

tried &
tested



Damai Laut's
signature 15th hole.



Swiss-Garden Hotel KL.



Swiss-Garden Beach Resort.

BY BENNY TEO

A SWISS-GARDEN IN MALAYSIA

ellie's Castle stands atop an atoll surrounded by what seemed like a moat, but it is actually a creek named Raya River. It was built around 1915 by Scottish tin entrepreneur William Kellie Smith to celebrate the birth of his son.

With a unique blend of Scottish, Moorish, and Tamilvanan Indian architecture, it was sadly never finished after he had passed away from pneumonia during a short trip to Lisbon and the ruins today leave a story that continues to enthrall visitors who walk through its halls and rooms with ghosts of a disquiet past steep within its walls.

That a wonderful spectacle as this could be found on the drive up after checking out of the Swiss-Garden Hotel Kuala Lumpur en-route to its sister resort at Damai Laut is nothing short of surprising, especially after a night spent walking through the bustling streets of Bukit Bintang and Chinatown, where the four-star rated city hotel resides.

But the journey has already begun and it is a four-hour commute to Damai Laut that became six after stopping over at Kellie's Castle, a

lunch break and a stopover at Aeon Mall in between.

From the mall, it is a short commute to the Swiss-Garden Beach Resort and it is, as one would discover, a nature lover's paradise with an ecologically bountiful rainforest that stretches for miles. And it's got a wonderful beach as well.

When we arrived last December, the resort had invited the most popular hawkers from Penang for a month of feasting on all manner of sumptuous cuisine, from Ah Pheng's Assam Laksa to Ah Cheng's Wanton Mee to Ah See's Northam Beach Café's Chinese Pasembor, amongst about a dozen stalls.

Also new was a bevy of child-friendly amenities like a newly opened "Young Citizens of The World" facility where kids of all ages can engage in fun activities like 'Wall Bat Ball', an 'Apps and Tabs' zone, a movie theatre

with bean bags and more.

There is also one of the most amazing water play areas in any resort where the playground is bigger than the actual swimming pool. With a generous stretch of beach and direct access by daily speedboat across to Pangkor Island, there is so much that beach lovers can look forward to as well.

And then, there is the golf. Damai Laut Golf & Country Club had been voted by Malaysia's ParGolf magazine's People's Choice Awards as amongst the top three most scenic as well as most improved golf course in the country in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

A Ronald Fream design that stretches 6,600 metres from the back, there is a Singaporean connection with former professional golfer Lam Chih Bing holding the course record of 66 there since 2006.

Built in 1997, both the Lakes and Hill nines offer contrasting challenges to play and is still an enjoyable experience that beckons golfers to come at it again and again to try to tame it.

One of its memorable holes is the signature 15th that doglegs from left to right. With a narrow fairway that slopes sharply down about 100 metres from the green and danger on both sides, the clever play here is a small cut off the tee that sets up a short iron into a beachside green flanked by coconut trees and grass bunkers with the Naval Base in the background.

A trip here may take a long while. It takes four hours to get from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur and then another four from there to Damai Laut.

Break it up into a stopover at Malaysia's capital and the journey, as well as the destination, will be well worth the effort.