

Moonriver Lodge – a Submontane Hideaway at Sigar Highlands

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Recently some of us have been watching birds at the Moonriver Lodge at the Cameron Highlands to Gua Musang road, Lojing, Kelantan, Malaysia. Moonriver Lodge is a family-owned highlands farmstay nestled in a valley of Sigar Highlands. Besides running a pesticide-free and organic vegetable farm, the owners operate a homestay and an ecotourism site, offering rafflesia flower and mossy forest treks, bird-sightings and farm tours. Over time they have nurtured about ~ 200+ acres of pristine primary forest around the farm / homestay with a vision to preserve and conserve it as a Biodiversity Park.

Moonriver Lodge is located 1.5 hours from Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia using the Simpang Pulai to Cameron Highlands route - about 15 min further up from the junction that turns into Cameron Highlands (Plate 1). Hence, it is away from the madding weekend crowds flocking to Cameron Highlands.

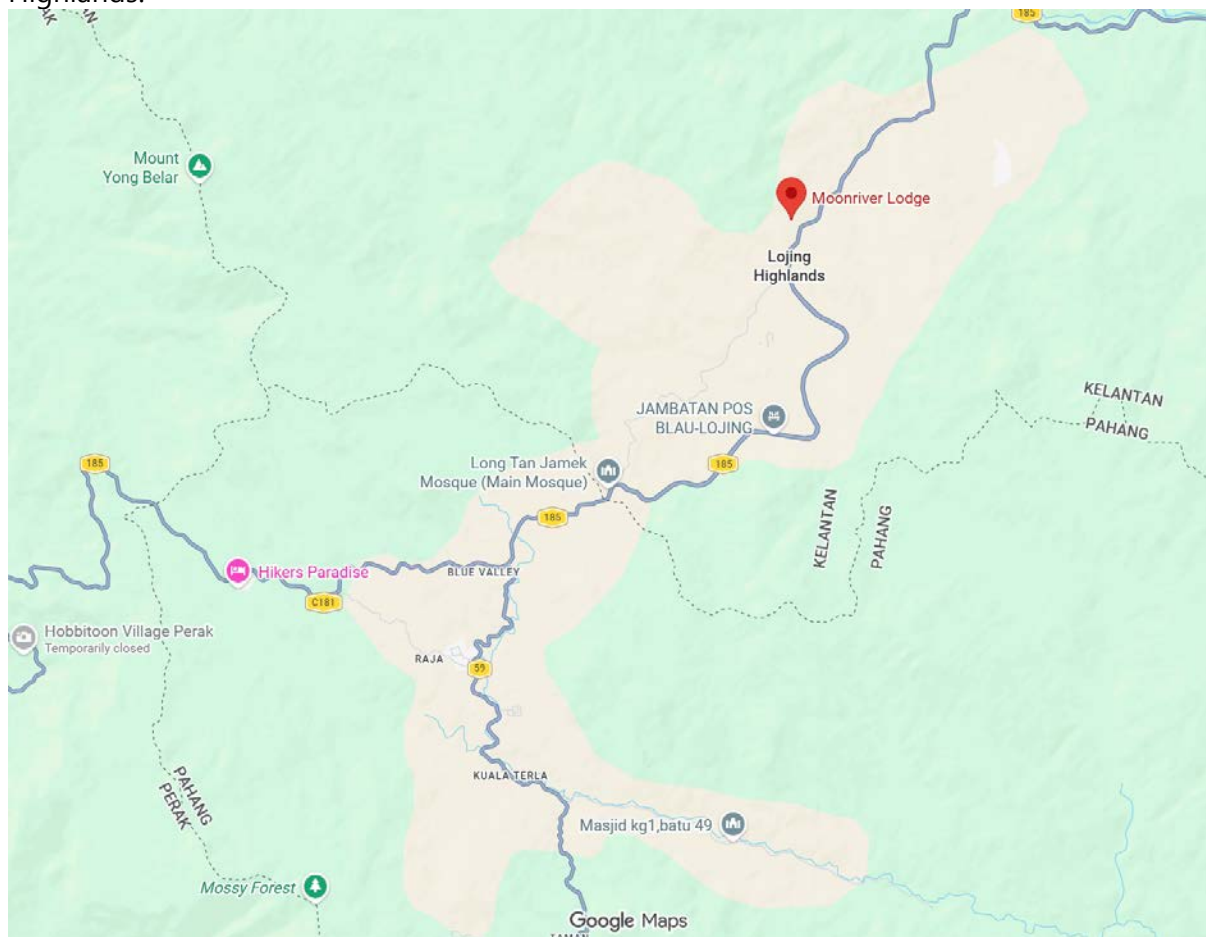


Plate 1: Location map for Moonriver Lodge based on Google Maps.

The homestay is tastefully done and has an excellent and widespread garden with many nectar sources (Plate 2). There is a lot of room to wander around or just hang out to rest and relax. The food we ate at two visits was good and wholesome (the location and food are pork free). We also bought organic vegetables to take home.



Plate 2: Moonriver Lodge homestay environment.

Although the area immediately around the homestay was previously logged, there are nearby primary forests. As the location is ~1,000 m ASL you get a good mixture of highland and lowland birds. Temperature is 18/19°C in the early morning and goes up to 26°C in the afternoon.

The 'star' birds here are (Plate 3):

1. Temminck's Sunbird *Aethopyga temminckii* – a regular in the homestay garden, coming for its daily nectar feeds, often best seen midmornings. Spiderhunters also visit the garden.
2. Bamboo Woodpecker *Gecinulus viridis* – commonly heard and seen by staff, it even visits the bamboo patch next to the larger dining area.

Other interesting birds that have been seen at the site during surveys include (Plate 4):

Little Cuckoo-Dove *Macropygia ruficeps*
 Maroon Woodpecker *Blythipicus rubiginosus*
 Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis* & other hornbills
 Green Broadbill *Calyptomena viridis*
 Silver-breasted Broadbill *Serilophus lunatus*
 Black-hooded Oriole *Oriolus xanthornus*
 Sultan Tit *Melanochlora sultanea*

Streaked Bulbul *Ixos malaccensis*
 Black-throated Babbler *Stachyris nigricollis*
 Sunda Scimitar-Babbler *Pomatorhinus bornensis*
 Hill Blue Flycatcher *Cyornis whitei*
 Long-billed Spiderhunter *Arachnothera robusta*
 Pin-tailed Parrotfinch *Erythrura prasina*

See links: <https://moonriverlodge.wordpress.com/photo-ukm/>
<https://moonriverlodge.wordpress.com/photo-umk/>



Plate 3: Temminck's Sunbird male (left) and Bamboo Woodpecker (right).



Plate 4: From top left clockwise: Maroon Woodpecker, Silver-breasted Broadbill, Sultan Tit, Black-throated Babbler, Sunda Scimitar-Babbler, Pin-tailed Parrotfinch.

Unlike many current locations, there are no hides here. The site offers you an opportunity to return to the pleasure of birdwatching; wandering around looking for birds, with the pleasure of unexpected surprises.

Another good aspect about the site is that you can bring your non-birdwatching family/partner who can enjoy the environment and many activities while you watch birds. The

site offers nature trails and mossy-forest treks, camping, visits to see Rafflesia flowers, etc. The owners also partner with the Temiar Orang Asli tribe to offer ecotourism. Also, do not miss out on the excellent night skies for astrophotography as light pollution is low.

Two non-bird rarities at the site are the Malaysian Fire Snail *Platymma tweediei* and the endangered Lar Gibbon *Hylobates lar* (also known as the White-handed Gibbon) (Plate 5).



Plate 5: Malaysian Fire Snail (left) and Lar Gibbon (right).

You can get more details by visiting their website:

<https://moonriverlodge.wordpress.com>

For birdwatching check out their self-explore day rate and tour package rates:

<https://moonriverlodge.wordpress.com/new-birdwatching-tour/>

Note that some good locations require the staff to take you by 4-wheel drive along logging trails.

To contact them:

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