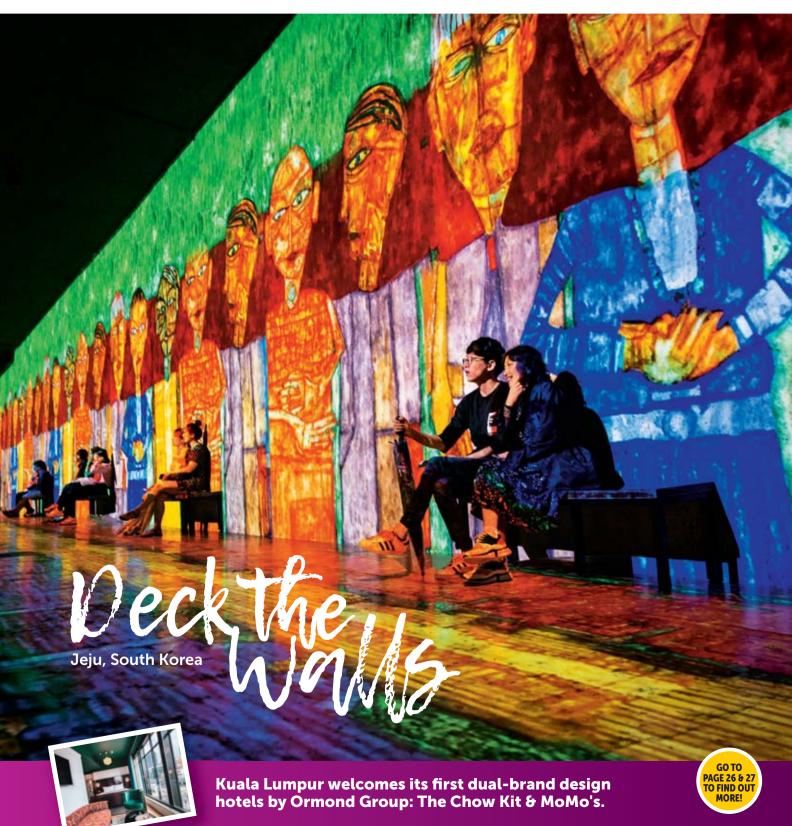


Naughty or nice, these walls have eyes. Read me on board, online and on wifi.airasia.com

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AirAsia Inflight Magazine









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On the Cover



Visitors pose against a Gustav Klimt artwork illuminated by laser lights at The Bunker de Lumieres – an immersive art space in Jeju, South Korea.

Photography: Chew Win Win

travel360 wishes to thank

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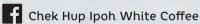
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FROM THE FLIGHT DECK



12 19

AirAsia's Vision 2020

Assalamualaikum (May Peace be Upon You), and thank you for choosing to fly with us today.

December brings the perfect opportunity to reflect on our achievements over the past year and begin planning for what's in store for 2020.

For us, this year has seen a number of new beginnings, especially as we embark on our journey of transformation to become more than just an airline.

Our vision has always been to provide everyone with the opportunity to fly, and for 18 years, we have reimagined travel by offering low fares and inspiring experiences.

Our travel and lifestyle platform – airasia.com – has now become a leading source of travel and lifestyle inspiration, and through the adoption of new technologies, we've continued to innovate and build new business opportunities.

By no means has it been an easy journey. In fact, many of our achievements have required hard work and perseverance, and I must thank those who have helped us get to where we are today.

Together, we fought for fairer travel conditions and put a halt to increased passenger service charges at Malaysia's low-cost terminal, klia2. Lower airport taxes translate to more tourism and trade opportunities for the country, and we're proud that our voices were heard loud and clear.

Testament to this dedication is also the awarding of top honours at the Skytrax World Airline Awards in Paris, where this year, we won World's Best Low-Cost Airline for the 11th year in a row. AirAsia X also bagged the World's Best Low-Cost Airline Premium Cabin award for the seventh time, which is a fantastic achievement.

When it comes to milestones, we've flown more than 600 million guests to over 150 destinations, many of which are unique. This lives up to our tagline 'Now Everyone Can Fly', and our objective to continue offering our guests the most affordable fares in the region.

1. Datuk Kamarudin Meranun with AirAsia cabin crew at the Skytrax World Airline Awards



As we look to next year and plan for the future, we couldn't be more excited. The introduction of a new long- and short-haul fleet will change the way we fly, and provide the best of inflight comfort.

The fleet expansion also opens access to more second- and third-tier cities, allowing guests to discover new adventures and destinations within our network such as Lanzhou and Quanzhou (China), Dalat (Vietnam), Brisbane (Australia), and Belitung and Labuan Bajo (Indonesia).

There's a lot to look forward to and like me, I'm sure you are excited for the New Year.

For those who are taking some time off in December and January, I wish you a safe and enjoyable holiday and year ahead. We look forward to welcoming you back on board soon.

Datuk Kamarudin Meranun Executive Chairman of AirAsia Group Berhad

odin.meranun



Singapore's Gardens by the Bay - Featuring over 1 million plants from 19,000 species

Showcasing the best of horticulture, sustainability and architectural design, Gardens by the Bay has blossomed into a must-see destination that's among the world's top 20 most checked-in places on Facebook (2015). Explore diverse plant life from around the world displayed in the spectacular Cooled Conservatories, marvel at Supertrees and dive into a 4D ride of a dragonfly's journey. Come, be inspired by nature where wonder blooms.





Flower Dome

Spring and discover 9 different gardens from Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe.





Stand next to the 35-metre tall waterfall and descend through the surreal mist-filled Cloud Walk and Tree Top Walk.



Poinsettia Wishes Floral Display

Flower Dome · 8 Nov - 5 Jan 2020

Embark on a whimsical journey through a landscape of poinsettias and winter blooms set in the Nordic region this festive season.



Floral Fantasy

Marvel at the beauty of our four diverse garden landscapes with a multitude expression of floral artistry and immerse yourself in a 4D ride of a dragonfly's journey.

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1st Prize Hillary Bong

Weird Wild World (Oct 2019) on the mysterious and diverse creatures that inhabit the Coral Triangle transported me back to the spectacular underwater world I experienced during a recent dive trip in Sapi Island, Sabah. The section on mindful diving reminded me of my trepidation to touch the corals. Thanks to travel360, I now know for a fact that it is not right to touch any underwater creature. I will most certainly share what I've learnt with my dive companions before our next excursion. Thank you for constantly striving to create awareness and educate readers that nature is a miracle we are all responsible for. Kudos on the great work.



A 2D/1N Stay in **Lexis Suite Penang's** Premium Pool Suite with breakfast for two, worth MYR1,270 (approx. USD300) **lexissuitespenang.com**



2nd Prize

Light over darkness, good over evil, and wisdom over ignorance - the phrases associated with Deepavali (the Hindu festival of lights) - took on a new meaning for me when I read Path of Light (Oct 2019). Through its descriptions of signs, symbols, and icons related to the festival, the article captured the essence of Deepavali - which some of us might take for granted. I, for one, was reminded of the significance of symbolism and metaphors in the Hindu faith. For readers who are not familiar with the festival, I am certain the article magnificently illuminated the beauty of Deepavali and reinforced the message that good eventually triumphs over evil.



A 2D/1N Stay in **Somerset Puteri Harbour Iskandar Puteri**'s Two Bedroom Premier Room with breakfast for four, worth MYR837 (approx. USD200) **the-ascott.com**



3rd Prize Foo Chuan Choong

The Gift of Rain (Oct 2019) about the 'rainy' myths of the Asean region was particularly meaningful to me as I have always been fascinated by rain. It was heartwarming to learn that this sentiment is shared by other cultures too. My favourite rain-related story was the one on Thailand's Erawan - the 33-headed elephant god (referred to as Erawana in Balinese) who carries the Hindu deity Indra and whose duty it is to draw water from the Earth to the sky, which Indra then returns as rain. The tale reminded me of our shared heritage, and how various Asean cultures draw inspiration from nature. Really looking forward to the next pour!



A 2D/1N Stay in **Somerset Puteri Harbour Iskandar Puteri**'s One Bedroom Premier Room with breakfast for two, worth MYR753 (approx. USD180) **the-ascott.com**

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@etr_eattravelrelax The world is yours to explore – Chinatown, Singapore #instacool #sgtraveller #visitsingapore



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THE VIEW

Tell Tales

As we say goodbye to a great year, the travel360 editorial team jumps in front of the camera to reveal the artists and artworks that inspire them.



Kerry-Ann Augustin

Frida Kahlo

Apart from our similar eyebrows, I love Kahlo for her ability to show that true strength comes from exposing our vulnerabilities.

> Adrian Balachandran Sub Editor

THE OLD GUITARIST, Pablo Picasso

Picasso's Blue Period masterpiece might be wrought with tragedy, but it resonates with me deeply; when all else fails, music prevails.



R Rajendra Regional Managing Editor

CALAVERA CATRINA & DIA DE MUERTO DEATH MASK, Jose Posada

Posada used skulls, bones and calaveras (decorative skulls) to pen socio-political critiques in his art. Death and decay to discuss life is an unusual approach where even the macabre can be life-affirming.

Fazlina Bee Abdul Rashid **Editorial Assistant**

Pablo Picasso/ **Piet Mondrian**

The myriad colours depict my life journey - with good friends from various backgrounds, a vibrant bunch of colleagues and most of all, my loving parents whom I adore.





Kan Seak Hong Art Director

BEETLEJUICE. **Tim Burton**

Always think out of the box. Tim Burton's bizarre and quirky art styles are always a big inspiration for me to stay creative.



Dils Kamarudin Senior Designer

Yayoi Kusama

Being Asian and female in the 1960s never stopped Yayoi Kusama from making a name for herself in an industry dominated by Western male artists – she truly is inspiring.

> Chitra Santhinathan **Deputy Editor**

WOMAN IN BLACK TIE, Amedeo Modigliani

The original portrait stands out from Modigliani's now famous nudes - in it, it's the mysterious gaze of the muse that draws the viewer in.







Andy Warhol

Warhol was the embodiment of art. His looks were simple, yet difficult to imitate. I hope my Warhol impersonation does some justice to the master.



Beverly Rodrigues Editor

VASE WITH FIVE SUNFLOWERS, Vincent van Gogh

There's something hauntingly beautiful about a fragile soul who, even in the darkness, managed to paint happy flowers that, to him, represented gratitude.

Shamini Rajah **Sub Editor**

I MISS THE SEA IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE A GIRL AGAIN, **Peregrine Heathcote**

Heathcote creates edge with class. I love the sea, and this beautiful

Top Tech Transformer

In October, AirAsia was named Asia Pacific Digital Transformer of the Year at the IDC Digital Transformation Awards (DXa) 2019, which recognises the company's discernible and measurable excellence in deploying innovative technologies, personalised products and services, optimisation of ancillary revenue and enhanced customer service. The IDC DXa honours organisations that have successfully digitalised one or multiple areas of their business through the application of digital and disruptive technologies. Beating more than 11,000 nominated companies, AirAsia bagged IDC DXa's top prize just weeks after being recognised for the same achievement at the Malaysia edition of the DXa. The company's new technologies include pricing optimisation through machine learning and facial recognition technology.





"Being named Digital Transformer of the Year for Malaysia is an achievement I am super proud of. To be recognised as the best in Asia-Pacific proves that our

digitalisation programme is having a profound impact on our guests and the industry." ~ Tony Fernandes, CEO of AirAsia Group & CEO of airasia.com

Seven Strong

AirAsia bagged top honours at the World Travel Awards Asia and Oceania 2019 in October for the seventh year in a row, winning the Asia's Leading Low-Cost Airline and Asia's Leading Low-Cost Airline Cabin Crew titles. The World Travel Awards, globally recognised as the ultimate hallmark of industry excellence, acknowledges excellence across key sectors of travel, tourism and hospitality.



1. Tony Fernandes, CEO of AirAsia Group & CEO of airasia. com, accepts the Asia Pacific Digital Transformer of the Year award from Eva Au. Managing Director of International **Data Corporation** (IDC) Asia/Pacific. 2. Riad Asmat, CEO of AirAsia Malaysia (right), celebrates the accolades with Graham Cooke. President and Founder of World Travel Awards, flanked by cabin crew, at the awards gala in Phu Quoc, Vietnam. 3. AirAsia Allstars from across Asean support the #AllstarsDoGood initiative in Hanoi, Vietnam.

Good Deeds



Hammock Amok – AirAsia's recent #AllstarsDoGood volunteer initiative drew support from 40 Allstars (staff) from across Asean. The volunteers repurposed decommissioned fire hoses donated by Fire Rescue Department of Malaysia to create enrichment tools such as hammocks, climbing ropes, log sacks and feeders to enhance the welfare of rescued captive animals at Hanoi Wildlife Rescue Centre. Established in 1996, the centre rescues animals from the illegal wildlife trade and provides them rehabilitation support before releasing them into the wild.

App Anew







AirAsia recently announced enhancements to its mobile app for Android and iOS. which include innovative new features to improve guest experience, in addition to optimising existing features. Using a guestcentric approach, the mobile app has been redesigned for quicker performance and improved usability to offer guests a more seamless, personalised experience. The new features enable guests to save their mobile boarding pass onto their Apple e-wallet, allowing travellers without luggage to head straight to the boarding gate upon clearing immigration; and connect with fellow travellers on board the same flight via flight chat rooms once check-in opens 14 days prior to departure date.

12 19



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Employer A-lister

AirAsia was voted a top employer in the e-commerce and shared services category at the Graduates' Choice Awards 2019 in October. The Graduates' Choice Award is among Malaysia's leading employer branding awards, recognising distinction in the private sector and human resource industry. In its recruiting process, AirAsia looks beyond skills and experience, and aims to recruit people who uphold the company's values with passion. Last year, AirAsia recruited 4,600 Allstars globally.



1

"We are extremely proud to be recognised in the e-commerce category for two consecutive years — an employment category we've been working hard to

recruit for, as we transform AirAsia into a digital travel and lifestyle company." ~ Varun Bhatia, Chief People and Culture Officer of AirAsia Group

Treasured Win



AirAsia was awarded Airline Treasury Team of the Year at the Asia Pacific Aviation 100 awards in November, based on the company's efficient fundraising deals that translated to strong financial performance, as well as impressive fleet expansion. The Airline Economics Aviation 100 awards recognises the most outstanding performers in the air travel industry, as well as the most innovative and successful finance and leasing deals closed in the 12 months preceding. In the 2018-2019 year, AirAsia sealed two major aircraft portfolio deals with BBAM and Castlelake LP for a combined USD3.6 billion.

1. Sandeep Devgon. CFO of AirAsia Southeast Asia (AASEA) (left); and Yazid Misnan, Head of People Solution, People and Culture for AirAsia, at the Graduates' Choice Awards 2019 2. FROM LEFT Philip Tozer-Pennington. Managing Editor of Airline Economics; Farhan Zainul. **Head of Aircraft** Finance for AirAsia; and Aaron Gomez. Senior Counsel, Asia Aviation Capital, at the Airline Economics Asia Pacific Aviation 100 awards in Hong Kong 3. Benyamin Ismail, CEO of AirAsia X Malaysia (left); and Riad Asmat, serve voung visitors from Waia Home during the Allstars Deepavali celebrations, as cabin crew Sangeetha Nadarajan (centre) looks on. 4. Linh Phuoc Pagoda

Illuminating Lives



For Deepavali celebrations this year. AirAsia invited 30 underprivileged children from Waja Home in Selangor, Malaysia, to RedQ – the airline's Malaysian headquarters. The children were given a tour of the office, followed by lunch, and a sharing session featuring inspirational Allstars. At the session, Allstars Kugan Tangiisuran and cabin crew Sangeetha Nadarajan, shared their journeys at AirAsia with the kids. Kugan spoke about how he rose through the ranks from despatch to Senior First Officer, while Sangeetha talked about her experience working in the cabin at 35,000ft in the air. AirAsia also pledged MYR10,000 (approx. USD2,400) to Waja Home to support their operations and charitable work.

Da Lat Delight



AirAsia commences an exclusive route from Kuala Lumpur to Da Lat, Vietnam, on December 20, with a four times weekly service. Also known as City of Eternal Spring for its pleasant weather, the capital of Lam Dong province in the country's Central Highlands was developed as a leisure town by the French in the early 1900s, and showcases well-preserved colonial buildings such as Da Lat Railway Station and Lycée Yersin. Other attractions include the iconic Xuan Huong Lake, and the stunning Linh Phuoc Pagoda, covered in colourful mosaic made from pieces of pottery and glass.



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- AEON BUKIT TINGGI

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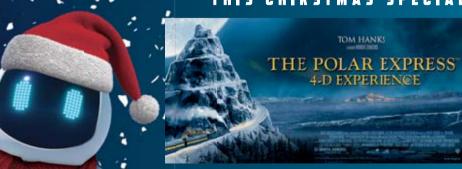
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AirAsia WiFi is Five



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Foundation



Destination: GOOD

The AirAsia Foundation team talks shop about the people they meet and the ideas they come across as they travel the Asean region on their unique mission: to meet social entrepreneurs and explore ways to support their growth. airasiafoundation.com



Three Cheers for 2019

It has been quite a remarkable year for us at AirAsia Foundation. Other than our activities with social enterprises, our year was marked by three major milestones.

The first was the opening of our **Destination: GOOD** social enterprise shop in the historic heart of Kuala Lumpur. At REXKL on 80 Jalan Sultan, we are not just a shop but part of a community of small businesses, all striving to create a welcoming and engaging space for Malaysians and visitors alike. With this space, we have been able to increase our range of ethical products, giving us an opportunity to broaden our social enterprise network.

Next, we organised our very first Malaysia Day Festival with REXKL, titled Made-in-Malaysia, to celebrate the country's

multiculturalism through two days of cooking classes, talks, traditional craft workshops and performances. With the positive public reception, we are resolved to making it an annual event.

Third, we are also thrilled to have formed a close partnership with conceptual design house Projek Jahat in launching our joint label GOOD/jahat/. Our sizzling red collection, made from repurposed AirAsia aircraft materials, stole the show at KL Fashion Week 2019 and sparked off a creative collaboration that will see us come up with many more exciting projects.

To ensure you don't miss out on any of these upcoming activities, follow us on 🕤 and 🧿 or better still, visit us at Destination: GOOD.

What's 'Destination: GOOD'?

A movement to encourage people to shop and travel sustainably.

AirAsia **Foundation** is an ASEAN accredited civil society organisation.



Contact US!



Yap Mun Ching, **Executive Director of** AirAsia Foundation, is always on the lookout for exciting new social enterprises Write in to foundation@ airasia.com

Word Up!

Yap Mun Ching closes 2019 filming the finale of #Destination GOOD Short Films Season 2.



Each December since 2017, we have released a #DestinationGOOD Short Film featuring one of our projects that conveys a message of hope and extraordinary resilience.

These stories are a little out of the ordinary. One year, we headed to a remote earthquakehit village in Nepal to check on schools rebuilt with donations from AirAsia guests. Last year, we featured three Malaysian social enterprises that support the livelihood of refugees.

While the feedback we received has been overwhelmingly positive, there were some criticisms too - mostly from viewers who thought the subject matter was too sombre.

I make no apologies for that. This period is one that prompts many of us to reflect. What better time to spare a thought for others? So. on December 26, we release our year-end message on a social enterprise that helps rebuild livelihoods of survivors of the 2004 Asian Tsunami. Let us know what you think!

Animal Tales

In the recent #DestinationGOOD Short Film -New Life for Wildlife - we focus our lens on the colourful, majestic and beloved wildlife of Southeast Asia. See how social enterprise APE Malaysia - with a little help from AirAsia Allstars - gives rescued animals a better life. Watch on board at the AirAsia Foundation channel on wifi.airasia.com or at airasiafoundation. To buy pet toys featured in this episode, visit us at Destination: GOOD shop.



BROUGHT TO YOU IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MINCONSULT



1. Datuk (Dr) Chef Wan, Food Ambassador for Tourism Malaysia, shares how Malaysia's multicultural roots inspired his career and life during the Made-in-Malaysia festival. 2. Mun Ching interviews social entrepreneur Zainal Abidin Suaria at the Baiturrahman Grand Mosque in Banda Aceh. 3. A Borneo pygmy elephant gets playful at Lok Kawi Wildlife Park in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah.







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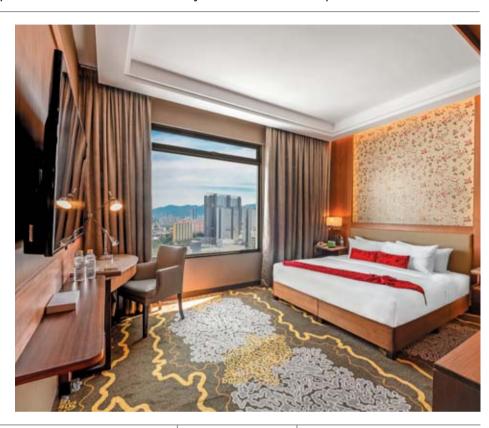


The Client List

Check out the latest promotions, products and services offered by our advertisers and partners this month.

Cititel Hotel Management

A subsidiary of one of Malaysia's top property developers IGB Berhad, Cititel Hotel Management oversees three properties - The Wembley, Cititel Penang and Cititel Express - in George Town, Penang. The Wembley along Magazine Road offers 415 elegantly appointed rooms complemented with standard amenities including coffee/tea making facilities, satellite TV and free Wi-Fi. Facilities include Wembley Cafe, Enoshima Japanese Restaurant and DSRT Sky Room a bar on the hotel's 31st floor bar. Adjacent to The Wembley is the newly-opened Cititel Express Penang, which features 234 rooms that range from Standard (sleeps two) to Family (sleeps four) options. All rooms come with rainshower-equipped en-suites, LCD TVs, and free Wi-Fi. The central location of both properties is ideally suited for business and leisure travellers, who can take advantage of the free CAT (Central Area Transit) bus service that traverses the city centre between 6am to midnight.



Brighton Healthcare

Staffed by a team of skilled healthcare professionals, and equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic tools, Brighton Healthcare provides comprehensive healthcare services in the suburb

of Cyberjaya, Malaysia.
Services include specialist and outpatient care, health screenings like genetic testing, and wellness and healthy ageing treatments.

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Universal Traveller



Universal Traveller is a one-stop shop with a wide range of stylish and functional winter apparel including down jackets, padded coats and thermal wear. Founded in 1974, the brand has over 70 stores in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. The outlets also stock luggage, travel accessories, and footwear like snow boots.

universaltraveller.com

Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa



Set within the lush rainforests of Borneo, Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa is a nature retreat with stunning views. To maximise the panoramic views, all rooms – from the cosy Deluxe Double Room to the spacious Presidential Suite – come with private balconies. Dining options include all-day dining outlet Marriott Cafe, and River Bar – the ideal spot to unwind after a day exploring the rainforest and Mulu caves. marriott.com



Journey to Sustainability

AirAsia champions holistic initiatives to manage the company's economic, environmental and social impact. Here, the Sustainability team explains how and why they do this.



Decarbonising Aviation

Commercial aviation is a key driver to the global economy. contributing an estimated USD2.7 trillion to global GDP (gross domestic product). With air traffic forecasted to double in the next 15 years, the industry recognises its vital role in ensuring that this growth is sustainable - economically, socially and environmentally.

Thanks to technological advances, today's planes are 80 per cent more energy-efficient and 75 per cent quieter than aircraft in the 1960s. Nevertheless, the aviation industry aims to further lower its greenhouse gas emissions by: improving average annual fuel efficiency by 1.5 per cent from 2009 to 2020, achieving carbon-neutral growth from 2020 onwards; and halving net aviation carbon emissions by 2050.

In line with this, AirAsia has implemented over 28 fuel efficiency initiatives that have led to 11 per cent better fuel performance, surpassing IATA's recommended industry savings standard of seven to eight per cent.

Moving forward, AirAsia will continue to step up its fuel efficiency programme through its digital initiatives, while exploring other means of reducing the airline's carbon footprint via the use of sustainable aviation jet fuel and new aircraft technology.

So keep flying AirAsia; we are committed to becoming a sustainable airline!

22,602

tonnes is the approximate CO2 emissions AirAsia's fuel efficiency initiatives save vearly - it would take 373.729 seedlings grown for 10 years to save the same amount.

IN THE PIPELINE

AirAsia participates in CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting & Reduction Scheme for International Aviation) the ICAO's (International Civil Aviation Organisation) global carbon offsetting scheme - and will begin offsetting CO2 emissions in 2021.

HAVE IDEAS? Write in to sustainability@airasia.com

Balancing Act

Carbon offsetting is a mechanism by which carbon emissions from your activities (including flying) are compensated through your purchase of carbon credits - the reduction in carbon emissions through a company's sustainable initiatives are converted into carbon credits for purchase. Proceeds from the sale of carbon credits are then used to fund more sustainability projects. There are plenty of credible carbon credits in the carbon market, supported by legitimate certifications that assure you that your financial contribution goes towards combating climate change.

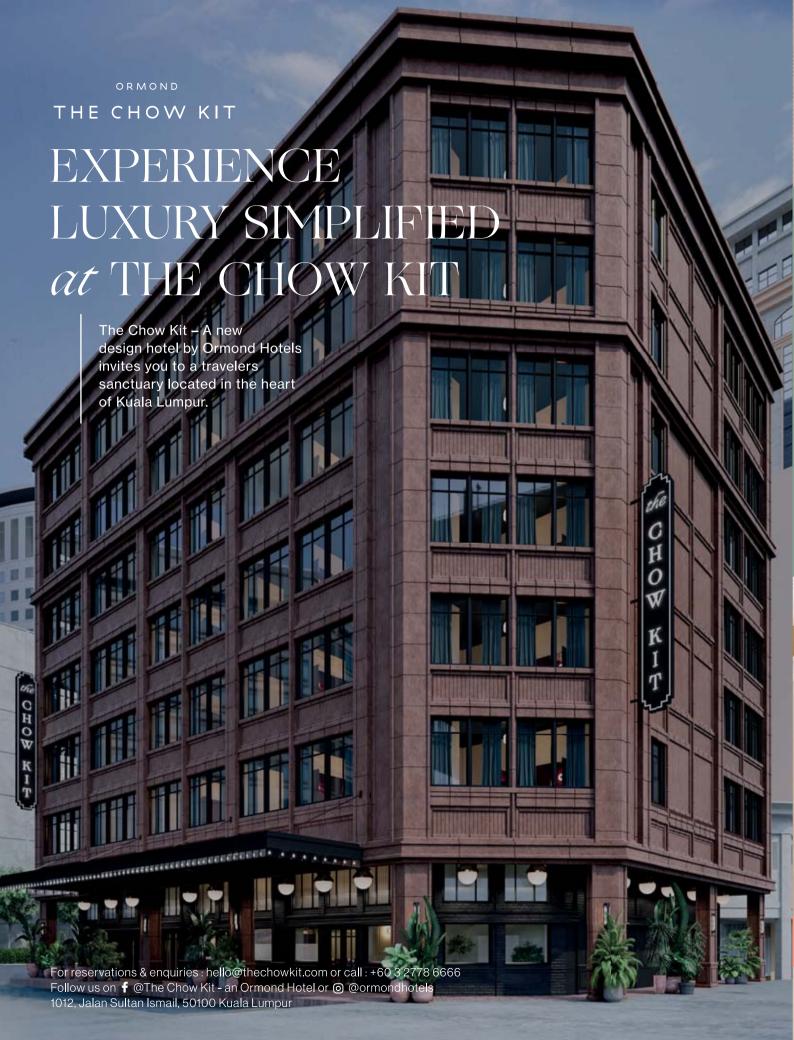
Join the Cause

Do your bit to support sustainable travel — follow these simple steps to reduce your personal carbon footprint.



- O Travel Light The heavier the plane, the more fuel it consumes, leading to more CO2 (carbon dioxide) emissions.
- O Fly Direct AirAsia operates more than 400 routes, flying direct to over 152 destinations.
- O Think 'young' Choose an airline with a young fleet younger aircraft are typically more fuel-efficient, just like new cars. The average age of AirAsia's fleet is six years while the aviation industry average is nine to 10 years.
- Opt Fuel-efficient Certain aircraft are more fuel-efficient than others. Aircraft like the Airbus A320neo is 15 per cent more fuel-efficient than its baseline variant. AirAsia is one of Airbus' largest customers for the A320neo, A321neo and A330neo.
- O Buy Credits Travel with zero CO2 emissions by purchasing carbon credits - an option that will soon be available to AirAsia guests.
- OGo Low-cost Low-cost carriers typically carry more passengers on a flight, resulting in lower CO2 intensity ratios. AirAsia's CO2 intensity ratio is 64.03g CO2/RPK (Revenue Passenger Kilometre), meaning the carbon emission per passenger is only 64.03g per km; the industry average is 75g to 95g CO2/RPK.







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Eclectic Escape

The Chow Kit - an Ormond Group hotel – is a swanky new hideaway located on Jalan Sultan Ismail, offering luxurious comfort and convenience in the heart of Kuala Lumpur. Each of the hotel's inviting 86 rooms and 27 suites is equipped with modern creature comforts that include free high-speed Wi-Fi, luxury linen, bespoke toiletries and a smart TV. The property's top draw, The Chow Kit Kitchen restaurant, serves a smorgasbord of delightful eats such as: Marinated Tomatoes & Mozzarella - caprese salad served with marinated tomatoes. mozzarella and peanut Thai basil pesto; Nam Yue Fried Chicken

Wings - deep-fried, fermented bean curd chicken wings with kaffir lime, chillies and spring onions; and Japanese Katsu Sandwich deep-fried chicken sandwich with sesame seed panko coating and coleslaw with wasabi mayonnaise. The restaurant also boasts an alluring craft cocktail bar featuring white marble decor, terracotta flooring and lacquered black timber wall panels, transporting patrons back to Kuala Lumpur of the romantic 70s.

The-Chow-Kit-an-Ormond-Hotel aormondhotels thechowkit.com





Sassy Momosita

Head to the trendy Momosita in Kuala Lumpur for a mouthwatering culinary experience. Spawned by serial restaurateurs Christian Bauer and Eddie Chew, the fuss-free, self-service taco bar is housed within MoMo's, another Ormond Group property. With interiors crafted by Australian design house Akin Atelier, Momosita plates up tacos, cocktails and beer, and is well-known for its staple dishes that include: Spicy Guacamole (hass avocado, onion, lime juice, coriander, cucumber, caramelised green chillies and tortilla); Prawn Gorditas (tiger prawns, chipotle mayo, tomatillo pickle and black beans); and Corn Cake (fresh corn, polenta, nutmeg, cayenne pepper, corn and chilli salsa). A stay at one of MoMo's

99 rooms promises to be a cosy affair, with each room featuring a self-pick-up style room service, among other modern amenities. What's more, MoMo's also offers a slew of laid-back spaces where visitors and locals can mingle.













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SPOTLIGHT





Sports Fashion Masters

Whether you're in the market for stylish lace-ups or a well designed heavy-duty duffle bag for gym runs, JD Sports is your go-to retailer. The UK-based sports fashion retailer has 13 physical stores across Malaysia (seven in the Klang Valley alone) offering branded sports and lifestyle goodies. The sports fashion retail giant prides itself on seamlessly blending physical and digital retail experiences, and features a wide range of iconic

sportswear brands including Adidas Originals, Nike and Puma, as well as lifestyle marques like Converse, Vans and Emporio Armani. The company also carries its own brand labels such as Pink Soda, Supply & Demand and Status. With over 30 years of experience in sports fashion retail, JD Sports distributes quintessential sports fashion and street style clothing and accessories for men, women and children. jdsports.my

100 P

Sweetest Surrender

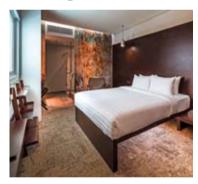
Downy pillows, sumptuous beds and mouth-watering cuisine – these are just some of the treats awaiting guests at the new DoubleTree by Hilton Phuket Banthai Resort, Thailand. This tranquil abode on sunny Phuket's Patong Beach features 290 suites (measuring 35sqm to 350sqm), Port Restaurant that plates up delicious Thai and international cuisine, al fresco Blah Blah Bar, three outdoor swim-up pools and a 24-hour fitness centre.

Fur Sights



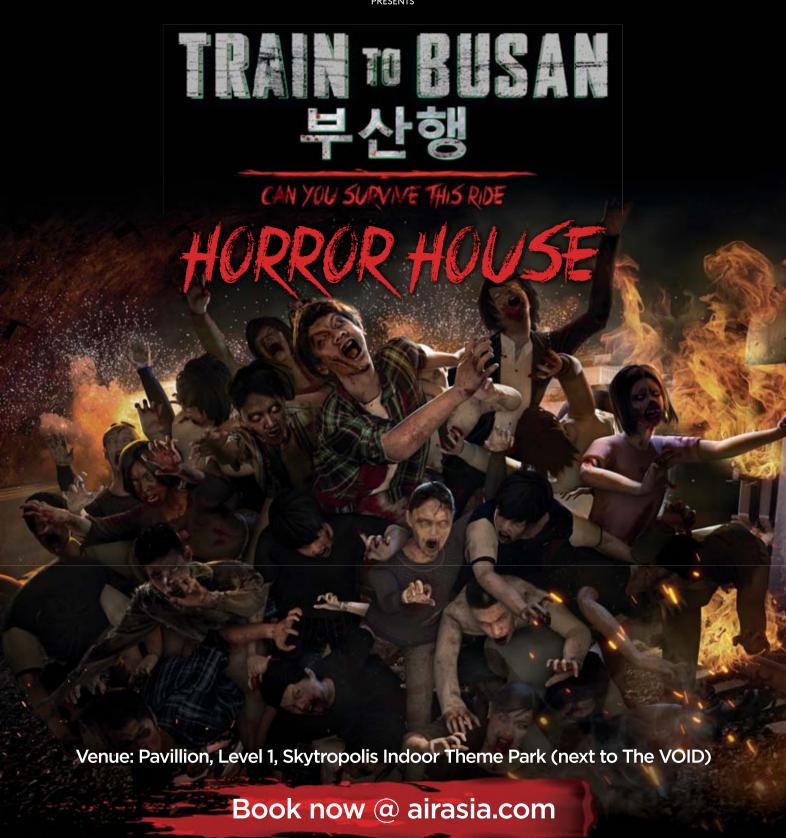
Visit Australia's largest fur seal colony in Phillip Island, Victoria, with Wildlife Coast Cruises – an Ecotourism Australia Advanced Eco Accredited boat tour operator. The two-hour Seal Watching Cruise takes guests along the coast to Seal Rocks, where they can view thousands of seals in their natural environment. wildlifecoastcruises.com

Rest Up



Transit travellers at klia2 airport in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, can look forward to a restful stay at Tune Hotel klia2, located next to gateway@klia2 mall. The hotel, which was recently named Asia's Leading Airport Hotel at the World Travel Awards Asia and Oceania Awards 2019, features seven accommodation categories. For guests looking for a larger space, the Premium Executive Studio (25sqm) and Family Room (32sqm) are ideal. Both are fitted with rain showers. Jeanie Botanicals toiletries and Philips Circadian lighting systems to reduce jet lag. The hotel provides self-service laundry, baggage storage and a massage parlour called REHAT at Tune, and offers various room packages, which include a VIP Fast Track Pass for direct access to klia2 Departure Hall. tunehotels.com





CREATED AND PRODUCED BY

vividthree

SPOTLIGHT



1. Lewis Capaldi 2. Yung Raja 3. Pinocchio, 1940, Concept art, Gustaf Tenggren © Disney 4. Moana, 2016, Concept art, Lisa Keene © Disney

Music in the sky





Take off and touchdown on AirAsia to the tune of Yung Raja's red-hot debut single, Mad Blessings. Yung Raja found viral success in Malaysia and Singapore following the release of his debut single and is known for his formidable English-Tamil rap. Another artist making waves in and on the air is Lewis Capaldi. His new Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent album features the 2018 hit, Someone You Loved, and the Glaswegian is already set to make his Kuala Lumpur debut in January 2020.



Redefining Cargo

Founded in 2018 and formerly known as RedCargo Logistics, Teleport – a wholly-owned subsidiary of AirAsia Group Berhad – aims to enhance the airline's cargo and logistics reach. Teleport is on a mission to enable everyone – from single merchants to large companies – to move goods and facilitate seamless e-commerce transactions in Southeast Asia and beyond. Launched in September,

teleport.social serves as a one-stop payment and logistics solution for social commerce, simplifying the social commerce experience by making the payment process easier and deliveries faster and smoother. Sellers are able to import social media orders from any social messaging app such as Facebook Messenger, Instagram or WhatsApp – just chat, pay and deliver by the next working day. teleport.social

What does teleport.social offer to social sellers?



Seamless payments When an order is placed, teleport.social creates a unique payment link that a seller can share with buyers.

Faster shipments teleport.social offers the fastest inter-region delivery and door-to-door pickup services.

More sales, more rewards Both seller and buyer earn AirAsia BIG Points with every successful transaction or purchase of a teleport.social subscription plan.



Rediscover the magical world of Walt Disney with Disney: Magic of Animation at Singapore's ArtScience Museum at Marina Bay Sands. The six month-long exhibition, which ends on March 29, 2020, showcases over 90 years of Disney animation, and features more than 500 exhibits, including original drawings, paintings, sketches and concept art curated by the Walt Disney Animation Research Library. Visitors also have the opportunity to learn about the technological innovations behind the evolution of beloved Disney characters, from Mickey Mouse to Elsa. marinabaysands.com





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What's Happening in Putrajaya Simply Mesmerising

Putrajaya may not be the first place that comes to mind when you think of places to visit in Malaysia. The city, which was established as the administrative capital for the federal government in 1995, is filled with immaculate government buildings, wide boulevards, impressive bridges and pockets of greenery. Putrajaya is a world of its own, and there is more to this "intelligent garden city" than you think! With the backdrop of remarkable buildings and landscape, Putrajaya is a hot spot for international events. Here are some of the vibrant happenings that you can visit for your next trip to Putrajaya!

Light and Motion Festival Putrajaya

An annual event usually held in conjunction with new year's celebration, Light and Motion Festival Putrajaya a.k.a LAMPU is a spectacular projection mapping show that brings the entire facade of the imposing Palace of Justice building to life with exciting colourful light, imagery and sounds.

Held for the past seven years, the event is a highlight of Putrajaya's event calendar and it attracts more than a million visitors each year! In addition with the fanfare, the Putrajaya Boulevard stretch is transformed into a whimsical stage of lights and fun activities with illuminated buildings, colourful lit trees, live music, hologram exhibition, LED-lit trishaws, and many more!

The climax of the event is usually celebrated with digital fireworks display at midnight to usher in the new year. So, if you're still planning where to celebrate the upcoming 2020, make Putrajaya your next destination!

Urban Birding Hot Spot

Apart from the government buildings, architectural bridges and parks, Putrajaya is also a paradise for birds. It is now home to more than 200 species of birds, 1,740 species of insects, 17 species of amphibians, 22 species of reptiles and 17 species of mammals that provides a symbiotic relationship between man and nature.

Putrajaya Corporation has been working tirelessly for the past few years to ensure that Putrajaya is established as one of the world's urban birding hot spots by 2020. Key locations around Putrajaya Wetlands have been recognised and soon, avid bird watchers will be able to enjoy birding trails and facilities. Two trails have been recognised in Rimba Alam Park and Putrajaya Wetlands Park, while three trails have been marked in Putrajaya Botanical Garden. Bird watchers would be able to spot migratory birds, including Green-backed Flycatcher (Ficedula elisae), Common Kingfisher (Alcedo atthis), as well as local species such as Asian Paradise Flycatcher (Terpsiphone paradisi), Blue-eared Kingfisher (Alcedo meninting) and Barred Eagle Owl (Bubo sumatranus) in a unique

For the first time this year, Putrajaya will turn into a venue for bird race where avid bird watchers would gather to spot the creatures. Putrajaya is calling all birding enthusiasts to take part in the Putrajaya Bird Race 2019 from 15 until 17 November 2019. A fun-filled event involving three in a team racing to sight, identify and record the most number of bird species.



Blue Eared King Fisher



Barred Eagle Owl

In addition to the bird race, there will be a Bird Photography Contest, Birds in Arts Exhibition, cultural performances by local communities, drawing competition as well as discussion and conservation talk by renowned bird experts. Through the series of activities, participants will learn the basic biology of birds and understand the roles these amazing little creatures play in maintaining our ecological balance.

Bird Interpretive Centre

On top of that, Putrajaya Corporation is also planning to introduce a Bird Interpretative Centre to oversee birding activities around Putrajaya. The centre will act as a place where visitors can find information on current events and exhibitions, an archive of bird and nature books.



Picture credit: Winner of Light and Motion photography competition 2018 - Syed Mohd Shahridhan Bin Syed Mohd Nor

Unwrapping Christmas

Look beyond the chubby man shimmying down a chimney, and you'll discover the fascinating history behind much-loved Christmas traditions that celebrate the true meaning of this feast of love and giving.



Celebrated worldwide on December 25, Christmas marks the birth of Jesus Christ in a little town called Bethlehem in what is now the West Bank - over 2,000 years ago. To Christians, Christ's humble birth, crucifixion and resurrection (as celebrated at Easter) fulfil the messianic prophecies of Hebrew Scripture and the Old Testament, which foretell the coming of a Messiah to redeem the world. With the spread of Christianity across the Roman Empire, Europe, the Americas and Asia, the celebration incorporated traditions of different cultures, giving rise to fascinating customs that celebrate the essence of Christmas.

Nativity Scene The Nativity Scene or crib refers to the

humble depiction of the Holy Family - the new-born Christ lying in a manger, watched over by the Virgin Mary and St Joseph - with the Magi, shepherds, ox and sheep looking on, and the Star of Bethlehem twinkling in a sky filled with angels. This scene was described in the Gospels of Luke (circa AD60 to 80) and Matthew (after AD70). Although veneration had been carried out at the site of Christ's birth in Bethlehem for centuries (in what is known as the Church of the Nativity), the crib seen in Christian homes today was inspired by St Francis of Assisi who put forward the idea of a replica of this holy scene while in

Greccio, Italy, in AD1224.

1. A life size Nativity
Scene at St Peter's
Square, Vatican City
2. Christmas wreath
decorated with brilliant
red poinsettias

FUN FACT In the Philippines, the Nativity Scene is called belen, and the province of Tarlac in Cental Luzon is famous for its belenmaking competition.

Presents & Poinsettias For

Christians, the act of gift giving is done in remembrance of the greatest gift received – that of eternal life through Christ's sacrifice. The ruby red

poinsettias seen during the Christmas season have a beautiful story behind them that reflect the true spirit of giving.
According to a Mexican folk tale, there was once a little girl who, having nothing to offer the Christ Child during Christmas Eve mass, placed a bouquet of weeds at the

mage: Getty, 123RF



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crib, believing that even the smallest gift – if given with love – would be acceptable. The weeds immediately burst into bright red blooms, and from then on, poinsettias were called Flowers of the Holy Night. Its shape is said to resemble the Star of Bethlehem, while its deep red colour symbolises the blood Christ shed for the salvation of the world.

FUN FACT Poinsettias are native to Central America and Mexico, and were prized by the Aztecs as fever medicine and dye. They were brought to the US by statesman and botanist Joel Poinsett – hence the name.

Angels We often see Christmas trees decorated with angel figurines. These heavenly beings appear throughout the Bible. Setting in motion the events of the Christmas story, the Angel Gabriel appears to the Virgin Mary telling her that she will bear a child who will be named Jesus and be the 'Son of the Most High', as chronicled in the Gospel of Luke. Later, in the Gospel of Matthew, an angel appears to St Joseph in a dream, assuring him that Mary has conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit. On the night of Christ's birth, a choir of angels appears to shepherds announcing the good news,

and later, an angel appears to St Joseph in a dream warning him to flee to Egypt, as King Herod of Judaea has plans to kill the infant Jesus.

FUN FACT Biblical verses refer to angels in the tens of thousands. They act as guardians and

1. A figurine depicting an angel announcing the birth of Christ 2. Christmas is a time for giving. 3. Advent wreath





Although the legend of Santa Claus has no biblical roots it is inspired by a real person - a kind monk named Nicholas who lived in Asia Minor around AD280 and was said to have dedicated his life to God and used his inheritance to help the poor and sick. Devotion to St Nicholas has been recorded from as early as the sixth century.



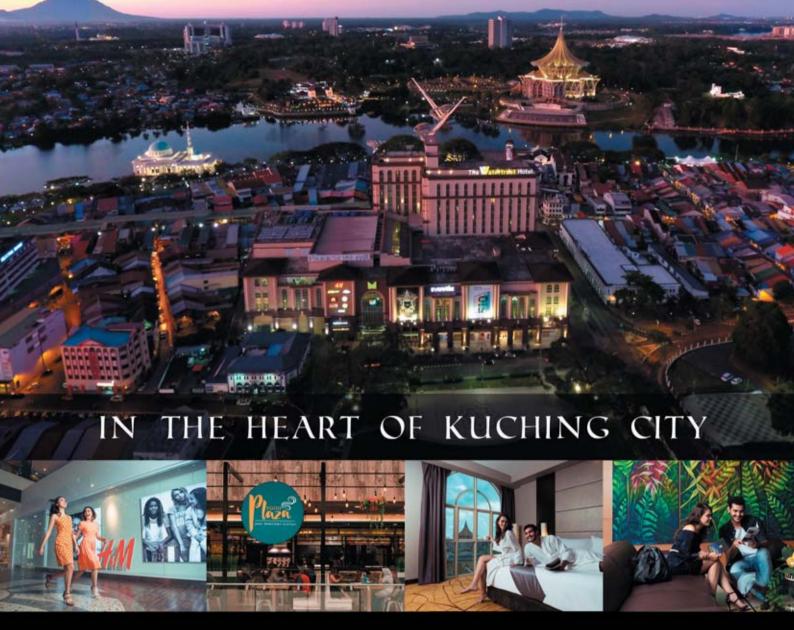
messengers – at times, providing strength and comfort, other times, rendering justice.

Advent Wreath Advent is a season of spiritual anticipation leading up to Christmas, and begins on the fourth Sunday preceding Christmas, During this time, the advent wreath an evergreen circle with four candles, three violet and one rose - makes an appearance, with each candle gradually lit each Sunday. The evergreens used signify everlasting life while the circular shape of the wreath symbolises the eternity of God and the immortality of the soul. The candles too have special significance; violet is the colour of penance and sacrifice, and the candles represent hope, faith and peace, while rose is the colour of joy. Sometimes, a white candle is placed in the centre and lit on Christmas Day, signifying purity.

FUN FACT Advent wreaths can be traced to pre-Germanic peoples who used wreaths lit with candles as a sign of hope in the dark winters. In medieval times, this tradition was incorporated into Advent, and in the 1900s, it was brought to US by German immigrants.



mage: Getty, 123RF



Strategically basking in the oldest charm of the city, Plaza Merdeka Shopping Centre and the 5-star Waterfront Hotel are housed in the same building. Kuching's most affluent landmarks, such as the Brooke Monument, Old Court House, and Central Post Office surround it while India Street and Carpenter Street are just literally around the corner. The iconic DUN building is within walking distance across the Darul Hana Bridge, Kuching's latest landmark.

This is the perfect neighbourhood to hunt for authentic local food, and your playground to discover quaint little cafes and pubs. Street arts worthy of insta shots and tons of other treasures are tucked away in every nook and cranny of this historic city.

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Little Martyrs

On December 28, the Catholic Church, Church of England and Lutheran Church celebrate the Feast of the Holy Innocents to honour the infants massacred by King Herod of Judea following Christ's birth. According to the Gospel of Matthew, upon learning from astrologers about a star that

signified the birth of a new king of the Jews, Herod ordered the execution of all boys in Bethlehem two years and under, including his own son. The children murdered in Christ's stead are considered the first Christian martyrs. On this day, priests usually perform the traditional Blessing of Children.

> 1. Symbolic fresco of the Holy Innocents with angels in a church in Turin, Italy

Guiding Star



The parol is a five-pointed starshaped lantern and the most iconic of Filipino Christmas decorations. It symbolises the star of Bethlehem that led the Magi to the manger. Originally, parols comprised simple bamboo frames covered with Japanese rice paper and illuminated with a coconut oil lamp. Today, parols come in varied shapes and use materials like wrought iron and capiz shells, with brilliant blinking lights. San Fernando city in Pampanga province is famous for its annual Giant Lantern Festival. It is set to run from December 14 this year to Jan 1, 2020.



Holy Smoke

Frankincense was one of the three gifts of the Magi (the other two being gold and myrrh), symbolic of Christ's role as a priest. It is the dried sap of trees in the Boswellia genus, which, when burned as incense, gives off a fruity scent. Frankincense is used in Roman Catholic masses as a symbol of prayers rising to heaven and as part of purification and sanctification rituals.



Story of the Tree

One popular tale on the origins of the Christmas tree involves the Benedictine monk and Archbishop St Boniface (AD680-754) who preached the Gospel in Germany. The saint discovered that during Yuletide, the people of Geismar village would usually make a blood sacrifice to the Norse god Thor, feeding blood to the roots of his sacred tree, a thunder oak. Determined to end this practice, St Boniface travelled to the village on Christmas Eve, and when the priest of Thor lifted his hammer over a child's head to perform the blood sacrifice, the saint thrust his crozier against the hammer, splitting it in two. A mighty wind then felled the oak, pulling it out of the ground by its roots and splitting it in four. Seeing a young fir tree behind the oak, St Boniface told the people to regard the fir as their holy tree, saying: "It is the wood of peace, for your houses are built of the fir. It is the sign of an endless life, for its leaves are ever green. See how it points upward to heaven. Let this be called the tree of the Christ-child; gather about it, not in the wild wood, but in your own homes; there, it will shelter no deeds of blood, but loving gifts and rites of kindness." Traditionally, the Christmas tree is only taken down after the feast of the Epiphany, which is celebrated on January 6 to commemorate the visit of the Magi.



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Supported Recovery

Receiving help from family and loved ones is crucial for a smooth journey to healing.



When you fall sick with a cold or fever, there is a noticeable change to your productivity. In relation to that, contracting a disease that requires hospital admission can cause a drastic shift in your life. This is even more so if the disease causes permanent changes to your bodily functions.

It is natural then for people to spotlight the medical aspect of patient recovery. As such, less focus is placed on the effects of a supportive family and their role in aiding successful physical, mental and emotional recovery.

Family Medicine Specialists
Association of Malaysia
member Dr Hanis Saadah Husin
illustrates an example using
a stroke patient. She explains
that a severe stroke usually
causes permanent disability
like one-sided body weakness,
difficulty swallowing and speech
impairment. This patient would

then need help with basic living activities, including moving, bathing and eating.

"The switch from being a fully independent person to someone who needs help attending to their personal hygiene can definitely lead to emotional and mental stress. A person may feel useless and be fearful of burdening his family," she says. These feelings of sadness and hopelessness can lead to depression in some patients.

She adds that many patients who fall chronically ill would also be forced to stop working. This can then lead to financial difficulty, especially if the patient is a breadwinner.

Power of Positive Mind Familial support is crucial in managing patients' worries and advancing their road to recovery.

Dr Hanis says patients will need all the support they can

get following diagnosis of a lifechanging disease. Family members are the ones patients will depend on from things as mundane as driving them to doctor's appointments to more serious issues like deciding on treatment options.

Patients can also benefit by sharing their thoughts and fears with close family members. This helps patients alleviate some of their emotional burdens. "Having a shoulder to cry on is essential to the mental health of a patient," she says.

Besides that, research has shown that familial support affects the post-surgery recovery of the patient. A 2000 Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation article titled First-stroke recovery process: The role of family social support presented that high levels of family support – instrumental and emotional – are associated with progressive improvement of body functions, mainly in severely impaired patients, while the psychological and social status is also affected.

These results ring true till today. A 2017 Psychology, Health & Medicine article titled The influence of perceived family support on post-surgery recovery indicates a clear relationship between familial support and recovery.

In contrast, Dr Hanis says facing an illness alone would probably feel like a double death sentence to a person. Medical care provided by healthcare professionals might control or cure the disease, but support from loved ones is crucial to heal the emotional and mental effects of the disease.

Strength in Good & Bad Times A

disease does not only affect the life of the patient, but also the lives of those dear to them. A family member of a sick person may need to give up his career to be a full-time caregiver.

In other cases, caregivers may have to start earning an income if the patient used to be the breadwinner of the household. Some families may need to relocate for better access to healthcare for the patient.

Regardless of the situation, Dr Hanis advises that whatever the

decision, it has to be made as a loving and supportive family. She stresses that good communication is vital to avoid ill feelings between family members.

To foster positive communication in the family, she recommends spending quality time with each other. "Activities like going for daily walks as a family are great ways to be close and supportive of each other. Opinions and grouses from each family

member should also be voiced out and dealt with care and respect. After all, the fight should be against the disease, not against each other."

All in all, the support of loved ones does wonders for the morale of a patient during recovery. Sometimes, all it takes is a visit and an expression of care to motivate patients during their recovery period, and this may even contribute to a faster and smoother recovery.



Managing chronic illness is hard, and can be even more so without support from loved ones.
 Spending quality time with chronically ill family members can greatly boost their morale and indirectly impact their recovery process.

For a Worryfree Vacation





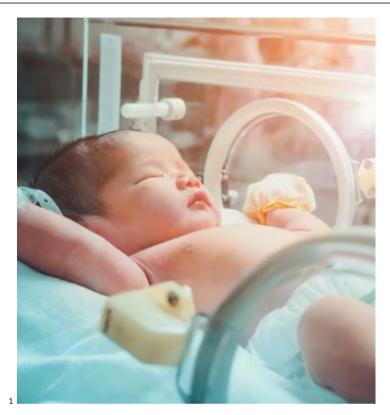
Dr Faisal Mohd Fadzli, Consultant Paediatrician

Children are more susceptible to contracting illnesses when travelling abroad compared with adults. Hence, proper planning and precautions

are necessary when travelling with children.

- O Health Requirements If your child has any health problems, ensure you have their medication well stocked and keep a list of the nearest medical facilities to your accommodation abroad.
- O Airplane Travel Ensure your child is properly restrained in their seat. In case of ear pain, encourage them to suck on a bottle or sweet.
- Rest and Nutrition Space out travel arrangements and take note of sleeping patterns to allow for adequate rest. Research the local cuisine before the trip to choose the food options your children can consume.
- O Prevention is Better than Cure Vaccinate your child before your trip.
- O Make Smart Choices Look out for things your child can or cannot do or eat to ensure there is lower risk of getting ill or hurt.

For more information, call +603-7718 1000.



Care for Preemies



Dr Anita K. Ahluwalia

With progress in medical technology, preemies (babies born prematurely, after less than 37 weeks of

gestation) no longer face as large of a risk to their health as they did a decade ago. In fact, premature babies are quick to catch up, says Dr Anita K. Ahluwalia, consultant paediatrician and neonatologist at Subang Jaya Medical Centre.

"At 23 weeks, babies are fully formed, but their bodies have just not had the chance to fully mature. Therefore, extra care is taken to ensure premature babies' health, specifically their brains, heart, lungs and digestive system, until they reach 37 weeks, which is considered full term."

Therefore, Dr Anita advocates for proper antenatal care, especially if the mom is known

to be at risk of premature birth. Some factors to take note of are:

- Gestational/non-gestational diabetes and hypertension
- O Stressful lifestyle
- Infections
- Multiple pregnancies
- O History of premature births in the family

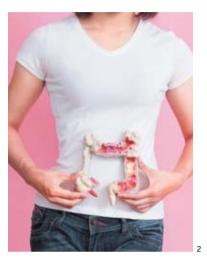
Premature births are on the rise globally because more women are living stressful lifestyles, undergoing invitro fertilisation and having children at a later age. Dr Anita asserts the need for proper medical support for babies born prematurely, starting from the time of birth, to maximise the likelihood of nurturing the baby to full health as fast as possible.

She says, "If your baby is at risk of premature birth, please visit a maternity centre that is well equipped to handle such cases."

For more information, call +603-5639 1212.

1. Though there is usually concern around premature births, the reality is that, with the proper care, premature babies can grow up to be healthy children. 2. As a commonly occurring type of cancer, awareness about colorectal cancer should be widespread enough to bring down the local prevalence.

Colorectal Cancer





Dr Law Chee Wei

Colorectal cancer (CRC) is the development of cancer from the colon or parts of the large intestine. According to

the World Health Organization Globocan database, CRC is the third most commonly diagnosed cancer in males and second in females.

As CRC is multifactorial, consultant colorectal surgeon at ParkCity Medical Centre Dr Law Chee Wei lists a few things that place you at a higher risk:

- Age It is advisable to go for screening if you are 50 years old and above.
- Family History/Genetics If there is a history of CRC in your family, then you might have to start going for screenings at an earlier age.
- O Smoking.
- O Unhealthy Lifestyle

He strongly advises screening should you have the above risk factors and shares that the most common symptoms to look out for are rectal bleeding, change in bowel habits like diarrhoea and constipation, abdominal discomfort, loss of appetite and anaemia.

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Most students live on a budget and cost is always a factor for foreign students. Under the QS Best Student Cities ranking, Kuala Lumpur was ranked second in the world for affordability this year, making it suitable for anyone keen on pursuing an education here.

Broaden your Horizons Known for its multicultural climate, rich history and diverse culinary scene, Malaysia's uniqueness is unparalleled. In this food haven, foreign students can expect to have their tastebuds tantalised by local delicacies that will also help them stretch their ringgit.

Besides that, with so many beautiful destinations to explore, Malaysia is a traveller's paradise. At a fraction of the price, students can visit exotic islands, tropical rainforests or even make their mark climbing Mount Kinabalu.

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BRITISH International School of Kuala Lumpur (BSKL) opened in 2009 and is part of the Nord Anglia Education family. BSKL follows the English National Curriculum and was graded "excellent in all areas of educational provision" in the most recent Independent Schools Inspectorate report; a result comparable to that of many top independent schools in the United Kingdom.

The school has also been awarded the Council of British International Schools Patron's Accreditation and is the first school in Asia to gain this honour. In the last academic year, 75 per cent of students achieved A*/A and 93 per cent A*/B grades in the IGCSE examinations. A hundred per cent of BSKL's Year 13 cohort secured spots at each of their first-choice universities.

The school ensures students are exceptionally well prepared for the next stage of their education. As a result, students are more likely to develop ambitions and a sense of their own potential, marked by a broad global perspective in a rapidly changing world.

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As one of the most established providers of comprehensive quality education, SEGi University continuously ensures its students' needs are met. The university offers students an excellent learning experience through its comprehensive and holistic curricula and programmes.

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In the current Industry 4.0 revolution, SEGi continues to update its programmes and collaborate with industry leaders to ensure its graduates are industry-ready. SEGi University is committed to adopting a global benchmark in producing world-class students and academics who can continuously evolve and bring the Malaysian economy to the next level.

SEGi University launched its first R&D Blueprint (2016-2020) in 2015, allowing SEGi to drive successful research and innovation strategies with impactful outcomes for the community. A clear theme that drives this blueprint is the need for all components of the university system to work seamlessly together. Moving forward, SEGi will internalise its research capability through effective collaboration with the public, university and business sectors, as well as across national boundaries, mainly focusing on preparing SEGi academics and students for Industry 4.0.

To learn more about SEGi University, visit segiuniversity.edu.my





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Hot Dates

Don't miss these sizzling events taking place around the world in the month of December.



AUSTRALIA

THAILAND

New Year's Eve at Darling Harbour

Dec 31 Catch the fabulous fireworks display at Darling Harbour in Sydney with loved ones and usher in the New Year with a spectacular blast! Flame and light shows kick off at 7.00pm, and the main fireworks event blazes on from 9.00pm till late. sydneynewyearseve.com

1. Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike 2. *Tamed Tuskers* ©Senthil Kumaran Rajendran





CAMBODIA Angkor Photo Festival



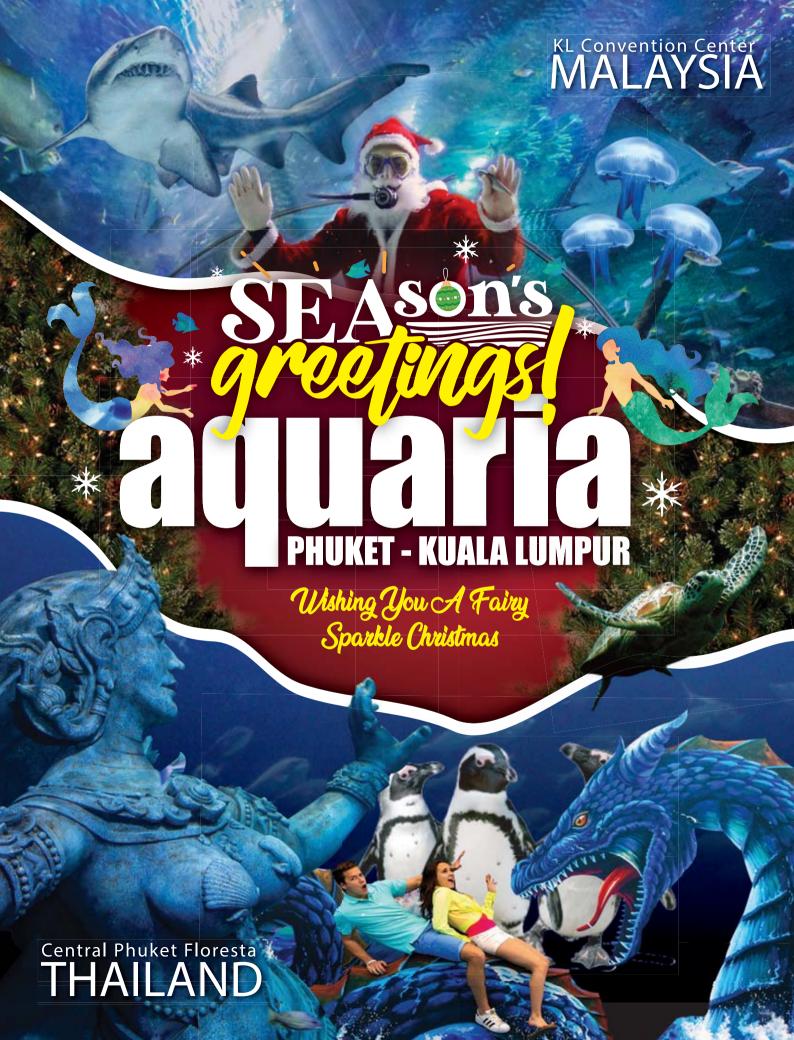
Dec 3-7 This festival in Siem Reap celebrates photography with some of the brightest talents in Asia sharing the latest techniques to 'capture the moment'. Event highlights include indoor and outdoor exhibitions, free workshops and presentation nights at various venues across the city. angkor-photo.com

THAILAND Wonderfruit 2019



Dec 12-16 Eclectic music acts like Midori Hirano and Rival Consoles take centre stage at this carbon-neutral festival in The Fields at Siam Country Club, Pattaya. The event also features wellness workshops, eco-friendly architecture talks and ethical fashion design, among others, all going towards sustainable living. wonderfruit.co

airasiaredtix.com

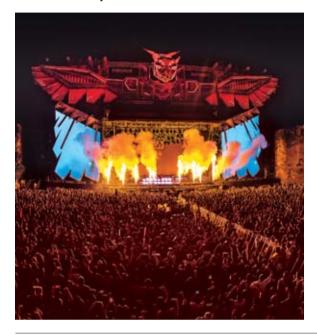


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INDONESIA DWP 2019

Dec 13-15 Electronica's biggest heavyweights like Calvin Harris, Martin Garrix and Skrillex headline a 25-act line-up for this EDM showdown at JIExpo Kemayoran convention centre in Jakarta. Revel in the high-tempo beats at one of Southeast Asia's leading music festivals. djakartawarehouse.com



MALAYSIA

Train to Busan Horror House

Dec 2, 2019-Jan 1, 2020 Relive the horror of the thrilling zombie film *Train to Busan* at Skytropolis Indoor Theme Park in Resort World Genting. This gripping horror house experience features dramatic props and 360 VR games inspired by the 2016 South Korean hit horror flick. **rwgenting.com**





EPIZODE Dec 27, 2019Jan 7, 2020

Party non-stop on picturesque Sunset Sanato Beach, Phu Quoc. as DJ greats like Loco Dice and Anja Schneider crank up the good vibes with their hypnotising beats. The festival boasts dazzling stages and art installations, and electrifying sunrise and sunset parties. epizode.com



PHILIPPINES

The Joshua Tree Tour 2019

Dec 11 Legendary rock band U2 takes over Philippine Arena in Manila for a one-night special featuring their world-famous chart-toppers. Get ready to sing along to classics such as With or Without You, and headbang to tunes like Vertigo and Beautiful Day. u2.com

SINGAPORE Boyz II Men Live 2019

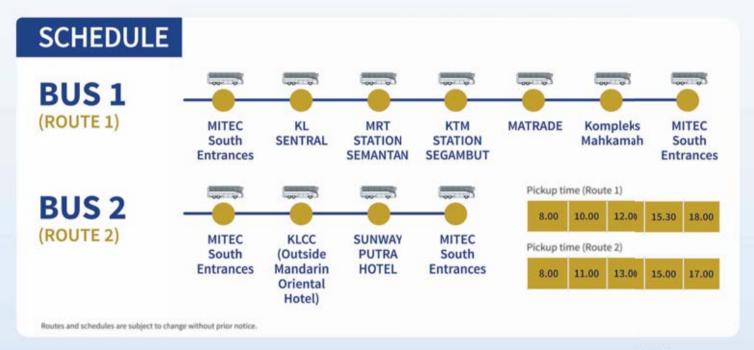


Dec 9 Nathan Morris, Shawn Stockman and Wanya Morris croon the night away at Suntec Singapore Convention & Exhibition Centre. Watch the famous American trio dish out their RθB and hip-hop smash hits like *End of the Road* and *A Song for Mama*. airasiaredtix.com





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Green Choices

When travelling, look out for well-managed attractions and destinations where sustainable initiatives allow you to leave a positive impact on the environment and support local communities.



1. Cambodia's scenic Koh Kong Province

Koh Kong, Cambodia This province is home to some of Cambodia's most pristine natural sites, including islands, beaches, waterfalls and rivers – not to mention the remote jungles of the Cardamom Mountains. Much of the range is recognised as protected forest, with many NGOs working to ensure the environmental protections are upheld. This has led to a flourishing of ecotourism ventures that work closely with local communities in the area.

Taman Negara, Malaysia

Taman Negara (National Park) encompasses one of the oldest tropical rainforests on Earth – more than 130 million years old. The forest houses wildlife such as the Malayan tiger, Asian elephant and Malayan gaur. Featuring the world's longest canopy walk, which hovers 45m above the ground, Taman Negara is a designated ecotourism destination in Malaysia, offering activities like white water rafting, hiking and jungle safaris.

Ha Giang, Vietnam Bordering China in Northern Vietnam, Ha Giang province – one of the most remote locations in the country – provides visitors both short hikes and multi-day treks through lush mountains, rice terraces and limestone karsts. For many, the highlight of this region is the breathtaking Ma Pi Leng mountain pass. In an effort to maintain the natural beauty of the area, ecotourism is being encouraged here, with sustainable initiatives that engage with local villagers.

Surin Islands, Thailand Part of Mu Koh Surin National Park, the archipelago of five islands in the Andaman Sea boasts unspoilt beaches, shallow corals and abundant marine life. This makes Surin Islands a haven for divers and snorkellers, as well as for those looking to get off the beaten tourist track. Illegal fishing and irresponsible tourism practices are among the threats in the area. In recent years, however, there has been a push for sustainable travel companies. There is an increasing number of local ecotourism companies, thereby sustaining the communities on the islands.

Wild & Free

Support ethical and responsible wildlife sanctuaries where the residents' welfare is top priority.



Komodo National Park, Indonesia This UNESCO-listed site is the only place on the planet where you can see the Komodo dragon – the world's largest lizard – in its natural habitat.



Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, Malaysia This centre teaches rescued and orphaned orangutans the life skills needed to survive in the wild.



Donsol, Philippines A protected area for whale sharks in the Philippines, the Municipality of Donsol allows swimming with these creatures but under strict rules, such as no touching or feeding.



Elephant Nature Park, Thailand The park rescues and rehabilitates ill-treated captive elephants, providing them with a lush 'retirement home'.

nages: 123RF & Getty







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Neighbourly **Spirit**



Soupy Savour

As the year comes to an end, it is monsoon season in Southeast Asia. Nothing is more comforting than a hot bowl of soup as the rain pours outside, and there's certainly no shortage of delicious slurpy dishes in this part of the world. In Vietnam, bun rieu cua is sweetish-sour tomato broth served with freshwater crab, topped with rice vermicelli. Over in Myanmar, Laos, and Northern Thailand, khao soi is a hearty curry-coconut milk broth

with both boiled and crispy egg noodles. Myanmar also offers mohinga – a rich fish soup with rice noodles - that is practically considered a national dish. In Indonesia and Malaysia, sup buntut, or sup ekor, is an oxtail soup bursting with flavourful local herbs and spices. For something with a zing, head over to the Philippines for sinigang, a sour soup dish that features meat or seafood boiled with tamarind or other sour fruits.



Buddhist monastery sits on a volcanic plug on the summit of Mt Popa in Myanmar; volcanic plugs are formed when magma hardens within the vent of an active volcano.

Bayanihan is a Filipino concept that refers to a sense of community, or unity, and is derived from the word bayan - meaning nation, town or community. Bayanihan reflects the willingness to lend a hand to a member of one's community without expecting anything in return. It originates in a rural custom of moving house, where a traditional Filipino home is lifted up and tied to bamboo poles, and carried by volunteers to a new location.



The Taung Kalat

Celebrated Couple



The bersanding ceremony is an important part of a Malay wedding in Malaysia. The couple is seated together on the bridal dais called pelamin, and loved ones and guests take turns to sprinkle them with scented water and yellow rice as a blessing.



People of the Dragon

According to ancient folklore, Vietnamese people are descendants of dragons. A popular tale recounts how an immortal mountain fairy named Au Co married Lac Long Quan, a dragon king from the sea. She bore him

100 children. However, both soon missed their homes. So, they separated, each taking 50 children - it is said that those who stayed with Au Co learnt to cultivate land and hunt, while those who followed Quan became fishermen.

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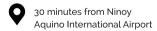


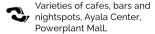
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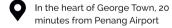
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Natural Solutions

China rallies the world to tackle climate change with nature-based solutions.



At September's UN Climate Action Summit held in New York, China proactively promoted nature-based solutions to tackle climate change and the nation is lobbying for other nations to support the initiative. China has been actively focusing on reducing its carbon footprint in the last four years, as part of the Paris Agreement it signed in 2015.

The pledge has seen China take necessary steps to curb emissions, primarily from its heavy industrial sectors, with the goal of reducing its CO2 output by as much as 65 per cent by 2030. However, it is now also promoting nature-based solutions such as reforestation and the expansion of grasslands and wetlands to help fulfil its goal.

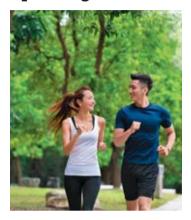
In a paper presented by the country's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, China intends to persuade other countries to support its plan to adopt similar solutions to help curb the root causes of climate change. China has increased its total forest reserves by 456,000 hectares in

the last three years, thus raising the percentage of forest areas in China to just below 23 per cent according to the World Bank.

China is also looking to expand its carbon sinks – natural systems such as oceans and forests that absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere – and is working to cap its fertiliser use. The nation underlined its goal to increase the usage of organic material sourced from plants and animals as a renewable source of energy.

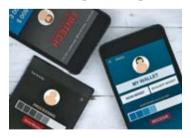
According to the environment ministry, China will further promote its nature-based solutions when it hosts the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in October 2020. Delegates from 200 countries are expected to grace the conference in Kunming to discuss a new framework to protect the world's ecosystems and curb global diversity loss, which is tantamount to the overall health of the planet.

Sporting Future



China aims to become a sporting powerhouse by 2050. The Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation, issued by the General Office of the State Council, is targeting a wider public engagement in sport along with an increased sporting culture. In 2018, 33.9 per cent of the population was involved in regular exercise. China intends to raise that to 45 per cent by 2035 by providing residents better access to sport facilities.

Building Bridges



American firm PayPal Holdings Inc is the first foreign firm to penetrate China's payment services market through the acquisition of a controlling stake in Gopay Information Technology. The Bank of China approved PayPal's 70 per cent buy over of Go Pay, a domestic payments firm that has licenses for mobile, online and crossborder yuan payment services, for an undisclosed sum in October.





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Historic Ningbo

Ningbo in Zhejiang province is a vibrant port city known for heritage sites such as the 1,700-year old Asoka Temple that honours the ancient Indian king Ashoka, and the Tianyi Pavilion (Tianyi Ge), one of the oldest libraries in China, which was built in 1561. For scenic views, take a stroll along the Dongqian Lake in Yinzhou District, or head to the Old Bund lined with eastern and western architecture. Ningbo Old Bund is a buzzing lifestyle stretch lined with cafés, bars, restaurants, retail outlets and more.

eSports Playground



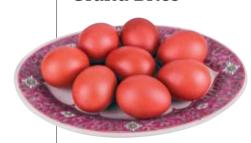
Video game giants NetEase is planning to build an esports park in Shanghai with an investment of USD725 million. The new park in the Qingpu District features a 5,000-seat esports stadium, as well as facilities for development and training. NetEase owns the Overwatch League esports team, the Shanghai Dragons, and also holds the distribution rights for Healthstone World of Warcraft in China.

Theme Town



The Universal Beijing Resort is set to be the largest Universal theme park in the world come 2021. The project – a joint venture between Universal Parks & Resorts, Universal Studios and Beijing Shouhuan Cultural Tourism Investment – occupies 169 hectares of a 400-hectare site. It boasts a seven-zone theme park, two hotels and a mall. The project, which is the fifth Universal theme park and the third in Asia, reportedly costs USD6.5 billion.

Grand Bites



1. Tianyi Pavilion
2. Ningbo Old Bund

Chinese festivities often feature dishes that carry unique significance. Noodles for instance, symbolise longevity - a reference gained from the long length of noodle strips, making it a staple dish at birthdays. Similarly, noodle broths are also savoured during wedding ceremonies or when one is moving into a new home, as a symbol of living a flavourful life. Eggs are linked to fertility, making it common for parents to gift red hard boiled eggs to friends to announce the birth of a child - an even number to represent a boy and an odd number for a girl. At weddings, it is commonplace to find duck delicacies at the banquet table, as a sign of fidelity. Fish - served whole with head and tail - is also a favourite. symbolising abundance. In Chinese tradition, chicken is often associated with the legendary phoenix. This is predominantly why it's commonplace to find chicken claws or phoenix feet on the menu at most celebrations as it represents good luck and good fortune.

Mobility Maker



US electric vehicle maker Tesla has begun operations at its new Gigafactory 3 in Shanghai, its first car manufacturing site overseas. The USD2 billion plant opened in October and can reportedly roll out 500,000 vehicles per year at full capacity. As an initial weekly target, Tesla is focusing on producing 1,000 units of its best-selling Model 3 sedan.

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Soul Food

Get into the Christmas spirit by volunteering with these organisations in the region that put community and food at the heart of their work.



Ah, the Yuletide season! The time for family, friends, feasting and everyone's favourite part: receiving gifts. This year, extend the gifting beyond the season by sharing your time with groups that make a difference to the less privileged all year-round. Here are some outstanding organisations that prove that the greatest gift, is giving.

Kebun-Kebun Bangsar, Malaysia

Set amidst Kuala Lumpur's urban landscape, the 3.4-hectare Kebun-Kebun Bangsar (KKB) is a community-led initiative, designed as a space for people of all backgrounds to come together, get in touch with nature and learn about food cultivation. Since 2017, volunteers have tirelessly planted a range of local fruits, vegetables, and even paddy - most of which are harvested for soup kitchens like Pit Stop Community Café, a social enterprise that reaches out to homeless and marginalised communities in the Malaysian capital.

Involvement Volunteers International, Indonesia

Involvement Volunteers International (IVI) has a spectrum of activities for people keen on giving back to the community. One of the many programmes include a health and nutritional service in the cultural heart of Bali - Ubud. In a region where obesity is widespread, volunteers - most of whom hail from healthcare backgrounds - run dental checkups and nutritional classes to teach the surrounding communities about healthy eating, nutrient-rich food and general cleanliness.

Good Food Grocer, Philippines

Considered the first food bank in the Philippines, Good Food Grocer (GFG), an initiative by Rise Against Hunger Philippines, works with restaurants, food manufacturers, private companies and local governments to collect food for the community. Their first store in Taguig, Manila, is run by volunteers who help sell mislabelled foods. production overruns and rescued food that would otherwise end up in landfills, to communities in need, all at discounted prices. GFG also runs soup kitchens, as well as a livelihood programme for impoverished communities to develop their own food products such as jams and pickles.



According to a 2004 survey by specialist social research company ICM, 71 per cent of people who volunteer say that volunteering combats depression.

Scoops of Goodness

These community-centric bodies and soup kitchens in the region nurture the less privileged.



The Nasi Lemak Project This social enterprise empowers Kuala Lumpur's urban poor by teaching them to make nasi lemak (rice cooked with coconut milk and served with condiments) and equipping them with skills to earn a living by selling this humble favourite. f thenasilemakproject



Willing Hearts Founded in 2003 by former businessman Tony Tay, Willing Hearts mobilises volunteers to prepare and deliver meals to more than 6,000 elderly, disabled, poor and marginalised people in and around the Lion City for free. F WillingHeartsSingapore



The Living Fields Intentionally built across Cambodia's Killing Fields, The Living Fields - a soup kitchen space that also houses a school and an area for local village women to sell their handicrafts - brings light to one of the country's darkest places. aynsoupkitchen.com







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12



New Additions

Asian restaurant chain COCA has rolled out a new menu for its Kuala Lumpur outlet at Bangsar Shopping Centre. In addition to its popular hotpot sets that feature meat, seafood, veggies and delicious broths, the mouth-watering selection includes small plates like Crab Cakes served with house-made Curry Mayo, and delectable Tom Yum wings. coca.com

Pantry Staples



Homegrown Singaporean bistro The Marmalade Pantry serves up comfort food, from pastas to pastries - all made with fresh ingredients. New additions to the menu include Spicy Sriracha Chicken Burger showcasing a spiced chicken patty topped with Sriracha mayo and blue cheese, and Kimchi Fried Rice with striploin, nori and sous vide egg. themarmaladepantry.com.sg

Over the Moon

Founded by former aerospace engineer Kate Reid, Lune Croissanterie crafts decadent pastries in Lune Lab - a climatecontrolled glass cube in its outlet in Melbourne's Fitzroy. The croissanterie's buttery pastries include traditional French croissants, cruffins (a croissant and muffin hybrid), and kouign amann - a pastry that originates from France's Bretagne region. A standing roomonly outlet in the CBD serves a selection of the delicious pastries.



1. Kimchi Fried Rice



Indonesia's jamu is made from plantbased ingredients that include bark, roots and seeds. Jamu is prescribed for everything from fevers to hangovers, and is also consumed as a restorative tonic.

Inflight Delights



Chicken Meatballs and Mushroom Stew with Roasted Vegetables This Christmas special features tender chicken meatballs slow-cooked to perfection in a delicious mushroom stew. This festive family-friendly meal is served with a side of delicious roasted sweet potatoes and vegetables. Available on all AirAsia Malaysia, AirAsia Indonesia and AirAsia X Malaysia flights (pre-book and on board). airasia.com

Santan

Hungry for more mouth-watering Santan meals on board your flight? You can now enjoy up to two hot meals when you pre-book your meals with your flight via airasia.com or the AirAsia mobile app!

Art of Jamu



Capella Hotel and Resorts' Capella Curates programme offers epicurean experiences to guests at the brand's properties around the world. On the list is Capella Ubud's Art of Jamu – an exploration of jamu (herbal tonics) that teaches guests about the medicinal properties of the elixir, and how to prepare it. capellahotels.com

lunecroissanterie.com





New Capital

Plans to relocate Indonesia's capital to East Kalimantan sends land prices skyrocketing in the area.



80

cm is the diameter of the largest gold coin in the world. Made by the Perth Mint in 2012, the 1,012kg coin has a face value of AUD1 million (apprx. USD684,000)

Electrifying Hub



Thailand is poised to become Southeast Asia's electricity trading hub. In September, the country's main stock exchange signed an agreement with stateowned Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) to develop an energy trading platform. The move shores up plans for a regional super grid that involves Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia and Malaysia. Since 2018, Malaysia has been buying 100 megawatts of electricity from Thailand. As part of the agreement, Thailand is looking at introducing new highvoltage transmission lines to encourage additional crossborder power trading.

In August, Indonesian President Joko Widodo identified the East Kalimantan province, near the cities of Balikpapan and Samarinda, as a proposed site for the country's new capital city, causing land prices in the area to soar tremendously.

According to a Channel News Asia report, the land value in the regencies of Penajam Paser Utara and Kutai Kertanegara, which is set to be the home of Indonesia's new administrative capital, have risen tenfold following Widodo's announcement.

Previously, a hectare of land in the area used to cost USD8,833, but now, some owners are advertising 1ha for as much as USD85,210. This is due to increased interest from big developers such as PT Agung Podomoro Land and PT PP Properti. PT Agung Podomoro Land has already begun promoting its residential and commercial project in Balikpapan as a 20-minute drive to the new capital city, while PT PP Properti is looking to develop about 500 hectares in East Kalimantan.

Development works in the province will commence as early as next year once the proposed relocation of Indonesia's capital receives a formal greenlight from the Indonesian parliament. The Indonesian government owns approximately 180,000ha land in this area, 40,000ha of which will be developed initially. According to Widodo's proposal, the estimated expenditure for the development is USD33 billion with a targeted date for the transfer of the administrative capital set for 2024.

Self-Driving Tuk-Tuk



Startup firm Airovr and investor Siri Ventures are working with the Thai government to test a self-driving tuk-tuk platform; the electric-powered tuk-tuk is being tested within an eight hectare gated community in Bangkok to ascertain its capabilities in real-world scenarios.

E-Commerce Muscle



In September, Yahoo Japan Corp acquired a majority stake in Zozo, Japan's biggest fashion retailer, to strengthen its position in the nation's e-commerce industry. The acquisition worth approximately USD3.7 billion –representing a 50.1 per cent stake in Zozo – will allow the company to compete more effectively against rivals Amazon and Rakuten.

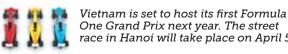


Whale Friendly

Fishermen in Oslob, Philippines, have turned into tour guides, while protecting endangered whale sharks in the area from being finned to earn a living. The fishermen now earn an average of USD62 a day ferrying tourists out to watch or dive with the sharks, compared to their previous daily average of USD1.40 earned from fishing. From 2012 to 2016, Oslob has earned USD18.4 million from ticket sales from whale shark tourism.

Source: guinnessworldrecords.com, nst.com.my, bloomberg.com, businesstimes.com.sg. technology.inquirer.net, cna.com, yahoo.com Images: 123RF

12



Tee Time

Tiger Woods and Ernie Els lead the charge at the 2019 Presidents Cup.



The biennial Presidents Cup tees off from December 12 to 15, bringing together some of the world's best golfers to compete in a series of men's matches at the Royal Melbourne Golf Club in Australia.

The tournament, held since 1994, features team USA and the International Team (the rest of the world excluding Europe) each captained respectively by legendary golfers Tiger Woods and Ernie Els. Both captains are blessed with a selection of 12 talented players each to field during the tournament, which uses a match play scoring system.

On paper, Woods' USA team arguably has an edge with no less than six players currently in the top 10 of the PGA world

rankings. This includes Bryson DeChambeau, Xander Schauffele, Patrick Cantlay, Justin Thomas, Dustin Johnson and reigning world number one. Brooks Koepka.

Els on the other hand will be relying on a team made up of seasoned Presidents Cup players, as well as tournament newbies. Pro golfers such as Hideki Matsuyama (Japan), Louis Oosthuizen (South Africa) and Marc Leishman (Australia) are making their fourth appearance at the tournament.

Leishman's compatriot, Adam Scott, who has played the tournament on eight different occasions, is also back on board. Scott's experience will prove useful to newcomers Haotong Lee and CT Pan who have officially qualified for the International Team.

billion Euros is the amount Manchester City has spent on player transfers for its current squad, effectively making them the first billion-euro football squad.

Wicket Result



The Thai women's cricket team made history in September by qualifying for the 2020 ICC Women's T20 World Cup tournament for the first time. The team is set to feature at next year's tourney in Australia from February 21 to March 8.



Touchdown TikTok

The National Football League (NFL) of America has signed a multi-year partnership with Chinese social video app TikTok as part of its global audience expansion strategy. The partnership, which kicked off ahead of the NFL's 100th season in September, will see the league stream game highlights and behindthe-scenes footage on the NFL's official account on the video platform.

Monster Mayhem



Two years after making their debut in Singapore, the big rigs and trucks from Monster Jam return for a one-night only event at the Singapore National Stadium on December 7. At the event, a total of eight Monster Jam trucks including Grave Digger, Max-D, El Toro Loco and Megalodon will face each other in races, stunts and freestyle competitions.

Fit Future

The global fitness app market size is expected to reach USD10.9 billion by 2026, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 21.1 per cent. According to Grand View Research, Inc, the growth is attributed to the increasing number of people seeking a health-conscious lifestyle, resulting in a higher adoption of fitness apps. The top earning fitness app globally last year was Calm, with a gross revenue of USD63.6 million.







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The Next Frontier

Amazing experiences are in store for us in the coming decade, as technology catapults the world into a realm beyond imagination.



As advancements in technology continue to propel industries, cultures and nations forward, the 2020s are set to become a decade of unparalleled progress for the masses across the planet.

In the field of medicine, it is highly possible that voluntary human testing for 3D printed organs will be initiated as early as next year.

Known as bioprinting, this revolutionary tech has been in the development stage for the past decade, and is now ready for human testing. Some of the organs that have been identified as suitable for 3D printing include the heart and cornea, as well as tissues like bones. With the commencement of human testing, we could very well see widespread use of bioprinting in the coming decade, which is great news for consumers as mass

adoption of the technology also means lower medical costs for patients opting for treatments that involve 3D printed organs.

Transportation is another sector that is poised for major technological shifts soon, as companies - big and small - turn to alternative energy sources to propel planes into the sky.

NASA recently accepted the delivery of the X-57 Maxwell aircraft. Designed by Empirical Systems Aerospace, the X-57



Automechanika Shanghai 2019

This international trade fair is a platform for automotive industry experts and leaders from around the region, to showcase the latest in innovation, technology and trends. Event highlights include e-mobility, car connectivity. liahtweiaht materials and new automotive models.

Venue National **Exhibition and Convention Centre** (Shanghai), China Date December 3-6 automechanikashanghai.hk. messefrankfurt.com

Maxwell is powered purely by electricity. Boeing and Airbus, on the other hand, while still in the midst of studying the feasibility of electric engines, are looking to adopt alternatives to Jet A-1 aviation fuel. A prime choice is biofuel - not only does it burn cleaner (and is thereby more eco-friendly), it's also cost-saving in the long run, as it is more economical to power a large plane with biofuel than with traditional jet fuel.

Consumer electronics is another industry that will experience further groundbreaking inventions.

The state-of-the-art folding screen, sparked with the launch of the Samsung Galaxy Fold earlier this year, is here to stay and will soon be the norm for computers and smartphones rather than in niche devices.



2. NASA X-57 Maxwell 3. Huawei's Mate X

1. Bioprinting of a human organ in action

More new technologies are expected to emerge in the 2020s, with rapid advancement in consumer and transport-related technologies particularly creating an unprecedented impact on our daily lives. So, get ready to greet 2020 – the year is poised to kick-start a decade of some of the greatest technologies the human

Huawei's Mate X, for instance,

market next year.

race has ever seen.

is one of the numerous foldable

devices that is expected to hit the

ALLSTAR TAKE "I can't wait to see what mind-blowing innovations the future has in store for us. I love what we already have now, it truly makes life easier. Ultimately, technology should always be geared towards helping people live better." ~ Nadiah Ismail,

Marketing & Events Executive, AirAsia WiFi (formerly known as ROKKI Wi-Fi)

12

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Not all satellite positioning systems are the same - different countries have different systems such as Galileo by the European Union, GLONAS by Russia and Beidou by China.

Tip of the Month

Check out these handy pointers that increase your work productivity on the go, minus your laptop!



Big is Better

Smartphone screens are getting larger every year - the days of 3.5inch displays are long gone and today, 6-inch screens are a norm. This is great for productivity, as more content can be displayed on a larger screen, reducing the need to constantly zoom in or scroll.

Key Player When

19

connected to a keyboard, your modern smartphone can handle most of the work you do on a laptop. Also, a small keyboard, like a foldable one, serves to enhance your work output by providing flexibility to type on the go.

In True Form Keyboard apps such as SwiftKey and GBoard include a built-in dictionary for correcting errors. These apps automatically correct frequently used words if misspelt, so your text always looks perfectly presentable.

Take a pick from our line-up of work performance boosters this month.

Samsung Galaxy Fold The Samsung Galaxy Fold combines futuristic design with cutting-edge internals - top-of-the-line Qualcomm Snapdragon 855 is paired with 12GB of RAM and 512GB of internal storage. It also features two screens, a smaller 4.6-inch on the front (when phone is folded) and a 7.3-inch foldable screen. samsung.com



Canon

Canon EOS M200 The Canon EOS M200 is all about new features in a familiar form. Its compact rangefinder body hides a 24MP APSC sensor behind the EF-M mount. and its new DIGIC 8 image processor helps capture unrivalled imagery. Plus, it includes a flip-up screen for vlogs and 4k24p video recording capability. canon.com

Acer Predator Helios 700 If you like a beefy laptop, the Acer Predator Helios 700 - offering great performance and gaming capabilities - is a top pick. Its Intel Core i9-9980HK processor, 32GB of DDR4 RAM, 1TB SSD and an NVIDIA GeForce RTX2080 graphics card with 8GB of memory head the specs list, powering a 17.3inch display. acer.com





Apple iPad Apple has refreshed its iPad line. The seventh-generation device can be fitted with Apple's Smart Keyboard and also supports the firstgen Apple Pencil. Underneath the 10.2inch screen is the A10 Fusion chip. And its new iPadOS delivers supreme performance. apple.com

PLANET OF THE APPS

Test your mental agility with these traffic management games.



Mini Metro Each stop in Mini Metro caters to different passengers. and it's your job to get everyone to their specific destination. Creating metro lines to connect two points or more on the map may sound easy, but this addictive game tests your analytical skills to the max!

OS: iOS/Android Price: USD4.99



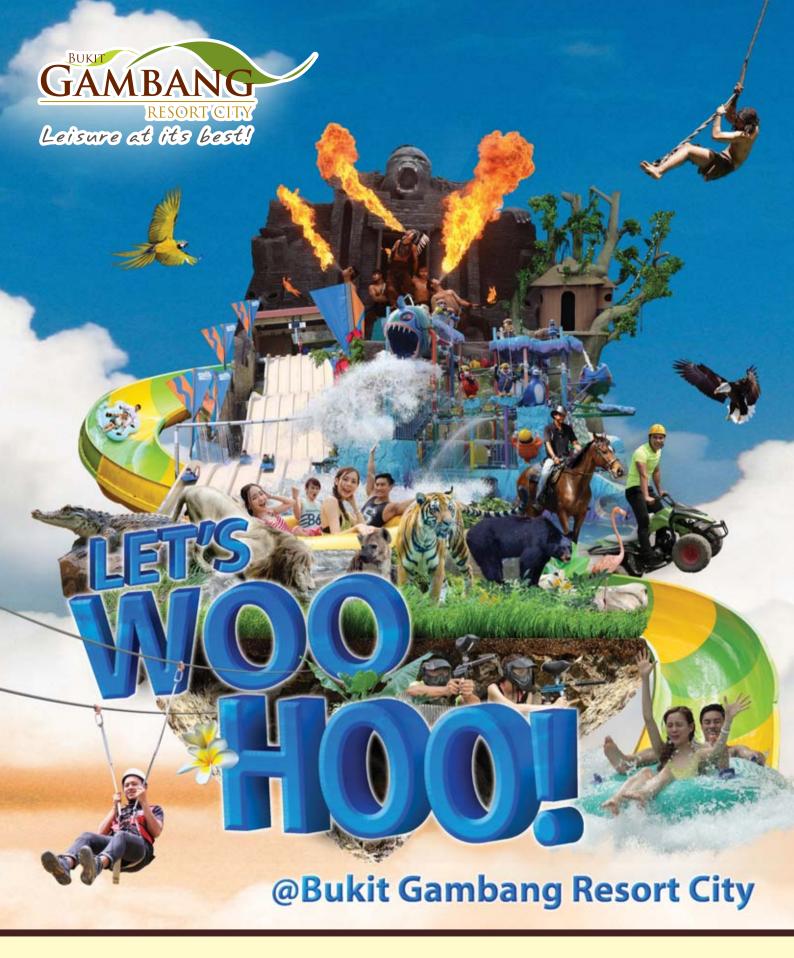
Traffix Be it a van, train or plane, your task as a highway manager is to ensure that traffic runs smoothly. Finding the right mix between traffic and speed is crucial. Too fast accidents ensue. Too slow - you end up with gridlocks.

OS: iOS/Android Price: USD1.99



Tiny Rails Starting with a single train engine, work your way up to a multi-car railway company spanning the continent. Ensure that your passengers stay happy with entertainment and food on board, while you build your train fleet and become the next railway tycoon.
OS: iOS/Android

Price: Free







Belitung, Indonesia

Often referred to as the twin sister of the Seychelles, Belitung island's pristine, natural surroundings make it the ultimate getaway for anyone seeking a slice of pure paradise.



12

In 2008, the Indonesian film Laskar Pelangi hit the big screen. Based on Andrea Hirata's book of the same name, the film tells the story of schoolchildren and their teachers in the impoverished town of Gantong Village in Belitung. The inspirational movie won audiences over instantly, for capturing both





the human spirit, as well as the ethereal beauty of Belitung.

Known fondly as Negeri Laskar Pelangi (Laskar Pelangi Land), Belitung – part of the Bangka Belitung province - sits just east of the mainland of Sumatera. Its 300,000 inhabitants are fiercely proud of their rich cultural and natural heritage - the island's main assets, apart from tin. The metal was the main source of wealth that enticed migrants from China and different parts of the archipelago to build a home there centuries ago - forming Belitung's multi-ethnic community.

Today, Beltung's chilled vibe and natural bounty attract visitors from across the globe. Exploring its marine-rich waters and enjoying the solitude of its vast. powdery beaches are a must, but travellers will also find gems in the island's many uncharted treks to majestic highlands and waterfalls, making it a paradise for nature lovers and adventure seekers.

1. Pulau Batu Berlayar in North Belitung is known for its unusual stone formations. 2. Manmade Kaolin Lake is a former kaolin mining site that is known for its clear blue waters. 3. The summit of **Batu Baginda offers** stunning views. 4. The 137-yearold lighthouse on Lengkuas Island

ALLSTAR Inside Scoop



Dhanisha Ganase, **Pricing System** Analyst, Route Revenue, Malaysia, spills the beans on the best experiences in Belitung.



"From clear skies, pristine waters and delicious food to friendly faces - Belitung has it all! Only 30 minutes from the airport is the picturesque Dapoer Belitung restaurant that serves a musttry - Gurame Menari (deep-fried flying fish). Be sure not to miss out on the yummy street dessert martabak manis sold in little stalls - believe me, your taste buds will thank you. Spend half a day island-hopping from **Pulau** Lengkuas and Pulau Kepayang to **Pulau Pasir**. Everything you see is blue! The untouched corals and marine life make the perfect snorkelling trip. Need something unique to spice up your Instagram feed? Pantai Tanjung Tinggi, with its large rocks and white sandy beach, is the most Insta-worthy spot."

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Budget & Blowout Guide

Treat yourself, or save your Indonesian Rupiah (IDR)? Our guide can help you decide.

Save

Spend the day at PULAU LENGKUAS, home to the iconic 137-year-old lighthouse built by the Dutch that offers unparalleled views of Belitung's astounding natural beauty from the 18th floor. The tranquil island's pristine waters are also ideal for . snorkelling excursions.

PAY IDR30,000 (approx. USD2) per snorkel set

Spend



Take in the mesmerising sights of Belitung by sea and explore the marine-rich waters around the island by **BOAT RENT AAK KELAYANG BELITUNG** staffed with crew to take you to the different islands. Get your fishing gear on and reel in a catch or two!

PAY IDR400,000 (approx. USD29) per boat



A local favourite, RUMA MAKAN **BELITONG TIMPO DULUK** plates up authentic local flavours. Feast on the eatery's renowned nasi bedulang, the Belitung specialty combining a variety of dishes - rice, fried fish, fish satav, coriander fried chicken. lemongrass sambal and mixed vegetables, among others.

PAY From IDR50,000 (approx. USD3.50)



The award-winning, sea-facing SAHANG BEACHFRONT RESTO of Arumdalu Private Resorts offers patrons a refined menu crafted from fresh, organic local produce. Must tries include Kaiseki Bird in a Cage an interpretation of the classic Indonesian grilled duck; and Zori-ebi slipper prawn, straight out of the sea.

PAY From IDR250,000 (approx. USD18)



Dive into the world of local snacks at TOKO OLEH OLEH KLAPA BELITUNG, but be sure to pick up the specialty crackers, or getas, as it is locally known. Ranging from shrimps to fish crackers, these addictive treats make the perfect souvenir for foodies

PAY From IDR12,000 (approx. USD0.90)



SHOP

STAY

Considered a pioneer of Belitung's style of batik, SEPIAK BELITUNG sells a range of stunning contemporary batik wear and material, inspired by the island's coastal beauty. Apart from its vibrant colours, batik Belitung's most prominent motif is daun simpor (simpor leaf), which is native to the island.

PAY From IDR150,000 (approx. USD10)



Cool, chic and affordable - the 3-starred **BW INN** has spacious family rooms, a restaurant, room service and a 24-hour front desk service. Located in Tanjungpandan · Belitung's biggest town - the hotel is located close to Tanjung Pendam Beach and the mesmerising Danau Kaolin.

PAY From IDR398.000 (USD28)



Luxurious yet rustic, **ECO BEACH BY BILLITON** sits on the sandy, secluded shores of Tanjung Kelayang Beach. Featuring handmade 'tents' constructed from local wood, nipa palm and recycled materials, each unit is a private ocean-facing sanctuary with fivestar amenities.

PAY IDR3,000,000 (approx. USD214)

NOTE All prices listed here are approximate values at the time of print.

Chasing Waterfalls

Belitung isn't all sun and sea. Check out these majestic cascades that dot the island!



Tarsius, Batu Mentas

Batu Mentas

Situated in a forest reserve, the crystal clear waters of Batu Mentas falls are great for a swim. If you're lucky, you may be able to catcht a glimpse of the tarsius, an adorable but endangered nocturnal primate.

Marsilla

Enveloped by pristine jungle, the relatively small Marsilla falls, with its gentle cascading waters and quiet surroundings, is bliss for those keen on getting away from it all. The treks are said to be easy, although wearing proper footwear is advisable.

Gunung Kubing

It's a long and tough trek to Gunung Kubing waterfalls, but the ultimate pay-off is when you reach the top. The falls, which form a natural infinity pool (perfect for a chill dip!), overlooks unending acres of lush tropical forests and a ring of mountains.



mages: 123RF, Arumdalu, Sepiak various destinations.







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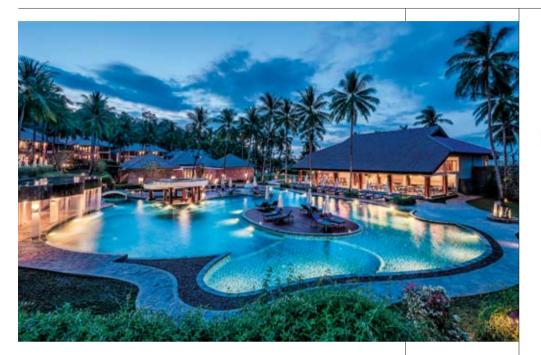
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12

Ultimate Escapes

From tropical beachfront dreys to historic luxury hotels, these stays are the quintessential picks for the holiday season.



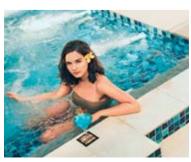
Must Try!

The resort's Dive Centre offers beginner and refresher scuba diving lessons that take place at the property's 3m deep dive pool, and are ideal for quests who wish to explore the surrounding Gili islands.

Wyndham Sundancer Resort Lombok

Many travellers to Lombok, Indonesia, head straight for the laid-back Gili islands - the hallowed trio of Trawangan, Meno and Air northwest of Lombok. But, during a recent stay at Wyndham Sundancer Lombok Resort, I discover the Southern Gilis, a pristine paradise made up of 13 islands off Lombok's southwestern coast.

Located on the hillslopes of Raya Pandanan in the secluded village of Sekotong, Wyndham Sundancer Resort is a luxurious hideaway that is perfectly positioned for exploring the Southern Gilis.



The journey from Lombok International Airport to the resort is a brilliant prelude to the natural splendour that surrounds the 66-room property. The hour-long scenic coastal route winds past villages on the ascent to Raya Pandanan, which on clear days, rewards visitors with panoramic views of two majestic mountains – Lombok's Mt Rinjani and Bali's

At the resort's lobby, I am garlanded with a pretty kalung bunga woven with red and pink petals, and offered a soothing cup of lemongrass tea. After quenching my thirst, I make my way along a pebble stone path to my weekend abode that



sits atop a hillock within the sprawling property.

There are four categories of accommodation at Wyndham Sundancer Resort, and they are all nothing short of luxurious. Suite options include the snug 1 Bedroom Deluxe Suite (80sqm) and the spacious 2 Bedroom Grand Suite (140sqm).

My expansive 2 Bedroom Grand Suite is warm and inviting, and showcases a creamy colour palette punctuated with dark wood cabinetry. Given its massive size, my suite is fit for a family of four and features a host of amenities that caters for maximum comfort and convenience.

The suite's living area is equipped with a giant 52-inch LED smart TV, and a plush three-seater sofa, as well as two armchairs, while the adjoining kitchenette comprises an induction cooktop, microwave and refrigerator. Flanking the living room are the two bedrooms - a master suite with a king-size bed, and another equipped with two single







beds. That aside, each room is identical in terms of design and amenities; both come with their own 42-inch LED smart TV, desk and walk-in wardrobe, as well as attached baths that include marble dressers, luxe stone bathtubs and rainshowers. My favourite chill-out spot in the suite is the airy balcony overlooking the resort's lush grounds. This is where I

spend most of my time, lost in contemplation.

Being on holiday is as good an excuse as any to indulge. At Wyndham Sundancer Resort, guests are spoilt for choice with the plentiful F&B options on offer.

The resort's dining venues include Sunrise Restaurant - a casual space that dishes up sumptuous Western and Asian selections for breakfast and lunch; The Bukit that plates up local favourites; and Sunset Pool Bar, where guests can unwind with a hearty beef burger and ice cold Bintang when not doing laps in the spectacular 900sqm pool. My favourite of the trio is The Bukit, where I savour local specialties like Ayam Taliwang (grilled free range chicken served with water spinach, eggplant and spicy sambal) and Bulayak Satay (skewers of tender beef served with glutinous rice cakes).

While panoramic views can be enjoyed throughout the property, the best sunsets are to be had at Sundancer Beach Club, a cool hangout located on a private stretch of beach just outside the resort's grounds. The casual dining venue serves up tapas, gourmet sandwiches, steaks, salads and crusty pizzas baked in a wood-fired oven.



Eastern & Oriental Hotel



Once known as 'the Premier Hotel east of the Suez', the E&O in George Town is among Southeast Asia's most iconic properties. Room options include suites in the newly-refurbished Heritage Wing, and spacious studios in the Victory Annexe.

10. Lebuh Farguhar. George Town, 10200 George Town, Pulau Pinang





To burn extra calories, guests can work out at the resort gym, or head to Sundancer Spa, which features a jacuzzi, sauna, steam room and cold-plunge pool. Best of all, one complimentary spa treatment per day is offered to guests who book the 2 Bedroom Grand Suite.

For more adventurous pursuits, the Wyndham Sundancer Resort has you covered.

The property's proximity to the Southern Gilis makes it the perfect jump-off point for snorkelling and diving excursions. I join the hotel's chartered snorkelling excursion to Gili Nanggu and Gili Rengit - a 45-minute boat ride from the resort. The pristine waters of the Southern Gilis teem with marine life, and I am rewarded when a hawksbill turtle swims alongside me.

Watching the lonesome turtle gracefully navigate the coral reefs and schools of fish, I can't help but feel blessed to witness nature's splendour up close.

Wyndham Sundancer Resort Lombok, Raya Pandanan, Dusun Pandanan, Desa Sekotong Barat, Sekotong, Lombok Barat NTB, Indonesia. 12

19





X2 Chiang Mai Riverside Resort

The sweet song of birds perched atop the scraggly branches of a nearby tamarind trees awakens me from restful siesta. I must have dozed off here on the snug sunbed of my hotel balcony, thanks to the hypnotic sway of the towering trees that dot the lawns of X2 Chiang Mai Riverside Resort (pronounced 'cross-to') - my home for a few days.

Nestled along the banks of the tranquil Ping River – the artery of Chiang Mai's ancient Lanna Kingdom - the boutique hotel is an oasis of serenity, despite lying only 10 minutes from the vibrant city streets of Chiang Mai.

rice wine distillery, the resort was crafted to highlight the property's existing beauty; rows of centuriesold tamarind trees, the leafy riverside and an unobstructed view of the mountain where Wat Phra Doi Suthep - one of Thailand's most sacred Buddhist temples - sits. In an ode to the city's storied

Built on the site of a former

past and scenic surroundings, architects from Bangkok-based I'll Design Studio blended ancient inspirations with modern day aspirations, resulting in a jawdropping architectural wonder.

Slender earthy-red bricks blanket the resort's façade and interior, paying homage to the remnants of Chiang Mai's Old City





walls, while large glass windows cast lanes of natural light in its walkways. It is through these same windows that city-slickers like me appreciate the beauty of its verdant courtyard, where the oldest of the tamarind trees stand.

My abode - the Grand Suite River View - is one of only 30 suites in the entire property. The luxurious 65sqm space, which includes the spacious balcony with vistas of the river and mountains, is adorned with chic, contemporary furnishings in monochromatic hues and sleek finishes of marble, wood and steel. I'm tempted to stay in, but Chiang Mai's cool winter breeze is perfect for some outdoor wandering.

I have the option to cycle or hop onto one of the resort's canoes to explore the meandering river, but I choose instead to slump on a deck chair on X2's lush lawn and get lost in a good book.

It's easy to lose track of time in this peaceful sanctuary, but when the sun starts to settle behind the mountainous backdrop, I head to the resort's Ozone Roof Bar. This rooftop hangout with cosy cabanas is where I find Chiang Mai's only salt water fibre-optic lit infinity



pool. Taking a dip here during sunset is something I can't resist!

Food is at the heart of all my visits to Thailand, but this time, my gastronomic adventures start in the resort itself, at the awardwinning Oxygen Dining Room.

Housed in a stunning conservatory-like structure of glass and steel, the fine-dining establishment is headed by Michelin-starred Chef Nicolas Isnard, but the big man in the kitchen is his mentor (and

winner of Thailand's Iron Chef!) – Executive Chef Alexandre Demard. The Cannes native's fun-loving demeanour translates to his creations. "What can I say, I like to play with my food and experiment with flavours!" Demard quips, as he talks me through the menu that fuses bold Thai flavours with refined French techniques.

Over the course of two days, Chef Demard spoils me rotten with one remarkable dish after another (I brought stretch pants on my trip for a reason).

His repertoire of creations - all so delicately and artfully plated are organic and mostly sourced locally. Some send me straight to gourmet heaven, like the fresh, briny flavours of Marennes-Oleron Oyster - Majestic No. 2 oyster from Jacques Cocollos farm - served with citrus, coconut and caviar de Neuvic; the richly-flavoured Khao Yai duck breast, perfectly balanced with beetroot, wild mulberries, coriander and blackcurrant sauce: and a local favourite Khao Kha Moo - the chef's take on the northern Thai delicacy of stewed pork leg, served lukewarm (in the way the French would with pate), topped with organic duck yolk confit.

Chef Demard's breakfast set-up is equally as appetising. There's everything from smoothies, pancakes, salads, freshly baked

JW Marriott Maldives Resort & Spa



Showcasing 60 beach and overwater villas replete with their own private pools, five trendy restaurants and stunning views of the Indian Ocean, this gorgeous new property is the ideal getaway to recharge the senses.

 ○ Vagaru Island, Shaviyani Atoll, 40880 Maldives

Must Do!



The Signature treatment at the resort's X2 Spa combines aromatherapy massage, herbal compress and tok sen – a soothing Lanna technique using a wooden hammer and mallet to tap the nerves in a rhythmic motion.





breads and homemade butter to salmon and Chiang Mai tartines made with the province's herbladen sausage. It doesn't hurt either that breakfast comes with a tall glass of bubbly!

I indulge in this explosion of flavours on the lawn, all while enjoying breathtaking views of Chiang Mai's ethereal natural beauty. The tamarind trees once again dance above me as the fresh winter breeze brushes against them, and in that very moment I know – this is the perfect place to relax, recuperate and recharge before the New Year begins.

369/1 Charoenraj Road, Watket, Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand







Must Do!



At Apsara Terrace in the hotel's lush gardens, guests can enjoy classical and folk dance performances, which include the graceful *Apsara* dance, while savouring a traditional Khmer dinner.

Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor

In 1967, it was the Grand Hotel d'Angkor that Jackie Kennedy chose to retreat to on a tour of the temples of Angkor. Designed by Ernest Hébrard – one of the pioneers of style Indochine – the hotel, which opened its doors in 1932, has a guest list that reads like a veritable Who's Who.

From Charlie Chaplin (who honeymooned here) and former French President Charles de Gaulle, to the Obamas, everyone who is anyone has probably made a pit stop at Grand Hotel d'Angkor. Now, newly refreshed after a six month-long refurbishment, the hotel is set to shine once more.

The updated property still retains its old-world French

colonial charm, which includes a fascinating timber cage elevator, still in service after almost 90 years. It is in this elevator that I am whisked to my room – the Henri Marchal Suite – in the hotel's heritage wing. Named after the Conservator of the Monuments of Angkor, my suite is one of four Personality Suites that honour illustrious figures closely associated with Angkor.

The focal point of my 48sqm suite is a gorgeous four poster bed, above which hangs a hauntingly beautiful monochrome close up of the apsaras (celestial maidens) of Angkor Wat.

In-room amenities include a minibar stocked with beer, juices and a bottle of the house Negroni, as well as an espresso machine. But it is the reminders of yesteryear



Salinda Resort Phu Quoc Island



Embrace the island life at Salinda Resort a 121room property on Vietnam's Emerald Island. Relax and unwind at Salinda Spa, which offers rejuvenating treatments including the signature pearl massage, or chill with a drink at the beachfront Cvan by the Pool.

Cua Lap Hamlet, Duong To Commune, Phu Quoc Island, Kien Giang Province, Vietnam - the bedside vintage rotary telephone and the en-suite's luxurious clawfoot bath - that evoke the romance of another era. With an ample balcony, my suite has the added benefit of a glorious view overlooking the hotel's stunning pool and gardens.

Throughout the property, curated spaces filled with memorabilia pay homage to the hotel's rich heritage. At Elephant Bar, I sample Airavata – the bar's signature blend of rum, crème de banana, lime juice and fresh coconut water – within an opulent space that showcases pachyderm-inspired decor.

A new addition to the property is 1932, an elegant dining room that spotlights modern Khmer cuisine, with inventive takes on traditional favourites. Highly recommended is The Royal Khmer Cuisine degustation menu – a sumptuous four-course dinner that features mains such as Chien Sach Chiem (grilled lamb chops with ginger sauce) and Kari Sach Moan (Khmer chicken and sweet potato curry), as well as a truly decadent dessert platter of traditional Khmer sweets.

Though much of Siem Reap has changed, Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor is still a class above – a luxurious hideaway after a day of exploration.

♠ 1 Vithei Charles de Gaulle, Khum Svay Dang Kum Siem Reap, Cambodia









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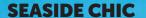




















The 90s saw the evolution of the Havaianas brand with the Havaianas 'Top' Style available in an explosion of colours, and this spirit of creativity continues to this day.

For HIM



HAVAIANAS TOP 3D Not for the conventional, these bold Havaianas flip-flops make a statement. With the left foot a neon yellow, and the right foot in neon pink, they let the world know you aren't afraid to be different, let loose and party.



EARPHONE CASE Protect your earphones and other little precious items with this unique sand-proof, water resistant silicone pouch. This trendy leaf green case is a must-have for the beach!



HAVAIANAS BACKPACK
COOL Lightweight and
feature loaded, this
backpack is the perfect
travel companion. It folds up
into a small pouch for easy
packing, and comes with lots
of convenient pockets.

For HER



HAVAIANAS SLIM SUMMER Vamos a playa is a popular expression that means 'let's go to the beach'. Let the spirit guide with this fun flip-flop that features a tropical print of pomegranates and guavas on the strap and footbed.



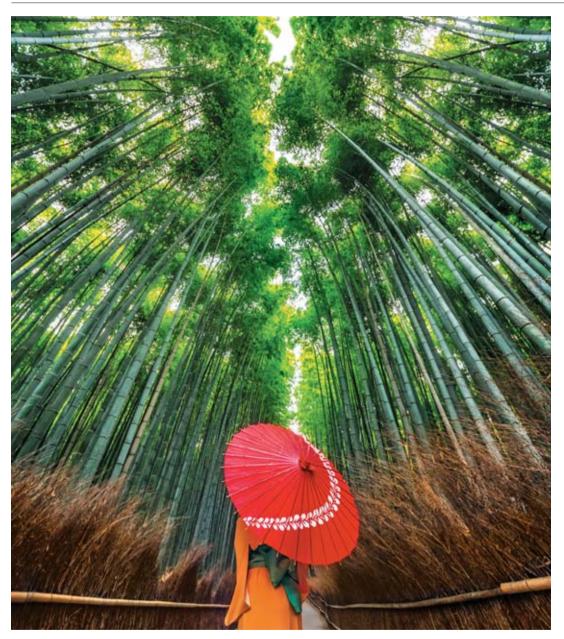
MINI BAG The cute mini bag is perfect for stashing your phone and money for a day at the beach. Crafted from specially formulated silicone to keep the sand off, this stunning lavender to gold degrade accessory is also water resistant.



CANGA CARAIVA Whether you call it a *canga*, pareo, towel or scarf, this item is your best friend for the beach. It's lightweight and perfect as a picnic blanket or as a makeshift dress or skirt – plus, it features a Havaianas flip-flop design hidden among the flowers.

December Diary

As 2019 draws to a close, make a date to visit these unique attractions that are best (and sometimes only) seen in December.



Japan

Kyoto

Kyoto is a destination that combines both picturesque landscape and traditional charm. Once the capital of Japan and official Imperial residence from CE 794 to 1868, Kyoto is a melting pot of culture and heritage, and is home to some of Japan's

most beloved landmarks such as Nijo Castle, Kyoto Imperial Palace and Kiyomizu-dera Temple. A not to be missed event of the winter season is the Kyoto Arashiyama Hanatouro – an annual illumination festival that runs for 10 days in mid-December. During this time, Kyoto's Arashiyama and Sagano

districts are lit up at night with thousands of coloured lights. Popular attractions such as Togetsu-kyo Bridge, and the Tenryu-ji and Horin-ji temples, are also illuminated and the wonderous Arashiyama Bamboo Forest takes on a surreal beauty that needs to be experienced at least once in a lifetime. japan.travel

Time of Your Life

Although Kyoto is perfect at any time of the year, December brings unique experiences in the city – with plenty to eat, see and do!



- O Kyoto is famous for kaiseki, a traditional Japanese dining experience that combines multiple courses. December brings new menus featuring delicacies such as snow crabs and other seasonal produce.
- The cold months are ideal for rotenburo, or outdoor onsen (hot springs). Soaking in hot spring pools while enjoying the cold air is believed to reinvigorate the body and senses.
- O Throughout this month, Kyoto's main shopping areas and departmental stores such as Takashiyama and Daimaru come alive with fantastic Christmas decorations.
- Temples buzz around Kyoto on December 31 for Joya-no-Kane, a sacred bell-ringing ceremony where devotees ring temple bells to usher in good fortune for the New Year.

nages: Getty, 123RF







Indonesia

North Sumatra

For a dose of culture, the North Sumatra province on Sumatra island is a great place to get acquainted with Indonesia's unique blend of traditions and heritage, especially at the annual Lake Toba Festival this month. The five-day festival is held near Lake

Toba - Indonesia's largest lake and one of the deepest volcanic lakes in the world. First held in 2013 to promote the natural beauty of Lake Toba and to encourage tourism, the festival also shines a light on the culture and traditions of the indigenous Batak people of the area. The event features handicraft and food bazaars, and

the opportunity to sample worldfamous Sumatran coffee. Festival highlights also include a parade featuring ceremonial outfits of the Batak, cultural performances such as Batak Opera and the Tor Tor dance, and exciting traditional sports like boat racing using the solu bolon, a type of long wooden canoe. indonesia.travel

Lasting Traditions



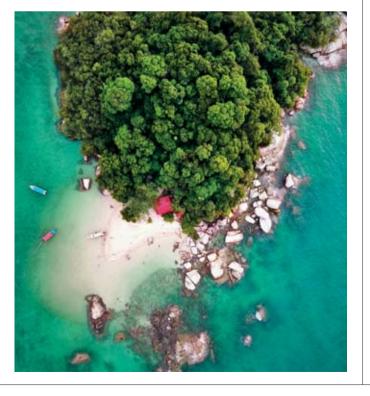
The Batak are believed to have inhibited Sumatra for over 2,500 years and remain one of Indonesia's largest ethnic communities with their own unique customs.



Malaysia

Pangkor Island

In December, travellers looking to escape the cold of the Northern Hemisphere, flock to Southeast Asia for the warm weather. A perfect spot for a year-end vacation is Pangkor Island. With a tropical climate and less rain in December, Pangkor offers a wide variety of fun activities. Kayak to the north of the island for unspoiled beaches and picturesque island views, and snorkel around Giam Island to discover a plethora of marine life such as parrotfish, moon wrasses and sea fans. To see the Oriental Pied Hornbill and Lesser Hornbill up-close, visit Sunset View Chalet in Teluk Nipah where the birds come to feed every day at around 6.30pm. For a dash of culture and history, visit Foo Lin Kong Temple - with its intricate Taoist-inspired carvings and a mini Great Wall of China replica in its garden - and the Dutch Fort, the ruins of a Dutch outpost built in 1670. malaysia.travel



South Korea Gyeonggi-do



Gyeonggi-do province shines bright this month with its annual Lighting Festival, held in The Garden of Morning Calm. The festival is one of the biggest in South Korea and transforms the 30-hectare arboretum into a fantastical wonderland of multi-coloured illuminations at night. visitkorea.or.kr

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Singapore



In December, Singapore's famous shopping street Orchard Road comes alive with dazzling Christmas decorations and lights, and a carnival-like atmosphere with food, drinks and street performers. On Christmas Eve, the party continues with the Christmas Countdown event featuring a live concert with local bands and dance groups. visitsingapore.com



Sri Lanka

Hambantota

Animal lovers looking for a wildlife adventure in December should visit Yala National Park, located in Hambantota. The park in southeast Sri Lanka borders the Indian Ocean and is one of the biggest in the country. It is best known as home to one of the world's most significant concentration of leopards, aside from housing over 44 species of mammals, 18 species of amphibians and 215 species of birds. This month, in particular, is a great time to see the park's collection of birds. This is because during the northeast monsoon, which runs from December to February, thousands of waterfowls like the northern pintail, Eurasian curlew and ruddy turnstone migrate to nest in the park's wetlands. Other must-see bird species at the park include the Sri Lanka grey hornbill and the Sri Lanka junglefowl, both of which are endemic to the country. yalasrilanka.lk

China

Mount Emei

A winter wonderland awaits at Mt Emei, situated in Sichuan province, at an elevation of 3,099m above sea level. The mountain is known as one of the Four Sacred Buddhist Mountains of China and is home to various Buddhist temples. In December,

Mt Emei's snow-capped peaks are a popular holiday destination. Visitors come to enjoy the therapeutic waters of the hot springs, at locations such as Lingxiu Lake and Hongzhushan Hot Spring Club. For skiing, snowboarding and sledging, Mount Emei Ski Resort offers world-class facilities, with trails for

all levels and classes for beginners. Another highlight is the Golden Summit, which is Mt Emei's second highest peak, standing at 3,079m. Here sits the 48m high Golden Buddha statue, one of the world's tallest. The summit also offers breathtaking vistas of the Chengdu Plain, Dadu River and Qingyi River below. cnto.org

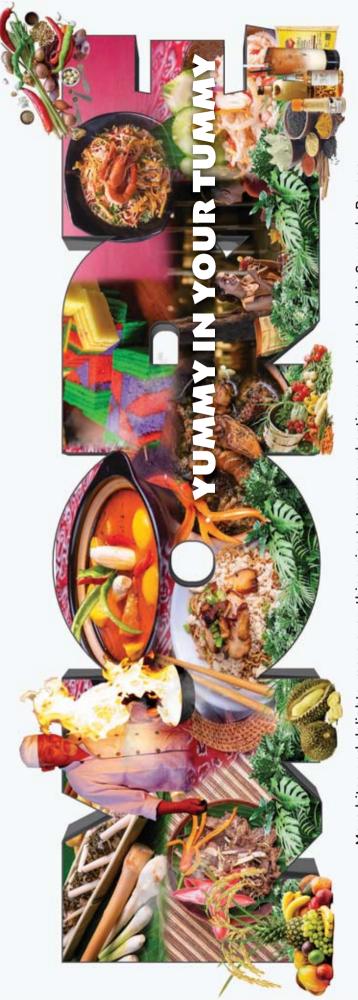
Majestic Beginnings



Sunrise at the Golden Summit is truly an unforgettable sight – the sunrays transform the dark purple sky with hues of pinks and reds before bathing the entire mountain in golden light.



mages: Getty, 123RF



More bites and delights, more everything nice to tempt and entice your taste buds in Sarawak, Borneo.



Australia

Gold Coast

In December, Australia heats up, and the best place for summer fun with the whole family is Gold Coast. This beach paradise has the longest daylight hours in December. The warm sea temperatures are perfect for swimming and there are plenty of pristine beaches

such as Burleigh Beach, Budds
Beach and Rainbow Bay to
explore. The season is also great
for water sports like surfing,
snorkelling and parasailing.
Aside from seaside activities,
families can also visit various
theme parks such as Warner
Bros Movie World, Dreamworld,
Sea World and Wet'n'Wild.
To discover nature, visit

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, which houses various species of native animals such as lorikeets, kangaroos, wallabies and koalas. Other highlights in Gold Coast include Springbrook National Park, featuring the majestic Purling Brook Falls, and shopping and entertainment on Cavill Avenue. australia.com

Vietnam **Hanoi**



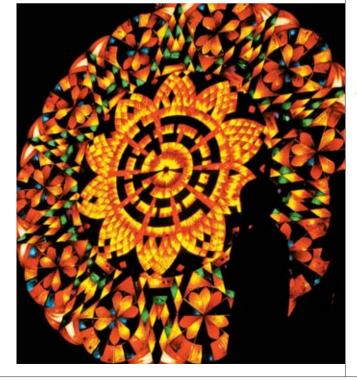
The annual Hanoi Flower Festival kicks-off at the end of December, when the city enjoys dry and cooler weather. During the festival, the area around Hoan Kiem Lake is festooned with pretty potted flowers, and festivities include music and dance performances, flower-arranging competitions and firework displays. vietnam.travel



Philippines

City of San Fernando

Those looking for an abundance of Christmas cheer in a tropical climate should look no further than the City of San Fernando in Pampanga province. Although most of the Philippines celebrates Christmas in a big way due to its predominantly Catholic population, San Fernando has been hailed as the country's Christmas capital for its annual Giant Lantern Festival which starts in mid-December. Historically, the city's Christmas lanterns have been part of yuletide celebrations since the 1900s. Today, the most popular event at the festival is the Giant Lantern Competition, with districts from around the country competing to create the biggest and most beautiful lanterns, some reaching up to 6m in height. The lanterns are built using steel and feature hundreds of multi-coloured light bulbs. They are also attached to motors, which allow them to spin and change colour, creating a striking kaleidoscopic effect. experiencephilippines.org





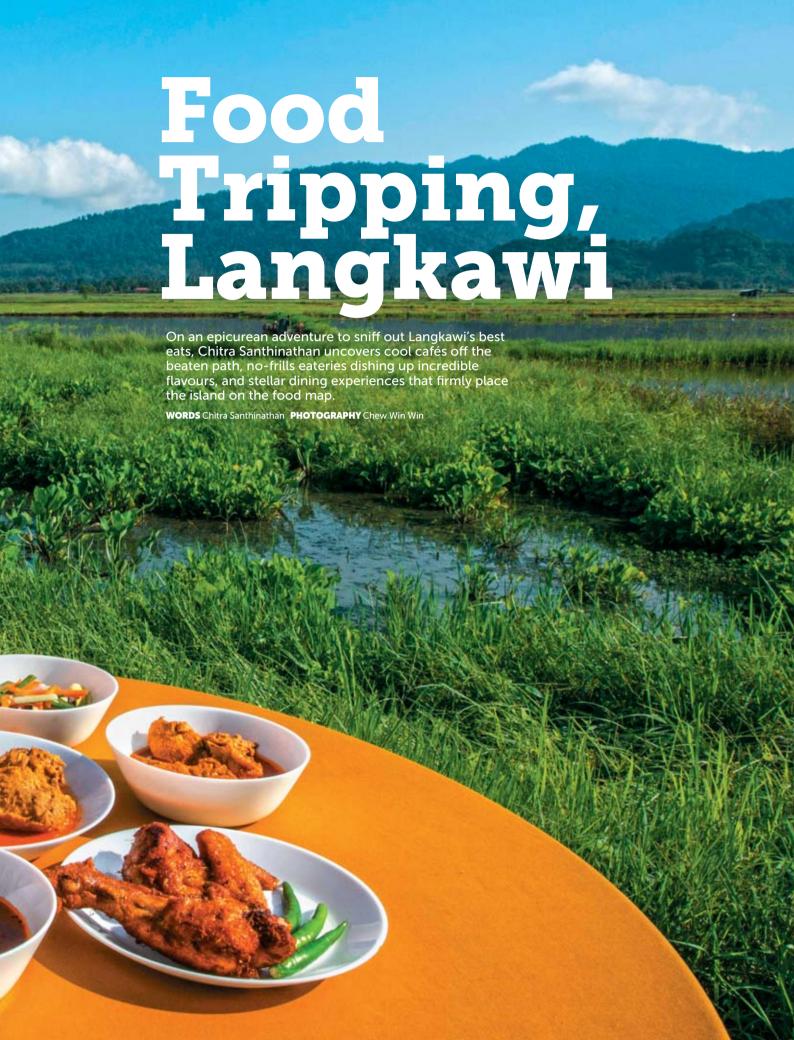


During the Christmas season, Philippines is illuminated by hundreds of parol – a traditional star-shaped lantern that symbolises the Star of Bethlehem, associated with the birth of Jesus Christ in Christianity.

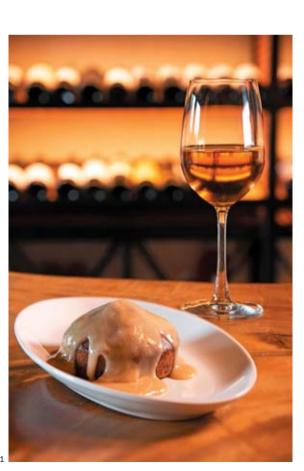
nages: Getty, 123RF







Breakfast Club To fuel up for adventure, a breakfast fit for champions is the order of the day. Though choices are aplenty, top of my list is Nasi Dagang Pak Malau located at the edge of picturesque paddy fields framed by Mt Raya. What began as a post-retirement diversion for the owners, is now a favourite among locals. This humble eatery dishes up nasi dagang fragrant rice steamed in coconut milk with shallots, lemongrass and fenugreek seeds, and served with creamy, spice-perfumed gulai (curry). Although the dish originates from Malaysia's East Coast, ever since Pak Malau (whose wife hails from the East Coast state of Kelantan) set up base seven years ago, its popularity has grown here. Daily curry specials include gulai ayam kampung (free range chicken curry), gulai ikan tongkol (tuna curry), and gulai daging (beef curry), best savoured with a steaming cup of frothy teh tarik (pulled tea). Don't fret if you're a late riser, the restaurant stays open until 2pm.



1. The Fat Frog's Vegan Sticky Toffee **Pudding pairs** perfectly with a glass of rosé. The restaurant, which serves wholesome dishes, has a wine room stocked with Old and New World labels. 2. In Langkawi, local kuih (traditional cakes) are available throughout the day. These include penaram (doughnut-shaped cakes made from a batter of rice flour and brown sugar), kuih karas (lacy half moon-shaped rice flour biscuits). and lidah buaya or crocodile tonque (crisp and sugary tongue-shaped cookies). 3. Executive Chef Mandy Goh of St Regis Langkawi puts the finishing touches on one of her exquisite creations. The open kitchen at the hotel's elegant Kayu Puti restaurant allows guests to be a part of the experience. Opposite Page Mangoes Bar and Grill in Kuala Teriang serves up hearty meals, and decadent homemade desserts whipped up by its owner Michele Kratochvil. Treats include quintessentially Aussie pavlova with a pillow-soft centre and meringue crust topped with whipped cream, strawberries





Situated within the leafy grounds of boutique hotel Panji Panji, Smiling Buffalo is a spot I'd recommend for leisurely all-day breakfasts and specialty coffee. On the drinks list are brews made from single origin beans using the V60 (handpour filter coffee) and Aeropress methods, as well as espresso-based beverages such as latte and cappuccino. Pair your beverage of choice with the café's sumptuous breakfasts, which include Big Breakfast (locally-produced preservative-free beef or chicken sausages, creamy scrambled eggs, and toast), Smiling Buffalo Sandwich (beef bacon, chicken ham, lettuce, tomato, cheese, garlic butter and black pepper sauce), and Mango Pancake - fluffy pancakes served with mango, coconut milk and gula melaka (palm sugar) syrup. Decorated with the owner's eclectic collection of antiques and vintage posters, the café exudes a laid back vibe.

Located along Langkawi's Cenang Beach, Huggin' Hippo echoes the casual feel of its sister café, Smiling Buffalo. The café features indoor and outdoor spaces decorated with vintage finds like gas station signs and an old fuel pump, as well as framed classic rock cover art. Indoors, comfy butterscotch leather sofas and a long coffee bar add to the cosy ambience. Here, allday breakfast includes scrumptious fare like Ben (two poached eggs, smoked salmon, house-baked wholemeal bread, and hollandaise sauce), Layar Jala (lacy pancakes served with delicious chicken curry), and healthy options such as chia seed pudding (matcha-, chocolate- or strawberry-flavoured) topped with muesli and yoghurt. The café also serves heartier selections, which include pastas, pizzas, burgers and pies.







Thirst Quenchers

Thirstday Bar and Restaurant Run by the Loh brothers whose family owns the popular Orkid Ria seafood restaurant on the Cenang strip, this beachfront bar offers tasty tipples from draught beers to espresso martinis – alongside bar bites. With glorious sunset views and a live band that performs daily, Thirstday is the place to kick back and unwind.

Thirstday BAR
& Restaurant

The Cliff Restaurant

Perched on a cliff at the end of Cenang Beach, and overlooking the Andaman Sea, The Cliff is a great spot for date nights and family dinners. The spacious restaurant features a formal dining space and an elevated bar both with great views. The extensive drinks list includes everything from mojitos to Dom Perignon. theclifflangkawi.com

in Kuah town, Cellar Bank stocks a range of liquor including topshelf whiskey labels like The Balvenie 14Y Peated Triple Cask and Glenfiddich 18Y Small Batch Reserve, and liqueurs – all at dutyfree prices. Guests can sample tasting flights at the bar.

Cellar Bank Located

at the bar. **Ei Cellar Bank Langkawi**

Constructed from salvaged finds including timber beams and wooden louvres rescued from old kampung houses, and ensconced within a garden setting, Smiling Buffalo café is a leafy retreat just minutes away from the buzzing Cenang strip.

Trail Guide

For more information on the featured eateries, check out our handy guide

Nasi Dagang Pak Malau

Jalan Makam Mahsuri,

Kampung Mawar

Smiling Buffalo

f smilingbuffalocafe

Huggin' Hippo

f hugginhippo

Nam Restaurant at Bon Ton **bontonresort.com**

Pia's the Padi

Fia's The Padi

Kayu Puti kayuputilangkawi.com

Jala

marriott.com

My French Factory

MY French Factory Langkawi

Mangoes Bar and Grill

Mangoes Bar & Grill

The Fat Frog

o thefatfroglangkawi

Kampung Cravings

At Hujung Kampung Resort, an idyllic sanctuary just 10 minutes from Cenang Beach, homecook Zairul Shukri offers cooking lessons with an emphasis on Malay heritage cuisine. Having learnt to cook from his grandmother at a young age, Zairul has a treasure trove of heirloom recipes to draw from, including recipes passed down to him by his former restaurateur dad. His informative classes -MYR100/USD24 per person for two to six people - offer authentic experiences and highlight forgotten flavours. On the menu are peknga pancakes made with coconut milk and wheat flour and served with grated coconut; kerabu bronok herb salad with a type of sea cucumber (Acaudina molpadioides) and gulai talang masin nenas (curried salted fish with pineapples). hujungkampungresort.com



Leisurely Pursuits If, like me, you're eager to lose the hordes in Cenang Beach, you'll be happy to discover Nam Restaurant at Bon Ton – an elegant hideaway close enough to the main strip but away from the bustling crowds. Run by Narelle McMurtrie, Bon Ton encompasses a collection of antique Malay houses and Nam, which plates up Asian and international favourites. The house specialty – Nyonya Laksa – is highly recommended. The dish, which consists of blanched yellow noodles in a rich and creamy curry broth with strips of chicken, plump prawns, and crunchy bean sprouts, is, I assure you – good to the last slurp!

One thing is for certain – the island is not short on jaw-dropping vistas. Postcard-perfect views can be enjoyed at The Fat Frog, which overlooks a ninehole golf course, and beyond it - Dayang Bunting Island. The stylish restaurant that showcases upcycled wood (the bar top base is made entirely from salvaged tree stumps) was formerly the course clubhouse. Transforming the space has been a labour of love for owner Indi Price, who now runs the restaurant, which features a selection of wholesome meals made from locally-sourced ingredients. While the restaurant serves fish and chicken, Indi, a vegetarian, has incorporated her family's favourite meat-free dishes into the menu. Vegetarian offerings include Falafel Salad (crisp, homemade falafel balls on a bed of hummus alongside a salad) and The Topless Mexican Burger (homemade ciabatta or mashed potato topped with a veggie patty, chilli beans, melted cheese, sautéed onions, and salsa). During my visit, I sample Vegan Sticky Toffee Pudding - the chalkboard special of the day with a glass of rosé



1. Vincent-Filis Diennad spoons fillings on top of a sweet crepe at MY French Factory Langkawi's only creperie. Here, crepes galettes and waffles are cooked to order 2. Coral Lobster Salad - tender sous vide coral lobster served with a refreshing salad of iulienned vegetables and bursts of pomelo - is among the delectable dishes at The Andaman's beachfront Jala restaurant. 3. To sample tasty tipples and pick up a bottle or two of your favourite liquor at duty-free prices, head to Cellar Bank in Kuah town. The outlet, which also features a small bar. stocks everything from premium single malts to Frangelico and Jack Daniels. Opposite Page Thirstday Bar and Restaurant on Cenang Beach serves up pub grub like pizza, pasta and steak alongside draught beer, wines, cocktails and mocktails. Highlights include their signature chicken satav pizza, which is topped with grilled chicken, peanut sauce and cheese.



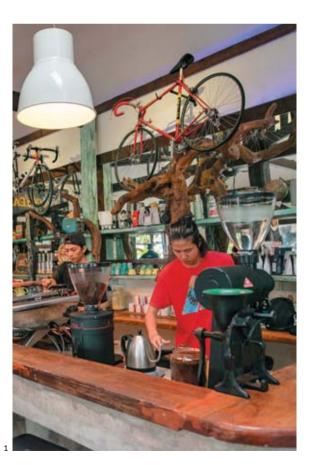


(oh yes, there's an on-site wine room too) – a match made in heaven!

Down a winding village road in Kampung Padang Gaung is **Pia's the Padi** – a family-owned restaurant that serves Malaysian, Indian and Western staples. Here, head chef Pia Jamil whips up delicious curries like Chicken Butter Masala and Beef Rendang – tenderloin slow-cooked with a housemade spice paste, coconut milk, and *kerisik* (toasted grated coconut). Although slightly off the beaten path, Pia's is worth a visit if you're craving comfort food that packs a flavourful punch.

Epicurean Feasts For a stellar dining experience in opulent settings, Kayu Puti at St Regis Langkawi is hard to beat. Perched over a sparkling lagoon, the stunning restaurant features an open kitchen where diners are welcome to watch Executive Chef Mandy Goh create the inspiring dishes that feature in her elaborate dinner menus. The young chef enjoys experimenting with exotic ingredients, and introducing unique flavours to diners. Sitting down to a seven-course meal, I have the pleasure of savouring such delights as Spring Peas Veloute & Black Truffle Toast (black truffle toast served with espuma of peas, zucchini tartare, kipfler potato crisps, and egg yolk sauce) and Patagonian Toothfish & Panko Bacalhau. I must admit that I am a little hesitant to try the prehistoric-sounding toothfish, but the cold water fish is surprisingly buttery and delicately flavoured. Perfectly paired with a creamy and mildly spicy assam pedas (spicy-sour gravy) risotto, as well as panko-crusted bacalhao (salted fish) fritters, this dish is truly a show-stopper, and attests to the chef's creative flair.

Divine Desserts There's always room for dessert that's what I always say. And in Langkawi, where kuih (traditional cakes) in all the hues of the rainbow are available morning, noon and night, you really have to save tummy space in order to enjoy the sweet treats on offer. For desserts with French flair, head to My French Factory a little creperie along the Cenang strip. Here, French expats Vincent-Elias Djennad and wife Soumia turn out delicate crepes using tools like the biliq - a cast-iron griddle - and rozell - a T-shaped rake for spreading batter - imported from Brittany, France. There are 15 varieties of crepes au froment (sweet crepes) on the menu that range from the basic butter and sugar combo to the deliciously decadent banana and homemade salted butter caramel pairing. The





pineapple chunks.





homemade salted caramel is so good that customers often request jars (MYR35/USD9 for 350g) of the sauce to take away. The Djennads also whip up waffles and galettes (savoury crepes).

Another revered institution is Mangoes Bar and Grill tucked away in Kuala Teriang. The 10-year-old restaurant run by Aussie expat Michele Kratochvil has a homey atmosphere, and is decorated with various nautical-themed knick-knacks - a nod to Michele's passion for the sea. Having sailed for many years before finally anchoring in Langkawi, home cook Michele lavishes guests with hearty meals, and best of all - rustic but exquisite desserts like apple strudel, frangipane pear tart, Bailey's cheesecake, chocolate and walnut pie, rum mango crepes, and very likely the best pavlova to be had on the island.

Foodie Paradise With so much attention on Langkawi's spectacular natural attractions, the island's food scene often slips under the radar. But, there are plenty of good eats here, many of them in the most unlikely of places - by the side of a road or even at the end of a narrow, winding path in a kampung. If you're adventurous, rest assured; you will be justly rewarded here in Langkawi.





Experience the soul of Asia in Penang through a variety of non-stop vibrant festivals and excitina events happenina throughout the calendar year.

Start the year by watching heavily pierced Kavadi bearers parade through the streets during Thaipusam in January. Marvel at the city's urban landscape from a tethered hot air balloon in February at the Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta. Go deep into Japanese culture at the Penang Yosakoi Parade in March.

Get splashing in April during the Songkran Festival and then chow down on the best street food Penang has to offer under one roof at the Penang International Food Festival. Visit the once-a-year Ramadan bazaars around Penana for a taste of Muslim festive treats, happening from April to May. Watch colourful floral floats weave through the streets during Wesak Day celebration in May. Get ready for a thorny affair with the King of Fruits, as the Penang Durian Festival reigns from June to July!

Celebrate Penang's cultural and natural heritage at the George Town Heritage Celebrations, George Town Festival and Penana Hill Festival, happening in July. Discover the rich cinematic world of traditional Chinese opera during the Hungry Ghost Festival in August.

Prepare to mingle with local and international literary figures in November at the award-winning George Town Literary Festival. In December, Teluk Bahang Dam on the island comes alive with intricately designed dragon boats racing to victory at the Penang International Dragon Boat Festival while mainland Butterworth turns the heat up with lively cultural and artsy performances at the Butterworth Fringe Festival.

End your year by ringing in the new year at various locations in Penang - dazzling display of fireworks lighting up the skyline makes a great #newyearnewyou photo. Experience Penang, The Diversity Of Asia.



- 1. Penang Bon Odori Festival
- 2. Penang International Food Festival
- 3. Penang Hot Air Balloon Fiesta

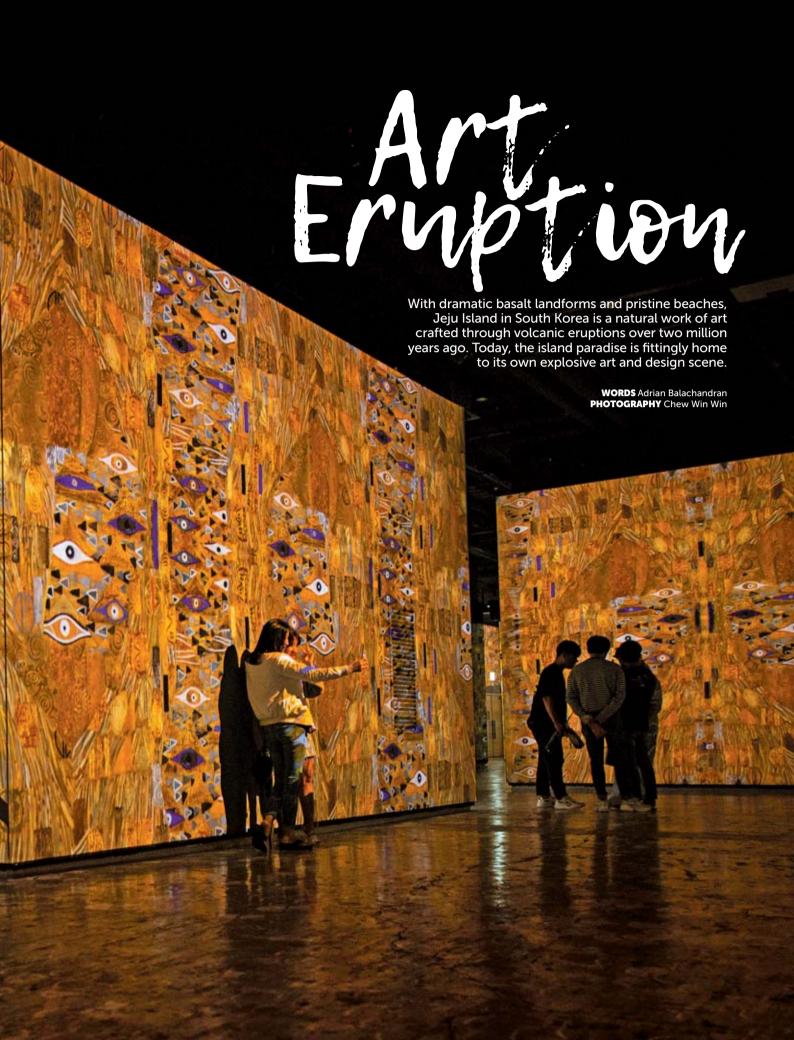
mypenang.gov.my/events/all-events/





WANDERLUST / South Korea







- 1. As the world's largest junk art theme park, Surprise Theme Park features 300 artworks across 10 themed zones. The artworks are crafted from salvaged industrial waste such as metal, wood, mortar and glass collected from around the island. The jewel of the park is a 12m tall dolharubang, which pays homage to Jeju's iconic stone guardians believed to ward off danger.
- 2. At Bonte Museum, Yayoi Kusama's Pumpkin a work of art that marries the Japanese artist's fascination with the humble fruit and her love of organic forms, polka dots, and bold colour palettes takes pride of place. The museum

- also houses her *Infinity* Room Gleaming Lights of The Souls (2008) an art installation that uses a combination of light fixtures and mirrors to create an otherworldly visual effect.
- 3. Bonte Museum in Andeok-myeon is a treasure trove of Korean culture; two dedicated floors display traditional handicrafts such as soban (wooden tray tables), bojagi (vintage wrapping cloth) and sangyeo (wooden funeral ornaments). Designed by world-renowned architect Tadao Ando, Bonte Museum features five galleries, a music hall and Bonte Garden - an outdoor exhibition space.







The Legendary Haenyeo

Jeju's famed haenyo hold their breath underwater for extended periods in depths of up to 10m – a remarkable feat for even the best divers. Even more amazing is the fact that these robust women used to dive clad only in mulsojungi (traditional cotton outfits) before the introduction of full-body wetsuits in the 1970s; the unpredictable weather and water temperatures, which can sometimes drop to an unforgiving 16 degrees Celsius, make their calling a perilous one. In 2016, these extraordinary women were rightfully recognised by UNESCO as an 'intangible cultural heritage of humanity'. To learn more about these resilient mermaids, head to the Haenyeo Museum on Jeju Island.

- 1. The Jeju Olle Trail is a 422km footpath comprising 21 main routes that weave around the island. Free daily walking tours are conducted by the Jeju Olle Academy and start at 9.30am. Route distances range between 7km and 20km and are designed with varying difficulty levels. The trail includes stops at sections of the island's iconic Dodudong Rainbow Coastal Road.
- 2. Lush and beautiful, Jeju Jeolmul Recreation Forest spans 300ha. Its towering cedars and black pines provide cool cover for walkers who traverse the forest's gentle slopes and hills. Admission costs USD1 per person.

Opposite Page Sunrise Peak – known locally as Seongsan Ilchulbong – is a UNESCO World Heritage-listed site famed for its tuff cone (sloping crater) form. It is recognised as one of the most well-preserved tuff cones in the world, thus providing valuable geological data to scientists. Its dramatic landscape is best experienced at sunrise.











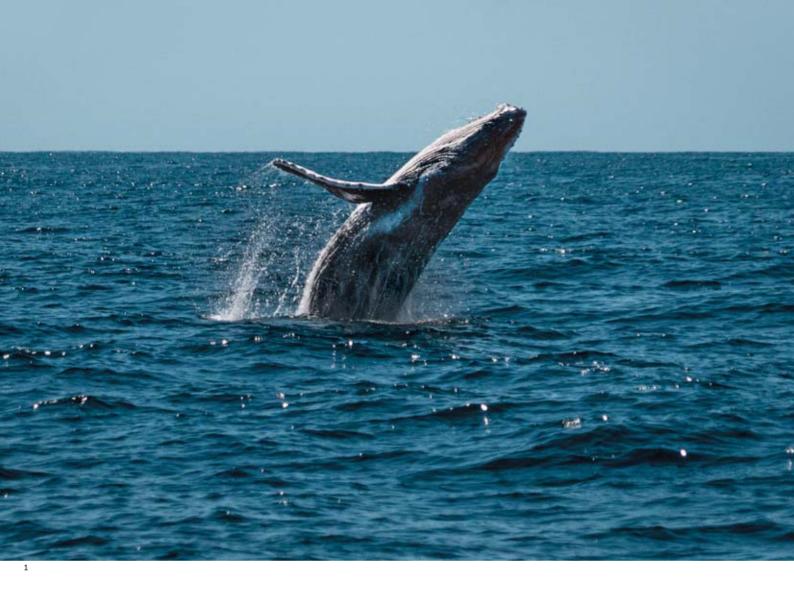
- 1. Since the 17th century, Jeju has been home to a community of female free divers known as haenyeo. These brave and resilient women are celebrated in art and sculptures around the island. Though declining in numbers, the small population of haenyeo continue to dive daily, sometimes up to 10m in depth, to collect seaweed, shellfish and other seafood.
- 2. A shutterbug's paradise, the Jeju Herb Dongsan blooms with more than 150 species of wildflowers and herbs, creating a

- magical backdrop for Insta-worthy snaps. Couples often flock here to celebrate their love in this stunning garden of Eden.
- 3. These translucent Jeju candles are a popular memento of Jeju Island. Many shops across the island provide classes for visitors to hand-make their own sea-inspired candles. To celebrate Jeju's natural beauty, each candle features materials like sand, seashells, lava stones and seaweed; the transparent gel wax represents the island's pristine waters.









hale, whale, whale!"
a woman excitedly
yells, prompting the
passengers – mostly
well-equipped shutterbugs from a
camera club – to climb up onto the
open-air top deck from the indoor
seating area below.

Armed with a DSLR, I scan the choppy waters through a telephoto lens, struggling to steady myself along the steel railing aboard a 24m red-and-white catamaran that is heaving on unpredictable swells off the coast of North Stradbroke Island in Queensland, Australia. From June to November, a southern population of 28,000 humpback whales migrate along the eastern coastline of the continent to mate and calve in the tropical waters of the Great Barrier Reef, before returning to their feeding grounds off Antarctica.

Finally, a timid cow and calf surface at a three o'clock position, their dark grey backs rolling above the water, preceded by the sound of water spurting from their blowholes, and occasionally followed by their barnacle-studded flukes lifting up. As the vessel moves farther out towards a group of exposed rocks, we come across an energetic calf repeatedly leaping out of the water around 200m in front of the boat, eliciting cheerful gasps and applause.

While whale-watching tours have long been a major tourist draw in the country, Yalingbila Tours (named after the indigenous word for 'whale') stands out for being the first to be owned and operated by Aboriginal people. Launched last June by Quandamooka Coast – the tourism branch of Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC) – the six-hour excursions offer a glimpse into the history of the Quandamooka people.

Born of Sand and Sea Having lived in the region for thousands of years prior to European settlement, the Quandamooka people are the traditional owners of southern Moreton Bay.

Comprised of the Nunukul, Ngugi and Goenpul ethnic communities, they inhabit greater portions of the mainland between the Brisbane and Logan Rivers, and the barrier islands of Moreton (Mulgumpin), North Stradbroke (Minjerribah) and South Stradbroke. Like many Aboriginal peoples across the continent, they were displaced and dispossessed, and their population almost decimated during the British colonisation of the area that began in 1823.

In 2011, the Quandamooka were finally granted land rights by the Australian government over most of Minjerribah. Since then, the community has led the sustainable management of the world's secondlargest sand island, which mineral sand mining has ravaged for the past 70 years. Over the decades, the lucrative industry destroyed natural habitats and important cultural sites. However, the last of the sand

mines will be closing down for good at the end of this year.

"There's a spiritual awakening occurring in the Queensland tourism sector, where (stakeholders) are realising the value of the First Nations' story. We've always felt that our story is the genesis of this area, so we're very proud and excited that we are now leading tourism in Brisbane," Cameron Costello, CEO of QYAC, tells me. The secret to their success, he adds, is "combining experiences", integrating Aboriginal knowledge and culture into nature-based activities that the island is known for

Whale of a Tale On the whale-watching trip, my Quandamooka guide for the day is Tallulah Mewett, an 18-year-old student of mixed descent, who grew up proud of her Aboriginal identity.

Aside from imparting fascinating scientific facts about humpback whales, she also delves into their cultural significance to her people. As the ferry barrels through the turbulent passage between Mulgumpin and Minjerribah, Tallulah recounts the Quandamooka creation story of Moreton Bay, which involved a three-way battle for authority among the dwellers of the land, sea and air.

Amidst the chaos, she narrates, the sparrow hawk snatched the spear of the goanna (Australian monitor lizard) and threw it at the dolphin. When the spear was removed, blood and water gushed out of its wound, creating the waterways of the bay. Meanwhile, the peace-loving whale, who was also speared, refused to take part in the melee and swam far away, explaining their annual migration. The wounds of both cetaceans never healed, becoming the blowholes we see on them today.

"It's really hard to judge authenticity, but the authenticity of my culture is family," Tallulah tells me after the tour. "So, when we go down to the beach to collect pipi shellfish, that's me continuing to practise my culture. And going to these whale-watching tours, talking about my culture, is also continuing our way of life."

Cultural Awakening Aside from whale-watching tours, eco-cultural facilities promoting Quandamooka heritage and culture will be built on Minjerribah to attract visitors to the island. The languorous gateway town of Dunwich (Goompi) – linked to the mainland by frequent car ferries and water taxis from Cleveland by SeaLink







1. A humpback whale calf breaches during an excursion with Yalingbila Tours of Quandamooka Coast — the country's first Aboriginal-owned whale-watching tour. 2. The grandson of celebrated poet and political activist Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Joshua Walker is one of the most knowledgeable tour guides on Minierribah, 3. Quandamooka art at North Stradbroke Island Museum depicts a dugong cow and calf. Once commercially hunted for their oil, meat and hide, around 900 dugongs live in the waters of Moreton Bay today. 4. Aboriginal scarred trees had their bark removed by Indigenous Australians for the creation of canoes, shields, containers and shelter. They also signify traditional ownership of the land, like this beachside gum tree along the Goompi Trail painted with the Australian Aboriginal flag.

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Stradbroke Ferries – will be the site of Quandamooka Art, Museum and Performance Institute (QUAMPI), a AUD9.5 million (approx. USD6.5 million) cultural centre scheduled to be completed by early 2021.

Presently, an essential stop in town is North Stradbroke Island Museum **stradbrokemuseum.com.au**, a social history museum founded in 1987 and housed in a quaint complex of wooden buildings. The main structure was a worker's flat for a sand mining company, built from a dismantled ward from when the township was a Benevolent Asylum for the aged, infirm and destitute from 1865 to 1946.

"We reflect the different knowledge in the community," says ethnographer and museum curator Elizabeth Gondwe whilst showing me around the galleries of glass-encased artefacts and old photographs. "For example, there's a very long history of the Quandamooka people, so representing that is a major focus. We've also reflected that in employment and governance, where we have Quandamooka people on our board and 50 per cent on our staff."

Another important collaborative space is Salt Water Murris Quandamooka Art Gallery f SWMQuandamooka, which stands next to the Asylum-era St Mark's Anglican Church, built in 1907. The gallery exhibits paintings, jewellery, ceramics and other handicrafts made by Aboriginal artists, and also provides a venue for them to create art and conduct workshops, especially for visiting schoolchildren.

"Art is a way to keep our culture strong and to educate the wider community," says Sandra Delaney – artist, author and advocate of Jandai, the language of the Quandamooka – who frequently exhibits her work at the gallery. "The Native Title (at its most basic, recognition of Aboriginal peoples' rights to land according to traditional law, as set out by Australian Law) has allowed me to come here and work on Country, and share knowledge, share language and give back."

Connect with Country There's no better way to understand the land than by bushwalking with an experienced Aboriginal guide. Stradbroke Island Holidays stradbrokeferries.com.au offers the Goompi Trail, a walking tour of the shores of Dunwich. At a grassy clearing on Polka Point, I meet Quandamooka guide Matthew

1. On the Goompi Trail, bushwalking guide Matthew Burns demonstrates Aboriginal weapons and instruments, including how a spear is thrown to hunt wild game. 2. Traditionally hunted for food and hide by the Quandamooka people. Eastern grey kangaroos are easily spotted around Minjerribah's townships and roadways, especially in the early morning and late afternoon. 3. Housed in Asylum-era buildings, North Stradbroke Island Museum is a treasure trove of the island's history run by the local community. 4. Sandra Delanev is an artist, author and advocate of Jandai, the native tongue of the Quandamooka people.





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Into the Wild

Around 50 per cent of North Stradbroke Island is protected as Naree Budjong Djara National Park, jointly managed by the Quandamooka people and the Queensland government. Its name means 'My Mother Earth' in the indigenous tongue. The 13,875-ha park features diverse habitats, from rainforests and wetlands to sandy beaches and freshwater lakes. The only section of the park currently open to visitors is Karboora, also known as Blue Lake, which is believed to be the home of an extraordinarily large carpet snake. To the Nunukul people, the carpet snake is their clan totem, or spiritual emblem. Whilst exploring the bush trails around the lake, lucky visitors may spot a rare golden-haired variety of swamp wallaby found only on Stradbroke and Peel Islands, or hear the call of the endangered Cooloola sedge frog. parks.des.qld.gov.au

Legacy of a Legend

Born on Minjerribah, Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920-1993) was a Quandamooka political activist, artist and educator who campaigned for Aboriginal rights. She was a key figure in the reform of the Australian constitution to allow Indigenous people full citizenship through the historic 1967 referendum. In 1964, she published her first volume of poetry entitled We Are Going - the first book published by an Aboriginal woman and the first book of verse by an Indigenous Australian. She also wrote children's books inspired by traditional stories like Stradbroke Dreamtime (1972). Father Sky and Mother Earth (1981) and The Rainbow Serpent (1988).

Whale of a Time

Quandamooka Coast offers four excursions a week during whale-watching season. The tours depart from South Bank at Brisbane's city centre, or Cleveland, 28km east of the state capital. **q-coast.com.au**



Salt Water Murris Quandamooka Art Gallery provides a collaborative venue for Indigenous artists to showcase their work and conduct workshops.

Burns, who has been sharing his cultural knowledge and skills for more than 20 years. He kicks off the tour with a fascinating demonstration of Aboriginal weapons, instruments and other artefacts laid out on a table set under a large eucalyptus tree inhabited by koalas.

We then walk down to the nearby beach where Matthew points out shell middens exposed by coastal erosion. Shell middens are ancient piles of discarded shells from edible mollusks, indicating human settlement. "The history of Minjerribah so far has been carbondated to 21,000 years," explains Matthew, "so it's said to be the oldest recorded Aboriginal site found within the state of Queensland."

A 25-minute bus ride northeast from Dunwich takes visitors to the

rocky headlands of Point Lookout (Mooloomba), a main draw for tourists on the island.

The following morning, I meet another pioneering guide from Quandamooka Coast by the name of Joshua Walker, grandson of celebrated Minjerribah-born poet Oodgeroo Noonuccal, formerly known as Kath Walker. Sharing his encyclopaedic knowledge of ancient wisdom, modern science and firsthand experience, the dreadlocked bushman takes me along the North Gorge Walk, a scenic trail featuring a 1.2km cliffside boardwalk overlooking the rugged seascape.

It's an excellent area to spot more wildlife – both on land and open sea. During our walk, we encounter grey kangaroos grazing at the trailhead, before spotting bottlenose dolphins and more humpback whales offshore near Wail Rock, a blowhole formation which, according to tradition, embodies the spirit of an unfortunate woman gasping for air. Reputedly one of the world's

best spots for land-based whale-watching, Mooloomba will soon be the site of another tourism project named Yalingbila Bibula, meaning 'whale on the hill' – an interpretative centre that will house a 15m skeleton of a humpback whale that washed ashore in the area eight years ago.

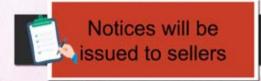
"The whale represents patience, wisdom and love," Joshua concludes, after retelling the gentle giant's role in the creation story.

It's these same virtues, it seems, that characterise the Quandamooka community as they reclaim their ancestral domain across Moreton Bay and, in the process, revitalise their time-honoured stories, language and traditions for generations to come.





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he overhead lights bathe the crowd in swathes of blue, red and yellow. Renowned ring announcer Bruce Buffer calls the fighters' names to the screams of fans and haters alike. The main fight is about to begin, and a momentary hush filled with anticipation pervades Singapore Indoor Stadium. Then, the bell rings and chaos reigns once again, both inside and outside the Octagon.

I've seen this UFC scene play out on television hundreds of times before. Tonight, I finally experience it live

Quick Rewind Martial arts have always fascinated me, and ever since I watched Randy 'The Natural' Couture face off against 'The Iceman' Chuck Liddell – both greats of their time – during their 2005 showdown in UFC 52 – I knew that I had found my favourite sport. I would go on to study muay Thai and Brazilian Jiu-jitsu (BJJ), which I still practise to this day.

I credit the UFC for having introduced me to this healthy lifestyle. Tonight, I have AirAsia to thank – the airline is the presenting sponsor for UFC Fight Night 162 in Singapore – for the chance to watch Demian Maia take on Ben 'Funky' Askren, in the flesh!

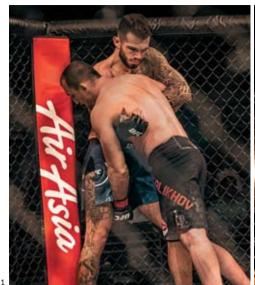
To the uninitiated, Maia and Askren are two of the greatest grapplers in the industry, albeit coming from totally different disciplines. Maia is known for his flawless BJJ, often finishing his opponents with the rear-naked choke, while Askren is an Olympic wrestler known for his relentless takedowns and top pressure style.

They say styles make fights, and this is a fight I can't wait to have unravel before my eyes.

View to a Fight Having watched over 300 UFC events on TV, I had grown accustomed to the benefit of colour commentary. Being at a live showdown, however, doesn't afford me this luxury.

Is the fighter hiding an injury or is it just my imagination? Did they

As unpredictable as mixed martial arts fights might seem, a lot of strategy and mind games go into each step, strike and takedown. Michael 'The Menace' Johnson's (right) well-timed shovel hook breaks through Stevie 'Braveheart' Ray's defenses.





legitimately get knocked down, or did they just slip? I have to make my own conclusions in real-time, without split-screens or second opinions.

Of course, the casters' voices are replaced by cheeky remarks from the fans, part of the entertainment of this live event. "Hit him in the face!" someone calls out, to the delight of the crowd. "Let's go dad bods!" yells another.

The banter does little to faze the fighters, who are determined to put on a good show for their fans. All the 11 fights feature nonstop action, which has a veteran spectator like myself at the edge of my seat. Alas, I can't name them all without turning this into one big name list, so here are the highlights of a few personal favourites.

Fierce Bouts Loma Lookboonmee puts on a muay Thai clinic in her match against Alexandra 'Stitch' Albu, showcasing deadly knees and elbows from the clinch. Albu, with her karate background, stands her ground admirably, absorbing the incoming strikes to dish out some



Action in Busan

Ultimate Fighting Championship makes its highly anticipated return to South Korea with UFC Fight Night: Ortega vs The Korean Zombie in Busan on December 21, 2019. The thrilling main event sees No. 2 ranked contender Brian 'T- City' Ortega face homegrown superstar No. 6 ranked Chan Sung Jung. The highest level of MMA action will be presented when top 10 rankers meet. Watch out for Alexandre 'The Cannibal' Pantoja versus Matt 'Danger' Schnell at flyweight, and Volkan 'No Time' Oezdemir versus Aleksandar Rakic at light heavyweight. Strong Korean talent will be showcased in bouts featuring Da-un Jung, 'The Iron Turtle' Junyong Park and the return of 'The Korean Superboy' Dooho Choi. Tickets can be purchased at Auction. ticketgen.auction.co.kr

A Weighty Matter

The first-ever UFC event, held in Denver, Colorado, sought to determine the best martial art in the world - so there were no weight classes, and a match between a sumo wrestler and a lithe karate specialist wasn't unexpected in those days (circa 1993). However, as the more successful styles like wrestling, BJJ and kickboxing began to dominate, size mattered, prompting the need for weight classes. UFC 12, which took place in Dothan, Alabama, in 1997, marks the first of its events to have weight categories - today, UFC has 12 weight classes: eight for men ranging from 52kg to 120kg and four for women, ranging from 52kg to 66kg.

1. In the clinch, fighters typically jockey for control by pummelling their hands under their opponents' armpits. Called the underhook, it's one of the best grips in this position.
2. Each UFC round lasts five minutes, with a one-minute break in between. This is where the cornermen enter the Octagon to tend to their fighters' bruises and cuts, as well as give last-minute advice. 3. The intense back and forth action between Randa 'Quiet Storm' Markos (bottom) and Ashley 'Spider Monkey' Yoder is a true treat to the fans in attendance.



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1. Being under the bright lights of the Octagon is a challenge of its own, and many great fighters have been known to wilt under the pressure. 2. Loma Lookboonmee (right), one of the few Southeast Asian fighters in the UFC, showcases superior muay Thai techniques in her fight against Alexandra 'Stitch' Albu. 3. Rafael 'Ataman' Fiziev is ecstatic with his decision win over Alex 'The Spartan' White.



hard-hitting punches of her own. Lookboonmee ends up winning by a well-earned decision, and I'm not surprised if she moves on to dominate the rest of her division.

Randa 'Quiet Storm' Markos versus Ashley 'Spider Monkey' Yoder is another entertaining fight. Both play an intricate game of chess on the ground and on the feet, not favouring one fighting style over another, showcasing the true spirit of mixed martial arts. Their grappling exchange in the first round is especially exciting, as they take

turns scoring top position and nearsubmissions. In the end, it is Markos who edges out the decision win.

Clash of the Grapplers And then the fight I've been waiting for, the main event of Maia versus Askren. The bell rings, the crowd goes wild, and the fighters meet at the centre of the Octagon. The heavy emphasis on boxing in the early rounds takes fans by surprise. I hear them muttering among themselves: "Why aren't they going to the ground?", "Why are they striking?"





It seems like both fighters are content to just stand and trade punches too, before it finally happens – they revert to what they do best. Askren goes for the takedown and Maia wraps his hand around his opponent's neck. The crowd erupts as Askren taps out right before he goes unconscious, signalling the night's conclusion.

Learning by Fighting Besides putting on a great show, these two elite fighters demonstrate that age is just a number. Askren is 35 years old

and Maia is 41, and in a sport where 30 is considered the athletic prime, it's inspiring to watch them break the norm - just like Liddell and Couture did back in 2005.

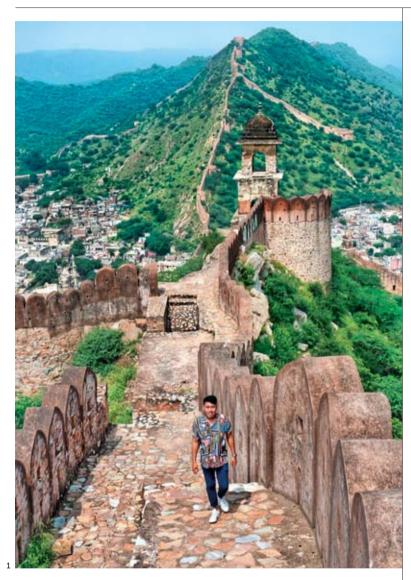
Perhaps that's why I love combat sports so much. It's not just about who's better than whom, but it is also about the resilience of the human spirit, and there's really no better way to discover your limits than by actually testing them. Because in the end, our toughest opponent is not waiting for us in a fight octagon, but within ourselves.



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Dream Circuit

Fascinated by India's vibrant culture, Leo Mark Jedhael Mejos backpacks across the country's Golden Triangle on a birthday dream trip.



1. Amber Fort, Jaipur 2. Taj Mahal, Agra

hen deciding on a destination for my birthday trip earlier this year, one country instantly popped into mind - India. Thanks, in part, to my exposure to Bollywood movies, I was fascinated by India's vibrant culture, amazing architecture, and sumptuous cuisine.

India, however, is a big country, so I decided to start by exploring the famous Golden Triangle (Jaipur, Agra and Delhi) on my inaugural trip. With just a backpack, and a tight budget, I

headed for my first stop - Jaipur - via Kuala Lumpur. Planning my route from my home in the Philippines was easy as AirAsia has connections to Jaipur, New Delhi, and other major Indian cities.

The capital of Rajasthan, Jaipur was founded by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II in 1727, and is known for the pink buildings in its historic walled centre. Buildings here were first coloured pink in 1876 to welcome Queen Victoria and the then Prince of Wales to the city, and since then, the rosy hue has come to symbolise the city's hospitality.

The city has many grand attractions, and these include City Palace - which is a blend of Raiput, Mughal and European architecture; Isarlat - a minaret built in the 1740s; and Jantar Mantar - an observatory constructed by the maharaja who was a keen astronomer. Top among the city's landmarks is the majestic Hawa Mahal or Palace of Winds - a spellbinding sandstone monument that showcases an intricate honeycomb facade.

After a tour of these attractions, I headed to the outskirts of the city to visit Amber Fort - the former capital of Rajasthan. Located on a hill, the fort comprises a beautiful palace complex, and offers breathtaking 360-views of the surrounding desert landscape. I also visited Royal Gaitor - which houses the mausoleums of Jaipur's royals; the historic and much photographed stepwell Panna Menna ka Kund; the Jagat Shiromani Temple dedicated to the Hindu deities Lord Krishna and Lord Vishnu, and the mystic Meera Bai; and Jal Mahal - a stunning palace in the heart of picturesque Man Sagar Lake.

Then, I was off to Agra for the second leg of my three-city tour. The city is synonymous with the Taj Mahal - the exquisite marble monument that is a testament to enduring love. The Taj Mahal





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- 1. Albert Hall Museum, Jaipur 2. Royal Gaitor, Jaipur
- 3. Hawa Mahal, Jaipur







was built by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as a tribute to his beloved wife Mumtaz Mahal who died during childbirth. I timed my visit to coincide with sunrise when the stunning structure was aglow with the first rays of the sun. It was truly an awe-inspiring sight that drew oohs and aahs from the early morning crowd. It's no wonder that the Taj Mahal is considered one of the new Seven Wonders of the World!

From Agra, I took a train to my final destination, India's national capital territory - Delhi. Divided into Old and New Delhi, and with historic monuments, colourful bazaars, and a multicultural community, this city encapsulates incredible India. Self-guided tours here are a breeze thanks to Delhi Metro – a world-class rapid transit train system that connects Delhi

to its satellite cities. I decided that the best way to experience the city's melting pot of cultures was to visit its places of worship. My first stop was the golden-domed Gurudwara Bangla Sahib, which is an important place of worship for Sikhs in New Delhi. The gurudwara (Sikh temple) welcomes all faiths, and visitors are invited to partake in the delicious free vegetarian meals served by the langgar (community kitchen).

Next up was Akshardham – a Hindu temple complex and centre of spirituality. The temple is dedicated to yogi and ascetic Swaminarayan whose teachings focus on central Hindu practices including dharma (the right way of living) and ahimsa (compassion). I also visited the Lotus Temple - a Baha'i place of worship that provides a space for



Sukhothai. Thailand Once the centre of Siamese art and architecture UNESCO heritagelisted Sukhothai is famed for its shrines, chedis (religious monuments with conical tops), and stunning Buddha statues.



Kvoto, Japan From the teahouses and geisha of Gion to the iconic red torii (shrine gates) of Fushimi Inari Taisha, Japan's ancient capital offers endless attractions.



Bagan, Myanmar The Bagan plains are truly ethereal with over 3,000 monuments including stupas and temples constructed between the 11th and 13th centuries.

Winner of the Month

wins a 3D/2N complimentary stay in Gayana Marine Resort Sabah's Rainforest Villa. inclusive of breakfast for two.



Nestled along Sabah's Malohom Bay, Gayana Marine Resort features 45 cosy overwater villas and its very own Marine Ecology Research Centre where quests can learn about the local marine environment and participate in coral reef conservation. Dining options at this laidback resort include Alu-Alu - a seafood restaurant committed to sustainable aquaculture - and Latitude Bar for sunset cocktails.

🞧 Malohom Bay, Gaya Island, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, Sabah, Malaysia

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people of all beliefs to gather, reflect and contemplate. The marble lotus 'petals' of the temple is really a sight to behold. Before wrapping up my holiday, I stopped at India Gate - an impressive sandstone tribute to the nation's fallen soldiers.

Though brief, my trip to India was exactly as I had imagined it would be, and I was happy and grateful that I had made the decision to visit this incredible country.



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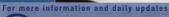




before

after

* Derma Sculpture actual photo













19

Harry Sanders

Whiz kid Harry Sanders speaks to *travel360* about how he went from being homeless to founding StudioHawk – one of Australia's largest award-winning SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) agencies.



At the age of 14, you taught yourself all about SEO from scratch. What did you discover?

My biggest discovery wasn't something new in terms of technology; it was around mindset and process. Nobody was really committed to learning SEO. They were just doing what they were told, no trials or testing. So really, all I started doing was creating tests and processes to make sure that the SEO work that I was doing was producing results. Each time it did, I documented it, and each time it didn't, I would retry with a new technique.

In 2015 you started your own company but it went bust. What did that teach you? I thought that I could do it better and learned the hard way about getting started in the business world. Nobody knew me, and building trust and credibility to start with is a massive summit to surmount.

You became homeless after that.
On the nights that were the hardest for you on the streets
- what kept you going? Well, to be honest, a better life. I knew that

if I didn't do something to turn it around, I was still going to be there in five years' time. It came down to: did I want to wallow in self-pity, or do something about my situation. Not everyone who finds themselves in that situation has the chance or skill set I did, and in that regard, I was very lucky to be able to pull myself out of it with that.

How would you describe your managing style as a 21-year-

old boss? The team I have now is the reason that I can continue to grow; they have become family. I don't think my managing style is anything new or revolutionary – I just put people first. Our biggest value at StudioHawk is investing in people because at the core of any business, good people are what makes it tick, and what makes a brand deliver on its promise.

How does StudioHawk's SEO methods ensure a level playing field and that the industry is fair and ethical? Well, there are two real core parts to this question – fair and ethical. In the sense of fair, we work with a lot of other individuals in the industry, and share a lot of

BIG WINNER

Sanders has won many accolades over the years. Most recently, he was crowned Millennial of the Year by one of the world's largest international media and marketing award bodies – M&M Global Awards.

what we do and learn from them as well. On the ethical side, I am involved with AWIA (Australian Web Industry Association) to help govern and regulate things like SEO in Australia, working to ensure that people aren't being taken advantage of by dodgy contracts or providers. But it feels like an uphill battle sometimes, as consumers need more education around what they are buying.

How would you serve two similar clients offering identical services and deliver results for both? When we might do work for two different airlines, for example, a team within the company (Team A) will work on one account and another team (Team B) will be assigned the other. These teams do not share staff resources, and Chinese walls are put in place to ensure that information or data is not shared across. This is something we take very seriously. Funnily enough, these campaigns are generally the strongest performing, because our teams are very competitive and playing against each other brings out the best tactics that are reserved for only the most difficult situations.

Why have you chosen to work specifically with entrepreneurs in Asia? I think Asia is a booming place with a lot of exciting tech talent emerging, but not a lot of SEO work comes out of Asia, and I think that is largely due to there not being a massive industry drive towards it just yet. But with the emergence of platforms such as WeChat, the demand for it is growing; people are willing to learn and are looking for companies to help educate them.

What advice do you have for young entrepreneurs?

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A Life Less Ordinary

A serious medical condition may have changed Kent Yap's direction in life, but it has ultimately become a fortuitous journey that has allowed him to travel the world



Although diagnosed with Lupus, Kent still lives life to the fullest

Overcoming a Curve Ball

Like most young individuals, Kent, had his life mapped out. Winning a scholarship at age 17, he planned to further his studies in Singapore before heading overseas to seek his fortunes. Unfortunately, his plans unravelled when he was diagnosed with Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE), or lupus, not long after.

"It was a bitter pill to swallow," admits Kent. "It was unexpected, and it hit my family hard as the treatment was expensive. We were all unprepared." He reveals his family exhausted their savings to pay for his medical bills, but through sheer resolve they pulled through. Aware that his condition would stifle his career prospects, Kent decided that he needed to take charge of his life. "I decided to continue my studies locally whilst also finding a job to pay for my living expenses," he shared. "One day during chemotherapy, I thought to myself, if I had insurance, I wouldn't be in the financial predicament I was in." Taking the leap at the young age of 19. Kent decided to join AIA as a Life Planner to support himself and his treatments - despite being aware of the various setbacks like rejections and a limited source of prospects. Motivated by his condition. Kent persevered, learning the ropes and growing his circle. He shared his own personal story with his customers, helping them understand the importance of having proper insurance coverage.

A Full Life

Today, Kent Yap leads a pretty busy life. The 35-year-old typically begins his day at 5.30am, with meditation, before getting ready for work. With a lot on his plate, he prefers to be at the office at 7am to clear his emails and messages before the working day officially begins

As an agency leader, Kent makes it a point to have daily catch-up sessions with his team, while scheduling a couple of appointments in a day. "It's important for me to check in with my team, making sure that they get the support they need in their day-to-day work." Despite his hectic schedule, Kent's impeccable planning allows him to cut off at 3pm to spend the rest of his time with friends and family.

"Lupus is still very much a part of my life. I go for bi-monthly check-ups and treatments to make sure that everything is ok. But I didn't let my disease define me. In fact, it pushed me to embrace a career that now allows me to help others live better lives and enables me to live my life to the fullest." added Kent. An avid traveller, Kent has ticked off many amazing destination experiences off his life and proudly shares that he has been fortunate enough to visit 47 countries due to the fruits of his labour. "Some of my greatest experiences were skydiving and bungee jumping in New Zealand and visiting Devil's Pool Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe. I'm also really grateful to be able to bring my mum along to 18 countries so far!"

Mentoring the Future

His personal experiences have not only helped him in his career path, but it also served as his motivation to grow his team. In the years since Kent became an AIA Life Planner, he has managed to become a well-respected leader in the field and currently mentors 50 Life Planners under his agency. "I am accountable for the professionalism for those under me, and when I see them achieve success it makes me very happy," says Kent. As part of his role as a mentor, Kent has also successfully recruited six individuals into the AIA Elite Academy, an exclusive month-on-boarding programme that is offered to selected up and coming Life Planners.

Kent explains that the programme, which is the first of its kind in the industry, serves as a great platform for professionals who want to embark on this career path. "The AIA Elite Academy not only helps provide the necessary skillsets and knowledge for new agents to excel in their profession but also incorporates elements such as a financing scheme, a seamless syllabus with personalised mentorship to help them kick-start their career with AIA. I wish they had this programme when I first started out!" he laughs.



Kent and his mum. Being an AIA Life Planner has allowed him to provide for his family

For the past 16 years, Kent has built on the success of being an AIA Life Planner, and he admits he doesn't think of doing anything else. "Being an AIA Life Planner has helped me provide for my family and improved their lives but it has also empowered me to help other people live a better quality of life."



Kent Yap has been with AIA for 16 years

Top Shots

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WINNER

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Maurice Lee Choong Min, Sarawak, Malaysia

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