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# Hospitality Industry Newsletter

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## IHG Expands Voco Brand with First Hotel Launch in Kuching

IHG Hotels & Resorts will open its first voco hotel in Malaysia next year, marking a significant milestone for the premium brand. The 321-room voco Kuching will be strategically located just 15 minutes from the city centre and five minutes from Kuching International Airport, supporting both tourism and business travel.

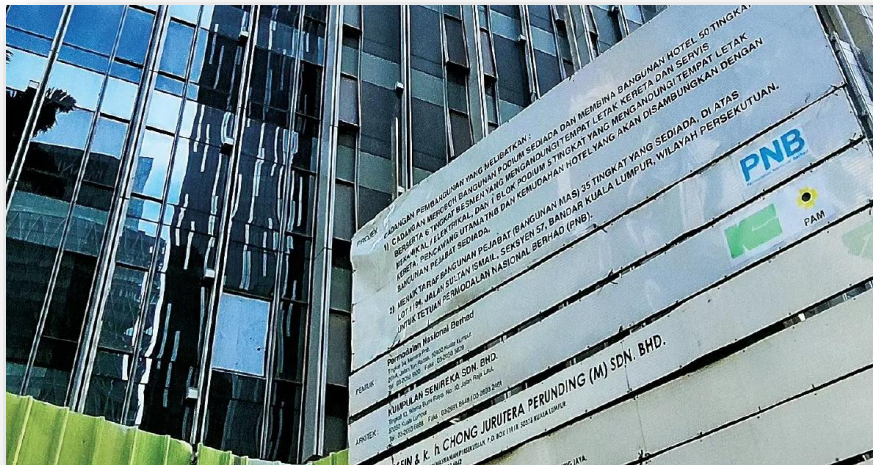
Guests can expect a wide range of amenities, including a swimming pool, all-day dining restaurant, lounge, and fitness centre. A key feature is the extensive 2,400 sq m of meeting facilities, including a ballroom that can accommodate up to 1,300 guests, catering to corporate events and conferences.

Since its launch in 2018, voco has become the fastest growing brand in IHG's premium portfolio, reaching 100 hotels across 25 countries.

After debuting in Asia with voco Orchard Singapore in 2022, the brand continues its expansion with upcoming launches in Malaysia, Thailand and Jamaica.



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## PNB Revives Project 1194, Eyes RM1.4 Billion Asset Sale

PNB is putting its long-awaited Project 1194 on the market, with the 50-storey, 481-room luxury hotel positioned as a key highlight. Industry sources estimate the entire mixed-use development, located on Jalan Sultan Ismail, could fetch RM1.4 billion. The hotel component, branded as Conrad Kuala Lumpur, marks Hilton's first Conrad property in Malaysia.

Work on the project began in 2012, with PNB signing a management agreement with Hilton in 2019. The hotel will include a banquet hall for 500 guests, gym, 25m infinity pool, four dining outlets, and 12 multifunctional rooms. The building is expected to receive its Certificate of Completion and Compliance in Q4 2025, enabling hotel pre-opening works to commence.

The 481-key scale makes it a sizable hospitality asset. PNB has not disclosed pricing, though comparables include Pavilion REIT's acquisition of Banyan Tree and IOI Properties' deal for W Kuala Lumpur. Knight Frank Malaysia has been appointed exclusive agent. PNB is divesting the asset as part of routine portfolio optimisation and return-focused strategies.



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## Kimpton Naluria Kuala Lumpur To Open in TRX by Late 2025

IHG Hotels & Resorts will debut its Kimpton brand in Malaysia with Kimpton Naluria Kuala Lumpur, set to open in Q4 2025. Located in the Tun Razak Exchange, the 26-storey hotel will offer 466 rooms and reflect Kimpton's signature approach to modern luxury, intuitive service, and immersive guest experiences.

Inspired by the words Naluri (instinct) and Ria (joy), the hotel will balance vibrancy and calm through wellness, curated design, and heartfelt hospitality. The interiors, created by Hassell Studio, will blend city energy with natural textures and panoramic views, fostering a tranquil urban sanctuary.

Kimpton's hallmark experiences will be featured, including morning coffee service, a hosted evening social hour, and thoughtful in-room amenities. Dining offerings will include four venues such as rooftop bar Four Siblings and the dual-concept Tuai + Till. This opening supports Kimpton's global expansion across Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, reinforcing IHG's luxury positioning worldwide.



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## Malacca Hospitality Sector Rises with Dusit Princess Melaka Launch

Malacca's tourism sector is on a strong upward path, driven by a 74% increase in visitor arrivals in 2024. This growth is fueling demand for new hospitality offerings, with international arrivals—especially from Singapore—expected to rise further as the state leverages its Unesco status and event hosting capabilities.

Dusit International's latest addition, Dusit Princess Melaka, officially opened on May 29. Positioned in the MICE segment, the upscale hotel introduces Thai-inspired hospitality, featuring one of the state's largest event spaces with 12 rooms and a 774-square-metre grand hall. Facilities include a 24-hour gym, deep swimming pool, and versatile meeting technology.

The hotel aims to redefine hospitality standards in Malacca while navigating talent shortages. Despite this, Dusit is confident in its growth, supported by strong occupancy and the momentum from Visit Malaysia 2026.

Dusit International also confirmed its expansion into Selangor, reinforcing its long-term commitment to Malaysia's hospitality market.



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## Plaza Premium Lounge Debuts at Senai with Local, Tech-Driven Edge

Plaza Premium Group has opened its new lounge at Senai International Airport, marking its return to Johor Bahru. As the airport's sole lounge operator, it offers a premium 80-seater space for both international and domestic travellers, combining modern digital solutions with rich Malaysian heritage.

The lounge features seamless access through self-check-in kiosks and QR-based food ordering, while Smart Traveller app integration personalises services and rewards. A Lounge To-Go corner caters to busy passengers, offering curated food and beverage options without compromising quality.

Celebrating the \*Proudly Local\* concept, the lounge serves authentic Johorian dishes such as Otak-Otak and Laksa Johor. It also showcases local art, offering guests a cultural immersion and the chance to support Malaysian artists.

With its blend of technology, comfort and cultural expression, Plaza Premium Lounge Johor Bahru aims to elevate the airport experience and redefine hospitality at Senai for all passengers.



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## Perak Leads Domestic Tourism With Over 10 Million Visitors

Perak recorded the highest number of domestic tourists in Malaysia last year, attracting 10.2 million visitors, according to the 2024 Domestic Tourism Survey by the Department of Statistics. This marks a 36.1% increase from 7.5 million in 2023, placing Perak ahead of Selangor and Pahang.

Key destinations that drew travellers include Teluk Batik, Pangkor Island, Lumut Waterfront, Gunung Lang Recreational Park, and the Ipoh Night Market. The districts with the most tourist presence were Kinta, Larut and Matang, Manjung, Kuala Kangsar, and Batang Padang.

The rise in arrivals is credited to the success of the Visit Perak Year campaign, which featured strong collaboration between state and federal agencies. Officials praised stakeholders for their role in driving growth.

With Visit Malaysia Year 2026 on the horizon, Perak aims to build on this momentum as competition among states intensifies to capture domestic and international tourist markets.



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## Johor, Grab Explore Travel Upgrade Ahead of Tourism Push

The Johor government is in active discussions with Grab to update the Cross-Border Travel Agreement, aiming to simplify travel between Johor and Singapore. The initiative is part of preparations for Visit Johor Year 2026 and reflects broader efforts to enhance regional tourism and mobility.

Menteri Besar Datuk Onn Hafiz Ghazi confirmed the talks took place during a recent meeting with Grab's senior leadership. Key topics included cross-border collaboration involving both Malaysian and Singaporean transport ministries and public transport providers.

Additionally, Johor plans to launch an integrated platform—both digital and physical—to highlight its key attractions. This initiative seeks to improve tourist access to information and streamline travel planning experiences.

The platform is expected to stimulate the local economy, generate new income opportunities, and elevate Johor's reputation as a forward-looking and globally connected destination, aligning with its 2026 tourism ambitions.



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## ETS Extension to Johor Bahru Set to Boost Tourism Flow

The upcoming extension of KTM Bhd's ETS service from Gemas to Johor Bahru is expected to strengthen tourism connectivity ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026. The service will shorten travel time from KL Sentral to JB Sentral to just four hours, enhancing tourist mobility and hotel occupancy, especially during cultural events.

Tourism Malaysia's Datuk Musa Yusof noted that areas like Segamat have already seen tourism benefits since ETS reached the district in March. The next phases will extend the line from Segamat to Kluang, then to Johor Baru, improving access to key towns along the route.

Ongoing engagement with tourism industry players is underway to prepare for VM2026. Efforts include enhancing digital outreach and ensuring hospitality providers are well equipped to deliver quality experiences.

Malaysian Association of Hotels Johor Chapter sees the ETS as vital to unlocking tourism growth, with improved logistics likely to attract more domestic and international travellers.



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## Malaysia Mega Sale 2025 Kicks Off Ahead of Tourism Drive

Tourism Malaysia has launched the Malaysia Mega Sale Campaign (MMSC) 2025, running until 31 July, in partnership with Mastercard. The nationwide event supports tourism and retail recovery ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026, promoting spending across shopping, hospitality, air travel, and entertainment sectors.

This year's campaign features over 100 industry players and 150 activities. Highlights include late-night shopping at AEON Mall Bukit Indah, Miss SHOPhia Happy Hour flash deals in Miri, and cultural dining showcases in Klang Valley hotels. Discounts of up to 85% are available nationwide.

Tourists and locals can win up to RM250,000 worth of prizes, including a JAECOO J7 SUV and luxury hotel stays. Flight deals with Malaysia Airlines offer up to 30% off from key international markets.

With strong industry collaboration and wide appeal, MMSC 2025 positions Malaysia as a leading destination for value-driven shopping and culturally immersive travel experiences.



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## Malaysia Strengthens Position as Regional Film Production Hub

Malaysia is growing as a regional film production hub, thanks to the Film in Malaysia Incentive (Fimi). This program attracts foreign investments, creates jobs, and builds local skills.

The recent *Lord of the Flies* series by Sony Pictures and BBC, filmed in Langkawi, highlights Fimi's success. Local crew involvement will increase from 30% to 40% next year, creating more job opportunities and improving skills.

Since 2013, Fimi has approved 128 productions, issued RM419 million in rebates, and brought in RM2.71 billion in investments. Malaysia's advantages include a skilled English-speaking workforce, stable economy, quick permit approvals, and cost-effective locations.

Finas is expanding partnerships, including with Tourism Malaysia, to promote the country as a filming and tourism destination. The goal is for Malaysia to become a regional leader in film production, education, and technology within five years, supporting local talent and companies to compete internationally.



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## WTTC Forecasts Robust Growth for Malaysia's Tourism Sector by 2025

Malaysia's travel and tourism industry is projected to recover strongly in 2025, contributing RM332.2 billion or 11.3% of GDP, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC). This marks an 18% increase over 2019 and significant growth from 2024's RM218.9 billion.

The sector is expected to support 3.5 million jobs in 2025, with 860,000 new roles forecast between 2025 and 2035. Tourism's economy will grow at a 3.8% compound annual rate through 2035. Regional arrivals from Singapore, Indonesia, China, Thailand, and Brunei are driving this recovery.

International visitors contribute 52.2% of tourism spending, with leisure travel dominating. Visitor spending is forecast to rise to RM169.8 billion by 2035. Tourism taxes generated USD9.8 billion in 2023, underlining its fiscal importance. The sector is also becoming more inclusive and reducing emissions intensity.

With strong demand and strategic investments, Malaysia is set to cement its place as a key Southeast Asian tourism hub.



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## Malaysia's Domestic Tourism Sees Strong Growth and Rising Expenditure in 2024

Malaysia's domestic tourism showed robust growth in 2024, with visitor expenditure reaching RM106.7 billion, up 25.6% from 2023. This momentum continued into Q1 2025, recording RM29.4 billion in spending, a 22.1% increase year-on-year.

Domestic visitors surged to 69.7 million in Q1 2025, an 18.9% rise from last year, while total 2024 visitors reached 260.1 million, growing 21.7%. Seasonal factors like holidays and festivals boosted activity. Spending grew among both tourists and excursionists, with tourists accounting for 59% of expenditure. The average stay length slightly increased to 2.49 nights.

Most domestic travelers used land transport and stayed with friends or family, though paid accommodation rose. Visiting relatives remained the top travel purpose, with shopping as the largest spending category. Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, and Perak were the most visited states, with Perak's visitors growing 36.1%. Overall, Malaysia's domestic tourism is expanding with rising visitor numbers, spending, and diversification.



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# Experience MALAYSIA HEALTHCARE



## Malaysia Highlights Healthcare Tourism Growth at MHX Makassar 2025

The Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), together with Tourism Selangor, is hosting the Malaysia Healthcare Expo (MHX) Makassar 2025 from June 19 to 22. The event promotes Malaysia's advanced medical services and tourism for Indonesian patients, especially from Sulawesi.

More than 15 top Malaysian private hospitals showcase key specialties such as Cardiology, Oncology, and Orthopaedics. Tourism Selangor highlights recovery options including wellness retreats and cultural attractions, enriching the patient experience.

Selangor's State Executive Councillor, YB Dato' Ng Suee Lim, emphasized the state's 42 internationally accredited hospitals offering quality and affordable care. Their campaign, 'Liburan Sehat Ya, Di Selangor Aja,' combines medical treatment with leisure for a holistic healing journey. MHTC aims to position Malaysia as a leading global healthcare travel destination by focusing on clinical excellence, patient care, and cultural familiarity. The expo strengthens regional cooperation and boosts Malaysia's status as a preferred healthcare tourism hub.



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## AirAsia Malaysia Expands Routes to Palembang and Semarang Airports

AirAsia Malaysia has launched two direct flights from Kuala Lumpur to Palembang and Semarang, returning as the first international airline to serve these cities since their airports reopened. This expansion strengthens AirAsia's position in Indonesia, now operating 188 weekly flights to 15 destinations, including Jakarta, Bali, and Medan.

The launch supports Indonesia's tourism goal of 16 million international arrivals in 2025, with Malaysia as a key contributor. It coincides with the reopening of Sultan Mahmud Badaruddin II Airport in Palembang and Jenderal Ahmad Yani Airport in Semarang.

Dato' Captain Fareh Mazputra, CEO of AirAsia Malaysia, said the new routes create business and tourism opportunities and help reconnect people. Special fares are available for travel from mid-2025 to early 2026.

Both cities offer rich culture and attractions, with Semarang recognized as Southeast Asia's cleanest tourist destination by ASEAN.



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## Malaysia Airlines Leads Strategic Tourism Growth with TES 2025 Summit

Malaysia Airlines, in partnership with the Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MYCEB) and Langkawi Development Authority (LADA), hosted the second Trade Elevation Summit (TES) from June 10–12, 2025, in Langkawi. This flagship event gathered over 300 delegates from 68 cities, fostering collaboration among airlines, trade partners, and stakeholders.

TES 2025 builds momentum ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026, reinforcing Malaysia Airlines as a national ambassador and regional connector. The airline showcased its latest products and strengthened ties with Malaysia's key tourism hubs, especially Langkawi, served by 56 weekly flights.

Malaysia Airlines Chief Commercial Officer Dersensh Aresandiran emphasized the summit's role in aligning aviation growth with national tourism goals. The event featured B2B sessions, product showcases, and discussions on connectivity and destination marketing. Supported by MYCEB and LADA, TES 2025 highlights unified efforts to boost Malaysia's tourism and aviation industries, positioning Malaysia Airlines at the forefront of regional travel growth.



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## Cambodia Airways Launches New Phnom Penh-Penang Route to Boost Tourism

Cambodia Airways will begin its inaugural Phnom Penh to Penang flight on June 26, enhancing Malaysia–Cambodia ties, especially in tourism. The twice-weekly service, using an Airbus A319 with 150 seats, will operate on Thursdays and Sundays.

Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing announced the route during a Cambodia dinner promoting Visit Malaysia Year 2026 (VM2026). He called on Cambodia Airways to increase flights, highlighting the opportunity to strengthen cooperation in tourism, business, and culture.

Tiong emphasized tourism as a key driver for economic growth and cultural exchange between the ASEAN neighbors. He urged industry players to develop partnerships, expand air routes, create travel packages, and simplify visa processes to support travel recovery post-pandemic.

Following discussions with Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Manet, both countries aim to deepen tourism collaboration, benefiting communities and reinforcing Malaysia's diverse travel offerings.



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## Sarawak Seeks to Restart Direct Flights to Kalimantan's Pontianak City

Sarawak is aiming to resume direct flights between Kuching and Pontianak, Kalimantan, following recent approval from the Indonesian government to open Kalimantan airspace. The state government has approached AirAsia to re-establish this important route.

Sarawak's Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Abdul Rahman Karim Hamzah highlighted the route's significance for strengthening social, economic, and business ties between Sarawak and Kalimantan. Currently, road travel takes four to five hours, while flights would cut travel time to about 30 minutes.

The Kuching-Pontianak flights have been suspended for over a decade. Discussions with AirAsia are underway to operate daily flights, aiming to boost cross-border movement and trade.

Once Sarawak launches its own Air Borneo airline, it plans to expand air connections with more Kalimantan destinations, supporting regional integration and growth.



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