



My visit to Zhong Cheng Durian Plantation

Description

The durian season is upon us. I have been exceeding my daily caloric intake due to the availability of cheap and good durians in Singapore. Let me lay down a marker, Singapore's durians are from Malaysia. Malaysian durians are way better than Thai durians. There is no argument about this. The difference between Malaysian durians and Thai durians is that Malaysian durians are harvested when they are ripe and drop from the tree whereas Thai durians are harvested before they ripen. Thai durians are chopped down while they are still attached to the durian tree. This means that Malaysian durians are ripe the moment they fall and they continue to ripen every second after. This is the reason why some durians that are sold in Singapore are watery. The durians are overripe. The ideal situation would be for the durian to be transported to Singapore the moment they are harvested. This would be as fresh as one could get them in Singapore. However, is there a difference between a durian that is freshly consumed at the source versus one that was transported to Singapore?

There is only one way to find out. I needed to visit a durian plantation in Malaysia myself.

I needed recommendations. A good plantation. Not just any old plantation. A good plantation welcomes visitors with staff that would explain the various durian varieties to visitors.

This is what I settled on. Zhong Cheng Durian Plantation.



Durian
忠诚榴莲芭
韩新根 (榴莲王子)
HAN SING KENG (DURIAN PRINCE)
PLANTATION OWNER
+6 012-709 1106

忠诚榴莲芭
ZHONG CHENG DURIAN PLANTATION

Entrance Point GPS Coordinates: N 01° 41.290' E 103° 31.875'
Farm GPS Coordinates: N 01° 41.572' E 103° 32.199'

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榴莲芭观光

- 现掉现买, 新鲜好榴莲

榴莲品种:

- 青龙, 石头, 麒麟, 金凤, 猫山王, D13, D101, 黑刺

TOUR OF DURIAN PLANTATION

- Seasonal, Fresh Everyday, Excellent and assured quality

DURIAN VARIETIES:

- Green Dragon, Batu, Qilin, Golden Phoenix, Raja Kunyit D197, D13, D101, Black Thorn



This looks far. However, estimating the time taken for them to travel to Singapore, the durians would have ripened at least another 12 hours before customers in Singapore consumed them. According to certain durian connoisseurs, this is not ideal and the taste of the durian would have altered in those 12 hours.

For starters, the ideal time to visit a durian farm would be in the morning. I set off at about 8 am on Wednesday. Met Wilber and some other friends and headed to JB via the Woodlands Causeway.

Wilber... please hold your belly in while taking photos...

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The jam at about 9 am took about 45 minutes to clear and we were off to Zhong Cheng Durian Plantation. According to Google Maps, this plantation is about a 45-minute drive from the CIQ checkpoint on the Malaysian side. This is not near Woodlands nor is it near Tuas. Although travelling from Tuas does seem to be the shorter route.

Travelling to the plantation... here is what I saw.



We needed to navigate the labyrinth that is the Malaysian highway network.



It felt like we were en route to Malaka or KL...







Almost there...



Further into Malaysia you will encounter sleepy towns like this.



I wonder if there are durians in that truck.



That was a moving vehicle on the road that we had to avoid.



Finally...



I would recommend that your car have sufficient clearance from the ground if you are driving to this plantation.



Halfway through, a Singapore-registered car came in the opposite direction. We had to squeeze the

car by the side of the road to let that car through.



The farm is behind this metal hoarding.



Here is a video of the drive into the plantation. If you intend to visit I think you should know the

condition of the road before driving in.





There were already many patrons before us at the plantation.



I wonder if anyone actually read that sign...



The plantation was old but clean. It was not warm at all. Perhaps due to the overcast sky.



There is ample seating. There is a tap to wash your hands. Tissues are provided.



The durians on sale are placed in large baskets.

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Fresh durians have green stems. Sap can be seen on some of the stems. This was what I was here for. Just as a spoiler, the D13 tasted amazing. This is because it was fresh.

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The durians we paid for were placed in a bucket. The owner of the plantation opened the durians for us. We ordered in total 3 Black Thorns, 5 Green Dragons, 3 D13s and we took the last Mao Shan Wang.

By “we” I meant Wilber, myself and a few other friends who met us there at the farm. It was close to impossible that two people could eat so much durian.



This is the Black Thorn. There is this yellow blank strip in the middle.

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The boss of the plantation told us that their durians needed to be hit because their durians did not fall to the ground and were caught by the nets placed below the trees. The hitting is to mimic the force applied to the durians when they fall to the ground. When the durians fall to the ground, the flesh would be bruised and that opens up the flavour of the durian.

I am not sure whether this theory is accurate but I think there might be some truth as the flesh of the durian would be slightly bruised from the drop.

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I still prefer the taste of Mao Shan Wang. The Black Thorn was nonetheless good. Extremely creamy. It has a strong bittersweet taste.

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As there was only one Mao Shan Wang, we proceeded to order more of the Black Thorns as that was the next best thing.

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This is the Golden Dragon. The seed is very small. The flesh is rather pale. It has a slightly fermented, alcoholic taste. That was what I tasted for the ones I ate.

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So do fresher durians taste better? For Mao Shan Wang I do not think it makes much of a difference. However, for Black Thorn and especially D13, consuming extremely fresh durians of these varieties is most ideal. I do not take D13 when it is sold in Singapore. The flesh is usually watery and has a more bitter taste. However, when you eat it fresh, the flesh of the fruit is firm and extremely sweet.

So would I visit a durian plantation again? Of course! It is an experience to eat durians the moment they are harvested. For some varieties, the difference is night and day.

Buying from a plantation may not necessarily be cheaper. The Mao Shan Wang cost RM\$35 per kg (I believe this was because that last piece was deemed damaged as it was cracked slightly open) and the Black Thorn was RM\$75. Remember, you are there because you want to taste the freshness of the durian.

Yours sincerely,

Daryl

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