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## YTL Hotels Acquires Thistle Johor Bahru for Major Redevelopment

Thistle Hotel Johor Bahru, a 380-room icon, ended operations on September 30, 2025, closing an important chapter in the city's hospitality sector. Managed by JB Parade Sdn Bhd, the hotel thanked guests for their support, noting that the Thistle brand continues at Thistle Port Dickson Resort. Once known as Hyatt Regency Johor Bahru before its rebranding in 2009, the property was positioned as a premium destination near the Johor-Singapore Causeway.

The closure followed YTL Hotels' RM150 million acquisition of the hotel and its land from GuocoLand Ltd, which will gain RM35 million from the divestment. For YTL Hotels, the deal signals a strategic push in Johor, a state advancing with mega projects such as the Johor-Singapore Special Economic Zone and the upcoming Rapid Transit System Link, both set to drive tourism.

YTL Hotels will fully refurbish the property and relaunch it in 2026 as a five-star hotel with luxury rooms, dining, event spaces, and lifestyle facilities.



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## H World Expands into Malaysia with First JI Hotel Opening 2026

H World Group Limited has announced its entry into Malaysia with the signing of JI Hotel Downtown Kuala Lumpur, marking the hospitality giant's first project in the country. Developed in partnership with Saadiq Tri Venture, the 101-room property in Dang Wangi is set to open in the fourth quarter of 2026. The hotel will showcase JI Hotel's latest 5.0 design, combining oriental aesthetics with modern comfort, and will target both business and leisure travelers in the capital's vibrant city center.

According to H World Asia Pacific President Murphy Zhu, the group is thrilled to introduce one of its flagship brands to Malaysia, extending the reach of a highly recognized Chinese hospitality name. Beyond the brand, the group will also bring its strong supply chain, development expertise, and digital capabilities to the market.

This milestone underscores H World's long-term commitment to Malaysia and reflects its strategy of expanding across key Southeast Asian gateways.



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## Hilton Petaling Jaya Unveils Revitalized Identity with Modern Hospitality Upgrades

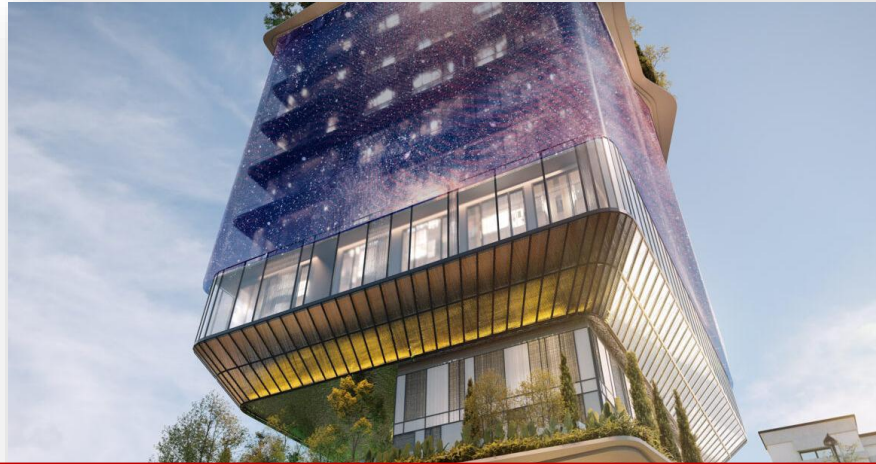
Hilton Petaling Jaya has launched its refreshed identity, positioning itself as a gateway to discovery with newly renovated rooms, enhanced dining experiences, and upgraded meeting facilities. The transformation is designed to meet the evolving expectations of modern travelers by blending seamless business connectivity, leisure opportunities, and authentic local touches. General Manager Andre Gomez said the renovation reflects Hilton's dedication to world-class hospitality while staying relevant to guest needs.

The property now features 547 redesigned rooms and suites showcasing contemporary elegance enriched with Malaysian elements. Public spaces, including lounges and the Executive Lounge, have been reimagined with intuitive layouts and productivity pods to balance social connection with quiet work, ensuring a more adaptable guest experience.

Hilton Petaling Jaya also elevates its meetings and events offerings with 1,748 sqm of flexible space. Highlights include the column-free Kristal Ballroom for up to 1,000 guests and 20 modern meeting rooms, supported by advanced technology and locally inspired experiences.



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## Richmond Asia Group Expands Hospitality-Led Developments Across Key Malaysian Cities

Richmond Asia Group has introduced Richmond Estelar, its flagship project in Kuala Lumpur City Centre. The landmark will feature 199 exclusive hotel suites, Malaysia's first glass-bottomed cantilever pool, and a Michelin-starred sky restaurant. Scheduled for completion in Q4 2028, it blends innovation, sustainability, and luxury, positioned as both a lifestyle asset and a legacy investment in Malaysia's most coveted district.

In partnership with global hotel brand Barcelo, Richmond Estelar anchors the group's strategy of hospitality-led real estate. This approach leverages design excellence, managed income models, and sustainability to deliver higher yields and resilience compared to conventional property. Targeting high-net-worth investors, the group focuses on assets that combine performance with distinctive experiences.

Looking ahead, Richmond Asia Group aims to launch 20 projects within eight years, with RM8bil in potential gross development value. Future developments include a landmark in Jalan P. Ramlee, Kuala Lumpur, and premium projects in Mount Austin and Stulang Laut, Johor Baru.



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## Warisan Tradisi Partners CoBnB to Launch Investment-Ready The Skies KL

Warisan Tradisi Sdn Bhd has appointed CoBnB Sdn Bhd as the main short-term rental and co-living operator for its new serviced apartment project, The Skies Kuala Lumpur. The partnership, formalized through a Memorandum of Understanding, positions the development as one of the first in Kuala Lumpur to be designed and marketed from inception as an investment-ready property with integrated professional management.

Located on Jalan Cheras, The Skies is a 42-storey tower comprising 303 units ranging from 550 to 800 sq ft. With dual-key layouts, smart-home features, and premium amenities including a rooftop sky pool, floating cinema, sky gym, halotherapy sauna, and EV charging stations, the project is tailored for both city living and rental performance. Completion is expected in early 2029.

CoBnB will deliver end-to-end management including occupancy and yield optimization, supported by in-house technology providing real-time dashboards. This collaboration ensures buyers benefit from sustainable rental potential and strong investment returns.



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## Malaysia Targets Tourism Growth with Global Appeal and Regional Leadership

Malaysia has reaffirmed its commitment to building a world-class tourism industry that is both competitive and resilient. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim, in a speech delivered by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof at the World Tourism Conference in Melaka, highlighted the nation's biodiversity, cultural strengths, and strategic plans to attract international visitors while preserving natural heritage.

Tourism priorities include nature-based travel, adventure tourism, Muslim-friendly offerings, medical and wellness tourism. Emerging segments such as educational travel, business events, and digital nomad hubs are also seen as strong growth drivers. These focus areas aim to strengthen Malaysia's appeal as a diverse global destination while supporting long-term industry resilience.

The government is also enhancing sustainability measures, including recycling models and revenue-sharing frameworks to support infrastructure and ecosystems. Looking ahead, as Asean chair in 2025, Malaysia will advocate smoother travel, harmonised standards, and stronger regional collaboration to further expand its tourism potential.



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## Over 2.6 Million Indonesians Visited Malaysia by July 2025

Malaysia welcomed more than 2.6 million Indonesian visitors up to July 2025, reaffirming Indonesia's position as the country's largest tourist market in ASEAN. In 2024, Malaysia recorded 4.1 million Indonesian arrivals, representing a 19.1 percent increase year-on-year. At the same time, 2.2 million Malaysians traveled to Indonesia, strengthening tourism ties between both nations.

Medical tourism continues to be a strong driver, with 1.6 million Indonesians seeking healthcare services in Malaysia in 2024, a 14 percent rise from the previous year. This growth cements Malaysia's standing as one of the region's leading destinations for medical and wellness travel. Alongside healthcare, attractions such as Langkawi, a UNESCO Global Geopark, and Kuala Lumpur, a global shopping hub, remain popular draws.

The momentum was highlighted at Malaysia Fair 2025 in Surabaya, featuring hospitals, travel agencies, airlines, and hotel groups. The initiative supports Malaysia's preparations for Visit Malaysia Year 2026, aiming for greater regional tourism growth.



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## Penang Leads Malaysia with Mandatory Hotel Guest Safety Video Initiative

Penang has become the first state in Malaysia to require safety videos by the Fire and Rescue Department (JBPM) as part of the hotel check-in process. The initiative, also shown in guest rooms, focuses on fire safety and water rescue protocols, ensuring visitors are equipped with essential knowledge during their stay. Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow said the measure supports Penang's commitment to being both a safe and attractive tourism hub.

With 8.2 million visitors recorded last year, Penang continues to strengthen its position as an international destination. However, rising numbers bring challenges, particularly water safety and hotel accommodations. By introducing safety videos, the state reinforces its reputation as a secure and welcoming destination for global travelers.

According to JBPM director Mohamad Shoki Hamzah, drowning incidents remain a concern. The initiative, backed by training for hotel staff and future mobile app development, positions Penang as a national model for tourism safety.



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## Sarawak Tourism Board Strengthens Japanese Market Presence Through Dual Initiatives

The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) has reinforced its footprint in Japan with a five-day programme combining participation at Tourism Expo Japan (TEJ) 2025 in Nagoya and a Product Update Session in Tokyo. These efforts underscore Japan's importance as a core market and reflect STB's long-term strategy to grow international arrivals. At TEJ 2025, Sarawak was showcased under the Malaysia Pavilion, engaging industry players and consumers through interactive promotions, including collaborations with Japanese content creators.

Momentum continued in Tokyo, where STB hosted leading travel agents to highlight new products, packages, and partnership opportunities. The initiative built on earlier showcases, such as Expo 2025 Osaka, and strengthened Sarawak's brand as a culturally rich, nature-inspired destination. Described as the "Gateway to Borneo," Sarawak's appeal lies in its diverse ethnic heritage, pristine landscapes, and vibrant festivals.

STB's branding success is reinforced by multiple global awards reflecting its innovative campaigns and growing international recognition.



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## Batik Air Expands Regional Network with Nine New Routes by 2025

Batik Air will expand its regional network with nine new routes starting December 8, 2025, reinforcing its role in Malaysia's aviation landscape. The expansion includes services from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, Subang, to Singapore, Jakarta, Langkawi and Johor Bahru, supporting the government's Subang Airport Regeneration Plan. Subang is set to emerge as a vibrant hub, strengthening Malaysia's regional connectivity.

Penang will also take on a strategic role with new flights to Singapore, Medan, Kuching and Kota Kinabalu, positioning the airport as a connector to East Malaysia and neighbouring countries. Ipoh's Sultan Azlan Shah Airport will be added to the network with direct services to Singapore, while all Lion Group airlines, including Batik Air, will shift operations to Changi Airport Terminal 4 in November 2025.

Chief executive officer Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said the routes reflect Batik Air's strategy of linking secondary cities, driving tourism, trade and investment ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026.



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## Malaysia Aviation Group to Launch In-Flight Catering Hub by 2029

Malaysia Aviation Group Bhd (MAG), the parent of Malaysia Airlines, will establish its own in-flight catering hub by 2029 at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). Operated by MAG Catering Solutions (MAGCS), the new facility will nearly double output to more than 50,000 meals daily, compared with 26,000 currently. It will support Malaysia Airlines' full network, Firefly, other MAG carriers, and selected third-party airlines, strengthening MAG's aviation services business.

The project follows MAG's move in 2023 to take catering operations in-house after ending its 25-year partnership with Brahim's Food Services. Since then, the group has invested heavily in new equipment, restoring operations within a month. The new hub will integrate advanced automation in preparation, packaging, storage, and transportation, reducing reliance on manual labour.

MAG said the initiative reflects its long-term strategy to boost revenue and operational efficiency. Through technology-driven solutions and global partnerships, it aims to expand customer reach and unlock new revenue streams.



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