

Z E R I N
P R O P E R T I E S

ISSUE
330

Hospitality Industry Newsletter

Weekly Insights

<https://www.zerinproperties.com>





Millennium Hotels and Resorts Opening 7th Property, M Social Resort Penang, In March

M Social Resort Penang, the seventh property under Millennium Hotels and Resorts' upscale M Social brand, will launch in phases from March 1, 2025. Located in Tanjung Bungah, George Town, the resort offers 318 stylish rooms and suites across two wings—Sunset Bay Wing with island views and Azure Wing with beachfront views. Inspired by Peranakan heritage, its vibrant design blends tradition with modern aesthetics.

Guests can enjoy an outdoor pool, all-day gym, Aiello voice-controlled in-room assistance, and dining at Beast & Butterflies, featuring Peranakan and international cuisine. The Social Hub lounge and Breezy Bites poolside bar provide relaxing social spaces. The resort's 482 sqm Grand Ballroom accommodates business and celebratory events.

To mark its soft opening, M Social Penang introduces the Island Escape—Penang Stay & Feast package from RM888++ for two guests, including breakfast, dining credits, and attraction tickets. The Stay. Savour. Earn. package offers additional perks for MyMillennium members, with both promotions available until June 30, 2025.



[READ MORE](#)



Zahid seeks electricity tariff exemption for homestays and kampung stays

Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi will request an exemption from electricity tariff hikes for homestay and kampungstay operators, aligning them with the 85% of Malaysians unaffected by the increase. He emphasized that the adjustments primarily target the industrial sector.

Malaysia aims to attract 1.6 million tourists to homestays and kampungstays in 2024, generating RM100 million in revenue. In 2023, nearly 830,000 tourists contributed RM54 million, with a 2030 target of five million tourists and RM500 million in revenue. A key focus this year is the Student Exchange Programme, especially for ASEAN students, to immerse in local culture. However, challenges such as infrastructure and amenities persist. The ministry, alongside Tourism Malaysia, will provide training and support for homestay entrepreneurs.

With Visit Malaysia 2026 approaching, homestays will play a crucial role in tourism promotion. Zahid aims for a balanced approach between urban hotels and rural homestays, ensuring they remain central to Malaysia's tourism strategy.



[READ MORE](#)



Sarawak set to become first Malaysian state to own an airline

Sarawak has acquired MASwings, a sister company of Malaysia Airlines, marking its latest move to control strategic assets as it seeks greater autonomy. The deal, signed on Feb 12 with Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG)—wholly owned by Khazanah Nasional—makes Sarawak the first Malaysian state to own an airline. The purchase price was not disclosed.

Sarawak Premier Abang Johari Tun Openg announced that MASwings will be renamed Air Borneo and transformed into a full-service airline. Initially, it will continue rural air services in Sarawak and Sabah before expanding to destinations within a four-hour flight radius.

The state is open to collaborations with aircraft manufacturers such as Boeing, Airbus, Comac, Embraer, and ATR to enhance operations. To support its aviation ambitions, Sarawak also plans to build a new Kuching International Airport, further strengthening its connectivity and economic growth.



[READ MORE](#)



Firefly expands Subang jet operations with direct flights to Kuching and Singapore

Firefly is expanding its jet operations from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport (SZB) with new direct flights to Kuching (KCH) and Singapore (SIN) starting March 24. With these additions, Firefly now operates 28 weekly jet flights to four destinations, including Penang (PEN) and Kota Kinabalu (BKI), using retrofitted Boeing 737-800 aircraft.

Datuk Captain Izham Ismail, Managing Director of Malaysia Aviation Group, stated that Firefly aims to provide a seamless blend of comfort, affordability, and efficiency while enhancing connectivity.

To celebrate the new routes, Firefly offers promotional one-way fares from RM219 to Kuching and RM189 to Singapore, inclusive of 10kg check-in baggage, 7kg carry-on baggage, and in-flight refreshments. Travellers can also opt for the upgraded "Flex" service, which includes unlimited flight changes and 30kg of checked baggage. Izham emphasized that these new routes mark a significant milestone in Firefly's commitment to providing greater travel convenience and expanded regional connectivity.



[READ MORE](#)



AirAsia's passenger numbers rise 9% in 4Q as seat capacity increases

Capital A Bhd's AirAsia Aviation Group carried 16.27 million passengers in 4Q2024, a 9% increase from 14.88 million in 4Q2023, supported by a 10% rise in seat capacity to 18.56 million and an 88% load factor. For 2024, the airline transported 63.18 million passengers, an 11% jump from 56.99 million in 2023, with seat capacity growing 10% to 70.83 million. Its active fleet expanded to 205 aircraft out of 224, with nine more expected in service by 1Q2025 and seven by 2Q2025.

Asia Digital Engineering (ADE) completed 63 base maintenance checks in 2024, a 10% increase, and 12,700+ line checks, up 17% y-o-y, driven by expansion into Cambodia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Teleport recorded its highest quarterly cargo volume at 85,950 tonnes in 4Q2024, a 33% increase, with full-year cargo rising 44.5% to 295,926 tonnes.

AirAsia MOVE saw a 16% q-o-q rise in active users to 15,216, with transactions up 10% to 3.78 million. BigPay's card base expanded to 1.6 million, supported by enhanced remittance services. Santan served 19.7 million meals in 2024, up 53%, leveraging strategic partnerships and affordable pricing.



[READ MORE](#)



Thomas Cook India's MICE focuses on Malaysia

Following Malaysia's visa exemption extension and increased direct flights from India, Thomas Cook (India) Limited partnered with Tourism Malaysia for a high-impact MICE promotion in Mumbai. The event, inaugurated by Tourism Malaysia Director General Datuk Manoharan Periasamy, targeted over 30 senior executives from leading multinational corporations and Indian corporate houses in BFSI, pharma, and electronics.

Organised with key Tourism Malaysia representatives, the event featured presentations, networking, and one-on-one sessions, showcasing Malaysia's MICE capabilities for 2025-26. A curated gastronomic experience with Malay-Indian fusion cuisine and a Malaysia-inspired décor highlighted the country's cultural appeal.

Datuk Manoharan emphasized Malaysia's visa-free access, strong connectivity, and infrastructure as key advantages for MICE planners. Thomas Cook India's Rajeev Kale and Meera Charnalia reinforced Malaysia's unique value, cultural richness, and seamless travel experience. With exciting prizes and strong corporate interest, the event successfully positioned Malaysia as a premier MICE destination, fostering long-term collaboration with Indian corporations.



[READ MORE](#)



Mata, Guilin Travel Agent Association form strategic partnership to boost tourism

The Malaysia Tourism Agency Association (Mata) and the Guilin Travel Agent Association have signed an MOU to strengthen tourism collaboration between Malaysia and China. The agreement aims to enhance two-way travel, fostering tourism exchanges and economic opportunities for both nations.

This partnership will support Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VMY 2026), which targets 26.1 million international tourists and RM97.6 billion in tourism receipts. Mata and the Guilin Travel Agent Association will facilitate seamless travel experiences between Malaysia and Guilin, a renowned destination known for its karst landscapes, cultural heritage, and the scenic Li River.

Similarly, Malaysian tourism stakeholders will collaborate to promote Malaysia's attractions, from Unesco-listed heritage sites in Penang and Melaka to island getaways in Langkawi and Sabah.

Mata president Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Khalid Harun emphasized the partnership's role in boosting Malaysia's tourism sector, particularly with China as a key market. He noted that the MOU would not only enhance inbound tourism but also encourage Malaysians to explore Guilin's wonders.



[READ MORE](#)