

An Eco-Walk through the Frangipani Resort

By Teviot Fairservis



Some remarkable things happen when you look for ways to interact in mutually beneficial ways with Mother Nature. Take an “eco-walk” through the Frangipani Resort and you’ll see what I mean. You will find yourself surrounded by beauty and feel a sense of harmony, delight, even happiness. Thanks to the Langkawi Ladybirds, I was able to join a ‘behind the scenes’ tour of the property led by their knowledgeable young environmental officer, Ms. Ai Ling.



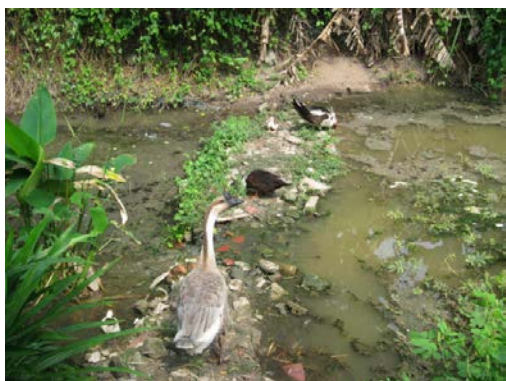
This small resort along Pantai Tengah beach clearly deserves its title as “the greenest resort in Malaysia.” It is pioneering eco-friendly solutions to many issues faced by the tourist industry – and offers a myriad of ideas that you could do at home if you have a bit of land. Almost everything we saw on our walk showed careful and clever design with the added benefits of reducing costs and lessening the impact on the environment.

How, for example, would you deal with the rainwater run-off from a parking lot? Here it runs down to a collection tank that empties into a simple filter that layers soil with coral and stones. As we stood on the a bridge above the pond, our guide explained that the water then passes on into a small pond abundantly planted with water hyacinths and other botanicals that clean, oxygenate, and balance the pH. She passed out buns which we tossed into the pond. Huge thriving catfish rose to the surface to grab them. These large fish could make a nice dinner in the restaurant, completing the cycle.

Throughout the resort, signs are posted detailing the names of the trees and flowers and describing some of their uses. We stayed for minutes by the cashew nut tree admiring its delicate flowers and leaves. Passing neem and frangipani trees, our excited group shared tidbits about their traditional uses. Walking by the hotel rooms, our guide pointed out the solar panels on the roofs, the rain and waste water collection systems that are used to water the gardens and flush the toilets. We peeked into the public toilets which are lit by sunlight filtering through colorful glass bottles set into the concrete walls.



Beyond the fences separating work areas from the guests, things got a bit wilder and more 'jungle.' We came to a pretty little house with a thatched roof – I wondered if anyone lived there until I saw the sign "Chicken Villa." We clambered over a rocky path and a steep mound of rubble to a stream to see both wild and domestic birds which were completely undisturbed by our presence. A very handsome male goose surveyed his flock of baby geese, ducks, and chickens. To protect the chickens from being eaten by the monitor lizards who haunt the jungle, the resort brought in the geese.



Perhaps what impressed me the most was the commitment to ongoing maintenance and continuous improvement of these systems by the members of the staff. We came to the composting area where several large facilities have been set up and continuously maintained. In one, a bin constructed of bricks had pipes at various levels. On a daily basis, a hose would be inserted in the pipes to spray in water.

Another 'house-sized' pile was held up by stumps and roofed over with the fallen branches from the palm trees scattered around the resort. Then we came to a series of bathtubs lying next to each other – an odd sight in the midst of a jungle. Each one contained a different surface of leaves. Once a day, the contents are turned and moved into the next bathtub down the line.

Towards the end of our walk, we came across boxes of drying frangipani flowers, used to make the resort's signature tea. This is one of my favorite flowers – known as 'tiare' in Tahiti and 'plumeria' in Hawaii and the US. The recipe is to collect white frangipani flowers, lay them out in a cardboard box and let them dry in the sunshine (not the oven) for 2 or 3 days until they turn a deep brown and are crisp to the touch. Then steep them in hot water, add a bit of honey for sweetness, and pour yourself a cup.





In the cool shade of their veranda restaurant, we sipped frangipani tea and with appetites up after our walk, a delicious chili noodle salad and ginger cakes quickly disappeared.

To our wonderful guide Ai Ling, General Manager Jeffrey Goh, Admin Executive Zuraidah who was inspired to invite the Ladybirds for this tour, and to all the staff at Frangipani, thank you! Please keep up the good work!

And big thanks to Evelin and the Ladybirds for this great opportunity!