

BUKIT KIARA

A place for healing the mind and body

KIARA Hill Walk is a challenging exercise park located in Bukit Kiara, an affluent suburb of Kuala Lumpur, containing some attractive exercise and relaxation spots, a golf course and an equestrian centre.

Formerly a rubber estate, this area is one of the larger yet fast diminishing green spaces in the city — a rarity these days in Kuala Lumpur. There are some roads, trails popular with mountain bikers, as well as walking and hiking trails.

Starting at Taman Rimba Kiara, near the Aether Cafe, running up Changkat Abang Haji Openg and doing a loop at the top is around 5.2km distance-wise. The elevation gain is 480 feet, with the steepest part being the first 1.4km. The labelled trail is nearly 2km each way, with the first 0.5km being steep before it levels out.

Designed for bikes, in the middle are trails made from concrete walking paths that have exercise work stations and rest areas for meditation and yoga. Generally, the place is safe and the facilities are well-maintained by a dedicated team of workers from the National Landscape Department, KL City Hall. It

is open from 6.45am to 7pm daily.

The ideal time to walk here is 6.45am, as you get to see the morning sunrise. Some of the regulars, like my friend Pathma Naban, have walked here for the last 15 years. It is his favourite area not only to sweat it out, but to find peace, tranquillity and solace.

Complementing the quiet ambience is the flora and fauna. A variety of trees in various heights, sizes and shapes as well as flowering plants, ferns and creepers are found here. Supplementing the beauty are streams, a waterfall and birds chirping merrily along the pathway.

Macaques and occasionally dusky leaf monkeys inhabit this place. Birds, butterflies, squirrels, and less commonly, tortoises, centipedes, snakes and scorpions are also found here, though they won't harm you unless provoked.

A cool freshness pervades the environment with the absence of vehicles emitting greenhouse gases. This pollution-free atmosphere is immediately felt as you commence the walk from the guard house. How I wish many parts of KL can be akin to Bukit Kiara in harnessing that

harmony with nature.

Several scientific studies carried out have found that people who spent time in natural surroundings with plenty of trees and natural flora and fauna experienced positive improvements in their immune functions.

A person simply needs to visit a natural area and enjoy a walk to calm and rejuvenate their body and mind. The concept of *shinrin-yoku*, first developed and practised in Japan during the 1980s, has yielded excellent results.

Researchers at the University of Essex conducted a survey where they found that 94 per cent of individuals believed that spending time in nature and connecting with it helped them to have a positive mood.

At a place like Bukit Kiara, you are also bound to meet up with old friends, renew relationships and make new friends to share many things in common. For retirees, this is an ideal park to spend your daily routine. The health benefit is just an added bonus.

BENEDICT LOPEZ

Kuala Lumpur



Well maintained pathways in Bukit Kiara. PIC BY PATHMA NABAN