



MURLI MENON

ONE is writing this from one's beach-side cottage at the Holiday

Villa at Pantai Tenga beach on the picturesque island of Langkawi in Malaysia. The 478 sq. km. isle is situated 600 km. north of Kuala Lumpur.

Langkawi is derived from the word lang in Malay meaning eagle and kavi meaning black stone.

Thus Langkawi means eagle's black stone island. Several species of tropical eagles inhabit this island and which is a two and a half hours ferry ride from Penang. Langkawi consists of isolated coves, tropical forests, scattered paddy fields, sandy beaches and azure waters.

Langkawi is a collection of 99 tropical islands lying off the north western coast of peninsular Malaysia. With a geological history stretching back to 150 million years, Langkawi boasts of emerald waters, prehistoric caves, rock formations and idyllic beaches.

Located near the Holiday Villa, this man made miracle is



a short walk from one's cottage. The 3,038sq m Underwater World, which opened on Aug 26,1995, contains 5000 different species of fishes in colours ranging from cobalt blue to fluorescent, which await discovery in this virtual simulation of the ocean floor.

One can see the world's

largest freshwater fish, the Arapaima, swimming lengths of the underwater pool, in endless turns, in the tropical rainforest section.

The highlight is a giant tank housing large species such as sharks, stingrays, groupers, snappers and green turtles. A 15m underwater tunnel runs

through this tank and enables visitors to enjoy the feeling of being with the fish without getting wet!

How to get there?

By road:

Visitors traveling by road have to drive from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Kedah, which takes all of six hours. Car park-

ing facilities are available at Kuala Kedah jetty, from where one takes the boat to Langkawi. Taxis are available at Langkawi Ferry Terminal.

By air:

Langkawi International Airport at Padang Matsirat is about 20 km. away from the town centre. Langkawi is connected by direct flights from Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Singapore.

By sea:

It takes 150 minutes to reach Langkawi by ferry from Penang. The ferry from Kuala Kedah takes 75 minutes to reach Langkawi.

Where to stay?

Holiday Villa is a value for money proposition which offers four star comforts at three star rates and is extremely affordable by Indian standards during May-August which is a low season. A standard double room costs approximately RM 150 inclusive of American breakfast. Budget conscious tourists frequent this eco-friendly property throughout the year.

(The writer is a stress management consultant, who conducts workshops in South-East Asia.)