

The Batu Caves in Malaysia

A Beautiful Attraction Just Minutes from
Kuala Lumpur

By Gregory Rodgers

The Batu Caves in Malaysia are one of the most important Hindu religious sites outside of India and are a must-see once you tire of shopping and wandering round Kuala Lumpur.

Just 13 short kilometres north of the city, the Batu Caves are just one of the many interesting things to do around Kuala Lumpur. The caves attract around 5000 visitors a day who come to climb the gruelling 272 steps up to the caverns. The Batu Caves are a focal point for Hindu Malaysians: they house a 113-year-old temple, along with an interesting array of Hindu artwork and shrines.

Every year during the Hindu festival of Thaipusam, the Batu Caves attract more than a million devotees and spectators. The eight-hour procession of music and ceremony leaves offerings before a giant statue of Lord Murugan, the Hindu God of War.

Approaching the caves, the first thing you notice is a towering golden statue of Lord Murugan. Erected in 2006, this statue is the largest in the world dedicated to the deity and stands guard to the 272 leg-burning steps that lead up to the cave entrances. As you make your way up the steps, you will undoubtedly be entertained by a tribe of monkeys that feed off the steady stream of tourists. You may take pictures, but pay attention to your belongings!

Resting points along the stairs provide nice views of the suburbs of Kuala Lumpur.

Batu Caves' jagged limestone hillside is home to three main caverns. The largest and most popular is known as Temple Cave, which has a ceiling over 90m high. Inside the lit cave you will find various Hindu shrines and ornate depictions bringing legends to life.

The entrance below Temple Cave is known as Dark Cave; this is the wildest of the three caves. The 2000m underground stretch harbours brilliant limestone formations and is home to many species of cave animals including the endangered Trapdoor Spider.

The Dark Cave can only be explored by booking a special caving tour in advance. The tours require a fair level of physical fitness as some

crawling is required; it is advisable to bring a change of clothes.

Just across an attractive set of bridges, the Art Gallery cave contains Hindu carvings and wall paintings that depict tales of Lord Murugan and other Hindu legends; expect to pay a small fee to enter.

While most tourists come to visit only the caves, the limestone hills and crags in the surrounding area offer some of the best rock climbing in Southeast Asia. Around 170 bolted routes present great climbing challenges for sport climbers. The routes, rated from 5A to 8A+, have something to offer for climbers of all skill levels. For less technical climbers, there are many opportunities for hiking, scrambling, and bouldering in the area.



Expect to be entertained and possibly even harassed by a horde of Macaque monkeys that call the area home. The monkeys make great subjects for photos, but inevitably end up stealing from and even biting the occasional tourist. Monkey bites can be serious; immediately drop anything that they grab on to such as a backpack or water bottle. The monkeys consider tug-of-war to be a challenge and may bite your hand before they let go!

The Batu Caves are located in the Gombak district, a northern suburb of Kuala Lumpur just 13km from the city centre.