A MESMERISING TRIP ABOVE THE ALTITUDE

Take a different view of famed Langkawi through its cable cars.

By Vikneswaran Nair

Langkawi, is primarily a laid back destination, with very little in the way of action or adventure opportunities. Perhaps the closest thing to a thrill ride is the Langkawi Cable Car, up to the top of Mount Mat Chincang. Catching a glimpse of Langkawi from bird's eye view is indeed a mesmerising and picturesque sight.

The 20-minute ride is wonderful, not only for the spectacular scenery, but for the eerie silence too. The world falls away in quiet calmness as the carriage ascends 2.2 kilometres up the mountain. It is sheer bliss in the few minutes of the ride. The tranquillity soon gives way to camera clicks as the landscape below blossoms in full view.
Langkawi Cable Car is located on the southwest coast of the main island, a mere 30 minutes drive from Kuah town and only 15 minutes from Langkawi International Airport. It is conveniently located within a themed shopping and lodging centre called Oriental Village at the foot of Mount Mat Chincang.

The journey up the cool mountain side is an experience that you should not miss. You get the feel of an incline of 42 degrees and a breathtaking view of the surrounding green forests, the Telaga Tujuh Waterfall, the sea and part of the 104 islands (according to our guide on the latest count) of the Langkawi Archipelago.

As you approach the Middle Station, you will be able to observe at close range the unique rock formation and geological features formed some 550 million years ago. The journey to the Middle Station is 1,700 metres at 650 metres above sea level. You can then alight from the cable car and walk up to the viewing platform to enjoy a 360 degrees view of the beautiful surroundings.

A VIEW FROM THE TOP
The ride from the Middle Station to the Top Station (450 metres distance and 700 metres above sea level) is another exhilarating experience as you glide slowly over the forested valley below. The unique flora on the ridges and the forested valley between the Middle and Top Stations also offer spectacular view, as your eyes sweep the dramatic scene of Langkawi Islands, the Mainland of Kedah and South Thailand.

At the Top Station too there is a curved suspension bridge that you could walk across a gulley. The strong and cool breeze will vibrate the bridge to give you a chilling experience.

For the more adventurous, just below the first viewing platform is the Mat Chincang Trail which offers a great getaway from the masses suspended in gondolas and a great way to explore the rainforest for a day. For the intrepid few who want to experience nature rather than technological wonders, the Mat Chincang Trail offers the perfect remedy.

The Mat Chincang Forest Reserve peaks at about 800 metres and encompasses more than 4,000 hectares of tropical flora and fauna. The trail slithers alongside a ravine supported by well-maintained cement blocks that hold the solid ground steps in place and descends from windswept mountain top forest to the mighty lowland dipterocarps further below.

It is highly recommend that you take advantage of modern conveniences - ride the cable car up the mountain and enjoy nature without having a heart attack and leisurely walk down to the Oriental Village.

Nonetheless, be caution that even when starting from the top, the trek is still arduous. Take plenty of food as there are no facilities except two covered rest stations at one-third and two-thirds of the way down. Be prepared for rain, scorching sun, insects and nightfall if you start too late. The terrain is moderately steep but the footing is very stable. It is a good hike without any hard climbs, scary jumps or confusing outlets. It is all about gaining solitude in a secluded part of the Langkawi landscape. Keep the pace slow and let time fade away in your hike down.

It is amazing that the cable car was built without constructing any roads through the jungle. All the materials were lifted into place using helicopters. Langkawi Cable Car uses the environmentally friendly photovoltaic (PV) hybrid solar system to power the car above the altitude. Basically, the cable car combines both diesel and solar energy.

On the whole, I will encourage anyone who is visiting Langkawi for the first time to try the cable car. It is probably one of the most exhilarating experiences you will ever have in Langkawi or even in Malaysia.

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