

## A Walk to Remember

The Guardian.  
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A Walk to Remember.  
by Andrew Catchpole.

"Langkawi is one of the most ravishing places in southeast Asia and is already being talked of as a rising star, yet it is still a hideaway where insiders come to revel in the ecological diversity and to drop out of sight in a handful of five-star hotels.

Datai Bay, a beautiful crescent of white sand beach and crystal water, is backed by virgin rain forest that runs all the way up to the slopes of Gunung Mat Cincang. The swish Datai and The Andaman are the only properties on this secluded stretch of coast, sharing the place with brown-winged and white-collared kingfishers, flying squirrels, wild boar, long-tailed macaques and huge monitor lizards that live in the dense tangle of strangler figs, keruing, meranti, and gelam merah trees.

At The Datai, a troop of monkeys are the unimpressed audience outside my spa villa one evening as I get a massage. Flocks of birds use the fig tree by the pool as their banquet area, and cheeky macaques stroll nonchalantly around the bay. As I lounge in a deck chair on the beach, one of them pokes a twig into the sand looking for crab snacks, then saunters past, inspecting the grounds like a proud general manager.

The next day, at 7 a.m.—an hour I usually avoid—I'm joined by a bleary-eyed Japanese couple and a pair of eager British birders for an appointment with Irshad Mobarak, The Datai's resident naturalist and a local celebrity—celebrated, that is, by other nature guides as the kind of charismatic communicator they would all like to become.

Before we're more than a few steps from the hotel lobby, he has identified Asian fairy bluebirds, dark-necked tailorbirds, and a scarlet-backed flowerpecker. A few yards later, a tarantula clinging to a tree trunk hits me with the rush of a double espresso. Irshad then points to a nearby branch, where a pair of sea eagles are nesting. At the base of the tree sprouts tongat ali, a prized aphrodisiac. The sightings, within just a quarter of a mile, are unparalleled."

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