

KL lifestyle

SEPTEMBER 2026

SAVE THE DATE

KLAS ART AUCTION
MALAYSIAN & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART
18TH OCTOBER 2026



KLAS ART AUCTION
MALAYSIAN & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART

SAVE THE DATE

AUCTION DAY, SUNDAY, 18TH OCTOBER 2026



Yusof Ghani, Datuk

Siri Segerak: Emerging, 2005

Oil on canvas

200 x 200 cm

RM 400,000 - 700,000

KLAS

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ON THE COVER :
SAVE THE DATE
KLAS ART AUCTION
MALAYSIAN & SOUTHEAST ASIAN ART
18TH OCTOBER 2026

COVER IMAGE :
Yusof Ghani
Segerak Series : Emerging (2005)
Oil on Canvas

What's On in September 2026

YOUR GUIDE TO THE HOTTEST HAPPENINGS IN SEPTEMBER 2026



Dear Jane Live in Kuala Lumpur

The Hong Kong indie-rock favourites return with their signature blend of introspective lyrics and guitar-driven sound.

Date : 13 September 2026

Venue : Zepp Kuala Lumpur

Price : RM 388, RM 488, RM 588, RM 788



Firdhaus – Flat Earth Theory Concert Tour 2026

Malaysian singer-songwriter Firdhaus brings his Flat Earth Theory tour home to Kuala Lumpur, pairing his heartfelt Mandarin pop with an upgraded arena production featuring new visuals, lighting and reimagined arrangements.

Date : 19 September 2026, 8pm

Venue : Unifi Arena, Bukit Jalil

Price : RM 99, RM 169, RM 269, RM 369, RM 469, RM 569



Post Malone Presents The BIG Stadium World Tour

A homegrown indie/alternative music festival featuring acts such as babychair, Amazing Show and Anak Borneo.

Date : 27 September 2026

Venue : TM Stadium Nasional

Price : RM 259, RM 299, RM 399, RM 499, RM 599, RM 658, RM 758, RM 858, RM 958, RM 1,618, RM 1,718



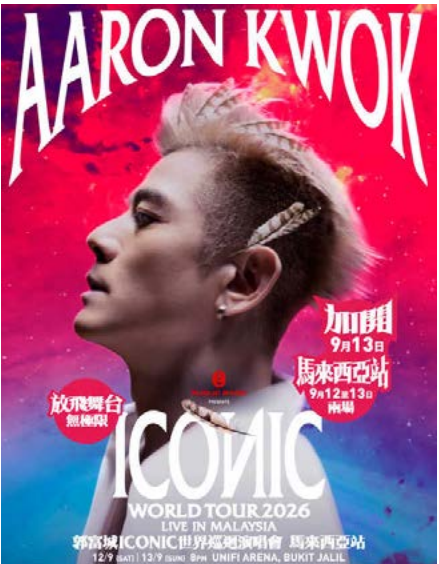
Lea Salonga with the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra

The Tony-winning voice behind Princess Jasmine (Aladdin) and Mulan performs Disney and Broadway classics with the MPO, conducted by her brother Gerard Salonga.

Date : 26 September 2026, 8pm

Venue : Petronas Philharmonic Hall

Price : RM 399, RM 499, RM 549, RM 599, RM 649



Aaron Kwok “ICONIC” World Tour 2026 Live in Malaysia

The Cantopop “King of the Stage” brings his full-scale, 200-crew ICONIC production to KL, two years after his last visit — following sold-out stops across China, Taiwan, Indonesia and the US.

Date : 12 September 2026 (Sat), 8pm

Venue : Unifi Arena, Bukit Jalil

Price : RM 388, RM 688, RM 988, RM 1,188



Avenged Sevenfold Live in Kuala Lumpur

American heavy metal giants Avenged Sevenfold return to Malaysia for a high-powered night of soaring guitar riffs, theatrical production and favourites spanning more than two decades.

Date : 26 September 2026

Venue : Unifi Arena, Bukit Jalil

Price : RM 299, RM 399, RM 499, RM 599, RM 699



EMERGE FESTIVAL MALAYSIA 2026

A homegrown indie/alternative music festival featuring acts such as babychair, Amazing Show and Anak Borneo.

Date : 5 September 2026

Venue : Zepp Kuala Lumpur

Price : RM 288, RM 308, RM 328, RM 3,200



Ungu – 3 Dasawarsa Special Night in Kuala Lumpur

Celebrating three decades in music, Indonesian rock favourites Ungu bring their anniversary show to Kuala Lumpur, revisiting the ballads and anthems that made them one of the region’s most recognisable bands.

Date : 5 September 2026

Venue : Idea Live Arena, Petaling Jaya

Price : RM 148, RM 208, RM 228, RM 258, RM 278, RM 288, RM 328, RM 488

Festivals & Expo



MATTA Fair 2026 (September Edition)

Malaysia’s premier travel fair connecting consumers directly with airlines, hoteliers and tour operators from around the world.

Date : 4 – 6 September 2026

Venue : Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre (MITEC)



ASEAN Landscape & Gardening Expo 2026

Southeast Asia’s leading showcase for landscaping, gardening and outdoor living, bringing together designers, urban developers and enthusiasts to explore the latest trends, innovative solutions and creative ideas for transforming outdoor spaces.

Date : 12 – 15 September 2026

Venue : Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre (MITEC)



Agri Malaysia 2026 (Malaysia International Agriculture Technology Exhibition)

The nation’s largest agriculture B2B platform, themed “Agriculture Innovates Future,” brings together more than 450 exhibitors from 18 countries under one roof. The event serves as a major meeting point for agriculture professionals, businesses, technology providers and industry leaders to explore the latest innovations, solutions and opportunities shaping the future of the agricultural sector. It also provides a valuable platform for networking, knowledge exchange and collaboration across the regional and international agriculture industry.

Date : 10 – 12 September 2026

Venue : Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre (MITEC)



Malaysia Day Celebrations (Hari Malaysia)

Marking the 1963 formation of Malaysia, which brought together Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak, Malaysia Day is celebrated with parades, cultural performances and festive activities across the country. In Kuala Lumpur, Dataran Merdeka often becomes a lively centre of celebration, featuring colourful performances, patriotic displays and events that highlight Malaysia’s diverse cultures and traditions. Nationwide, communities come together to commemorate the country’s history, unity and shared identity.

Date : 16 September 2026 (public holiday)



Malaysia Gold Festival 2026

A three-day showcase dedicated to Malaysia’s gold and jewellery industry, bringing together jewellers, established brands, talented designers and jewellery enthusiasts under one roof. The event offers visitors an opportunity to discover the latest collections, explore unique designs and learn more about trends and craftsmanship within the industry. It also provides a valuable platform for businesses and industry professionals to connect, exchange ideas and showcase their latest products.

Date : 18 – 20 September 2026

Venue : Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre



Malaysia International Craft Fair 2026

A vibrant celebration of traditional craftsmanship and contemporary creativity, bringing together talented artisans, designers and craft communities from Malaysia and beyond. The event showcases a diverse range of handmade works, highlighting unique techniques, cultural heritage and modern artistic interpretations. Visitors can explore distinctive crafts, discover emerging designers and gain a deeper appreciation for the skill, creativity and stories behind each piece.

Date : 24 September – 5 October 2026

Venue : Kuala Lumpur Craft Complex



DSA – Defence Services Asia Exhibition & Conference 2026

Asia’s largest defence and homeland security show, spotlighting AI, robotics and cybersecurity innovations, with 1,500+ global exhibitors.

Date : 20 – 23 September 2026

Venue : Malaysia International Trade & Exhibition Centre (MITEC)



Malaysia International Home Renovation Expo 2026

A one-stop showcase for homeowners and design enthusiasts, featuring the latest ideas and products for renovation, interiors, furnishings and home improvement.

Date : 11 – 13 September 2026

Venue : Mid Valley Exhibition Centre, Kuala Lumpur

Big Screen Thrills

SEPTEMBER MOVIE PREMIERES



PRACTICAL MAGIC 2

SEPTEMBER 10

Nearly three decades after the beloved original, the notorious Owens women return — aunts Frances and Jet, sisters Sally and Gillian, and Sally’s daughters Kylie and Antonia. Set against a world of moonlit mischief and powerful ancestral magic, the family must confront a dark curse and long-buried secrets that threaten to unravel them once and for all, in a story of sisterhood, sacrifice and spellbinding fun.

Genre: Comedy / Drama / Fantasy

Cast: Sandra Bullock, Nicole Kidman, Joey King, Maisie Williams, Lee Pace, Stockard Channing, Dianne Wiest, Xolo Maridueña



FALL 2: DEADPOINT

AUGUST 27

Overwhelmed by the loss of her fearless sister Hunter, a deeply damaged Jax connects with Luce, Hunter’s old climbing friend. Seeking closure, the pair attempt the infamous plank walk across Thailand’s Mount Kwan, only for a sudden rockslide to leave them stranded thousands of feet above the ground. Battling vertigo-inducing heights, sheer exposure and dwindling odds, Jax must confront her deepest fears to survive.

Genre: Adventure / Thriller

Cast: Harriet Slater, Arsema Thomas, Tom Brittney, Virginia Gardner, Grace Caroline Currey

HOPE

SEPTEMBER 10

A tense action-drama that follows a desperate fight against a ticking clock, blending high-stakes thrills with an emotional core as its characters are pushed to their limits in pursuit of a way out.

Genre: Action / Drama / Thriller

Cast: Hwang Jung min, Zo In-sung, Hyeon, Michael Fassbender, Alicia Vikander, Taylor Russell, Cameron Britton, Eum Moon suk



KHONG KHAEK 2

SEPTEMBER 24

In a village at the foot of Mount Budo, Diana begins behaving violently after vanishing into the forest, forcing her husband Anas to kill her. Believing her spirit trapped in the realm of the djinn, Anas seeks a way to bring her back, setting off a collision between faith, mysticism and love as a university student’s research trip pulls new victims into the same cursed forest.

Genre: Horror / Supernatural / Thriller

Cast: Yotsawat Tawapee, Mim Rattawadee Wongthong, Sutida Burtig



TERBANG

SEPTEMBER 17

Inspired by the true story of Malaysian rally legend Karamjit Singh, better known as the “Flying Sikh”, Terbang brings his remarkable journey to the big screen. Directed by Chiu Keng Guan, the filmmaker behind The Journey and OlaBola, the film traces the determination, setbacks and triumphs behind one of Malaysia’s most celebrated motorsport figures.

Genre: Drama / Action

Cast: Irfan Zaini, Jack Tan, Zizan Razak, Namron



A GATHERING OF LEGENDS

KLAS ART AUCTION · 18 OCTOBER 2026

ENG TAY | The Young Beauty, Oil on canvas, 122 x 152 cm | **RM 90,000 - 150,000**

This October, KLAS Art Auction brings together an exceptional selection of works spanning generations, mediums and artistic perspectives from Malaysia and Southeast Asia. Featuring celebrated masters alongside influential modern and contemporary voices, the auction offers collectors an opportunity to encounter works that have shaped and continue to shape the region's artistic landscape.

Among the distinguished names presented are Datuk Yusof Ghani, Yong Mun Sen, Khoo Sui Hoe, Suzlee Ibrahim, Awang Damit Ahmad, Abdul Latiff Mohidin, Abdul Multhalib Musa, Chuah Thean Teng, Dato' Eng Tay, Jalaini Abu Hassan, Raphael Scott Ahbeng, Ong Kim Seng and Fuji Anggara, alongside many other legendary artists.

From the pioneering modernism of Yong Mun Sen and Abdul Latiff Mohidin to the expressive abstraction of Yusof Ghani, Suzlee Ibrahim and Awang Damit Ahmad, the selection reflects the remarkable diversity of artistic voices that have emerged across the region. Works by Chuah Thean Teng recall the transformation of batik into a recognised fine-art medium, while artists such as Raphael Scott Ahbeng and Ong Kim Seng capture the changing landscapes, cities and cultural environments of Southeast Asia.

What connects these artists is not a single style, but a shared ability to translate their surroundings, experiences and ideas into something lasting. Their works speak of place, memory, identity, movement and imagination. These are themes that continue to resonate with audiences today.

For collectors, the October auction presents more than an opportunity to acquire an artwork. It is an invitation to engage with the stories behind some of the region's most significant artistic voices and to become part of the continuing journey of these works.

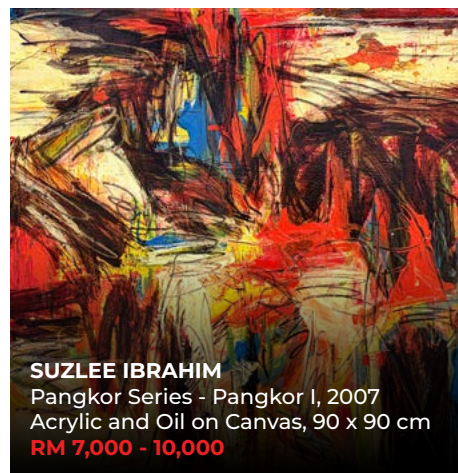
An exceptional selection of Malaysian and Southeast Asian art, bringing together masters, pioneers and contemporary voices in one remarkable collection.



AWANG DAMIT AHMAD
Iraga "Injap Beralih Arah", 2007
Mixed Media on canvas, 183 x 183 cm
RM 100,000 - 160,000



YUSOF GHANI, DATUK
Siri Topeng, 1995
Oil on canvas, 26 x 26 cm
RM 3,500 - 7,000



SUZLEE IBRAHIM
Pangkor Series - Pangkor I, 2007
Acrylic and Oil on Canvas, 90 x 90 cm
RM 7,000 - 10,000



YUSOF GHANI, DATUK
Segerak Series : Emerging, 2005
Oil on Canvas, 200 x 200 cm
RM 400,000 - 700,000

A vibrant green composition featuring sweeping, expressive strokes that capture the fluid movement, energy, and rhythmic flow of the human form.



SHARIFAH FATIMAH, DATO'
Sailing, 2019
Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 30 cm
RM 6,000 - 8,000

A lyrical abstract work that uses fluid brushstrokes, layered textures, and a harmonious color arrangement to evoke the buoyant, floating sensation of navigating wind and water.



FUJI ANGGARA
Di Antara Dua Tanah, 2025
Mixed media on paper, 78 x 54 cm
RM 3,000 - 7,000

Translating to "Between Two Lands," this abstract work explores themes of displacement, geography, and personal identity through layered pigments, gestural scribbles, and contrasting earth-toned blocks.



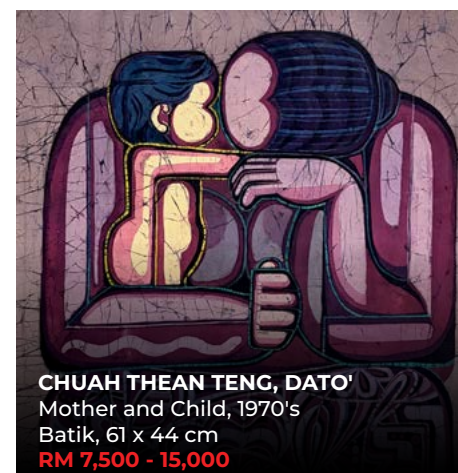
NGUYEN THANH BINH
The Mother, 2008
Oil on canvas, 80 x 95 cm
RM 5,000 - 7,500

A quiet and intimate portrayal of motherhood, The Mother captures Nguyen Thanh Binh's signature sense of elegance and restraint. The simplified figures, muted palette and contemplative atmosphere create a poetic sense of tenderness, reflecting the enduring bond between mother and child.



ABDUL LATIFF MOHIDIN
Rock Landscape, 2019
Oil on canvas, 76 x 76 cm
RM 260,000 - 380,000

The warm hues give the rugged, geological forms an ignited, molten quality, evoking sun-baked stone, volcanic heat, or the elemental fire of the natural landscape rather than a standard cool terrain.



CHUAH THEAN TENG, DATO'
Mother and Child, 1970's
Batik, 61 x 44 cm
RM 7,500 - 15,000

A classic representation of rural Malaysian life, showcasing a mother and child in a tight, affectionate embrace surrounded by crackled wax textures, fluid lines, and decorative sarong patterns.



TAN CHOON GHEE
Untitled
Watercolour and ink on paper, 30.5 x 47 cm
RM 2,500 - 5,000

Typically captures a bustling Penang shophouse street or heritage scene with swift ink outlines and breezy color, recording everyday Malaysian life, architecture, and light with nostalgic charm.



TAY MO LEONG, DATO'
Rubber Estate Series, 1960's
Batik, 57 x 87 cm
RM 5,000 - 12,000

Features stylized figurative or rural motifs—often depiction of local women, fishing villages, or natural landscapes rendered through rich, layered dyes, sharp wax outlines, and complex crackle patterns.



WONG KEAN CHOON
Fluorescent Kampung, 1993
Watercolour on paper, 74 x 53 cm
RM 2,500 - 5,000

Illustrates a traditional wooden village (kampung) scene illuminated by vibrant, high-contrast light using glowing highlights against deep shadows to give the rustic landscape an almost glowing, "fluorescent" quality.



IN CONVERSATION, IN CONTRAST

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN MALAYSIAN IDENTITY, MODERNITY AND THE GLOBAL ART WORLD

Inspired by the world, rooted in Malaysia. Malaysian art has never existed in isolation. Shaped by tradition, migration, modernism and global exchange, its story is one of constant negotiation between what is inherited and what is encountered beyond its borders.

RAFIEE GHANI | Prelude to Garden Series, Circa 1990's, Batik, 112 x 112 cm | **RM 10,000 - 18,000**

Malaysian Art and the Wider World

To look at Malaysian art is to encounter a history shaped by movement. Malaysia's geographical position at the crossroads of Asia has long brought different cultures, ideas and traditions into contact, creating a visual landscape that is as diverse as the country itself. Malay, Chinese, Indian and indigenous traditions have developed alongside influences arriving through trade, migration, education and international exchange, while artists have continually responded to the changing cultural landscape around them.

The development of modern Malaysian art in the 20th century reflects this complexity. Artists were increasingly exposed to artistic movements and ideas from Europe and elsewhere in Asia, whether through formal education, travel, exhibitions or personal encounters. Modernism, abstraction, expressionism and other international approaches offered new ways of thinking about composition, colour and representation. At the same time, artists remained connected to the subjects, materials and traditions that surrounded them.

The result was not a straightforward adoption of international styles, but a process of interpretation. Ideas encountered abroad were brought home and transformed through local experience. A landscape could be approached through modernist principles while remaining unmistakably Malaysian; a traditional motif could be simplified, abstracted or reimagined without losing its cultural associations. In this sense, Malaysian art developed through a continuous exchange between the local and the international.

This exchange is particularly visible in the history of batik painting. A medium deeply associated with textile traditions was gradually taken into the realm of fine art, demonstrating that the distinction between craft and painting was not necessarily fixed. Artists found in wax, dye and fabric a sophisticated visual language through which they could explore Malaysian life, identity and modernity.

What emerged was a body of work that could be understood within the broader history of modern art while retaining a distinctly Malaysian character. The significance of this history lies not simply in the fact that Malaysian artists were influenced by the outside world, but in the ways they absorbed those influences and made them their own.

The story of Malaysian art, therefore, is not one of choosing between local heritage and international influence. It is the story of what happens when the two meet.



CHUAH THEAN TENG, DATO' Mother and Child, Batik, 61 x 44cm **RM 7,500 - RM 15,000**

When Batik Entered the Language of Fine Art

Long before batik entered galleries and auction rooms, it was already part of everyday life. Its traditions were embedded in communities, particularly along the East Coast of the Malay Peninsula, where generations of makers developed sophisticated knowledge of wax-resist techniques, dyes and pattern-making.

The transformation of batik into a recognised fine-art medium was therefore significant. It required artists to reconsider not only the possibilities of the technique, but also the assumptions surrounding the relationship between craft and art.

Among the most important figures in this development was Chuah Thean Teng, whose work helped establish batik painting as a serious artistic medium in Malaysia. Rather than treating batik simply as a method for producing decorative textiles, Chuah approached it as a means of depicting people, places and everyday life. His subjects often included mothers and children, rural communities and scenes of Malaysian life, giving the medium a narrative and human dimension. His contribution was both artistic and conceptual. By demonstrating that batik could carry the same expressive ambitions associated with painting, he helped broaden perceptions of what the medium could achieve. Fabric became a surface for composition; wax became a drawing tool; dye became an expressive element rather than simply a means of colouring cloth.

The artists who followed developed these possibilities in different directions. Seah Kim Joo, Tay Mo Leong and Khalil Ibrahim, among others, demonstrated that batik could accommodate individual artistic identities rather than conforming to a single established style.

This period also coincided with a broader search for Malaysian identity within the arts. Artists were considering what it meant to create modern art in a newly developing nation, at a time when international artistic movements were becoming increasingly accessible. The challenge was not simply to create something "modern", but to determine what modernity might mean within the Malaysian context.

Batik provided an unexpectedly powerful answer. Its history was local, but its artistic possibilities were open-ended. The medium could accommodate observation, abstraction, colour, pattern and experimentation. It could address everyday life while participating in a much wider conversation about modern art. In the hands of these artists, batik ceased to be defined solely by its function as textile. It became a vehicle for artistic thought.

“A traditional medium does not necessarily produce traditional art. Its history can become the foundation for experimentation.”



SEAH KIM JOO Kenyan Musicians, Batik, 48 x 75cm **RM 2,500 - 5,000**

Among the artists who helped expand the visual possibilities of Malaysian batik, Seah Kim Joo occupies a distinctive position. Born in Singapore and raised in Terengganu, Seah encountered batik within the environment where the tradition was practised, while his later artistic education exposed him to broader developments in modern art.

This dual perspective became important to his practice. His work demonstrated that batik could move beyond the scale and conventions normally associated with textile production. Large compositions gave the medium an entirely different physical presence, allowing batik to function as an ambitious pictorial surface rather than simply as an ornamental one.

Seah's artistic approach also reflected a willingness to experiment. His use of collage and other techniques demonstrated that traditional processes could be combined with new ideas without losing their essential character. His work occupies an interesting position between cultural tradition and modern experimentation, revealing how an artist could engage with both without treating them as opposing forces.

TAY MO LEONG, DATO' Rubber Estate Series, Batik, 57 x 87cm **RM 5,000 - 12,000**



Tay Mo Leong approached the medium from another direction. His interest in batik developed alongside his wider artistic education, and his subsequent engagement with the medium led him to study its techniques more deeply in Kelantan. His work became particularly associated with vibrant colour, intricate pattern and lively representations of Malaysian life.

For Tay, colour was not merely decorative. It became central to the atmosphere and rhythm of the composition. Figures, landscapes and cultural subjects could be transformed through intense colour relationships and the distinctive textures produced by the batik process.

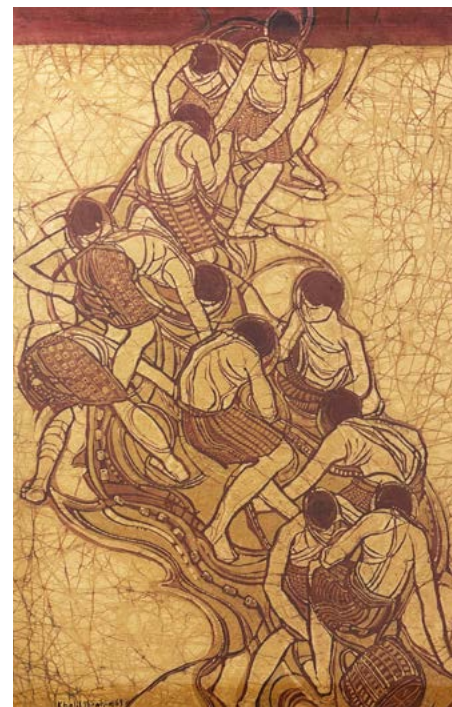
His willingness to experiment with technique further demonstrated that batik was not a fixed language. It could evolve through the artist's individual approach.

The significance of both artists lies partly in the way they challenged the assumption that a traditional medium must produce traditional-looking art. Their works show that the history of a material does not determine the limits of its artistic possibilities.

This is one reason Malaysian batik remains relevant when considered alongside international modern and contemporary art. Around the world, artists have increasingly questioned the divisions between painting, textiles, craft and other forms of material practice. Batik had already been negotiating those boundaries for generations.



KHALIL IBRAHIM | Fishermen Series, 1969, Batik, 82.5 x 57 cm | **Private Collection**



KHALIL IBRAHIM
Fishermen Series, 1969, Batik, 82.5 x 57 cm
Private Collection

Khalil Ibrahim and the International Connection

The relationship between Malaysian art and the wider world becomes particularly evident in the career of Khalil Ibrahim. Born in Kelantan, Khalil later studied in Britain, where he encountered a very different artistic environment and became exposed to international developments in modern art.

Yet his subsequent career was not defined by an attempt to reproduce what he had encountered overseas. Instead, his experiences became part of a broader artistic vocabulary that remained connected to his Malaysian background.

Khalil worked across painting, drawing and batik, moving between different approaches to figuration and abstraction. His work demonstrates how international education could expand an artist's possibilities without requiring the abandonment of local identity.

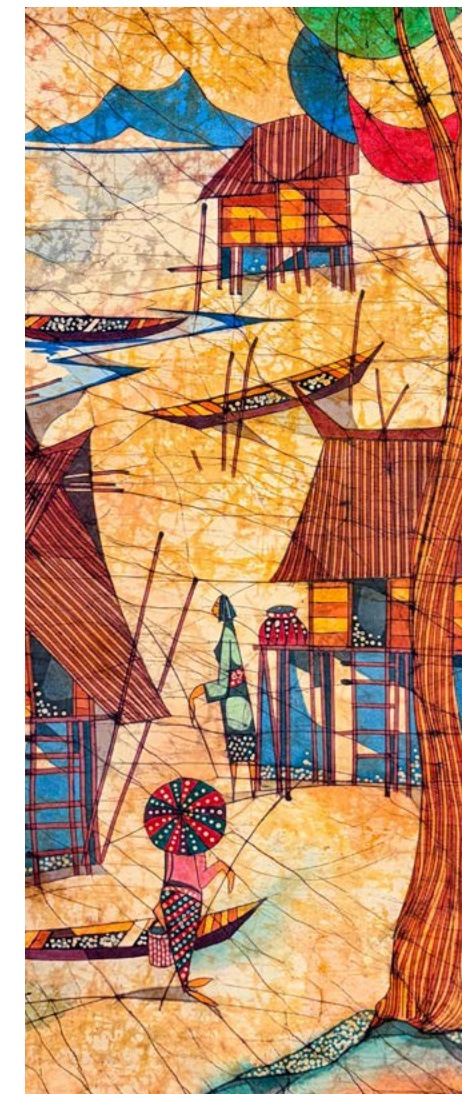
This distinction is important when considering the development of Malaysian modern art. International influence is sometimes described as though artists simply adopted foreign styles. In reality, artistic exchange is rarely so straightforward. Artists take what they encounter and filter it through their own experiences, memories and cultural surroundings.

The same can be seen in the work of Yong Kheng Wah, whose contribution forms part of the wider development of Malaysian batik painting. Alongside artists such as Seah Kim Joo, Tay Mo Leong and Khalil Ibrahim, his work contributes to a history in which the traditional medium continued to evolve through individual interpretation.

This process of exchange extended well beyond batik. Malaysian artists working in oil, watercolour, printmaking, sculpture and other media were similarly negotiating international ideas alongside local subjects and traditions. This distinction is important when considering the development of Malaysian modern art. International influence is sometimes described as though artists simply adopted foreign styles. In reality, artistic exchange is rarely so straightforward. Artists take what they encounter and filter it through their own experiences, memories and cultural surroundings.

For many artists, travelling or studying overseas did not represent a departure from Malaysia. It became another way of seeing home. Distance can change perception. Exposure to other artistic environments can make familiar subjects appear differently, encouraging artists to reconsider their own visual traditions with fresh eyes.

The resulting works are often neither entirely local nor entirely international. They exist in the space between the two, carrying evidence of both. That space has become increasingly important in understanding Malaysian art.



YONG KHENG WAH
Penang Fishing Village, Batik, 87.5 x 58cm
RM 2,500 - 5,000



CHUAH THEAN TENG, DATO'
Houses on Stilts, 1960's, Batik, 61 x 44 cm
Private Collection

Does Malaysian Art Need to Look International?

The question of international recognition inevitably raises another question: what does it mean for an artwork to be considered "international" in the first place?

For much of modern art history, the dominant narrative has been shaped by institutions, movements and artists associated with Europe and North America. Paris, London and New York became important centres through which artistic ideas were developed, exhibited and circulated. As a result, the history of modern art has often been told through a relatively specific set of movements and geographical centres.

Malaysian art does not always fit comfortably within that framework, and perhaps it should not be expected to. Its history developed through different cultural encounters and material traditions. Batik, for example, carries a relationship with textile, community and everyday life that does not necessarily correspond to the conventional Western distinction between fine art and craft.

This difference becomes increasingly relevant today. International contemporary art has become far more open to textiles, ceramics, traditional techniques and material practices that were previously positioned outside the conventional fine-art canon. Artists around the world are revisiting craft traditions, indigenous knowledge and culturally specific materials as serious subjects of artistic investigation.

In this context, Malaysian batik can be seen in a different light. What might once have been regarded primarily as traditional craft can also be understood as a sophisticated artistic practice concerned with process, materiality, surface, colour and cultural memory.

The question is therefore not whether Malaysian art



SHARIFAH FATIMAH, DATO' | Sailing, 2019, Acrylic on canvas, 38 x 30 cm | RM 6,000 - 8,000



CHUAH THEAN TENG, DATO' | Durian Penang Village Life, Mothers and Children, 2019, Batik, 60.5 x 151 cm | Private Collection

Does Malaysian Art Need to Look International?

The question of international recognition inevitably raises another question: what does it mean for an artwork to be considered "international" in the first place?

For much of modern art history, the dominant narrative has been shaped by institutions, movements and artists associated with Europe and North America. Paris, London and New York became important centres through which artistic ideas were developed, exhibited and circulated. As a result, the history of modern art has often been told through a relatively specific set of movements and geographical centres.

Malaysian art does not always fit comfortably within that framework, and perhaps it should not be expected to. Its history developed through different cultural encounters and material traditions. Batik, for example, carries a relationship with textile, community and everyday life that does not necessarily correspond to the conventional Western distinction between fine art and craft.

"The goal is not to make Malaysian art look international, but to allow the international art world to see what is distinctly Malaysian about it."

From Heritage to Possibility

The story of Malaysian batik does not end with its pioneers. Its continued relevance depends on the artists who inherit its techniques and decide what to do with them.

M. Sukri Derahman, representing a later generation of Malaysian batik practitioners, is part of this continuing lineage. Born in Kelantan and trained under the late Ismail Mat Hussin, Sukri's practice reflects the enduring relationship between batik and the artistic traditions of the East Coast.

His work is a reminder that heritage is not necessarily preserved by repeating the past exactly as it was. A tradition remains alive when artists continue to use it, question it and reinterpret it. This principle extends beyond batik.

For contemporary Malaysian artists, the

international art world is now more accessible than ever. Digital platforms, international exhibitions, art fairs, residencies and global networks have created opportunities for artists to encounter ideas from almost anywhere. At the same time, these connections make questions of identity even more relevant.

The contemporary Malaysian artist is no longer required to choose between local and global perspectives. An artist can work with international visual languages while drawing from Malaysian history, personal memory and cultural experience. The resulting work can move between different contexts without belonging exclusively to any one of them.

This is perhaps where the future of Malaysian art becomes most compelling. Rather than treating tradition and contemporary practice as separate categories, artists can approach heritage as a resource for new ideas. Batik can become abstract. Traditional motifs can be fragmented, enlarged or reinterpreted. Familiar materials can be placed into unfamiliar contexts. The boundaries between painting, textile, sculpture and installation can continue to shift.

The history established by artists such as Chuah Thean Teng, Seah Kim Joo, Tay Mo Leong, Khalil Ibrahim and Yong Kheng Wah provides an important foundation for this experimentation. Later artists such as M. Sukri Derahman continue that conversation, demonstrating how knowledge can move from one generation to another while remaining open to change.

Ultimately, Malaysian art's place in the wider world should not be measured simply by how closely it resembles international trends or how frequently it appears in global institutions. Its contribution is more meaningful when it brings something particular to the conversation: a history, a material, a perspective or a way of seeing that enriches the understanding of art beyond geographical boundaries.

Malaysian art has always been connected to the wider world. What has changed is the scale and speed of that connection. The opportunity now is to enter that conversation with confidence, not by leaving its history behind, but by carrying it forward.

From batik to contemporary painting, from traditional craft to experimental practice, Malaysian artists continue to demonstrate that cultural identity and international dialogue are not opposing ideas. They can coexist, overlap and influence one another, producing work that is deeply rooted in place while remaining open to the world.

The conversation, in many ways, has only just begun.

A Conversation Still Unfolding

The history of Malaysian art is ultimately a history of exchange. It has been shaped by local traditions and international ideas, by artists who travelled and those who remained close to home, by inherited techniques and new forms of experimentation. The most compelling works often emerge from these intersections, where different histories meet and something unexpected takes shape.

Batik offers one of the clearest examples. A medium rooted in textile traditions became a language for modern painting, then continued to evolve as artists challenged its boundaries. The story of its development reflects a much larger story about Malaysian art itself: the ability to engage with the world while maintaining a distinctive sense of place.

Perhaps the most productive way to understand Malaysian art today is therefore not as an alternative to international art, nor as a smaller version of it, but as part of a larger and increasingly diverse artistic landscape.

Its strength lies in having its own history, its relevance lies in its willingness to continue changing, and its future may depend on bringing those two qualities together, allowing Malaysian artists to look outward without losing sight of where they began.

Selected artworks featured in this article will be available at the upcoming KLAS Art Auction this 18th October 2026, at KLAS, 31 Jalan Utara, Petaling Jaya.

The Unity Weave

HOW KUALA LUMPUR LIVES MALAYSIA DAY
A NATION FORMED, A CITY THAT REMEMBERS

Every year on 16 September, Malaysians mark a date that gets far less noise than Merdeka but sits just as deep. Malaysia Day commemorates the formation of Malaysia in 1963. This was the moment Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak and, briefly, Singapore came together to build the federation Malaysians call home today.

Where 31 August celebrates the birth of independence, 16 September marks something trickier: separate peoples, split by sea, language and history, choosing to weave themselves into one nation.

In Kuala Lumpur, a city built by migration, shaped by a hundred different journeys, that choice still shows. You feel it in the Sabahan and Sarawakian communities who’ve made KL their second home, in food stalls serving Kadazan and Iban dishes next to nasi lemak, in the quiet understanding that unity was never a single act. It’s ongoing. It’s daily maintenance.

This September, as the city gears up for another Malaysia Day, we look at how KL actually lives this often-overlooked half of the national story and why the weave still holds.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF ANNIVERSARY

Malaysia Day doesn’t get the parade-ground pageantry of National Day. There’s no equivalent of the Jalur Gemilang going up at Stadium Merdeka, no single moment that crystallises the whole thing for the country.



Instead, it asks something quieter: remember that nationhood was negotiated, not declared, and that the negotiation involved partners whose voices too often get folded into a story told from the Peninsula outward.

The formation of Malaysia wasn’t instant and it wasn’t uncontested. The Cobbold Commission had to travel to Sabah and Sarawak to actually gauge public sentiment, and what it found wasn’t a clean mandate.

Roughly a third of the population backed the federation outright, a third wanted safeguards first, and a third didn’t want in at all. Out of that came the Twenty Points and the Eighteen Points, the protections Sabah and Sarawak negotiated for their autonomy, land rights, languages and religious freedoms within the new federation. The safeguards weren’t a courtesy. They were the price of the deal.

That history isn’t just textbook material. It still shapes how Sabahans and Sarawakians in Kuala Lumpur talk about their place in the federation, pride in what got built, alongside a clear-eyed read on the distance, literal and otherwise, that still separates the Borneo states from the Peninsula. Malaysia Day, then, isn’t only a celebration. It’s a reminder of a promise that’s still being kept or still being chased.

BORNEO IN THE HEART OF THE PENINSULA



Walk through certain pockets of KL in the days before 16 September and the city’s Bornean heart is unmistakable.

Sabahan and Sarawakian associations, student bodies and cultural groups put on gatherings across the Klang Valley, some in modest community halls, some big enough to draw thousands. These aren’t tourism-board events.

They’re homecomings, run by and for the tens of thousands of Sabahans and Sarawakians living, working and studying in the capital, many of them a plane ride and a time zone from family.

At these gatherings, the sompoton and the sape carry a soundtrack you won’t hear anywhere else in the city that week. The Sumazau of the Kadazan-Dusun, the Ngajat of the Iban, performed not as museum pieces but as living practice, taught to kids who’ve never set foot in the longhouses and kampungs their grandparents call home.

Tattoo artists working in traditional Iban and Kayan motifs, once the preserve of Borneo’s interior, are now finding real audiences among young urban Malaysians curious about a heritage that predates the federation itself.

Food does the rest of the talking. Hinava (Kadazan-Dusun raw fish, bright with lime and chilli) turns up on pop-up menus next to Sarawak laksa and manok pansoh, chicken cooked in bamboo over an open flame. For a lot of KL diners, Malaysia Day has become an annual excuse to taste a part of the country they may never have visited.

THE JALUR GEMILANG'S QUIET NEIGHBOUR



If the Jalur Gemilang is the unmistakable symbol of Merdeka, Malaysia Day belongs just as much to the flags of Sabah and Sarawak, flying alongside the national flag through mid-September across government buildings, schools and homes in Kuala Lumpur. Small gesture, but it says something: Malaysia’s story never had just one point of origin.

Government buildings across the Klang Valley get lit up in the colours of unity through the second week of September. Dataran Merdeka, so tied to the Merdeka story, hosts its own Malaysia Day observance too, smaller in scale than August’s, dignitaries and cultural troupes and members of the public showing up anyway.

Schools across the city hold assemblies on the formation of Malaysia, often the first real engagement Peninsula-born students have with Sabah and Sarawak’s entry into the federation, a corrective to a national curriculum that’s historically given the topic less airtime than it deserves.



A CAPITAL OF MANY HOMES

You can't separate KL's relationship with Malaysia Day from its role as the country's great magnet, the city Malaysians from every state eventually gravitate to for school, work, ambition.

For Sabahans and Sarawakians, that migration carries extra weight. Living in KL means living at the geographic centre of a federation that, for a lot of East Malaysians, still feels administratively and culturally distant from home.

The city's growing number of East Malaysian-run businesses, from Sarawakian coffee houses, Sabahan-owned eateries scattered through Petaling Jaya and Bangsar, have become informal community anchors as much as commercial ones. Around Malaysia Day, these places tend to see a real surge in patronage, from East Malaysians and Peninsula-born customers alike, wanting to mark the day with something more than symbolism.

The date also opens up a conversation the city's gotten more comfortable having in recent years, about equitable development,

representation, the ongoing work toward the partnership the 1963 agreement promised.

Civil society groups and cultural organisations use the period around 16 September to run talks and forums on exactly this. Not a closed chapter. An open one, still being written by the choices Malaysians make now.



WHAT MALAYSIA DAY TEACHES A GENERATION

For younger Malaysians raised in KL, Malaysia Day is turning into genuine curiosity rather than rote observance, and social media gets a lot of the credit. Sabahan and Sarawakian creators, musicians and chefs have built serious followings among Peninsula audiences, sharing language, food and tradition in ways a textbook rarely pulls off.

A generation raised with instant access to Borneo's music, film and cooking is starting to treat Malaysia Day less as an abstract date and more as a live connection to fellow citizens whose stories deserve equal billing.

That shift matters. It points to a Kuala Lumpur beginning to hold both halves of its founding story with equal weight, Merdeka's declaration of freedom, Malaysia Day's act of union, and to understand that the federation's strength was never a given. It was, and still is, a choice renewed every year by people willing to keep weaving themselves together.



THE WEAVE CONTINUES

As Kuala Lumpur marks Malaysia Day 2026, it does so with a growing understanding of what the day actually asks of it. Not just gratitude for a nation formed, but attention to a nation still forming.

The country's greatest strength, as we noted of Merdeka just weeks earlier, has always been its people. Malaysia Day is the reminder that those people aren't one people but several, bound not by uniformity but by a shared decision made in 1963,

renewed every year since to build something bigger than any single state or the Peninsula could build alone.

In the sape drifting through a community hall in Setapak, in the smell of manok pansoh over an open flame in a Bangsar car park, in the quiet raising of the Sabah and Sarawak flags beside the Jalur Gemilang across the capital. Kuala Lumpur lives Malaysia Day not as spectacle, but as thread. One more strand pulled taut in a unity weave that, six decades on, still holds.

COMMONWEALTH OF WORLD CHINATOWNS

BRIDGING CIVILISATIONS IN PENANG

Penang becomes a meeting point for cultures, ideas and influential voices from around the world as the Commonwealth of World Chinatowns (CWC) Conference Series 2026 returns from 3 to 6 September.

Bringing together leaders, academics, scientists, healthcare professionals, artists and innovators, the four-day gathering moves beyond the conventional idea of Chinatown as simply a place of heritage. Instead, CWC looks at how these communities can serve as bridges between cultures, creating opportunities for dialogue and collaboration across art, history, science, medicine, education and international affairs.

Penang is a natural setting for these conversations. For centuries, the island has been shaped by the movement of people and ideas across borders. George Town's streets tell a story of cultural exchange, where Chinese clan houses, mosques,

temples, churches and historic shophouses reflect generations of communities living alongside one another, creating a rich cultural landscape shaped by shared histories, traditions and experiences that continue to influence Penang today.

It is this spirit of exchange that sits at the heart of CWC and its vision for connecting Chinatowns and communities around the world.

BRIDGING CIVILISATIONS

A major highlight of this year's conference is the inaugural Penang Peace Dialogue 2026, held on 5 and 6 September at JEN Hotel George Town by Shangri-La.

Under the theme Bridging Civilisations in a Multipolar World, the dialogue brings together international leaders and thinkers to explore some of the defining questions facing the world today. From globalisation

and geopolitical change to United Nations reform and the growing influence of Asia, the programme encourages conversation across national and cultural boundaries.

The discussions will examine whether five centuries of globalisation have ultimately made the world better, how relations between civilisations may evolve as global power becomes increasingly multipolar, and what Southeast Asia can contribute to international cooperation and peace.

The programme also looks to history for perspective. Topics range from European colonisation and the voyages of Zheng He to China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Non-Aligned Movement and the future of global institutions.

For Penang, a city whose identity has long been shaped by maritime trade, migration and encounters between cultures, the subject feels particularly relevant.



AMONG THE SPEAKERS

The Penang Peace Dialogue brings together an influential line-up of leaders, academics and thinkers, each offering a distinct perspective on peace, globalisation and the changing international order.



H.E. Joko Widodo

7th President of the Republic of Indonesia
Joko Widodo, Indonesia’s President from 2014 to 2024, offers a Southeast Asian perspective on international cooperation and the region’s role in a multipolar world.



Prof Emeritus Jomo K. Sundaram

Prominent Malaysian Economist
A leading Malaysian economist and former UN Assistant Secretary-General, Prof Jomo K. Sundaram brings expertise in development, globalisation and policies.



Prof Victor Gao

Vice President, Center for China and Globalization
An international relations expert, Prof Victor Gao offers perspectives on China’s global role, development and globalisation.



Prof Jeffrey Sachs

President, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network
A renowned economist and academic, Prof Jeffrey Sachs has spent decades working across sustainable development, economic policy and international cooperation.



Dr Wang Sheng-Wei

Founder, China-US Friendship Exchange
Dr Wang Sheng-Wei’s work encourages greater understanding between China and the United States, with a focus on cultural exchange, international relations and historical connections.



Prof Kishore Mahbubani

Distinguished Fellow, Asia Research Institute, National University of Singapore
A former Singaporean diplomat, academic and author, Prof Kishore Mahbubani is a leading Asian voice on geopolitics and global power.



Dr Joanna Lei

Chairwoman, National Women’s League, Taiwan
Dr Joanna Lei offers perspectives on leadership, politics and women’s roles in a changing world.



Tan Sri Dr Mazlan Othman

Former Director of the Malaysian Space Agency and UN Office for Outer Space Affairs.
Malaysian astrophysicist connecting science, diplomacy and cooperation.



Nurul Izzah Anwar

Executive Chairman, Polity & Chairman, SERI
Nurul Izzah Anwar offers perspectives on public policy, democratic reform and Malaysia’s regional role.

BEYOND THE PEACE DIALOGUE

While the Penang Peace Dialogue is a centrepiece, the CWC Conference Series extends into a range of disciplines.

Space and education feature through initiatives designed to inspire a new generation to think about exploration, science and international collaboration. History enters the conversation through discussions of ancient civilisations and maritime connections, while art provides another avenue for bringing cultures together.

The Art & Poster Exhibition and art initiatives place creativity within the conversation about peace, demonstrating how visual culture can communicate across borders without the need for a shared language.

Healthcare is another important pillar, with Integrative Medicine Asia 2026 bringing practitioners and specialists together to explore integrative approaches to health and their potential role within healthcare in Asia.

The breadth of the programme reflects CWC’s larger ambition. Rather than focusing exclusively on preserving the past, it seeks to create connections that can contribute to the future.

Beyond these fields, the Conference Series also creates opportunities for dialogue between them. By connecting science with education, history with culture, and healthcare with social conversations, CWC encourages participants to look at global challenges from multiple perspectives. This interdisciplinary approach reflects the belief that progress emerges when different forms of knowledge meet, creating space for new ideas, partnerships and possibilities.

PENANG AS A GLOBAL CROSSROADS

Chinatowns around the world are often celebrated for their food, architecture and cultural heritage. CWC invites us to consider another dimension: their potential as international networks connecting communities, ideas and generations.

These neighbourhoods were born from migration and adaptation. People travelled across borders, established new communities and gradually became part of the social fabric of cities far from where their journeys began. Their stories are therefore also stories of connection.

Penang embodies much of that history.

Against this backdrop, the Commonwealth of World Chinatowns Conference Series 2026 feels less like a conventional conference and more like an exploration of what can happen when different worlds meet.

From conversations about peace and globalisation to art, medicine, history and space, Penang will spend four days looking both backwards and forwards, drawing upon centuries of cultural exchange while asking what meaningful international collaboration could look like in the future.

Commonwealth of World Chinatowns Conference Series 2026
3 to 6 September 2026
Penang, Malaysia

Penang Peace Dialogue 2026
5 and 6 September 2026
JEN Hotel George Town by Shangri-La



Zee Avi and The Good Things: Coming Home to the Music

THREE MUSICIANS, ONE SHARED RHYTHM, AND A NEW CHAPTER

There is an easy warmth to Zee Avi and The Good Things that feels instantly familiar. The music leaves room to breathe, the chemistry between its members feels lived-in rather than manufactured, and beneath it all is a sense that this is a group built as much on friendship as it is on sound.

For Zee Avi, that is exactly the point.

"I think this chapter is really about coming home to ourselves a little bit," she says. "We've all been doing music for quite a long time, and at this point, I think we're less interested in proving anything and more interested in making music that feels honest and good to us."

The Good Things brings singer-songwriter Zee Avi together with longtime collaborators Yuswa Ansari, a music producer, keyboardist and beatmaker, and Raja Farouk, a multi-instrumentalist, music director and arranger best known for electric guitar and electric double bass.

The three had already been making music together for around eight years before the group took on a clearer identity of its own. What began naturally through performances, writing and time spent together eventually became something they felt was worth developing further.

"The Good Things is also about friendship,

community, and creating something together without needing everything to be perfect," Zee says. "There's something really beautiful about being able to make music with people you trust and just enjoy the process."

That relationship sits at the heart of the group, and it comes through in the way they speak about each other too. There is plenty of teasing, but also a clear sense of respect for what each person brings into the room, both creatively and personally, every time they come together.



THREE DIFFERENT MUSICAL PERSONALITIES

The Good Things works precisely because the three musicians do not approach music in the same way.

"I think there's a kind of conversation that happens between the three of us," Zee explains. "We all have different musical personalities, but somehow they complement each other."

Part of that comes down to knowing when not to do too much.

"There's a lot of space in the music, and I think that's important to us. We're not trying to fill every second with sound. Sometimes it's about knowing when to play, when not to play, and letting the song breathe."

Their musical roles are equally distinct. Zee describes Yuswa as the perfectionist of the group, with a strong ear for production and detail.

"He hears things in a way that I don't always hear them, and he can take an idea and really shape it."

Raja Farouk brings a different energy. His background stretches into orchestration and conducting, and Zee describes him as someone with both technical knowledge and a very instinctive feel for music.

"There's something about his playing that gives the music a pocket and a sense of movement," she says.

Then there is Zee herself.

"I suppose I bring the songwriting and, of course, the emotional mess," she jokes.

That contrast is important to her.

"I don't want people around me who are just going to agree with everything I say. I want people who can challenge a song, surprise me, and make it better."

It is this push and pull that has shaped The

Good Things into what it is now.

"None of us is trying to be the same person," she says. "We each have our own language, and somehow those languages work together."

STILL CURIOUS

Looking back at her younger self, Zee says one quality has remained particularly strong: curiosity.

"The younger Zee was very curious and quite fearless in a strange way," she says. "I didn't really know what I was doing, so maybe ignorance helped me a little bit."

That willingness to try something new has not disappeared. "I still get excited about trying something I've never done before."

What has changed is the pressure she once placed on herself. "When I was younger, I felt like I had to figure everything out and prove myself," she says. "Now I'm much more interested in enjoying the journey and

staying connected to why I started making music in the first place.”

That shift has affected the people around her too. Yuswa speaks about learning to move beyond theory and technical correctness when playing with Zee, focusing instead on feeling. For Raja Farouk, the lesson extends beyond music: Zee has taught him to think less about constantly getting everything right and more about simply allowing himself to live.

The exchange goes both ways. Zee describes patience as one of the things she has learned from them. Over eight years, they have seen each other through different versions of themselves, giving the group a depth that cannot be created overnight.

Creative disagreements still happen, naturally.

“The biggest thing is that we try not to take it personally,” Zee says. Once a song enters the room, everyone needs space to have an opinion on it. “Sometimes you try someone’s idea and it doesn’t work. Sometimes you realise, ‘Oh my God, that’s actually much better than what I had.’”

And sometimes, they simply agree to disagree.

“The ego has to serve the song, not the other



Zee Avi styled by BEHATI



Raja Farouk



Yuswa Ansari

way around.”

THE PULL OF HOME

For Zee, one of the strongest influences running through her music remains Sarawak.

“I think home is probably the biggest influence, especially Miri and Sarawak,” she says.

It appears not necessarily in obvious references, but in the smaller things that settle into memory: “The pace of life, the way people talk, the food, the weather, the sounds, even the feeling of being somewhere where life can be quite simple.”

Zee laughs that she is naturally sentimental. “I collect memories. Sometimes I don’t even realise something has stayed with me until it turns up in a song years later.”

Having lived and worked in different parts of the world, returning to Sarawak now means something very different to her.

“When you’re young, you sometimes

think you have to leave home to become someone,” she says. “And then you spend years travelling and growing and experiencing different things, and eventually you realise that home was shaping you the whole time.”

“Sarawak is such a huge part of my musical DNA. It’s in my sense of humour, my relationship with nature, my family, the way I tell stories, the pace at which I like to live.”

Coming home, then, no longer feels like looking backwards. “It feels like returning with everything I’ve learned and seeing home with new eyes.”

It is a sentiment that feels especially fitting around Malaysia Day. For Zee, the occasion is about recognising how many different places, communities and stories make up Malaysia.

“With Malaysia Day, I think it feels particularly meaningful to celebrate where we come from and the different stories that make up this country.”

Yuswa sees being Malaysian through a

similar lens of togetherness, describing it in terms of unity and community, while also feeling a growing connection across the local creative scene and wider Southeast Asian region.

Farouk’s relationship with Malaysia is more instinctive. No matter where he travels, he says, home remains home. Together, the three share a sense that Southeast Asia is entering an exciting creative period, with more artists looking towards one another and finding new opportunities to collaborate across borders.

TAKING THEIR TIME

That sense of place may also explain Zee’s unhurried musical identity.

“I’ve never really been very good at rushing,” she says. “Even when I try, my body is like, ‘No, we’re going to take our time.’”

“I like space. I like things that feel human and slightly imperfect. I like hearing the person behind the instrument.”

That perhaps sums up Zee Avi and The Good Things. The group is not trying to overcrowd its songs or rush towards a fixed destination. Instead, three musicians who know each other well bring different instincts into the same room and let those differences shape the music in ways that feel natural and deeply personal, without forcing anything along the way.

Zee Avi and The Good Things have also made history as the first Malaysian artists to sign collectively with Sony Music Publishing Indonesia as songwriters. The deal keeps the trio independent while opening opportunities to collaborate across Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia.

For Zee, Yuswa and Raja Farouk, it is another step towards a wider regional presence, with collaborations in Indonesia already firmly on their radar.

And for Zee Avi, at this stage of the journey, that is enough: good songs, good people, a strong sense of home, and the freedom to see where all of it leads next.

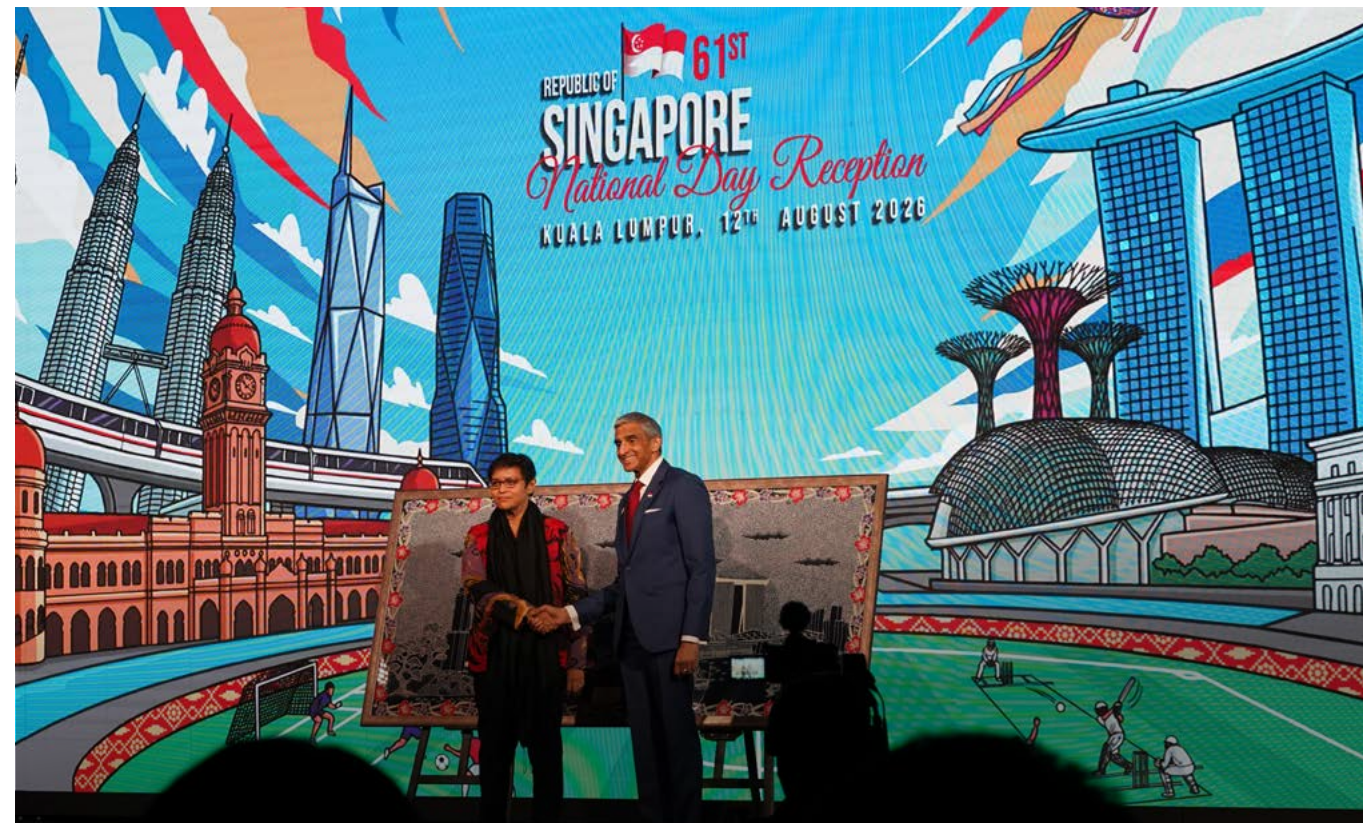




Singapore's 61st National Day Reception, Kuala Lumpur

"CLOSER TOGETHER"

SINGAPORE'S HIGH COMMISSION MARKED THE REPUBLIC'S 61ST NATIONAL DAY WITH A RECEPTION AT SHANGRI-LA KUALA LUMPUR, HOSTED BY HIGH COMMISSIONER VANU GOPALA MENON AND ATTENDED BY GUEST OF HONOUR DATUK SERI AZALINA OTHMAN SAID, DIGNITARIES AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY.



Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform) and TYT Vanu Gopala Menon, High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia.

Held under the theme "Closer Together", the evening was hosted by Singapore's High Commissioner to Malaysia, TYT Vanu Gopala Menon, with Datuk Seri Azalina Othman Said, Malaysia's Minister in the Prime Minister's Department (Law and Institutional Reform), attending on behalf of the Malaysian Government.

"Our bilateral relationship is so intertwined and interrelated that it is in our mutual interest to work together on a wide range of issues, more so in today's rapidly changing and more volatile world," he said, noting that the evening's theme reflected both the historical ties between the two countries and their growing cooperation.

Menon also pointed to a year of shared milestones bridging the two capitals, from the Singapore Ballet's April staging of Ballet Illuminations 2026 at the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre,

to Singapore's Ding Yi Music Company sharing the stage with the Malaysia Century Chinese Orchestra at DBKL's Festival Orkestra Kuala Lumpur in June.

On the economic front, he singled out the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone (JS-SEZ) as a driver of jobs and opportunity for both peoples, with the upcoming Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link set to further ease movement between the two nations.

Date: 13 August 2026 (Wednesday)

Venue: Kuala Lumpur

Theme: "Closer Together"



YAM Tunku Naqiyuddin ibni Almarhum Tuanku Ja'afar

YB Tuan Syed Saddiq bin Syed Abdul Rahman

Nikhil Thanasan, Managing Editor at KL Lifestyle and Tan Sri Nazir Razak

His Excellency Vanu Gopala Menon, High Commissioner of Singapore to Malaysia and Datuk Ahiruddin Attan, President of the National Press Club of Malaysia

Malaysia's Investment Momentum Builds on Quality, Not Just Scale

Malaysia entered the second half of 2026 demonstrating a deepening competitive advantage in the global investment landscape. The first half of the year saw approved investments that signal not merely growing activity, but a strategic shift toward higher-value industries and a diversification of investor bases seeking to establish stable alternative supply chains.

Approved investments in the first six months reached RM218.5 billion across 2,746 projects, with these projects expected to create 99,030 jobs once fully implemented. The growth reflects an 11.7% year-on-year increase—a healthy expansion in a period marked by a global energy crisis and economic uncertainty. Yet what matters most is not the headline figure itself, but what it reveals: foreign investment climbed 18.5% year-on-year, signalling renewed confidence among international businesses seeking to establish or expand operations in Southeast Asia.

This confidence represents the culmination of years of deliberate work by the Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA). As MIDA highlighted, investments that showcase “quality, not just scale” are the true measure of progress. That distinction matters enormously in an era when investor selection is becoming increasingly strategic.



“Malaysia’s half year performance is driven by quality investments in services and manufacturing, with digital and information technology building the backbone for our AI Nation 2030 ambitions while semiconductor investment shifts from back-end assembly to front end design. Our structural competitiveness gains evidenced by Malaysia’s strongest IMD competitiveness ranking in over a decade reflect a deliberate commitment to technology transfer, local participation, and high value job creation.”
- Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Aziz, Chairman of MIDA

THE GEOPOLITICAL ADVANTAGE

Malaysia’s appeal has sharpened considerably amid ongoing global supply-chain tensions and the search by major economies for dependable, alternative sources and manufacturing hubs. The country’s position as a stable, technology forward nation with established manufacturing expertise, coupled with its centrality in Southeast Asia, has made it an increasingly attractive hedge for investors seeking to diversify geographic risk.

The semiconductor and advanced manufacturing sectors illustrate this trend most clearly. Companies are not simply expanding back-end operations; they are investing in front-end design, equipment manufacturing, and research capabilities. This shift signals investor confidence that Malaysia offers both the current capacity and the future potential to serve as a critical node in next-generation supply chains an advantage that transcends any single bilateral relationship.

SERVICES AND DIGITAL GROWTH LEADING THE WAY

The services sector continues to dominate, attracting approximately 68.5% of approved investments. Within this, information and communications investment surged, climbing 68.2% to RM103.3 billion. Digital projects alone accounted for close to 44% of all approved investments during the period. This concentration is no accident: as businesses worldwide accelerate cloud adoption and AI deployment, Malaysia has positioned itself as a regional digital infrastructure hub, ranked by UNCTAD among the world’s ten largest data-centre destinations.

Beyond the infrastructure itself, these investments create opportunities for local small and medium enterprises to participate as vendors, service providers, and support industries. MIDA’s #InvestLokal initiative deliberately encourages foreign investors to deepen local participation, ensuring that each major investment generates a multiplier effect across the domestic economy.

MANUFACTURING SHIFTS TOWARD HIGHER VALUE, IMPLEMENTATION GETS EXPEDITED

Manufacturing attracted RM51.3 billion across 973 projects, with the number of projects rising 88.2% year-on-year. Critically, nearly one-fifth of manufacturing jobs now offer monthly salaries of RM5,000 and above, reflecting a genuine shift toward higher skilled, better compensated employment.

MIDA’s disciplined implementation supports Malaysia’s growth trajectory by translating approvals into real economic activity. Companies like Syntiant expanded its Penang operations with a new manufacturing and R&D campus, doubling production capacity and creating 800 high-tech jobs. Rianlon Malaysia broke ground on a RM1.27 billion R&D and manufacturing base in Johor, signalling confidence in the state’s emerging position as a regional investment hub. The semiconductor sector saw particularly strong momentum: Chipbond Technology opened a new Penang facility, AIXTRON established advanced semiconductor manufacturing operations, and MKS celebrated the opening of its semiconductor supercenter factory.

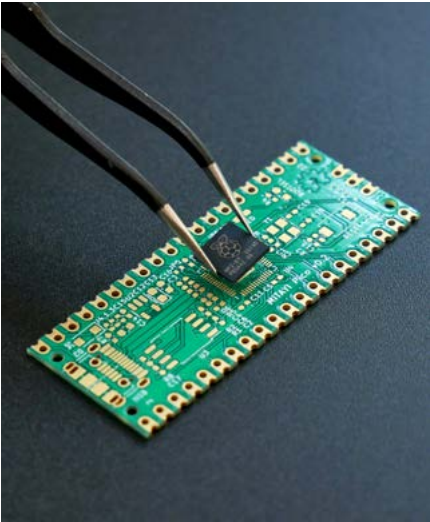
In fact, as of mid-August 2026, 87% of manufacturing projects approved since 2021 are currently in various stages of implementation, from construction through to production. Projects approved between 2021 and 2024 showed implementation rates exceeding 90%, reflecting MIDA’s speedy facilitation of the investor’s journey.



“MIDA’s core focus is turning investor confidence into operational success. Through swift project facilitation and initiatives like #InvestLokal, we are dedicated to ensuring every ringgit committed translates directly into advanced manufacturing capability, resilient supply chains, and high value opportunities for local businesses and talent.”
- Datuk Sikh Shamsul Ibrahim Sikh Abdul Majid, CEO of MIDA

The pipeline ahead remains robust. Over RM72 billion in proposals under review concentrated in semiconductors, AI infrastructure, renewable energy, and medical devices suggests that investor momentum will continue through the remainder of 2026 and into 2027.

Malaysia’s investment success rests not on any single advantage but on a disciplined combination of factors: political stability, institutional capacity, technological readiness, and a deliberate focus on quality investments that create genuine economic value. In a world seeking reliable alternatives, that combination has become invaluable.



Shu

A CULINARY JOURNEY THROUGH
THE CHINESE DIASPORA

Seasonal Meat Kambing Percik Barbecued
Lamb Rack with Ulam Raja and Percik Sauce

Restaurant Shu KL

Level 8, Annexed Block, Menara IMC
8 Jalan Sultan Ismail, 50250 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +60 11-2769 6838

Every cuisine carries stories of movement. Families leave one country for another, familiar ingredients become harder to find, recipes are adapted, and new flavours gradually find their way into old traditions. Over generations, these changes can create dishes that are very different from where they began, yet still carry an unmistakable connection to home.

It is this idea that sits at the heart of Restaurant Shu, an intimate contemporary restaurant at Menara IMC in the centre of Kuala Lumpur. Led by chef-patron Chin Hua Wong, Shu explores the Chinese diaspora through food, tracing the ways Chinese culinary traditions have travelled, adapted and evolved across borders.

Rather than attempting to define what Chinese cuisine should be, Wong is interested in what happens when it moves.

The concept is particularly resonant in

Malaysia, where migration has played a significant role in shaping the country's food culture. Recipes brought by earlier generations were adapted to local ingredients and influences, eventually becoming dishes that now feel inseparable from Malaysian identity. Shu takes that process of adaptation and places it at the centre of the dining experience.

For Wong, the subject is also closely connected to his own culinary journey. His career has taken him through kitchens and experiences in Singapore, Bangkok and Shenzhen, exposing him to the different ways Chinese flavours and techniques have developed across Asia. Those experiences eventually encouraged him to look more closely at his own roots and at the differences that emerge when a cuisine crosses borders.

Even the restaurant's name keeps the project personal. Shu is named after Wong's mother, giving a concept built around migration and heritage an intimate anchor.

The restaurant has quickly earned recognition since it arrived in Kuala Lumpur. Shu joined the MICHELIN Guide Kuala Lumpur &

Penang 2026 as a Selected restaurant, while Wong received the MICHELIN Young Chef Award. The recognition highlighted his exploration of Chinese heritage and diaspora cooking, placing the restaurant among a growing number of KL establishments telling increasingly personal stories through food.

One dish that captures Shu's approach particularly well takes its inspiration from drunken shrimp. Wong's interpretation uses aka ebi marinated in yellow wine and pairs it with a beurre blanc infused with the fragrance of Hua Diao wine. Ikura, squid and wakame add further layers of salinity and umami.

The combination neatly illustrates the restaurant's philosophy. Beurre blanc brings a classical French technique into the picture, while ebi introduces a Japanese ingredient, and Hua Diao wine pulls the dish firmly towards a Chinese flavour memory. These elements are not combined simply for the sake of novelty. Instead, they reflect the way cuisines naturally change as people, ingredients and techniques travel.



Yellow Wine — Shellfish with Hua Diao Butter
and Ikura



Yunnan Mushrooms, Pork, Koshihikari



Umami — Jeju Abalone, Liver Emulsion,
Roasted Aubergine

It is an idea that extends throughout the experience at Shu. Familiar Chinese flavours can appear in unexpected forms, while European techniques provide another language through which Wong can express them. The starting point may be a traditional preparation, a condiment or even an everyday food memory, but the finished dish often travels considerably further.

The restaurant's central question is deceptively simple: why can dishes with similar origins taste so different depending on whether they are eaten in China, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia or elsewhere?

There is, of course, no single answer. Ingredients differ, communities adapt and recipes are passed from one generation to the next. Sometimes substitutions made out of necessity eventually become traditions in their own right. The cuisine that emerges may no longer resemble its original form exactly,

but that does not make its connection to heritage any less meaningful.

Shu embraces these differences rather than trying to resolve them.

Its intimate setting is well suited to that philosophy. Located on Level 8 of Menara IMC along Jalan Sultan Ismail, the restaurant feels removed from the activity of the city below. The smaller dining environment creates space for the stories behind the dishes to become part of the meal, while the open kitchen reduces the distance between diner and chef.

For all its conceptual depth, Shu remains a restaurant first. Its ideas are expressed through food, not history lessons. Diners can simply enjoy the flavours, while those who recognise the references discover an added layer of meaning.

Shu's arrival also reflects how much Kuala

Lumpur's contemporary dining landscape has matured. Increasingly, chefs are looking towards personal histories and regional identities rather than relying solely on the traditional frameworks of European fine dining. Their own memories, families and cultural experiences are becoming fertile ground for ambitious cooking.

In Wong's hands, the Chinese diaspora provides almost endless territory to explore. It is a story stretching across countries, generations and kitchens, shaped every time someone carries a recipe from one home to another.

At Shu, those journeys are brought together at the table, offering diners a thoughtful reminder that food does not need to remain unchanged to preserve where it came from.

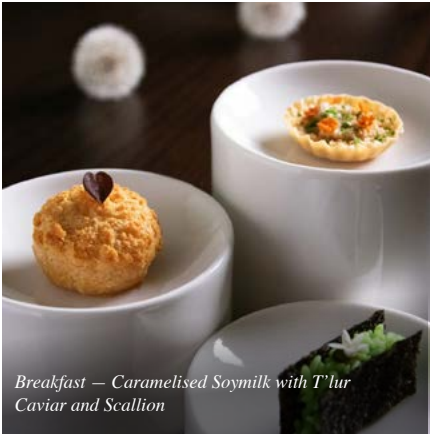
Sometimes, its evolution is precisely what keeps the story alive.



Nányang — Grouper with Nányang Curry and
Coconut Foam



M9 Wagyu with Oyster Emulsion and Roasted
Aubergine



Breakfast — Caramelised Soymilk with T'lur
Caviar and Scallion

HIDE KL

AN INTIMATE CULINARY EXPERIENCE
BEHIND CLOSED DOORS



Tandoori Lobster, Budu Aioli, Shallot Pakora, House-Made Brioche Bun

HIDE KL
The Ritz-Carlton Residences Kuala Lumpur
105 Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +60 12-988 2348

In a city where restaurants increasingly compete through scale and spectacle, there is something particularly appealing about a dining room that deliberately keeps things small. At Hide KL, dinner unfolds across just 13 seats, placing guests close to the kitchen and turning the evening into a more intimate exchange between chef and diner.

Located within The Ritz-Carlton Residences Kuala Lumpur, Hide is a chef's-table restaurant built around a tasting-menu format. The limited number of seats immediately changes the rhythm of the experience. There is no sprawling dining room or distant kitchen hidden behind closed doors. Instead, diners settle in around the

counter with a direct view of the preparation taking place in front of them.

That sense of proximity is central to Hide's appeal. A tasting menu can sometimes feel like a carefully choreographed procession, with plates appearing and disappearing while much of the work remains unseen. Here, the kitchen becomes part of the evening. Guests can observe the finishing touches, watch ingredients come together and experience the natural interaction that develops when only a handful of people are being served at a time.

It is a format that suits Hide's contemporary approach to fine dining. The restaurant has earned recognition from the MICHELIN Guide, which currently lists it among Kuala Lumpur's selected restaurants. Yet the experience is less about the formality traditionally associated with fine dining and

more about creating a focused setting in which the food receives undivided attention.

The menu is built as a progression rather than a collection of individual dishes ordered separately. Courses arrive in sequence, allowing flavours and textures to develop over the course of the evening. Seafood has played a particularly prominent role in Hide's culinary identity, alongside carefully selected meats, vegetables and seasonal produce.

As with many tasting-menu restaurants, what appears on the plate evolves. That element of change is part of the attraction. Returning diners may encounter a different sequence depending on the menu being served, while the compact format gives the kitchen room to refine individual dishes and explore new combinations.

Japanese ingredients and influences have appeared frequently within Hide's cooking, but the restaurant does not position itself as a conventional Japanese dining room. Instead, ingredients and techniques are incorporated into a broader contemporary style. The result is a menu that can move comfortably between delicate seafood, richer meat courses and precisely composed desserts without being restricted to one culinary tradition.

That freedom is particularly well suited to a chef's-counter environment. With diners seated only a short distance from the kitchen, presentation becomes more immediate. A sauce can be added at the last moment, a garnish positioned just before the plate is served and the details that might otherwise disappear behind a kitchen door become visible.

The experience also encourages a different relationship with the people preparing the meal. Rather than chefs existing anonymously somewhere behind the scenes, the counter places them within the dining room. Questions can arise naturally and dishes can be understood not only by reading a menu, but through the context provided as the evening progresses.

For diners accustomed to larger fine-dining restaurants, that intimacy can be refreshing.

There is also a certain exclusivity that comes naturally with only 13 seats. Reservations are necessarily limited, but the small capacity serves a purpose beyond scarcity. Each service remains controlled and personal,

allowing the restaurant to maintain the sense that guests are participating in one shared experience rather than simply occupying another table in a busy room.

The location provides an interesting contrast. The Ritz-Carlton Residences sit in the heart of Kuala Lumpur, surrounded by the movement and energy of the city, yet Hide creates a much more contained world within. Once seated at the counter, attention narrows to what is happening directly ahead: the kitchen, the next course and the conversations taking place around it.

That feeling of retreat is part of what has made small chef's-table restaurants increasingly compelling. Luxury dining no longer has to mean enormous chandeliers, white tablecloths or grand rooms. It can just as easily be expressed through access, attention and the luxury of having a kitchen prepare an entire evening for a very small number of people.

Hide understands that distinction.

Its restrained scale also places greater emphasis on the details. When there are only 13 diners, there are fewer distractions from the food itself. Temperature, texture, pacing and presentation become more noticeable, as does the progression from lighter opening courses towards richer flavours and the eventual transition into dessert.

The tasting-menu structure encourages guests to surrender some of the decision-making that usually accompanies dining out. Rather than choosing a starter and main course from a long menu, the experience

is shaped by the kitchen. For adventurous diners, this can be one of its pleasures: each course arrives with an element of anticipation.

Wine and beverage pairings can add another dimension, particularly when the progression of drinks is designed to complement the changing flavours across the menu. In an intimate setting such as Hide, those pairings become part of the overall narrative rather than an accompaniment chosen independently from a conventional wine list.

Ultimately, Hide's strength lies in knowing exactly what kind of restaurant it wants to be.

It does not attempt to impress through size. Nor does it need an enormous menu covering every possible preference. Instead, it concentrates on a limited number of guests, a carefully paced tasting experience and the immediacy of watching dinner take shape just beyond the counter.

Kuala Lumpur's dining landscape has changed considerably since Hide first appeared on the scene, with increasingly ambitious restaurants opening throughout the city. Yet the chef's-table format continues to hold a particular appeal precisely because it offers something that larger establishments cannot easily replicate.

At Hide, the most memorable luxury may simply be proximity: to the chefs, to the creative process and, ultimately, to the food itself.



Rock Melon , Cucumber and Citrus



Seasonal Tasting Menu Course at Hide KL



Hide KL's Intimate 13-Seat Chef's Counter



Seasonal Meat Kambing Percik Barbecued Lamb Rack with Ulam Raja and Percik Sauce



Snacks at Hide — showcasing the flavours of Malaysia in one bite



Kingfish Sashimi, Torch Ginger, Citrus Emulsion

BAR.KAR

WHERE FIRE TAKES CENTRE STAGE

BAR.KAR

Suite G-06, Ground Floor, G Tower
No. 199, Jalan Tun Razak, 50400
Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +60 11-2277 3131

There is something instinctive about cooking over fire. Long before temperature-controlled ovens and induction hobs, there were glowing embers, burning wood and the unmistakable aroma of ingredients meeting flame. At Bar.Kar in Kuala Lumpur, that primal method of cooking is not simply a technique used behind the scenes. It is the heart of the entire dining experience.

Located at G Tower along Jalan Tun Razak, Bar.Kar takes its name from the Malay word “bakar”, meaning to burn or grill, combined with the conviviality of a bar. The concept centres on raw-fire cooking, using wood, charcoal, smoke and heat to bring out different dimensions in meat, seafood and vegetables.

Opened in 2023, Bar.Kar has since earned a place in the MICHELIN Guide’s Kuala Lumpur selection. Its speciality is house-aged meats and seafood cooked over a wood-fired grill, but the experience begins before anything reaches the plate.

A dramatic corridor lined with logs leads into the dining room, while an 18-seat curved counter faces the open kitchen. From here, diners can watch chefs work at close range, moving ingredients between flame and glowing embers as smoke rises from the cooking station. The counter is arguably the best way to experience Bar.Kar, turning dinner into something more interactive than a conventional meal.

That theatre reaches its peak with the Penang oysters. They are finished using a flambadou, an old cooking tool heated intensely before flaming chicken fat is poured through it directly over the oyster. The result combines the oyster’s natural brininess with richness, smoke and burnt calamansi. It is dramatic to watch, but the spectacle has a purpose: the flame becomes part of the flavour.

Malaysian references run throughout the menu, preventing Bar.Kar from feeling like just another contemporary grill restaurant. Aged beef kerabu tartare combines beef with budu sauce, egg and chips, while beef salai carpaccio brings together pucuk paku, masak lemak and smoked dressing. Grilled cockle kerabu skewers arrive with betel leaves, bunga kantan salad and fish sauce.

Seafood is treated with the same attention to smoke and regional flavour. Coconut husk is used to smoke fish such as king salmon, hamachi and mackerel, accompanied by ingredients including belacan, sambal and asam soy. Wild Sabah tiger prawns meet the grill before being served with prawn bisque, while grilled squid is paired with kangkung and a sweet chilli peanut accompaniment.

Even familiar comfort foods are given the Bar.Kar treatment. Egg and toast combines homemade Hainan bread with chicken bak kwa and a slow-cooked egg, with more indulgent versions adding caviar or fresh truffle. It is nostalgic yet contemporary, fitting naturally into the restaurant’s broader style.

The larger plates allow the kitchen’s work with ageing and fire to become even more apparent. Fourteen-day dry-aged mountain duck is served with chai bui, mustard greens and duck tsukune, while dry-aged corn-fed chicken can be paired with chicken jus enriched with artisan soy or masak lemak and fermented chilli. Lamb ribs are aged before being finished with black vinegar, maltose and Bentong ginger.

Beef is another major part of the experience, ranging from aged Angus short rib and Spanish chuletón to Australian wagyu and Miyazaki A5 wagyu. Bar.Kar’s signature sirloin takes its Malaysian identity further by incorporating belacan into the ageing process, creating a meeting point between steakhouse traditions and Southeast Asian flavours.

Vegetables are not spared the flames either.

Leeks are deliberately burnt and paired with peanut relish and burnt lemon, Cameron Highlands asparagus is grilled with smoked sour cream, and even tofu enters the restaurant’s smoky vocabulary. Fire here is not reserved only for large cuts of meat.

There is also a communal quality to the experience. Diners sit around the counter watching ingredients transform over heat, chefs remain visible throughout the process, and many dishes are designed for sharing. The restaurant describes the experience as an “orchestra of flames”, reflecting the different ways fire can sear, smoke, caramelize and char.

What makes Bar.Kar particularly distinctive is how naturally Malaysian flavours sit alongside luxury ingredients. Belacan, budu, bunga kantan, masak lemak and Hainan bread appear comfortably beside caviar, truffle and dry-aged wagyu. Rather than allowing those premium ingredients to define the restaurant, Bar.Kar uses them as part of a broader exploration of Malaysian and Southeast Asian flavours.

For diners seated at the counter, the evening becomes as much about watching as tasting: the glow of the wood-burning station, the sudden flare of the flambadou and the aroma of smoke arriving before the next plate.

In a city filled with increasingly sophisticated restaurants, Bar.Kar has found its identity by returning to something elemental. Here, fire is not merely how dinner is cooked. It is the reason to come.



Grilled Cockle Kerabu Skewers with Betel Leaves, Bunga Kantan Salad and Fish Sauce



Signature Belacan-Aged Sirloin, served with house pickles and truffle-dressed romaine

STEKA GRILL HOUSE

A NEW FLAME IN MONT KIARA



STEKA GRILL HOUSE

G-03-2 & G-03-3, Steppes
32, Jalan Kiara 3, Mont Kiara
51200 Kuala Lumpur
Tel: +602 811 9456

There is a particular pleasure in a steakhouse that knows when to keep things simple. Good beef, intense heat and careful cooking do much of the work. At Steka Grill House, one of the newest dining additions to Mont Kiara, that straightforward relationship between meat and fire sits at the centre of the experience.

Located within Steppes, the new lifestyle

destination along Jalan Kiara 3, Steka arrives as part of a fresh wave of restaurants giving diners another reason to explore this corner of Kuala Lumpur. The concept is built around premium cuts of beef, selected according to cut, marbling and weight, then prepared with a focus on bringing out the character of the meat itself.

Rather than treating steak as just another main course, Steka makes it the reason to visit. Australian beef features prominently, with selections spanning Black Angus and highly marbled full-blood Wagyu. Availability can change depending on the cuts offered that day, bringing an element of

choice to the experience before the cooking even begins.

For steak enthusiasts, this is part of the appeal. Different cuts bring different qualities to the table. Some offer deeper beefiness and a firmer bite, while others are prized for the richness and tenderness that comes with heavier marbling. Choosing a steak becomes less about automatically ordering a familiar favourite and more about deciding what kind of experience you want from the meal.

Once selected, the beef is cooked over high heat, allowing the exterior to develop the char and caramelisation that make a well-

prepared steak so satisfying while preserving its tenderness within. It is an approach that depends on restraint. When the quality of the beef is the main attraction, there is little need to disguise it beneath elaborate sauces or excessive embellishment.

The grill naturally plays an important role. Heat transforms the fat running through a well-marbled cut, rendering it into the meat and creating the richness associated with Wagyu, while a good sear adds another layer of flavour to the surface. It is a familiar formula, but one that remains compelling when the ingredients and cooking are handled properly.

Steka's setting follows a similarly contemporary direction. The restaurant has a polished feel suited to Mont Kiara, but the experience remains centred on the food rather than formality. It works equally well for a relaxed dinner between friends and a more celebratory evening where a substantial steak and a bottle shared across the table are very much the point.

Its location also gives the restaurant a sense of newness. Steppes opened in 2026 as a lifestyle hub bringing together restaurants, cafés and other concepts within one destination. For a neighbourhood already known for its international dining scene, the development introduces another cluster of places to discover without heading into the city centre.

Within that mix, Steka occupies a clear niche. Kuala Lumpur has no shortage of

steakhouses, from traditional hotel institutions to modern restaurants built around premium Japanese and Australian beef. The challenge for any newcomer is therefore not simply serving an expensive cut of meat, but creating an experience diners will want to return to.

Steka's answer is to keep the proposition focused. Come for the beef, choose the cut that appeals to you and allow the grill to do the rest.

That simplicity makes it particularly suited to diners who enjoy understanding what is on their plate. Marbling, provenance and cut are increasingly part of the conversation around steak, especially as Malaysian diners become more familiar with the differences between breeds and grading systems. A ribeye offers something very different from a leaner cut, just as a richly marbled Wagyu delivers a different experience from Black Angus.

There is also something inherently communal about a steak dinner. Larger cuts lend themselves naturally to sharing, turning the meal into an occasion rather than a sequence of individually plated courses. A selection of sides around the table, a steak sliced for everyone to try and the inevitable debate over preferred doneness are all part of the ritual.

Steka taps into that familiar pleasure without trying to reinvent the steakhouse entirely. In a dining landscape where restaurants increasingly compete through elaborate

concepts and ever longer tasting menus, there is something refreshing about a place built around a proposition diners immediately understand.

The timing also feels right for Mont Kiara. The neighbourhood has long been one of Kuala Lumpur's most diverse dining enclaves, shaped by its international community and an appetite for everything from Korean barbecue and Japanese cuisine to cafés, wine bars and contemporary restaurants. Steppes adds another layer to that landscape, and Steka gives meat lovers a reason to make the new development a dinner destination.

Ultimately, a steakhouse is judged by what happens when the meat reaches the table. The crust should carry the flavour of the grill, the centre should arrive at the requested doneness and the quality of the beef should remain apparent with every bite.

At Steka Grill House, everything is designed to bring the experience back to those fundamentals. There may be plenty happening around it as Steppes establishes itself as one of Mont Kiara's newest lifestyle addresses, but inside Steka, the focus is reassuringly clear.

For diners who believe a good steak needs little more than quality beef, serious heat and someone who knows how to bring the two together, Steka Grill House is a new Kuala Lumpur address worth putting on the list.



UNDER THE SAME MOON

A TASTE OF MID-AUTUMN TRADITION

As the moon reaches its fullest and brightest, families gather, lanterns glow and one of the most enduring symbols of the Mid-Autumn Festival returns to the table: the mooncake.

More than a seasonal delicacy, the mooncake has long represented reunion and togetherness. Its round form mirrors the full moon, a symbol of completeness in Chinese culture. Traditionally cut into wedges and shared among family members, eating mooncakes is as much about the people around the table as the pastry itself.

Celebrated on the fifteenth day of the eighth lunar month, the Mid-Autumn Festival has been observed for centuries through moon gazing, lantern lighting and family gatherings. Classic Cantonese mooncakes, with their golden baked crusts, are often filled with lotus seed or red bean paste, while salted egg yolks recall the golden full moon.

Today, these time-honoured flavours sit alongside snow skin, durian, chocolate and inventive new combinations. Yet the sentiment remains unchanged. Mooncakes are still made to be given, cut and shared.

For Mid-Autumn Festival 2026, Kuala Lumpur's luxury hotels celebrate this enduring tradition through collections that bring together heritage, craftsmanship and contemporary creativity.



Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Mid-Autumn Collection

FOUR SEASONS HOTEL KUALA LUMPUR



Chef Ng Meng Loong of Yun House

A Season of Reunion

At Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur, this year's collection brings together traditional baked mooncakes and contemporary snow skin creations under the guidance of Chef Ng Meng Loong of Yun House.

Taking centre stage is the Bird's Nest, Dragon Fruit and Pecan Nuts, Musang King Durian Paste, Black Sesame Lotus Seed Paste with Almond, and White Lotus Seed Paste with Palm Sugar, Macadamia Nuts and Seaweed Snow Skin Mooncakes.

Traditionalists can turn to five baked varieties, including Pandan Lotus Seed Paste with Single Egg Yolk and Melon Seeds, Red

Bean Paste with Almond Flakes and Eight-Nut Treasure.

The mooncakes are presented in an elegant jewellery-inspired box dressed in auspicious shades of red, creating a keepsake for the season.

Available for collection until 25 September 2026.

Tel: +603 2382 8602



Bird's Nest, Dragon Fruit and Pecan Nuts, Musang King Durian Paste, Black Sesame Lotus Seed Paste with Almond, and White Lotus Seed Paste with Palm Sugar, Macadamia Nuts and Seaweed Snow Skin Mooncakes



Four Seasons Hotel Kuala Lumpur's Mid-Autumn Mooncakes Served with Tea

SHANGRI-LA KUALA LUMPUR



Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur's Mid-Autumn Gift Collection

Tradition Dressed for the Occasion

At Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur, heritage meets contemporary Malaysian creativity through a collection of traditional baked favourites and playful snowskin creations.

Classics include White Lotus Seed Paste, Lotus Seed Paste with Double Yolk and White Lotus Seed Paste with Yolk, while contemporary interpretations range from Yuzu Lotus Seed Paste with Bird's Nest and Red Bean Paste with 40-Year-Old Dried Tangerine Peel to Custard Lava and Toffee Butterscotch.



Matcha Strawberry, Musang King, Bird's Nest and Coconut, and Black Sesame and Nutella Snow Skin Mooncakes

The snowskin selection features Matcha Strawberry, Musang King, Bird's Nest and Coconut, and Black Sesame and Nutella.

This year's gift boxes draw inspiration from blooming peonies and ancient Chinese coin motifs, symbols of prosperity, harmony and abundance. Adding a Malaysian fashion element, the collection was unveiled in collaboration with Rizman Ruzaini, bringing contemporary design into a celebration rooted in tradition.

Available until 25 September 2026.

Tel: +603 2786 2378

RENAISSANCE KUALA LUMPUR HOTEL & CONVENTION CENTRE



Mid-Autumn Opulence — Handcrafted Mooncakes with a Pearl Jewellery Set by J&Kel Jade & Jewel

Mid-Autumn Opulence

Renaissance Kuala Lumpur Hotel & Convention Centre turns mooncake gifting into a lasting keepsake with Mid-Autumn Opulence, created in collaboration with Malaysian luxury jewellery artisan J&Kel Jade & Jewel.

Each set contains four handcrafted, halal-certified baked mooncakes: White Lotus Single Yolk, Pure Lotus Single Yolk, Red Bean with Almond Flakes and Black Sesame Lotus.

Accompanying them is a pearl jewellery set featuring a moon-inspired necklace with pendant and matching silver-finished earrings. Presented in an opal-inspired keepsake jewellery box, the collection connects the luminous pearl, the full moon and the ideas of completeness and togetherness central to Mid-Autumn.

Priced at RM1,368 nett per set, available from 1 September 2026.

Tel: +603 2706 8088



Renaissance Kuala Lumpur's Mid-Autumn Opulence Keepsake and Pearl Jewellery Collection

MANDARIN ORIENTAL KUALA LUMPUR



Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur's Celadon Green Mid-Autumn Collection

A Celebration Beneath the Moon

At Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur, Chinese tradition meets Malaysian heritage through classic baked mooncakes, delicate snow skin creations and artisanal chocolate interpretations.

This year's boxes are dressed in Celadon Green, inspired by the ancient art of celadon ceramics. Malaysian identity is woven into the design through depictions of the tropical rainforest and the hornbill, which the hotel describes as a guardian of family, community and nature.



Mandarin Oriental, Kuala Lumpur's Mid-Autumn Gift Boxes

The Timeless Tradition Collection features Lotus Paste with Single Yolk, Assorted Mixed Nuts, Pandan Paste with Single Yolk and Red Bean Paste, while the Snow Skin Collection includes Musang King Durian, Red Bean Paste with Bird's Nest & Rose, Pistachio Cream Cheese & White Lotus Paste, and Lotus Paste with Organic Five Treasures Assorted Nuts.

The Artisanal Chocolate Collection takes a contemporary turn with Pistachio Kataifi Chocolate, Mango-Passion & Rice Crispy Chocolate, Dulcey Caramel & Peanut Chocolate, and Hazelnut & Fig Chocolate,

inspired by the hornbill's fruit-rich diet. All three collections are priced at RM218 for four pieces and RM288 for eight pieces, with bespoke selections also available, perfect for celebrating cherished Mid-Autumn moments with loved ones and sharing meaningful festive memories together. The elegant presentation also makes each selection a thoughtful gift, beautifully blending Malaysian culture, traditional symbolism, modern flavours, and refined festive craftsmanship.

Available for collection from 7 July 2026.
Tel: +603 2330 8797



A TRADITION THAT CONTINUES

From lotus paste and salted egg yolks to snow skin, chocolate and elaborate keepsakes, the mooncake may continue to evolve with each generation, but its purpose remains beautifully familiar.

It is a gift exchanged between friends, families and colleagues, a delicacy divided around the table and a reminder of the importance of reunion. This Mid-Autumn Festival, perhaps the most meaningful way to enjoy one remains the simplest: cut it into pieces, pour the tea and share it with someone under the same moon.

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L
IVE IT UP

MORE THAN AN AWE-INSPIRING AIRPORT,
A GATEWAY TO THE WORLD.

KL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, THE GATEWAY TO GETAWAYS

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Malaysia Airports Strengthens Industry Partnerships for East Malaysia's Airport Development

Following the success of Malaysia Airports' inaugural Procurement and Project Showcase held in Kuala Lumpur recently, the airport operator has brought the East Malaysian edition closer to the contractors, consultants, suppliers, technology providers and specialist firms based in Sabah and Sarawak.

A total of 144 companies attended this event held in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.

They included 87 Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) G7 contractors, who represented 60% of participating companies.

This strong participation reflected the groundwork laid through last years Vendor Roadshows to broaden local participation in Malaysia Airports procurement ecosystem.

Through this year's initiative, East Malaysian-based companies were able to gain insights into upcoming airport development opportunities as infrastructure development and asset renewal gather pace across airports located here.



The engagement came at a time when Malaysia Airports is advancing the proposed upgrading and expansion of Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI), whose capacity would be increased from nine million to 12 million passengers per annum (mppa).

BKI's capacity peaked at 9.45 mppa in 2019. The airport handled over 7.95 mppa in 2024, making it Malaysia's third busiest airport after KL International Airport (KUL) and Penang International Airport (PEN).

Under BKI's RM442.3 million expansion plans, expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2028, the development includes the expansion and renovation of its existing terminal, airside infrastructure upgrades, as well as the reconfiguration of the kerbside and car park.

The RM442.3 million project will be funded almost entirely through private financing by Malaysia Airports.

“ East Malaysia is an important part of our development agenda.

While BKI is a major focus, the wider programme includes proposed improvements at airports serving communities and economic centres across Sabah and Sarawak.

The scale and diversity of the development pipeline, ranging from terminal and airside works to baggage systems, technology and passenger facilities, make early engagement with the regional vendor community essential.

By engaging the industry early, we want capable East Malaysia-based companies to understand what is required, strengthen their readiness and position themselves to participate in the opportunities ahead.

DATO' MOHD IZANI GHANI
Managing Director
of Malaysia Airports



Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI)

Malaysia Airports is also working with the government to support proposed upgrades at other airports across East Malaysia, including Sandakan (SDK), Lahad Datu (LDU) and Tawau (TWU) in Sabah, as well as Miri (MYJ) in Sarawak.

As Sabah's second-largest airport, TWU's annual capacity of 1.5 million mppa was already exceeded in 2023, when passenger traffic reached 1.71 mppa.

Upon completion of its RM120.9 million expansion project by 2028, approved under the 12th Malaysia Plan, the airport is expected to cater to 2.5 mppa.

Malaysia Airports recently presented updates on TWU's progress, operational priorities and terminal expansion during a working session with Finance Minister II, Senator Datuk Seri Amir Hamzah Azizan.

Among the key initiatives highlighted were traffic decongestion measures, enhanced enforcement, implementation of cashless parking and rectification of existing passenger boarding bridges, all aimed at improving passenger experience and operational efficiency.

Overall, these measures are expected to support TWU's growing tourism, trade and economic activities while strengthening its connectivity and role as a gateway to Sabah's east coast.

Meanwhile, under the Airport Development Fund administered by the Ministry of Transport for smaller domestic airports, RM24 million and RM20 million have been allocated for SDK and LDU respectively to improve their operational efficiency and passenger comfort.

At SDK, Malaysia Airports is reportedly finalising the scope of work, which includes improving public transport facilities by providing dedicated bus and taxi parking bays with pedestrian access to the terminal building.

Two passenger boarding bridges, upgrades to its baggage conveyor system and the relocation of X-ray screening machines for post-check-in baggage screening concept will also be included in its upgrading exercise.

Also in the works will be the refurbishment of SDK's immigration departure and arrival checkpoints to facilitate the installation of NIIS e-Gate facilities in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

SDK's departure hall will also be expanded to provide larger waiting areas and more commercial space to accommodate growing travel demand.



Sandakan Airport (SDK)

Physical works at the airport are expected to begin in the fourth quarter of 2026 and scheduled for completion by the end of 2027.

Additionally, a new RM1 million air conditioning system for SDK is scheduled for installation in the first quarter of 2027 to fix the terminal's comfort issues.

Meanwhile, MYJ's RM445 million expansion for a larger terminal, multi-storey car park and aerobridges is currently undergoing tender process, is expected to begin construction early next year, according to Sarawak Transport Minister Dato Sri Lee Kim Shin.

As Malaysia Airports continues to work with CIDB to facilitate the local vendors' participation in all these project scopes, procurement timelines and capability requirements across five priorities are crucial.

The priorities are capacity expansion, asset renewal and operational resilience, passenger experience, smart airport technology, and sustainable infrastructure.

Opportunities abound for the industry players beyond major construction to engineering, maintenance, baggage and terminal systems, traffic management, ICT, automation and energy solutions.

Besides providing potential vendors with a clearer understanding of the requirements of working within an operational airport environment, Malaysia Airports also requires projects to be delivered without compromising safety, service continuity or the passenger journey.

Vendor assessment goes beyond cost, taking into account technical capability and compliance, quality controls, delivery track record, and the ability to carry out work without disrupting airport operations.

All this in the name of building a future-ready airport ecosystem.



Kepler Club More Than Doubles Capacity at KL International Airport

Technology-driven airport hospitality brand, Kepler Club, recently celebrated the grand opening of its expanded facility at KL International Airport (KLIA) Terminal 1, more than doubling its capacity from 64 to 148 beds.

Its ribbon-cutting ceremony was attended by the Ambassador of Türkiye to Malaysia, His Excellency Nevzat Uyanık; Ambassador of Malaysia to Türkiye Adlan Mohd Shaffiq; Malaysia Airports Managing Director, Dato' Mohd Izani Ghan and its Senior General Manager, Hani Ezra Hussin.

Kepler Club's expanded facility also introduced a double-deck cabin design with private entrances for guests, the world's first of its kind within an airport terminal.

The configuration combines the intimacy of a hotel room with the space efficiency required in an airport environment.

Each DoubleKep cabin features superior sound insulation, allowing guests to connect to the in-cabin sound system via Bluetooth and enjoy their favourite Spotify playlists in complete privacy.

Available 24 hours daily and bookable by the hour, Kepler Club also offers travellers a lounge and working area, showers, smart toilets, lockers, high-speed Wi-Fi, and unlimited refreshments.

Check-in and check-out are fully automated through self-service kiosks. Guests can unlock their cabin doors directly through the Kepler app, eliminating the need to check in at the reception although a 24-hour receptionist is available.

Guests checking in via the app can personalise their stay by selecting a mood — Rainforest, Desert, Ocean, Mountain, or Fire — which sets the cabin's lighting and soundscape on arrival and gently wakes them in the same mood before checking out.



Kepler Club has also collaborated with Malaysian artists to feature their original artworks in selected cabins, with the artists' names displayed alongside the works, turning each guest's rest stop into a small gallery of Malaysian creativity

Since its launch at KLIA's airside location, Kepler Club has emerged as the highest-rated property on Booking.com among the 182 hotels around KLIA, scoring 9.2 out of 10 while its landside location followed closely behind with a 9.1 score.

For more information, visit www.keplerclub.com



Singapore Airlines Group's Passenger Traffic Grows 2.6% in July 2026

Passenger traffic at Singapore Airlines (SQ) Group increased 2.6% year-on-year in July 2026 amid growing capacity, with its national carrier and its low-cost carrier subsidiary, Scoot, carrying a combined 3.7 million passengers, up 4% more than the period a year ago.

Driven mainly by network expansion to East Asia, Europe and the Southwest Pacific, the growth in SQ Group's passenger capacity resulted in a load factor (LF) of 86%, with the monthly LF for SQ and Scoot at 84.8% and 90.2% respectively.



These figures come after the Group's first-quarter results recorded revenue of SGD5.7 billion with 10.9 million passengers carried.

However, higher fuel costs linked to the prolonged conflict in the Middle East, together with a larger share of losses in its 25.1% stake in Air India (AI), have resulted in a Group net loss of SGD76 million, its largest quarterly loss since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the challenging operating environment, passenger demand is holding up well.

Earlier this year, SQ and Air China (CA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a commercial joint venture partnership to deepen their collaboration.

Additionally, customers are offered more travel options and flexibility, greater value and additional benefits.

The agreement is expected to offer customers more travel options and flexibility, greater value and additional benefits.

It also covers the potential expansion of their codeshare partnership to additional destinations between Singapore and mainland China, within China and beyond the two countries.

Building on their long-standing relationship as Star Alliance members, the two carriers also intend to deepen the cooperation between CA's PhoenixMiles and SQ's KrisFlyer frequent flyer programmes.

Goh Choon Phong, SQ Chief Executive Officer said, "Our partnership will also support the growth of tourism, business, and cultural exchanges, strengthening economic and people-to-people ties while fostering deeper connections and shared opportunities between Singapore (SIN) and China."

Both airlines began their codesharing on selected flights in 2016. Today, they have codeshare on services between SIN and Beijing (PEK), Chengdu (TFU), Chongqing (CKG), and Shanghai (PVG).

For more information, visit www.singaporeair.com



Royal Brunei Airlines Expands Connectivity Through Strategic Partnerships

Brunei's flag carrier, Royal Brunei Airlines (BI), has expanded its long-standing codeshare partnership with Turkish Airlines (TK), introducing a new codeshare route between Bandar Seri Begawan (BWN) and Istanbul (IST) via Kuala Lumpur (KUL), effective 7 August 2026.

The enhanced partnership builds on the airlines' existing codeshare arrangement via Dubai (DXB), providing passengers with an additional gateway to Türkiye and beyond.

Under the expanded agreement, BI will operate the BWN to KUL sector, while TK will operate KUL to IST, strengthening Brunei's connectivity to Türkiye, Europe, the Middle East and destinations across TK's extensive global network.

The partnership also creates greater opportunities for international visitors to discover Brunei ahead of Visit Brunei 2027.

Earlier at ITB China 2026, BI further strengthened its regional connectivity efforts by formalising a strategic partnership with the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The MoU was signed by Dr Sharzede Datu Salleh Askor, Chief Executive Officer of STB, and Colonel Norsuriati Sharbini, Interim Chief Executive Officer of BI.

Dylan Redas Noel, STB Marketing Director of North Asia and New Markets, and Alirahim Abdul Rani, BI Manager of Integrated Marketing, witnessed the signing.

Also present at the signing were Dato Dennis Ngau, Chairman of STB, and Song Kai, President of Beijing Longway International Travel, BI's General Sales Agent in China.

Dr Sharzede said, "Strategic collaborations such as this are important in strengthening accessibility, enhancing destination visibility, and creating greater opportunities to encourage travel into Sarawak and the wider Borneo region."

"As the gateway to Borneo, connectivity remains an important component in supporting our ongoing tourism growth and international outreach efforts."

Located on the northern coast of Borneo, Brunei is the largest source of international visitors to Sarawak, accounting for around 1.7 million arrivals in 2025.

Colonel Norsuriati said China remains a key market for BI and the wider Borneo region, with strong opportunities to further position Brunei and Sarawak as compelling destinations for travellers seeking authentic cultural, nature and wellness experiences.

"Through our established network and ongoing partnerships, we remain committed to enhancing regional access and welcoming more visitors to discover the richness and diversity of Borneo."



For more information, visit www.flyRB.com



Riyadh Air's New Direct Service to Kuala Lumpur, A Gateway to Southeast Asia

The recent launch of Saudi Arabia national carrier, Riyadh Air's (RX) inaugural thrice weekly service between Riyadh (RUH) and Kuala Lumpur (KUL) marks its expansion into one of Southeast Asia's (SEA) most dynamic markets.

Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani, Managing Director of Malaysia Airports, described RX's decision to make KUL its first destination in SEA as significant for Malaysia.

"As the ninth Middle Eastern airline to serve KL International Airport (KUL), its entry further strengthens our connectivity with a region that is an increasingly important market for tourism, trade, and investment," he remarked.

Tony Douglas, RX Chief Executive Officer said, "This new route builds a vital bridge between Saudi Arabia and the broader Association of Southeast Asian Nations region."

"By facilitating seamless travel for business, tourism and education, we are actively supporting Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 while delivering an elevated, digitally led travel experience for our guests."



Besides advancing position RUH as a leading global aviation hub, the route also supports the continued growth of religious travel by providing Malaysian Umrah and Hajj pilgrims with enhanced access to Saudi Arabia.

Deploying RX's new Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, the inaugural arrival to KUL on 31 July 2026 was celebrated with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Operating RX's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner, the inaugural flight to KUL on 31 July 2026 was celebrated with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.

The event was attended by His Excellency (HE) Osamah Dakhel Al-Ahmadi, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Malaysia; HE Dato' Syed Mohamad Bakri Syed Abdul Rahman, Ambassador of Malaysia to Saudi Arabia; Dato' Mohd Izani Ghani, Managing Director of Malaysia Airports; Dato' Seri Jana Muniyan Secretary General of the Ministry of Transport and Chu Chuan Hwa, Deputy Secretary General (Tourism) of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture, alongside other senior airport and government officials.

Tokens of appreciation were also exchanged between Vincent Coste, RX Chief Commercial Officer and Malaysia Airports, as well as other dignitaries.



Guests on RX's inaugural service to KUL were invited to become founding members of its loyalty programme, Sfeer. Under its Best Offer Guaranteed, members are offered priority access to bookings on new routes, along with other benefits such as a 'no points expiry' policy and complimentary Wi-Fi onboard for seamless connectivity.

Derived from the Arabic word for 'ambassador' and the English word 'sphere', Sfeer embodies the generous spirit of Saudi Arabia while fostering a global community.

RX's B787-9 aircraft offers four classes of seats - Business Elite, Business, Premium Economy and Economy - and features one of the world's most advanced in-flight entertainment systems.

For more information, visit www.riyadhair.com



Philippine Airlines' Resilient Measures Amid Rising Fuel Costs

Philippine Airlines (PR) has advanced key strategic initiatives to strengthen its global competitiveness and enhance customer experience, moving quickly to mitigate the impact of higher fuel prices arising from the conflict in the Middle East (ME).

Apart from targeted fare and capacity adjustments across its network, the airline also implemented schedule adjustments on selected domestic, ME and regional routes while maintaining its stable long-haul international network.

While the Philippine flag carrier's total revenue for the first half of 2026 rose 5.9% to USD1.746 billion, a USD219.5 million increase in fuel expenses led the airline to incur a net loss of USD25.1 million.

Nevertheless, PR's cash balance remained stable at USD456.3 million as of 30 June 2026, with positive free cash flow at USD135 million and capital expenditures totalling USD153 million, underlying its resilience.

“

We moved quickly on fare and network adjustments, protected our liquidity, and continued investing in the fleet and partnerships that will strengthen our long-term competitiveness.

International demand remains strong, our cost discipline is holding, and we enter the second half with the flexibility to manage through this disruption while staying focused on our strategic plan.

”

RICHARD NUTTALL

President at Philippine Airlines

PR recently welcomed the third of its nine Airbus A350-1000 aircraft ordered in 2023, reinforcing its ongoing fleet modernisation and long-haul growth strategy.

Following its debut on the Manila (MNL) to San Francisco (SFO) route on 5 August 2026 with thrice weekly services, the A350-1000 has transitioned to daily flights in September, bringing PR's newest premium long-haul travel experience to more customers

As the first and only airline in Southeast Asia to operate the A350-1000, its flagship aircraft features the latest Business, Premium Economy and Economy Class cabins, offering significantly improved fuel efficiency, lower carbon emissions and larger cargo capacity than previous generation aircraft.

The airline announced orders at the recent the Farnborough International Airshow 2026 of up to 20 Boeing 787-10s and 14 Airbus A350-1000s alongside their respective GE Aerospace GEnx-1B and Rolls-Royce Trent XWB-97 engines to be delivered between 2031 to 2036.



“These widebody aircraft and engine investments will enable PR to expand its reach, compete more effectively in key international markets, and serve better the evolving needs of travellers,” said Lucio C. Tan III, President and CEO of PAL Holdings, Inc, which owns and operates the airline.

For more information, visit www.philippineairlines.com



Emirates Grabs Five Accolades in The Middle East and Africa 2026 Flyers Choice Awards

Dubai-based Emirates (EK) has been voted by travellers as the preferred airline in the Middle East (ME) and Africa in the 2026 Flyers' Choice Awards organised by AirlineRatings.com.

The United Arab Emirates carrier also performed strongly in several individual categories, taking the top position in Preferred Premium Economy.

EK finished second in three other categories: Preferred Business Class, Preferred Economy and for cabin crew service, demonstrating broad passenger recognition across multiple areas of the airline's onboard experience.

Meanwhile, the airline and South African Airways (SA) recently expanded their codeshare partnership, providing access to nine cities and establishing the start of a reciprocal codeshare agreement between both carriers.



The two have been partners for almost 30 years, making it one of the longest partnerships in EK's portfolio.

Amid the ongoing conflict in the ME, the airline has offered customers greater flexibility and wider choices, enabling them to tailor their travel plans for more peace of mind booking through to arrival at their destination.

Starting 10 August 2026, EK customers travelling to Dubai (DXB) can have make unlimited free changes to their travel dates across all Economy, First and Business Class fares.

Additionally, customers travelling anywhere on the airline's network are entitled to one free date change on tickets booked from 2 April 2026, including journeys connecting through DXB. They can also hold a fare for 24 hours at no charge while finalising their plans.

Another benefit for customers is reduced refund fees on flights to DXB on fares in the Economy and Business Class.

The airline has also introduced an industry first comprehensive travel insurance product covering a range of scenarios, including enhanced conflict cover with reimbursement of medical expenses up to USD25,000 and a free trip extension of up to 30 days.

This insurance cover is not restricted by government travel advice. Customers are covered for trip cancellation, baggage delay and losses in addition to unlimited worldwide medical expenses and emergency evacuation.

Available at an accessible premium and across 27 countries, the cover can be purchased at the time of booking on the airline's website or added to an existing booking through its online tool, Manage Booking.

For more information, visit www.emirates.com



Garuda Indonesia Tests High-Speed Inflight Connectivity at 30,000 Feet

Commemorating Indonesia's 81st Independence Day on 17 August 2026, Garuda Indonesia (GA) has accelerated its service transformation through a pilot project for high-speed in-flight connectivity on flight GA-960 from Jakarta (CGK) to Medina (MED), which is increasingly relevant to the needs of today's digital society.

A total of 81 passengers were granted special access to enjoy the high-speed internet access for various digital activities, including making video calls at an altitude of over 30,000 feet.

The trial was conducted as part of the Sinyal Merdeka campaign, reflecting the spirit of independence through connectivity and innovation.

GA President and Chief Executive Officer, Glenny Kairupan, viewed this development of high-speed in-flight connectivity as part of the airline's efforts to take its transformation to the next phase.

Through this pilot project, Indonesia's national flag carrier will enhance its technological performance, user experience, operational readiness, safety and compliance with aviation regulations.

Further service development will be carried out in phases, taking into account the evaluation results, fleet readiness and supporting technology, with implementation projected to begin in 2027.

Meanwhile, GA's consistent operational performance on a global scale has positioned it as the world's most punctual airline for five consecutive months from March to July 2026.

The airline recorded an arrival On-Time Performance (OTP) of 95.4% across 6,895 flights in July 2026, according to the OAG's OTP Rankings,

GA Vice President Director, Thomas Oentoro, identified consistent flight punctuality as one of the key indicators in the airline's performance transformation journey, notably in strengthening its operations fundamentals and service quality.

"Punctuality is a crucial element in building trust with our customers," he added.

Based on OAG's methodology, flight punctuality is measured by comparing an aircraft's actual arrival time at the gate to its scheduled arrival time, with flights arriving within 15 minutes of the scheduled arrival time categorised as on time.

In a move to strengthen GA's international flight connectivity, particularly to the Middle East, Europe, Africa, and Australia, GA recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Saudia, Saudi Arabia's national flag carrier.



The collaboration between the two carriers includes strengthening the codeshare schemes and interline agreements besides exploring potential joint-business opportunities.

Thomas said the partnership also aligned with the need to create a better integrated pilgrimage travel service ecosystem as the mobility among Indonesians to the Holy Land increases alongside their demand for more efficient, comfortable and connected flight services.

For more information, call **+603-27026301** or visit **www.garuda-indonesia.com**



TransNusa's Historic Direct Flight from Bandar Lampung, Sumatra to Kuala Lumpur

Strengthening regional connectivity, TransNusa (8B) has launched a new daily international service connecting Bandar Lampung (TKG) in Sumatra directly to Kuala Lumpur (KUL), providing passengers with a convenient point-to-point travel option without the need to transit through other hubs.

The new route establishes a direct gateway between TKG and KUL, reducing travel times and supporting greater opportunities for trade, tourism and business between the two destinations.

8B Group Chief Executive Officer, Datuk Bernard Francis said, "As part of our strategic growth, we aim to excel in the business of absolute route creation."

The new service marks the first direct connection between TKG and KUL operated by TransNusa using the COMAC C909 aircraft with 95 Economy Class seats.

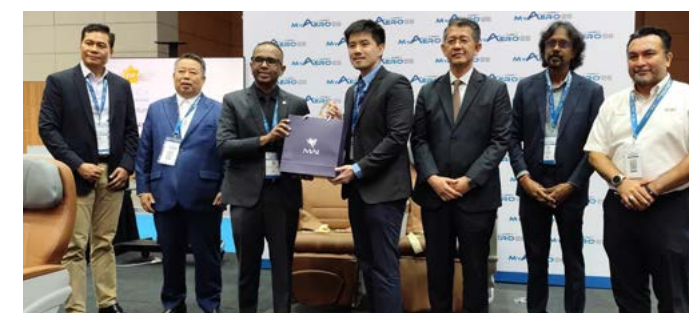
Rahmat Mirzani Djausal, Governor of Lampung Province, was among the passengers on the inaugural flight on 24 August 2026. The flight was welcomed by Samuel Lee Thai Hung, Deputy Director General (Promotions II), Tourism Malaysia and other airport representatives.

Bandar Lampung, a vibrant capital of the Lampung Province on the southern tip of Sumatra, is rapidly emerging as a premier economic and tourism destination.

Its cultural landmarks include the legendary Krakatoa volcanic complex and Way Kambas National Park, a sanctuary for endangered Sumatran elephants.

Additionally, Bandar Lampung is a major agricultural and trade hub known for its premium coffee, pepper and robust maritime industries.

For more information, visit **www.transnusa.co.id**



Myanmar Airways International Paves the Way for More Collaborations

Privately-owned Myanmar Airways International (8M) has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Pecca Aviation Services Sdn Bhd to collaborate on cabin interior and seat assembly services at the recent MyAero Summit 2026.

Present at the MoU signing ceremony were Pecca Aviation Services Chief Operating Officer K Karunakaran and Invest Selangor Chief Executive Officer Dato' Hasan Azhari Idris.

As part of 8M's cabin interior transformation programme, the MoU covers cabin design enhancements, cabin repair and refurbishment, as well as soft furnishing solutions.

Earlier this year, the airline announced a Special Prorate Agreement



with Saudia (SV) to expand travel options between Myanmar and Saudi Arabia.

The agreement will enable guests to book travel on a single itinerary between Jeddah (JED) or Madinah (MED) and Yangon (RGN), with connections via key regional hubs, including Bangkok (BKK), Singapore (SIN), Kuala Lumpur (KUL) and Dubai (DXB).

Guests will benefit from coordinated itineraries across both airlines' networks, enabling a more streamlined booking process.

Additionally, the partnership expands SV's reach into Myanmar and strengthens its connectivity with Southeast Asia, supporting growing travel demand between the two markets.

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



AirBorneo, The Pride of Sarawak Elevates Regional Air Travel

Sarawak-owned AirBorneo (MY) has gone beyond providing essential rural air services (RAS) and has ventured into the commercial jet market with the recent launch of its Kuching (KCH) services to Kuala Lumpur (KUL) and Singapore (SIN). The airline has also surprised passengers with a range of unique onboard offerings.

At the helm of the rebranded MY is Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Megat Ardian Wira Mohd Aminuddin, who brings more than two decades of experience in the aviation industry to the role.

Megat's wealth of experience and industry knowledge, accumulated throughout his career, from his first aviation role with AirAsia Malaysia (AK) in 2004 as an Executive of Airport and Public Policy to his most recent position as Chief Aviation and Strategy Officer at Malaysia Airports, has equipped him well to embrace the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Since assuming his current role on 1 January 2026, the 54-year-old CEO acknowledged he had come full circle to know exactly what an airport requires from an airline and vice versa having spent almost eight years with Malaysia Airports from 2018 to 2025.

He recalled picking up his CEO skills as far back as 2007 during his second tenure with Malaysia Airlines (MH) when he was the special officer to the then Managing Director/CEO and worked on strategies related to the national carrier's transformation, among other things.

From 2012 to 2015, Megat was with Saudi Arabia's flynas, where he rose to be its Chief Commercial Officer, overseeing low-cost carrier's network, revenue management, marketing and moving its sales to more direct distribution channels.

Megat was also a trainer for airlines such as Jeju Air and Jetstar during his short stint with the International Air Transport Association (IATA). He believes these experiences have equipped him for his new role, whose immediate task at MY was "to launch an airline within an airline".



“Our priority remains to deliver safe, reliable and high-quality service while continuously enhancing the travel experience for our passengers.”

”

MEGAT ARDIAN MOHD AMINUDDIN

Chief Executive Officer at AirBorneo

The former MASwings (MH) was subsequently rebranded as MY and had its operations stabilised with the right talents within six months, a process that would typically have taken one to two years to accomplish, according to Megat.

MY's manpower needs are now adequately resourced with close to 460 staff for the airline to operate its network safely, reliably and efficiently.



About 300 of them are with the rural air services (RAS) based in Kota Kinabalu (BKI) and Miri (MYY) while the rest of the staff are based in Kuching (KCH), where MY's jet operations are and also where the airline intends to grow its local talents.

The RAS, an important lifeline for the residents of the remote corners of Borneo, continues to be operated by the turboprop fleet inherited from MH, comprising eight ATR 72-500s and six DHC-6-400 Twin Otter aircraft.

The long-term plan is to have eight new ATR -600 series aircraft, with two arriving in 2027, four in 2028 and the last two in 2029 to replace the ATR 72-500s, Megat disclosed.

Identifying reliability and serviceability as the main challenges faced by its RAS, Megat sees operational resiliency as critical to MY's success.

“This means working, especially with maintenance, retail and overhaul (MRO) service providers to ensure that parts arrive on time and resources are placed at the right time for aircraft to be serviceable so that they can fly more.”

For MY, its role extends beyond fulfilling its social responsibility to remote communities in East Malaysia and Labuan. The airline also aims to establish a wider catchment area and connect it to Kuching (KCH) as a gateway.

Following its recent maiden connection to KUL, the airline is now looking to expand its reach to the other destinations in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), as could be seen from the successful launch of its daily flights from KCH to SIN on 22 July 2026.

On the challenges facing its jet operations, Megat opined that the airline's growth needs to be managed in a controlled manner, despite the excitement surrounding its growth potential and opportunities.

MY currently deploys two wet leased Boeing 737-800s for its jet operations for a determined period from July 2026 to December 2027 to support its new routes from KCH to KUL and SIN. Its agreement with Batik Air Malaysia covers the aircraft, maintenance and insurance.

Megat said the next phase of its jet services' growth would be to procure the aircraft through dry lease from lessors and have its own cabin crew.

“We are also looking at network recalibration and rationalisation, prioritising flights that are high in demand and merging those with low load factors.”

Highlighting MY's product distinctiveness, Megat enthused about the way its crew interact with customers and how the elements of taste and sound or audio onboard the airline are different. “We want to be customer obsessed.”

Although the airline is still in the early stages of its sustainability journey, it has taken small steps towards this journey. “Our signature calamansi drink is sourced from local providers while the cartons we use are reheatable and recyclable,” he said.

Meanwhile, discussions are at an initial stage with service providers on the pricing and volume for the use of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF), as the airline explores ways to advance its sustainability efforts.

MY has been participating in international trade events and local fairs to raise awareness of its growing presence as a local airline and is eager to engage in more business dealings besides working closely with travel agents, destination management companies to market its destinations. These include the recent three-day PATA Travel Mart (PTM) 2026, held for the first time in Kuching from 18 to 20 August 2026.

Asked about the legacy that Megat plans to leave behind, he modestly replied, “A legacy is only worthwhile if you leave it for the future.”

He sees himself as just passing through and is here to expand MY as much as he could with his team to fuel its future. His parting words, “The energy comes from the team. Every day is not a challenge when you have the right team.”



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Ozhean Clinic

WHERE KOREAN BEAUTY HERITAGE
MEETS MODERN AESTHETIC SCIENCE

Kuala Lumpur's aesthetic scene has long looked to Korea for inspiration, but few clinics in the city can claim a direct lineage to Gangnam's dermatology district itself.

Ozhean Clinic is one of them. Founded in Seoul in 2015 by Dr. Park Ji Youn, a Korean board-certified dermatologist, the brand has since grown to five branches across South Korea before making its way to Malaysia, where it now operates in Bangsar and Bukit Jalil.

For Ozhean, the promise is simple: bring the same clinical rigour and refined aesthetic philosophy that built its reputation in Korea to a Malaysian clientele increasingly fluent in K-beauty standards.

At the heart of Ozhean's approach is the belief that good skin is not chased through trends but built through consistency, precision and an understanding of each individual's skin biology.

The clinic's name itself, derived from a Korean phrase meaning "meet beauty," reflects a guiding philosophy that beauty is not manufactured but uncovered. This is a result of proper diagnosis, disciplined treatment planning and long-term skin health rather than one-off quick fixes.

This philosophy takes shape through Ozhean's signature FIT programme, a treatment framework developed by a team of Korean aesthetic doctors and adapted for the clinic's Malaysian-certified physicians.

Clients undergo a thorough consultation and skin assessment before any procedure is recommended, ensuring treatment plans are built around individual concerns rather than a one-size-fits-all menu. From there, the clinic's range spans some of the most sought-after modalities in modern aesthetic medicine such as HIFU and Ultherapy for skin lifting and tightening, Pico Laser and RF microneedling for pigmentation and scarring, thread lifts and dermal fillers for facial contouring, and Rejuran for skin regeneration.

Beyond the face, Ozhean also addresses slimming, hair loss and FUE hair transplantation, positioning itself as a fuller-spectrum aesthetic and wellness destination rather than a single-treatment specialist.

Being LCP-certified places Ozhean within Malaysia's recognised standard for aesthetic practice, a detail that matters to clients who are increasingly discerning about safety credentials alongside results. It is a reassurance that pairs naturally with

the clinic's Korean pedigree: the expectation of exacting technique, paired with local regulatory accountability.

What distinguishes Ozhean within KL's crowded aesthetic landscape is less about offering something entirely new and more about the consistency of its Korean-honed methodology, translated faithfully for a Malaysian setting.

Clients are not simply receiving a Korean-inspired treatment menu; they are stepping into a system that has been tested and refined across five clinics in Seoul before ever reaching Bangsar. For a market that has grown increasingly educated about aesthetic medicine, that lineage carries weight and signals a clinic built on clinical continuity rather than a passing trend.

As Ozhean continues to grow its presence in Kuala Lumpur, its focus remains on bridging two beauty cultures: the exacting, research-driven standards of Korean dermatology, and the personalised, relationship-based care that Malaysian clients have come to expect from their trusted aesthetic providers. It is this blend, precision without losing the personal touch, that positions Ozhean as a clinic worth watching in KL's next chapter of aesthetic medicine.

September in Style

THIS SEASON'S HOT PICKS



Facetasm
Logo-Embroidered Jacket
RM 1,721

Facetasm brings its directional Japanese streetwear sensibility to this logo-embroidered jacket. The relaxed shape and understated branding make it a versatile statement layer, offering just enough detail to elevate simple separates while remaining easy to incorporate into an everyday wardrobe.



Moncler
Hemmoor Jacket
RM 5,864

A sleek take on transitional outerwear, Moncler's Hemmoor jacket brings the house's performance-led aesthetic into an everyday silhouette. Its clean construction and understated black finish make it an easy layer for the new season, whether styled casually with denim or paired with smarter separates.



Marni
Pencil Logo-Print Shirt
RM 1,840

A crisp shirt gets the Marni treatment with playful pencil-inspired logo detailing. Crafted from cotton, the relaxed piece brings a graphic touch to an everyday essential without overwhelming the silhouette. Pair it with tailored trousers or denim for an effortless balance of polish and personality.



Marni
Water-Repellent Taffeta Jacket
RM 5,969

Marni combines practicality with its distinctive contemporary aesthetic in this water-repellent taffeta jacket. Lightweight and easy to layer, the streamlined silhouette makes a versatile addition to a transitional wardrobe while retaining the playful, unconventional character associated with the Italian house.



EA7 Emporio Armani
Colour-Block Sweater
RM 1,067

Sporting influences meet refined Italian design in this colour-block sweater from EA7 Emporio Armani. Its mixed-fabric construction and graphic panelling give classic knitwear a contemporary update, making it an easy choice for relaxed days when comfort and considered styling are equally important.



RRD
Zip-Fastening Jacket
RM 1,070

RRD keeps things streamlined with a lightweight zip-fastening jacket designed around a clean, contemporary silhouette. Its pared-back aesthetic makes it particularly versatile for transitional dressing, working as an understated outer layer that can move effortlessly between casual and smarter looks.

Modern Femininity

THIS SEASON'S HOTPICKS



Proenza Schouler
Nilo Fringe-Trimmed Jacquard Dress
RM 11,800

Proenza Schouler explores texture and movement with the Nilo dress, crafted in wool jacquard and finished with tactile fringe. A clean scoop neckline and flared silhouette balance the intricate surface detail, creating a piece that feels both artisanal and distinctly modern.



Marni
Short-sleeves shirt
RM 3,429

Marni transforms a simple blouse through thoughtful proportions and unexpected detailing. A V-neckline keeps the silhouette clean, while the side-zip construction introduces the offbeat design element the house is known for. Style it with understated separates and let its architectural shape do the talking.



Dolce & Gabbana
Rose-Print Charmeuse Mini Dress
RM 10,855

Romance takes centre stage in Dolce & Gabbana's rose-print charmeuse mini dress. The floral motif and lustrous silk fabrication capture the house's unapologetically feminine aesthetic, while the shorter silhouette brings a youthful energy to its signature Italian glamour.



AMI Paris
Ruffled Blouse
RM 1,084

AMI Paris softens its typically understated Parisian aesthetic with this ruffled blouse. Crafted from a silk-blend fabrication, the fluid silhouette and feminine detailing make it an elegant option for both work and occasion dressing. Pair it with tailored trousers for a modern take on romantic styling.



Maison Margiela
Freeze-Frame Silk Midi Dress
RM 10,263

Maison Margiela brings its conceptual approach to eveningwear with the Freeze-Frame midi dress. Crafted from silk, the fluid silhouette combines understated luxury with the house's unconventional design language. Elegant yet unexpected, it makes a sophisticated statement without relying on excessive embellishment.



Versace
Twist-Detail Silk Dress
RM 5,279

Versace channels its signature confidence through this silk dress, where a twist detail adds shape and movement to the silhouette. The rich green shade heightens its statement appeal, while the fluid fabrication keeps the look elegant. An effortless choice for evenings that call for something memorable.

Mercedes-Benz

Fashion Week

Kuala Lumpur 2026

WELCOME TO COUTURE. WELCOME TO BEYOND



For three days in August, The Exchange TRX became a meeting point for fashion, design and contemporary culture as Mercedes-Benz FashionWeek Kuala Lumpur (MBFWKL) returned for its eighth edition. Held from 21 to 23 August 2026, the showcase brought together established designers, emerging names and regional talents under the theme “Welcome to Couture. Welcome to Beyond.”

The theme reflected an event that had grown beyond the conventional idea of fashion week. While the runway remained at its heart, MBFWKL 2026 presented a broader interpretation of modern luxury, shaped by craftsmanship, individuality, experimentation and creative expression.

This year’s edition also coincided with Mercedes-Benz celebrating 140 years since Carl Benz patented the first automobile in 1886. Against this backdrop, MBFWKL highlighted the creative parallels between fashion and automotive design. Both rely on proportion, form, materials and meticulous attention to detail, while ultimately serving

as expressions of personality.

A total of 19 designers and labels participated in MBFWKL 2026, creating a line-up that reflected the breadth of Malaysia’s evolving fashion landscape while welcoming perspectives from around the region. The collections moved between couture, contemporary ready-to-wear, streetwear and more experimental expressions, demonstrating just how diverse the local and regional fashion scene had become.

Several names made their MBFWKL runway debut, among them JOYCE COUTURE, Ethereal by Amni S, ROMANCE 1314, D I Studios and ARUNSAYFULL. Their arrival injected fresh energy into the programme and gave newer creative voices the opportunity to present alongside established designers.

They joined an accomplished roster that included Justin Yap, Dickson Lim, Coterie by Celest Thoi, EL by Ellie Lim, byThian, P-23, SEIBU, TEMMA PRASETIO and DIKSON

MAH. UnitedWood, SETH&LUNA MALAYA and Joe Chia also returned to the MBFWKL stage, reinforcing the event’s role as both a platform for emerging talent and a space for established names to reveal the next evolution of their creative journeys.

Rather than presenting one prevailing trend, the programme celebrated contrast. Refined construction appeared alongside relaxed silhouettes, romanticism shared the runway with minimalism, while traditional interpretations of luxury sat comfortably beside streetwear influences and unisex design.

Regional participation expanded that perspective. Singapore was represented by Furry Tales by Leia, a label that brought together fashion, art and an affinity for animals. Beyond its animal-inspired creations, the brand used its platform to raise awareness around rescue, adoption and wildlife conservation.

Indonesia’s BLANC STUDIO brought a



different sensibility through contemporary unisex fashion informed by minimalism, streetwear and individual expression. Its presence reinforced MBFWKL’s growing regional character and the exchange of ideas taking place across Southeast Asia’s creative communities.

What connected these varied approaches was an emphasis on individuality. Rather than prescribing what luxury should look like in 2026, MBFWKL allowed designers to interpret it through their own identities and creative languages.

The Exchange TRX provided an appropriate setting. Since opening, the destination has established itself as one of Kuala Lumpur’s prominent fashion and lifestyle hubs, bringing together international fashion houses, contemporary retail, dining and the adjoining TRX City Park.

Behind the runway, the production was supported by a network of partners including Kimarie Hairdressing, Kimpton Naluria KL, Luen Heng, M·A·C Cosmetics, SEIBU, Signature Total Home & Living Solutions and The Exchange TRX, each contributing to the wider fashion week experience.



MBFWKL also marked the finale of Mercedes-Benz Malaysia’s week-long showcase at The Exchange TRX, held from 17 to 23 August. During FashionWeek, guests were given a closer look at the new Mercedes-Maybach SL 680



The relationship between these creative worlds was particularly apparent in their



shared appreciation for construction and detail. Couture often depends on elements that may not immediately be noticed: the structure beneath a silhouette, the precision of a seam, the selection of a material or the way fabric responds to movement. Similar considerations of proportion, material and finish extend throughout the wider world of luxury design.

More importantly, the eighth edition demonstrated how much MBFWKL itself had evolved. Emerging designers received visibility alongside established Malaysian names, regional labels introduced different perspectives and contrasting interpretations of fashion were given space to coexist.

“Welcome to Couture. Welcome to Beyond.” therefore felt less like a slogan and more like an invitation to reconsider what couture and contemporary luxury could encompass.

Over three days at The Exchange TRX, that answer came in many forms: craftsmanship and experimentation, established names and new voices, romanticism and streetwear, Malaysian creativity and regional exchange.

MBFWKL 2026 ultimately celebrated fashion as a creative language that continually changes with the people who shape it. Eight editions in, the event had become more than a series of runway shows. It had evolved into a platform for the ideas, identities and ambitions helping shape the next chapter of fashion in Malaysia and across the region.



MERCEDES-MAYBACH SL 680 MONOGRAM SERIES

OPEN-TOP LUXURY, REIMAGINED

Some cars are designed around practicality. Others exist because driving can still be an occasion. The new Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series belonged unapologetically to the latter.

Presented in Malaysia during Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week Kuala Lumpur 2026 at The Exchange TRX, the new roadster represented an intriguing first for the marque. Described as the sportiest model in Maybach history, it combined the open-top proportions and performance character of the SL with the craftsmanship, comfort and visual extravagance expected of Mercedes-Maybach.

The result was a different kind of Maybach. Instead of the spacious rear compartment traditionally associated with ultra-luxury motoring, the SL 680 Monogram Series was created strictly for two. It placed the owner behind the wheel, roof down, turning Maybach luxury into a more personal driving experience.

Visually, there was little chance of confusing it with a conventional SL. The model was presented in two curated design concepts. Red Ambience paired Obsidian Black Metallic with MANUFAKTUR Garnet Red Metallic, while White Ambience combined Obsidian Black Metallic with MANUFAKTUR Opalite White Magno.

Both featured an array of Maybach-specific details. At the front sat a chrome-finished radiator grille with illuminated contours and discreet MAYBACH lettering, while the upright Mercedes star retained its traditional position above it.

The bonnet could become one of the car's most distinctive elements. Finished in Obsidian Black, it incorporated the Maybach monogram pattern in Graphite Grey through a detailed production process involving hand sanding, printing and multiple finishing stages. It was the sort of craftsmanship more readily associated with luxury accessories, fitting for a car presented during fashion week.

Rose-gold accents appeared within the headlights, chrome highlighted the windscreen frame and sill area, and the roadster rode on imposing 21-inch forged wheels. Even the black acoustic soft top carried the Maybach pattern subtly incorporated into its fabric.

With the roof lowered, the SL's long bonnet and two-seat proportions came into their own. Behind the seats, a sculpted double scoop



reinforced its roadster profile, while Maybach-specific rear lights, chrome trim and distinctive exhaust details completed the transformation.

Inside, Crystal White MANUFAKTUR Exclusive nappa leather dominated the cabin, extending across the seats, door panels and centre console. The sustainably tanned leather featured a new floral design on the seat upholstery, while the area behind the seats was also finished in white leather, contrasted by galvanised seat backrests and silver chrome trim.

A Crystal White MICROCUT microfibre roof liner continued the theme. The 12.3-inch digital instrument display and electrically adjustable 11.9-inch central display featured Maybach-specific graphics and start-up animations, accompanied by illuminated MAYBACH door sills, stainless-steel pedals and a wood-and-leather multifunction steering wheel.

Comfort remained central despite the car's sporting proportions. AIRSCARF delivered warm air around the neck and shoulders for more comfortable roof-down driving, while the ENERGIZING Package Plus incorporated features such as seat climate control, ambient lighting and multi-contour seats with massage functionality.



A Burmester high-end 3D surround sound system added another layer to the cabin experience.

Beneath the bonnet, there was serious performance to match the visual drama. A 4.0-litre biturbo V8 produced 430 kW, or 585 hp, and 800 Nm of torque, paired with a 9G-TRONIC automatic transmission and fully variable 4MATIC+ all-wheel drive. The

roadster could accelerate from 0 to 100 km/h in 4.1 seconds and reach an electronically limited top speed of 260 km/h.

Yet Mercedes-Maybach deliberately tuned the SL 680 for refinement rather than creating an uncompromising sports car. A noise-optimised exhaust system, extensive insulation and absorption measures, a comfort-oriented suspension set-up, soft engine mounts and adapted accelerator characteristics were employed to deliver the quiet, composed driving experience expected of a Maybach.

ACTIVE RIDE CONTROL suspension was joined by rear-axle steering, combining agility with greater stability, while an electronic rear-axle locking differential helped optimise power distribution and reduce slip. A front-axle lift system could raise the nose by up to 30 mm, helping protect the front bumper when negotiating steep entrances and other obstacles.

The philosophy was effortless performance rather than outright aggression. The V8 provided considerable reserves of power, but the SL 680 Monogram Series was conceived as a grand tourer in which the journey mattered just as much as the performance figures..

In Malaysia, the Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series is estimated from RM2.25 million in Peninsular Malaysia, on the road

without insurance, with further scope for individualisation.

At that level, practicality was hardly the point. By combining the drama of an open-top V8 roadster with Maybach's focus on craftsmanship, materials and comfort, Mercedes-Benz created something deliberately indulgent.

For a marque synonymous with being driven in, the Mercedes-Maybach SL 680 Monogram Series offered an appealing alternative: the luxury of taking the wheel yourself.



The Art of The Reset

FIVE LUXURIOUS WELLNESS RETREATS IN ASIA WORTH TRAVELLING FOR

Travel is increasingly becoming less about escaping somewhere and more about returning home feeling genuinely different. Across Asia, some of the region's most luxurious resorts are responding with experiences that place rest, movement, nutrition and emotional wellbeing at the centre of the journey.

The traditional spa weekend has evolved into something far more considered, ranging from personalised wellness programmes and ancient healing traditions to geothermal bathing, meditation and sophisticated health technology.

For the luxury traveller, the appeal is that wellbeing no longer requires sacrificing beautiful surroundings or exceptional hospitality. A retreat can mean waking beside a Langkawi beach, soaking in a natural hot spring beneath ancient limestone cliffs or practising yoga surrounded by Balinese jungle.

From Malaysia to Thailand, Indonesia and India, these five destinations make slowing down feel like the greatest luxury of all.

THE DANNA LANGKAWI, MALAYSIA

The Danna Langkawi Resort & Beach Villas
Tel: +604 959 3288

Set between rainforest-covered hills and the Andaman Sea, The Danna Langkawi offers the kind of wellness escape that begins with its surroundings. The colonial-inspired resort sits at Telaga Harbour Park on Langkawi's west coast, combining beachfront seclusion with the polished hospitality of a member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

Here, wellbeing feels deliberately unhurried. Time can be divided between the beach, the resort's expansive infinity pool and treatments at The Spa, making The Danna particularly suited to travellers who want wellness woven naturally into a luxurious island holiday rather than dictated by a rigorous schedule.

This season brings a distinctly Malaysian dimension to that experience. From 10 August to 16 September 2026, The Spa is offering its 120-minute Hibiscus Serenity Spa Treatment, inspired by Malaysia's national flower. The ritual moves through a hibiscus body



scrub and coconut oil aromatherapy massage before a rose milk bath, concluding with hibiscus tea.

It forms part of The Danna's wider celebration of Malaysian culture throughout August and September, during which the resort is bringing together wellness, dining and luxury experiences inspired by the spirit of the country.

For those who prefer their reset to come with sea views, generous suites, private beach villas and plenty of time to do very little, The Danna makes a persuasive case for wellness without regimentation.

THE BANJARAN HOTSPRINGS RETREAT, IPOH, MALAYSIA

The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat Ipoh, Perak, Malaysia
Tel: +605 210 7777



If The Danna represents wellness by the sea, The Banjaran Hotsprings Retreat takes the experience underground.

Hidden within a 22.7-acre valley in Ipoh, the luxury retreat is surrounded by rainforest, geothermal springs and limestone hills dating back some 260 million years. Just 44 private villas occupy the sanctuary, several with private pools and geothermal hot spring whirlpools.

The landscape is not merely a beautiful backdrop; it forms an integral part of the wellness experience. Guests can move between geothermal dipping pools, a thermal steam cave, ice bath, meditation cave, reflexology pool and other natural facilities. Bespoke programmes take things further, combining villa accommodation with tailored meal plans, health regimes, traditional rituals and wellness treatments.

Its spa philosophy draws from across Asia, incorporating Malay healing traditions, Traditional Chinese Medicine and Ayurveda. Treatments range from acupuncture to the Hawa and Adam Traditional Malay Spa Journey, while yoga, tai chi, qi gong, meditation and Pranayama offer quieter ways to reset.

Even dining becomes an experience. Jeff's Cellar is hidden within a vast limestone cave, creating one of the most extraordinary restaurant settings in the country.

The Banjaran is ideal for those wanting a wellness retreat removed from everyday Malaysia, despite being only 15 minutes from Ipoh. Its five-star hospitality and natural geothermal features make it difficult to replicate elsewhere.



KAMALAYA KOH SAMUI, THAILAND

Kamalaya Koh Samui, Koh Samui, Surat Thani, Thailand
Tel: +667 7429 800

On the tropical southern coastline of Koh Samui, Kamalaya has built its reputation around a more immersive interpretation of wellness.

The sanctuary combines Eastern healing traditions with contemporary research, supported by a multidisciplinary team that includes naturopaths, Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners, Ayurvedic specialists, massage therapists, yoga teachers, fitness trainers and meditation and

life-enhancement mentors.

The breadth of programmes is one of Kamalaya's strengths. Guests can arrive looking simply to rest or commit to a much deeper programme addressing detoxification, sleep, fitness, gut health, emotional balance or resilience. Its Relax & Renew programme, for example, is offered across stays ranging from three to 15 nights, while more extensive programmes can stretch considerably longer.

The setting softens the seriousness of it all. Rooms, suites and villas are integrated into a landscape of granite boulders and tropical vegetation overlooking the Gulf of Thailand, while steam caverns, plunge pools and holistic activity spaces encourage guests to move easily between treatments and nature.

Kamalaya is less about adding a massage to a holiday and more about making wellness the reason for travelling in the first place.



**COMO SHAMBHALA ESTATE,
BALI, INDONESIA**
COMO Shambhala EstateBali,
Indonesia
Tel: +62 361 978 888

Deep within the lush landscape near Ubud, COMO Shambhala Estate has long represented one of Bali's most sophisticated approaches to wellbeing.

Its wellness centre, Ojas, sits close to where the Ayung and Tibakauh rivers meet, surrounded by jungle. The facilities combine restorative traditions with a decidedly contemporary edge: nine treatment rooms, outdoor treatment pavilions, a yoga pavilion and Pilates studio sit alongside contrast therapy, cold plunge facilities, colonic hydrotherapy and hyperbaric oxygen therapy.

Guests can choose from focused programmes addressing everything from mindfulness and metabolic health to energy and posture.



Longer Wellness Paths delve into integrated wellness, fitness, detoxification, nutrition, reconnection and Ayurveda, with personal assessments helping determine the direction of each stay.

Yet COMO Shambhala never loses the sense of place that makes Bali such an enduring wellness destination. Meditation, yoga and therapeutic treatments coexist

with Balinese rituals and immersion in nature. Its Wellness Weekend, for instance, incorporates a water purification ceremony at a 10th-century temple within the estate alongside Pilates, massage and wellness consultations.

It is this ability to marry science, tradition and extraordinary surroundings that makes the estate particularly compelling.



SIX SENSES VANA, DEHRADUN, INDIA

Six Senses Vana Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

Tel: +91 135 351 1111

For travellers ready to go considerably deeper, Six Senses Vana offers one of the most immersive wellness experiences on this list.

Located in northern India, Vana approaches a stay as a complete retreat rather than a luxury holiday with spa treatments added around it. Wellness screening and consultations, private treatments and access to group activities accompany full-board accommodation and personalised nutrition.



Its philosophy draws upon several traditions, including Ayurveda, yoga, Tibetan Medicine and natural healing therapies. What guests experience depends on both their goals and the length of the stay. Programmes focusing on sleep, detox and yoga require a minimum of five nights, while Weight Management and Ayurveda programmes extend to 14 nights. Ayurveda Panchakarma requires 21 nights, reflecting the much deeper level of commitment involved.



That makes Vana particularly suited to travellers who want more than temporary relaxation. Rather than simply emerging rested, the intention is to establish practices and perspectives that endure after the journey ends.

Therein lies the changing definition of the luxury wellness retreat. It is no longer simply about being pampered, although there is certainly room for that. The most compelling retreats give guests something increasingly difficult to find in daily life: time, space and expert guidance devoted entirely to how they feel.



From Langkawi's shores to Ipoh's geothermal caves, the forests of Koh Samui and Bali and the foothills of northern India, each retreat approaches wellbeing differently. What connects them is the idea that luxury can be measured in more than thread counts, private pools or elaborate dinners. Sometimes it is simply the ability to stop, reset and return feeling better than when you arrived.

HOTEL STRIPES KUALA LUMPUR

WHERE OLD KL MEETS CONTEMPORARY LUXURY

**Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur,
Autograph Collection**

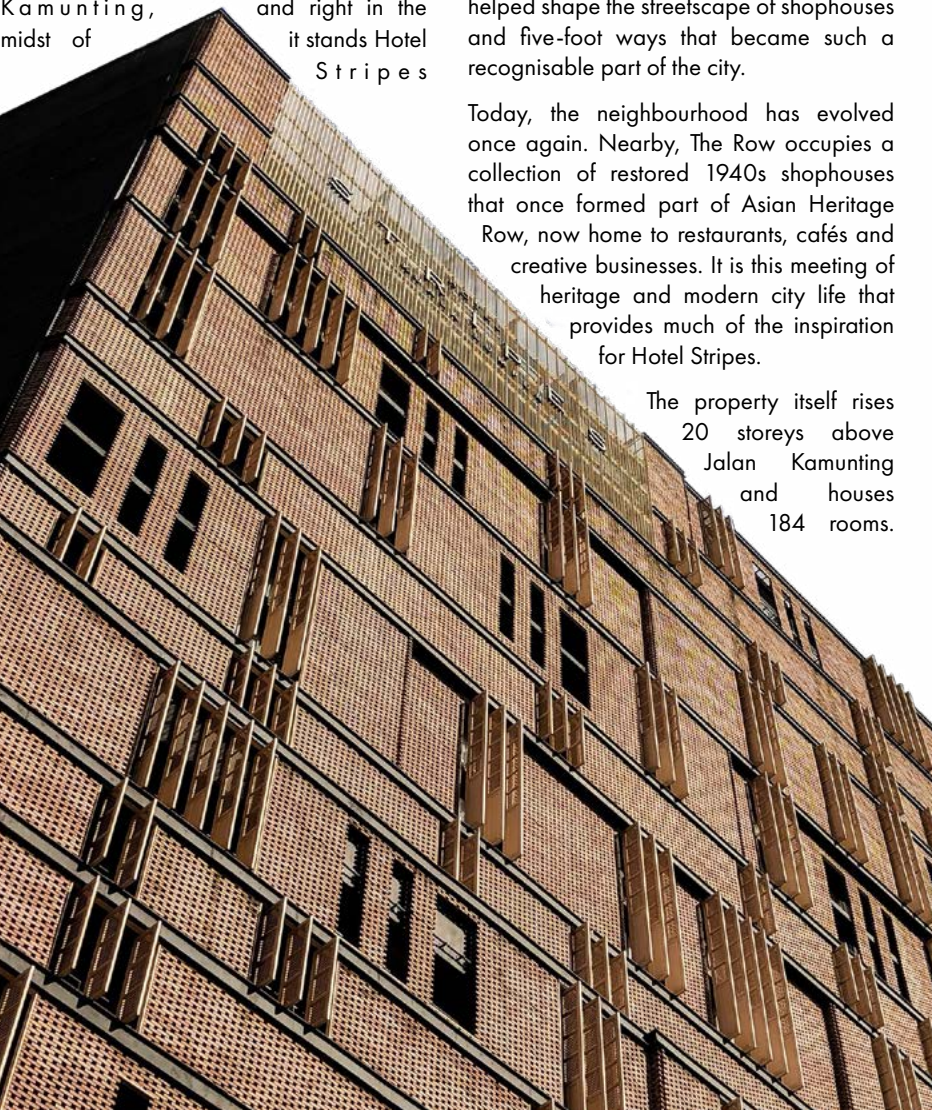
Address: 25, Jalan Kamunting, 50300

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Tel.: +603 2038 0000

Website: www.marriott.com

Kuala Lumpur is a city where the old and new have always existed side by side. Glass towers rise beyond rows of timeworn shophouses, while decades-old eateries share streets with cocktail bars, galleries and contemporary cafés. Few neighbourhoods capture that contrast quite like Jalan Kamunting, and right in the midst of it stands Hotel Stripes



Kuala Lumpur, Autograph Collection.

Part of YTL Hotels' portfolio, Hotel Stripes brings a contemporary approach to the city stay while drawing much of its personality from the neighbourhood around it. Rather than feeling detached from its surroundings, the hotel takes cues from the history and character of Jalan Kamunting, creating a stay that feels distinctly connected to Kuala Lumpur.

The story of the area stretches back to the city's early years. Jalan Kamunting developed during Kuala Lumpur's tin-mining era in the 19th century, before fire and flooding led to wooden buildings being reconstructed in brick and tile. The result helped shape the streetscape of shophouses and five-foot ways that became such a recognisable part of the city.

Today, the neighbourhood has evolved once again. Nearby, The Row occupies a collection of restored 1940s shophouses that once formed part of Asian Heritage Row, now home to restaurants, cafés and creative businesses. It is this meeting of heritage and modern city life that provides much of the inspiration for Hotel Stripes.

The property itself rises 20 storeys above Jalan Kamunting and houses 184 rooms.

Inside, the mood is urban and contemporary, with clean lines and understated tones balanced by details that reference the hotel's surroundings. Black-and-white photographs depicting Jalan Kamunting during the 1940s and 1950s appear throughout the rooms, offering small glimpses into the neighbourhood's past.

Accommodation ranges from Deluxe and Executive Deluxe rooms to Studios, with spaces designed to feel polished without becoming overly formal. Custom fixtures, neutral palettes and modern conveniences create a comfortable retreat from the activity outside, while the historical photography adds a sense of place that could easily be lost in a city hotel.

That connection to the neighbourhood is particularly important here. Hotel Stripes sits within easy reach of some of Kuala Lumpur's best-known landmarks, yet guests are also well placed to explore a side of the city that can be missed when staying within the usual tourist enclaves

Old-school restaurants, cafés, bars and restored shophouses are woven into the streets surrounding the hotel, while the Kuala Lumpur skyline remains close at hand.

Dining begins at Brasserie 25, the hotel's relaxed all-day restaurant. Red-brick arches, dark timber flooring and statement lighting give the space a character that reflects the wider hotel, blending industrial touches with a warmer, more classic atmosphere. Breakfast is served here in the morning, while the restaurant continues through lunch and dinner, with menus that evolve through visiting guest chefs and seasonal creations.

Yet one of Hotel Stripes' most appealing spaces awaits much higher up.

Man Tao Bar brings the experience to the rooftop, where the city unfolds beyond the edge of the building. Part open-air and designed as an easy-going urban retreat, the bar offers unobstructed views across downtown Kuala Lumpur. As daylight fades and the skyline begins to illuminate, it becomes an atmospheric spot for cocktails, conversation and a different perspective on the capital.

Alongside the bar is the hotel's outdoor rooftop swimming pool, arguably one of its most photogenic features. Framed by the surrounding cityscape, it offers guests a place to cool off during the day or simply take in the changing skyline. For a hotel so closely connected to the streets below, the rooftop provides an appealing counterpoint: a chance to retreat above the city while remaining firmly at its centre.

There is also a fitness centre for guests who want to maintain their routine, while the hotel's event spaces take a less conventional approach to the typical business-hotel meeting room. The Studio spaces are designed around natural light and flexible layouts, while The Snug on Level 2 combines stripped-back, industrial-inspired interiors with a more intimate atmosphere for private gatherings and events.

What ultimately gives Hotel Stripes its personality, however, is not any single facility. It is the way the property uses Kuala Lumpur itself as part of the experience.



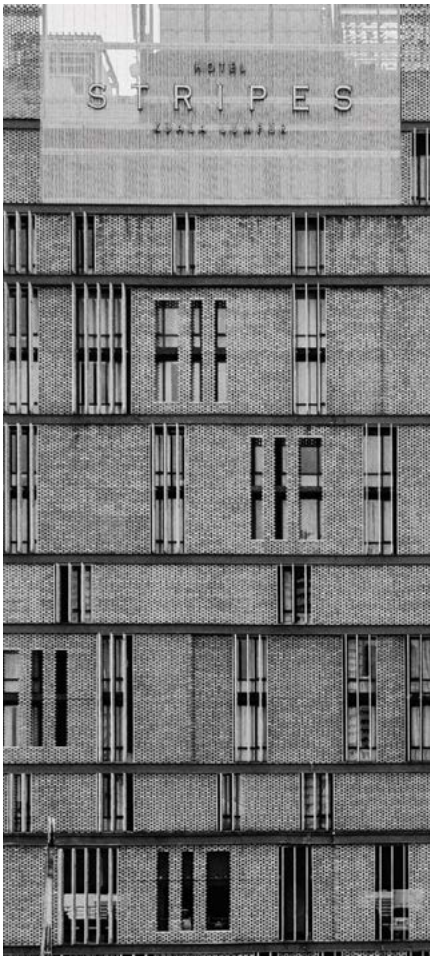
Autograph Collection hotels are intended to have individual identities rather than follow a single uniform aesthetic, and Hotel Stripes leans into its location to create its own. Historic photographs appear in contemporary rooms. Brick details reference the architecture outside. A rooftop bar looks across a skyline that tells the story of how dramatically Kuala Lumpur has changed.

For travellers, this makes Hotel Stripes particularly suited to a city break where exploring the neighbourhood is as much a part of the experience as spending time at the hotel. Guests can begin the morning among the streets and eateries surrounding Jalan Kamunting, venture towards Kuala Lumpur's shopping and cultural districts during the day, then return for a swim or an evening drink overlooking the skyline.

It is contemporary without forgetting what came before, polished without losing its connection to the streets around it.



In a city constantly reinventing itself, Hotel Stripes Kuala Lumpur captures a little of both worlds: the character of old Kuala Lumpur and the energy of the city it has become.



The Padel Effect

WHERE FITNESS MEETS FUN

For years, Malaysia’s fitness conversation has circled familiar territory: gym memberships, running clubs, the occasional yoga retreat. In the past two years, a different kind of court has begun appearing across the Klang Valley, glass-walled, brightly lit, and increasingly impossible to book on a weekend evening.

Padel, the racquet sport that originated in Mexico before taking off across Spain and Latin America, has arrived in Malaysia, reshaping how a growing number of Malaysians think about exercise, socialising and stress relief all at once.

Unlike tennis or squash, padel is played on an enclosed court roughly a third the size of a tennis court, using solid, stringless bats and a depressurised ball. The surrounding glass and mesh walls remain in play, allowing the ball to bounce back into the rally rather than end the point.

The result is a sport that rewards positioning and teamwork over raw power, making it far more accessible to beginners while still delivering a genuinely demanding workout.

Dedicated padel clubs have opened across the city in quick succession over the past eighteen months, many fully booked within weeks of launch, as corporate teams and friend groups trade the badminton court for something new.

From a health perspective, padel occupies a sweet spot that fitness experts increasingly point to as ideal for sustainable exercise habits.

A typical hour combines short bursts of



sprinting, lateral movement and constant hand eye coordination, engaging the cardiovascular system much like interval training, without ever feeling like a structured workout.

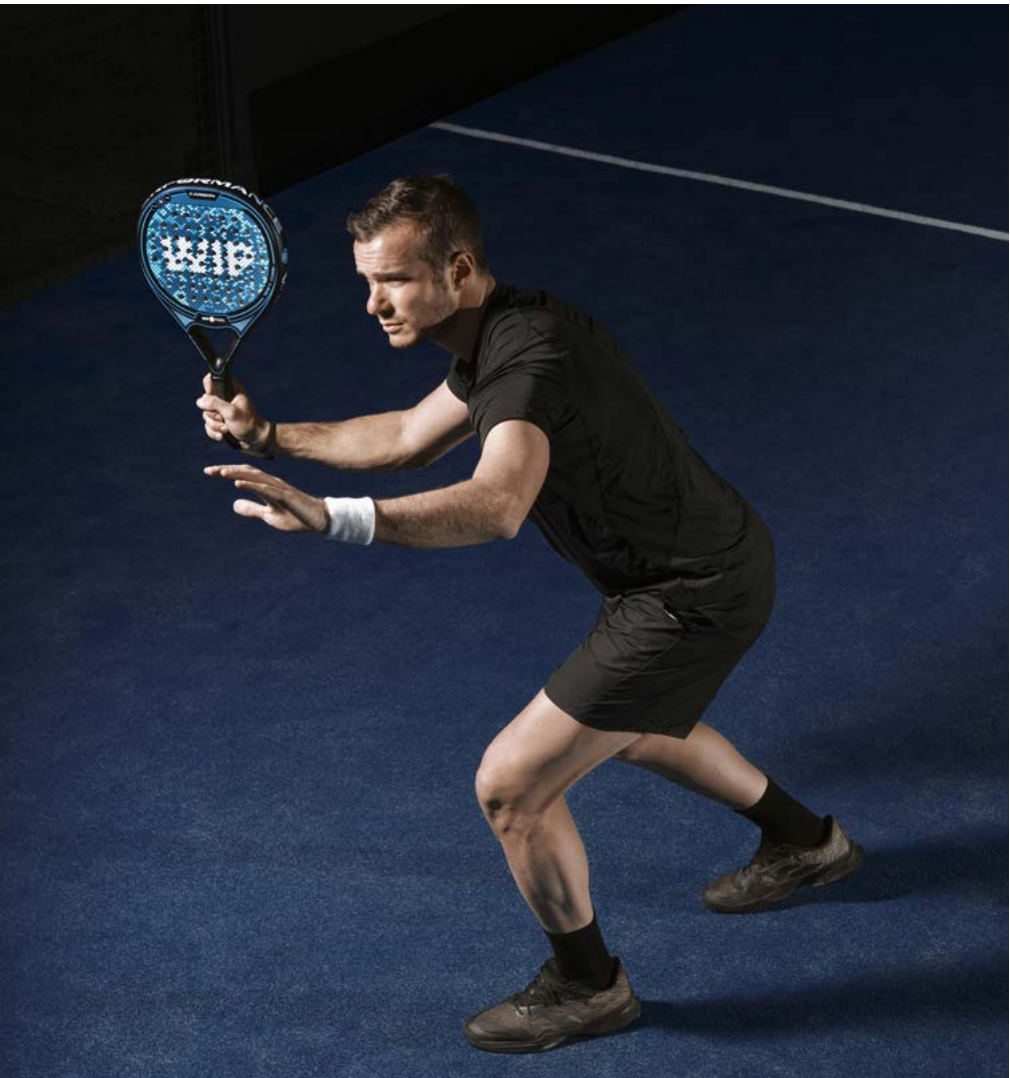
Short, quickly restarting rallies give players repeated bursts of exertion interspersed with brief recovery, a pattern long associated with improved fitness and calorie burn.

The sport is gentler on the joints, appealing to players of different ages and fitness levels. The smaller court reduces the distance players cover, while enclosed walls mean fewer sprints and sudden changes to retrieve

a ball heading out of play.

This makes padel particularly appealing to those returning to exercise after injury, older players seeking a lower impact option, and beginners intimidated by tennis or squash.

Beyond the physical, padel’s format lends itself unusually well to mental wellbeing. Played almost exclusively in doubles on a court small enough for constant communication, sessions double as informal social time. Games are typically loud, laughter-filled, and collaborative, a combination researchers have long linked to reduced cortisol levels and improved mood.



Many clubs now pair their courts with cafés, lounges and social spaces, turning a quick session into a relaxed half-day outing. Exercise habits are far more likely to stick when woven into a person’s social life, and padel benefits from this built-in sense of community in a way that solitary gym workouts often cannot.

Most Malaysian padel clubs now offer beginner clinics, introductory sessions and equipment rental, removing much of the upfront commitment for newcomers. Players can simply arrive, borrow a racket, learn the basics and start playing without needing to invest heavily before knowing whether the sport is for them.

Padel’s underhand serve, smaller court and slower ball make the fundamentals easy to grasp within an hour. By their second or third visit, most beginners can sustain a competitive rally, making the sport rewarding without the steep learning curve of traditional racket sports.

As Malaysia’s wellness culture matures beyond the gym, padel offers a compelling case study in sustainable fitness: social by design, gentle enough for longevity, and intense enough to matter.

Face Value

WHERE GROOMING MEETS SELF-CARE

For decades, skincare in Malaysia was framed almost entirely as a women's category, bottles of serum crowding one side of the bathroom shelf while the men's side offered little more than a bar of soap and, if lucky, sunscreen.

That divide is rapidly closing. Across Kuala Lumpur, men's skincare counters are expanding, barbershops are adding facials to their menus, and a new wave of local and international brands are building product lines specifically for men, no longer as a token gesture, but as a genuine growth category.

The shift is partly generational. Younger Malaysian men, raised on social media and increasingly comfortable discussing grooming openly, are far more likely to have a skincare routine than their fathers ever did.

Where a previous generation might have viewed a multi-step regimen as excessive, many now treat cleanser, moisturiser and sunscreen as basic maintenance, no different from brushing teeth.

Kuala Lumpur's climate has done its part to accelerate the shift. Year-round humidity, intense UV exposure and heavy urban pollution take a visible toll on skin, and dermatologists in the city report a steady

rise in male patients seeking treatment for sun damage, breakouts and premature ageing, issues that a basic routine can meaningfully help prevent.

Sunscreen, once an afterthought, has become the single product most often recommended as non-negotiable, given how much daily UV exposure the average KL commute and lunch break involve.

Retailers have responded accordingly. Men's grooming counters in KLCC and Pavilion have expanded well beyond razors and cologne, now stocking dedicated cleansers, lightweight moisturisers and oil-control products formulated for the city's humidity.

Barbershops across Bangsar and Damansara have added facials and skin consultations to their offerings, positioning skincare as a natural extension of a haircut rather than a separate, more intimidating errand.

Simplicity remains the category's biggest selling point. Most dermatologists suggest men need only three consistent steps, cleanser, moisturiser and daily sunscreen, to see meaningful improvement, with more targeted products like exfoliants or serums added only as needed.





The Sleep Reset

WHY REST IS BECOMING KUALA LUMPUR'S NEW WELLNESS PRIORITY

For years, Malaysia's wellness conversation has been dominated by what happens in waking hours: diet plans, gym routines, the latest padel booking. Increasingly, a quieter shift is taking place in bedrooms across the Klang Valley, where sleep, once treated as a passive afterthought, is being reframed as the foundation everything else depends on.

Sleep clinics, wearable trackers and specialised mattress boutiques have multiplied across KL in the past two years, mirroring a global "sleep tourism" and sleep-optimisation trend that has moved from niche biohacking circles into mainstream conversation.

Corporate wellness programmes are beginning to include sleep coaching alongside gym subsidies, and a growing number of Malaysians can now recite their average REM percentage as readily as their daily step count.

The renewed attention isn't misplaced. Sleep researchers have long established that rest is not simply downtime but an active process, one in which the brain consolidates memory, the body repairs tissue, and the immune system recalibrates.

Consistently short or fragmented sleep has been linked to impaired concentration, weakened immunity, and long-term risk for conditions ranging from hypertension to metabolic disorders. In a city known for its long working hours and notorious traffic, where late nights are often followed by early commutes, the gap between recommended and actual sleep has become difficult to ignore.

Humidity and heat present a distinctly Malaysian obstacle. Even with air conditioning, KL's tropical climate can disrupt the body's natural temperature drop, a key trigger for deep sleep. This has fuelled demand for cooling mattress technology and breathable bedding, with several local retailers reporting sharp increases in sales of temperature-regulating pillows and mattress toppers over the past year.

Screen use compounds the problem. Malaysia consistently ranks among the world's heaviest mobile internet users, and the blue light and mental stimulation of late-night scrolling delay the release of melatonin, the hormone that signals the body to wind down.

Sleep specialists increasingly point to a consistent wind-down routine, dimmed lighting, and a screen cut-off an hour before bed as more effective than any single gadget or supplement.

Unlike a gym membership or a padel court, better sleep requires no new venue, only a shift in habit. Small, consistent changes tend to matter more than dramatic overhauls: a fixed wake time even on weekends, a cooler bedroom, and limiting caffeine after early afternoon are among

the adjustments sleep experts most often recommend. Naps, when needed, are best kept short and early in the day to avoid interfering with nighttime rest.

As Kuala Lumpur's wellness culture continues to expand beyond visible, Instagrammable pursuits, sleep is emerging as its least glamorous but most essential frontier.

It cannot be tracked in the mirror or shown off in a highlight reel, but its effects, such as sharper focus, steadier mood, better resilience, touch every other part of daily life. In a city that rarely slows down, learning to properly switch off may be the most valuable habit Malaysians can build.



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