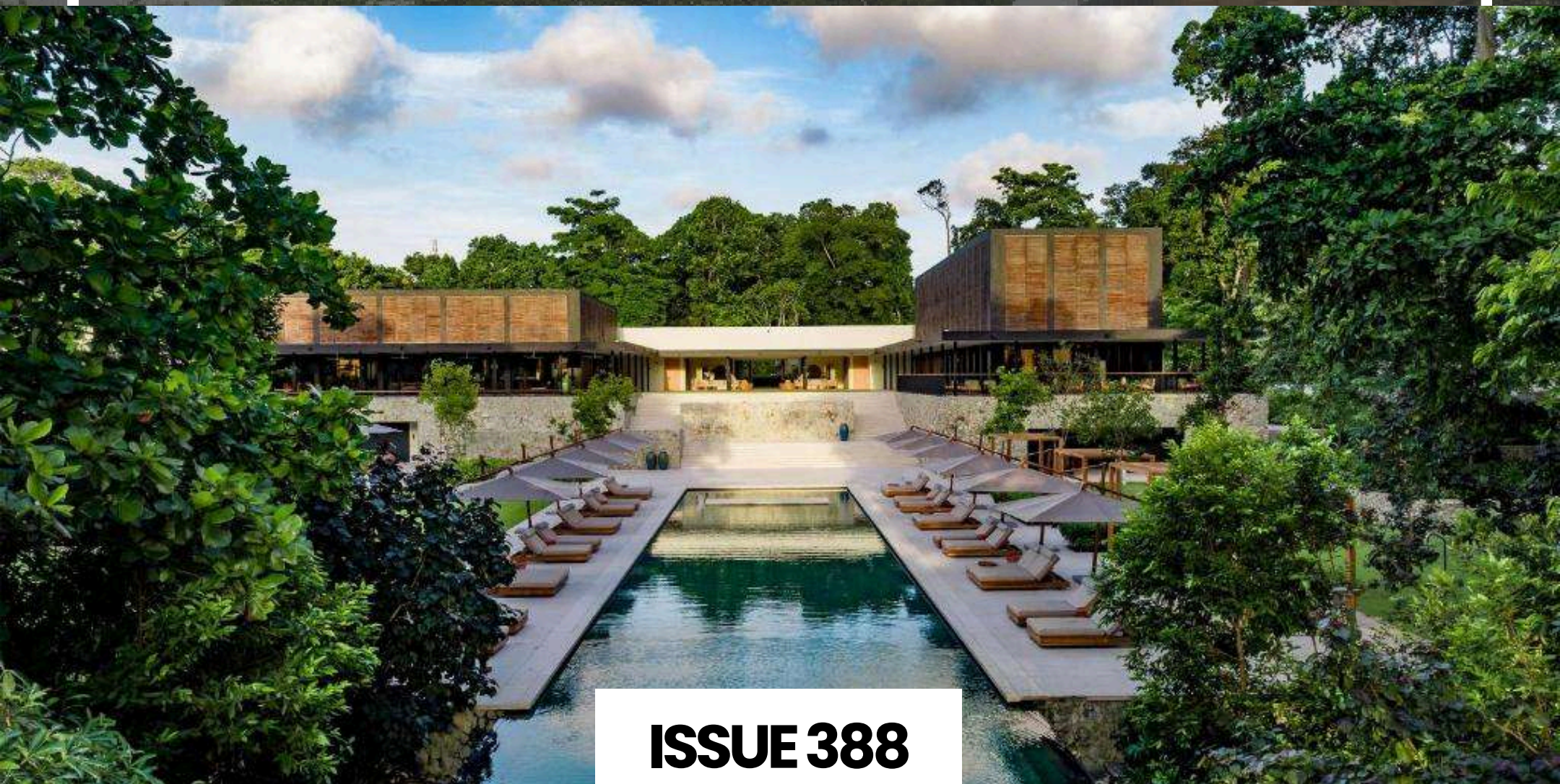


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Budget 2027 Allocates RM935 Million To Sustain Visit Malaysia Momentum Into 2027



Budget 2027 allocates RM935 million for tourism and culture as the Visit Malaysia campaign extends into 2027. The funds will support promotional grants and tourism events, upgrade facilities such as jetties and heritage sites, and promote arts, culture and heritage.

Matching grants will encourage new direct international and charter flight routes from China, India, Central Asia and Europe. The scheme will also expand to cruise ships, ferries and tour buses carrying international visitors. Organisers of events at venues holding at least 10,000 spectators will be offered rebates, while incentives for international incentive travel, conferences and exhibitions are extended until assessment year 2030.

In Langkawi and Labuan, the duty free shopping limit for visitors rises to RM10,000, with a minimum stay of 48 hours. More locally made Langkawi products will qualify for import duty exemptions. In addition, QR payment services will expand to 15 locations next year, including resort islands where limited ATM access has hurt small businesses. Together, these measures target arrivals, spending and connectivity across the tourism value chain.

Industry Welcomes RM935 Million Tourism Boost But Flags Yield And Capacity Gaps



Industry players welcome the RM935 million tourism allocation but caution that profitability is the real test. Nikie Mok of PARKROYAL COLLECTION and Pan Pacific Serviced Suites Kuala Lumpur expects stronger demand for central Kuala Lumpur hotels. However, she warns that higher arrivals do not guarantee profit, citing cost pressures, uneven infrastructure, competition from Airbnb and manpower shortages. She wants training grants and destination campaigns, and said the main challenge is ensuring the anticipated rise in arrivals converts into higher yield.

Canary Tours' Aaishah Bohari said Malaysia risks losing high spending travellers to regional rivals because of limited luxury hotels in Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu and Kuching. She also flagged a shortage of guides who speak French, German and Spanish, and said airport efficiency matters.

Temple Tree Resort Langkawi's Irene Vairo welcomed the duty free change but said shopping alone will not sustain growth. She called for better connectivity, year round experiences and preservation of natural and cultural assets. Overall, lasting returns depend on infrastructure, premium accommodation, skilled hospitality talent and compelling visitor experiences.

Malaysia Ranks Fifth Among Fastest Improving Economies In WEF Tourism Index



Malaysia's score in the 2026 World Economic Forum Travel and Tourism Development Index rose 5.8% between 2024 and 2026, placing it fifth among the 10 economies with the largest gains. Albania led at 7%, followed by Viet Nam at 6.3%, Laos at 6.1% and Qatar at 6%.

The index covers 110 economies, 17 pillars and 102 indicators, produced with Zurich Insurance Group. 101 economies improved, and the average score rose 2.1% from 2024, the fastest pace since 2019. Japan topped the index with 5.27, followed by the United States, Spain, Australia and France. China was the only emerging economy in the top 10.

The forum credited stronger cultural resources, tourism infrastructure and services, air connectivity and business travel. However, travel became less affordable in three of four economies, and investment lagged rising demand. Labour shortages, rising costs and climate disruption were also cited. Ramya Krishnaswamy, the forum's Head of Experience Economy and Cities, stressed creating greater value by investing in people, infrastructure and stronger public and private collaboration. The index measures enabling conditions, not actual arrivals, spending or revenue.

Malaysia Records 28.8 Million International Arrivals From January To August 2026



Malaysia recorded 28.8 million international visitors from January to August 2026, a 1.8% increase over the same period in 2025. Tourism Malaysia deputy director general for promotion Mohd Akbal Setia shared the figure on behalf of Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing. He spoke at the opening of INTACT 2026, the International Tourism, Arts and Culture Exhibition and Conference, at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre.

Akbal said the growth reflects Malaysia's continued appeal as a destination. He described the result as particularly relevant to the Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027 campaign. He added that tourism contributes over 15% of national gross domestic product, supporting businesses from hotels and e-hailing services to local artisans and family run restaurants.

In its second edition, INTACT drew 154 exhibitors from 35 countries. Akbal encouraged participants to build business connections and expand joint promotions that benefit destinations and local communities. The steady growth in arrivals, together with a wide international presence at the exhibition, supports the outlook for the tourism sector as the campaign enters its second year.

Sarawak Healthcare Travel Earns RM203.2 Million In 2025 As Capacity Expands



Sarawak's medical tourism sector earned RM203.2 million in 2025, up 36% from RM160.2 million in 2024. The figures were shared at the inaugural Borneo Global MediTourism Congress and Expo in Kuching on October 12, 2026. Revenue for the first half of 2026 reached RM109.9 million, compared with RM90.6 million in the same period of 2025.

Healthcare traveller arrivals rose 4% to 48,480. The minister noted that while the number of healthcare travellers continues to increase, revenue is growing at a faster rate. This points to higher spending per traveller, which strengthens the sector's contribution to the state economy.

Capacity is set to grow alongside demand. Kuching has five private hospitals, with three more in development. The state also plans to add accommodation beyond its existing 13,000 hotel rooms to serve international patients and their families. These plans link healthcare and hospitality, since longer patient stays and accompanying family members require rooms, dining and transport. The expansion therefore supports both healthcare providers and hotel operators as the sector continues to mature.

MATTA Fair Delivers RM37 Million In Domestic Package Sales For Local Operators



The 59th MATTA Fair generated an estimated RM37 million in domestic tourism package sales, according to a written parliamentary reply from the Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry dated October 12, 2026 and reported on October 13. The ministry said the fair helped generate income for industry players, including travel agencies, hotels and transport operators, as well as food and beverage businesses and micro, small and medium enterprises.

The reply responded to a question on whether the fair mainly promotes overseas travel. The ministry said it will work with MATTA through Tourism Malaysia to boost domestic destinations. Proposed steps include expanding business to consumer promotions, organising business to business matching sessions and reviewing proposals to extend future fairs.

On consumer protection, the ministry stressed licensing compliance and clear disclosure of package pricing, service scope, facilities and conditions. It advised consumers to use only licensed travel agencies and to review contract terms before paying. These steps aim to widen the fair's benefit to domestic destinations. Together, these measures support domestic tourism growth while maintaining trust between operators and travellers.

Sepang Formula 1 Race Generates RM345 Million Economic Spillover For MSMEs



Local micro, small and medium enterprises gained over RM345 million in economic spillover from the Bahrain Gulf Air Formula 1 Grand Prix at Sepang International Circuit. Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives Minister Steven Sim Chee Keong announced the figure in a statement. About 261,000 spectators attended, and nearly half were foreign tourists.

Attendees were projected to spend 2.17 times more than at ordinary events. This reflects foreign visitors who stay longer and spend more on accommodation, food, transport, shopping and recreation. The minister said the race had a strong effect on enterprises in hospitality, food and beverage, retail, transport, entertainment, tourism related services and support industries.

Looking ahead, he suggested Malaysia use major international sporting events to create more opportunities for small businesses. He urged stronger ties between small enterprises and larger industry players, event organisers, tourism operators and local suppliers, so that more of them can share in the gains from large scale events. The result therefore shows how a single global event can lift demand across the wider tourism value chain.

Malaysia Food And Tourism Fair In Berne Draws More Than 450 Visitors



The Embassy of Malaysia in Berne, Switzerland, held the Malaysia Food and Tourism Fair 2026 on October 3 at the Mattenhofsaal Hall. The event formed part of Visit Malaysia Year 2026 to 2027 and was organised with Tourism Malaysia Frankfurt. It showcased Malaysian dishes, cultural experiences and tourist attractions to a European audience.

According to the embassy, more than 450 visitors attended, including local residents, members of the international community and Malaysians living in Switzerland. Visitors watched cultural performances, took part in activities and learned about destinations across Malaysia. The fair therefore combined cuisine, culture and travel information in one setting.

The embassy said the event brought Malaysian flavours and culture closer to the Swiss public and helped strengthen ties within the Malaysian community. Food and cultural events of this kind support wider destination marketing efforts under the Visit Malaysia campaign, and they give Tourism Malaysia a direct channel to engage potential travellers in a European market. The strong turnout in Berne shows continued interest in Malaysian cuisine and travel experiences among Swiss visitors.

Sabah Plans Larger 2027 Promotion For Sandakan And Kinabatangan Wildlife Destinations



Sandakan and Kinabatangan will feature in a larger tourism promotion programme in 2027, according to Sabah Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Jafry Ariffin. The Hunt and Explore 2026 programme, run with Tourism Malaysia, drew over 100 participants from across Sabah, and influencers helped highlight destinations in the district.

Both districts are known for their natural environments and wildlife. Sandakan is home to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, the Selingan Island turtle conservation programme and the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre. Kinabatangan already attracts visitors, particularly from Europe.

Jafry welcomed Budget related allocations for Sabah and said incentives for chartered flights could bring more international visitors. He hopes Sandakan will eventually get direct international flights, as Kota Kinabalu and Tawau already have. The ministry is also in the final stages of setting up the secretariat for Visit Sabah 2027. Discussions with relevant agencies are expected by the end of October, and a launch is planned for late 2026. A large scale promotional event in Peninsular Malaysia may follow in early 2027.

Tourism Malaysia Develops Dark Tourism As Respectful Heritage And Education Niche



Tourism Malaysia treats dark tourism as a niche segment within its cultural, heritage and educational tourism offerings, tied to the Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027 campaign. Deputy director general Samuel Lee Thai Hung describes it as responsible visits to sites linked to conflict, tragedy, loss and historical events, focused on education and remembrance. Sites named include the Penang War Museum, Kundasang War Memorial, Sandakan Memorial Park and the Malaysia Prison Museum in Melaka.

Lee said heritage trails could use digital interpretation, self guided experiences and storytelling, with the focus on preserving historical narratives, educating visitors and generating local economic opportunities. Promotion should emphasise historical facts, human stories and respect for victims and communities, rather than ghost stories or the supernatural. Malaysia can stand out through stories of multicultural resilience.

Tourism Malaysia has supported 52 archaeological and heritage packages, including Lembah Bujang, Sungai Batu, George Town and Jerai Geopark. Former prisons such as Kota Jail in Johor Bahru and the former Pudu Jail site in Kuala Lumpur show how historic spaces can be repurposed while preserving their significance.

Gamuda Land Opens 280 Room ASAI Gamuda Cove As Brand's Largest Hotel



Gamuda Land has opened ASAI Gamuda Cove, its first hotel, in Banting, Selangor, at a launch ceremony on October 11, 2026. The 280 room property is the largest hotel under the ASAI brand, which also operates in Melaka, Japan and Thailand. It sits within the 755.14 hectare Gamuda Cove development, about 20 minutes from Kuala Lumpur International Airport. The hotel welcomed its first guests during a pre opening phase on September 15.

The hotel uses the ASAI Tropical model, which Dusit International expanded to create a nature inspired destination. General manager Muhamad Buhari Muhamed Yusof said it is the first property to introduce the Live Local concept. Facilities include an infinity pool overlooking the Paya Indah Discovery Wetland, a gym, workspaces, meeting areas and three dining outlets: Nasi & Khao, The Tea Shop and the Pool Bar.

The hotel stands beside the 450 hectare Paya Indah Discovery Wetlands. Nearby attractions include the 36.4 hectare Wetlands Arboretum, SplashMania Water Park and Discovery Park. In addition, an electric tram network links the nature, recreation and commercial destinations within Gamuda Cove.

Hello Penang Campaign Offers RM20 Nightly Discount To Lift Domestic Hotel Demand



A Hello Penang campaign offers RM20 off per night at participating one to three star hotels in Penang, targeting up to 10,000 room bookings. It aims to boost domestic tourism against cheaper neighbouring destinations. Bookings run until October 27, and stays can be used until April 30 next year. Trip.com and hotels offer extra rebates and promotions.

Partners are Tourism Malaysia, the Malaysian Budget and Business Hotel Association Penang Chapter as coordinator, and Trip.com as booking platform. Tourism Malaysia northern region director Abdul Hadi Che Man said the campaign targets price sensitive domestic travellers, and Penang is a pilot for similar schemes in other states. He cited 151.6 million domestic visitor arrivals in the first half of the year, up 5.6%.

Association Penang chairman Andy Lau Eng Leong said the campaign is open to all eligible Penang hotels, not only its 70 members. He said hotels face short term rentals, rising minimum wages, e-invoicing and manpower shortages, and called for regulation of accommodation providers. He added that the campaign aims to help restaurants, hawkers, attractions, transport operators and retailers too.

Malaysia Airlines Signs Three Indian Partnerships To Deepen India Market Reach



Malaysia Airlines has signed memoranda of understanding with three Indian partners to expand its reach in India. The partners are PayU in digital payments, Times Black in premium lifestyle and experiences, and Jio Network in digital and media. The collaborations will explore digital payments, premium lifestyle engagement and digital media outreach.

Malaysia Aviation Group president and group chief executive officer Nasaruddin A Bakar said India is an important market for the airline's Kuala Lumpur hub. He added that travel trade partners are central to how the airline reaches and serves this market. The new partnerships therefore complement its distribution network with payment, lifestyle and media channels.

The airline currently operates 80 weekly flights across 10 Indian cities. It carried close to one million passengers between India and Malaysia in the first half of 2026, a 10% increase year on year. Together, the strong passenger base and the new partnerships position Malaysia Airlines to capture further demand from Indian travellers, which supports inbound tourism, hotel occupancy and hub traffic at Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia Strengthens Gulf Airline And Travel Trade Ties To Lift Visitor Arrivals



Malaysia is working with the United Arab Emirates and the wider Gulf Cooperation Council to attract more visitors from West Asia. Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry official Chua Choon Hwa visited Dubai, where he met airlines and travel agencies. The push supports the Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027 campaign.

Tourism Malaysia signed memoranda of understanding with Emirates and Qatar Airways to promote Malaysia and coordinate marketing. Chua also met Air Arabia, Gulf Air, Etihad Airways and several travel firms. The agreements link national destination marketing with airline networks, which can raise awareness among travellers across the region.

Chua stressed that air connectivity is fundamental to this effort. Tourism Malaysia reported 30,257 visitors from the Gulf Cooperation Council to Malaysia from January to June 2026. Closer ties with major carriers and travel trade partners should help turn that interest into more arrivals, as regular flights give visitors convenient access to Malaysian destinations. The report was published by The Star via Bernama on October 1, 2026, and the initiative forms part of a broader strategy to widen source markets.

Penang Welcomes First Winter Charter From Poland To Open European Tourism Market



Penang is set to receive its first winter charter flight from Poland on November 5, 2026, as part of its effort to diversify tourism markets and build a presence in Europe. The Warsaw to Penang service is scheduled to run until March 25, 2027, with about one flight a week. Flights depart Warsaw Chopin Airport on Thursdays and arrive at Penang International Airport.

A travel agency runs the charter, and LOT Polish Airlines operates the flights. About 19 flights are expected over the winter season, each carrying roughly 250 to 300 travellers. The agency developed eight tourism packages for Polish travellers, who can choose any two. Local Penang tour guides lead them, and stays are seven or 14 days, combining city sightseeing with beach time.

State Tourism and Creative Economy Committee chairman Wong Hon Wai said the charter could open the European market. He called it a stepping stone towards a stronger presence there and a starting point for future long haul air links. He met the travel agency and destination management company on October 1 to finalise preparations.

Batik Air Malaysia Expands Fleet And Wide Body Network Under Regional Strategy



Batik Air Malaysia chief executive Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy, reappointed on February 1, 2024, said the airline has grown rapidly in two years. Its fleet reached 51 aircraft from just over 30, and staff rose from about 2,000 to nearly 4,000, roughly 98% Malaysian. Passengers grew from just over six million to close to eight million last year. The five year goal is a fleet of about 80 aircraft, subject to market conditions.

The airline is shifting from its Boeing 737 base toward Airbus A330s. Six were operating, with three to four more expected by year end, bringing the total toward 10. Growth focuses on Kuala Lumpur International Airport as a connecting hub, with expansion into Australia, Japan, China and India. Subang adds a direct Bali route from December 2, 2026.

Chandran estimates 60% to 70% of bookings now come within two weeks of departure, so the airline avoids heavy early discounting. It aims to sit between low cost and full service carriers. An initial public offering remains a possible long term option, not an immediate plan.