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P R O P E R T I E S

ISSUE  
365

# Hospitality Industry Newsletter

Weekly Insights

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## IHG Expands Luxury Portfolio with First Vignette Collection in Malaysia

IHG Hotels & Resorts will introduce its first Vignette Collection property in Malaysia through Mangala Estate Kuantan, a 67 villa retreat developed with FRANKY Group of Companies. The estate will join IHG's system in mid 2026 and later undergo a full refurbishment and rebranding in 2027. This move strengthens IHG's entry into Kuantan and Pahang while preserving the resort's independent character within a brand known for distinctive and locally rooted hotels.

The resort offers a strong sense of place, with villas ranging from private pool units to lake view and two bedroom options. Its nature focused setting supports the brand's commitment to sustainability and community connection. Facilities include all day dining, a poolside bar with local menus, a spa and wellness centre, and access to two lakes for kayaking and water activities. Meeting spaces for 400 guests will also support corporate retreats and events.

Kuantan's rising tourism interest, with 2.28 million visitors in 2024, reinforces the estate's long term potential and supports IHG's expanding Luxury and Lifestyle presence in Malaysia.



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## JW Marriott Johor Baru Strengthens Malaysia's Luxury Hospitality Growth

YTL Hotels will open the JW Marriott Hotel Johor Baru on Dec 1, 2026, after signing an agreement with Marriott International. It will be the second JW Marriott in Malaysia and further supports Marriott's confidence in the country's tourism growth. The project is expected to elevate Johor Baru's luxury hospitality market, helped by the city's proximity to Singapore and rising cross border travel demand.

YTL Hotels is converting the former Thistle Johor Baru, acquired for RM150 million, into a 410 room JW Marriott after extensive refurbishment. Renovation work has already begun, reflecting both organisations' shared aim to deliver modern luxury. Marriott leaders noted stronger demand for premium accommodation in secondary cities, supported by improved connectivity and the upcoming rapid transit system to Singapore.

The 1.9 hectare hotel will offer contemporary rooms, a spa, fitness facilities, a resort style pool, multiple sports courts and a kids club. Its 2,517 square metres of event space and strategic location near transport hubs will strengthen its appeal for business and leisure travellers.



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## Magma Group Plans RM50 Million Private Placement to Boost Growth

Magma Group Bhd plans a private placement of up to 168.11 million shares, or 10% of its issued capital, to raise up to RM50.1 million. The funds will support property development and hotel investments. The placement may occur in one or more tranches, with the final price to be set later. For reference, Magma assumed a price of 29.8 sen per share, a 9.97% discount to its five-day average price as of Nov 14.

Of the RM50.1 million, RM32 million will go to property development in Persiaran Dutamas, Kuala Lumpur, covering contractors, consultancy, and marketing. RM15 million will fund hotel development and upgrades, RM2 million for working capital, and RM1.1 million for placement costs. As of 2024, the company had RM36.72 million in working capital, RM47.85 million in inventories, RM6.41 million in trade receivables, and RM11.26 million in cash.

The private placement is intended to strengthen Magma's financial position and support ongoing business plans and capital expenditure. Despite past losses and widening net losses in 3QFY2025, the board remains focused on enhancing profitability and cash flow.



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## TGE Group Expands Global Hospitality Portfolio with Kuala Lumpur Hotel

The Generation Essentials Group (TGE), a subsidiary of AMTD Digital Inc., has signed an agreement to acquire a hotel in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, pending customary closing conditions. The property is strategically located in the city's central business district, offering connectivity via a link bridge to Sunway Putra Mall and the Putra World Trade Centre. The hotel features 135 rooms, a gym, a library, and a rooftop infinity pool on the 37th floor with panoramic views of Kuala Lumpur's skyline.

This acquisition aligns with TGE's broader strategy to grow its global hospitality footprint. The company has recently expanded into the United States and Australia, signaling a commitment to entering high-potential markets and diversifying its hospitality investments.

Financial details of the transaction have not been disclosed, and completion remains subject to standard closing conditions. Once finalized, the acquisition is expected to strengthen TGE's presence in Malaysia, enhance its global portfolio, and position the company for long-term growth in key urban hospitality markets.



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## Malaysia's Tourism Set to Surpass 40 Million Visitors in 2025

Malaysia is set to receive more tourists this year than its 35 million population, with arrivals likely exceeding 40 million, according to HSBC Global Research. Growth is driven by more Chinese visitors, better flight connectivity, and the government's "Visit Malaysia 2026" campaign. By August 2025, over 28 million tourists had visited, a 15% increase from last year, making Malaysia the top ASEAN destination.

Day-trippers from Singapore, Thailand, and Brunei continue to contribute significantly, while infrastructure developments such as the Rapid Transit System linking Johor and Singapore, expected in December 2026, will enhance long-term prospects. Chinese visitors, now 20% higher than 2019, benefit from visa-free entry, safety perceptions, and direct flights that are 50% above 2019 levels.

Looking ahead, the "Visit Malaysia 2026" campaign, backed by over RM700 million in Budget 2026, aims to attract a record 47 million tourists. Trends such as durian tours and concert events, projected to generate RM1.7 billion, further support Malaysia's growing tourism momentum.



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## Melaka Welcomes Over 140,000 Luxury Cruise Tourists Amid Terminal Construction

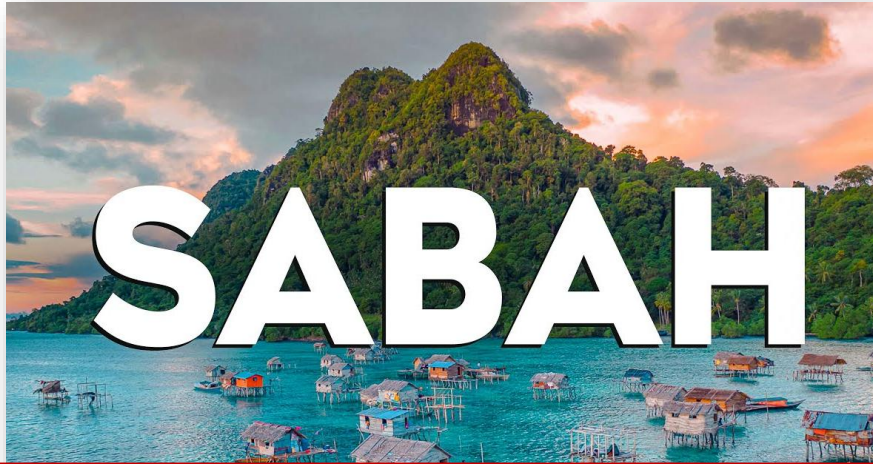
Melaka welcomed 143,218 tourists via luxury cruise ships from November 2024 to October 2025. The arrivals came on six cruise ships docking in the state. While 249,829 tourists boarded luxury cruise ships to Melaka during this period, only 143,218 completed landings at the Melaka Immigration, Customs, Quarantine and Security Complex, highlighting the city's growing appeal as a cruise destination.

The report was presented during the Melaka State Legislative Assembly session, answering queries on monthly cruise tourist landings since 2024. These figures indicate a steady inflow of high-value visitors, reinforcing Melaka's potential for tourism-driven economic growth and its attractiveness to the luxury cruise segment.

Construction of the Cruise Terminal on Pulau Melaka has begun, with progress at approximately 5%. Sixty piles have been installed, marking the start of the terminal's basic structure. The state government has stressed strict enforcement of responsibilities for all involved companies, ensuring accountability and timely completion of the project.



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## Sabah Targets Over Four Million Tourists with New Tourism Initiatives

MOTAC is intensifying promotional efforts to attract more than four million tourists to Sabah, focusing on both domestic and international markets. Collaborations with airlines, travel agencies, and digital platforms aim to showcase the state's natural beauty. MOTAC is also developing community-based, cultural, and nature tourism products to offer authentic experiences that highlight unique destinations across Sabah.

Tourism Malaysia has organised several initiatives in 2025, including the ASEAN Tourism Forum Post Tour, involving 34 representatives from travel agencies and media from countries such as the United States, Australia, India, Indonesia, Turkey, and South Korea. Partnerships with Amazing Borneo and the Malaysia Budget Hotel Association produced.

Further efforts include collaboration with the Sandakan Tourism Association to publish a guide to local attractions and with SabahTravel.com to run an online discount campaign from April 2025 to February 2026. These measures aim to boost tourism growth, strengthen the local economy, and elevate Sabah's global profile.



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## Malaysia Aims to Attract 300,000 Bangladeshi Tourists in 2026

Malaysia is strengthening tourism, cultural, and people-to-people ties with Bangladesh, aiming to attract 300,000 Bangladeshi visitors in 2026, said High Commissioner Mohd Shuhada Othman. Relations have grown across trade, investment, education, tourism, and cultural exchange, reinforced through regular high-level engagements.

Tourism is seen as a bridge connecting societies through food, culture, heritage, and shared experiences. Festival Malaysia showcases the country's multicultural harmony, while cultural exchanges strengthen bilateral ties. Recent high-level visits, including the Malaysian Prime Minister to Dhaka and the Bangladesh Chief Adviser to Kuala Lumpur, reaffirm both governments' commitment to cooperation across tourism, investment, education, and culture.

Malaysia's global connectivity is a key advantage, with Kuala Lumpur International Airport ranked among the world's most connected airports. The Visit Malaysia Year 2026 campaign aims to boost tourist arrivals and reinforce Malaysia as a regional hub for travel, trade, and investment.



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## Malaysia Expects 1.5 Million Indian Tourists Amid Strong Connectivity

Malaysia expects 1.5 million tourist arrivals from India this year, supported by strong air links and its visa-free policy for Indian visitors. Datuk Muzafar Shah Mustafa, Malaysian High Commissioner to India, noted that India remains a key source market, currently ranking fifth in tourist arrivals. Tourism Malaysia data shows average monthly arrivals from India exceed 100,000, reflecting consistent growth as travellers explore Malaysia's cities, islands, and beaches.

As of October 2025, Malaysia has welcomed 1.3 million Indian tourists and aims to reach 1.5 million by year-end. Ahmad Johanif Mohd Ali, director of Tourism Malaysia's New Delhi office, highlighted that the target for 2026 is 2.5 million Indian visitors, contributing to Malaysia's goal of attracting 47 million international tourists under the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign, up from 37.9 million in 2024.

Travel between Malaysia and India is supported by over 230 weekly flights operated by Malaysia Airlines, Batik Air, AirAsia, Air India, and IndiGo. Malaysia Airlines will further increase capacity with a daily service to Thiruvananthapuram, enhancing connectivity.



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## Malaysia-Uzbekistan Tourism Ties Drive Cultural and Economic Growth

Tourism is emerging as a key driver of Malaysia-Uzbekistan relations, creating economic opportunities and strengthening cultural exchange. Both nations have introduced a visa-free regime valid for 30 days, while shared Islamic heritage and historical ties further enhance collaboration. Uzbekistan's historic cities, including Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, attract Muslim tourists, supported by Muslim-friendly infrastructure.

Tourist arrivals from Malaysia are rising steadily, with nearly 4,500 visitors in 2023, 9,500 in 2024, and over 13,000 expected in 2025. Air connectivity is a key factor, with Uzbekistan Airways, Batik Air, and AirAsia operating direct Kuala Lumpur-Tashkent flights seven times weekly, and Batik Air launching a Tashkent-Langkawi route from December 14.

Bilateral engagement in 2025 included multiple tourism and cultural delegations, participation in MATTA Fair, and performances by Uzbek cultural groups. Relations continue to grow on principles of friendship, trust, and mutual respect, positioning tourism as a strategic growth sector.



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## Tourism Malaysia and MHTC Unite to Boost Medical Tourism Excellence

Tourism Malaysia and Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council formalized a strategic cooperation agreement targeting Visit Malaysia 2026 and Malaysia Year of Medical Tourism 2026. This partnership creates a coordinated framework to enhance Malaysia's positioning as a premier medical and wellness destination, demonstrating commitment to healthcare tourism excellence.

The collaboration integrates marketing strategies, industry engagement, and data sharing to develop healthcare travel packages targeting higher-spending international travelers from ASEAN, South Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East. This effort supports the national goal of welcoming 47 million international visitors under VM2026.

Director General Datuk Manoharan Periasamy and MHTC CEO Suriaghandi Suppiah emphasized this unified approach significantly enhances Malaysia's competitiveness in global medical tourism. Consequently, the alliance positions Malaysia to capture greater market share in the rapidly expanding international healthcare travel sector.



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## Tawau Hospital Emerges as Sabah's Premier Regional Healthcare Destination

Tawau Hospital will upgrade from Grade 2 to Grade 1 status by 2030, transforming it into a regional healthcare powerhouse and emerging health tourism destination. Serving 353,900 people, the facility received Prime Minister's approval for this ambitious enhancement.

The upgrade expands capacity from 585 to 735 beds, adding 150 critical care beds and establishing an invasive cardiology laboratory. This positions Tawau as a new Cardiology Referral Centre, enabling East Coast patients to access complex treatments locally instead of traveling to Kuala Lumpur or Kuching. Grade 1 status represents rare recognition requiring top-level expertise.

This enhanced status will attract patients beyond district boundaries, potentially from outside Sabah. Malaysian public hospitals already feature in Newsweek's World Best Hospitals list, proving global competitiveness. Additionally, the facility will address non-communicable diseases and conduct cancer screening programs.



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## Malaysia Positions Itself as Asia's Dominant Medical Tourism Powerhouse

Malaysia Year of Medical Tourism 2026 signals bold ambitions to capture the expanding global healthcare market, projected to reach US\$35 billion (RM144 billion) in 2025 and US\$142 billion (RM586 billion) by 2034. Asia-Pacific dominates this growth, with Malaysia strategically positioned to benefit.

Led by Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, the initiative elevates Malaysia through stronger branding and enhanced outreach. Revenue grew impressively from US\$201 million in 2015 to US\$374 million in 2019. Post-pandemic recovery shows strength with 2024 generating RM2.79 billion and 2025 targeting RM3.0 billion. Malaysia offers prices 30-50% lower than Singapore with comparable quality.

Patient experience includes airport meet-and-greet, visa facilitation, dedicated immigration lanes, and KLIA healthcare lounges. The Flagship Hospital Programme features Institut Jantung Negara, Island Hospital Penang, Mahkota Medical Centre, and Subang Jaya Medical Centre. Malaysia must address workforce governance and leverage wellness offerings for sustained advantage.



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## AirBorneo Prepares for Jetplane Launch to Strengthen Sarawak Connectivity

Sarawak-owned AirBorneo will launch jet aircraft operations in July 2026 to strengthen regional air connectivity. Starting with turboprop aircraft in December 2025, the airline transitions to jets mid-2026. Premier Abang Johari announced this development at SEDC's 2025 corporate dinner.

Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong welcomed the direct flight plans, with Transport Minister Anthony Loke approving the proposal. Beyond Singapore, Sarawak targets Jeju Island in South Korea, connecting two UNESCO Global Geoparks after Sarawak Delta Geopark achieved this status in September 2024. Operations complement SEDC's hospitality, infrastructure, and tourism initiatives.

This effort supports economic transformation as SEDC embraces innovation to develop human capital alongside natural resources. SEDC is positioned for emerging industries including renewable energy, algae-based fuels, and technology ventures. The corporation could lead algae development as Sarawak's new green fuel, supporting sustainable aviation.



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## Batik Air Launches Daily Ipoh Singapore Service Boosting Perak Tourism

Batik Air launched daily direct flights between Ipoh and Singapore from Sultan Azlan Shah Airport, strengthening Malaysia's aviation network. State Tourism Committee chairman Loh Sze Yee stated this reflects confidence in Perak's potential as an international gateway. The inaugural Singapore flight landed at 11:30am with 73 passengers aboard a Boeing 737-800.

CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy emphasized the route demonstrates commitment to connecting Malaysian cities with regional markets. As Malaysia's largest visitor source, Singapore represents significant opportunity for unlocking tourism and business exchanges. Direct access positions Ipoh as an accessible destination for Singaporean travelers.

This service supports Batik Air's strategy to strengthen national connectivity and tourism growth, positioning Malaysia as a future-ready Southeast Asian travel hub. The timing aligns with Visit Malaysia 2026 preparations, enhancing tourism accessibility and international appeal.



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## Batik Air Expands Penang Network with Singapore and Medan Routes

Batik Air expanded its Penang International Airport network with new routes to Singapore and Medan, reinforcing Penang's role as northern Malaysia's gateway. Singapore recorded 14.0 million arrivals to Malaysia from January to August 2025, up 18.1% year-on-year. The Penang–Singapore route meets demand for leisure trips, weekend getaways, and business travel.

Penang–Medan responds to rising medical and wellness tourism demand from Indonesia, offering convenient healthcare access while enabling leisure travel. CEO Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy noted Penang's strategic northern position complements existing Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta services, strengthening its hub status.

Tourism Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai highlighted this reflects confidence in Penang as northern Malaysia's premier gateway. The routes support Visit Malaysia 2026 and Malaysia Medical Tourism Year 2026. Tourism Malaysia's Samuel Lee expects enhanced visibility contributing significantly to VM2026's 47 million arrival target.



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## AirAsia Strengthens Regional Links with New Phuket Penang Connection

AirAsia Malaysia launched a new Phuket–Penang route with four weekly flights, creating a leisure and medical travel corridor. Penang offers world-class hospitals, heritage, and food culture, while Phuket features beaches, wellness centers, and lifestyle appeal.

Penang's medical-tourism sector shows strong momentum with over 200,000 foreign patients generating nearly RM500 million revenue by August 2025. International arrivals grew steadily since 2023, led by Indonesia, China, and Thailand. Malaysia ranks as Thailand's top foreign tourist source with over 4 million Malaysians visiting by November 2025.

CEO Dato' Captain Fareh Mazputra emphasized commitment to Visit Malaysia 2026 through enhanced connectivity. Thailand ranks among Penang's top five tourist sources, with AirAsia flying nearly 200,000 guests between Penang and Bangkok in 2025. Promotional fares start from THB 1,690 one-way, bookable until December 21, 2025.



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## Malaysia Airlines Successfully Resumes Direct Brisbane Service After Three Years

Malaysia Airlines resumed direct Kuala Lumpur–Brisbane flights on November 29, 2025, marking the first service since March 2023. This reinstatement addresses growing travel demand while demonstrating Malaysia Aviation Group's commitment to strengthening its Australian footprint. The expansion supports tourism and trade flows between Malaysia and Queensland.

Market response proves overwhelmingly positive with 86% load factors on Brisbane–bound flights and 99% on return flights to Kuala Lumpur. These exceptional figures reflect robust demand, validating the decision to resume operations. MAG chief commercial officer Dersensh Aresandiran noted this offers travelers greater convenience and choice.

The airline operates five weekly flights on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Flight MH135 departs KUL at 8:40pm, arriving Brisbane the following morning. With Brisbane added, Malaysia Airlines now serves five Australian cities: Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Adelaide, and Brisbane, strengthening bilateral tourism and business ties.



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