

JOM!

with the LIFE & TIMES

Only 11 people are allowed at the pool around a time.

Time for 'vaxication' in Port Dickson

After undergoing multiple lockdowns, **Hanna Hussein** takes a trip with help from Agoda's Vaxed To Go platform

The spacious Deluxe Room at the Guest Hotel and Spa is perfect for families with young children.
PHOTO BY HANNA HUSSEIN

ALTHOUGH it is not a weekend, most hotels in Port Dickson are fully booked, especially the popular ones along the beach.

"It must be cabin fever. Now everyone is eager to go for a sorry, just like us," my friend, Rizki, jokes.

Both of us have been planning to go for a "vaxication" since we have been fully vaccinated, and since the interstate travel ban was lifted, we decided to find a destination that is supposedly not too far away.

It was a last-minute decision, but Rizki and I pulled off our unplanned all-girls getaway, thanks to Agoda.

We spent hours browsing through the hotel lists last night, and settled for an accommodation that is not at the beachfront.

It isn't anything fancy, but our hotel is just a stone's throw from some of Port Dickson's child-friendly attractions, which is ideal since we are bringing along our

daughters.

BE A GUEST

It takes less than an hour to get to Port Dickson from our meeting point in Bangi, Selangor, where our chauffeur, Huanan, picks us up before heading for The Guest Hotel and Spa.

It is a four-star hotel in Bandar Dataran Segar, Lukut. Looking at the location, it is obviously targeting business travellers.

Nevertheless, we are greeted warmly with smiles by the hotel staff.

While Rizki keeps watch on two toddlers, I head for the counter to check in.

Since everything has been pre-arranged through "The Vaxed To Go" platform by Agoda, we have nothing to worry about.

The programme offers exclusive deals only for vaccinated travellers, who will be rewarded with two or more value-added benefits.

These give vaccinated guests an even more relaxing stay, including priority

check-ins, early check-ins or late check-outs, a variety of food and beverage discounts, unique on-site experiences, such as spa and wellness deals.

Before heading up, the receptionist tells us not to worry about our luggage as it has been brought to the room while we were checking in.

We are so happy with the good service, especially when we have to take care of the toddlers.

Once we reach our room, we see the bellboy waiting in front and he kindly helps us to open the door.

He takes care of the luggage, while Rizki and I explore the spacious Deluxe Room, which is clean and well-maintained.

Before he heads out, he makes sure that everything is good and we are comfortable.

We request for extra pillows since my 7-month-old daughter, Aamina, enjoys crawling all over the huge king-size bed. There is also a baby cot placed beside

the bed, which we requested in advance when making our booking.

After a short rest, we head for the swimming pool on the first floor.

We have booked a slot during check-in, as only 15 guests are allowed at a time. Each guest is given only an hour in the pool.

Then, another new standard operating procedure in many hotels in Malaysia to ensure the safety and health of guests.

The hotel has two indoor swimming pools, one for adults and another for kids.

Luckily, there are no requests of the pool when we get there. We head straight for the kids' pool, which is smaller and shallower.

Aside from it, the hotel also boasts a spa, which offers a 20 per cent discount to Agoda's Vaxed To Go guests.

Across the road from the hotel, there are other attractions, such as the Alive 3D Art Gallery and Wild West Cowboy Indoor Theme Park. These, too, are offering half-price discounts on their entry fees.

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THE WATERFRONT

For lunch, Hoon suggests we try out a seafood restaurant at the PD Waterfront, which is a 15-minute drive from the hotel.

The Sri Pantai Ria Seafood Restaurant is a popular establishment located on the seaside, and it is no wonder that tourists looking for fresh seafood in a comfortable environment flock to the place.

We purposely head there slightly after lunch hour, when the restaurant is not too busy. This is to make sure that it is not too crowded for us to bring our little ones, just to be safe.

Indeed, we arrive at the right time as only a couple of tables are occupied. We order a few dishes, including steamed grouper, salted egg mantis prawn, and vegetable soup — perfect portions for three light eaters.

As the meals take time to prepare, we take the pleasure of enjoying the lovely view of the sea.

LOCAL FAVOURITE

The next day, Ricki and I decide to try out another local favourite dining place called Wawang Satei.



Wawang Satei claims to serve the original 'Melayan' recipes.

Located about 10 minutes' drive from the hotel, it serves one of the best Negeri-style cooking in the area — Satei masak lemak!

This time, we come slightly before lunch to make sure we don't have to queue for a table, since the eatery is just a humble shop lot.

We are given a table just beside a huge fan, and the kids are each given a high chair.

The menu is simple, you either pick the Satei Melayan dishes, which is masak lemak cili api (super spicy turmeric-infused coconut gravy) — that is served with your choice of cat-fish, daging (beef), beef and perut (tripe), three-range chicken, duck, itaipu and quail all smoked to perfection.

Or if you like saem pedas, which is a spicy sour dish, they serve it with lele (leathered meat), kembung, tenggiri and pari.

There are also grilled fish and soup, as well as other dishes.

While Ricki opts for daging satei masak lemak, I go for the mix of daging satei and perut.

The restaurant, which was established in 2008, claims to cook using the Melayan original recipe and now, it has five branches — three in Port Dickson, one in Seremban and one in Petaling Jaya.

As expected, the masak lemak gravy is rich, really hot and super spicy! Just the way we like it!

The dish is served in a small kasul (bowl) and the portion is just nice for one person. If you go there in a group, I highly recommend ordering different dishes on the menu to share and enjoy all.



Stepping on the hard ostrich egg.

VAXICATIONS FOR MALAYSIANS

'Vaxed To Go' is a specially designed to promote vaccination for Malaysians who are fully vaccinated and ready to travel.

To speed travel deals and benefits are available via the Vaxed To Go social app, and to protect both hotel staff and guests, it is only available to travellers who can prove to the hotel at check-in that they are fully vaccinated as defined by standard operating procedures.

The Vaxed To Go app, perfect for these special deals is available from June next year.

For easy booking made, Aseka will contribute RM50, with a government donation of RM125,000, to the Malaysian Red Crescent Society's vaccination programme, which reaches out to marginalised communities in the country.

For more information, visit www.aseka.com.my/vaxedto-go.

FUN FOR THE KIDS

Before returning home, we decide to check out another fun attraction in Port Dickson.

Ricki's 3-year-old daughter, Naila, is now in her learning phase and loves to see animals. So we decide to take her to PD Ostrich Show Farm, around 20 minutes' drive from our hotel.

The star attractions are the ostriches, but there are also other farm animals that you can pet and feed. This makes it fun for families with little children.

There are goats, chickens, cows, rabbits and many more. Older kids can also try riding a pony.



A handover feeding goat at the PD Ostrich Show Farm.



The Sri Pantai Ria Seafood Restaurant serves daily fresh catches at affordable prices.



Feeding the ostriches is a fun activity at the PD Ostrich Show Farm.

On the ground, there is also a dinosaur park, ideal for curious kids who love a Jurassic adventure.

Although the dinosaur is not able to obviously roar, some of the dinosaur "statues" are moving and roaring, and it feels almost real.

However, it may be too scary for Naila as she covers her eyes as we walk through the park.

The roars and squeaks may have frightened Naila a little, but not Aarima. Aarima enjoys gawking at the dinosaurs, and sometimes she grows back at the scary-looking gloves.

The park also boasts a restaurant serving ostrich meat and egg dishes, such as omelette and omelette — if you don't mind giving them a try.

By rhannellmediaprims.com.my



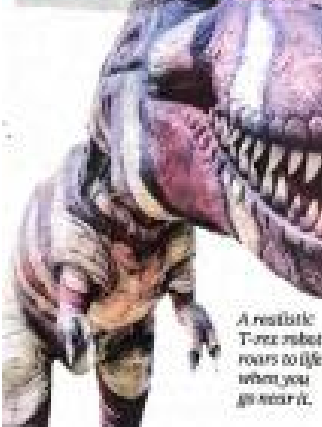
Kids will enjoy the Dinosaur Park.



You can pet and feed little rabbits at the PD Ostrich Show Farm.



Naila enjoys petting and feeding little rabbits.



A realistic T-rex robot roars to life when you go near it.