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City of discovery

Many hidden gems to find in our country's capital

By **CHOONG MEK ZHIN**

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AS A city with some 150 years worth of history behind it as well as 40 years of being a Federal Territory at this point, there is certainly plenty to see, learn, taste, touch and experience in Kuala Lumpur.

Today marks the end of the weekly KL on a Shoestring column that documented the team's exploration of the capital city since April.

We have reviewed some well-known tourist attractions, a few lesser known ones and some downright unknown places during this period, all for a budget of RM60 per adventure.

Every time we thought there is nothing else we could check out, something new will always come up through various means and off we go to find out a little bit more about Kuala Lumpur.

Here is a compilation of some of the more memorable trips made by the team for this column.

Hidden hot spring

For a very reasonable fee of RM1, anyone can enter the private grounds of residential apartments built over a hot spring located along a road unsurprisingly named Jalan Air Panas.

Many believe that the water is good for skin diseases, including pimples. One thing we are sure of, it is very good for sore and stiff feet as evidenced by the senior citizens soaking their feet. Although going into the pool is not allowed, dipping is fine.

While not exactly picturesque like other well-known hot spring locations around the globe, this makes the list for being such an unusual find.

Nightly carnival in the heart of the city

Busking is an activity that has been legalised in certain areas by Kuala Lumpur City Hall recently. One of these places is Bukit Bintang and

as a result, the streets come alive at night with entertaining activities such as music performances and magic shows.

Nearby, the famous local food street remains a good place to enjoy a decent meal though one should beware of peddling tactics that may include sweet talk.

City village life

Kampung Baru, which literally means new village, was formed in the early 1900s and gazetted as a Malay Agricultural Settlement.

It features seven villages with distinctive characteristics of their own but all of them have the makings of a typical village, including attap houses on stilts.

Interestingly, a number of old religious houses such as Kampung Baru Masjid Jamek and Tatt Khalsa Diwan Gurdwara, which is touted as the largest Sikh temple in South-East Asia, can also be found here.

Amble along the narrow inner roads and sample some of the local Malay fare, some of which have become household names here in Malaysia.

Green escape

Untouched for the last 80 years, the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) is the country's largest secondary forest.

Though mainly for forestry research, it is probably more well-known among the public as a place to reconnect with nature outside

the hustle and bustle of the city.

There are myriad activities to do here including camping, bird-watching, jungle trekking, picnicking by the waterfall, jogging, cycling and visiting the herbal botanical garden as well as the jewel in the crown, the Canopy Walk.

More than just a famous photo

Batu Caves is one of those places that makes everybody's list

of places to visit while in Kuala Lumpur though technically, it lies just outside the capital's borders. One can read up and find out everything about this spot via a simple online search, but a walk around the grounds and slightly beyond reveals many activities are available too.

This includes something for adrenaline junkies in the form of cliff scaling and base jumping while nature lovers can check out a tour of the Dark Cave that is said to be the home of an animal community of more than 100 million years old as well as the world's rarest trap-door spiders.

Artistic masters

We hear the term "dying craft" so often that it does not really hit us how little we know of the art that makes Malaysia so unique, until we see the masters at work.

Here at the Kuala Lumpur Craft Complex, one can catch live demonstrations of various local crafts or pay a fee to get hands-on experience.

There is a Craft Museum here as well that immortalises the techniques of making traditional local craft and hosts a constantly changing thematic exhibition highlighting local culture.

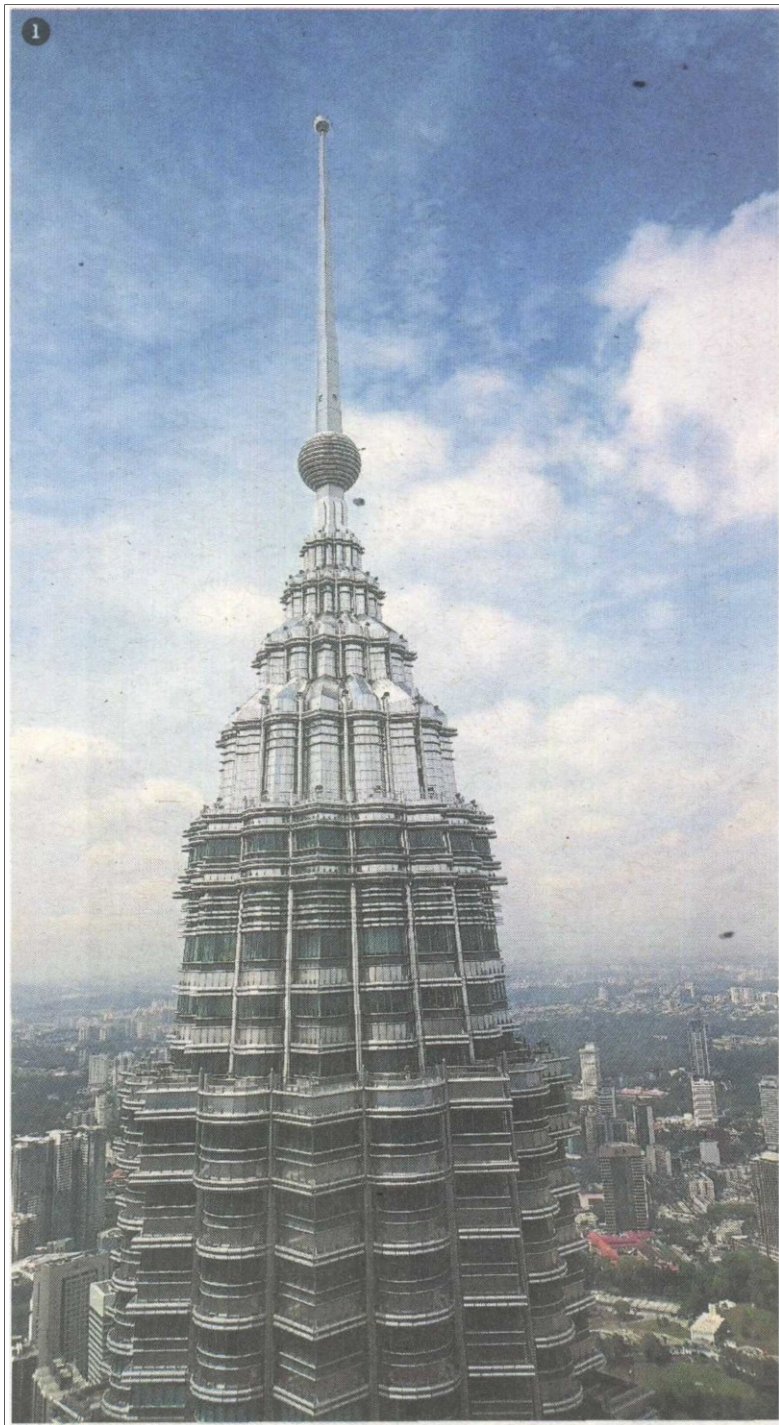
Up in the sky

The Kuala Lumpur skyline would not be distinguishable from many other cosmopolitan capitals of the world if not for the two identical towers in the city called the Petronas Twin Towers.

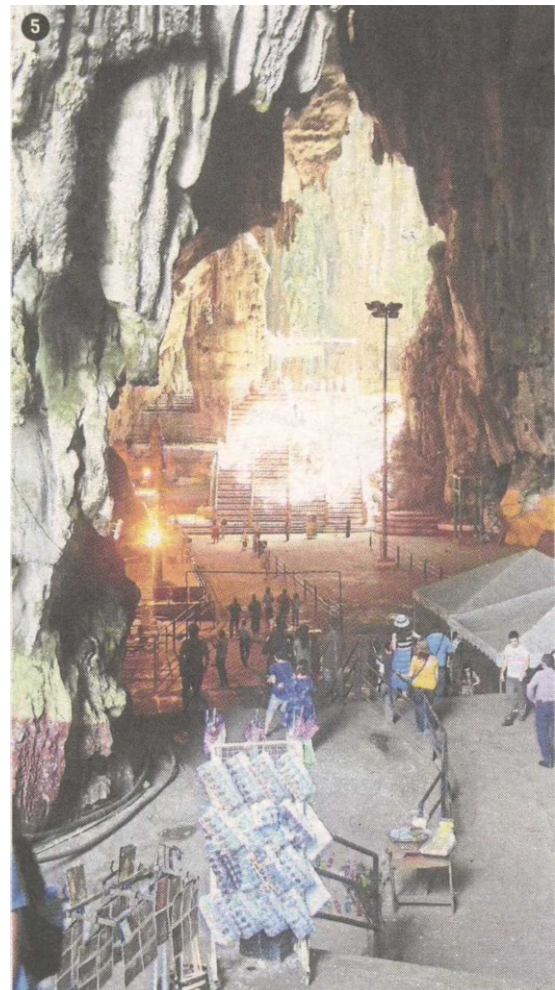
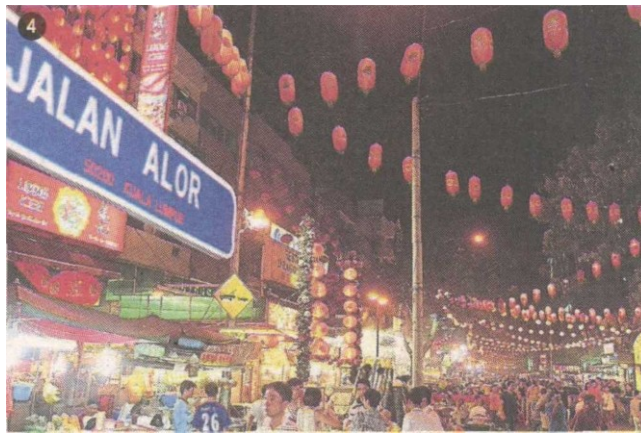
For a Malaysian, the price for a ticket to visit the Observation Deck and the Skybridge, a connecting double-decked bridge between the towers, is reasonable and the experience is fun.

A local would certainly appreciate the view and even try spotting their house through one of the powerful binoculars available.

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- ❶ There is just something irresistible about going up to observation decks of skyscrapers.
- ❷ A stone's throw away from Kuala Lumpur lies the green haven called FRIM that has a Canopy Walk as one of its highlights.
- ❸ Zorollah Silin, who is known as the 'Nose Man', going about his craft at the Kuala Lumpur Craft Complex.
- ❹ The shopping centre of Kuala Lumpur, Bukit Bintang as well as its equally famous neighbour Jalan Alor truly comes alive at night
- ❺ Batu Caves and its 272 steps up to the cave temple.