

JACOB BALLAS CHILDREN'S GARDEN



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Jacob Ballas Children's Garden at a Glance

The Jacob Ballas Children's Garden is the first of its kind in Asia. It aims to cultivate an appreciation for nature in young visitors and is a place where visitors can learn more about plants and the roles that plants play in our daily life. There are also play areas where young visitors can enjoy a fun day in the sun.

There is even a Party Place in the garden that you can book for birthday parties. It is like a sheltered mini amphitheatre so guests are protected even in wet weather conditions.

The garden is open daily (except Mondays, unless it is a public holiday) from 8am to 7pm. Adults have to be accompanied by a child.

Admission to the Garden is free, but you have to pay for parking. It is also easily accessible by public transport. If you are taking a taxi, tell the driver that it is located at the NUS Faculty of Law campus at Bukit Timah.

The Garden is stroller-friendly, with flat paths and some gentle slopes. There are plenty of benches and thatched huts scattered around for resting. The trees in the garden have yet to reach maturity, so there is not much shade in some parts of the Garden, especially at the water play area and the playground. Therefore, it might be a good idea to bring an umbrella and sunhats if you are going to spend some time at these two areas.

A good time to visit the Garden is in the morning on a weekday when it is cooler. It is also less crowded then, especially at the more popular areas like the water play area and

the tree house. Schools and childcare centres bring children there on weekdays, but these crowds move on after a while, so the favourite areas do not stay crowded for too long.

1. Visitor Centre

You can buy refreshments at the little café, but they discourage visitors from having their own food there. The children's toilets are located here and near the classrooms. Picnics are not allowed in the garden, so if you are thinking of having one, you might want to consider going over to the other areas of the Bukit Timah Core of the Botanic Gardens instead.

2. Waterplay Area

Bring a towel and a change of clothes for the little ones. This is a great favourite with many young visitors as they can use the watering cans provided to water the plants placed in the vicinity for that purpose. Do not fret if the water is not flowing when you get there; look for a red pillar with a rounded top and press the top. That should activate the system and get the water going.

3. Playground

Adjacent to the waterplay area is a playground that comes with a sand pit and some unusual equipment to keep little ones occupied for a while. Remember to bring sand toys, a hat, and sun block. Some of the equipment might feel a little hot to the touch in the sun since they are made of stainless steel, so parents should do a touch test before putting their little ones on the equipment.

There is also another play area in the garden where children can play hide and seek; the



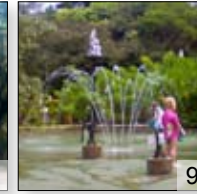
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hiding places are made from a towering tree trunk and parts of roots from various tropical trees. The tree trunk was from a giant tree in the Botanic Gardens that was struck by lightning a few years ago. When it died, its trunk was conserved and then used for this special purpose.

4. A-Maze-ing Play

Older children should find this maze a breeze to solve and younger ones should have fun figuring out what animals are depicted on the iron gates that function as dead ends.

5. Tree House

The tree house has a climbing net and stairs that go up to the platform where there are chairs and a table made from tree stumps. Little ones can take a break from all that climbing before going down the covered slides.

6. Suspension Bridge

Young visitors can pretend that they are explorers trekking through a forest and coming across a suspension bridge that would lead them to a great adventure. The bridge does not sway very much, so long as visitors do not bounce on it or shake it too vigorously.

7. Four-Sided Blocks

One of several interactive learning stations scattered throughout the garden, the blocks, when aligned correctly, show the various animals and plants that can be found in tropical forests and gardens. Other learning stations include an

explanation of the photosynthesis process and how plants are used as dyes.

8. The Cave

Looking for a cool place to escape the heat? Find the cave, which is the coolest part in the garden. It is also quite noisy as it is located behind a waterfall. The pool where the water falls into is less than one metre deep, but keep an eye on the little ones who might get a little too curious. Check out the cave floor; the prints of various types of leaves are worked into the material.

9. Helpful Labels

Two kinds of labels are found at the base of trees, shrubs, and bushes all over the garden to help visitors identify the plants. The butterfly-shaped ones also tell visitors their location in the garden.

10. Bathrooms

There are toilets at the visitor centre as well as in the garden. Bathroom fixtures are placed and sized for the younger visitors. There are also water dispensers outside the bathrooms within the garden and these are also placed at children's height.

Visit www.sbg.org.sg/bukittimahcore/ChildrenGarden.asp for more info.