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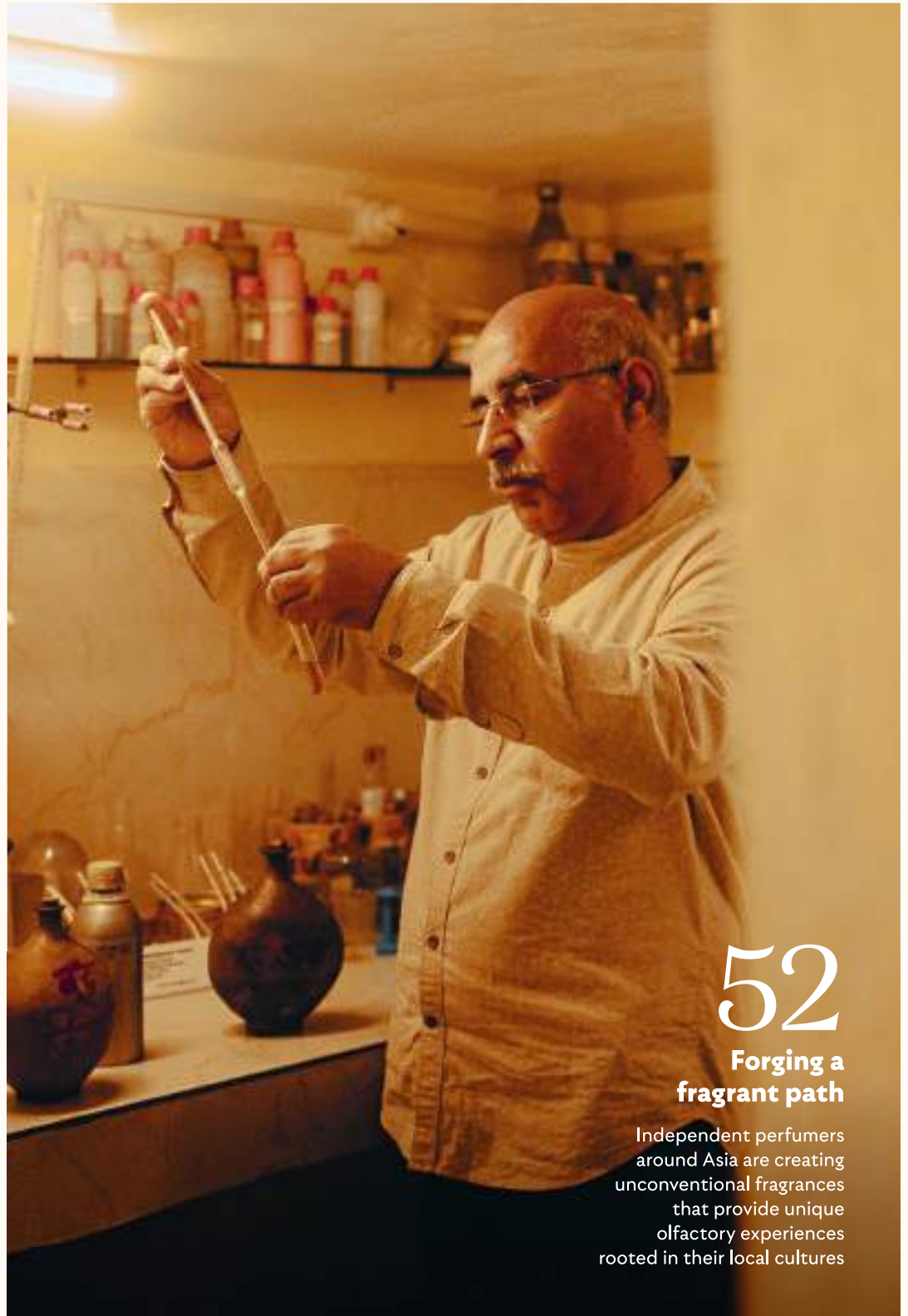
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IMAGE: TARIQ KHAN



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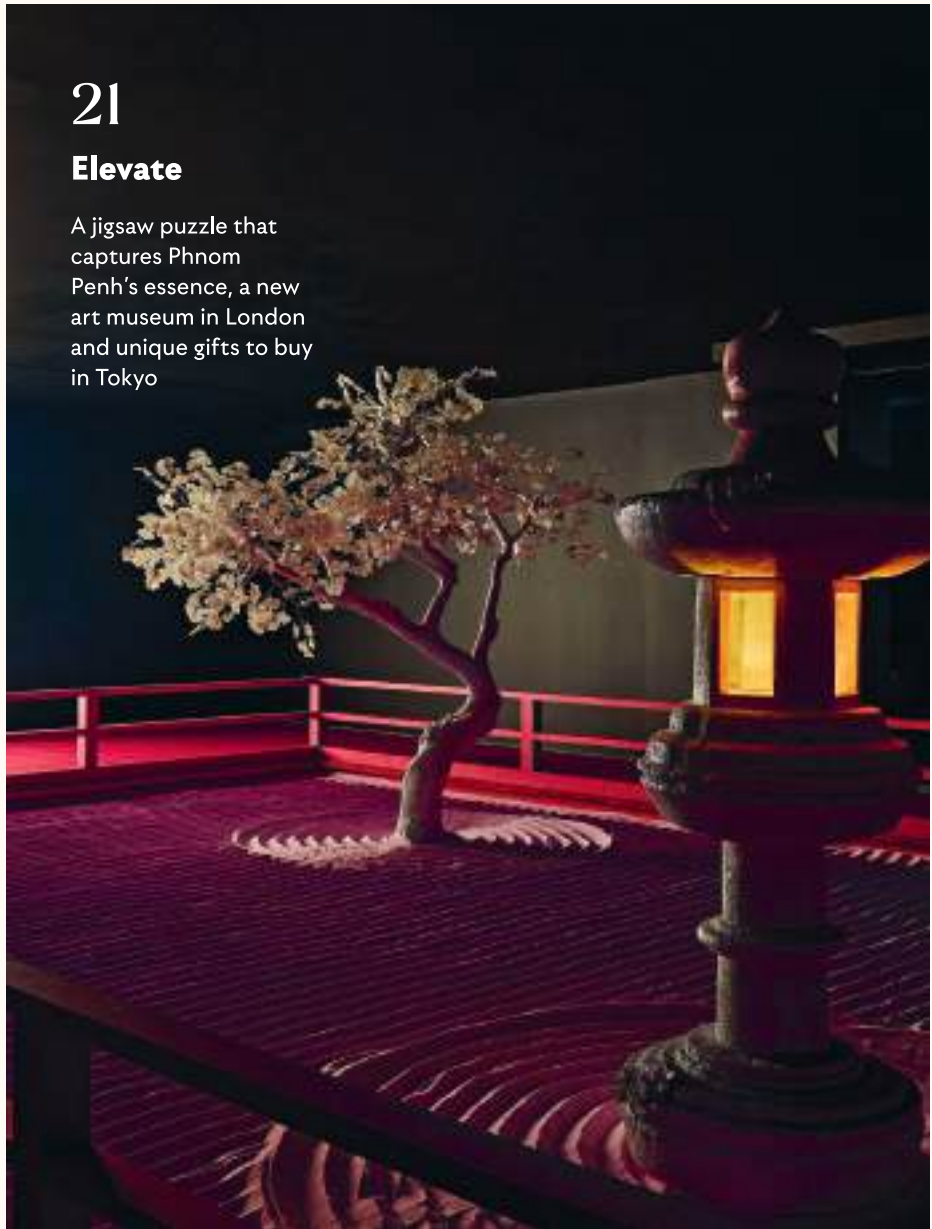
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Turkish sculptor Seçkin Pirim's stunning Gate of Zero pavilion greets guests at Joali Being. Courtesy of JOALI BEING

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## Dear guests,

As the year draws to a close, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to you, our valued customers, for your unwavering support to Malaysia Aviation Group's airlines. Whether you're travelling for work, reuniting with loved ones or taking a well-deserved holiday, we thank you for choosing us to be part of your journey. Your continued trust drives us to keep enhancing our services, ensuring every journey with us is as comfortable and memorable as possible.

As we reflect on the past year, we recognise that it is your feedback and insights that have inspired us to reach new heights. Your suggestions have been invaluable, helping us to innovate and adapt our services based on your needs.

It is with your support that we have been able to consistently achieve significant milestones and earn global recognition. I am proud to share that Malaysia Airlines has been accorded the coveted Four Star Major Airline 2025 status by the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). This award, based on over one million PNR-verified flight reviews, places us among the top 8% of airlines worldwide, underscoring our dedication to delivering world-class passenger experiences. In addition, the airline also earned the title of Malaysia Brand Experience of the Year (Aviation) and Malaysia Customer Experience of the Year (Airline) at the Asian Experience Awards 2024. These accolades reflect our unwavering commitment to enhancing our service and showcasing Malaysian Hospitality on the global stage.

We are constantly evolving our offerings – be it through enhanced in-flight services, expanding our global destinations or introducing new customer engagement initiatives. Earlier this year, we introduced innovative support channels, such as the Live Chat feature on Malaysia Airlines and Firefly's websites, to reduce reliance on traditional voice channels and provide you with more options for assistance. Additionally, Enrich Platinum and Gold members have access to our Premier Line, and we have also improved our customer relationship management systems to ensure first-contact resolution. Since implementing these changes, we've received positive customer feedback, maintaining service levels between 80% and 90% across all platforms. This customer-centric approach has led to significant improvements in satisfaction, earning us the Gold Award for Best Customer Experience in the Contact Centre at the Industry Excellence Awards 2024 and the Digital Excellence Award at the PIKOM Digital Excellence Awards. We look forward to continually delivering tailored services that meet your needs, ensuring your travel experience with us remains as seamless as possible.

We understand that travel is not just about reaching a destination; it is about creating experiences and memories along the way. We remain dedicated to investing in resources and experiences that will set a new benchmark for travel with our airlines. This includes the introduction of unlimited complimentary Wi-Fi on our 737-8 fleet, enhancement of our in-flight dining offerings, among other exciting initiatives in the pipeline. Each step we take today will strengthen the foundation for the journeys we embark on in the future. We look forward to welcoming 2025 with excitement and anticipation for the opportunities that lie ahead, and to continue serving you better.

On behalf of everyone at Malaysia Aviation Group, I wish you a joyous and prosperous New Year! We look forward to welcoming you on many more journeys with our Malaysian Hospitality.

### **Izhah Ismail**

Group Managing Director  
Malaysia Aviation Group





TUMI

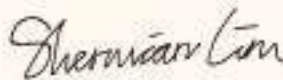
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**T**his month, we begin our adventures in the Maldives, where turquoise waters and powdery sands set the stage for a blissful vacation in paradise. Dive into salty, sand-kissed experiences, savour ocean flavours and unwind in the finest luxury resorts tailored for the ultimate escape (p42). Next, we explore the art of bespoke perfumery in Bangkok, Mumbai and Manila, home to innovative artisans who craft scents that reflect

personal stories and memories – a perfect holiday gift that speaks to individuality (p52). Let's also not forget the warm spirit and diverse landscape of Malaysia that makes us such an attractive country for travellers. From idyllic islands to one-of-a-kind gifts to bring home, there are endless reasons to fall in love with Malaysia (p11).

Wishing you a wonderful holiday season filled with adventure, joy and the promise of new horizons in 2025.

Happy travels,



**Shermian Lim**  
Editor



## This issue's contributors



**Vidya Balachandar**

Writer, "Forging a fragrant path", p52

An award-winning writer and editor currently based in Manila, Vidya enjoys writing about the intersection of food, travel, culture and communities.



**Tracia Goh**

Photographer, "24 hours in Kudat", p35

Tracia is a visual artist from Sabah, with a goal to photograph the charm in Borneo's landscapes and cultures as inspiration for her art.



**Jonathan Evans**

Writer, "Out of this world", p42

Jonathan lived in London for 13 years, honing his craft at BBC Magazines, before venturing east in 2007. He covers Asian cities and culture for regional publications.





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# 5 travel trends in 2025

Travel smarter and learn how Visa can make your globetrotting adventures fun and easy

The new year brings a wave of exciting travel trends that promise unforgettable experiences for every kind of traveller. From off-the-grid escapes to unique pop-up events, here is how to capture the spirit of adventure and discovery in 2025.



## 1 Search out sustainable escapes

As more travellers seek to reduce their impact, sustainable escapes are on the rise. This trend includes everything from remote eco-lodges and wildlife conservation tours to plant-based dining options. Go green by choosing eco-friendly stays and sustainable tours that make a difference.

## 2 Sign up for off-the-grid adventures

Craving an escape from city life? Off-the-grid adventures are the ultimate answer, with travellers venturing into national parks, secluded beaches and rugged mountain trails. These natural havens promise tranquillity and a real sense of adventure, away from the crowds.

## 3 Local culinary immersions

Nothing brings you closer to a culture than exploring its food. Local culinary immersions – like cooking classes, bustling markets and street food tours – are high on the list for 2025. Authentic dining experiences are a delicious way to connect with locals and savour new flavours.

## 4 Catch a pop-up experience

From art exhibits and concerts to immersive installations, pop-up experiences are redefining travel as a spontaneous and engaging journey. These short-term events are often unplanned finds that add an unforgettable twist to any trip.

## 5 Relaxing staycations

Sometimes, the best getaways are close to home. Staycations offer a refreshing break without the travel hassle, allowing you to explore your local area with new eyes. Boutique hotels, luxury spas and local excursions can make for a relaxing yet adventurous staycation.



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# 14

# REASONS TO LOVE MALAYSIA

Bold flavours, inspiring people and unforgettable places



After weathering the challenges of the pandemic, **GMBB** got to celebrate its official launch this past August, and is now a one-stop culture hub that brings together local creatives, artists and artisans. Tenants range from renowned arts collective Five Arts Centre, contemporary Malay Gamelan group Gangsapura and shadow puppeteers Fusion Wayang Kulit, to a plethora of galleries, arts and craft stores, bookstores and more. [gmbb.com.my](http://gmbb.com.my)

1

Kuala Lumpur

**All about the arts**



2

Kuala Lumpur

## Suspended in time

**Avogere Herbarium** specialises in capturing beauty, with dried flowers suspended in bottles to preserve their allure, as well as capturing moments, with custom engraved portraits courtesy of a collaboration with Labo Art & Craft. Avogere's pop-ups appear in markets around the Klang Valley, with workshops where you can learn to make your own memories last forever.

[instagram.com/avogere.herbarium](https://www.instagram.com/avogere.herbarium)



3

George Town

## Icy and fresh



George Town's **Fufu Bingsu Dessert** offers a fresh take on the beloved shaved ice treat. Their signature D24 durian and mango bingsu comes with real fruit slices on the side, while the sesame and peanut bingsu is served with chewy mochi sticks. To make it even more unique, try pairing the fluffy bingsu with Merry ice cream, featuring local flavours like *gula melaka* (palm sugar) and *tau fu fah* (soybean pudding). [instagram.com/fufu.bingsudessert](https://www.instagram.com/fufu.bingsudessert)

4

## Scents of the forest

Kuala Lumpur

Turn your home into an enchanting forest with the luxuriant floral and woody fragrances of **Candle Loft's** spa-inspired candles. Revel in the Peony Garden, with notes of rose, jasmine and suede; take a trek through the eucalyptus and timber scents of Wooded Valley; or lose yourself in the heady amber, sandalwood, leather and iris of Midnight Santal. [instagram.com/shopcandleloft](https://www.instagram.com/shopcandleloft)





# 5



Langkawi

## Pocket of paradise

Langkawi recently ranked fourth in the *Condé Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards 2024* for the Top 10 Best Islands in Asia – and it's easy to see why. This enchanting archipelago of 99 islands is a haven of mystical beauty, where tropical forests blanket mountain landscapes that have inspired myths for centuries, bordered by pristine beaches stretching out to the azure Andaman Sea.

From the lively nightlife at Pantai Chenang to the vibrant sunsets at Tanjung Rhu, Langkawi's beaches offer something for everyone. But

perhaps none capture seclusion and serenity like Datai Bay on the island's northwest, a true pocket of paradise. Here, white sands arc in a crescent around the bay's calm waters, set against a backdrop of ancient rainforests, mangrove swamps and lowland jungles rich with diverse flora and fauna. Helping to preserve these incredible natural resources is The Datai Pledge, a conservation trust devoted to keeping Langkawi's magic alive for generations to come. [thedataipledge.org](http://thedataipledge.org); [naturallylangkawi.my](http://naturallylangkawi.my)

# 6

Kuala Lumpur

## Mad about honey

Kelulut honey from local stingless bees is quickly gaining popularity, and **Madbees** is one of the brands sharing its many benefits. Founder Simon Hiew was drawn to kelulut honey for its unique flavour and soon discovered its wide range of health advantages. Madbees offers three honey varieties, each named after the bees that produce it: the sweet *Heterotrigona Itama*, the tangy *Lepidotrigona Terminata* and the slightly sour *Tetrigona Binghami*. [instagram.com/madbees.my](http://instagram.com/madbees.my)

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK (LANGKAWI)



# 7

Kuala Terengganu

## Room to explore



Few know hospitality like **Ammar Kevin Eu**, the award-winning complex general manager of both the Perhentian Marriott Resort & Spa and Fairfield by Marriott Kuala Besut. Here, Kevin provides industry insider tips on how guests can make the most out of their hotel stay.

### Customise your stay

Speak to the concierge for personalised tips on top experiences. “Whether it’s unique cultural tours or wellness retreats you seek, we’re here to make every stay special and inspire you to return.”

### Meals to go

“Request takeaway breakfasts or lunches when you’re heading out for excursions,” Kevin adds. Some hotels offer this service upon request, which allows you to fully maximise your vacation time.

### Indulge and unwind

An experience at your hotel’s in-house spa is surely rejuvenating. Luxury hotel spas offer signature treatments to pamper tired muscles after a day outdoors, preparing you for tomorrow’s activities.

### A settled mind

“Take care of your bill the night before for a stress-free morning,” Kevin suggests, ensuring your mind is free and clear before embarking on the long journey home.

### Get those points

Join free hotel loyalty programmes to unlock exclusive rates, stays, perks and gifts. Depending on the brand, benefits can be enjoyed at thousands of hotels worldwide. [marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)

# 8



Malaysia

## Keeping tradition alive

Farhan Omar and Ekram Faiz can perhaps lay claim to being among those making batik cool again. From selling shirts at a night bazaar, they have now established **Kapten Batik** stores all over the Klang Valley and Penang and have ventured beyond men’s shirts into stylish fits for women and kids, and even activewear and swimsuits, to breathe new life into the traditional art form. [kaptenbatik.com.my](https://www.kaptenbatik.com.my)







9

Kuala Lumpur

## Fur the kids

Responding to unregulated commercial pet food causing health issues, **Barkery Oven** has been baking healthy and nutritious gourmet treats for fur kids since 2008, with dehydrated meats, biscuit treats, goat milk buttons and nutrient-boosting food toppers, and even Barkday cakes and wheat-free Pawffins (paw-shaped muffins) to show your love to your furkids.

[barkeryoven.com](http://barkeryoven.com)

10

Malaysia

## Unexpected pairings

True to their name, which means "wildly good", **Gila Goodness** boldly steps into new territory and hits a bullseye. They've taken Malaysia's favourite breakfast and transformed it into a Nasi Lemak Granola, blending crunchy oats, anchovies, nuts and curry leaves for a healthier twist – especially when paired with Greek yogurt. Equally surprising is their Tom Yum Granola, perfect for those craving a savoury, on-the-go snack. [gilagoodness.com](http://gilagoodness.com)



11

Kota Kinabalu

## Jewel by the sea

With accents of teal and turquoise in each of its 396 beautifully furnished accommodations to match the waters of the South China Sea, **Citadines Waterfront Kota Kinabalu** gives travellers the chance to experience the beating heart of Sabah's capital. The property is just a short distance from the KK Esplanade boardwalk, the century-old Atkinson Clock Tower and perhaps the waterfront's central feature, the sprawling Filipino Market, where travellers can pick up traditional snacks, handicrafts and pearls sourced from the sea. Good news for pet parents too; Citadines Waterfront welcomes furkids, so start planning that perfect petcation. [citadineswaterfront.com-kotakinabalu.com](http://citadineswaterfront.com-kotakinabalu.com)



# 12

Kuala Lumpur

## Little delights



Residents of Kuala Lumpur can now indulge in the exquisite petits gâteaux from Ipoh's **Être Patisserie**, thanks to its new outlet at 188 Suites by NamaStay, which opened in August. Choose from a splendid selection of macarons, madeleines, croissants and cakes, including the vibrant Mango, with mango cream, lychee and passionfruit pulp encased in bright yellow chocolate, and the delightful Peach and Pink Guava Cake, layered with peach mousse and pink guava gel. [instagram.com/etrepatisserie](https://www.instagram.com/etrepatisserie)



# 13

Malaysia

## Taste of the seasons

**Acaya** was born when the pandemic brought together three pharmacists with a vision to transform everyday toothpaste into what they call "oral cocktails with cleansing power" – infused with notes of perfume and the refreshing finish of a drink. Their First Date flavour captures the essence of spring with zesty verbena, green apple and pineapple, while Summer Tales evokes Spanish sunsets with a blend of peach, apricot and cassis berry. [acayaofficial.com](https://www.acayaofficial.com)



# 14

Kuala Lumpur

## Culture revolution

Playing off the Zakiah Omar and Hanno Baethe's 1998 documentary of the same name, Ilham Gallery's "**Boom Boom Bang: Play & Parody in 1990s KL**" recalls how the decade transformed the soul of the capital city. The exhibition, which runs until March 2025, uses videos, photographs, objects, sketches, posters and more to show how KL's rapid modernisation brought with it an explosion of vibrant countercultural expression. [ilhamgallery.com/exhibitions/boom-boom-bang](https://www.ilhamgallery.com/exhibitions/boom-boom-bang)







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# Sosodikon Hill is home to Kundasang's agro and rural tourism

Kundasang, with its rolling terrain and cool mountain air, stands as Sabah's vibrant heart of tourism and agriculture. Known for its breathtaking landscapes and iconic landmarks like Mount Kinabalu, this area has blossomed into a destination for agro and rural tourism, complete with a variety of homestays and farm stays that invite visitors to experience its natural wonders.

Thanks to a RM750,000 grant from the Ministry of Rural and Regional Development in 2022 under the Desa Lestari programme, Koperasi Sosodikon Ranau Berhad (KOPSODIK) has spearheaded sustainable village development and agro-tourism in Kampung Kauluan, Kundasang. Anchored by the popular Sosodikon Hill, KOPSODIK has recently launched the Sosodikon Sunflower Farm, which serves as both a scenic flower garden and a glamping site.

The Sunflower Farm, fully managed by KOPSODIK's female members, offers them an income source through entrance and camping fees that support the farm's upkeep. Tourists who stay in the rural homestay programme can also engage with these members, learning firsthand about flower planting and gardening.

At an altitude of 1,176m above sea level, Kundasang is also Sabah's largest producer of highland vegetables. KOPSODIK's 13 full-time employees manage a thriving commercial operation, cultivating crops like cabbage, tomatoes and sweet potatoes, adding another income stream for the co-operative.



Once a subsistence farming village, Kampung Kauluan has embraced technological advancement to boost crop production, now selling surplus harvests in Kundasang town. Tourists can join the farmers in planting and harvesting vegetables, immersing themselves in the daily rhythms of KOPSODIK's agricultural life.

Looking ahead, KOPSODIK aims to introduce chemical-free practices, exploring hydroponic and aquaponic systems to enhance sustainability. By integrating these methods, they envision a holistic rural tourism experience that not only immerses visitors in village life, but also strengthens the local economy through ecotourism.

**To learn more, visit [www.sosodikon.com](http://www.sosodikon.com)**





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# EMBRACE THE FESTIVE SEASON



Experience the festive season's rejuvenating atmosphere on the tranquil east coast of West Malaysia. As we prepare to welcome 2025, our serene retreat invites you to relax and recharge.

## Culinary Highlights :

### 22<sup>nd</sup> December - 1<sup>st</sup> January

Savour the season with our Chef's Holiday Menu, available from the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December through the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2025. Enjoy dishes that showcase the finest local ingredients with a festive touch, adding a delightful twist to your holiday dining experience.



## All-Inclusive Resident's Package with Spa Indulgence

Make the most of your stay with our Resident's Package, designed to provide seamless comfort and added benefits. Enjoy luxurious accommodations and a complimentary 60-minute spa session for two, it's the ideal way to relax during your stay.



## Festive Celebrations and Joyful Gatherings

Our festivities begin with the enchanting Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony, setting a joyful tone for the season.



On Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve, enjoy special events featuring gourmet buffets, festive drinks, and an unforgettable fireworks display.

## Rejuvenation and Fun for All

Adults can bask in eco-conscious rejuvenation practices and captivating nature activities, while children are entertained at the My Explorer Kids Club. As the clock chimes in the New Year, you'll find yourself fully refreshed and ready to embrace 2025 with renewed vigour.



## Book Your Holiday Stay

Reserve your holiday at Mangala Estate Boutique Resort and enjoy a season of easy-going enjoyment, fine dining, and memorable moments. Our Resident's Package promises a rejuvenating escape filled with warmth and discovery.



For reservations or more information about our shuttle service and festive events, please contact our reservations team or visit our website.



# ELEVATE

A global guide to uplifting updates for work, rest and play



ARTS

## Cultural capital

With the new Moco Museum, there's even more to see in **London**

BY TARA FT SERING

**Got an hour to spare between Oxford Street** shopping and West End shows? Pop into the Moco Museum in Marble Arch, which opened in August, for a riveting tour of artworks by some of modern and contemporary art's brightest and flashiest names, from Jean-Michel Basquiat and Banksy to Yayoi Kusama and KAWS, among many others.

This London museum is Moco's third and largest outpost – it first opened in Amsterdam, then in Barcelona – and features three floors of exhibition space. Don't miss the museum's inaugural show "Healing Frequency" by the celebrated Serbian conceptual artist Marina Abramović, an interactive performance art exhibition that invites audience participation. The show runs until March 2025 and tickets are available online. [london.mocomuseum.com](https://london.mocomuseum.com)



IMAGE: COURTESY OF MOCO MUSEUM



DESIGN

## Picture perfect

A 500-piece jigsaw puzzle captures the quirky charm of **Phnom Penh**

BY TARA FT SERING

**“Anyone who’s spent a day in Phnom Penh will probably have seen something out of the box,”** says 34-year-old artist and illustrator Tessa Polder (in photo), the creative force behind Monsoon Illustration and Design studio.

Tessa first moved to Cambodia’s capital to work as an intern, but her original six-month stint stretched on to six years as she fell in love with the city. And what she loves about Phnom Penh shows up in quirky illustrations that perfectly capture the city’s spirit: freewheeling, sometimes chaotic, always exciting.

“When I first arrived in Phnom Penh I was immediately struck by the many things going on around me all at once and the sense that ‘anything goes,’” she adds. But once she had a

better grasp of the city, the organised chaos became a large part of its charm. “One of my stand-out-moments was seeing a huge stack of mattresses piled high on the roof of a van, and on the very top was a guy just chilling, scrolling casually on his phone. I was also wowed the first time I saw monkeys climbing the electricity wires as if they were jungle vine.”

These and other quirky scenes feature in the delightful Phnom Penh City Jigsaw Puzzle, available online and at **For Someone I Like**, a charming boutique of thoughtful, artisan-made goods – from ceramics and jewellery to handwoven fabrics and fashion accessories – in the city’s Tuol Tompoung area, not far from the Russian Market. The set makes for a perfect holiday souvenir, and piecing together the puzzle is a great way of reliving the fun of navigating Phnom Penh’s narrow downtown streets, lined with shopfronts and bustling with tuk tuk drivers and vendors. [instagram.com/monsoon.illustration](https://www.instagram.com/monsoon.illustration)

## Beyond the bar

Southeast Asia is a booming hub for artisanal chocolates celebrating the local cacao – there’s Marou from Vietnam, Auro from the Philippines and Krakakoa from Indonesia, to name just a few. In 2019, WAT Chocolate, Cambodia’s first bean-to-bar company, put the country on this map. Cacao from Mondulkiri in eastern Cambodia is harvested then processed in Siem Reap and turned into gluten-free, mostly vegan chocolate bars of varying intensities (we love dark chocolate of at least 70% cacao content), all available at **Wat Temple of Cacao** in Phnom Penh’s bustling BKK1, an enclave of hip hotels, swish residential tower blocks and trendy restaurants. It’s a cosy spot for treating yourself to a tasty hit of cacao, from bon bons and soft serve ice cream topped with roasted nibs to drinks. Feeling extra indulgent? The signature cold chocolate drink is topped with a high swirl of chocolate ice cream. Don’t forget to bag some bars; they come in beautiful packaging individually screen-printed by village women in Pondicherry, India, as well as a range of unique flavours, including Kampot pepper. Pick up a boxed set of five or six for the folks back home or for your own stash. [watchocolate.com](https://www.watchocolate.com)







## HOTELS

# Central perks

Stay in the heart of **Singapore** and find plenty to love in the city

BY MAYA CALICA COLLINS



Explore the Lion City with the Journify Singapore Pass.

**The charming thing about the Little Red Dot** is how pockets of areas in the city are rich in historical trivia. For example, not many would know that Coleman Street, between Armenian Street and St Andrew's Road, was once an enclave of private mansions. It was named after George D Coleman, Singapore's first architect who was instrumental in designing and constructing much of the island's early infrastructure. In 1829, he built his residence (later called Coleman House) on that street. Today, that site is where the modern **Peninsula Excelsior Hotel**,

**A Wyndham Hotel** stands. Most of its 591 suites and rooms offer stunning views of the beautiful Marina Bay and the city Coleman helped envision.

The Executive King Room – with its plush king-sized bed and sweeping views of the bay – is perfect for a romantic weekend. For families or groups, the Deluxe Triple Room provides three comfortable single beds.

Start your day with buffet breakfast at Coleman's Café (they open at 6.30am), then put on your walking shoes. Historic buildings like the Armenian Church (which Coleman designed) and the

Children's Museum Singapore are a hop and skip away. You'll also be within walking distance of Raffles City Shopping Centre, Funan Mall, Marina Bay Sands, Clarke Quay and Chinatown. Want to venture towards Orchard Road's iconic shopping strip without breaking a sweat? The City Hall and Clarke Quay MRT stations are five minutes away by foot.

Head to the Sky Lounge on the 22nd floor of the hotel to cap your evening off with a glass of wine, and 270-degree views of the city. [peninsulaexcelsior.com.sg](http://peninsulaexcelsior.com.sg)

## Culture crawl

What's on just around the corner from Peninsula Excelsior



**National Gallery Singapore**  
"Experimental Landscape Ink Painting with Hong Sek Chern" will give you insight into ink artist Lim Tze Peng's experimental works through this hands-on workshop and exhibition tour on 14 December, from 3pm to 6pm. S\$20 (registration required). [nationalgallery.sg](http://nationalgallery.sg)



**Peranakan Museum**  
Discover the inspiring story of three Peranakan women from Indonesia, and the impressive batiks they produced at "Batik Nyonyas: Three Generations of Art and Entrepreneurship". S\$18 (tourists and foreigners) and S\$6 (locals and permanent residents). [nhb.gov.sg/peranakanmuseum](http://nhb.gov.sg/peranakanmuseum)



**Children's Museum Singapore**  
"Mini Makan Mania: Craft Your Own Kueh Tutu Magnet" is a hands-on parent-child workshop, where you will shape clay to resemble *kueh tutu* (steamed rice cake) and the pandan leaf before transforming it into a fridge magnet. 8 December, 3pm. S\$25 per pair (S\$10 per child, S\$15 per adult). [nhb.gov.sg/childrensmuseum](http://nhb.gov.sg/childrensmuseum)



ELEVATE



SHOPPING

# Wrapped stars

Fantastic gifts and where to find them in **Tokyo**

BY KISSA CASTAÑEDA

**The Japanese capital is** teeming with stores that champion homegrown artisans and the artistry of bygone eras. Looking for a thoughtful holiday present? Here's what to look out for and where to go.

## Traditional Japanese fans

For a chic way to beat the heat, there's nothing better than a traditional Japanese fan. **Ibasen** specialises in all manner of fans, including decorated folding ones – some featuring *ukiyo-e* (block printing) and Claude Monet designs – and *uchiwa* or silk round fans, as well as other pieces like coasters, playing cards and folding screens. An established souvenir shop with a history of 400 years, it also does limited-edition collaborations and sells its products online. **4-1 Nihonbashi Kobunacho, Chuo City; [ibasen.co.jp](http://ibasen.co.jp)**



## Premium brushes

The artists in your circle will love these art tools fit for a king or queen, or a shogun, by **Edoya**. Set in a century-old shophouse in Nihonbashi designated as a tangible cultural property, Edoya was the exclusive brushmaker for the Shogun family and is perhaps the most revered brush shop in all of Tokyo.

Established in 1718, the shop carries an extensive selection of Japanese and Western handmade paint brushes, long-lasting clothes brushes designed to remove lint and static (talk about form and function), as well as coveted make-up brushes. **2-16 Nihonbashi-Odenmachi, Chuo City; [nihonbashi-edoya.co.jp](http://nihonbashi-edoya.co.jp)**







### Special glass ware

Friends and family who love to entertain will appreciate the glorious glassware from **Sokichi**. The Asakusa-based brand champions *Kiriko*, which means “European cut glass”, and refers to both the technique and the cut glass product itself. Edo Kiriko is a 200-year-old artform that involves creating striking geometric patterns on colourful glassware. The store features 1,000 product varieties spanning sake glasses to flower vases, but for something truly unique, dream up your own design at their 90-minute workshop. **2 Chome-1-14 Kaminarimon, Taito City; sokichi.co.jp**



### Washi paper and stationery

One of the most well-known Japanese crafts, the art of papermaking is celebrated every day at **Ozu Washi**. Dating back to 1653, this three-storey complex features a store, museum and a studio where visitors can try their hand at making their own washi creations. From calligraphy paper to fine stationery, Ozu Washi stocks every paper variety you can think of. **OzuHonkan Building, 3-6-2 Nihonbashihoncho, Chuo City; ozuwashi.net**



### Personalised pens

If you love handwritten letters, then **Kakimori** is your kind of heaven. Celebrating the “joy of writing”, this stylish brand in the *shitamachi* (downtown) maker’s neighbourhood of Kuramae stocks exquisite writing pens in all shapes and sizes. Go the extra mile by creating your very own ink colour at the sister boutique inkstand by Kakimori. **1-6-2 Misuji, Taito City; kakimori.com**

ELEVATE



Layan beach



Anantara Layan Spa



Banyan Tree Spa workshop



WELLNESS

# Closing ceremony

Indulge in a ritual year-end spa holiday in **Phuket**

BY NIKKI BUSUTTIL

**It's widely acknowledged** that Thailand's Phuket has perfected the art of pampering. As the year draws to a close, treat yourself to a well-deserved day of deep relaxation – and what could be more blissful than hours of massages and facial treatments by the sea? Here, we round up a selection of three exquisite spa experiences to inspire you.

## Gold rush

Thirty years ago, the original **Banyan Tree** property opened in Phuket's Bang Tao Beach, along the island's western coast, long before the brand became globally known for its wellness programmes. To this day, the resort and spa infuses local remedies and traditions throughout their spa rituals. Fancy a workshop on making your own Thai herbal compress ball?

Their 120-minute Sense of Place Rise and Shine package includes a Bi-Co-Moi scrub – inspired by the Phuket dessert of black sticky rice and coconut milk – a heated herbal Golden Pouch massage and a Jasmine Rice facial. This deliciously indulgent full body experience, with generous use of flecks of gold leaf, is said to promote deep relaxation and nourish the skin. [banyantree.com](http://banyantree.com)

## Sound ideas

Up the coast from Banyan Tree, the **Anantara Layan Spa** offers sanctuary and respite, in a seaside garden setting, not to mention with a relaxing view of Layan Bay's powder-white sands. Here the signature treatments

highlight the calming effect of nature. The 90-minute Sea Shell and Herbal Therapy, for instance, uses the primeval sounds of the Andaman Sea from shells held to your ear, to help you find your breath and relax. If you're up for a long, luxurious pampering session, then the 4.5-hour Anantara Layan Well-being package is for you. It includes Thai herbal steam using local herbs, yogic stretching, green tea scrub, signature massage, Biologique Recherche facial, and refreshments – the gift that keeps on giving. [anantara.com](http://anantara.com)

## Bliss amid the bustle

If you've had a little too much fun in Patong Beach – a lively stretch of the island best known for its nightlife – an escape to **Burasari Spa** for their Buraliscious Experience will do you wonders. It begins with a relaxing 30-minute purification ritual that sets the tone, thanks to soothing sounds from a singing bowl and hot steam. What follows is three hours of detoxifying treatments using local ingredients – an exfoliating scrub, the house signature massage with coconut oil and a form of ancient Chinese facial massage called *tui na*, which focuses on pressure points to help restore energetic balance and improve circulation. By the time you're soaked in a bath at the end of the journey, you can feel all your tension dissolve. [phuket.burasari.com](http://phuket.burasari.com)

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK (LAYAN BEACH)



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# Your travel rights in Malaysia

**Pushpalatha Subramaniam, Malaysian Aviation Commission Director of Consumer and Public Affairs, shares key air travel protections every consumer should know**



When it comes to air travel, knowing your rights can make all the difference in your journey. With the Malaysian Aviation

Consumer Protection

Code 2016 (MACPC), the Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM) has established clear protections for consumers flying into and out of Malaysia, covering both local and foreign airlines.

MAVCOM Director of Consumer Affairs Pushpalatha Subramaniam outlines some of the most important rights you have, broken down into key phases of your travel journey.



## BEFORE BOOKING YOUR FLIGHT

**Know what you're paying for**

**No hidden fees:** Ever booked a flight only to find unexpected costs at checkout? Under the MACPC, airlines are required to display the full, all-inclusive price – which comprises government taxes, charges under any written law, mandatory fees and surcharges – in their advertisement and before consumers purchase their tickets. This transparency means no more surprises – just the actual price from the start.



## Optional add-ons only with your consent:

Airlines can't sneak in extra services by default. Any additional options, like insurance or extra baggage allowance, must be offered clearly and as an opt-in service. That way, you pay only for what you actually want.

**Key tip:** Before making a purchase, read and understand the terms and conditions regarding cancellation fees; policies on refund, rebooking, baggage allowance and no-show (consumer not turning up for a booked flight at the airport); as well as validity of your travel documents.



## COMMUNICATION OF CHANGE IN FLIGHT STATUS

**Stay informed**

**Communication when there is a change in the scheduled time of departure:** Airlines must inform consumers of any schedule changes, says Pushpa. For instance, if your flight is rescheduled by three hours or more,

“

**The Malaysian Aviation Commission (MAVCOM) has established clear protections for consumers flying into and out of Malaysia, covering both local and foreign airlines”**

MAVCOM requires the airline to notify you as soon as practicable, or at least 24 hours from the scheduled time of departure. For routes that have been discontinued by the airline, the airline is required to provide a notification at least one month before the scheduled departure date.



### **Flight cancellations and refunds:**

In case of a flight cancellation, you have the right to choose between a full refund or rerouting to your final destination. The refund should be processed within 30 days in the same form of payment you originally used.

**Tip:** Keep an eye out for notifications from your airline to stay updated on any scheduled changes to your flight. If there's a flight disruption, reach out to the airline promptly to explore your options.



### **AT THE AIRPORT Rights during delays and denied boarding**

**Delayed flights:** If your flight is delayed for **two hours or more**, you're entitled to essentials like meals or refreshments, internet access, and limited phone calls. If the delay is **five hours or more**, you are entitled to the previously mentioned care, as well as hotel accommodation and transportation to and from the airport if an overnight stay is necessary. However, if you decide not to continue your journey, you can request a full refund from the airline, according to Pushpa.

**Flight disruptions caused by extraordinary circumstances:** For flight disruptions beyond the airline's control (e.g., weather, delays, cancellations, rescheduling, or route cessation), airlines must refund the full ticket cost, including taxes and fees, in the same form of payment you originally used within 30 days. Airlines may offer alternative forms of refund such as vouchers or credit shells, but the choice of refund method rests with the consumers.

**Denied boarding protections:** An airline may only deny consumers from boarding an aircraft if consumers voluntarily surrender their reservations or if there are insufficient volunteers. Any denied boarding must occur before consumers board the aircraft. If you are denied from boarding, you are entitled to a full refund or rerouting with comparable transport conditions – including meals or refreshments, phone calls, internet access, as well as hotel accommodation and transport, if needed.



### **AFTER YOUR FLIGHT Dealing with refunds and baggage claims**

**Mishandled baggage:** Lost, delayed or damaged baggage? Under the MACPC, you should file a complaint with the airline immediately upon arrival or within seven days for damaged baggage and within 21 days for delayed baggage. However, consumers are strongly encouraged to file a written complaint upon arrival.

**Tip:** You should keep all receipts to validate your claims for essential items purchased.

**Refunds for unused flights:** If you were unable to board a flight, airlines are required to refund mandatory charges, including fuel surcharge, taxes, fees and charges imposed by government and prescribed under any written law, as well as charges imposed on consumer by airlines. This applies to both refundable and non-refundable flight tickets.

**Complaint resolution by airlines within 30 days:** Airlines must resolve consumer complaints within 30 days, with consumers allowed up to 2 years to file their complaint.



### **FLYING WITH DISABILITIES Special considerations to know**

MACPC's regulations prioritise accessibility for travellers with disabilities.

Airlines must provide free wheelchair assistance to those with an OKU (Orang Kurang Upaya) card. It is recommended that the request be sent to the airline at least 48 hours prior to departure. If your mobility equipment is damaged or lost during a flight, you are entitled to compensation based on the equipment's current market value.

### **Travel insurance**

While MACPC offers protections for your travel, travel insurance can provide added peace of mind. If you encounter situations outside of the MACPC's scope – such as medical emergencies or related expenses arising from flight cancellations or rescheduling, such as hotel or transportation costs – travel insurance may cover expenses that the airline cannot. However, coverage depends on your insurance policy. It is advisable to review your plan before travelling, as having insurance can provide a more comprehensive safety net, says Pushpa.

The MACPC is here to protect and empower you as a traveller, making sure that air travel remains fair and transparent. By understanding these rights, you're not only safeguarding your journey but also contributing to a more accountable and consumer-friendly aviation industry. Travel confidently by planning ahead and staying informed about your air travel rights.

## **Know when to seek help**

If you encounter an unresolved issue with an airline or are unhappy with the resolution provided, MAVCOM offers a reliable avenue for lodging complaints. You can file a complaint through [flightsmart.my](http://flightsmart.my) or the FlySmart mobile app. MAVCOM advocates for fair and transparent treatment, ensuring that consumers feel empowered to assert their rights. **For more information, visit [mavcom.my](http://mavcom.my) or call their hotline at 1800-18-6966 (within Malaysia) or +603-7651 2777 (outside of Malaysia).**



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INSIDER TIPS

# A Malaysian in... Taipei

Raito Low, a stop-motion animator who has called Taipei home for a decade, shares her top spots to visit in the city

BY SHERMIAN LIM



**In middle school, I read a lot of literature from Taiwan and I frequently watched Taiwanese films and TV shows. These gave me a strong sense of how much Taiwan prioritises social issues that impact its communities.**

My exposure to the culture inspired me to move from Johor Bahru to Taipei for a degree in communications design of 3D animation at Shih Chien University. As a stop-motion artist, I bring everyday objects to life, capturing them frame-by-frame to create surreal visual stories. I work with items like plants, stones and cultural artefacts. Each piece of material tells its own story, bringing depth and vitality to my animations.

I'm currently back in Malaysia for an artist residency, which led to the creation of my latest piece, *Cha Bute Mening*, meaning "little shiny things" in the Kenyah language, spoken by a tribe in Sarawak. This work highlights the beautiful beadwork used by the Kenyah and Kayan tribes in their traditional crafts. Over the past few months, I've showcased *Cha Bute Mening* at several new media art events, including IMMERSIO at GMBB mall in Kuala Lumpur, running until 22 December. You can explore more of my work on Instagram @raitomotion.

Taipei's convivial vibe, artistic freedom, vibrant cultural life and ease of living make me feel at home and keep me inspired. I'm excited to share some of my favourite places to check out around town.

## Meet fellow creatives

**Treasure Hill Artist Village**, a historic cluster of old homes built by Kuomintang veterans, is a 10-minute walk from Gongguan MRT station. Now a vibrant creative community, artists from around the world live and work



here, displaying unique works year-round. Visitors can stroll through lanes filled with murals and spaces with outdoor sculptures, relax at cosy cafés or browse local snacks and toys at the traditional Treasure Hill Tangerine Store. [travel.taipei](#)

## Feel the (indie) music

The second floor of **Revolver** in the Zhongzheng district is a late-night live music venue and features many independent bands. The





music genres here range from rock and metal to punk and hip hop to electronic and experimental – plenty of serendipitous opportunities to discover new bands to add to your playlist. It's very popular with both expats and locals. [revolver.tw](http://revolver.tw)

### Art and culture hubs

The **Taipei Fine Arts Museum**, one of Taiwan's premier art museums, offers a wide range of international

exhibitions in a bright, spacious setting with affordable ticket prices. There's also **Huashan 1914 Creative Park**, a former tobacco factory turned arts and culture hub. The cinema here is my favourite spot – it screens unique films by directors like Wong Kar-wai, Edward Yang and Hou Hsiao-hsien. It's also a popular venue for film festivals. [english.tfam.gov.taipei](http://english.tfam.gov.taipei); [huashan1914.com](http://huashan1914.com)

### Inspired by nature

Most of my creations are based on natural objects, so I collect plants along hiking trails. For tourists, I recommend **Fuzhou Shan Park** (stop at Linguang station on the brown MRT line) and **Xianjiyan Trail** (stop at Jingmei station on the green MRT line). Both trails are easy and take less than one hour to complete. Taiwan has 34 out of the 39 species of ferns found in the world and you'll get to observe lots of these on the trails, along with native birds like the Formosan blue magpie – don't get too close as they bite! The peak of the trails also offers beautiful views of Taipei. [travel.taipei](http://travel.taipei)

### A taste of Taipei

**Huayin Street** is famous for authentic Taiwanese street dishes such as beef soup and more adventurous offerings like snake meat. Due to Taiwan's historical Japanese influence, Japanese food is also very prominent in the city and **Hizen Ya** in the Zhongshan district is worth a visit. It's an old-school Japanese restaurant that serves some of the best rice bowls, grilled skewered meats and fried dishes in Taipei. The *unadon* (eel rice) is particularly popular, often drawing long queues.

### For a caffeine fix

My colleagues recommend **La Grotta**, a small café with a homey vibe in the bustling Ximending area. Their dessert selection changes regularly – if it's available, try the hazelnut basque cheesecake. Another well-known coffee shop is **Hafu Coffee** in Banqiao. Say hello to a few of their resident cats while enjoying hand-brewed coffee and home-made desserts. [instagram.com/la.grotta.cafe](https://www.instagram.com/la.grotta.cafe)

### The great outdoors

You must visit **Shitiping – East Coast National Scenic Area** in Hualien County. It's a stunning coastal gem with surreal volcanic rock formations carved by the ocean. Imagine blue waves crashing against rugged cliffs while you explore tidal pools full of marine life. It's perfect for snorkelling, fishing, hiking or just soaking in the dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean. There is a large Amis population here, so take the opportunity to try authentic indigenous cuisine like grilled flying fish, taro or seaweed dishes. [eastcoast-nsa.gov.tw](http://eastcoast-nsa.gov.tw)



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# Distinctly Borneo, uniquely Sarawak

On the Island of Borneo, Sarawak is a shining example of conservation in action, sustainable tourism and cultural pride. Experience its national parks, tribal traditions, festivals and events for yourself and see why this magical place is drawing eco-conscious travellers

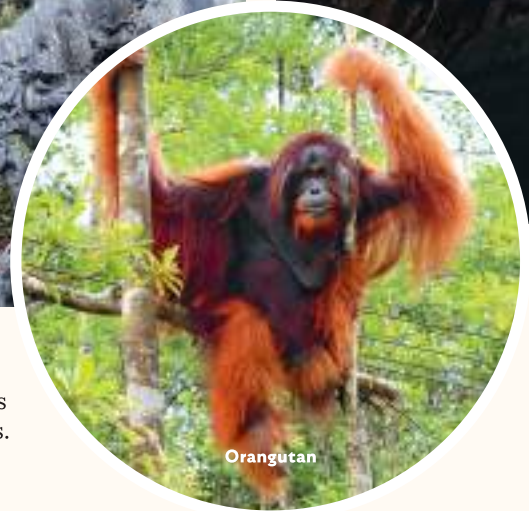
## Mesmerising national parks

Search the high jungle canopy for wildlife or explore the depths of some of the world's largest underground passages and caves. Sarawak's incredible national parks offer endless adventures for nature lovers.

In **Mulu National Park**, a Unesco World Heritage Site, guided multi-day hikes lead travellers closer to the park's natural wonders. The spectacular Headhunter's Trail is a popular choice, taking hikers deep into the rainforest via longboat to walk trails still used by indigenous tribes. Those looking to encounter Sarawak's iconic Pinnacles will undertake a near-vertical journey, using ladders and ropes, which rewards fearless adventurers with



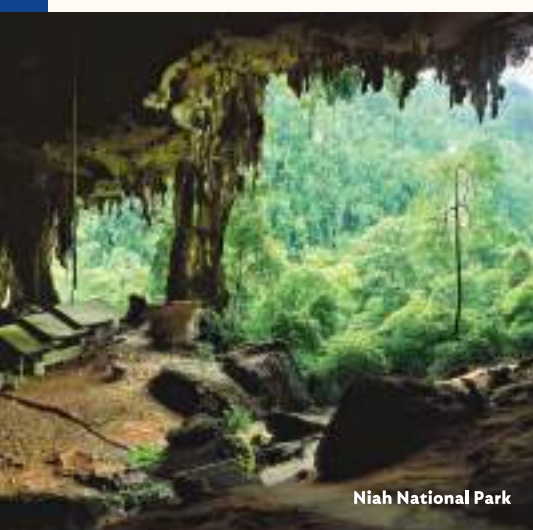
The Pinnacles, Mulu National Park



Orangutan

incredible views of the park's famous 60-million-year-old limestone spires. Mulu National Park is also home to all eight of Sarawak's spectacular hornbill species and the impressive Sarawak Chamber, the largest cave chamber in the world.

On the coast, **Niah National Park**, Sarawak's second and newest Unesco World Heritage Site, offers anthropology-loving travellers caverns filled with archaeological wonders, including ancient cave paintings and the discovery site of the oldest human remains in Southeast Asia. Further south, **Bako National Park** welcomes wildlife lovers to get close to Bornean bearded pigs, saltwater crocodiles and large-nosed proboscis monkeys, endemic to the jungles of Borneo. These comical creatures are one of Sarawak's biggest attractions, typically spotted lounging on the branches of mangroves early in the morning.



Niah National Park

## Incredible cultural encounters

In addition to its natural wonders, Sarawak is home to a kaleidoscope of ethnic and sub-ethnic groups, including the indigenous people who have inhabited its mountains, rainforests and waterways for thousands of years.

The Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau and Kelabit are just some of the groups represented in the **Sarawak Cultural Village**, a 17-acre living museum in Kuching. This award-winning attraction welcomes visitors from all over the world to experience Sarawak's rich culture by stepping inside replica dwelling houses, hearing from indigenous storytellers and partaking in crafts, games and local delicacies.







The Mulu Cave

In Kuching City, **The Borneo Cultures Museum**, the largest museum in Malaysia and the second largest in Southeast Asia, celebrates the geography, history and cultural heritage of the Island of Borneo over five floors and 30,000m<sup>2</sup>. This incredible state-of-the-art attraction has welcomed more than a million visitors since opening in 2022 and includes modern interactive displays, artefacts such as weapons, beading and crafts, Borneo totem poles, replica buildings and a children's gallery.

#### **World-class events**

Building on its natural wonders and cultural attractions, Sarawak is home to a growing number of cultural events that showcase the region's rising stars in music, food and the arts.

At the **Nyamai Sarawak Gastronomy Festival** in Kuching, a Unesco Creative City of Gastronomy, visitors experience Sarawak's diverse culinary traditions, warm hospitality, unique ingredients and legendary Sarawak laksa. Tribal delicacies from local indigenous groups

are also popular, including *Nuba laya*, a Kelabit speciality of mashed rice wrapped in leaves; stir-fried *midin*, a wild jungle fern enjoyed by the Iban; and preserved seafood specialities from the Melanau.

During the **Rainforest World Music Festival**, visiting and local artists perform for an international audience, bringing indigenous languages and instruments to the stage in a powerful celebration of diversity. At the **Sarawak International Festival of Music and Arts**, traditional and contemporary artists, musicians and dancers perform and offer workshops to inspire and educate attendees.

***With an unwavering commitment to the preservation and celebration of its cultures and natural wonders, reflected in multiple Unesco designations and internationally recognised events, Sarawak has established itself as a leader in sustainable tourism.***

***Make Borneo your next destination and visit [sarawaktourism.com](http://sarawaktourism.com) to choose your unique Sarawak adventure.***

## **Three amazing day trips from Kuching city**

### **Hang out with orangutans**

**Semenggoh Wildlife Centre**, 20 minutes from Kuching City, has been rehabilitating injured and orphaned orangutans since 1975 and offers visitors a chance to see these incredible creatures in their natural habitat. The centre feeds the semi-wild orangutans living in nearby forests twice daily at 9am and at 3pm, which offers the best opportunity to observe them in their natural habitat.

### **Discover a fairy cave**

Less than an hour from Kuching City, **Fairy Cave Nature Reserve** is an enchanting day trip to a whimsical, moss-covered cave within Gunung Kapor. The entrance to the cave is at the top of four flights of stairs, halfway up a limestone cliff. Once inside, the Twilight Trail and the Dark Cave Trail lead visitors along wooden walkways and winding staircases into the labyrinth of caverns, past nesting swiftlets, bats and eerie rock formations, to the spectacular main chamber.

### **Go frogging after dark**

**Kubah National Park**, a 40-minute drive from Kuching City, is home to no less than 60 species of frogs and attracts nature lovers to experience the park's nocturnal chorus of croaking. Guided late-night frogging tours search for species including the pea-sized Matang narrow-mouthed frog, often found living inside pitcher plants, and Wallace's flying frogs which use their webbed feet to soar through the air.



# GATEWAY TO BORNEO

Ancient wonders await at Niah National Park. Embark on a journey to Sarawak's newly inscribed UNESCO World Heritage Site, home to the oldest traces of human history in Southeast Asia, where past shapes the future.

Sarawak is home to two UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the first is Mulu National Park which was gazetted in 2000, and the second is Niah National Park, gazetted in 2024. Sarawak is also home to Malaysia's 6<sup>th</sup> Geopark, the Sarawak Delta Geopark.



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24 HOURS IN

# Kudat

Words **Nova Renata** Photography **Tracia Goh**

Before Kudat got its name, the indigenous Rungus people had named it “Tanjung Berungus” or “Tomburungan”. However, when the British arrived and asked for the name of the place; a Rungus native mistook his question for asking for the name of *lalang* (coarse grass) that was growing there, hence answering “kutad” (the Rungus dialect for lalang). The name eventually stuck and is still used to this day.

Situated 190km north of Kota Kinabalu (approximately three hours’ drive away), Kudat town has benefitted from the development of the Tanjung Simpang Mengayau, an iconic headland located at the northernmost tip of Borneo. Known for its unspoiled beaches and panoramic views where the South China Sea meets the Sulu Sea, it’s ideal for relaxation and exploration and attracts travellers from all over the world.

Kudat is emerging as a surfers’ paradise, celebrated for its white sandy beaches, among the most pristine in Sabah. As the homeland of the indigenous Rungus people, it’s also rich in cultural heritage. If you are short on time, here are some recommendations for how to make the most of 24 hours in Kudat.





# Saturday



🕒 7am

## Take a gentle seaside stroll

Rise and shine to a morning walk along the seaside **Sidek Esplanade** and enjoy the relaxing breeze. Capture the stunning view of the sea and perhaps strike a pose with the “I Love Kudat” landmark at the Esplanade. *Esplanade Sidek*

🕒 8am

## Tuck into Kudat’s speciality breakfast

Fuel up with a delicious local breakfast at **Kedai Kopi Lok Kheng Lim**. Popular offerings include Kudat fried noodles, Kudat fish noodles and more. Finish your breakfast with a glass of Tenom coffee or Sabah tea and you’ll have your caffeine buzz all set for the day. Can’t live without your cup of latte? Fret not, as you can grab a cup of oat milk latte and Western-style breakfast at **1993 Coffee Street**. Must-try drinks include the Honey Coffee Latte, Honey Americano and Bubbly Tea. *Jalan Seri Kapor (non-halal); Lorong Friendly Town*



🕒 9am

## Off to the market

Once you’re all fuelled up for the day, it’s time to explore the Kudat community market. Kudat is famous for its fresh produce, such as sweet corn, coconut, honey and peanuts, seafood and handcraft items, such as bead accessories and gongs. The community market is the best place to get the best deals if you’re planning to shop for these items. The Kudat community market (tamu market) happens every Tuesday and Wednesday from 6am to 2pm. *Tamu Sikuati Kudat, Sikuati*





Did you know?

## Located

at the northernmost point of Malaysia, Kudat is the closest Malaysian town to the Philippines

## Home

to a diverse range of marine life, including coral reefs, tropical fish and sea turtles, perfect for divers

## Rungus

artists are renowned for their beaded handiworks, woven tapestries and wood carvings



🕒 10am

### Enjoy a beachy good time

Kudat is probably best known for its pristine azure seas and powder soft, white sandy beaches. Amongst the beautiful beaches in Kudat, **Kalampunian Beach** is a standout as a popular picnic, swimming and camping destination. The beach also plays host to Sabah's annual surfing festival.

Ultimately, no trip to Kudat is complete without a visit to the **Tip of Borneo**. The hike up from Kalampunian Beach takes approximately 90 minutes, depending on your fitness level. There's a landmark of a giant bronze globe at the top of the hill. After a stop for photos, continue downwards to a set of steps leading to the cape, which is where Borneo Island ends on the northern side and marks the point where the South China Sea meets the Sulu Sea. *Tanjung Simpang Mengayau*

🕒 1pm

### Enjoy lunch by the beach

**Secret Place Café & Camping** serves delicious and affordable local Malaysian and continental menu offerings. Must-tries include their wood-baked pizza and fresh fruit juices. Located at Jalan Marang Parang, this family-run business also offers a camping site that's perfect for stargazing.

Close to Kalampunian Beach is **Tampat Do Aman**, an eco-lodge and jungle camp offering unique Rungus cooking lessons where you can prepare authentic, local dishes using natural ingredients and seasonal vegetables. Surrounded by stunning views at the Tip of Borneo, try making *tinopuru* (steamed fish), *linugu soguntung* (egg-fried roasted eggplant) or *sinamu* (fermented meat and rice). Evening classes include sunset-watching while enjoying traditional rice wine. Contact them on Instagram @tampat\_do\_aman as reservations are required. *Kampung Tiga Papan*







🕒 **3pm**  
**Immerse yourself  
 in the rich Rungus  
 cultural heritage**

One signature cultural destination to visit when in Kudat is the **Kampung Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse**. Kudat is home to the indigenous Rungus community who are known for their communal lifestyle. They are the only indigenous group in Sabah that inhabits longhouses, with more than ten families living under one roof.

A visit to Kampung Bavanggazo Rungus Longhouse will give you a sneak peek into the lives of the Rungus community, immersing yourself in their culture and tradition. Here, you will get to experience their traditional dance, sample their cuisine and witness the making of their iconic beaded handicrafts. *Jalan Bavanggazo*

🕒 **5pm**  
**Visit a honeybee farm**

Curious about how honey is harvested? The **Borneo Honeybee Centre** in Sikuati is managed by residents and beekeepers from the area and offers enthusiasts a hands-on experience in producing and bottling honey. The locals of Sikuati have enjoyed raw honey for generations, appreciating its well-known medicinal benefits. At the centre, you can see firsthand how it operates and even sample raw honey directly from the honeycomb. Additionally, there is a honey processing factory, bee gallery, souvenir shop and café for visitors. *Jalan Sikuati Marabau*



🕒 **7pm**  
**Refuel with catches  
 from the sea**

Enjoy delicious seafood to your heart's content at **Kafe Abang J**. This alfresco, ocean-facing restaurant offers a delectable selection of fresh catch. It's also a great spot to watch the sunset while feasting on steamed crabs with eggs, golden fragrant prawns and steamed Jewel grouper. *Esplanade Sidek*







# Sunday

**🕒 8am**  
**Souvenir shopping at a gong factory**

Kudat is famous for being Sabah's primary producer of brass gongs. If you're interested in seeing how this iconic Sabahan instrument is crafted, be sure to visit the **Kampung Sumangkap Gong Factory**. The factory offers gongs in all shapes and sizes, along with miniature gong souvenirs and keepsakes that make charming additions to any living room. *Jalan Kampung Sumangkap*

**🕒 Noon**  
**A farewell lunch to remember**

Enjoy one last beachside lunch to make your memories of Kudat unforgettable. **Beach Café Bar** is a great choice, offering a mix of Italian, Malaysian and gastropub favourites. Visitors rave about their wood-oven-baked marinara pizza.

With its large Hakka Chinese community, Kudat is also an ideal place to sample authentic home-cooked Hakka cuisine. **Hakka Private Dining** is the spot to experience this, with must-tries like steamed stuffed tofu and minced meat-stuffed mushrooms. *Bavang Jamal Beach; Hakka Private Dining (non-halal)*

**Rustic escapes**

**9 Huts on a Hill**  
 Perched atop a hill overlooking the gorgeous Bak Bak Beach, 9 Huts on a Hill offers a quaint wooden hut accommodation that also hosts yoga retreats, corporate events and weddings throughout the year. [facebook.com/9Huts](https://www.facebook.com/9Huts)

**Secret Place Campground**  
 This frills-free camping ground offers the opportunity to camp by the beach and stargaze at night. Packing insect repellent is highly recommended. [secretplaceborneo.jimdofree.com](https://www.secretplaceborneo.jimdofree.com)

**Hibiscus Beach Retreat**  
 Originally built as a private holiday villa by a wealthy expat, the luxurious chalet-style retreat is open to holidaymakers who wish to escape the hustle and bustle of the city in style. [hibiscusbeachretreat.com](https://www.hibiscusbeachretreat.com)



IMAGE: COURTESY OF BEACH CAFE BAR



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# Clear as day

**Suffering from cloudy eyesight? IKONIK offers exceptional surgical procedures that free you from cataracts**

Living with cataracts – or clouding of the eye lens – makes it challenging to perform everyday tasks. From cooking a meal to replying to a text message, simple activities take longer to do when you have blurred or dim vision. Driving alone is dangerous, especially at night. You may experience double vision, see faded colours or get disoriented by sudden bright lights.

Without the freedom that clear vision brings, you could be prone to falling, hurting yourself or having accidents. It could also make you feel dependent on others, which in turn may lead to frustration. If left unattended, cataracts can greatly affect your quality of life and even cause complete blindness. But there is hope.

## The right lens

The good news is that cataracts are treatable through surgery. IKONIK, an award-winning eye specialist centre in Malaysia, offers detailed eye assessments and cutting-edge cataract treatments. Highly qualified ophthalmologists provide compassionate care as they evaluate a patient's case.

Premium lenses are recommended to the individual's unique needs and



lifestyle. The monofocal lens grants clear distance vision with a single point of focus. Thus, reading glasses may still be required. On the other hand, a multifocal lens provides clear vision at various distances, so there's no need for reading glasses after surgery. About 70% of IKONIK patients have chosen the multifocal lens – it frees them from both cataracts and having to wear eyeglasses.

A client shared, "I have such sweet memories of my journey. I had been blind for five years and was very afraid of undergoing surgery. After the surgery with Dr Aniah, I can see clearly again. I was so emotional, as I could finally see the faces of my eight children, 30 grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren. I'm truly grateful to Dr Aniah for her professional care and patience."

Once deemed fit for surgery, the patient undergoes a quick, painless and straightforward procedure lasting between 10 and 40 minutes. Recovery is often swift, and it takes approximately a week for patients to gain unobstructed eyesight. If they follow post-operation guidelines and take extra care to protect



their eyes, patients regain clear vision quickly. The best part? They can return to their daily routines and to what they love most.

## Get a renewed outlook on life

Are you over 60 years old, have diabetes, have taken steroids for a long period or have a family history of cataracts? You may already have, or are at risk of developing a cataract. Schedule a consultation with IKONIK by calling 03-97651368 or visiting [ikonik-eyecentre.com](http://ikonik-eyecentre.com) to receive a personalised eye assessment.





📍 Eiffel Tower, Paris

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Out of





# this world

An aerial photograph of a tropical beach. The foreground shows a white sandy beach curving along the left side. The water is a vibrant turquoise color, with a shallow reef flat area visible. In the distance, there are several overwater bungalows with thatched roofs. The sky is a mix of light blue and pinkish-orange, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall scene is serene and idyllic.

Planning your next luxury escape? There's nowhere on earth quite like the Maldives, one of the world's most tantalising holiday hideaways. We survey some of the latest breathtaking hotspots perfect for solo retreats, honeymoons or family adventures

Words **Jonathan Evans**

# Few flights remotely compare with hovering over the Maldives' iridescent, coral-fringed atolls, distant sandbars and perfect-circle lagoons in the southern Indian Ocean –

**Previous spread:** Soneva Fushi's sister property, Soneva Jani resort in the Noonu Atoll

**This page:** Club Med Kani puts a premium on nature and play

a jaw-to-the-floor visual feast that'll make you pinch yourself to check that you're not dreaming.

The gateway to the Maldives is Velana Airport, which is positioned by a stunning harbour. On arrival in high season from December to April, it is permanently abuzz with activity as hyper-excited tourists from around the world negotiate their onward journey to one of the myriad eye-candy resorts dotting this extraordinary island chain.

The Maldives is at once Asia's smallest nation-state, yet also one of its lengthiest at 90,000km<sup>2</sup>, its widely dispersed islands numbering almost 2,000. It can take up to an hour to fly by propeller jet from the fascinating, historically rich capital Malé to the southernmost resorts – a travel experience so indescribably beautiful, it defies reality.

Forty percent of all Maldivians are squeezed into Malé's tiny metropolis, one of the world's smallest capitals – an 8.3km<sup>2</sup> island packed with sights and artificial beaches. It takes approximately two hours to walk across from east to west. Maldivians have their own language, Dhivehi, though English – the country was colonised by the UK until 1965 – is the *lingua franca*.

Tiny though it might be in native population, this crystalline ocean-world is overloaded with rich indigenous culture, including its own currency (the rufiyaa), dialects and citrusy cuisine – largely from the sea's bounty; think snapper or trevally fish. If available, ask for *kandu kukulhu riha* (yellowfin tuna curry), tuna-and-coconut *mas huni* and spicy *kulhi kaaja* snacks; and if you only learn one Dhivehi phrase, make it *varah meeru* ("very tasty") – it'll soon become obvious why.

Dubai, Sri Lanka and Thailand necessarily export food to the Maldives' cosmopolitan resorts. Though

fruit and vegetables are in ample supply, lawmakers have wisely banned fishing for blacktip reef sharks, spinner dolphins and moray eels. This preserves the country's already mind-boggling biodiversity: hawksbill turtles, barracudas, grey herons, giant eagle rays, noisily cawing crows, manta rays and tropical fish schools. You'll also hear traditional *boduberu* music gracing the airwaves, and if you can, sail aboard an ornate *dhoni*, a colourful, distinctively shaped fishing boat.

## AN IDEAL WAY TO EXPERIENCE THE MALDIVES IS A STAY

at an all-inclusive resort, where you largely don't have to worry about running a high tab on meals and activities, most of which will already be tucked into the price of the room or villa. Club Med pioneered this concept in the 1950s, and has kept that spirit alive at Club Med Kani, a short 30-minute speedboat ride from the airport.

A popular choice for families eager to snorkel among coral reefs and enjoy watersports, it also hosts the pricier Manta Exclusive Collection, a 70m<sup>2</sup> adults-only space with more than 60 overwater wooden stilts, each offering butler service. According to Rachael Harding, CEO of Club Med for East, South Asia and Pacific, Manta offers "an elevated level of personalisation and service that really leans on the trend that is luxury travel with a difference." The hospitality group is also gearing up to open its first property in Malaysia next year, in Kota Kinabalu on Borneo island.

The relatively simplified set-up of Club Med Kani feels rather refreshing, with just two restaurants – The Kandu and The Vehli – offering buffet spreads and a la carte menus respectively; pampering at a spa; and the blissful release of lazing the day away on a white-sand beach. Excursions include day-tripping to Malé,









an option offered by few Maldivian resorts, a “lobster picnic” and an array of land-based leisure sports (padel tennis, anyone?) and Club Med’s signature trapeze, as well as more strenuous aquatic adventures.

Further along the luxe scale is Conrad Maldives Rangali Island. Last year, the property completed sweeping renovations led by the esteemed New York-based Japanese architect Yuji Yamazaki. “The vision,” says general manager Thomas Hoeborn, “was to elevate each guest’s experience by blending seamless indoor-outdoor living, sustainable practices and timeless elegance, ensuring that the natural beauty of the Maldives remains central to the experience.”

The Conrad pioneered the underwater-villa concept with The Muraka, which to date only one other resort (Pullman Maldives Maamutaa) has emulated. This oneiric experience allows six people to fully immerse in the sub-aquatic universe swimming silently mere metres away. Sitting pretty in South Ari Atoll, a half-hour seaplane flight from Malé, visitors may choose between beach villas with outdoor bathrooms or plunge pools, and interconnected overwater villas.

There’s an emphasis on enjoying the sea and its various inhabitants – one notable tour is the whale-shark yacht excursion, where guests search for this majestic species prevalent in local waters, then enjoy swimming alongside the gentle giant. As you enjoy champagne and canapés, you may also find playful dolphins somersaulting through the Indian Ocean.

There are also turtle tours and sunset fishing boat trips that offer the opportunity to catch your own seafood dinner.

Another resort is Soneva Fushi, and although more remote, has plenty to keep everyone busy. It’s perfect for multigenerational travel, featuring South Asia’s biggest kids’ club (The Den) alongside 63 villas strung across the white-sand beach, lush gardens and huge Water Reserve residences on Unesco-protected Baa Atoll’s Kunfunadhoo Island. It’s one of four sustainable properties under the Soneva brand name – alongside Jani in Noonu Atoll; the brand-new, ultra-personalised 14-villa Soneva Secret on Makunadhoo Atoll; and the Kiri beach resort in southern Thailand. The prestigious chain is known for its focus on both local and international experiences, such as visiting Michelin-star chefs and sports stars.

The phrase “barefoot luxury” might sound cliché, yet perfectly describes Soneva Fushi, where every villa comes with a 24/7 “Barefoot Guardian” and guests need never don shoes. The brilliant water slides into the ocean affixed to the Water Reserves are just the start; the two-storey “Crusoe” residence comes with a steam room, of all things, while the Sunset Reserve sprawled around a superannuated banyan tree is fitted with swings.

Padel tennis courts, the Maldives’ first zipline and trending Seabob motorised watercrafts top the list of exhilarating activities, while 11 dining destinations



**Clockwise from left:**

Casual dining at Club Med Kani; a private deck at Conrad Maldives Rangali Island; an aerial view of Soneva Fushi;

a sun-soaked lounge at Soneva Jani; pink-hued Maldivian sunsets; the renovated Conrad from above



“

**Tiny though it might be in native population, this crystalline ocean-world is overloaded with rich indigenous culture...”**









are dotted around Soneva Fushi, all innovative in their own way, are blessed with pun-tastic names like Carne Diem, Flying Sauces and Once upon a Table. Soneva's eco-efforts aren't to be sniffed at; it partners with NGO Save Our Seas and the Olive Ridley Project, while its own foundation helps grow coral reefs.

**THE MALDIVES IS ALSO GAINING POPULARITY AMONG** wellness seekers. "[It's] a new destination for wellness," says Jeneena Schatz, marketing and PR manager for Joali Being, a whole resort designed around well-being programmes, a first in the Maldives. "The nature, peace and clean air, along with the hospitality of the Maldives, attract a number of travellers." Joali Being, a true resort original, arrived as "mindfulness" and "responsible travel" became buzzwords in 2021 – a "well-being island" set on calm, secluded Bodufushi in Raa Atoll. Its ethos has four central pillars: mind, skin – think anti-ageing treatments – microbiome (the interaction of a community) and energy.

"It all began with spa treatments that evolved into more," says Jeneena, who adds that the resort recognises the rise of a particular type of traveller: the leisure and wellness seeker. "Wellness for us isn't just a one-time detox; it's a way of life where your daily food, physical activities and experiences are centred around healthy habits." Balm for the soul, its 68 distinctive villas are built to biophilic design principles, leading to not merely a satisfying night's sleep but a feeling of fulfilment on waking. The experiential resort is centred around giving its guests what it calls "weightlessness" – a sense of freedom, lightness and joy.

Holistic well-being is the ultimate aim, taking those who stay at Joali on an immersive journey of self-discovery and renewal in the calm surrounds of nature. It's a paradigm that even extends to the wide selection of sustainably sourced food-and-drink venues on offer, which include options for all possible tastes; "earth-to-table", pescetarian, Japanese and Mediterranean cuisines.

As W Maldives prepares to open next month on North Ari Atoll, promising 77 villas, eclectic dining and sustainability initiatives, the country is undergoing a transformative moment. Wherever you choose to stay in the Maldives, you'll witness breathtaking sunsets that shift from orange to red to purple, and a spotlessly clear, unpolluted night sky twinkling with brilliant stars – scenes that would bedazzle even the most hard-bitten traveller with the sheer wonderment of it all.



**Clockwise from left:** Lush grounds at Joali Being; romantic settings and nature-inspired architecture at Joali Being; star-speckled skies over Soneva Jani



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**Below:**  
Minister  
of Housing  
and Local  
Government  
of Malaysia  
Nga Kor Ming



# A journey towards global leadership

**Following the historic ASEAN-China Ministerial Roundtable, Malaysia is redefining living through innovative housing strategies and robust international partnerships**

Malaysia's Ministry of Housing and Local Government, led by Nga Kor Ming is making significant strides on the global stage, with Nga set to run for UN-Habitat Assembly President for the 2026–2029 term. This candidacy underscores Malaysia's commitment to enhancing sustainable urban development and housing solutions, aligning with global initiatives aimed at creating resilient cities.

"Malaysia takes pride in its cultural heritage. With over 80% of the population expected to live in urban areas by 2030, rapid urbanisation should not come at the cost of our cultural heritage. Instead, it offers an opportunity to

create a harmonious blend of modernity and tradition," said Nga.

He highlighted George Town, Penang, as an example where heritage buildings have been transformed into modern establishments, creating a dynamic landscape within a Unesco World Heritage Site. This revitalisation aligns with the New Urban Agenda, with plans to introduce an Urban Renewal Act to breathe new life into ageing structures.

The country recently hosted the first-ever ASEAN-China Ministerial Roundtable on Construction and Housing, culminating in the Kuala Lumpur Consensus. This agreement emphasises localising sustainable development goals (SDGs) and

advancing the UN's New Urban Agenda. It identifies three key areas: enhancing cooperation in housing and urban development, promoting technological innovation and developing climate-resilient cities.

At the World Urban Forum in Cairo, Egypt, Nga showcased Malaysia's New Urban Agenda, stating, "We focus on strengthening international cooperation in housing and urban development." Malaysia has gained support from ASEAN, China, Russia and Turkic states, reinforcing its leadership in the habitat agenda.

Looking ahead, Malaysia will host the Asia Pacific Ministerial

Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD) in Penang next year, bringing together representatives from 59 countries. This event will further solidify its role in shaping housing policies and urban development strategies across the region.

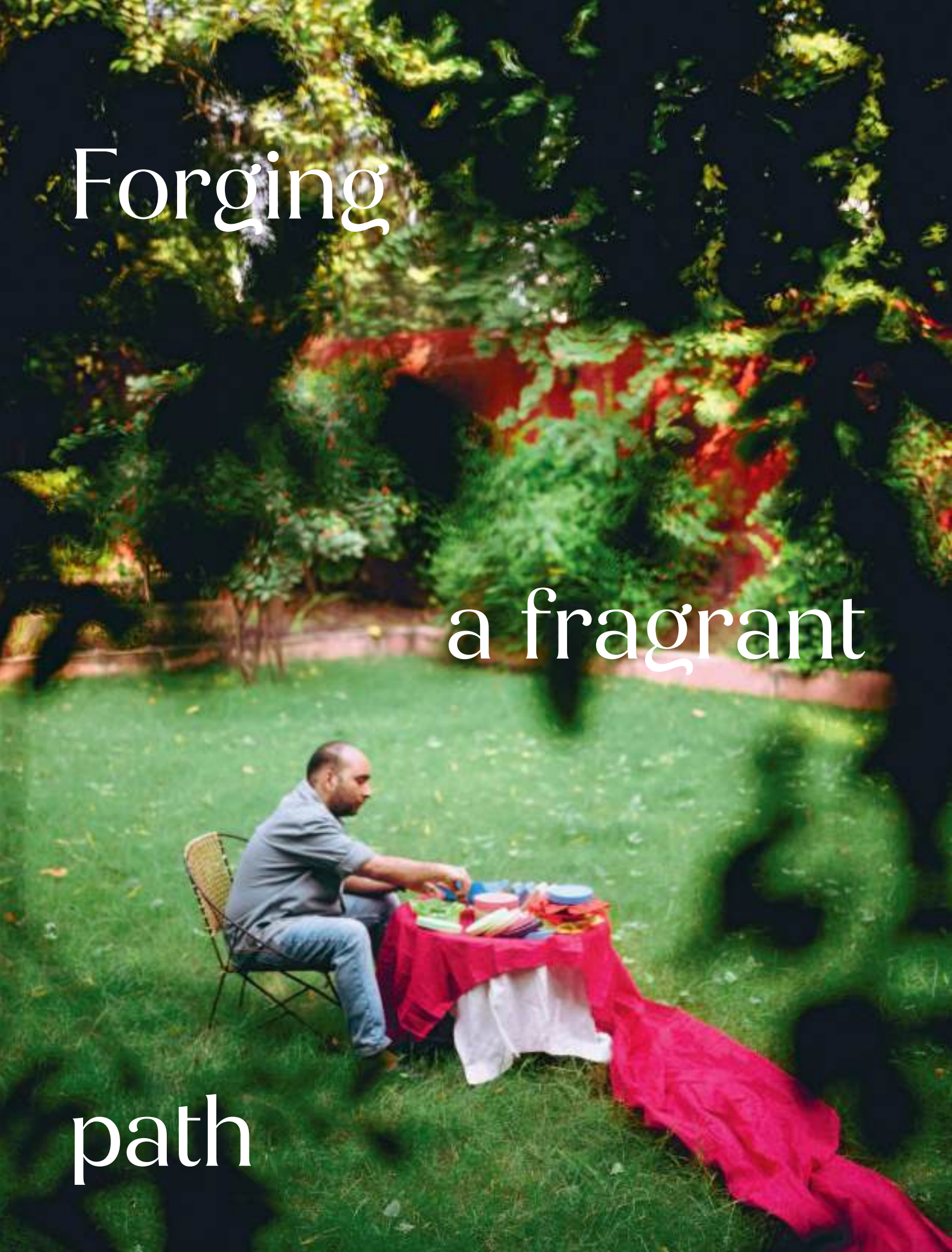
The Ministry of Housing and Local Government is committed to fostering sustainable urban environments that meet current needs and pave the way for future generations. With strong international partnerships and a clear vision, Malaysia aims to lead by example, balancing rapid urbanisation with cultural preservation and innovative urban solutions.



Forging

a fragrant

path





A growing number of independent perfumers and brands from South and Southeast Asia are crafting fragrances that stray from convention and offer a new olfactory journey to the places they are rooted in

Words **Vidya Balachander**





# In the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, there is a town called Kannauj, known for producing attar or perfume oils.

Although I was born and raised in India, I have never visited Kannauj. But it has existed in my olfactory imagination for years. The town is also known for producing *mitti attar* or the distilled essence of petrichor, the smell of the first rain on parched earth.

My memory of petrichor goes back to the years I spent in the arid heartland of north India. Embedded among my early childhood memories is the longing for rain that followed a long, blistering summer, and the euphoric relief when the smell of wet earth would rise from the ground after the first showers.

Unforgettable in its fleeting intensity, petrichor is better experienced than described. Sitting at my desk in Manila, the closest I can come to that specific scent that's burnished in my memory is by opening a small, glass bottle of Maati, an attar by Boond, a boutique, modern-day fragrance house from Kannauj.

Like most attars, Maati is sold in a small, no-frills glass flacon. I use the glass wand attached to the screw top to daub a few drops of the attar on my pulse points. Unlike modern





perfumes, which focus on sillage – or the perfume’s ability to project and linger – attars drape themselves to the skin. Maati reveals itself in the hushed decibels of an intimate secret – a suggestion of earthiness, suspended in a heart of musky sandalwood. It isn’t exactly how I remember petrichor to be, but it is transportive in its ability to evoke a specific time, place and season.

Boond is one of a growing number of independent perfumers and brands in South and Southeast Asia who are creating fragrances that are closely inspired by the ethos of those places. Reflective not just of terroir – or the specific soil and climatic conditions that influence their composition – but also of provenance or a more encompassing sense of place, these fragrances open a unique portal to global exploration.

**LET’S CONSIDER SALTED GREEN MANGO, ONE OF THE NICHE** fragrances created by Thai perfumer Prin Lomros under his brand Strangers Parfumerie, for instance. It opens with an intensely fruity note with a slightly acrid edge, like slices of semi-ripe mangoes sweating in the midday sun. As time wears on, the fragrance mellows into something sweeter and fruitier but with an unmistakable edge. I imagine a mobile vendor on the streets of Bangkok briskly slicing mangoes and dousing them with coarse salt, the sweet scent of the fruit wafting amidst the smoke and fumes of the city.

Some of Prin’s other fragrances, produced under his labels PRIN and Parfum Prissana, also evoke the ethos of his native Thailand, in bold, unusual and even unsettling ways. Featuring

**Previous spread:**

Perfume making at Boond; ornate glass bottles by Litrahb Perfumery. **This page, left to right:** Boond founder Varun Tandon with his father, Pravin Tandon, who works as the company’s head of operations; the brand’s packaging reflects its provenance; Boond headquarters in Kannauj; vials of attar

notes of tar, hay, ambergris (or deer musk), skunk musk and even burning tire, alongside more conventional elements like floral, fruity and gourmand notes, it’s clear that Prin’s perfumes are not meant for mass approval. Independent perfumers like him create space for perfumery to exist as an art beyond the Eurocentric values that largely define its contemporary existence.

Most modern perfumes can be linked to Grasse, the French city that has been synonymous with the craft since the 16th century. A town once renowned for its tanneries but notorious for the stench that they generated, Grasse spun its disadvantage into an enviable calling card. Dotted with flower fields that produce precious raw materials, along with the ideal terroir to harness their fragile essence, the city is thought to have perfected the techniques and processes that define the industry today. Most famous “noses” or experts who compose fragrances have acquired their training in Grasse, and it is where many of the world’s leading luxury fragrance houses and large companies source their ingredients from.

IMAGES: TARIQ KHAN





**Clockwise from top:**  
Prin Lomros of Strangers  
Parfumerie; inspiration  
at Litrahb Perfumery;  
Litrahb founder Bharti  
Lalwani; luxe packaging  
by Wren Atelier

However, the reality is that with perfumery being a highly lucrative and competitive industry, it is only a select few with means who have been able to gain access to Grasse. As a result, perfumery is considered a guarded world that perpetuates a code of exclusivity. Most famous noses working today are overwhelmingly of French or European ancestry, and while their artistry is beyond debate, it does open the thorny yet important question of gatekeeping and the space – or lack thereof – for diversity.

Bharti Lalwani, an art critic-turned-perfumer, founded Litrahb Perfumery, an independent label focussed on natural fragrances based in Pune, India – a three-hour train ride from Mumbai – partly in response to this gatekeeping. “Art and academic institutions are built for public good yet their format of knowledge production does not lend itself easily to the public,” Bharti tells me. Looking to apply her critic’s eye to the aesthetics of a different – yet interconnected – discipline, she founded Litrahb Perfumery in 2018.

The first fragrance project that she took on was expansive in its ambition but with an element of fun in its approach. “Bagh-e Hind” was a virtual art exhibition or what Bharti calls “an immersive garden oasis”, which allowed viewers to experience the sensory setting of paintings and poetry from the Mughal era through music, poetry, photographs and fragrance. Created in collaboration with academic scholar and horticulturist Dr Nicolas Roth, “Bagh-e Hind” offered a synesthetic immersion into the milieu of these paintings through specially crafted perfumes and edible perfumes. Each of the five chapters of the exhibition, dedicated to a flower, had an accompanying set that included a parfum, a flavoured tea, an edible perfume, a perfumed soap and objects that recreated or were reminiscent of the period.

According to Bharti, the objective of the project was to take the experience of history out of a distant museum setting and to

bring it to one’s fingertips (and taste buds), so to speak. “For our Narcissus chapter in ‘Bagh-e Hind’, I created the effect of ‘eating narcissus’ by beating into sugar trace amounts of saffron, tuberose and *Jasminum grandiflorum* extracts,” wrote Bharti. “I then dusted dried apricots with this perfumed sugar. The sensorial impact is such that one chews and tastes fruit but smells flowers! The idea is to access our history, our heritage, our gardens and our flowers, with a light-handed playfulness.”

#### **VARUN AND KRATI TANDON, THE SIBLINGS**

who co-founded Boond in 2021, are also trying to reclaim history in their own way. Hailing from Kannauj, Krati says her family has always been involved in the attar trade. However, it was during the pandemic years that the siblings decided to make their foray into the business. “It was during this time that we saw the fragrances and perfumeries of our town in a new light,” Krati tells me. “We realised their unmatched beauty and the great heritage value they hold.”

The decision was also hastened by the body blow that the pandemic dealt to the industry that sustains Kannauj’s economy. “It was also during this time that we saw the artisans and perfumeries struggle first-hand and were worried that the pandemic could be the final blow to our indigenous art,” says Krati. “We wanted to try and help the artisans and to revive the ancient Kannauj art of perfume making.”

Kannauj has been associated with perfumery for over 400 years. The form of perfumery practised here even to this day is old school, both in its form and application. Unlike modern perfumes, which use a small percentage of fragrance concentrates (such as fragrance oils) diluted with alcohol as a solvent or base, attars are highly concentrated perfume oils that use sandalwood oil as a base.

Attar is painstakingly distilled using *deg-bhapka*, a traditional technique that involves steaming flowers, woods and resins in a copper still called the deg and collecting the condensation in a receiver called the bhapka. It is a resource- and time-intensive process, with an end-product contrary to the high-octane glamour of western perfumery.

But Krati says that their customers have been receptive to the idea of rediscovering the quiet gravitas of attar. “We’ve found that customers are eager to experience fragrances that are nostalgic and unique, and our





“

**Today, more than ever, a fragrance does not need to be conventionally pleasing to find an audience. Why shouldn't fragrances reflect the complex, layered reality of the places that they are rooted in?”**

**This page:**  
Wren Atelier founder  
Renato Lopena Jr

fragrances are just that for an Indian audience,” said Krati. “Whether it is the celebratory Motiya (Jasmine) and Audh (Agarwood) or the nostalgic Maati, most Indian customers love or at the very least are curious about these since they’ve heard about them from their elders. For international customers, the fact that the fragrances are oil-based, sustainably made and alcohol-free are major draws.”

The burgeoning success of Boond, Litrahb and Prin are an indication that a growing number of consumers are ready to embrace an unconventional approach to perfume. This is a shot in the arm for independent perfumers looking to forge their identity in a competitive environment. Today, more than ever, a fragrance does not need to be conventionally pleasing to find an audience. Why shouldn’t fragrances reflect the complex, layered reality of the places that they are rooted in?

This question comes to mind when I meet Renato Lopena Jr, the perfumer behind Wren Atelier, a boutique perfume brand based in Manila, where I now live. In a market dominated by clean, fresh, largely inoffensive scents that Filipinos favour for the tropical weather, Renato is trying a different path. Having trained at the Grasse Institute of Perfumery after giving up on

his initial career path of becoming a chef, Renato’s creations are a bit like the Philippines itself – bold, occasionally challenging and greater than the sum of its parts. I try Hacienderos (Spanish for farm owner), a fragrance that Renato says is his “homage to Filipino landowners and farmers”. With a bright flourish of bergamot and lemon that belies a base of barnyard, hay and dirt, Renato says it is a “clean yet dirty” scent.

When he launched Hacienderos in 2021, Renato was wary about the reception. “The first batch of Hacienderos was just 50 pieces,” he told me. “It was very risky, and I didn’t know if it would hit or not. But it was sold out in a matter of five days.” That initial success propelled him to launch more scents as part of his private collection under Wren Atelier, including Banqueros, a marine fragrance underpinned by notes of seaweed and squid ink, and Cosa Nostra, my personal favourite, a smoky, leathery perfume with a strident note of gunpowder, which softens as it lingers on your skin.

They may not be meant for a quick spritz when you are running late for a meeting, but Wren Atelier’s perfumes offer pause when you have a moment to spare. At least in part, they tell the story of a complex culture with layers upon layers to peel back. It’s clear that Renato has many more stories to craft – he’s just getting started. “My target as a brand is to not really be conventional,” he says. “Here in the Philippines, we still love fresh fragrances because of the weather. But I want my brand to be artistic and niche.”



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# Travel tips in Paris and London

Explore the best of Paris and London with this curated guide to must-see landmarks, elite dining spots and luxurious accommodations



From posh accommodations to world-class culinary delights, no trip to Paris or London is complete without exploring the cities' premium offerings. Here are some bucket-list experiences that discerning travellers should not miss, enhanced by the unique perks when you travel with the right credit card – the new Maybank World Elite Mastercard. Designed for those who seek exceptional experiences, benefits include buy-one-get-one-free business class tickets on a partner airline upon spending RM 250,000 annually and complimentary airport lounge access for two.

## See

Start your London adventure at Buckingham Palace, where you can witness the Changing of the Guard ceremony, a quintessential British

experience. Next, immerse yourself in history at the Tower of London, home to the Crown Jewels. A stroll across Tower Bridge offers stunning views of the Thames and the city skyline. Don't miss Westminster Abbey, where royal ceremonies take place, and take a moment to admire the architecture of St Paul's Cathedral. Fashion lovers can consider visiting Bicester Village, renowned for its luxury outlet stores featuring hundreds of designer brands at discounted prices.

In Paris, your journey begins at the iconic Eiffel Tower. Ascend for breathtaking views of the city before heading to the Louvre Museum to marvel at world-renowned art pieces like the Mona Lisa. Stroll along the Champs-Élysées to reach the majestic Arc de Triomphe and enjoy a leisurely walk through the beautiful Tuileries Garden. Don't miss Printemps for luxury shopping in the heart of the city, or La Vallée Village for discounted designer outlets just 40 minutes away.

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## Dine

Dining in these cities is an experience

in itself. In London, inventive cocktails and contemporary dishes await at Sexy Fish, known for its vibrant atmosphere and exquisite menu. For a classic British experience, sip on afternoon tea at The Ritz or savour fish and chips at a local pub. While in Paris, treat yourself to a meal at Le Meurice, where culinary artistry meets French tradition. Don't miss dining at the Table, which emphasises fresh ingredients and innovative cooking techniques.

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## Stay

After a day of exploration, unwind in luxurious hotels that epitomise comfort and elegance. In London, consider booking a stay at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Leicester Square. In Paris, enjoy a refined experience at Hotel Napoleon, where classic charm meets modern luxury.

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# THIS IS MALAYSIAN HOSPITALITY



Welcome aboard Malaysia Aviation Group's (MAG) airlines! This month, see what we have on offer to ensure that you have a safe, seamless and fuss-free journey with us.

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### Inside our airlines

News and updates from MAG Airlines

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### Discover our network

See where MAG Airlines can take you, around the country and around the world

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### Onboard entertainment

Keep yourself entertained with our latest releases of Hollywood movies, TV shows and music





## Malaysia Airlines shines with prestigious global awards

Malaysia Airlines has achieved APEX Four Star Major Airline 2025 status, ranking it among the top 8% of airlines worldwide for exceptional service. Based on over a million verified flight reviews, this award reflects a dedication to world-class passenger experiences. Additionally, Malaysia Airlines

ranked in the Top 10 Best Airlines and 6th for Best Airlines for Food in the *Condé Nast Traveler* Readers' Choice Awards 2024. It also won the Asian Experience Awards for Malaysia Brand Experience of the Year (Aviation) and Customer Experience of the Year, showcasing its commitment to Malaysian Hospitality.



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## Malaysia Airlines and IndiGo launch codeshare partnership

Malaysia Airlines and IndiGo have launched a codeshare agreement, expanding travel options between Malaysia and India. Signed in April 2024, this partnership allows Malaysia Airlines passengers access to seven additional destinations, including Kolkata, Varanasi and Goa, bringing its Indian network to ten cities. Meanwhile, IndiGo passengers can book Malaysia Airlines flights from Kuala Lumpur to key spots like Penang, Langkawi, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching, boosting connectivity and enriching travel experiences between the two countries.



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SCAN TO SHOP







## Beyond the cabin with the airlines' flight attendants

Malaysia Airlines cabin crew members Wesley Anak Juntan, Sarah Elissa Tang A/P Aman and Rozana Khalid share what inspired them to join the airline, their travel tips, favourite destinations and memorable moments that highlight the true essence of hospitality and care

### What inspired you to become a flight attendant, and what do you enjoy most about your work?

**Wesley:** The unique opportunity to travel while working allows me to meet people from all walks of life and explore the world – a combination few careers offer, and what I love most.

**Sarah:** Being a flight attendant from the Temuan indigenous tribe in Malaysia, especially with a premium airline, is my biggest achievement for my community. My fellow indigenous colleagues, Veena, Amyisha, Alza and I believe we are paving the way forward.

**Rozana:** Flying offers a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and helps sharpen communication skills. Helping passengers, especially in tough situations, is rewarding. That's when the job becomes not only fun but incredibly fulfilling.

### How has being a flight attendant changed your perspective on travel?

**Wesley:** This job has truly opened my eyes, allowing me to experience different cultures and try new foods. The more you see, the more you learn about everything. Each city offers unique lessons, and I've realised that sometimes, leaving home is what makes you appreciate it most.

### What are your top travel tips when flying?

**Sarah:** Pay attention to captain announcements to prepare for weather

conditions, review safety demos, follow crew instructions for take-off and landing, stow smaller items under your seat and consider packing a portable bidet.

**Wesley:** Having seen passengers struggle in-flight, my top three tips are: minimise carry-ons to ease luggage handling and finding space onboard; bring a jacket or shawl as flights can be chilly even with blankets provided; and bring extra snacks, in case you want something familiar.

**Rozana:** Frequent flyers should join the Enrich loyalty programme to earn miles and enjoy perks such as upgrades and priority boarding. Download the Malaysia Airlines app as it enables mobile check-ins and pre-ordering of meals.

### Is there a favourite destination or route you love flying to?

**Rozana:** I love Japan for its rich culture, stunning scenery and blend of tradition with modernity. The cuisine is a sensory delight, and the transportation system makes travel easy. What truly sets Japan apart is its people – disciplined, humble and incredibly hospitable.

**Sarah:** Auckland. It was my first time visiting New Zealand, and I instantly fell in love with the people, the weather and the overall atmosphere. It's one of the most peaceful places I've experienced.

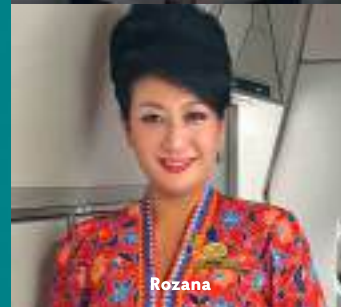
**Wesley:** The ancient architecture and breathtaking landscapes of Kathmandu always amaze me. My top spot is Chandragiri Hill, with stunning views of the Himalayas and Mount Everest.

### How do you balance long hours and time away from home with your passion for the job?

**Sarah:** Long flights can be tiring, but interacting with passengers helps the time



Wesley



Rozana



Sarah

pass quickly. Building connections with them reduces my fatigue, and the joy I find in these interactions makes the hours feel much shorter.

### Can you share a moment when you made a passenger's experience memorable?

**Rozana:** A truly memorable experience was with an elderly couple on their "last big trip" for their 50th anniversary. They were nervous about the journey. My team and I made sure they felt cared for with extra pillows, blankets and a surprise dessert. The wife's tears and their gratitude deeply touched me. They reminded me of the power of love and how small gestures can create lasting memories. My experience reinforced the importance of showing empathy and hospitality, and proved that we can make people feel at home, no matter the distance.



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Length **58.82m** | Wingspan **60.30m** | Height **17.39m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **880km/h**  
MHconnect Wi-Fi Connectivity on selected aircraft



**B737-800 NG**

No. of Aircraft **42** | Passenger Seating **160, 166, 174**  
Length **39.5m** | Wingspan **38.5m** | Height **12.50m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **857km/h**



**B737-8**

No. of Aircraft **4** | Passenger Seating **174**  
Length **39.52m** | Wingspan **35.90m** | Height **12.30m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **976km/h**



**ATR 72-500**

No. of Aircraft **9** | Passenger Seating **72**  
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Max. Cruising Speed **510km/h**



**B737-800 NG**

No. of Aircraft **5** | Passenger Seating **189**  
Length **39.5m** | Wingspan **38.50m** | Height **12.50m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **857km/h**



**A330-200F**

No. of Aircraft **3** | Maximum Cargo Capacity **65 (70) tonnes**  
Length **58.82m** | Wingspan **60.30m** | Height **16.88m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **1,021km/h**



**ATR 72-500**

No. of Aircraft **8** | Passenger Seating **68**  
Length **27.05m** | Wingspan **27.17m** | Height **7.65m**  
Max. Cruising Speed **510km/h**



**Viking DHC-6 Twin Otter Series 400**

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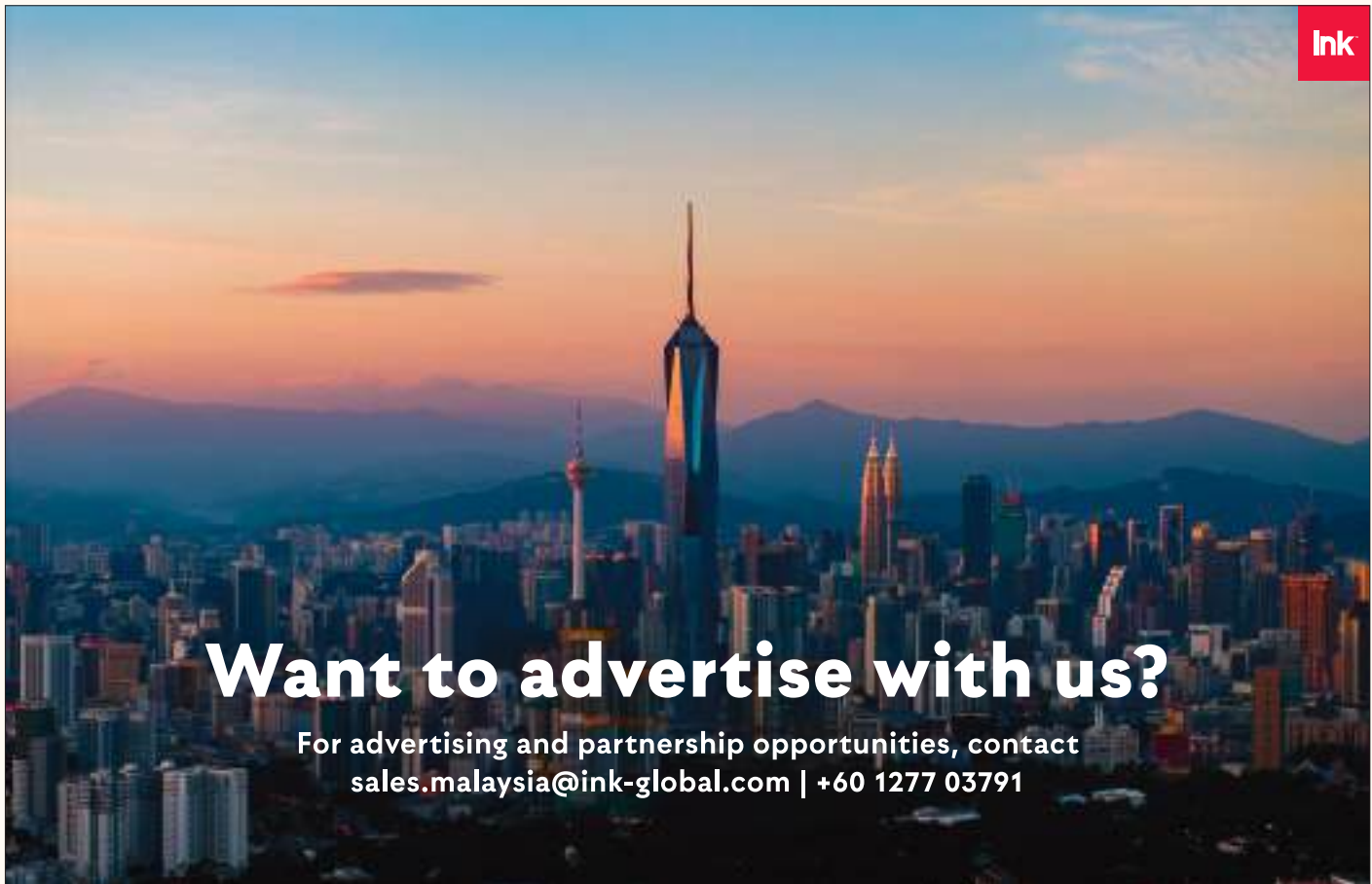
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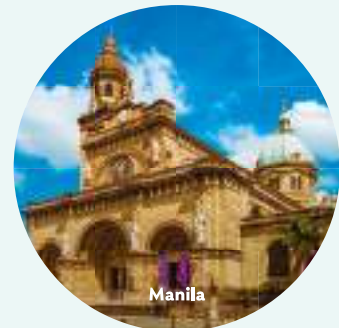


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Manila

IMAGE: SHUTTERSTOCK (TAIPEI)



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Experience unparalleled Malaysian Hospitality with unlimited complimentary Wi-Fi\* for a seamless and hassle-free journey. Whether you're flying Economy Class, Business Class or Business Suite, stay connected with loved ones, work from the sky or keep up-to-date with the latest news.

## Stay connected in 5 easy steps:



### Step 1

Switch to  
"Flight Mode"



### Step 2

Connect to **MHconnect**  
**iOS:** You will be directed to the home page\*\*  
**Android:** Enter the URL  
**mhconnect.malaysiaairlines.com**  
to be directed to the home page



### Step 3

Click on the "Go Online" tab  
(not applicable for A330-900)



### Step 4

Click on the  
"Connect" tab



### Step 5

Enter your email address and click the  
"Continue" tab (not applicable for A330-900)



### You are connected

You can now surf the  
web with **MHconnect**

\*MHconnect Wi-Fi service is available on selected A350 and A330 aircraft operated by Malaysia Airlines.

\*\*If iOS is not automatically redirected, enter URL [mhconnect.malaysiaairlines.com](http://mhconnect.malaysiaairlines.com) to be directed to the homepage. Other T&Cs apply.



# Enjoy in-flight entertainment with MHstudio

Enjoy over 150 movies, 400 TV shows and more on our in-flight entertainment system with the convenience of using your own headphones. Available on selected aircraft.

## Stay connected in 3 steps:



### Step 1

Switch to  
**Flight Mode**



### Step 2

Connect to  
**MHstudio**



### Step 3

Scan the QR code or enter the URL (as per decal)  
**<http://mhstudio.malaysiaairlines.com>** or  
**<http://mhstudio.streamonboard.com>**

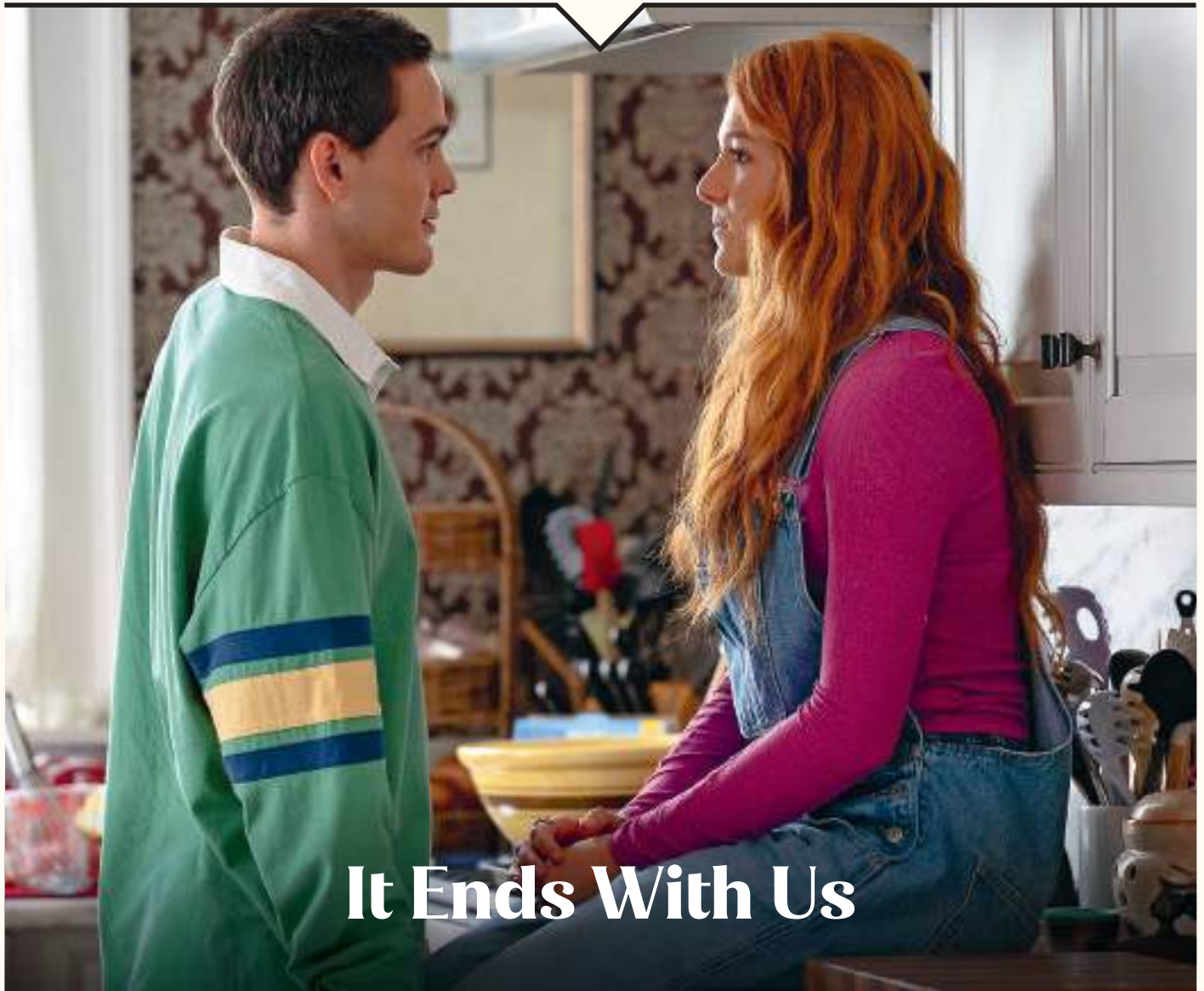
\*Wi-Fi service (with internet connectivity) is available on B737-8 aircraft operated by Malaysia Airlines.

\*\*The availability of in-flight entertainment (IFE) programmes will vary depending on the aircraft model, flight routes, and current availability. Please note that these offerings are subject to change without prior notice.



# NOW SHOWING

MOVIES p80 TELEVISION p89 AUDIO p91



## It Ends With Us

Check out our **Christmas Special** on page 83!



A Christmas Story Christmas



8-Bit Christmas



Elf



Elliot the Littlest Reindeer

Christmas Special

DISCLAIMER: IN-FLIGHT ENTERTAINMENT CONTENT IS EXCLUSIVE TO MALAYSIA AIRLINES PASSENGERS





## It Ends With Us

A gripping and emotional journey, *It Ends With Us* follows Lily Bloom as she navigates the complexities of love, resilience and personal growth.

When her past collides with the present, Lily must confront difficult choices and life-altering decisions. This powerful adaptation of Colleen Hoover's bestselling novel delves into themes of domestic abuse and the strength it takes to break free from toxic cycles, reminding us that the hardest decisions are often the ones that set us free.



## Beetlejuice Beetlejuice

Dive into the bizarre and whimsical world of the ghost with the most in *Beetlejuice Beetlejuice*.

When a new family moves into the haunted home of the Deetz family, chaos ensues as they unknowingly summon Beetlejuice. With his trademark mischief, the supernatural prankster disrupts the living and the dead in his quest for chaos. A delightfully twisted sequel to the 1988 classic, this film is full of spooky humour, unforgettable characters and Beetlejuice's signature charm.



# MOVIES

## Hollywood Latest



**Trap**

A thriller where a group of friends gets lured into a deadly game of survival. Secrets unravel as their trust in each other fades.



**Blink Twice**

A gripping psychological drama where every blink could mean life or death. A detective must outwit a criminal mastermind in this race against time.



**Bookworm**

A quirky and heartwarming tale about a shy librarian whose passion for books takes her on a magical adventure she never expected.



**My Penguin Friend**

A touching family film about a young boy who befriends a lost penguin and embarks on an unforgettable journey to return it home.



**Widow Clicquot**

A historical drama inspired by the life of Barbe-Nicole Clicquot, who revolutionised the champagne industry and defied societal expectations.



**Coup!**

A fast-paced political thriller exploring the aftermath of a sudden coup d'état and the personal stakes for those involved in the power struggle.

150+  
more movies on  
your IFE player

Christmas Special



Christmas with the Knightlys

Royally Yours, This Christmas

How to Fall in Love by Christmas



The Polar Express

Unaccompanied Minors

Elliot the Littlest Reindeer



# MOVIES & TELEVISION

## Hollywood Favourites & Kids Special



**Beetlejuice**

When a recently deceased couple enlists the help of the mischievous ghost Beetlejuice to scare away the new inhabitants of their home, chaos ensues.



**Point Break**

Thrilling, action-packed series where FBI agents go undercover to infiltrate a group of extreme sports enthusiasts suspected of pulling off major heists.



**The Man From U.N.C.L.E.**



**Room**



**Road Rally Racers**



**Smallfoot**



**The Pink Panther**



**The Pink Panther 2**

### TV Shows



**Legion Of Super-Heroes**

An animated adventure following a group of young heroes from the 31st century who band together to protect the galaxy from impending threats.



**Bunnica**

A humorous and spooky series about a vampire bunny with supernatural powers who lives with a cat and a dog, leading to hilarious supernatural misadventures.

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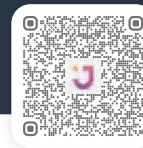


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Now Showing

# MOVIES

**150+**  
more movies on  
your IFE player

## Malay



**Memburu**



**Hantu Telekung**



**Crush Pilihan Mama**

## Chinese



**I Love You to the Moon and Back**



**Be My Family**

## Japanese



**Detective Conan the Movie:  
Black Iron Submarine**

Conan Edogawa returns in this high-stakes adventure as a secret submarine facility becomes the backdrop for an international conspiracy. With cutting-edge technology in enemy hands, Conan must race against time to prevent a catastrophe.



**Great Absence**

A quiet and poignant exploration of family ties, **Great Absence** follows a son's journey to reconnect with his estranged father. As old wounds resurface, this emotional drama examines the pain of separation and the possibility of reconciliation.

## Korean



## Hindi



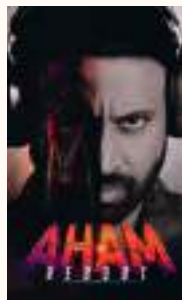
## Tamil



## Malayalam



## Telugu



## Indonesian



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T&Cs apply

Now Showing

# TELEVISION

## Comedy



## Drama



**Gossip Girl**

**The Cleaning Lady**

In **Gossip Girl**, the secrets and scandals of Manhattan's elite are exposed in a thrilling reboot, while **The Cleaning Lady** tells the gripping story of a doctor forced into a dangerous double life as a mob cleaner. Both shows offer high-stakes drama, complex characters and unexpected twists.

## Nature & Wildlife



**Planet Earth III**

## History



**Inside the Tower of London**

## Lifestyle



**Seated Movement for the Spine**

## Korean



**Earth Arcade – Season 1**

Four warriors embark on a mission to capture the moon rabbit that escaped to Earth. This hybrid multiverse action-adventure variety show takes viewers on a thrilling journey through time and space, blending humour, excitement and unexpected twists.

## Japanese



**How to Get a Divorce for the Whole Family!**

A dark comedy that follows a couple navigating the chaos of divorce while trying to keep their dysfunctional family together.

## Hindi



## Tamil



## Chinese



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# NEVER MISS A TRAVEL TIP

Go to [goingplaces.malaysiaairlines.com](https://goingplaces.malaysiaairlines.com)





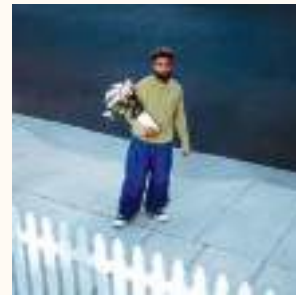
### The Hits

A festive mix of 50 holiday hits from various artists, offering a blend of classic carols and modern favourites to set the perfect Christmas mood.

### Memories



### R&B



### Club



### Japanese



### Korean



### Hindi



### Tamil



### Malay



### Indonesian



### Cantonese



### Mandarin



### Kids





# Elegance in the sky

To celebrate 50 years of service to London, Malaysia Airlines recently unveiled the “Heritage in the Skies” campaign, a nostalgic tribute to its iconic kebaya uniforms. This unique showcase, displayed both on flights between Kuala Lumpur and London and at KLIA Terminal 1 in November, featured six timeless uniforms, each embodying the spirit of Malaysian innovation through the decades. Beautifully illuminated to highlight their intricate details, the garments invited passengers on a journey through style and culture. The campaign also included interactive in-flight activities, encouraging travellers to capture memorable photos with these exquisite uniforms. This tribute celebrated the elegance and pride of Malaysia Airlines – having graced the skies for half a century – showcasing the legacy of Malaysian Hospitality that continues to define the airline. [malaysiaairlines.com](http://malaysiaairlines.com)



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