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LIVING and working in the city can sometimes get a little stressful, so it's always a good idea to take a break from the concrete jungle and immerse yourself in nature.

The good thing about Malaysia is that you don't have to go far to unwind at a place that's filled with lush greenery. In fact, you can easily find pockets of nature within some cities, be it a park, a botanical garden or even a forest reserve.

Here are some beautiful green spots you can check out that are easily accessible from some of the country's major cities.

### Taiping Lake Gardens, Perak

Opened in 1884, the Taiping Lake Gardens in Perak is Malaysia's first official public park. This beautiful green space was once a tin mine, owned by tin and rubber tycoon Chung Keng Quee. After the mine closed, he donated the land to the town; it was later developed as a park by town planner Charles Compton Reade. Trees, flowers and even grass were planted all around, most of which are still standing today. Yes, a lot of the trees that line the lake in the park are over a century old!

You can find the West Lake, South Lake and Jungle Lake here, as well as a number of smaller ponds that are all linked by either footpaths or bridges. Apart from that, there is also a rock garden, a clock tower, a playground and more. You can rent a bike or a "swan paddle boat" too.

The Taiping Lake Gardens is not an enclosed space (no fences, walls or gates) so you are free to visit any time of the day. If you come at night, you will see that some of the bridges are lit up.

### Anjung Flora, Putrajaya

Anjung Flora is arguably one of the most beautifully designed gardens in the country. With pebbled paths, mini bridges and lush vegetation, the well-kept garden is where many tired city dwellers go over the weekend to recharge their minds.

Here, you can find an incredible collection of flowers and other plants, all set within a gorgeously manicured lawn. It is easy to navigate your way to the garden as the place is divided into several different zones. Some of them include the Magical Gardens, Musical Gardens, Tropical Magic In A Glass, Secret Theme Garden, Royal Garden, Designer Garden, and the Tea Party Garden.

Located in Putrajaya's Precinct 4, Anjung Flora hosts the annual Royal Flora Putrajaya garden festival, one of the country's most popular attractions. There's also the Annual International Orchid Competition, which features some of the world's finest orchids.

Naturally, Anjung Flora is an excellent location for wedding photography too, with the China-Malaysia Friendship Garden being one of the more popular locations.

### Taman Tugu Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur

This 27ha (66 acres) park is one of the capital city's newer green lungs

# Green escapes in the city

Head to the city parks and forests to escape the hustle and bustle of life.



The Perdana Botanical Gardens is located within the Tun Abdul Razak Heritage Park in KL. — Photos: Tourism Malaysia



The Mount Kinabalu Botanical Gardens features tons of flora that's endemic to North Borneo.



Check out the canopy walk when you go to the KL Forest Eco Park. — Filepic

that is fast gaining popularity with Klang Valley folks. Taman Tugu is a public park created within a forest. Because of this, you can find plenty of indigenous trees including the Jelutong, Tembusu and Gaharu, some of which are potentially over a century old!

There are thousands of trees and even more plants located in the park and the surrounding forest, making it the perfect place for city workers to escape during lunch hour, for example, to enjoy some fresh air.

There are a few trails you can follow at Taman Tugu; on weekends, you can usually find many people either jogging or walking the trails. There are also a few spots where you can have a picnic, or just sit down quietly while reading a book or chatting with friends.

The park opens daily from 7am to 6.30pm, although the last entry is actually at 5.45pm. The place will close if the weather is bad as it may not be safe to enter.

### Forest Research Institute Malaysia, Selangor

Another favourite with Klang Valley folks is the Forest Research Institute Malaysia or FRIM, in Kepong, Selangor, right next to the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve. This is actually one of the leading institutions in tropical forestry research in the world, founded in 1929!

FRIM is also listed as a National Heritage (2012) and received the 2021 Unesco Sultan Qaboos Prize for Environmental Conservation on Nov 17, 2021.

Apart from being a research institute, FRIM also features a park and

some tourist attractions, the latest of which is the Forest Skywalk, located at the Kepong Botanic Gardens.

You can go trekking at one of the many nature trails, have a riverside picnic near Sungai Kroh or camp at the Perah Camp Site.

Opening hours and entrance fees depend on which part of FRIM you wish to visit. Kepong Botanic Gardens, for example, is free and open from 7.30am to 7pm from Monday to Thursday, and 7am to 7pm on weekends and public holidays.

The Forest Skywalk is a ticketed attraction that's open from Saturday to Thursday, 8.30am to 3.30pm; closed on Fridays.

Some areas are closed and certain activities are not allowed at the moment because of bad weather. For more information, go to [www.frim.gov.my](http://www.frim.gov.my).

### KL Forest Eco Park, KL

Another natural rainforest in the middle of the capital city, the KL Forest Eco Park is a truly unique park. Originally known as the Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve, it is one of the oldest forest reserves in Malaysia.

The park is located next to the KL Tower, one of the city's most famous landmarks. The green lung site is home to flora and fauna that are endemic to Malaysia's tropical rainforest.

The 10.5ha forest reserve was gazetted as a wildlife reserve and a bird sanctuary many decades ago, with a portion of around 5ha designated as a virgin jungle reserve. There's a 200m canopy walk that visitors can check out, offering a won-

derful view of the treetops and the city's skyline.

The park opens from Saturday to Thursday, from 8am to 5.30pm. There are entrance fees to the place, and you can check the rates at this page: <http://bitly.ws/wxGp>.

### Tropical Spice Garden, Penang

Nestled along the north-western coast of Penang island in Malaysia, Tropical Spice Garden is where nature meets culture, the only award-winning spice garden in South-East Asia.

It's a bio-diverse living museum of the spices and other tropical plants that have shaped our global history. The landscaped garden is a treasure trove of more than 500 living specimens of lush and exotic flora from around the world alongside a myriad of wild fauna.

Highlights of this garden include the Spice Terraces, Heart of the Garden, Bamboo Garden, Poison Garden, Giant Swing, Red Grove Deck, Pavilion and Cooking School.

Managed by a community that genuinely cares about the local biodiversity, this is a great place to check out if you're looking for a relaxing yet educational day.

Explore the garden via a guided tour by a professional nature guide, or a self-directed audio tour along your trek.

The Tropical Spice Garden is open from Monday-Thursday (9am-4pm), and Friday-Sunday (9am-6pm). The last entry to the garden is one hour before closing time.

### Labuan Botanical Gardens, Labuan

The site where this botanical gardens sit on used to be the estate of a stately government mansion. Built as the official residence for Labuan's first governor James Brooke, the building also served as a guesthouse for dignitaries to the island.

The mansion was destroyed during the Japanese occupation and the historical site has since been rehabilitated and developed into the recreational park it is today.

The Labuan Botanical Gardens is a beautifully landscaped area populated by a huge variety of tropical plants and flowers. Take a stroll past hibiscus, orchids, bougainvillea, heliconia, lilies, fruit trees, ferns, palms and many kinds of herbs. Along the way, stop at the treehouse overlooking the lake.

The gardens are flanked by the Labuan War Cemetery and Gurdwara Sahib Temple, both of

which are also worth visiting. Opens daily from 8am to 6pm.

### Perdana Botanical Gardens, KL

Located within the Tun Abdul Razak Heritage Park, the Perdana Botanical Gardens boasts the largest collection of flower gardens in KL. This recreational park is also popularly known by locals as Lake Gardens, and is usually packed with people on weekends.

Check out the Sunken Garden, which consists of several low shrubs and is surrounded by pergolas that support climbing plant species.

Apart from enjoying the lush greenery, the garden's proximity to some of the popular attractions like the Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia, Muzium Negara and the National Monument makes it a popular tourist spot. The place opens daily from 7am to 8pm.

The Orchid Garden is currently closed for upgrading works, and is scheduled to reopen in February 2023.

The park also has a small island at the lake that houses a collection of cycads and succulents, while some of the trees in the area are over a century old.

### Mount Kinabalu Botanical Garden, Sabah

The Mount Kinabalu Botanical Garden in Ranau, Sabah has an interesting collection of native flora, including the world's smallest orchid. Views of Mount Kinabalu are spectacular from the garden, which is located within the Kinabalu Park UNESCO World Heritage Site.

There are plenty of trails to explore here, including the Kiau View Trail, Bundo Tuhan View Trail, Liwaqu River Trail (temporarily closed), Silau Silau Trail, Bukit Burung Trail, Mempenging Trail, Pandanus Trail and Bukit Ular Trail.

The garden features endemic flora like local herbs, wild fruits and flowers, as well as some small animals, insects and birds.

The Botanical Garden is open to the public from 9am to 4pm daily. You can opt for a scheduled guided tour of the Silau Silau Trail, conducted by one of Sabah Park's knowledgeable guides. These guided tours will begin from 11am, and the meeting point is at the Kinabalu Hall.

While the nearest city is Kota Kinabalu (about two hours drive away), Kundasang town is between 30 and 40 minutes away by car from Kinabalu Park.