



A Monthly Publication of Malaysia Airports ©

Managing Editor

Zainuddin Mohamed

Editorial & Concept

Mediate Communications Sdn Bhd

Editorial & Advertising

Noor Hafiza Ruslan

Nurul Farehah Norsam

Design & Distribution

Mediate Communications Sdn Bhd

Editorial Enquiries

airlink@mediate.com.my

MALAYSIA AIRPORTS HOLDINGS BERHAD

Reg. No: 199901012192

(487092-W)

Aviation Marketing and Development Division

Level 3, Arrival Hall (Domestic)

Main Terminal Building, Terminal 1

KL International Airport

64000 Sepang

Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

marketing@malaysiaairports.com.my

AIRPORT TALK

Resilient Tourism Growth in First Quarter 2026 for Malaysia 42

AVIATION NEWS

Chongqing Airlines' Inaugural Direct Flight to Kota Kinabalu 44

Firefly's IOSA Registry Renewal Extended 45

Higher Cathay Pacific Airways Group Attributable Profit 46

Scoot Expands Southeast Asia and Asia Connectivity 47

Xiamen Air's Inaugural Direct Nanjing to Kuala Lumpur Flight 47

Express Rail Link Rolls Out More Airline Self Check-in Kiosks at KL Sentral 48

Air Algérie Launches Kuala Lumpur Service, Linking Malaysia and North Africa 49

AirAsia Malaysia Strengthens Regional Network 50

Juneyao Air Inaugurates Direct Flight from Wuxi to Kuala Lumpur 50

Aero Dili's First Direct Service to Kuala Lumpur 51

SPECIAL COVERAGE

KL International Airport's Growing Role as a Strategic Transit Hub 52

BREATHE EASY

KISS THE SKY

INDULGE



MORE THAN NATURAL WONDERS, A GATEWAY TO EPIC EXPEDITIONS.

KOTA KINABALU INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

It all begins at Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI). Make an aquatic friend, conquer Mount Kinabalu, and discover a world so exotic with more than 6,000 plant species, even the first season of reality TV show Survivor was filmed there. Plan your route to countless new adventures.



THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT

Need assistance? We are here to help. 'The Butterfly Effect' initiative is designed to provide a calm and supportive airport experience.

Through small gestures and thoughtful assistance, 'The Butterfly Effect' helps create a more relaxing journey for passengers.

- Look out for our **CARE Ambassadors** in orange uniforms, ready to assist you.
- Visit any **Information Counter** at KLIA Terminal 1 or Terminal 2 for any enquiries.

Scan the QR code to learn more



An inclusive airport experience for all.



Resilient Tourism Growth in First Quarter 2026 for Malaysia

Malaysia's tourism industry remains resilient, with overall international visitor arrivals continuing to record positive growth in the first quarter of 2026 (1Q26). A total of 2.84 million international visitor arrivals, representing a 2.4% year-on-year (YoY) increase.

This is reflected in the passenger movements across Malaysia Airports' local network, which recorded 9.1 million passenger movements in March 2026 alone, bringing the total for 1Q26 to 27.3 million.

This is reflected in passenger movements across Malaysia Airports' local network, which recorded 8.9 million passenger movements in February 2026 alone, bringing the year-to-date total to 18.3 million passengers for the first two months of the year.



The figures continued to grow in 1Q26, with more new airlines and destinations introduced at the major gateways in the country despite the tensions in the Middle East.

The latest addition is Qingdao Airlines (QW), which commenced a thrice-weekly service to Penang International Airport (PEN) on 31 March 2026, operated using the Airbus A320neo, further strengthening connectivity between Malaysia and China, one of Malaysia's key source markets.



QW joins the growing roster of Chinese carriers serving PEN, alongside China Southern Airlines (CZ), Xiamen Air (MF), Spring Airlines (9C), Juneyao Air (HO) and 9 Air (AQ), all of which operate direct services to Guangzhou (CAN), Shanghai (PVG), Xiamen (XMN) and Haikou (HAK).

Beyond its growing connectivity, PEN is also gaining recognition on the regional stage. PEN, alongside KL International Airport (KUL) and Langkawi International Airport (LGK) have been shortlisted in the soon-to-be-announced Routes Asia 2026 Awards in Xian, China.

PEN is shortlisted in the five to 20 million passengers per annum (mppa) category, KUL in the over 20 mppa category, and LGK in the under five mppa category.

KUL has also continued to strengthen its position as Malaysia's main aviation hub, with new airlines such as Aero Dili (8G) and Air Algérie (AH) joining its network in March this year.

To meet the growing needs of the airports and to elevate the passengers' travel experience, Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani, Managing Director of Malaysia Airports assured that the airport operator would continue to invest in passenger comfort, digital enhancements and collaborative initiatives with airlines, concessionaires and tourism stakeholders.

Meanwhile, LGK was recently recognised as the Best Airport in Asia Pacific under the two to five mppa category at the 2025 Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards by Airports Council International (ACI), marking its fifth consecutive win.

Dato' Mohd Izani described this milestone as a 'powerful endorsement' from the passengers as the ASQ Awards are based on real-time passenger feedback.

Regarded as the world's leading airport customer experience benchmark, the ASQ Awards are based on scientifically designed surveys capturing travellers' experiences across key touchpoints, including efficiency, cleanliness, comfort and overall service quality.

“The recognition affirms the dedication of our airport community in LGK and reflects our commitment to delivering seamless, welcoming journeys at one of Malaysia's most iconic island destinations.”

DATO' MOHD IZANI GHANI
Managing Director
of Malaysia Airports

“As the Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) campaign gains momentum, service excellence at key tourism gateways such as LGK will be critical in shaping first and lasting impressions of our country.”

LGK plays a strategic role in supporting Malaysia's aspiration to become the most connected country in Asia Pacific, particularly as international demand for resort and nature-based travel continues to strengthen, he added.

As one of Malaysia's premier leisure gateways, LGK handled 2.6 million domestic passenger movements 2.6 million domestic and 300,000 international passenger movements in 2025.

LGK also saw the relocation of Plaza Premium Lounge, operated by Plaza Premium Group (PPG), to a new and enhanced site on 8 March 2026, offering expanded comfort to travellers.



Cavin Loh, Regional General Manager of PPG said, “While the space has been transformed, our heart and soul remain the same, dedicated to making travel better by combining world-class hospitality with a strong sense of place.”

The upgraded lounge further enhances the airport experience by offering travellers greater comfort alongside a more distinctive sense of Langkawi's local character.

Sultan Ismail Petra Airport's Major Expansion

Meanwhile, Malaysia Airports recently completed a major RM440 million expansion of Sultan Ismail Petra Airport (KBR) in Kota Bharu, Kelantan, increasing its capacity from 1.5 to four mppa to meet its growing passenger traffic.

The airport's upgraded facilities include a larger 36,000 sq metres terminal building, separate departure and arrival levels for smoother passenger flow, and an increase in aircraft bays from five to 11.

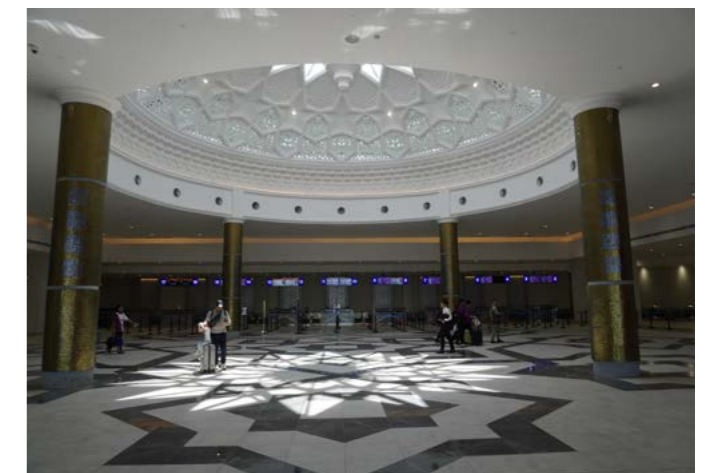
Among its other upgrades are more spacious and modern check-in areas with more than 20 airline counters, as well as cashless systems for improved efficiency.



KBR's new multi-storey car park provides 1,300 parking bays and direct access to the terminal via a link bridge.

Dedicated kerbside lanes for taxis, buses and e-hailing services have also been introduced.

Currently, five airlines operate at the expanded airport, which serves six domestic routes and one international route to Singapore.





Chongqing Airlines' Inaugural Direct Flight to Kota Kinabalu

Sabah welcomed the first direct flight by Chongqing Airlines (OQ) from the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing (CKG) to Kota Kinabalu (BKI) on 19 March 2026, further strengthening its presence in the China market.

With the launch of this thrice-weekly service, Kota Kinabalu is now connected to eight key Chinese cities, including Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Beijing, Hangzhou, and Fuzhou, highlighting Sabah's rising profile as a travel destination and further strengthening its presence in the China market, in line with Malaysia's broader tourism goals for 2026.

OQ, a subsidiary of China Southern Airlines (CZ), carried 154 passengers on its inaugural flight OQ2193 deploying an Airbus A320neo aircraft and the arrival at BKI was celebrated with a water cannon salute.

The Sabah Tourism Board also hosted a cultural welcome, with greeters in traditional attire presenting souvenirs to passengers.



Its Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Julinus Jeffery Jimit and Senior Deputy CEO Tay Shu Lan were present alongside Tourism Malaysia Sabah director, Haryanty Abu Bakar.

CZ Kuala Lumpur (KL) Office's General Manager, Guo Hao said, "The opening of the CKG to BKI air route not only shortens the spatial and temporal distance between the two cities but also provides a new channel for Chongqing residents to travel to Southeast Asia for tourism, business negotiations and cultural exchanges."

He added, "Sabah's capital is renowned for its rich island tourism resources and unique tropical scenery, making it a favourite destination among Chinese tourists."



Also present at the welcome reception were CZ KL Office's Deputy Station Manager Yap Wei Kian, its Sales Manager Low Yu Yang, OQ Flight Operation Department's Deputy Manager Dai Xin and Malaysia Airports' Pass Office, Muhammad Hilmi Azwan Ahmad.

Meanwhile, OQ will commence a new direct thrice weekly from CKG to Penang (PEN) on 9 April 2026 using an Airbus A320neo, further enhancing its connectivity in Malaysia.

For more information, visit www.chongqingairlines.cn



Firefly's IOSA Registry Renewal Extended

Firefly (FY) has successfully extended its International Air Transport Association's (IATA) Operational Safety Audit (IOSA) Registry for a further two years, until February 2028, reaffirming the airline's continued commitment to maintaining the highest global standards of operational safety.

Over the past two decades, the IOSA has set the global benchmark for airline safety audits and continues to play a critical role in enhancing safety performance across the aviation industry.

The IOSA Registry renewal follows FY's successful completion of its first risk-based IOSA (RBI) audit, which transitioned from the conventional IOSA audit methodology to the more advanced risk-based approach.

The assessment covered multiple operational disciplines, including organisation and safety management systems, flight operations, flight dispatch, aircraft engineering and maintenance, cabin operations, ground handling, cargo operations and operational security, in line with IATA's global benchmarks.

“ We will continue to strengthen our systems and processes to ensure we deliver safe, reliable and quality services to the communities we serve

BRYAN FOONG

Chief Executive Officer of Airline Business from Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG)

Reviewing FY's performance, he said FY achieved an on-time performance (OTP) of 92% for the first quarter of 2026 and for March itself, the OTP stood at 95%.

Meanwhile, FY operated a twice-weekly charter service connecting Nanjing (NKG) in China to Tawau (TWU) in Sabah throughout February 2026, in partnership with Shanghai Eagle Aviation Service Co Ltd.

Each flight, operated using the Boeing 737 aircraft, brought in 176 passengers, boosting tourism to Sabah's east coast, including destinations such as Semporna, which is renowned for its marine life.

Improved direct access from major Chinese cities such as NKG enhances travel convenience while strengthening Malaysia's air connectivity with China in conjunction with its Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign, Tourism Malaysia Director General Amirul Rizal Abdul Rahim commented.

FY's inaugural charter flight from NKG to TWU on 3 February 2026 was welcomed by representatives from Tourism Malaysia, Malaysia Airports and the charter operator.

Since January this year, Traveloka Insights reported that TWU, the gateway to Semporna and Sipadan Island, one of the world's top dive spots, has seen an 18% increase in overseas bookings, driven by direct flights from Hong Kong and China.

For more information, visit www.fireflyz.com.my



Higher Cathay Pacific Airways Group Attributable Profit

Cathay Pacific Airways' (CX) group attributable profit rose by 9.5% to USD1.39 billion for the financial year ended 31 December 2025, driven by increased passenger capacity and robust cargo demand.

Marking its third consecutive year of profitability, CX Group Chairman Patrick Healy remarked, "We have built a strong foundation which has made us resilient, efficient and adaptable.

"This has put us in the best possible position to withstand current market turbulence and we will remain agile as we continue to face external challenges."

The Group's airlines carried more than 36 million passengers in 2025, up 27% year-on-year.

With 20 new destinations launched by its Hong Kong flag carrier, CX, and its low-cost carrier, HK Express Airways (UO), last year, the Group's passenger network grew to more than 100 destinations worldwide.

Additionally, Cathay Cargo transported 9.5% more goods, totalling 1.68 million tonnes in 2025.

“ We expect to grow passenger capacity by around 10% in 2026 as we add frequencies and destinations to our network, which will also contribute to increased cargo capacity. ”

PATRICK HEALY
Chairman of
Cathay Pacific Airways (CX)

According to Chief Executive Officer Ronald Lam Siu Por, all its available aircraft are now fully resourced and flying after a successful rebuild over the past three years.



The average age of its fleet is 11.8 years. CX makes up the bulk of the Group's fleet size with 179 passenger aircraft and freighters out of its 237 total last year.

With 103 aircraft on order from 2026 to 2028 and beyond, eight new narrowbody aircraft are expected to be delivered this year.

Celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2026, CX will continue to retrofit more of its Boeing 777-300ERs with its award-winning Aria Suite and introduce a nose-to-tail retrofit of its regional Airbus A330-300 aircraft at the end of the year.

This includes the all-new Aria Studio, a flat-bed business class cabin that offers direct aisle access along with a new seat in the economy class.

The airline is also enhancing some of its existing cabin products, including reducing the number of seats in the economy cabins onboard its narrowbody A321neo aircraft to provide its passengers with more space.

This follows the refresh of some of its A330 and B777-300 aircraft last year for a more modern look.

For more information, visit www.cathaypacific.com



Scoot Expands Southeast Asia and Asia Connectivity

In the first quarter of 2026, Scoot (TR) launched four-times weekly flights to Palembang (PLM) and daily services to Medan (KNO) in Indonesia, alongside five-times weekly services to Chiang Rai (CEI) in Thailand, as part of its efforts to expand its Southeast Asian network.

Scoot, which began thrice weekly flights to Semarang (SRG) on the Airbus A320 family aircraft from 23 December 2025, increased the frequency to four times weekly from 1 January 2026.

Additionally, the low-cost carrier (LCC) increased flights to Jeju (CJU) in South Korea from five to seven times weekly from January 2026, and commenced daily flights to Tokyo Haneda (HND) in Japan on 1 March 2026, deploying the Boeing 787 Dreamliner aircraft.

TR also increased its services to Kota Kinabalu (BKI) in Sabah and Kuching (KCH) in Sarawak, increasing frequencies from seven to 10 times weekly from February 2026.

Ranked the third safest LCC in 2026 by AirlineRatings.com, an airline safety and product rating website, this LC subsidiary of Singapore Airlines (SIA) showed increased capacity expansion by 13% and 19.3%, respectively for January and February 2026 compared to the same months in 2025.

As of 31 December 2025, TR has a fleet of 61 passenger aircraft comprising 13 787-8s, 10 787-9s, six A320neos, 11 A320neos, 12 A321neos and nine Embraer E190-E2s.

Based on its operating performance for February 2026, TR reported revenue passenger kilometres of 3,022 million, marking a 17.4% increase year-on-year (yoy).

The airline's passenger traffic rose to 1,227,900, up 19.7% yoy, with a passenger load factor of 88.1%.

For more information, visit www.flyscoot.com



Xiamen Air's Inaugural Direct Nanjing to Kuala Lumpur Flight

The arrival of Xiamen Airlines' (MF) inaugural direct flight from Nanjing (NKG) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) on 13 March 2026 is in line with Malaysia's efforts to attract a higher volume of Chinese visitors besides significantly reducing travel time for travellers from eastern China's Jiangsu Province.

Using a Boeing 737-800 aircraft with a capacity of 173 passengers, MF's daily NKG to KUL flights takes approximately five hours and 40 minutes, providing access for both leisure and business travellers to Malaysia's offerings and attractions.

The inaugural flight's welcoming ceremony was attended by Nuwal Fadhilah Ku Azmi, Tourism Malaysia Senior Director of the International Promotion Division (Asia/Africa); Gao Ya Shuang, General Manager of Xiamen Airlines (Malaysia) as well as representatives from Malaysia Airports.

According to OAG's latest data on China's aviation market, Malaysia has been among China's top 20 international markets since 2019 and, as of March 2026, ranks fourth with almost 600,000 seats, with international capacity showing the strongest growth at 42%, followed by Laos at 35% and Vietnam at 31% compared with March 2025.

As Malaysia's most important source markets, 4.7 million visitor arrivals from China were received in 2025, representing a 25.1% year-on-year increase.



Early 2026 data indicates strong momentum, with a target of seven million Chinese visitor arrivals for the year, supported by expanded direct flights to key destinations, including Penang (PEN), Kota Kinabalu (BKI), and Tawau (TWU) in Sabah.

The continuation of the reciprocal visa exemption policy into 2026 further supports this growth.

In addition to NKG, MF also operates direct flights from Chongqing (CKG), Xiamen (XMN), Fuzhou (FOC), Hangzhou (HGH) and Quanzhou (JJN) to KUL.

For more information, visit www.xiamenair.com



Express Rail Link Rolls Out More Airline Self Check-in Kiosks at KL Sentral

Express Rail Link Sdn Bhd (ERL) has recently expanded its Self Check-in Kiosk service at KL Sentral station to include three additional airlines, AirAsia Malaysia (AK), KLM Royal Dutch Airlines (KLM) and Ethiopian Airlines (ET).

This brings the total of five airlines now offering the facility to their passengers, further enhancing the speed, convenience and seamlessness of rail-to-air travel to KL International Airport (KLIA) Terminals 1 and 2.

Malaysia Airlines (MH) and Batik Air Malaysia (OD) were first two airlines to introduce this service alongside the Self-Service Baggage Drop in September and October 2023, respectively, at KL Sentral.

Bryan Foong, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Airline Business at Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) remarked, "MH is committed to providing a travel experience that is seamless, reliable and thoughtfully designed around our guests."

Concurring with him, OD CEO, Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said, "These services make travel smoother and give our passengers greater control over their journey, from the moment they leave the city to when they board their flight."

“ The Self Check-in Kiosks and Self-Service Baggage Drop facilities at KL Sentral reflect our continued focus on a passenger-centric experience ”

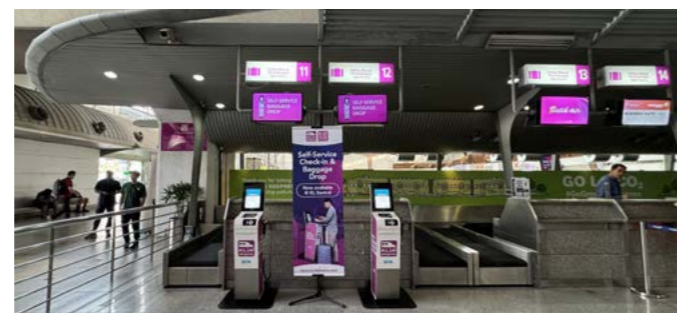
YEOW WEI-WEN
Acting Chief Executive Office
from Express Rail Link (ERL)

"They provide greater flexibility, time savings and convenience, especially for passengers who value a seamless and efficient journey from the city to KLIA," Yeow added.

Moving forward, ERL is in active discussions with more airline partners to extend Self Check-in and Self-Service Baggage Drop services at KL Sentral, aligning with its long-term vision of delivering a fully connected, end-to-end travel experience that integrates rail, airline and airport operations.

Enabling passengers to complete their essential airport formalities before boarding the KLIA Ekspres will provide them with greater peace of mind during their 28-minute journey to the airport besides reducing queues at the airport.

Meanwhile, manned check-in counters will remain available for passengers who prefer assisted services at KL Sentral.



Now in its 23rd year of service, ERL, which operates the KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit services from KL Sentral, has carried more than 136 million passengers on its trains.

For more information, visit www.KLIAekspres.com



Air Algérie Launches Kuala Lumpur Service, Linking Malaysia and North Africa

Air Algérie's (AH) inaugural flight from Algiers (ALG), which arrived in Kuala Lumpur on 30 March 2026, aboard an Airbus A330-900neo aircraft, not only offers direct connectivity between North Africa and Malaysia but also marks the airline's first service to Southeast Asia.

This new thrice weekly service, which carried 248 passengers on its first flight to KUL, highlights Malaysia's expanding reach into new and emerging markets.



Passengers were welcomed by Datuk Shahrudin Abu Sohoh, Secretary General of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture together with Nuwal Fadhilah Ku Azmi, Tourism Malaysia's Senior Director of the International Promotion (Asia & Africa) Division and Zainuddin Mohamed, Malaysia Airports' General Manager of Aviation Marketing and Development.

This was followed by a cake cutting ceremony to mark the momentous milestone of the arrival of AH's 272-seater A330-900neo to KUL, comprising 254 economy and 18 business class seats.

Wholly owned by the Algerian government, AH serves 34 countries worldwide and a total of 88 destinations, 55 of which are international.

Nor Hisham Astar, Head of Sales Malaysia of Oscar Holidays Sdn Bhd, AH's General Sales Agent said in his briefing to travel agents that the airline offered 11.3 million seats in 2025, up 10% year-on-year. Its load factor stood at 77%.

Approximately 14,500 Malaysians visited Algeria last year, with the figures projected to increase by more than 25% in 2026.



Citizens of both countries enjoy visa-free travel, with Malaysians granted up to 90 days of visa-free access for short-term stays, including tourism and business visits.

Currently, AH operates fleet size of 58 aircraft, comprising a mix of Boeing narrowbody jets, Airbus widebody aircrafts and ATR turboprops.

The airline also plans to acquire 31 additional aircraft, with deliveries scheduled between 2026 and 2028.

For more information, call +603-26944803 or visit www.airalgerie.dz



AirAsia Malaysia Strengthens Regional Network

The launch of AirAsia Malaysia's (AK) two new direct routes - Phuket (HKT) to Penang (PEN) and Batam (BTH) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) - on 13 March 2026 marks a significant milestone in strengthening Malaysia's connectivity and tourism flows with Thailand and Indonesia.

Malaysia welcomed approximately 2.5 million Thailand visitors and 4.3 million visitor arrivals from Indonesia in 2025.

Malaysians remain the top source market for Thailand in early 2026, with over 573,000 visitors recorded between 1 January and 22 February 2026.

Present to welcome the inaugural flight from HKT to PEN were Wong Hon Wai, Penang State Executive Councillor; Ooi Chok Yan, Chief Executive Officer of Penang Global Tourism; Zuraidah Abu Bakar, Deputy Director of Tourism Malaysia Northern Region and representatives from the low-cost carrier.

AK's HKT to PEN service operates four times weekly while its BTH to KUL sector offers a daily service.



Juneyao Air Inaugurates Direct Flight from Wuxi to Kuala Lumpur

Chinese carrier Juneyao Air (HO) launched its new direct service between Sunan Shuofang International Airport (WUX) in Wuxi and KL International Airport (KUL), with its maiden flight arriving on 20 March 2026. The new route reflects the growing momentum in air connectivity and tourism between Malaysia and China.

Located in Jiangsu province, Wuxi, a global industrial powerhouse in the Yangtze River Delta, is reportedly emerging as a new source of outbound travellers.

Operated using a 164-seater Airbus A320neo aircraft, this thrice weekly service marks the airline's continued expansion into Malaysia beyond its established Shanghai (PVG) hub.

The LCC operates both routes using Airbus A320 aircraft, each with a 180 passengers capacity.

BTH first flight to KUL was at full capacity, carrying mainly Indonesian passengers along with travellers from China, Singapore, and beyond.



This new route from Indonesia's emerging second-tier city serves as a vital platform to boost visitor arrivals from the Riau Archipelago.

Touted as the new powerhouse of tourism in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations region, Batam, the largest city in Indonesia's Riau Islands province, reportedly received 1,613,202 international visitors in 2025.

Supported by maritime and air connectivity, its key source markets are Malaysians and Singaporeans.

AK, which carried nearly three million passengers between Malaysia and Indonesia last year, plans to target the growing demand from the leisure segment, as well as visiting friends and relatives, as the airline expands its Indonesian network to 19 routes with BTH.

For more information, visit www.airasia.com

The flight takes approximately five hours and 15 minutes. In addition to KUL, Juneyao Air also operates existing services from Shanghai Pudong (PVG) to Tawau (TWU) and Penang (PEN).

With this latest route, HO is expected to open door for more travellers from WUX, to discover Malaysia's unique charm, rich's culture and diverse travel experiences, in line with the objectives of Visit Malaysia 2026 to attract more arrivals from China, one of its key source markets.

Passengers on HO's inaugural flight received a special send-off ceremony at WUX from Aaron Gan, Director of Tourism Malaysia Shanghai and representatives from the airline on 19 March 2026.

Upon their arrival in Malaysia in the early hours the next day, they were welcomed by Noriah Jaafar, Senior Deputy Director of Tourism Malaysia, along with HO representatives.



For more information, visit www.global.juneyaoair.com



Aero Dili's First Direct Service to Kuala Lumpur

The historic arrival of Aero Dili's (8G) inaugural flight from Dili (DIL), Timor-Leste, to KL International Airport (KUL) Terminal 2 on 28 March 2026 marked a significant milestone for the airline. Operated using an Airbus A319-100 aircraft, the flight carried 93 passengers.

Zainuddin Mohamed, General Manager of Aviation Marketing and Development at Malaysia Airports, said the new service represents a strategic addition to the growing number of airlines operating in Malaysia and contributes directly to the goal of positioning KLIA as the most connected airport in Southeast Asia (SEA).

"Last year, KLIA handled over 63.4 million passengers, marking an 11% increase, a clear signal of the rising demand for travel to our gateway.

"In the same period, we welcomed 15 new airlines to our Malaysian network. Today, we are served by 73 international carriers, reflecting the continued expansion of our connectivity."

With 8G's direct twice weekly service to KUL, he said Timur-Leste is now added to an extensive global network of over 141 destinations across multiple regions, offering seamless onward connections for travellers worldwide.

Flight 8G921 was welcomed by Datuk Surendren Sathasiven, Deputy Secretary-General (Management) of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture alongside Samuel Lee Thai Hung, Deputy Director General (Promotion II), Tourism Malaysia; Baizuri Baharum, its Director of International Promotion Division (Southeast Asia), His Excellency Lisuaido Gaspar, Ambassador of Timor-Leste to Malaysia and Zainuddin Mohamed, General Manager of Aviation Marketing and Development at Malaysia Airports.

Also present were Dr Bendito dos Santos Freitas, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste, Lourenco de Oliveira, Founder and President Director of 8G.



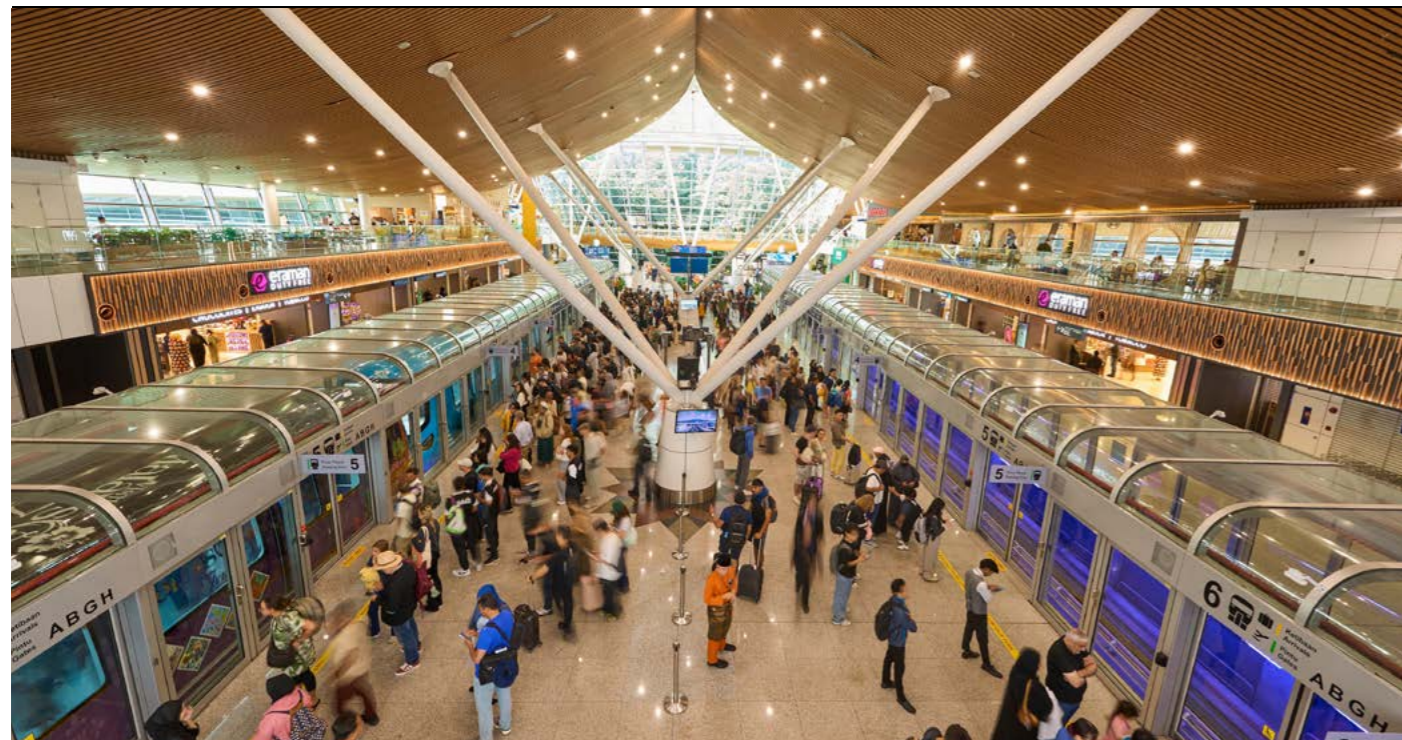
Following the welcome reception for passengers, a memento exchange and a cake-cutting ceremony were held to commemorate the occasion.

This new route from DIL to KUL reflects the deepening ties between Malaysia and Timor-Leste, while also positioning Timor-Leste as one of Southeast Asia's best-kept secrets.

It also supports Tourism Malaysia's efforts to expand connectivity with emerging markets in conjunction with the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign.

In addition to Malaysia, 8G operates international services to Indonesia, Singapore and China.

For more information, visit www.aerodili.com



KL International Airport's Growing Role as a Strategic Transit Hub

Despite challenges such as rising fuel prices and flight connectivity disruption arising from the United States-Iran war that broke out on 28 February 2026, an interesting revelation emerged from the March 2026 report on The Impact of the Middle East Conflict on the Southeast Asian Travel Industry.

That is, the tourism industry is resilient in times of crisis and the potential for Southeast Asia (SEA) to act as an alternative transit hub.

This is particularly true for Malaysia, which saw Lufthansa Airlines (LH) announcing on 4 March 2026 the expansion of its SEA network for winter 2026/2027, or more specifically, the much-awaited return of its direct flight from Frankfurt (FRA) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) after nearly a decade.

Scheduled to recommence on 25 October 2026, LH's five times weekly service to KUL will be its fourth destination in Southeast Asia (SEA) besides Bangkok (BKK), Singapore (SIN) and Phuket (HKT).

The Star Alliance member will operate the 287-seater Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft in a three-class configuration, featuring its new premium Allegris cabin.



Jens Ritter, Chief Executive Officer of LH said, "With the deployment of our state-of-the-art Dreamliner, we are creating ideal conditions to participate in SEA's growth."

Following this was British Airways' (BA) announcement of its major winter expansion on 16 March 2026, which included the launch of its daily London Heathrow (LHR) to Melbourne (MEL) service via KUL, starting 9 January 2027.

BA's service will further strengthen KL International Airport's (KUL) role as a strategic transit hub linking connecting Europe, SEA and Australia, as well as the airline's presence as a founding member of the oneworld alliance.

Malaysia Airports Managing Director, Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani said, "It also demonstrates KUL's resilience and sustained growth potential amid ongoing global uncertainties affecting the aviation sector."



Neil Chernoff, Chief Planning and Strategy Officer at BA said, "I'm confident the service will prove popular with both leisure and business travellers. KUL remains an important gateway to our broader Asia Pacific network."

Using the Boeing 787 aircraft, the airline offers a choice of four cabins, including World Traveler, (economy), World Traveler Plus (premium economy), Club World (business class) and First.

Besides passenger connectivity, the service will also provide cargo capacity, supporting trade flows between the United Kingdom, Malaysia and Australia.

Derived from a quick online poll from 8 to 18 March 2026, the report by Pear Anderson and the ASEAN Tourism Association (ASEANTA) on the impact of the ME conflict showed that regional travel in SEA remains a strong option at 64% despite the flight disruptions.

This was followed by East Asia at 47%, while Europe and Central/South Asia each accounted for 24% of the redirected travel demand.

Oceania, particularly Australia and New Zealand, represented 22.4% of responses in the poll survey, which was conducted among 157 travel businesses across eight Southeast Asian countries.

The report also noted that while Middle Eastern airlines may be the most popular way for travellers from SEA to reach Europe, there remain many direct flights between Europe and Asia, with airlines increasing their capacity in the absence of the Middle Eastern hubs.

Additionally, it said the governments of Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore have voiced their hopes that the redirection of the travel demand will boost their status as an alternate transit hub.

According to Dato' Sri Tiong King Sing, Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia will focus on the tourism markets in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and Asia as his ministry revised its strategy for Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) in light of the current global developments.

“ At the same time, we will maintain and deepen engagement with emerging and long-haul markets to ensure diversification and long-term resilience. ”

DATO' SRI TIONG KING SING
Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Malaysia

These include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Russia, France, Germany, Australia, Ukraine, Denmark, Switzerland, Türkiye, Poland, and Timor-Leste, where its national flag carrier Aero Dili (8G) recently started twice a week non-stop service from its capital city of Dili (DIL) to Kuala Lumpur (KUL).



Dato' Sri Tiong also announced Nok Air's (DD) commencement of a direct service from Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport (DMK) to KUL in July 2026 as part of the broader efforts to expand Malaysia's aviation connectivity and value proposition as a destination to be reckoned with.

Malaysia is adopting a more targeted tourism promotion strategy, with emphasis on high-value segments and the premium travel market rather than on arrival numbers. "The focus is on improving quality, yield and overall economic contribution," he stressed.

Meanwhile, Deputy Prime Minister Dato' Seri Dr. Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said the second meeting of VM2026's National Main Committee agreed to extend the campaign period until the end of 2027.

This is to enable Malaysia to adopt a more proactive approach to strengthen its promotional strategies and showcase the country as a safe, stable and competitive destination.

The government remains committed to ensure VM2026 is implemented holistically and effectively, he added as Chairman of the VM2026 National Main Committee.



Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport



Airport FastTrack Lounge



Lobby



Deluxe Room



Airport FastTrack

www.samasamahotels.com

A seamless blend of connectivity, excellence, and five-star comfort at KL International Airport

Beyond the movement and momentum of KL International Airport (KLIA) lies a quieter way to travel, one defined by ease, discretion, and unhurried elegance.

At KLIA, this refined experience comes to life through thoughtfully designed services that elevate the airport journey. Here, efficiency feels effortless, comfort is intuitive, and every transition is carefully curated.

For travellers who value ease and exclusivity, Airport FastTrack offers a private passage through airport formalities. From a discreet kerbside welcome to expedited immigration clearance, personalised baggage assistance, and access to exclusive lounges, every step unfolds smoothly, away from queues, crowds, and haste. It is travel as it should be: calm, composed, and impeccably managed.

A short distance from the terminal, Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport extends this sense of tranquility. Directly connected to KLIA Terminal 1 via a covered sky bridge and supported by a complimentary 24-hour buggy service, the five-star hotel offers comfort and convenience just steps from the terminal.

Guests enjoy round-the-clock international dining, an outdoor swimming pool, a fully equipped gym, spa, jacuzzi, sauna, and steam room, complemented by thoughtful services including room service, laundry, private parking, and complimentary Wi-Fi, ensuring a relaxing stay at any hour.

Together, Airport FastTrack and Sama-Sama Hotel transform KLIA into more than a point of arrival or departure. They create a seamless, sophisticated passage, where the airport becomes a place of calm, and the journey itself becomes part of the experience.



Sama-Sama Hotel KL International Airport
Jalan CTA 4B, 64000 KLIA, Sepang,
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia.
TEL +603 8787 3333 FAX +603 8787 5555
Email : reservations@samasamahotels.com

