

# AIRLINK

## CONTENTS - FEBRUARY 2024

### AIRPORT TALK

Welcome Message  
Malaysia Airports  
Chairman Tan Sri Datuk  
Zainun Ali 19

Malaysia's Aviation to  
Surge Further in 2024 with  
Increased Connectivity 20

From the Desk of the  
Malaysia Airports Acting  
Group Chief Executive  
Officer 22

### SPECIAL COVERAGE

Chat Session with Steven  
Small, Brand Director  
of Informa Markets for  
Routes 24

Matching grants and  
more in store for Routes  
Asia 2024 delegates from  
Tourism Malaysia 26

Malaysia Convention  
& Exhibition Bureau's  
Support for Business  
Events 27

Langkawi Development  
Authority Sets Its Sight For  
Higher Arrival Targets 28

More to Discover in  
Naturally Langkawi 30

Langkawi International  
Airport Sees Influx of  
Foreign Tourists 32

Interview with Datuk  
Captain Izham Ismail,  
Group Managing  
Director of Malaysian  
Aviation Group 34

Refreshing New Look and  
Feel for Airport Retail 36

Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA  
Going Strong Post-  
Pandemic 38

Sama-Sama Hotels'  
Strong Streak of Winning  
Awards 40

### AVIATION NEWS

Air Macau Returns to  
Kuala Lumpur  
Fostering Renewed  
Partnership 42

China Eastern Airlines  
Strengthens Tie-Up with  
Etihad Airways, Initiates  
Flights to Kuala Lumpur 43

Batik Air Malaysia  
Expands Domestic  
Connectivity from KL  
International Airport 44

More Network Expansion  
for Etihad Airways in 2024 45

oneworld Opens First  
Dedicated Lounge in  
Seoul 46

Plaza Premium Group  
Enhances Airport  
Dining Concepts in  
Malaysia 47

Cathay Group's  
Rebuild Journey Gains  
Momentum 48

Japan Airlines  
Celebrates 70 Years of  
International Flights 49

SIA to Launch Direct  
Services to London  
Gatwick Airport 50

All Nippon Airways  
Remains the Leader of  
On-Time Performance in  
Asia Pacific in 2023 50

AirAsia Malaysia Expands  
Kota Kinabalu Hub 51

### AVIATION INTERVIEW

Upclose with Dato'  
Muzammil Mohamad  
Regional Manager  
ASEAN Qatar Airways 54



# Shaping the skies of tomorrow

27-29 February 2024 / Langkawi, Malaysia



Co-Hosts



Supported by



Official Carrier



AVIATION WEEK  
NETWORK



## Welcome Message

Tan Sri Datuk Zainun Ali  
Chairman of Malaysia Airports

I welcome with great pleasure all delegates of the 20th edition of Routes Asia 2024 who have flown in from various parts of the world to Malaysia and join us in Langkawi, Kedah's breathtaking duty-free island.

We hope Routes Asia 2024 will draw more tourists to Langkawi following your visit here and your soon return visits with your family and friends.

We are happy that this momentous event is returning to Malaysia after 10 years. It will be instrumental in shaping the future of air connectivity in the region with the gathering of the region's routes development community here consisting of key decision makers and top corporate leaders.

We hope you will have a fruitful time in negotiating for route slots and networking with one another. The organiser, Informa Markets Division of Informa PLC, has packed Routes Asia 2024's conference programme with talks and interviews by some of the most experienced people in the aviation industry.

From Malaysia itself, we have key people from the Malaysia Aviation Group and AirAsia Group providing insights into how Asia Pacific is responding to the disruptions caused by the pandemic, and the return of China Market.

Other key local speakers include those from our regulatory body, Malaysian Aviation Commission sharing how we are restoring air connectivity in the region and our country's promotion arm, Tourism Malaysia, revealing how we are charting a sustainable and responsible future for the travel industry.

Indeed, I see this event is a gathering of great minds when we have top representatives from the Association of Asia

Pacific Airlines, Airports Council International Asia Pacific and the Middle East, Pacific Asia Travel Association speaking at its three-day conference programme that is filled with airline briefings as well.

We, at Malaysia Airports, would like to see Malaysia's aviation industry bounce back with vigour, more air connectivity and airline business post-COVID-19 pandemic.

This event will serve as a catalyst for more economic activities and spin-off benefits not just for the folks in Langkawi but also the other parts of Malaysia as we have post tours organised for the delegates to discover more of our country's other hidden gems.

We are proud that Malaysia Airports is hosting Routes Asia 2024 and has the opportunity to showcase Langkawi International Airport (LGK), which many of you came through.

It was the winner of the Airports Council International (ACI) Award for the Best Airport in Asia Pacific for the two to five million passengers per annum category last year.

This is a great milestone for us at Malaysia Airports. As the airport operator, we are eager to showcase LGK's expanded terminal and enhanced facilities for better operational efficiencies and to meet the evolving needs of the travellers since the pandemic.

Lastly, Routes Asia 2024 could not have happened without the support from all of you. I thank our co-host Tourism Malaysia and other key partners, namely Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) and our official carrier Malaysia Airlines for making it a success.





A Monthly Publication of  
**MALAYSIA AIRPORTS © Aviation  
Marketing and Development  
Division**

**Managing Editor**

Zainuddin Mohamed

**Editorial & Concept**

Mediate Communications Sdn Bhd  
airlink@mediate.com.my

**Advertising & Production**

Noor Hafiza Ruslan  
hafiza@malaysiaairports.com.my

Nurul Farehah Norsam  
farehahn@malaysiaairports.com.my

Ariana Amirul Azam  
ariana@malaysiaairports.com.my

**Design & Distribution**

Mediate Communications Sdn Bhd

**MALAYSIA AIRPORTS HOLDINGS  
BERHAD**

Reg. No: 199901012192  
(487092-W)

Aviation Marketing and  
Development Division  
Level 3, Arrival Hall (Domestic)  
Main Terminal Building  
KL International Airport  
64000 Sepang  
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia  
Tel: +603-8776 4949  
Fax: +603-8776 4040  
Email: marketing@  
malaysiaairports.com.my

## Malaysia's Aviation to Surge Further in 2024 with Increased Connectivity

The Malaysian aviation industry, which was on a trajectory mode of recovery last year, will be witnessing the resumption of more flights as well as the introduction of new routes and airlines into the country in 2024.

For a start, January 10 welcomed Air Macau with its direct Macau to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) weekly service on Monday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday. Having flown to KUL previously, its Vice President of Flight Operations, Captain Du GuoFu said the airline is thrilled to strengthen ties with Malaysia's vibrant capital city.



This is timely as the Macau government is keen to develop its Guangdong-Macau-Hong Kong Greater Bay Area and increase international visitor arrivals to Macau while Malaysia is keen for the airline to fly to its other domestic destinations in the near future.

### More flights from East Asia

Subsequently, Firefly's first international charter flight to Tawau (TWU) on the east coast of Sabah from Nanjing (NKG), China carried 157 passengers on January 23. Firefly will be operating the chartered flights three-times weekly with a 540-seat capacity a week until end-March.



Using the Airbus A330 aircraft, China Eastern Airlines (MU) launched its inaugural four times-weekly Beijing flight to KUL on January 31 to be followed by a flurry of flights at the start of February.

February 1 saw the maiden arrival of low-cost carrier, Loong Air, to KL International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 2 with thrice-weekly flights from Hangzhou, China deploying the Airbus A320/A321.

Shahrnizam Abd Jamil, Malaysia Airports General Manager of Operations for KLIA Terminal 2 said, "Loong Air's decision to include KLIA in its network is a reflection of the confidence in the attractiveness of our airport as a gateway to Malaysia and beyond."

The following day (February 2) saw Iraqi Airways, which was last here in 2020, relaunching its once-weekly Baghdad (BGW) flights to KLIA Terminal 1 using the Boeing 787-8 aircraft.



Another new airline from West Asia is the Dubai-based flydubai, which announced the launch of its daily service to Langkawi via Penang (PEN) on Feb 10.

According to an industry source, Malaysia is expected to receive a number of charter flights in February, including one by MU from Shehyang Airport (SHE), the capital and largest city of China's northeast Liaoning Province, to KUL on February 11.

### New routes

As travel recovery gains traction, Malaysia is expected to see more new routes being introduced by existing airlines such as Batik Air Malaysia (OD) and AirAsia besides the return of Turkmenistan Airlines, whose Ashgabat (ASB)- KUL-ASB flights will start from February 15 using the wide-body Boeing 777 aircraft.

The Turkmenistan's national carrier announced in January that it was adding KUL as part of its international network expansion to Southeast Asia and other parts of the world in 2024.

OD, meanwhile, will be expanding its reach in China and one to Taiwan in February with new routes and flight resumption, all using the Boeing 737 MAX-8 aircraft.

The airline debuted its KUL-Kaohsiung (KHH) route on February 7 for three roundtrips a week.

KHH, OD's second destination in Taiwan after Taipei, continued to the Japanese city of Nagoya, which saw its frequencies increased from three to six times-weekly.

On February 8, OD began its maiden direct four-times weekly flights from KUL to Kunming (KMG) in China while the next day, the airline launched its inaugural three-times weekly direct services from KUL to Zhangjiajie (DYG) alongside its flight resumption from KUL to Zhengzhou (CGO) four times a week.

February 9 saw OD introducing its four-times weekly flights from KUL to Türkiye's Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (SAW) using the Airbus A330-300.



The airline will continue its network expansion from KUL to Batam, Indonesia with four-times weekly flights effective 17 February on its Boeing 737 Max 8.





## From the Desk of the Malaysia Airports Acting Group Chief Executive Officer

Malaysia Airports will continue to welcome potential airlines from various regions, specifically South Asia, Europe and China to operate within the Group's network of airports, Mohamed Rastam Shahrom, Acting Group Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Airports told *Airlink*.

"We are in advanced talks with flagship carriers in Europe and the Middle East into resuming or commencing flights into Malaysia as well as increasing their capacity if they are already operating in the country," he shared.

For South Asia, *Airlink* understands that the potential for a direct flight from Chennai to Penang is strong following the recent seventh edition of the Penang Roadshow to India 2024, where Wong Hon Wai, Penang State Tourism and Creative Economy Committee Chairman, paid a visit to low-cost carrier IndiGo's headquarters to discuss connectivity matters.

With Routes Asia 2024 being held in Langkawi, where route slots are being negotiated amidst the recovery of the travel globally, Mohamed expressed his confidence, saying, "By 2025, we anticipate having 20% more airlines operating out of Malaysia as compared to pre-pandemic levels.

"With the enhanced connectivity brought about by the airlines, we expect the visibility and attractiveness of KLIA Terminal 1 and 2 as a connecting or transit hub to further flourish. This is in line with Malaysia Airports' business plan to position KLIA as a regional hub."

KLIA recently achieved Level 2 for outstanding customer experience service standards under the Airports Council International's (ACI) Airport Customer Experience

Accreditation programme. Having joined the programme in February 2023, the flagship airport has been implementing new experiences to meet passengers' demands.

Mohamed remarked, "I firmly believe in getting the basics right, that is, putting our hearts in making the passengers' journey at our airports a seamless and enjoyable experience.

"Post-COVID-19 pandemic, we are getting our airport facilities upgraded and redesigning the passenger's touchpoints by providing additional services such as the kerbside trolley service for their convenience.

"We will also continue our efforts in rejuvenating our commercial offerings. If you pass through KLIA Terminal 1 and 2 today, you will see many new brands and outlets, both international and local, operating at the terminal, providing passengers with more choices for both retail as well as food and beverage.



"Additionally, all the lounges have been refurbished and redesigned, providing premium passengers the comfort and luxury they require when travelling. The enhanced offerings and spending by passengers will in turn help boost our revenues in the long run."



Mohamed also said that Malaysia Airports is forging ahead in developing the 3,454.92-hectare landbank surrounding KLIA, "We are in advanced talks with prospective tenants who are interested in taking up space here. Giants such as Cainiao Aeropolis eWTP Hub and DHL are already propelling Malaysia to become the region's preferred air cargo hub."

"The entire development is meant to be holistic and comprehensive, aligned to the Malaysia Airports' Environmental Master Plan 2.0. Soon, we hope to announce the development of a 30MW Solar Park that will provide renewable energy solely for the consumption of the airport. We are still ironing out details and waiting for the necessary approvals but once completed, it will increase the airport's solar mix from the current 4% to more than 20%," he added.

### Penang's progress

On the status of Penang International Airport's (PEN) expansion, which the Transport Ministry has allocated up to RM93 million to transform this aviation hub to be parked under the third phase of the 12th Malaysia (Development) Plan, he said, "We are finalising the financing structure of the development plans for PEN.



Mohamed said PEN and Langkawi International Airport (LGK) contributed significantly to the international passenger arrivals last November although it was the off-peak travel period.

The contributing factors included the launch of Firefly's five weekly service from PEN to Bangkok (BKK), Thailand as well as the introduction of two new routes - PEN to Hong Kong (HKG) and Kuala Lumpur (KNO), Indonesia to PEN - by Air Asia (AK) and Lion Air (JT) respectively.

The entry of two new airlines, namely Xiamen Airlines and Thai Airways International into PEN was another contributing factor. He added that most of the international scheduled flights operating into PEN have returned to pre-pandemic 2019 level.

They were also aided by the increased flight frequencies by Batik Air Indonesia's (ID) PEN to Jakarta (CGK) from seven times to 14 times weekly, AirAsia Indonesia's PEN to Surabaya (SUB) from five times to seven times weekly and Scoot's (TR) PEN to Singapore (SIN) from 18 times to 21 times weekly.

As for LGK, he said the reinstatement of 2019 level of operations were contributed by AK and TR on the LGK-SIN sector.

### Overview of Malaysia Airports' 2023 Performance

Malaysia Airports Group's performance has surpassed the 100 million total passenger movements for the first time since 2020, with 119.5 million passengers received in 2023.

Representing a recovery rate of 84.6% against 2019 levels, this underscores the Group's resilience and adaptability in the face of current global challenges besetting the aviation industry. They include rising air fares, gradual reactivation of aircraft, delay in new aircraft deliveries, inflation, and severe weather changes.

The Group's international and domestic passenger movements reached 86.2% and 83.2% of 2019 levels with 58.2 million and 61.3 million passengers respectively.

Overall, its traffic growth last year was driven by the increase in travellers' confidence and air travel demand, approval of more slots for routes, reactivation of more aircraft leading to increase in airlines' seat capacity, new aircraft deliveries and news of China's reopening of its borders on January 8, 2024.

The airport operator's latest released data for December 2023 showed continued encouraging traffic demand, resulting in a record four million international passengers in Malaysia, its highest ever achieved since February 2020. The airport operator's latest released data for December 2023 showed continued encouraging traffic demand, resulting in a record four million international passengers in Malaysia, its highest ever achieved since February 2020.

The month also had the highest average load factor for both international and domestic sectors at 80.0% while the average load factor for 2023 was 77.2%, an increase of 5.9 percentage points compared to 2022.

A total of six new airlines were launched while seven airlines resumed their services to 20 city pairs and seven countries in 2023, with the highest traffic to Indonesia, China, South Korea, and the Middle East.

Malaysia's aviation remains firmly on a trajectory of recovery with a total of 72 airlines operating actively within Malaysia Airports' network of local airports at the end of 2023. This 9.1% surge from the preceding year has also resulted in a robust connection to a total of 147 destinations - 113 international and 34 domestic. It marked a 21.4% increase from 121 destinations (86 international and 35 domestic) in 2022.

### Operations in Turkiye

The Group's network of airports consists of 39 airports across Malaysia and one international airport in Turkiye, Istanbul Sabiha Gokcen International Airport (SAW).

2023 was a significant year for SAW, which not only exceeded 2019 levels but its total passenger movements were also a record high, registering 37.6 million passengers, 4.5% higher compared to 2019 levels. The encouraging growth was primarily driven by the airlines' rapid expansion and new operations in the international sector.

Its international passenger movements rose 37.5% to 19.6 million passengers over 2019 figures while the domestic sector, which recorded 18 million passengers, showed 82.8% recovery rate over 2019. For the first time, its international traffic share reached more than 50% of the airport's total passengers.



Chat Session with Steven Small  
Brand Director of Informa Markets for Routes



**Steven Small shares with Airlink from the organiser's perspective what it took to make Routes Asia 2024 happens in Langkawi, Malaysia, and more.**

**It is the 20th Routes Asia this year. Why did you choose to host this anniversary edition in Langkawi?**

Malaysia Airports entered a competitive bidding process to host Routes Asia 2024 and were selected, thanks to their strong application. As host of the first three Routes Asia events that took place from 2003-2005, it is fitting for Malaysia Airports to once again be hosting the event for the 20th anniversary edition in Langkawi.

**Do you expect a strong attendance at this year's Routes Asia now that the travel momentum has picked up? What's the number of delegates who have confirmed coming to date? Likewise, the number of countries, airlines and meetings?**

A report by the Association of Asia Pacific Airlines (AAPA) found that the region's airlines carried 278.5 million passengers in 2023, a 161% year-on-year (YOY) improvement. With this recovery continuing to grow this year, and international travel to and from China expected to have fully recovered by mid-2024, Routes Asia will serve as a catalyst for this momentum.

This year's event has attracted attendance from Asia Pacific's leading airlines, airports, tourism authorities and industry suppliers. Over 800 delegates from more than 60 countries are attending the event here in Langkawi, with senior attendance from over 100 airlines. More than 2,500 meetings are taking place over the course of the three days that will help to define the region's route networks.

**For the exhibition component, what is the total floor space taken up and the number of exhibitors participating?**

Routes Asia, as a platform for major airports, tourism and supplier organisations to promote their opportunities and services to the region's senior airline decision makers, has been reflected by a strong uptake from exhibitors here in Langkawi. The entire event utilises 7,000 sq m of space with more than 30 organisations showcasing their brands.

**How about the speakers for the conference? What kind of topics will be discussed?**

Routes Asia's conference programme offers insight into what the future holds for Asia's air services. Airline CEOs and aviation heavyweights are addressing the challenges and opportunities faced by airlines and airports in restoring full connectivity, as well as advancing traffic and financial recovery. The programme also explores opportunities for future development, examining trends towards sustainability, and more. Delegates can hear over 10 hours of actionable insight from industry leaders during exclusive CEO keynote interviews, panel discussions, airline briefings and best practice workshops. Some of the executives joining us this week include Datuk Captain Izham Ismail, Group Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group, Tan Sri Datuk Zainun Ali, Chairman of Malaysia Airports and Dato' Dr Ammar Abd. Ghapar, Director General of Tourism Malaysia.

**Tell us more about the attendees at the event and the wider economic impact of Routes Asia?**

With over 60 countries represented at Routes Asia, more than 90% of delegates in Langkawi are from international organisations. Their attendance in Langkawi provides an immediate economic impact through hotel stays and spending within the destination. However, unlike other trade shows, the economic impact of Routes events is longer lasting for the host destination. Routes Asia attracts the decision makers of the region's airlines, allowing them to experience Langkawi and Malaysia at first hand. This unique opportunity accelerates the destination's route network, increasing air connectivity at a faster rate, which ultimately supports greater economic growth, new job creation, trading opportunities and increased inward investment. An independent study undertaken by York Aviation found that over the three years following an event, previous host destinations for Routes Asia have benefited on average by US\$58 million of economic impact.

**In the bid for Routes Asia 2024 to be held in Langkawi, what were the factors that Informa Markets looked at which determined its success?**

A key consideration during the bidding process was the alignment of the stakeholder group involved to bring the event to Malaysia as well as the attractiveness of -



the destination and its associated hotel and conference centre infrastructure. The bid by Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia is set to bring significant tourism gains to Langkawi and Malaysia, as well as supporting the wider ambitions of the route development community to recover and grow networks across the region.

**What are your thoughts on the co-hosts - Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia?**

As long standing supporters of Routes, we could not be more delighted to have partnered with Malaysia Airports and Tourism Malaysia to deliver Routes Asia 2024. This collaboration is incredibly important in creating a valuable event for the route development community, and we are confident that our hosts will fulfil their brand promise of 'Hosting Joyful Connections'.

The event will provide a platform to showcase the beautiful island of Langkawi and create an environment for airlines and airports to expand their route development opportunities during face-to-face meetings, ensuring the co-hosts play a central role in the continued connectivity growth across the region.

**From your past years' experience as Informa Markets' Brand Director for Routes, which is your favourite Asian destination so far and why?**

Given the peripatetic nature of the Routes business, I have been fortunate enough to visit several destinations in Asia over the past seven years and work with some amazing hosts.

Most recently Routes Asia has taken place in Chiang Mai in Thailand and Da Nang in Vietnam. Each event provides a platform for destinations to showcase their own culture and distinctiveness, which makes every Routes Asia unique and impossible to choose between them.

**What are your views on the Routes Asia Awards 2024? Did you receive many nominations? How many categories altogether?**

The Routes Awards celebrate excellence in route development marketing and are always keenly contested. A record number of votes were received ahead of the Routes Awards taking place at this year's

Routes Asia. We are delighted that 25 organisations across five categories have been shortlisted.

However, as host of the event, Malaysia Airports is not eligible to be nominated for an award. Nevertheless, the group's achievements have been recognised at previous Routes Awards ceremonies, notably being crowned Overall Winner of the Routes Awards at Routes Asia 2018.

**Why is Routes an important event for the airports and airlines?**

Air connectivity is a partnership between airlines, airports and destinations. The recovery following the pandemic has been uneven and there have been winners and losers amongst both airlines and airports. In this context, route development has perhaps become more important than it has ever been, with airlines scrutinising opportunities more carefully than before, and airports and their partners consequently having to work even harder to secure opportunities.

Routes events continue to play a vital role in this process, providing a meeting place for the route development community to come together and a focal point for activity during the year. The meetings that take place at Routes events define the future of the region's route networks; over half of Asia Pacific's air services are connected to meetings at the event.

The events serve as a platform for airports and destinations to negotiate with the decision makers who are in charge of planning airline networks. With a lot of change in personnel following the pandemic, this industry access is more valuable than ever; providing delegates with the opportunity to develop key partnerships through unrivalled meeting opportunities and a comprehensive networking programme.

**How big is your team running this event?**

A small but dynamic team of 20 staff have travelled to Langkawi to deliver this year's Routes Asia. The team has a wealth of experience and is supported by the wider Aviation Week Network and Informa businesses. We are delighted to have brought Routes Asia to Malaysia; a key location for many of Informa's trade shows and events.





Matching Grants and More  
in Store for Routes Asia 2024  
Delegates From Tourism  
Malaysia

Co-host of Routes Asia 2024, Tourism Malaysia, recognises the pivotal platform Routes Asia 2024 provides in fostering international aviation relations, particularly among key stakeholders in the aviation and tourism sectors.

“Notably so, this event serves as an excellent platform to promote the tourism promotions board’s Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY 2026), which targets to receive 35.6 million foreign tourist arrivals,” remarked Dato’ Dr Ammar Abd Ghapar, Director General of Tourism Malaysia.

This year Malaysia targets to welcome 27.3 million tourists and expects to generate RM102.7 billion in revenue.

The government’s aim is to make Malaysia the Top-of-the-Mind Ecotourism Destination of the World in line with Malaysia’s commitment to achieve the 2030 Agenda as per the 17 Sustainable Development Goals under the United Nations, that is, to promote the sustainability of natural resources to drive new economic growth via ecotourism while creating jobs.

Besides ecotourism, he said Tourism Malaysia will continue to focus on niche tourism segments such as business events, which is where Routes Asia 2024 fits in.

Other areas include community-based tourism, medical and wellness, edu-tourism and experiential travel to bring more tourists to Malaysia.

Malaysian culture, cuisine, arts and heritage will also be utilised to enhance tourism experiences. Dato’ Dr Ammar added, “One of our strategic directions for

niche tourism products is to focus on gastronomy.

“We want to promote local cuisine as part of our cultural heritage and strengthen local culinary identity. They cover street food, franchises, Michelin Guide-rating restaurants and food trails.”

Thus, the Networking Dinner on February 28, 2024 at Resorts World Langkawi done in collaboration with Malaysia Airports, be ready for an immersive experience amidst Malaysia’s natural beauty.

Themed Tropical or Malaysia Garden, the night will be accompanied by cultural performances while its menu’s fusion concept will have live cooking stalls featuring famous Malaysian street food.

It will be a gastronomic journey where Routes Asia 2024 delegates can savour the unique flavours of Malaysia’s culinary fare.

Matching grants for Hosted Airlines Programme

Committed in facilitating this whole event, Tourism Malaysia’s role extends to overseeing the transportation arrangements for delegates, coordinating the Hosted Airlines Programme (HAP) with a sunset cruise, and providing publicity items.

HAP’s primary objective is to foster networking opportunities between Tourism Malaysia and top management figures from airlines with the aim to enhance connectivity for Malaysia.

Representatives from prominent airlines, will be onboard this sunset cruise organised by the host partly to promote it as one of the must-experience activities while in Langkawi.

Dato’ Dr Ammar said, “We plan to leverage this programme to introduce the international and charter flights matching grant (GSPC) to stimulate the expansion of more new and direct routes besides providing insights into our upcoming VMY 2026 initiative.

“Additionally, we are keen to support the hosting of various world-class sports events such as MotoGP, IRONMAN, Le Tour de Langkawi, and other tourism segments such as golfing, yachting, diving, angling, e-sport, biking and adventure travel.

“We also encourage the promotion of Malaysia as a filming destination and will assist in its facilitation, incentives and promotion in collaboration with relevant government agencies, including the National Film Development Corporation Malaysia (FINAS) and local production houses.

In the bidding process of Routes Asia 2024, which is spearheaded by Malaysia Airports, where Tourism Malaysia has been a steadfast supporter since the previous hosting of this event in 2014 in Kuching, Sarawak, he comments, “I foresee this is a good event as the major airlines will be here.

“Since accessibility is one of the issues faced by us, Routes Asia 2024 will be an opener for them to consider Malaysia as a destination.”



Malaysia Convention &  
Exhibition Bureau’s Support  
for Business Events

Spearheading one of Malaysia’s major economic drivers, Azman Tambi Chik, who has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of Malaysia Convention & Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB) since November 20, 2023, is armed with plans to lead the business events industry to a new era.

Given our destination’s resources and expertise as well as the digitalisation and technological advancements that are available, he expressed his confidence that “We are ready to invest in attracting quality international events and delegates”.

With the opportunities that abound out there, Azman urged the industry players to capitalise on them as Malaysia holds a key position in navigating the business events industry for the region.

Since MyCEB’s inception until 2023, he said the national bureau together with the industry partners have staged 3,110 business events in Malaysia. They include meetings, conventions, exhibitions, corporate incentives, and international sporting events.

“MyCEB managed to bring in an accumulative total of 2.4 million delegates to the country where the economic impact generated is estimated at some RM20.4 billion.”

A total of 253 events was secured in 2023 with delegates estimated at 851,634, providing an economic impact of RM3.03 billion.

Ushering in 2024, he said “We are ready to stage along with our industry stakeholders at least 56 business event activities for now and expect to welcome over 103,414 local and international delegates, thus translating into RM889 million in estimated economic impact for the country.”



Among them is the 20th edition of the Royal Langkawi International Regatta held from January 15-20 at the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club (RLYC) that was participated by 33 boats from Australia, China, Denmark, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Aimed at promoting Langkawi as a prominent sailing destination, this annual yachting event, organised by the Malaysian Sailing Association under RLYC’s patronage, is considered as one of the popular regattas in Southeast Asia.

Azman estimated an expenditure of RM 2.2 million from its targeted 410 attendees from the sailing community.

He said, “So far, MyCEB has successfully secured future events to be hosted up to 2030. With 98 business events in the pipeline, Malaysia expects to welcome 157,530 delegates with an estimated economic impact of RM1.67 billion to the country’s gross domestic product.”

For the upcoming Routes Asia 2024, which MyCEB is providing significant support for it to be held in Malaysia again after 10 years, Azman told *Airlink*, the support given includes promotional activities and onsite support.

From the over 800 delegates, he said this regional event held in Langkawi is estimated to generate an economic impact of RM12.9 million and visitor expenditure of around RM5.5 million.

The event, some of the delegates would be leaving for post tours to various parts Malaysia.

Established in 2009 by the Ministry of Tourism, Arts & Culture Malaysia to further strengthen Malaysia’s business tourism brand and position for the international business events market, it has been MyCEB’s aim to make the country a world leader in hosting business, cultural and hallmark sporting event, and in doing so, grow its business tourism arrivals.





Langkawi Development Authority Sets Its Sight for Higher Arrival Targets

Langkawi has lined up over 26 sports and tourism events such as IRONMAN Malaysia and the Langkawi International Half Marathon which attracted 1,500 and 2,600 participants respectively in 2023.

For 2024, the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) aims to attract three million tourists to Langkawi and generate RM5.9 billion in tourism revenue.

Chartered flights from China are estimated to bring in a total of 1,480 passengers in February. With the debut of the first Middle Eastern airline, flydubai, also in the same month, Langkawi expects to receive more tourists from the Middle East, Europe and Africa.

LADA's newly appointed Chief Executive Officer Dato' Haslina Abdul Hamid told *Airlink*, Of the 2.81 million visitors Langkawi welcomed in 2023 which generated RM4.4 billion in tourism revenue, about 35% of them were international tourists.

"For the Middle East, we are looking at Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Besides Australia, LADA is also eyeing emerging markets such as the United States and Eastern Europe such as Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland."

LADA, which is also keen to attract more tourists from Indonesia, spearheaded B2B partnership trips to Medan and Jakarta last December to boost visitor arrivals and to offer incentives to airlines to launch direct flights to Langkawi.

Among the 24 tourism stakeholders which participated were Royal Langkawi Yacht Club (RLYC), cruise operator Avante Holidays Sdn Bhd, Enfiniti Interactive Xperiences Sdn Bhd, Mega Water Sports and Holidays Sdn Bhd besides its subsidiary, Panorama Langkawi Sdn Bhd, which operates the Langkawi SkyCab, one of the island's top five attractions.

Dream Forest Langkawi by Enfiniti is one of the latest attractions on the island while RLYC operates a marina, food and beverage outlet and hotel.



The hotels that participated in the trip were Mercure Langkawi Pantai Cenang, Langkapuri Resort, Bella Vista Waterfront Langkawi, Aloft Langkawi Pantai Tengah and Wings By Croske Resort Langkawi.

To improve connectivity to the island, Dato' Haslinda said, "LADA has introduced a new incentive for scheduled airlines flying new routes to Langkawi, offering a one-off US\$10,000 effective this year. The new flights must be scheduled in advance and maintained for at least one year."

Its Langkawi Chartered Flights Incentive Programme, launched since the Langkawi Tourism Blueprint 2011-2015, is still ongoing. Currently, LADA offers a Marketing Support Scheme with 70% seat capacity for chartered flights. However, the incentives offered under this programme may change depending on current needs and situations.

On the hotel supply situation in Langkawi, Dato' Haslinda said, "We have around 12,000 rooms available in various categories, making it possible to accommodate a large number of tourists, especially during peak seasons."

Among the new hotels coming up are the Hilton Burau Bay scheduled for completion in April 2025 while the Nautilus Resort, Curio Collection by Hilton is expected to be completed in 2024.

On the Langkawi Eco Resort & Eco-Adventure Park in Kuala Sungai Melaka, Mukim Padang Matsirat, which LADA has a joint venture with Syarikat Chenang Prima Resort Sdn Bhd to develop in phases, she said the project's facilities will include 13 private pool villas, restaurants, banquet halls and floating market areas.



Currently, six private pool villas under Royal Riveria Resort and a restaurant, Rumah Jebat, are open. Phase two and three of the project will centre on developing the Eco Adventure Park, which will offer activities such as river cruises, kayaking and camping.



She added, "We are looking at more new attractions in Langkawi while our existing attractions such as Ayer Hangat Village will be upgraded as we want repeat tourists."

Under the Langkawi UNESCO Global Geopark Blueprint 2024-28, she said LADA has developed a five-year action plan focusing on sustainability governance to ensure its status for future revalidation processes.

"They include initiatives, such as a dding Gunung Raya Granite as the fourth Geosite. Gunung Raya is Langkawi's highest point, standing at 881 meters above sea level and holds a fascinating geological narrative.

The site is home to an array of endemic plants and wildlife species, making it a treasure trove of mega biodiversity on the island.

"We will use the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals as a framework for addressing global challenges and promoting sustainable development."

On a final note, Dato' Haslina said LADA plays a crucial role in managing and promoting sustainable tourism by balancing the number of visitors in Langkawi with the available infrastructure and services.







## More to Discover in Naturally Langkawi

Langkawi, an archipelago of magical islands known for its natural beauty and status as an Unesco Global Geopark, draws visitors globally not just for its tourist attractions but also for international conventions and exhibitions.

This laid-back gem of Malaysia, with its world-class facilities, has some new attractions such as the **Maha Tower**, which stands at 138 meters high.



Visitors can enjoy a 360-degree view of Kuah town, Langkawi's highest peak, Gunung Raya, and sailing boats dotting the Andaman sea from its Sky Deck on level 33. You can also brave yourself to walk on its glass floor at the top level.

Located on level 18 is its Sky Lounge, which offers complimentary refreshments to its ticket holders. Maha Tower's most saleable slots are its sunset tickets. Opens from 10am to 10pm, its admission fee allows access to its Sky Deck and Lounge area.

Langkawi's new skyscraper lights up in the evening with different hues, making it a not only good spot for photography but also to catch the sunset from here.

Also housed inside Maha Tower are popular coffee chain brands, namely Starbucks, Zus Coffee, and Heehee Concept Store, a lifestyle brand selling merchandise as well as F&B. This section is open to the public and extends outdoors.

Another great place to watch the sun setting is at the top station of **Langkawi SkyCab**, located 708 metres above sea level with majestic views of Gunung or Mount Machinchang

Enjoy the cool fresh air as you feast your eyes on its mountain ranges that are over 550 million years old at its two circular viewing platforms, which are both linked by a short boardwalk. It is not just another 360-degree view for you but also a great venue for themed sunset functions.

Located on the eastern ridges of the top station is the Langkawi Sky Bridge that is accessible via the SkyGlide, a cabin-like elevator. The 125-metre long walkway has some parts offering the glass-bottom windows which allow visitors to view more than 600 metres below while walking over the Machinchang mountain.

At the middle station, at an elevation of 650 metres above sea level, is a new glass-bottom platform, Eagle's Nest, due to open soon and set to challenge your fear factor.

The Langkawi SkyCab, which offers one of the world's steepest inclination cable rides, takes about 15 minutes from the base station at Oriental Village, which houses F&B outlets, amusement arcades and souvenir shops, to reach the top station.

It has four types of gondola that turns around at the station at about every 30 seconds for visitors to board. Its latest 360-degree gondola with its open-air design offers an exhilarating ride. Each gondola can seat six people.



Another new offering at the Langkawi Skycab is its exciting episode of Boboiboy: Journey to Space at Langkawi SkyDome at six people.

One of the best ways to chill out in Langkawi is to join its **sunset dinner cruises** to experience the beauty of Langkawi's coastline which offers panoramic views of its rugged islands, limestone cliffs and the green tropical rainforests, making it one of the most picturesque destinations. Come prepared with your swimming attire to enjoy its 'sea jacuzzi' when you alight from the stern of the yacht into a huge netting and be dragged at very slow speed to enjoy the warm, calm sea. What a way to unwind and relax!



For more immersive experience and knowledge about paddy or rice planting, a visit to **Laman Padi** and its rice museum offers interactive exhibits. Its Kerisik Restaurant serves traditional Malay, fusion and western fare. The place, which also offers accommodation, is also an ideal location for business events.

Other not-to-be-missed attractions in Langkawi is its iconic Dataran Lang or Eagle Square, located beside the ferry terminal in Kuah.

Mangrove tours and the **Kilim Geoforest Park** are other popular attractions. The Kilim Limestone Karst Geoforest was recognised by as a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2007.

Covering 4,354 hectares, it is the home to massive mangrove forest set against the backdrop of more than 550 million years old of limestone hills with steep cliff faces.

Some of these limestone outcrops have been sculpted by nature and the weather, turning them into natural sculptures that look like the head of a Red Indian Apache or an elephant. It is a sight to behold!

In many of the **island-hopping** tour packages to the islands of Pulau Dayang Bunting (Island of the Pregnant Maiden), Pulau Beras Basah (Wet Rice Island) and Pulau Singa Besar (Island of Giant Lions), there is also the popular tour to feed the eagles in the mangrove forest.



Last but not least, nestled amidst the prehistoric Lubuk Semilang rainforest at the foot of Gunung Raya, lies Langkawi's newest wonder, **Dream Forest**, which combines storytelling, nature and a sprinkling of magic to enthrall its visitors.

The place comes alive as night falls when visitors enter its Dream Forest Book Portal into the magical realm of Sang Gedembai, the legendary keeper of stories and guardian of the forest.

Dream Forest has won awards for Most Enchanting Night Rainforest Experience and Best Immersive Outdoor Experience at the Malaysian Association of Themepark and Family Attractions' Golden Horse Awards 2023.

Dream Forest has won awards for Most Enchanting Night Rainforest Experience and Best Immersive Outdoor Experience at the Malaysian Association of Theme Park and Family Attractions' Golden Horse Awards 2023. Experiential dinners can be held here while during the day, fun races and team building programmes can be conducted for corporate groups.

The possibilities are endless in Langkawi!





Langkawi International Airport Sees Influx of Foreign Tourists

The award-winning Langkawi International Airport (LGK) - Malaysia's sixth busiest airport in terms of weekly air connectivity - is currently served by four local airlines. They are namely Malaysia Airlines (MH), Firefly (FY), AirAsia (AK), Batik Air Malaysia (OD) - and one foreign airline, Scoot (TR).

Overseeing the operations of this emerging airport is **Che Sulaiman Che Pa**, Airport Manager of LGK, who hails from Kota Bharu, Kelantan.

The 53-year-old started in Malaysia Airports in 1998 as an electrical engineer before moving up to helm LGK operations in 2022. During his 26 years of service, he has served as Airport Manager in Sandakan and Terengganu.

Unlike his last posting at Sultan Mahmud Airport (TGG), which has no international flights, LGK has 15-times weekly direct international flights to Singapore, of which eight times of the weekly flights are by AirAsia and the rest by Scoot, another low-cost carrier.

Che Sulaiman said preliminary records showed that LGK's total passenger movements in 2023 stood at 2.5 million, of which 10% are international passengers and 90% domestic.



He pointed out, however, the majority of the passengers flying into LGK via the domestic flights are foreigners with connecting flights from KL International Airport (KUL), Penang International Airport (PEN), Senai International Airport in Johor Bahru and Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport in Subang, Selangor.

The influx of its tourists come from all over the world, including China, India, Europe, Uzbekistan and the Middle East. "Last year, we had 10 chartered flights from Chengdu (TFU) in Sichuan, China by OD using the Boeing 737-800 aircraft which brought about 1,800 passengers in total", Che Sulaiman recalled.

This year, OD mounted chartered flights from TFU and Chongqing (CKG) to LGK starting from February 5 until 22, consisting of eight trips for both destinations.

Flydubai has also confirmed their daily flight for Dubai (DXB) to Langkawi (LGK) via Penang (PEN) starting from February 10 this year.

LGK has been upgraded to handle four million passengers per annum (mppa) from 1.5 mppa previously. It underwent a major upgrading exercise in 2019 which included the extension of its terminal building and expansion of its public car park to 600 bays from 420. Other facilities at the airport also underwent major improvements.

In line with Malaysia Airports' sustainability policy to make LGK carbon-neutral, Che Sulaiman said the airport has been installed with LED lightings at its Terminal Building. Apart from that, the apron's high masts, carpark and street lightings have also been converted into LED lightings.

In addition, the photovoltaic solar power system has been installed at LGK Terminal Building's roof top as part of the airport operator's Environmental Master Plan 2.0 to reduce carbon emission.

Che Sulaiman said, "In 2024, further enhancement to the In-line Baggage Handling System (ILBHS) will be carried



out, comprising the upgrading of the screening system and modification of the conveyor belt alongside the upgrading of the toilets at LGK's domestic departure.

"The current check-in system will also be upgraded into a common use passenger processing system (CUPPS), which is expected to go live by October 2024."

LGK obtained full score of five points for Airport Service Quality to be ranked top for two consecutive years from 2021 and 2022. On whether it expects to maintain its position for 2023, Che Sulaiman confidently replied, "The preliminary results show LGK is still number one."

LGK's opening hours are from 7am to 11pm to cater to the last flight at 10.30pm. While its peak hours are from 10am to 12pm and 2pm to 4pm, they are under the capable hands of Che Sulaiman and his team.

Key staff at LGK

Assisting him is **Hamidah Kamis**, LGK Head of Operations, who has been with working at the airport for close to 13 years. She shares responsibilities that include looking into its cleanliness and airport facilities such as the various VIP rooms in Kompleks Lang Merah Langkawi, ensuring that they are kept in tip-top conditions.



Perak-born Hamidah, who joined LGK in 2011, said the airport was congested then and during the haze, flights were diverted from PEN and KUL served as the alternate airport for aerodrome.

"During the 26th ASEAN Summit held in Langkawi in 2015, aircrafts were landing every 10 minutes at LGK and I was kept busy attending to the VIPs."

Hamidah, 57, said the atmosphere reminded her of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) held in Langkawi last year.

Gearing up for preparations to welcome the delegates from the upcoming Routes Asia 2024's to the island, she said a help desk will be set up to assist them while visuals will be mounted at LGK's entrance to create awareness about this regional event which would be of interest not just to the airlines but also those in the tourism and hospitality sectors.

Having witnessed the transformation of LGK over the years, Hamidah is not the only one enraptured by its "wow" and many Instagrammable areas.

The 39-year-old **Mohd Zainorfitri Mohd Zain**, Head of Commercial at LGK is thrilled to showcase successful implementation of the commercial reset, prioritising travellers' needs.

In contrast to the previous temporary kiosks, LGK has introduced permanent structures and enhanced shopping and dining experiences, including the newly established boulevard and Food Garden at the arrival hall.

Mohd Zainorfitri highlighted the remarkable increase in F&B and retail outlets from 25% to 41%, with notable additions like Habib Jewels and Kopi Kita, which debuted last December.

They joined esteemed tenants such as Sense of Malaysia, a strategic collaboration between Royal Selangor, Borneo Pearls, and Himpun. Additionally, Noodles has been relocated to a new, improved site, further enhancing the overall ambiance and offerings of LGK.





Interview with Datuk Captain Izham Ismail  
Group Managing Director of Malaysian Aviation Group (MAG)

**D**atuk Captain Izham Ismail, with his extensive aviation experience, updates *Airlink* on the latest developments at MAG ahead of Routes Asia 2024.

**As the official carrier of Routes Asia 2024, besides the discounts of up to 20% for flight bookings with Malaysia Airlines and/or Firefly, are there other benefits that delegates can expect? What is the support given to business events such as Routes Asia 2024?**

Aside from the discount on flight tickets for Malaysia Airlines and Firefly operated flights, delegates can also enjoy special discounts on experiences, attractions and airport transfers (to/from KUL or LGK) via our one-stop travel and lifestyle digital platform, Journify.

**How does the MAG aspire to help position KL International Airport into one of the strongest hubs in Southeast Asia with it facing stiff competition from other airports in the region?**

As the national carrier, Malaysia Airlines takes pride in contributing to inbound and outbound tourism, facilitating connectivity from our main gateway in KL International Airport to the world.

This aligns with our broader goal of promoting Malaysia as a premier destination, showcasing the rich cultural heritage, stunning landscapes, and vibrant cities.

We remain steadfast in our commitment to maximising the benefits derived from existing partnerships, including our membership in the oneworld alliance and other bilateral trade and tourism collaborations.

Leveraging these global networks allow us to tap into

a vast array of resources, expertise, and market access, amplifying our capabilities on an international scale.

This approach not only strengthens our global footprint but also facilitates the seamless exchange of ideas, technologies, and best practices, fostering a dynamic environment for growth and innovation.

We remain focused in ensuring our service delivery is not only adaptive to external challenges but also proactively addresses the evolving needs of our valued customers.

In our efforts for customers to feel right at home throughout the journey with us, we will be investing our efforts on three customer value propositions (CVPs), namely cabin comfort, in-flight dining and cabin crew. This is in addition to the many other efforts taken to ensure seamless journeys across all customer touchpoints.

**MAG has returned to 100% seat capacity of 2019 levels. When was that achieved and what were the contributing factors?**

This milestone was achieved recently with the main contributing factor being the high demand on our international flows between India, Australia, New Zealand and London.

**How is the progress for the refurbishment on 39 of your 47 B737-800 NG, which are targeted to be completed by early 2024? What can we expect upon its completion?**

So far, 20 refurbished Boeing 737-800 NG have re-entered service and we are expecting to complete the refurbishment exercise in 2024.

The newly refreshed B737-800 NG aircraft will feature a new and premium cabin experience, including new seats, innovative in-flight entertainment, MHstudio, and a refurbished interior that pays homage to our Malaysian identity from the moment passengers board our flights.

With a fresh and premium cabin environment that features a bright and refreshing colour scheme that is unique to Malaysia Airlines' identity, the new interior design represents a progressive step forward.

In the third quarter of 2024, we will be receiving our first Airbus A330neo, which promises new seats and experiences for our guests. We will also be refreshing our current A330 fleet to ensure consistent cabin standardisation and premium experiences in alignment with our new A330neo cabin, which is expected to commence in 2026.

**Malaysia Airlines has received two of its Boeing 737 Max 8. When is it third aircraft arriving?**

We currently have three Boeing 737-8 in our inventory, having received the third aircraft on 16 January 2024.

**These new Boeing 737-8 aircraft will initially service the domestic routes before venturing to the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) region. When can we expect this to happen?**

We are looking to deploy them to the ASEAN destinations at end-March 2024.

**Do you foresee delays in the delivery of another six of your Boeing 737-8 orders for 2024 with the ongoing investigations on Boeing by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)?**

Based on the feedback we received from Boeing, at present we do not expect any delays in the planned deliveries in 2024 as the current FAA investigation is focused on the 737-9 aircraft type.

**On your key market, India, the frequency for your newly launched Amritsar route was increased from twice weekly to four times weekly on January 15 due to strong demand. What is the load factor (LF) like for your new Indian routes, including Cochin, whose frequencies was raised from six times weekly to seven times weekly to accommodate the increased travel demand up to March 2024?**

We have witnessed promising LF performance on our

new routes in India covering Amritsar, Trivandrum and Ahmedabad, which is at 84%, whereas the LF for Cochin is at 80%.

**What new routes or slots is Malaysia Airlines negotiating for at Routes Asia 2024?**

We look forward to new opportunities and strengthen existing ones to benefit connectivity for passengers. We will explore slot constraints involving our current and long-term network plans.

**Moving forward, what are your aspirations for MAG in 2024?**

Having successfully navigated a restructuring during the COVID-19 pandemic and aligning it with a strategic shift towards the higher-yield international markets, MAG is now well-positioned for key investments previously unattainable.

Amidst intense competition and economic challenges, our focus lies on enhancing customer experience driven by our three CVPs, leveraging strategic partnerships, sustaining financial discipline, investing in our workforce's agility, and incorporating sustainability practices across our business.

We are actively pursuing fleet renewal and growth opportunities and remain steadfast in our pursuit of materialising our Long-Term Business Plan 2.0, ensuring accelerated network expansion besides facilitating a robust recovery and sustained growth in the coming years.

We are cognisant on diversifying our revenue sources to ensure a seamless, holistic ecosystem that is focused on providing end-to-end travel solutions to complement the Group's strength and expertise in the airlines and aviation services businesses.

These diversifications of revenue complement the existing strength in our airline business, which is deemed critical for business sustainability in the long run.

The Group is also actively pursuing key investments in aviation services such as maintenance, repair and operations as well as catering, ground handling and cargo. These businesses, identified as the core proponent in supporting the Group's diversification strategy, are expected to contribute up to 30% of the Group's total topline by 2025.







## Refreshing New Look and Feel for Airport Retail

Following Malaysia Airports' continuous journey in its Commercial Reset exercise post-COVID-19 pandemic, its commercial offerings have emerged refreshed, ultimately elevating its airports' positioning and retail profile to beyond just being a transportation hub.

This is particularly true for its flagship airport, KL International Airport (KLIA), which recently won the Best Duty-Free Shopping in Asia from Global Traveler's 20th Annual GT Tested Reader Survey Awards 2023.

Hani Ezra Hussin, Malaysia Airports Senior General Manager of Commercial Services has been tirelessly working with its partners to introduce brand new experiences under its five retail pillars. They are Duty-Free, Fashion, F&B, Retail-tainment and Sense of Place.

Each store has been carefully detailed out to provide passengers with an experience that enhances their overall travel adventure – starting with diverse dining and retail delights.

Since the airport operator's embarked on the commercial reset initiative in 2018, Hani told *Airlink* that around 800 outlets have been tendered out, with 80% in operations as of 2023, while the remaining 59 lots are

expected to open later this year. During the transition period and in line with the recovery of air travel, a bridging strategy was implemented to minimise the gap and ensure availability of offerings and provide sustainable business for the tenants.

### Emphasis on F&B local champions and designs

On what it looks like when bringing in F&B retailers, Hani replied, "Besides notable international brands such as Hard Rock Café, Jamie Oliver's Pizzeria and the most recent which is Paul, a French bakery which opened in January.

"We bring in downtown local champions such as Serai, Jibby Chow, Nooodles and Ahh-Yum considering a number of our travellers are Malaysians."



"Kitchen by Open House is also another local champion that recently opened its outlet at KLIA Terminal 1 offering a selection of local delights that showcases the rich tapestry of Malaysian culture in collaboration with Jabatan Warisan Negara (The National Heritage Board)."

"This restaurant features a unique one-of-a-kind garden décor with terrace pods lush in green giving customers an outdoor feel while being in the airport."

She also remarked, "Another key element we have brought in this year is encouraging the tenants to bring in local elements into their decor and designs.

"Thus, you will notice that eateries like Din by Din Tai Fung displays a batik backdrop or batik cushions that blend in with its international look, injecting local taste for their customers."

The Hard Rock Café, which is doing very well at KLIA Terminal 1's Satellite Building, also features Malaysia's iconic landmark, the Petronas Twin Towers.

Not only that, they also have exclusive merchandise available for purchase that is only available at the airport.



Starbucks also has signages with graphic elements that are very Malaysian. The outlet has remained at the same location although it has revamped in terms of their look and feel.

She added, "Our longtime tenant Nooodles, has a unique layout at its newly refurbished outlet at KLIA Terminal 1 departure hall that resembles a *tengkolok* or headgear and its outlet at the satellite building is based on a Chinese concept.

"At KLIA Terminal 2, we also have exciting brands such as Jollibee, which is a very popular fast food chain from the Philippines.

"Din by Din Tai Fung also made its debut at Terminal 2, performing as well as its outlet at Terminal 1."

### Success stories

Malaysia Airports is always looking for new ways to further enhance passenger experience at our airports. Some of the efforts undertaken to heighten travellers' duty-free shopping experience have already begun through the newly-revamped Heineman duty-free stores in KLIA Terminal 2.

This is followed by the new Eraman duty-free store at the Satellite Building, including fashion brands like Bvlgari, Tumi, Ralph Lauren have also opened their store at KLIA Terminal 1.

Moving forward in the very near future, the Duty-Free zones housing various retailers will see a complete transformation with the enhancement of the store facade, in line with trending retail concepts to create a more welcoming shopping ambience.

Late last year also saw the launch of Eraman Duty-Free Emporium at KLIA Terminal 1, which features a new shopping experience. Spread across 1,074 sq m, the two flagship stores utilise innovative screens to provide detailed product information and exclusive promotions.

Not only that, Eraman had also introduced self-checkout counters, making it the first to do so in the travel retail industry in Malaysia where shoppers can find a ray of variety of goods, from confectionery to liquor products.

For Langkawi International Airport (LGK), whose commercial reset started in 2018 is reaping success. It saw several firsts in Langkawi, including Costa Coffee and Burger King.

Its Food Court was also refurbished into a food garden concept, a marked enhancement in ambience versus the conventional food court experience.

Hani said, "One of the commercial reset strategies we have managed to deliver is that airports should be more than just a transit hub but also serve like a community hall. We strive to bring brands that are not in downtown so that the community can go to the airport to experience it.

She added, "We are changing the way people view the airport, it is no longer a place where people go to hop on a plane.

"Therefore, we have brought in downtown brands such as Habib Jewels and other brands to cater to the local community."

Another outlet called Sense of Malaysia offers local products and souvenirs is currently located at the airside of KLIA Terminal 2 while at Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI), Langkawi International Airport (LGK), Penang International Airport (PEN) and Kuching International Airport (KCH), it is located on the landside.

She said, "We can expect more local experiential moments for tourists as they explore the specially curated travel souvenirs that include local handicrafts, food and specialty gifts.

"It is a brand that we develop and where we use it as a platform to house small and medium enterprises in standalone stores, an opportunity to reach the international market and experience travel retail.

"I am happy when these retailers see the benefits, including the big purchases from travellers. Airport retail is all about gifting.

"Therefore, when customers see unique and hard-to-get items at the airport, there is no second thought. That should be the way to sell at airports."





Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Going Strong Post-Pandemic

Japan's branded factory outlet shopping mall and its largest in Southeast Asia - Mitsui Outlet Park KLIA Sepang (MOP KLIA) - continues to garner encouraging support as travel recovery picks up since the reopening of the borders.

Overall, its visitors' figures have been growing while its tourists' numbers have more than tripled in 2023, reflective of the normalisation to pre-COVID-19 pandemic levels, TJ Cheah, Deputy Managing Director of MFMA Development, a joint venture company between Mitsui Fudosan Co Ltd and Malaysia Airports, told *Airlink*.

Year-round engaging branding, promotions, activities as well as cultural and family-driven campaigns are organised. Its latest festive campaign, themed 'A Dragon's Blessing at Every Turn' to usher in the Lunar New Year of the Dragon has the outlet mall decorated with cherry blossoms, red lanterns and a majestic golden dragon.

"These activities are specially curated to create memorable and immersive experiences for our patrons with their loved ones, thus encouraging repeat visits and positioning our lifestyle outlet mall as a must-stop destination when visiting Kuala Lumpur or the Klang Valley."

Cheah said MOP KLIA is committed in providing its patrons with unbeatable value, discounts and savings beyond just festive seasons. Embracing the outlet mall concept, they can enjoy discounts throughout the year, thus making MOP KLIA a must-go-to destination for savvy shoppers and foreign travellers looking for a myriad of international and local brands.



“We collaborate closely with Tourism Malaysia and our business partners such as tenants, travel and tour agents, hoteliers and banks to build awareness and draw visitors to MOP KLIA, which is also the first outlet mall in Malaysia to provide flight check-in services.”

**TJ CHEAH**  
Deputy Managing Director  
of MFMA Development



Since the launch of its Phase 3 expansion, several new outlets and kiosks have been introduced. They include Pandora, La Senza, Sweetie, Nature Republic, Sembonia Men, CROSSOVER and Hypershoe, Sacoor Blue, Sacoor Classic, Montigo and Nautica.

On the food and beverage front, there is a brand-new food court, Food District, providing an array of scrumptious fare ranging from local to Japanese, Korean and Western delights. It is complemented by a dessert bar.

At MOP KLIA's Flight Check-In Centre, free luggage storage is available, hence giving travellers a peace of mind with the convenience of hands-free shopping. Other services include a SITA check-in kiosk system where passengers with Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Cathay Pacific and KLM can print their boarding passes.

The Flight Check-In Centre also offers online check-in service for passengers travelling with other airline by providing a desktop and printer to print their boarding passes.

With the Flight Information Display System, showing real-time flight departure and arrival of the airlines' schedule, located at MOP KLIA's Sunshine Square on the Ground Floor, and at Sky Walk on both the Ground and First Floor, travellers can shop at ease.



Free shuttle bus services to KLIA Terminal 1 and 2 are provided while the pick-up points to MOP KLIA from KLIA Terminal 1 is at Level 1, Gate 2, and at Level 1, Bus Bay, B9 from KLIA Terminal 2.

For more information, visit [www.mitsui-shopping-park.com.my](http://www.mitsui-shopping-park.com.my)





Sama-Sama Hotels’ Strong Streak of Winning Awards

**K**L Airport Hotels Sdn Bhd (KLAH), a wholly-owned subsidiary of Malaysia Airports, operates the local hospitality chain, Sama-Sama Hotels, which has three distinctive award-winning airport transit hotels at Malaysia’s main gateway, KL International Airport (KLIA).

Its five-star Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA is located on the landside, adjacent to the airport while its remaining two properties, known as Sama-Sama Express, are housed at the airside of KLIA Terminal 1 and 2.

The multi-award-winning Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA collected a string of accolades last year, which kick-started with the Airport Hotel of the Year in Asia Pacific at The Airport Food & Beverage (FAB) and Hospitality Awards 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.

It is another milestone and a significant accomplishment for the hotel when it bagged four 2023 Haute Grandeur Global Awards.

They were for the Best Airport Hotel on a global level for the eighth time, Best Conference Venue Hotel in Malaysia, Best Culinary Experience in Malaysia and Most Unique Guest Experience in Malaysia.

Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA’s Atrium Alfresco features a well-landscaped tropical garden courtyard with lush greenery and a healthy dose of sunshine that is picture-perfect and suitable for afternoon teas, evening drinks and leisure hang-outs.

The place is soothing not just for the jet-lagged and weary travellers but also for participants looking for a rejuvenating respite in between their conference sessions held at the hotel’s ballroom or meeting rooms. Another unique selling point about Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA is its open terrace on the ninth floor where guests can watch the landing and take-off of aircraft at the airport’s runways.

Later in the year at the 17th annual World Luxury Hotel Awards 2023, the 442-rooms Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA, won two awards, namely the Best Luxury Airport Hotel in Asia and the Best Business Hotel in Malaysia.

At the 20th edition Hospitality Asia Platinum Awards (HAPA) Malaysia series 2023-24, Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA was recognised for being the Best Five-Star Hotel and Best Service Excellence for Hospitality and Tourism.

The hotel was also honoured with a Special Resilience Award while its all-day dining Continents also earned a place under the Best 30 Restaurants Award.



Continents’ multiple culinary experiences range from its open food sections to patisseries and bars offering both Asian and Western cuisines as well as fresh produce.

Adjoining Continents is Equator, a cosy private event space which is often used for business, lifestyle and social events, offering exquisite dining experience with open concept style of serving food.



Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA has been a preferred hotel choice for transit passengers with a few long hours in between flights and those with early morning departures or arrivals during the late night. Its facilities include an outdoor swimming pool and gymnasium tucked away in one nook of the building.

Conveniently linked by a covered sky bridge to KLIA’s Main Terminal Building where the arrival and departure halls are, Sama-Sama Hotel KLIA operates a complimentary 24-hour buggy shuttle service to ferry its guests if they choose not to walk.

Meanwhile, located next to Gate C5 of the KLIA’s Satellite Building, the airside Sama-Sama Express offers 80 guestrooms and suites, a shower facility and lounge for transit travellers to unwind before jetting off to their next destination. Its guests do not need to clear Malaysian Customs and Immigration on a layover between their flights.

The other Sama-Sama Express, located at KLIA Terminal 2’s International Departure on Level 3, has 70 guestrooms and suites. Its guests on a layover in between flights can also enjoy its airport lounge.

Both these two transit airside hotels also won three accolades each from the World Luxury Hotel Awards 2023. Sama-Sama Express at KLIA Terminal 1 won for Best Luxury Concept Hotel in Malaysia, Best Airport Transit Hotel in Asia and Best Luxury Eco Hotel in Southeast Asia (SEA).

Sama-Sama Express at KLIA Terminal 2 was the regional winner of the Best Luxury Eco Hotel, Best Airport Transit Hotel and Best Luxury Contemporary Hotel for SEA.



When asked how Sama-Sama Hotels managed to win all these accolades for its three properties, Sundralingam Kulendra, General Manager of Sama-Sama Hotels, succinctly replied, “Simply because we are the best” with a laugh.

“The staff of Sama-Sama Hotels has been given empowerment that enables them to take ownership of their work and contribute to meaningful decision-making and deliver the best customer experience.

“Coming soon, a unique new wellness spa and fitness studio, which is one of its kind in the marketplace. This is to stay relevant in meeting guest expectations and differentiating from competitors.

“By investing in renovations, we demonstrate our commitment to providing exceptional experiences, providing guests with an exceptional stay, and ensuring our long-term sustainability in an ever-changing market,” Sundralingam added.

For more information, visit [www.samasamahotels.com](http://www.samasamahotels.com) and [www.samasamaexpress.com](http://www.samasamaexpress.com)





### Air Macau Returns to Kuala Lumpur Fostering Renewed Partnership

The recommencement of Air Macau's direct flight NX922 from Macau (MFM) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) on January 10, 2024 after an absence of 20 years saw a load factor of about 90% passengers onboard its Airbus A320.

The aircraft consists of eight business, eight 'joyful economy' and 138 economy class seats, with the joyful economy class offering wider seating space in the first to fourth rows of the economy class where a row of three seats only accommodates two passengers.

Describing it as a smooth inaugural flight, Captain Du Guofu, Vice President of Flight Operations of Air Macau said the route will not only enhance travel convenience for the passengers but will also help promote trade and cultural exchanges between Macau and Malaysia with its four flights a week.

“Malaysia is one of our most important Southeast Asian markets.”

**CAPTAIN DU GUOFU**  
Vice President of Flight Operations  
of Air Macau

As Macau's flag carrier, its global network covers 36 destinations in eight countries, namely China, South Korea, Indonesia, Japan, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Established as a full-service airline on September 13, 1994, Air Macau is a subsidiary of Air China, one of China's top three airlines.

Committed to expanding its reach and enhancing its services, the airline appointed Pacific World Travel Sdn Bhd (PWT) as its General Sales Agent on December 12, 2023.

PWT Group President Tunku Dato Seri (Dr) Iskandar Tunku Abdullah remarked, “We are delighted to facilitate this milestone in aviation that will foster stronger ties between Macau and Malaysia.”

Heralding Air Macau's arrival of its maiden flight as an important milestone, Zainuddin Mohamed, Covering General Manager of Aviation Marketing and Development of Malaysia Airports, said it was also the first new foreign airline in 2024 for KUL.

The maiden flight was given the symbolic water cannon salute while goodie bags were distributed to its arriving passengers.

To drive forward its digital retail strategy, the airline recently signed a five-year agreement with Dublin-based retail software company Datalex plc using the latter's China Shopping and Pricing Engine, a standalone air shopping and pricing solution tailored for Chinese airlines.

Bryan Porter, Chief Revenue Officer of Datalex said, “We look forward to being a key enabler of NX's digital transformation strategy.”

For more information, call **+603-2144 2500** or visit **www.airmacau.com.mo**



### China Eastern Airlines Strengthens Ties with Etihad Airways, Initiates Flights to Kuala Lumpur

China Eastern Airlines (MU) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Etihad Airways (EY) to further build their existing partnership that has endured for over a decade.

Both airlines plan to implement a broad collaboration, including an expanded codeshare.

Other areas involve reciprocal loyalty programmes, cargo transport, maintenance, repair and overhaul, ground handling, catering, lounge access, staff training and sustainability initiatives.

The MoU will facilitate the Chinese carrier's plans to begin direct services to Abu Dhabi via discussions with Abu Dhabi International Airport, Department of Culture and Tourism of Abu Dhabi and other key stakeholders in the United Arab Emirates' capital.

According to Li Yangmin, President of China Eastern Airlines Group, the connectivity between its Shanghai hub and EY's network will significantly enhance its footprint in the Middle East and Africa.

“The MoU paves the way for an agreement that will boost Abu Dhabi's economic development as well as support China's Belt and Road Initiative.”

**ANTONOALDO NEVES**  
Chief Executive Officer  
of Etihad Airways (EY)

Meanwhile, following Malaysia's Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture's visit to China in December 2023, Dato' Seri Tiong King Sing recently said that MU and its subsidiary Shanghai Airlines (FM) are expected to mount a minimum of 62 weekly flights this year.

FM increased its flight frequencies using the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner from Shanghai Pudong International Airport (PVG) to KL International Airport (KUL) while MU commenced its four times-weekly new route from Beijing (PKK) to KUL deploying the Airbus A330 aircraft on January 31, 2024.



The late-night maiden flight was greeted with the water cannon salute and a cake cutting ceremony witnessed by Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan, the Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (centre) and Dato' Dr Ammar Abd Ghapar, Tourism Malaysia Director-General (far left).

For more information, visit **www.ceair.com**





## Batik Air Malaysia Expands Domestic Connectivity from KL International Airport

Starting from February 8, travellers can enjoy flights by Batik Air Malaysia (OD) to Tawau (TWU) in Sabah, Sibu (SBW) in Sarawak, and Kota Bharu (KBR) in Kelantan from KL International Airport (KUL) Terminal 1.

All the three domestic routes are using the Boeing 737-800 aircraft, featuring 12 business and 150 economy class seats.

It will be daily services to TWU while for SBW and KBR, there will be to daily flights each from KUL.

These schedules are designed to provide smooth connections for OD passengers to other domestic and 56 of its international destinations in 22 countries.

They also cater to the increasing travel needs of both business and leisure travellers alike.

“The launch of these routes is not just about flights; it is about bringing communities together across Asia and opening doors to international destinations.”

**DATUK CHANDRAN RAMA MUTHY**  
Chief Executive Officer  
of Batik Air Malaysia (OD)

OD’s SibU to KUL route is a reinstatement as the airline flew to SibU in 2013 but it was for a brief period. OD is also reinstating the KBR to KUL after stopping its KBR to Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport recently.

Passengers from KBR intending to perform their umrah or pilgrimage can now connect to Jeddah (JED) via KUL.

OD brought together some 100 Indonesian and Malaysian tour operators in January this year to Shah Alam, Selangor with the objective of turning KUL into a transit hub for umrah passengers from Indonesia.

Also present were Lion Air Chief Executive Officer, Rudy Lumingkawes, Deputy Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Khairul Firdaus Akbar Khan and Tourism Malaysia Senior Director of International Promotion (Asia and Africa) Manoharan Periasamy, who is also covering for Deputy Director General Planning.

Datuk Chandran said these passengers can spend a day here before or after their umrah trip as OD currently flies to seven locations in Malaysia, adding that the airline plans to increase the umrah flights between Malaysia and Saudi Arabia to 10 times weekly by February.

This will be an expansion of its KUL-JED direct services introduced on August 15, 2023, which were subsequently increased several times and finally to seven times a week due to the surging demand.

OD plans to fly from Banda Aceh, Medan, Padang, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, Denpasar, Surabaya, Makassar, Pekanbaru and Batam and transit in KUL by February 15.

Plans are also afoot to integrate feeder services from Lion Air’s affiliate airlines.



“We also have plans to introduce four flights weekly from KUL to Madinah by July,” Datuk Chandran added.

For more information, visit [www.batikair.com.my](http://www.batikair.com.my)



## More Network Expansion for Etihad Airways in 2024

Etihad Airways kicked off 2024 by reintroducing two direct daily services from Abu Dhabi to Kozhikode and Thiruvananthapuram in the Kerala region of India on New Year’s Day. Thus, bringing to a total of 10 Indian gateways served.

Last year, the United Arab Emirates’ national airline reintroduced services to Kolkata, a vital Indian gateway connecting Eastern India to global destinations and increased flight frequencies to Mumbai and Delhi, two of its most popular routes from twice daily to four times daily.

“We have established non-stop routes between India and Abu Dhabi, providing customers with easier access to our growing network without transiting at one of the main Indian hub airports.”

Seamless and practical connections at Abu Dhabi ensure that our guests can easily access destinations across the Gulf Cooperation Council, Europe - including our four daily services to London - and North America. Moreover, they have the opportunity to enjoy a fantastic stopover in Abu Dhabi as an integral part of their journey.

**ANTONOALDO NEVES**  
Chief Executive Officer  
of Etihad Airways

The Gulf airline’s recent strategic bilateral interline partnership with Maldivian, Maldives’ national airline, also means its guests can now seamlessly navigate across the Indian Ocean archipelago, enjoying the combined services and networks of both carriers in a single ticket.



Additionally, Etihad Airways’ flights to Malé connecting it to the Maldivian network have been increased from 10 to 14 weekly flights this year.

Meanwhile, at the annual DesignAir Awards, Etihad Airways was crowned the top honour for the Design Airline of the Year 2023. Besides that, it also received the Most Improved Airline Brand Award in recognition of its continued investment in guest experience.

They included their new menu and launched a design-led and sustainable dining experience for its economy class while its business class’ soft furnishings and tableware were elevated via its partnership with Armani/Casa.

For more information, visit [www.etihad.com](http://www.etihad.com)





oneworld Opens First Dedicated Lounge in Seoul

The world's leading airline alliance, oneworld, has broken new ground in premium benefits and luxury air travel with the recent unveiling of its first fully-branded dedicated airport lounge at Terminal 1 of Incheon International Airport's (ICN) in Seoul, South Korea as it celebrates its landmark 25th anniversary later this year.

It collaborated with global aviation ground services provider Swissport and the team behind its award-winning ASPIRE Airport Lounges to create a contemporary airport lounge experience with vibrant and calming space for guests to recharge, relax and dine before their flight.

The 555 sqm lounge, which can accommodate up to 148 customers, will serve as the blueprint for future oneworld lounges at select airports.

“The new oneworld lounge is an exciting next step in our vision to making travel bright. Together with ASPIRE, we have combined refined fixtures and finishes, digital technologies, and warm and ergonomic settings to create smart and memorable travel experiences.

GERHARD GIRKINGER

Vice President, Customer Experience, Delivery and Membership of oneworld

Its design incorporates subtle nods to South Korean culture, capturing the colourful lantern festival in mesmerising glass art and the 'gat' hat in a welcoming bar, mixing traditional and contemporary aesthetics. The lounge has distinct zones with spacious and comfortable seating areas.



The opening hours daily are between 7:30am and 11:45pm apart from Monday and Saturday when it opens earlier at 4:30am for eligible oneworld Emerald and Sapphire passengers departing from Seoul on oneworld flights as well as first and business class passengers travelling with its member airlines.

The Seoul lounge is served by seven oneworld member airlines, namely American Airlines, Cathay Pacific Airways, Finnair, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas Airways, Qatar Airways and SriLankan Airlines. Between them, they operate more than 60 weekly flights to Seoul, connecting the Korean capital to over 900 destinations worldwide via oneworld's member network.

Among the member airlines present at the official launch of oneworld's lounge were Datuk Captain Izham Ismail, Group Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group and Lavinia Lau, Chief Customer and Commercial Officer of the Cathay Group (fifth and sixth from left).

Meanwhile, oneworld was recently named Best Airline Alliance for the 14th consecutive year by readers of Global Traveler, securing oneworld's position as the most preferred alliance among frequent flyers.

For more information, visit [oneworld.com](http://oneworld.com)



Plaza Premium Group Enhances Airport Dining Concepts in Malaysia

Going beyond comfortable airport lounges and convenient transit accommodations, Plaza Premium Group's (PPG) has a diverse portfolio of brands that includes airport dining concepts targeted to meet different needs of travellers.

“We are thrilled to offer both Malaysian and international travellers a comprehensive range of award-winning hospitality solutions under our umbrella and are committed to making every journey through Malaysia a smooth and enjoyable experience.

CAVIN LOH

Area General Manager for Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia of Plaza Premium Group (PPG)

Under its dining concepts, PPG's Flight Club offers warm, cozy comfort food as well as grab and go options at both the KLIA Terminal 1 and 2. Promoting homey dining experiences, its dishes are visually enticing, using ingredients sourced locally. Playing with a variety of herbs and seed ingredients, unique dishes featuring fresh produce are created.

Flight Club, which made its debut at Kota Kinabalu International Airport in Sabah last December on Level 2 of the domestic departure area, is opened from 6am to 11pm daily and can seat up to 69 travellers.



Plans are afoot to have another Flight Club at the international departure area near the Contact Pier of KLIA Terminal 1 by the third quarter of 2024.

Committed to redefine airport dining and raise the bar, PPG opened Flight Club Signature on October 13, 2023 with a bigger seating capacity that can hold up to 84 people. Operating 24 hours daily, it is a place to savour familiar flavours, including western cuisine.

A one-of-a-kind establishment, Flight Club Signature is sited at the Satellite Building's Mezzanine Level, where PPG has also slated at this location of KLIA Terminal 1 the opening of its new restaurant by mid-February 2024. Known as The Summerhouse, it will be serving local and western fare in a tropical forest ambience.

For more information, call +603-8876 0988 or visit [plazapremiumgroup.com](http://plazapremiumgroup.com)





### Cathay Group's Rebuild Journey Gains Momentum

Cathay Pacific Airways (CX), which took home the Global Traveler's 2023 Best Trans-Pacific Airline Award, carried almost 18 million passengers last year. Together with Hong Kong Express Airways (HKE), the two airlines flew more than 20 million passengers in 2023 compared with about three million passengers in 2022.

Considering this a milestone for the Cathay Group, CX Chief Customer and Commercial Officer, Lavinia Lau, said air cargo also posted encouraging results. "In total, we carried almost 1.4 million tonnes of air cargo throughout 2023 compared with about 1.2 million tonnes in 2022."

"As a Group, we made significant progress in 2023. As we look ahead into 2024, we remain committed to working towards fully rebuilding our flights, with the aim of delivering high-quality and reliable services that Hong Kong deserves."

Envisaging the Lunar New Year holidays to mark another peak travel period with strong demand starting from late January, she also expects cargo to steadily pick up from the second half of January with e-commerce demand on the Americas and European lanes remaining solid and local demand strengthening up to the festive holidays.

To strengthen Hong Kong as the world's number one air cargo hub, Cathay Cargo has selected the next-generation Airbus A350F freighter to meet its future fleet requirements. It has placed an initial firm order with Airbus for six of these state-of-the-art aircraft and

secured the right to acquire 20 more to achieve its vision of becoming the world's most customer-centric air cargo service brand.

These highly fuel-efficient aircraft, which expected to be delivered in 2027, will contribute to its sustainability goals and provide greater cargo connectivity between Hong Kong, the Chinese Mainland and the rest of the world.

“  
This order marks another major component in our investment for the future. It reflects Cathay's confidence in the Hong Kong hub as we look ahead to the opportunities provided by the Three-Runway System.  
”

**RONALD LAM**  
Chief Executive Officer  
of Cathay Group

Currently, Cathay Cargo has a freighter fleet of 20 Boeing 747 freighters, including 14 B747-8Fs and six B747-400ERFs. It also provides belly capacity through the Group's extensive passenger network to around 80 destinations worldwide.

Cathay Group's order book includes 21 Boeing 777-9 wide-body passenger aircraft scheduled to be delivered in 2025 and a total of 49 Airbus A320neo and A321neo aircraft to be delivered by 2029.

For more information, visit [www.cathaypacific.com](http://www.cathaypacific.com)



### Japan Airlines Celebrates 70 Years of International Flights

Commemorating Japan Airlines' (JAL) 70th anniversary of its first international flight on February 2, Japan's national carrier has launched a special web page on its corporate website tracing its history with memorable stories.

It is also providing a month of free inflight WiFi on all JAL-operated international flights, excluding the codeshare flights. JAL's current extensive international network connects 376 airports in 64 countries or regions.

For the summer schedule for its international routes for the fiscal year 2024 (FY24), JAL has a Discount Mile campaign running from February 8 for the launch of its daily Haneda (HND)-Doha (DOH) service on March 31.

This will be the first direct route from Japan to the Middle East by a Japanese airline with codeshare connections beyond DOH offered by Qatar Airways (QR), a member of the oneworld alliance, of which JAL is also a member. JAL said its codeshare on the Tokyo-DOH route by QR will continue to operate.

Meanwhile, its new Airbus A350-1000, which was used on its HND-New York (JFK) route in January this year, will be progressively introduced to its other international routes within its FY24.



JAL was recently recognised as the Best Airline to Japan as part of the 20th annual GT Tested Reader Survey Awards hosted by Global Traveler. Kazuki Yoshino, its Managing Director of Passenger Marketing and Sales for the Americas received the award together with Maria McKinnon, Director of Brand, Marketing and Loyalty of oneworld alliance.

The airline was also selected for the Dow Jones Sustainability Asia Pacific Index (DJSI Asia Pacific Index) for the second year running, receiving the highest rating in various areas within the airline industry in the 2023 assessment.

They include materiality, supply chain management, passenger safety, sustainable marketing and brand perception.

For more information, call +603-2287 6888 or visit [www.jal.co.jp/my/en](http://www.jal.co.jp/my/en)



Using the long-haul variant of Airbus A350-900 aircraft, Singapore Airlines (SIA) will begin operating its inaugural five-times weekly non-stop flights between Changi Airport (SIN) and London Gatwick Airport (LGW) in June 2024.

SIA's A350-900, which features 253 seats in three cabin classes, comprises 42 Business Class, 24 Premium Economy Class and 187 Economy Class seats. With LGW's addition, this will increase SIA's European destinations in its network to 141, thus reflecting the airline's firm commitment to enhance its connectivity to this key region.

“London has always been a very important market for the SIA Group.

”  
**DAI HAOYU**

Acting Senior Vice President  
Marketing Planning  
of Singapore Airlines (SIA)

With its four-times daily services to London Heathrow Airport (LHR), this will bring SIA's total flights to the United Kingdom's capital to 33 weekly

Japan's largest carrier, All Nippon Airways (ANA) continues to be undefeated in Asia Pacific with an impressive on-time performance score of 82.75% across 302,279 flights, according to Cirium's newly released The On-Time Performance Review 2023.

In the global airlines category, an airline must serve at least three regions and meet other criteria, ANA is ranked seventh among the top 10 performers in 2023.

The Cirium annual report, now in its 15th year, comprises of data and analytics curated from over 600 sources of real-time flight information. It defines an on-time flight as one that arrives within 15 minutes of the scheduled gate arrival.

The Star Alliance member, ANA, is also celebrating its recent success, having achieved the Skytrax's 5-Star rating for 11 consecutive years since 2013 for its consistent top-notch inflight and airport services as well as hospitality exhibited by its staff.

Shinichi Inoue, President and Chief



**SIA to Launch Direct Services to London Gatwick Airport**

services. In addition to that, SIA operates five-times weekly services to Manchester Airport (MAN).

Stewart Wingate, Chief Executive Officer of LGW said, "For passengers across London and the South East, the new route will provide huge connectivity potential not only to Singapore but also more widely across Southeast Asia, Australia and New Zealand."

For more information, visit [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com)



**All Nippon Airways Remains the Leader of On-Time Performance in Asia Pacific in 2023**

Executive Officer of ANA said, "The recognition of the 5-Star designation by Skytrax for over a decade reflects our team's unwavering commitment to excellence and delivering exceptional service for our customers."

So far, only 10 airlines in the world have earned the 5-Star recognition, with ANA being the sole Japanese carrier to maintain this distinction for more than 10 consecutive years.

As part of ANA's initiatives to enhance its services, the airline introduced their new and exclusive amenity kits in January for its first and business class international flights. Passengers in both these two classes get Ettinger amenity pouches while the first and business class receive Sensai and Aveda cosmetics respectively.

Committed to environmental sustainability, ANA also eliminated the use of plastic from its amenity kit packaging, replacing it with environmental-friendly paper bands.

For more information, call **+603-2032 1331** or visit [www.ana.co.jp/group/en/my](http://www.ana.co.jp/group/en/my)



**AirAsia Malaysia Expands Kota Kinabalu Hub**

With the introduction of a new international direct route to Shanghai from Kota Kinabalu (BKI) on February 20, Malaysia (AK) will further expand its second largest hub in Malaysia.

Shanghai, its sixth destination in mainland China, will join Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Beijing and Wuhan. This will be an opportunity to stimulate tourism between China and Malaysia following the visa-free entry initiative announced by both governments last year.

“China, being one of our largest markets, boasts a total of 19 routes from Malaysia, with 162 weekly flights from February onwards.

This new international route also reinforces our standing as the largest foreign low-cost carrier in China. We eagerly anticipate contributing substantially to the Sabah tourism sector as the state targets 2.8 million tourist arrivals in 2024.

”  
**BO LINGAM**

Group Chief Executive Officer  
of AirAsia Aviation Group

Currently, AK also connects BKI directly to three other international destinations -Singapore, Taipei and Hong Kong - beyond mainland China.

Meanwhile, its sister company AirAsia X (AAX) has announced that it will be resuming its thrice weekly service from Kuala Lumpur (KUL) to Xian on 4 April 2024.

The resumption will align with its commitment to strengthen its presence in China with five destinations while complementing the AirAsia Group's 12th destination in Mainland China.

It also marks AAX as the sole airline offering direct flights between KUL and Xian.

The Group is working towards the full restoration of its fleet and looks forward to reactivate 191 aircraft by the end of the first quarter of 2024 (1Q24), with 166 in operation.

The Group also expects its capacity to rebound to 83% of pre-pandemic levels by the close of 1Q2024.

To support its guests to fly home to reunite with their families affordably to usher in the Lunar New Year, AK has allocated 134 late-night flights numbering around 25,000 seats that offer fixed low fares to seven destinations in East Malaysia from Peninsular Malaysia.

It also operates 408 flights weekly with regular fares to Sabah, Sarawak and Labuan in support of the government's festive season initiative.

For more information, visit [www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com) and [www.airasiox.com](http://www.airasiox.com)



Quick & easy journey from check-in to boarding gate with

**EZPaz**  
biometric facial recognition

# How to use EZPaz?

## Step 1 :



Check-in at EZPaz kiosk



Scan your face and drop your bag  
at EZBagz kiosk

## Step 2 :



Scan your face at the security  
checkpoint

## Step 3 :



Scan your face at the boarding lounge

REMINDER : Please provide your passport/identification card (IC)  
and e-ticket/booking reference number for check-in purposes

**MALAYSIA  
AIRPORTS**  
Hosting Joyful Connections



**malaysia**  
airlines



## The best journeys begin with Malaysian Hospitality on board.

Fly Malaysia Airlines to enjoy the genuine warmth the country is known for. As a member of the oneworld airline alliance, we offer superior connectivity to 900 destinations in over 170 territories worldwide and access to over 650 airport lounges worldwide.

Official airline partner of  **ROUTES**  
ASIA



## Upclose with Dato' Muzammil Mohamad Regional Manager ASEAN of Qatar Airways



Airlines in this region are poised for a positive trajectory. According to a study by the Asian Development Bank, the projections indicate a substantial recovery, with airlines expected to reclaim 90% of their capacity by the end of 2023. However, despite these optimistic projections, challenges such as fleet and staff constraints, evolving travel patterns, and environmental concerns persist, necessitating innovative strategies and business models from the airlines.

In navigating this complex landscape, the ASEAN airline industry must continue adapting, addressing challenges head-on, and exploring sustainable growth strategies. Balancing optimism with a realistic assessment of potential obstacles will be key to shaping a resilient and forward-looking aviation sector in the region.

**You were instrumental in bringing about the signing of a memorandum of collaboration (MoC) with Tourism Malaysia in September 2022 to strengthen Malaysia's appeal as a preferred destination among travellers in the Middle East (ME), Europe and the United States (US). What were some outcomes of the MoC?**

At Qatar Airways, we recognise the importance of promoting Malaysia as the preferred destination for international travellers. We conducted targeted local market activities in the US, focusing on key countries in Europe, Africa, and the ME, including Qatar. In addition, Kuala Lumpur is featured in our airline's safety video from January 1, 2023, until December 31, 2024 to ensure our passengers, regardless of their departure point, are introduced to the charms of Malaysia's capital city.

The collaboration has been positive and impactful, contributing significantly to enhancing Malaysia's appeal as a tourism destination. Dedicated to supporting the region's tourism growth, we will continue to assist Tourism Malaysia.

**Since the easing of travel restrictions in Malaysia after the pandemic, how many times does Qatar Airways fly from Doha (DOH) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) and Penang (PEN)?**

Qatar Airways has significantly increased its flights to Kuala Lumpur to operate a robust schedule of 28 flights per week, which equates to four daily flights. 14 of these weekly flights are in collaboration with our codeshare partner, Malaysia Airlines, as part of our strategic efforts to meet the surging demand for air travel.

Throughout the pandemic, the airline has consistently maintained its service between KUL and DOH, facilitating the repatriation of over 10,000 Malaysian citizens and more than 14,000 foreigners from Malaysia. We resumed our daily services to PEN on October 29, 2023, underlining our commitment to expand our global network and contribute to Malaysia's aviation growth.

**It has been slightly more than three years since Dato' Muzammil Mohamad stepped up to take on his current role as Regional Manager for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) of Qatar Airways with greater responsibilities.**

**Prior to that, he was its Country Manager for Malaysia and Brunei from April 2016 to November 2020, overseeing the airline's operations, orchestrating strategic initiatives, and customer relations. An accountant by profession, his career in the aviation industry started in 2007 when he joined Malaysia's national carrier before moving on to Qatar Airways.**

**Tell us more about your regional responsibilities at Qatar Airways**

I am tasked with strategically leading, developing, and delivering revenue with the aim of maximising returns from the dynamic ASEAN market. My role involves not only managing relationships with key stakeholders such as trade partners, government entities, and tourism bodies within the region but also ensuring the effective management of our dedicated team and valuable company assets.

This multifaceted position allows me to contribute significantly to the growth and success of our operations in the ASEAN market. I also represent Qatar Airways at events and forums, solidifying our commitment to excellence and innovation.

**How do you see the growth of airlines in the ASEAN region post COVID-19 pandemic?**

**Given the one-off US\$10,000 incentive recently announced by Langkawi Development Authority for airlines starting new routes to Langkawi, can we expect to see Qatar Airways returning directly to the island or will the airline continue with its codeshare agreement with Malaysia Airlines?**

Qatar Airways first launched the DOH-LGK services in November 2019 but they have been suspended due to the pandemic. While we look forward to returning to LGK, our current plan involves maintaining the codeshare arrangement. Any definitive plans regarding the resumption of Qatar Airways' direct flights to the island will be formally announced. We appreciate the interest and anticipation surrounding our operations in LGK and will communicate promptly regarding its future developments.

**Is Qatar Airways' current fleet size of approximately 255 aircraft able to meet passengers demand as travel recovers. If not, how will this be resolved?**

Our current fleet size positions us well to meet the increasing demand as travel recovers. We continuously assess market dynamics and passenger needs to ensure our fleet capacity aligns with the evolving travel landscape. If additional capacity is required, we remain open to strategic solutions.

This may include exploring more partnerships or expanding codeshare agreements with other airlines. Collaborative efforts allow us to optimise resources and enhance our global connectivity while ensuring we can effectively address rising passenger demand.

**Will airfares continue to be high under the current challenging aviation environment?**

As we steer through the post-pandemic challenges amidst continued travel demand, airfares are projected to remain elevated as indicated by FCM Consulting's Global Trend Report for the third quarter of 2023. The forecasted 3% to 7% increase in global airfares in 2024 reflects the multifaceted dynamics of the aviation industry, encompassing factors such as fuel costs, sustainability measures, and fleet upgrades. Our focus remains on navigating the complexities of the aviation landscape while ensuring the highest standards of safety and service.

**With Qatar Airways taking the lead in the sponsorship of sports events such as the FIFA World Cup and its latest global partnership with the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), to what degree have football fans contributed to the airline's passenger traffic growth and the sales of travel packages under Qatar Airways Holidays?**

While we do not have specific data on the direct impact of football fans on Qatar Airways' passenger traffic nor the sales of travel packages under Qatar Airways Holidays, we are pleased to witness the positive reception and enjoyment of fans participating in our sponsored sports events. They align with our commitment to connecting people through shared experiences, including the excitement of sports.

**What is it like working for the Best Middle Eastern airline and more importantly the World's Best Airline for seven consecutive years from 2011-2022?**

Working for Qatar Airways has truly transformed both my professional and personal journey. Being part of this airline feels like joining a supportive family where my commitments are valued and my aspirations nurtured. The airline fosters a culture of continuous learning, providing comprehensive training and growth opportunities. Growth here is not just encouraged but integral to the experience and it has been a fulfilling one where I found meaning in the challenges.

The journey to becoming the Best Middle Eastern Airline and one of the best in the world required persistent efforts from our dedicated employees. Furthermore, Qatar Airways is the only airline in the world to have won the prestigious Skytrax World's Best Airline seven times and the Skytrax World's Best Business Class 10 times. Our commitment to excellence and innovation creates a dynamic work environment where employees thrive and their well-being are taken care of.

**Is it better to join the aviation industry immediately or do accountancy first as many accountants have made it in high management positions?**

The financial acumen gained from an accountancy background can be a valuable asset in leadership roles, where strategic decision-making often involves a deep understanding of financial implications.

There is no one-size-fits-all answer to this question. What matters most is the clarity of your goals and the development of a well-thought-out plan to achieve them. If your passion lies in aviation, and you have a clear vision of the role you aspire to play, joining the industry immediately may be the most direct route for you.

However, if you see the potential benefits of acquiring financial expertise through a detour in accountancy, that can be a valid and strategic approach as well. The key is to ensure that your chosen path aligns with your ultimate career objectives.

**With a wealth of experience spanning over 17 years in aviation, what advice would you give to those planning to join the industry?**

Embarking on a career in aviation is a thrilling journey as the industry itself is ever evolving, with technological advancements and regulatory changes shaping its landscape. To excel in this industry, you must be passionate about it as aviation is by far the most complex industry I have been with.

Approach your work with passion and professionalism. The aviation industry values individuals who are dedicated, enthusiastic, and uphold high standards of integrity. Finally, it is your attitude and commitment that will leave a lasting impression.

**What are your hobbies?**

I enjoy travelling, reading, and watching movies.





# EAT & WIN

FOOD GARDEN KLIA TERMINAL 1

Spend a minimum of RM50\* to participate.

1 NOVEMBER 2023 - 30 APRIL 2024

**GRAND PRIZE x1**  
DUCATI STREETFIGHTER V2

**x2**  
SONY SMART TV X75K

**x2**  
PLAYSTATION 5

**x2**  
REDMI 12 PRO 4G

**x2**  
ROIDMI EVA ROBOT VACUUM

**x1**  
TOSHIBA DISHWASHER

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

### EAT

\*Spend minimum of RM40 at any food stalls plus spend of RM10 on Beverage and Dessert Counter.

### SNAP

Take a photo of your purchase receipt.

### SCAN QR

Submit receipt and fill in your details. Send.



\*Terms & Conditions apply

Minimum spend of RM40 at any food stalls plus RM10 at Beverage and Dessert Counter.

[www.eraman.com.my](http://www.eraman.com.my)



[eramanmalaysia](https://www.instagram.com/eramanmalaysia)

MALAYSIA AIRPORTS (NIAGA) SDN. BHD. Registration No. 199301026572 (281310-V)