

Selangor



Surrounding KL, Selangor has developed rapidly into Malaysia's most urbanised, industrialised and prosperous state. Here you'll find great day trips such as those to the Batu Caves and the Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia, as well as rewarding stopovers, including the pleasantly cool hill station of Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser) and the old royal capital of Kuala Selangor, with its wildlife-watching and *kampung* (village) atmosphere.

Cutting a broad commercial swathe west from KL to the coast is Klang Valley, featuring the sprawling commuter residences of Petaling Jaya, which is also home to gargantuan shopping malls, the vast Sunway Pyramid and the enormous wave pool at Sunway Lagoon. Fast-flowing freeways and railways will speed you into Selangor's state capital, Shah Alam, notable for its beautiful blue mosque, and Klang, with its reminders of the old sultanate and vibrant Little India – a gourmand's mecca. On the coast discover the Hma' Meri villages of Pulau Carey hidden amid vast palm-oil plantations or take a ferry to the sleepy fishing community of Pulau Ketam.

South of KL, Malaysia's administrative capital of Putrajaya, less than two decades in the making, is packed with striking architecture and makes for a fascinating day trip. Heading northeast up into the highlands of the Banjaran Titiwangsa mountain range, there are the contrasting delights of Genting Highlands, a purpose-built gambling resort that has its moments, and Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB), one of the most charming small towns in Malaysia and a great base for trekking and river rafting adventures. For more ideas check out the state's tourism website (www.tourismselangor.org).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hiking and bird-spotting in the cool of **Fraser's Hill** (p134)
- Tucking into delicious Indian and Chinese food in historic **Klang** (p139)
- Splashing around in the pools at **Sunway Lagoon** (p138)
- Viewing the impressive new Malaysian architecture of **Putrajaya** (p136) from a boat on its central lake
- Getting a treetop perspective on KL from the thrilling canopy walkway at the **Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia** (p132)
- Climbing the 272 steps to the psychedelic Hindu galleries of **Batu Caves** (p131)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03, 09

■ POPULATION: 4.74 MILLION

■ AREA: 7960 SQ KM

History

In the 15th century, Selangor was under the control of Melaka's great *bendahara* (chief minister), Tun Perak. Once Melaka fell to the Portuguese, control of Selangor was hotly contested, partly because of its rich tin reserves. The Minangkabau settlers, who had migrated from Sumatra 100 years earlier, were displaced by Buginese immigrants from Celebes (present-day Sulawesi), who aided Dutch colonisation by hiring themselves out as mercenaries. By the middle of the 18th century, the Buginese had established the current sultanate, based at Kuala Selangor.

A century later the success of the tin trade and the growing wealth of the Chinese communities in the fledgling city of Kuala Lumpur

led to conflicts both among and between the Selangor chiefs and the miners. The outcome was a prolonged civil war, which slashed tin production and saw the destruction of KL. In 1874, with the civil war over, the British made their move to take control. The sultan was forced to accede to the installation of a British Resident at Klang, and for the next 25 years the state prospered, largely on the back of another boom in tin prices.

The most famous of all of the British Residents was Frank Swettenham who, evincing more tolerance and cultural insight than his colleagues, smoothed relations between the sultan and the local chiefs. He cajoled the sultans of four states (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) into an alliance



that eventually became the Federated Malay States in 1896.

The federation was centrally administered from a phoenix-like KL, which had become a well-ordered and prosperous city by the turn of the 20th century. In 1974 Selangor's sultan ceded KL as a federal territory, and Shah Alam took over the role of state capital. In the late 1990s the federal administrative capital of Putrajaya was also cleaved off from Selangor.

Climate

Lowland Selangor has a tropical climate, with daily temperatures hovering between 21°C and 32°C year-round. There is occasional rain throughout the year. Temperatures at Fraser's Hill and in the Genting Highlands are much cooler, ranging between 12°C and 22°C. Rainfall here is much heavier and more prolonged. Humidity averages about 85% to 90%.

Parks & Reserves

The Taman Alam Kuala Selangor (p141) is an important wetland and forest reserve some 75km northwest of KL, and is home to a large number of rare bird species. Closer to KL you'll find the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve (p132) 16km northwest, and 22km north of the city the 1200-hectare tract of primary rainforest enclosed in Templer Park, named after the last British high commissioner of Malaysia.

Getting There & Away

Selangor's transport hub is KL – see p124 for full details. Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCC-T), at Sepang in the state's southeast corner, have road and rail links to the capital and Putrajaya. The Lebuhraya (North–South Hwy), from Johor Bahru to the Thai border, runs the length of the state. Ferries to Sumatra depart from Pelabuhan Klang (p140).

Getting Around

Trains and buses radiate out from KL to destinations around the state; see p124 for details.

NORTH OF KUALA LUMPUR

Batu Caves

Just 13km north of the capital, a short distance off the Ipoh road, a towering limestone outcrop is home to the impressive **Batu Caves** (admission free; car park RM2; ☎ 8am–9pm). The

caves were officially discovered around 120 years ago by American naturalist William Hornaday. A short time later a small Hindu shrine was built in the vast open space, later known as Temple Cave.

An enormous golden statue of Muruga, also known as Lord Subramaniam, to whom the caves are dedicated, stands at the foot of a flight of 272 steps leading up to Temple Cave. Beyond the towering main cavern, the space opens to an atrium-like cave at the rear. Monkeys scamper around the shrines, which are dwarfed by the scale of the cave.

Each year in late January or early February a million pilgrims converge here during the three days of Thaipusam (p52). Lord Muruga's silver chariot takes pride of place as it makes its way from the Sri Mahamariamman Temple (p99) in KL's Chinatown to the caves. Get here by dawn if you want to see anything amid the crowds, and bring food and water with you.

DARK CAVE

At step 204, a path branches off to the **Dark Cave** (www.darkcave.com.my; adult/child RM35/25). On the 30-minute guided tour you can explore some 2km of surveyed passageways with seven different chambers. There are some dramatic limestone formations but the caves are damp and muddy – a head torch and wellington boots are provided. See the website about organising a more challenging two- to three-hour tour that involves crawling through the cave's narrow tunnels.

CAVE VILLA

The commercialisation of the caves continues at the base where you now have to pay to enter the previously free **Cave Villa** (☎ 012 910 8389; www.cavevilla.com.my; adult/child RM15/7; ☎ 9am–6pm), fronted by a pond packed with koi carp. It's worth paying to see the psychedelically painted sculptures of various Hindu gods arranged to tell parables from the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures inside the cave. Outside the cave there's a small bird sanctuary, an area containing over 100 different species of reptiles (including a 7.6m-long python) and classical Indian dance shows on the half hour.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take bus 11 (RM2, 45 minutes) to the caves from where Jln Tun HS Lee meets Jln Petaling

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK: RIMBU DAHAN

It's worth checking the website of **Rimbun Dahan** (☎ 6038-3690; www.rimbundahan.org/home.html), a private property about 20 minutes' drive west of Kepong and one hour from KL, for times when it's possible to visit. There's a gallery inside this centre for developing traditional and contemporary art, as well as buildings designed by Hijias Kasturi, the architect of the striking Tabung Haji (Map pp92–3) and Menara Maybank (Map p100) buildings in KL. The property also boasts a 19th-century traditional Malay house and an indigenous garden.

(Map p100), just south of Medan Pasar in KL. The bus also stops along Jln Raja Laut in the Chow Kit area. A taxi from KL shouldn't cost more than RM20.

Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)

Birdsong and wall-to-wall greenery replaces the drone of traffic and air-conditioning at the **Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)**; (☎ 03-6279 7525; www.frim.gov.my; admission RM1, cars RM5; ☎ 8am–6.30pm). The highlight of this 600-hectare jungle park at Kepong, part of the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve 16km north-west of KL, is its **Canopy Walkway** (adult/child RM5/1; ☎ 9.30am–2.30pm Tue–Thu, Sat & Sun).

The 200m walkway, hanging a vertigo-inducing 30m above the forest floor, is reached by a steep trail from FRIM's **information centre** (☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–4pm Sat & Sun), where you should go first to register and to pick up maps of the other trails in the park. Heading down from the walkway, the trail picks its way through the jungle (follow the water pipe) to a shady picnic area where you can cool off in a series of shallow waterfalls. The return hike incorporating the walkway takes around two hours. Bring water with you.

Elsewhere in the park there's a charming tearoom, a couple of handsome traditional wooden houses, relocated from Melaka and Terengganu, and a **museum** (☎ 9am–4pm Tue–Sun), which has some interesting displays explaining the rainforest habitat and the forest-related research carried out by FRIM. Several arboreta highlight different types of trees, and there's also a wetland area.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Take a KTM Komuter train to Kepong (RM1.30) and then a taxi (RM5); arrange for the taxi to pick you up again later. It's a good idea to bring a picnic to enjoy in the park; failing that the FRIM's canteen is open all day and serves decent home-cooked Malay food (around RM10 including a drink).

Orang Asli Museum

In the sleepy village of Gombak, 25km north of KL, the **Orang Asli Museum** (☎ 03-6189 2122; www.jheoa.gov.my/web/guest/25; Jln Pahang; admission free; ☎ 9am–5pm Sat–Thu) is a fine introduction to the customs and culture of Malaysia's aboriginal people (see p38). The fascinating exhibits include clothes made from the bark of terap and ipoh trees, personal adornments, musical instruments and hunting implements, all accompanied by informative descriptions of the various Orang Asli cultures and ways of life. The helpful staff will play video documentaries on the Orang Asli, if you ask.

The museum's shop sells the striking wood carvings of the Hma' Meri people who live on Pulau Carey (see p140), as well as *tongkat ali*, a kind of ginseng that's marketed as Malaysian Viagra.

To get here take bus 174 (RM2, 1½ hours) from the Lebu Ampang bus station (Map p100) in Kuala Lumpur.

Zoo Negara

Laid out over 62 hectares around a central lake, **Zoo Negara** (National Zoo; ☎ 03-4108 3422; www.zoonegara.org.my; adult/child RM15/6; ☎ 9am–5pm), 13km northeast of KL, is home to a wide variety of native wildlife, including tigers, as well as other animals from Asia and Africa. Though a good zoo by the region's standards, some of the animal enclosures look cramped. Animal shows take place throughout the day, but a better way of interacting with the creatures here is to spend some time as a volunteer at the zoo – the website has details about how to arrange this.

Taxis charge around RM30 from central KL or you can take Metrobus 16 (RM2) from Central Market (Map p100) in Chinatown.

Genting Highlands

☎ 03

Opened in 1972, **Genting Highlands** (www.genting.com.my), 50km north of KL on the Pahang border,

is in stark contrast to the Old English style of other Malaysian hill stations, its *raison d'être* being a glitzy casino – the only one in the country. It can get very busy here; the resort's five hotels have beds for 10,000 people and three times as many punters usually turn up each day.

In its slender favour is its cool weather; at 2000m above sea level there's no need for air-conditioning. The 3.4km-long **Genting Skyway** (one-way RM5; ☎ 7.30am–11pm Mon–Thu, 7.30am–midnight Fri–Sun) is a gentle 11-minute cable-car glide above the dense rainforest. Kids will also enjoy the **indoor and outdoor theme parks** (outdoor park adult/child from RM38/27; indoor park RM26/24, both parks RM51/36); they include water slides, thrill rides, a climbing wall, Snow World and a fierce wind tunnel for a simulated skydive!

To find out about the resort's history drop by the **Visitors Galleria** (☎ 10am–8pm) in the lobby of the Genting Hotel.

SLEEPING & EATING

Genting is an easy day trip from KL, but if you do decide to stay, the resort has a choice of five hotels, none of which is particularly outstanding. Rates vary enormously, the most expensive nights generally being Saturday and all public holidays; check on the website (www.genting.com.my) or with the **KL booking office** (Map p96; ☎ 03-2718 1118; Wisma Genting, 28 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat). There's no shortage of places to eat, including cheap fast-food outlets and noisy food courts.

First World Hotel (r from RM120; 🏠) With 6500 beds, this is Malaysia's largest hotel. The plain but quite acceptable rooms are Genting's cheapest accommodation deal.

Genting Hotel (r from RM255; 🏠 🏠) High rollers should enquire about the luxury rooms on the Maxims floors of Genting's most luxurious hotel.

Olive (☎ 610 1118; Genting Hotel; meals R70; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is the pick of the fine-dining options, serving fusion cuisine in (for Genting) surprisingly classy surroundings.

Coffee Terrace (Genting Hotel; lunch/dinner RM55/65; ☎ lunch & dinner) A reasonably good buffet-style restaurant offering a range of food including Malay, Nonya, Thai, Western and Indian dishes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses leave at hourly (and sometimes half-hourly) intervals from 7.30am to 8.30pm

from KL's Puduraya bus station (Map p100; adult/child RM8.50/6.80, 1½ hours) and on the hour from 8am to 7pm from KL Sentral (RM8.30/6.70); the price includes the Skyway cable car. A taxi from KL will cost around RM60.

A great deal is the **Go Genting Golden Package** (RM42), which includes return transport from KL, an all park unlimited ride pass or buffet lunch at the Coffee Terrace. Buy the pass from Genting's ticket office at KL Sentral (Map pp92–3) or from its **main sales office** (Map p96; ☎ 03-2718 1118; Wisma Genting, 28 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Fri, 8.30am–1pm Sat), where you can also book resort accommodation.

Kuala Kubu Bharu

☎ 03

Known simply as KKB, the charming town of Kuala Kubu Bharu, 72km north of KL, is easily accessible via its new KTM Komuter station. You'll pass through here en-route to Fraser's Hill (p134).

Apart from its stuck-in-time atmosphere, the principal attraction of KKB is as a base for activities such as rafting and kayaking on the Selangor Dam, Sungai Selangor and Sungai Chiling. Among the outfits you can organise this with are local operators **Box Tracks Adventures** (www.tracksadventures.com.my) and **Pierose Swiftwater** (www.raftmalaysia.com).

Jungle trekking is also possible here, the most popular route being to the 20m-tall **Chiling Waterfall** on Sungai Chiling. This is a 1½ hour walk from the so-called Rainbow Bridge on route 55 leading up to Fraser's Hill. The route is clearly marked, but it's a good idea to hire a guide to get you there, since you have to cross the river five times and it's important to be aware of flash flooding. Guides include KKB-based **Eddie** (☎ 012 213 2678; eyap48@gmail.com) and **Happy Yen** (☎ 017 369 7831; www.happyyen.webs.com), who organises tours to the falls from KL.

SLEEPING & EATING

Accommodation in KKB itself is limited. You could also use Fraser's Hill as a base.

Rumah Rehat Seri Teratai (☎ 6064 1971, 019-350 7735; 1A Jln Teratai, Taman Seni Teratai; d RM100) There are just five rooms at this simple Malay guesthouse a few kilometres from the heart of KKB.

Flying Rhino Guesthouse (☎ 6064 2188; theflyingrhino@gmail.com; Lot 5 Jln Dato Tabal; d RM148; 📍) At the time of research this excellent new guesthouse, run by a lovely expat couple, was temporarily closed.

ourpick Sekeping Serendah Retreat (☎ 012-324 6552; www.serendah.com; Serendah; mud/glass cabins from RM500/650; 📍) If you have wheels this forest-bound ecoretreat outside the town of Serendah, 35km south of KKB, is a gem. Two partly mud-walled cabins each sleep two, while the double-storey glass, steel and wood units, with self-catering facilities, can house up to six each. All the cabins have outdoor showers and there's a fantastic, purpose-built swimming pool, as well as a gurgling stream running through the property. A caretaker is on hand to provide a simple breakfast (RM3) or dinner (RM20).

In KKB, delicious Chinese food is available for lunch at **Restoran Vilet** (15 Jln Kamaraddin; meal RM8; 🕒 11am-4pm) while **Kedai Makanan Govindamah** (☎ 017-362 7790; 9 Jln Abd Hamid, Kuala Kubu Bharu; meal RM5.50; 🕒 7-1am) dishes up palatable veg and non-veg Indian food.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

KKB is a station on the KL-Ipoh train line (RM5 to RM9 from Sentral KL, one hour, four daily). From the station a taxi to the town centre costs around RM5. The No 43 Metrobus service from beside the Bangkok Bank stop (Map p100) in KL runs to Rawang (RM2, every 20 minutes). From Rawang (also on the KTM train line) the No 36 Metrobus goes to KKB (RM3, every 20 minutes).

Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser)

☎ 09
Of all the hill stations, Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser), 103km north of KL, retains the most colonial charm. Situated across seven densely forested hills at a cool altitude of 1524m, this quiet and relatively undeveloped place, dotted with a mix of stone bungalows and more modern complexes, attracts only a fraction of the visitors of Genting or the Cameron Highlands. In 2009 many of the buildings and accommodation options, owned by the Fraser's Hill Development Corporation, were undergoing a much-needed renovation, so the whole place should be looking freshly spruced up by now.

There's relatively little to do here besides relax in the cool air, enjoy a forest stroll and

indulge in a spot of bird-watching. Should you choose to make it more than just a day trip from KL, there's plenty of accommodation; on weekends and public holidays you will need to book ahead. Like the Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill is on the Selangor/Pahang border, but almost all visitors come through Selangor, and the state border actually cuts right through the station. For online information check the website of **Pahang Tourism** (www.pahangtourism.com.my).

INFORMATION

The hill station's focal point is the tiny village at the western end of the golf course.

Fraser's Hill Development Corporation office

(FHDC; ☎ 362 2201; www.pkbf.org.my; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Currently sharing premises with the offices for the mosque but likely to move into new digs by the central clock. Provides information, maps and brochures; staff can book accommodation and help arrange hiking guides.

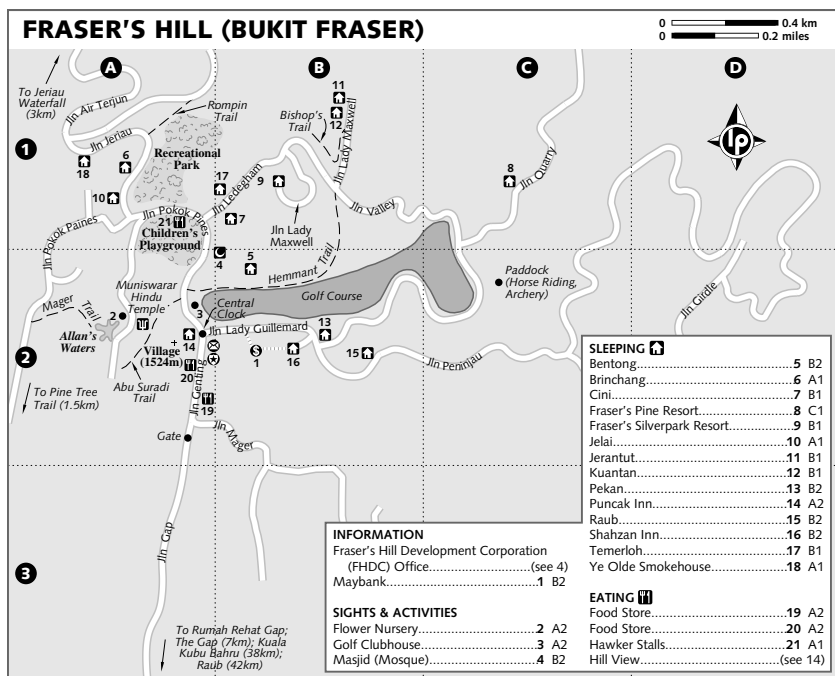
Maybank (Jln Lady Guillemard; 🕒 9.15am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 9.15am-4pm Fri) Small branch at Shahzan Inn; accepts credit cards, exchanges foreign currency and travellers cheques. Nearest ATM is back in Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB) opposite the bus station.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Fraser's Hill's main attraction is its abundant flora and fauna, in particular its **birdlife**. With its lush, damp environment Fraser's Hill supports some 265 species of birds, including the Malaysian whistling thrush, the Kinabalu friendly warbler, the brilliantly coloured green

NAMING THE STATION

Fraser's Hill is named after Louis James Fraser, an adventurous Scotsman who migrated to Malaysia in the 1890s after failing in attempts to prospect for gold in Australia. Trying his luck in the country's booming tin-mining industry, Fraser set up a mule-train operation to transport the ore across the hills and is also rumoured to have run gambling and opium dens. These had vanished (along with Fraser himself) by 1917, when Bishop Ferguson-Davie of Singapore came looking for Fraser. Recognising the area's potential as a hill station, the bishop wrote a report to the High Commissioner on his return to Singapore. A couple of years later this 'little England' in the heart of the Malaysian jungle began to be developed.



magpie, and the long-tailed broadbill with its sky-blue chest. The high point of the local twitchers' calendar is June, when the hill station hosts its International Bird Race, in which teams of bird spotters compete to record the highest number of species.

Pick up a leaflet from the Fraser's Hill Development Corporation Office outlining the hill station's various hikes, most pretty straightforward and signposted. The **Hemmant Trail**, which takes only 30 minutes, is about 1km and leads from the mosque to Victory Bungalow. You'll need to arrange a guide for the 5km-long **Pine Tree Trail**, which takes around six hours and crosses three mountain peaks, including 1505m Pine Tree Hill; a recommended guide is **Mr Durai** (☎ 013-983 1633; durefh@hotmail.com), who charges around RM30 per hour.

At the picturesque nine-hole **golf course** (☎ 362 2129; Jln Genting; green fees Mon-Fri/Sat & Sun RM30/40, hire of half/full set of clubs RM15/30) you'll most likely see dusky leaf monkeys wandering about as well as the occasional wild boar. At the paddock to the east of the golf course, you can go **horse riding** (RM3 to RM7) or practice **archery** (RM5 to RM6). Alternatively hire a paddleboat

(RM6 per 15 minutes) to explore **Allan's Waters**, a small lake next to the flower nursery.

About 5km northwest of the town centre, along Jln Air Terjun, is **Jeriau Waterfall**, with a swimming pool fed from the falls. It's a 20-minute climb up from the road to reach them.

SLEEPING

Musty, damp hotel rooms and cottages go with the territory at Fraser's Hill. At the top-end places you can expect to pay 20 to 40% more on weekends and public holidays. Rates typically include breakfast and all the hotels have wi-fi (but no public internet terminal).

Many places were closed for renovation when we visited, including the FHDC-run budget hotel option **Puncak Inn** (☎ 362 2201), the FHDC's three rental bungalows (Kuantan and Cini with three bedrooms and Bentong with two bedrooms) and the Selangor state government's **Rumah Rehat Gap** (☎ 362 2227) at the Gap, 8km south of Fraser's Hill. Bookings for the FHDC properties can be made via its website (www.pkbf.org.my) or at the hill-station office (see opposite).

You can also contact the KL office or check the website of **Highland Resthouse Holdings Bungalows** (Map pp92-3; ☎ 03-2164 8937 in KL; www.hrbungalows.com; Suite 38A-1, 38th fl, Empire Tower, City Square Centre, 182 Jln Tun Razak, KL) for details about the range of rooms, chalets and bungalows in the hill station, starting from RM300 per room at the eight-bedroom Pekan bungalow to RM2000 for full hire of the four-bedroom Jerantut bungalow. Their other properties include the Brinchang, Jelai, Raub and Temerloh cottages.

Fraser's Pine Resort (☎ 362 2122; www.thepines.com.my; Jln Quarry; r from RM110) Everyone gets to sleep in three-bedroom, reasonably well-kept but plainly decorated apartments here. For RM50 extra you can rent one with an equipped kitchen.

Fraser's Silverpark Resort (☎ 362 2888; www.frasersilverpark.com.my; Jln Lady Maxwell; r from RM150) Not the most attractive-looking complex from the outside, but the views looking out can be spectacular from what are the best maintained self-catering apartments in Fraser's.

Shahzan Inn (☎ 362 3300; www.shahzaninn.com.my; Jln Lady Guillemard; garden/golf course view r incl breakfast from RM145/168) Overlooking the golf course, this is one of the most attractive places to stay. There's a kettle and satellite TV in all rooms and a 20% discount is available to guests at the golf club.

Ye Olde Smokehouse (☎ 362 2226; www.thesmokehouse.com.my; Jln Jeriau; d/ste from RM308/385) Exposed beams, log fires, four-poster beds and chintz – the Smokehouse goes for broke on its English-charm offensive. Even if you don't stay here, drop by for a well-made pie or roast at lunch or afternoon tea (RM18) on the garden terrace.

EATING

There a couple of small stores as you come into Fraser's for self-catering supplies and all the hotels have restaurants, Ye Olde Smokehouse's being the best. At the time of research a new complex for hawker stalls was being built beside the kid's playground.

Hill View (☎ 362 2231; mains from RM10; ☎ 9.30am-9pm) Both passable Western and Chinese food is available at this simple eatery, which has been run by a locally based family for a couple of generations.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The route to Fraser's Hill is via Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB); for details of how to get there,

see p134. A taxi from KKB to Fraser's Hill is RM50. A direct taxi from KL's Puduraya bus station (Map p100) costs around RM280; for a return taxi journey from KL reckon on paying RM700.

Since a landslide has put out of action the 11km-long road via the Tamil school and Fraser's Pine Resort, the old 8km-long Gap road to Fraser's operates as it once did, allowing traffic to go up on the odd hours from 7am and come down on the even hours from 6am: the road is open for 40 minutes before the change over of direction. Between 8pm and 6am it's a free-for-all, so take it very slowly if you drive during this time.

There's no petrol station in Fraser's Hill; the nearest ones are at Raub and KKB.

SOUTH OF KUALA LUMPUR Putrajaya

☎ 03

An eye-catching array of monumental architecture is on display in the Federal Government's administrative hub of Putrajaya (www.ppj.gov.my), 25km south of KL and 20km north of KLIA. Covering 4932 hectares of former rubber and palm-oil plantations, this brand new city was but a twinkle in the eye of its principal visionary – former PM, Dr Mahathir – back in the early 1990s. Designed as a garden city, the heart of Putrajaya is a 600-hectare man-made lake fringed by landscaped parks and an eclectic mix of buildings and bridges, which in themselves are the city's chief tourist attraction.

It's worth noting that less than 10% of government workers in Putrajaya are non-Malays. Several huge mosques have already appeared, but there are no major religious monuments for any other ethnic groups – fuelling claims of bias against Indian and Chinese Malaysians by the Malay-dominated government.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Putrajaya Architecture

Putrajaya cannot be faulted as a showcase of urban planning and vaulting architectural ambition. The main boulevard is Persiaran Perdana, which runs from the elevated spaceship-like **Putrajaya Convention Centre** (☎ 8887 6000; www.pcc.gov.my; Presint 5), worth visiting for the views, to the circular **Dataran Putra** (Putra Square), passing the Mogul-esque **Istana Kehakiman** (Palace of Justice) and the modernist Islamic gateway fronting the

Kompleks Perpadanan Putrajaya (Putrajaya Corporation Complex).

Framing Dataran Putra on two sides are **Perdana Putra**, housing the offices of the prime minister, and the handsome **Putra Mosque** (☎ for non-Muslims 9am-1.30pm & 3-6pm Sat-Thu, 3-6pm Fri), which has space for 15,000 worshippers and an ornate pink-and-white-patterned dome, influenced by Safavid architecture from Iran. Appropriately dressed non-Muslim visitors are welcome outside of prayer times.

There are nine bridges, all in different styles. The longest, at 435m, is the **Putra Bridge**, which mimics the Khaju Bridge in Esfahan, Iran. Also worthy of a photo is the futurist sail-like **Wawasan Bridge** connecting Presint 2 and 8.

Lake Cruise

The bridges and buildings look their best viewed from Putrajaya Lake. **Cruise Tasik Putrajaya** (☎ 8888 3769; www.cruisetasikputrajaya.com; ☎ 10am-7pm), located just beneath the Dataran Putra end of the Putra Bridge, offers up two options: the gondola-like Dondang Sayang Perahu boats (adult/child RM20/12) departing anytime for a 30-minute trip around the lake, or a 45-minute air-con cruise on the Belimbing boat (adult/child RM30/20) leaving hourly from 1pm Monday to Friday and from 11am to 7pm at weekends.

Taman Botani

North of Perdana Putra, near the prime minister's official residence, the 93-hectare **Taman Botani** (Botanic Gardens; ☎ 8888 9090; Presint 1; admission free; ☎ 9am-7pm daily) features attractive tropical gardens, a visitors centre, a beautifully tiled Moroccan pavilion and a lakeside restaurant. A tourist tram (RM3) trundles between the flower beds and trellises, and you can hire bicycles for RM4 for two hours (RM4 for one hour on weekends).

Taman Wetland

Further north is the serene **Taman Wetland** (Wetland Park; ☎ 8889 4373; Presint 13; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm; ☎ visitors centre 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-7pm Sat & Sun), a contemplative space with peaceful nature trails, a colony of flamingos, fluttering butterflies and picnic tables overlooking the lake. Canoeing and boating trips can be arranged here.

SLEEPING & EATING

Pullman Putrajaya Lakeside (☎ 8890 0000; www.pullmanputrajaya.com; 2 Jln P5/5, Presint 5; r from RM260; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) Close to the Convention Centre and beside the lake, this large new resort complex incorporates traditional Malaysian architectural elements into its design. The rooms and resort facilities are good and include an alfresco seafood restaurant built over the lake.

Putrajaya Shangri-la (☎ 8887 8888; www.shangri-la.com; Taman Putra Perdana, Presint 1; r from RM390; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎) This very classy hotel has a great hillside view across to the lake. Good-value weekend packages are available and its Azur restaurant serves up an impressive Malaysian set lunch (RM40)

Alamanda (www.alamanda.com.my; Presint 1; meals RM10; ☎ 9am-9pm) Putrajaya's swish shopping mall is home to several restaurants as well as an excellent food court where you can join the local bureaucrats for a meal.

Selera Putra (Presint 1; meals RM10; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun) Head to this food court beneath Dataran Putra and enjoy the lakeside view while sampling a wide range of inexpensive Malaysian dishes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

KLIA transit trains from KL Sentral (Map pp92-3) and KLIA stop at the Putrajaya-Cyberjaya station (from KL Sentral it costs RM9.50 one way and takes 20 minutes).

Bus 200 runs from the train station to Dataran Putra (50 sen); a taxi there is RM9 while hiring one for an hour to tour the sights (the recommended option) is a fixed RM30. The city's planned monorail/metro is unlikely to be completed within the next five years.

KLANG VALLEY

Heading southwest of KL along the Klang Hwy, the **Kota Darul Ehsan** ceremonial arch marks the transition between the city and Selangor. Just over the boundary, Petaling Jaya blends into Shah Alam, the state capital, which blends into Klang, the old royal capital - pretty much all in one seamless stretch of housing estates and industrial parks. Efficient public transport to and from KL makes for easy day trips.

Petaling Jaya

☎ 03

Many of the people you'll meet in KL actually live in the neighbouring city of Petaling Jaya

SEPANG CIRCUIT

The **Sepang Circuit** (☎ 03-8778 2222; www.sepangcircuit.com), 65km south of KL and a 10-minute drive east of KLIA, is where Formula One holds the Malaysian Grand Prix every March or April. Tickets go for as little as RM100, which in 2009 included access to an after-race party headlined by top international music acts. During the three days of the grand prix, plenty of special train and bus transport to the circuit is on offer, from around RM80 return from KL city centre.

At other times of the year there's an **auto museum** (admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm), and you can call ahead to book a tour of the facilities. Also check the website for track days when the circuit is open to wannabe Michael Schumachers, who want to rev up their own cars (RM200) or motor-bikes (below 250cc RM70, over 250cc RM100).

(PJ). This sprawling community is defined by its giant shopping malls. Apart from these, there's not a whole lot else to detain you here.

SUNWAY LAGOON & SUNWAY PYRAMID

There are few more fun ways of cooling down on a sticky day than splashing around at **Sunway Lagoon** (☎ 5639 0000; www.sunwaylagoon.com; 3 Jln PJS, 11/11 Bandar Sunway; adult/child from RM45/30, incl water park RM60/45; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). Built on the site of a former tin mine and quarry, the highlight of this multi-zone theme park are the water slides, and the world's largest man-made surf beach. There's also a Wild West-themed section with all the regular thrill rides, an interactive wildlife zoo (ie, you're allowed to stroke the giant tortoises and cuddle the hamsters) and an extreme park with all-terrain vehicles, a rock-climbing wall and paintball fights.

The park is behind the vast **Sunway Pyramid** (☎ 7494 3100; www.sunwaypyramid.com) mall distinguished by its giant lion gateway, faux Egyptian walls and crowning pyramid! Inside is a **skating rink** (admission incl skate hire Mon-Fri RM13, Sat & Sun RM16; ☎ 9am-8pm) as well as a bowling alley, a multiplex cinema and the usual plethora of shops and dining outlets.

Sunway Lagoon is so close to KL that staying over isn't necessary. However, the site does have several appealing accommodation options gathered together in the **Sunway Resort Hotel & Spa** (☎ 7492 8000; http://kualalumpur.sunwayhotels.com; rm/villa from RM450/1800; ☎ ☎ ☎ ☎): the **Pyramid Tower** is a modern and quirkily designed business hotel; the **Duplex** offers 12 townhouses, each with three chicly designed bedrooms and fully equipped kitchens – ideal for families; and the **Villas** are 17 contemporary Asian-styled residences, each with their own infinity-style plunge pools, sunken baths and rain showers – great for a romantic getaway.

The easiest way to get to Sunway is take the Putra LRT to Kelana Jaya (RM2.10), then the feeder bus T623 (RM1) or a taxi (RM11) to the Sunway Pyramid. Shuttle buses U63, U67 and U756 run here from Subang Jaya station on the KTM Komuter line. A taxi all the way from central KL will cost around RM21.

THE CURVE

It's got Ikea, it's got Tesco's, and it's got oodles more shops and restaurants. However, there are other reasons for heading to **The Curve** (☎ 7710 6868; www.thecurve.com.my; Mutiara Damansara; ☎ 10am-10pm), about 15km west of the centre in Petaling Jaya. One of the best is to attend concerts by up-and-coming local bands at **Laundry Bar** (☎ 7728 1715; www.laundrybar.net; 675 & 76 Western Courtyard; ☎ 11-1am), which has also been hosting the monthly Popcorn & Soda Sunday afternoon film sessions showcasing shorts by local film-makers and feature-length French movies. A free shuttle bus runs three times a day between the mall and the Royale Bintang Hotel (Map p96) on Jln Bukit Bintang (see the Curve website for details). Otherwise catch Metrobus 99 here from KL's Central Market (Map p100).

Shah Alam

☎ 03

Thirty years ago Selangor's state capital was just a rubber-and-palm plantation, but in the late 1970s a massive building program spawned a well-developed infrastructure, huge public buildings and a rapidly growing population. It's a staunchly Muslim city, dominated by the showpiece **Masjid Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah** (☎ 5159 9988; Persiaran Masjid; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sat-Thu), one of the largest mosques in Southeast Asia.

Called the Blue Mosque for its azure dome (larger than that of London's St Paul's

Cathedral) covered in a rosette of verses from the Quran, the building accommodates up to 24,000 worshippers. Its four minarets, looking like giant rockets, are the tallest in the world (over 140m). You'll need to be appropriately dressed if you want to look inside. Once you've seen the mosque there isn't a huge amount else to do, so it's best to combine a visit here with a trip out to Klang and the coast.

Bus U18 goes to Shah Alam from KL's Klang bus station (Map p100; RM2, one hour) and will drop you in front of the PKNS Plaza mall, from where it's a short walk to the mosque. Frequent Komuter trains also run from KL to Shah Alam (RM2.50, 45 minutes), but from there it's another bus or taxi ride to the mosque.

Klang & Pelabuhan Klang



About 10km west of Shah Alam is Klang, once the royal capital of Selangor and a mecca for food lovers. This is where the British installed their first Resident in 1874. Its few sights should take no more than a couple of hours to see, leaving you plenty of time to enjoy the real reason for heading here: satisfying your stomach in Klang's vibrant Little India.

Five stops further down the line the KTM Komuter trains terminate at ramshackle Pelabuhan Klang, once KL's main seaport until the establishment of the modern harbour on Pulau Indah, 17km to the southwest. The main reason for coming here is to either catch a ferry to Sumatra or Pulau Ketam (see p140), or to grab a seafood meal at the nearby waterside village of Bagan Hailan.

SIGHTS

Klang is small enough to see on foot. Heading south from the train station, along Jalan Stesyen, you'll pass several attractive rows of Chinese shophouses (to the right). Running parallel to Jln Stesyen to the right is Jln Tengku Kelana, heart of Klang's colourful **Little India**. Especially frenetic around the Hindu festival of Deepavali, this Little India is more vibrant than that of KL and includes several fortune tellers, who squat on the pavement and predict the future with the aid of green parrots trained to pick out auspicious cards.

Return to Jln Stesyen to take a quick look at the grand whitewashed 1909 colonial building housing the **Galeri Diraja Sultan Abdul Aziz** (☎ 3373

6500; www.galeridiraja.com; Bangunan Sultan Suleiman; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun). The royal gallery, devoted to the history of the Selangor Sultanate dating back to 1766, contains a wide array of royal regalia, gifts and artifacts, including copies of the crown jewels.

Heading uphill along Jln Istana will bring you to **Istana Alam Shah**, the sultan's palace before the capital was moved to Shah Alam; there are plans to open this to the public. The park opposite gives a pleasant view of the city.

East of the palace, along Jln Kota Raja, the **Masjid Di Raja Sultan Suleiman** is a striking blend of Art Deco and Middle Eastern influences. Opened in 1934, this was once the state mosque and several sultans are buried here. Step inside to admire its stained-glass dome.

EATING

Indian food is Klang's highlight, but it's not the only thing on offer: the town's Chinese community is also famous for inventing *bak kut the* (pork-rib soup with hints of garlic and Chinese five spice). Excellent, reasonably priced seafood is also available at a number of restaurants out at Bagan Hailan, a RM10 taxi ride from Pelabuhan Klang station.

Asoka (Jln Tengku Kelana; meals RM5-10; ☎ 7am-11pm) A vividly orange-and-cream-painted parlour of Indian culinary goodness, including a great selection of sweets, juices and crispy *tosai* pancakes served with coconut chutney.

Jai Hind (Jln Tengku Kelana; meals RM5-10; ☎ 7am-11pm) Also renowned for its sweets, Jai Hind has been in business for over 60 years and is the place to head when it's time for *tiffin* (afternoon snacks).

Sri Barathan Matha Vilas (34-36 Jln Tengku Kelana; meals RM5-10; ☎ 6.30am-10.30pm) It's hard to resist a bowl of this restaurant's signature dish of spicy *mee goreng* fried noodles since the chef prepares them constantly in a giant wok beside the entrance.

Seng Huat Bak Kut Teh (☎ 012-309 8303; 9 Jln Besar; meal RM10; ☎ 7.30am-1pm, 5.30-9pm) Sample the fragrant, flavoursome pork stew at this unpretentious eatery, steps away from the train station, just beneath the Klang Bridge.

Mohana Bistro (☎ 3372 7659; 119 Jln Tengku Kelana; meals RM10-20; ☎ 7am-11pm) Deservedly popular spot for banana leaf curry spreads and spice-laden biryani rice.

Bagan Seafood (☎ 3176 4546; Lot 4546, Lingkar Sultan Hishammuddin, off Jalan Pelabuhan Utara, Kg Baru Bagan Hailan; meals RM40; ☎ 11am-3pm, 6-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-

ISLAND ESCAPES

If you're looking to escape the Klang Valley's urban sprawl, two islands – one reached by ferry, the other by road – make for great day trips.

Chill out on the 30-minute ferry trip (RM6) through the mangroves from Pelabuhan Klang to **Pulau Ketam** (Crab Island), where you'll find a charming fishing village built on stilts over the mudflats. There's little to do here other than wander around the wooden buildings of the village and enjoy a Chinese seafood lunch at one of several restaurants. Air-con ferries depart roughly every hour between 8.45am and 6.30pm (until 7.10pm on weekends); the last ferry back from Pulau Ketam is at 5.45pm (6pm on weekends).

If you don't have your own wheels, hire a taxi to get you out to **Pulau Carey** (from Klang one way/return RM60/130), an island largely covered with palm-oil plantations. Pause either on the way there or back to enjoy a tasty seafood meal at **Kang Guan** (☎ 352 7737; Jln Bandar Lama, Telok Panglima Garang; meals RM30; 🕒 11.30am-2.45pm & 5.45-11pm) beside the mangroves just before you cross the bridge over to the island.

Your final destination is tiny **Kampung Sungai Bumbon**, home to an Orang Asli tribe known as the Hma' Meri (also written as Mah Meri). Here you can see the woodcarvers who have put the Mah Meri's art on the cultural map. There's also a **community centre** (🕒 9am-5pm), where you can pick up pretty woven baskets and other products made from dyed pandanus palm leaves as well as an interesting booklet in English about Hma' Meri culture.

Held in August the village's Mystic event, when prayers are made to ancestors and the Hma Meri display their carvings, is worth attending.

midnight Sat & Sun) Brave the long drive out to this seaside eatery to enjoy its super fresh seafood. Order *mantou* (deep-fried bread buns) to mop up the yummy sauces.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Klang

It's best to come here by train from KL, as the KTM Komuter station is closer to the sights; there are trains every 30 minutes. Klang's bus station is opposite the My Din shopping complex, on the northern side of the river. There are several buses every hour to KL's Klang bus station (Map p100; RM2) or Kuala Selangor (RM2). Express buses between KL and Pelabuhan Klang also stop in Klang. Klang's taxi station is one block east, behind the bus station.

Pelabuhan Klang

Pelabuhan Klang is 41km southwest of KL and 8km past Klang. Buses from KL's Klang bus station (Map p100) run to Pelabuhan Klang via Klang, but they terminate about a kilometre from the port. KTM Komuter trains also run to/from KL and Klang, and the station is just a stone's throw from the ferry terminal.

Ferries to Tanjung Balai (Asahan; one way including tax RM145, 3½ hours, 11am Monday to Saturday) in Sumatra depart from

here. Citizens of Australia, America, Britain and several European nations can get a visa on arrival in Indonesia; otherwise you must have an Indonesian visa before boarding. To check on ferry details call **Aero Speed Enterprises** (☎ 3165 2545) at the ferry terminal.

KUALA SELANGOR

☎ 03

Where the Sungai Selangor flows into the sea is the old royal capital of Kuala Selangor. The hilltop fort at this small sleepy town was briefly conquered by the Dutch when they invaded Selangor in 1784; Sultan Ibrahim took it back a year later. The town became embroiled in the Selangor Civil War (1867–73) when the fort was partly destroyed. Later the British built a lighthouse on the hill, which still stands and has become a symbol of the town.

Well off the beaten tourist track, Kuala Selangor has a friendly *kampung* atmosphere and a good wildlife park. It's possible to do as a day trip from KL, or en route to or from Perak state, but an overnight stop is recommended so you can catch the nightly show put on by fireflies along the Sungai Selangor.

Sights & Activities

FIREFLY VIEWING

The main place for viewing the flickering of the fireflies is **Kampung Kuantan**, 9km east of

Kuala Selangor. Malay-style wooden boats row out on the river to the 'show trees' and their dazzling displays. Boats take four people at RM10 each for the 45-minute trip, and leave on demand throughout the evening from around 7pm until midnight. The trips are not recommended on full-moon or rainy nights, when the fireflies are not at their luminous best. Take mosquito repellent.

To reach the village, take the turn-off to Batang Berjuntai, 2km south of Kuala Selangor. A taxi from Kuala Selangor costs RM40 for the return trip.

You can also see the fireflies at the Firefly Park Resort at Kampung Bukit Belimbing (right).

BUKIT MALAWATI

It's a pleasant, short walk through landscaped parklands to the top of Bukit Malawati, with views across the mangrove coastline. The hill has long been an ideal site for monitoring shipping in the Selat Melaka (Strait of Melaka), first for the sultans of Selangor and then for the Dutch, who destroyed the sultan's fort during their invasion in 1784, then rebuilt it, naming it Fort Atlingsburg after their governor general.

All that remains of the old fort today are some sections of wall and cannons. At the summit you'll find the British lighthouse (dating from 1909), a podium for viewing the new moon, and a museum (closed at the time of research). Tame silvered leaf monkeys hang out here too, happy to be fed titbits by visitors.

The road up Bukit Malawati starts one block away from the old bus station in the town centre. It does a clockwise loop of the hill; you can walk up and around in less than an hour.

TAMAN ALAM KUALA SELANGOR NATURE PARK

On the estuary of Sungai Selangor, at the foot of Bukit Malawati and reached by a flight of steps from the hill, is **Taman Alam Kuala Selangor Nature Park** (☎ 3289 2294; www.mns.org.my; Jln Klinik; adult/child RM4/1; ☎ 8am-7pm). Inside the 240-hectare park are three ecosystems – secondary forest, a man-made lake and a mangrove forest with views out to sea – and you can explore them all on a 3km trail that includes a raised walkway above the mangroves.

It's easy to spot the cheeky long-tailed macaques and silvered leaf monkeys at the accommodation huts at the entrance to park. There are also three bird-watching towers and a hide. Around 150 species of birds have been spotted in the park, including mangrove waders such as the rare spoonbilled sandpiper and Nordmann's greenshank, best seen at dawn or dusk. On the lake you might also be lucky enough to see an endangered milky stork; the park cooperated with Zoo Negara on a breeding program and now around four storks still live on the lake. Other fauna you may see includes otters, nocturnal leopard cats and civets.

The **visitors centre** (☎ 8am-6pm) has some interesting displays on the nature in the park as well as a small shop selling Malaysian Nature Society goods and books.

Sleeping

Taman Alam Kuala Selangor Nature Park (☎ 3289 2294; www.mns.org.my; Jln Klinik; r from RM25) Offers simple A-frame huts (RM25) or two-bed (one single, one queen) wooden chalets (RM45) with fan and attached bathroom.

Hotel Kuala Selangor (☎ 3289 2709; 90B Jln Steysen; r from RM33; 🍷) Directly opposite the bus station, this budget option is the best of a few reasonably clean but uninspiring Chinese hotels.

Firefly Park Resort (☎ 3260 1208; www.fireflypark.com; Jln Haji Omar, Kg Bukit Belimbing; chalets from RM130; 🍷) This modern resort has plainly decorated, comfortable four-person chalets perched on stilts over the river, and pleasant landscaped grounds. Boat trips to watch the fireflies cost RM15/10 for adults/children, and fishing trips cost RM40 per hour.

De Palma Hotel Kuala Selangor (☎ 3289 7070; www.depalmahotel.com; Jln Tanjung Keramat; r with breakfast from RM200; 🍷 📺 🚰) Around 1.5km north of the old bus station (follow the signs) is this decent miniresort offering a range of accommodation in nicely furnished and reasonably well-maintained wooden chalets. It rents bicycles (RM5 an hour) and can arrange a trip out to see the fireflies (RM48). The best deal is their two-day, one-night packages (RM120 per person), which include accommodation and the fireflies trip.

Eating

If seafood is what you're after, head to Pasir Penambang, a fishing village on the north side

of the river, where a number of atmospheric seafood restaurants are clustered; a taxi from Kuala Selangor costs around RM10.

Auntie Kopitiam (No C3, Jln Sultan Ibrahim; meals RM5-10; ☎ 6am-6pm). Next to the bus station, this old-style coffee shop serves Malaysian favourites such as *nasi lemak* and chicken chop.

Waterfall Café (☎ 3289 2388; 88 Jln Stesen; meals RM6-10; ☎ 10am-9pm) Good food, a picture menu and friendly service make this simple Chinese-run cafe a delight.

Getting There & Away

To reach Kuala Selangor you'll first need to take one of the frequent buses from KL to Klang bus station (see p140), where you'll

change to a Kuala Selangor-bound bus (RM5.30, one hour). Heading north from Kuala Selangor to Perak state, first take one of the old rattlers to Sabakbernam (RM7, 1½ hours) for connections to Teluk Intan (see p146).

Buses to and from Klang stop at the old bus station beside Bukit Melawati, but for services to Sabakbernam you will need to go to the new bus station, which is 2km outside the town centre. A local bus from the old to new bus station is 60 sen, or it's a 20-minute walk.

Approximate fares for a taxi ride from Kuala Selangor: KL (RM100), Klang (RM60) and Teluk Intan (RM80).

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