



Kuala Kangsar

Splendours of a Royal Town



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*A delightful tour in a town
steeped in history*



The mighty Perak River meanders lazily past this quaint town in Perak, located just 30 km north of Ipoh, the state capital. The river is broad and slow moving here, unlike its youth stage at the Thai border from where it then flows through Perak's Gerik district.

The town is also the administrative centre for the Kuala Kangsar district. Kuala Kangsar has approximately 39,300 residents and many of them are involved in small trade or work as civil servants.

This river was the important water transportation route for several centuries back then when there were no roads. Many towns and villages sprouted along its banks, including Kuala Kangsar. Its strategic location in the heart of Perak along the side of the Perak River, made it a suitable point for setting up the residence of rulers then, and until today, Kuala Kangsar is the Royal town of Perak with the official residence of the Perak Sultan sited in it.



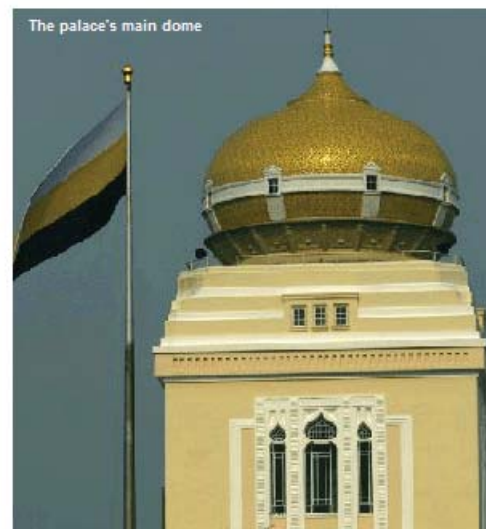
Walk Into the Past

Kuala Kangsar today is still rich with its traditions as it was more than 200 years ago, when Sultan Yusuf Sharifuddin Mudzaffar Shah of Perak who ruled from 1877 to 1887 had his first Royal Palace built beside the riverbank, which was named 'Istana Sri Sayong'.

The palace was not only exposed to the dangers of invasions, flooding also wreaked havoc to its structure and one great flood in 1926, which almost swept away the Palace brought about the decision to move it to its current site, where it was named Istana Iskandariah and still stands today, more beautiful than ever.

The Sultan of Perak officially resides in Kuala Kangsar, which has been Perak's Royal seat since the 18th century. The town was also the administrative centre of the first British Resident in the Malay Peninsular, James W.W. Birch, from October 1874 until November 2, 1875.

Kuala Kangsar is also where the first Conference of Rulers, the Durbar, was held in 1897. It remains to this day, one of the most attractive of Malaysia's royal towns and is also the one where the first rubber tree in the country still stands today.



The palace's main dome



Istana Iskandariah

Charming With Its Historical Landmarks

Two bridges now connect Kuala Kangsar to Sayong and to the roads across the banks of the Perak River. Sultan Abdul Jalil Shah bridge is located near the town while Sultan Iskandar bridge is further upstream. The former takes people across to the village of Sayong and to other villages and towns across the banks of the river. Sayong is famous for its clay vassal industry and today, collectors can easily access this village via the bridge.

The Sultan Iskandar bridge, which is about 330m in length is an important connection for the Federal Route 1, which runs along all the main towns from Johor Bahru in the south to Alor Star in the north.

Apart from being the location for the Sultan of Perak's Palace and his official residence, Kuala Kangsar town also proudly boasts other important foundations including one the of oldest schools in the country, The Royal Malay College.



Galeri Sultan Azlan Shah



Masjid Ubudiah

Visitors can also see the country's first rubber tree here, standing tall, strong, and carefully protected by a fence, right in the towns centre.

An awe inspiring structure that is iconic to Kuala Kangsar is its gorgeous gold hued Masjid Ubudiah, an old mosque of Mogul architecture at Bukit Chandan, built in 1917 by the then Sultan of Perak Sultan Idris Shah. Its five golden domes and 24 minarets are strikingly positioned, making this one of the most beautiful old mosques in the country.

The mosque is located at Bukit Chandan, which is also where the Palace ground is sited, along with the Royal Mausoleum, and the Galeri Sultan Azlan Shah which has huge collection of memorabilia and paraphernalia of past and present Sultans of Perak. Another old but attractive building in the vicinity is the striking and intricately carved yellow and black wooden Istana Kenangan or Royal Perak Museum, which was built in 1926.

In Kuala Kangsar town itself, the old Kuala Kangsar Clock Tower in a mini roundabout is an interesting landmark. The town's old streets and shophouses present tourist a unique shopping experience.

For dining, the town is famed for its traditional Malay fare and here, its refreshing Cendol and tangy Laksa (a type of Malaysian noodle in spicy soup) should not be missed. Some of the best places to savour these delicacies are by the riverbank stalls at Dataran Kuala Kangsar. Here, there are also many stalls selling traditional tidbits, and local crafts made from clay, mat, and rattan.

The stalls are pleasantly sited by the riverbank, which also has a riverine park complete with mini playground, jogging or walking tracks, manicured gardens, and wooden shades. Perfect for an evening stroll or breather. Nearby is the towns' famous Rest House. Here, people come to stay or hold important and auspicious functions.



In Kuala Kangsar, there are several important cottage industries namely the making of Labu Sayong, a kind of Gourd-shaped vassal made from clay which is found in the Sayong area, hence the name of the craft. The Labu Sayong is said to owe its origins to ancient traders from the Middle East who brought with them similar looking water containers made from metal. The Labu Sayong is a popular decorative item in most Malay homes in the country and the vassal is said to impart curative and cooling properties to drinking water that is stored in it.

There are many homes that involve in the production of these vassals as well as other decorative clay jars and vases. They are mostly located along the village of Sayong by the banks of Perak River opposite of Kuala Kangsar.



At Bukit Chandan, there are two small but fascinating industries still kept alive by several household heads. Its the making of *Parang*, a Malaysian machete and the *Keris*, an important traditional weapon, used long ago in wars and fights, but now is part of the complete Malay men's traditional outfit worn during their most important occasions such as during weddings or Royal functions.

The Art of Making Traditional Weapons Stays

At Kampung Padang Changkat, Haizul Annuar Hussin still toils with his handmade, fire blown metal smelter that uses charcoal, to make his *Parangs*. Not an easy task as he can only complete two pieces a day.

The 39 year-old father of three who used to be a building contractor, learned the art of making *Parang* from his uncle and in six months, produced his first hand made *Parang*. He then travelled near and far in the country to get more skills on *Parang* making.

He is now able to produce *Parangs* of various sizes ranging from those with 15cm blades to Samurai sword-like *Parangs*. The different forms of *Parangs* come with different names such as *Golok Rembau*, *Tombok Lada*, *Golok Perak*, and *Rembau Camca*.



Haizul Annuar says that when there is a good demand, orders of 50 *Parangs* a month has been placed, but that is also the maximum that he can produce in one month.

The price for each of his handmade *Parang* can range from RM50 to more than RM300, depending on the order. The price usually will depend on size, wood, and metal quality, as well as carvings on the *Sarong* (sheath), which holds the weapon safely when it is carried. Surian wood is usually used for the sheath and he uses metal from car springs, chain saws, and chisels, which are smelted to create the alloy for the blade.



Haizul toils with his traditional equipments



According to this innovative metalsmith, there are eight others in Kampung Padang Changkat, which is located in Bukit Chandan, who are involved in making *Parang*, but his is the only fully traditional handmade product. It takes a week to create a *Parang* from the date of order and you can contact Haizul Annuar at +6 017 562 9931, if you are keen to own one of these masterpieces.



On the other hand, Abdul Mazin from the same village takes a much longer time to create a *Keris*, which is even harder to make as it involves amalgamating seven different types of metal products to make each blade, including metal from umbrellas, nails, fences, knives, and spades. The sheath of his *Keris* are made from Surian wood while the blade handle is made from buffalo horns.

Keris is a highly symbolic Malay weapon, which was used by Malay warriors a long time ago before the use of guns came into the picture, and today the weapon is significant in Royal ceremonies, Malay weddings, and other important functions. A traditional Malay man's costume in full regalia is incomplete without the *Keris*. Thus, the making of *Keris* is a highly special skill and art, passed down from generations and requiring the utmost patience and dexterity, not to mention strength, to create these symbolic masterpieces.

Abdul Mazin has learnt the art of making *Keris* since the age of 12, and says that the skill has been passed down the generations from his great-grandfather who was a blacksmith.

He incorporates traditional methods with some machinery help to create his *Keris*. It's not easy to make the *Keris* as once the alloy is created from the amalgamated metal, it has to be soaked in sulfur for seven days before lime is used to clean the blade, after which natural patterns will form on the metal. The whole process from scratch to complete can take three weeks. Thus, is not surprising that the price of these incredible work of art can fetch anything from RM550 to RM3,000 per piece.

Abdul Mazin has created *Keris* for the Royal Family of Perak, for display at the Pasir Salak Museum, and also made the UMNO Panca Warisan *Keris*. If you are interested in getting a traditional *Keris*, you can contact him at +6017 656 1040 or at +605 777 4050.



A more modern complex in Kuala Kangsar called Mariwasa produces various paraphernalia, medals, award badges, souvenirs, insignias, epaulets, and uniform badges. Most of the products here are made from copper and brass but some are gold plated and even come in pure gold. They are made to cater to orders from the state and federal governments, corporation, or even for private, or individual needs.



Labu Sayong. And Its Famous Water Vassal

Sayong is a village located on the eastern bank of the Perak River and it is the production centre of the famed Labu Sayong - a traditional earthenware water vassal.

The vassal is black in colour and has a unique gourd-shape that is said to cool water stored in it apart from imparting minerals that are believed by locals to have curative effects on certain ailments.

Labu Sayong is made from very fine clay soil, which is pounded into fine powder after which water is added and the mixture kneaded and shaped into its unique form.



It is then dried in the sun, and then baked in a kiln after which it is burnt in padi husk, until it turns into a rich black colour.

At Kampung Kelapa Bendang in Sayong is a thriving cottage industry producing and selling this craft. It is approximately 15 km from Kuala Kangsar. This is perhaps the best place to get these vassals at bargain prices. There are also other attractive earthenware decorative items made and sold here.



Tekad Benang Emas

Mastered only by several villagers living just outside the palace grounds, the art of 'Tekad' or embroidery was once taught to all girls on reaching puberty and this handiwork was passed from mothers to daughters. The goal was for the girls to create beautiful embroidery pieces to be worn or paraded for her own wedding ceremony.

Traditionally, gold thread is embroidered on velvet pieces, which are later used to make sets of splendid looking clothings, decorative gift sets, cushion covers, wall decorations, betel nut boxes, pillowcases, hand cushions, and beddings. The craftsmen are able to create wonderful motifs from their surroundings and the patterns are normally inspired by flora around their environment.



Carving patterns



Delicate artwork - Tekad



Embroidery on a Songkok

Places of Interest

Kuala Kangsar is a delightful town where a day could get you to see all its interesting landmarks. Not to be missed are listed below.

Ubudiah Mosque

This beautiful mosque was designed by Arthur Benison Hubback, who also designed the Ipoh, and the Kuala Lumpur railway stations. The mosque was completed in 1919

Royal Mausoleum

This is the official burial place for the Sultans of Perak and other Royal dignitaries from the state. It is located in the Ubudiah Mosque compound.



Istana Kenangan (Old Palace, now the Perak Royal Museum)

Also known as Istana Kenangan, this historical building was built with glorious diamond motif called *kelarai* adorning its walls that are made from woven sliced bamboo.

Planned and built in 1926 after the great floods, the palace was built without a blueprint and not a single nail was used. The roof is shaped with five ridges

of a traditional Malay house resembling the ridge of a row of bananas - known as 'perabung'. The palace was completed in 1931 and was the temporary residence for Sultan Iskandar Shah (1918 - 1938, the 30th Sultan of Perak).



Pavilion Square Tower

Built in 1930 during the reign of Sultan Iskandar Shah, this structure is also fondly known as the "Pagoda of Malaysia". It was once used as a recreational and entertainment venue for the wives of court officials and other important people but is now part of a public park.

Victoria Bridge

This is an old bridge in Karai town, about 15km south from Kuala Kangsar, that was built in 1900 to transport tin from that area.



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Hulu Palace (Istana Hulu)

Istana Hulu is also known as the "Istana Kota" and this former palace is located on Bukit Chandan, not far away from Ubudiah Mosque. Built in 1903 during the reign of Sultan Idris Mursyidul Azam Shah, the palace was taken over in 1954 by the Education Ministry and was subsequently converted into the Istana Kota National School.

In 1970, it was converted into the Raja Perempuan Mazwin School, but then the school moved out and the palace was abandoned until recently. Now, restoration has transformed the palace into a state museum called the 'Sultan Azlan Shah Museum'. It is considered to be one of the most beautiful old buildings of this Royal town.



Sultan Abdul Jalil Bridge

This bridge spans over the Perak River and connects the town of Kuala Kangsar to Sayong, famed for its Labu Sayong cottage industry.

Bukit Chandan

This a small hill where the Sultans palace is located, along with the Ubudiah Mosque, the Royal Mausoleum, and the Perak Royal Museum.

Keris Memorial

This memorial is located on a small hill, close to the Kuala Kangsar rest house and you can have a sweeping view of the meandering Perak River from here.

Malay College Kuala Kangsar

This is a premier school in Malaysia and was founded by four Sultans from the Federated Malay States. Many of the country's leaders had their secondary education at this college, which is located in the centre of town, not far from the railway station.

Medan Selera Sungai Perak

This place is famous for its stalls offering traditional Perak Malay cooking. You will be able to get the famed *Laksa Kuala* and *Cendol Kuala*. Also try the *Ikan Patin Masak Tempoyak* - river catfish cooked with fermented Durian.



Sultan Iskandar Bridge

This bridge spans 330m across the Perak River and connects towns that are north and south of the Perak River along the Federal Route 1.

The first and oldest Rubber tree in Malaysia

This is a special rubber tree near the Kuala Kangsar District Office, as it is the first *Hevea brasiliensis* that was planted in Malaya in 1877. Sir Hugh Low, the British Resident of Perak of that time, encouraged the growth of rubber trees to cater for the growing car industry in the west at that time. Eight others planted together at that time have all died and this is the sole surviving tree that belongs to the original batch that came from Brazil and taken to Kew Gardens in London before it was brought to Malaysia.

River side walk next to the Sayong Bridge

There is a nice tiled path that will take you pass pretty landscaped gardens, playgrounds, observation and clock towers, as well as rest areas, all with commanding views of the Perak River.

Chenderoh Dam

About 30km from town not far from the road to Sauk town is the Chenderoh Dam, built in 1926 for electricity to run the burgeoning tin mining industry then. It is the first hydroelectric dam in the country and used to be the largest power producing plant in Malaysia. Today, the lake that was created from the damming process is a serene and placid body of water with lotuses blooming at its shallower ends. The lake also supplies a small freshwater fishing community in that area.



Gushing waters of Ulu Kenas

Refreshing Forest Retreat

Where there are hills and mountains, there are sure to be waterfalls in Malaysia and the same can be expected in Kuala Kangsar district in which the southern flanks of the Bintang range is located. Like most places in the country where waterfalls are located not far from urban areas, this place has been converted into a recreational forests with facilities for outdoor activities and picnicking.

For the more nature oriented, Kuala Kangsar's forest recreational park is called Ulu Kenas where refreshing water in a gushing stream flowing down nearby mountain, makes it an ideal site for picnickers. The Ulu Kenas Recreational Park, which is popular among locals for its clean and clear water is part of the Bubu Forest Reserve and is surrounded by rainforest with the swift stream, being the main attraction here.

Small pools have been created, offering visitors the pleasure of cool refreshing dips. This is a favourite place for camping, hiking, bathing in refreshing stream water, and it is located just 12 km from town, along the road to Manong. The water from the stream comes from the nearby 1,657m Gunung Bubu, itself another attraction for mountain climbing enthusiasts.

Facilities here include a suspension bridge, chalets, a camping ground, picnic areas, public toilet, community hall, and food stalls.

Sleepy Karai

About 15km south of Kuala Kangsar, set deep among rubber plantations and hills, is the sleepy town of Karai, also by the banks of Perak River about 3km from the Iskandar bridge. One of the interesting aspects you will find here apart from the town scene that resembles one which time has forgotten, is the Victoria Bridge, built in 1900 to aid the transporting of tin by rail.

Karai is also close to several areas that produce local handicrafts. There are several centres at nearby villages such as Enggor, Kampung Bendang, and Kampung Berala, dealing in creating and selling products from earth, seashell, wood, and bamboo.

Sungai Siput - Deer, Ostriches, and More



About midway along Federal Route one between Kuala Kangsar and Ipoh is the town of Sg Siput, which offers several interesting features to visitors. Apart from jungle 4WD adventure in its Lasah area, there is also the country's premier deer and ostrich farm, which also breeds other animals on experimental basis as well as for their meat and products.

Called the Infoternak farm, it is located in the Sungai Siput (N) sub-district and covers an area of about two square km. The farm is one of the main agrotourism destinations in Perak and the activities conducted here are training and information to the public, especially on the prospects of domesticating more exotic animals that have farming potential such as deer, ostriches, and dairy goats.

Various species of livestock including cattle, goats, sheep, deer, rabbits, poultry, and ostriches are reared here. Visitors often come here to experience close and pleasant encounters with these animals, which are not exactly docile. Many visitors also come here to obtain products that they will not get elsewhere such as fresh goat's milk, quail meat, venison, ostrich eggs and meat, as well as other dairy products. Here, goats' milk can be obtained at RM 10.00 per litre, venison is priced at RM 26.00 per kg, ostrich meat is RM 30.00 per kg, Ostrich egg shells goes at RM 20.00 per shell, broiler chicken is RM 3.50 per kg liveweight, and rabbits are sold at RM 5.00 per kg liveweight. Not everyone goes home with a supply of what they want and came for as production is limited.

Deer and sheep at Infoternak.



Among the exotic breeds that you would get to see here are 60 heads of Friesian Sahiwal and Girlando cattle, 280 heads of Toggenburg and Saanan goats, 1,600 heads of deer from Mauritius and New Caledonia, 147 heads of ostriches, Broiler (Indian River breed) rabbits as well as Layers (Golden Cormet) rabbits are reared here along with 50 heads of New Zealand White rabbits. There is also a flock of peahen and peacocks that roam quite freely near the visitors registration area and exotic pigeons roosting in specially designed aviaries. The farm animals are kept in paddocks and there are also vast grazing areas here.

Infoternak has a hostel that can accommodate approximately 50 people at any one time and is available at an affordable rate of RM 8.00 per room and RM 30 for a VIP room. For those who wish to have their family day here, karaoke, fishing competitions, field facilities, food catering, and other facilities can be arranged.

Visitors will be taken around the whole farm and transportation in and around the farm is provided. You can not only get to interact with nature and animals, but learn some vital points on ostrich, and deer farming on a commercial scale.



Visiting Hours to Infoternak is during office hours from 8.00 am to 4.30 pm.

For further information and queries, contact the Manager at:

Infoternak Farm,
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Perak Darul Ridzuan.
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Facsimile: +605 - 5982266
E-mail: info@infoternak.gov.my
Manager Ladang Infoternak






Getting to Kuala Kangsar

Kuala Kangsar is easily accessible via the North-South Expressway at KM240. The town is about 5km from the toll exit. Sungai Siput is midway between Kuala Kangsar and Ipoh, and takes about 30mins to reach.

Stage coaches ply the Federal Route 1 thrice hourly from Taiping to Kuala Kangsar and twice an hour from Ipoh's Medan Kit bus terminal. The bus from Ipoh passes through Sungai Siput town.





TOURISM PERAK
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