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Expert Column

Hiking in Malaysia: Embrace Nature and Enhance Your Muscle Fitness

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Hiking is booming in Malaysia! Our nation's rich and varied landscape, especially the stunning highlands, offers the ultimate adventure for nature lovers. From towering peaks to winding trails, Malaysia's mountains beckon hikers to explore their breathtaking beauty.

Hiking is the activity of walking in natural environments, taking you through forests, hills, mountains, and scenic trails, while providing a fulfilling form of physical exercise. And the best part? You don't have to be an athlete to enjoy it! Hiking is a fantastic activity for everyone, from kids to healthy seniors. Plus, hiking is a low-cost and accessible way to garner numerous health benefits.

Beyond enjoying breathtaking scenery and making new friends, hiking also provides an essential benefit to overall happiness: improved health. Extensive research has highlighted the numerous health advantages of hiking, particularly for

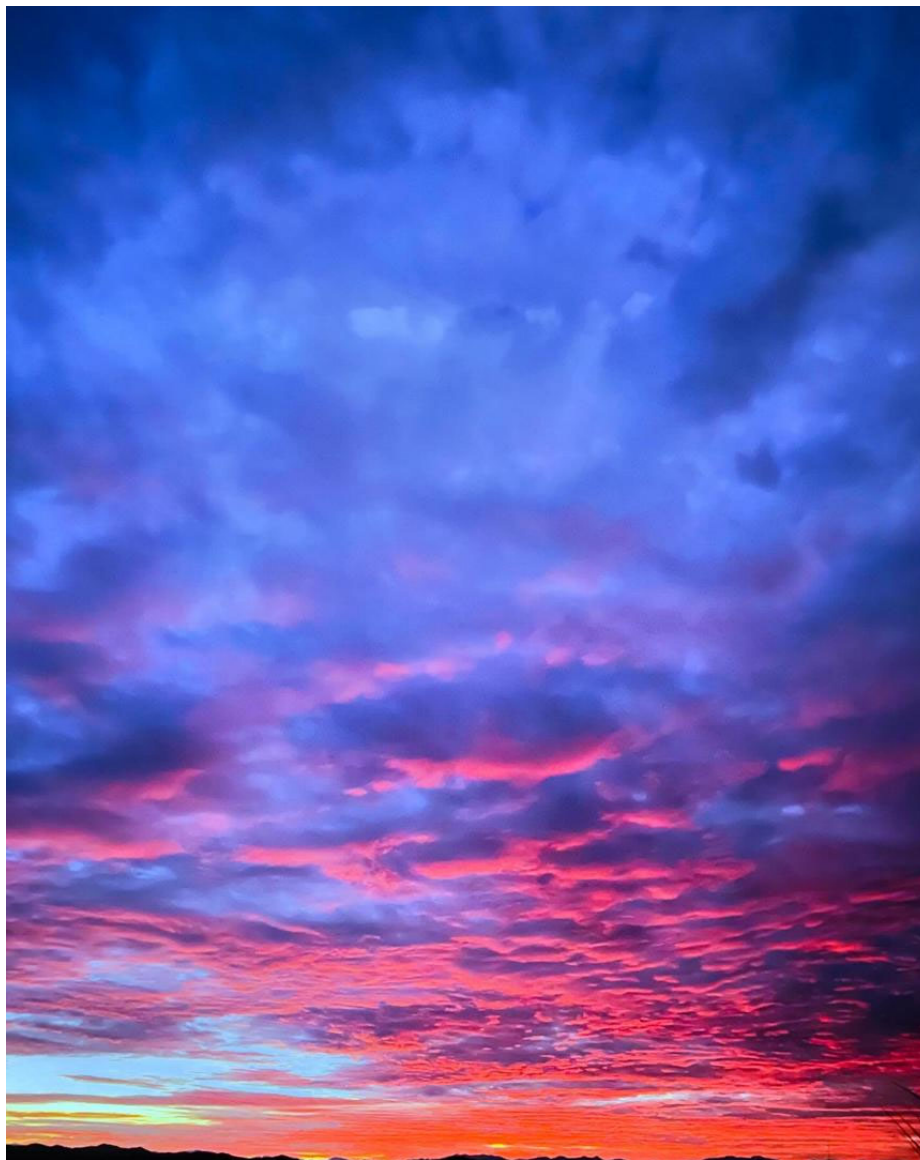
muscle fitness and cardiovascular health.

Hiking is an awesome way to build strong muscles while enjoying nature. Every hike, whether it's up a gentle slope or a steep hill, makes you use different muscle groups, giving your body a full workout. When you hike uphill, you strengthen your lower limb muscles such as quads, hamstrings, glutes, and calves (Rodio & Fattorini 2014). Going downhill is great for your knees and hip flexors. Carrying a backpack? That's extra training for your shoulders, arms, and back. Plus, your core muscles get activated, helping you stay balanced on uneven ground.

Hiking isn't just great for your muscles; it's also fantastic for your bones. Activities like hiking help improve bone density and strength, reducing the risk of bone diseases as you age. Want to boost your balance? Hiking helps with that too! It makes your hips and core stronger, keeping you steady on tricky trails. As you get better, try more challenging hikes with steeper climbs and rocky paths.

Recent studies show that having weak muscles can lead to poorer cardiovascular health and even higher risk of death as we get older. In particular, hiking can boost muscle endurance, which helps manage your heart health. Cardiovascular exercises like hiking make your muscle heart work harder, increasing blood flow to your heart's small vessels and helping prevent blockages. This improved blood flow lowers your risk of heart disease and helps maintain healthy blood pressure and cholesterol levels (Kang 2014).

So, hitting the trails not only strengthens your muscles but also promotes a healthy heart and overall wellness. Embarking on hikes could be your ticket to a longer, healthier life. So, let's hike!



Breathtaking Sunrise View from the Summit of Mount Kerunai, Perak.

References

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SDG 3 - Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

SDG 4 - Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all