

FOOTLOOSE



MONKEY BUSINESS

WOMKEY BUSINESS??



After the long cruise you return to the comfort of the Jiva Rhu spa where the ancient Thai foot massage relaxes your aching bones. The Ayurvedic spa has more to offer. Staffed by *kalari* and traditional masseurs from Kerala, the *shirodhara* is an extremely rejuvenating experience. Lukewarm herbal oil is gently poured on the forehead exactly four fingers above the point where the eyebrows meet. The body and head are gently massaged for 50 minutes of *shirodhara*

after which you get a body scrub. The Balinese aromatherapy massage is extremely effective in relaxing all the muscles of the body. You feel waves of relaxation ripple through every muscle as the masseur works on you with scientific precision. The aromatic oils used during this massage stimulate all the five senses, resulting in an extraordinary experience. The Thai foot massage is an extremely effective way to find a new pair of legs! You feel a new vigour in every step taken after this two hour massage that increases the blood flow to every part of the foot. Indeed, the massage therapy is so effective that you forget the aches and pains of yesterday and are ready to hit the trail again the next day. **btw**

reach 'out

By road:

Visitors travelling by road have to drive from Kuala Lumpur to Kuala Kedah, which takes all of six hours. Car parking facilities are available at the Kuala Kedah jetty from where you take the boat to Langkawi. Taxis are available at the 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 Kuala Kedah ferry takes only 75 minutes to reach Langkawi.

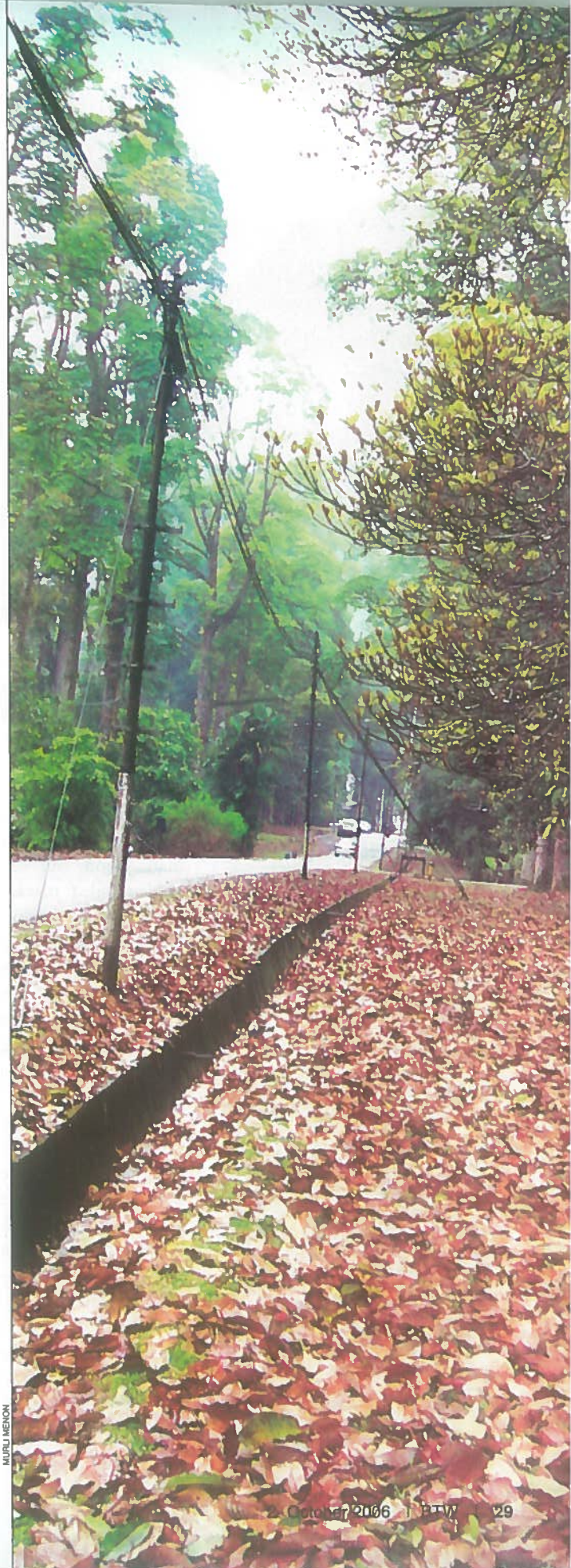


On the island of Langkawi (*lang-kah-wee*), the rhythm of life remains much as it had in days gone by. A coastline dotted with fishing boats, rustic villages, and a horizon that twinkles with the brilliance of a thousand stars at dusk. Nowhere is this more apparent than at a cape in the northernmost tip Tanjung Rhu (*tan-joong-roo*) - a scenic and untouched enclave nestled in the shade of luxuriant casuarinas. Here lies the Tanjung Rhu Resort, a quaint little resort fringing the long, magnificent bay that leads to the clear, cool waters of the Andaman Sea. Spread over 1100 acres and landscaped by nature, Tanjung Rhu offers a unique combination of the most modern comforts encased in an oyster of peace and surrounded by blue lagoons and verdant hills. You wake up each morning listening to the sweet songs emanating from innumerable mynahs that have sought sanctuary under the huge trees that surround this picturesque resort.

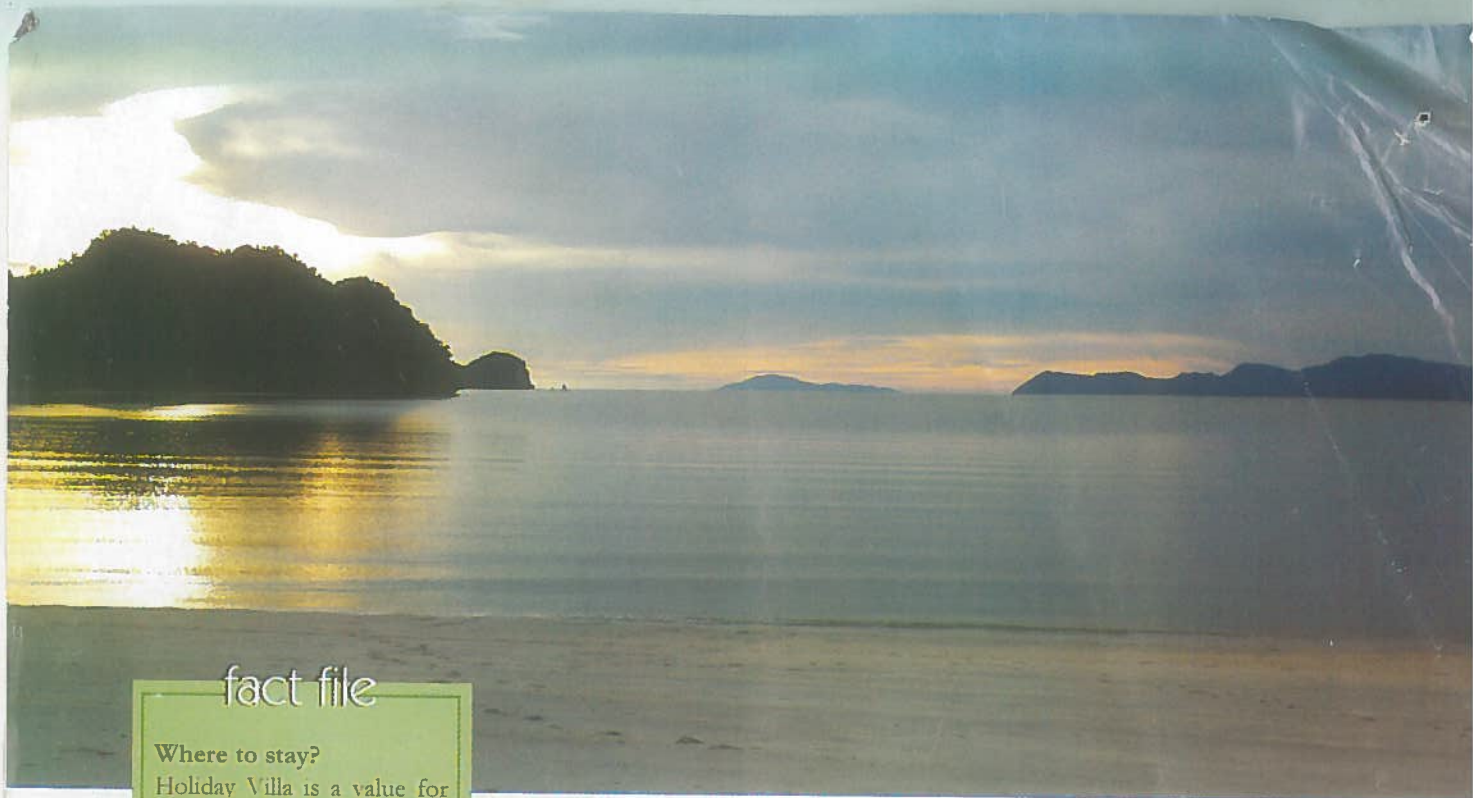
It is advisable to stay overnight at Langkawi for at least one night to explore the wonders of nature on this island off the Malaysian coast. **By MURLI MENON**

I am writing this from the beachside villa at Tanjung Rhu Beach Resort at Langkawi, a 478 sq km island 600 km north of Kuala Lumpur. Langkawi is derived from the word *lang* in Malay meaning eagle and *kawi* meaning black stone. Thus Langkawi means Eagle's Black Stone island. Several species of tropical eagles inhabit this island, a 30-minute flight from Penang. Langkawi is also connected by flights from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. It is advisable to stay overnight at Langkawi at least for one night, if not more, to explore the wonders of nature on this island. Langkawi consists of isolated coves, tropical rainforests, scattered paddy fields, sandy beaches and mangroves. 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.

One of the must-see attractions after the novelty of the silver sands and snowy beaches have worn off is an early morning cruise along the mangrove swamps to spot golden tailed macaques that live alongside the mangroves. Located near the Tanjung Rhu Beach Resort, these mangroves can be reached by a speedboat in a matter of minutes. The marine life at Tanjung Rhu beach is a rich treasure trove and a fascinating window on the aquatic world. Home to over innumerable varieties of fish and other animals, each fish represents living proof of being sculpted by nature's hidden hand. As you cruise along the placid waters of the translucent lagoons that flank both sides of one's speedboat, you hear rustling bushes, which indicate the presence of these golden tailed macaques.



MURLI MENON



fact file

Where to stay?

Holiday Villa is a value for money proposition that offers five-star comfort at three-star rates and is reasonably priced by Indian standards during October to November, which is the off season.

Where to eat?

Lots of small restaurants serving Malay and Chinese cuisine dot Langkawi. Freshly steamed vegetables in coconut milk, pumpkin cooked in mustard paste, boiled spinach with peppercorn are served with white boiled rice at Sun Village, a quaint restaurant serving specialty Malay cuisine. At RM18 this Malay food platter is a steal. Pappadam is value for money for Indian vegetarians. The food at the high profile hotels is only for the gastronomically adventurous who like greasy food. Fresh tropical fruits including watermelons, papayas, tender coconuts, pineapples and are available at the local market.

Spotting one is not so easy. The macaques scatter at the sound of the approaching motorboat. A more relaxed technique to spot these gentle creatures is to alight at one of the tiny jetties that dot the swamps and transfer to a wooden canoe and paddle gently along the reedy plants. Nature rewards patience and you can wait in the boat for the arrival of these delicate darlings. One of the more adventurous lands on a branch near your boat. After keenly observing the boat and its occupants, it squeaks and signals his mate. Soon, out of nowhere, seven to eight golden tailed macaques land alongside and swing wildly from one branch to the other. One gets to spot a mother feeding her newborn too. But feeding wild monkeys is neither advisable nor expected. Giant monitor lizards roam the swamps as did their ancestors during the prehistoric days. There are ancient species of palms that are endemic to the limestone formations around these swamps. These palms have been around for 260 million years and palaeontologists believe dinosaurs fed on them. The other rare species of palm that can be found here is the Buddha's belly palm, which is much sought after by Chinese as they believe it brings prosperity when planted in one's gardens. You may see the giant terrestrial crab, another prehistoric crustacean, if you are one is fortunate enough.

