

# Pahang



Occupying the huge Sungai Pahang Basin and bordered to the east by a coastline 209km in length, Pahang is by far the largest state in Peninsular Malaysia. Visitors will be spoiled by Pahang's spectacular natural features. The jungle-swathed island of Pulau Tioman lies embedded in the twinkling waters of the South China Sea, fringed by coral formations and leisurely beaches that support small and highly hospitable island communities. With its languid tempo, the island is a convincing enough argument to make an immediate beeline to its shores. Pahang is also home to the colossal and primordial national park of Taman Negara, which lays claim to some of Peninsular Malaysia's largest tracts of virgin jungle. Ambitious trekkers can come face to face with its rich and timeless biodiversity and even keep an eye out for the local Bigfoot, a woolly blur occasionally spotted moving at velocity through the foliage.

Nearby Kenong Rimba State Park may be Taman Negara's less-visited cousin, but it's more manageable. The park is often reached via the charming and easy-going town of Kuala Lipis, studded with colonial-era architecture, laced with diverting walks and distinctly Chinese in flavour. It deserves a special mention for its museums, shophouses, stately quarters and *kampung* (village) houses while the capital, Kuantan, sees travellers passing through to the pleasant beach at Teluk Chempedak outside town. Further north, travellers naturally hit the buffers at Cherating – a small beach community where time stands still - intoxicated by its sea views and seduced into long stays by a resourceful convergence of restaurants, bars, beachfront chalets and welcoming folk.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Chugging across the South China Sea to beach-fringed **Pulau Tioman** (p265) for its unique blend of diving, jungle trekking and duty-free beer
- Exploring the mighty and primordial **Taman Negara** (p285), one of the world's most ancient rainforests
- Dropping your backpack in seaside **Cherating** (p280) and comprehending the true meaning of inactivity
- Submitting to the unhurried charms of **Pekan** (p274), where *kampung* (village) life and royal extravagance make a delightful rendezvous
- Promenading and dining at **Teluk Chempedak** (p279), Kuantan's signature beach
- Touring the colonial legacy of riverine **Kuala Lipis** (p293), a pleasant, hilly town perched within reach of **Kenong Rimba State Park** (p295)

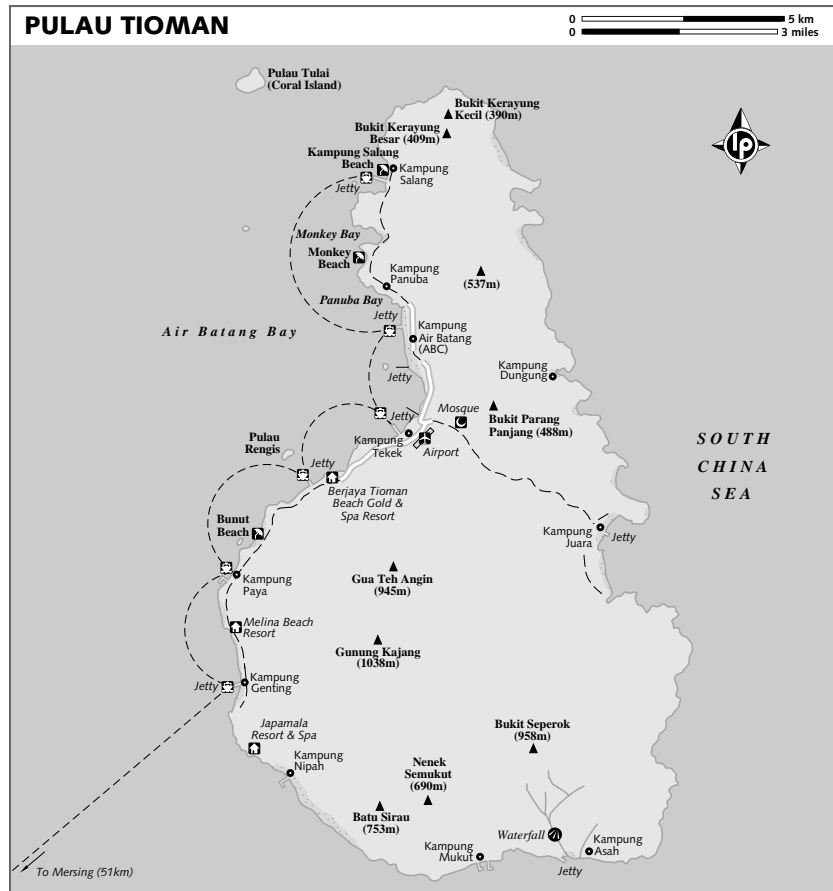


■ TELEPHONE CODE: 09

■ POPULATION: 1.26 MILLION

■ AREA: 35,964 SQ KM





surged to the island ever since, seeking a taste of paradise (and an all-over tan).

To bring you up to date: an airport materialised (sandwiched between vertiginous mountains and the sea), a further airstrip to be built on reclaimed land is planned, express (including speedboat) ferry services to the mainland multiplied, a rough road was built to Juara on the east coast, dive schools have flourished, the internet appeared in the late 1990s, a controversial RM40 million marina was under construction in Tekek at the time of writing (where up to 36 yachts will be able to dock) and the island has emerged as a duty-free zone with beers less than half the price of cans on the peninsula. With the price of alcohol

in Malaysia being what it is, this last attraction can only add to the island's winning portfolio.

It comes as no surprise, then, that Tioman today is geared almost entirely to tourism. This may have flawed the island's perfection, but it hasn't dented the unflagging friendliness of the locals – wherever you go on Tioman, you are met with warmth and chirpy hospitality. The permanent population is small, with just a handful of small *kampung* (villages) dotted around the coast; the mountainous jungle of the interior is home only to monkeys and other wildlife (and the occasional honking of 4WDs).

Visitors outnumber villagers outside the monsoon (November to February), and at

certain times of the year (usually July and August) Tioman can get quite crowded, especially in Kampung Air Batang and Salang. During the summer crush, parts of the island have litter problems (but increasing numbers of rubbish bins are sorting this out) and sandflies can be endemic at many of the island's beaches.

At other times, especially during the monsoon, Tioman can be virtually deserted. Boat travel is interrupted during bad monsoon weather (especially during November and December) and some resorts shut up shop, but rainy days are interspersed with sunshine and calm seas, in particular during the low monsoon (January and February), when it may not rain for weeks. If you're not on a frantic agenda and a day or two either in Mersing (p255) or marooned on Tioman is not a problem, this can be an ideal time to visit.

A fascinating array of fauna and flora flourishes on Tioman, and the underwater world around the island remains largely intact, offering some of the best diving and snorkelling in Malaysia. To delve deeper into local history, pick up a copy of *Call of the Dragon: A History of Tioman Island* (Dr Tarek Amin and Karen K Gustafson; RM37), available at the Featherlight Cafe in the airport building, in Tekek.

Bear in mind that everything stocked in shops on Tioman is shipped over from the mainland and tends to be expensive (except beer and tobacco), so stock up on essentials, such as mosquito repellent containing DEET, before you arrive.

## Orientation

The bulbous southern end of the island is wilder and more mountainous than the narrow northern end. A short stretch of road runs along the western side of the island from Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort to the northern end of Tekek, where it is interrupted by steps before continuing as a path to the end of Kampung Air Batang. A half-built road through the jungle links Tekek with the dozy east coast idyll of Juara. Being incomplete, only 4WD vehicles can make the trip, so Juara's isolated personality remains intact.

Tekek is the island's largest village, and its administrative centre. The airport is here, as well as well-stocked shops and

some pleasant restaurants, but the beach is average. At the time of writing, the construction of a huge marina was creating a vast lesion south of the main jetty, forcing the closure of a couple of guesthouses.

An easy walk to the north of Tekek, just over the headland, is Air Batang, commonly known as ABC. Juara on the east coast is far quieter and less developed than most beaches on the west coast. Nipah and Mukut are tranquil and secluded spots on the southwestern shore and perfect if you really want to get away from it all. The beaches are superb, with good snorkelling.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS

You can get online at a few resorts and guesthouses (noted in reviews where access is available); alternatively, Tekek has a few internet cafés. Featherlight Cafe, in the airport building, offers internet telephone service.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

Poliklinik Komuniti Tekek (☎ 419 1880)

### MONEY

It is advisable to cash your cheques in Mersing before coming to Tioman, although travellers cheques can be cashed at the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort. There is a moneychanger in the airport building, but rates are poor.

Bank Simpanan Nasional (Tekek) Has an ATM (open from 6am to midnight) that takes Visa and MasterCard.

### POST

There's a small post office not far north of the Babura Seaview Resort in Tekek.

### TELEPHONE & FAX

There are numerous public phones at Tekek, ABC and Salang, but many are in disrepair. Only Telekom cards can be used for calls, on sale at shops around the island. Featherlight Cafe (Airport Bldg, Tekek) Offers internet telephone service.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

Tioman Information Centre (Tekek; 11 9am-noon & 3-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, closed 1 Nov-28 Feb) North of the jetty. Arranges ticketing, round-island trips, island-hopping and trekking.

## Sights & Activities

### DIVING & SNORKELLING

Snorkelling equipment for hire is easy to find and a growing, competitive band of centres offer scuba diving and PADI courses (credit cards accepted at most). Note that some dive schools shut during the monsoon season.

At fully-equipped **B&J** (☎ 419 5555; www.dive.tioman.com), which has a diving pool in ABC, PADI open-water courses cost RM750, and two dives with/without equipment rental cost RM160/130; night dives are also offered. For technical divers, B&J also conducts dives to the famous WWII wrecks of HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales*. At DiveAsia (☎ 419 1654; www.diveasia.com.my), four-day PADI open-water courses (RM750), two-day advanced open-water courses (RM525), and professional courses and adventure dives (including dives to *HMS Repulse*) are available; in Salang, Tekek and ABC. Eco-Divers (☎ 419 1250; www.eco-divers.net), in ABC, offers a range of courses from introductory three-hour courses (RM180) to PADI three- to four-day open-water courses (RM800) and leisure dives for experienced divers.

**Tioman Reef Divers** (☎ 419 1342; www.tiomanreefdivers.com, Babura Seaview Resort, Tekek) offers NAUI and PADI certification courses. On the east coast of Tioman, **Sunrise Dive Centre** (☎ 419 3102; www.sunrisedivecentre.com), in Juara, offers a popular range of courses including three- to four-day open-water (RM750) diving courses.

There is good snorkelling off the rocky points on the west coast of the island, particularly those just north of ABC, but the best snorkelling is around nearby Pulau Tulai, better known as Coral Island. The sea, however, can be very rough during the high monsoon season (November and December). Masks and snorkels (per day typically RM10) can be hired at many places around the island.

For information about other dive sites and advice for safe and responsible diving, see p484. Other activities on Tioman include the increasingly popular rock climbing; travellers can ask for more information at Sunrise Dive Centre.

### CROSS-ISLAND WALK

Despite signs of construction of the Tekek–Juara road, this is a breathtaking walk (around 7km), trailing across the island's

waist from Tekek to Juara. While not too strenuous, parts of the walk are steep, and hiking in tropical heat can be taxing. Carry plenty of water.

The walk starts about 1km north of the main jetty in Tekek (or 200m south of the second jetty) where a sign says 'Trek ke Kg. Juara 7km'. Follow the concrete path, passing the mosque on your left, and then veer right onto the boulder path, leaving the concrete road as it enters a modern compound on your left. The boulder steps continue intermittently for most of the way to the top. Crossing streams, dissolving into mud, and obscured by roots and stones, the trail can be difficult to discern, so follow the power lines overhead. Near the top of the hill, you pass a small waterfall. The jungle is awesome, with vast trees, creepers, monkeys, squirrels, butterflies, spiders and much more. About an hour beyond the waterfall, the trail levels off before becoming a concrete path that drops steeply into Juara.

The walk takes from 1½ to three hours. A car back from Juara will cost around RM70, otherwise you will either have to walk back or be at the mercy of the sporadic ferry service that links Juara with Salang, ABC and Tekek (no service during the monsoon season). If walking back to Tekek, it's not hard to find a motorcyclist willing to take you to the end of the concrete path from Juara for around RM10 (saving you the punishing uphill slog). If returning or setting out on foot, don't enter the jungle after around 4.30pm, as you can get lost in the dark. (It may be bright on the beach, but it is much darker in the jungle.) During the monsoon season, the path can be very slippery, so wear shoes with a good grip.

### OTHER WALKS

Much of the west coast is open to walking, but trails can be difficult to follow and are often very overgrown during the slack season; again, take water.

The walk south from Tekek to Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort is an easy 30 minutes, either by the road or by rock-hopping around the headland at low tide. From there you can walk through the golf course. Just before the telecommunications tower is a trail to the deserted beach of Bunut. From the end of the beach, the

occasionally faint trail continues over the headland to Paya, from where you can walk south to Genting – the trail is easy to follow and there are houses along the way where you can ask directions.

From Mukut in the south of the island (reached by boat from Genting), a popular trek leads to the waterfalls near Asah.

Heading north from Tekek, you can walk all the way to ABC, and climb up to Bamboo Hill Chalets at the northern end of the bay for a further 10-minute hike over the next headland to Panuba Bay. From there it's another 40 minutes through the rain-forest to Monkey Beach, before the trail continues from the far end of the beach across the next headland to the white-sand beach at Monkey Bay. At the end of this beach the trail starts the long, steep climb over the headland to Salang. The trail is not well marked here and should not be attempted during the monsoon season (the trail can be overgrown). The walk from ABC to Salang takes about three hours and is a fairly strenuous undertaking.

Boat transport to the beaches can be arranged at most of the guesthouses in ABC or Salang, if you don't want to walk back.

## Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

Accommodation on Tioman is largely strung out on the easier-to-reach west coast, shared between the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort, Kampung Tekek, Kampung Air Batang and Kampung Salang and to a lesser degree, Kampung Paya, Kampung Genting and the Japamala Resort and Spa. All of the above are serviced by ferries from Mersing. Juara, a quiet beach community flung out on the east coast, offers the enviable combination of cheap accommodation, relative seclusion and gorgeous scenery. A few secluded chalet options also exist on the south coast.

The island is inundated with arrivals from June to August and during the Chinese New Year, and accommodation becomes tight. For the rest of the year, it's more of a buyer's market and during the monsoon the island is almost deserted. You can generally find accommodation from January to February, although some places (especially the pricier options) shut up or undergo repairs for the entire monsoon season (November to February).

Budget accommodation largely comprises small, cramped wooden chalets and longhouse rooms, typically with a shower room, fan and a mosquito net. Air-con rooms with hot showers are more expensive. Most operations have larger family rooms for those with children, and many have restaurants.

Ramshackle bars operate in Tekek, ABC, Salang and Juara, although they may shut up shop for the monsoon. You will trip over the duty-free shops in Tekek.

### BERJAYA TIOMAN BEACH, GOLF & SPA RESORT

**Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort** (☎ 419 1000; www.berjayaresorts.com; d RM400, standard/seafacing chalets RM550/650, ste RM750-1000, with breakfast; a s ) The only international-class hotel on the island, this has a vast number of rooms, ranging from chalets to blocks of fully furnished suites to entire villas. Most rooms are chalet-style with air-con, in-house movies and minibar but the facilities and activities are the standout attractions. These include a golf course, tennis courts, a dive centre, a football pitch, children's playground, donkey rides, amusement arcade, a delightful strip of beach, two swimming pools, four restaurants and a beach bar. Up to 50% discounts apply during slack months in the monsoon season (November to February).

### TEKEK

If Tioman has a hub, this is it. The beach is OK here, the water azure and the sheer greenery of the hills astonishing, but plastic bottles and refuse lie about unchecked (despite all the 'Do Not Litter' signs) and the sight of the two jetties – around 800m apart – is an inescapable twin eyesore. The shore gets patchy and rocky at the north end of Tekek beach, but is pleasant in the vicinity of the Babura Seaview Resort.

Accommodation options – dwindling in number as construction of the new marina robs some of the land – are less appealing than other, less commercialised parts of the island, but flights arrive and depart from here, community facilities (including a post office and a police station) are more developed, it's handily located for walks north, south and east, and there are duty-free shops as well as some good restaurants.

All accommodation options lie south of the jetty; north of the jetty, Tekek fizzles out into dilapidated *kampung* shacks.

**Sri Tioman Beach Resort** (☎ 419 1189; d RM40-80; a ) Pleasantly plonked amid the palm trees, the perfectly comfortable chalets here sit in rows on the beach. Sea views are choice – for Tekek, anyway – beyond the intrusive spectacle of the disused jetty.

**Samudra Swiss Cottage Resort** (☎ 419 1642; longhouse d RM65, chalets RM70-88, bungalows RM98) Just beyond the Babura Seaview Resort, this place has decent, clean and spacious rooms and a good beach. Double rooms are connected to the main building while most bungalows are semidetached. Most chalets face the sea and have a balcony. All rooms have fans.

**Coral Reef Holidays** (☎ 419 1868; garden/sea-view d RM60/80) The chalets are a bit shabby at this place down by the beach, but beds are clean. The attached East Divers Tioman (www.eastdivers.com) can sort out diving and snorkelling expeditions; call ☎ 012-908 5145.

**Babura Seaview Resort** (☎ 419 1139; d RM60-88, chalets RM140, sea-view d RM170, with breakfast; a ) This efficient, resort-style complex, 900m south of the jetty at the end of the beach, has a tidy and pleasant section of beach, a spacious open-air restaurant/bar overlooking the sea, and clean accommodation, including brick-built rooms (with balcony) enjoying fine sea views. The dive shop Tioman Reef Divers is located here. The Babura Seaview Chinese Restaurant here has a decent menu (meals RM25) and a choice of chilled, bottled beers (including Hoegaarden).

**Persona Island Resort** (☎ 419 1213; tw/tr RM60/70, sea-view d RM90; a ) All 24 adequate rooms here come with shower (cold), but the resort is, sadly, off the beach.

**Shady's Bakery** (h 10am-7pm) Bakes take-away pizza (RM6 to RM15), ready in 10 minutes, doughnuts and fresh, tasty bread rolls; on the corner near the police station, south of the southernmost jetty.

**Kontiki Café** (meals RM10; h 7pm-midnight) A rudimentary wood-assembled bar north of the Babura Seaview Resort, serving up chips (RM4), crispy fried chicken (RM7.50), Guinness (RM5.50), and Heineken (RM5).

**Chinese Sarang Seafood** (☎ 013-706 6484; meals RM20; h lunch & dinner) Not far from the Babura

Seaview Resort, this spot does a particularly tasty sizzling hotplate bean curd (RM8) and serves up beer.

**Liza** (meals RM20; h noon-11pm) This popular joint serves up Malay and Western food just south of the police station.

#### AIR BATANG (ABC)

ABC, one of Tioman's main traveller outposts and a pleasant base, is 2.5km north of Tekek jetty. The beach is average, with lumps of dead brain coral stranded on the sand, and huge 6ft monitor lizards sniffing through the garbage bins, but accommodation options are generally good.

**Johan's Resort** (☎ 419 1359; dm/chalets/tr/d/f RM10/25/70/100/120; a ) With rooms arranged in tiers up the hillside, and two five-bed dorms, this well-laid-out place beyond the South Pacific has chalets on the beach and a restaurant, with barbecues sizzling through the evening, overlooking the sea.

**South Pacific** (☎ 419 1176; chalets RM15-30) Run by an effusive owner and just north of the jetty, this simple, cheap and clean place offers laundry and boat services, shows films in the evening, and has a restaurant and a small library of second-hand books. The pricier chalets are by the sea and all come with shower and mosquito net.

**YP Chalets** (☎ 419 1018; chalets RM15-50; a ) Simple chalet arrangement north of My Friend's Place, with air-con rooms at the rear, where the jungle rears up. Batik courses offered (two- to three-hour batik painting session RM65).

**Mawar Beach Chalets** (☎ 419 1153; chalets RM25) Just south of the jetty. A well-tended place with a restaurant (tables on the sand), clean chalets with fan, shower room and mosquito net.

**Nazri's II** (☎ 419 1375; d RM25-80, tw RM50; a ) The green-fingered owner has cultivated a pleasant atmosphere at this outfit, towards the north end of ABC. Its Hijau restaurant (Chinese, Western, Malay menu) is poised above the palm fronds, and there are 15 chalets up the hillside (air-con doubles are large with spacious verandas), sea views and a handy beachfront café-bar at the front. Air-con rooms all come with hot shower.

**Nazri's Place** (☎ 419 1329; www.nazrisplace.com; d RM60-180, f RM200; a i ) Next to an overgrown football pitch south of the jetty and the first place you hit walking north from

Tekek, Nazri's is a well-tended spot. It has clean rooms and a wide range of accommodation, from budget rooms with air-con (cross a small river to the cheapies at the rear), deluxe rooms and family rooms in the brick units. The beach is good, and there's bike hire (per hour RM5) and a scenic restaurant overlooking the beach.

**ABC Bungalows** (☎ 419 1154; d chalets RM35-120, tr chalets RM55; a ) Tucked away here at the north end of ABC, swing on a hammock overlooking the sea and a lovely section of the beach. With a couple of chalets almost on the beach, accommodation is spread over pleasant, well-tended grounds. Marked by a huge durian tree, a decent beachfront restaurant out the front rounds it off. The large, pricier air-con chalets come with hot water, sea views, hot shower, freezer and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

**Bamboo Hill Chalets** (☎ 419 1339; chalets RM70-120; i ) Open from March to October only, this is perched on rocks overlooking the sea at the northern end of the beach. Six well-kept chalets are in a stupendous location surrounded by vegetation and alongside a waterfall and pool. They are almost always full, so call ahead. There's no air-con, but the location benefits from cooling sea breezes. Visa and MasterCard accepted.

**My Friend's Place** (☎ 419 1150; r around RM20) An attractive and quiet garden setting (all rooms garden-facing) north of Nazri's Place makes this a popular choice. There's snorkel hire and laundry (per kg RM6) service, and boat services to other island haunts.

**Ari's Café** (beer RM4) Near the jetty in between Tekek and ABC, Ari's advertises itself as being open all night, with a menu of fried fish, chicken and rice.

**Hallo Café** (h 5pm till late) Small beachfront watering hole with music and a 5pm to 7pm happy hour (three beers RM10). It's north of the jetty in front of Nazri's II.

**ABC Restaurant** (meals RM10; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) At bungalows of the same name, this is at the north end of ABC. Serves breakfast, omelettes, seafood, sandwiches and barbecues.

#### KAMPUNG PANUBA

**Panuba Inn Resort** (☎ 419 1424; www.panubainn.com; d RM68-130, tr/f RM115/160, with breakfast; a ) Over the headland from ABC, the peaceful Panuba Inn has a pier and restaurant and

30 chalets built on a hill overlooking the bay. Rooms all face the sea, ranging from simple fan chalets (RM45) to chalets with hot shower, air-con, fridge, TV and coffee and tea making facilities.

#### SALANG

The small bay at Salang, 3km to the north of Panuba, has an attractive beach (not good for swimming, however), good accommodation, dive shops, restaurants and bars. It's a popular location, although perhaps past its prime. About 700m long, the bay gets rocky north of the jetty, where it becomes scrappy, with junk lodged in the rocks. The best sand is just south of the jetty but it's a bit shallow for swimming.

**Ella's Place** (☎ 419 5004; d RM30-80, tr RM40; a ) At the northern terminus, this simple and clean place – run by Ella – is virtually up against the buffers at the rocky extremity of the bay. There are 10 chalets and a small café.

**Salang Beach Resort** (☎ 419 5015; d RM40-110, q RM145-170; a ) Has wooden chalets with verandas, the more expensive of which face the sea. There's a restaurant, and pricier quads come with TV.

**Pak Long Island Chalet** (☎ 419 5000; enquiry@paklongislandchalet.com.my; chalets/deluxe chalets/q RM45/130/180; a i ) South of the jetty and over the bridge, this friendly and sprawling place has a restaurant and internet access (30 minutes for RM5) and is a nice setting for families.

**Salang Indah Resort** (☎ 419 5015; www.salangindah.com; d/longhouse tw RM30/60, chalets hillside/sea-view RM80/90, q RM120; a i ) Sprawling north of the jetty, this resort acts as a hub of sorts, with a large sea-facing restaurant with pristine sea views, beefburgers, cheeseburgers and more. There's also a bar, shop and slow internet access (per hour RM8). Sea-view chalets are right over the sea.

**Zaid's Place** (☎ 419 5020; chalets RM60-150, sea-view chalets RM80-200, q RM180; a ) Also south of the jetty, this popular place – down by the beach and backing onto Sungai Salang – has an attractive garden and a restaurant. A further crop of chalets (RM60 to RM120) up the hillside to the south, with lovely views of the bay, belongs to the same operation.

**Khalid's Place** (☎ 419 5317; salangpusaka@yahoo.com; chalets RM45-75, tr/q/f RM150/120/250; a ) South of the jetty, behind the Salang Complex

and across a festering section of Sungai Salang, this place has 47 cleanish chalets set in a large grassy area. Accommodation is set back from the beach; air-con chalets come with fridge and hot shower.

**Aina's Bakery** (Salang Complex; 𠄎 lunch & dinner) Serves pizza (RM15 to RM25), sandwiches and the like.

A few bars and cafés inject vitality into the community; both **Sunset Boulevard** and the **Four S Cafe** (Tiger beer RM5, Guinness RM6; 𠄎 6pm-1am) are north of the jetty (the latter also serves a choice of cocktails). The small and funky **BB Café** goes for the driftwood look, perched up on the rocks at the southern tip of the beach.

## JUARA

Juara is the sole place to stay on the east coast of the island and perhaps the most picturesque spot on Tioman. The beach is excellent and this is a place for serious relaxation, since there is little to do except swim and laze away the day under the towering coconut trees. Despite the semi-completion of the Tekek-Juara road, traffic (all 4WD) has not built up and the gorgeous seclusion survives along with increased accessibility. The beautiful bay at Juara curves away in a lengthy sweep, so accommodation options are quite spaced out.

**Paradise Point** (% 419 3145; small chalets/q RM25/35) Pleasantly located about 150m north of the jetty with a small number of simple, neatly laid out chalets and a beachside restaurant.

**Juara Mutiara Resort** (% 419 3159; chalets RM25-60; a ) South of the jetty, this is a tidy, well-arranged place with rows of neat double chalets with wooden sun beds out the front.

**Mizani's Place** (% 419 3157; chalets RM30) On the far side of the headland bisecting the beach south of the jetty, Mizani's enjoys great seclusion with rather dilapidated beachfront chalets.

**Mañana Chalets** (% 419 3278; d RM40) Under construction at the time of writing, with simple A-frames (air-con rooms in the pipeline).

**Bushman** (% 419 3109; matbushman@hotmail.com; small/large chalets RM40/50) The simple, unpretentious Bushman is right next to Rainbow Chalets and has a small café (with a library), small dive centre, a couple of chalets in an excellent spot on a deep stretch of beach

and a friendly owner. The large chalet can sleep four.

**Juara Lagoon** (% 419 3153; chalets & longhouse q RM100; s ) At the very far end of the bay, the Juara (closed October to February) enjoys sensational views of the entire sweep of the bay. Popular with school groups, there's a large restaurant, a pool table, a small dipping pool, very clean chalets and longhouse quad rooms (each with showers and two loos).

**Rainbow Chalets** (% 419 3140; d RM30, tr & q RM40) Seven brightly painted beachfront chalets (all with shower) just before the rocky promontory and on the other side of the overgrown football pitch; great secluded location.

**River View Place** (% 419 3168; d RM150) At the north end of the bay and run by John (from Canterbury), this choice place enjoys a superb location backing onto the crystal-clear river as it threads to the sea. On top of gorgeous views and a great piece of beach, room prices (not fixed at the time of writing) include drinks. There's a restaurant with buffet-style meals.

**Kak Long Corner** (𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Clean Kak Long at the jetty has staples: *roti canai* (flaky, flat bread; RM1) and egg on toast (RM1.40).

**Sunrise Café** (𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) South of the jetty, this treats all comers with breakfasts (RM4) of bread, Dutch cheese and coffee; fresh seafood dinners are available on request. A large library caters to bookworms, and the Sunrise Dive Centre (% 419 3102) is here.

**Bushman Café** (can of beer RM4; 𠄎 8am-4pm & 7pm-late) Sitting alongside Rainbow Chalets, this is the place for a drink and a slice of seclusion.

## KAMPUNG PAYA

A few kilometres south of the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort, the beach at Kampung Paya is one of the first stops on the ferry from Mersing.

**Paya Resort** (% in Mersing 07-799 1432; www.paya.beach.com; dm RM40, d/f chalets RM180/420, with breakfast; a s ) Open February to October, this has clean and serviceable chalets (with sea view and hot shower), tidy Paya Lodge air-con four-bed dorm rooms (with attached shower), and a restaurant, spa, dive centre, lounge and a range of activities.

## GENTING

Popular with Malaysians and Singaporeans – perhaps because of the eponymous Genting Highlands that draw similar crowds – Genting has a rather poor beach and an absence of charm or any real seclusion.

**Sun Beach Resort** (% 419 7069; www.sunbeach.resort.com.my; tw RM50-90, tr RM 70-100, f RM90-110; a ) Provides OK chalet accommodation, with some beachfront.

**Genting Bayu Chalets** (d RM78-98, f RM175; a ) Has an OK range of chalet accommodation (all with hot water), a beach café, a restaurant and a pleasant enough ambience.

## JAPAMALA RESORT & SPA

**Japamala Resort & Spa** (% 419 6001; www.japamala.resorts.com; tree-top chalets RM335-480, sea-cliff chalets RM385-660, with breakfast; a s ) South of Genting, this stylish resort has its own jetty, a lovely array of accommodation, fine restaurant and beach barbecues. Prices fluctuate depending on the time of the year. To reach the resort, take the Mersing ferry to either Genting (RM15) or Tekek (RM30) and the resort boat will pick you up (phone ahead).

## NIPAH

**Nipah Beach Chalet** Apart from a couple of longhouse blocks that are open only during the holiday periods, there's only this place to stay at this secluded spot on the southwest coast. It's a lovely retreat with simple wooden chalets and a small restaurant.

## MUKUT

On the southern tip of Tioman, Mukut is another secluded and tranquil spot with a lovely beach.

**Mukut Coral Resort** (% 07-799 2535/2612; r/chalets RM25/88; a ) Traditional village-style chalets (all with air-con and hot water, some with TV) set in a marvellous location. The resort has a sea-view restaurant serving Chinese and Western food.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Berjaya Air** (% on Tioman 419 1303, in KL 03-7846 8228, in Singapore 02-6481 6302), with offices at Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort and at the airstrip, has one daily flight to/from KL (RM225) and Singapore (RM290) from the airport (% 419 1309) at Tekek.

## BOAT

Mersing in Johor is the main access port for Tioman. Several companies run boat services to the island. Departure times vary with the tide, with the first ferry leaving in the morning and the last mid-afternoon. From Mersing, ferries (one way RM35, two to three hours) leave from the main jetty and stop at Genting, Paya, Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort, Tekek, ABC and Salang, in that order, picking up from those jetties in the reverse order on the return trip. Decide where you want to get off and tell the ticket inspector. Purchase tickets from one of the many tour operators around Mersing or in the R&R Plaza (you can also buy tickets at the jetty just before departure if there are spare seats). For the return trip from Tioman, ask at the place you're staying for the next day's sailing times. There is a car park at the jetty in Mersing where you can leave your vehicle (per day RM7.50).

Several speedboat companies also operate from the same jetty in Mersing for Tioman (one way RM45, 90 minutes), departing several times a day. Buy tickets from agents in Mersing or as you board in Tioman. Boat departures during the monsoon season (November to February) can be erratic (and dangerous), although sailings become more regular during the low monsoon months (January and February).

Ferries also depart for Tioman from the **Tanjung Gemok ferry terminal** (% 413 1997; adult/child one way RM35/70), 35km north of Mersing (see Endau, p274). Boats depart Tanjung Gemok at 9am, noon and 4pm, returning from Tioman at 10am, noon and 4pm. This route is useful if coming from the north and is faster, taking only 1½ hours to the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort. Accommodation is available at hotels near the Tanjung Gemok jetty. Ferry services dry up between November and February.

At the time of writing the ferry service between the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort and Singapore had been suspended.

## Getting Around

When operating (times can be irregular and it stops altogether during the monsoon season), the Tioman sea bus runs between Salang, ABC, Tekek, the Berjaya Tioman

Beach, Golf & Spa Resort, Paya, Genting and Juara, with the morning boat departing Salang at 8.30am and returning from Juara at 2.45pm. Typical fares are Salang to Juara (RM20) and from Juara to the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf & Spa Resort (RM25).

During the monsoon, the service dries up altogether and you will have to wait either for the morning ferry from Mersing to drop you off at stops on the west coast north of your embarkation point, or the return ferry to Mersing from Salang (RM25; usually around 2pm, depending on the tide) for jetties to the south.

At other times or for boats to the south and east coast, you are at the mercy of the sea taxis. Typical fares for these are (from Tekek): Salang RM30, ABC/Panuba RM25, Paya Beach RM30, Genting RM30, Nipah RM75 and Juara RM105. Most chalets can arrange boat charter, but it is expensive (per day RM300 to RM400).

If you have the time, you can explore some of the island on foot. Bicycles can be hired at several places in Tekek, including the bike rental outlet (per hour RM5, open 9am to 7pm) opposite the Kontiki Café, south of the jetty. There is another bike rental shop (per hour RM5, per day RM20) next to Ari's Café in between ABC and Tekek, and bike rental is also available at Featherlight Café (airport building, Tekek).

A lift in a 4WD from Tekek to Juara or from Juara to Tekek costs around RM70 per person for one person, RM35 per person for two people, RM30 per person for three people or RM25 per person for four people.

## THE COAST

### ENDAU

09

There's little of interest in Endau, but fast boats speed to Pulau Tioman from nearby Tanjung Gemok, which functions as an alternative to Mersing in Johor for reaching Pulau Tioman (see p273). Hotel Seri Malaysia (09-413 2723; smrom@serimalaysia.com.my; d with breakfast RM120; a s), just across Sungai Endau in Tanjung Gemok, has clean air-con rooms with shower. Also near the jetty in Tanjung Gemok are numerous other small, cheap hotels and restaurants, and a couple of internet cafés. D Layak Guesthouse (09-413

1215; No 6, Bangunan D Layak, Jln Sri Tanjung 1; d RM30) offers simple fan rooms and the Hotel Meiwah (09-413 1241; 16 Taman Tanjung Gemok; d RM40-80; a ) may look foreboding on the outside but has very clean, tiled rooms.

### PEKAN

09

The spruce and subdued former royal capital of Pahang state is an attractive and tranquillising stop for either eating up miles along the east coast. Saunter slowly past old shophouses by the river, thread through old, sleeping *kampung* with colourfully painted homesteads, admire white-marble mosques, point your camera at some photogenic architecture and get a taste of Pekan's splendid regal pageantry.

### Information

There's internet access at 10 Net Cyber Café (Jln Sultan Abu Bakar; per hr RM3; 10am-7pm).

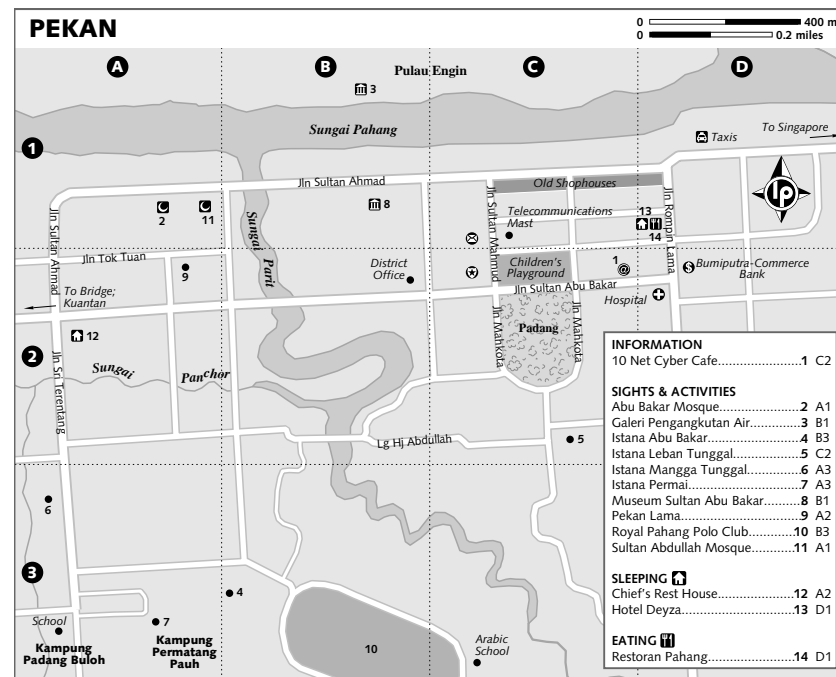
### Sights

The stately Museum Sultan Abu Bakar (Jln Sultan Ahmad; admission RM1; 9.30am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-12.15pm & 2.45-5pm Fri) is housed in a wonderful building constructed by the British in 1929 for the local Resident. Exhibits are largely about the Pahang royal family, such as the sultan's car and his polo achievements, but there are also weapons, pottery (including Chinese porcelain and Arab ceramics unearthed on Pulau Tioman) and exhibits on wildlife in Pahang.

On the river island facing the museum, the absorbing display of traditional Malaysian watercraft in Galeri Pengangkutan Air (9.30am-5pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-12.15pm & 2.45-5pm Fri) introduces a variety of local boats and fishing vessels, some lovingly painted. Look out for the fabulously carved craft with the head of a mythical beast.

To the west of the Museum Sultan Abu Bakar along the river is the blue-domed Sultan Abdullah Mosque (Jln Sultan Ahmad), a large, slightly mildewed and mouldering creation with blue domes dating back to 1932. Behind the mosque stands the old Pekan Lama, fashioned from wood and stone. The active Abu Bakar Mosque (Jln Sultan Ahmad) is further west, crowned with gold domes.

Walk to the end of the road (Jln Sultan Ahmad), turn the corner and head along the road away from the river, through the



memorial archway fashioned like huge tusks, passing the Chief's Rest House (see right) on your left. Keep walking, past the blue-painted Istana Mangga Tunggal with its red-tile roof on your right before continuing to the rural setting of Kampung Permatang Pauh and Kampung Padang Buloh, where splendid single *kampung* houses line the roads, and cows ruminant by the wayside.

The focus of the litter-free, palm-lined roads of the royal quarter of Pekan is the Regent of Pahang's palace, Istana Permai, and further on, the sultan's palace, the Istana Abu Bakar, set in vast grounds of cow grass and adjacent to the verdant polo field of the Royal Pahang Polo Club. It's worth completing a lazy circuit of the road around the field (Prince Charles reputedly played here) as it's a very well-tended area at odds with the rest of Pekan; sitting on a section of track within the grounds of the polo field is an old steam engine.

North of the polo field (back towards the river) are attractively coloured, traditional *kampung* houses on stilts. North of the main shopping district and the *padang*

(city square), the Istana Leban Tunggal, within Kampung Leban Tunggal, is a fine old red-tiled, two-storey building, in need of a lick of paint, with two buff-coloured domes.

Returning to the river, wander past the old shophouses, a row of old family shops, Chinese guildhalls, barbers and restaurants. Sungai Pahang, able to be crossed at this town via a lengthy bridge, is the longest river in Malaysia and was the last east-coast river to be bridged.

### Sleeping & Eating

Many visitors take Pekan as a day trip from Kuantan, but landing a room at the Chief's Rest House and tackling the town in low gear is recommended. Restaurants cluster among the grid of streets in between the Padang and Sungai Pahang and along the riverfront Jln Sultan Ahmad.

Hotel Deyza (09 938 7642; 102A Jln Tengku Arif Bendahara; d RM18-28; a ) Very rudimentary, no-frills rooms for the severely budget-conscious.

Chief's Rest House (09 422 6941; Jln Istana Permai; dm RM40, d RM55-70; a ) Exuding atmosphere





14th-floor hotel enjoying a good location north of the *padang*. Rooms are recently restored and pleasantly furnished.

#### TOP END

A superior alternative to staying in Kuantan is to check into the Hyatt (see opposite), by the sea, in Teluk Chempedak outside town.

**Mega View Hotel** (☎ 517 1888; Lot 567, Jln Besar; d RM150/200; a s ) Efficient and modern multi-storey hotel featuring a popular alfresco sports bar (see right), health centre, long views over the Kuantan river and good promotional rates.

**MS Garden Hotel** (☎ 555 5899; Lot 5 & 10, Lg Gambut, off Jln Besar; deluxe d incl breakfast RM300; a i s ) The interior is subdued and uninspiring, but regular promotional rates are attractive, and there's a welcome drink and a free hour of internet use. There's a large outdoor amoeba-shaped pool, children's paddling pool, baby cots, pool terrace and a bar. The location right alongside the Berjaya Megamall (with a Tesco Express) is handy.

#### Eating

Kuantan has good eating options. Small food stalls can be found dotted along the riverbank, down from the Tong Nam Ah Hotel. Others can be found in the central market, on Jln Bukit Ubi and inside the long-distance bus station. Indoor food courts can be found in Kuantan's shopping malls.

**Tjantek Art Bistro** (☎ 967 2021; 46 Jln Besar; meals RM30; h 4pm-1am Mon-Sat) Despite the traffic speeding past outside, this stylish bistro is an out of place and urbane refuge in non-cosmopolitan Kuantan. Modern art hangs from the walls, jazz issues from the speakers, and the menu – pastas, cooling salads, sizzling steaks, noodles and desserts – is engagingly trendy.

**New Yee Mee Restaurant** (Jln Haji Abdul Aziz; meals RM15; h lunch & dinner) Chinese restaurant serving Chinese favourites and fizzing *tiaban* (hotplate) dishes, good with a beer or two.

**Pattani Restoran** (☎ 515 7800; 79 Jln Tun Ismail; meals RM8; h 8am-10pm) Popular, bustling Malay restaurant (fan-cooled); among tasty dishes are nasi goreng (fried rice; RM3.50) and *tom yum* soup (hot-and-sour spicy Thai-style soup; RM4).

**Restoran Paruvathy** (☎ 514 3140; 75 Jln Bukit Ubi; meals RM8) Patronised by regulars, this popular

eatery serves up good value and wholesome *masala dosai* (paper-thin rice-and-lentil crepes stuffed with spicy vegetable filling), and vegetable and meat curries.

**Restoran Choise** (☎ 515 9822; 20 Jln Mahkota; meals RM10) Unfussy banana leaf curry meals, no-nonsense dishes and staff who can helpfully guide you through what's what.

#### Drinking

**Alfresco bar** (Mega View Hotel, Lot 567, Jln Besar) At the rear of the Mega View Hotel (left), this sits right next to the river, with a huge TV screen for live sports events. Coupled with ambient music, it's a very relaxing venue.

#### Getting There & Away

##### AIR

**Malaysia Airlines** (☎ 515 6030; Ground fl, Wisma Persatuan Bolasepak Pahang, Jln Gambut) Has daily direct flights to Johor Bahru and KL, among others. The airport is 15km away from the city – take a taxi (RM15).

##### BUS

Long-distance buses leave from the station on Jln Stadium. The ticket offices and information counter, as well as a food court, are on the 2nd floor of the building.

There are services to/from the following cities: Kuala Lumpur (RM16.80, four hours, frequent departures), Singapore (RM22.50, six hours, frequent departures), Jerantut (RM12.40, 3½ hours), Mersing (RM12.60, three hours), Kuala Lipis (RM19.90, five hours), Melaka (RM20.80, six hours), Seremban (RM16.90, five hours), Temerloh (RM8.30, two hours), Butterworth (RM37, eight to nine hours), Kuala Terengganu (RM13.50, four hours) and Kota Bharu (RM24, six hours).

Buses for Pekan (bus 31; RM4), Balok (RM2), Beserah (RM2), Cherating (bus 27; RM3) and Teluk Chempedak (bus 39; RM1) depart from the local bus station on Jln Besar.

##### CAR

Several car rental companies have offices in Kuantan.

**Hawk** (☎ 538 5055; www.hawkrentacar.com.my; Sultan Ahmad Shah Airport, Kuantan)

**Mayflower** (☎ 538 4490; www.mayflowercarrental.com; Lot 1, Terminal Bldg, Sultan Ahmad Shah Airport, Kuantan)

#### TAXI

The long-distance taxi stand is in front of the long-distance bus station on Jln Stadium. Destinations and costs (per car): Pekan (RM40), Mersing (RM150), Johor Bahru (RM250), Cherating (RM40), Kuala Terengganu (RM150), Jerantut (RM150) and KL (RM200).

#### AROUND KUANTAN Teluk Chempedak

Whipped by refreshing sea breezes, Kuantan's main beach at Teluk Chempedak, an attractive length of sand and surf around 6km east of Kuantan, is a popular escape for shaking a leg, sinking a beer and having alfresco chats over sizzling seafood dinners. Quality sand blankets the beach, which becomes delightfully gritty at its northern tip near the rocks, where all manner of seashells litter the sand, ground into a thick morass by the blue waves. Several walking tracks wind along the park area on the rocky promontory from the northern end of the beach.

The **Hyatt Regency Kuantan** (☎ 566 1234; http://kuantan.regency.hyatt.com/hyatt/hotels/index.jsp; r RM420; a s ) cuts off a long slice of beach for itself. A spacious, breezy and effortlessly luxurious place, the Hyatt pampers guests with polite, amenable staff, lovely views and a solid list of amenities (including two pools, three tennis courts, squash courts, a spa, a children's play area and a water sports centre). Rooms are sumptuous and a whole bevy of activities runs from cruises along the Kuantan River (featuring a boardwalk through a mangrove jungle) to walks along the cliffs to Methodist Bay.

Over two floors, the **Pine Beach Hotel** (☎ 940 4458; s/d/f RM48/60/120; a ), in the block of restaurants, bars and shops on the approach to the drive-in McDonalds, is fresh and new, but all ground floor rooms are windowless. Prices rise by around RM10 at weekends.

Traipse the sand and dive into one of the beachfront restaurants and food stalls for a bite to eat, but note that the fiercest drinks served at some places are mocktails (as ever in Malaysia, aim for Chinese-owned restaurants if you want beer). **Restoran Pattaya** (☎ 567 4437; meals from RM20; h lunch & dinner) is a pleasant open-air restaurant where the monsoon winds can get so blustery your grilled fish, tiger prawns and lobster may take flight.

For fine Sichuan (Szechwan) and Cantonese cuisine, turn to the **Yue Yuen Restaurant** (meals RM50; h 7-10.30pm Tue-Sun) at the Hyatt, or sit down at the **Kampung Restaurant** (h breakfast, lunch & dinner), also at the Hyatt, for an inviting international/Pan-Asian menu (meals RM35) and refreshing marine views.

A gaggle of bars lines the strip on the approach, including Cheers Bar, Urban Beach (with Wifi zone), Shannigan's Pub & Bistro, Lips TC Pub (2 jugs Tiger beer RM64), a sports bar featuring karaoke, and the Country Ranch Pub. For superior views and a shot of quirkiness, the black, wooden **Sampan Bar** (Hyatt Regency Kuantan; cocktails RM18.50) is a converted Vietnamese refugee boat perched on the sand.

Bus 39 (RM1) from Kuantan takes you to Teluk Chempedak. You can catch it at the local bus station, or from the more convenient stop for northbound buses on Jln Mahkota near the mosque. A taxi out to Teluk Chempedak costs RM10.

#### Beserah & Balok Beach

Hugging the coast 15km north of Kuantan, Balok Beach at Beserah is a refreshing, beachside alternative, especially if you have kids in tow. The beach at Balok – venue of the annual international **Monsoon Madness** (January) windsurfing competition – is long and pleasant, and beachfront accommodation – largely resort-style – is easy to find, as the length of the beach is littered with a variety of lodging options. Internet access is available at the **Cyberstation** (per hr RM10; h 9am-6pm) at the **Swiss Garden Resort & Spa**. The **Natural Batik Factory** (☎ 551 0113; www.batikfactory.com; Lot 4898, Jln Kemaman, Kg Chengal Lempong, Balok; h 10am-7pm) offers batik-making lessons for children and adults and has a wide selection of batik products. The **Swiss Garden Resort & Spa** (☎ 544 7333; www.swiss.garden.com; 2656-2657 Mukim Sungai Karang, Balok Beach, Beserah; d RM320-360, f RM460; a i s ) is the top pick, boasting a huge pool and a superb restaurant – the Garden Terrace – that serves up fantastic pizza.

Regular buses run from Beserah into Kuantan (RM1.50).

#### Gua Charas

Twenty-six kilometres north of Kuantan at Panching, the limestone karst containing **Gua Charas** (Charas Caves, also Charah Caves; RM1) towers high above the surrounding palm

plantations. The caves owe their fame to a Thai Buddhist monk who came to meditate here about 50 years ago.

It's a steep climb up a stairway to the caves' entrance – be careful. The colossal **Sleeping Buddha Cave** (Wofu Dong) is decorated with small altars to Guanyin, Puxian, other Bodhisattvas and Buddhist idols leading to the sleeping Buddha, a rather modest cement effort at the rear of the cavern.

Take the Sungai Lembing-bound bus 48 (RM2, one hour) from the local bus station in Kuantan and get off at the small village of Panching, just past the sign reading 'Gua Charas 4km'. From the bus stop in town it's a hot 4km walk each way, but you may be able to get someone in Panching to give you a lift on the back of a motorcycle for around RM2. A taxi from Kuantan to the caves costs RM30.

## TASIK CHINI

09

Tasik Chini (Lake Chini) is a series of 12 lakes linked by vegetation-clogged channels, its shores inhabited by the Jakun people, an Orang Asli tribe of Melayu Asli origin. They believe the lake is home to a serpent known as Naga Seri Gumum, sometimes translated in tourist literature as a 'Loch Ness Monster'. The best time to visit the lakes is from June to September when the lotuses are in bloom.

## Sleeping

**Lake Chini Resort** (0477 8000; tasikchini@hotmail.com; camp sites/dm/d RM3/15/80) On the southern shore of the main lake, this place has acceptable lodgings and a restaurant, and can arrange boat trips (RM50), canoeing, night treks (RM15), fishing (per hour RM30), an overnight climb up Mt Chini (including food RM70) and other activities.

**Rajan Jones Guest House** (r RM18) Across the lake at the more appealing Kampung Gumum, this guesthouse, about 10 minutes' walk up the main road into the *kampung*, is good value. Rajan speaks English very well, is knowledgeable about the Orang Asli and can arrange a spectrum of activities (jungle trekking, night hikes, waterfall trips and canoeing). The longhouse accommodation here is very basic (fan plus mosquito net) but breakfast and dinner is included.

## Getting There & Away

Reaching the resort or Kampung Gumum by public transport is laborious. A taxi from Kuantan should cost around RM80.

## CHERATING

09

Effortlessly ranked among the east coast's top stops, the travellers' *kampung* of Cherating waylays visitors with a woozy concoction of sunshine, seaside charms and an infectious leisurely tempo. Some people drift through, settle down and stay for weeks (years even), while many others at least theorise about joining them. Complete with budget shacks by the sea, a scattering of bars, good restaurants and fine views, Cherating is well worth a few days exploration. The beach can't compare with the white-sand beaches of the Perhentians, but the mellow atmosphere is hard to resist.

## Information

There are no banks in Cherating. Travelpost can change travellers cheques and cash, but the rates are poor. Some useful outfits on the main road:

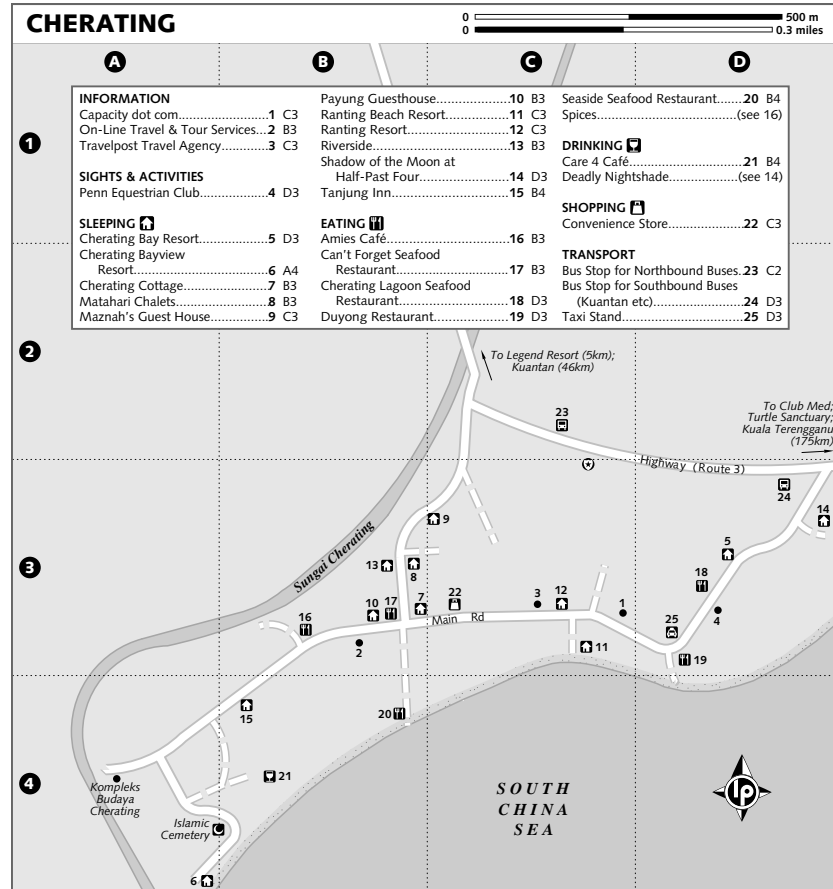
**Capacity dot com** (0581 9330; Main Rd; h 10am-9pm, sometimes shut Wed) Offers internet access (per hour RM6) as well as a phone and fax services, a small library, river and sea cruises, waterfall expeditions, turtle watching, horse riding and long-distance bus ticketing.

**On-Line Travel & Tour Services** (0908 2446; h 9am-10pm) Next to Cherating Laundry; can arrange river fishing, sea-fishing trips, trips to Snake Island, day trips to the elephant sanctuary at Kuala Gandah etc. There's internet access (per hour RM6).

**Travelpost** (0581 9796; h 9am-11pm) Book exchange, bike hire (per hour RM3), internet access (per hour RM6), currency exchange, tourist information and ticketing, and arranges night treks, tours to watch turtles (May to August) and more.

## Sights & Activities

Several places around the village can arrange river trips, sea and river kayaking, explorations of the mangrove swamps, sea fishing expeditions, turtle-watching (April to September), walks and other activities. Inquire at one of the places listed under Information or ask at the Payung Guesthouse (opposite). The **turtle sanctuary** (09am-5pm Tue-Sun) at Club Med (p282) is a popular attraction. Batik-making is a local industry, with a collection of shops in the village. Riding lessons,



either in the paddock or trotting along the beach, can be booked at the **Penn Equestrian Club** (0292 9265; per hr RM100).

## Sleeping BUDGET

Accommodation ranges from basic A-frame huts, each with a double mattress and light (but no fan), to more-comfortable 'chalets' with fan and shower. Most places have their own restaurants; note that rooms prices can rise at weekends.

**Maznah's Guest House** (0581 9072; A-frames RM15-20, d with shower RM25, chalets with/without shower RM30-35/20-30, with breakfast) Maznah's may be basic, but travellers enthuse about the amiable owner and atmosphere.

**Matahari Chalets** (0581 9835; small/large chalets RM20/25) Chalets have shared showers but are clean and equipped with a fridge, windows, mosquito nets and spacious verandas. The atmosphere is relaxed with a TV common room, and a kitchen for guests. Batik courses are also held (T-shirt RM30, sarong RM40).

**Payung Guesthouse** (0581 9658; chalets RM30, f with kitchen RM50) Excellent, friendly and helpful choice run by an Edinburgh woman. It backs onto the river, with neat rows of chalets and hammocks in the garden, river kayaks for hire, bike rental (per day RM10), river trips into mangrove swamps and other expeditions.

**Riverside** (0581 9128; chalets RM35-65; a ) Amid scampering chickens, simple wood

chalets here come with shower and TV. There's a contrived feel to the landscaping, and English-language skills are basic, but the views of the river bending away into the distance are stunning. Not to be confused with same-named operation across the way from Tanjung Inn.

**Shadow of the Moon at Half-Past Four** (☎ 581 9186; d/tr RM35/55) The chalets (all rooms have shower here) in this quiet and secluded backpackers' haven lie in tiers up the forested slopes of a hill. Free laundry and one meal a day is included (breakfast is free if you stay more than three days), and it's rounded off with an atmospheric Deadly Nightshade bar (right).

**Cherating Cottage** (☎ 581 9273; d/chalets/f RM30/50/80; a ) Staff are pleasant at this well-looked-after place with a bistro; air-con rooms come with TV and hot water.

#### MIDRANGE

**Tanjung Inn** (☎ 581 9081; www.tanjunginn.com.my; weekday chalet/tr RM45/60, d weekday RM45-90, d weekend RM55-100, tr weekday/weekend RM60/80; a ) The setting is gorgeous at this popular choice, with chalets clustered around a lotus-filled pool. The grass is lovingly kept, the palms are heavy with coconuts, and chalets are clean (but could do with a bit of attention), all with shower. Prices rise at weekends; prices are subject to 5% government tax.

**Ranting Beach Resort** (☎ 581 9208; chalets RM50-90; a ) Much-liked place with attractively laid-out assortment of clean chalets directly facing the beach. A handy bar (can of beer RM8) can slake a thirst, and windsurfing/surfing can be arranged.

**Cherating Bayview Resort** (☎ 581 9248; poolside tr chalets RM100, d with/without sea view RM150/120; a s ) Particularly clean and almost obsessively neat, this resort at the eastern end of the village is pleasantly laid out with plants and flowers, a restaurant and a gorgeous pool, but is sectioned from the beach by a barbed-wire fence. All air-con rooms come with hot shower.

**Ranting Resort** (☎ 581 9068; d chalets RM50-70, f chalets RM120-150; a ) Amid the purple bougainvillea, across the way from its sibling operation (the Ranting Beach Resort), this place has simple but clean double chalets.

**Cherating Bay Resort** (☎ 581 9988; standard/f apt RM150/250; a s ) Resembling a set from the *Truman Show*, clean, orderly and trim

apartment blocks are arranged over two floors, geared towards holidaying families. Among other facilities, there's a children's playground and restaurant.

#### TOP END

**Club Med** (☎ 581 9133; www.clubmed.com.sg; a s ) Crafted to look like a Malaysian *kampung* with wooden buildings on stilts, the resort underwent a huge refurbishment in 2005 and comes fully equipped with its own stretch of beach, international restaurants, nightclub, kiddies club, nearby turtle sanctuary and sports facilities. Prices are all-inclusive; contact the hotel for standard package deals.

**Legend Resort** (☎ 581 9818; www.legendsgroup.com; Lot 1290 Mukim Sungai Karang; d/ste incl breakfast RM350/700; a s ) Outside Cherating, this luxury resort on the road to Kuantan has huge outdoor pools by the beach, spacious rooms, two restaurants, a lovely section of beach, squash and tennis courts, a convenience store, a bar with a snooker table and tempting discounts.

#### Eating & Drinking

**Amies Café** (meals RM10; h 8am-4pm) Amies brings doses of healthy cooking to Cherating: homemade brown bread and yogurt, muesli with milk (RM5), sandwiches, wholesome breakfasts (banana and honey pancakes, RM5), water bottle refills (RM1) and restorative teas.

**Spices** (meals RM15; h 7pm-late) Sharing the same restaurant space as Amies Café, Spices works the night shift, its kitchen offering an Indian and Malay menu of tandoori chicken (RM8), chicken tikka (RM10), tandoori fish (RM10), vegetable *kofta* (ball; RM7) and more.

**Duyong Restaurant** (meals RM15; h lunch & dinner) Raised on stilts at the western end of the beach, this offers unbroken views around the bay. There's a large selection of seafood, steaks, poultry and vegetables, but it's the setting that is superlative. Try the *tom yum* soup with prawns (RM8).

**Deadly Nightshade** (h till late) You could do worse than sink a drink at this appealing spot in the dark woods at the Shadow of the Moon at Half-Past Four. There's a lounge area, cobbled-together wooden furniture, a library of well-thumbed trashy fiction, and Western cooking.

**Care 4 Cafe** (h 4.30pm-midnight) Almost on the beach, this café can put a beer in your hands, and has dartboard, beach view, menu and occasional live music.

Other seafood restaurants include the **Seaside Seafood Restaurant** (meals RM10), right on the beach, serving good Malay and Chinese dishes, the **Cherating Lagoon Seafood Restaurant** (small beer RM5.50) and the **Can't Forget Seafood Restaurant** (meals RM15-50; h 11am-3pm & 6-11.30pm), serving claypot noodle dishes, fish, crab, lobster and bean curd dishes.

#### Getting There & Away

Cherating is most easily reached from Kuantan. From Kuantan's station for northbound buses on Jln Besar (see p278), catch a bus marked 'Kemaman' and ask to be dropped at Cherating (look for a sign by the road that reads 'Pantai Cherating'). Buses leave every 30 minutes (RM4, one hour, 6.45am to 8pm). When coming from the north, any bus heading for Kuantan will drop you on the main road. A taxi from Kuantan should cost about RM40. Call the **Cherating Taxi Service** (☎ 581 9355).

From Cherating to Kuantan, wave down a Kuantan-bound bus from the bus stop on the highway (Route No 3).

**Travelpost** (☎ 581 9796; h 9am-11pm) can arrange long-distance bus tickets and taxis (convenient for those heading north to places like Kuala Terengganu or Kota Bharu).

## CENTRAL PAHANG

### JERANTUT

☎ 09

The small town of Jerantut is the gateway to Taman Negara. There are no attractions in town, but most visitors to the park spend at least one night here.

#### Information

##### EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 266 2222; Jln Besar)

##### INTERNET ACCESS

**AZM IT** (4 Jln Stesen Keretapi; per hr RM4; h 10am-10pm) East of the train station.

**Internet Café** (Hotel Sri Emas lobby; per hr RM5; h 24hr)

**Internet** (1st fl, 11 Jln Tahan; per hr RM3; h 9am-5pm)

### MONEY

Several banks in town can change cash and travellers cheques (change money before heading into Taman Negara).

**Bumiputra Commerce** (Jln Tahan; h 9.30am-4pm Mon-Fri & 9.30am-noon Sat) Has two ATMs (MasterCard, Cirrus) and foreign exchange.

### Sleeping

Hotels can get very busy during Taman Negara's peak period (usually April to August).

**Chong Heng Hotel** (☎ 266 3693; Jln Besar; d RM15) This small, good-value hotel has a helpful and informative owner and comes with travellers' recommendations.

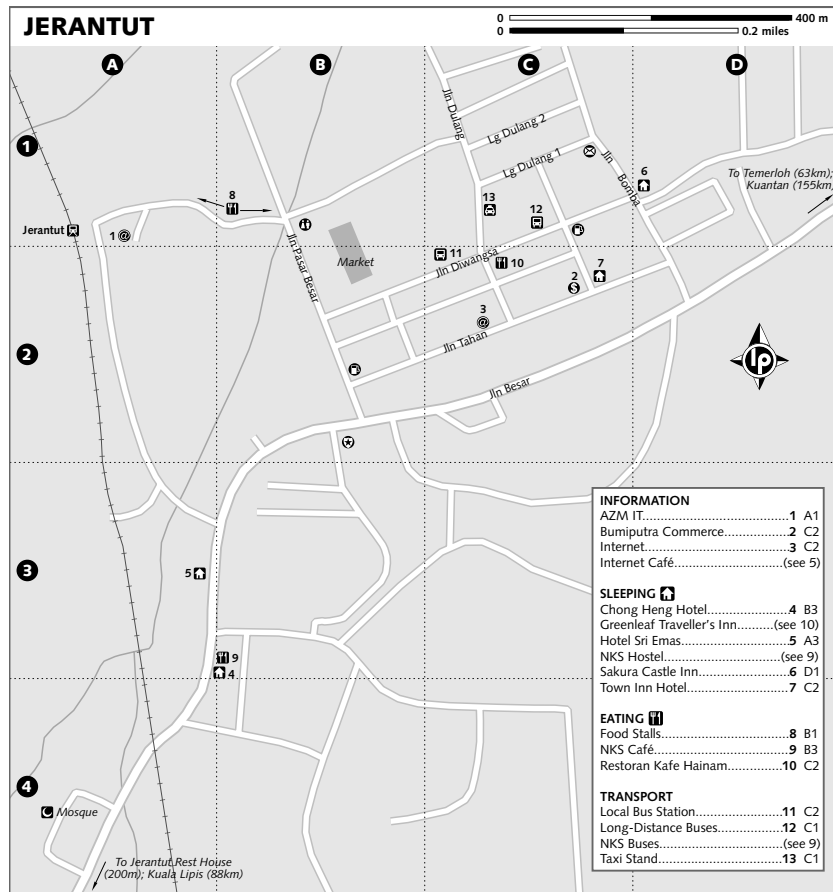
**Greenleaf Traveller's Inn** (☎ 267 2131; 3 Jln Diwangsia; dm & s RM10, d RM20-30; a ) Clean rooms (some *sans* window), quiet place. There's a minibus to Tembeling jetty/Kuala Tahan, and packages to Taman Negara.

**Hotel Sri Emas** (☎ 266 4499; tamannegara@hotmail.com; 46 Jln Besar; dm RM8, d with/without shower RM38/RM15-35, tr RM21, f RM64; a i ) Rooms are OK at the relocated Sri Emas, but dorms are a tad small and tight and paintwork is scuffed, although doubles are fine. Nightly briefings on Taman Negara are held in the meeting room above NKS Café on the other side of the road (8.30pm). The hotel can make full arrangements for your trip to the national park, arranging minibus transport to the park or to the jetty at Kuala Tembeling, as well as accommodation at Taman Negara. Don't forget, however, that you can do all of this under your own steam, and book tours once at the park, as not all travellers report satisfaction with tours booked here. Luggage storage off lobby, internet access (five terminals).

**NKS Hostel** (21-22 Jln Besar; d with/without shower RM48/35) Above the NKS Café, this new hotel has clean, tiled rooms, although not all RM35 doubles (with TV) have outside-facing windows. Most rooms are without shower.

**Sakura Castle Inn** (☎ 266 5200; 1st & 2nd fl, 51-52 Jln Bomba; d RM35-40, tr/q RM55/80; a ) This clean Malay-run midrange hotel near the bus station has tiled floor rooms in good condition, with TV (Astro), air-con, hot shower and polite service.

**Town Inn Hotel** (☎ 266 6811; Lot 3748, Jln Tahan; d/tr/q RM48/65/78; a ) All rooms at this new, quality hotel are neat with tiled floors, TV, shower and air-con.



**Jerantut Rest House** (☎ 266 6200; dm/tw/d/tr RM10/50/70/70; a ) Air-con dorms (in a separate block down the road) come with shower, and doubles are spacious, with attached bathrooms, at this friendly place. To get here, take Jln Besar (the main road) south past the mosque, then take the left under the flyover and it's about 100m ahead.

## Eating

**NKS Café** (21-22 Jln Besar; meals RM10; 🕒 7.30am-9pm, closes 6pm low season) Popular with those on NKS tours to Taman Negara as NKS buses depart here for the Tembeling jetty. Serves omelette dishes, soups, seafood, *dou-fu* (tofu) meals and sandwiches. Beer is also sold.

**Restoran Kafe Hainam** (Jln Diwangsa; meals RM10) Smart-looking fast-food-style café, with a simple menu of burgers, chicken wings, spaghetti and pizza.

The food stalls between the market and train station are very good, offering Thai dishes and seafood as well as the usual Malay favourites.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS

Long-distance buses leave from the ticket offices near the taxi stand; local buses depart from the station not far away on the same street.

Four buses depart daily to/from KL's Pekeliling bus station (RM12.80, three

hours, last bus to/from Jerantut 5/4pm) via Temerloh. If you miss the bus to KL, buses go every hour to Temerloh (RM4, one hour), from where there are more connections to KL and other destinations. Three daily buses run to/from Kuantan (RM12.40, 3½ hours). One bus runs daily to Melaka (RM14.10) and Johor Bahru (RM30).

Buses coming through from KL continue to Kuala Lipis; otherwise, take a bus to Benta Seberang (RM4.80, hourly from 7am to 6pm) and then another to Kuala Lipis.

The Hotel Sri Emas arranges buses to a variety of destinations, including Tembeling jetty (RM5), KL (RM30), Perhentian Island Jetty (RM55), Kota Bharu (RM55) and Cameron Highlands (RM55), which leave from the NKS Café.

## To/From Taman Negara

Buses to the jetty at Kuala Tembeling (RM2, 45 minutes), for the boat to Taman Negara, leave from the bus station approximately every hour from 7.45am to 5pm. Be warned that bus schedules are unreliable and are not designed to arrive in time for boat departures to the park. From the jetty, buses to Jerantut come by at around 12.30pm and 4pm, but again, don't count on it. A taxi from Jerantut to Kuala Tembeling/Kampung Kuala Tahan should cost from RM16/60. Most visitors prefer to take the scenic river trip to the park from Tembeling, but note that direct buses (RM6) all the way to Kampung Kuala Tahan at Taman Negara depart from the bus station at 5.30am, 8am, 1.30pm and 5pm. In the return direction, buses leave Kampung Kuala Tahan for Jerantut at 7.30am, 10am, 3.30pm and 7pm. NKS buses also depart from the NKS Café on Jln Besar for Tembeling Jetty (RM5, 8.30am and 1.30pm; returning at 11.30am and 4.30pm) and Kuala Tahan (Taman Negara; RM25, 8.30am and 1pm; returning 8am and 7.30pm). Alternatively, you can drive to the park.

## TAXI

Per car, taxi fares are as follows: Kuala Tembeling (RM16), Kampung Kuala Tahan (no air-con/air-con RM60/80), Temerloh (RM32), Cherating (RM140), Kuala Lipis (RM50), KL (RM140) and Kuantan (RM120). A surcharge of RM30 is enforced after 3pm.

## TRAIN

Jerantut train station (☎ 266 2219) is on the Tumpat-Gemas railway line (also known as the jungle railway). All northbound trains go via Kuala Lipis and Gua Musang.

Two express trains run daily to Singapore (2am, 8.50am), via Johor Bahru. For KL Sentral, take the 11.58pm express; there are two trains for Kuala Lipis, at 12.44pm and 6.22pm.

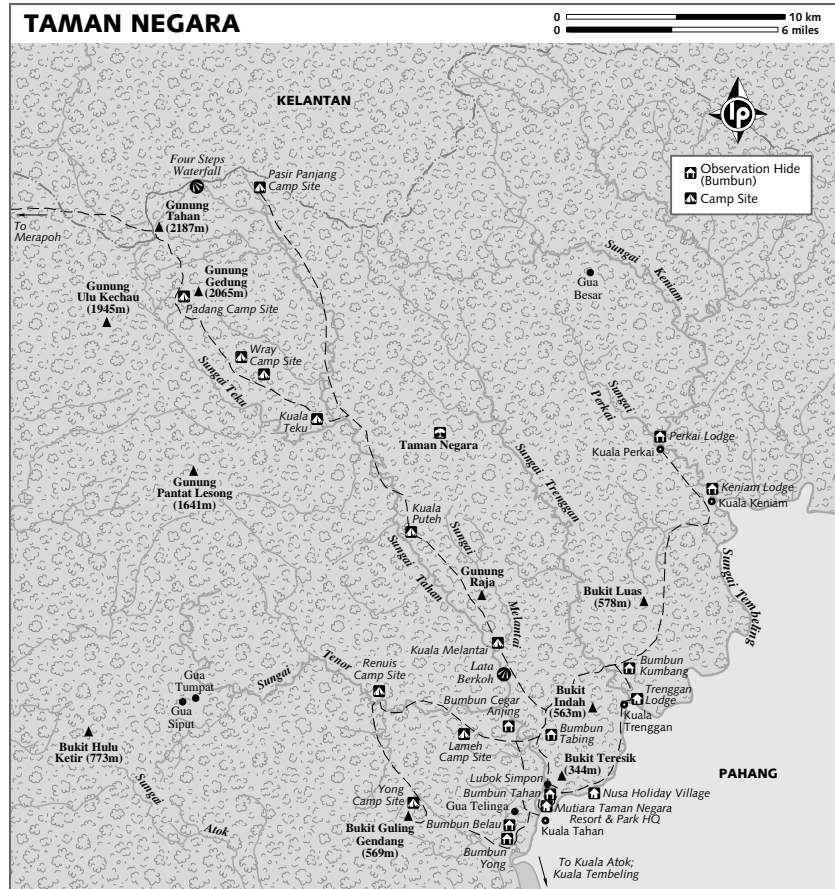
For an up-to-date timetable and list of fares, consult KTM ([www.ktmb.com.my](http://www.ktmb.com.my)).

## TAMAN NEGARA

Covering 4343 sq km and at twice the size of Luxembourg, Peninsular Malaysia's greatest national park sprawls in a huge, verdant swathe across the states of Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu. Everything about Taman Negara is big: the trees are dwarfing, the forest impenetrably huge, the timescale dauntingly massive (the jungle is 130 million years old) and ants and fellow creepy crawlies are simply outside.

Most visitors penetrate Taman Negara in Pahang. It is billed, perhaps wrongly, as a wildlife park. Certainly this magnificent, lush region is a haven for endangered species such as the Asian elephant (*Elephas maximus*), tigers, leopards and rhinos, but numbers are low and sightings are rare. It's unlikely that you will see anything more exotic than snakes (dog-toothed cat snakes, reticulated pythons, temple pit vipers and red-headed kraits all live here), lizards, monkeys, small deer, and perhaps tapir. Birdlife is prolific, however, and you will probably glimpse more insects – many at extremely close quarters – than you've ever seen in your life. The park is also home to the nomadic Batek people, one of Malaysia's aboriginal groups. The diverse flora is equally enthralling, ranging from luminescent fungi to rafflesia (a parasitic plant devoid of stems, roots or leaves and the world's largest flower), orchids, two-tone ferns and towering, ancient trees with trunks that flare imposingly into the ground.

The jungle at Taman Negara is so dense that you could pass within metres of an animal and never know it. The probability of spotting wildlife increases the further you trek from the heavily trafficked park headquarters, but sightings are never guaranteed. Some travellers are subsequently



disappointed, but that is perhaps to miss the point: the greatest reward of a visit to Taman Negara is to be present in one of the world's most pristine extant primary rainforests. The jungle here is claimed to be the oldest in the world: none of the Ice Ages had any effect here, and Taman Negara has eluded volcanic activity and other geological upheavals.

More than any other destination in Malaysia, the more you put into a visit to Taman Negara, the more you'll get out of it. Fleet-footing visits are naturally feasible, but invariably only scratch the surface. Consider an overnight trek or at least a long boat trip up one of the park's rivers (p289). If you aren't comfortable doing these things on your own, don't hesitate to join one of the tours that can

be arranged at guesthouses and restaurants in Kampung Kuala Tahan. If you plan on making some longer treks, consider bringing food and proper equipment with you.

The best time to visit the park is during the dry season from February to September. Rainfall is not constant during the rainy season, but when it rains it pours, and trails rapidly transform into treacherous, muddy bogs. The peak tourist season is from April to August.

### Orientation & Information

The park headquarters and the privately run Mutiara Taman Negara resort are at Kuala Tahan, across the river from Kampung Kuala Tahan. The Tourist Information Center (h 8am-

10pm Sun-Thu, 8am-noon & 3-10pm Fri), in the building behind the reception of Mutiara Taman Negara resort, is where you must register before heading off into the park, or to other park accommodation outside the Mutiara Taman Negara resort. Come here also for information regarding travel within Taman Negara. Tour guides can be booked here (right). Camping, hiking and fishing gear can be hired at the Mutiara Taman Negara resort shop or at the jetty on the Kampung Kuala Tahan side. See Planning, p288, for recommendations about useful books.

Daily video shows (h 9.30am, 3pm & 8.45pm) on Taman Negara are shown in the exhibition hall at the Mutiara Taman Negara resort/park headquarters. The exhibition hall itself has informative displays on the park.

Other activities include jungle trekking (RM35, 9.30am), a night jungle walk (RM30, 8.45pm), cave exploration (RM45, 10am and 3pm), river rafting (RM65, 10am), rapids-shooting on Sungai Tembeling (RM40, 10am), a picnic trip to Lata Berkoh rapids (per boat RM160, 9.30am and 2.30pm) and visits to an Orang Asli settlement (RM50, 5pm).

For health care, the Poliklinik Komuniti is adjacent to Agoh Chalets in Kampung

Kuala Tahan, opposite the school. Also in Kampung Kuala Tahan:

**Internet 'café'** (per 10min RM1; h 8am-midnight) No coffee; just down from the Teresek View Motel.

**Police station** (☎ 266 6721) Next to the Teresek View Motel.

**Rivernet Station** (h 9.30am-1pm, 1.45-6pm & 7.30-11pm; per hr RM6) Near the Liana Hostel and the Tembeling Riverview Hostel.

### Permits & Guides

Purchase permits (park entrance permit RM1, camera permit RM5, fishing rod permit RM10) at the Tourist Information Counter at Mutiara Taman Negara resort. Permits can also be picked up at the office at the Kuala Tembeling jetty. Failure to buy a permit can incur fines of up to RM10,000 (or three years' imprisonment).

Guides cost RM150 per day (one guide can lead up to 12 people), plus a RM100 fee for each night spent out on the trail. A guide is necessary for longer trails and is compulsory for climbs of Gunung Tahan. Also see Tours (p290).

### Hides & Salt Licks

Taman Negara has several readily accessible *bumbun* (hides) – many close to Kuala Tahan and Kuala Trengganu – that overlook

### THE FUTURE OF TAMAN NEGARA

First established as a preservation area in 1937, Taman Negara is Malaysia's oldest and most prestigious national park. Its relentless promotion as a wildlife haven and *the* place for an experience of the Malaysian jungle, however, has been met by growing numbers of visitors (around 60,000 per year).

Large animals once roamed right up to park headquarters, but sightings are now rare and the effective animal habitat area of the park has shrunk. Eroded by legions of walkers, trails around park headquarters are up to 4m wide. Trails, which occupy 5% of the park, are largely shunned by wildlife. Taman Negara is home to perhaps 600 elephants and up to approximately 110 of Malaysia's estimated 300 tigers, which have been increasingly pushed towards the Kelantan and Terengganu borders.

The visitor boom is not all bad news, though, as the resort provides necessary local employment; and increasing revenues from tourism, along with stiff government penalties, has helped eliminate poaching. Orang Asli are allowed to hunt small animals and continue their traditional nomadic lifestyle, but their impact is relatively low (although the impact of tourism on the Orang Asli is high).

With all the increased traffic putting strains on the park, there has been much talk of how to best preserve Taman Negara and cater to increasing visitor attention. Restricting access, by introducing quotas or raising prices, may be unpalatable as Taman Negara is one of Malaysia's major tourist attractions. Not only does it generate foreign income but the park is an important educational resource for Malaysians, who are increasingly aware of the ecology and natural beauty of their own wilderness areas.

salt licks and grassy clearings that attract feeding nocturnal animals. There's a chance of spotting tapir, wild boar or deer, but sightings of elephant and other large game are extremely rare. Your chances of seeing wildlife increase if you head for the hides furthest away from park headquarters. Even if you don't see any wildlife, the fantastic sounds of the jungle are well worth it.

The hides – Bumbun Tahan, Bumbun Belau, Bumbun Yong, Bumbun Tabing, Bumbun Kumbang and Bumbun Cegar Anjing – can be reached on foot or by river boat. You can overnight in hides (per person RM5; try to book at park headquarters the day before), but conditions are primitive, with pit toilets; take food, water and a sleeping bag.

Take a powerful torch to illuminate any animals that wander into the salt-lick area. Rats are a problem at some of the hides, so hang food high out of reach.

### Activities

The major activity at Taman Negara is penetrating the magnificent jungle. There's a wide variety of walking and trekking possibilities – from an hour's stroll to nine arduous days up and down 2187m-high Gunung Tahan. Don't enter the jungle after 6pm (unless on a guided trek), and do pack a torch (flashlight) just in case.

The trails around the park headquarters are convenient but heavily trafficked.

Relatively few visitors venture far beyond the headquarters, and longer walks are much less trammelled. A long day-walk will take you away from the madding crowd, but getting well away from it all requires a few days trekking and/or expensive trips upriver by boat.

### SHORT WALKS FROM KUALA TAHAN

Easy-to-follow trails around park headquarters are signposted and marked with approximate walking times; enquire at the information office for details on other routes. If you're interested in birdlife, try to set out before 8am. The trunks of the towering Kedondong and Pelong trees flare out into wide trumpetlike fins as they reach the soil (their roots are shallow, so these act as buttresses).

East from the park headquarters, the Bukit Indah (Indah Hill) trail leads along Sungai Tembeling to the **Canopy Walkway** (adult/child RM5/3; 11 9.30am–3.30pm Sat–Thu, 9am–noon Fri), 30 minutes away. Queues can get long here as only four people are allowed on each swinging gangplank at one time, but it allows for closer inspections of the higher forest reaches. The walkway is suspended between huge trees, including *mersawa*, *keruing* and *keladan* trees. The entire circuit takes around 40 minutes.

From behind the Canopy Walkway a trail leads to Bukit Teresik, from the top of which are fine views across the forest. The

trail is steep and slippery in parts but quite easily negotiated and takes about an hour up and back. You can descend back along this trail to the Mutiara Taman Negara resort or, near the Canopy Walkway, take the branch trail that leads across to **Lubok Simpon**, a swimming area on Sungai Tahan. From here it is an easy stroll back to park headquarters. The entire loop can easily be done in three hours.

Past the Canopy Walkway, a branch of the main trail leads to **Bukit Indah**, another steep but rewarding hill-climb offering fine views across the forest and the rapids in Sungai Tembeling.

The well-marked main trail along the bank of Sungai Tembeling leads 9km to Kuala Trenggan, a popular trail for those heading to the Bumbun Kumbang hide (see p287). Set out early and allow five hours. Though generally flat, it traverses a few small hills before reaching Sungai Trenggan and Trenggan Lodge. From the lodge, boats go back to Nusa Holiday Village and Kampung Kuala Tahan, or it's a further 2km walk to Bumbun Kumbang. An alternative, longer trail leads inland, back across Sungai Trenggan from Bumbun Kumbang to the camp site at Lubok Lesong on Sungai Tahan, and then back to park headquarters (six hours). This trail is flat most of the way and crosses many small streams. Check with park headquarters for river levels – Sungai Trenggan can be forded only when levels are low.

Night jungle walks (see p290) allow you to see the jungle from a different perspective and there's also the possibility of glimpsing nocturnal animals.

### Lata Berkoh

North from park headquarters, the trail leads to Gunung Tahan, but you can do an easy day walk to Lata Berkoh, the cascading rapids on Sungai Tahan. The trail passes the Lubok Simpon swimming hole and Bumbun Tabing, 1¼ hours from Kuala Tahan. There is one river crossing before you reach the falls, which can be treacherous if the water is high; do not attempt the river crossing in high water – you should hail one of the boatmen waiting on the opposite side to ferry you across. Boats also ferry visitors to Lata Berkoh from park headquarters (right).

### LONGER TREKS

#### Kuala Keniam

A popular walk is the trail from Kuala Trenggan to Kuala Keniam. It's normally done by chartering a boat to Kuala Keniam and then walking back to Kuala Trenggan (six hours). The trail is quite taxing and hilly in parts, and passes a series of limestone caves. This walk can be combined with one of the Kuala Tahan–Kuala Trenggan trails to form a two-day trip, staying overnight in the Trenggan Lodge or at Bumbun Kumbang (see p287). It is also possible to walk from Kuala Keniam to the lodge at Kuala Permai, an easy two-hour walk.

#### Gunung Tahan

Really adventurous travellers climb Gunung Tahan (2187m), the highest peak in Peninsular Malaysia, 55km from park headquarters. It takes nine days at a steady pace, although it can be done in seven. A guide is compulsory (RM500 for seven days plus RM50 for each day thereafter) and either bring your own equipment or rent it; with no shelters along the way, you have to be fully equipped. For camping near the summit of Tahan you'll need a lightweight sleeping bag, waterproofs, blanket or tracksuit to sleep in. Try to organise this trek in advance, so you don't have to hang around park headquarters for a couple of days.

### FISHING

Anglers will find the park a real paradise. Fish found in the park rivers include the superb fighting fish known in India as the *mahseer*, but here as the *kelasa*.

Popular fishing rivers include Sungai Tahan, Sungai Keniam (north of Kuala Trenggan) and the remote Sungai Sepia. Simple fishing lodges are scattered through the park and can be booked at park headquarters. The best fishing months are February, March, July and August. Fishing permits are RM10, and hiring a rod costs RM5 per day.

### BOAT TRIPS

The Mutiara Taman Negara resort has daily boats that go upriver to Kuala Trenggan at 10am and 2.30pm. In the reverse direction, boats leave Kuala Trenggan at 11.15am and 3.15pm. These services are intended for guests only.

### PLANNING

Although everyday clothes are quite suitable around Kuala Tahan, be well prepared if heading further afield. Lightweight cotton clothing is ideal. Loose-fitting, long trousers are better than shorts, protecting legs against scratches and insect bites. Take a water bottle, even on short walks, and water purifying tablets for longer walks.

Good boots are essential; lightweight, canvas jungle boots that lace up high to keep out leeches can be hired from the camping ground office at Mutiara Taman Negara resort. Sleeping bags, tents, cooking gear and torches (flashlights; per day RM4) can also be hired here or at the Kampung Kuala Tembeling jetty for trekking or for staying overnight in a hide.

Mosquitoes can be annoying, but repellent is available at the park shop (although it could be advisable to bring your own spray containing DEET).

Leeches can be a nuisance after heavy rain. Mosquito repellent, tobacco, salt, toothpaste and soap can all be used to deter them, with varying degrees of success. A liberal coating of insect spray over shoes and socks works best. Leech-proof socks are also an option. See p620 for more insights.

*Taman Negara: Malaysia's Premier National Park* by David Bowden (available in the bigger bookshops of Kuala Lumpur or online) is an excellent book on the park, with detailed route maps and valuable background information. Another book to try is John Briggs' *Parks of Malaysia*.

See the boxed text, p486, for more information on preparing yourself for trekking.

Nusa Holiday Village (p292) runs a river bus (not restricted to guests) from the Nusa Riverbus Jetty on the Kampung Kuala Tahan side to the following places:

**Bumbun Yong** (RM10) Three per day; first boat 8.30am.

**Canopy Walkway** (RM7) Two boats per day; first boat 10.15am.

**Gua Telinga** (RM8) Four boats per day; first boat 8.30am.

**Kuala Tembeling** (RM25) One boat per day; 9am.

**Kuala Trenggan** (RM20) Two boats per day; first/last boat 10.15am/3.05pm, return first/last boat 11am/3.30pm.

**Nusa Holiday Village** (guest/nonguest RM4/10) Six boats per day; first boat 8.15am.

**Persona Village Resort** (RM15) Three boats per day; first boat 8.45am.

The same boat also runs from Nusa Holiday Village to Kuala Trenggan (RM10).

Keep in mind that these regularly scheduled riverboat services run pretty much on time during the peak season, but may be dropped entirely during the rainy season. It's best to ask at Nusa Holiday Village or the Mutiara Taman Negara resort for up-to-the-minute information.

In addition to these boat trips, you can arrange private boat trips at the Tourist Information Counter, at the resort or at the restaurants in Kampung Kuala Tahan (the latter are usually 10% cheaper). Boat trips to Lata Berkoh rapids, Kuala Trenggan and Kuala Keniam are all popular and can be combined with short or long walks. The following prices are for boats seating four/10 people from Kuala Tahan: Bumbun Tabing RM40 (four-seater), Bumbun Cegar Anjing RM40 (four-seater), Canopy Walkway RM40/60, Gua Telinga RM40/60, Lubok Lesong RM80 (four-seater), Kuala Keniam RM180/220, Kuala Trenggan RM90/120, Kuala Perkal RM280 (four-seater), Lata Berkoh RM130 (four-seater), Nusa Holiday Village RM70/90.

## Tours

Many guesthouses and restaurants in Kampung Kuala Tahan organise guided tours through the park, and individual guides can be found at the floating restaurants by the jetty in Kampung Kuala Tahan. Typical prices: night jungle walk (RM20), night river safari (RM35 per person), two-day inner-jungle trek (per person RM230) and three-day inner-jungle trek (per person RM280). Minimum numbers are often required.

At Kampung Kuala Tahan, the long-haired guide called Man (akbarmnaturezone@hotmail.com) comes recommended by travellers. He can usually be found at one of the floating restaurants, and offers a variety of treks, from two-day, one-night sorties (per person RM230, minimum four people), three-day, two-night excursions (per person RM280, minimum four people) to four-day, three-night trips (per person RM380, minimum four people). Drop him a line in advance to inquire about or book his services.

## Sleeping

Facilities at Mutiara Taman Negara resort are comprehensive, including chalets, dorm rooms, bungalows, camping ground, restaurant, bar, clinic and pricey minimart.

Cheaper and more varied accommodation options are also available in the village of Kampung Kuala Tahan, directly across Sungai Tembeling from park headquarters, where there are also cheaper shops and restaurants moored on the river. Many visitors elect to stay in Kampung Kuala Tahan, rather than at Mutiara Taman Negara resort. To cross the river, simply hail a boat at any one of the floating cafés to take you across (50 sen).

The only other places with organised accommodation (other than the hides – see p287) are Nusa Holiday Village, about 15 minutes by boat up Sungai Tembeling from the park headquarters, and lodges at Kuala Trenggan, Kuala Keniam and Kuala Perkal, which can be booked at the Tourist Information Counter.

## KUALA TAHAN

**Mutiara Taman Negara resort** (☎ 266 3500; www.mutiarahotels.com; camp site RM5; dm/guesthouse/chalets/bungalows incl breakfast RM75/280/380/1200; a ) All accommodation at park headquarters is operated by the privately run resort. Clean air-con eight-person dorms (with wardrobe, mosquito nets) are good quality, but expensive. Older-style guesthouse rooms have bathrooms, but are tired-looking. Wooden chalets (each with fire extinguisher) are pleasantly equipped with verandas and shower, bamboo ceilings and coffee- and tea-making facilities. The bungalows are essentially houses, with two bedrooms and kitchenette plus living room – ideal for families. TVs are only available in bungalows.

Bookings can also be made through its KL office (☎ 03-2145 5585; saltm@mutiarahotels.com; Ste 11.01, 11th fl, Kompleks Antarabangsa, Jln Sultan Ismail, Kuala Lumpur 50250).

## KAMPUNG KUALA TAHAN

The village of Kuala Tahan, directly across the river from park headquarters, is a cheaper alternative to the Mutiara Taman Negara resort. Although it's rather scruffy, it's perfectly acceptable. Crossing the river is easy; sampans go on demand throughout the day and evening (50 sen).

**Liana Hostel** (☎ 266 9322; dm RM10) Has a barrackslike but clean hostel. It's first on the left as you climb the steps, opposite the Tembeling Riverview Hostel & Chalets.

**Durian Chalet** (☎ 266 8940; dm/d/f RM10/25/50) Out of the action and on the fringes of Kampung Kuala Tahan, the leafy and secluded Durian ranges from six-bed dorms to solid-looking bungalows, bamboo chalets and family rooms. Take the paved road uphill from the restaurants, turn left before Teresek View Motel, walk past the police station and the mosque, keep going past the rubber trees and you'll see it on the right.

**Tembeling Riverview Hostel & Chalets** (☎ 266 6766; rosnahtv@hotmail.com; dm RM10, d/f chalets RM40/50) First on the right as you climb the steps, this offers good views over the river. Dorm beds here are four to a room with fan and mosquito net; all chalets come with fan, mosquito net and shower; restaurant on site.

**Teresek View Motel** (☎ 266 9177; del\_tvmm@yahoo.com; fan dm/d RM10/40, chalets RM50-60, new block d RM70-90; a ) On the corner east of Agoh Chalets, this place has a generous choice of sleeping options. The clean RM40 A-frames come with shower; there are two eight-bed dorms with attached shower and a useful minimart. A new block opposite has new, modern rooms with window and balcony (and a ground-floor restaurant).

**Tahan Guesthouse** (☎ 266 7752; dm/d incl breakfast RM10/50) A colourful and welcoming place painted in cartoonlike swirls with good four-bed dorms. It's along the road in from the Teresek View Motel en route to Durian Chalet.

**Mat Leon Village** (☎ 013-998 9517; dm/chalets RM15/60) Supreme forest location with view over the river (swimming possible) from its

## TOUR WARNING

Before booking a tour, take time to talk to other travellers for their experiences on tours and possible recommendations. Some operators promise certain tour features that fail to materialise on the tour itself, while others have complained of harassment. By all means wait till you arrive in Taman Negara and ask around there; it is simple to reach the park under your own steam and find a tour guide there. See Tours (opposite) for further advice.

restaurant, clean four-bed dorms (shared shower) and chalets (with shower) and free boat pick-up from the Mat Leon floating desk at the Kampung Kuala Tahan jetty. On foot, go past Durian Chalet for around 350m to the sign at the edge of the forest; follow the forest path for 200m and you will see the chalets on the far side of a small stream.

**Ekoton Chalets** (tamanegara@hotmail.com; dm RM13-20, d/chalets RM70/90; a ) Fifty metres to the right from the top of the steps, Ekoton has eight clean and crisp chalets (mostly twins, all with kettle), all with air-con and shower, and plentiful dorms. Rooms are in good condition.

**Agoh Chalets** (☎ 266 9570; tw/d/f RM50/80/100; a ) Agoh Chalets is located in the middle of the village and has a car park; all rooms come with air-con and shower facilities, and are arranged around a small, grassy lawn.

**Rainforest Resort** (☎ 266 7888; www.rainforest-tamanegara.com; d/ste with breakfast RM207/414; a ) Modern and neat landscaped resort with rows of identical-looking units housing clean doubles. It's at the end of the road several hundred metres south of the Teresek View Motel. All doubles come with air-con and spacious shower rooms.

**Woodland Resort** (☎ 266 1111; 18 Kampung Kuala Tahan; d/chalets/ste RM207/276/483; a i s ) Just before the Rainforest Resort, this smart place has very tidy standard rooms with new fixtures, tiled floors, clean shower rooms, wardrobe and air-con. Two rows of good dorm rooms are at the rear; chalets are all new and spacious. There's internet access (per hour RM7), a small bar and pool tables. Large car park.

**SOUTH OF KAMPUNG KUALA TAHAN**

Several peaceful places lie removed from the action west off the main Kampung Kuala Tahan–Jerantut road south of Kampung Kuala Tahan:

**Park Lodge** (☎ 017-983 2074; [www.parklodge.nurnilam.com](http://www.parklodge.nurnilam.com); fan d incl breakfast RM60) Hidden away down a dirt track around 500m south of Kuala Tahan, this quiet spot has eight chalets and a restaurant. Can drive guests to Kampung Kuala Tahan.

**Traveller's Home** (☎ 266 7766; [www.travellershome.com.my](http://www.travellershome.com.my); d/bungalows RM70/280; a j ) Very clean and highly recommended, this bright and airy place, around 1km down a turn-off 2km south of Kuala Tahan (look for the signs), has a homely, family feel. Rooms here are very new (with balcony) and there's a handy library and internet access (per hour RM4). Meals – breakfast, dinner and drinks included in the room price – are held with the owners, a Swiss woman and her Malay husband. A pool was under construction at the time of writing; can arrange pick-ups from Kuala Tahan (phone ahead; boat transfer possibly in the pipeline).

**Persona Village Resort** (☎ 266-9696; [www.personatamannegara.com](http://www.personatamannegara.com); dm/d/f chalets RM30/185/250; a ) Modern, recently constructed chalet resort with pleasant river views, trekking packages and good discounts but little personality.

**NUSA HOLIDAY VILLAGE**

Quieter and away from park headquarters, **Nusa Holiday Village** (☎ 266 3043, 266 2369; camp site RM5, dm/A-frames/cottages/houses RM15/55/90/110) is 15 minutes up Sungai Tembeling from Kuala Tahan. More of a 'jungle camp' than anything at park headquarters, it has a range of accommodation for most budgets. The clean, spacious double cottages with fan and bathroom are probably the best value. The restaurant serves good but unexciting food. If camping, tents are available (RM15).

Bookings can be made in Jerantut with **SPKG Tours** (☎ 266 2369; [spkg@tm.net.my](http://spkg@tm.net.my); 16 Jln Diwangsa), the **Kuala Tembeling jetty** (☎ 266 3043) or in KL (☎ 03-4042 8369; 9-2 Jln 15/48A, Sentul Raya, off Jln Sentul). It runs its own boat from Kuala Tembeling (return RM50), and a river bus service between Nusa Holiday Village and Kampung Kuala Tahan (p289).

**KUALA TRENGGAN**

**Trenggan Lodge** (☎ 266 3500; d RM120) About 35 minutes upstream from Kampung Kuala Tahan at Kuala Trenggan, and under renovation at the time of writing, this makes for a secluded alternative. It's run by Mutiara Taman Negara resort.

**KUALA PERKAI & KUALA KENIAM**

Located about an hour upstream from Kuala Trenggan, the lodge (camping costs RM1; a room is RM100) at Kuala Keniam is without electricity. Four-bed dorms are available at Kuala Permai (camping RM1, dorm beds RM8), also without electricity and a further two hours' walk past Kuala Keniam. If camping at either of these places, bring your own tent. Check with the Mutiara Taman Negara resort to see if these are operational when you arrive in the park.

**Eating**

**Seri Mutiara Restaurant** (Mutiara Taman Negara resort; meals RM20; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) You may have to wait 30 minutes for a menu (service is dilatory), but this is the smartest place in Kuala Tahan, with salads (RM14.50), sandwiches/burgers (RM15), pizza, local dishes and a small kiddies' menu. Breakfast (American/buffet RM25/35) is filling; better value is the RM5 coffee, for which you get a whole pot (four cups).

Floating barge restaurants line the rocky shore opposite park headquarters, all selling cheap basic noodle and rice meals. Some of these restaurants will prepare a dinner of fresh river fish if you order early in the day (note that all of them can arrange the same activities as the Mutiara Taman Negara resort, usually for about 10% less).

**Getting There & Away**

The main way to reach Taman Negara is to take a bus or train to Jerantut, a bus or taxi from Jerantut to Kuala Tembeling and then a boat from Kuala Tembeling to park headquarters at Kuala Tahan, but you can also take a bus from Jerantut direct to Kampung Kuala Tahan; see p285 for details. Driving to Kampung Kuala Tahan is straightforward, but to do so is to miss the river trip, which is a big part of the Taman Negara experience (see opposite).

**BOAT**

The main entry point into the park is by riverboat from Kuala Tembeling, 18km north of Jerantut. The 60km boat trip to Kuala Tahan takes two to three hours, depending on the level of the river. Along the river you'll see several Orang Asli *kampung*, local fishing people and domestic animals such as water buffalo. You might also see monkeys, otters, kingfishers and hornbills from the boat. It's a beautiful journey.

Regular boats (one way RM25) depart daily at 9am and 2pm (9am and 2.30pm Friday). Extra boats are laid on during the busy season but the service can be irregular during the November to February rainy season. Boats are run by the Mutiara Taman Negara resort and Nusa Holiday Village, whose boats also stop at park headquarters before continuing to Nusa Holiday Village, so you can take either service. At Tembeling, the resort's office is up the steps above the jetty, and Nusa Holiday Village's is near the parking area.

On the return journey, regular boats leave Kuala Tahan at 9am and 2pm (2.30pm on Friday) and speedboats leave at 10am; there is no discount for return tickets.

**BUS & TAXI**

For details on buses and taxis from Jerantut to Kuala Tembeling, see p284. From KL, **NKS** (☎ 03-2072 0336; [www.taman-negara.com](http://www.taman-negara.com)) has a daily bus to the Kuala Tembeling jetty from the Hotel Mandarin Pacific in Chinatown at 8.30am (RM35), returning to KL at 11.30am. The Pudu Hostel (p99) also runs daily shuttle buses to Kuala Tembeling.

**CAR**

A road goes all the way from Jerantut to Kampung Kuala Tahan, traversable in an ordinary car.

**WALKING**

You can walk into or out of the park via Merapoh, at the Pahang–Kelantan border. The trail from Merapoh joins the Gunung Tahan trail, adding another two days to the Gunung Tahan trek (see p289). Guides are compulsory and can be hired in Kuala Lipis to take you in. Contact the **Kuala Lipis tourist information centre** (☎ 312 3277). However, it is easier to arrange a guide at the park for the walk out (see p287). It is also possible to enter or exit the park by walking over the mountains on the Pahang–Terengganu border and

navigating the upper reaches of Sungai Tembeling by riverboat. Contact **Ping Anchorage** (☎ 09-626 2020; [www.pinganchorage.com.my](http://www.pinganchorage.com.my)) in Kuala Terengganu for details and guides.

**KUALA LIPIS**

☎ 09

At the confluence of the Lipis and Jelai rivers, Kuala Lipis is a small, picturesque town with a strong colonial past. The centre of town, with fine rows of shophouses down the main street, is the busy Chinese commercial district. Further south on the hilly outskirts, Kuala Lipis is dotted with reminders of the glory days when it was Pahang's most important town.

A gold-mining centre long before the British arrived in 1887, the town's heyday began in 1898 when it became the capital of Pahang. Grand colonial buildings date from this period, and trade increased when the railway came through in 1924.

In 1957 the capital shifted to Kuantan, and Kuala Lipis went into decline. It is a sleepy and pleasant town, but the gold miners are back and recent construction and the presence of a shopping mall suggest a revival of fortunes. Besides being an important sight in itself, Kuala Lipis is the major launching pad for visits to the nearby Kenong Rimba State Park.

**Information**

Hand-drawn maps of Kuala Lipis are available at Appu's Guest House (p294).

**INTERNET ACCESS**

**Appu's Guesthouse** (63 Jln Besar; per hr RM6)

**MONEY**

**Bumiputra Commerce** (opposite the bus station; Jln Besar) Has a 24-hour ATM (MasterCard & Cirrus). **Maybank** (Jln Besar) ATM (MasterCard, Maestro, Cirrus).

**POST**

**Post office** (Jln Besar) East of the train station.

**TOURIST INFORMATION & TRAVEL AGENTS**

**Tourist office** (☎ 312 5032; off Jln Besar; h 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–1pm Sat) Inside the train station is a private travel agency that sells its own trips to Kenong Rimba, but you can get a map of the town and have basic queries answered. Helpful.

**Tuah Travel & Tours** (☎ 312 2292; off Jln Besar;



↳ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) Helpful agency at the train station offers a variety of packages to Kenong Rimba State Park, starting from RM120 for a day trip (minimum four people).

## Sights & Activities

Kuala Lipis has some riveting colonial-era architecture. Maroon and white and decorated with arches, the noble District Offices, off Jln Lipis, crown a hill 1km south of the centre of town. The offices overlook the exclusive Clifford School, a grand public building that began life as the Anglo-Chinese School in 1913 and was later named after Sir Hugh Clifford, the second British Resident of Pahang. During the occupation, the school served as the headquarters of the Kempetai (the Japanese secret police).

The road next to the school leads up the hill to the black-and-white wooden Pahang Club, off Jln Lipis, a stately and dignified bungalow with wide, open verandas.

Accessed by a winding road or steep, overgrown steps, the gracious hill-top Government Rest House (↳ 24hr) is a large, red two-storey building, once home to the British Resident. Now a picture of peeling paint and gradual, mouldering decay, it doubles as a hotel, with the foyer housing a small museum showcasing local artefacts.

The Chinese Tianhou Temple (Jln Jelai) east of the Jelai Hotel is dedicated to the Queen of Heaven, protector of seafarers. With a carving of a ship inside the main door, on the main altar is Tianhou herself and Guanyin stands to her left. Try to visit during Chinese New Year, when huge incense sticks smoulder in front of the temple.

A very pleasant walk starts on the road behind the Lipis Centrepoint Complex. Follow the road up the hill where the sign says 'Driving Range Lipis'. You will soon pass the Istana Hinggap on your right; keep going uphill and the road will fork. Take either branch and you will be led to old, wooden built colonial-era houses – some now abandoned and being slowly reclaimed by jungle.

If you're in town on Friday evening, be sure to visit the excellent night market held in the parking lot next to the bus station.

Mountain bikes (RM25) can be rented at the shop at the end of the block opposite the bus station on Jln Besar.

## Sleeping

There are several hotels on Jln Besar (the main street) and Jln Jelai (the street by the river), a short walk from the bus and train stations. For budget hotels, try one of the cheap Chinese flophouses along Jln Besar.

**Hotel Tong Kok** (☎ 312 1027; Jln Besar; s/d RM15/20) Simple, central Chinese-run hotel above a restaurant on the main street.

**Appu's Guesthouse** (Hotel Lipis; ☎ 312 3142; jungle-appu@hotmail.com; 63 Jln Besar; dm RM10, d RM20-35, q RM60; a ) Relaxed place on the main street, with simple rooms (shared toilet/shower), not all with windows. It's rather worn but remains cheap and dependable; popular for its tours of Kenong Rimba State Park.

**Hotel Jelai** (☎ 312 1192; 1st fl, 44 Jln Jelai; d/tr/q RM45/55/65; a ) Front rooms – some a bit grubby now and popular with geckos – have good views over the Jelai river, but pack mosquito spray as windows don't close tightly. Air-con doubles come with hot shower and TV. Don't confuse this hotel with its namesake sibling off Jln Pekeliling, near the Centrepoint Hotel.

**Tanjung Lipis Rest House** (☎ 312 1185; s/d RM55/75) With spectacular views over town, this modern hill-top resthouse in the south-east of town has colossal rooms, especially the RM75 doubles, which are all lovingly furnished, and complete with coffee- and tea-making facilities, TV and shower.

**Centrepoint Hotel & Apartments** (☎ 312 2688; Level 5, Lipis Centrepoint, Jln Pekeliling; d/tw/ste/apt incl breakfast RM58/78/158/238; a ) A tale of two hotels: the rooms on the budget 7th floor of this two-star hotel are average (but have new shower rooms); instead aim for the inexpensive rooms on the executive level (5th floor), where rooms are far more deluxe, very spacious and all tastefully furnished. The restaurant is good.

## Eating & Drinking

**Xin Hoi Kee** (☎ 312 5072; 5K, Jln Pekeliling; meals RM20; ↳ lunch & dinner) Specialising in river and sea fish, this lively and bustling Chinese seafood restaurant, with its large alfresco seating area, seems like the social centre of Kuala Lipis. Next to KFC.

**Flash Jack's Bar 55** (☎ 019-966 7903; 55 Jln Jelai) The sole bar in town; a low-key, low-profile place run by the affable Jack, patronised by card-playing locals and decorated with a dartboard.

There are also busy and popular food stalls on either side of the northern end of the overhead walkway crossing Jln Pekeliling, south of the Tianhou Temple: try the tasty Chinese noodles at the stalls upstairs.

## Getting There & Away

Buses run from the bus station (Transnasional ☎ 312 5055) to KL (RM11.20, four hours, six daily), Kuantan (RM19.90, six hours, four daily) via Temerloh (RM11.70), Raub (RM4.10) and Gua Musang (RM9.40, two hours, two daily), from where you can catch onward buses to Kota Bharu. For Kuala Tembeling, first take a bus to Mela and change buses.

Daily trains run to Singapore (7.39am, 12.55am) and KL (10.54pm). Trains bound for Singapore, KL or Gemas stop at Jerantut (for Taman Negara). The local ('jungle') train connects with Wakaf Baharu, the closest station to Kota Bharu.

Taxis leave from the bus station for KL (RM150), Jerantut (RM50), Kuala Tembeling (RM30), Gua Musang (RM70), Temerloh (RM110), Kota Bharu (RM200) and Kuantan (RM180).

## KENONG RIMBA STATE PARK

☎ 09

A sprawling area of lowland forest rising to the limestone foothills bordering Taman Negara, this 120-sq-km forest park can be explored on three- or four-day jungle treks organised from Kuala Lipis. Sightings of big mammals are rare and monkeys, wild pigs, squirrels, civets and possibly nocturnal tapir are all you should expect to see. The park is also home to the Batek people, an Orang Asli tribe. For information on preparing for the jungle, see the boxed text, p486.

Visitors need to acquire a permit from the Kuala Lipis District Forest Office (☎ 312 1373). Guides are compulsory for entry to the park and can be arranged in Kuala Lipis. **Appu** (☎ 312 2619) of Appu's Guesthouse in Kuala Lipis offers cheap tours – RM50 per person per day plus RM160 (minimum three people) for the boat to and from Jeti Tanjung Kiara and a RM2 per-person-per-night camping fee. Tours include food, guide and all expenses in the park, but they are no-frills jungle experiences – you camp in the park, with all equipment and meals provided. Trips go when enough people are

interested, usually every two or three days, or you can ring ahead to make a booking.

There is also simple dorm and chalet accommodation available at the Persona Rimba Resort (☎ 312 5032).

## Getting There & Away

Access to Kenong Rimba is from Kuala Lumpur on southbound local trains to Batu Sembilan (Mile 9). From Batu Sembilan, hire a boat (per person RM20) to Jeti Tanjung Kiara, just across the river from Kampong Kuala Kenong.

## TEMERLOH

☎ 09

An old town on the banks of the enormous Sungai Pahang, Temerloh has hints of colonial style and a colourful Sunday market. As the main city of central Pahang, it serves as a transport hub – the chief reason to visit. The train station is 12km away at Mentakab, a thriving satellite of Temerloh with a bustling nightly market.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Semantan** (☎ 296 8111; C-98 Jln Dato Ngau Ken Lock; d RM60-70, f RM100; a i ) Over three floors, this new, fresh hotel opposite the Dunhuang Chinese restaurant offers clean and spacious rooms. Free internet access for guests.

**Rumah Rehat Temerloh** (Temerloh Rest House; ☎ 296 3218; Jln Datok Hamzah; d/f RM70/90; a ) With only 10 rooms on two levels the real reason to stay here is for the marvelous garden falling to the river. A popular restaurant looks out onto the foliage on the river banks, but the food is mediocre. Rooms can smell a bit after the rain, showers are naphthalene-scented and furniture is tired, but doubles are commodious and good value.

**Seri Malaysia Hotel** (☎ 296 5776; Lot PT 370/6/92, Jln Datok Hamzah; d RM120; a s ) Next door to the Rumah Rehat Temerloh, this place has midrange service and clean rooms. Excellent views of the river; there's a swimming pool, paddling pool and an OK restaurant.

Jln Tengku Bakar in the old town is dotted with cheap hotels, including the **Foo Sing** (1 Jln Tengku Bakar; d RM18) – a very simple and basic Chinese-run choice – and the similar **Banhin Hotel** (☎ 296 7331; Jln Tengku Bakar; d RM20-38; a ).

### Getting There & Away

Temerloh's bus station is central. Buses go to all parts of the peninsula, including Kota Bharu (RM36), Kuala Lipis (RM11.70), Melaka (RM12.60) and Penang (RM43.50). Regular buses depart to Jerantut (RM4.20), KL's Pekeliling bus station (RM8.65) and Kuantan (RM8.30).

Taxis at the bus station go to Mentakab (RM8), Jerantut (RM32), Kuantan (RM80) and KL (RM120).

### AROUND TEMERLOH

#### Kuala Gandah Elephant Conservation Centre

This conservation centre (☎ 019-932 1576; www.wildlife.gov.my/bhg\_ekogandah.htm; Kuala Gandah, Lanchang; 🕒 8am-4.30pm) is the base for the Department of Wildlife and National Parks'

Elephant Relocation Team, the only one of its kind in Malaysia. They help capture and relocate rogue elephants from across Southeast Asia to other suitable habitats throughout the peninsula, such as at Taman Negara.

The best time to visit the conservation centre is from 2pm onwards as then it's possible to go on elephant rides, join in with their bathing (bring your swimming costume!), assist in their feeding and watch a video about their plight.

Before heading out this way, it's best to call the centre, which is located about 150km east of KL near the town of Lanchang west of Mentakab, to check on opening times and get exact directions. Tour companies in KL (see p98) can also arrange day trips here.