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Coping *with* price hikes

>Here's a cheapskate's guide to still have some fun while battling inflation and the shrinking value of our ringgit

BY ANANSA JACOB

IT'S NO secret that the recent series of subsidy cuts and price hikes have got most people tightening their belts. And with the coming implementation of the GST in April 2015, people are expecting prices to go up even further.

Despite implementing frugal measures like eating out less, not going shopping as often and doing everything else to trim unnecessary spending, we still need to have some fun once in a while.

Luckily, with a little bit of patience and planning, there are quite a number of ways in which you, your family and friends can entertain yourselves on the cheap – or even for free.

► Visit local parks or playgrounds

If you're lucky to live near a public recreation area, there are plenty of activities to be had such as exercising, having a picnic or barbecue, or just enjoying nature in general. You can take the youngsters there, or arrange a weekend with friends.

Within the city limits, one of the most well-known parks is the KLCC Park (*top, right*), which has numerous visitors on weekends and a clear view of the iconic Twin Towers.

Travel out a little further and there is the nature preserve run by the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). For a small fee (from RM5 for adults and RM3 for children), visitors can explore nature trails, enjoy the canopy walk and even camp overnight.

► Watch shows for free online

Back then, you would go to the VCD seller for movies on the cheap (remember those days?). With the rapid growth of IPTV, more people are realising that as long as you have an internet connection, you can gain access to a range of films or TV series.

For local channels, you can catch recordings of your favourite programmes, and even live streaming, on websites such as TonTon.com.my.

There are also other legal, local-based sites where you can catch international films or series, including Maadu.com, which is known for Korean-language content; as well as BentoLive.com and MaxMan.TV.

While many of these sites often have

limited content, you can find a few gems.

Other international sites like CouchTuner.eu have a whole list of top-rated shows,

often uploaded right after they are screened in the US. And don't forget, there's always YouTube.

► Be a bookworm

For bibliophiles, books are the best and most economical form of entertainment.

There are a few public libraries located within the Klang Valley, including within some universities and colleges.

People can also browse through 'reading copies' in shopping mall bookstores like MPH and Borders. There are also quite a few second-hand bookstores, where you can find specialised and out-of-print books.

If you prefer to read the latest books, there are often book sales happening every other month. There are also quite a few book clubs in the city for book-lovers to get together and discuss their favourite books.

And of course, friends can share and exchange books with each other for free.

► Try some new games

Tabletop games have taken off in recent years, with many new board game cafes around the Klang Valley catering for a growing clientele.

Many of these cafes, such as Spartan Games and Meeples, have a substantial catalogue of games available to choose from and will often let you purchase games at a

minor discount.

While some cafes charge hourly rates, most have a fixed price per person. Spartan Games for instance, lets people play games from 5pm to midnight for RM5.

Of course, if you already have your own board games at home, you can just arrange your own game weekend with friends for free.

► Enjoy more local culture

If you think that high art equals high prices, think again. With some research, you can find plenty of ways to enjoy a stage or musical show that won't cost you a fortune.

For example, Central Market often has free cultural performances on weekends or for festive seasons (*above, left*).

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Dewan Filharmonik Petronas also has weekend matinee shows for families with tickets starting from RM20.

Most local theatre productions at venues like klpac, PJ Live Arts and The Actors Studio are also priced affordably, with tickets often starting from RM20.

Plenty of private art galleries are also open to the public, and people are allowed to walk in and browse to their hearts content.

What other activities do you think are affordable and exciting? And what steps are you taking to save money while still being able to have fun? Email lifestyle@thesundaily.com with your suggestions or stories.

