



EMBRACED BY NATURE... at Cameron Highlands

The world is changing at unprecedented speed. Everywhere we look, what was once verdant land is systematically overtaken by concrete and steel structures. For us urban dwellers, the "artificially-created" landscapes outside our apartments, usually consisting of a few young trees and some patches of grass here and there, is as close to nature as we're going to get. And with the skyrocketing value of properties, opening the window to the sight of a lush garden is fast becoming a distant dream that seems impossible to fulfill. Fortunately, many of us who reside in Malaysia can rest knowing that the warm embrace of Mother Nature is still but a short travel away...

As a boy who grew up in a *kampung*, my childhood days were spent amidst local wild trees, crystalline rivers and meandering hill slopes. Everyday after school, I would make my way back home through a mazy forested path, usually with a group of good buddies and classmates. The path was by no mean easy to traverse. By the time we got back, we would be sweating and panting and our shoes stained with mud and dirt. And during rainy days, we would even be drenched from head to toes! Still, those were probably the best days of my life.

Journey to the Strawberry Park Resort

Having spent much of my life in such a wonderful natural environment, I've grown up to acquire more than just a casual need for the great outdoors. Whenever I could, I would make it a point to travel to hills, rivers and other places that remind me of home. And it was during one of these little adventures that I recently found myself at the lush,

picturesque Cameron Highlands.

Perhaps due to the lengthy period since my last escapade from the city, my spirit was exceptionally high, even more so than usual, when I arrived at Cameron Highlands' highly-rated Strawberry Park Resort. Like magic at work, I could feel my mind relaxing and my body loosening to the scenic surroundings and the wonderfully slow-paced atmosphere. Even the chronic soreness of my shoulders seemed to disappear into thin air!

Like a kid being led to a playground, I was determined to enjoy every second of my little escapade, and what better way to do so than to allow my appetite to take over. Luckily for me, the Strawberry Park Resort did not disappoint in this respect, with a diverse range of English-style afternoon tea, Thai cuisine, Western food, scrumptious steamboat and even outdoor dining at its lush garden to choose from. I took turn trying out the various dining options, and stuffed myself until I could eat no more. Amazingly, every food tasted just

as good as the other.

An Escape from the Summer Heat

Cameron Highlands is a popular destination to both foreign and local tourists. Driving from Kuala Lumpur, the journey takes approximately four hours – first through the ultra-convenient North-South Expressway, followed by an adventurous drive up an intertwining mountain road. A combination of cool mountain air and fresh produce (especially the children's favorite – strawberry) await at the end of the journey, so there's plenty of things to look forward to during the trip!

Bliss is a Cup of Fresh Morning Tea

It is said that in seasonal countries, nothing beats a cup of piping-hot, fresh-made tea on a spring morning. In Cameron Highlands, the sentiment is identical. Every morning, you could wake up with a cup of good black tea here, and do so in front of lush tea gardens scattered across the hill slopes. Personally, my most memorable experience here is watching the tea workers going about their business right after sunrise, where the soft rays of the morning sun would reflect against the dew that hang on the tip of the tea leaves. It was like watching a show of twinkle and sparkle presented by Mother Nature itself.

Though I do not profess to be a tea expert, I love drinking tea. Unlike "professional" tea drinkers, I know next to nothing about the

