

23/12/1999

Cultural eye-opener at Ayer Keroh

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IF Bandar Hilir in Malacca town is famous for its architecturally resplendent historical buildings and monuments, Ayer Keroh, about 15 kilometres away, is well-known for its Taman Mini Malaysia and Taman Mini Asean.

Here, a visitor can get to know more about the culture and traditions of the people in the various States of Malaysia as well as those from Asean countries.

It is a perfect spot to enjoy the charms of well-crafted traditional houses as well as to enjoy the fresh air from the nearby virgin forest.

Both taman were officially opened by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on July 17, 1986.

As one enters Taman Mini Malaysia, the first State you visit is Perlis where all its history and culture can be found in the Rumah Perlis. Then follows the other States in the peninsula.

After that comes Sabah and Sarawak and the displays from these two States are very popular with tourists.

Each of the houses is equipped with not only musical instruments but also home appliances and furniture to enable the visitors to understand the cultures and lifestyles of the local people.

Sighboards at the entrance to each house explain the architectural concepts and the origin of the designs.

Besides that, a house representative is around to provide any further explanation needed by the visitors.

The houses of Sabah and Sarawak are particularly interesting.

The Sabah house is made of bamboo and is spacious to provide for a cool and breezy interior.

The Sarawak unit, the rumah panjang, is equally captivating. Made up mainly of bamboo, it is designed to contain several families unlike the Sabah house which is meant for just a single family.

At Taman Mini Asean, the visitor gets to know about the cultures of the people in Asean countries all in one spot.

Like Taman Mini Malaysia, the houses here tell the visitor of the country's culture - with every detail of the house, its architectural designs and motifs brought alive with household items and furniture representative of the country of origin.

Great attention is given to details to depict the lifestyle of the people of Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore and the Philippines. The other new Asean member countries - Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar - are not included in the theme park as it was set up more than 10 years ago.

Perkampungan Thailand, for instance, has houses with large verandahs and an open air court in the centre. Its design is similar to the royal residence in Bangkok.

Next to both taman is the Malacca Zoo where visitors can stroll along the shady pathways to view the animals in their enclosure while opposite the road is the crocodile farm and the Ayer Keroh recreational forest.

With these tourist sites close to each other, many flock to these favourite spots especially during the weekends and public holidays.

For those driving from Kuala Lumpur, the easiest and fastest way is to hit the North-South highway until you see the Ayer Keroh and Malacca signboard.

After paying the toll, drive on and within five minutes, you will see the signboard indicating the location of the taman and other places of attraction.

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