



« WINTER TRAVEL 2012: Bespoke Getaways

The Multi-Agenda Family of Three

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Scale the Great Wall at Johor Bahru's Legoland.

(Photo: Then Chih Wey/Xinhua Press/Corbis)

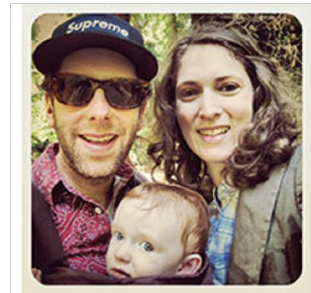
Shana Dworken, 31, high-school teacher; Arye Dworken, 35, advertising creative; and Steven Dworken, 23 months

Budget: Moderate

Duration: 10 Days

"My wife teaches global history, so she tries to get me to do things that involve culture and museums. I'm an unrepentant beach person. I just want to lie down and do nothing. Steven is up for whatever, but he'd love a kid-themed place—like a Sesame Street."

Go here: Johor Bahru, Malaysia



(Photo: Courtesy of the travelers)

Why now: The government created the **Iskandar** development region in 2007 in hopes of turning the southerly area into a major metropolis; since then, J.B. (as the locals call it) has lured in both hotel and theme-park developers, earning a reputation as the Orlando of Southeast Asia (albeit with more cultural allure). It's also within spitting distance of **Danga Bay** and just over an hour's drive to the white-sand beaches of **Desaru**.

What to do: Explore 75 acres of Lego-themed thrills at Asia's first **Legoland** (from \$34.50 for adults, free for children under 3; Medini, Nusajaya; 60-7-597-8888), making sure to check out **Miniland**, dotted with Lilliputian versions of Asian landmarks like the Taj Mahal and the Great Wall of China. Feel like an adult again at **Arulmigu Sri Rajakaliamman** (free; No. 22, Lorong 1, Jalan Tebrau), a Hindu temple mosaicked with 300,000 pieces of shimmering glass, or the **Starhill Golf & Country Club** water park (from \$1.63; 6.5KM Jalan Kampung Maju Jaya, Kempas Lama, Skudai; 60-7-556-6325), which has a pool with three cascading waterfalls and a hot tub in a cave.

Where to stay: The **Pulai Springs Resort** (from \$75; pulaisprings.com) beckons with a golf course, spa, a rock-slide-equipped children's pool, and lap and wading pools for grown-ups.

What to eat: No trip to Malaysia would be complete without a bowl of mee rebus, a noodle dish served with a spicy potato-based brown gravy; the version at **Haji Wahid's Mee Rebus** in Plaza Angsana (LI-33A Jalan Skudai) is just \$1.15 a pop. For dinner, try **Eight Lido** (8 Jalan Skudai; 60-7-222-7807): The year-old tapas joint doesn't disappoint—and neither does its view of the Strait of Johor.

Buy this: A hand-woven **rattan fruit basket**, made by people with physical or mental disabilities, is just \$7.50 at the **JARO Malaysia Handicraft Centre** (TLO-2125 Jalan Sungei Chat; 60-7-224-5632).

Also consider: **Richmond, Virginia**, whose **Children's Museum** has three facilities for the under-8 set, two of which opened recently. The town's eighteenth-century plantations and the **American Civil War Center** provide cultural relief, while the skylit indoor pool at the Jefferson Hotel (from \$235; jeffersonhotel.com) will sate aquanauts.

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