# Ubin Experience Tour

Photos courtesy of John Kwok

Did you know?
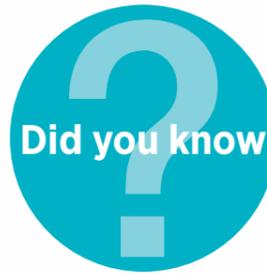
1

The island was originally named Pulau Batu Ubin (meaning Granite Stone Island) by the local Malays as the rocks on the island were used to make floor tiles or *jubin* in Malay. It was later shortened to Pulau Ubin.

2

The granite base and walls of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca were made from granite rock from Pulau Ubin as they were deemed most suitable compared to bricks and mortar. In 1850 and 1851, granite blocks were transported by lighters to Pedra Branca and the lighthouse was completed in 1851.

3

Between the mid-1800s and early 1900s, crop planting and cultivation were the main activities on the island. Coffee, cocoa, pineapple and rubber were recorded to have been grown on the island.

4

A Maternity and Child Health Clinic operated on the island from 1957 to 1987. The clinic attended to expectant mothers, post-partum mothers and their young children.

5

The community centre that functioned on the island between 1961 and 2003 used to screen movies at its basketball court every four months and each screening would attract two to three hundred residents. It was also recorded that as early as the 1920s, some quarry coolies attended free cinema performances organised by their quarry owners.

6

There are different types of housing structures on the island. The Malay houses are typically built on raised platforms or on the ground, or a combination of both. The living room and bedrooms are usually located on raised platforms while the dining rooms, kitchens and toilets are built on the ground. Raised platforms allow for greater ventilation. The Chinese houses typically have concrete flooring with brick walls and painted timber panels. Wire-mesh grills on top of the walls provide ventilation.

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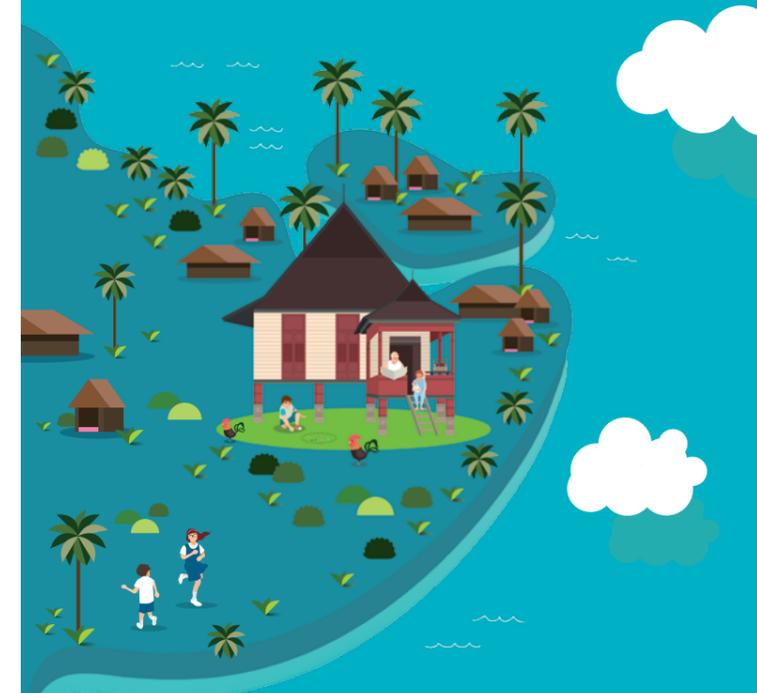
heritagefest.sg
#SGHeritageFest

This new tour of Pulau Ubin has been developed by the National Heritage Board in conjunction with the Singapore HeritageFest 2016. This brochure guides visitors on a self-facilitated tour of the little-known sites on the island. This tour will take approximately two hours on bicycle.

About Pulau Ubin

Pulau Ubin lies on the Straits of Johor off the North-eastern coast of the main island of Singapore. It was essentially made up of five smaller islands connected by mangrove swamps. The swamps were later drained, resulting in one continuous island. In the 16th to 17th century, the island was under the control of the Johor-Riau Empire and the earliest inhabitants were the Orang Laut and indigenous Malay with Bugis and Javanese origins. The British East India Company claimed Pulau Ubin (then called Pulo Obin) in 1825 when John Crawfurd, Singapore's second British Resident, led an expedition to the island from Singapore. Pulau Ubin was later described as an important island that commanded the entrance of the "highway for all vessels trading to China and the far east".

Clockwise from left:
Ahmad Drink Stall, Pekan Quarry, House No. 1 and Visitor Centre, German Girl Shrine

- For cycling, wear protective gear and ensure that your bicycle is in good working condition before setting off. When cycling downhill or negotiating a bend, switch to a lower gear and slow down by braking gently.
- For your safety, stay out of closed areas and keep away from the edges of granite quarries, ponds and rivers.
- Be considerate and take good care of the facilities on the island so that others can also enjoy them.

In case of any emergency or accident, please call:
Police Hotline: 6375 0000
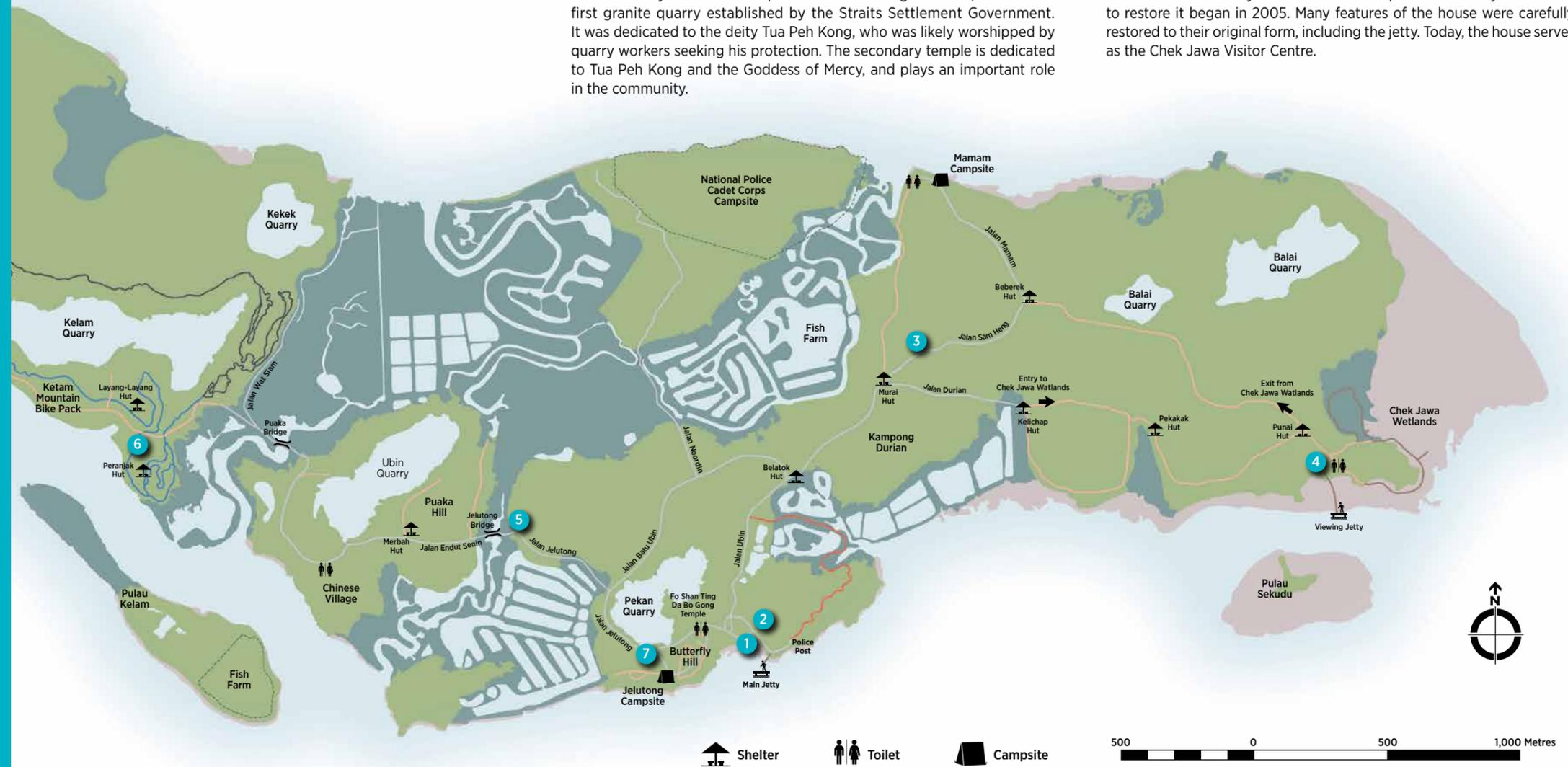
1 The Wayang Stage

The Wayang Stage was an important part of social life on Pulau Ubin. For decades, Chinese opera or *wayang* performances on the stage were the island's only form of entertainment. In the past, the stage also served as rallying platforms during the election period. On festive occasions such as Vesak Day and the Hungry Ghost Festival, Chinese opera troupes would stage performances to celebrate and honour the patron deities of the Tua Peh Kong Temple. Even when the number of residents on the island began to decline, the performances continued to be staged to honour the patron deities.

2 The Tua Peh Kong Temples

The Tua Peh Kong Temple located across from the Wayang Stage in the Ubin town centre is the secondary temple to the main temple near the Ketam Quarry. The main temple is located on a granite hill, next to the first granite quarry established by the Straits Settlement Government. It was dedicated to the deity Tua Peh Kong, who was likely worshipped by quarry workers seeking his protection. The secondary temple is dedicated to Tua Peh Kong and the Goddess of Mercy, and plays an important role in the community.

3 Ahmad Drink Stall

Mr Ahmad Kassim is a long-time resident of Pulau Ubin. He arrived on the island with his father and his six siblings during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. Ahmad has lived on Pulau Ubin ever since, and once worked for the National Environment Agency to check for breeding mosquitos on the island. His home is a large wooden house that his father built during World War Two. Today, he sells drinks to visitors and part of his home is used to teach *batik* painting and Malay cooking using local ingredients and herbs. Ahmad also shares his experiences of living in a *kampong* – such as drawing and using water from a well – with groups of school children.

4 House No. 1 and Visitor Centre

The Tudor-style house at No. 1 Ubin was built in the 1930s for Chief Surveyor Langdon Williams as a holiday retreat. The house was granted conservation status by the Urban Redevelopment Authority and efforts to restore it began in 2005. Many features of the house were carefully restored to their original form, including the jetty. Today, the house serves as the Chek Jawa Visitor Centre.

5 Ah Ma Drink Stall and former Prawn Farm

Popularly known as the Ah Ma Drink Stall, the stall is managed by Madam Ong Ang Kui (also known as Lai Huat So) and her daughter. Ong was born on Ubin and lives in a house surrounded by more than 90 durian trees that were planted by her late husband. Today, she sells drinks and fruit from these trees at her stall, which is near a former prawn farm called Xin Li Prawn Pond. Prawn farms were introduced to the island from the late 1950s and sluice gates, such as the one near the drink stall, were built to regulate the water levels of the prawn ponds. As a result, most of the mangrove swamps on the island were drained over the years, linking up different parts of Ubin and making most of the island accessible by foot.

6 German Girl Shrine

The legend of the German Girl Shrine began with the alleged death of a German girl during World War One. At the time, the British authorities was purportedly going to intern a German family who owned a coffee plantation on the island. The daughter is said to have died after falling into a quarry while escaping from the authorities. The site later became a shrine as rumours spread about people winning the lottery after praying there. The shrine was relocated in 1974 along with the supposed exhumed remains of the German Girl stored in a porcelain container, but this was later stolen. The shrine continues to attract worshippers to this day, who often leave items such as perfume and make-up accessories at her altar as offerings.

7 Pekan Quarry

By 1847, Chinese settlers had set up private quarrying companies on the island to quarry granite and feed the demand for stone as Singapore developed. In the 1850s, the colonial administration established large-scale quarrying operations on Ubin for the construction of the Horsburgh Lighthouse on Pedra Branca, the Raffles Lighthouse, the Causeway, Fort Canning and its reservoir, as well as the Singapore Harbour. The Pekan Quarry was opened in 1947, then known as the Municipal Quarry No. 1. It was later renamed Pekan Quarry to reflect its close proximity to the main village ("Pekan" is Malay for "town"), and was closed in 1970. Today, nature has transformed the former quarry into a lake and it is now home to a large heron colony.

Map labels

Kekek Quarry
Kelam Quarry
Ketam Mountain Bike Pack
Layang-Layang Hut
Jalan Wat Siam
Puaka Bridge
Peranjak Hut
Ubin Quarry
Puaka Hill
Merbah Hut
Jalan Endut Senin
Jelutong Bridge
Chinese Village
Pulau Kelam
Fish Farm
Pekan Quarry
Jalan Jelutong
Jalan Batu Ubin
Jalan Noordin
Jalan Ubin
Butterfly Hill
Fo Shan Ting Da Bo Gong Temple
Jelutong Campsite
Main Jetty
Police Post
Belatok Hut
Kampong Durian
Fish Farm
National Police Cadet Corps Campsite
Mamam Campsite
Jalan Mamam
Beberek Hut
Jalan Sam Heng
Murai Hut
Jalan Durian
Entry to Chek Jawa Watlands
Kelichap Hut
Pekakak Hut
Punai Hut
Viewing Jetty
Exit from Chek Jawa Watlands
Chek Jawa Wetlands
Balai Quarry
Balai Quarry
Pulau Sekudu

Shelter   Toilet   Campsite

500   0   500   1,000 Metres

N