

War and Peace in Kranji, Singapore, Where History, Nature & Farmers Converge



Kranji

war memorial in Singapore. Mike Smith, Asia Photostock photos.

By Mike Smith



Kranji war cemetery

By Singapore standards **Kranji** is in the middle of nowhere! In reality it is a forty minute drive from the city centre to an area rich in history, nature and local farming.

Take a trip to pay respects to those who gave their lives in World War II, see crocodiles and birds in their natural habitats and join in the fun and educational activities down on the farm.

There are three national treasures in Kranji (four if you count the "Gentle Warrior" Ms Ivy Singh)

namely The Kranji War Memorial, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve and Thow Kwang Dragon Kiln but there is much more to visit. So please read on!

Lest We Forget - War Memories

The Kranji War Cemetery, better known as the Kranji War Memorial is dedicated to the soldiers who died defending Singapore and Malaysia against the Japanese in World War 11. There are almost 4,500 graves with over 850 being unidentified and a memorial wall with over 24,000 names of those never found in this quiet, moving, hilly location.



Kranji park Remembrance Day & ANZAC

Day are particularly emotional services at the memorial and extremely well attended. Next door at the Kranji Military Cemetery Singapore's first two presidents are buried.

As you enter Kranji Countryside a small park has an information tablet on the Kranji Beach Battle of 10th February 1942 when troops of the 27th Australian Brigade and Singaporean volunteers scored a victory against the invading Japanese by burning them alive by setting fire to an oil slick released from a local depot.

Clear a few bushes to improve the view towards Malaysia and this will be a pleasant park. Don't bother with (4) WWII first landing site, there is nothing to see.

Tidal Gates

There are parts of Kranji where you might believe the war is still being played out. Indeed future generations of soldiers are being trained there and the red signs warning of Protected Areas should not be ignored. My heart warmed as I saw a sign for a PUB, potentially a beer? No it was a case of water, water everywhere but not a drop to drink! In fact it was the Public Utilities Board Tidal Gates which regulate the water flow to the reservoir during heavy rain or tides.

Nature Calls - Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve.

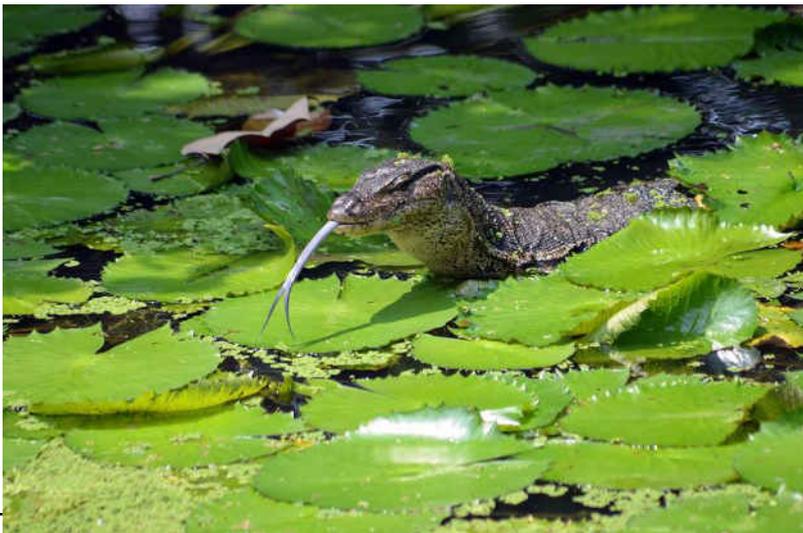


Estuarian croc in Sungei Buloh park. Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve is an absolute gem! Not only is it Singapore's first ASEAN Heritage Park it is a joy to visit and of course home to crocodiles, monitor lizards, otters, mudskippers, crabs, snakes and resident birds including sunbirds, herons, egrets, kingfishers and owls throughout the year.

I go there at least once a month!

From September to March is a vital feeding ground for hundreds of migrating shore and wading birds such as plovers and sand pipers

Kranji Marshes



The newly opened Kranji Marshes is an important area for conservation but of little interest to the casual visitor. Perhaps it will gain in popularity in future when the building site alongside is completed and if a greater area is opened up to the public.

There is however, a good chance to see raptors and storks flying overhead so for hard core "twitchers" it shouldn't be written off.

Down on The Farm - Bollywood Veggies

The Kranji Countryside Association promotes "local agriculture, food security and sustainability, health, eco and agro-tourism, education, conservation, recreation and community bonding" - lofty goals indeed.

Some of the farms welcome the public so support them by visiting and spending a few dollars on local produce. Avoid Mondays and Tuesdays if possible as some of the establishments are closed.

I admit that I am biased but **Bollywood Veggies**, a planet friendly vegetable farm with dozens of different species that you've often tasted but wondered how they look when growing, is my favourite farm in the area. **Poison Ivy Bistro** is my "must go to" place for lunch in the area. The food is locally grown or reared and served in lovely curries and salads, the beer is cold and the desserts are delicious too. Ivy and May and the rest of the staff are passionate and great to chat to.



White bellied sea eagle in the park.

Goat Milk - Hay Dairies

Go to Hay Dairies in the morning before 10.30 to see dozens of goats being milked. The goat milk is certified free of antibiotics, preservatives and growth hormones and is a healthy alternative to cow's milk. Try it on the spot - straight from the fridge - It's excellent believe me!



Frogs at the frog farm Frogs Legs from

Jurong Frog Farm.

What do frogs play at recess? - Jumping jack and Leapfrog! What do frogs say after telling a joke? - Git it git it

Anyway I digress - The Jurong Frog Farm (Located in Kranji) is fun, educational and a meat processing touring facility. You can book a 90 minute guided tour of the facility, see the life cycle of a frog, get hands on and learn lots of amazing facts and of course taste the little creatures! y the way frogs legs do taste great particularly when fried with chilli!

Frog meat is rich in calcium, protein and phosphorus ie it is very healthy too!

Mega award winning **MaxKoi Farm** is the place to go to learn about and purchase top quality koi and the equipment for keeping this luxury fish brand.



Golfer at the park.

Gone Fishing or Golfing

If you want to be active (is fishing active?) you can pond fish at several locations including Ah Lim's and Hausmann Marketing Aquarium and even play a round of golf at Warren Golf and Country Club.

Staycations!

For those really keen on exploring the countryside you can even have a "staycation" at D'Kranji Farm Resort but I must say it looked pretty dead when I walked through the grounds on a weekday and the lady at the Bird Nest Museum looked shocked to see a visitor when I entered but perhaps my timing was just bad.



Dragon Kiln

The dragon kiln of Thow Kwang Industry was given a new lease of life recently but who knows how long. Make sure you visit this unique kiln and explore the large inventory of pottery which is

for sale before it is too late. Or even consider a course and learn more about pottery techniques.

Singapore continues to evolve. The old Kranji Army Barracks have been torn down and the Kranji Railway rail tracks removed. Many of the farm leases are up for renewal in the next year or two.

No doubt some of the non-strategic industries will struggle to stay in business but I understand more chicken farms will be established. Whatever; Kranji will remain and grow as a significant area where history, nature and farmers converge and it really is an interesting place to visit.

One last comment - you do not need a car just hop on to the Kranji Countryside Express and hop off and on wherever you want.



British-born Singapore Permanent Resident Mike Smith is a travel writer, blogger and photographer who has had articles published in numerous local and international magazines including several for GoNomad. He owns AsiaPhotoStock.com, an online stock photo library, and you can follow his blog at asiaphotostock.blogspot.sg where he gives honest opinions about the many places he has travelled to.

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