

# BEACH Please

## Malaysia's Underrated Islands

BY HIRANMAYII AWLI MOHANAN

It is a well-known fact that Malaysia overflows with comprehensive beauty, translated through its people, food, flora and fauna. That said, what many are uninformed about Malaysia (locals included) are its pristine, sun-dappled and highly underrated islands that could challenge the Maldives and its likes any day. Befitting KL Lifestyle magazine's travel theme and the Malaysia Day celebration, we list the country's underrated islands for your reading pleasure.

### PULAU KAPAS, TERENGGANU

Defined as cotton, its moniker, 'kapas' aptly describes the characteristics of this paradise. It features white cottony beaches that your feet sink into and a scene of rustic, laid back charm. The island offers a tropical jungle as well as clear, glassy seawater, white sandy beaches and coral reefs. It is promoted as a diving and snorkeling paradise, besides activities such as turtle-spotting and kayaking.



### PULAU LANKAYAN, SABAH

Lankayan, is a tiny jewel-shaped island located off the northeastern coast of Sabah and joins the Sugud Islands Marine Conservation Area (SIMCA). Surrounded by azure water and coral reefs, it makes for one of Sabah's top diving spots. There are two Lankayan wrecks and over 20 dive sites that you can go explore. Besides the diving crowd, this island attracts families with its 24 beachfront wooden chalets, complete with outdoor chaise lounges for some sweet, family-bonding time.



### PULAI SAPI, SABAH

Another addition to the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park in Sabah is Pulau Sapi. The alluring scene here is right out of a postcard; makes for a heavenly getaway to see the underwater ecosystem. Activities for the water babies include snorkeling and diving, and paragliding for the adventurous. Make most of your time at this island by camping and watching a surreal sunrise the morning after.

### PANTAI KERACHUT, PENANG

Have you ever pictured lying on the beach, stargazing and sleeping under the starry skies? You can make your dream come true at Pantai Kerachut in Penang. Forget about the overcrowded Batu Ferringhi and Tanjung Bungah and head to this beach instead. Merely 3 km away from Penang National Park, its location is ideal for BBQ nights and camping. It is the abode of the Penang Turtle Sanctuary and a rare meromictic lake.

### PULAU GAYA, SABAH

Situated 10 minutes away from Kota Kinabalu, Pulau Gaya is an enclave surrounded by the majestic Borneo rainforest. Located within the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park, it features a diverse array of colourful aquatic life – a snorkelers or divers' paradise. On the other hand, for those who feel the call of verdant greenery, a 20km light trekking trail awaits, where one is enclosed by greenery.



### PULAU TENGAH, JOHOR

Pulau Tengah is a private island in Johor, gazetted as a marine park. Naturally, it is home to plentiful rare underwater flora and fauna. Its name, Tengah (translated as 'middle' in Bahasa Malaysia) is attributed to its location, nestled between two other islands, Pulau Besar and Pulau Hujung. Besides the usual snorkeling and scuba-diving activities, turtle-watching is highly recommended here. You can also spend some time volunteering at the island's turtle conservation project called Turtle Watch Camp. It is the perfect place to bear witness to the breeding ground of leatherback turtles.

