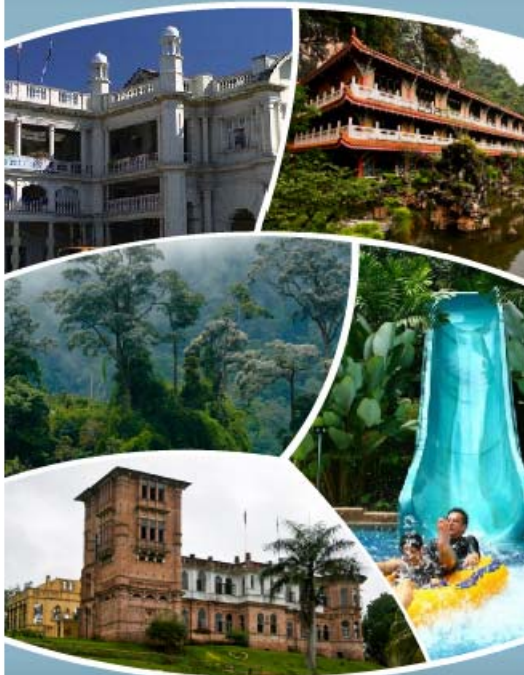


# *Ipo*

*Where Old Meets New*



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## *Ipoh - Where Old Meets New*

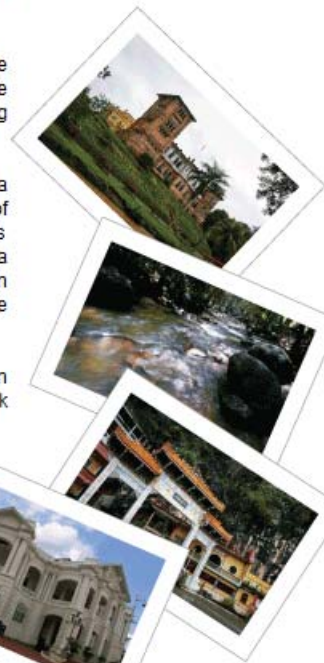
***Surrounded by jungle-clad mountains and hills, Ipoh sits on a lovely valley and this pleasant city offers its visitors some of the most enjoyable holidays in the country.***

Like all highway drives, the journey on the North South Expressway can be a monotonous one but at least the dramatically rugged blue mountains not far from the road, are refreshing to look at.

This is the common scenery along the expressway when you drive from the Malaysian capital towards Ipoh, the Perak state capital famed for its limestone hills, cave temples, delicious food, and lively nights among other interesting offerings.

Established in 1880, Ipoh today is the third largest city in the country with a population of more than 700,000 resident. This city is about 200km north of Kuala Lumpur and basically, it is divided by the Kinta River into two areas called Old Town and New Town, but the development of Greentown into a bustling administrative and commercial centre of Ipoh as well as the even newer Medan Ipoh commercial area, has made the latter two places more popular among residents and visitors alike.

Ipoh is also the birthplace for some prominent people who are known regionally or internationally such as Dato' Michelle Yeoh, Mamat Khalid, Patrick Teoh, Angie Cheung, Amber Chia, and cartoonist Lat.



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## A Tree called Ipoh

The origin of Ipoh's name is said to have come from a tree that used to grow abundantly in that area. Called the Pokok Ipoh, it produces poisonous sap that the Orang Asli use to tip their blowpipe's darts, which then help kill quarry quite instantly.

The city also has several old nicknames such as "City of Millionaires" referring to the many residents who made their vast fortunes from the discovery of tin, found in abundance here in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. It is also popularly known as "the Town that Tin built".

Ipoh was founded in the 1890s when it started as a small village by the banks of the Kinta River. It grew and gained prominence at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the establishment of tin-mining companies by the British. It grew rapidly especially in the 1920s and 1930s.

In the 1950s, Ipoh was the country's main entertainment centre with large numbers of cinema halls, cabarets, amusement parks, and night life. Malayan Airways (now Malaysia Airlines) also had operations in Ipoh back in its early days.



## 'Happening' Medan Ipoh

You can get to Ipoh in just two hours using the excellent North South Expressway. From recommendations, I checked into the brand new Ipoh Times Inn Hotel in Medan Ipoh Bestari. Room rates ranged from RM65 to RM95 at this hotel, which is still squeaking new and clean, and it is located in the glitzier part of Ipoh where nights are the blooming time of the day.

There is a 24-hour McDonald's, five minutes walk away and the Jusco shopping complex and Tesco hypermarket are also sited within walking distance from here.

This area around the hotel comes alive at night with numerous Chinese restaurants opening up for business and offering a myriad of cheap and delicious hawker's fare.

There are also various finer dining outlets as well as Indian Muslim restaurants here. It's indeed a food connoisseur's haven. A *pasar malam* operates here on Tuesday nights and apart from more food on offer, you will also find cheap goods on sale.

One interesting feature is the high density of pubs, bistros, and clubs located in this area and no surprise that finding a parking lot can be a problem if you are driving.



A colourful and busy evening at Gerbang Malam.

## Past and Present

A walk around the compact Old Town revealed that this place is filled with olden-day pre-World War II shop houses, heritage buildings, and some Government buildings.

St. Michael's Institution along Jalan S.P. Seenivasagam is architecturally interesting, so is the Ipoh train station (Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd) with its Moorish, and Gothic architecture that makes it another famous landmark. In front of the railway station is an Ipoh tree.

These olden-day shophouses along Jalan Bandar Timah in the Old Town maintain their architecture, and many are now favourite eating places.

The Perak Medical University and Ipoh City Hall building are located in the New Town.

Get a glimpse of the past here by visiting the Muzium Darul Ridzuan, which showcases the interesting history of Perak, and it is located in a nice former tin-mining tycoon's mansion near the railway station.

One of the most interesting Hindu temples in Perak is the Mari Amman Temple, an old temple located on the banks of a river near a bridge along Sungai Pari Road.



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## Lovely Recreational Parks

The Gunung Lang Recreational Park is 5 km from the Ipoh city centre has three man-made lakes which were reclaimed from old tin mines. It is a picturesque park surrounded by low limestone hills.



Gunung Lang recreational park.



D. R. Seenivasagam Park



D. R. Seenivasagam Park formerly known as the Coronation Park, is located in the heart of Ipoh (New Town), is known for its lovely landscaped gardens and recreational facilities. The park has several recreational fields, an artificial lake, a nursery, and a children's playground. Here, there are nice pedestrian paths, pretty arches, shelters, and the Ipoh tree is also present. A landscaped Japanese garden featuring a typical Japanese carp pond is a favourite spot for amateur photographers.



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## Pretty Japanese Garden

This is a pretty landscaped garden, created to resemble those in Japan. There are bonsai plants here, carp ponds, a rock garden, and plenty of colourful flowers, namely bouganvilleas.

This garden was established in the early 1960s and is a popular site for couples, and wedding photographs. Visitors from near and far come to admire and enjoy the garden's ambiance where its small Japanese house, *koi* pond, and wooden bridge across a stream combine to recreate a picture perfect scenery.

Surprisingly, there is also a Dutch attraction here, in the form of a colourful solar-powered floral clock on a slope, which is imported from Holland.



Small Japanese house



Colourful Carp



Bridge at the Japanese Garden



## Overwhelming Spread of Food Choice

Ipoh is famed for having one of the cleanest and clearest water supplies in Malaysia with its source coming from the waterfalls nearby Tanjung Rambutan.

Ipoh is also famous for its food and according to local people's claim, the city's water which is relatively high in alkali content makes the food especially delicious.

When it comes to Chinese hawker's fare, few places in the country can rival the spread of mouth-watering cuisines available in this city. Especially tasty is its *Sar Hor Fun*, which is a flat white rice noodle, *Char Kuey Teow*, *Hor Hee* served with fish cakes; *Nga Choi Kai*, which is chicken with bean sprouts, *Hakka Mee*, and *Dim Sum* consisting of small Chinese dumplings with various filling.



There is also a generous selection of places offering an even bigger spread of Malay cuisine. The *Satay* (meat on a skewer served with peanut sauce) is great here and do not miss the opportunity to taste some of the best *Tempoyak* (preserved durian extract) based dishes.



Dim Sum.



Char Kuey Teow

There is a selection of Indian restaurants in its Old Town area offering banana leaf rice and a variety of northern Indian food.

Another popular item in the menu is "Ipoh white coffee", which is increasingly becoming popular in other cities in Malaysia where classier restaurant serve this specialty along with other famous types of western-origin coffee.

## Temples in the Caves

Ipoh has many limestone caves and visitors must not miss a visit to the unique Sam Poh Tong or Cavern of Triple Gems, which is built in a cave. The temple is located on the southern side of the city along the main trunk road (Federal Route 1) to the south. It is fascinating to see beautiful and intricately designed places of worship like this, locked into otherwise void caverns.

There is a pretty pond outside with many tortoise as the Chinese believe these creatures bring good luck. Its sister temple, Perak Tong has a steep, high staircase leading from the cave's interior right to the outside top of its hill, which offers thrilling view of Ipoh and its surroundings. You can also savour good vegetarian food here.

Another interesting temple is the Kek Lok Tong or Cavern of Utmost Bliss, and it lies at the opposite side of the same range of limestone hills as Sam Poh Tong. You can get there through the Gunung Rapat housing area. The best part is the scenic cave view here, which is simply spectacular.



Sam Poh Tong



Kek Lok Tong



Perak Tong



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One destination that not many visitors to Ipoh are aware of is the spectacularly scenic drive along the Simpang Pulai-Cameron Highlands expressway that presents some of the most fascinating close up views of mountains in the country. This picturesque part of the state so close to Ipoh is called the Kinta Heights. The idea of the drive would be to see the Pos Selim Orang Asli village, some 20km from Simpang Pulai, which is about 10km from Ipoh South.

Pos Selim is located about 500m above sea-level in a valley sitting by the shadows of the imposing 1,712m high Gunung Chabang, which resembles a giant camel's hump when viewed from the village. The mountain with its dizzying slopes, colourful flora and numerous waterfalls such as the Lubuk Timah, is a lure for trekkers and climbers. However, trekkers not familiar with the terrain should hire guides from the Orang Asli village.

The mostly Christian villager's are curious but not unfriendly. Many visitors have come here before and you will get a close view of their village and even make some friends.

The road to Cameron goes on to 1,440m above sea level from here and you will pass close to even mightier looking mountains, namely Gunung Suku.



## Eerie Kellie's Castle

One famous attraction near Batu Gajah not far from Ipoh is Kellie's Castle, which is the uncompleted and abandoned mansion of an eccentric British planter. You can get there in half an hour's drive from Ipoh city centre. This building is especially appealing as it is said to be haunted and contains secret passages leading to hidden chambers.





## Refresh at Ulu Chepor

Ulu Chepor is a popular recreational place to relax, picnic, or do camping and trekking. It is located at the foot of the Kledang Range and there is a nice waterfall here. It is just 10km from the city and the place has good facilities for the public such as parking areas, rest shades, and washrooms.



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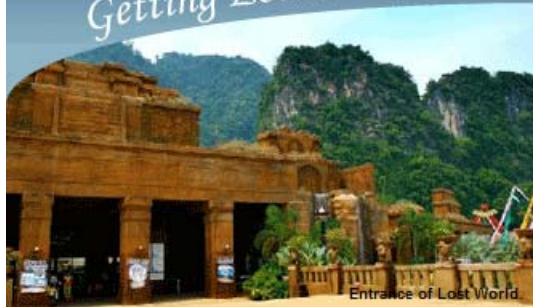
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## Getting Lost in Tambun



Set among dreamy looking forest clad limestone hills where many hectares of Pomelo plantations once flourished, The "Lost World of Tambun" is a RM60 million water theme park, just four-years old and only 11km from the heart of Ipoh.

Living to its name, the theme park is landscaped with vines, creepers, and lush tropical plants and in it, visitors can choose from a myriad of thrilling and fun activities. Among the more exciting ones offered here are special rides such as the Tube Raiders where you will come sliding down through large tubes, Cliff Racer with its exhilarating high speed mine carts, and Jungle Wave Bay, which is a huge wave pool with seven different waves that can rise to one metre.

After the wave pool, you can further boost that adrenaline rush by going through the Tube Raiders where four different tube slides measuring, between 113m and 115m, take you on a seemingly endless slide down to the end at the edge of a pool. One of the slides even has a dark tunnel that will take your breathe away as you slide through.

More adventure and fun can be sought at the Adventure River, which is a long 600m river ride around the theme park and it includes some thrilling moments negotiating giant waves. The river passes through structures built to resemble ruins where you will hear recorded sounds and calls of monkeys, elephants, and insects. Sprays of water and smoke add to the adventurous feel. The Tipping Basket is another favourite here where a huge bucket above is filled with water and tips, pouring water on everyone below. For those who need more, check out the Cliff Racer twin speed coaster slides that offer you even faster blood-curdling sliding experience.





Anyone with the passion for seeing animals would not want to miss Tiger Valley where three adult Siberian tigers and their cubs can be seen, staying on an island that is created to closely resemble their natural habitat.

The theme park has also incorporated the well-known Tambun Hot Springs into its confines and you can now enjoy a hot soak in one of the several pools here that are filled with hot water from natural springs, said to have curative and therapeutic properties, especially for healing skin ailments.



The theme park opens from 12:00 noon until 7pm on weekdays while on weekends, school, and public holidays, it opens at 10am. The park closes on Tuesdays except on Malaysian school and public holidays. Entrance fees are RM21 per adult and RM16 per child.

There is ample parking facility outside the park and there is also a small township just away from the entrance, where there are grocery shops, restaurants, and even a hypermarket.





## *Ipoh's Pomelos - Famous Giant Citrus*

Ipoh has a famous agricultural product that visitors from other towns often buy as gifts for friends or relatives back home.

It's called Pomelo and is grown quite extensively in the Tambun area near limestone hills. Apparently, this species of citrus plants seem to thrive in Ipoh's hot wet climate where the soil is generously laced with lime and chalk.

The fruit can grow an amazing 3kg and can measure 30cm across. Usually, its about 1kg in weight and has thick skin with fleshy juicy pulp that is mildly sweet, tangy, and aromatic.

Many places in Ipoh sell the fruit but at the main trunk road to Kuala Lumpur near the Perak Tong temples, there are dozens of pomelo stalls, the most you will find anywhere in the country.



## *The Peak that Dominates the Kinta Valley*

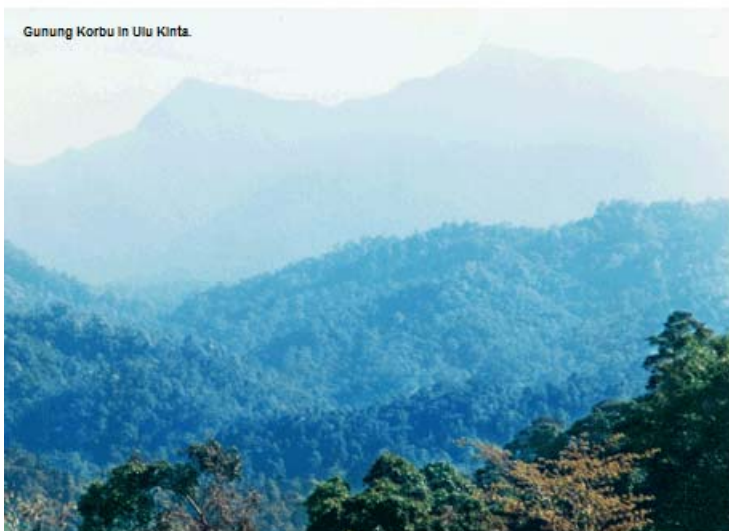
On clear days, you can see it from anywhere in Ipoh and the Kinta Valley. Little wonder as this imposing mountain is the second highest peak in the peninsula, standing at 2183m.

Gunung Korbu is a massive mountain with jagged twin peaks and half the mountain is covered in clouds most of the days. In the mornings, mist veils its slopes, revealing just its peaks and on cloud-free days, its slopes and ridges can be seen scarred by massive landslides.

Gunung Korbu presents one of the best and most adventurous climbing experiences, which takes four days and three nights to complete for those with reasonable fitness level.

Experienced climbers will know that there are three places to start the climbing direction with trailheads from Tanjung Rambutan, Ulu Kinta near Ipoh, and from Gunung Yong Belar, which is in Pahang.

Gunung Korbu in Ulu Kinta.



This route From Tanjung Rambutan is said be the easiest way up, although climbers who have done it will testify that no way up Gunung Korbu is an easy way. The trek starts from an old abandoned logging road, only accessible by 4WD drive vehicles and the return climb can be completed in four days.

The first and second day takes you trekking along a logging road to a campsite by a small stream on a slope. The peak is about six hours climb from here. It's all the way down on the third and fourth day.



The Ulu Kinta route is considered to be much more difficult, being shorter, it is steeper with near vertical walls to scale. The trek may seem easy at the beginning where it starts at the Ulu Kinta Intake, which is a forest recreational park. The trek here begins from a low altitude and the walk is along the Kinta river at its youth stage, passing by several Orang Asli villages. There are also several river crossings before reaching the first night's campsite by a river.

A tough climb awaits on the second day until the last water point, which is seven hours climb to the peak. Steep inclinations and slippery conditions prevail thereafter.

The trek from Gunung Yong Belar in Pahang is considered one of the toughest climbs in the country, taking six days for just one way! The climb is from the TNB dam in Kampung Raja, Cameron Highlands and up to Gunung Yong Belar, from where you have to climb up and down several other mountains before you finally get to the top of Korbu.

Parts of the Gunung Korbu forest reserve have been logged and the scenery is monotonous at the lower levels with little view, as the panorama is obstructed by secondary forest.



Cloud covered Gunung Korbu

It can also be very hot on midday as you trek along the wide dirt logging road and there are really no huge trees here, which are common in real pristine tropical rainforest where they provide you much needed shade.

However, when you ascend above 1000m, less logging activity is seen and more lush vegetation starts to appear. The air gets cooler at this height and the Giant Tree Fern gets showy, with clumps of it growing everywhere.

Still higher at 1,700m, the wind gets stronger, clouds more prevalent, and the air is certainly chillier. Here, trees are smaller with tiny leaves, clumps of Rhododendrons can be seen, and small orchids in bloom decorate tree branches. Heavy misty conditions create a special forest where thick moss cover the ground and branches.

The 'Cloud Forests' dominate right up to the peak where windy conditions and poor soil create an even more stunted forest of Bonsai-like vegetation and peat moss. The ground is soggy here and the wet conditions often dismay climbers as their soaking feet becomes numb with cold at these heights.

For those who want to experience shrill winds and temperature as low as 5 degrees, Celsius, a small space near the peak allows for camping and on clear nights, the starry lights of Ipoh, far below and beyond, is ethereal looking.

It is recommended to take a guide for climbs up Gunung Korbu, and you must be reasonably fit. Take what is necessary, such as camping gear and energy food supply, and always inform the nearest police station at least three months earlier, if you intend to enter the forest and climb to the peak.



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## Getting There

Ipoh is well-connected to all parts of the country. The Federal Route 1 main trunk road connects Ipoh with neighboring towns north and south of it, as well as to other roads, leading to other parts of the state and beyond.

The North-South Expressway is the best, fastest, and easiest way to get to Ipoh and you can exit the highway into the city at four places - Simpang Pulai, South Ipoh (Ipoh S) or North Ipoh (Ipoh U) and at Jelapang.

If you prefer a scenic and nice way to get there, the train is recommended. Ipoh's railway station is situated in the Old Town and from here, the railway connects Ipoh with neighbouring towns and cities. Daily train services from KL at 8:45pm arrives at Ipoh at 1:05am. It then goes to Butterworth, and to Hat Yai, Thailand.

The inter-city bus terminal is located at Silver Heritage Galleria along Gopeng Road and there are express bus services here to cities and towns all over the country.

Merpati flies to Ipoh three times weekly from Medan (Indonesia). Beginning April, Firefly, a subsidiary of Malaysia Airlines, will connect Ipoh to Penang and Subang, Kuala Lumpur.



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