

## #JOM! GO: More than satay

By [Hanna Hussein](#) - December 19, 2019 @ 2:12pm

On a heritage walk in Kajang, Hanna Hussein discovers its tin mining and rubber plantation roots

IT has been ages since my last visit to Kajang. The last time was probably more than a decade ago.

Ever since Sate Kajang Hj Samuri was available beyond the town in Selangor, there's no reason to travel all the way there just to get my satay craving fix.

But when Tourism Selangor invited the media to join its Kajang Heritage Walk, I was eager to revisit it.

Kajang is located in the heart of Hulu Langat district in the southeastern part of the State.

Beginning at 9am (or by appointment), the two-hour walk is organised by the Kajang Heritage Centre in collaboration with Kajang Municipal Council. The guided tour aims to promote the town's history and heritage.

While aimed mainly at tourists, the tour is also open to locals interested to get an insight into the quaint town.

### MINING AND RUBBER-PLANTING

If you are driving, be sure to reach the area early to avoid the busy traffic and get a good parking spot.

Thanks to the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT), getting there is so much easier now.



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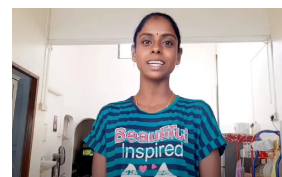
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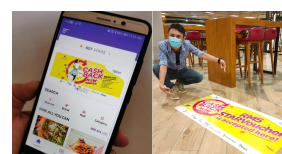
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Cikgu Lee, the guide of Kajang Heritage Walk.

It takes me less than 10 minutes to walk from MRT Stadium Kajang Station to the meeting spot on Jalan Mendaling.

There, I meet Lee Kim Sin, a former teacher fondly known as Cikgu Lee, who is our guide.

Cikgu Lee, the director of Kajang Heritage Centre, is a former Kajang assemblyman.

While waiting for the others to arrive, he briefs me on the community centre established by the Federation of Chinese Associations Hulu Langat in 2000.

The centre keeps records and artifacts. Exhibits include well-preserved treasures such as vintage furniture, old books and tin mining equipment used in the 1900s donated by the local community .

Tin mining and rubber cultivation led to the establishment of the town. Before Kajang, there was another town called Sungai Tangkas (previously known as Rekoh) which is the first tin mine in Hulu Langat district in the 1850s. Sungai Tangkas is located 4km away from the town.

The Mandailing migrants from Sumatra were pioneers in opening up forest land in and around Kajang.

Sultan Abdul Samad, the Selangor ruler during the era (who owned most of the land), invited more miners in which led to the foundation of the settlement.

The 1884 census report of Kajang town by the British shows that 40 out of the 60 inhabitants of the wooden shophouses were owned by the Mandailing, Rawa and Minang communities which were very good in the tin mining business.



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Uncle Siew, the owner of one the oldest shops in Kajang Town.

The other members of the community living there were 19 Chinese migrants and another Indian migrant who moved to Kajang in the 1870s as labourers and traders.

After the decline of the tin mining business in the 1890s, British planters started coffee cultivation in Kajang but it failed due to disease infection. They then tried rubber plantations. The Kindersly Brothers, for instance, started planting rubber in 1895 and they were successful.

The rubber industry boomed and more British people came, buying land to plant rubber.

During the time, the first batch of brick shophouses were built. Kajang had by the early 20th century developed into a commercial and administrative centre.

On the origins of satay in Kajang, Cikgu Lee says that the seasoned, skewered grilled meat served with a peanut sauce came from Jawa. The Jawa community, he continued, lived in Beranang and they travelled to Kajang to sell the smokey delicious dish by the roadside.

## CENTURY-OLD TEMPLE

The tour kicks off with a visit to one of the oldest temples in the area, located next to the Kajang Heritage Centre.

Established in 1898, the Kajang Shen Sze She Yar Temple relocated from Rekoh in 1892. Incense was brought from Cheng Koon Temple in Rasa.



Grand entrance of Shen Sze She Yar temple.

The temple was renovated and extended over the years but the main

structure was retained.

Inside, you will find well-kept artifacts and records in the gallery set up by the Temple Management Committee in 2015.

Exhibits include a 120-year-old gong made of cast iron and a more than 100-year-old wood bat door knob which symbolises luxury.

According to Cikgu Lee, in 1860, war broke out in Sungai Ujong due to conflict over ownership of tin mines.

Kapitan Seng Meng Lee, a respected community leader in Lukut, was beheaded when his men lost. Legend has it that the blood which gushed out was white so he was deified as an immortal and honoured by the followers as Lord She Sze She Yar at Cheng Koon Temple in Rasa in 1861.

### FROM ONE GENERATION TO ANOTHER

We then explore the streets where we visit a few old businesses in the old town which were passed down from generation to generation.

Cikgu Lee takes us to an old biscuit shop. Kedai Biskut Kwong Sang Woh is owned by Siew Bak Chong. He is 88 and is the second generation of the more than 100-year-old shop!

The shop, which started as a small grocery store, was owned by his father. Later, his father started to sell biscuits and Chinese prayer items. Today, the shop focuses on selling sweets and biscuits, and there are more than 400 types of biscuits including the popular colourful ice gem biscuits priced at RM13 per kilogramme. Glass jars are used to keep the biscuits fresh and crispy.



Low at his 70-year-old shop

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The next shop is Tukang Ayan Sin Wah Cheong, a more than 80-year-old tinsmith and metal welding shop owned by Low Woo Ngee, 81, the third generation owner.

Low learnt the techniques of smithing from his father when he was just 11.



In the old days, charcoal was used for welding and later this was changed to fuel oil.

However, due to the rising price of oil, Low has turned to gas.

In the 1960s, Kajang town had more than six metal welding shops due to high demand to make rubber-tapping and tin mining tools.

Today, the business is declining and Low is struggling to keep afloat.

Other old shops include a kopitiam serving toast from a charcoal burner, Wong Chai Tong traditional medicine shop and a cendol stall located by the temple.

## LANDMARKS

Aside of the shops, there are a few local landmarks in Kajang town and one of them is the iconic Kajang Post Office.

Located on Jalan Tengah, the building was built before WWII, and started operations in 1914.



The post office boasts distinctive Malay architecture.

It was made with cengal and meranti wood, and has undergone renovation over the years.

The design is a mix of traditional Malay classic and colonial European style. The building is a post office till today.

Another iconic building is Bangunan Dato Nazir, the Hulu Langat district office from 1890 to 1970. Today, it is where you can enjoy Sate Haji Samuri for lunch and dinner!

The walk takes more than two hours and covers Masjid Jamek, Stadium Kajang as well as Kajang Satay Gallery, possibly the first such gallery the world.

The mini-complex gallery, which opened in 2009, is located next to Medan Sate Kajang and houses artifacts, information panels, audio visual guides and dioramas tracing the history of satay in Kajang back to 1917.

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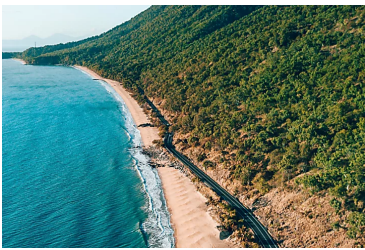
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