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Sunway Joins Global Hotel Alliance to Boost Regional Growth

Sunway Hotels & Resorts has joined Global Hotel Alliance (GHA), integrating all 11 properties across Malaysia, Vietnam and Cambodia into the GHA Discovery loyalty programme, which boasts 30 million members. From mid-May 2025, guests booking through this platform will enjoy instant benefits, experiences, and Discovery Dollars.

The move enhances Sunway's reach, especially with its flagship five-star Sunway Resort Hotel and two other hotels in Sunway City Kuala Lumpur, a hub of retail, leisure and MICE attractions. Sunway's portfolio also includes properties in Johor Bahru, Hanoi and Phnom Penh, offering access to strategic urban and tourism centres across Southeast Asia.

Looking ahead, Sunway plans to expand with new projects in Ipoh, Penang and a luxury resort in Johor. GHA, now in 100 countries, aligns with Sunway's values in sustainability and social responsibility. To celebrate the launch, GHA members will receive double Discovery Dollars for bookings made until 30 September 2025.



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Malaysian Hotel Sector Faces Soft Start Amid Global Uncertainty

Malaysia's hotel sector began 2025 slowly, impacted by global tensions and cautious travel sentiment. Despite a 31.3% year-on-year rise in visitor arrivals to 6.74 million in the first two months—surpassing even 2019 pre-pandemic levels—this has not translated into stronger hotel performance. Inbound travel from Singapore, China, and India increased significantly, yet economic concerns and rising budget stays continue to hold back occupancy growth.

Malaysian Association of Hotels reported a 1% drop in average occupancy rates to 54.3% in Q1. Five-star hotels saw sharper declines in occupancy and revenue, while three-star hotels experienced the steepest fall in average daily rates and revenue per room. Ongoing geopolitical unrest has also disrupted group bookings, particularly from India.

Still, prospects remain. Summer holidays may lift demand, and the Klang Valley expects a surge of luxury hotel openings, including brands like Park Hyatt and Waldorf Astoria, signaling long-term sector resilience.



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Mana Mana Suites Expands With Unique Hospitality Model in Malaysia

Mana Mana Suites is transforming Malaysia's hospitality sector by offering hotel-like services in serviced apartments. Led by Suki Tan, the company manages over 1,000 units in Kuala Lumpur with 24-hour front desk, concierge, and guest support. This model improves returns for property owners and provides a better stay for guests. Starting in 2017 with Airbnb, Mana Mana has grown into a recognised brand, earning the SME100 Award in 2024.

The company now plans to enter the boutique hotel space by acquiring budget hotels and partnering with operators to create a new brand. It is also expanding across Ipoh, Penang, Kuantan, Port Dickson, Terengganu, Johor and Sabah. With AI tools improving efficiency and customer service, the team remains focused on quality.

Mana Mana works closely with Tourism Malaysia to promote the country abroad. Through careful growth and a strong team culture, it is building a lasting presence in hospitality.



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Malaysia Hosts Key Medical Event to Boost Tourism and Investment

THIS ASEAN 2025 will run from June 9 to 11 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre, showcasing cutting-edge medical technologies from over 200 Chinese firms. Co-hosted with the Association of Private Hospitals of Malaysia (APHM), it will attract healthcare buyers, regulators, and industry leaders across Southeast Asia.

This event positions Malaysia as a regional healthcare hub, supporting medical tourism growth and drawing foreign investment. For corporate property investors, this signals rising demand for healthcare-related infrastructure, commercial spaces, and hospitality assets.

Highlights include demonstrations of advanced technologies such as surgical robots, AI assistants, smart hospital systems, and rehabilitation exoskeletons—pointing to future facility needs and innovation trends. Six themed conferences will explore topics including medical device development, pharmaceutical regulations, hospital innovation, and cross-border market entry. These discussions will offer practical insights for investors eyeing expansion in ASEAN's fast-evolving healthcare landscape.



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Malaysia Strengthens Air Links and Tourism Drive Ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026

Malaysia has approved 103 new flight routes, 29 increased frequencies, and five chartered flights to strengthen global connectivity ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026). Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who chaired the Cabinet Committee on Tourism and Culture, highlighted the campaign's role in rebuilding the economy under Malaysia MADANI. The government will drive comprehensive international promotion supported by national coordination.

Key strategies include empowering the Malaysia Truly Asia and Cuti-Cuti Malaysia brands, working with airlines and tour operators, and targeting high-value tourist segments. Seven iconic events—such as the Malaysia Mega Sale and World Tourism Day & Conference—will anchor the VM2026 calendar. These efforts aim to boost GDP, create jobs, and raise Malaysia's global standing.

Sustainability is also a priority. Through the Greening Protocol Initiative, DBKL and Selangor will advance low-carbon solutions and green mobility. Zahid urged collective action to make Malaysia a leading global destination.



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Tourism Malaysia and Petal Ads Strengthen Digital Push in China

Tourism Malaysia and Petal Ads formalised a strategic collaboration during the 2025 ITB China Travel Trade Show in Shanghai. The Memorandum of Collaboration (MoC) aims to accelerate Malaysia's tourism digital transformation in China, using Petal Ads' full-scenario marketing solutions. The agreement designates Huawei SkyTone as the official roaming data partner, enhancing connectivity and branding efforts. The MoC was witnessed by key tourism and Huawei leaders.

This renewed partnership builds on the success of their 2024 campaign. Chinese tourists will benefit from complimentary roaming data, discounts from Malaysian merchants, and improved travel experiences. The strategy aims to increase visibility of Malaysian attractions, hotels, and theme parks among Chinese audiences, stimulating stronger travel demand.

Future plans include localised storytelling, offline activations, user-generated content, and curated destination guides. The initiative also features a photography exhibition showcasing Southeast Asia's cultural richness, reinforcing Malaysia's emotional appeal in China.



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Malaysia Unveils High-Speed Train in China to Boost Tourism

Malaysia unveiled the "Malaysia: Truly Asia" high-speed train in Qingdao, China, to promote Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026). The train displays images of Malaysia's natural beauty, historic cities, landmarks like the Petronas Twin Towers, and local cuisine. This mobile showcase aims to attract more Chinese tourists by highlighting the country's unique culture and attractions.

Tourism Minister Dato Seri Tiong King Sing thanked China Hongqiao International Investment and Hongqiao International Cultural and Sports for their support. He described the train as a "moving invitation," promoting Malaysia's tourism to the Chinese public. The initiative strengthens cultural and tourism ties between Malaysia and China, encouraging more visitors.

This effort reflects Malaysia's commitment to boosting its tourism sector ahead of VM2026. By using innovative partnerships and cultural promotions, Malaysia aims to increase its visibility in China, attract more tourists, and support economic growth.



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Negeri Sembilan Boosts Revenue and Tourism Ahead of 2026 Campaign

Negeri Sembilan recorded RM250.66 million in state revenue from January to May, achieving 42.48% of its RM590 million target, surpassing last year's figures. The state attracted RM7.25 billion in investments in 2024, creating over 4,600 jobs. Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Aminuddin Harun highlighted these gains during the 2024 Excellent Service Awards, where he also launched the Visit Negeri Sembilan Year 2026 (TMNS2026) logo.

TMNS2026 focuses on beach tourism, ecotourism, and the cultural heritage of Adat Perpatih, showcasing attractions like Port Dickson's resorts, Titiwangsa's rainforests, and traditional long-roof architecture. These align with the Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign emphasizing culture, nature, and global appeal.

To reach the 20 million tourist arrival target, Aminuddin called for strategic initiatives including international promotions, overseas missions, and partnerships with travel agents. He also urged civil servants to act as TMNS2026 ambassadors and improve public service quality to support the campaign's success.



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KL Wellness City Launches Major Campaigns to Boost Health and Tourism

KL Wellness City (KLWC) has launched two flagship initiatives: the 2H: Health & Holidays Reward Campaign and Wellness 360: Integrative Yoga & Specialist Doctor Talks. Running from May to August 2025, the 2H campaign offers health and travel rewards worth RM13,000 to RM16,000 with property purchases, including health screenings and AirAsia travel perks. These programs aim to promote proactive health management and position Kuala Lumpur as a regional wellness tourism hub.

Wellness 360 is a 12-session public health series from June to December 2025, combining doctor-led talks and yoga sessions. It covers key wellness themes such as heart health and mental resilience. Health brand Kinohimitsu supports the series with products and expert talks. The upcoming International Hospital @ KLWC, opening in 2026, will offer advanced screenings and specialist services.

KLWC emphasizes wellness as a lifestyle, linking health and tourism with seamless travel access through AirAsia MOVE and Rewards. This initiative supports community health and local economic growth.



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Sarawak Reports Strong Growth in Air Transport and Connectivity

Sarawak showed strong air transport growth in Q1 2025, with 30,980 aircraft movements carrying 2.5 million passengers. This marks an 8 percent increase from the same period in 2024. Air cargo also rose sharply by 23.3 percent, handling 14,438 tonnes, reflecting growing demand across sectors and improved connectivity throughout the state.

International connectivity remains robust with 37 weekly flights to Sarawak and 427 weekly domestic flights from other Malaysian states. Key carriers include Malaysia Airlines, AirAsia, Batik Air, and Royal Brunei Airlines. Kuching International Airport leads with 216 weekly flights, followed by Miri and Sibiu.

Domestic flights within Sarawak totaled 620 weekly, connecting major cities and rural areas under the Rural Air Services initiative. Batik Air will launch a new route from Subang to Kuching in July, further enhancing connectivity and supporting economic growth in the region.



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Sarawak Tourism on Track for Five Million Visitors in 2025

Sarawak is set to reach its target of five million visitors in 2025, having welcomed over 1.6 million tourists in the first four months. Tourism receipts already total RM4.07 billion this year, supporting confidence in achieving RM12.73 billion for 2025, up from RM12.45 billion in 2024. Visitor numbers grew 23 percent last year, surpassing pre-pandemic levels.

Most international tourists come from ASEAN neighbors, including Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore, and the Philippines. To sustain growth, Sarawak allocated RM382.57 million for tourism development under the 12th Malaysia Plan, with additional funding from federal sources and Projek Rakyat.

Recent projects include conservation efforts for historical forts, ecotourism upgrades at Santubong National Park, and improvements to the Melasak Waterfall Tourism Centre and Sarawak Cultural Village. These initiatives strengthen Sarawak's appeal and support long-term tourism growth.



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Malaysia Airlines and Google Deepen AI Partnership to Revolutionize Travel

Malaysia Airlines and Google have expanded their strategic partnership to accelerate AI-driven marketing and digital innovation. Building on success since 2024, the renewed collaboration aims for deeper integration of AI across Malaysia Airlines' ecosystem. This supports Malaysia's ambition to become a regional aviation and tourism hub aligned with Visit Malaysia 2026.

The partnership recently showcased Google's Veo image-to-video technology, delivering personalised, immersive travel experiences that engage customers from inspiration through booking. This reflects a commitment to transform the traveller journey using Google Gemini's advanced AI capabilities.

Formalised under a Joint Business Plan, the collaboration focuses on AI-powered performance marketing, targeted global brand campaigns via YouTube, agile innovation, and first-party data activation to enhance customer loyalty and premium offerings. Google Malaysia emphasizes the blend of technology and creativity to deliver seamless experiences. This partnership highlights Malaysia Airlines' leadership in digital transformation and its role in driving Malaysia's tourism and aviation growth.



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AirAsia Secures RM99.5 Million Contract to Support Malaysian Armed Forces

AirAsia has secured a RM99.5 million contract with the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) to provide charter services, including special aircraft leasing until August 2027. The agreement covers daily charters and special arrangements on domestic routes across Malaysia, leveraging AirAsia's extensive network and frequent flights.

The airline will facilitate the movement of MAF personnel on commercial flights Monday to Friday for duty and welfare travel, ensuring seamless integration with existing schedules. Additionally, exclusive special charters will be arranged, renting entire aircraft solely for MAF personnel without mixing with commercial passengers.

AirAsia's CEO, Datuk Captain Fareh Mazputra, emphasized the company's commitment to serving the nation and supporting government initiatives. Beyond flights, the contract includes in-flight meals, luggage handling, and logistical support between airports and military camps, ensuring comfort and efficiency for MAF personnel during their travels.



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Airbus Strengthens Commitment with New Regional Office in Malaysia

Airbus officially opened a new office in Putrajaya, reinforcing its commitment to Malaysia and the region. The office will support 170 employees focused on flight hour services and component support for A330 and A350 widebody fleets. Malaysia ranks as Airbus' third-largest market in Asia after China and India.

The company buys about US\$325 million annually from Malaysian suppliers and supports nearly 150 Airbus commercial aircraft currently operating in Malaysia, with 400 more on order. Major customers include AirAsia and Malaysia Airlines. Airbus also provides 93 helicopters for critical missions and was Malaysia's first exporter of the A400M airlifter.

Airbus plans to propose the C295 aircraft for transport and maritime surveillance to enhance Malaysia's security. Airbus Asia-Pacific president Anand Stanley emphasized the company's long-term partnership with Malaysia, supporting economic growth, defense, sustainability, and local job creation.



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Batik Air Expands International and Domestic Flights from Subang Airport

Batik Air will launch its first international route from Subang Airport on July 28, offering daily flights to Bangkok. On the same day, it will start daily services to Kuching, boosting Subang's domestic connectivity. This expansion supports the revival of Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport as a city-based alternative to KLIA.

The Bangkok route provides faster access for Klang Valley travellers to Thailand's capital, while flights to Kuching enhance connectivity for East Malaysians and promote Borneo tourism to West Malaysians.

Batik Air highlights Subang's strategic location near Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, and Shah Alam, appealing to urban travellers. CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said this launch marks the beginning of Batik Air's regional growth from Subang. With existing routes to Penang, Kota Bharu, and Kota Kinabalu, the airline will soon serve five key destinations from this hub.



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New Direct Flight from Lanzhou Boosts Malaysia-China Travel Ties

Malaysia has welcomed the first direct flight from Lanzhou, China's Gansu Province, to Kuala Lumpur, strengthening tourism and economic links. Operated by China Eastern Airlines three times weekly with a 156-seat Airbus A320, this route is the first direct air connection between these cities, complementing existing Kunming-KL flights and enhancing connectivity from inland China.

The flight launch was marked by a ceremony at KLIA with officials from Tourism Malaysia, China Eastern Airlines, Malaysia Airports Holdings, and AeroDarat. This development reflects growing demand from northwest China's outbound travel market.

Malaysia recorded 1.12 million Chinese visitors in the first quarter, a 36.5% increase year-on-year. The visa-free policy extension for Chinese nationals until December 2026, alongside expanded air links, supports this growth. Tourism Malaysia sees this route as key to attracting travellers from second-tier Chinese cities, opening new opportunities for diverse travel experiences across Malaysia.



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