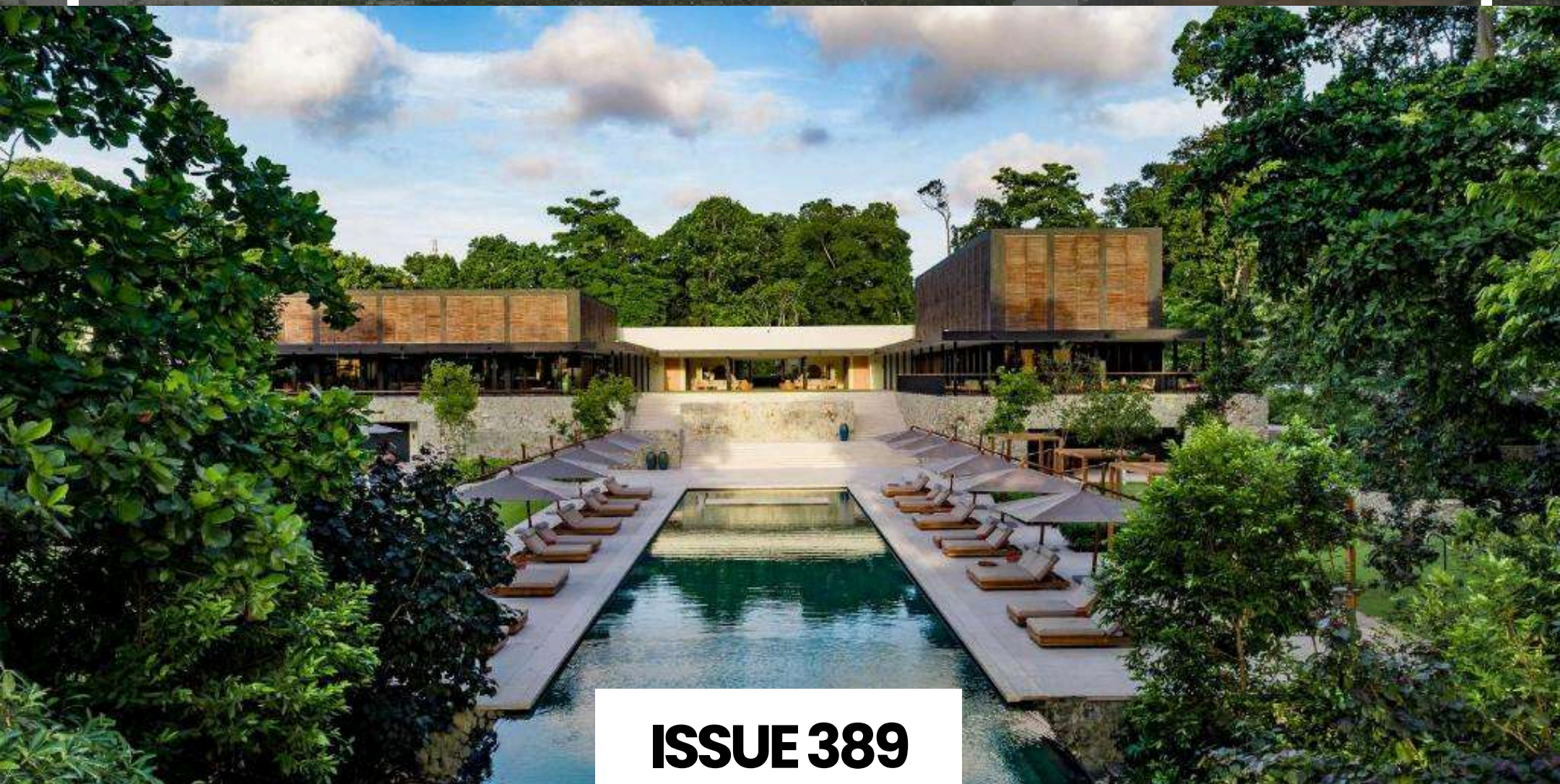


HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY NEWSLETTER



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Ormond Group Starts Building 396 Key Beachfront Resort Within Desaru Coast



Ormond Group, the hospitality arm of ECM Libra Group Bhd, broke ground on Ormond Desaru in Johor on October 16, 2026. The resort will offer 396 keys on a 9.1 acre beachfront site and is scheduled to open in the fourth quarter of 2029. It is the first third party investment in the 4,000 acre Desaru Coast master plan and Ormond's first resort style property. The average daily rate is not yet finalised.

Owned by ECM Libra subsidiary Desaru Beachfront Sdn Bhd and managed by Ormond, the resort targets young families. It sits beside The Westin Desaru in Phase 1 of the master plan. Family layouts include a 1,400 square foot two bedroom suite. Facilities cover a signature restaurant, beach bar, infinity edge pool, kids' club and 300 pax ballroom.

Group chief executive Gareth Lim said ready infrastructure and beach quality drove the decision. He sees a gap between high end and outpost hotels, which Ormond aims to fill. A RM10 million karting circuit and a racquet club in Phase 1 are expected to open by end 2026.

Teluk Bahang To Gain 348 Room InterContinental Resort Opening This December



InterContinental Penang Resort is scheduled to open in December 2026 in Teluk Bahang, marking the brand's first resort in Malaysia. The site sits away from George Town on Penang's quieter shores, between rainforest, coastline and the Andaman Sea. Opening and reservation details will be shared later.

The resort offers 348 rooms and suites overlooking the Andaman Sea, gardens or surrounding greenery, including Club InterContinental for more privacy and personalised service. Four restaurants and bars cover Sulam for Peranakan cuisine, Paradiso for Italian, SHINKA for Nikkei and Coastal for oceanfront dining. Gemala Spa draws on Penang's multicultural healing traditions. Families gain Planet Trekkers Kids Club and a teen games room. Event spaces include a Grand Ballroom, meeting rooms, a boardroom and outdoor lawns.

General manager Jeffrey Seward said guests can wake up beside the Andaman Sea and taste Peranakan flavours at Sulam. InterContinental has over 220 hotels in 70 countries with more than 73,500 bedrooms, and is described as the world's first and largest luxury hotel brand. It was founded in 1946 by Juan Trippe, who also founded Pan American Airways.

Oriental Holdings Commits RM210 Million To Reposition Three Bayview Hotels Under Ascott



Oriental Holdings Berhad is investing RM210 million to transform and rebrand three Bayview hotels in Penang and Langkawi, with 989 rooms in total. Phased reopenings begin in early 2028, and the properties will be managed by Ascott Malaysia. The hotels were previously operated by The Ascott Limited and have ceased operations ahead of refurbishment.

Bayview Beach Resort Penang becomes Ascott Batu Ferringhi Penang Resort, Malaysia's first beachfront resort under Ascott's flagship brand. Upgrades cover rooms, restaurants, pools, wellness and spa facilities, a kids' club and the 1,000 seat grand ballroom. It targets leisure and MICE travellers. Bayview Hotel Georgetown becomes Oakwood Georgetown Penang, using the Home + Beyond concept for business and leisure guests near heritage attractions. Bayview Hotel Langkawi becomes Fox Hotel Langkawi, the brand's first property on the island, in Kuah.

Ascott Malaysia's area general manager Adrian Chua said the change introduces experiences that reflect how people travel today. International arrivals rose 2.5% year on year to 21.1 million in the first half of 2026. On reopening, the hotels join Ascott Malaysia's 29 hotels and serviced residences.

Berjaya Hospitality Uses Eight Country Hotel Network To Promote Visit Malaysia Campaign



Berjaya Hospitality Group signed a memorandum of understanding with Tourism Malaysia on October 19, 2026 at Berjaya Times Square Hotel, Kuala Lumpur. The agreement supports the Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027 campaign. The group will join international sales missions, host familiarisation trips for media and trade partners, and run targeted campaigns and exclusive packages. Tourism Malaysia will amplify its digital presence through social media and influencers.

The group operates over 30 hotels and resorts across 21 destinations in eight countries, including 10 properties and 2,974 rooms in Malaysia. Overseas hotels in Japan, Iceland, the United Kingdom and the Philippines will act as windows into Malaysia. Group general manager Pravir Mishra said wherever Berjaya is present, Malaysia will always be at heart.

The Stay Berjaya, Discover More of Malaysia campaign offers discounts of up to 70% on room rates. Stays require two nights at city hotels or three at resorts. Bookings close on December 31, 2026 for stays through June 30, 2027. Guests receive a destination postcard with a promo code valid until December 31, 2027.

Alipay+ Partners Tourism Malaysia To Digitise Visitor Spending Ahead Of Campaign



Tourism Malaysia and Alipay+, the unified wallet gateway of Ant International, signed a memorandum of understanding to improve digital tourism services, cross border commerce and merchant engagement. It was reported on October 13, 2026, ahead of Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027. The partnership combines destination marketing with Alipay+'s wallet network and AI technology. It links international visitors with local operators and SMEs and encourages travellers to visit beyond major hubs.

Over 600,000 Malaysian merchants received payments through Alipay+ partner wallets and bank apps in the first half of 2026, up more than 70% year on year. Traveller spending through DuitNow rose more than 60%.

Alipay+ Voyager, an AI travel agent in digital wallets, recommends cultural, culinary and experiential offerings verified by Tourism Malaysia. Tourism Malaysia will also launch an AI travel subsidy programme, and a PayNet DuitNow campaign offers 20% savings at local businesses. Tourism Malaysia's director general said the collaboration supports Malaysia as a smart tourism destination. Alipay+'s general manager said cross border commerce is evolving beyond the moment of payment and will help SMEs engage global customers.

North Borneo Rainforest Festival Gathers Indigenous Cultures From Five Destinations This Month



The fifth North Borneo Rainforest Festival will be held on October 31 and November 1, 2026 at Koisaan Cultural Village, Penampang, Sabah. Its second international edition follows the first in 2025. The theme, Misoloot Sapisupi, means an ancestral gathering and centres on living heritage and contemporary creative practice. Pertubuhan Kolektif Seni Budaya Sabah organises it, supported by the Sabah Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment, Sabah Art Gallery and Bayu Seni.

Indigenous groups from Sabah, West Kalimantan in Indonesia, the Philippines, Guam and Taiwan will take part. The exchange is two way, allowing Sabah groups to share their heritage abroad and international groups to share theirs in Sabah.

Highlights include an international indigenous exhibition, the Borneo Indigenous Film Festival, a traditional tattoo gathering, an international weaving exchange and a cultural dance parade. Visitors can also join workshops, crafts, culinary experiences and creative markets, while local vendors and artisans gain a platform to sell. The festival suits families, artists, travellers and film fans. One ticket gives full access to the grounds and the entire programme, sold online through myticketempire.com.

Sarawak Nature Sites Santubong, Similajau, Kubah And Matang Gain Approved Facility Upgrades



The Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture has approved infrastructure upgrades at four Sarawak eco tourism sites. They are Santubong National Park, Similajau National Park, Kubah National Park and Matang Wildlife Centre. The funding amount was not stated. Sarawak's tourism, creative industry and performing arts minister announced the approval on October 20, 2026 during his winding up speech at the State Legislative Assembly.

He said the initiatives will enhance tourism facilities and accessibility and improve the overall visitor experience. His ministry will keep working with the federal ministry, Tourism Malaysia, the National Department for Culture and Arts, the Malaysian Handicraft Development Corporation and the National Heritage Department.

Separately, the federal government has allocated RM1.5 million this year to upgrade tourism infrastructure at five Sarawak locations under the Restoration, Conservation, Renovation and Upgrading Programme. These are Taman Negara Maludam, Taman Awam Miri, Homestay Patrick Libau in Niah, Air Terjun Melasak in Lawas and Kampung Budaya Sarawak in Kuching. Together, the measures should improve access and facilities at nature based tourism sites.

Netflix Thriller Shoot Positions Penang As Rising International Filming Destination



Penang is working to attract more international productions after Netflix chose the state for *The Big Fix*, a thriller starring Mark Wahlberg. The state's tourism and creative economy committee chairman called it another significant milestone for the sector. The report was published on July 14, 2026, when filming had run for three days at Penang Island sites.

Locations include Jawi Peranakan Mansion, Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion, Lorong Ikan in George Town, Penang City Stadium and Padang Brown. The film is a football themed crime thriller about match fixing. It was scheduled to film for two weeks in Penang. The production is backed by the Film in Malaysia Incentive and endorsed by the state and the Penang Island City Council.

The chairman said international productions create spillover for local businesses, hotels, transport providers and the creative industry, while promoting film tourism. He added that the exposure on a major streaming platform is invaluable. The state, with Penang Global Tourism and industry partners, will keep pursuing productions that add economic value, develop local creative talent and showcase Penang.

Xventure Brings RM8 Million Indoor Adventure Park To Penang On October 29



Indoor adventure park operator Xventure opens its first Malaysian outlet on October 29, 2026 at The Waterfront Shoppes at The Light City, Penang. The RM8 million investment follows launches in Thailand and Hong Kong. The park spans 1,800 square metres with 11 adventure zones, aimed at teenagers, adults, families and groups beyond the typical children's playground market. It runs daily from 10am to 10pm.

Attractions include the eight metre Challenger Arena with a digital tagging system and live leaderboard, an Aerial Rope Course 4.5 metres above ground and a gigantic seesaw billed as the largest of its kind in Penang. Xventure is a spin off from Kiztopia's family edutainment business. Its group chief executive said Penang was chosen for its diverse consumer base and vibrant tourism economy, with the aim of creating a cross generational leisure destination.

Non peak two hour tickets start from RM40 for X-Junior and RM60 for X-Plorer, based on height. From October 29 to November 1, the first 100 buyers can purchase a second ticket for RM1. Corporate team building programmes are offered.

Airlines And Tourism Bodies Welcome Wider Flight Matching Grant To Lift Connectivity



Airlines say the expanded International and Charter Flight Matching Grant will reduce the commercial risk of opening new routes and support Malaysia's tourism connectivity. Batik Air chief executive Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said it helps most for emerging markets, where new routes can take six to 12 months to become commercially viable. The grant covers the whole value chain, so airlines can work with agents and hotels on packages. When tour operators and hoteliers have matching funds to bundle accommodation with flights, seats sell faster. The wider scope also makes charter flights more viable.

The Malaysia Cruise Industry Association's deputy president said the grant could link international air travel with cruise tourism. He proposed fly cruise packages, such as Port Klang to Singapore, and routes linking Penang, Langkawi and Phuket. He hopes incentives extend to international cruise operators to make Malaysia a home port.

The Malaysian Inbound Tourism Association's president said grants are crucial for attracting routes. She said tour bus numbers fell from 4,362 in March to 941 in September on rising costs, and hopes the allocation can increase.

Malaysia Airlines Named World's Best MICE Airline In Debut Double Award Win



Malaysia Airlines has been named World's Best MICE Airline and Asia's Best MICE Airline at the 2026 World MICE Awards. These are its first wins in both categories. The ceremony was held in Jamaica and recognised the airline's services in the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions segment. The Star reported the awards on October 15, 2026.

Bryan Foong, chief executive of the airline business at Malaysia Aviation Group, said the recognition reflects the airline's continued work on services and relationships with travel trade partners. He noted that progress depends on the collective effort of teams across the group. The airline remains focused on building partner confidence and deepening collaboration.

Operational performance supports the message. Average year to date on time performance stands at 91.70% and rose to 94.16% in September 2026. This year, it also won recognition in Malaysia, South Korea and Hong Kong. Under its Long Term Business Plan 3.0, the group targets a place among the world's top 10 airlines by 2030. It will keep investing in its fleet, network, products and operations.

Batam–Penang Service From Batik Air Targets Tourism And Medical Travel



Batik Air has launched direct flights between Batam, Indonesia and Penang. The inaugural service arrived at Penang International Airport on October 18, 2026 from Batam's Hang Nadim International Airport. The route gives travellers in the Riau Islands direct access to Penang and supports tourism, business and medical travel. Healthcare partners include Sunway Medical Centre Penang, Island Hospital and KPJ Penang Specialist Hospital. Frequency, aircraft type and fares were not disclosed.

Batik Air chief executive Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy said the route is part of efforts to expand the regional network and improve travel between Indonesia and northern Malaysia.

Tourism Malaysia's director general said the flights should boost visitor arrivals from Batam, adding that Malaysia is primed to become the top getaway for Batam travellers during Visit Malaysia 2026 to 2027. The Penang tourism and creative economy committee chairman said the state held a tourism roadshow in Batam before the launch to engage travel agents. The state will work with Batik Air on travel packages and joint promotions for visitors from the Riau Islands.

Penang Targets Myanmar Visitors As Yangon Route Carries Almost 16,000 Passengers



Penang is keen to tap the Myanmar tourism market as its direct Yangon route gains traction. Myanmar Airways International launched the service in April 2025 with two flights weekly, increasing to three on June 27, 2026. By July 31, it had operated 140 flights and carried 15,885 passengers. Malaysians made up 4% of travellers, while Myanmar nationals and other foreign visitors made up 96%.

Penang's tourism and creative economy committee chairman said the figures show the route's potential to attract international travellers. More frequent flights would give flexibility and let operators build packages for leisure, medical tourism, family visits and business travel. Penang will keep prioritising Southeast Asia because of proximity and transport links. The state will work with airline and industry partners and hopes to lead a familiarisation visit to Myanmar.

The airline's chief executive said its fleet will grow from 14 to 20 aircraft by the end of this year. Myanmar aims to attract more Malaysian travellers through heritage, spiritual, beach, wellness and slow tourism. Historic ties include the Dhammikarama Burmese Temple, founded in 1805.

Hainan Airlines Adds Haikou Penang Service, Ninth Chinese City Linked To Penang



Hainan Airlines' direct Haikou to Penang service is scheduled to begin on October 11, 2026. Haikou becomes the ninth Chinese city with a scheduled direct air link to Penang, joining Guangzhou, Xiamen, Chengdu, Shenzhen, Shanghai, Qingdao and Chongqing. Penang's tourism and creative economy committee chairman announced the route after meeting airline representatives in Guangzhou on August 12, during a Penang tourism roadshow.

Flights operate twice weekly on Wednesdays and Sundays. Flight HU477 departs Haikou Meilan International Airport at 5.30pm and arrives in Penang at 8.45pm. The return flight HU478 leaves Penang at 9.45pm and reaches Haikou at 1am the next day. The aircraft type was not stated.

The chairman said businesses and industry players on both sides will have more convenient access for business travel. This supports the route's role in strengthening business and industrial ties as well as tourism. Haikou has a permanent resident population of 3.0563 million, and Hainan Province about 10.55 million, according to China's National Bureau of Statistics. Penang and Hainan established friendly state to province relations in 2013.

AirBorneo Plans October Kuching–Jakarta Service As Its Second International Route



Sarawak owned AirBorneo Airways plans direct Kuching to Jakarta flights in October 2026, its second international route. It aims to tap an existing market of about 100,000 passengers a year with a full service product. Jakarta will be its initial entry point into Indonesia, and other cities may follow as demand grows. Targets include business and government travellers, medical tourists, leisure visitors and people visiting friends and relatives.

Chief executive Megat Ardian Wira Mohd Aminuddin spoke at a media roundtable in Jakarta on October 16. He said the airline wants to draw travellers from existing services and grow demand through added capacity and premium options, including business class. The Jakarta service will initially use its two leased jets on a rotational basis. It plans to grow its jet fleet to five by early 2027 and move from leases to financial leases.

Jet operations began on July 20, 2026 with Kuching to Kuala Lumpur, followed by Kuching to Singapore on July 22. Since July, it has carried 43,502 passengers on about 500 jet flights with on time performance above 95%.