

AIRLINK

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Phase One of Selangor Aero
Park @ KLIA Aeropolis Kicks Off

The recent launch of the Selangor Aero Park @ KLIA Aeropolis by Malaysia Airports and Menteri Besar Selangor Incorporated (MBI) marks a step closer towards Malaysia becoming a leading player in Asia Pacific's aerospace and advanced manufacturing landscape.

Spanning about 600 acres within the KLIA Aeropolis, this landmark development has a potential gross development value of RM2.3 billion.

To be developed over several phases, the Selangor Aero Park is expected to attract high-impact investments across the aerospace supply chain, including precision engineering and integrated logistics services.

It is anticipated to serve as a hub for innovation, talent development and technology transfer as well.

Covering 200 acres, phase one of the Selangor Aero Park is open for sale to potential investors, while the remaining 400-acre parcels of land will be progressively released beyond 2028, in accordance with infrastructure readiness and investor demand.

GE Aerospace secured 100 acres of land under phase one to develop an engine test cell as well as maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) facility to serve the Asia Pacific region.

Supported by a governance model led by Malaysia Airports and MBI to ensure seamless investment facilitation, the latter's presence as a strategic partner representing the Selangor state ensures that the tenant-operators and investors benefit from fast-track facilitation for business permits and development approvals, talent development programmes and incentives.

Dato' Seri Amirudin Shari, Menteri Besar of Selangor said, "By leveraging our strategic location, robust infrastructure and industrial strengths, we are building an enabling ecosystem where global aerospace players as well as local small and medium enterprises can thrive.

The Selangor Aero Park is envisioned to offer a complete ecosystem of aerospace activities encompassing MRO, aerospace parts manufacturing, avionics, propulsion and high-value electronics, as well as advanced supply chain facilities.

It will integrate smart security features such as closed-circuit television with facial and vehicle-plate number recognition, solar-powered street lighting on smart poles, smart billing and maintenance monitoring and green parks.

MBI will ensure a future-ready environment for the local aerospace industries that includes staff accommodations and commercial amenities apart from providing training and workforce development initiatives.

Malaysia Airports, on the other hand, is promoting renewable energy across Selangor Aero Park's facilities, including solar and rainwater harvesting.

Describing Selangor Aero Park as a catalyst in transforming the KLIA Aeropolis into a vibrant aviation and logistics hub, Malaysia Airports Chairman, Dr Nungsari Ahmad Radhi said, "This key milestone opens up multiple opportunities to enhance aviation-related infrastructure and services to meet the evolving needs of the industry and region."

Additionally, Selangor Aero Park's close proximity to the KL International Airport (KLIA) provides direct access to Asia Pacific's high-growth flight corridors and global markets, linking Malaysia's aerospace value chain to local and international demands.

Designed to offer built-to-suit and fully-serviced facilities to cater to original equipment manufacturers and Tier 1 aerospace players as well as high technology and high value supply chain operators, this synergistic aviation-linked development will enhance KLIA's core operations while attracting global investments.

With Selangor Aero Park's location easy access to Port Klang, this further strengthens its multi-modal logistics proposition.

As Transport Minister Anthony Loke Siew Fook put it at the ground breaking of the Selangor Aero Park, this development matters because it offers a seamless integration between air, land and sea - a multimodal hub designed for efficiency, precision and speed.

"It gives our exporters, manufacturers and innovators a new edge in a fast-changing region."

The Selangor Aero Park is a crucial element in the realisation of the vision of the Malaysian Aerospace Industry Blueprint 2030, to generate RM55.2 billion in annual aerospace revenue and create over 32,000 high-income jobs by 2030.

Enhancing Passengers' Experience with New Aero trains and More Connectivity

As Malaysia Airports continues to expand air connectivity into Malaysia with the entry of new foreign carriers and the launch of more new routes, its commitment to ensuring a smooth and seamless flow for its passengers remains top priority.

This is clearly demonstrated at its flagship KL International Airport (KLIA), which debuted its new Aero trains on 1 July 2025 following the successful completion of a major infrastructure upgrade planned three years ago.



With enhanced reliability, improved passenger flow and a stronger system resilience, KLIA is well-positioned to establish itself as a strong hub in Southeast Asia.

Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani, Managing Director of Malaysia Airports said, "We are grateful for the close and diligent oversight from the Land Public Transport Agency throughout the project and the strong support from the Ministry of Transport."

He explained, "The Aero train is a complex system that requires seamless integration across multiple components, all of which must meet stringent safety and performance standards set by the regulator.

This includes testing our emergency response plan to ensure we are ready for any eventuality."

The fault-free run involved a rigorous validation process in which the first train was required to complete 2,000 kilometres (km) of continuous fault-free operations, while the remaining two trains logged 1,000 km each, confirming the system's technical reliability and readiness.

"We also worked closely with our contractor, Alstom, and their consortium partners to deliver this project

Northern gateway's connectivity enhanced

Meanwhile, at Penang International Airport (PEN), which recently welcomed its 18th foreign airline, Cambodia Airways' (KR) twice-weekly service from Phnom Penh (PNH) using the Airbus A320 aircraft, this is KR's second international route to Malaysia, complementing its existing PNH-Kuala Lumpur (KUL) service.

On the country's second busiest airport's performance, he said Penang International Airport (PEN) recently welcomed its 18th foreign airline, Cambodia Airways' (KR) twice-weekly service from Phnom Penh (PNH) using the Airbus A320 aircraft.

This is KR's second international route to Malaysia, complementing its existing PNH-Kuala Lumpur (KUL) service.

Dato' Mohd Izani said, "As the second new airline to commence operations at PEN this year following Sichuan Airlines' (3U) start of its five weekly flights from Chengdu on 30 April 2025, KR's entry strengthens Penang's position as a key northern gateway and enhances our strategic role in advancing regional air connectivity.

"More importantly, this new direct link with PNH aligns with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Connectivity Master Plan 2025, reinforcing Malaysia's commitment to deeper regional integration.

"It opens new pathways for trade and cross-border collaboration, positioning Penang as a vital node in the ASEAN economic network."

Beyond Cambodia, PEN also offers direct flights to key members of the ASEAN bloc, including Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, Vietnam and Myanmar, cementing its status as an emerging regional hub for commerce and tourism.

From January to May 2025, PEN recorded 3.4 million passengers, up 12% increase year-on-year. Of this, 53% were international passengers and the rest domestic passengers.



Direct Flights to and from Haikou and Kuala Lumpur by Hainan Airlines

Hainan Airlines' (HU) inaugural direct flight from Haikou (HAK) on 30 May 2025 is part of Malaysia Airports' strategic efforts to strengthen KL International Airport's network connectivity with China, one of its key target markets.

“This route expansion reinforces our role as an airport operator driving growth through enhanced accessibility, which supports trade, tourism and economic development.”

DATO' MOHD IZANI GHANI
Managing Director
of Malaysia Airports



This four-times-weekly service offers seamless smooth connections for passengers transiting through Haikou to over 50 cities across China as well as international destinations such as London, Bangkok, Tokyo, and Hong Kong.

Additionally, Haikou serves as a strategic gateway for flights from China to the Middle East, conveniently connecting destinations such as Dubai and Jeddah, making it an ideal transit point for travellers heading to the region.

According to OAG's latest June 2025 statistics, China's international airline capacity continued to recover strongly to Vietnam, Japan and Malaysia, increasing by 64%, 37% and 27% respectively compared to June 2024.

Among China's top 20 international markets that have recovered since 2019, Malaysia is ranked seventh with slightly over 400,000 seats as at June 2025.



Founded in 1993 and headquartered in Hainan Province, HU is one of China's leading full-service carriers, continuing to receive accolades in the first few months of this year.

In March 2025 HU was recognised as the Outstanding Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Innovative Enterprise of the Year at the second Victoria Harbour Overseas Excellence Awards, while in February, HU was awarded the Most Punctual Long-Haul Airline at Brussels Airport for 2024.

Earlier in January, HU won four awards in the Tianxuan 2024 Sky Choice Travel Awards of the Civil Aviation Administration of China's inflight magazine.

These awards were Innovation in Product or Service Airline of the Year, Crew of the Year, Airline Catering of the Year and Corporate, Social Responsibility (CSR) Brand of the Year.

For more information, visit www.hainanairlines.com



Historic Touchdown by Cambodia Airways from Phnom Penh to Penang

Cambodia Airways' (KR) inaugural direct flight connecting the two UNESCO listed cities of Phnom Penh (PNH) and Penang (PEN) launched on 26 June 2025 is expected to open doors for cultural tourism and heritage-based exchange.

Present to welcome its arrival were Dato' Yeoh Soon Hin, Deputy Chairman of Tourism Malaysia and two Directors from the Penang Convention and Exhibition Bureau (PCEB), Lee Boon Heng and Datin' Bharathi Suppiah.



The maiden flight KR785, celebrated with a traditional water salute, special welcome and cake cutting ceremony, was honoured by the presence of His Excellency Shaharuddin Onn, Ambassador of Malaysia to Cambodia, Tang Xiaojun, KR Vice President and Bai Guowei, KR Director of the Marketing Committee.

To ensure the route's success, PCEB will explore strategic collaborations with KR and other partners to enhance awareness among key target markets of the state as a leading destination for high-impact international business events.

Operating twice weekly, the new route opens up avenues for tourism, trade, and bilateral collaboration between Malaysia and Cambodia, while also enhancing accessibility and convenience for both leisure and business travellers.

With PNH connected to 14 destinations via 27 flights, this new route serves as a vital access for corporate and incentive groups from Cambodia and beyond, bringing KR's total weekly flights between PNH and Malaysia to five, covering both PNG and Kuala Lumpur (KUL).



Established in 2017, KR has been its country's only local airline offering business class seats and full-service flights. Currently, its fleet, comprising six Airbus A319 or A320 aircraft, flies to 22 domestic and international destinations. To date, KR has completed over 17,000 flights, safely transporting more than 1.7 million passengers and accumulating over 35,000 flight hours. The airline served over 620,000 passengers in 2024.

For more information, call **+603-218 8033** or visit www.cambodia-airways.com



Partnership between China Southern Airlines and Vietnam Airlines to Start in August

Following the approvals from the relevant authorities of both China Southern Airlines (CZ) and Vietnam Airlines (VN), the joint-venture (JV) between the two airlines will take effect on 1 August 2025, signaling a new phase in the civil aviation collaboration between China and Vietnam.

By combining their strength and resources, the JV aims to offer a stronger combined network and seamless connectivity for passengers flying between the two countries through schedule coordination and code-share arrangements.

To facilitate passenger transfers, both airlines have introduced the Inter-Airline Through Check-in (IATCI) process, enabling travelers to obtain boarding passes for up to three connecting flight segments at their initial point of departure.

Additionally, the members of both airlines' frequent flyer programme will enjoy benefits that include priority check-in, expedited baggage handling, increased baggage allowance and priority boarding.

Zhang Dongsheng, CZ Deputy Director General of the Commercial Steering Committee explained, "In recent years, we have actively tapped into the aviation markets in countries along China's Belt and Road Initiative through international bilateral cooperation, establishing

a global network of international partnerships."

Through this JV, which marks a significant step forward in its internationalisation strategy, he said, "We will build an air bridge between the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and Vietnam, boosting regional economic, trade and cultural exchanges."

With 2025 being the China-Vietnam Year of People-to-People Exchange, new opportunities abound for the aviation market and growth in tourism.

Currently, CZ operates direct flights from Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Changsha, Wuhan, and Shanghai Pudong in China to Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City and Nha Trang in Vietnam, with a peak weekly capacity of 111 flights.

Vietnam's flag carrier, on the other hand, provides direct services connecting Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City to Guangzhou, Shanghai, Beijing besides linking Nha Trang to Tianjin, Wuhan, Nanjing, Shanghai, Jinan, Changzhou, Wuxi.

During peak periods, VN operates over 50 weekly flights, providing extensive air connectivity between Vietnam and China.

For more information, visit www.csair.com or call **+603-2163 9977**



New Codeshare Partnership between Scandinavian Airlines and Vietnam Airlines

Two SkyTeam members - Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) and Vietnam Airlines (VN) – have forged a new codeshare agreement that will enhance travel convenience, expand connectivity and enable passengers to earn and redeem SAS EuroBonus or LotusMiles points across both networks.

The global aviation analytics company said the airline's flights arrived on time 88.32% and 89.72% of the time in April and May 2025 respectively while it was placed second globally in March 2025 at 91.92%.

Compared to the same period last year, this marks clear progress for SAS in setting the pace despite challenging seasonal conditions and increased traffic, Cirium added.

Mike Malik, Chief Marketing Officer at Cirium said, "SAS is clearly on a strong trajectory."

"These results speak to a consistent focus on operational performance and a clear commitment to the customer experience. It is great to see this kind of momentum in action."

SAS was awarded third place in Europe for On-Time Performance and ninth place globally in 2024.

Meanwhile, SAS and WestJet's newly signed interline agreement, marking the first phase of their collaboration, will significantly strengthen connectivity between Scandinavia and Canada.

Plans are afoot to launch a full codeshare later this summer.

Earlier in March 2025, SAS expanded its global reach through its partnership with Delta Air Lines, offering new trans-Atlantic options and more convenient travel experiences between Scandinavia and North America.

February 2025 saw the airline entered into a new codeshare agreement with Air France-KLM, widening its access to new destinations in Asia, Brazil and South Africa.

For more information, visit www.flysas.com

"This agreement is a testament to the value of the SkyTeam alliance in delivering global connectivity and shared benefits for frequent flyers."

PAUL VERHAGEN

Chief Commercial Officer
of Scandinavian Airlines (SAS)

SAS joined SkyTeam in September 2024. It serves more than 25 million passengers and transports 60,000 tonnes of cargo yearly to 135 destinations across Asia, Europe and the United States.

Its codeshare agreement with VN also allows passengers to book itineraries, including segments operated by either airline through a single reservation, making travel between Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City and the Scandinavian hubs of Copenhagen, Stockholm and Oslo more flexible.

Travellers can expect a reliable and seamless journey across continents with SAS ranked as the most punctual airline in both Europe and the world for the second month in a row this year according to Cirium's monthly reports for April and May.



Batik Air Malaysia Reinforces Commitment to Safety

Batik Air Malaysia (OD) has successfully renewed its International Air Transport Association (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) certification until 3 June 2027, reaffirming the airline's dedication to the highest standards of safety, reliability and operational excellence.

The IOSA certification, which must be renewed every two years, was awarded following a comprehensive audit conducted under the enhanced Risk-Based Audit framework by the global trade association representing over 300 airlines. The audit was carried out by independent IATA-accredited professionals.

The certification sets global benchmarks for aviation safety and operational efficiency by assessing an airline's systems and procedures against a comprehensive set of harmonised standards and recommended practices.

The IOSA audit covers eight critical operational areas, namely from Organisation and Management Systems, Flight Operations, Operational Control and Dispatch, Aircraft Engineering and Maintenance, Cabin Operations, Ground Handling, Cargo Operations and Aviation Security.

OD's renewed IOSA certification stands as a testament to the discipline, accountability, and professionalism embedded throughout its organisation, supporting further its tagline, Unwavering Commitment to Safety.

Reaffirming this, OD Chief Executive Officer Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy remarked that safety is the foundation of its operations and the core of its identity.

"For our passengers, this certification offers not only assurance but also peace of mind."

He added, "Whether flying domestically or across borders, they can trust that every OD flight is supported by robust safety protocols, seamless coordination, and operational precision."

For more information, visit www.batikair.com



First Codeshare Flight at Doha by Philippine Airlines

Philippine Airlines and Qatar Airways recently celebrated their new daily service between Manila and Doha with a ribbon cutting ceremony at Hamad International Airport (DOH), marking the start of a strong partnership between two carriers for both business and leisure travel.

These nonstop flights will be operated on PAL's long-range Airbus A330-300 aircraft in a dual-class configuration, featuring 18 flat-bed seats in its exclusive business class cabin and 341 seats in the main economy class cabin.

The new partnership between the two airlines allows PAL passengers flying from Manila to connect to QR's global network of over 170 destinations via DOH.

Commemorating the occasion were PAL President Richard Nutall, its Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Carlos Luis Fernandez, alongside executive delegates from the QR Group.

"We can focus clearly together on further developing the Philippines-Qatar air travel market while ensuring seamless connections across our respective networks."

RICHARD NUTALL
President
of Philippine Airlines (PAL)

Travellers from key markets such as Brazil, Spain, the United Kingdom and the United States can enjoy greater choice and enhanced connectivity with QR, voted the Best Airport in the Middle East by Skytrax in 2025 when planning their trips to the Philippines.

PAL's fleet of Boeing, Airbus and De Havilland aircraft operate scheduled direct flights out of its hubs in Manila, Cebu, Clark and Davao to 31 destinations in the Philippines as well as 38 destinations in Asia, North America, Australia and the Middle East.

Philippines' flag carrier-cum-Asia's first commercial airline also offers air cargo and charter services.

For more information, visit www.philippineairlines.com



Ethiopian Airlines Bags Four Wins at Skytrax

Africa's flag carrier, Ethiopian Airlines (ET), clinched the coveted Best Airline in Africa title for the eighth consecutive year besides securing three other awards at the recent Skytrax's 2025 World Airline Awards.

Its other wins were for Best Economy Class, Best Business Class and Best Business Class Onboard Catering, all in Africa, underscoring ET's commitment to deliver world-class service across its expansive network of over 140 international destinations.

They also reflect the airline's consistent focus on enhancing the customer experience and operational excellence, as well as its investments in fleet modernisation, innovation and sustainability.

"These achievements are a testament to the hard work, dedication and passion of the entire ET family. It also reflects the trust and loyalty of our valued customers worldwide. We remain committed to exceeding expectations through world-class service and connectivity that bridges Africa with the rest of the world."

MESFIN TASEW
Group Chief Executive Officer
of Ethiopian Airlines (ET)

Mesfin, who was recently honoured with the prestigious Ato Girma Wake Lifetime Achievement Award for his outstanding contribution to route development and African aviation, remarked, "This award is more than an honour as it is named after Africa's father of aviation, ET's former CEO and my mentor.

"As a Pan-African airline, we strive to realise a well-connected Africa and such recognitions strengthen our commitment to do more."

Earlier this year, ET won the Outstanding Food Service by a Carrier – Africa at the 2025 PAX Readership Awards for the third time in recognition of its exceptional onboard catering services.



The airlines' state-of-the-art catering facility in Addis Ababa can produce up to 100,000 meals daily, offering catering services and onboard duty-free items for both scheduled and non-scheduled Ethiopian and customer airlines, VVIP and charter flights.

Its catering facility, comprising international kitchens staffed by chefs globally, includes a separate halal certified kitchen.

ET was also named the Bronze winner of the 'Cabin Concept of the Year' 2025 at the Onboard Hospitality Awards for its new Airbus A350-1000 cabin innovation. Both awards took place in Hamburg, Germany.

For more information, call +603-2022 0168 or visit www.ethiopianairlines.com



Bespoke Manchester United Livery on Malaysia Airlines Deployed

Malaysia Airlines (MH) welcomed Manchester United's (MU) First Team to Kuala Lumpur on 26 May 2025 via a specially chartered flight from Manchester in England in the latter's maiden Post-Season Tour in Asia, reinforcing the strength of their exclusive partnership.

Malaysia's national carrier also brought together thousands of the iconic MU Club fans and football enthusiasts from across the region, including Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore and beyond for the match against the ASEAN All Stars held at the Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur.

Beyond the stadium, MH engaged the football fans through a lively activation zone, offering interactive games, photo opportunities and exclusive giveaways on social media, including the offer to fly from any part of the airline's network to either Kuala Lumpur or Hong Kong.

Additionally, MH hosted top agents, partners, employees and Enrich members with exclusive hospitality and ticket access.

As the Official Commercial Airline Partner, MH operated dedicated charter services showcasing the bespoke livery which merges the airline's national flag with MU's iconic red, symbolising the shared values of passion, pride and global unity throughout MU's Asian tour.

Following MU's match in Hong Kong on 30 May 2025, the team returned to Manchester onboard the airline's A350-900 aircraft, delivering the airline's signature Malaysian Hospitality.



MH's co-branded aircraft livery in partnership with MU on its flagship Airbus A330-300 aircraft was first unveiled at a consumer travel fair in Kuala Lumpur in April 2025, where MU legends - Dimitar Berbatov, Nemanja Vidić and Luís Nani - were brought in for the celebration.

"This marks a bold and exciting new chapter for MH as we unite the passion of sport, the spirit of innovation and the pride of our nation."

DATUK CAPTAIN IZHAM ISMAIL

Group Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG)

Concurring with him, Dersenish Aresandiran, MAG Chief Commercial Officer of Airlines said, "We look forward to creating more lasting memories through meaningful partnerships that bring people together."

For more information, visit www.malaysiaairlines.com



100 Global Destinations Reached in June by Cathay Group

The Cathay Group marked a milestone on 12 June 2025, celebrating Cathay Pacific (CX) and HK Express (UO) reaching 100 passenger destinations worldwide.

"In the past two years alone, we have added 30 new passenger destinations, including 18 new destinations this year alone and still counting."

"That rate of network expansion is at an unprecedented level and that has allowed us to reach this milestone of 100 destinations ahead of schedule."

"Our current investment programme of over HK\$100 billion across our entire offering of the fleet, cabin products, lounges and digital services is also the most ambitious and largest in the company's history."

PATRICK HEALY

Chairman of Cathay Pacific (CX)

During this summer peak period, CX and UO will operate passenger services totalling 23 destinations in the Chinese Mainland, providing more than 300 return flights per week.

Additionally, CX will operate more than 110 return flights weekly to eight destinations in North America and close to 100 return flights weekly to 12 European destinations.

CX Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau said the Group's low-cost carrier (LCC) achieved a new milestone by sustaining its network expansion with the launch of new routes to Changzhou and Yiwu in China in May 2025.

UO recorded the highest monthly seat capacity in its history, carrying more than 640,000 passengers in May 2025, 35.7% up year on year while its available seat kilometres grew by 42.6%.

UO followed up with more new service launches to Cheongju and Daegu in South Korea as well as Miyako (Shimajiri) in Japan in June 2025.

The LCC announced it would be flying to Guiyang in China on 31 July 2025 and the following day to Subang (SZB), its second destination in Malaysia after Penang.

Meanwhile, at the 2025 Skytrax World Airline Awards, CX was voted as one of the world's top three best airlines, up two places from last year.



CX was also named World's Best Economy Class Airline for the second consecutive year, and World's Best Inflight Entertainment for the second time in three years.

For more information, visit www.cathaypacific.com



Surreal Experiences and Creative Approaches to Boost Arrivals into Malaysia

Malaysia has set the stage to put itself on the world map as Asia's most loved country by making long and earnest preparations for its Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign to capture the hearts and imaginations of visitors through various strategic moves and action plans.

Its theme song for VM2026 entitled Surreal Experiences embeds the essence of the country's many unique offerings to attract global attention and engage its visitors with many enchanting experiences.

This is followed up by the Surreal Experiences Await promotional video to be updated quarterly to reflect its latest attractions and packages nationwide.

A production house was engaged to compile 200 short videos with RM1.9 million allocated for the project, according to the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MoTAC).

Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Dato Sri Tiong King Sing said from January to April 2025, Malaysia received 13.38 million visitor arrivals, representing a 12.1% year-on-year (YoY) increase.

Further data for the first four months of 2025 released by its promotion arm, Tourism Malaysia, in cooperation with the Immigration Department showed Singapore leading with 6.5 million visitor arrivals as the top source country, followed by Indonesia (1.47 million), China (1.44 million), Thailand (833,610), India (484,791) and Brunei (480,916).

With visa exemption allowing Chinese tourists to stay in

Malaysia for up to 90 days (from 30 days previously) extended until 31 December 2026, with further potential extension until 2036, the policy encourages longer visits and spending for this key market.

Average spending per visitor rose to RM4,300, with tourism receipts reaching RM27.5 billion for the first quarter of 2025, up 24% YoY, inclining towards higher value visitors.

PayNet recently partnered with Alipay and Weixin Pay, also known as WeChat Pay, to drive mainland Chinese and regional spending across Malaysia whereby visitors can scan DuitNow QR codes using their Alipay and Weixin Pay eWallets at over 2.5 million merchants here.

Malaysia, named Asia's most loved country for 2024 by United States-based financial website Insider Monkey, has not only overtaken Thailand, which ranked second with 9.55 million arrivals but also in terms of Chinese arrivals.

With Asia back on the radar due to the rising turmoil in the Middle East, Malaysia is experiencing a surge in visitor arrivals and is increasing its focus on high impact tourism and cultural events besides coming up with more innovative programmes.

Niche segment

Among them is birding tourism, said to contribute about 10% to 30% to the global tourism industry. Malaysia is ranked fourth in Asia for birding after China, India and Thailand.

Fraser's Hill, one of the country's top bird watching

destinations, is home to more than 250 species of birds. Migratory birds stop at this hill station from Siberia, Russia and the northern islands of the southern hemisphere between October and April.

This 'green jewel', bordering the states of Selangor and Pahang, recently held its 36 th Fraser's Hill International Bird Race jointly organised by Tourism Pahang, BirdLife International and the Malaysian Nature Society from 21 to 22 June 2025.

Marked a bumper year, the event recorded the highest participation from 127 teams, of which 50 teams were international. It also set a new record of 71 participants for the Bird Photography Contest.



The international participants came from Australia, Bhutan, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Nepal, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Vietnam and the United States.

More than just a competition, the bird race is pivotal in promoting eco and niche tourism, while supporting the local community and its businesses, from accommodation providers, restaurant operators, tourist attractions to food vendors.

Stargazing adventures

Datin Rafidah Idris, Tourism Malaysia's Senior Director of Domestic and Events Division said, "As part of our ongoing commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism, we have introduced experiences such as stargazing as a unique opportunity to reconnect with nature while raising awareness about environmental preservation.

"Stargazing also opens doors for local communities through guided experiences, homestays and eco-tourism packages."

She added that Tourism Malaysia collaborated with 16 tour operators to create 37 such stargazing packages nationwide for travel until December 2026.

During its recently concluded 'Star Healing Programme' in Kuala Selangor organised for the media and travel agents to create more awareness about such packages, cultural visits and sustainable activities such as the planting of durian seedlings at the Selangor Fruit Valley were included.

Workshops on astronomy photography and how to make your own telescope were also organised for the participants in collaboration with Canon Malaysia and Sahabat Langit Utara.

Meanwhile, as Malaysia ramps up preparations for the upcoming World Tourism Day (WTD) and the World Tourism Conference (WTC), it hopes to attract 1,000 high-profile global tourism leaders, policy makers, academicians and delegates to attend this event organised by United Nations World Tourism Organization.

To be held from 27 to 29 September 2025 in historic Melaka, both Melaka and Malaysia is expected to have a substantial impact on the hosting of WTD and WTC 2025.

The theme for WTD 2025, Tourism and Sustainable Tourism, emphasizes the vital role tourism plays in supporting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, including inclusivity, responsibility and resilience.

As a prelude, Melaka held a pre-launch ceremony for WTD and WTC 2025 in conjunction with its 17th anniversary celebration of it being a UNESCO World Heritage Site from 2 to 6 July 2025, with international cultural dance performances and Melaka heritage highlighted.



An invitation card to both WTD and WTC 2025 and a miniature memento of the traditional 'konda kondi' folk bat and stick game, reflecting the spirit of teamwork and quick thinking, were presented to the ambassadors from other countries to Malaysia and tourism excos from several states of Malaysia.

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