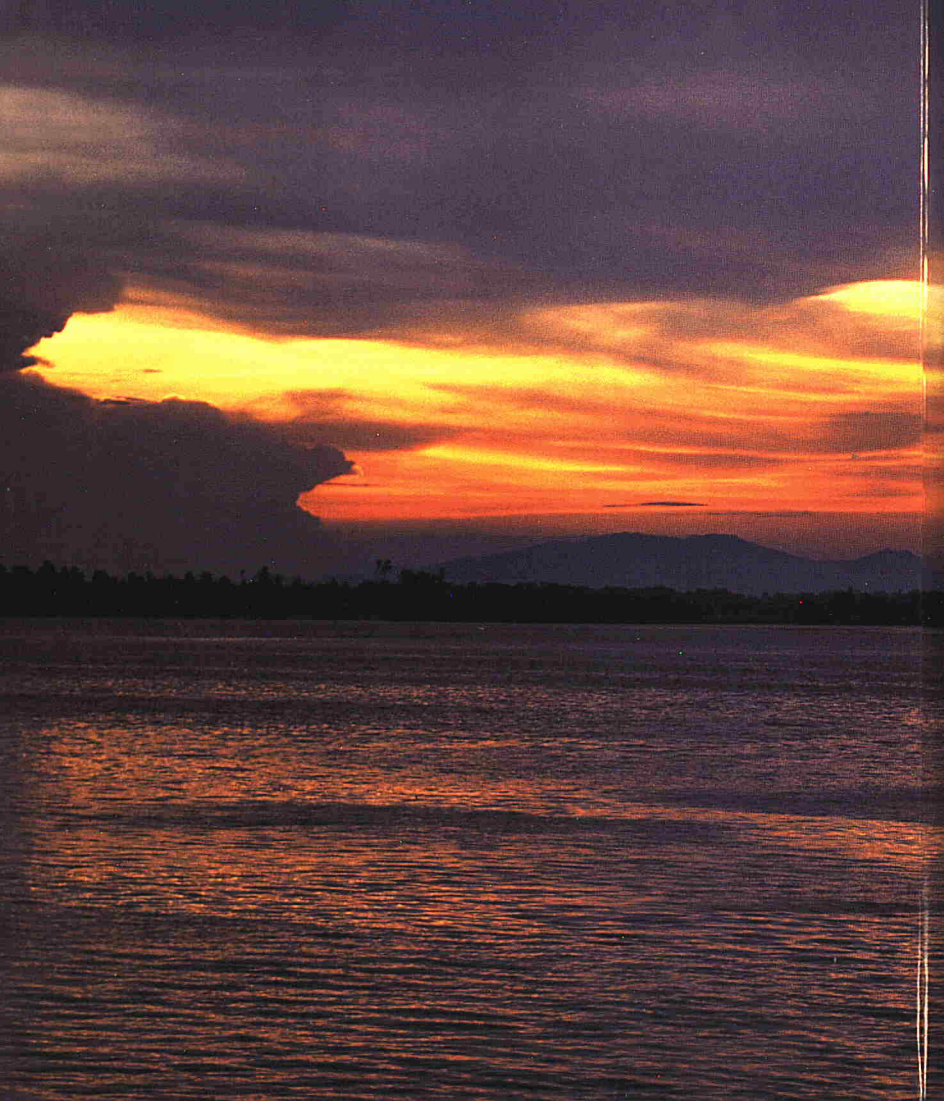
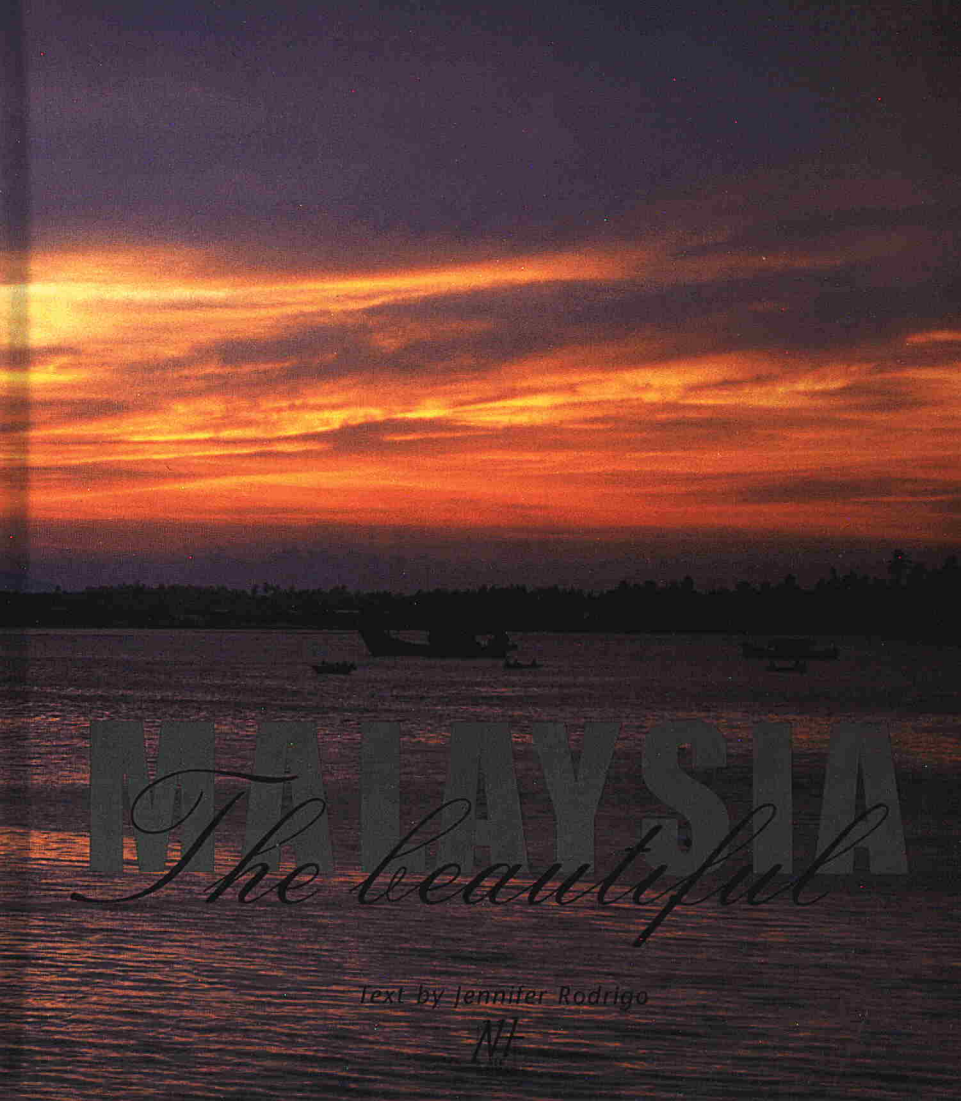


MALAYSIA

The beautiful







MALAYSIA
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Text by Jennifer Rodrigo

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Editors Jane Mabezan, Gill Gordon

Cover design Clare van Rhen

Designer Lindall Hamilton

Illustrator Lovetta Cheswick

Cartographer Lindall Hamilton

Consultant Ken Sorenson

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Front cover photograph: *The Selangor State Mosque at Shah Alam*

Back cover (top to bottom): *Kite flying in Aekantun, the beach at Berjaya Imperial*

Resort on Tioman Island, traditional dwelling near Kota Belud, Sabah, the tiger

(Felis tigris) is the pride of Malaysia, the centre of Malay culture

Spine: *A young Malaysian girl*

Half title: *An Iban woman in traditional dress, Sarawak*

Full title: *Sunset over the Terengganu River at Kuala Terengganu on the east coast*

This page: *The Taman Seri Budaya cultural complex near Seremban, Negeri Sembilan*

Contents: *Kota Kinabalu's Central Market, Sabah*

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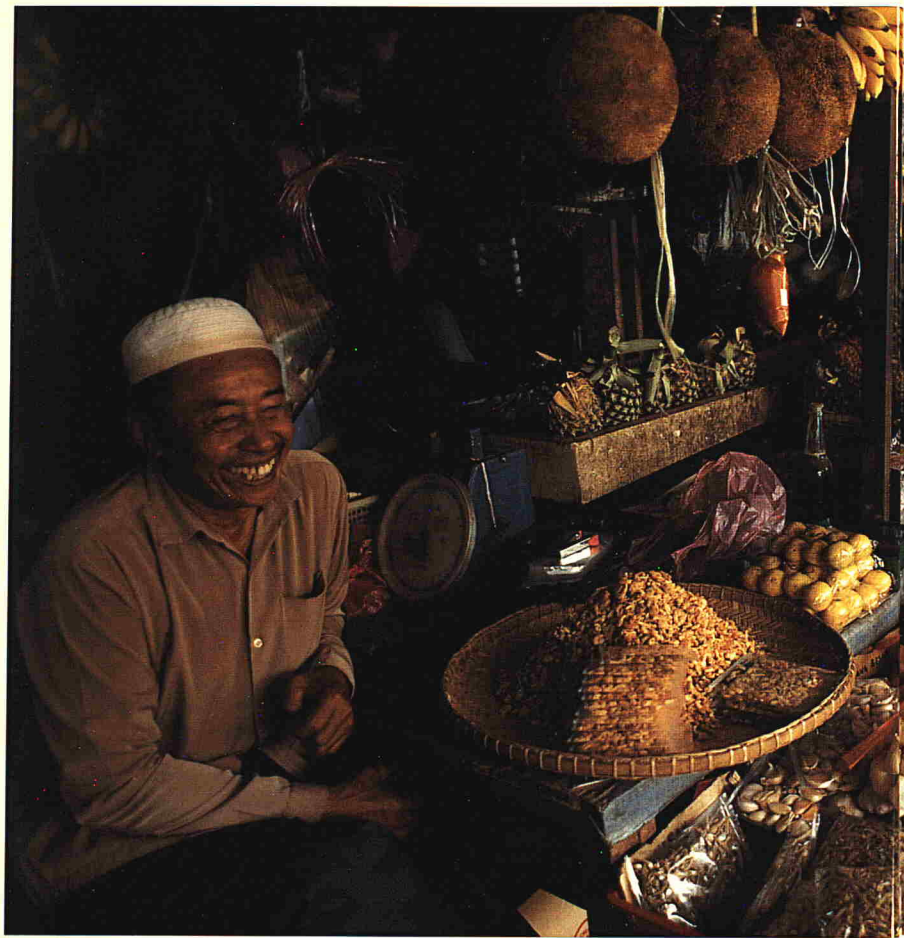


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Malaysia







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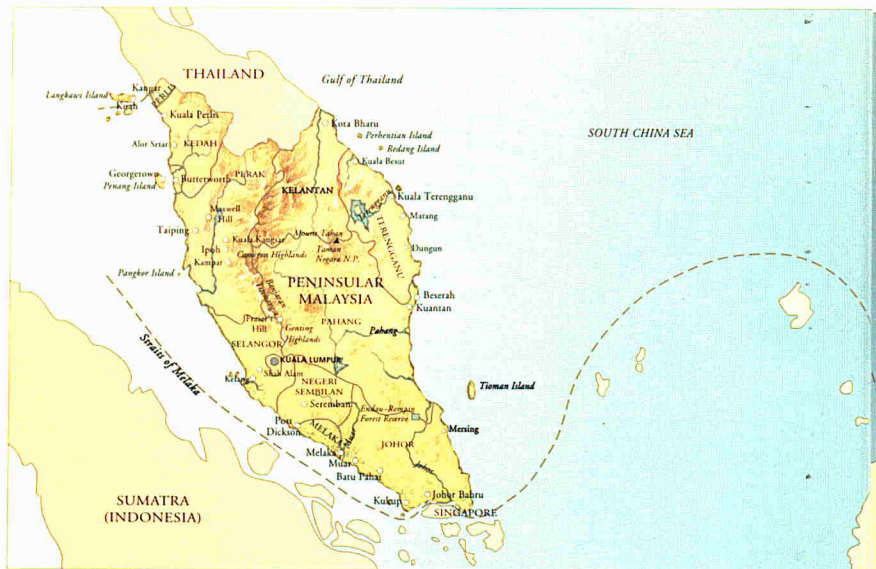
THE HISTORIC WEST COAST

cultural landmarks of the past

THE LIE OF TWO LANDS

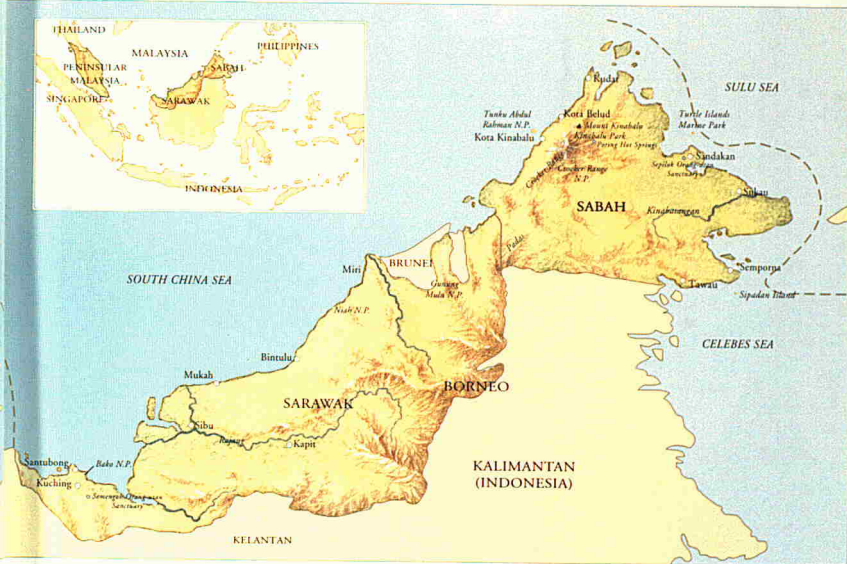
The Malay Peninsula, joined to continental Asia by a narrow isthmus historically known as the 'Isthmus of Kra', is surrounded by seas, straits and channels: to the east is the South China Sea, to the west, the Straits of Melaka, to the east is the South China Sea, to the west, the Straits of Melaka. To the east is the South China Sea, to the west, the Straits of Melaka. To the east is the South China Sea, to the west, the Straits of Melaka.

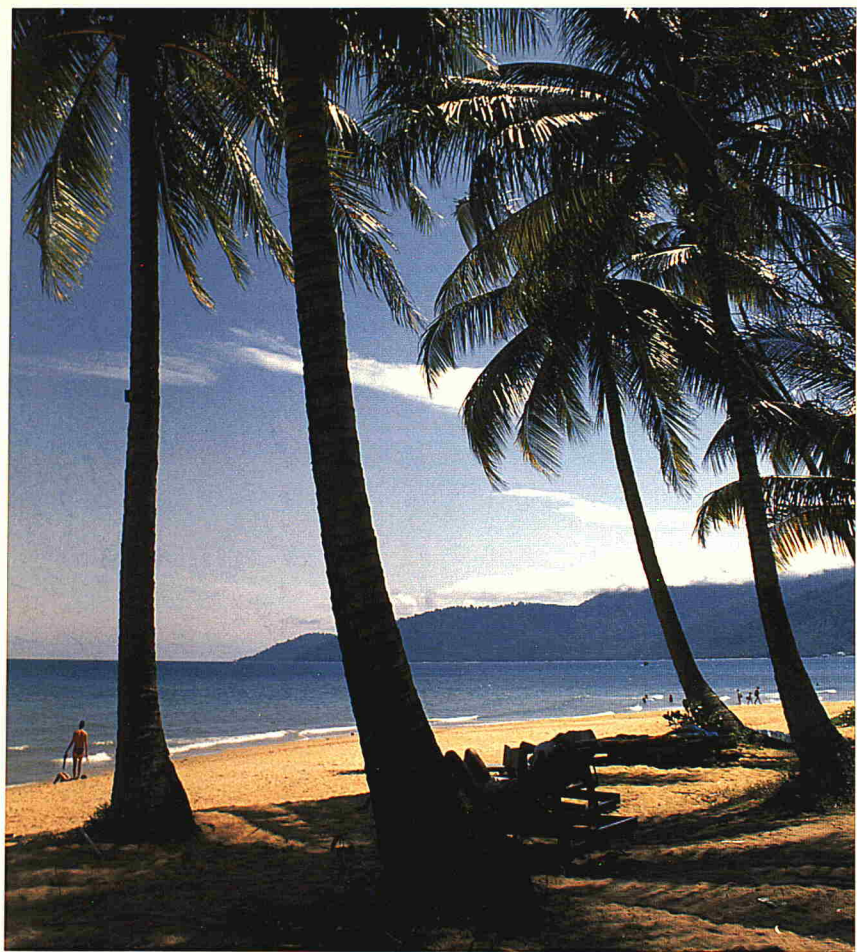
Consequently, the climate is tropical with warm and humid conditions. Temperatures in the coastal lowlands average between 21°C (70°F) and 32°C (90°F). As a result of the high humidity (around 80 per cent), the annual rainfall ranges from 2000 to 2500 millimetres (79 to 99 inches). An average day in the Peninsula consists of a clear, relatively cool morning, with convectional showers bringing relief to the torpid heat characteristic of the late afternoon. The evening is generally cooler and dry.



Peninsular Malaysia is dramatically bisected by a forest-covered, mountainous spine extending from the Thai border in the north to the lowlands of the south. Known as the Main Range, or Banjaran Titiwangsa, these mainly granite mountains are capped by highland peaks, the highest being Mount Tahan at 2187 metres (7176 feet). Four-fifths of Malaysia was once covered by tropical rainforest. Alluvial coastal lowlands, fringed with mangrove forests, characterise the west coasts of the Peninsula, Sarawak and Sabah; the east

coast of the Peninsula has long sandy beaches, interrupted by river estuaries. The Crocker Range, a continuation of the tertiary fold mountains of Sarawak and central Kalimantan, is prominent in the mountainous interior of Sabah. Separating the narrow lowlands of the northwest coast from the interior, this great range is dominated by Mount Kinabalu, at 4101 metres (13,455 feet) the highest peak in Southeast Asia. Sarawak's mountains give way to a rugged swampy coastal plain and undulating lowlands dissected by rivers.





INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY OF THE PENINSULA: CONQUEST AND COLONIZATION

Tioman Island (left), surrounded by the clear blue waters of the South China Sea, is just one of the many beautiful tropical islands off the coast of Malaysia which makes this exotic country such an appealing destination. In fact, traders, pilgrims and explorers have been drawn to Malaysia's shores for centuries.

The Independence Memorial in Melaka (below) was once the Melaka Club, a social gathering place for British colonialists. This neoclassical building is located next to the Memorial Garden and houses an exhibition of the events that led up to Malaysia's independence from colonial rule in 1957.



Situated at the southernmost tip of the Asian mainland, at the core of Southeast Asia, the Malay Peninsula has always been a crossroads. Thousands of years before Marco Polo explored the sea route between China and India in the 13th century, mariners and pilgrims depended on the monsoons to sail their ships across the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. The Malay Peninsula was a natural stopover, providing an idyllic oasis in which to wait out the change of winds, and at the same time, trade. As a result of the seasonal northeast and southwest monsoons the Peninsula became known as the 'Land Where the Winds Meet'. Arab, Indian and Chinese traders, who established maritime trade links across the two oceans, greatly influenced the culture, language, government and religious beliefs of the region. From as early as the 2nd century, powerful trading nations were struggling for economic and political supremacy within the Peninsula. These independently ruled kingdoms, each with their own protocol and ceremony, were often vassal states of the greater uncolonized kingdoms of Siam (now Thailand) and China.

The great trading kingdom of Melaka Modern Malay history began in 1400 with the founding of the Melakan Sultanate by a fugitive Hindu prince by the name of Parameswara. Forced to flee his kingdom of Singapura (ancient Singapore) when it came under Javanese attack, he journeyed northwards up the west coast of the Peninsula. One day, while the royal party rested under a tree, one of the royal dogs was kicked by an albino deer. As these deer were known to be quite timid, the incident was considered to be an unusual occurrence. The prince interpreted it as a good omen and decided to base his kingdom there, naming it after the tree he was resting under, a *melaka*, which grew in abundance in the area. Melaka held a key geographical position in the Straits. Parameswara's conversion from Hinduism to Islam in the 15th century, when he became known as the Sultan Iskandar Shah, was a shrewd move politically for it boosted the number of Indian Muslim traders visiting the port. The sultan was quick to provide the necessary amenities and infrastructure for trade to flourish and soon Melaka's reputation as a prominent centre of commerce and culture was well established. The years between 1400 and 1511, when courtly rituals and etiquette were formalized and Malay culture was shaped, are often described as the golden age of the Melaka Sultanate. As Melaka's power and influence extended throughout the Peninsula, so too did the spread of Islam.

Portuguese presence in Melaka Intent on putting an end to Melaka's domination of the Straits' spice trade, the Portuguese invaded in 1509. In 1511, commander Alfonso d'Albuquerque led the Portuguese to a resounding victory. The exiled Sultan Mahmud Shah fled to

Pahang and later to Bintan in the Riau-Lingga archipelago south of Singapore, from where he attempted numerous attacks on the Portuguese. After his death, his son established a court on the Johor River and later became the first ruler of what was to become the kingdom of Johor.

Despite numerous attacks, the Portuguese ruled Melaka for 130 years. They were finally defeated by the Dutch in 1641, but not without the assistance of Johor which had suffered the scourge of the Portuguese and the Acehnese for more than a century. In a show of gratitude, the Dutch granted Johor protection from Aceh as well as exclusive trading privileges in Melaka. But Melaka had already started its downward spiral and influential Muslim traders were being attracted to Johor and other Islamic ports which had better prices and more goods. Johor continued to rise in prominence and in the latter half of the 17th century, extended its influence to include Pahang, Terengganu and Selangor, as well as Siak in Sumatra. However, the regicide of Sultan Mahmud of Johor in 1699, a premeditated move by his own noblemen, was to change the power structure in Johor forever.

The Malay Peninsula continued to be torn apart by the endless struggle for domination between the various states. The influx of immigrants of different cultural origin caused much strife in the Malay states. Warring Malay, Bugis and Minangkabau chieftains were all fighting to establish their slice of independence. During the 18th century, India, the East Indies (Indonesia), the Philippines and Indo-China mostly became European imperialist enclaves, and Penang and Melaka, both strategically positioned in the Straits of Melaka, were being eyed by many Western powers. Melaka was given to the British in 1795 to prevent it from falling to the French when the Netherlands was captured during the French Revolution. It was returned to the Dutch under the Treaty of Vienna but was later exchanged by the British for Bencoleen in Sumatra. By 1800, other states in the Peninsula were starting to emerge as sovereign powers in their own right.

The Straits Settlements The Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 divided the territories on either side of the Straits into British and Dutch spheres of influence, effectively destroying the cultural unity that had existed for centuries. The Dutch ruled the Indonesian archipelago while the ports of Singapore, Melaka and Penang were brought under the control of a British governor, and became known as the Straits Settlements.

Fighting between Chinese immigrants in the rich tin-mining district of Larut in Perak started to cause further problems, and the fighting eventually became embroiled with succession quarrels among the Perak monarchy. Andrew Clarke, the British governor, was able to use this dissension to his advantage. After arranging a cease-fire between the Chinese societies, he requested that the leading Perak Malays meet him on the island of Pangkor off the Perak coast to settle the dispute. The Pangkor Treaty, signed on 20 January 1874, formally recognized Raja Abdullah as Sultan of Perak. In return, the sultan agreed to accept a British Resident whose advice had to be sought and accepted on all matters except those relating to Malay religion and customs. The Pangkor Treaty effectively hastened British involvement in the affairs of the states and by 1914, the Peninsula comprised the Straits Settlements, Federated Malay States (FMS) and Unfederated Malay States (UFMS). The FMS, a British protectorate headed by a British High Commissioner (governor of the Straits Settlements), comprised the states of Negeri Sembilan, Pahang, Perak and Selangor with Kuala Lumpur as the capital. The UFMS, which consisted of Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, Perlis and Terengganu, were also British protectorates with each state under the tutelage of a British

HISTORICAL CALENDAR

- | | |
|--|--|
| c1400 Founding of Melaka by Prince Parameswara. | 1896 Formation of Federated Malay States (Perak, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan and Selangor) as British protectorate, with Kuala Lumpur as its capital. |
| 1511 Melaka conquered by the Portuguese. Malay Sultanate re-established in Johor. | 1909 Acceptance of British Residents by Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu (Unfederated Malay States). |
| 1541 Portuguese rule in Melaka overthrown by the Dutch. | 1914 Johor becomes last state to enter Malay Federation. |
| 1699 Sultan Mahmud of Johor murdered, ending the Melakan dynasty. | 1941-45 Japanese Occupation. |
| 1786 Francis Light founds British trading settlement on Penang. | 1948 Creation of Federation of Malaya and beginning of the Malayan Emergency. |
| 1819 Thomas Stamford Raffles establishes trading post on Singapore. | 1957 Malaysia declared independent. |
| 1824 Anglo-Dutch Treaty in London confirms Dutch rule in Indonesian archipelago; Britain retains Straits Settlements. | 1963 Malaysia joined by Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore to create Malaysia, under first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman. |
| 1841 James Brooke becomes first 'White Rajah' of Sarawak. | 1963-66 Indonesia announces policy of confrontation against Malaysia. |
| 1874 Treaty of Pangkor establishes British residential system, introducing British administration throughout Peninsular Malaysia. | 1965 Singapore becomes a republic. |
| 1881 Establishment of Chartered Company of British North Borneo in present-day Sabah. | 1969 Racial tension culminates in May 13 riots and emergency rule. |
| 1895-1900 Mat Salleh's rebellion in British North Borneo. | 1971 Formation of new national ideology designed to overcome ethnic differences. |
| | 1981 Dato' Seri Dr Mahathir bin Mohamad becomes 4th prime minister. |

Advisor, and each one responsible to the British High Commissioner. Life for the British colonialists was surrounded by all the comforts of a privileged existence: huge residences, elite clubs and plenty of servants. The women played bridge and croquet, while the men played cricket and told topical jokes over whiskeys in club bars. This lifestyle came to an abrupt end when the Japanese invaded in 1941, entering the country at Kelantan and cycling southwards in their thousands. The British surrender in Singapore in 1942 led to five years of Japanese imperial dominance.

THE HISTORY OF SABAH: SULTANS AND REBELS

Before the Europeans ventured into Borneo, Sabah was a loosely scattered group of self-governing communities with a somewhat ambiguous association with the Brunei Sultanate and the Sulu Sultanate in the Philippines; until 1878, the west coast of Sabah formed part of the Brunei Sultanate, while the east coast was under the jurisdiction of the Sulu Sultanate. In the same year, the sultanates ceded their lands to the Chartered Company of British North Borneo but not before they had been owned by an American trader, an Austrian baron and eventually an Englishman called Alfred Dent. In 1881, it was Dent who organized the acquisition of Sabah by the Chartered Company.

From 1883, the capital of North Borneo and the headquarters of the Chartered Company of North Borneo was Sandakan, a bustling logging town with a fine harbour. The Sandakan government, which consisted largely of ex-merchants, met with much resistance from the locals. From 1895 to 1900, there was a massive uprising against the Chartered Company which became known as the Mat Salleh Rebellion. Mat Salleh, the charismatic rebel leader who was killed in 1900, is still recognized as a great hero in Sabah today.

Until the Japanese Occupation in 1942, Sabah was known as British North Borneo. In 1946, after the end of World War II, Sabah became the British crown colony of North Borneo and remained as such until the formation of Malaysia in 1963. Its name then reverted to its oldest form, Sabah.

THE HISTORY OF SARAWAK: THE WHITE RAJAHS

'The Land of the Hornbills', as Sarawak is more colourfully known, has a history rife with civil wars, family quarrels, pirates and head-hunting. It was to become the private domain of British soldier-turned-adventurer, James Brooke. After leaving the military service, Brooke set out to explore Sarawak. On 11 August 1839, he landed at Santubong at the mouth of the Sarawak River. At this time, Sarawak was merely a small province of the Brunei Sultanate and in a state of chaos. The locals, who despised the oppressive rule of their governor, staged a revolt. The ruler and heir to the throne of the sultanate, Rajah Muda Hassim, turned to Brooke, as an ex-soldier, for help to quell the uprising and put an end to the rampant piracy at the same time. With his military experience, Brooke organized a skilful and successful resistance. As a result, on 18 September 1841, the grateful ruler presented Brooke with 18,000 square kilometres (6948 square miles) of land which incorporated Kuching and the surrounding area.

For 23 years, James Brooke reigned as 'White Rajah' of Sarawak. While he was able to suppress piracy, eradicating the deeply entrenched custom of head-hunting proved to be more difficult. Practised by the Iban, head-hunting was more than a manhood ritual. Enemy heads represented medals for bravery and increased the social standing of an Iban tribesman, both with the village folk and with the women of marriageable age. Head-hunting was only truly abolished in Sarawak during the early years of the 20th century.

James Brooke's nephew, Charles, was to inflict a divide-and-rule policy of government on the many local tribes from 1868 to 1917, with harsh punishment meted out to anyone suspected of rebellion. When British protection was granted in 1888, Charles's task was made even easier. His son, Charles Vyner Brooke, was to become the last 'White Rajah' before the Japanese Occupation.

An historic portrait of James Brooke (below), who was declared the first 'White Rajah' of Sarawak in 1841 by Rajah Muda Hassim, ruler of the Brunei Sultanate, after Brooke helped to quell a local rebellion.



THE FORMATION OF MALAYSIA

When the British resumed control of the Malay Peninsula in 1945, they no longer ruled with the same authority – the Malaysians had started to unite. The British tried to oppose the creation of a Malayan Union, but efforts to reduce the country to the status of a British colony failed and the Federation of Malaya was formed in 1948, consisting of nine states headed up by a British High Commissioner. As a result, communist-inspired insurgency broke out. After communist attacks on British planters on 16 June 1948, a State of Emergency was declared that was to last for 12 years.

The Federation of Malaya, under the leadership of Tunku Abdul Rahman, was finally granted independence on 31 August 1957. The country's first prime minister shouted the historic cry for freedom, 'Merdeka!', on the site of Merdeka Square in Kuala Lumpur. He was gravely concerned that Singapore would achieve independence and turn into a communist base as Singapore's politics had been increasingly dominated by communist and other left-wing factions since the introduction of elections in 1948. In an attempt to prevent this, he invited Singapore to join the Federation of Malaya instead. However, there were fears that the politics of the alliance could be 'taken over' by the Chinese; therefore, in order to strike an ethnic balance, the eventual proposal included North Borneo (Sabah) and Sarawak as well as Singapore. Various concessions were granted and on 16 September 1963, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah joined the Peninsula to become part of Malaysia.

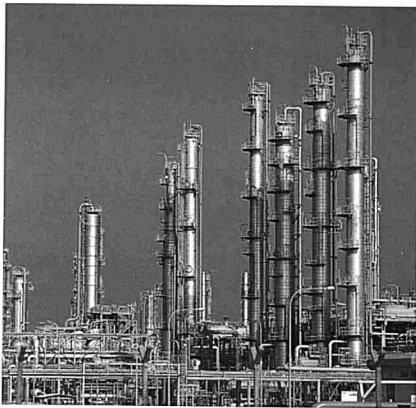
Meanwhile, in January 1963, Indonesia had announced a policy of confrontation against Malaya in support of a young Brunei Malay by the name of A.M. Azahari who aspired to uniting Brunei, Indonesia and the Philippines into a 'greater Malaya'. He was responsible for initiating the Brunei Revolt of December 1962, which was quickly suppressed with the help of the British. Although Indonesia launched attacks on Malayan fishing boats, and there were violations of Malaya's air space, there was no full-scale war as Malaya had the security of a defence agreement with Great Britain.

Early in 1962, the Philippines made clear its opposition to the formation of Malaysia because of its territorial claim on Sabah. More trouble ensued after the Singapore elections in 1963 and the Malaysian elections in 1964, with communal tensions erupting into violent interethnic clashes in Singapore. In August 1965, a bill was passed allowing Singapore to secede. On 9 August 1965, Singapore left the Federation and became a republic. By this time, Malaysia had survived the Indonesian confrontation, the Filipino claim to Sabah, the Singapore secession and an attempt by Sabah's former chief minister, Donald Stephens, to claim autonomy for his state.

The challenge of self-government The government's most pressing concern in the new Malaysia was to work out a solid blueprint for the future, one that would preserve each ethnic group's culture and traditions but still uphold Malaysian solidarity. Malay became the national language with English being used officially. By the time of the 1969 federal elections, the difficulties of maintaining ethnic equality were becoming increasingly clear. The Chinese and Indian communities wanted an end to the Malays' special privileges as well as true equality in education. Three days after the elections, on 13 May, victory celebrations spilled out into the streets, leading to violence in the city. Although a State of Emergency was declared, order was only restored after four days of bloody rioting. In July 1969, in an attempt to address the problem of continued communal violence, a Department of National Unity was formed to hammer out a national ideology and initiate new social and economic programmes. A new economic policy of growth had been introduced in the form of the First Malaysia Plan (1966 to 1970). With former commodity strengths such as rubber and tin declining in world markets, serious plans were made to diversify: palm-oil production, timber, iron

The main gate of the Istana Negara (Royal Palace) in Kuala Lumpur (below), the official residence of the Malaysian king, or Yang Di-Pertuan Agong. He is elected every five years from among the nine Malay sultans.





A huge petroleum and natural gas complex (above) has replaced some fishing villages along the coast of Terengganu on the Peninsula. The discovery of offshore deposits has contributed significantly to the country's economy.

ore and manufacturing contributed to increasing export earnings. Efforts were also made to check unemployment and eradicate poverty, especially in the densely populated rural areas. The Malays were becoming more involved in the economic growth of their own country and by the Second Malaysia Plan (1971 to 1975), the government had implemented a new economic policy that had two main objectives: to eliminate poverty irrespective of race, and to restructure society so that the different ethnic groups would not be identified by the limitations of stereotypical job descriptions, such as 'Malay farmer', 'Chinese merchant' and 'Indian estate labourer'. Other areas of focus included expanding the private sector, and securing foreign investments.

MALAYSIA TODAY

Malaysia's form of government is described as a constitutional monarchy under a head of state known as the Yang di Pertuan Agong, or king, who is also the supreme commander of the armed forces. The king is elected every five years at a Conference of Rulers which comprises the hereditary rulers, or sultans, of the nine states of Perlis, Kedah, Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. This allows the sultan of each state the opportunity of sitting on the royal throne. The sultans play a significant role in defending Malay customs and religious traditions in modern Malaysia. The states of Melaka, Penang, Sabah and Sarawak are ruled by the Yang di Pertuan Negeri, or governor, who is

appointed for a term of four years by the king. A prime minister, who heads up his own cabinet, makes all the main national decisions. The National Front, or Barisan Nasional, is a coalition of the dominant parties and currently controls most of the Malaysian states.

A burgeoning economy From its early commercial aspirations, Peninsular Malaysia has evolved into a dynamic economic hub with barter trade increasingly being replaced by the complexities of modern electronic business. Twenty years ago, Malaysia's economy, which depended solely on commodities such as tin, rubber and timber, was vulnerable to the vagaries of world markets. In past decades, the economy has enjoyed a high growth rate which has brought its own share of problems, including inflationary pressures, labour shortages and a balance of payments deficit. Recent budgets have been designed to redress these problems while striking a balance between a reasonable standard of living and excessive consumption. The government's emphasis on resource-based industries has achieved commendable results; today, petroleum, manufacturing, agriculture and tourism are the most important contributors to Malaysia's buoyant economic development.

Over 53 per cent of the world's palm oil and around 23 per cent of its natural rubber resources originate in Malaysia. Both are primary foreign exchange earners in the agricultural sector, along with timber, cocoa, pepper, pineapples and tobacco. Petroleum and natural gas are also exported.

Although commodities such as rubber and tin have continued to be important Malaysian exports, today the manufacturing sector increasingly dominates the economy due to the country's rapid industrialization. Leading exports include semiconductors, rubber gloves, air-conditioning units, furniture, and electrical equipment. Malaysia has also established an increasingly technologically advanced industrial sector dominated by electrical goods and components. From 1990, national companies such as Telecom, Tenaga Nasional and the major automobile manufacturers have been privatized, encouraging the growth of the private sector.

MALAYSIA'S NATURAL WONDERS

Malaysia's mountains One of Peninsular Malaysia's greatest physical features is the range of mountains that extends from Thailand in the north down to Negeri Sembilan in the south. Known as the Main Range, or Banjaran Titiwangsa, the mountains form the backbone of the Peninsula, separating the east coast from the west and accounting for the high density of population along the coastal lowlands. The highest peak in the Peninsula, Mount Tahan, lies off the Main Range in the heart of Taman Negara National Park. As a respite from the humidity of the coast, the British colonialists established hill stations like Cameron Highlands and Fraser's Hill at higher altitudes as places for rest and relaxation. The bracing mountain air was perfect for pursuing activities such as tennis, golf, horse-riding and hiking. While these settlements have now become popular weekend retreats, they still exude a delightful English country town ambience.

Sabah is bisected by a rugged forested spine called the Crocker Range. The state's most prominent geographical feature is Mount Kinabalu. At 4101 metres (13,455 feet) above sea level, it is the highest peak between the Himalayas and Papua New Guinea. For the local Kadazan people, the mountain has a special spiritual significance, and once a year, they make sacrificial offerings to show their respect for the spirits of the great mountain. Extensive limestone outcrops hiding huge cave systems are to be found in Gunung Mulu National Park (dominated by Mount Mulu, Sarawak's highest peak) and Niah National Park in Sarawak, and at Gomantang in Sabah. Locals collect and sell swiflet's nests, found in the caves, which are considered to be a delicacy by the Chinese.

Malaysia's forests Peninsular Malaysia possesses the most ancient rainforests in the world, having evolved over 100 million years ago. Their form and composition is largely dependent on the elevation of the land and the characteristics of the soil. An entire spectrum of flora comes under the category of 'rainforest', which includes not just the tall trees with their leafy crowns, but also smaller trees, shrubs and herbs growing on the forest floor from the coasts to the highlands. There are over 8000 species of flowering plants of which some 2800 are tree species. Of these, 746 are endemic, and about 500 species are endangered.

The Malaysian rainforest, as most people imagine it, is largely composed of trees of the Dipterocarp family (characterized by having a two-winged seed) which can grow as high as 65 metres (215 feet). These trees are recognizable by their tall trunks and lofty spreading crowns; they frequently have large buttressed roots. Clotted with vines, creepers and epiphytes (plants which grow on other plants) such as orchids and ferns, these trees are what give the forest its aura of romantic mystique. The great rainforests of Borneo are similar to those in the Peninsula but particularly rich in certain species. More prominent in Borneo is the *mallang*, the third tallest tree in the world, which may reach heights of 80 metres (263 feet). Borneo's endemic species include the illipie nut and the ironwood, or *belian*.

The rainforest is at its most enchanting in the early morning. As the sun rises, mist drifts through the valleys and dew glistens on every tree and shrub. After rain, birds, insects and the larger animals come to life. Tree ferns, palms, lianas (woody climbing plants), epiphytes, and giant trees transform the forest into liquid emerald green. With the haunting calls of gibbons, the mystical magic of the forest is at its strongest. Isabella Bird must have felt the magic too. In her book, *Golden Chersonese*, published in 1883, she describes the steamy jungle as 'this new wonder-world, so enchanting, tantalising, intoxicating'.

A walk through the rainforest

is a rewarding and exciting Malaysian experience. From the lofty heights of the tree canopy, alive with the wailing cry of gibbons and the distinctive calls of hornbills, to buttress roots on the forest floor (below), with its rich concentration of plant and animal life forms, there is much to see and explore in the forest.



ORCHIDS

Since 551 B.C., the time of the prominent Chinese sage, Confucius, orchids have been known to humankind. Chinese poets and philosophers waxed lyrical about orchids, extolling their beauty, purity and grace. These exotic flowers of many shapes, forms, colours and patterns are known as the 'aristocrats' of flowers. Orchids were believed to emit a king's fragrance. Western interest in orchids has been largely due to the beauty and diversity of form of the flowers. It is believed that certain species have medicinal qualities.

There are an estimated 24,000 species of orchids in the world, of which about 6000 are found in Asia and an estimated 1000 in Peninsular Malaysia. Of Borneo's 25,000 species of flowering plants, Orchidaceae represent 3000 to 4000 species. The greatest diversity of orchid species occurs in lowland montane forest ranging in height from 900 to 1800 metres (2953 to 5906 feet).



Orchids are barely plants, ranging from the minute species of Bulbophyllum to the Grammatophyllum, the largest of all orchids. They grow in the ground, on rocks, or perched on other plants or trees. There are two basic types of orchids: terrestrials which grow with roots and epiphytes which grow on tree trunks and branches.

Areas well-known to botanists and to orchid lovers in Malaysia include the Cameron Highlands, Taman Negara National Park, Mount Opber in Johor, and Mount Kinabalu Park in Sabah. The Tenom Orchid Centre (TOC) at the Agricultural Research Station in Tenom, Sabah, has a large display of lowland species. Orchids are also cultivated on a commercial scale, with particular hybrids being exported to countries such as Japan.

The forests of Peninsular Malaysia and Borneo have many plants common to both. The macabre strangling fig, which is found throughout Malaysia, is an epiphyte that germinates from a seed deposited by a bird on a high branch. The seed, after germinating, sends its roots down to the ground and, as the roots multiply, they eventually suffocate the host tree. Ultimately, with no host to bear its weight, the strangling fig also dies.

Another interesting plant is the world's largest flower, *Rafflesia*, which can measure up to one metre (3.3 feet) across and weigh up to nine kilograms (20 pounds). First discovered by Sir Stamford Raffles and Dr Joseph Arnold in 1818 in southwestern Sumatra, the *Rafflesia* is a parasite that uses a vine as its host. When the plant is in full bloom, it has a faint stench of rotting meat that attracts flies. Flowers are rare and villagers eagerly show them to tourists when they spot them.

Malaysia's pitcher plants belong to the genus *Nepenthes*, a Latin word meaning 'to remove all sorrow'. Homer referred to it in his poem, 'The Odyssey', and legend has it that Helen of Troy added the secretion of the pitcher plant to wine to enable men to forget their anxiety and grief. The Malay name for the pitcher plant is *pertuk kera* (monkey's cooking pot), which possibly refers to the plant's pot-like shape. The largest and most spectacular pitcher plants are found on the mountains of Sabah, especially on Mount Kinabalu.

Where there has been no human intervention, the coastal vegetation on the Peninsula's west coast largely comprises mangrove forests with nipah palms in the river estuaries. These areas are very important nurseries for fish and prawns. Mangrove trees, with their exposed stilt-like roots, have thin trunks and small leaves. The east coast comprises stretches of sandy beach with casuarina and coconut trees. The latter, with their swaying palms and trunks shaped by the wind, add to the

east coast's scenic beauty. Other coastal vegetation includes cycads and the screw pine which belongs to the Pandan family. Inland, there are peat swamp forests which feature the exotic red candlestick palm, commonly known as the sealing-wax palm. This can grow to eight metres (26 feet) in height and is an endangered species.

The coasts of Sabah and Sarawak, and indeed much of Borneo, are fringed by mangrove forests. Inland swamp forests on alluvium are seen mainly in eastern Sabah, especially along the lower Kinabatangan River. Peat forests occur extensively in Sarawak, especially in the Gunung Mulu and Bako national parks. Heath forests, or *kerangas* (an Iban word for soil-impoverished areas where rice cannot be grown), are characterized by closely spaced, low stunted trees with small, thick, reddish-tinted leaves. Pitcher plants abound in these forests as do ant plants which have developed a symbiotic relationship with ants.

The best examples of highland flora occur in Sabah, especially on Mount Kinabalu. Large trees and lianas make way for montane forests, starting at around 600 metres (1969 feet). The higher the altitude, the lower the overall tree canopy. Where dipterocarp gives way to montane flora, trees such as oak, myrtle and laurel are found and magnolias and rhododendrons make their appearance. Pitcher plants, moss- and algae-carpeted boulders and trees appear in sparsely covered landscape. Higher up, gnarled lichen-draped bushes signal the beginning of the moss forest, which usually starts at altitudes of about 1676 metres (5500 feet).

Malaysia's wild animals There are some 200 wild mammals in Peninsular Malaysia with bats accounting for half this figure. Similarly, of the 221 mammals in Sabah and Sarawak, 92 are bats. The tiger, tapir and leopard occur only in Peninsular Malaysia while the orang-utan is only found in Borneo (and Sumatra in Indonesia). Many wild cats, including the rare and beautiful clouded leopard, occur throughout Malaysia, but are seldom seen. Loss of habitat, and hunting in Sabah and Sarawak, are the main threats to the existence of these cats, despite their protected status. In Sarawak, the Iban still use the skin and canine teeth of the clouded leopard for ceremonial costumes.

The tiger is one of Malaysia's most striking symbols but, unfortunately, it is also one of its most endangered species. Today, there is a critical need to preserve the habitat of these magnificent creatures. The rare two-horned Sumatran rhinoceros, one of the country's 10 most endangered animals, is very close to extinction; the current population is estimated to be between 50 and 80. Poaching, loss of habitat, and the fact that it is extremely difficult to breed in captivity, have all contributed to the rhino's rare and endangered status. The most dangerous of all Malaysia's animals is the gaur, or wild ox, the largest species of wild ox in the country.

A rare herbivorous mammal and also a protected species is the black-and-white Malaysian tapir which has a soft trunk-like snout, a stumpy tail and weighs around 300 kilograms (662 pounds). It is found in Peninsular Malaysia, Thailand, Myanmar and Sumatra, though not in Borneo. The only species of bear found in Malaysia, the sun or honey bear, is the smallest in the world. Its diet consists largely of honey and termites, and it has long strong claws perfectly adapted to ripping open termites' and bees' nests. Perhaps the most reptilian-looking mammal found throughout Malaysia is the pangolin, or scaly anteater. It eats ants, licking them up with a sticky tongue which is capable of protruding 25 centimetres (10 inches) from its tiny mouth.

The largest of all Malaysian mammals, the Asian elephant, roams the forests of Johor, Kelantan, Terengganu and Pahang in the Peninsula, and is also found in Sabah. A fully grown male elephant grows to a height of 2.5 metres (8.2 feet) with 1.5-metre-long (5-foot) tusks, and it weighs up to 3 tonnes. The proboscis monkey is only found in Borneo, primarily in mangrove forests on the edge of rivers. Large numbers are found along the lower Kinabatangan River in eastern Sabah and in Sarawak's Bako National Park. An excellent swimmer, the proboscis monkey explores the river banks in search of its staple diet which comprises mangrove leaves. The male has a unique pendulous nose (the female has a smaller snub nose), giving it a fearsome appearance; in reality, it is a gentle creature.

Sparsely-haired and chestnut-coloured, the orang-utan is the world's only solitary ape. Found in Borneo and Sumatra, there is some dispute over the total number of this particular endangered species in the wild; it is believed that there may be between 10,000 and 20,000 orang-utans in Sabah and anything between 500 and 2000 in Sarawak. At the Sepilok Rehabilitation Centre near Sandakan in Sabah and the Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre in Sarawak, orang-utans can be seen in captivity. The male, characterized by large facial flaps, can weigh up to 100 kilograms (221 pounds) and grows to 1.5 metres (5 feet) tall. Orang-utans are active during the day, eating mainly fruit, leaves, insects, and sometimes durian, a favoured food. Unlike monkeys and other apes, they make fresh sleeping nests every night by shaping young leafy branches into a rough circular platform in a tree.

The male black-naped oriole

(*Oriolus chinensis*) is a brilliant yellow with a black mask over the eyes. It also has black wings and a black tail (opposite).

The clouded leopard

(*Neofelis nebulosa*) is the largest cat in Borneo. Although it is not uncommon in extensive forest areas, it is rarely seen. The attractive pelt and canine teeth of this elusive creature are used by Iban warriors as ceremonial adornments.





BIRD-WATCHING IN MALAYSIA

*I*t is always a joy to spot a bird, be it colourful or drab, resident or migrant, as small as a flower-pecker or as flamboyant as a hornbill. To stand in the Malaysian rainforest at dawn and witness barbets, hornbills and other birds communicating with calls and songs is an unforgettable experience. A visit to the Lake Gardens in Kuala Lumpur is a useful point of departure for aspirant bird-watchers. Orioles, magpie robins, mynahs, bulbuls, and sunbirds are all commonly seen in urban environments in Malaysia.

Some 626 birds have been recorded in the Malay Peninsula of which four species are endemic. These are the Malaysian and mountain peacock pheasants, the Malaysian whistling thrush and Gurney's pitta (the latter is only found in that part of the peninsula belonging to Thailand). Of the 570 species of bird recorded in Sabah and Sarawak, 88 do not occur in the Peninsula.

Birds are largely dependent on one of three natural habitats, namely: montane forest, lowland forest or mangroves (the coast); some

species occur in all three habitats. Over half of Malaysia's birds (including flower-peckers, sunbirds, pittas, and trogons) are found in lowland forest regions. Lowland forest species are in evidence in well-known Taman Negara National Park in Peninsular Malaysia and in a range of Bornean national parks, among them Gunung Mulu, Bako and Niah, and the Danum Valley Conservation Area. In Peninsular Malaysia, the Cameron Highlands, Maxwell Hill, Fraser's Hill, and Genting Highlands are worthwhile sites for montane species, while in Sabah, Kinabalu Park is your best bet. Mangrove forests and coastal mudflats attract migratory shore birds like curlews, plovers, herons and storks; Kuala Selangor Nature Park in the Peninsula and Bako National Park in Sarawak are excellent sites for mangrove forest species.

The Malaysian Nature Society has an active bird group which organizes monthly bird-watching outings. Annual bird races are held at Kinabalu Selangor Nature Park and Fraser's Hill where groups of bird-watchers try to spot as many different species of birds within an area.

MALAYSIA'S WILDLIFE RESERVES AND PARKS

Taman Negara National Park Bird-watching, jungle trekking and a seven-day climb to the top of Mount Tahan are the major attractions at Taman Negara, which means 'the national park'. Established in 1939, and 4350 square kilometres (1680 square miles) in size, it is Malaysia's oldest and largest national park. Situated where the borders of Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu meet, the park consists of tracts of virgin rainforest said to be 100 million years old. These forests have remained virtually undisturbed by the drastic climate changes of the ice age that was responsible for transforming the contours of Africa and South America; the absence of significant volcanic activity has also contributed to its survival.

With limited road access, Taman Negara is fairly inaccessible which is why it has remained so protected. Most visitors take a three-hour boat trip from Kuala Tembeling, in Pahang, to the park's headquarters at Kuala Tahan. On some rivers, giant trees soar up to 70 metres (230 feet) high, their crowns overlapping in a dense canopy. Pitcher plants and orchids are just some of the species that make the park one of the Peninsula's most important conservation areas. Large animals, such as tigers, elephants and gaur (wild oxen) are well-camouflaged and nocturnal, and it is advisable to stay overnight at an animal hide to catch a glimpse of them. Deer, wild fowl, monkeys, as well as a wide variety of birds and miniature mousedeer may be spotted on many of the well-marked trails. A canopy walk offers a unique perspective of the forest.

Cameron Highlands In 1958, the whole of the Cameron Highlands district, including the farming towns of Ringlet, Tanah Rata and Brinchang, was declared a reserve for deer. In 1962, it became a wildlife reserve affording protection to animals and birds. At 2031 metres (6664 feet), Mount Brinchang is the highest peak in the 70,000-hectare (172,970-acre) reserve. Large tracts of land are

under agriculture (tea, vegetables, flowers and strawberries), and there are some 3642 hectares (9000 acres) of forest. Rough or ill-defined trails lead visitors through the forest to waterfalls and other tranquil spots. Birdlife is profuse with barbets, sunbirds, flower-peckers, minivets, bulbuls, and leafbirds evident in gardens, secondary forest and beneath the forest canopy.

Kinabalu Park This park is a fine example of the successful balance between tourism, park maintenance, ecological protection, education, and training. It has become a model for ecological research and ecotourism and has been afforded UNESCO World Heritage status. Situated northeast of Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu, the 754-square-kilometre (291-square-mile) park is a botanist's paradise; there are 400 different types of fern, 1200 species of orchid and 10 of pitcher plant. A species of *Rafflesia*, the world's largest flower, which bears a scarlet bloom almost one metre (3.3 feet) wide, can be found in low-altitude forest around Poring. Nearly all the plant species encountered along the summit trail to the top of Mount Kinabalu, including numerous rhododendrons, are cultivated in the park's Mountain Garden. From park headquarters, nature trails lead to vantage points with views of the famous mountain.

At nearby Poring Hot Spring, the hot mineral baths are a restorative welcome to weary Mount Kinabalu climbers. Poring, and much of the eastern part of Kinabalu Park, consists of luxuriant rainforest with gigantic trees, vines, orchids, ferns and other epiphytes growing beneath the canopy. About 100 hectares (247 acres) contains trails, shelters, picnic areas, and a canopy walkway, which was first opened in 1990. The latter offers an elevated view of the rainforest and visitors can see canopy plants that are not visible from the forest floor.

Crocker Range National Park Established in 1984, this is one of Malaysia's largest parks. Situated on the western side of Sabah, it occupies an area of 1399 square kilometres (540 square miles), dominated by a range of densely forested mountains, known as the Crocker Range, which runs parallel with the coast and serves as an effective barrier to the interior. Until the turn of the century, the only way to cross these mountains was by means of a series of walking trails that cut across the mighty Padas River. Today, Padas Gorge is the site of advanced grade white-water rafting. In 1905, a railway line was built alongside the gorge. Currently four roads partly link the perimeter of the range and the towns of Ranau, Tambunan, Keningau and Tenom.

Gungung Mulu National Park Situated in Sarawak, this important park is dominated by Mount Mulu, a 2577-metre-high (7799-foot) peak that forms part of a range of spectacular limestone hills punctuated by a series of giant razor-edged monoliths that soar 45 metres (148 feet) above the rainforest canopy. Beneath these cliffs lies the world's largest underground network of caves. Clearwater Cave is the longest cave in the world. Its stalagmite-strewn expanse is an underworld maze of passages and water, and features a brilliant skylight 62 metres (203 feet) above a tributary of the Melinau River which flows through the caves. Deer Cave, 2160 metres (7087 feet) long and 220 metres (722 feet) deep, could accommodate five St Paul's Cathedrals. The *pièce de résistance* is the awesome Sarawak Chamber, a vast 700 metres (2297 feet) long and 70 metres (230 feet) high. As an alternative to caving, there is hiking in the Melinau Gorge. Here, the largest butterfly in Malaysia, the Rajah Brooke birdwing, shows off its magnificent green and black colouring. A substantial part of the park is composed of heath (*kerengas*) forest.

Niah National Park The Niah Caves, situated in the Niah National Park, are one of Southeast Asia's most famous archaeological sites. Located near the northern border of Sarawak, the park was established in 1975. Excavation projects have unearthed an ancient burial site, a skull carbon dated to 37,000bc as well as palaeolithic (Stone Age) implements and pieces of pottery. Massive archaeological digs at the Niah Cave complex have also uncovered pottery fragments, early bronze, glass beads and bangles. Ancient wall paintings created from hematite, a red pigment derived from iron-ore-rich mineral rock, were also discovered at a nearby cave. Called Painted Cave, the drawings on the cave walls depict hunting scenes and coffin boats. In the 3140-hectare (7759-acre) Great Cave, edible birds' nests are collected by the locals and are then exported for birds' nest soup.

Bako National Park Despite its small size, Bako National Park is Sarawak's oldest conservation area. With its coastal situation a little more than an hour away from the state capital, Kuching, Bako is highly accessible by boat or road. However, the last leg of the journey must be undertaken in a motorized longboat where, on arrival, guests register at the park headquarters at Telok Assam. A number of well-maintained trails, which are signposted and colour coded, lead to a variety of types of natural habitats, with a few trails ending on isolated sandy beaches noted for their unusual rock formations. There is a good chance of spotting animals at close quarters, including giant monitor lizards and proboscis monkeys.

CONQUERING MOUNT KINABALU



Hugh Low, an Englishman, is recorded as being the first person to climb Mount Kinabalu in 1851, although he never reached the summit. Low made a second unsuccessful attempt in 1858. It was naturalist John Whitehead who eventually succeeded in reaching the 4101-metre-high (13,455-foot) peak and who named it Lau's Peak after his professor.

The local Kadazan tribe, however, made it to the top long before any European. These people believe that the mountain is the homeland of their spirit world. It is thought that the word Kinabalu originated from the Kadazan term 'aki nabalu', meaning 'rest of the gods, ghost and spirits of ancestors' or 'sacred place of the dead'. Whether this is superstition, magic or the truth, the awesome vista of its cloud-shrouded jagged peaks adds to Kinabalu's mystique.

In 1989, a Gurka soldier participating in the Kinabalu Climbathon ran up and down the mountain in two hours, 29 minutes and 38 seconds. A bull terrier named Wigson, accompanied by his master, a district officer from Kota Belud, achieved fame when he became the first dog to climb the mountain. A nine-month-old baby, carried by its father, is possibly the youngest climber, while an 83-year-old New Zealander is the most senior climber to date. Of the 200,000 annual visitors to Kinabalu Park, only one-sixth makes the climb. The mountain is said to be growing at a rate of half a centimetre (0.2 of an inch) per year.

MALAYSIA'S UNDERWATER REALM

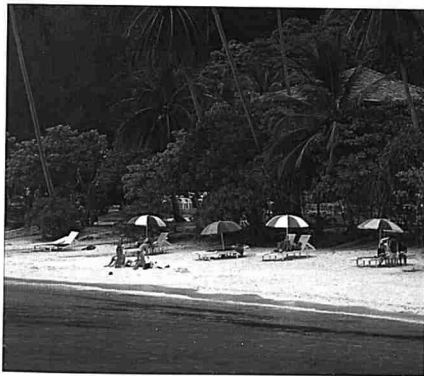
More than 100 idyllic tropical islands, or pulau (the Malay word for island), are scattered in the warm waters that surround Peninsular Malaysia. Many of the islands have become highly sought-after holiday destinations – classic castaway resorts offering luxurious thatched accommodation, delightful restaurants, and the universal appeal of long sandy beaches. Underlying these oceanic outcrops is the Sunda Shelf, creating shallow seas perfect for snorkelling and diving.

Over the years, pollution has had a negative impact on the fragile coral ecosystems of the islands, particularly on the Peninsula's highly-industrialized west coast. As a result, the west coast islands are not renowned for the clarity of their waters, and instead, divers looking for world-class dive spots head for the islands off the Peninsula's east coast and the east and west coasts of Sabah. However, despite this, the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia does have some exceptional resort islands, notably Payar (which is part of the Langkawi group of islands off Kedah) and Pangkor. Declared a marine park in 1985, Payar Island has an underwater viewing gallery, yellow sandy beaches and offers snorkelling among a host of very colourful fish. In spite of its position at the mouth of the polluted Perak River, Rumbia Island has a well-developed coral reef which owes its survival to a longshore current which prevents silt from settling on the 40-odd species of hard and soft corals. The Malaysian Nature Society is currently collecting data in an attempt to establish a conservation plan for this area. In a bid to conserve and protect the marine environment, 38 of the islands off Peninsular Malaysia have already been declared marine parks by the Fisheries Department of Malaysia. However, without the right to control land development, such tangible efforts are proving a challenge.

Picturesque beaches, extensive coral reefs and clear waters teeming with bright tropical fish are characteristic of the Perhentian island group (below), which includes beautiful Perhentian Besar, located off Terengganu's coast.

Perhentian Island From Kuala Besut in Terengganu, a two-hour boat trip brings visitors to the Perhentian group of islands, just 21 kilometres (13 miles) off the mainland. Besides Perhentian Besar (Big Island) and Perhentian Kecil (Small Island), the group includes several islets with wonderful isolated beaches. Between the two main islands there is a shallow, narrow and sandy channel that is excellent for snorkelling. Here, and to the north of Perhentian Besar, extensive shallow reefs are home to a proliferation of reef fish such as angel-, puffer-, trigger-, lion-, and scorpionfish. There is also a good chance of seeing hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and green (*Chelonia mydas*) turtles in these waters, as well as rays, reef sharks and a variety of other colourful fish.

Redang Island Arguably one of Malaysia's prettiest tropical islands, and a popular holiday destination for nature lovers and divers, the Redang archipelago lies 45 kilometres (27 miles) off Terengganu on the Peninsula's east coast. In 1985, it became Malaysia's first marine park. Redang consists of a group of nine islands: Redang and Pinang islands and seven tiny islets, a few being no more than small rocky outcrops. The surrounding coral reefs are extensive, and exhibit a variety and density of hard and soft corals comparable to the world's best. Coral groves of hummocks, spikes, stony bushes, brain coral, thickets, ferns, and sponges provide a protective environment for, among others, lion-, damsel- and clownfish, anchovies, giant clams with crinkled jaws agape, rays, skates, and small reef sharks. Redang's shores and shallows are feeding grounds for many species of shore birds and waders. The islands are also an important stopover for migrating birds.



Tioman Island The Tioman group of islands comprises the beautiful island of Tioman, as well as a number of very small islands including Tulai, Chebeh, Seri Buat and Sembilang. Together, they make up the Pahang Marine Park which was established in 1985. Although the park falls under the government of the state of Pahang, it is approached by boat from the port of Mersing in Johor, it can also be accessed by air.

To the south of Tioman, twin granite peaks soar 914 metres (3000 feet) above sea level. In ancient times, they used to act as effective navigational beacons for mariners using the South China Sea. Characterized by rugged mountain terrain, dramatic rocky headlands and sandy beaches, the 13,420-hectare (33,161-acre) Tioman was discovered by Hollywood in the late 1950s; the beach south of Tioman Island Resort and the dramatic waterfall near the village of Mukut were two of the exotic locations used when the musical *South Pacific* was filmed here. The best diving reefs are to be found around the smaller islands in the group, and not off Tioman.

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park Another marine wonderland lies off Kota Kinabalu on Sabah's west coast. Tunku Abdul Rahman Park comprises five islands: Gaya (which is also worth visiting for its wildlife), Sapi, Manukan, Mamutik and Sulug. Beyond the sandy beaches, beneath the translucent waters, interesting coral reefs await discovery by divers. Overnight facilities exist on Mamutik and Manukan.

Turtle Islands Park This is one of Southeast Asia's most important turtle breeding spots, and consists of three tiny islands in the Sulu Sea, northeast of Sabah. Almost every night of the year, giant female hawksbill and green turtles struggle ashore to lay their eggs. Staff transfer the eggs to a hatchery where they are incubated and hatched, after which the young turtles are returned to the sea. Since the inception of the breeding programme almost 30 years ago, egg production has increased significantly. Accommodation on the island is limited and early bookings are recommended.

Semporna Marine Park The Bodgaya and Ligitan are two groups of pristine reef-fringed islands off the southeast coast of Sabah. The Semporna Marine Park, which is in the Bodgaya group of islands, is made up of eight small islands – Sebangkat, Selakan, Malga, Sibuan, Boheydulong, Bodgaya and Tetagan – all of which are accessible from the important fishing port of Semporna in Sabah. There is a cultured pearl farm on Boheydulong Island which produces Borneo's half-round pearls. The Ligitan group of islands comprises Mabul and Kapalal. The reefs are shallow here but the coral formations are excellent and there is a spectacular diversity of fish and other marine life. Beyond Ligitan, at the edge of the continental shelf, is the island of Sipadan which rises 600 metres (1970 feet) from the ocean depths.

Sipadan Island Malaysia's only oceanic island, Sipadan, is located off the east coast of Borneo, just south of Sabah in the Sulawesi (Celebes) Sea. The world-renowned Frenchman, Jacques Cousteau, after visiting the rainforest-covered island in the late 1980s, described it as one of the world's most beautiful underwater sites; it arguably has the best beach diving anywhere in the world. Sharks, moray eels, giant turtles, barracuda and reef fish swim amidst pristine coral.



WITNESSING MALAYSIA'S MARINE WONDERS

As a result of the Sunda Shelf which surrounds Malaysia, the seas are shallow which makes for excellent diving. The clear waters that surround the tropical paradise islands off the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia are known for their rich coral life. Beginner snorkellers can enjoy the colonies of fire, brain, staghorn and pillar corals, the latter housing bottle-brush worms.

Marine life is diverse and fish of all descriptions, sizes and colours are evident: butterfly-, damself-, trigger- and parrotfish, as well as wrasse, sturgeon, basslet, grouper and snapper. Hawksbill and green turtles can be seen gliding gracefully through the water. Marine plants, sea anemones, crustaceans, sea stars and many other creatures create a world of brilliant colour.

The best islands for scuba diving and snorkelling are off the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and off western Sabah: Perhentian, Hadang, Kapas, Terenggan and Lang Tengah are the group of islands off Kuala Besut in Terengganu. The islands off Mersing in Johor also cater for divers and snorkellers.

There are many dive centres on the islands from which scuba cylinders and boats, as well as equipment such as snorkels, masks and fins, can be hired. Dive courses are conducted on most islands. There are several dive centres; among them Borneo Divers, on the oceanic island of Sipadan off Semporna in Sabah, all which offer full diving packages tours. The wall diving here makes it one of the world's best dive locations. Sipadan is also a well-known turtle habitat.

PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION

The Malaysian Government, which is committed to a policy of conservation, has established a network of protected areas throughout the country in an effort to maintain environmental stability, ensure the protection of soil and water resources, and preserve the region's biological diversity. Under the National Forestry Policy, 14.05 million hectares (35 million acres) out of a total forest area of 19.25 million hectares (48 million acres) have been designated as permanent forest reserve; and an additional 4.63 million hectares (11.4 million acres) has been set aside as protected forests. Totally protected forest is in the area of 1.4 million hectares (3.4 million acres).

Despite this, deforestation and the effects of urbanization, including air and water pollution and the exploitation of water resources, are just a few of the threats to the natural heritage. In Sabah and Sarawak, for example, deforestation of the rainforests threatens to destroy many of the 11,000 resident plant and animal species. Almost all of Malaysia's remaining lowland forest, which offers a rich diversity in plant and animal life, has been degraded to some degree. About half of the endemic tree species are classified as endangered or extinct. In the last two decades, the loss of biodiversity has been particularly significant through the retreat of forested areas as a result of conversion to cash crops like oil palm and rubber, and through the pollution of Malaysia's waterways.

In Malaysia's drive for development, conservation has traditionally been given low priority in existing land-use policies, and large tracts of forest have been exploited for timber. However, the government has recently made efforts towards the implementation of sustained-yield timber production utilizing better forest management, which gives consideration to environmental needs as well as the achievement of rational economic growth. The cultivation of rubberwood, for instance, provides an alternative resource to the exotic hardwoods of the natural forest.

There have, however, been some noteworthy conservation successes such as the Matang Forest Reserve in Perak, which includes the single largest mangrove forest in Peninsular Malaysia. Mangrove vegetation plays an important role in preventing erosion and protecting the coastline from strong waves and wind. The Matang wetland teems with life; it is also a rich marine breeding ground. A bird sanctuary at Kuala Gula, at the northern tip of the reserve, is a feeding ground for some 140 migratory species from as far away as Siberia en route to the southern hemisphere.

Sepilok Forest Reserve, located near Sandakan in Sabah, was established in 1931 for conducting experimental forestry techniques. In 1964 it became a rehabilitation centre for injured orang-utans and those that had been illegally captured. Sepilok's professional management and organization has turned it into one of Sabah's most popular and ecologically sound tourist attractions.

Marine conservation Malaysia's biologically diverse reefs are under threat as a result of many factors that impact on the marine environment, including urban development, pollution, overfishing, and even the removal of shells and corals. The loss of aquatic species and the destruction of coral reefs through pollution is believed to be particularly critical in the Straits of Melaka where reefs are almost nonexistent as a result of pollution, silt and garbage. Reef destruction has been caused by the removal of coral for building, blast fishing and effluent and sewage discharge into the sea. Unfortunately, land-based activities, such as industries, have an adverse effect on the marine environment. The growth of tourism, particularly on the islands, is an obvious incentive to resorts and the government to improve conservation efforts.

The green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*)

is the most common turtle species occurring in Malaysia's waters (below). It nests between January and October, laying its soft shelled eggs along sandy stretches of beach and on islands such as Perhentian and Redang.



EXPLORING MALAYSIA'S CITIES AND TOWNS

Malaysia consists of the 13 states of Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Pahang, Terengganu, Kelantan, Perak, Perlis, Kedah, Selangor, Penang, Sarawak and Sabah. It also includes the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur, Labuan and Putrajaya. Most of the states' ruling cities expanded to their current status because of economic activity. Ipoh prospered because of tin; Melaka and Penang were historically important ports for traders; Johor Bahru flourished due to its proximity to Singapore; Kuantan held a prime position linking the east coast with the west; while Kuala Terengganu's significance was crude petroleum. After Kuala Lumpur (KL) became a Federal Territory in 1974, the Sultan of Selangor built a new state capital in Shah Alam. The most visually impressive sight in Shah Alam is the blue dome of the Selangor State Mosque.

Peninsular Malaysia has some small but interesting towns worth visiting for their history, their food, their beaches or their streetside scenery and friendly locals. The nostalgic traveller, or those who love prewar Chinese shophouses, should drop in on Kampar, an old mining town north of KL, on the highway to Ipoh, the state capital of Perak. Here it is easy to imagine plaited Chinese coolies pulling rickshaws occupied by satin-robed men and women, the clatter of *mahjong* tiles, and the furtive movements of secret society members. In a country where economic development has been rapid, preserving the past has had a low priority. Nurtured by the tin-mining industry during the 1800s, Kampar was a major economic force in the Kinta Valley, attracting thousands of Chinese tin miners to the area. Situated by a river mouth, south of Kuala Terengganu on the east coast, Marang has rustic appeal. Wooden houses built on stilts nestle on sandy beaches amidst tall coconut palms, and children play on the river banks.

The network of highways and excellent roads that cross the Peninsula makes access very easy. From Johor Bahru at the southernmost tip of the Peninsula, the North-South Expressway stretches to the border with Thailand. From Kuantan, a picturesque coastal drive winds its way north along the Peninsula's east coast. Roads cut across the Main Range at two points. In the north the East-West highway, which links Kelantan with Kedah, is considered to be one of the most scenic drives in Malaysia; there is always the chance of spotting a wild animal crossing the road. The Karak highway links KL with the east coast city of Kuantan.

Linking Singapore to Malaysia is the 1.5-kilometre-long (one mile) causeway that took four years to build and was completed in 1924. In January 1942, the British army demolished part of it to stop the Japanese, but it was quickly rebuilt by the invaders. Today, the causeway has road and rail links as well as a pedestrian walkway. There is also a second tollway crossing into Singapore.

Trips in Sabah and Sarawak are equally fascinating, although a little more difficult to access. The mountainous rainforest terrain and network of rivers make roads scarce and the main mode of transport is by boat, especially in Sarawak. In central and southern Sarawak, for example, motorized express boats and craft of all descriptions ply the mighty Rejang River, turning it into a busy 'highway'. A boat trip up the river, stopping at villages, small towns and longhouses, has become a major tourist drawcard. Sukau, in Sabah, is the largest settlement on the Kinabatangan River, and is also accessible by road. The river flows eastward from its source in Sabah's western mountains until it meets the sea near Sandakan. Sukau is an ideal departure point for early morning cruises on the Menanggul River to see wildlife, including the curious-looking proboscis monkey, with its upturned nose and pot belly.

Top spinning (below) is one of many traditional pastimes pursued in Kelantan's capital, Kota Bharu, which is sometimes referred to as the cradle of traditional Malay culture. The men who participate in top-spinning competitions – where both skill and strength are tested – are usually dedicated professionals.





The Petronas Twin Towers

(above) dominate the Kuala Lumpur skyline by day and night. The 452m (1485ft) metal and glass towers, with 88 floors of offices, are linked by a bridge at the 41st and 42nd floor levels. The Twin Towers have come to be seen as a monument to Malaysia's national aspirations.

Kuala Lumpur: from mining town to national capital Many tourists begin their travels in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur. With impressive high-rise buildings (including the world's tallest, the Petronas Twin Towers), traffic-congested streets and frenetic pace, it is hard to believe that this was once a chaotic mining shanty town. Situated in the tin-rich Klang Valley within the state of Selangor, KL (as it is popularly known) occupies its own city boundaries, known as the Federal Territory. The literal translation of Kuala Lumpur, 'muddy estuary', refers to its location at the junction of the Klang and the Gombak rivers.

Before the first European administrator to Kuala Lumpur arrived in 1879, the town had been administered by a Chinaman named Yap Ah Loy, or 'Kapitan China', as he came to be called. He concentrated on maintaining law and order amongst the Chinese community, which in turn promoted the growth and development of tin mining. This system of indirect rule over the local populace, which was first introduced by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, worked well, with a Chinese headman serving as the intermediary between the colonial rulers and the various ethnic communities. In his role as an administrator, the headman acted as a revenue collector and was responsible for collecting taxes from gambling, pawn-broking and the illegal sale of pork, spirits and opium. When the Dutch came into power, they retained the 'Kapitan China' practice, as did the British, until it was officially abolished at the turn of the 20th century.

The British colonial administrative headquarters were originally erected in Klang, but in 1880 they were moved 32 kilometres (20 miles) up the east bank of the Klang River where Kuala Lumpur stands today. In 1881, after a fire that razed every building in the burgeoning town, a new building regulation stipulated that the town would have to be rebuilt with bricks and tiles rather than timber and *atap* (thatch). By 1895, KL had evolved into 'the neatest and prettiest Chinese and Malay town' in Malaya – this being the opinion of a visiting governor. In the same year, the town became the capital of the Federated Malay States.

Kuala Lumpur is architecturally fascinating and the influences of many diverse building styles – both traditional and contemporary – are evident throughout the city. Squeezed between the glass, concrete and steel building blocks of the modern city, remnants of the country's rich multicultural heritage are still to be seen. Functional prewar Chinese shophouses, Moorish domed and minareted edifices and imposing colonial buildings in English Tudor or Victorian style jostle for position beside Greek Corinthian pillars and sleek, contemporary high-rises.

To the north of Kuala Lumpur, in the direction of Ipoh, lie the famous Batu Caves. These caves, which contain unique rock formations, are part of a massive limestone outcrop that forms a section of mainland Asia's southernmost limestone block. Cathedral Cave, one of the biggest caves in the complex, is reached via a flight of 272 steps that have been carved out of the limestone. Next to the main cave is Dark Cave, which at 366 metres (1201 feet), is the longest of them all.

The Batu Caves were transformed into a Hindu temple in 1891, and worshippers pay daily visits to the caves, bringing offerings in the form of coconuts, milk, fruits and flowers. Chickens, cats and monkeys roam the temple precincts and there are souvenir shops, vegetarian restaurants and stalls selling drinks. Each February, the caves become the site of an extraordinary Hindu festival called *Thaipusam*. The festival, in honour of Lord Murugan (sometimes known as Lord Subramaniam), a Hindu god, is marked by various acts of penance and thanksgiving. Some participants carry an ornate *kavadi* on their shoulders, while others may have steel skewers pierced through the skin of their bare chests, and through their cheeks and tongue to demonstrate their suffering.

Melaka From Kuala Lumpur, the 90-kilometre (56-mile) drive to Melaka, mostly on the North-South Expressway, takes about two hours. Once the 'Queen of the Spice Trade' in Southeast Asia, Melaka is today a hub of tourism, development and economic growth.

History is everywhere, and a stroll through town offers much more than any historical record could: ancient mosques, impeccably maintained traditional 'melaka' houses decorated with ornate wood carvings and characteristic tiled staircases leading to raised verandas, and Portuguese and Dutch churches – the whole city is indeed a living museum. The Maritime Museum is designed after a Portuguese ship which sank off the coast of Melaka on its way to Portugal. Visitors can study aspects of the Malay Sultanate of the 14th century, and the Portuguese, Dutch and British eras, and view exhibits of foreign ships that once called at the port. There are many other museums in the town.

Melaka is geared towards catering for tourists. Join a cruise upriver, ride in a trishaw, take a ride on a bullock cart, or walk the narrow streets lined with antique shops. St Paul's Hill, with its shady age-old trees, is a good place to start a historical stroll. St Paul's Church has been many things in its life – a Catholic chapel, Dutch church, burial ground, fortress, and British powder magazine. Close by, the Melaka Cultural Museum, modelled after a 15th-century Melaka sultanate palace, offers an excellent insight into life during that period. Stroll along the covered walkways of the prewar shophouses on Tun Tan Cheng Lock Street and discover an authentic Baba ancestral home that has been transformed into a private museum. These elaborately designed and decorated ancestral homes were carved, gilded, inlaid, lacquered, and embroidered. The flamboyant Straits-born Chinese style was a fusion of high Victorian, Chinese and tropical. Some of the homes are narrow-fronted, southern-Chinese-style townhouses built during the 18th century; others are stately Chinese mansions with doorways paved with precious Dutch tiles, and walls and windows featuring cornices laden with colourful ornaments and decorations of plaster and shells.

Georgetown The island of Penang, situated in the Straits of Melaka off the northwest coast of the mainland, is known as the 'Pearl of the Orient'. Because of its fine natural harbour, the first British port, naval and trading station east of India was established here in 1786 with the arrival of Francis Light. Over 200 years later, it is a thriving business centre and heritage attraction for tourists. Penang has always had a lot of character, which may be due to the fact that it has retained many aspects of its past, be they the narrow streets, old-world shops, or distinctly authentic cuisine.

Georgetown, the capital, is a wonderful old town to explore; the Heritage Trail, a historic route that includes most of the popular tourist attractions, can be enjoyed on foot or in a trishaw. The most scenic way to see the harbour and the Penang Bridge is to take the ferry that regularly shuttles between the island and Butterworth on the mainland. Alongside the esplanade waterfront is a stately colonial building that used to be the city hall. It is a fine example of British Palladian architecture and features elegant Greek-influenced Corinthian columns.

High on a hill overlooking Georgetown looms the Kek Lok Si Buddhist temple complex at Air Itam. Built in 1890, it took 20 years to complete and is the largest Buddhist complex in Malaysia. The story goes that, in 1885, a visiting Buddhist abbot visualized the surrounding hills as a flying crane with outspread wings (a Buddhist symbol of immortality), and the temple was built after his vision. At Wat Chayamangkalaram, Penang's Thai Buddhist monastery, lies the 32-metre-long (105-foot) golden-robed reclining Buddha; it is the third largest statue of its kind in the world. At Cannon Square in Georgetown, glistening gold leaf and red lacquer create a dazzling, rich effect on the Khoo Kongsi Temple, a Chinese clan house built by the Khoo family in the late 19th century. A funicular tram ride transports visitors

The Shangri-La Golden Sands

Hotel (below) is one of many premium resorts that line the famous beach strip of Batu Ferringhi, or Foreigner's Rock, on the north coast of Penang.



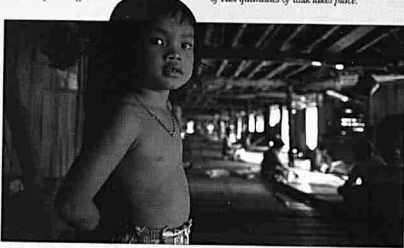
LIFE IN THE LONGHOUSE

A visit to a longhouse provides a fascinating insight into the traditional rural lifestyle of the local tribes. The Sarawak Cultural Village, situated near Damai Beach, is a worthwhile excursion. Here, visitors can wander through replicas of ethnic villages, complete with craftspeople demonstrating traditional skills such as weaving. However, an overnight trip to a real longhouse is a memorable experience and not to be missed.

The longhouse – a row of open plan dwellings sharing a common roof and joined by a broad communal veranda – is the traditional dwelling of many of Sarawak's ethnic groups, including the Iban, Dayak and Orang Ulu. Each family has a loft where rice and other provisions are stored as well as farming implements and tools for fashioning handicrafts and artefacts. Built of aw-bam timber secured with creepers fibre, and roofed with leaf thatch, the structure is usually built on the bank of a navigable

river. These days, longhouses are often of modern design with water, electricity, separate kitchens and bathrooms. Most longhouses are raised on stilts for security and in case of flooding. A notched log serves as a staircase and leads to the open veranda, the scene of domestic and communal activity where chores are carried out and guests are entertained.

A casual visitor will be invited to sit down on a mat on the veranda for a chat with the longhouse elder; entry into the family dwelling is usually restricted to relatives and overnight guests. It is important to observe and respect the customs of your hosts. For example, it is polite to remove your shoes before entering a dwelling, and to accept a drink of tuak (rice wine). In the evenings, there is usually entertainment in the form of dancing and music, and visitors are encouraged to participate. During Gawai (a harvest festival), much feasting, dancing and the consumption of vast quantities of tuak takes place.



to the top of Penang Hill, which at 800 metres (2625 feet) above sea level, offers a splendid view of Georgetown with its waterfront and distinctive red-roofed shophouses.

The luxury hotels, convention facilities and watersport facilities for which Penang is famous are mostly located on the north of the island. A circular island trip is the most picturesque way for visitors to see Penang, offering interesting scenes of rural villages, paddy fields, fruit orchards and coconut plantations. Along the way, local crafts, such as batik-makers, can be visited.

Kota Kinabalu Known as Jesselton until 1963, Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu, was burnt to the ground by the Allied Forces during World War II to prevent the Japanese from using it as a base. Few historical buildings survived the attack.

Once just a coastal village comprising modest stilt dwellings and a few rows of shophouses, KK (as it is better known) has evolved into a modern settlement of officially around 200,000 people, however, there are many itinerant visitors. Fanned by cooling sea breezes, and surrounded by forest-clad hills, the capital has the advantage of being close to the cluster of five coral islands of Tunku Abdul Rahman Park.

The city limit sprawls from Tanjung Aru, with its luxury beach resorts, to Likas. Most places in the city are within walking distance of each other, including the post office, travel agents and office of the National Parks Board. Places of interest include the state mosque, a stunning example of contemporary Islamic architecture; and the Sabah State Museum, located opposite the mosque and styled after a traditional longhouse. Here the arts and crafts of Sabah's ethnic groups can be appreciated. To the north, the high-rise Sabah Foundation Building towers over the land. The new resort destination of Sutera Harbour offers resort hotels, golf, and marine activities close to the town.

Kuching Sarawak's capital, Kuching, has a picturesque riverside setting, making it an ideal city to explore on foot. The word Kuching means 'cat' and there are a few versions of the origin of the city's name: it may have been named after a small tidal inlet known as Sungei Kuching (Cat River), or it is also possible that the name arose out of the many *matu kuching* (cat's eyes) fruit trees growing along the river banks. Kuching is conveniently situated for trips to Iban and Bidayuh longhouses, and is a wonderful source of local handicrafts like carved wood and basketry.

The Kuching Waterfront is one of Malaysia's finest open recreational spaces. The adjoining Main Bazaar features some of the country's finest antiquity and handcraft shops. The city has a number of historical buildings, among them Bishop's House, which was erected in 1849 and is Sarawak's oldest building, and the Astana, which was built in 1870 for the newly married rajah, and is now the official residence of Sarawak's head of state. Fort Margherita, which was named after the wife of the second 'White Rajah' and built in the edifice style of the late English Renaissance, is now a police museum. The Sarawak Museum is considered to be one of the best in the world. It houses a comprehensive collection of Bornean artefacts. Malaysia's oldest Chinese temple, the Tua Pek Kong, also located in Kuching, was built in 1876.

THE MALAYSIAN PEOPLE

Malaysian society is characterized by racial diversity, the result of a blend of Malay, Chinese, Indian, European and indigenous cultures. The latter includes the Orang Asli, or 'original people', some of whom still live in the jungles. The first Malays arrived 3000 years ago, possibly from an area where Taiwan is today. Malays of Sumatran (Minangkabau), Javanese or Bugis (Sulawesi) descent came later. Indians were brought from southern India in the days of British colonial rule. Chinese arrived to seek their fortune on the tin and gold mines in the 19th century. Eurasians were the result of intermarriage between colonial Europeans and locals. Babas and Nonyas descend from Chinese and Malay intermarriage. Completing the ethnic mix are the indigenous people of Sabah and Sarawak.

A rich cultural diversity The Orang Asli, the Malays, and Sabah and Sarawak's ethnic groups, whose cultures are considered indigenous to the region, are known collectively as *bumiputras*, or 'sons of the soil'. *Bumiputras* are granted special privileges such as land rights and housing subsidies as part of the government's policy to boost their economic status.

Malaysia's Orang Asli ('original people') date back around 55,000 years, judging by the human remains unearthed in Sarawak's Niah Caves. More recent finds, dating back about 10,000 years, were discovered at cave sites in the Peninsula. Today, this historically important indigenous group numbers around 95,000 in the Peninsula and is divided into 18 asli (original) groups. Around 60 per cent of these people still live in the jungle while the other 40 per cent are fishing folk, farmers, or live in urban areas. The Senoi, a semi-nomadic group known by their various tribal names, inhabit the Peninsula's northern and central regions. The Proto-Malays, or Orang Melayu Asli, many originally from Sumatra, settled in Malaysia around 4000 years ago.

The most nomadic group of all is the Negrito, who are thought to have arrived in Malaysia some 8000 years ago. Resembling East Africans or Papua New Guineans, these shy people are expert hunters and gatherers and live in the north-eastern and northwestern jungles of the Peninsula. Both the Senoi and Negrito speak Mon-Khmer, which probably originated in Indochina.

The wide diversity of Malaysia's indigenous groups is most evident in Sabah and Sarawak. In Sabah, there are at least 38 different groups, the largest being the Kadazan. Although many have converted to Christianity or Islam, most are still traditionalists who practise animism. The Bajau of Kota Belud in Sabah came from the Philippines during the 18th and 19th centuries. Their love of dressing up in ceremonial clothing and riding their prized ponies has earned them the reputation of the 'cowboys of the east'.

In Sarawak, the largest indigenous group is the Iban, also known as the Sea Dayak. Originally from Sumatra, their language has been described as pre-Islamic Sumatran Malay.

MALAYSIAN MARKETS

Despite the proliferation of supermarkets, Malaysians open air night and wet markets remain a firm tradition. They provide an insight into provincial culture and lifestyles and are an authentic Malaysian medley of sensational sights, sounds and smells. For the tourist it is a satisfying, and even

adventurous, experience. Wet markets may be so-called because they always were a wet, particularly in the fish section. In older times, there were conscientious people standing around with water hoses, poised to direct their jets of water over the area.

Sunlight filters through the octagonal yellow stained glass skylights of the wet market, giving the fresh produce section on the ground floor a 'vill life' feel, and its character the air of warm figures. Kota Bharu's Central Market is the domain of Kelantanese women, exquisite in their batik sarungs and baju kurungs (loose-fitting dresses), some with white-black beledai seyk (cold powder) faces, others flamboyantly make-up and flaunting masses of gold jewellery. They all form part of the market's colourful mosaic.

Another colourful east coast market is Kuala Terengganu's Central Market, next to the Terengganu River. It is notable for its fresh fish section, which usually abounds with the day's catch, and its wide and varied range of batik sarungs. The Malaysian batik style features rustic, simple designs, while the Thai style displays modern, pop-art expressions. The traditional Indonesian batik sarungs are known for their intricacy and exquisite ornateness and beauty.



One of the most classic east coast market or bazaar experiences must be Kuala Lumpur's Chow Kit Road. The contrast between the big-city bustle and the quiet community of old world medicine men with their herbal cures, and salesmen still operating in the obsolete tradition, is strangely typical of KL.

The same incongruity is evident, for example, in one of Sabah's Kota Kinabalu markets, where seafood is sold in abundance. Here, a hawker selling cigarettes might be seen tucking into freshly cooked fish.

Then there is the tawau at Miri in Sarawak, where the Kayans, Kertajays and Kolahits from the state's uplands congregate to display and sell an extraordinary assortment of jungle produce. Instead of traditional attire, their partially clothed bodies are adorned with tattoos. The combination of tattooed arms and backs, and their stretched earlobes lend these people a unique raw, natural beauty.

While shopping at the tawau, look for unusual fruits such as buah jelayan which has a skin like a woven rattan basket and a taste that only the very sour palate can handle. There are wild asbergines and mushrooms and various types of wild rice: hill, red and brown rice. Also available is mengkambang, a margarine substance derived from a tree and then stuffed into a bamboo hollow. There are deer antlers and wild honey as well as live produce. Birds, such as parrots, budgies and pigeons can be purchased as pets, or you could choose geolings, quails, lobsters or cufish for the pot.



Alfresco eating is a way of life in Malaysia (above), although the fun begins long before you start eating. You can take in the sights, smells and sounds as you wander between the food stalls where many of the hawkers enjoy exhibiting their culinary skills in front of an appreciative audience.

The Ibans who settled in the Lingga and Sebuyau areas were probably the first to make contact with Brooke in the mid-19th century. During the early years of Brooke's rule, in an attempt to flee piracy in the east, the Ibans moved into the area around Kuching and Lundu. Described as an aggressive and warring people, they managed – between their clan feuds and head-hunting expeditions – to forge a cultural tradition that is still strong today. Head-hunting may have been halted at the turn of the 20th century, but old war trophies of human skulls can still be seen hanging over the doorways of some longhouses to ward off evil spirits.

Including the Iban, there are officially 20 main ethnic groups in Sarawak. The Kenyah and Kayan live in the middle and upper reaches of the Batang Rajang and Baram rivers; the Melanau are found along the coast, where many have intermarried with Malays and converted to Islam.

The Chinese arrived en masse in the 19th century, some to escape their war-ravaged homeland and others to work in the tin mines or to trade. The first immigrants landed on the Peninsula's west coast in Penang but later they spread into other parts of the country. The Chinese soon forged a reputation for tackling the toughest jobs, such as tin mining, and road and railway building. Shrewd business tactics led to their domination of commerce and trade in the 1950s and 1960s. Malaysian-born Chinese have integrated well with all other races and exhibit a genuine Malaysian identity.

It was only in the 19th century that Indians arrived in substantial numbers to work as rubber tappers for British planters. Most are Hindus and Tamils from southern India, although there are also minority groups of Sikhs, Parsis, Telugus and Malayses. Indian Muslims, known as Mamaks, originally arrived to establish restaurants and food stalls.

The Eurasians, who are mainly of Portuguese, Dutch or British descent, reside chiefly within the Portuguese settlement in Melaka, although groups are now scattered throughout the west coast. The offspring of pure Eurasians – those Malaysian men and women who have married Caucasians – are described as Pan-Asian.

MALAYSIAN CUISINE

Like its citizens, Malaysia's food is extremely diverse; and in the case of Malaysian roadside food stalls, it is definitely unique. As a result of the country's multicultural population, Malaysian cuisine includes influences and borrowings from the likes of Indian, Chinese, Malay, Arabic, Nonya, Eurasian, Thai, Burmese, British, Portuguese, Dutch and indigenous cultures. Nonya food, for example, is an interesting blend of Malay and Chinese cooking with hot chilli-based coconut-milk curries and fiery sambals. Popular Malay dishes include *sate*, which is skewered meat grilled on hot coals; *rendang*, a rich, highly spiced dry curry cooked with grated coconut that is fried until fragrant and crispy, then ground into a paste; and *nasi campur*, an assortment of tasty seasoned meat and vegetables served with rice.

In the evenings, when the weather is cooler, stalls are set up on strategic street corners to cater to the Malaysians' favourite pastime, eating. Snacking al fresco under the stars is a great dining experience. Food developed on the streets is a blend of culinary textures and flavours. Staples include *nasi lemak*, a Malay dish of coconut-flavoured rice served with *ikan bilis* sambal, made from anchovies that have been cooked with freshly ground chillies, fried peanuts and hardboiled egg. *Roti canai* is a crispy pancake usually eaten with a thick lentil sauce. Besides coconut milk and ground chillies, a key ingredient in Malaysian cooking is *belachan*, a pungent prawn paste made from dried shrimps that are pounded to a paste and left to ferment. The smell is indescribable but, pounded together with red chillies, onions, salt and lime juice, it is a delicious appetizer.

Fruits are commonly used in Malaysian cooking. Jackfruit, mangoes, starfruit and rambutans are all colourful tropical fruits that are best eaten fresh. Malaysia's 'king of fruits' is the durian: a spiky shell protects the rich, creamy pulp that 'tastes like heaven, but smells like hell'.

RELIGION

Islam is the common faith that binds modern and rural Malays. However, the country's national religion is not as dogmatic as that which is practised in some other Islamic countries. Islam came to the Peninsula through Indian and Arab traders; consequently, some Malays have Arabic names. Five times a day, the call of the muezzin, or religious leader, emanates from mosques around the country, calling Muslims to pray. On Fridays, the day of worship, most mosques are full of devotees.

Hinduism first came to Malaysia in the 15th century, before the arrival of Islam, as the religion of the ruling class. Today, this aristocratic form of Hinduism survives in literary forms, such as in the traditional shadow puppets and in the Malay wedding ceremony. Hinduism (as it is practised today) was brought into the country by Indian contract labourers. Throughout Malaysia, one comes across Hindu temples, richly embellished with all forms of the Hindu pantheon, from the much-revered cow to temple dancers, holy men, demons and universal Hindu deities. Some of these temples are still maintained amidst deserted former rubber estates.

The introduction of Christianity to Malaysia can be traced right back to the Middle Ages; from this time on, it continued to spread right up to the early 20th century. It was introduced by Persian traders, Armenian Christians from eastern Turkey, as well as the Portuguese, Dutch and British. The Christian population is estimated at six per cent of the national population and includes many indigenous groups in the Peninsula, and in Sabah and Sarawak.

Chinese Malaysians may be Buddhist, Confucianist, Taoist or devotees of ancestor worship. Of the Chinese Buddhist pantheon, Kuan Yin (Goddess of Mercy) and Kwan Ti (Goddess of War) are the most popular. Followers of ancestor worship in Malaysia pay much homage to Sam Po Shan, regarded as the spirit of the celebrated Admiral Cheng Ho who visited Melaka in the 1400s.

Such a mingling of races and religions has led to the celebration of many different festivals. Despite the fact that most traditional festivals are religious, all Malaysians, regardless of creed, participate enthusiastically in these events. The Muslims celebrate Hari Raya Puasa after the month of fasting and prayer known as Ramadan. The birthday of the Prophet Muhammad is another significant Muslim holiday. The Indians celebrate Deepavali (the Festival of Lights), which symbolizes the victory of Lord Krishna over a demon king, as well as Thai Pusam. The Chinese New Year is the most important Chinese celebration and it is usually accompanied by springcleaning, feasting and an 'open house' period of entertaining and visiting friends. The Chinese Moon Cake Festival marks the overthrow of the Manchus, who invaded from the north of China in the 17th century. The cakes apparently hid secret messages in an attempt to organize a national rebellion.

In Sabah and Sarawak, harvest festivals are held by tribes such as the Kadazan and Iban to give thanks to the rice gods. Everybody is welcome to join in the festivities and traditional games.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

There is colour too in Malaysia's performing arts of dance, music and drama. Two ancient theatre forms are *Mak Yong* and the heavily Thai-influenced dance of *Menora*. *Mak Yong* encapsulates drama, dance, operatic singing and comedy, and in earlier times, was performed solely by women who played both the male and female roles. The ancient *rebab*, a three-stringed spike fiddle, is a key instrument in the *Mak Yong* orchestra. Described as an enigmatic instrument, with a deep, nasal hum, the *rebab* is said to possess powers that evoke and appease spirits. As most of Malaysia's key artists of this genre are over 50 years old, and as there is no formal training to continue the tradition, it may not be long before *Menora* and *Mak Yong* become extinct art forms.

Malaysian dance is a colourful montage of classical Indian dancers making geometrically precise gestures and movements, Chinese still walkers swirling their *chingay* flags and lion and dragon dancers swaying to crashing cymbals, fan dancers pirouetting with fluttering fans, and the Malay



SUPERNATURAL BELIEF SYSTEMS

Magic and supernatural beliefs are still fundamental to the lives of many Malaysians, despite the dominance of Islam in the country. There is evidence to suggest that modern-day Malays, especially those from the kampungs, still refer to their traditional bonohs for the treatment of certain ailments. Many still believe in the animistic notion of the soul, or semangap, which is said to be present not just in humans, but in all living things. The Orang Asli are strong believers of animism, which is based on the concept that all things in nature – from trees and animals, to fire and water – are inhabited by spirits. The tribal medicine man, called the bonoh or pawang, is the link between the spiritual and earthly worlds.

The Iban worship a variety of mythical heroes and deities, and the calls and sightings of different birds, especially the hornbill, are considered to be omens. For example, they believe that seven types of birds are manifestations of the seven spirit sons of the war god, Singalang Burang. The Gawai Burang, or Bird Festival, was a ritual enticement of the supernatural powers and sympathy of Singalang Burang before going to war. Today, the same festival takes place in June, and is signified by a tall, carved pole erected on the open veranda of each longhouse. The pole has the image of a hornbill on top and is hung with human skulls, remnants of ancestral bead-hunting forays. Edible peace offerings to the war god are placed at the base of the pole in ceramic plates.

dance of *ronggeng*. In traditional Malay dance, the emphasis is on the graceful movements of arms, hands and fingers. Inspired by so many cultural elements, contemporary dance has incorporated many ethnic dance motifs. The east coast of Peninsular Malaysia once had a strong tradition of shadow-puppet (*wayang kulit*) performances in which the puppets were manipulated by a master puppeteer, or *tok dalang*, who was capable of speaking in different accents and pitches.

Percussion offers the strongest link in traditional Malaysian music. The brightly-painted *rebana ubi*, or giant drums, are pounded by a group of drummers at wedding celebrations and after the rice harvest. The leading instrument in any percussion orchestra is the *gendang*, or barrel drum. The Indians play a wide variety of drums; the *tabla* – a drum which is laid on the lap of the cross-legged musician and hit on both sides – is learnt by many Indian children.

Kelantan, Terengganu and Sarawak are the states with the most visible 'living' cultural tradition. In the northeast of the Peninsula, in particular, traditional games continue to be played. Kite flying is a favourite pastime; on a windy day, giant kites of all shapes and sizes can be seen floating in the blue sky. The *wau bulan*, a specific kite design, is the emblem of the country's national carrier, Malaysia Airlines. Top spinning is yet another popular east coast game. A top may be the size of a dinner plate and weigh up to five kilograms (11 pounds). Top-spinning contests usually take place after harvest festivals, with contestants being judged on balance, duration of the spin, skill and craftsmanship.

The scope and variety of Malaysian handicraft is enormous: the making of kites, *keris* (a dagger) and puppets, batik, *songket* weaving, boat building, wood carving, basketry, beadwork and silverwork are just a few of the traditional crafts still to be found. The *keris*, used for more than 600 years in both Peninsular Malaysia and Indonesia, is Malaysia's national weapon. The dagger's two-edged blade, which is often curved, is designed to be used in confined spaces. The tradition of *keris* craftsmanship continues mainly in Kuala Terengganu on the east coast.

In Sabah and Sarawak, the different ethnic groups produce many interesting handicrafts and artefacts. Each handicraft has its own peculiar mark which identifies it with a particular ethnic group. Sarawak's only nomadic group, the Penans, have the reputation of making the best mats and baskets in Borneo. Their closely plaited soft *ajat* baskets are exquisitely decorated with hornbill, spider or floral motifs. Brilliantly coloured Melanau *terendak* conical sun hats are made from nipah leaves and decorated with red and black dyes or created in plaited designs with silver or other metallic thread. The Ibans of Sarawak weave representations of traditional rituals and legends into their unique

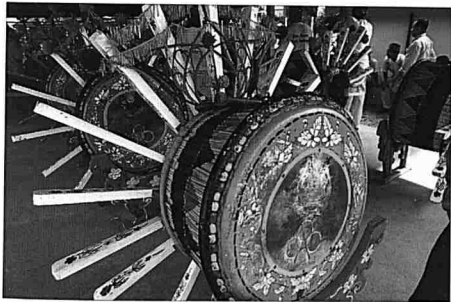
puat kumbu, or *ikat*, heirloom blankets. These intricate weavings are used for healing and farming rituals, and at times of birth, marriage or death. Bark cloth, made from the bark of the ipoh (*tajam*) tree, the breadfruit tree or the wild fig tree, is used to make simple items of clothing such as jackets and loincloths. Today, bark cloth is also fashioned into bags, wallets and backpacks.

Beadwork has been part of the Orang Ulu heritage for generations. In ancient times, beads were a form of currency. Today, they are still important barometers of social status and wealth, and are used to decorate headbands, bags, sun hats and tobacco boxes.

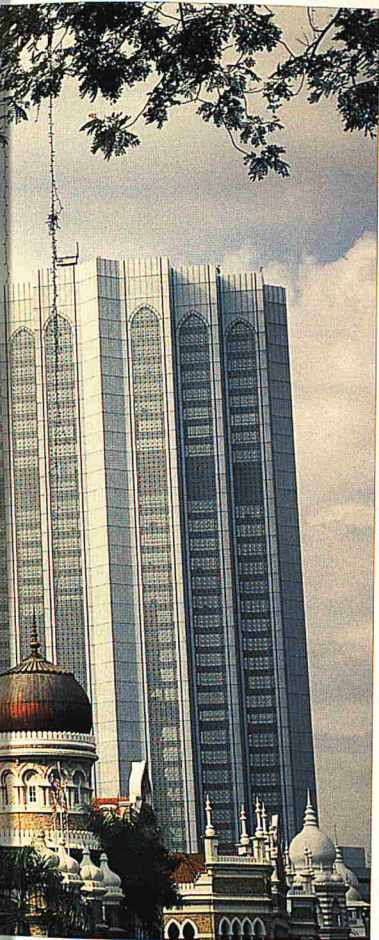
For generations, Malaysia, with its cultural contrasts, customs and rituals, has been quietly developing a *Bangsa Malaysia* – one Malaysian culture. Certainly, the different races may retain elements of their own culture, but progressively they are demonstrating identifiable aspects of being Malaysian – be it in the enjoyment of their cuisine, their inquisitive nature, their Manglish (Malaysian English), or their own unique Malaysian sense of *fole de vivre*.

This burial pole, or *kliering* (opposite), stands in front of the Sarawak Museum in Kuching.

Giant drums, or *rebana ubi* (below), are the focus of an annual celebration held in Kota Bharu in May. During the Festival of the Giant Drums, teams of 12 men (two to a drum) compete in tests of tone and rhythm, beating with their bare fingers or padded drumsticks.







KUALA LUMPUR

a blend of old and new

Situated at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers, Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur,



began life as a tin-mining town. Today, KL, as it is more commonly known, is like an engine at full throttle, whirling its 1.8 million citizens into a vortex of commercial activity. Skyscrapers soar alongside charming colonial buildings, creating an interesting skyline of old and new. With a buoyant economic growth rate that has been mostly spiralling skywards for the past decade or so, KL is gearing itself toward its vision of becoming a fully developed nation by the year 2020. Streets are congested with traffic, although new light-rail transits cut through the city centre, easing vehicular flow to some extent.

Kuala Lumpur may not be an impeccably organized Singapore or a crazily chaotic Bangkok; but it has its own identity and a unique charm that is reflected in small-town scenes: an old newspaper vendor cycling past with his granddaughter stowed in the sidecar, a narrow street lined with prewar shophouses, an old-fashioned cloth shop selling fabrics, a wayside cobbler who has been plying his trade in the same spot for over 20 years, and enthusiastic shoppers in air-conditioned shopping malls or informal colourful bazaars.

From its humble beginnings as a mining shanty town, KL has evolved into a cosmopolitan city – bewildering, beautiful and sophisticated, but at the same time, essentially Malaysian.

The domes of the Sultan Abdul Samad Building (left), built in 1897 to a Moorish design, contrast sharply with the sleek elegance of modern multistorey buildings. Once the government administrative centre, it now houses the supreme and high courts. Within this area, which is very much a part of Kuala Lumpur's historical heritage, is Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman, a street named after Malaysia's first prime minister. Better known as 'Batu Road', many of KL's most famous retail stores are situated along here.









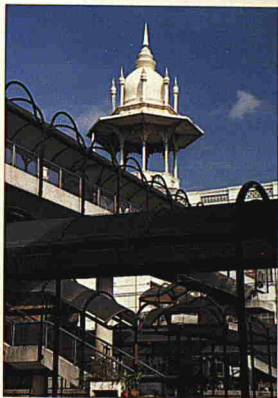
Thriving Kuala Lumpur (previous pages) was a prosperous village in the 1860s. Today, there is hardly any evidence of its early history as a mining town. The undulating mountains of the Main Range create a beautiful backdrop to the cityscape.

The Sultan Abdul Samad Building (opposite), an Indian-Moorish structure of onion domes, arches, circular staircases and broad verandas, stands resplendent against KL's modern skyline. Featuring a 41-metre (140-foot) clock tower, it is one of Malaysia's most photographed landmarks.

The stalls in Central Market sell a wide variety of arts and crafts from Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, including these beautiful intricately carved wooden flowers (left).

Different architectural styles (below left) form an intriguing blend of old and new in Kuala Lumpur. Malay-influenced peaked roofs share the skyline with contemporary Western-styled buildings and architecturally fascinating high-rise hotels and offices.

The Kuala Lumpur Railway Station (below), one of the most famous buildings in KL, is another Moorish-influenced creation by A.C. Norman, the architect who designed the Sultan Abdul Samad Building. Originally constructed in 1885, the Arabian Nights-style design was apparently entered for a Moscow trade fair, which may explain why the building came complete with snow gutters and a roof built to withstand two metres (seven-foot) of snow. Trains to Singapore, Thailand and distant Malaysian destinations leave from here.





The Royal Selangor Club (above) has been host to cricket matches since its inception as a social and cricket club in 1884. Initially a simple plank building with a thatched roof, the current Tudor-style club was constructed on the original site in 1889.



Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) (left), at Sepang on the city's out skirts, has been landscaped to resemble a rainforest within an airport. Recently built, the modern chrome and glass airport is an important transit hub for both regional and international flights.

Merdeka Square (right) is the scene of much celebration each year on Malaysia's day of independence, 31 August. A procession of young Malaysian women, dressed in graceful *sarung kebaya*, carry sequined *bunga masjar* (decorative ceremonial items which are fashioned after the fragrant flower from which they derive their name).

An elevated view of the old Paikang (below), which used to be the centre of colonial life in Kuala Lumpur. Today, it has become a venue for major festivities, including annual National Day celebrations. Surrounding the Paikang are well-known landmarks such as the Royal Selangor Club, the 100-metre-tall (325-foot) flagpole on Merdeka (Independence) Square, and the Sultan Abdul Samad Building with its copper domes, clock tower and arched colonnades. Formerly the Secretariat building, it houses the Judicial Department and the High Court.





An attractive girl (top), dressed in a blaze of colour, could be of Indian, Pakistani or Sikh descent. However, her origin is unimportant for she symbolizes the exotic melting-pot culture that symbolizes Malaysia.

An Indian eating stall (above) attracts customers with its fragrant infusion of aromas – cloves, aniseed, cardamom, coriander and cumin – and wide selection of aromatic dishes. *Roti canai* (a flat bread served with curry) is a typical Indian snack.

At a stall in Central Market (right) Malaysian salesgirls sell Indonesian and Malaysian skin-care preparations and cosmetics, some of which are manufactured specially for the Muslim market. Central Market was once a 'wet' market, selling fresh and live produce. Built in the Art Deco style of the 1930s, it has been refurbished and renovated, and turned into a shopping and handicraft centre with a difference. It is one of the best places to buy Malaysian and other Asian handicrafts.





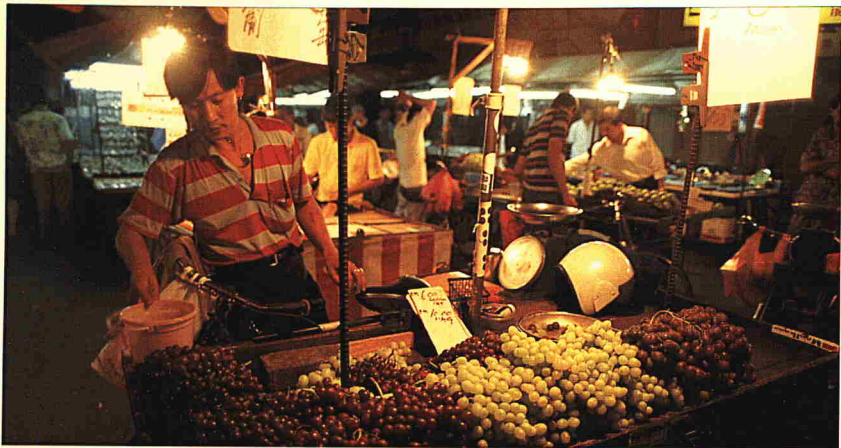
Tablo Beras

maskita ratu

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PRIMA

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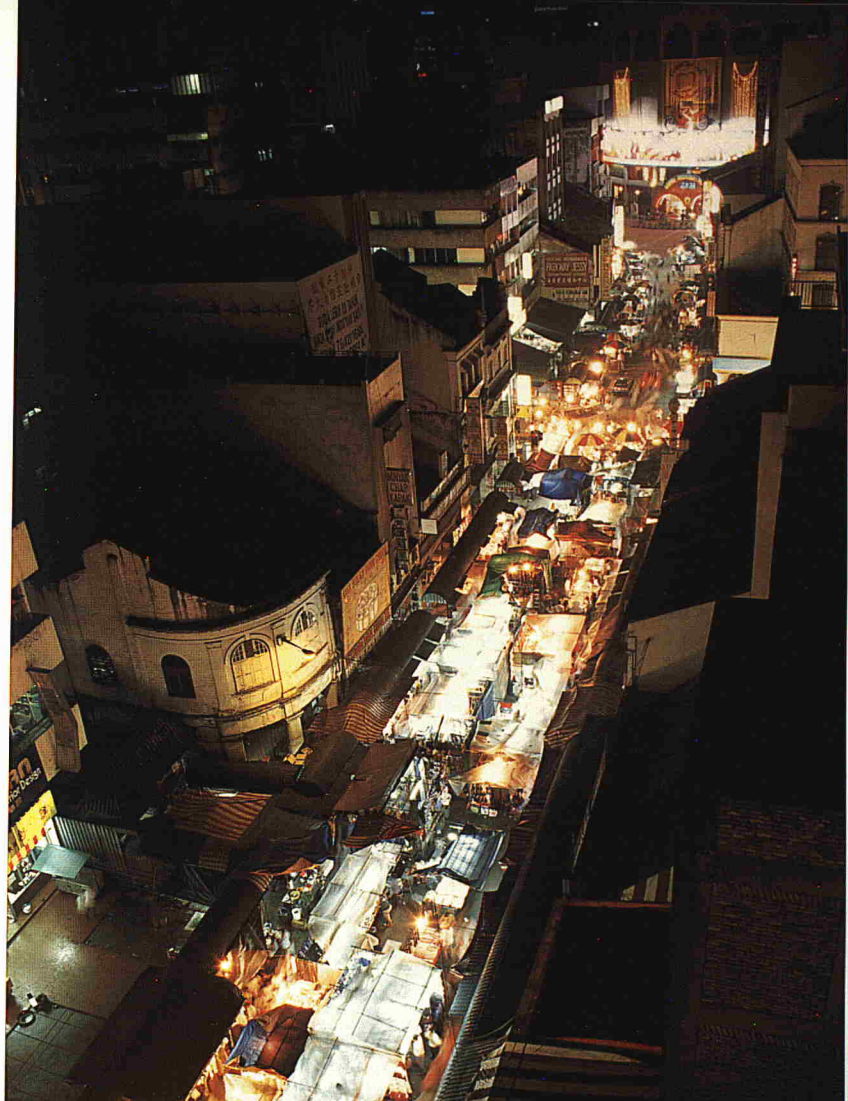


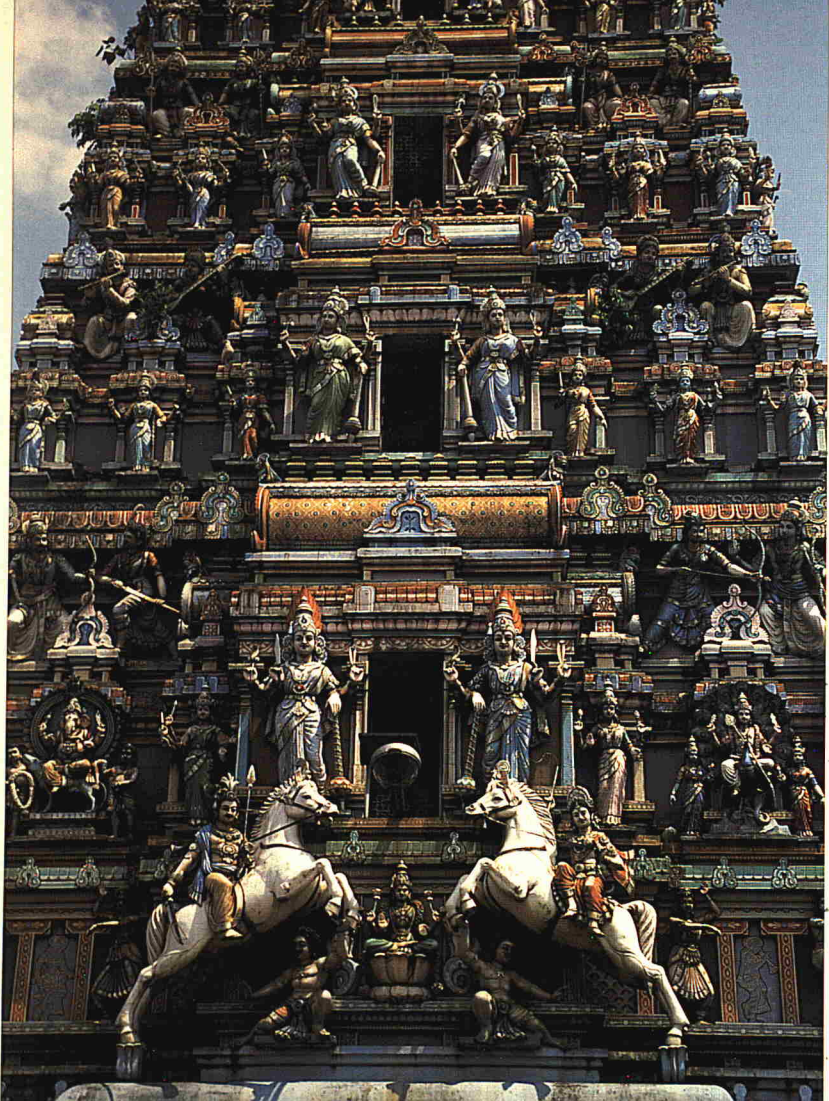
Chinatown's night market (top and opposite) buzzes with activity beneath the glare of fluorescent lights, while the latest hits blare cheerfully from loudspeakers. At dusk, the shops close and stalls are set up in the main street. Jalan Petaling, which is closed to traffic.

Bargaining is encouraged here, and you might be lucky enough to find juicy imported Australian grapes at a special price. Heritage buffs will enjoy the Chinese, Malay and colonial architectural influences of the place, including its floor-to-ceiling wooden shutters, decorative columns, and peacock tiles.

The goddess Kuan Yin (above), also known as the Goddess of Mercy, grants over her subjects' prospects in the Thean Hou Temple. The religious traditions of the Chinese are rooted in Confucianism, Taoism and ancestor worship.

A display of shiny watches (left) without fixed-price tags encourages passers-by to browse before striking a bargain. These "international brand" watches are unlikely to be genuine, but most shoppers engage in the bargaining process just for the fun of it.



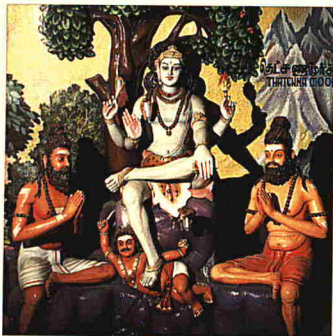




The Sri Mahamariamman Temple (opposite), the oldest Indian place of worship in KL, is situated on Jalan Rindang close to Chinatown. It was founded in 1873 by Indians who came to Malaysia as contract labourers. Originally situated where the railway station is today, it was relocated to its present site in 1885. In authentic southern Indian style, the temple's intricately carved tiered entrance tower is guarded by numerous stone statues of the Hindu deities and is embellished with gold, precious stones and European tiles. Skilled artisans were specially commissioned from India to do the work.

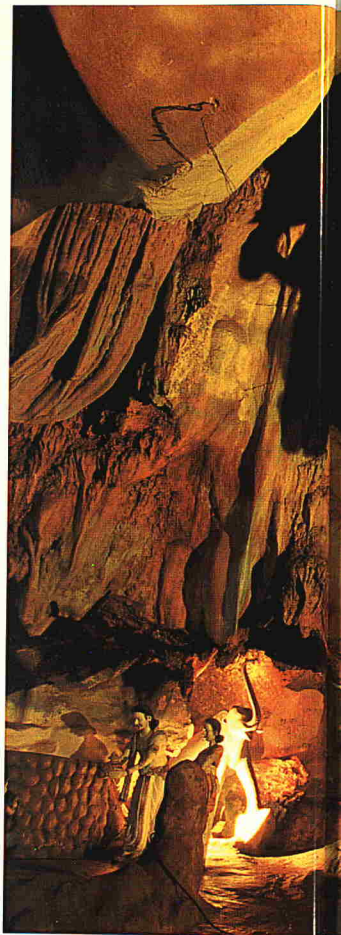
Masjid Jamek (above and right) was built in 1907 and is one of KL's most beautiful mosques, especially when viewed at sunset. Situated at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers, the red-brick and white structure is set amidst an oasis of swaying palms. The main entrance to the mosque is along Jalan Tun Perak. A replica of a north Indian mosque, it has a walled courtyard, a number of domes and minarets and a breezy open prayer hall with arcways, pillars and a superb marble floor. It is advisable to visit between prayer times, and shoes must be removed before entering the building.





Entering the Batu Caves (top), a series of cave chambers of immense proportions, involves a 272-step ascent into the first giant cavern, Cathedral Cave. Discovered in 1878, the Batu Caves became an Indian temple in 1891. Every year, millions of Hindu devotees converge on this sacred site to celebrate the festival of *Thaipusam*.

The Batu Caves 'art gallery' (above and right), situated inside one of the smaller caves at the base of the limestone outcrop, features life-sized statues of the many Hindu deities, including Kali, Murugan, Shiva, Subramaniam and Mariamman, the latter two being the most popular. Each statue is lit up by bright green, red and yellow lights.







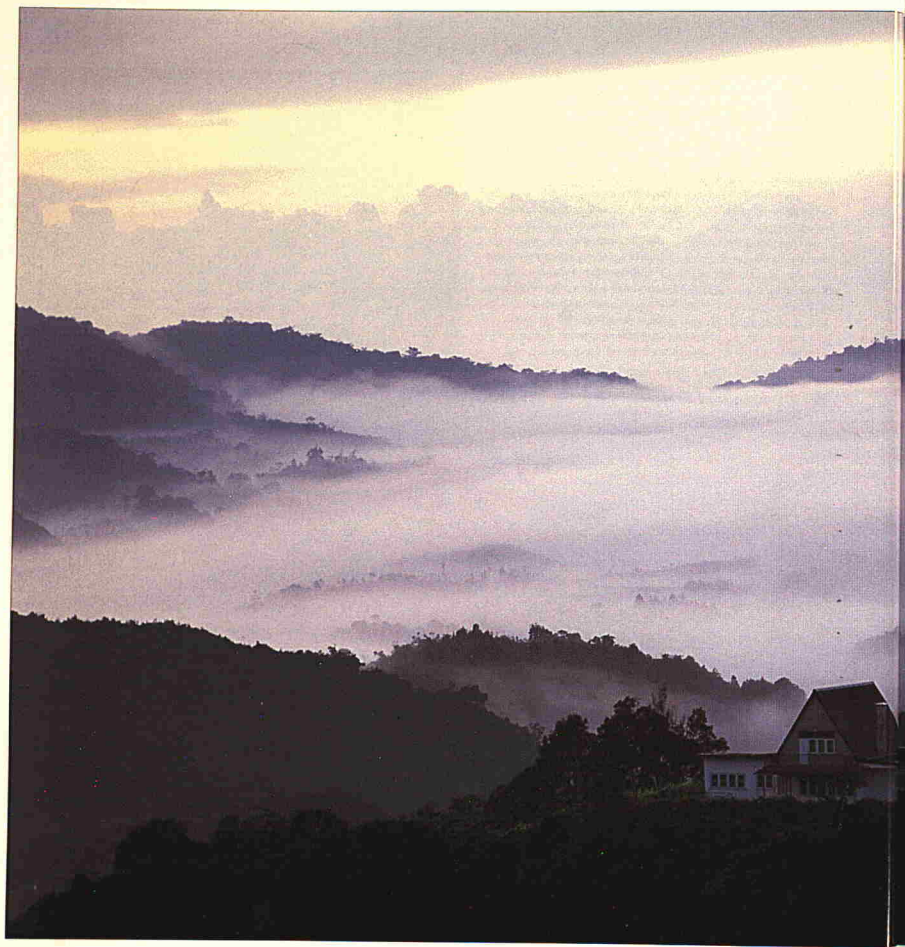
Giant murals (left) greet visitors to the National Museum, located near the southern entrance of the Lake Gardens. Made exclusively from Italian glass mosaic imported from Florence, some of the murals feature Malaysian handicrafts while others depict the country's history. Inside the museum permanent displays relate to Malaysian culture, arts and crafts, weaponry, old-world currency, Malaysian bins and mammals, entomological specimens, and the country's major economic activities.

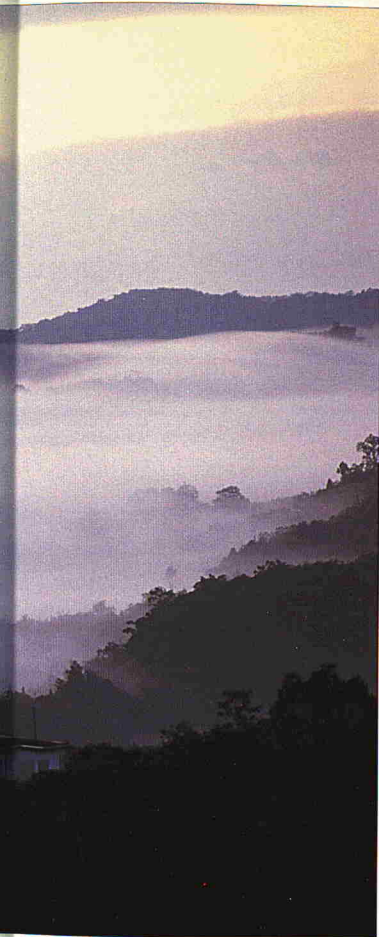
Istana Kenangan (below), which means 'Palace of Memory', is situated in the small town of Kuala Kangsar, the old capital of Perak. It was built as a temporary residence for the Sultan of Perak while the Istana Iskandariah, the main mosque, was under construction. Built entirely of wood, without any architectural plans or a single nail, it is renowned for its intricately carved ceremonial hall. Currently a royal museum, it houses a small collection of mementos and photographs of the Perak royal family.



These long war drums (right), used by Sarawak's Bidayuh ethnic group, form part of a display of traditional musical instruments at the National Museum. In the early days, when head-hunting was still practised in Sarawak, these drums were used to welcome the arrival of triumphant warriors bearing enemy heads. Made by hollowing out tree trunks and covering them with goatskin, the drums were traditionally beaten by four people with pieces of wood or rattan, and could be heard from far away.







HILL STATIONS

the Peninsula's highlands

Strawberries and
fresh cream,
Tudor-style
country inns and
splendid rose
gardens – images



reminiscent of the quaint charm of English country villages come to life in the hill stations. Built by the colonial British as cool retreats, these mountaintop escapes provided refuge from the stifling tropical lowland heat and, in their design, were an attempt to recreate a little piece of England.

The Cameron Highlands, Malaysia's largest and most popular hill retreat, is a series of small towns linked by a main road and surrounded by farmlands and forested mountains. The area is named after William Cameron, an adventurous surveyor who in 1885 mapped the then-tiger-infested country. Home to many Orang Asli tribes, it has also evolved into the country's cool fruit and vegetable basket. Today, the surrounding hills are lined with tea estates and retreats, most notably Ye Olde Smokehouse and the Equatorial Hill Resort.

Fraser's Hill was named after Louis James Fraser, a reclusive trader who ran a remote and illegal gambling and opium den in the area in the early 1900s. Today, Fraser's Hill is best known for its birdlife, and an annual bird race in which bird-watchers compete to see who can spot the greatest number of bird species over a set period.

Quite different from the English atmosphere of other hill stations, the 1700-metre-high (5578-foot) Genting Highlands boasts the only casino in Malaysia. Fifty kilometres (31 miles) from Kuala Lumpur, Genting offers a choice of hotels, a golf course, theme park, and a multitude of other recreational activities. The nearby Bukit Tinggi Resort offers a little piece of France in Malaysia, with the Colmar Tropicale Resort

The Cameron Highlands (left) were dense with virgin rainforest in 1885, when a government surveyor called William Cameron visited the area on a mapping assignment and reported a 'fine plateau with gentle slopes shut in by mountains'. Soon, the rolling hills were cleared for tea plantations, terraced vegetable farms, and later, flower farms. The cool highland areas quickly became popular as retreats from the heat and humidity of the lowlands, and today, cosy mountaintop homes complete with fireplaces still dot the landscape.



The crested serpent eagle (*Spilornis holospilus*) is the most common of all the raptors (left). Often seen soaring effortlessly above the rainforest or perched on a high branch, it can be identified by its distinctive crest of black-and-white feathers, white tail band and white wing edges.

Tudor-style homes, like this fine example (below) in the Cameron Highlands, are usually situated amidst landscaped gardens of roses, orchids, carnations, sunflowers, dahlias and poinsettias. Most of the houses are privately owned or owned by companies, with resident caretakers who look after the premises and see to the guests' every comfort.

Dramatic gushing waterfalls (opposite) are prevalent throughout Peninsular Malaysia. Most of the rivers have their source in the Main Range (Banjaran Titiwangsa).







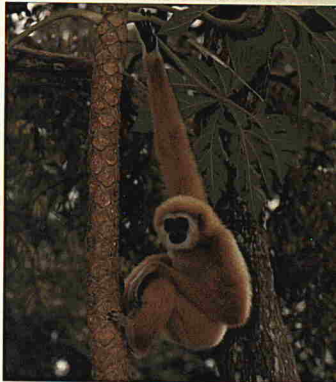
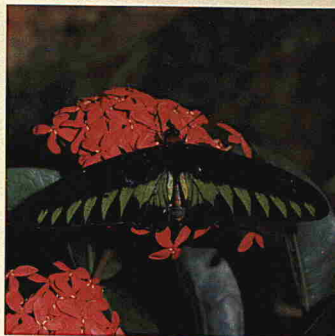


The endless green vista of tea bushes (left) is accentuated by a lone tea-picker. The first bushes were planted in 1926, thanks to the initiative of an Englishman by the name of J.A. Russell. The Orang Asli, or 'original people', carved out the first tea estates from the rainforest using axes and handsaws. Experienced tea planters and pickers from India still play an integral part in the Malaysian tea industry.

The Rajah Brooke birdwing (*Trigonoptera brookiana albescens*) is the largest butterfly in Malaysia (above right). It can measure almost 20 centimetres (eight inches) from wing tip to wing tip. Discovered by the scientist Alfred Wallace, this striking butterfly was named after Rajah Brooke, oocetime ruler of Sarawak.

The Gap Rest House (above), so named because of its unique position at a natural gap that exists in the Main Range, is located at the point where motorists wanting to travel up the narrow winding road to Fraser's Hill used to have to stop for one-way traffic. It is mentioned in Spencer Chapman's famous book on World War II in Malaysia, *The Jungle is Neutral*. Chapman had here to monitor Japanese troop movements.

The white-handed gibbon (*Hylodactylar*), can be seen throughout Peninsular Malaysia (right), swinging one hand over the other through the forest canopy. It has extremely long arms, specially adapted wrists and shoulders, and a slight body, making it a champion in the art of swinging. It is known for its loud booming calls in the morning.







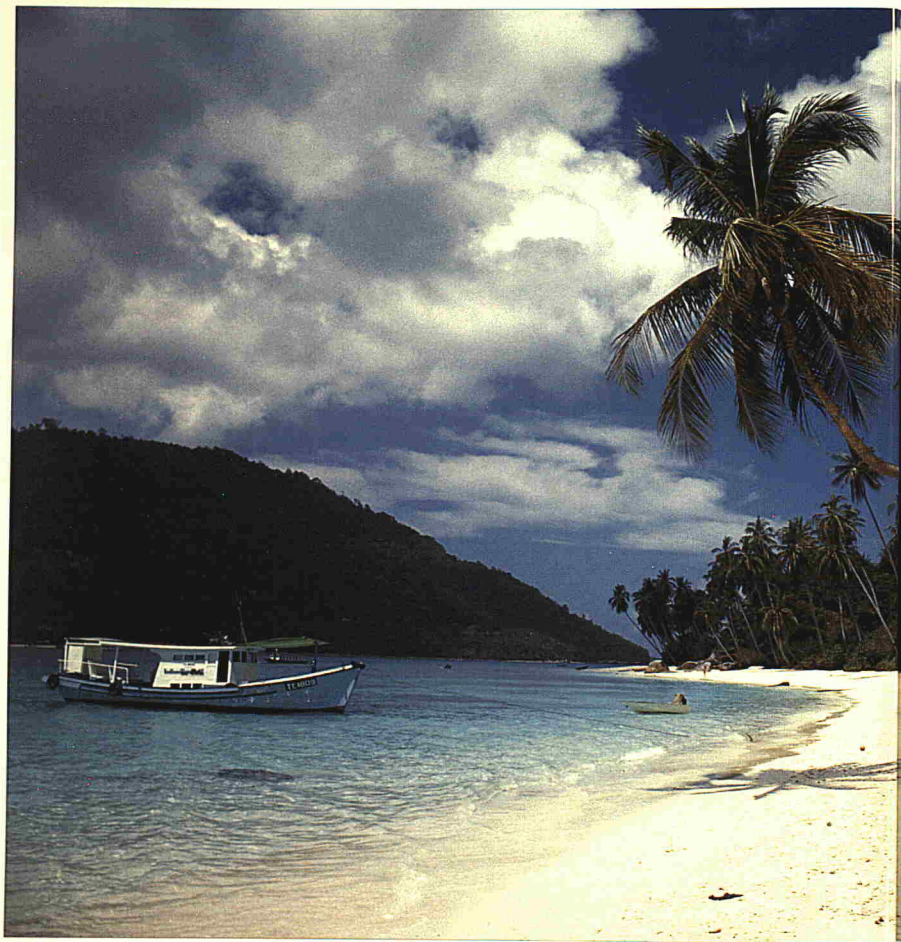


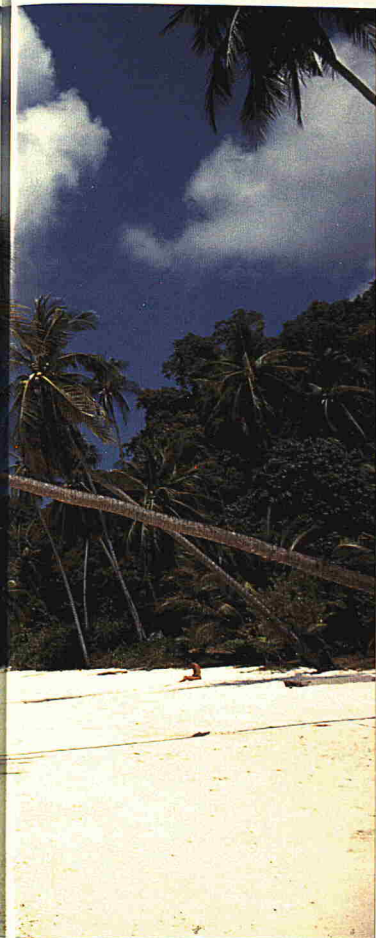


The 18-hole golf course (previous pages) in the Cameron Highlands is close to the main town of Tanah Rata. It was developed in 1935, and in the early days was patronized by the wealthy. At that time, it was fairly common to find tiger paw prints on the golf course, especially in the bunkers.

Wild orchids (above) are mostly epiphytes, but there are also many that grow on the ground. Depending on the species, the flowers of wild orchids vary greatly in size, but generally they are much smaller than those of domesticated hybrids and varieties.

Vegetable terraces (left) are an integral part of the landscape in the Cameron Highlands. The township of Ringlet is the agricultural centre of this area. Temperate vegetables, such as cabbages, lettuces and tomatoes, thrive in the rich soil and cool air.





TROPICAL ISLANDS

jewels of the ocean

Picture-perfect islands, or *pulau*, glitter invitingly in the oceans surrounding Malaysia. The



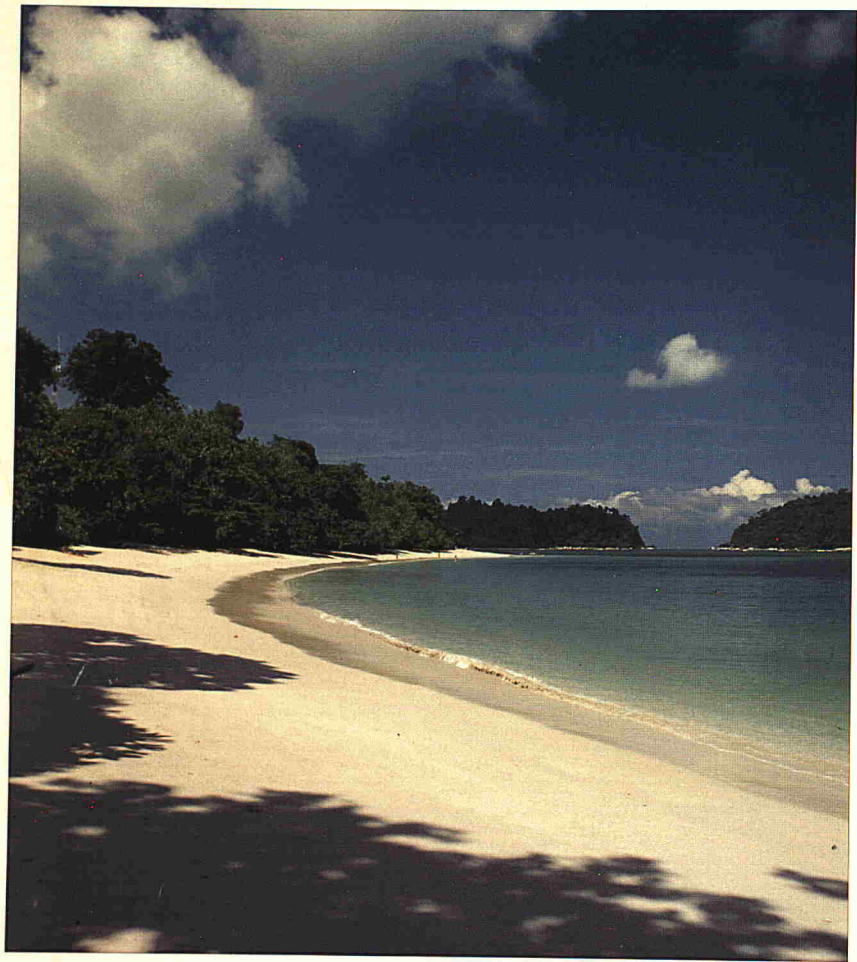
clear warm water, white sand, coconut palms, and thatched holiday chalets on stilts, complete with verandas on which to laze, attract visitors from all over the world. Beneath these waters, a spectacular marine world teems with a wide variety of sea creatures, from anemones, clown-, lion- and soldierfish to barracuda, sharks and other denizens of the ocean depths. Brain, pillar and fern coral formations are home to shoals of brightly coloured reef fish.

The islands off Peninsular Malaysia's east coast have a more rustic ambience and generally offer simpler accommodation than their west coast counterparts. Stretching from north to south, some of the more popular islands on the east coast include Perhentian, Kapas, Redang, Besar, Tioman, and Sibul, closest to Singapore. Between March and October each year, green turtles come ashore to spawn on the beaches of Redang, off Terengganu; the island has the largest concentration of green turtles in the Peninsula.

Over in Sabah, the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park is a cluster of five offshore islands, namely Gaya, Manukan, Mamutik, Sapi and Sulug. A five-minute boat ride away from the state capital of Kota Kinabalu, the islands offer good snorkelling and swimming. Comprising the islands of Selingaan, Bakingan and Gulisan, Turtle Island National Park lies off the coast of Sandakan in Sabah.

Sipadan, situated off Semporna on the east coast of Sabah, is a scuba diver's paradise. The only true oceanic island in Malaysia, it was hailed by Jacques Cousteau as one of the world's best dive sites. Its clear violet-blue waters are home to sharks, moray eels and giant turtles.

Perhentian Island (left) lies 21 kilometres (13 miles) offshore from Kuala Besut in Terengganu on Peninsular Malaysia's east coast. It comprises the two islands of Perhentian Kecil and Perhentian Besar, separated by a narrow strait, as well as a number of tiny islets. Beautiful beaches and the clear waters of the South China Sea combine to make this a first-rate snorkelling and scuba-diving destination.





Pangkor Island (opposite), situated off the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, is one of the more beautiful islands in the Straits of Melaka. A ferry service from the mainland town of Lumut (headquarters of the Malaysian Naval Base) in Perak, transports passengers to long sandy stretches of scenic shoreline that resemble the famous beaches of the east coast. Pasir Bogak and Coral Bay are the two most popular spots. Although the water is not as clear as the east coast, the island ambience of a breezy tropical location is very much part of the experience.

Pangkor's Pan Pacific Resort (above) lies on the Beach of the Beautiful Princess (or the Golden Sands Beach). The five-star resort offers accommodation in hotel rooms or private chalets, with a beach frontage that is mostly secluded due to forested headlands on either side. An excellent jungle track weaves its way inland, and calls for some strenuous climbing. Southwest of Pangkor lies the tiny privately owned island of Pangkor Laut, which was once a pirate's hideaway. The resort is now one of Malaysia's most exclusive holiday destinations.



A funicular railcar (top left) rambles slowly up the steep incline of Penang Hill. Modelled after a similar system in Switzerland, Penang's funicular railway was opened in 1923. From the summit, there are spectacular views of Georgetown.

Opulent mansions such as the 51-room Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion (centre left), are a feature of Georgetown. Built by wealthy Chinese businessmen who made their fortunes from tin, rubber and industries associated with those commodities, these elegant homes are reminiscent of the grandeur of times past.



The Penang ferry (bottom left) has plied the Straits of Penang since the early 1900s. By the 1940s, congestion at the ferry terminals had become an issue. They were eventually expanded, and there was even talk of building a bridge to join the island and mainland. Today, the Penang Bridge (the longest bridge in Asia) links the island with the mainland's North-South Highway.

A corner shop, such as this one in Georgetown (opposite), is in accordance with positive *feng shui* principles (the Chinese art of correct positioning based on good and bad auras) as it can attract custom from both sides. The small temple next door, the ubiquitous trishaw parked outside and the roadside vending stall all add to Georgetown's special charm.





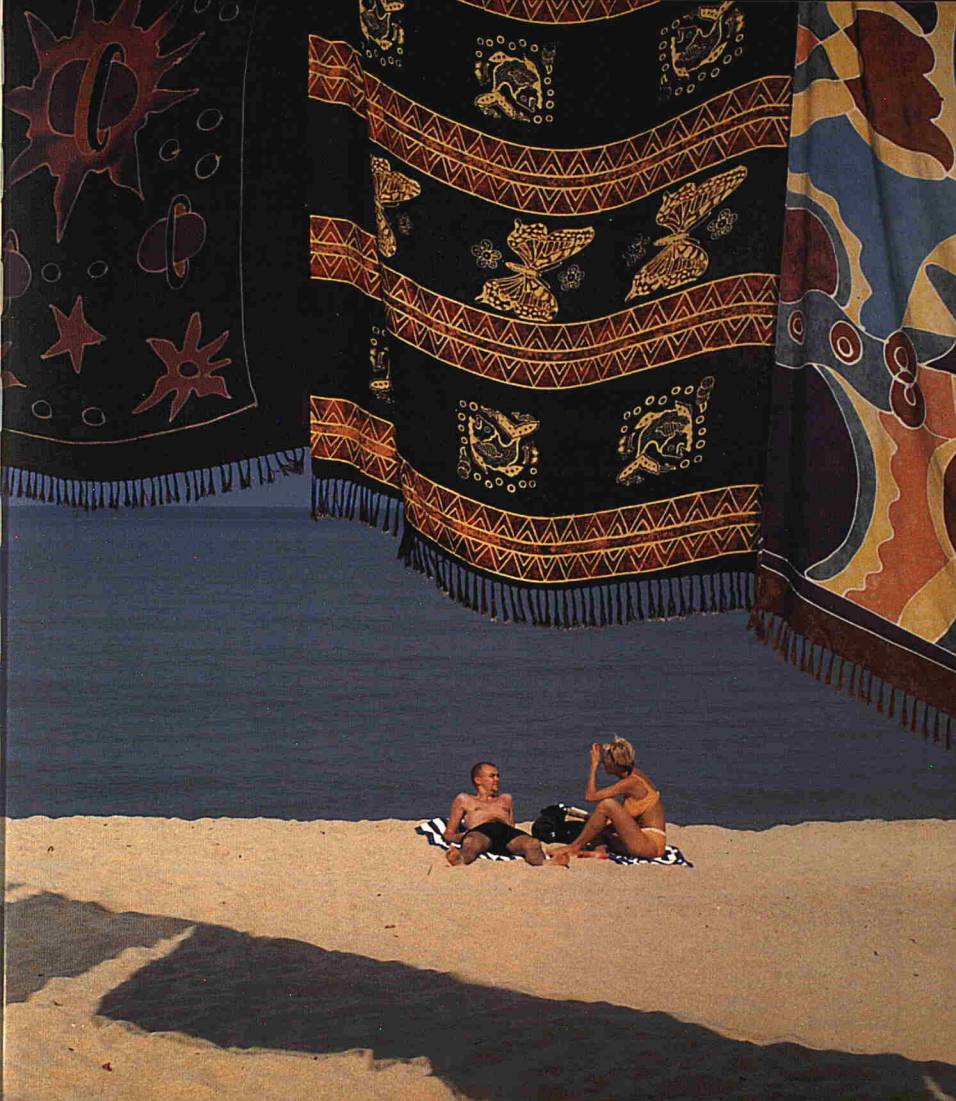


Penang's capital, Georgetown (left), although a busy developing city, has retained a strong Chinatown flavour with its red roofs, narrow streets and prewar shophouses with their covered five-foot ways. The downstairs area of these historic buildings was traditionally used for commercial purposes and storage while the upstairs section was for residential use.

The bustling waterfront (below), lined with ancient, rickety houses on stilts, lies at the heart of Georgetown. A 24-hour ferry service operates between here and Butterworth on the mainland, which is also located in the state of Penang.

Printed sarongs flutter in the wind at a stall in Batu Ferringhi, or Foreigner's Rock (opposite), a famous beachside resort strip on Penang's north coast that is lined with shops, five-star hotels, restaurants and car-rental outlets. The beach has inviting white sand and shady coconut trees.





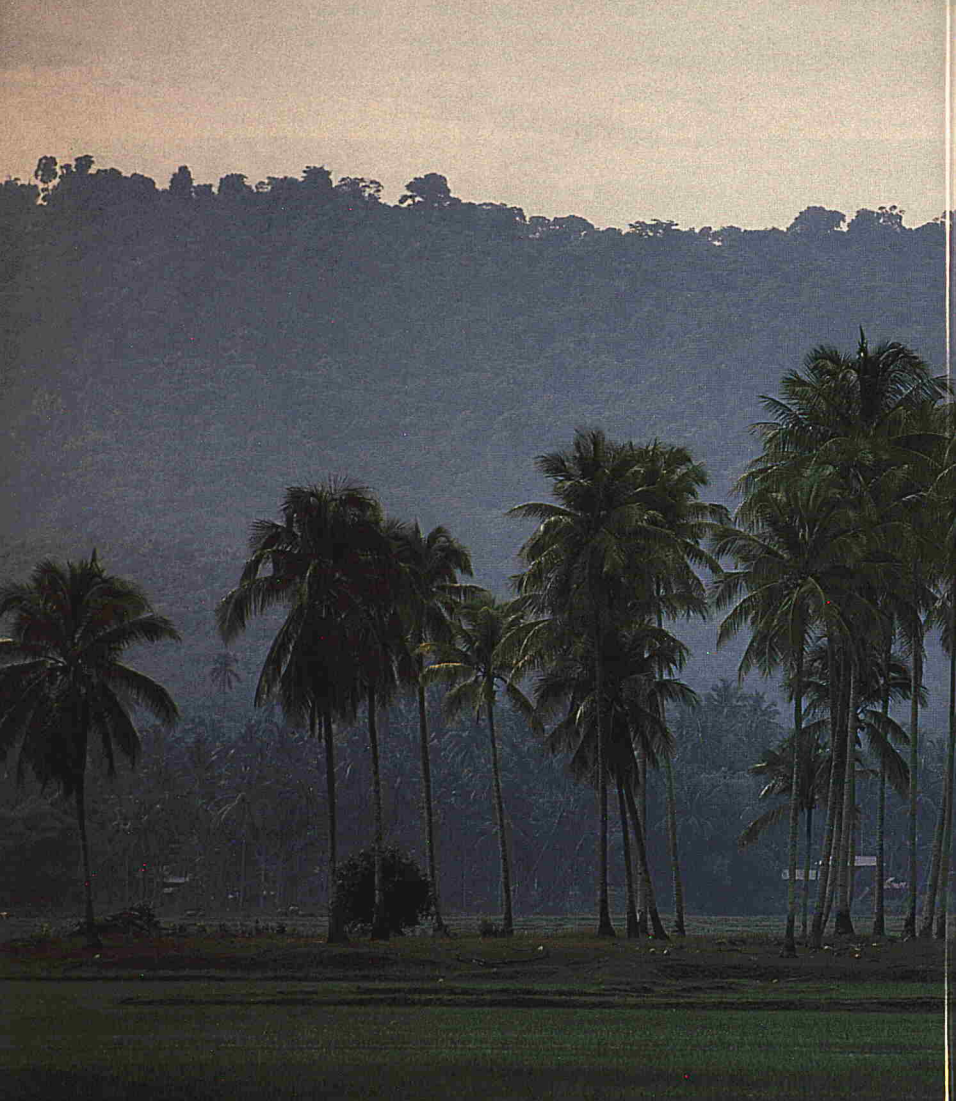


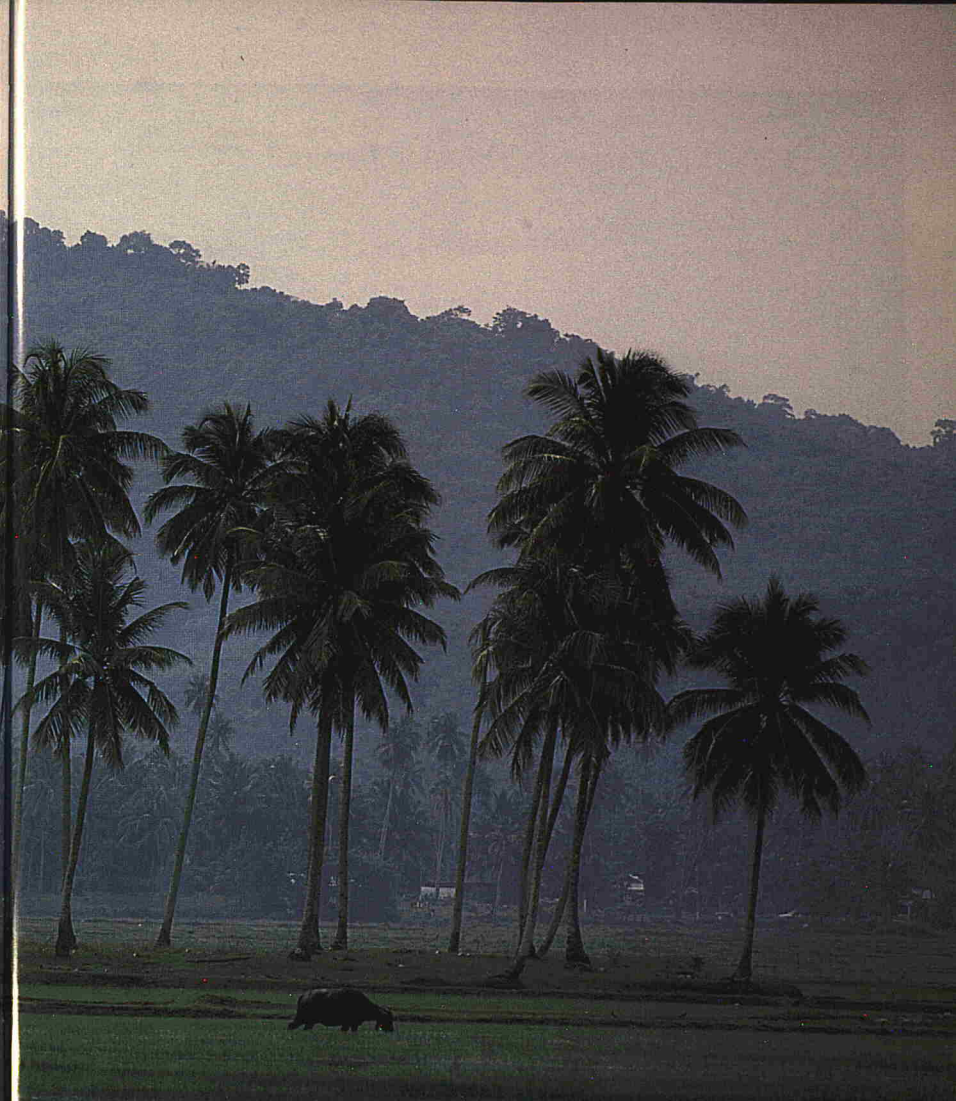
The Kek Lok Si, or Temple of Paradise (above), is the largest Buddhist temple in Southeast Asia. Located close to the funicular railway that travels up Penang Hill, the temple was built by Boon Lean, a Buddhist priest from China's Fukien Province who made his way to Penang in 1887 to become the resident priest of the Kuan Yin Temple in Georgetown. Inspired by the complete devotion of his followers, he decided to build a monastery at Ayer Hitam, a small town on the island. Work began in 1890, and was completed in 1930. The temple honours Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy; Bee Lay Hood, the Laughing Buddha; and its founder, Gautama Buddha.

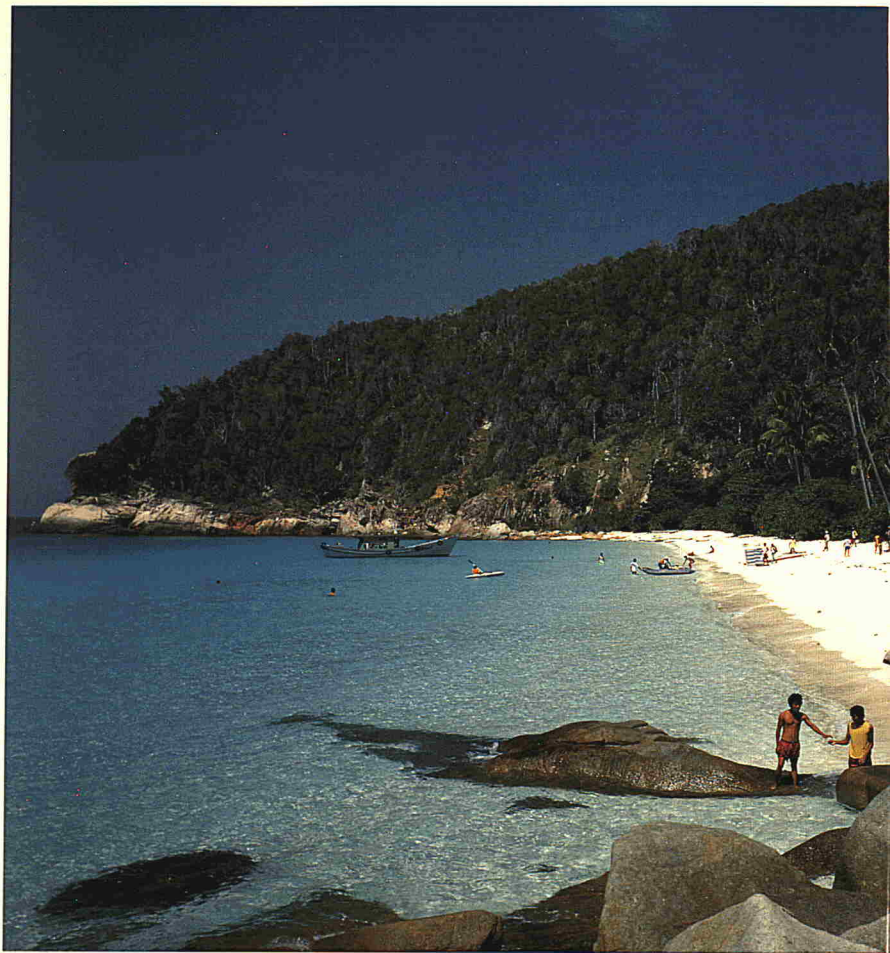
The Ban Po Thar, or Pagoda of 10,000 Buddhas (right), is one of many pagodas within the Kek Lok Si temple complex. It incorporates Chinese, Thai and Burmese architectural styles. The statues represent the numerous manifestations of Buddha.

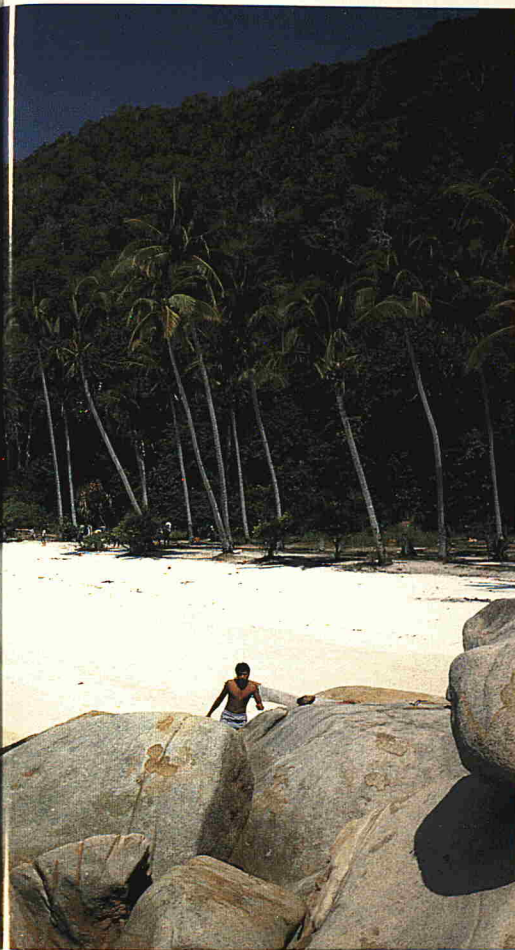










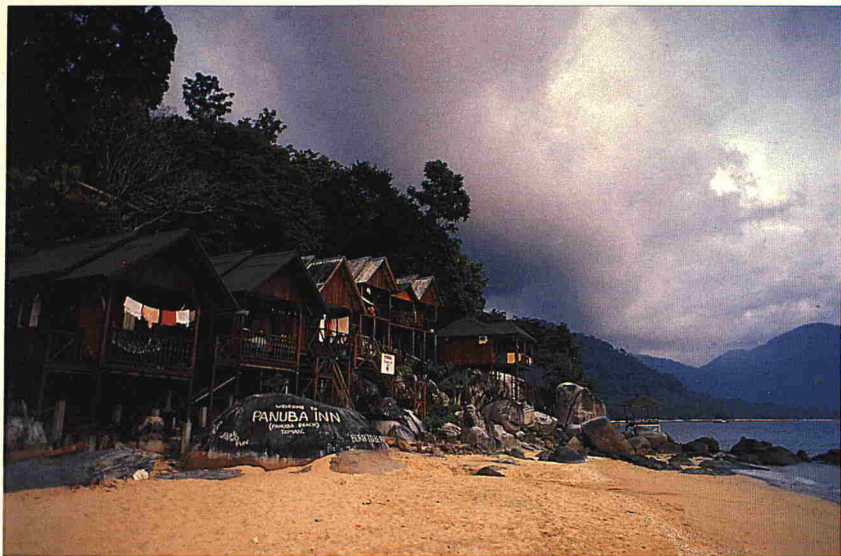


Ricefields on Langkawi Island

(previous pages), situated off the coast of Perlis, evoke a timeless rural charm that is accentuated by swaying palm trees and a solitary wallowing water buffalo. The island, which is rich in legends, has managed to retain an enviable *kampung* lifestyle despite the recent tourism developments.

A rock crab (*Gardosoma hirtiles*) lurks amidst leaf debris on a rock (above). This is a familiar sight on Redang, an ecologically rich island off the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. The beaches are nesting sites for the hawksbill (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and endangered green (*Chelonia mydas*) turtles.

Redang Island (left) attracts scuba divers, snorkellers, swimmers and anyone who wants to relish the pleasures of being on an isolated tropical island. Redang is considered to be one of Malaysia's most beautiful islands, with its translucent waters, smooth rocks, swaying coconut trees, sandy beaches and protected marine park status.

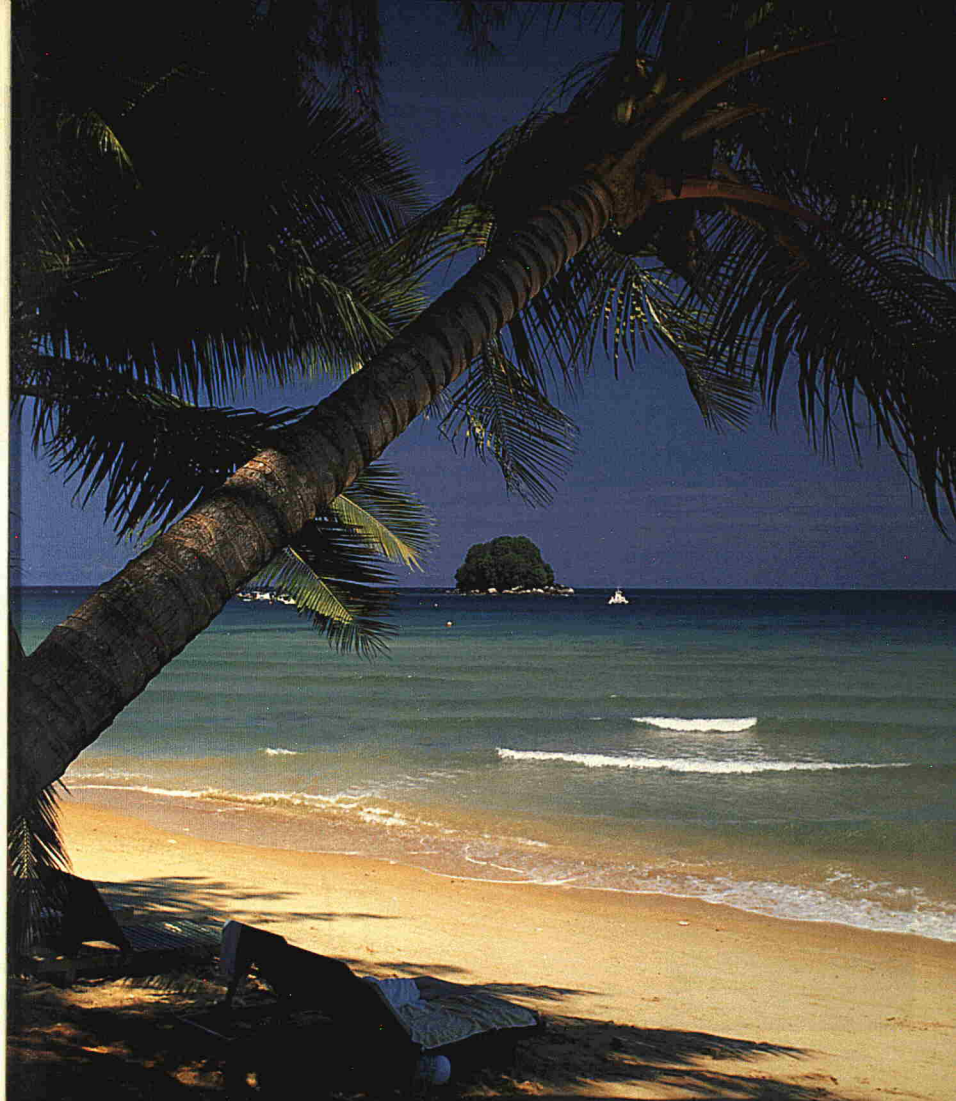


Panuba Inn (above), on the island of Tioman, a typical beachfront resort with a relaxed atmosphere, caters to the needs of scuba divers and snorkellers.

Berjaya Tioman Beach Resort, the only luxury, or five-star, accommodation on Tioman Island, fronts an excellent swimming beach fringed with coconut palms (opposite). Facilities at this resort include chalet-style bungalows set in an exotic garden, a superb 18-hole golf course, tennis courts, horse-riding, and a fully-equipped scuba centre.



A **powerboat** (left) whizzes through the sparkling blue waters surrounding Tioman. Some of the villages on the island, each with beautiful beaches, are only accessible by boat.





Feather stars (*Otycomanthus bennetti*), which belong to the class Crinoidea, do their own underwater dance (left) in the ocean depths around the island of Sipadan. These spiny-skinned bottom dwellers, which are usually a brilliant yellow colour, have 10 or more arms used primarily for catching food.

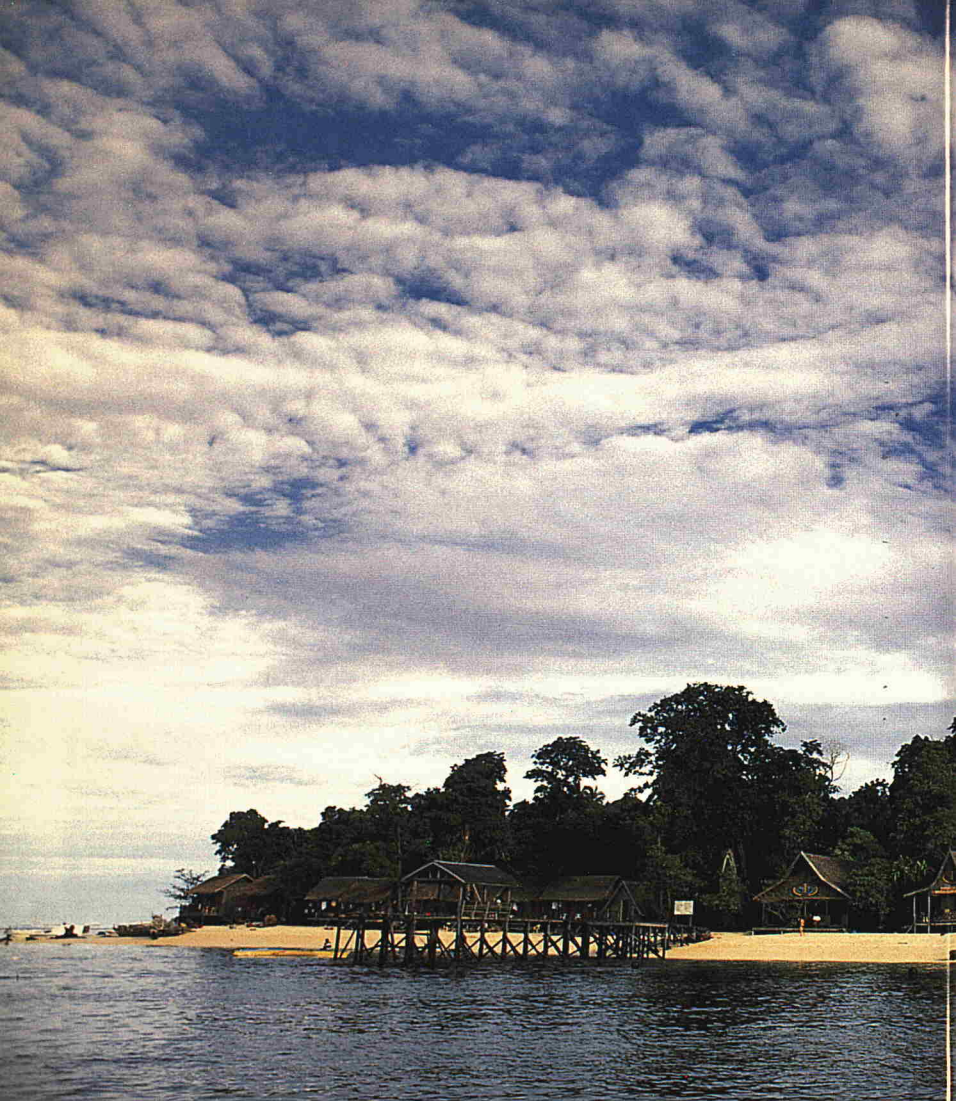
The superb underwater attractions of this remote tropical destination, with its top-class dive resorts, lure scuba divers from all over the world (below). Snorkel or dive over the shallow seabed of undisturbed coral reefs, swim with turtles, experience sharks in their natural environment, or drop off the edge of a sea wall into a gaping abyss.

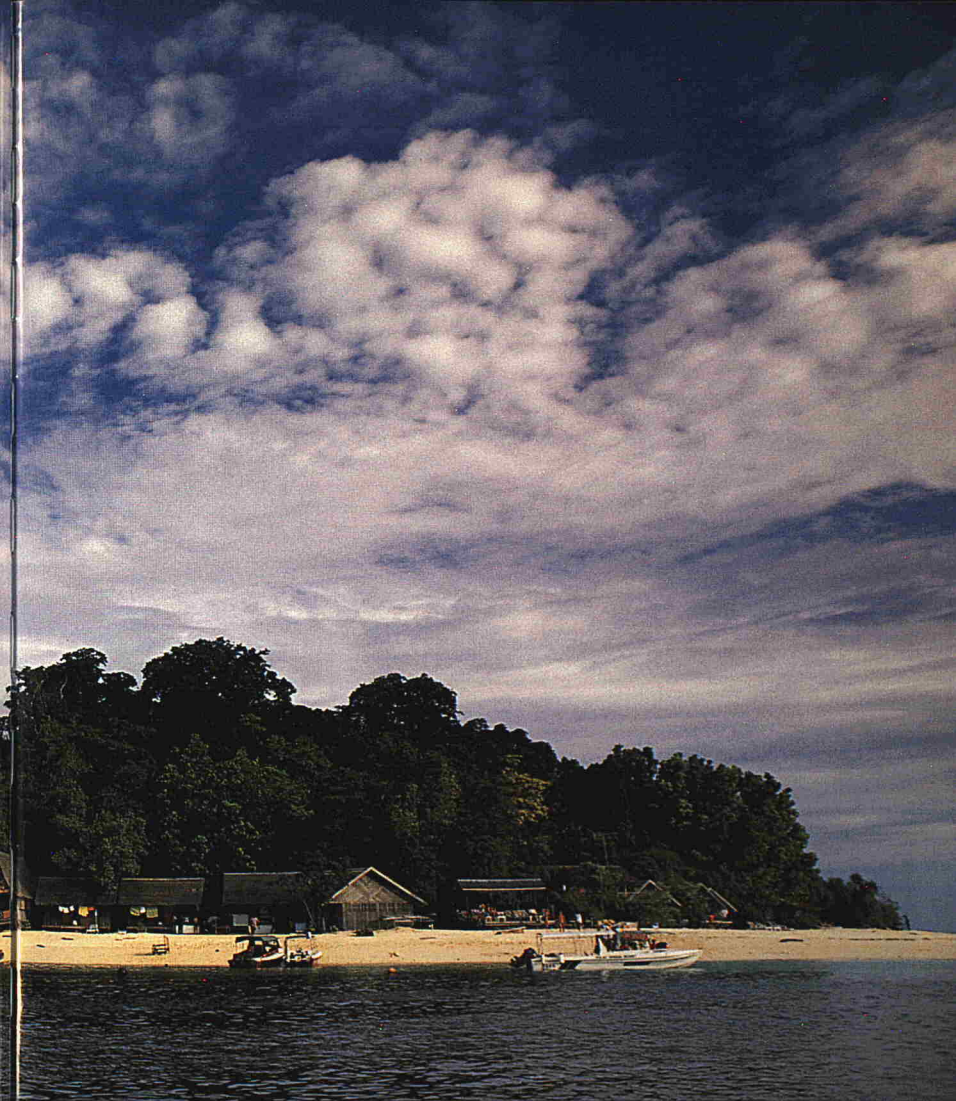
Long-finned bat fish (*Platax pinnatus*) glide silently through the waters (right) that surround Sipadan Island. These colourful fish have well-developed, undulating high dorsal and anal fins, and are characterized by a greyish-brown colouring with broad, vertical dusky bands.

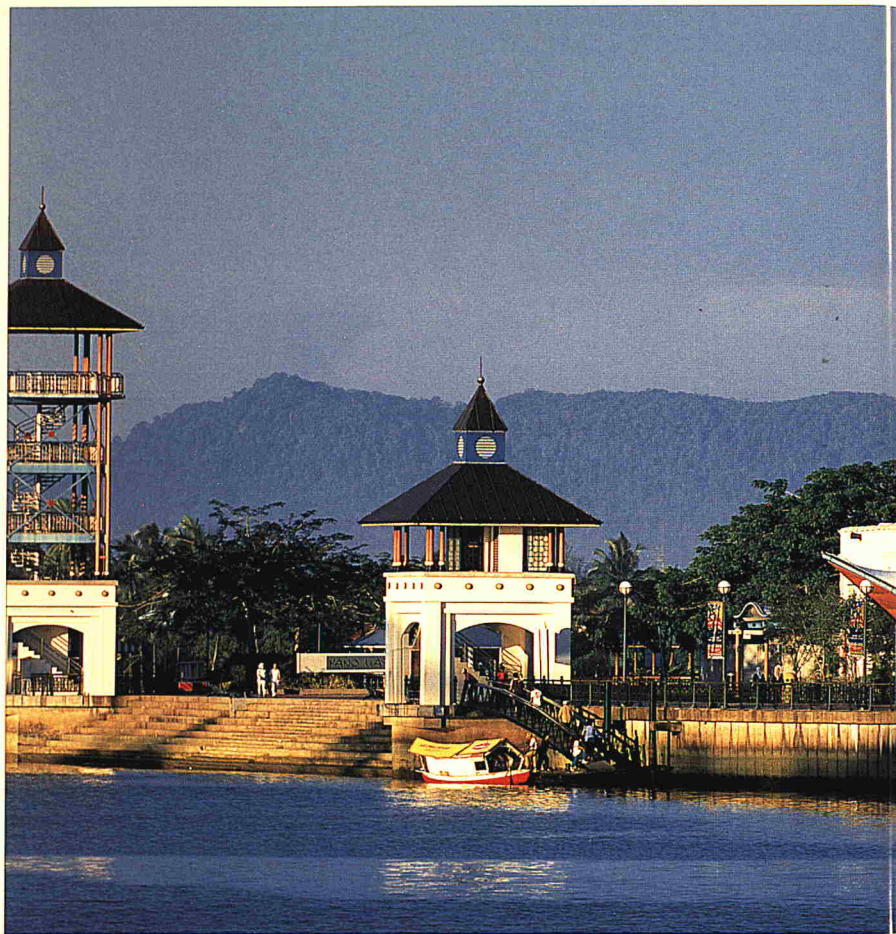
Lying off the southeast coast of Sabah (following pages), in the Celebes Sea, Sipadan is every bit a tropical island retreat: a clump of scrubby vegetation completely surrounded by immaculate white sand. It is the only truly oceanic island in Malaysia, rising up out of the ocean floor from a depth of 600 metres (1970 feet).













EXOTIC BORNEO

indigenous traditions and rituals

A dancer wearing a loincloth and an elaborate headdress of hornbill feathers dances to the

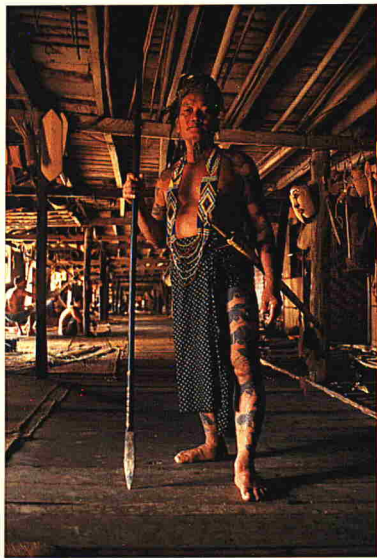


poignant strains of the Sarawak *sape*, a traditional stringed musical instrument. He is dancing the *ngajat*, a colourful, dramatic Iban warrior dance. Longhouses, blowpipes, *tambang* boats drifting on the current down the Sarawak River, the earthy textures of *juai kumbu* (handwoven heirloom fabric) and stories of head-hunting expeditions in times long past – these are some of the exotic images that capture the diversity and uniqueness of Malaysia's two Bornean states.

Sabah and Sarawak are characterized by large and varied ethnic groups, each practising their own customs and rituals; as a result, Bornean towns all have their own distinct flavour and spirit. Sarawak's capital, Kuching, is located on the Sarawak River. Founded by James Brooke, the history of this bustling waterfront town, and former seat of power of Brooke and other 'White Rajahs', is a fascinating tale of pirates, head-hunters and warring natives. A trip to Kuching would not be complete without a visit to the museum, with its famous ethnological collection. Boat safaris depart from the port of Kapit, offering visitors a glimpse of traditional life. The Sarawak Cultural Village, near the fishing village of Santubong, nestles in the foothills of the Santubong Mountains; visitors become acquainted with the cultures of various tribes while walking through six hectares (15 acres) of coastal forest. The oil boom town of Miri is the gateway to northern Sarawak's spectacular reserve areas, including the Mulu, Niah and Lambir national parks.

Kota Kinabalu, the capital city of Sabah, is the perfect base from which to explore the state's beautiful marine reserves, tropical islands and parks, including Mount Kinabalu and Poring Hot Springs.

A water taxi, or tambang (left), takes on passengers at the Pavilions on the Waterfront in Kuching, the capital of Sarawak. In 1993, the river front, which has always been a focal point for Kuching's residents, was transformed into the Main Bazaar, a mix of Chinese and Indian trading stores, and the Waterfront, a promenade of walkways, gardens, stalls and restaurants.



These young Iban children (left) are sitting on the edge of a traditional mat inside an Iban longhouse. The mats, which are woven from vines, have many uses; they are for sleeping, eating and for drying rice, and often act as the only furniture in the dwelling. At least two or three families share an Iban longhouse, and are usually related to each other. In contrast, large Kayan and Kenyah longhouses may house up to 200 people. Built in a linear fashion, the building has a common hallway and veranda, with separate apartments, all under one roof.

The acquisition of enemy heads (far left top) in Dayak societies was spiritually significant, as the head was considered to be the highest spiritual point of the body and the seat of life-giving essence.

This Dayak chief (far left bottom) in traditional dress recalls a time in Borneo's history when head-hunting was practised by most of the indigenous tribes. Today, some Dayak groups that still practise traditional religions hold head-hunting festivities as part of their ritual calendar, using old skulls.

The longhouse (below), the traditional home of the Iban and other Borneans, is the oldest form of architecture in Malaysia. It is usually built on the bank of a river, making it conveniently situated for water, fishing and transport. Natural building materials, such as wood and palm fronds, provide protection from the tropical heat and heavy rain. It is raised on tall posts as a means of defence, to take advantage of cooling breezes, and to prevent flooding. Frightening faces are often carved on the door, while intricately carved poles stand guard in front of the longhouse.

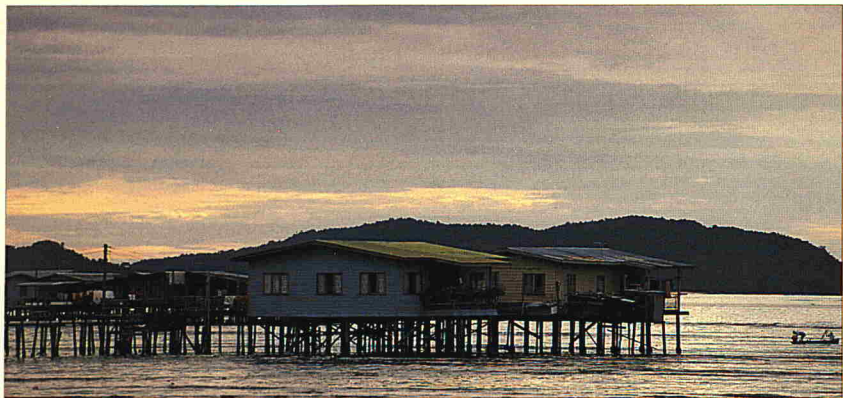






The Bidayuh, or Land Dayak (above), are mainly farmers who live around the headwaters of the Sarawak and Sadong rivers. After the rice harvest, they perform a special dance called *rajang beuh*, in which the dancers imitate an eagle in flight by moving their hands up and down in a series of graceful movements. The male dancers sport colourful costumes and wear necklaces of wild boars' teeth.

Iban youngsters (left), on the sheltered communal veranda of the family longhouse. Most of the domestic chores are carried out here, as well as functional activities such as weaving. Iban women are skilled weavers, and special designs are often passed down from one generation to the next.

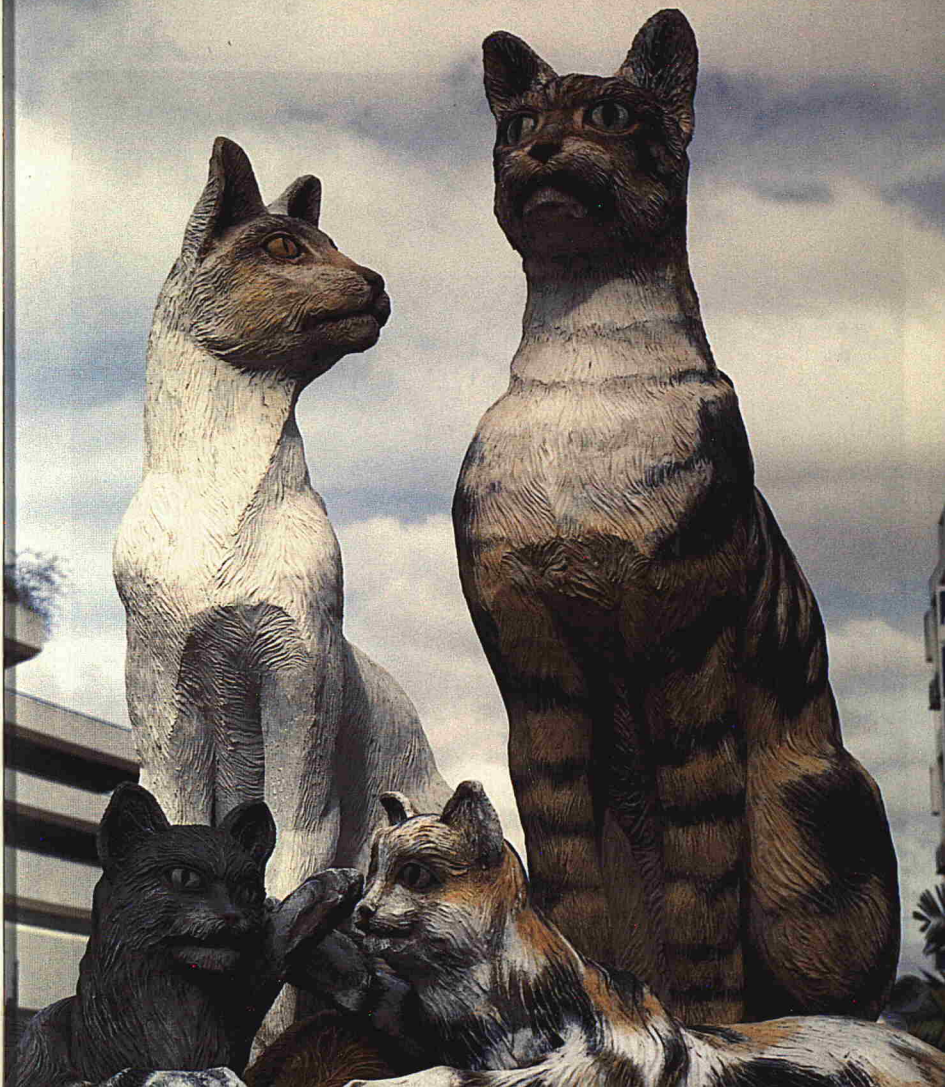


Many coastal houses in East Malaysia are built on stilts (above), with wooden steps leading to a veranda where guests wait before being invited inside. Sometimes, windows run the full height from ceiling to floor, allowing breezes to blow through the house. Fishing folk build their huts over water to take advantage of the coolness. The houses are functional and easy to repair and extend. The veranda ends in a jetty where the boat is moored and nets can be hung and repaired.



The esplanade on the Sarawak River (left) is the centre of most activity in Kuching. The Main Bazaar runs along the northern bank of the river and consists of a row of some of the oldest Chinese shophouses in Malaysia. Further along, there is an open-air market with stalls selling food and fresh produce.

Cats (opposite) are synonymous with Kuching (its name means 'cat' in Malay), and the capital even has a cat museum which is located in the city hall in Petra Jaya.







In Kuching's central market (opposite), fruit and vegetable sellers display their wares in neat rattan baskets. Bright yellow bananas, fresh cucumbers and long beans, fragrant papayas, and piles of ripe red *jambu ayer* form part of the magical mosaic of vibrant colours and nose-twitching smells that are so much a part of the market.

Iban cuisine (above), although basic, makes up for its lack of sophistication in the sheer variety of dishes presented at meals. A typical menu might include bamboo shoots braised in fermented prawn paste, rice cooked in a leaf, smoked river fish, and pickled wild boar contained within a bamboo hollow, washed down with lots of *tuak* (rice wine).

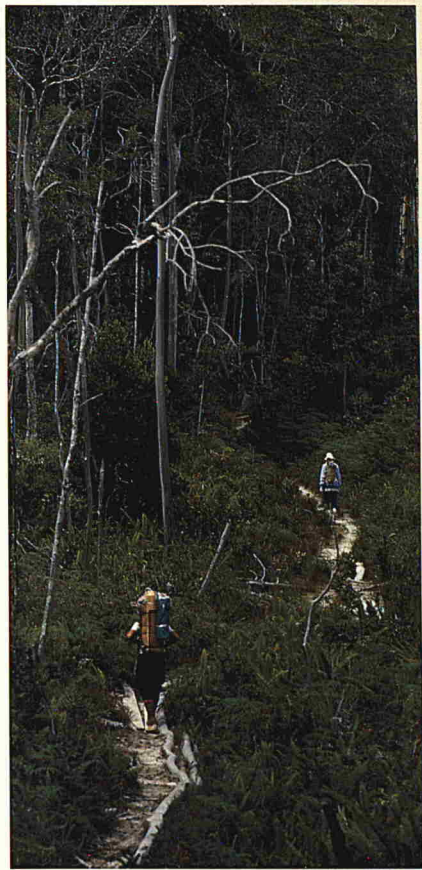


The main chamber of Niah Caves (above) in Sarawak has been an attraction ever since the discovery of Stone Age remains dating back some 40,000 years. Although the local people had been using it for years, it was only in 1870 that the animal collector and adventurer, A. Hart Everett, came across it. During the now famous archaeological digs, the skull of a *Homo sapiens* was found. Haemite paintings on the walls of one of the smaller caves depict stick figures with what are probably burial boats. Bones, shells and pottery were also found.

Hanging bridges (opposite top left) have always been used for crossing narrow rivers or gorges in the Bornean rainforest. Bridges are built by the local people, using bamboo and rope tied in a series of knots.

Children frolic in a river (opposite bottom left) while taking a bath. These days, bathing is still done down by the river.

Hikers take the forest track (opposite right) between the highland villages of Bano and Long Dano in rural Sarawak.







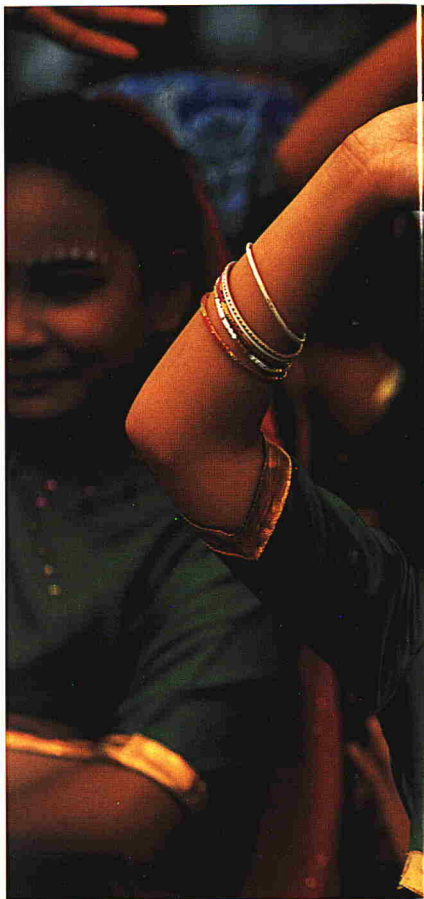
The long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*), which is widely distributed throughout Borneo and Peninsular Malaysia, occurs in coastal and lowland forest (above). It is sometimes found in mangroves, where its propensity for crabs gives rise to its other name, the crab-eating macaque. Malays call it *beru*, which refers to the sound it makes.

The sharp spikes of the Pinnacles (left) at Mulu National Park in Sarawak are quite awesome. The dagger-like formations, which jut out of the dense jungle canopy, can be as high as 45 metres (148 feet). The Pinnacles form part of the highest limestone mountain in Malaysia, Mount Api. Ascending these peaks involves a two-day climb over a tangle of roots, wet leaves and sharp limestone, and involves camping overnight at a simple hut near the Melinau River. Closer to the top there are ropes and ladders to assist climbers over the mossy rock walls and trees.



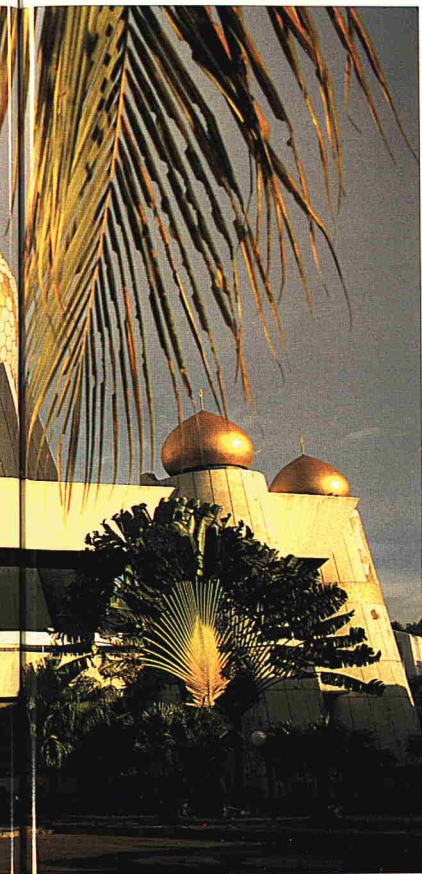
The box-leaved rhododendron (*Rhododendron boxifolium*), with its brilliant red petals (above), is in full bloom from February to April, especially around Laban Rata on Mount Kinabalu. At least 26 different species of striking rhododendrons grow on Mount Kinabalu's vast foothills.

Sabah's Independence Day (right) is marked by colourful parades and processions. Here, a parade of young Sabahans, decked out in vivid traditional costumes, wave to the roadside crowds during the festivities.









The magnificent State Mosque (opposite), located on Jalan Sembulan in Kota Kinabalu in Sabah, features a series of dome-topped columns, each beautifully adorned with gold inlay motifs, and a massive central golden dome.

When it rains in Malaysia (above), it can pour down suddenly. Caught in an unexpected downpour, this young Malaysian takes shelter under an "instant" umbrella in the form of a leaf from the broad-leaved macaranga tree.



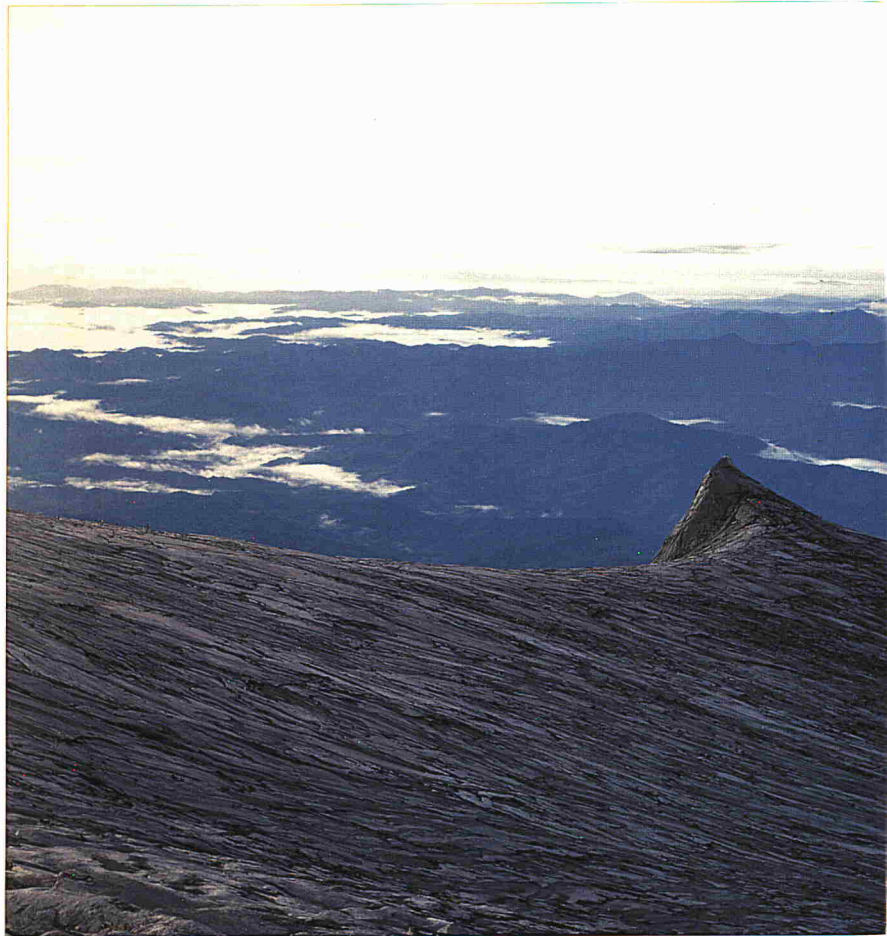


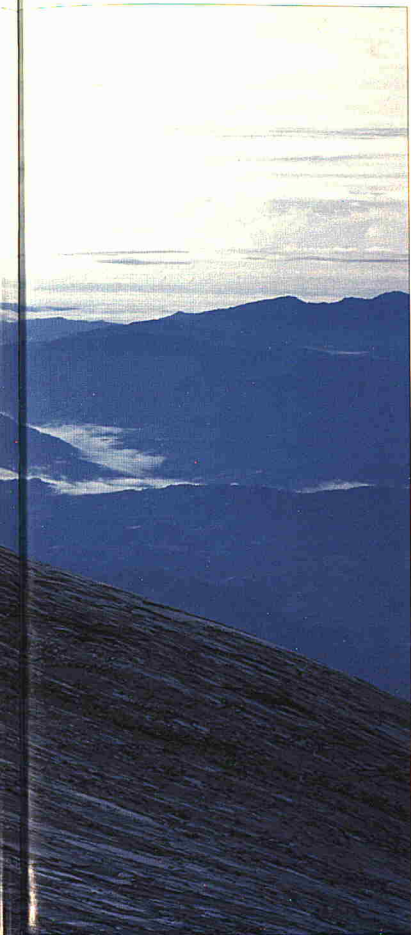
Semporna is situated on Darvel Bay (opposite) in southeast Sabah. This pretty Bajau- and Suluk-populated town has gained in popularity since it became the departure point for the nearby Semporna islands (a long necklace of islands to the east of the Semporna Peninsula) and the oceanic island of Sipadan, arguably Malaysia's best dive spot.

The rhinoceros hornbill (*Buceros rhinoceros*), easily identified by its brilliant orange-red casque (above left), is one of the largest hornbills in Borneo. Motifs of hornbill casques and feathers are often incorporated into Bornean art, and carved and painted effigies of the bird appear during the Iban hornbill festival, Gawai Kemalangan.



This male orang-utan (above) is from the Sepilok Orang-utan Sanctuary, a rehabilitation centre for injured orang-utans and those that have been illegally captured. All 'inmates' spend their first two months in quarantine with a diet comprising milk, bananas and vitamins. Once healthy, they are taught to lead a more independent life.





MOUNT KINABALU

Southeast Asia's biggest peak

At 4101 metres (13,454 feet), Mount Kinabalu rises majestically out of the dense montane rain-



forest in Sabah's Kinabalu Park. Known geologically as a granite pluton massif (a body of rock that crystallizes beneath the earth's surface and is then exposed), the mountain has great spiritual significance for the local people, the Kadazan.

Kinabalu National Park was created in 1964 to protect the mountain and its extraordinary fauna and flora. The world's largest flower, the parasitic *Rafflesia*, is found in low-altitude forest at the base of the mountain around Poring Hot Springs. The cool weather is perfect for walking; several nature trails scattered throughout the park reveal numerous varieties of brilliantly coloured rhododendrons, ferns, orchids and pitcher plants.

Further up the slope, above the lowland forest, the terrain changes to montane forest, then mossy cloud forest and subalpine meadow, finally a crown of bare granite is revealed. The sharp angles of the summit are a dramatic sight when seen piercing through the clouds in misty light or silhouetted against the sunset.

In 1851, Sir Hugh Low, a British government officer, was the first European to reach the summit plateau. He did not make it to Low's Peak, the highest point, even though it was named in his honour. Zoologist John Whitehead made it to the peak with the help of Kadazan porters in 1888. The trek to the top of the highest peak begins at 1830 metres (6004 feet) above sea level. It is an eight-and-a-half kilometre (five-mile) slog up endless steps to the bare rock of the summit plateau. From the craggy moonscape of the plateau, climbers make their way towards Low's Peak. The final stage of the climb should be completed just before dawn to enjoy the magnificence of the sunrise.

Looking down on the world from the top of Mount Kinabalu (left), the highest mountain between the Himalayas and Papua New Guinea. Probably the youngest granite intrusion in the world, the mountain is estimated to be around 1.5 million years old, which in geological terms is considered very recent.



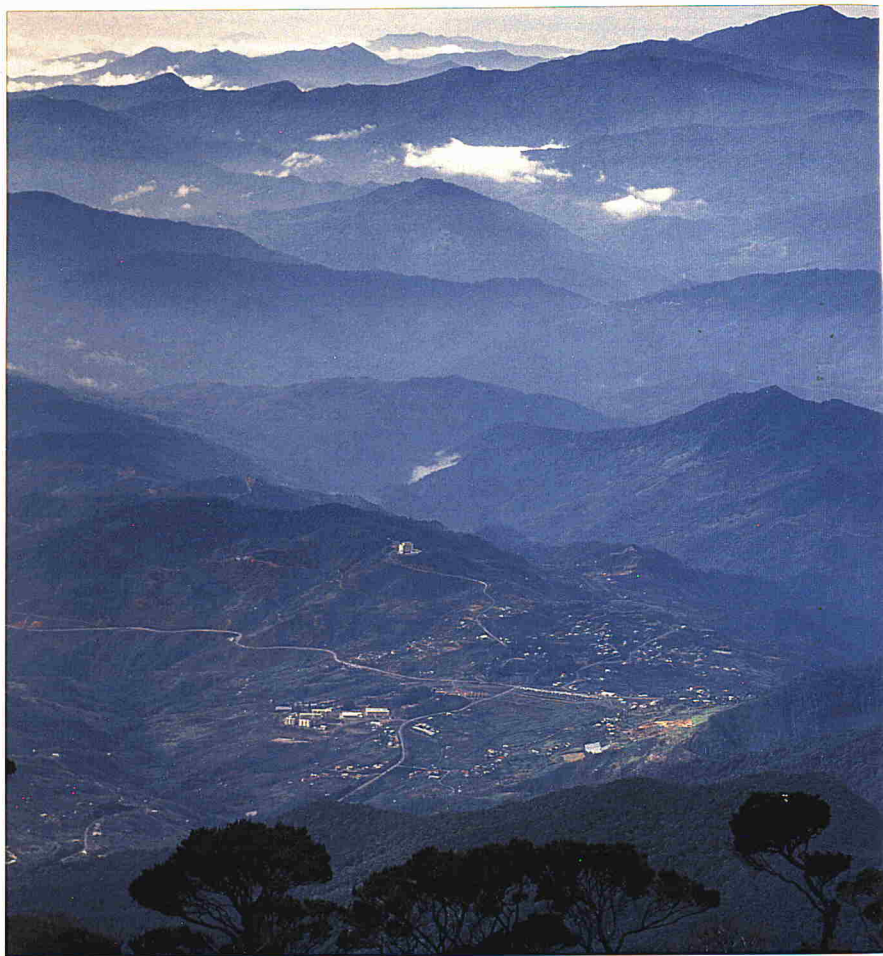
Gnarled trees signify the end of the tree line (opposite top). The mountain rises well above this line to the summit plateau, which is often enveloped in thick cloud. Above 2600 metres (8500 feet), the landscape has a fairy tale appearance, with white flowering shrubs that resemble snowflakes.

Low's Gulley (opposite bottom), en route to Low's Peak, provides an interesting diversion for climbers who might like to venture to the edge and experience the sensation of looking down a sheer 1006-metre (3300-foot) drop.

Pitcher plants (right) can be seen on many parts of the summit trail. There are more than 10 of these insectivorous species, which trap their prey in a cup-like pitcher, growing on the slopes of Mount Kinabalu. One of the plants was named after Hugh Low, who recorded the first ascent of Kinabalu.

The summit trail (below) begins four kilometres (two-and-a-half miles) from the Kinabalu Park headquarters. From Carson's Falls, it climbs steeply to the first of several summit trail shelters.







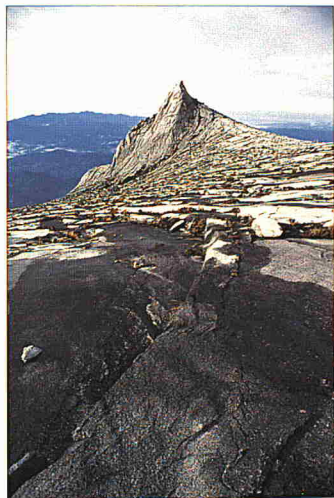
The views from the slopes of Mount Kinabalu (opposite), at 3170 metres (10,400 feet), encompass the whole of the Crocker Range. Paka Cave nearby is a rock shelter where early expeditions camped before the hostel at Labani Rata was built.

The Donkey's Ears can be seen to the left of the exposed summit plateau (above), and indicate that journey's end. Low's Peak, is close by. The tiled appearance of the glacier worn plateau is the result of thin layers of rock flaking away.

Heath rhododendron (*Rhododendron ericoides*), with its tubular blooms and tiny leaves (right), is found only on Mount Kinabalu. It is first sighted around 2896 metres (9500 feet) and is one of the few plants to thrive on the summit plateau. It grows to full maturity, only a few inches high, in between rock crevices or whenever the rocks can gain a foothold.



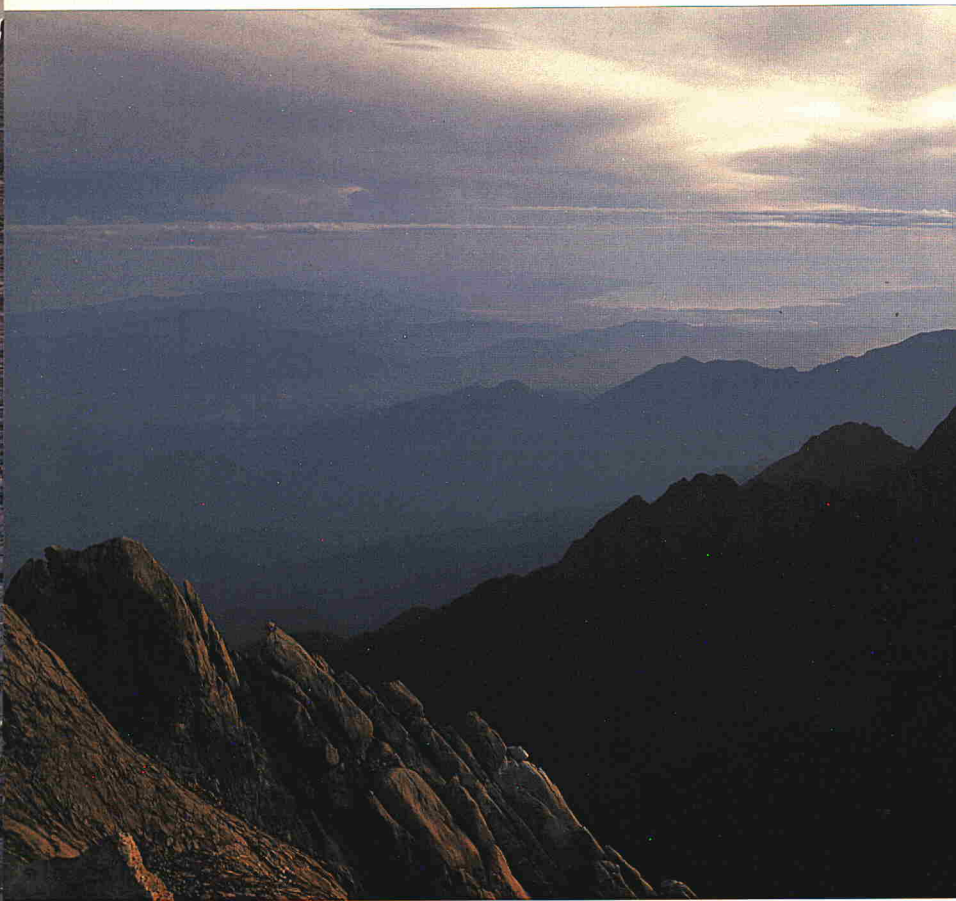


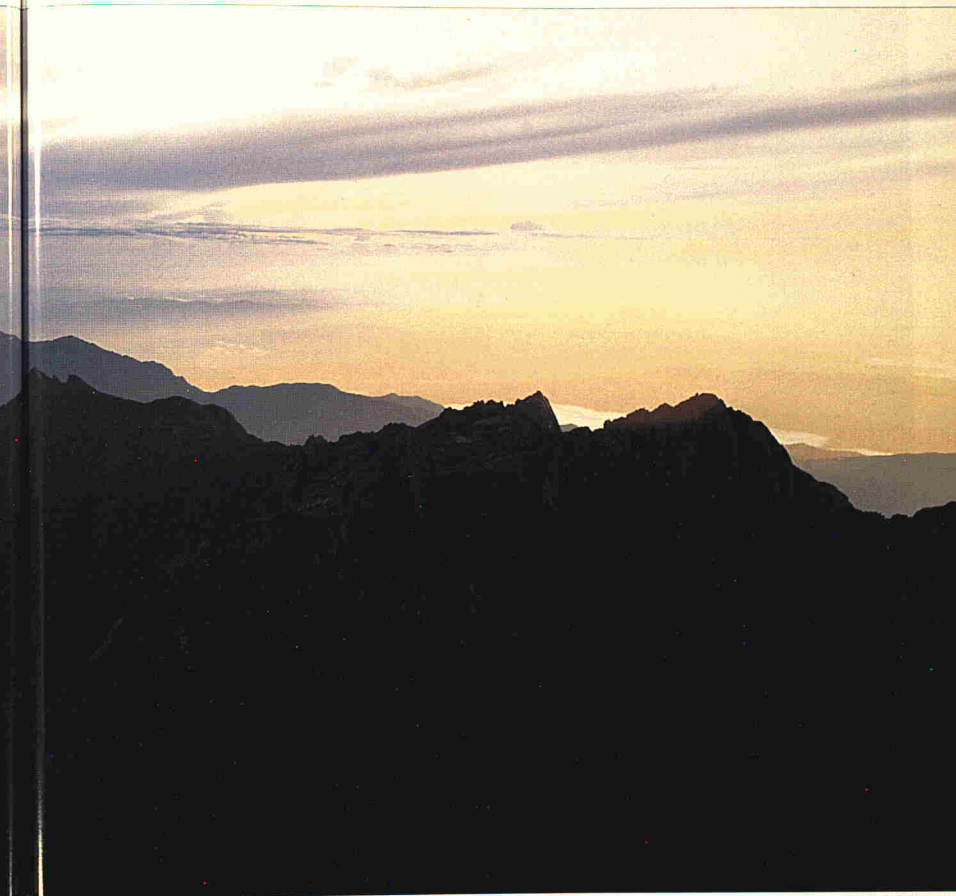


The summit trail (left and above) winds its way along the southern side of Mount Kinabalu. The strenuous trek to the peak starts at 1850 metres (6000 feet) on a broad, clear and well-maintained path amidst montane oak forests. The majority of the trail consists of endless steps which lead up to the bare rock of the summit plateau. At 2154 metres (7000 feet), rhododendrons stand out against the green of the surrounding forest. Higher up, at around 2651 metres (8700 feet), the air starts to get quite thin. From this level, the trails start to climb steeply over lichen-covered rocks. The vegetation changes and the tea tree (*Uapiticum*), locally called *sayat sayat*, can be seen.

As early as three o'clock in the morning, climbers begin the final slog to the summit (opposite), having spent the night at Laban Rata, the resthouse located at 3553 metres (11,000 feet), where electricity, beds, hot water and a canteen are available. Climbers use ropes to help them negotiate the rockface. Once the craggy moonscape of the summit plateau is reached, there is still a walk to the highest point to complete before the sun rises majestically in the east.

It is an awesome feeling to clamber up the last pyramid of rocks and finally stand on top above the cloud line as the soft light of dawn hits the peaks (following pages).









THE GREEN MANTLE

Virgin forest and languid waterways

Green is the colour most frequently associated with Malaysia. From the air, the dense



canopy of the country's extensive tropical rainforests resembles fresh broccoli; the oil-palm estates and coconut trees look like spidery green stars, and the rubber plantations could be mistaken for giant ferns. Malaysia's green mantle accounts for 75 per cent of the country's total land area. The forests, the moss-clad limestone cliffs, the rubber, oil-palm and tea plantations, and rich agricultural lands all rely on the life-giving torrential rains brought by the annual monsoon. The most enduring image left with most travellers visiting this lush landscape is undoubtedly that of the ancient remaining rainforests. Although vast tracts of forest have been cleared for rubber and oil-palm plantations, there are areas that have remained virtually untouched for millions of years.

There are 14 designated wilderness areas in Malaysia, covering a total area of some 8000 square kilometres (3088 square miles). Taman Negara is the oldest and largest national park in the country. Located in parts of Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu, it offers a spectacular introduction to the primeval attractions of the dark, humid world of the rainforest. The overwhelming vastness of this environment is perhaps best appreciated from the top of Terasek Hill which is situated in Taman Negara. From here, a 360-degree view reveals accents of orange, russet and brown (the leaves of seasonal tree species) which stand out in sharp contrast to the predominant green of the rainforest. Beneath the canopy, a multilayered domain of plant species thrives in a tangle of green hues. From the *tuahling* tree, which can reach a height of 80 metres (265 feet), to the strangling fig, a parasitic plant which grows around a host tree, the rainforests of Malaysia continue to thrill and enchant botanists and ecotourists.

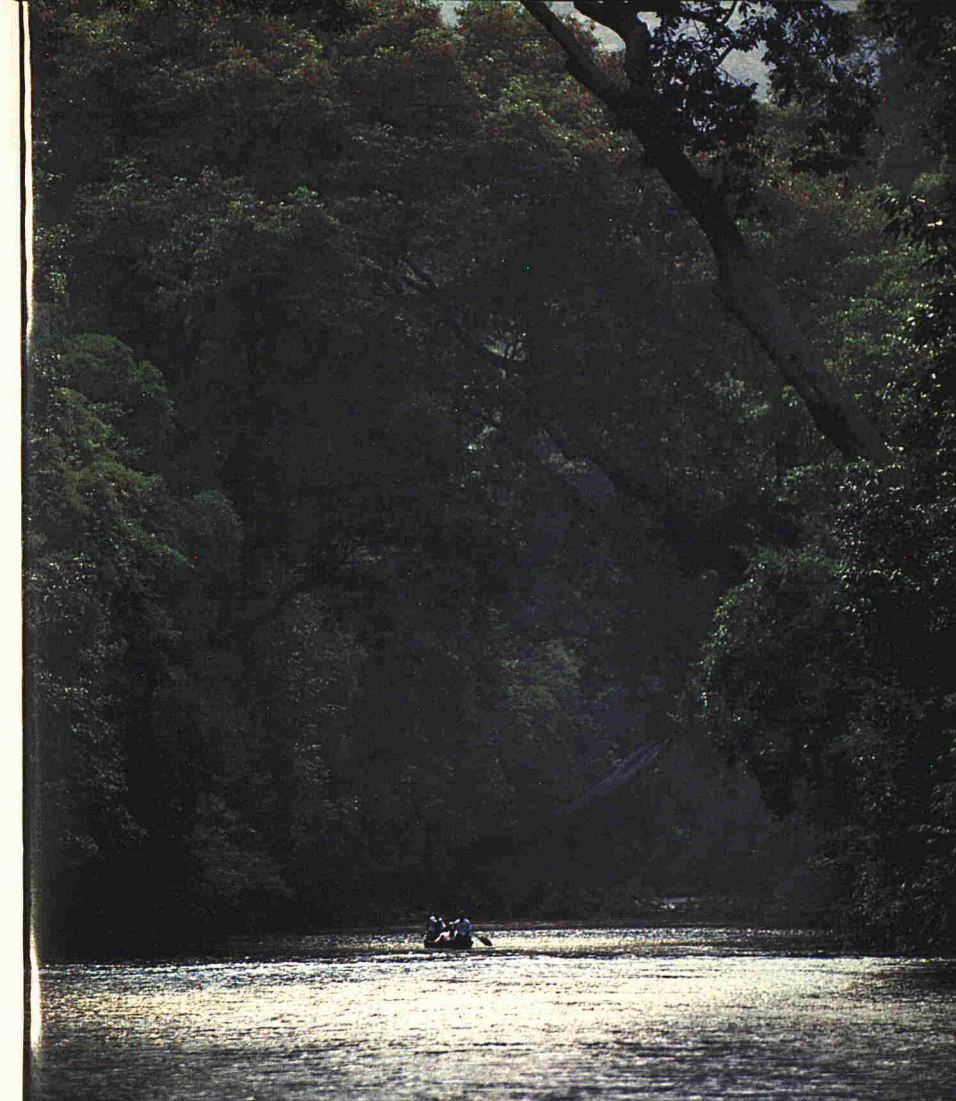
Deep within the rainforests of Sarawak (left), tall trees of the Dipterocarpaceae family are mostly found. When one of these giant trees falls, it can change the character of the surrounding vegetation. Smaller trees are often destroyed, and the gap created by the fallen tree allows sunlight to penetrate the forest floor, causing rapid growth of the plants and trees in the vicinity.



The long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) has clearly visible white eyelids (above), and lives in forest habitats by rivers. It usually feeds on the fruits of riverside trees, although it sometimes forages on mangrove swampland. It is still found in forested green lungs in urban areas, making it one of the easier hard mammals to see.

Club mosses (*Selaginella* sp.) have a metallic blue appearance (left) where they grow in deep shade. Mosses, as well as ferns and liverworts, are all part of the rich plant diversity in the rainforest.

Drifting lazily downriver in a motorized longboat (opposite), shaded by an archway of giant *neram* trees, is a popular activity in Taman Negara. Switching the engines off gives one the opportunity to tune into the numerous sounds and activities of the forest.

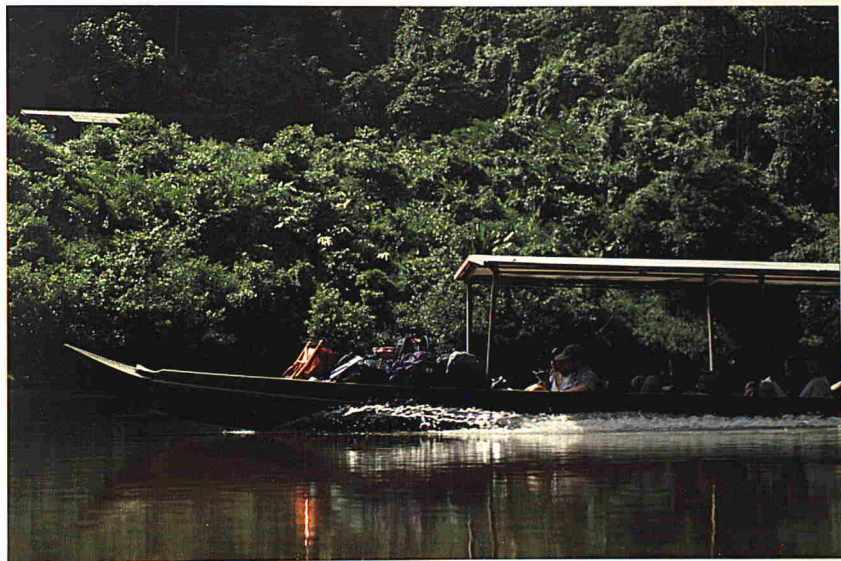




Taman Negara Resort (above), in Kuala Tahan, offers a range of accommodation in chalets, dormitories, and tents. The offices of the Wildlife Department and the headquarters of the Taman Negara National Park are located at Kuala Tahan. Visitors can organize guided treks within the park.

The sambar deer (*Cervus unicolor*) can be seen opposite top and heard in the park. It has a high-pitched bark or grunt. Active mainly at night, it grazes in clearings or at the forest edge, or browses on the leaves of ground vegetation. The stag sheds its antlers each year after the breeding season.

Covered motorized longboats (opposite bottom) transport visitors from Kuala Tembeling to the park headquarters at Kuala Tahan, a journey river that takes three to four hours. Along the way, there is plenty to observe, including Malay *kampung*s, with residents pursuing their daily activities.





The narrow strip of natural riverine, or riparian forest (opposite), differs from the vegetation of the interior. It is characterized by *nerani* trees that tend to lean over the water's edge, forming a beautiful arch of shade and cover. When river banks erode, old trees tend to topple into the water, becoming potentially hazardous for boatmen.

This Orang Asli man (below) is collecting a specially thin species of bamboo which is used for the inner barrel of a blowpipe. Being rare, scarce expeditions are made to collect this bamboo from traditional but distant locations in the forest.

This canopy suspension bridge (right) at Taman Negara is 460 metres (1,509 feet) long. It took almost four years to build and uses no nails or screws, only ropes of various sizes tied by means of intricate knots to tall *tuallang* trees. Because of its length and method of construction, the number of people allowed on it at one time is limited.

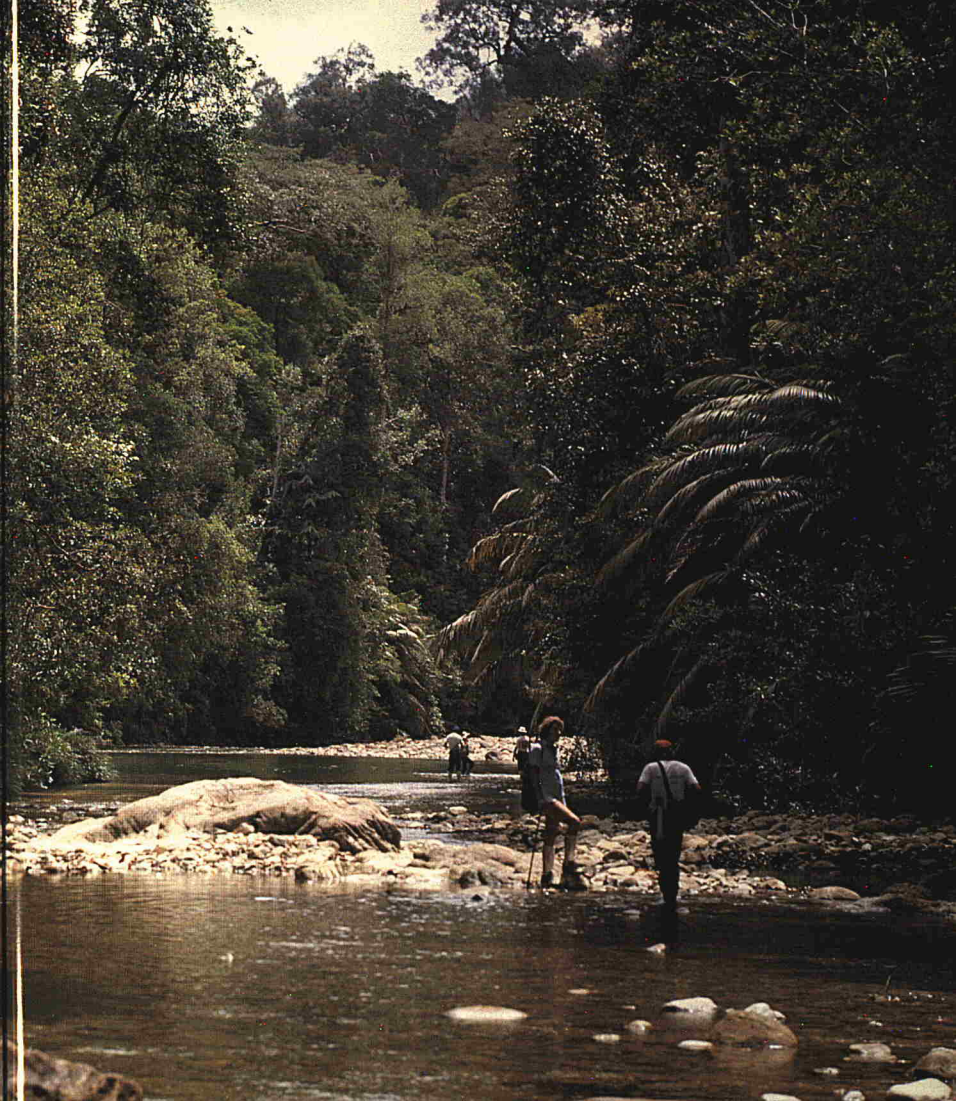




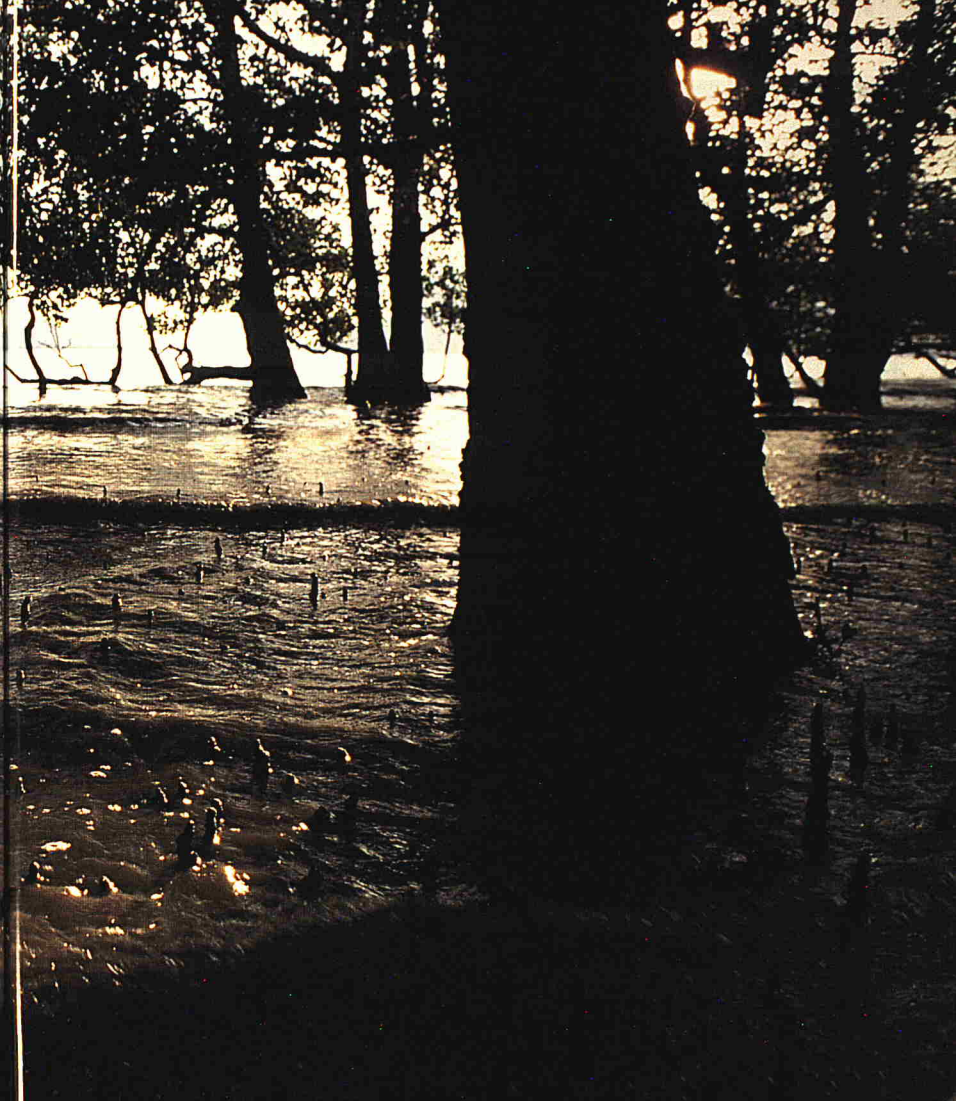
To appreciate the spectacular vista of the lowland tropical rainforest canopy (above), it is best to climb a hill, or better yet, the nearest mountain. An elevated vantage point affords a seemingly endless view of the forest in all its shades of green, accentuated by the browns, oranges, reds, and yellows of new and old foliage. The rainforest always appears green, because most trees lose their leaves and develop new ones within a few days. Occasionally, a deciduous tree, bare of all leaves, stands out amidst this lushness.

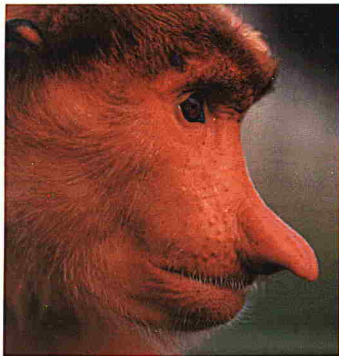
A jungle trek through Taman Negara (right) can last from two hours to more than a week. Keen hikers can ascend Mount Tahan, Peninsular Malaysia's highest peak at 2187 metres (7174 feet), which involves a trek through low-altitude forest, negotiating many river crossings, before climbing up a narrow, high ridge to a plateau. Correct footwear is most important, and hikers are advised to wear loose, cotton clothing that 'breathes' in the heat. In an area with such high humidity, hikers should be prepared to get wet.









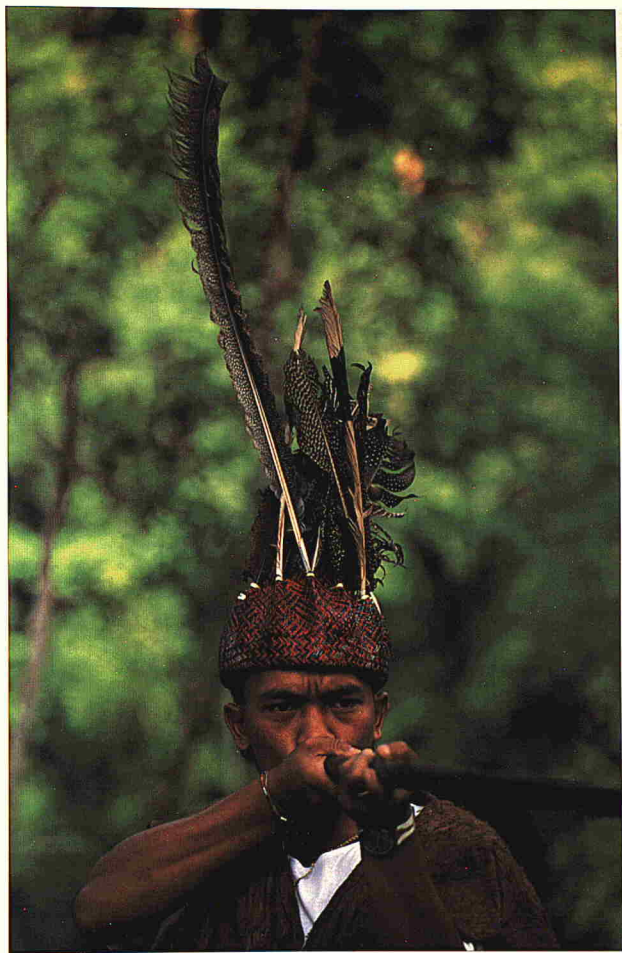


The air-breathing roots of mangrove trees are exposed with the nesting tide (previous pages) at the entrance to Bako National Park, located about 40 kilometers (25 miles) northeast of Kuching in Sarawak. Bako is the oldest national park in Borneo. Only 27 square kilometers (10 square miles) in size, it is possible to explore the entire park in one visit. A phenomenal variety of flora exists here, including swamp forest and scrub species. Hornbills, proboscis monkeys and monitor lizards can be seen by visitors who take one of the many well-maintained trails that crisscross the park.

The proboscis monkey (*Nasalis larvatus*) has a distinguishing bulbous nose (left); the male has a longer nose than the female. Found only in Borneo, it prefers to live near water, and is found mainly in the coastal forests of Sabah and Sarawak, and along the banks of large rivers.

An Iban in traditional dress demonstrates the use of a blowpipe (opposite). He wears an elaborate headdress, decorated with a rich plumage of tail feathers from the Argus pheasant. The feathers are sewn onto a headband made out of *pua kumbu*, or bark cloth. Silver ornaments are very much an Iban trademark and are worn by both men and women. The man usually wears a top made from *pua kumbu* or gossamer-clothed, decorating his body with ornately beaded necklaces. The swords have brass handles and tufts of human hair on the hilts.

Wild bananas, or plantains (above), grow profusely in tropical rainforests. These particular bananas are full of seeds and are inedible. The diversity of species in the rainforest is immense. Within a small area of the upper storey, for instance, there can be as many as 500 different tree species.







Far beneath the cloak of vivid green of the forest canopy in Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak, is the world of the forest floor. Ferns, fungi and seedlings grow between the buttressed roots of large trees (opposite), while beetles, ants and less visible forms of life are responsible for recycling the plant debris into vital nutrients.

Pitcher plants (left) are actually modified leaves, and not flowers or fruits. They are shaped to attract and trap animal life which is then digested in the liquid contents of the pitcher. Frogs, birds and even rats have been found as victims of these plants.

Many caterpillars have long hairs (below left) which can cause nasty stings or itches if handled. They often have bright warning colours too. The caterpillars of most butterflies feed on plant tissue; they have biting mouth parts and feed voraciously. After the final moult, the skin of the caterpillar hardens to form a chrysalis.

Some lizards, such as this member of the *Gehos* family (below), can change colour from bright green to brown. The Malaysian forests are home to many species of lizards; some are arboreal, spending their lives in the canopy, while others are terrestrial.







EAST COAST POSTCARDS

picturesque bays and villages

Picture a long stretch of sandy beach fringing a blue-green sea. Under a grove of tall coconut trees,

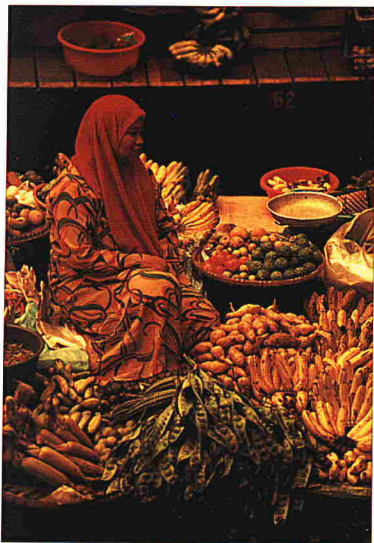


there is a Malay fishing village, or *kampung*, with traditional thatched houses on stilts. A fishing boat, heavily laden with the day's catch, approaches the beach, but the water is too shallow for it to come ashore. Buffalo-drawn carts emerge from the *kampung*. The buffalo amble into the shallows and stand patiently while the fish are unloaded from the boat onto the carts. At Berserah, on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, bringing in the daily catch has been done this way for generations. Traditions like these give the east coast its unrivalled charm and make it distinctly different from the west coast.

Unlike the west coast, the east coast of the Peninsula is not protected from strong winds by the sheltering effect of the Sumatran landmass. On the contrary, it is subject to the full force of the northeast monsoon from October to February. During the monsoon months, fishing comes to a standstill, and traditional games such as top-spinning and giant-kite flying provide a welcome diversion. The east coast towns of Kota Bharu and Kuala Terengganu, steeped in tradition, are important centres of Malay culture. Here, visitors can take in *gamelan* (percussion orchestra) and classical Malay dances.

With the surge in tourism, new beachfront resorts and rapidly expanding towns are changing the east coast skyline, but not to the extent of obliterating altogether the picturesque bays, villages and ubiquitous coconut palms. The smaller towns, such as Berserah and Marang (not to be confused with nearby Merang), still retain an idyllic timelessness.

Boats of all shapes, sizes and colour (left) anchor off Marang, a village situated 28 kilometres (17 miles) north of Kuala Terengganu, the capital of Terengganu state. Marang is the point where boats leave for Redang, one of the attractive islands off the east coast, and a popular diving destination. In the peaceful village, children play games in between wooden houses on stilts, while on the beach, coconut trees blow in the wind.





Colourful trishaws (opposite top) are still a delightful mode of transport in Kota Bharu. It is advisable to learn a few basic words of Kelantanese in order to communicate with the driver. For one thing, it is essential to agree on a price before the start of a ride to avoid being overcharged. For some, a trip in a Malaysian trishaw can be nothing short of nerve-racking as the driver expertly weaves his way between bicycles, scooters, cars, and buses on the narrow streets.

The Central Market (opposite bottom) in Kota Bharu is reputed for its colour and variety. Scarlet chillies nest alongside *petai* pods (the seeds are considered a delicacy) and ripe yellow bananas. This is the domain of Kelantanese women, resplendent in their batik sarangs (*baqa kurungs*) and bright head-scarves. Some have *bedak sipak* (a talcum powder made from rice flour) on their faces. Amidst the bustle of this vibrant market, the staccato Kelantanese dialect fills the air.

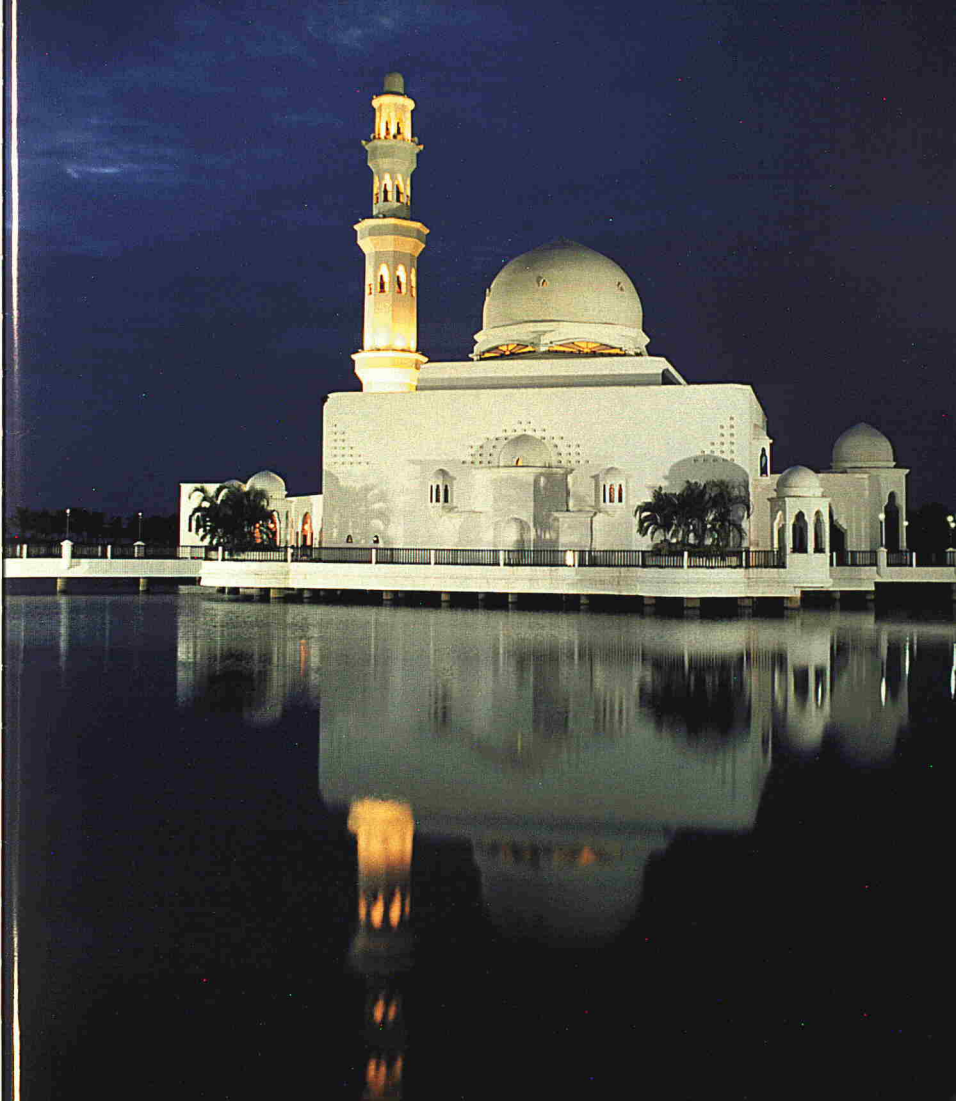
Kota Bharu (above), the capital of Kelantan, is only a few kilometres from the Thai border. Consequently, the identity of the Kelantanese Malays in this bustling city is quite distinct, particularly their rather guttural dialect which almost forms a separate language. Many of the non-Malay residents in Kota Bharu also speak and understand the local Kelantanese Malay dialect. The town is an important centre of traditional Malay culture.

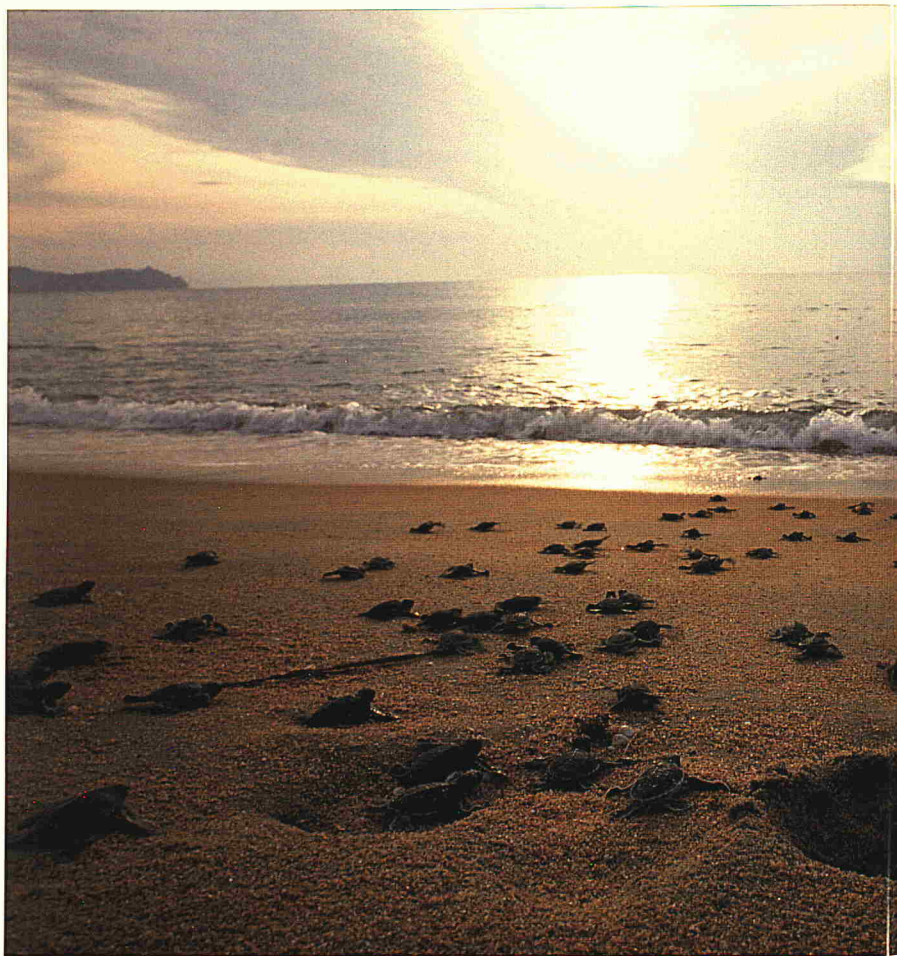


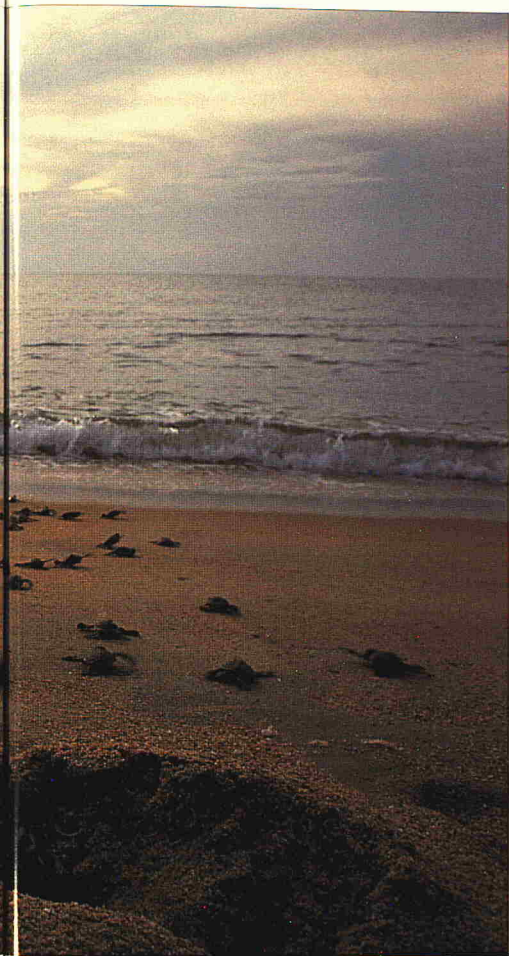
Kite flying (above), which has its origins in the 16th-century Melakan Sultanate, is a popular adult preoccupation, particularly in Kelantan and Terengganu. It is a seasonal pastime, enjoyed during July and August. While some fishermen make and fly *kuar* (the Malay word for 'kite'), others spin giant tops or play traditional Malay musical instruments. There are kites designed for high-speed flying, and others that are purely decorative. They may be in the shape of the moon, birds, cats or fish. The frame is made from bamboo and decorated with glazed-coloured paper. Sometimes a device that emits a humming sound when it is in the air is fixed to the neck of the kite.

Terengganu's Floating Mosque

(opposite), otherwise known as Masjid Ibar, is an enthralling sight to those who pass by the village of Gendering, close to Kuala Terengganu, where it is situated. Built close to water, facing the South China Sea near the estuary of the Ibar River, the mosque was designed to look like it was floating. Sea breezes blow through its open areas, making it a cool, contemplative and special sanctuary in which to pray. The pure white façade of the mosque captures the changing light throughout the day, a combination of the reflections from the surrounding water and sandy shores. It was designed by Raja Bahru, a nephew of the Sultan of Terengganu.

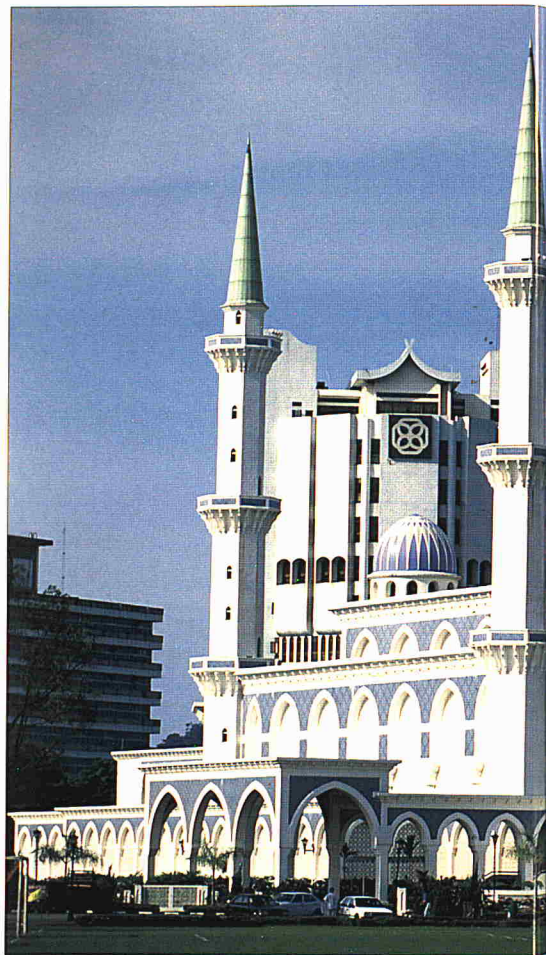






Four of the world's seven marine turtle species visit Malaysian shores (left and above), namely the giant leatherback, hawksbill, olive ridley and green turtles. These creatures, which have inhabited the earth for over 100 million years, are survivors from the age of the dinosaurs. In order to ensure their survival, there are a number of turtle sanctuaries in Malaysia. Leatherback turtles, which used to rest along the sandy shores of the east coast in large numbers, are now almost extinct. Between March and October, green turtles come out of the sea to spawn on the beaches of Redang Island, off the coast of Terengganu. After incubation, the hatchlings break out of their shells and dig their way to the surface. At night, they emerge and scramble instinctively towards the ocean. Unfortunately, their chances of survival are very slim with only one in every thousand hatchlings reaching adulthood.

Kuantan's elegant Masjid Negara, or state mosque (right), is situated in the centre of the town on Jalan Masjid. Decorated with delicate mosaics, it features a huge Mogul-inspired entrance arch, four towering minarets standing guard at each corner, as well as four small domes surrounding the large central dome.





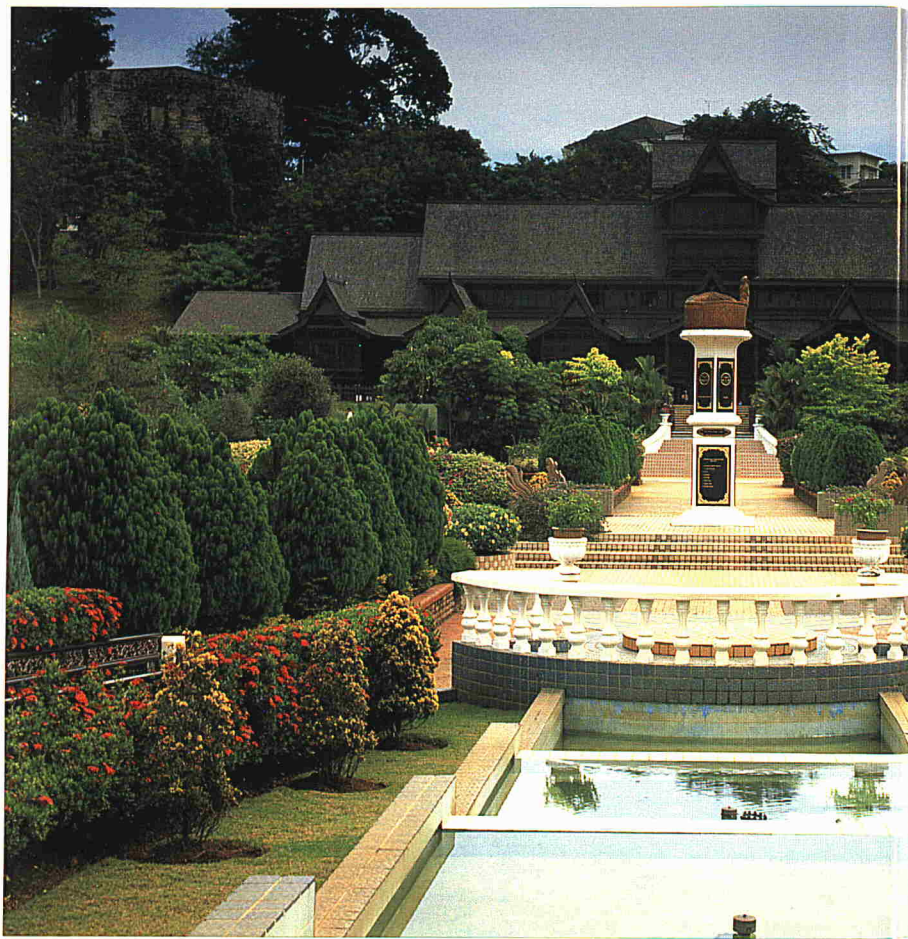




Traditional Malay images, such as a man mending his fishing nets (opposite top), still exist along the east coast despite the rapid and wide-scale development of tourism. As a result of bad catches and unsuitable weather, fishing as a livelihood is becoming both nonlucrative and unsafe. Of the fish that are caught, as many as possible are sold to the market, while the remainder is made into dried salted fish (above), which is a popular delicacy among Malaysians. The freshly salted fish are laid out on mats on the ground to be dried by the sun.

The Malay dance drama, *Mak Yong* (opposite, bottom left), was a form of entertainment in 19th-century Patani (southern Thailand) and Kelantan. It combined drama, dance, operatic singing, and comedy, using the spike fiddle (*rebab*), double-headed barrel drums (*gendang*) and a pair of hanging gongs (*lajak-lajak*).

Song birds (opposite, bottom right) are very popular on the east coast. They are kept in beautifully carved wooden bird cages and are often trained to sing in competitions.





THE HISTORIC WEST COAST

cultural landmarks of the past

In the towns and cities along the west coast of Peninsular Malaysia, sleek skyscrapers seem



to sprout overnight alongside historic buildings, vanishing reminders of a bygone era. Despite the massive invasion of contemporary architecture, it is still possible to find a colonial-style mansion behind an overgrown hedge.

The old quarter in a west coast town is always the most interesting, with narrow streets flanked by prewar shophouses that have been endlessly repainted over the years. In towns like Penang and Melaka, a trishaw is still a popular means of inner city transport – especially for tourists.

Beyond the highways, small towns, each having forged their own special place in Malaysia's turbulent history, epitomize the contradictions of fast-paced development coexisting with the old.

The island of Penang remains one of Peninsular Malaysia's most popular tourist destinations. Its capital, Georgetown, is a fascinating mix of historic and modern buildings, temples and mosques. Penang's beaches and resorts are another attraction, giving rise to the island's early reputation as 'The Pearl of the Orient'.

No description of the Peninsula's west coast would be complete without mentioning Melaka, Malaysia's oldest and most historically significant town. The rich and varied cultural influences of the city's conquerors are evident in the wealth of historic buildings and ruins dotted on and around St Paul's Hill, and serve as a reminder of Melaka's convoluted history.

The Melaka Sultanate Palace (left), an impressive replica of the original wooden palace built for Sultan Mansur Shah, was completed in 1985 using traditional construction techniques. The new palace houses a cultural museum.



Latex drips into a cup (above) after the bark of the rubber tree has been carefully cut. Most rubber tappers rise at around five in the morning, because it is best to tap the latex when it is cool as it flows better. The latex is collected around noon, and taken to a special processing station where formic acid is added to aid coagulation. It is then sent to a factory where it is cleaned, rolled, squeezed, dried, and processed into sheets of rubber.

Rubber plantations (right) occupy much of the land along the west coast. There was hardly a rubber tree in sight a hundred years ago. The rubber industry all began with the experimental vision of a director of Singapore's Botanical Gardens, H. N. Ridley, or 'Rubber Ridley'. He brought rubber tree seeds from South America and planted them with great success. Rubber was first planted commercially by coffee growers in the 1890s.

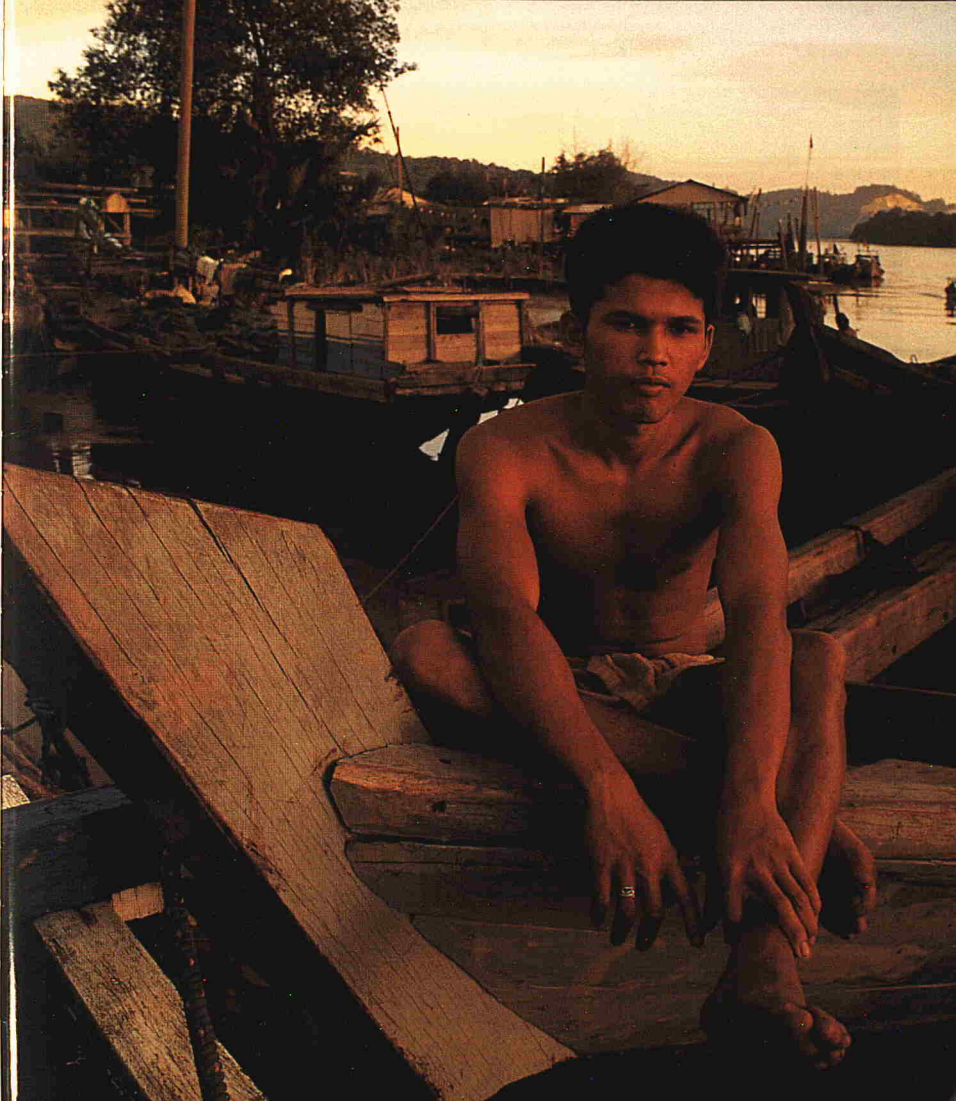






Sumatran fishing boats (above and opposite) are a common sight anchored near the main wharf in the large market town of Batu Pahat. Situated north of Johor Bahru, it began life as a small fishing village, although its history dates back to the heady days of the Melakan Sultanate. The town is

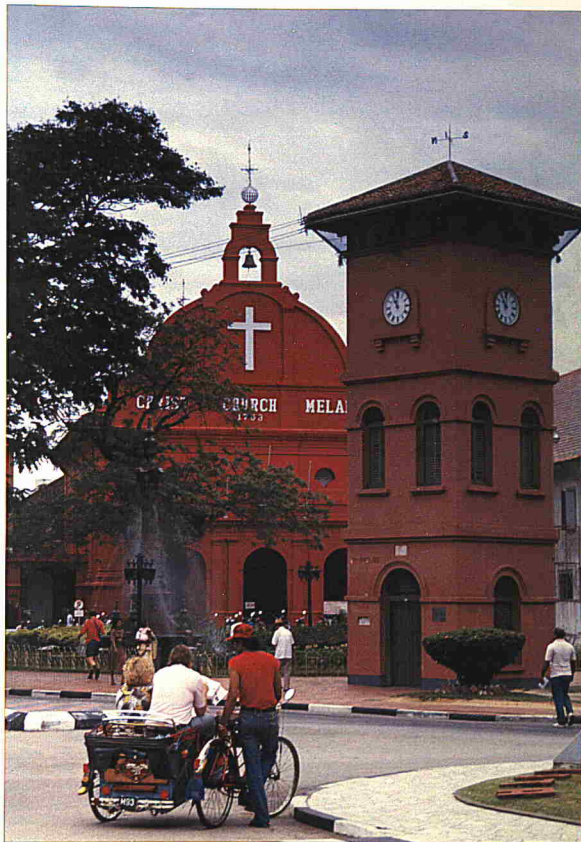
still renowned for its tempting seafood, which is available directly from the boats every day. Another highlight of a trip to Batu Pahat is a feast of reasonably priced Chinese food. Visitors approaching the town come across roadside fruit stalls offering such seasonal delights as the highly prized durian.

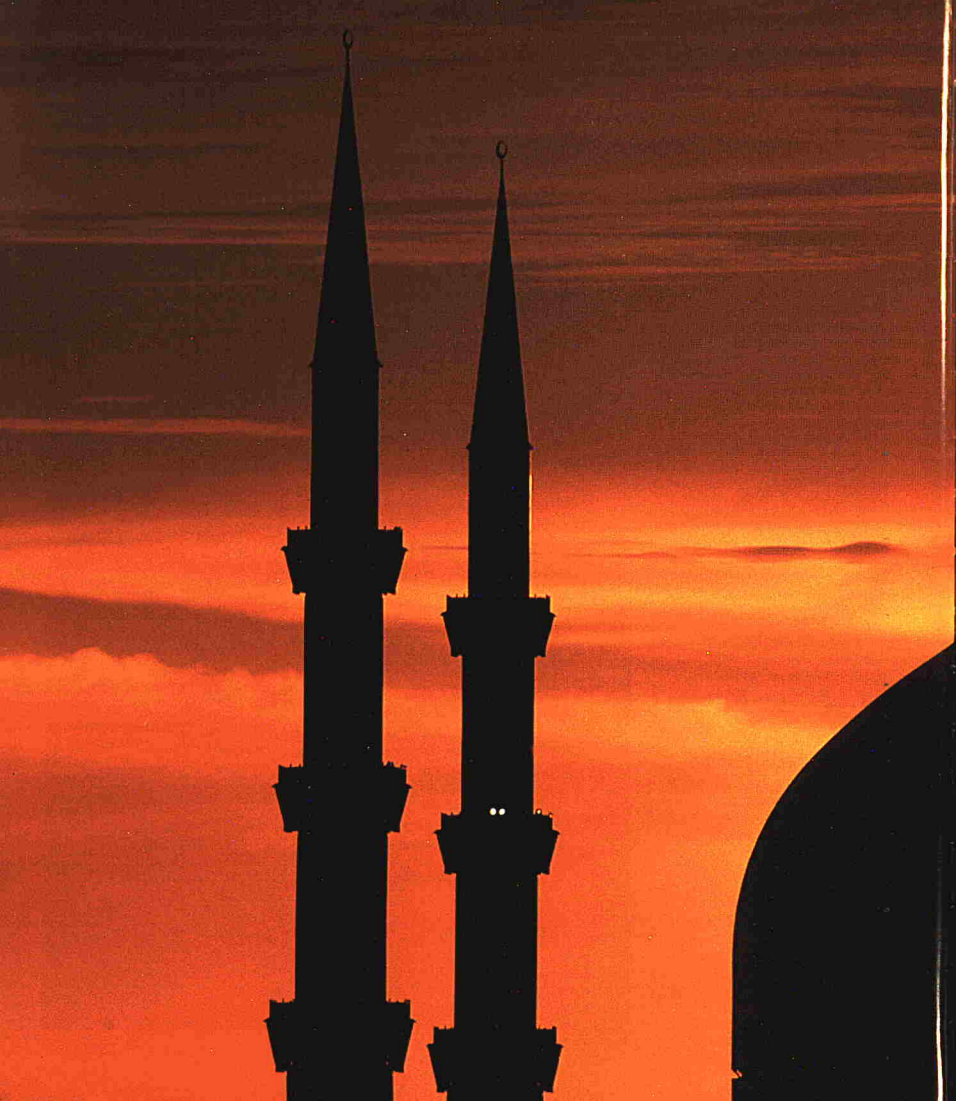


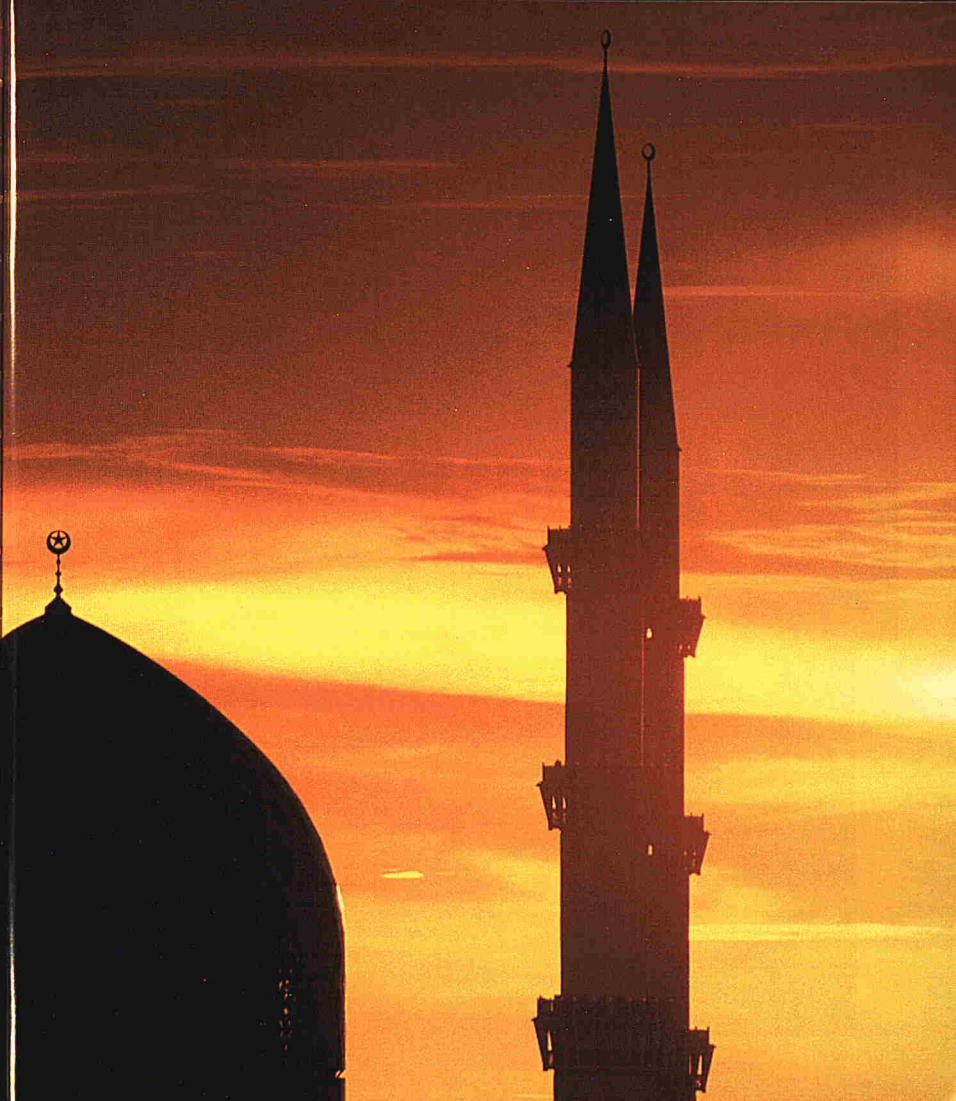


Melaka's Historical Square (opposite and right), encompasses Dutch, Portuguese and British colonial history. The distinctive red Dutch buildings surrounding the square are reminiscent of 17th-century buildings in Rotterdam. The *Stadhuis* (town hall) was the first building erected by the Dutch soon after their victory over the Portuguese in 1641. It was also the residence of the Dutch governor and his deputy. Built over part of the foundations of the original Portuguese fort of *A Famosa*, its massive thick straight walls, heavy beams, big doors and windows, and underground drainage system are all typical Dutch features. Christ Church was built in 1755 to commemorate the centenary of the Dutch occupation of Melaka. It took 12 years to complete, and no expense was spared in its construction. Each wooden ceiling beam was cut from a single tree. Esquisite handmade pews and a frieze of 'The Last Supper' are two of its outstanding features. The British defeated the Dutch in 1795, and added a weathercock atop the bell tower. Formerly a Dutch Reformed church, it was consecrated as an Anglican church.

St Paul's Church and *A Famosa* (opposite bottom) lend compelling evidence to the Portuguese presence and influence in Melaka in the 1500s. During its 500-year existence, St Paul's has been a Catholic chapel, a Dutch church, a burial ground, a fortress as well as a British powder magazine. In 1807, the British East India Company demolished the Portuguese citadel, *A Famosa*, except *Porta de Santiago*, thanks to the timely intervention by Stamford Raffles. Today, *A Famosa*, which helped to keep the Portuguese in power for 130 years, is a lone structure of stones: mortar and Limerick bricks.





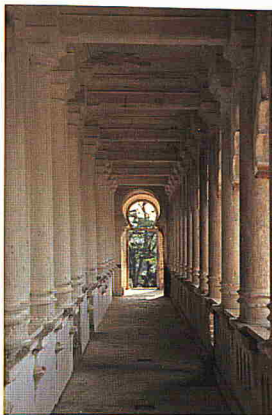




The Shah Alam mosque (previous pages), situated in the state capital of Selangor, can accommodate 16,000 worshippers; it is the largest place of worship for Muslims in Southeast Asia. Surrounded by landscaped gardens, its most outstanding feature is its shimmering blue dome.

The Ipoh railway station (above), a Georgian edifice with a silver dome, arches and colonnades, has a station hotel that is similar to the one in Kuala Lumpur. Commissioned by the British East India Company, it was built by Punjabi soldiers.

The Ipoh Birch Memorial Clocktower (left) is a colonial legacy in commemoration of the death of James W. Birch, the first British Resident who was assassinated for his controversial policies.



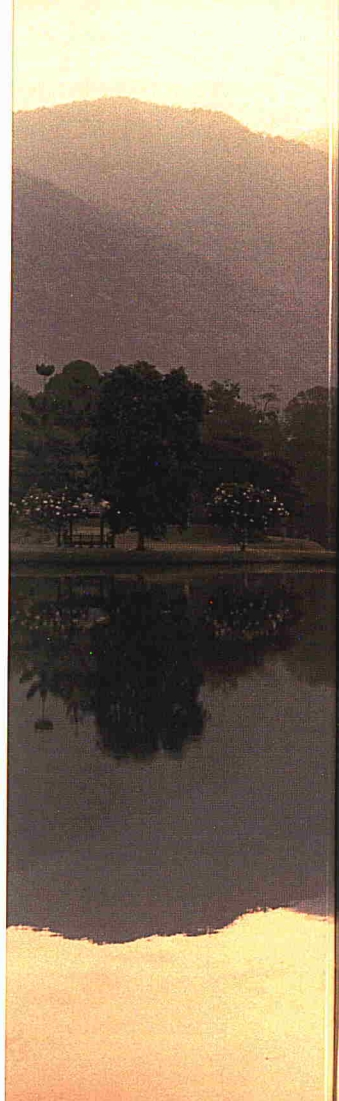
Kellie's Castle (left and below), about half an hour's drive south of Ipoh in the state of Perak, is a must-see attraction. The original owner, a Scottish rubber plantation boss, called William Kellie-Smith, began building the Moorish-style castle in the late 1800s. In the midst of its construction, he went back to England and never returned. Today, the ruins are being slowly renovated.

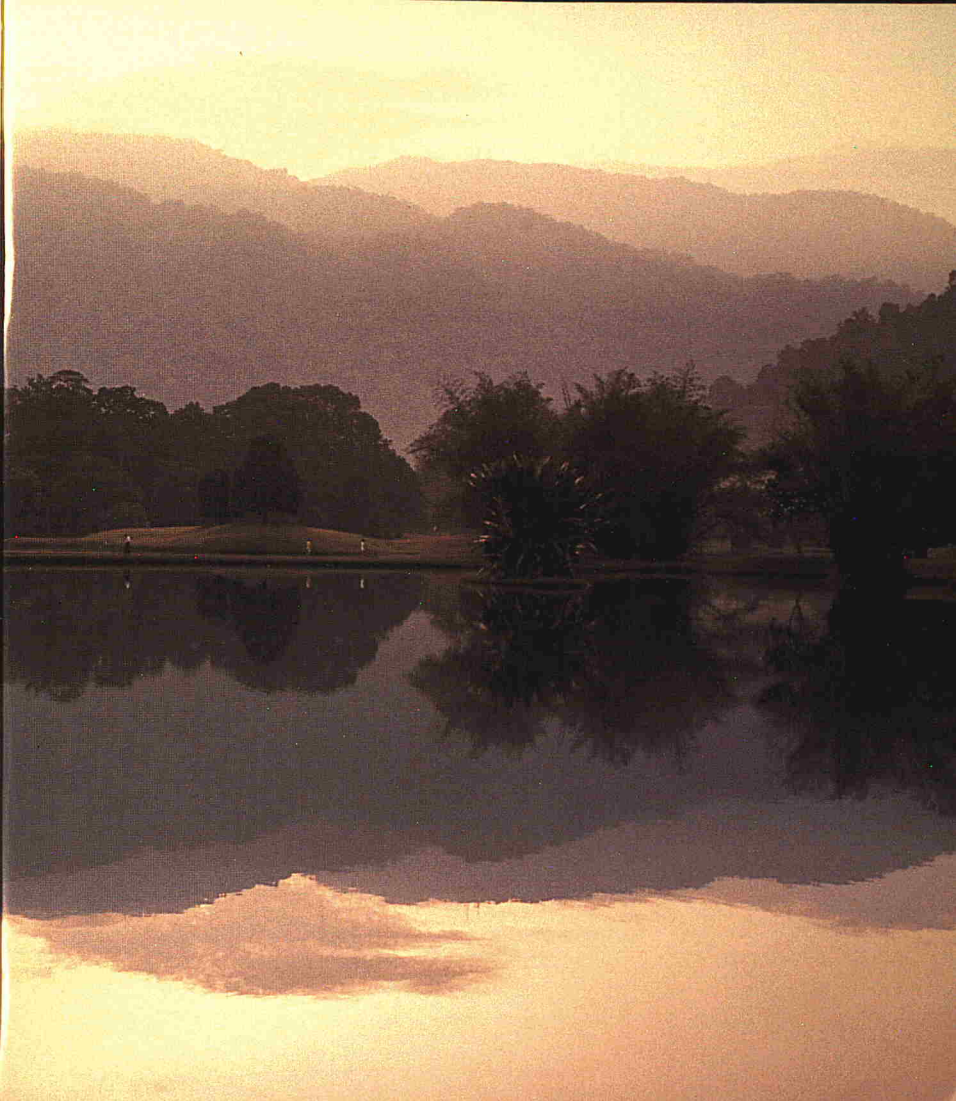




Taiping's Lake Gardens (above and right), 64 hectares (160 acres) of lush green lawns, shrubs and shady rain trees, are a major attraction in this Perak town. The word 'Taiping' means 'eternal peace' in Chinese, and the essential tranquility of the town is, perhaps, best encapsulated in the gardens, which are some of the most beautiful in Malaysia. The area, once an abandoned tin mine, was landscaped in 1890 to create the

gardens and lake. There are now boats for recreation, a nine-hole golf course and the Taipong Zoo. A government resthouse is built in Minangkabau style with Georgian columns, and towards the perimeter of the gardens are the government offices and the colonial town hall. At the foot of the hill is a war cemetery and a prison which was used by the Japanese during the Occupation. It later became a rehabilitation centre for communists during the Emergency.











Masjid Zahir (previous pages) in Alor Setar in Kedah is one of four historically fascinating buildings that surround a large *padang* (field) in the city centre. One of the largest mosques in Malaysia, it is Moorish in design, with numerous arches and columns exuding grandeur and beauty. In the vicinity is the Balai Besar, the site of royal weddings.

Rice, or *padu* fields (above and opposite), are very much part of Kedah's scenic beauty. The state is often referred to as the "rice bowl of Malaysia". As the biggest rice producer, it accounts for more than half of the country's output. Adequate water, good drainage and warm weather are all favourable conditions for 'wet' rice farming, and Kedah has plenty of flat

land and rich clay soils. With the aid of fertilizers, farmers can reap two excellent crops a year. During the early planting stage, seedlings are transferred from the nursery to the field. A sickle-shaped cutting instrument is used for harvesting the rice. After the harvest, the rice is threshed and cleaned before the grains are separated from the husk.



Outdoor night markets (below) with food stalls are very much part of the Malaysian way of life. The food is fresh, varied, tasty and very reasonably priced. Malaysians gather here for the social ambience, and to indulge in what has become an important recreational pastime.

Muslims pray at the Ubudiah Mosque in Kuala Kangsar (opposite), a magnificent building with striking symmetrical domes and minarets. Construction began between 1913 and 1917 during the reign of Sultan Idris Murshidul Alam Shah, the 28th Sultan of Perak. It was interrupted a number of times, including once when two elephants ran over the imported marble floor, before being completed in 1917.

The gateway to Thailand on Peninsular Malaysia's west coast is Perlis (following page), the smallest state in the country. Rice, rubber and sugar are the main crops in this part of Malaysia, which is renowned for its unequalled rural scenery and rolling hills.

A female silvered leaf monkey (*Presbytis cordata*) protectively embraces her young baby (page 160). From bright orange, the baby changes to the dark grey colour of the adult as it matures. Leaf monkeys occur in forested areas throughout Malaysia where they feed on leaves, seeds and flowers. The silvered leaf monkey can be seen best in the early morning and late afternoon when it is most active.



