

## Take the high road

by SEA Globe

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**Jungle walks. Cups of tea. Strawberries. God's very own triumvirate is just the beginning in the cool Cameron Highlands.**



When the sticky cities and baking beaches of Southeast Asia become too much to bear, there are relatively few destinations that offer genuine respite from the region's all-encompassing heat.

The Cameron Highlands in Malaysia is one of the most picturesque exceptions to the sweat-addled rule.

Located 200km north of Kuala Lumpur, the highlands is a retreat with its head in the clouds, standing, as it does, at about 1,500 metres above sea level. Early morning views dusted with fog and crisp evening strolls that necessitate a light cardigan come as standard – it's no wonder the area found such favour with the British during colonial times.

The footprint of the country's former rulers is still in evidence, with Tanah Rata – the highlands' main town – falling somewhere between quaint English village and small Rocky Mountain town. Visitors and locals wander the main street with an ease and comfort rarely encountered in Malaysia's other tourist hubs.

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But the Cameron Highlands is more than just a cooling-off spot, with the area's tea plantations providing some of Southeast Asia's most unique vistas. The undulating hills spread as far as the eye can see, seemingly covered by a lush emerald carpet laid by the hands of hot beverage behemoths.

The Boh Tea Plantation is the most popular of the bunch, offering tours of the estate topped off with a fresh cuppa in the tearoom perched above the rolling hills.

Trekking is also big business in the highlands, with numerous trails catering for every fitness level from athletic to pathetic. It is advisable to hire a local guide for any walks that veer off the well-trodden paths, such as the winding routes required to catch a glimpse of the infamous Rafflesia – the biggest flower in the world, sometimes growing to one-and-a-half metres in diameter. For the less adventurous, the Parit Trail, or jungle path number four, is more of an amble than a trek and concludes at the small, but pretty, Parit Waterfall.

As well as jungle jaunts, the Cameron Highlands throws up plenty of opportunities to sample the local produce, and the human being that does not salivate at the sight of a big, red, juicy strawberry is yet to be discovered. Kasimani's and Big Red are two of the most popular strawberry farms, with options including picking your own, taking them home in the form of jam, or eating them as Wimbledon intended: smothered with lashings of cream.

Options for enjoying nature's brilliant bounties are never far away in the Cameron Highlands, with butterfly farms and exotic flower nurseries providing other popular excursions. Just don't forget to pack your very best British sensibilities.