



The Coastal Boardwalk

The last village standing

Just off the coast of mainland Singapore is Pulau Ubin, a boomerang-shaped island, meaning 'Granite Island'. The fact that, this is the one last bit of the heavily urbanised Singapore that still retains its rustic village ways is what makes this a popular day trip destination

NEEHARIKA SATYAVADA

Popularly believed to be the last real kampung (village) in Singapore today, Pulau Ubin was once home to thousands of settlers dependent on granite quarrying. Although abandoned since the 1970s and reclaimed by nature, these quarries remain a picturesque relic of the past. The few remaining villagers on the Island now subsist on farming and fishing.

Legend has it that a frog, a pig and an elephant once had a race to swim through the straits and reach Johor and whoever was to lose would turn to stone. None of them made it. The frog turned into Pulau Sekudu (Frog Island), while the pig and the elephant turned to the two halves of what is today – Pulau Ubin. Over the years farmers built mud bunds on the Jelutong River and the two halves of the island eventually came together.

You can explore this quiet island on foot or by cycling along the many bike trails, at your own pace, stopping along the way for a bird's eye view of the luxuriant tree

canopy and flourishing birdlife from the Viewing Tower or kick back your heels for a picnic on the Jetty.

At the tip of Pulau Ubin lies a cape, surrounded by wetlands rich in bio-diversity. This is Chek Jawa and its popularity precedes it. So much so, that we were not the only 'tourists', who had packed a picnic lunch to eat at the lookout-jetty on the boardwalk. The view from here is made even more interesting with the flights taking off and landing at the Singapore Changi Airport. A Coastal Boardwalk runs along the coast for almost a kilometre and leads you through the mangroves to the jetty right in the middle of the Straits of Johor. Although made of concrete, this boardwalk is built to look like wood so the effect is not jarring but goes well with the feel of the island.

The Island of Pulau Ubin boasts of a variety of ecosystems in and as one. Coastal Forests, Mangroves, Seagrass Lagoons, Tidal Flats (both mud and sand) and Coral rubble, even rocky shores and sandy beaches co-exist here so you will never lack a scenic spot when on the island.

More than even the 'exploring on a cycle', it was the walking through these shady mangroves that I enjoyed the most here. Maybe it was my coming from the country of the Sundarbans. 'The Hungry Tide' and 'Midnight's Children' are amongst my favourite books, I admit that 'mangroves' always did hold a certain fascination for me even before I ever saw them for real. But the experience of walking through a mangrove forest, where the sun rays play hide and seek with you as you hear and feel the distant breeze from the surrounding sea, definitely heightened that fascination.

Only a short boat ride away, this island has a lot to offer and is totally worth the time!

FACT FILE

Catch a bumboat from the Changi Point Ferry Terminal to get to the island in just 10 minutes.



Get a Bike, Go Explore



A Fishing Village that is Pulau Ubin

Legend has it that a frog, a pig and an elephant once had a race to swim through the straits and reach Johor and whoever was to lose would turn to stone. None of them made it. The frog turned into Pulau Sekudu (Frog Island), while the pig and the elephant turned to the two halves of what is today – Pulau Ubin