

Gateway Kuala Lumpur

After years as a regional runner-up, modest Malaysia's capital has found its niche. Kuala Lumpur (KL) is easier to negotiate than Bangkok, grittier than Singapore, and masters an engaging multicultural landscape of Indian, Malay and Chinese enclaves. Best of all, KL is an easy layover for one- or two-night stays: transport into town from the airport is effortless, scams are minimal, and the queen of budget carriers, Air Asia, whisks travelers to Borneo for a small wad of ringgit.

See Lonely Planet's *Malaysia, Singapore & Brunei* guidebook for more information.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Kinokuniya (☎ 2164 8133; 4th fl, Suria KLCC Shopping Complex)

MPH Bookstores (☎ 2142 8231; ground fl, BB Plaza, Jln Bukit Bintang)

Emergency

Fire (☎ 994)

Police & ambulance (☎ 999)

Immigration Offices

Immigration Office – City Centre Branch (Kompleks Wilayah, cnr Jln Dang Wangi & Jln TAR)

Main Immigration Office (☎ 2095 5077; Block I, Pusat Bandar Damansara) Visa extension; 1km west of Lake Gardens.

Internet Access

Internet shops turn over frequently but are usually replaced by another nearby. Try Jln Sultan or the streets surrounding Kota Raya shopping centre in Chinatown. Rates per hour start at RM2.

Medical Services

Kuala Lumpur General Hospital (☎ 2615 5555; Jln Pahang)

Twin Towers Medical Centre (☎ 2382 3500; Lot 401 F&G, 4th fl, Suria KLCC Shopping Complex)

Money

Banks and ATMs are concentrated around Jln Silang at the northern edge of Chinatown. Moneychangers are located in shopping malls, along Lebu Ampang and near Klang bus station on Jln Sultan.

Post

Main post office (Jln Raja Laut; ☎ 8.30am–6pm Mon–Sat) The office is closed on the first Saturday of the month.

Tourist Information

Malaysian Tourist Information Complex (Matic; ☎ 2164 3929; 109 Jln Ampang; ☎ 9am–midnight) KL's most useful tourist office. It also hosts cultural performances.

Travel Agencies

For discount airline tickets, long-running and reliable student-travel agencies include:

MSL Travel (☎ 4042 4722; 66 Jln Putra)

STA Travel (☎ 2143 9800; Lot 506, 5th fl, Plaza Magnum, 128 Jln Pudu)

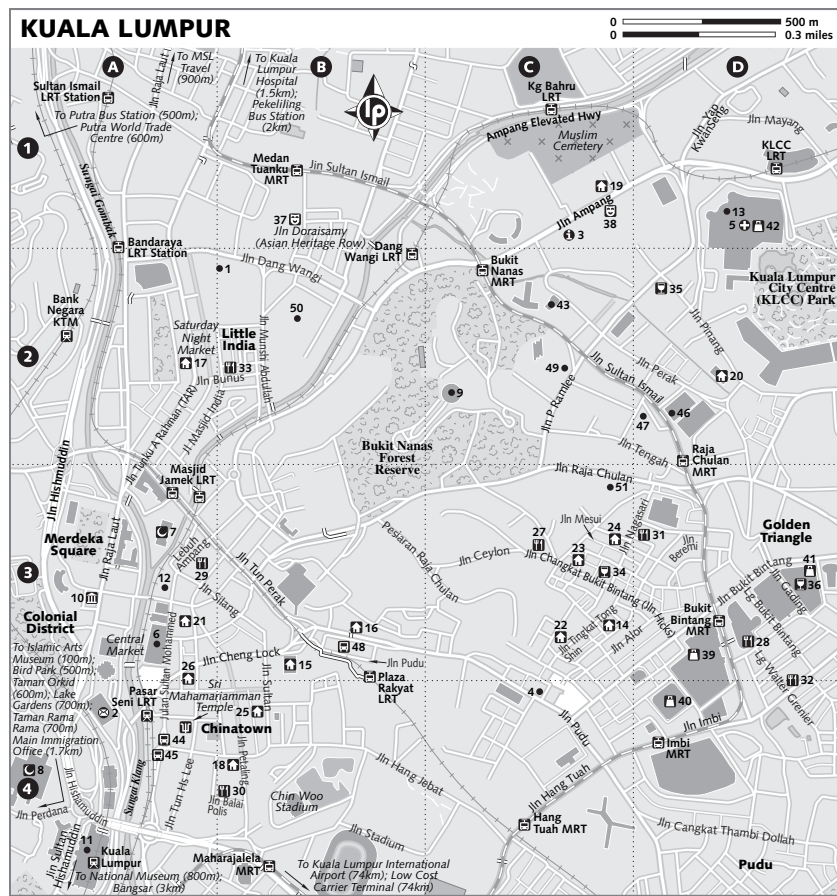
SIGHTS

Colonial District

Kuala Lumpur's colonial district hugs Sungai Klang between Jln Tun Perak and Jln Kinabalu. The symbolic heart is **Merdeka Square** (Jln Raja Laut), a formal parade ground with dutifully posing architectural legacies of Malaysia's successive conquerors, both Islamic and European. Fittingly, the nation's independence was proclaimed here in 1957. Further

FAST FACTS

- Telephone code: ☎ 60 country, ☎ 03 city
- Population: 1.8 million
- Time: GMT+8
- Visas: most nationalities get a 30-day tourist visa on arrival



south is the **Old Railroad Station** (Jln Hishamuddin), a fanciful castle of Islamic arches and spires.

The **National History Museum** (☎ 2694 4590; 29 Jln Raja Laut; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) will instil a sense of Malaysian pride in a new arrival, plus the 2nd-floor view of Merdeka Sq is stunning. Take the Putra LRT to Pasar Seni station.

A tranquil creation built in 1907, **Masjid Jamek** (Jln Tun Perak; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4pm) is set in a grove of palm trees; headscarves and robes are provided at the gate. It's closed during Friday prayers (11am to 2.30pm). Take the Star or Putra LRT to Masjid Jamek station.

The **Masjid Negara** (National Mosque; Jln Perdana; admission free; ☎ 9am-12.30pm, 2-3.30pm & 5-6.30pm) is one of Southeast Asia's largest mosques. The main dome is an 18-pointed star, symbolising

the 13 states of Malaysia and the five pillars of Islam. Remove shoes and dress conservatively. Take the Putra LRT to Pasar Seni station.

Chinatown

Circuitous streets and cramped chaos create a pressure-cooker of sights and sounds. **Jln Petaling** is a bustling street market selling things such as 'authentic' Paul Frank, Birkenstocks and Levis. Chinatown is accessed on the Putra LRT to Pasar Seni station or on the KL Monorail to Maharajalela station.

Chinese **coffee shops** are along Jln Penggong and Jln Balai Polis. You'll spot temples and shops in the side streets – check out KL's principal Hindu temple, **Sri Mahamariamman Temple** (Jln HS Lee).

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The **Central Market** (Jln Cheng Lock; ☎ 10am-10pm) is a refurbished Art Deco building with stalls selling Malay crafts and art.

Little India

Little India has all the feel of a bazaar. The sari shops and the shopping women along **Jln Masjid India**, the district's main street, are swathed in vibrant sherbets, turquoise and vermilions. Meanwhile Indian pop blasts through tinny speakers, and musky incense and delicious spices flavour the air. The district swings into full spectacle during the Saturday *pasar malam* (night market). Take the Star or Putra LRT to Masjid Jamek station.

Golden Triangle

The Golden Triangle is central KL's business, shopping and entertainment district. Sitting on a forested hill, **Menara Kuala Lumpur** (Kuala Lumpur Tower; ☎ 2020 5448; Jln Punchak; adult/child RM20/10; ☎ 9am-10pm, last tickets 9.30pm) is the fourth-highest telecommunications tower in the world. Visitors can ride the lift right up to the viewing deck (276m) for panoramic views, superior to those from the Petronas Towers. Take the KL Monorail to Bukit Nanas station.

The twin **Petronas Towers** (Jln Ampang; admission free; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-4.45pm Tue-Sun) were once the world's tallest skyscrapers until Taipei 101 swiped the title in 2004. Even so, the towers are still an elegant monument. This is the headquarters of the national petroleum company; visitors are allowed access to the

41st-floor skybridge that connects the towers. First-come, first-serve tickets are issued from 8.30am and 15-minute visits start at 10am. Arrive around 8am if you're particular about the time you want to go up, but tickets are often available until around 11am. Take the Putra LRT to KLCC station.

Lake Gardens & Around

Escape from the heat and concrete to this inner-city garden at the western edge of central KL. Intrakota bus 21C from the Jln Sultan Mohammed bus stop, or buses 21B, 22, 48C and F3 from Chinatown will take you there. It is also a 20-minute walk from Masjid Jamek LRT.

The gardens contain a host of attractions such as the **Bird Park** (☎ 2273 5423; adult/child RM28/17; ☎ 9am-7.30pm) and **Taman Rama Rama** (Butterfly Park; adult/child RM15/8; ☎ 9am-6pm). You can take a stroll or catch the shuttle bus (adult RM1; 9am to 6pm Thursday to Saturday, noon to 3pm Friday) that does a loop of the area.

At the edge of the Lake Gardens, the **National Museum** (Muzium Negara; ☎ 2282 6255; Jln Damansara; adult/child RM2/free; ☎ 9am-6pm) boasts colourful displays on Malaysia's history, arts and culture.

The **Islamic Arts Museum** (Muzium Kesenian Islam Malaysia; ☎ 2274 2020; Jln Lembah Perdana; adult/child RM12/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) has scale models of the world's most famous mosques and a full-scale interior reproduction of a typical Muslim room of the Ottoman Empire.

SLEEPING

Chinatown is your best hunting ground for cheap crash pads. The Golden Triangle has more upscale options as well as pricier but cleaner budget options.

Chinatown & Little India

Accommodation here can be reached by the Star LRT to Plaza Rakyat, Putra LRT to Pasar Seni or the KL Monorail to Maharajalela station.

Le Village (☎ 2026 6737; 99A Jln Tun HS Lee; dm/d RM10/30) A relaxed bohemian air hangs over this shabby, yet charming, guesthouse set in a colonial building decorated with local art.

Wheeler's Guest House (☎ 2070 1386; 131-133 Jln Tun HS Lee; dm/d RM12/30) The entrance is squalid but rooms are clean and well-ventilated. Character comes from potted plants, fish and murals and there's even a roof-top garden.

Anuja Backpackers Inn (☎ 2026 6479; 1st-3rd fl, 28 Jln Pudu; d RM25-40; 🏠) There's hardly room to change your mind, but this reliably clean and friendly place is convenient for inconveniently timed trips from Puduraya bus station.

Coliseum Hotel (☎ 2692 6270; 100 Jln TAR; s/d RM28/38; 🏠) With its famous old planters' restaurant and bar downstairs, the Coliseum is an aging relic. Rooms are huge, without bathrooms (some have sinks) and come with heritage-style furnishings.

Hotel Lok Ann (☎ 2078 9544; 113A Jln Petaling; s/d RM60/70; 🏠) Best value of the cheap hotels in the area. Despite facing noisy Jln Sultan, this neat and clean place has spacious rooms with such luxuries as windows.

Ancasa Hotel (☎ 2026 6060; Jln Cheng Lock; d from RM185; 🏠) Helpful staff make this Chinatown's best midrange option. All rooms are comfortable and feature satellite TV should you choose to be a couch potato.

Swiss-Inn (☎ 2072 3333; www.swissgarden.com; 62 Jln Sultan; d with breakfast from RM200; 🏠) A professional hotel for jet-lag recovery. Silent cripts and cable TV.

Golden Triangle

These places can be reached via the KL Monorail to Bukit Bintang station.

Pondok Lodge (☎ 2142 8449; 3rd fl, 20 Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang; dm/s/d RM20/45/55; 🏠) A spacious, mel-low retreat, Pondok has airy common lounges, a rooftop sitting area and a real 'home' feel. The price includes a basic breakfast.

Number Eight Guesthouse (☎ 2144 2050; www.numbereight.com.my; 8-10 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm RM30-85, d RM95-135; 🏠) Above and beyond the competition, this guesthouse is gussied up with photos of KL, a plaster wall map of Asia and flickering candles on the open porch. The en-suite rooms are boutique quality and rates include breakfast.

Rainforest Bed & Breakfast (☎ 2145 1466; 27 Jln Mesui; d with breakfast RM70-90; 🏠) Lush greenery tumbles off the façade of this pretty guesthouse. You'll still find the usual cheap windowless rooms visually expanded with wall mirrors. But the rooftop breakfast area is certainly appetising.

Allson Genesis (☎ 2141 2000; www.allson-genesis.com; 45 Tingkat Tong Shin; r from RM150; 🏠) You get a lot of ring for your ringgit here. The rooms are spacious with furnishings verging on boutique territory. The deluxe rooms at the front peep at the Petronas Towers.

Impiana (☎ 2141 6233; www.impiana.com; 13 Jln Pinang; r from RM380; 🏠) This sleek hotel offers chic, spacious rooms with parquet floors and lots of seductive amenities. Another plus is an infinity pool with a view across to the Petronas Towers

Hotel Maya (☎ 2711 8866; www.hotelmaya.com.my; 138 Jln Ampang; r with breakfast from RM600; 🏠) It hardly gets trendier than this design darling: timber flooring, picture windows and contemporary furnishings. Rates include transfers to/from KL Sentral and a host of other goodies.

EATING

All the food groups – Indian, Chinese, Malay and Western fast food – abound in KL.

Chinatown & Little India

In the morning, go for a jolt of joe in one of the neighbourhood's *kedai kopi* (coffee shops). Noodle stalls line Jln Sultan at mid-day and Chinese restaurants dominate Jln Petaling market in the evenings.

Little India's **Saturday night market** (Jln TAR) has sensational tucker, including Indian curry sopped up with flaky *roti canai* (Indian-style flaky flatbread, also known as 'flying dough').

Restoran Yasin (☎ 2698 2710; 141 Jln Bunus; meals RM3.50-7; 🍴) breakfast, lunch & dinner) A locals' institution serving tasty South- and North-Indian fare.

Fatt Yan Vegetarian Restaurant (☎ 2070 6561; cnr Jln Tun HS Lee & Jln Silang; meals RM18; 🍴) lunch & din-

ner) Herbivores will approve of this Buddhist Chinese restaurant that eschews meat but cooks up some awfully good substitutes.

Old China Café (☎ 20725915; 11 Jln Balai Polis; meals RM25-40; 🍴) dinner) Granted it's a tourist spot, but one that nails the 1920s Sino fantasy of shadow-casting ceiling fans, time-worn antiques and a soundtrack of sparrow sopranos. Spicy Baba Nonya (descendants of Chinese Straits settlers who intermarried with Malays) dishes are the speciality.

Golden Triangle

Head to central KL's shopping centres for international and local food. Jln Nagsari, off Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang, is lined with Malay food stalls and open-air restaurants. Jln Alor, one street northwest of Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang, has a carnival-like night market of Chinese hawk stalls. Take the KL Monorail to Bukit Bintang.

Lemon Food Court (basement, Low Yat Plaza; meals RM4-8; 🍴) lunch & dinner) Lemon Food Court has sizzling hot plates, mouth-watering aromas and a proletariat ambience.

Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao (☎ 2148 2338; Annex Block, Lot 10, 50 Jln Sultan Ismail; meals RM20-40; 🍴) 11am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-10.30pm Sat & Sun) Confounded by dim sum? Let the pictorial menu be your guide; come early to beat the lunch crowd.

Restoran Oversea (☎ 2144 0808; 84-88 Jln Imbi; meals RM50) Part of citywide empire, this banquet-style restaurant does melt-in-the-mouth pork belly and hot-pot bacon.

Restoran Nagasari Curry House (Jln Nagasari; meals RM5-10; 🍴) 7am-midnight) This simple place gets thumbs up for its authentic banana-leaf meals.

Bijan (☎ 2031 3575; www.bijanrestaurant.com; 3 Jln Ceylon; meals RM60-80; 🍴) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun) Sample traditional Malay dishes in a setting that is urban chic rather than rustic *kampung*. Try *tempeh* with anchovies, tomato rice, fried eggplant in spicy chilli sauce and the surprisingly pleasant durian cheesecake.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Drinking in KL is no budget activity (around RM10 per bottle of beer) and drinks at 'proper' bars are nearly double in price. The cheapest places to imbibe are Chinese eateries or open-air hawk stalls.

Green Man (☎ 2141 9924; 40 Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang) Eternally popular, unstuffy expat hangout,

with pool table and quieter reaches upstairs; there's simple food and outside seating.

Rum Jungle (☎ 2148 0282; cnr Jln P Ramlee & Jln Pinang) Take a trip on the wild side with the other party animals who roam this sprawling complex of thatched huts.

Village Bar (☎ 2782 3852; Feast Village, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; 🍴) noon-1am) Like Ali Baba's Bazaar this enticing bar is hung with coloured-glass lampshades and is a fine place to start or finish an evening of grazing at the trendy Starhill Gallery mall.

Cynna (☎ 2694 2888; www.loftkl.com; unit 28-40 Asian Heritage Row, Jln Doraisamy) Dress smart to make it past the clipboard nazis at the most stylish of Asian Heritage Row's clubs. Inside join a lively crowd knocking back cocktails and writhing to seductive sounds.

Zouk (☎ 2171 1997; www.zouclub.com.my; 113 Jln Ampang) There's a theme for everyone here from the small and edgy Loft Bar, to a plastic palm fringed main venue and sophisticated Velvet Underground (including entry to Zouk RM45).

GETTING THERE & AROUND

For information on getting to specific regions in Borneo, see Sabah (p87), Sarawak (p161), Brunei (p220) and Kalimantan (p237).

The city of Johor Bahru (JB) often has cheap flights to Borneo. To reach JB from Kuala Lumpur, take a bus from KL's Puduraya bus station; the journey costs RM24 and takes four hours. These daily buses leave frequently.

Air

The **Kuala Lumpur International Airport** (KLIA; ☎ 8777 8888; www.klia.com.my; Pengrus Besar) is 75km south of the city centre at Sepang. Airlines serving cities in Malaysian Borneo include Malaysia Airlines and Air Asia. Do note that Air Asia flights arrive and depart from the nearby **Low Cost Carrier Terminal** (LCC-T; ☎ 1300 889 933). Airline companies serving KLIA include:

Air Asia (☎ 08775 4000; www.airasia.com; KLIA)

Cathay Pacific Airways (☎ 2035 2788; www.cathaypacific.com; Suite 22.01, 22nd fl, Menara IMC, 8 Jln Sultan Ismail)

China Airlines (☎ 2142 7344; www.china-airlines.com; Amoda Bldg, 22 Jln Imbi)

Lufthansa (☎ 2161 4666; www.lufthansa.com; 18th fl, Kenanga International Bldg, Jln Sultan Ismail)

Malaysia Airlines (☎ 1300 883 000, 2161 0555; www.malaysiaairlines.com); Bangunan MAS (☎ 7846 3000; Jln Sultan Ismail); KL Sentral Station (☎ 2272 4260)

Royal Brunei Airlines (☎ 2070 7166; www.bruneiair.com; Menara UBN, 10 Jln P Ramlee)

Singapore Airlines (☎ 2692 3122; www.singaporeair.com; Menara Multi-Purpose, 8 Jln Munshi Abdullah)

Thai Airways International (☎ 2031 2900; www.thaiairways.com; 30 Wisma Goldhill, 67 Jln Raja Chulan)

Bus

The primary long-distance bus station in KL is **Puduraya** (Jln Pudu). For inner-city transport, local buses leave from Puduraya as well as **Klang bus station** (Jln Sultan Mohammed) near the Pasar Seni LRT station. The maximum fare is usually RM1 for destinations within the city limits.

Taxi

Taxis in KL have meters but drivers refuse to use them so you have to bargain. Ask at your hotel about fares before heading to a taxi stand, since the price skyrockets when a tourist approaches. Trips around town are about RM5 to RM10.

Train & Light Rail

The easiest way into town from the airport is via KLIA Ekspres (RM35/65 one way/return, 30 minutes, every 15 to 20 minutes from 5am to midnight), which terminates at KL Sentral train station, about a kilometre south of the historic Old Railway Station. KL Sentral is the transit station for all train-based travel in Kuala Lumpur. From here you can catch LRT and KL Monorail trains

to Chinatown, Golden Triangle and other parts of Kuala Lumpur.

Transport within central KL is handled by a three line system. The most convenient lines for short-term visitors are the Star and Putra lines of the **Light Rail Transit** (LRT; ☎ 1800 388 288; www.rapidkl.com.my) system. Fares range from RM1 to RM2.80 and trains run every six to 10 minutes from 6am to 11:50pm (11:30pm Sunday and holidays). **KL Monorail** (☎ 2273 1888) is convenient for hops between Chinatown and the northern areas of Bukit Bintang and Chow Kit. Fares are RM1.20 to RM2.50 and trains run every 15 minutes from 6am to midnight.

Interchange stations between the different lines include the following: KL Sentral, transfer between all lines; Masjid Jamek, transfer between Star and Putra LRT; Hang Tuah and Titiwangsa, transfer between KL Monorail and Star LRT; Bukit Nanas, transfer between KL Monorail and Putra LRT; Tasik Selatan, transfer between KTM Komuter and Star LRT.

Another rail system, the **KTM Komuter** (☎ 2272 2828) links Kuala Lumpur with outlying suburbs and the historic train station.

For long-distance departures to other parts of the Malay peninsula, KL is the hub of the **KTM** (☎ 2267 1200; www.ktmb.com.my) national railway system. The long-distance trains depart from KL Sentral. The **KTM information office** (🕒 10am-7pm) in the main hall of the station can advise on schedules and check seat availability. There are daily departures for Butterworth (the closest station to Penang), Thailand and Singapore.