

# Experts: It is easy to get lost in the jungle



**Dark side of nature:** The number of people reported lost in Malaysian jungles has risen significantly over the last three years.

## Many underestimate dangers of the wilderness

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**PETALING JAYA:** The great outdoors is an increasingly popular draw in Malaysia, but many people have learnt the hard way that the wild can be unforgiving if they are not well-prepared for the experience.

The number of people reported lost in the jungle so far this year is significantly higher than in each of the past three years.

Fire and Rescue Department operations division director Datuk Abdul Wahab Mat Yasin said in the first seven months of the year, there were 252 cases of persons reported missing in the jungle.

In contrast, there were 191 cases in 2016, while the figures for the next two years were 219 and 217 respectively.

Abdul Wahab said in 2018, all the missing persons were found, whereas two from this year's cases remain missing.

He said the increase this year could be due to growing interest in hiking, trekking and camping, even among those who are not skilled in such pursuits.

"Many of them don't hire certified guides or report their activities in the jungle to the relevant authorities."

"Some believe that venturing into the jungle is a piece of cake, even though they may not be fit for such outdoor activities," he added.

Of the 252 people reported missing between January and July this year, 23 are foreigners.

Abdul Wahab said Selangor had the most cases of missing persons in the jungle, with 85 so far this year.

"Many cases happen in Selangor because there are many attractive recreational spots that have good amenities," he explained.

The other states with a large number of such cases are Sarawak (46), Pahang (25) and Melaka (17).

Among the reasons people get lost in the jungle, he said, are unfamiliarity with jungle conditions, los-

ing their bearings while looking for forest products and failure to rely on guides.

"Also, a missing person may get separated from his group or may have an irresponsible guide," Abdul Wahab said.

He also advised people not to panic if they get lost in the jungle, adding that they should stay put.

"Try to retrace your steps, look out for footprints and find the route that you were on. Don't run or do strenuous activities that will drain your energy," he said.

They should also try to look for a shelter where they can rest safely, he said.

He added that people should find river or streams and attract the attention of search-and-rescue personnel.

"Break branches that are at eye level, which is about five feet from the ground. Make marks along your path to help rescuers track you."

"Sound a whistle if you have one and light a fire so that rescuers can see the smoke," Abdul Wahab said.

## Cases of people who went missing in Malaysian jungles

### July 2019:

Dutch tourist Peter Hans Hoverkamp, 66, went missing following a flash flood at the Mulu National Park, Sarawak. He was found drowned in a river inside a cave.

### March, 2019:

Ultra-marathon runner Mohd Ashraf Hassan, 29, went missing while participating in the Gopeng Ultra Trail Marathon in Perak. He has not been found.



### Aug, 2018:

A Department of Wildlife and National Parks (Perhilitan) ranger Ahmad Tarmizi Ahmad Japli went missing in Yong Forest Reserve, Taman Negara while collecting data on tigers. He was found alive two weeks later.



### Sept, 2017:

South Korean tourist Kim Chae-won, 71, was found alive after four days of going missing at Berjaya Hills resort in Bentong.

### Oct, 2016:

Australian tourist Andrew Gaskell, 25, went missing from Mulu National Park. He was found alive two weeks later.



### Aug, 2015:

Seven Orang Asli children went missing for 46 days near Pos Tohoi in Kelantan. Only two children survived the ordeal.



Source: The Star

### March, 1967:

American businessman Jim Thompson, 61, went missing when he went for a walk in Cameron Highlands. He was never found.



## 'If you get lost, stay calm'

**PETALING JAYA:** Lost and alone in the jungle for two weeks, a ranger got through the ordeal by keeping calm and relying on what he had learnt from survival training.

Ahmad Tarmizi Ahmad Japli of the Wildlife and National Parks Department (Perhilitan) made the headlines last year after going missing on Aug 11 while collecting data on tigers at Yong Forest Reserve, Taman Negara, Pahang.

Rescuers found him near a stream on Aug 25.

The 31-year-old father of four, who is with the Kelantan Perhilitan office, said when he realised he was lost, he stayed cool and recalled his training.

He also decided that the best thing to do was to move to a safe point and wait for help.

"I had initially been walking with a partner, but he went up ahead and I accidentally strayed from the path."

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