

Malacca — City of Love

SHANTI GUNARATNAM, NST

11th. February 2008

The old world charm of Malacca evokes feelings of love and romance. Even a ride in a colourful, decorated beca makes SHANTI GUNARATNAM feel all warm and cosy

LOVE is definitely in the air with Valentine's Day just round the corner. On this day, not only will flowers, gifts, lingerie, chocolate and candy exchange hands but there will be poems on cards and the millions of SMSes (short messaging service) flying back and forth.

In the cities, restaurants offering romantic candlelight dinners will be fully booked while florists will charge a premium price for flowers and floral bouquets.

For something quite different that which will impress your beloved, how about a romantic outing in historical Malacca? Malacca may not be Venice or Paris, but it has its lion's share of tourists attractions, quaint little eateries with romantic settings, spas that offer treatments for couples, places to stroll along while holding hands and lovely places with old world charm where you can take memorable photographs with your loves ones.

If you want to go on bent knees to propose to your girlfriend, The Stadthuys, one of Malacca's most recognized landmarks, would be simply perfect, especially at sunset.



The Stadthuys has a romantic ambience. Many couples have taken their wedding portraits here

Melaka River Cruise

Or if you are in the mood for an evening cruise, take the Malacca river cruise which weaves through old buildings, galleries, antique shops, temples, homes and river side eateries.



Riverside eateries along the Malacca river make cosy setting for romantic dinners and the Malacca river cruise can be fun and romantic at the same time, especially if you take the boat ride during sunset

Let There Be Love

Spend a day getting a good rub-down. There are many spas in Malacca to choose from. The newly-opened Holiday Inn Melaka offers the Peranakan-inspired spa called the Tea Tree Spa. Step out of the spa, and you will see the infinity edge pool overlooking the Straits of Malacca.

One of the signature treatments here is called “Spirit of Malacca” (RM238) and comprises traditional treatment for both sexes. A turmeric scrub and a special formulation of Tongkat Ali are used on couples who opt for this treatment.

Then, there is the “Let There Be Love” treatment (RM508 for a couple) which includes a hot bath, exfoliation and an aromatherapy massage.

Those looking for “sole” pampering can try the foot massage which promises to make aches, pain and the weight disappear from your feet. When your feet are being massaged by the therapists, you will definitely doze off because the treatment is so soothing. A 30-minute massage costs RM48.

The spa also offers many other treatments including facial for men.

Hop On, Hop Off



The Panorama bus, a nice way to see ancient Malacca

Just like London, Malacca has its very own double-decker buses that ferry tourists on sightseeing rounds. There are two such vehicles — covered and uncovered, the latter a favourite with Western tourists.

These buses ply the tourist routes in Malacca, stopping at 13 places from the Hang Tuah Mall to Bukit Cina, the largest Chinese cemetery outside China.

Each trip lasts about one and half hours and the frequency of the buses is about 15-20 minutes. Tourists can hop off wherever they want to spend more time at, and hop on later, either on a double-decker or a single-decker which also plies the same route.

On weekends and public holidays though, passengers may have to wait 30 minutes for the next bus as traffic flow is usually heavy.

While the journey is enjoyable because you get to see a lot of Malacca in a short period of time, the only setback is that the buses are slightly old and not as comfortable as they should be.

It's a cheap ride though. For a round trip, adults pay RM5 while children pay half the price. Enquiries and customer service, call 06-2820 088 .

Hop On The Beca

When in Malacca, you cannot help but notice brightly coloured trishaws imaginatively decorated in various designs. Hopping on one of these is a romantic way to see many of the tourist attractions.

With comfortable seats and music from Hindi or English films in the background, you sit back and enjoy the ride as the trishaw-riders manoeuvre in and out of back lanes, busy streets and main roads. They are all well-versed with every nook and corner of the city.

The rides can be a little bumpy, but it is fun all the way. Don't be surprised if you catch yourself giggling on the ride, especially when the trishaw stops at a junction or the traffic lights and you are the centre of attraction when people in cars and buses stare at you in the brightly painted and decorated "beca".

A 30-minute ride would cost RM30. Do check the rates with your trishaw man before embarking on that romantic yet bumpy ride.

Eat, Drink, Watch

Holiday Inn Melaka's Sirocco Restaurant is a Mediterranean restaurant offering wood-fired pizzas, pastas and wines among others.

The Sirocco Bar in the heart of the foyer is a modern-styled bar that attracts many foreign tourists, who like to relax with drinks and titbits here while people watching. The bar also offers a nice view of the Straits of Malacca which fronts the hotel.

If you want to treat your girlfriend or loved ones to a scrumptious breakfast or lunch, Essence Kitchen is the place. It has a show kitchen and an ample outdoor seating area facing the sea that's popular with couples who can be seen holding hands and getting cosy while having their meals.

Where To Stay

For the well-deserved shut eye, Holiday Inn Melaka offers 275 guest rooms - deluxe to kid's suites, four floors of executive club rooms, 10 suites and at the top of the building and a presidential suite. All rooms feature either king, queen or two single beds. Rooms come with a view of the city or the Straits of Malacca.

The hotel also offers meeting and banquet facilities and the Straits Ballroom is a popular venue for weddings and other events.

Room rates start at RM228++. The hotel is situated at Jalan Syed Abdul Aziz, 75000, Malacca. Tel: 06-2859 000 . Fax: 06-2859 111.

email: welcome@holidayinnmelaka.com or visit www.melaka.holidayinn.com.