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Passengers can alight at two stops along the cable car's route.

TOP OF THE WORLD



PANORAMIC VIEWS FROM LANGKAWI'S CABLE CAR.

WORDS & PHOTOGRAPHS: ARIFF AHMAD

THE MINUTE YOU TAKE YOUR SEAT IN THE LANGKAWI CABLE CAR YOU know you are in for an exhilarating ride as it slowly climbs up the steep escarpment of Gunung (Mount) Macincang.

While nearby Gunung Raya at 881 metres is the highest peak on Langkawi Island, Gunung Macincang at 708 metres offers visitors to the tropical islands off Malaysia's north-west coast, one of the most spectacular views in the entire country.

The idea for the cable car was conceived several years ago and it required engineering genius to erect the support tow-

ers and hook up the cables in position on the near vertical mountainside. While such cable cars are familiar sights in alpine ski resorts around the world, they are less common in tropical areas and the construction techniques are very different.

A journey on the Langkawi Cable Car commences from the Oriental Village, an exclusive shopping area, a 10-minute walk from Teluk Burau. It starts from about sea level and rises to an altitude of over 700 metres above sea level.

A horizontal lift of over two-kilometres is achieved and

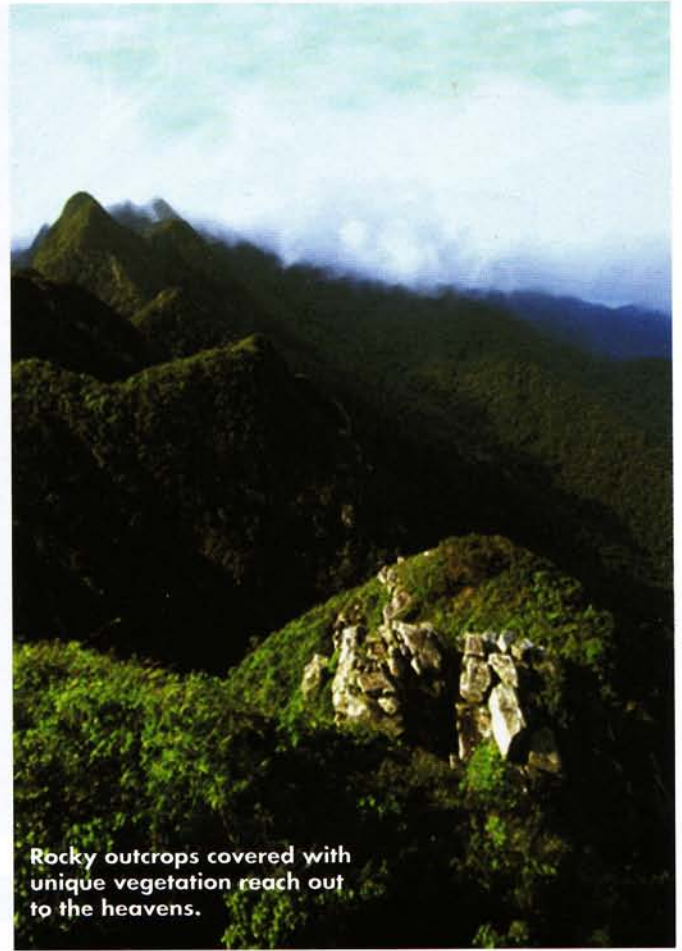
only two pylons have been installed by the engineers as support for the whole system. This decision was made in order to protect the unique vegetation that clings to the steep rocky outcrops rather than destroy them with too many support towers.

Along sections of the near vertical lift tourists are presented with the towering cliff face named Matahari Face. For safety reasons there are not too many openings on the glassed-in cabins but there is just enough space to squeeze a camera lense through for photographs.

During the journey, the views are simply stunning and the ride, exhilarating. Prevailing weather conditions will have a lot to do with tourists' appreciation of this, so if it is overcast or raining, it may be best to wait for a clearer day. With a piece of precision engineering such as this, the cable car operators carefully monitor the wind velocity and stop their operations should it get to strong.

The expanse of the cable from the second pylon to the first observation station is suspended over a distance of one kilometre, which is quite an amazing engineering feat by itself. This is where passengers really have to place faith in technology.

There are two viewing stations and it is possible to get off and rejoin the cable car at Station One. A walking trek from Station One, uphill to Station Two has been carved through



Rocky outcrops covered with unique vegetation reach out to the heavens.



Walkways provide good access to various parts of the summit.



The entrance to the Langkawi Cable Car

the vegetation for those who want to have a refreshingly cool walk through the forest. Plans are afoot to add more signs to enable visitors to learn about the montane ecosystem along the route.

The views from Station One face south-east and the beaches of Pantai Kok and Teluk Burau can be seen below. In the far distance are Pantai Cenang and its long expanse of yellow sands.

To access Station Two, passengers have to get back on one of the slow moving cable cars for a short ride to the summit. Getting on and off the cars is easy as they slow down at each station. Anyone who has snow-skied will be familiar with such systems.

The views from here include those from Station One but also the forested north-eastern side of the island and, in the distance to Tarutao National Park in southern Thailand. Thailand is less than 10 kilometres northwards across the Andaman Sea.

Another unusual pastime is to spot planes as they approach and land in the distance. Watching planes land may not be so unusual, but observing them from an elevated position is somewhat less common than looking at them from the ground up. At the summit of Gunung Macincang, you get the opportunity to see aerial views of Malaysia Airlines aircrafts as they land at Langkawi International Airport.

The rocks of this mountainous site are also worth noting

INFO

Contact: Langkawi Cable Car

Tel: 04 959 4225 Fax: 04 959 4121

Tickets: RM15 for adults and RM10 for children.

Operational hours: 10.00am to 8.00pm daily, subject to weather conditions.

E-mail: info@langkawi-cable-car.com

Website: www.langkawi-cable-car.com, or www.panorama-langkawi.com.my

as the sedimentary rocks here are over 350 million years old. This makes them some of Asia's oldest rocks. The geology is quite diverse with layers of various sedimentary rocks including sandstone, mudstone, siltstone, and conglomerate.

Gunung Macincang is very different geologically from Gunung Raya in that the former is sedimentary and the latter igneous. Gunung Raya is a granitic batholith that forced its way through the overlaying sedimentary rocks. This force pushed the horizontal sedimentary rocks apart and created Gunung Macincang in the process. Water, wind and time have played their part in carving out the island's topography that visitors to the island can now see.

Plants that grow in these difficult climatic circumstances and thin soils are biologically unique and the services of a botanical guide are recommended for those interested in this unique plant community. There are some very good guides

The cable car passes the Seven Wells Waterfall, one of Langkawi's main eco attractions.



on the island but they do not operate from the cable car. Visitors have to secure their services from various hotel and resort recreation counters.

At the end of the cable car journey, some 30 boutiques at the Oriental Village await visitors. There are also restaurants serving Malay, Japanese, Chinese, and Thai cuisine.

A souvenir shop greets tourists immediately as they alight the cable car. There is a comprehensive selection of T-shirts, postcards, stuffed toys, clothing and handi-crafts from around the region. Tourists can shop at the Oriental Village and benefit from Langkawi's duty free prices.

Langkawi Cable Car offers a superb bird's eye view of Langkawi and has quickly established itself as one of island's leading attractions in its short period of operation. With the continued development of tourism infrastructure such as the cable car, it is easy to see why Langkawi is now being added to the list of the world's leading island destinations. 🌿

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