



UNDERWATER THRILLS



View of the Tioman Island

get there

- Tioman Island is connected by direct flights from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore by Berjaya Air. Berjaya's Beach Resort is 5 km. away from the airport. The return flight fare in a 50-seat aircraft is approximately 400 RM.
- Berjaya Resort offers a two-night three day free stay at their beach resort in a package offer for all couples booking return tickets, ex-Kuala Lumpur, by Berjaya Air, the sole airline to fly into Tioman. The flights do not depart from Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) but from Subang Airport, Kuala Lumpur's second airport.

in diving for novices wanting to take the first step towards certification. Snorkellers and scuba divers can observe a diversity of marine life that includes freshwater fish, sea-bass, red snapper, stingray, tuna, moray eel, grouper, blue marlin, squid, prawn, lobster, coral trout, reef fish, turtles and sometimes one can also see a giant clam. Some of the other activities that are available at Tioman include cycling, sea kayaking, wind-surfing or simply island hopping. Boat tours are available to the villages that are scattered around Tioman. Explorers who prefer solitude can meditate at several smaller, uninhabited islands that are a short boat ride away. You can see the outlines of these volcanic islands on the ferry ride from Mercing to Tioman. Golden beaches, crimson sunsets, tropical rainforests, coral reefs, wooden chalets and azure waters - nature has generously blessed the tiny island of Tioman that generations after generations must enjoy. The duty free status of Tioman makes it an added attraction for shopping freaks. Several kiosks sell souvenirs ranging from T-shirts to handicrafts.

FOOTLOOSE

The anticipation of travel is almost like falling in love. You choose a destination and an adventure that makes your heart leap and your pulse race. When you arrive, you do not know how it will turn out - a casual flirtation, a torrid affair, a long-term relationship or just a bum trip. I am writing this from the cool confines of a beach-side chalet at Berjaya Tioman Beach Resort at Tioman Island in the state of Pahang in peninsular Malaysia. There is an interesting legend about the origins of this island. Once upon a time, a dragon princess from China, set out to visit her prince in Singapore. On her way to Singapore from China, she stopped when she saw the crystal clear waters of the South China Sea and was so enchanted by the charms of the sea that she decided to discontinue her journey and took the form of an

but a combination of the sun drenched beach, the rust coloured sandy shore, crystal clear waters teeming with marine life and corals of myriad colours stretching under the sea as far as you can see. The jewels in the crown are the rainforests and hills which surround this secluded cove that time forgot. Island hopping, boating, snorkelling, scuba diving and bird-watching are some of the other activities you can indulge in once the novelty of the sea wears off.

You can swim alongside a symphony of colourful fish while enjoying the beauty of the coral reefs that adorn the ocean floor. Mushroom shaped corals, fan shaped corals and rainbow corals can be clearly seen exploding in a riot of colours. The marine life is no less enchanting. Fishes of all

Tioman Island in Malaysia offers a unique combination of activities for tourists and is an attractive option for enjoying the bounties of nature. By MURLI MENON

island to offer comfort to passing travellers. That is how the magical and mythical island of Tioman came into being. Even today, the map of Tioman Island has a striking resemblance with the head of a sleeping dragon.

The view from the chalet is breathtaking. The wide expanse of the rusty beach and azure sea, a stark contrast to the snow white clouds suspended above them complete the picturesque scene as seen from your cosy abode. The warm waters and high visibility beckon you to slip into your swimming attire and take a dip in these pristine waters. Watching the sun set, while sipping cool coconut water, while sunbathing under the gently setting sun is the balm you need to rejuvenate those aching bones. The water is extremely shallow and you can walk into the sea for about a mile. You can watch your feet throughout your adventure into the sea. Tioman is nothing

colours swim in endless turns, making their way delicately through the corals. You discover the miracles of nature unfolding on a giant 3-D screen on the ocean floor covered by water resembling a looking-glass. Some of the fish you encounter while snorkelling include the parrotfish, rainbow runners and cuttlefish. Exploring the underwater flora and fauna at Tioman is like exploring Mars. Unexpected colours, shapes and forms are uncovered at every step. You feel as if you are peeling one layer of an onion to discover another. Shoals of tiny fish dart in between the crevices, moving as one seamless whole; starfish sway gently in the waves; sea cucumbers are scattered in disarray all over; and a few sea anemones and sea urchins rest peacefully on the corals. Snorkelling is open to all, though diving permits are needed. You have to attend a diving course and get a certificate before being permitted to dive. Berjaya offers beginner's courses



Indeed, Tioman offers a unique combination of activities for tourists and is an attractive option for enjoying the bounties of nature. You can sunbathe on the beach, soaking in the gentle sunlight throughout the day or curl up with a book in the cool confines of your chalet or play around in nature's own Jacuzzi a short walk from your residence. Those seeking tranquillity can climb up the hill and rest under the numerous trees that crave to reach the skies in the dense rainforests that cover the hills. So fire, water and earth, one can watch the changing phases of these primordial elements at dawn and dusk, You also have the option of spending the night at the beach huts, soaking in the moonlight and watching the twinkling stars all over the horizon. The cool ocean breeze, the moist sand and the gurgling lullaby of the gently rolling waves ensure a refreshing night's rest under the starlit sky.

A trip on a glass bottomed boat is another fascinating experience if you want to explore these coral gardens without getting wet. You can observe the colonies of coral and the marine life which shelter under them. At times you see lots of colourful fish swimming in synchronicity across the transparent deep blue waters. The symmetry, harmony and telepathic communication between these tiny creatures need to be seen to be believed. Unexpected showers are a constant feature of these tropical rainforests and to see millions of thick water droplets plunge into the dark blue sea as you sit under the canopy of your boat is an encounter with nature that is welcome. The bobbing boat, the turbulent sea and the incessant splatter of rain on the roof makes this experience seep into every pore of your being. The attractive monsoon promotional offers at Berjaya Tioman during September to November, is all the more reason to visit this paradise island during the monsoon. **btw**



stay here

- Berjaya Tioman Island Beach Resort is a comfortable place to stay. Lots of budget resorts also abound at Tioman Island ranging from 100 RM to 200RM. The hotel rates are on a per night basis only. The accommodation is equivalent to three star hotels in India minus the frills.
- Every visitor to Tioman Island has to pay a conservation fee of 5RM to the Tioman Island Marine Park. Boutique beachfront resort on Tioman Island has luxurious chalet styled villas which are probably the best retreat for newly weds. Bookings can be done online. During November to February, the sea may be unsettled and unsuitable for watersports. (1 RM = 0.27 US dollars)

