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No vacancy: Merdeka 2025 turns Putrajaya hotels into hot property

Putrajaya is gearing up for the nation's biggest National Day celebration yet, with hotels across the federal administrative capital fully booked ahead of the August 31 parade at Dataran Putrajaya. Properties such as Dorsett Putrajaya, Moxy Putrajaya, DoubleTree by Hilton and Zenith Hotel have reported full occupancy, driven by strong demand from local visitors, corporate groups, and parade contingents.

To accommodate the surge, hotels have introduced comprehensive operational measures, including revised staff rosters, enhanced housekeeping schedules, and improved crowd management to ensure comfort and safety.

The 2025 parade will feature 81 contingents, 14,010 participants, 116 animals and 21 marching bands, with 8,000 tiered seats prepared for spectators—double last year's provision. Adding to the festivities, the 30-hour Rihuh Merdeka 2025 programme will run from August 30 to 31 at Monumen Alaf Baru, celebrating unity, culture, and creativity.

This year's National Day theme is "Malaysia Madani: Rakyat Disantuni". Malaysia Day will be hosted in Penang on September 16.



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Hyatt Regency Kuala Lumpur at KL Midtown officially opens

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has officially reopened its Hyatt Regency brand in Malaysia with the launch of Hyatt Regency Kuala Lumpur at KL Midtown, its seventh property in the capital. The five-star hotel, led by KL Midtown Sdn Bhd (a joint venture between Hap Seng Land and Naza TTDI), marks the first completed component of the KL Midtown mixed-use development, which will also feature 500,000 sq ft of retail space anchored by AEON, corporate and signature towers, and residential apartments.

Designed by acclaimed Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, the property offers 306 guestrooms and suites, plus 104 serviced residences, catering to both short-term and extended-stay guests. Its facilities include 16 function spaces, a pillarless ballroom, and advanced meeting rooms, positioning it as a hub for global events near MITEC.

This opening represents a “homecoming” for the Hyatt Regency brand, which debuted in Malaysia 45 years ago but exited two decades ago. It follows Hyatt’s recent openings of Hyatt Centric City Centre KL and Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur at Merdeka 118.



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The Majulan Hotel Opens to Strengthen Sabah Tourism and Community

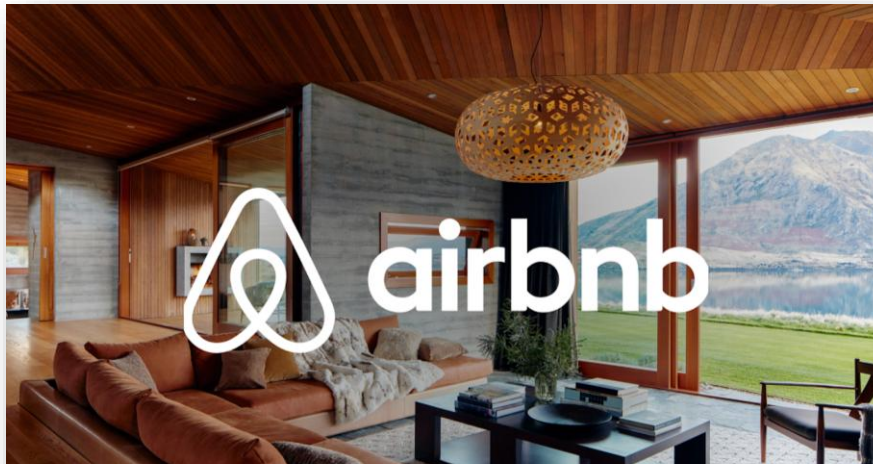
The Majulan Hotel has officially opened at ITCC Penampang, adding a new highlight to Sabah's hospitality scene ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026. Built by the Malakun family, the RM80 million, 10-storey property completes the integrated complex with 163 rooms, restaurants, leisure facilities, and direct access to ITCC's event spaces, making it a prime MICE destination. Though designed as a three-star, it aims to exceed expectations through comfort, service, and authentic Sabah experiences.

Chief Executive Officer Alexander Hugo Malakun said the hotel blends contemporary design with local culture, reflecting Penampang's heritage. A signature Mount Kinabalu-inspired sculpture captures this spirit. Despite pandemic delays, the hotel was completed in 18 months, showing resilience and confidence in the district's growth.

The Majulan has created over 40 local jobs, engaged community partners, and launched CSR programmes including Kadazan classes and blood drives. Positioned as a value-driven and culturally rooted stay, it targets both leisure and business travellers.



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Malaysia Introduces National Framework Regulating Airbnb and Short-Term Rentals

Malaysia has introduced a structured framework for short-term rental accommodation (STRA), including Airbnb, to align the sector with hotel industry standards. Operators will be required to register with the Companies Commission of Malaysia (SSM), obtain local council permits and licences, secure insurance, and subsequently register with the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (Motac). The framework is anchored by Planning Guidelines for STRA, finalised by PLANMalaysia and to be tabled at Cabinet.

Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming said the initiative addresses unlicensed operations, residential disturbances, and uneven competition with hotels. To strengthen regulation, Motac has also prepared guidelines for tourist accommodation registration and licensing of tour operators, providing a comprehensive regulatory framework.

STRA operators must submit local authority licences to Motac, while online travel agencies, including those hosting Airbnb-style listings, must verify compliance before advertising. These measures aim to foster accountability, fair competition, and consumer protection.



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KLIA Passenger Growth Strengthens Malaysia's Position as Regional Gateway

Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) recorded 3.9 million international passengers in July 2025, a 10.3% increase from 3.6 million in June, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd (MAHB) reported. The rise was driven by stronger connectivity, including Loong Air's new tri-weekly service to Xi'an, further deepening links with China.

Managing director Datuk Mohd Izani Ghani said improved connectivity to Chinese cities supports Malaysia's economic expansion, while reinforcing KLIA's status as a Southeast Asian hub. Direct links with emerging destinations not only lift passenger numbers but also create broader opportunities in trade, investment, and tourism, accelerating regional integration.

Across MAHB's network, passenger traffic reached 8.9 million in July, comprising 4.6 million international and 4.3 million domestic travellers. Its wholly owned Istanbul Sabiha Gökçen International Airport served 4.4 million passengers. Altogether, MAHB handled 13.3 million travellers in July, marking a 5.7% increase from June, underscoring sustained recovery and growth momentum.



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Matta Fair Targets RM250 Million Sales Ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026

The Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents (Matta) expects sales exceeding RM250 million at the upcoming 57th National Matta Fair, supported by Visit Malaysia 2026 and strong intra-Asean travel demand. President Nigel Wong said the September fair should outperform previous editions as enthusiasm for Asean destinations and domestic packages continues to grow. Exhibitors are also introducing creative offerings aimed at boosting spending, particularly in the local travel segment.

Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) will return as the official Airline Partner and Premier Sponsor. Chief commercial officer Dersenish Aresandiran said the partnership allows MAG to capture both outbound and inbound markets while reinforcing Malaysia's broader tourism agenda. Outbound travel remains strong, and inbound demand is rising steadily.

MAG will promote regional destinations such as Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines, alongside exclusive deals and added travel benefits. Its booths will also showcase a futuristic, AI-powered vision as it aspires to rank among the world's top 10 airlines by 2030.



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AirAsia Travel Fair 2025 Boosts Tourism Momentum Ahead of VMY 2026

The AirAsia Travel Fair (AATF) 2025 is projected to attract 15,000 visitors, up by 5,000 from its last pre-pandemic edition in 2019. Held from Aug 22 to 24 at Pavilion Bukit Jalil, the event features 213 booths and 1,000 curated travel packages. Organisers are optimistic of doubling sales from previous fairs, which saw daily ticket sales of up to 10,000. AirAsia also plans to expand the concept internationally to the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in support of Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

Group chief commercial officer Amanda Woo said the fair now brings together airlines, hotels, tourism boards, and travel agents, reflecting AirAsia's positioning as a full travel company. International carriers such as Emirates and Air Arabia are participating, with new routes targeting Central Asia and Istanbul, tapping rising inbound demand.

Tourism Malaysia said the initiative supports its 2025 target of 43 million visitors, strengthened by visa-free policies and growing arrivals from ASEAN, China and India.



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Indonesia and Malaysia Deepen Tourism Links Through Jakarta-Melaka Sales Mission

Indonesia and Malaysia have strengthened tourism ties through the Jakarta-Melaka Sales Mission, a three-day programme organised by the DKI Jakarta government and the Indonesian Consulate General in Johor Bahru. The initiative brought together 33 Melaka tourism players and 25 Jakarta operators, alongside representatives from the Indonesian Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, inbound tour associations, and the Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents.

Indonesian Consul General Sigit S. Widiyanto said the partnership extends beyond economic cooperation to shared culture and history, likening Jakarta and Melaka as siblings linked by the maritime spice route. He highlighted that collaboration in tourism should also reinforce cultural understanding while creating a sustainable and mutually beneficial ecosystem for both sides.

The programme promotes new packages built around historical and cultural narratives. It was further enriched by cultural showcases, including Betawi dance and performances by Abang and None Jakarta, strengthening regional solidarity across Southeast Asia.✂;



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RM72mil in tourism-related projects approved during 12MP

From 2021 to 2025, RM72.052 million was allocated under the 12th Malaysia Plan for tourism infrastructure development and maintenance nationwide. This includes RM7.75 million dedicated to four projects in Semporna, Sabah, reflecting a focused effort to enhance tourism readiness ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

The Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry highlighted its commitment to promoting Sabah and Sarawak as attractive destinations. Campaigns leverage social media, digital platforms, and influencer collaborations to raise awareness and engagement among domestic and international travelers.

Additionally, the Ministry is supporting the tourism sector through grant initiatives designed to stimulate innovative and appealing tourism packages. Emphasis is on family holidays, community-based tourism, eco-tourism, and homestays. These measures aim to strengthen local tourism ecosystems while creating sustainable economic opportunities for communities across Sabah and Sarawak.



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Langkawi Launches Major Tourism Campaign Ahead of Visit Malaysia Year

The Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) and Malaysia Aviation Group (MAG) have launched the Naturally Langkawi Special Deals 2025 campaign, offering 20–70 per cent discounts on hotels, attractions, dining, transport, shopping, and duty-free outlets from October 1 to December 31. The initiative targets off-peak months and strengthens Langkawi’s position ahead of Visit Malaysia Year 2026.

Langkawi attracts 3 to 3.2 million tourists annually, generating over RM7 billion in economic impact. Authorities aim for 3.5 million visitors this year, with 58 per cent international tourists, expecting an extra RM150 million in local spending. As of July 2025, 1.7 million arrivals were recorded, showing strong progress toward this target.

The campaign is backed by a Memorandum of Understanding between LADA and MAG, including limited-time flight and hotel packages through MHHolidays. These efforts demonstrate Malaysia’s readiness to welcome global travelers and highlight its resilience, creativity, and hospitality.



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Thomson Medical Unveils RM18 Billion Johor Bay Healthcare And Real Estate Project

Thomson Medical Group announced Johor Bay, a 10.5-hectare development in Johor featuring a 500-bed hospital with aged care facilities, a luxury hotel, serviced residences, and more. The project reflects Singaporean businesses' growing interest in Johor for lower costs and more space.

Part of the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone, which spans the Iskandar Development Region and Pengerang, the development is expected to create 20,000 skilled jobs for residents on both sides of the Causeway. It aims to strengthen long-term economic growth and cross-border collaboration.

Johor Bay benefits from its proximity to the upcoming Johor Bahru-Singapore Rapid Transit System (RTS) Link and ferry connections to Batam and the Riau Islands. With a projected gross development value of over RM18 billion, the first phase includes Thomson Hospital Iskandariah and a 47-storey luxury residential tower, making it one of Southeast Asia's largest private healthcare and real estate projects.



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Malaysia Strengthens Healthcare Travel Leadership Through Cambodia Engagement

Malaysia reinforced its role as a global healthcare travel hub by hosting Malaysia Healthcare Week 2025 in Cambodia from August 19 to 22. Organised by the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council (MHTC), the four-day programme featured medical sharing sessions, business-to-business meetings, public outreach, and networking with Cambodian stakeholders, healthcare facilitators, and the expatriate community.

The event comes as demand for overseas treatment grows. Last year, Malaysia welcomed 1.6 million healthcare travellers, generating RM2.72 billion, a 21% increase. Cambodia contributed 3,612 patients, up nearly 15% year-on-year, highlighting its potential as an emerging market. Activities included women's health engagements and collaborations with the Malaysia Business Chamber of Cambodia, insurers, referral partners, and travel agencies to strengthen bilateral healthcare ties.

MHTC emphasized Malaysia's affordability, multilingual expertise, and high standards, supporting Malaysia Year of Medical Tourism 2026 and consolidating the country's appeal for regional patients.



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Penang Strengthens Position As Leading Medical Tourism Hub

Penang has maintained its status as a key medical tourism destination, generating RM888.7 million in revenue last year from 412,944 foreign patients, according to the Penang Centre of Medical Tourism. As of August 18, 2025, the state has already attracted 213,032 foreign patients, contributing RM461.4 million.

While Penang's share of Malaysia's overall medical tourism has declined from 60% to just over 40% due to growth in other regions, revenue continues to rise. The state is witnessing the development of new private hospitals and expanded services in existing facilities. The launch of the Icon Sunsuria Cancer Centre at Island Hospital adds value, enhancing capacity and introducing programs such as women's cancer care and hematology services, including stem cell transplantation.

Equipped with advanced technology and skilled specialists, Penang hospitals serve both local and regional patients. The ongoing expansion and service enhancements signal a growing sector with strengthened offerings for international medical travellers.



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Jiangxi Air Launches First Southeast Asian Route To Kuala Lumpur

Jiangxi Air officially inaugurated its first Southeast Asian international route, connecting Nanchang and Kuala Lumpur with twice-weekly flights. The service enhances Kuala Lumpur International Airport's network, opens access to one of China's fastest-growing cities, and reinforces Malaysia's position as a key aviation hub in the region. Outbound flights depart Nanchang on Mondays and Saturdays, while return flights arrive from Kuala Lumpur later the same day.

Officials highlighted the strategic value of direct connections to emerging Chinese markets, which support passenger growth, investment, and trade while deepening Malaysia-China economic ties. The launch coincides with Malaysia's preparations for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, underlining air connectivity's role in attracting tourists and promoting Malaysia's hospitality.

Jiangxi Air aims to support the Belt and Road Initiative, enhance service quality, and strengthen bilateral tourism and commerce. With over 2.17 million Chinese visitors recorded in Malaysia during the first half of 2025, the new route meets growing demand and promotes cultural and economic exchange.



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Sabah Air Explores Strategic Partnership With Sarawak's AirBorneo

Sabah Air Aviation, the state-owned airline, is in early discussions with Sarawak-owned AirBorneo regarding a potential partnership. Talks began in April and have been described as “very positive,” though Sabah Air will await guidance from the state government before taking further steps.

Sarawak Premier Abang Johari Openg indicated that Sarawak is open to sharing ownership of AirBorneo if Sabah is willing to invest. Sabah leaders have stated they need internal discussions before making a decision, reflecting a measured and strategic approach to collaboration.

AirBorneo was established following Sarawak's acquisition of MASwings, Malaysia Airlines' rural air services division, and is expected to commence operations next year. Sabah Air, founded in 1975, operates a fleet of eight helicopters and two turboprop passenger aircraft. A partnership between the two state-owned airlines could strengthen regional connectivity, create operational synergies, and expand air services across Borneo, benefiting both states' economic and aviation sectors.



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