

# NATURALLY ENJOYING LANGKAWI



MANGROVE TOUR

MIKE SMITH AND FAMILY MADE THEIR FIRST VISIT TO LANGKAWI TO SEE ITS BEACHES AND MANGROVES AND STAY IN AN ANTIQUE VILLA SURROUNDED BY NATURE AT TEMPLE TREE RESORT.

It is hard to imagine that after more than 30 years in Singapore Ruth, Sarah and myself had never been to Langkawi. We put that right in January when we spent two nights at Temple Tree at Bon Ton Resort and two nights by the beach to get a taste of the accommodation options Langkawi offers.

## CENANG BEACH

Our first couple of nights were at the comfortable, affordable and excellently located, Nadias Hotel on Cenang Beach. The Huggin Hippo cafe opposite serves great breakfasts and coffee. Cenang beach was very clean and got a regular spruce up each morning to keep it that way.

In some respects Cenang Beach reminded me of Phuket or Pattaya in Thailand, but in other ways it was completely different. The jet skis, banana boats, parasailing and lounge

chairs with umbrellas are all available. However, perhaps because of the Muslim influence, there is no beer, snacks, topless sun bathing, massage or hassle from hawkers trying to sell sunglasses and souvenirs on the beach.

We primarily strolled along the beach or sunbathed before going roadside for drinks and food. Orkid Ria Restaurant was ideal for a quick lunch of noodles or a

CHENANG BEACH



more extensive meal of seafood. Others enjoyed the water sports or even took to the sky in a microlight aircraft. I shouldn't have been surprised, but it was definitely a sign of the times that a rider was texting from a jetski!

#### MANGROVE TOUR

One of the highlights of any trip to Langkawi is to take a scenic boat trip through the mangroves. We hired our own boat for the extra space and room to manoeuvre for taking photos. It

was a good move. Dayang Biru Travel made our arrangements and we were very happy with their service.

Dozens of raptors, particularly Brahminy Kites and White Bellied Sea Eagles, circle above the tourist boats in the mangroves. Some boat captains, controversially, feed chicken skins to the raptors which swoop down to the water to feed (KFC - Kites Fried Chicken!). It makes for great photos but is clearly against sustainable eco-tourism. It is a tricky one for the authorities to deal with as Langkawi's UNESCO status is potentially at risk, but local tour operators need to make a living too!

#### MONKEY BUSINESS

Large troops of long tailed macaques live in the mangroves and cheekily swim to the stationary tourist boats and even board them to feed on the offered peanuts.

Malayan Water Monitor Lizards sunbathed on large rocks, bats hung around in caves and



kingfishers dazzled before we head back to a rather disappointing, overpriced kelong fish farm for lunch. I'd skip that next time and have a very good seafood dinner at Putumayo Restaurant or equivalent on the beach road.

After a long day we headed to the rooftop Flo Lounge at the Nadias hotel which has a happy hour with 1 for 1 drinks at sunset. An ideal spot to watch the sun go down.

### MORNING EXERCISE

The beach takes a while to 'wake up' in the morning but there are public morning exercise groups to join in and a number of corporate groups bonded on the beach. We met with a chatty local fisherman, using traditional methods, who caught plenty of small fish casting his net from the shore and assuring us of their health benefits.

Later that day we moved from the beach slightly inland to a resort 10 minutes away.

### ENCHANTING TEMPLE TREE

Antique Villas in a natural setting - Temple Tree Resort is enchanting.

Owned by Australian entrepreneur Narelle McMurtrie, Temple Tree and adjoining Bon Ton Resort are unique, boutique hotels with antique villas of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian origin, that were relocated from around Malaysia. They are surrounded by nature. Expect to see otters, giant squirrels, egrets, bee eaters, bitterns, herons, purple swamp hens and more in the grounds – we did!

### BON TON

First impressions count and the reception, with a welcome glass of wine or beer rather than an unknown mocktail, was a perfect start. Our accommodation in Plantation 6 villa had two large bedrooms, two huge bathrooms and a spacious living room. Moreover it was beautifully decorated with period pieces of furniture.

Other villas include a black and white house, a Chinese house and a colonial home. The preserved tree temple by the pool is where the name comes from. A large continental style breakfast was delivered to our room while lunch, dinner and coffee were available in the Nam Restaurant at Bon Ton.

### FAMOUS FUSION

Narelle, who has lived in Malaysia for 30 years, is famous for her food, particularly China House Restaurant in Penang, so it was no surprise to find that Nam Restaurant is voted one of



TEMPLE TREE B & W



Langkawi's best and serves up a great selection of local and Western 'fusion' dishes. It is advisable to book ahead as it fills up quickly!

Bon Ton features Malay village houses, a large souvenir shop, Nam Restaurant, swimming pool and areas to relax, read, grab a coffee. I spent much of my time

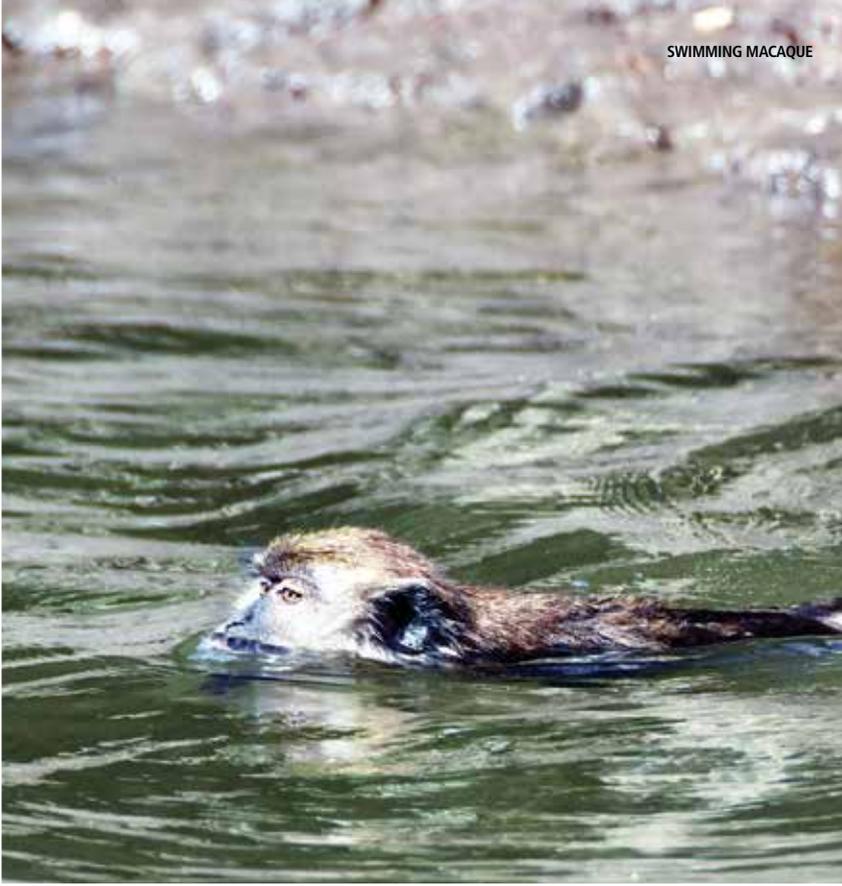
observing nature from both the Stilt House and the grounds in general. Guests are welcome to share the facilities of both resorts.

### A NATURE LOVER'S PARADISE

There were several standout moments during my nature observations. Firstly, I loved watching the orange chested black giant squirrels building nests in the tall tree tops. These near threatened creatures, approximately 1.5m from head to tail, carried bunches of leaves to their nests balancing easily on the narrow branches and jumping effortlessly from tree to tree.

A family of five otters made an appearance in the pond most mornings we were there. Although

SWIMMING MACAQUE



BEE EATER



BON TON

STILT HOUSE BON TON



## Packet Guide



**Hotel Cenang Beach**  
Nadias Hotel  
W: [nadiashotel.com](http://nadiashotel.com)

**Mangrove Tour**  
Dayang Biru Travel  
E: [inadayangbiru@gmail.com](mailto:inadayangbiru@gmail.com)

**Hotel Resort Langkawi**  
Temple Tree Resort at Bon Ton  
W: [templetree.com.my](http://templetree.com.my)

they kept their distance, they were a pleasure to watch. Purple swamp hens, bitterns, and herons fed well on small fish and insects.

### ROOSTING, CIRCLING AND FLYPAST

For me, the most impressive daily sight was the circling and flypast of literally hundreds of egrets before roosting at dusk and prior to going to feeding grounds in the early mornings after sunrise.

We spent most of our time at the resort, but note it is only a 10 minute taxi ride to the beach and there are nearby walks lasting an hour or so including one to a local jetty and the beach.

### NOT JUST A JETTY

To get to the jetty, exit the resort, passing

murals at LASSie, the Langkawi Animal Shelter and Sanctuary, which Bon Ton funds, and turn right at the main road. A narrow rural lane leads to a jetty with fishing boats and assorted bird life. There is a quirky cafe nearby serving great coffee! You can get to Cenang Beach via the Meritus Hotel, but surly security may try and send you via the main road.

We thoroughly enjoyed our two nights at Temple Tree Resort at Bon Ton (Thanks Narelle!!), great accommodation,



MONITOR LIZARD

friendly staff, good food and all the wildlife! The beach and exploring the mangroves was great too.

Langkawi is an interesting place to visit whether you stay by the beach or at a resort such as Temple Tree / Bon Ton. I'll be back because there were other attractions we didn't get a chance to visit including the sky bridge, eagle square and the cable car to mount mat cincang cenang, to name just a few. ❖