.

"If given a chance to revisit Peninsular Malaysia, I'd like to uncover a bit more of Selangor, or perhaps the southwestern coast and the comparatively offbeat northeast," he added.

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➔ Explore greater Klang Valley ➔

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Devesh added that Selangor has many hidden gems that provide travellers with a great escape.

"Away from the urban centres, while still not very far, Selangor offers convenient travel options

and a far refreshing scene of rural villages. Its serene coastline towards the west moreover promises a pleasant and a relaxing holiday," he gushed in his blog entry.

That call to explore the greater Klang Valley has also been made by Tourism Selangor, the tourism

promotional arm of the state.

"Outside its cities, Selangor is adorned with lush greens that vary with the landscape and topography – from the coastal mangroves and verdant tropical rainforest right down to the charming fishing villages that pave the coastline, such

as Sekinchan, Tanjung Sepat, Pulau Carey and Pulau Ketam," said Tourism Selangor on its website.

Selangor has nine districts in total, with Petaling being the most central and urban. Visitors from other states would usually travel here to go shopping at the many

malls in Petaling Jaya.

But if you venture further out, you'll find that Selangor has many surprises in store for everyone. With some recommendations from Tourism Selangor, we track down the things that visitors can do at six of the districts in the state.



Batu Caves is home to a temple that's considered an important religious landmark by Hindus. — YAP CHEE HONG/The Star

GOMBAK

The third smallest district in Selangor is blessed with hilly terrains. It is home to the Gombak Selangor Quartz Ridge (also known as the Klang Gates Quartz Ridge), the longest quartz formation in the world.

Another natural wonder here is Batu Caves. The limestone hill comprises three major caves and several smaller caverns. The highlight is the 100-year-old temple inside the main caves, and around it.

Considered an important religious landmark by Hindus, the

temple is also home to the world's tallest statue of Lord Murugan.

Gombak also offers many great outdoor adventure spots such as the Templer Forest Eco Park, Kanching Eco Forest park and Sungai Tua Eco Forest park. These places are all perfect for a picnic outing with the family amid some lush greenery and refreshing river.

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) – always a top destination during school holidays – is also located in this district.

For animal lovers, head on

over to the National Zoo. Kids would be delighted to explore the many animals, including elephants, Malayan tiger, panda bear and seladang, that are housed here. Be sure to take a train ride around the zoo for a more fun experience.

Elsewhere, the Orang Asli Museum offers visitors a glimpse of the history and tradition of the indigenous people. Take the time to learn about the community's unique heritage through various exhibits such as hunting equipment, traditional musical instruments and personal ornaments.

HULU LANGAT

Foodies might recognise Hulu Langat as the district that's notable for two Malaysian delicacies – satay and durian. Kajang, located within the district, is known for satay that are tender and flavourful. Meanwhile, durian lovers visit Hulu Langat to look for the coveted "durian bukit" (durian from the hill). This variety of durian is considered to be more natural as they are grown by the Orang Asli community with the use of minimal pesticide.

Located in the interior of the state, Hulu Langat is also known for its natural attractions. The district offers a number of recreational activities such as hiking, jungle trekking and swimming in the river. The popular outdoor getaways here are Sungai Gabai Waterfalls, Semenyih Water Reservoir, Tekala Recreational Park and the Congkak River Forest Recreational Center.

Those looking to scale Mount Kinabalu in Sabah can make the district's Mount Nuang (1,483m) their training ground. More amateur hikers can head to Saga or Broga hills for a more beginner-friendly hike.



Satay Kajang is known to be tender and flavourful. — Filepic

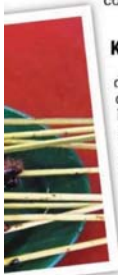


Sky Mirror in Kuala Selangor is one of the top attractions to visit in Malaysia. — Tourism Selangor

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The imposing Sultan Suleiman Building is one of the prettiest colonial buildings in Klang. — Tourism Selangor



KLANG

Klang is a historical district, and this is evident from the many heritage buildings found in the area. It is also home to a royal town that's one of the oldest and most vibrant in the country.

That rich royal history can be traced at the Sultan Abdul Aziz Royal Gallery.

The gallery is one of the stops in the Royal Klang Town Heritage Walk trail. Other places of interest

to look out for include the Istana Alam Shah and Raja Abdullah Warehouse.

Visitors should also take the time to explore Klang's Little India.

Located along Jalan Tengku Kelana, the enclave is the largest Indian-influenced street in Malaysia. During Deepavali, the street comes alive with an electrifying celebratory atmosphere.

In the evening, go to Tanjung Harapan to enjoy the cool ocean breeze. The seaside promenade is also a great place to feast on seafood at the many restaurants around the area.



KUALA LANGAT

Located southwest of the state, Kuala Langat is a district that is rich in natural as well as cultural attractions. Here is where visitors will find Pulau Carey, home to the Mah Meri Orang Asli tribe. That heritage is well documented at the Mah Meri Cultural Village.

The best time to visit the island is during the Hari Moyang (Ancestor Day) festival. Visitors to Pulau Carey should also make a stop at Hatter's Castle. Built in the 1920s, the colonial-era cottage bungalow is still well-maintained today with a beautiful landscaped garden.

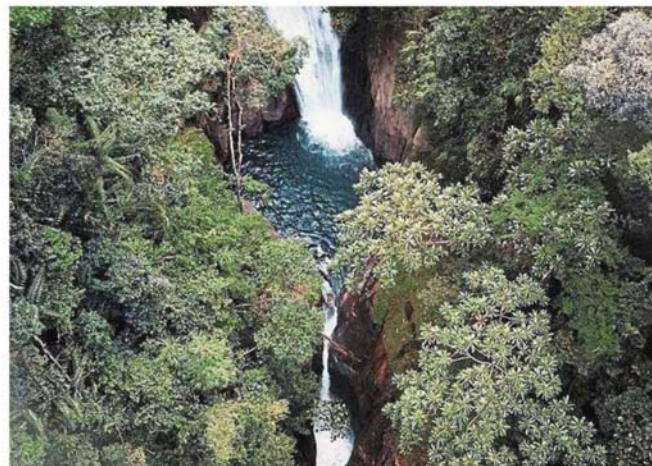
On the nature side of things, the district has the beautiful Kelanang and Morib beaches. There are several resorts around where you can just unwind by the beach. Outdoor lovers can head to Jugra Hill for an exhilarating tandem paragliding experience.

Historical buffs can visit Istana Bandar in the former royal town of



Pulau Carey, home to the legendary Mah Meri tribe. — Filepic

Jugra. Built in 1906 during the reign of Sultan Alaeddin Sulaiman Shah, Istana Bandar was once the administrative centre of Selangor. The heritage landmark stands tall in present day as a mark of the Selangor sultanate's illustrious past.



Chiling Waterfalls in Hulu Selangor is one of the most beautiful waterfalls in the state. — Filepic

KUALA SELANGOR

Over the years, Kuala Selangor has shed its off-the-beaten path status thanks to the popularity of several places on social media. Travellers might immediately associate the district with fireflies in the past, but these days, they know that Kuala Selangor has more to offer.

One such popular venue is the Sky Mirror, which is a sandbank that only appears during certain times in the middle of the Straits of Malacca. When photographed from certain angles, Sky Mirror produces a mirror-like reflection of the sky.

Another natural phenomenon in Kuala Selangor – the “blue

tears” – is caused by Dinoflagellates, an algae or that emits blue-green light at night. The phenomenon can be seen on a speedboat ride along waters where the river meets the sea.

If you love history, then begin your tour at Bukit Malawati. In the past, the hill was used as a fort against navy invaders and was a stronghold of the Selangor sultanate. The Kuala Selangor District Historical Museum sheds light on the background of the district's history.

Other notable attractions in Kuala Selangor are Pantai Remis and Sri Shakti Temple. Of course, you can always see fireflies too at the Kampung Kuantan Fireflies Park.

HULU SELANGOR

Formerly called Ulu Selangor, Hulu Selangor is the largest district in Selangor. Like Hulu Langat, this district also has many natural attractions within the area.

Outdoor lovers are spoilt for choice when it comes to recreational spots. Chiling Waterfalls, hailed one of the most beautiful waterfalls in Selangor, is located in this district.

Then there's also the Lata Medang Waterfall that is home to many unique flora and fauna. Getting to the waterfall requires a hike, though the trek is rather easy.

A good place to relax those aching muscles after your hike is at the Hulu Tarnu Hot Springs. There are several pools at this venue.

Another popular spot in the district is Kuala Kubu Baru (or KKB). The district capital is known for

whitewater rafting and paragliding. KKB also has many unique accommodations and resorts that offer a relaxing stay.

Complete your adventure in Hulu Selangor with a trip to the Sungai Dusun Wildlife Conservation Centre. The place is home to some Malayan tapirs, and visitors will get the rare chance to get closer to the gentle animal for better observation.