

Kuala Lumpur



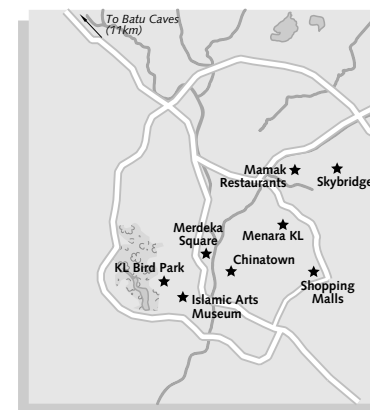
Kuala Lumpur – KL to its friends – is more than just a capital city: it is a monument to Malaysian ingenuity and determination. From humble beginnings as a tin-mining shanty town, KL has evolved into a 21st-century metropolis, dominated by the tallest skyscrapers in Southeast Asia and flush with the proceeds of international trade and commerce. Over the years, KL has faced its share of challenges but nothing has succeeded in suppressing the determination of locals to make KL, and Malaysia, a leader among Asian tiger economies.

The marketing slogan for the Malaysian tourist board is ‘truly Asia’ and nowhere is this more true than in the capital. KL is every inch the Asian cyber-city: historic temples and mosques rub shoulders with space-age towers and shopping malls; traders’ stalls are piled high with pungent durians and counterfeit DVDs; and locals sip cappuccino in wi-fi-enabled coffee hops or feast at bustling streetside hawker stalls serving food from across the continent.

The most striking thing about KL from a visitor’s perspective is its remarkable cultural diversity. Ethnic Malays, Chinese prospectors, Indian migrants and British colonials all helped carve the city out of the virgin jungle, and each group has left its indelible mark on the capital. Eating, shopping and nightlife are undeniable highlights of any visit to KL, but don’t restrict yourself to the city – there are numerous parks and monuments dotted around KL that make easy day trips for a break from the hustle and bustle.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Giddy views from the **Skybridge** (p86) at the Petronas Towers or the **Menara KL** (p88)
- Feasting in KL’s fabulous **mamak restaurants** (p110)
- Shopping till you drop at KL’s city-sized **shopping malls** (p122) – bring the platinum card!
- Taking in the temples and markets of **Chinatown** (p76) and the colonial architecture of **Merdeka Square** (p80)
- Exploring the peaceful Lake Gardens – don’t miss the **Bird Park** (p82) and the **Islamic Arts Museum** (p83)
- Hiking up the 272 steps to the **Batu Caves** (p131)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ POPULATION: 1.8 MILLION

■ AREA: 243 SQ KM

HISTORY

The founding of KL was almost an accident. In 1857, 87 Chinese prospectors in search of tin landed at the meeting point of the Klang and Gombak rivers and set up camp, naming the spot Kuala Lumpur, meaning 'muddy confluence'. Within a month all but 17 of the prospectors had died of malaria and other tropical diseases, but the tin they discovered in Ampang attracted more miners and KL quickly became a brawling, noisy, violent boomtown, ruled over by so-called 'secret societies', a network of Chinese criminal gangs.

As in other parts of the Malay peninsula, the local sultan appointed a proxy (known as Kapitan China) to bring the unruly Chinese fortune-seekers and their secret societies into line. The successful candidate, Yap Ah Loy (Kapitan China from 1868 to '85), took on the task with such ruthless relish that he's now credited as the founder of KL. According to legend, Yap Ah Loy was able to keep the peace with just six policemen, such was the respect for his authority in the Chinese community.

Loy had only just established control when local sultans went to war over the throne of Perak and its tin mines, marking the start of the Malay Civil War. KL was swept up in the conflict and burnt to the ground in 1881. This allowed the British government representative, Frank Swettenham, to push through a radical new town plan which transferred the central government from Klang to KL. By 1886 a railway line linked KL to Klang. A year later a new city was constructed in fire-resistant brick, and in 1896 KL became the capital of the newly formed Federated Malay States.

The British surrendered Malaya early in WWII and KL was brutally occupied by Japanese forces. Many Chinese were tortured and killed, and many Indians and British prisoners of war were sent to work on Burma's notorious 'Death Railway'. The British temporarily returned after WWII, only to be ousted when Malaysia finally declared its independence in 1957 at Merdeka Square (Independence Square). KL continued to thrive, but its confidence took a knock in 1969 when race riots between Chinese and Malays claimed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives. In the aftermath of the riots, thousands of Chinese were dispossessed of their homes and the Muslim Malay community consolidated its control over the army, police and political administration.

The city officially became the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur when it was ceded by the sultan of Selangor in 1974. Its mayor and councillors are appointed on the recommendation of the government, which is dominated by Malay politicians. There's little accountability and a job on the council is largely seen by locals as license to print money, not least because KL is Malaysia's most prosperous and populous city.

In 1996, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed approved the construction of a new political capital 20km south of KL at Putrajaya (p130). Although only 50,000 of the 330,000 residents planned for Putrajaya have moved into their new homes, the budget for the project has already exceeded US\$5 billion. Putrajaya was made the official seat of the Malaysian government in 1999. Since the turn of the millennium, Kuala Lumpur has been in the news more for demonstrations than innovation – city police used tear gas and water cannons to disperse antidiscrimination protests by thousands of ethnic Indians in 2007 and 2008, arresting many protesters under Malaysia's draconian security laws.

ORIENTATION

Although this is one of the more manageable Asian capitals, KL is divided into a series of separate neighbourhoods by a network of multilane highways and railway lines. As a result, getting from A to B can involve numerous underpasses, bridges and road crossings. You may find that it's easier to travel by public transport, even over short distances. One exception to this rule is the built-up area around the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) – walking is often quicker than changing lines on KL's poorly integrated rapid transit system (see p126).

The colonial heart of KL is Merdeka Square, near the confluence of the two rivers from which the city takes its name. Just northeast of Merdeka Square is Little India, a bustling neighbourhood of Indian-owned shops and restaurants, while further south is Chinatown, noteworthy for its cheap accommodation, night market, temples and long-distance bus station. West of Chinatown (across a maze of flyovers and railway tracks) are the peaceful Lake Gardens, home to many of KL's best-known tourist attractions. South of the Lake Gardens is the ethnically mixed neighbourhood of Brickfields, where you'll find KL Sentral, the

main long-distance train station (which replaced the historic old train station on the eastern edge of Lake Gardens). This is the place to come for trains to Melaka, Penang and Singapore, and for local buses and trains to the international airport and low-cost carrier terminal.

New KL is a space-age jumble of skyscrapers, shopping centres and monorail tracks, centred on the KLCC development and Petronas Towers. The business district is loosely bound by Jln Ampang, Jln Sultan Ismail, Jln Bukit Bintang and Jln Tun Razak. The main area for accommodation downtown is the Golden Triangle, which has long since expanded from its original boundaries of Jln Imbi, Jln Raja Chulan and Jln Sultan Ismail. On the eastern edge of the business district, Jln Tun Razak provides access to the National Library, National Theatre, National Art Gallery and Taman Tasik Titivangsa. North of the centre is Kampung Baru, a Malay neighbourhood dominated by traditional wooden houses, and further west is Chow Kit, a sprawling district of markets and shophouses, strung out along Jln

Tuanku A Rahman (commonly called Jln TAR). Nearby Asian Heritage Row (Jln Doraiswamy) is crammed with restaurants and clubs.

The relatively small central area is surrounded by burgeoning suburbs, some of which are becoming tourist attractions in their own right for their excellent restaurants and nightlife. Two places to clock for a lively night out are Bangsar Baru, southwest from KL Sentral, and Desa Sri Hartamas, 7km west (a half-hour taxi or bus ride) from the centre.

20km south of KL is Putrajaya, the new administrative capital of Malaysia, worth a visit for its parks and modern architecture. Between Putrajaya and the centre are the Mines and Sunway Lagoon, two ostentatious entertainment resorts built on reclaimed industrial land. Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) and the Low Cost Carrier-Terminal (LCC-T) are about 73km south of KL, while Berjaya Air operates a handful of flights from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, 20km west of the centre.

North of KL are the famous Batu Caves, a major pilgrimage destination for Malaysian

KUALA LUMPUR (KL) IN...

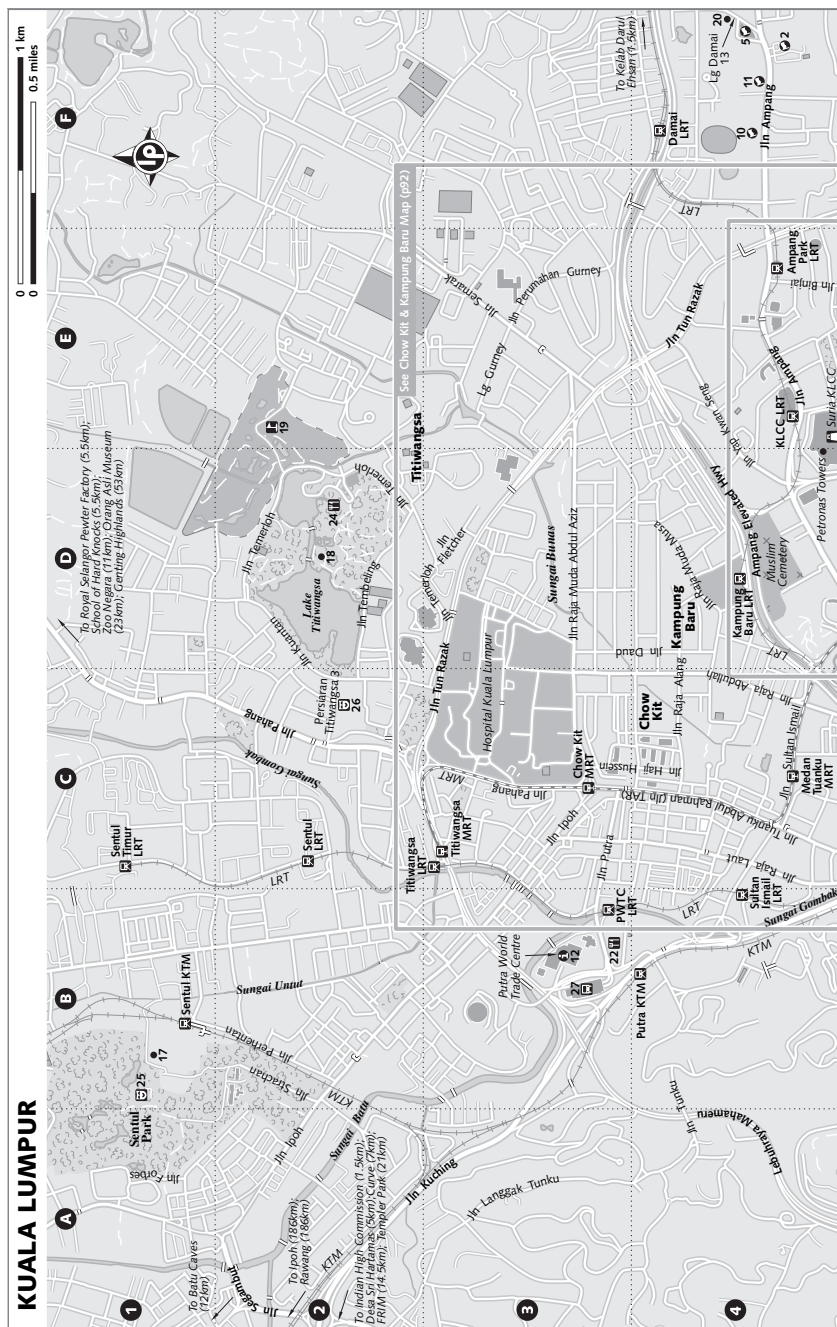
Two Days

With just two days, you'll need to move fast. Get to the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) early to queue for one of the limited free tickets for the **skybridge** (p86) of the Petronas Towers. Get in some retail therapy at the **Suria KLCC mall** (p86) then head to the **Menara KL** (p88) for even better views and a stroll through the surrounding forest reserve. Next, head over to Chinatown to pay your respects at the **Masjid Jamek** (p76) and see the colonial buildings around **Merdeka Square** (p80). Drop in on some of the Hindu and Taoist temples in **Chinatown** (p76), then browse the boisterous Jalan Petaling **street market** (p77) and the craft stalls in **Central Market** (p77). In the evening, dive into **Jalan Alor** (p106) for some tasty Chinese street food, then sample one of the bars or pubs near the Golden Triangle along **Changkat Bukit Bintang** (p116).

On day two, gaze in awe at exquisite Islamic artworks housed in the **Islamic Arts Museum** (p83) and be deafened by the avian orchestra in the Lake Garden's **Bird Park** (p82). Grab an Indian vegetarian lunch in **Little India** (p108), then get a dose of history at the **National Museum** (p89). Next, head over Jln Bukit Bintang to see the extravagant **Starhill Gallery** (p122). Finish up with a fabulous hawker-style dinner at **Nasi Kandar Pelita** (p110), located by the KLCC.

One Week

With more time to spare, take three days to explore the sights listed above. On day four, head out to the **Batu Caves** (p131) and **Zoo Negara** (p131) or **Orang Asli Museum** (p131). On day five, visit the **Pudu Market** (p91) or Chow Kit's **Bazaar Baru** (p93), and explore the sleepy backstreets of **Kampung Baru** (p93). Start day six at a theme park – **Sunway Lagoon** (p129) is the best of the bunch. Use the afternoon for a stroll around **Taman Tasik Titivangsa** (p93), then head out to **Bangsar Baru** (p113) or **Desa Sri Hartamas** (p114) for an extravagant supper. On day seven, visit the striking **Masjid Negara** (p82) and squeeze in some last-minute shopping at KL's malls (p122). In the evening, go all out at the clubs and bars on **Asian Heritage Row** (p120).



INFORMATION		EATING 🍴	
Brunei Embassy.....1 F5	Spanish Embassy.....10 F4	Café Café.....21 D7	
Canadian Embassy.....(see 1)	Thai Embassy.....11 F4	Medan Hang Tuah.....22 B3	
Chinese Embassy.....2 F4	Tourism Malaysia.....12 B3	Pusat Makanan Peng Hwa.....23 E7	
German Embassy.....(see 1)	USA Embassy.....13 F5	Restoran Nelayan Titiwangsa...24 D2	
Goethe Institut.....3 F5	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Yu Ri Tei.....(see 17)	
Indonesian Embassy.....4 F6	Choon Wan Kong.....14 E7		
Irish Embassy.....5 F4	Istana Negara.....15 C8	ENTERTAINMENT 🎬	
Japanese Embassy.....6 F5	Pudu Market.....16 E7	Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre.....25 B1	
Laos Embassy.....7 F5	Sentul Park Kol Centre.....17 B1	Sutra Dance Theatre.....26 C2	
Myanmar Embassy.....8 F5	Taman Tasik Titiwangsa.....18 D2		
Netherlands Embassy.....(see 5)	Titiwangsa Golf Club.....19 E2	TRANSPORT	
Singapore Embassy.....9 F5	Yogshakti.....20 F4	Putra Bus Station.....27 B3	

Hindus as well as Zoo Negara and the Orang Asli Museum. Shuttle buses run even further north to the Genting Highlands, a gaudy complex of casinos, shopping malls and theme parks on a cool hilltop about 54km from the capital.

INFORMATION Bookshops

Borders (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 0288; Level 2, Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi; ☎ 10am-10pm) Huge English-language range. Another branch in the Curve (p122).

Kinokuniya (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2164 8133; Level 4, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; ☎ 10am-10pm) Excellent range of English-language titles.

MPH Bookstores Bangsar (Map p94; ☎ 2287 3600; Level 2, Bangsar Village II, Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 9.30am-10pm); Golden Triangle (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 8231; Ground fl, BB Plaza, Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10.30am-9.30pm); Mid Valley (off Map p94; ☎ 2938 3818; Ground fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-10pm) Strong on local titles and magazines.

Silverfish Books (Map p94; ☎ 2284 4837; www.silverfishbooks.com; 67-1 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 10am-8pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat) Publisher of contemporary Malaysian literature.

Cultural Centres & Libraries

Alliance Française (Map p92; ☎ 2694 7880; www.alliancefrancaise.org.my; 15 Lorong Gurney; ☎ 10am-6pm Thu-Sat)

British Council (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2723 7900; www.britishcouncil.org.my; Ground fl, West Block, Wisma Selangor Dredging, 142C Jln Ampang; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm Sat)

Goethe Institut (Map pp72-3; ☎ 2142 2011; www.goethe.de/ins/my/kua/; 1 Jln Lenggak Golf, off Jln Tun Razak; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri)

Japan Foundation (Map pp84-5; 2161 2104; www.jfkl.org.my; Level 30, Menara Citibank, 165 Jln Ampang; ☎ 10.30am-6.30pm Tue-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat)

Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library (Perpustakaan Kuala Lumpur; Map pp78-9; ☎ 2612 3508; Jln Raja;

☎ 2-6.45pm Mon, 9.30am-6.45pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat & Sun)

National Library of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia; Map p92; ☎ 2694 3488; www.pnm.my; 232 Jln Tun Razak, Titiwangsa; ☎ 10am-7pm Tue-Sat, to 6pm Sun)

Emergency

The **tourist police** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2163 4422; Malaysian Tourism Centre, 109 Jln Ampang) handles minor crimes affecting tourists. For other emergencies, call ☎ 999 for police or an ambulance and ☎ 994 for fire.

Immigration Offices

Visa extensions can be arranged at the **Immigration Office** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 2095 5077; Aras 1-5, Block I, Pusat Bandar Damansara; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, closed 12.15-2.45pm Fri), 2km west of Lake Gardens. See p225 for more details.

Internet Access

Most hostels and hotels offer internet access to guests and there are numerous 24-hour internet cafés in Chinatown and the Golden Triangle – see following for recommendations. The going rate for internet access is around RM3 per hour, though rates are higher in some of the upmarket hotels and malls. Most top-end hotels offer wi-fi access in the lobby; travellers on tighter budgets should head to any branch of Starbucks – fast wi-fi

VISA SHOPPING

Kuala Lumpur (KL) is a good place to stock up on visas for other parts of Asia. The exchange rates are favourable, embassies tend to be fast and efficient, and there are regular flights from KL to countries across the region. See p219 for listings of embassies and p227 for listings of airlines.

access is free if you buy a drink and contribute to the Seattle coffee-chain's campaign for world domination.

21st Century Internet (Map pp84-5; Jln Alor, Golden Triangle; per hr RM2.50; ☎ 24hr)

Net Youth Resources (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan, Chinatown; per hr RM2.50; ☎ 24hr) Near the KFC; fast connections and air-con.

Yoshi Connection (Map pp84-5; Lower ground fl, Suria KLCC; per hr RM8; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Laundry

Most hotels offer a laundry service, but you'll have to drop your clothes off first thing in the morning if you want them back the same day. Alternatively, there are private laundries in the main tourist areas.

Dry Point (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 3845; 73 Changkat Bukit Bintang; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun) A handy option in the Golden Triangle.

Left Luggage

The train and bus stations have luggage offices where you can leave padlocked luggage. These places are reasonably secure but carry any important valuables with you and be sure to check the opening and closing times. The KL Sentral **left luggage office** (bag storage per hr/day RM2/6; ☎ 7.30am-10pm) is near the Air Asia office. There's a similar **luggage office** (bag storage per day RM3; ☎ 7am-midnight) at the Puduraya Bus Station.

Media

KL has a number of good listings and lifestyle magazines, available from most bookshops and news vendors.

Juice (www.juiceonline.com; free) Trendy mag that covers the local club scene; available in upmarket clubs and bars.

KL Lifestyle (www.kl-lifestyle.com.my; RM4.80) Covers activities and attractions in the city, including nightlife options; comes with a useful list and map of airline offices.

Klue (www.klue.com.my; RM5) A glossy monthly with good nightlife listings and plenty of upbeat features about things to do in and around the city.

Medical Services

Pharmacy chains Watsons and Guardian have branches all over KL selling toiletries, healthcare products, prescription medicines and, curiously, ladies' underwear and men's boxers. Opticians are found in most shopping centres. KL is an increasingly popular destination for health tourism, from cosmetic surgery to dental veneers. Medical centres

dentists are found in all the big malls and a private consultation will cost around RM35 – try the following.

DENTISTS

Dental Pro (off Map p94; ☎ 2287 3333; www.dentalpro.org; 8 Lengkok Abdullah, Bangsar Utama; ☎ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Pristine Dental Centre (off Map p94; ☎ 2287 3782; 2nd fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-6pm)

HEALTH CENTRES

Klinik Medicare (off Map p94; ☎ 2287 7180; 2nd fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Twin Towers Medical Centre KLCC (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2382 3500; www.ttmcklcc.com.my; Level 4, Suria KLCC; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)

HOSPITALS

Hospital Kuala Lumpur (Map p92; ☎ 2615 5555; www.hkl.gov.my; Jln Pahang)

Tung Shin Hospital (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 1655; www.tungshinhospital.com.my; 102 Jln Pudu)

Money

Moneychangers and banks are found on every other corner in KL. Rates are fairly consistent, though private moneychangers sometimes offer slightly better rates for cash than banks. Most banks and shopping malls provide international ATMs (typically on the ground floor or basement level) but see the warning, p223.

Useful places to change money include the following:

Maybank Forex Counter (Map pp78-9; Jln Hang Lekir, Chinatown; ☎ 10am-6pm)

RHB Bank (Map pp84-5; Ground fl, Suria KLCC; ☎ 10am-7pm)

Post

For international postal services, go to **Pos Malaysia** (Map pp78-9; Jln Raja Laut; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed first Sat of the month) in the Dayabumi complex. Stamps and the poste restante service are handled in the main hall upstairs, registered letters and small parcels are handled next door, and the office for large parcels is down in the basement. There's also a **philately museum** (admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, closed 12.30pm-2.30pm Fri) on the same level as the main entrance. Branch post offices are open 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Saturday (closed first Saturday of the month) and are found all over KL, including inside the Sungei Wang (Map pp84-5) and Suria KLCC (Map pp84-5) shopping centres.

See p223 for more information on sending letters and parcels in Malaysia. Other postal options include the following:

DHL (Map p94; ☎ 2283 6504; 60 Jln Telawi, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9am-5pm Sun) Good for urgent parcels.

Post office Jln TAR (Map p92); Jln Telawi (Map p94)

Telephone & Fax

Payphones abound in the capital and most take coins, credit cards and phonocards (available from convenience stores). Alternatively, street-side phone counters sell prepaid SIM cards for mobile phones (see p224). Most internet cafés offer Skype and other net-phone services.

Telekom Malaysia (Map pp78-9; Jln Raja Chulan; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) Quiet booths for international calls and a desk where you can send and receive faxes.

Tourist Information

KL has a number of tourist information offices, run by various tourist associations. There are also small information booths at many tourist attractions.

KL Information Centre (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2691 0285; www.kualalumpur.gov.my; Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman; ☎ 10am-6pm) Run by the KL administration; has general information on the city.

KL Tourist Association (Map p90; ☎ 2287 1831; www.klta.org.my; National Museum, Jln Damansara; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, till 1pm Sat) Good for brochures and general information on the city.

Malaysian Tourism Centre (MTC; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2163 3664, info line 1300-885050; www.mtc.gov.my; 109 Jln Ampang; ☎ 7am-10pm) Housed in a mansion built in 1935 for rubber and tin tycoon Eu Tong Seng; a useful office with a restaurant, tour agent, moneychanger and ATM, plus daily cultural performances (see p121).

Tourism Malaysia (www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) Kuala Lumpur International Airport (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 8776 5651; International Arrival Hall, KLIA, Sepang; ☎ 9am-midnight); KL Sentral (Map p90; ☎ 2274 5823; KL Sentral, Brickfields; ☎ 9am-6pm); Putra World Trade Centre (Map pp72-3; ☎ 4041 1295; Level 2, Putra World Trade Centre, 45 Jln Tun Ismail; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) Well-informed offices providing information on all of Malaysia, plus free maps of KL.

Travel Agencies

The agencies listed here are reliable for discount fares. See p99 for companies offering tours inside Malaysia.

MSL Travel (Map p92; ☎ 4042 4722; www.msltravel.com; 66 Jln Putra; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

Sri Sutra Travel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 3282 7575; www.sri-utra.com.my; Level 3, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; ☎ 9am-9.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9.30pm Sat & Sun)

STA Travel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 9800; www.statravel.com.my; Lot 506, 5th fl, Magnum Plaza, 128 Jln Pudu; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

KL is generally very safe, but it pays to watch for pickpockets on crowded public transport. One ongoing irritation in KL is the state of the pavements. The temporary covers thrown over drains can give way suddenly, dumping you in the drink or worse, so walk around them. Flooding can also be a problem, particularly during the monsoon – carry an umbrella and be prepared to roll up your trousers to wade through giant puddles.

SIGHTS

Because of KL's disjointed layout and convoluted road network, walking between the sights can be quite an undertaking. It's often better to use public transport or taxis, even over short distances. That said, the city centre is smaller than you might expect – from Chinatown, you can walk to Little India in five minutes, Bukit Bintang in 10 to 15 minutes and the KLCC in half an hour. Some districts have a huge concentration of sights in a small geographical area – see p96 for recommended walking tours.

Chinatown

SRI MAHA MARIAMMAN TEMPLE

The most striking religious monument in old KL, this **Hindu shrine** (Map pp78-9; 163 Jln Tun HS Lee; ☎ 6am-8.30pm, to 9pm Fri & Sat) was founded by migrant workers from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu in 1873. Flower-garland vendors crowd the entrance and the temple is crowned by a huge *gopuram* (temple tower) covered in riotously colourful statues of Hindu deities. Locals leave incense, flowers, coconuts and strings of limes as offerings to Mariamman, the South Indian mother goddess, an incarnation of Durga. The idol from the temple is paraded to the Batu Caves (p131) in a silver chariot during the Thaipusam festival in January or February each year. Non-Hindus are welcome to visit but leave your shoes at the entrance.

MASJID JAMEK

Chinatown's Muslim population prays at the historic **mosque** (Friday Mosque; Map pp78-9; off Jln Tun

Perak; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4pm, closed Fri 11am-2.30pm). Constructed in 1907 on an island at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers, the mosque is an island of serenity, with airy open pavilions shaded by palm trees. Although the architecture looks traditional, the mosque was actually designed by a British architect, AB Hubbock, who sought inspiration from the Mughal mosques of northern India. Visitors are welcome outside of prayer times, but shoes should be removed and female visitors should cover their heads, legs and shoulders (scarves and sarongs are available at the entrance).

OTHER TEMPLES

On a narrow alleyway near the Central Market, the Taoist **Sze Ya Temple** (Map pp78-9; Jln Tun HS Lee; ☎ 7am-5pm) is probably the most atmospheric Chinese temple in KL. The temple was constructed in 1864 on the instructions of Yap Ah Loy, the semi-official founder of Kuala Lumpur (see p70). You can see a statue of Yap Ah Loy just left of the main altar. The slightly odd position, squished between rows of shophouses, was determined by feng shui. Fortune-telling sticks are provided for devotees; just rattle the pot until a stick falls out, then find the paper slip corresponding to the number on the stick. Staff will translate the fortune on the slip for RM1. On your way out, note the two gilded sedan chairs used to carry the deity statues during religious processions. You can enter the temple through the stucco gatehouse on Jln Tun HS Lee or the back gate on the next alley west.

Around the corner is the similarly atmospheric 1886 **Guandi Temple** (Kwong Siew Free School; Map pp78-9; Jln Tun HS Lee; ☎ 7am-5pm). The main hall is hung with fragrant coils of spiral incense, paper clothes and money that are burned to bring good fortune to the ancestors. The temple is dedicated to Kwan Ti, a historical Chinese general revered by Taoists as the god of war.

There are two more interesting temples further south, facing the Bulatan Merdeka roundabout. **Chan She Shu Yuen Temple** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 1461; Jln Petaling; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) features a stunning tiled roof with dioramas of celestial scenes and dramatic woodcarvings inside the main shrine. There's also a **library** (☎ 1-7pm Thu-Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) with 4000 Chinese books. Across the road is the less dramatic **Guan Yin Temple** (Koon Yam Temple; Map pp78-9; cnr Jln Stadium & Jln Maharajalela; ☎ 7am-5pm), which displays golden Chinese Buddhist statues.

CENTRAL MARKET

Housed in a glorious Art Deco building that looks more Miami than Southeast Asia, the **Central Market** (Pasar Seni; Map pp78-9; ☎ 2031 0399; Jln Hang Kasturi; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) was the wet market for the miners of old Kuala Lumpur. The market was constructed by the British in 1888 and was nearly demolished in the 1970s before the Malaysian Heritage Society intervened to save it for future generations. Today, it houses a touristy but colourful market with some good handicrafts – batiks, wood carvings, kris (Malay daggers), durian candies – and Malay fabrics on sale. Prices are often elevated so bargain hard.

PETALING STREET MARKET

Traders start to fill covered Jln Petaling from midmorning until the whole street is jammed with market stalls selling everything from fake Gucci handbags and pirate DVDs to *nasi lemak* (coconut rice) and bunches of lychees. The **market** (Map pp78-9; Jln Petaling; ☎ noon-11pm) really comes into its own at night, when hordes of tourists scour the stalls for convincing fakes of brand-name clothes, perfumes, watches and luggage. The fact that there is a police station in the middle of the market is evidence of the rather relaxed Malaysian attitude towards counterfeit goods. If you do buy fakes, the risks include poor stitching on bags, and DVDs of current releases recorded on grainy hand-held video cameras smuggled into KL's cinemas. Running west of the main market towards Jln Tun HS Lee is Chinatown's pungent **wet market**, where locals shop for fresh fish, vegetables and gruesomely anatomical cuts of meat.

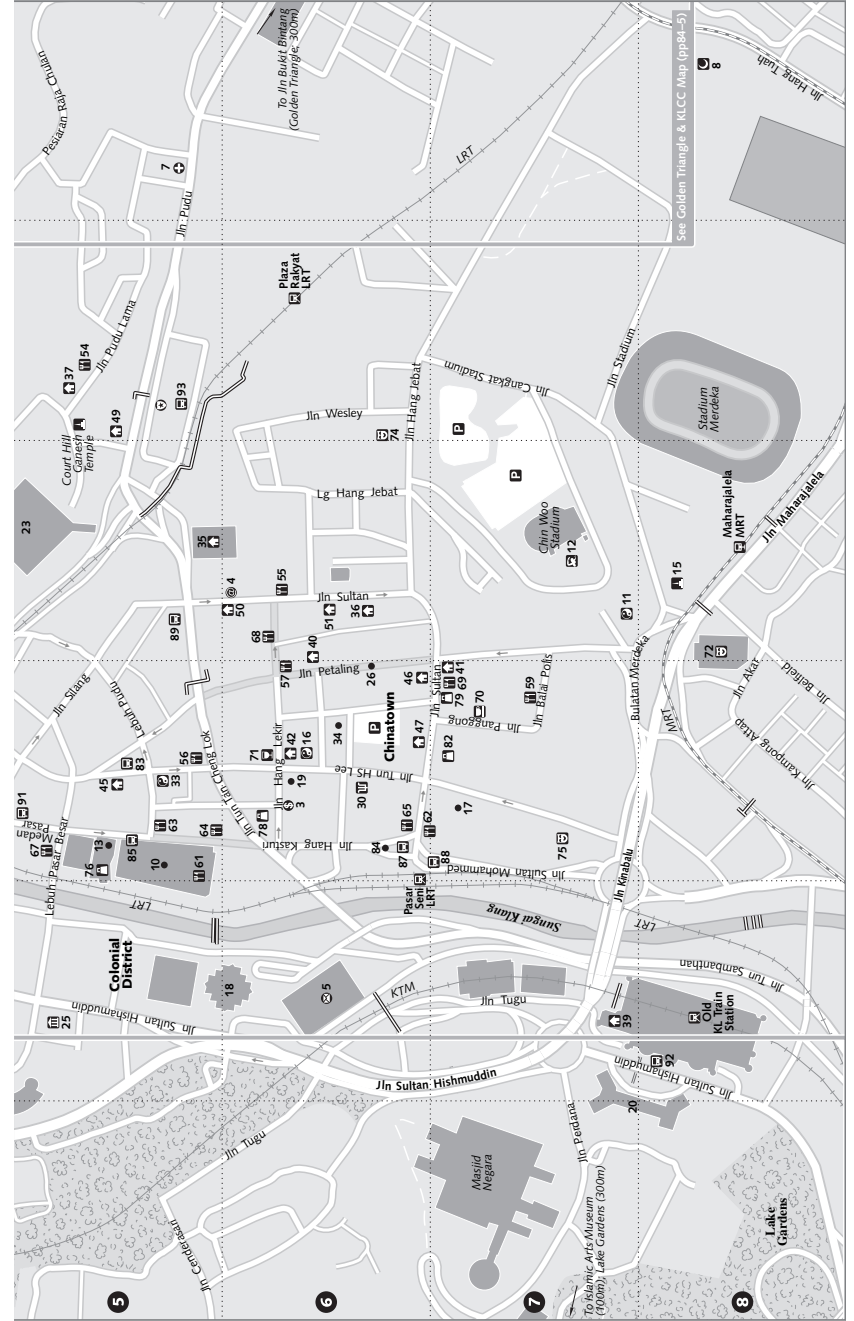
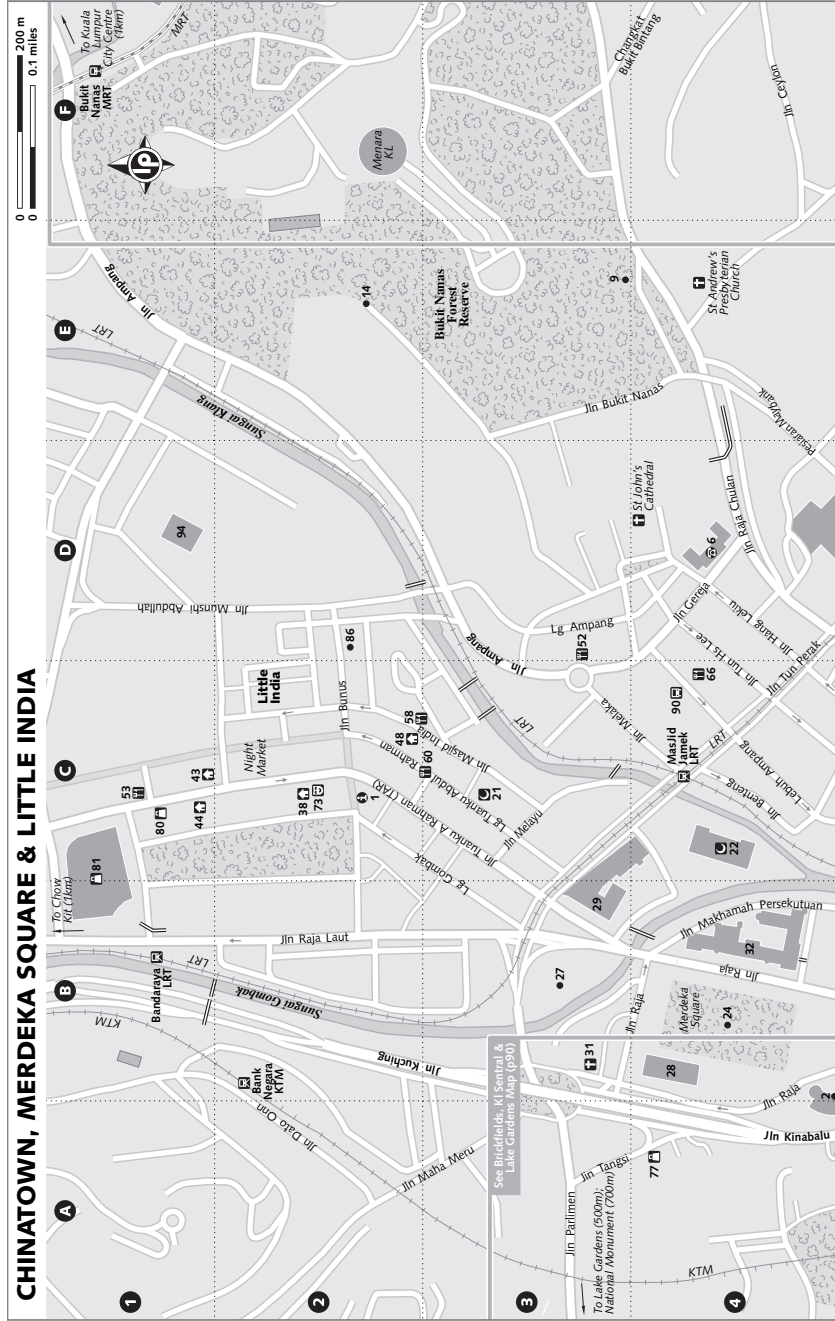
KOMPLEKS DAYABUMI

The former headquarters of Petronas, Malaysia's national oil and gas company, the **Kompleks Dayabumi** (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan Hishammuddin) was built in 1981 on land formerly occupied by the workshops for the Malayan Railway. The landmark feature here is a tall marble tower, cloaked in delicate fretwork screens. In profile, the tower forms a four-pointed star intersected by a square, a reoccurring symbol in Islamic art. Despite being one of the older buildings in KL, the tower is notable for its clean lines and purity of form. To get here, walk over the footbridge behind Central Market.

OTHER SIGHTS

On the ground floor of the Menara Maybank (p88), the **Numismatic Museum** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2690

CHINATOWN, MERDEKA SQUARE & LITTLE INDIA



INFORMATION		Sze Ya Temple.....	33 C5	Sangeetha.....	66 C4
KL Information Centre.....	1 C2	Wet Market.....	34 C6	Sing Seng Nam.....	67 C5
Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library.....	2 B4	SLEEPING ☹			
Maybank Forex Booth.....	3 C6	Ancasa Hotel.....	35 D5	Streetside Restaurants.....	68 D6
Net Youth Resources.....	4 D6	Backpackers Travellers Inn.....	36 D6	West Lake Restoran.....	69 C7
Pos Malaysia.....	5 B6	Casa Villa Travellers Lodge.....	37 E5	DRINKING ☹☹	
Telekom Malaysia.....	6 D4	Coliseum Hotel.....	38 C2	Chinatown Liquor Shop.....	(see 46)
Tung Shin Hospital.....	7 F5	Heritage Station Hotel.....	39 B7	Ikopi.....	70 C7
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Hotel China Town Inn.....	40 D6	Old Town Kopitiam.....	(see 61)
Albukhary Masjid.....	8 F8	Hotel Lok Ann.....	41 C7	Purple Cane Tea House.....	(see 70)
Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve		Hotel Malaya.....	42 C6	Reggae Bar.....	71 C6
Information Centre.....	9 E3	Hotel Noble.....	43 C1	ENTERTAINMENT ☹	
Central Market.....	10 C5	Kowloon Hotel.....	44 C1	Chinese Assembly Hall.....	72 D8
Chan She Shu Yuen Temple.....	11 D7	Le Village.....	45 C5	Coliseum Cinema.....	73 C2
Chin Woo Stadium		Lee Mun Guest House.....	46 C6	Stadium Bola Keranjang.....	74 E6
Swimming Pool.....	12 D7	Mandarin Pacific Hotel.....	47 C6	Taman Budaya.....	75 C7
Gajah Gajah Gallery.....	13 C5	Palace Hotel.....	48 C2	SHOPPING ☹	
Gate to Bukit Nanas		Pudu Hostel.....	49 E5	Central Market Annexe.....	76 C5
Forest Reserve.....	14 E2	Red Dragon Hostel.....	50 D6	Galeri Tangsi.....	77 A4
Going Places Tours.....	(see 36)	Swiss-Inn.....	51 D6	Peter Hoe Evolution.....	78 C6
Guan Yin Temple.....	15 D8	EATING ☹☹			
Guandi Temple.....	16 C6	Bilal Restoran.....	52 D3	Purple Cane Tea Arts.....	79 C7
Impressions.....	17 C7	Capital Café.....	53 C1	Silk Street.....	80 C1
Kompleks Dayabumi.....	18 B6	Coconut House.....	54 E5	Sogo.....	81 C1
Lee Rubber Building.....	19 C6	Coliseum Café.....	(see 38)	UO Superstore.....	82 C7
Malayan Railway		Food Court.....	(see 93)	TRANSPORT	
Administration Building.....	20 A7	Gin Ger.....	(see 61)	Bangkok Bank Bus Stop.....	83 C5
Masjid India.....	21 C3	Hong Kee Stall.....	55 D6	Bus Information Booth.....	84 C6
Masjid Jamek.....	22 C4	Kedai Kopi Lai Foong.....	56 C5	Central Market Bus Stop.....	85 C5
Menara Maybank.....	23 D5	Lakshmi Vilas.....	(see 66)	Indian Airlines.....	86 D2
Merdeka Square.....	24 B4	Madam Tang's Stall.....	57 C6	Jalan Sultan Mohammed	
Muzium Telekom.....	(see 6)	Mangrove Food Court.....	(see 61)	Bus Stop.....	87 C6
National History Museum.....	25 B5	Masjid India Hawker Court.....	58 C2	Klang Bus Station.....	88 C7
Numismatic Museum.....	(see 23)	Old China Café.....	59 C7	Kota Raya Bus Stop.....	89 D5
Old Asia.....	(see 10)	Pasar Malam (Night Market).....	60 C3	Lebuh Ampang	
Petaling Street Market.....	26 C6	Precious.....	61 C5	Bus Stop.....	90 C4
Philately Museum.....	(see 5)	Puduraya Hawker Court.....	(see 93)	Medan Pasar Bus Stop.....	91 C5
Pitcherplant Fountain.....	27 B3	Purple Cane Tea Restaurant.....	(see 72)	NICE Coaches.....	(see 92)
Royal Selangor Club.....	28 B4	Restoran Hameed's.....	62 C6	Plusliner.....	92 B8
Sessions & Magistrates Court.....	29 B3	Restoran Oriental Bowl.....	63 C5	Puduraya Bus Station.....	93 E5
Sri Maha Mariamman Temple.....	30 C6	Restoran Yusoff dan Zakhir.....	64 C5	Royal Nepal Airlines.....	(see 86)
St Mary's Cathedral.....	31 B3	Restoran Zhing Kong.....	65 C6	Singapore Airlines.....	94 D1
Sultan Abdul Samad Building.....	32 B4				

7461; Menara Maybank, 100 Jln Tun Perak; ☎ 10am-6pm) has a display of Malaysian currency, including early Chinese 'coin trees'. While Europeans preferred to strike coins, the Chinese cast their coins in moulds, leaving a tree of washer-shaped coins attached to metal 'branches'. The coins were then snapped off and carried around looped on strings.

A few blocks north, in a striking colonial building, the reasonably diverting **Muzium Telekom** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2031 9966; Jln Raja Chulan; admission free; ☎ 9.30am-5pm) has exhibits on the history of telecommunications in Malaysia, with an English or Bahasa commentary on old-fashioned phone handsets.

Merdeka Square

The huge open square (Map pp78-9) where Malaysian independence was declared in 1957

is ringed by heritage buildings and dominated by an enormous flagpole and fluttering Malaysian flag. In the British era, the square was used as a cricket pitch. Along its western edge is the mock-Tudor **Royal Selangor Club** (Map pp78-9; www.rscweb.org.my; Jln Raja), founded in 1884 and still an exclusive social club for the KL elite. It's also the place where world-wide running-and-drinking club the Hash House Harriers kicked off in 1938 (On, On!).

The east side of the square is dominated by the domes and clocktower of the **Sultan Abdul Samad Building** (Map pp78-9; Jln Raja), built as the secretariat for the colonial administration in 1897. It was designed by the India-obsessed architect AC Norman – who also created the Jamek Masjid – and it now houses the Malaysian High Court. There are several more AC Norman constructions along the

east side of the square, providing a striking counterpoint to the looming Menara KL and Petronas Towers.

At the south end of the square is the **National History Museum** (Muzium Sejarah Nasional; Map pp78-9; ☎ 2694 4590; 29 Jln Raja; admission RM1; ☎ 9am-6pm), which covers Malaysian history from prehistoric times to the present day. The building was constructed in 1888 and originally housed

the first bank in Kuala Lumpur. Inside you can see relics and treasures from the various cultures that preceded the British colonial administration, including the Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms that existed here before the rise of Islam.

Nearby is the Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library (see p74), a modern building that uses traditional features to blend into its

ORANGES ARE NOT THE ONLY FRUIT...

One of the highlights of KL is the fantastic variety of tropical fruit sold at markets and street stalls. Modified motorcycles piled high with lychees and mangoes loiter outside bus and train stations. Elderly ladies sit by the roadside selling bunches of rambutans. Vendors set up plastic tables beside food markets for the (some would say immoral) trade in durians, perhaps the world's stinkiest fruit. With a spiky armoured shell and soft, slimy flesh that smells vaguely like rotting meat, durian is definitely an acquired taste – though locals regard it as the king of fruits – and seeing as durian is the most expensive fruit on the market, many are happy not to acquire it. Should you feel tempted, be warned that durians are banned from most hotels, shopping malls and cinemas. Heed this advice – you may be asked to leave if your durian is upsetting other patrons. There is a host of other fruit to look out for, all coming into season at different times of year. Keep an eye out for the following sweet delights:

Buah nona The custard apple; a knobby green skin conceals hard black seeds and sweet gloopy flesh with a granular texture.

Buah salak Known as the snakeskin fruit because of its scaly skin; the exterior looks like a mutant strawberry and the soft flesh tastes like unripe bananas.

Cempedak The Malaysian breadfruit; a huge green fruit with skin like the Thing from the *Fantastic Four*; the seeds and flesh are often curried or fried.

Chikoo The sapota or sapodilla; a brown, plum-shaped fruit with soft orange flesh that tastes vaguely of dates.

Dragon fruit An alien-looking red pod with tongue-like flanges, hiding fragrant, kiwi-fruit-like flesh with lots of tiny edible seeds.

Duku Also known as *dokong* and *langsai*; a small, soft-skinned ball containing sweet segments, some with bitter seeds. Squeeze from the bottom to pop the shell and avoid the bitter sap from the skin.

Guava A green, apple-like ball containing sweet pink or white flesh with seeds you can eat.

Jambu merah Malay apple; elongated pink or red fruit with a smooth shiny skin and pale watery flesh. A good thirst quencher on hot days.

Longan A tiny hard ball like a mini lychee with sweet, perfumed flesh; peel it, eat the flesh and spit out the hard seeds.

Lychee Has a thin scaly shell that makes it look like a reptile egg; clear flesh that melts in the mouth, wrapped around hard black seeds.

Mango Many varieties of this fruit, all with succulent yellow flesh surrounding a hairy seed that mirrors the shape of the fruit.

Mangosteen A hard purple shell conceals delightfully fragrant white segments, some containing a tough seed that you can spit out or swallow.

Pomelo Like a grapefruit on steroids, with a thick pithy green skin hiding sweet, tangy segments; cut into the skin, peel off the pith then break open the segments and munch on the flesh inside.

Rambutan People have different theories about what rambutans look like, not all repeatable in polite company; the hairy shell contains sweet, translucent flesh that you scrape off the seed with your teeth.

Soursop A shapeless, sacklike fruit, with tasty but tart granular flesh and hard black seeds; it's only ripe when soft and it goes off within days so eat it quickly.

Starfruit The star-shaped cross-section is the giveaway; the yellow flesh is sweet and tangy and believed by many to lower blood pressure.

Tamarind Fresh tamarind comes in a curved brown pod; the hard seeds are hidden inside the delicious, tart flesh.

surroundings. There's a small **gallery** (admission free; ☎ 10am-9pm) with artworks by local student artists and displays on the history of KL.

At the end of the square is **St Mary's Cathedral** (☎ 2692.8672; www.stmaryscathedral.org.my; Jln Raja), looking every inch the white-washed English country church. The church was built in 1894 by the colonial administration and it still maintains a small Anglican congregation. The best time to visit is during the 5pm Sunday service.

Lake Gardens

Just a few hundred metres from busy Chinatown, the urban landscape gives way to sculpted parks and dense tropical jungle. Covering 92 hectares, the Lake Gardens were created during the colonial era as an urban retreat where the British administrators could escape the hurly burly of downtown (as well as people of other races). On the top of the tallest hill, the official residence of British government representative Frank Swettenham is now the swanky hotel Carcosa Seri Negara (p105), while on the northern fringes of the Lake Gardens is the striking honeycomb tower containing the Malaysian Parliament.

As well as the pleasantly restful Lake Gardens Park, the hills are dotted with interesting attractions, including two of KL's best: the Islamic Arts Museum and Kuala Lumpur Bird Park. The dense foliage creates a lot of humidity so strolling around can be a sweaty experience – a drier way to see the gardens is to hire a taxi and ask the driver to wait while you explore each of the sights. At weekends, a tourist tram rolls between the main gardens for a nominal charge.

KUALA LUMPUR BIRD PARK

The undisputed highlight of the gardens is this fabulous **aviary** (Taman Burung; Map p90; ☎ 2272 1010; Jln Cenderawasih; adult/child RM30/22; ☎ 9am-7pm), where 160 species of (mostly) Asian birds fly free beneath an enormous canopy. Star attractions include ostriches, hornbills, eagles, flamingos and parrots. It's worth getting to the park for feeding times (eagles 2.30pm, ostriches 2pm and 4pm) or the child-friendly bird shows (12.30pm and 3.30pm), which feature plenty of parrot tricks to keep youngsters amused. The park's Hornbill Restaurant is the best place in the gardens for an inexpensive feed.

BUTTERFLY PARK

Flying creatures of a different sort are showcased at the interesting **butterfly reserve** (Taman

Rama Rama; Map p90; ☎ 2693 4799; Jln Cenderasari; adult/child RM15/8, camera/video RM1/4; ☎ 9am-6pm) near the Bird Park. Some of the iridescent butterflies fluttering around the covered grounds are real monsters, and there's a bug gallery where you can shudder at the size of Malaysia's giant centipedes and spiders. The park shop sells mounted butterflies and other giant insects, but it's best not to encourage the trade in these increasingly endangered creatures.

OTHER PARKS & GARDENS

The Lake Gardens are centred on the pretty **Lake Gardens Park** (Taman Tasik Perdana; Map p90; Jln Tembusu; admission free; ☎ daylight hours). The park covers a huge area, planted with a variety of native plants, trees and shrubs – it's hard to believe that this calm open space exists just a few hundred metres from the main train station. In the middle is a huge children's adventure playground and nearby is the sprawling lake for which the gardens are named. You can rent boats for RM6 per hour and watch t'ai chi practitioners in the early morning.

Close to the children's play area is the small **Deer Park** (Taman Rusa & Kancil; Map p90; Jln Perdana; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm, closed noon-2pm weekdays), which has a collection of tame Malaysia deer, including the tiny *kancil* (lesser mouse deer), the world's smallest hooved mammal.

Malaysia's fabulous orchids are collected together at the handsome **Orchid Garden** (Taman Orkid; Map p90; Jln Cenderawasih; weekdays admission free, Sat & Sun RM1; ☎ 9am-6pm), uphill from the lake. The adjacent **Hibiscus Garden** (Taman Bunga Raya; Jln Cenderawasih; free weekdays admission free, Sat & Sun RM1; ☎ 9am-6pm) is a riot of hibiscus blooms, surrounding a small art gallery. Both are places to stroll and contemplate. Several small shops sell live and cut orchids.

MASJID NEGARA

The principle place of worship for KL's Malay Muslim population is the gigantic **Masjid Negara** (National Mosque; Map p90; Jln Lembah Perdana; ☎ 9am-noon, 3-4pm & 5.30-6.30pm, closed Fri morning). The mosque was inspired by the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Its umbrella-like blue-tile roof has 18 points symbolising the 13 states of Malaysia and the five pillars of Islam. Rising above the mosque, a 74m-high minaret issues the call to prayer that can be heard across Chinatown. Non-Muslims are welcome to visit outside of prayer times but dress appropriately and remove your shoes before entering.

ISLAMIC ARTS MUSEUM

Malaysia's fascinating Islamic history is showcased at this **museum** (Muzium Kesenian Islam Malaysia; Map p90; ☎ 2274 2020; www.iamm.org.my; Jln Lembah Perdana; adult/child RM12/6; ☎ 10am-6pm), which houses one of the best collections of Islamic art in the world. The building itself is full of striking Islamic architectural details and the galleries contain carpets, costumes, textiles, tiles, ceramics, jewellery, weapons and religious manuscripts. Highlights include a stunning recreation of an Ottoman room and a collection of miniature models of famous mosques from around the world. The complex also includes an upmarket restaurant serving Middle Eastern buffet lunches at weekends (RM45 plus tax) and an excellent shop selling high-quality Islamic arts and crafts.

NATIONAL PLANETARIUM

Looking more like a mosque than a centre for scientific research, this **planetarium** (Map p90; ☎ 2273 4303; www.angkasa.gov.my/planetarium; 53 Jln Perdana; admission RM1; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Tue-Sun) is a short walk uphill from the Islamic Arts Museum. The planetarium is part of the National Space Agency, and parts of the rocket that launched Malaysia's first satellite are displayed in the main gallery. Planetarium shows (RM2 to RM6 depending on the programme) take place throughout the day in English and Bahasa. In the grounds are models of famous historic observatories, including Jai Singh's Delhi observatory and Stonehenge.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

At the northern end of the Lake Gardens, the **National Monument** (Plaza Tugu Negara; Map p90; Jln Parlimen; admission free; ☎ 7am-6pm) commemorates the defeat of the Communists in 1950. The militaristic bronze sculpture was created in 1966

by Felix de Weldon, the artist behind the Iwo Jima monument in Washington, DC. Nearby is a monument to the Malay fighters who died in WWI and WWII. Creating an interesting juxtaposition to the triumphalism of the monument, members of the **Tugu Drum Circle** (<http://tugudrumcircle.blogspot.com/>) meet here every Sunday from 5.30pm for some therapeutic drumming.

Between the Islamic Arts Museum and the Planetarium is the surprisingly interesting **Royal Malaysia Police Museum** (Map p90; 5 Jln Perdana; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun, closed noon-3pm Sun). Inside you can see police uniforms and vehicles, a collection of old swords, cannons and kris, plus some sinister-looking hand-made guns and knives seized from members of Malaysia's shady 'secret societies'.

Other sights in the park include the **Civil Service Memorial** (Map p90; Jln Cenderawasih; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun, closed 12.15-3pm Fri), dedicated to the work of the Malaysian Civil Service, and the **Tun Abdul Razak Memorial** (Map p90; Jln Perdana; admission free; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun, closed noon-3pm Fri), containing the personal effects, speed boat and golf cart of the second prime minister of Malaysia.

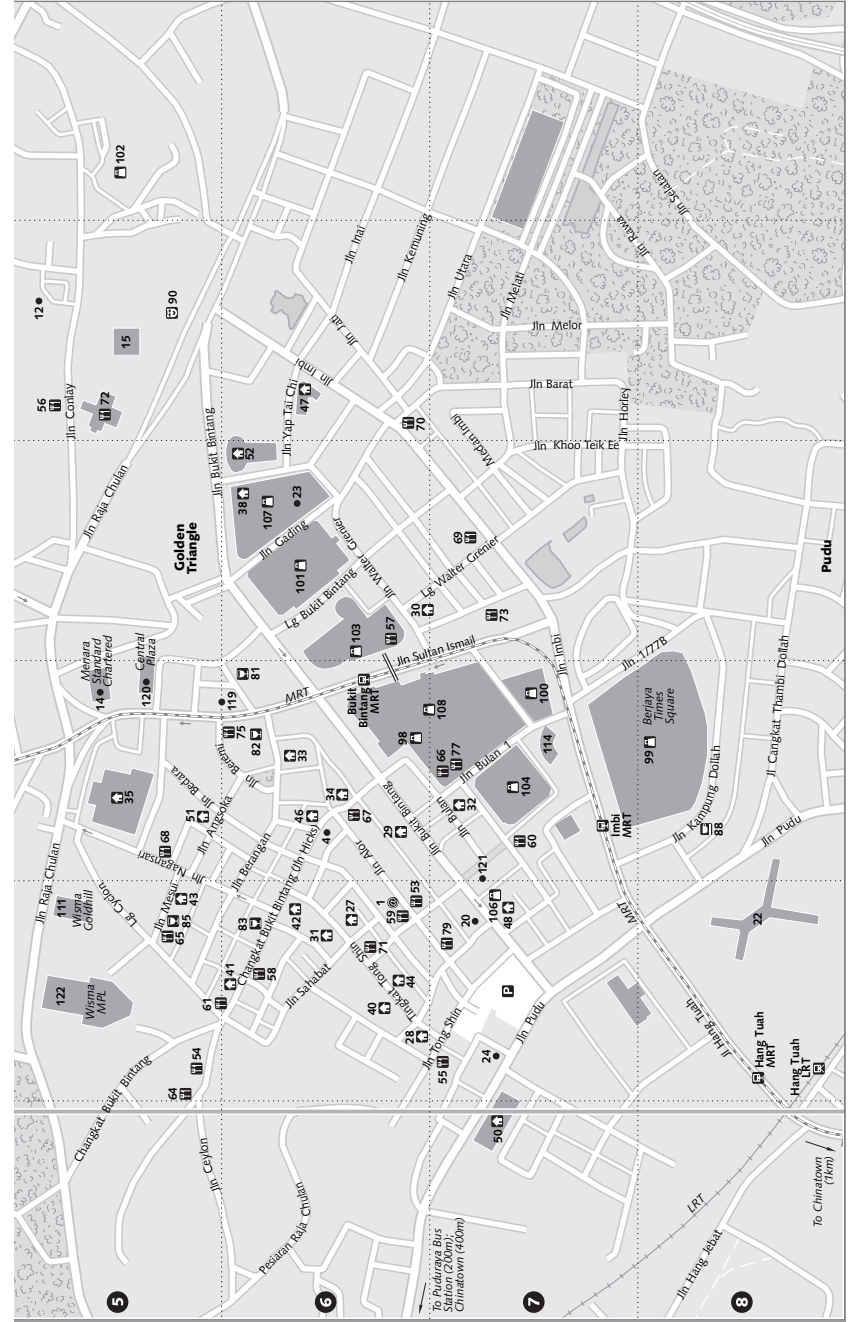
Golden Triangle & KLCC PETRONAS TOWERS & KLCC

There could be no better symbol of KL than the iconic **Petronas Towers** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2331 8080; www.petronastwintowers.com.my; KLCC, cnr Jln Ampang & Jln P Ramlee), the headquarters of the national oil and gas company Petronas (see boxed text, p32). These shimmering chrome towers rise above the city like twin silver rockets plucked from an early episode of *Flash Gordon*, a perfect allegory for the meteoric rise of KL from tin mine to space-age metropolis. The towers are the focal point of the enormous KLCC development, which includes a sprawling tropical

SECRET SOCIETIES

Although nominally loyal to the local sultans, the Chinese prospectors who founded Kuala Lumpur maintained their own network of 'secret societies', responsible for most of the organised crime in Malaysia. These forerunners to the modern-day Triads accumulated vast fortunes from smuggling and racketeering, carrying out robberies and assassinations, stage-managing strikes and riots, and pushing forward the political agenda of the Hokkien and Hakka communities. Their reach extended across Malaya and Singapore. During the 1860s, Penang faced all-out war between the Hai San and Gheen Hin gangs over the Perak Mines, triggering a massive crackdown on gang membership by the colonial police. The power of the secret societies waned as the Malay community took control of Malaysian politics. You can see some of the brutal weapons confiscated from gang members in the Royal Malaysia Police Museum (above).

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC



INFORMATION	JoJoBa Spa.....(see 99)	Red Palm..... 44 B6
21st Century Internet..... 1 B6	Kings Kitchen Klub.....(see 52)	Renaissance Kuala Lumpur..... 45 A2
Australian Embassy..... 2 C1	Malaysian Travel Business.....(see 6)	Replica Inn..... 46 C6
Borders.....(see 99)	Menara KL..... 18 A4	Ritz Carlton..... 47 E6
British Council..... 3 C2	Menara Maxis..... 19 D2	Royale Bintang..... 48 B7
Dry Point..... 4 C6	Old Asia..... 20 B7	Shangri-La Hotel..... 49 B3
Japan Foundation..... 5 E1	Petronas Towers..... 21 C2	Swiss-Garden Hotel..... 50 A7
Knokuniya.....(see 105)	Petrosains.....(see 25)	Trekker Lodge..... 51 C5
MPH Bookstores.....(see 98)	Pudu Jail..... 22 B8	Westin Kuala Lumpur..... 52 D6
Malaysian Tourism Centre..... 6 B2	Rumah Penghulu.....(see 12)	
Nepalese Embassy..... 7 E1	Rustic Nirvana.....(see 70)	EATING ☑
New Zealand Embassy..... 8 B3	Skybridge.....(see 21)	1+1..... 53 B6
Philippines Embassy..... 9 D4	Spa Indrani.....(see 23)	Avenue 10 Food Court.....(see 99)
Post Office.....(see 108)	Spa Village.....(see 47)	Bijan..... 54 B5
Post Office (Suria KLCC).....(see 25)	STA Travel..... 24 B7	Blue Boy Vegetarian Food Centre..... 55 B7
RHB Bank.....(see 25)	Starhill Spa.....(see 38)	Bon Ton..... 56 E5
Sri Sutra Travel.....(see 25)	Suria KLCC..... 25 D2	Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao..... 57 D6
Tourist Police.....(see 6)	Tabung Haji..... 26 F2	Frangipani..... 58 B6
Twin Towers Medical Centre KLCC.....(see 25)	Travel Han.....(see 42)	Frog Porridge Stall..... 59 B6
Vietnamese Embassy..... 10 F4		Gonbei.....(see 107)
Yoshi Connection.....(see 25)	SLEEPING ☑	Jogoya.....(see 107)
	Allson Genesis..... 27 B6	Kameya Restoran Jepun..... 60 C7
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	Bintang Guesthouse..... 28 B6	KoRyo-Won.....(see 107)
AJ Hackett.....(see 18)	Bintang Warisan Hotel..... 29 C6	Lafite.....(see 49)
Ampang Bowl.....(see 99)	Coronade Hotel..... 30 D6	Le Bouchon..... 61 B5
Aquaria KLCC..... 11 D4	Green Hut..... 31 B6	Little Penang Kafé.....(see 74)
Ayurvedium.....(see 23)	Hotel Capitol..... 32 C7	Lotus Hotel..... 62 F2
Badan Warisan Malaysia..... 12 E5	Hotel Fortuna..... 33 C6	Medan Selera Food Court.....(see 57)
Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve..... 13 A4	Hotel Imperial..... 34 C6	Mythai Jim Thompson.....(see 107)
California Fitness..... 14 C5	Hotel Istana..... 35 C5	Nasi Kandar Pelita..... 63 E2
Chulan Tower..... 15 E5	Hotel Maya..... 36 B2	Nerovivo..... 64 B5
Cosmo's World.....(see 99)	Impiana..... 37 C4	Old Siam.....(see 71)
Dharma Realm Guan Yin Sagely Monastery..... 16 E1	JW Marriott..... 38 D6	Palate Palette..... 65 B5
Essentials.....(see 23)	Mandarin Oriental..... 39 D3	Prego.....(see 52)
Facilities First..... 17 C4	Number Eight Guesthouse..... 40 B6	Restoran de Kitaro..... 66 C7
Galeri Petronas.....(see 25)	Pondok Lodge..... 41 B6	Restoran Dragon View..... 67 C6
	Radius International Hotel..... 42 B6	
	Rainforest Bed & Breakfast..... 43 B5	

park, a huge convention centre, an aquarium, an excellent kids' museum, a world-class concert hall and one of KL's most ostentatious shopping centres. One tower is occupied by Petronas while the other is leased out to private companies, most notably Al Jazeera, Bloomberg, IBM, Microsoft and Boeing.

Opened in 1998, the steel-clad twin towers rise 451.9m above street level. At the time, the towers were officially recognised as the tallest building in the world, though only through a technicality – the two spires on the roof tops were classified as 'architectural details', giving the towers a height advantage over several buildings with higher roofs, higher pinnacles and more occupied floors. The exulted status of the twin towers was short-lived: the Taipei 101 tower eclipsed the Petronas Towers in 2003, and at the time of writing the Burj Dubai tower looked set to steal the world record upon completion in 2008.

The highest visitors can go is the 41st-floor **Skybridge** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 9am-7pm Tue-Sun, closed 12.30-2.30pm Fri), which connects the two towers at a

modest 170m above street level. To get hold of one of the 1200 free tickets issued daily, you'll need to join the line at the ticket counter in the basement by at least 8.30am; tickets (only one per person) are usually gone by 11am each morning. Weekdays tend to be less hectic than weekends and public holidays.

Suria KLCC & KLCC Park

Even if shopping bores you to tears, it's worth visiting the futuristic **Suria KLCC** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2382 2828; www.suriaklcc.com.my; KLCC, cnr Jln Ampang & Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 10am-10pm) to see how fast KL has developed in the 50 years since independence. Inside you'll find some of the world's most exclusive brands, from Tiffany jewellery and Rolex watches to Gucci handbags and Prada and Moschino frocks, as well as restaurants, food courts, coffee shops, a cinema and a kids' museum.

This cathedral to consumerism is surrounded by the **KLCC Park** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 24hr), with a soft-surface jogging track, synchronised fountains, a fantastic (under 12s only) kids' **playground and paddling pool** (☎ 10am-7.30pm

Restoran Nagansari	Tiffin Bay/Tiff's Jazz Lounge.....(see 107)	Tear Proof.....(see 105)
Curry House..... 68 C5	Village Bar.....(see 107)	Tenmoku Pottery.....(see 105)
Restoran Oversea..... 69 D7	Wings.....(see 88)	Teratei.....(see 103)
Restoran Sahara Tent.....(see 33)		Yogini Mystical Treasures.....(see 103)
Restoran Sakura..... 70 E6	ENTERTAINMENT ☑	
Sagar.....(see 35)	Bangkok Jazz..... 90 E5	TRANSPORT
Sao Nam..... 71 B6	Dewan Filharmonik Petronas.....(see 21)	Aeroline..... 109 E1
Sentidos Tapas.....(see 107)	DiGi Imax Theatre.....(see 99)	Air China..... 110 E1
Seri Angkasa.....(see 18)	Espanda..... 91 B3	Air France.....(see 73)
Seri Melayu..... 72 E5	Frangipani Bar.....(see 98)	Air India.....(see 112)
Shang Palace.....(see 49)	Golden Screen Cinema.....(see 99)	All-Nippon Airways..... 111 B5
Shook!.....(see 107)	Hard Rock Kafé..... 92 B3	Avis..... 112 C2
Si Chuan Dou Hua..... 73 D7	La Queen..... 93 B3	Berjaya Air.....(see 99)
Signatures Food Court..... 74 D2	Neway.....(see 99)	British Airways (Agent)..... 113 D4
Spice of India.....(see 74)	Passion..... 94 C3	Cathay Pacific.....(see 8)
Srirekha..... 75 C6	Planet Hollywood.....(see 101)	China Airlines..... 114 C7
Tai Thong Grand Restaurant.....(see 3)	Ruoms..... 95 B3	China Eastern.....(see 110)
Top Hat..... 76 D4	Saloma.....(see 6)	Emirates..... 115 B4
U Village..... 77 C7	Tanjung Golden Village.....(see 25)	Ethad.....(see 14)
Vansh.....(see 107)	Top Room @ Top Hat.....(see 76)	EVA Air..... 116 C4
Wa-Raku..... 78 F4	Zouk..... 96 B2	Garuda Indonesian Airlines.....(see 5)
Wong Ah Wah..... 79 B7		Hertz..... 117 C4
	SHOPPING ☑	Japan Airlines.....(see 5)
DRINKING ☑ ☑	Art Seni.....(see 107)	Jet Airways.....(see 112)
Beach Club Café..... 80 B3	Avenue K..... 97 D2	KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.....(see 73)
Blue Boy..... 81 C6	BB Plaza..... 98 C6	Kuwait Airways.....(see 115)
Ceylon Bar.....(see 41)	Berjaya Times Square..... 99 C8	Lufthansa.....(see 116)
Finnegan's..... 82 C6	House of Suzie Wong.....(see 107)	Malaysia Airlines..... 118 C4
Green Man..... 83 B6	Imbi Plazqa..... 100 C7	Mayflower..... 119 C6
Legends.....(see 95)	Jim Thompson Silk.....(see 107)	Myanmar International Airways (Agent)..... 120 C5
Luna..... 84 A4	KL Plaza..... 101 D6	Orix..... 121 C7
No Black Tie..... 85 B5	Kompleks Budaya Kraf..... 102 F5	Philippine Airlines (Agent).....(see 112)
Old Town Kopitiam.....(see 104)	Lot 10..... 103 D6	Qatar Airways.....(see 120)
Olé Café.....(see 83)	Plaza Low Yat..... 104 C7	Royal Brunei Airlines.....(see 115)
Rum Jungle..... 86 C3	Pucuk Rebung..... 105 D2	Sri Lankan Airlines.....(see 117)
SevenAteNine..... 87 C3	Sarawak Paradise in Borneo..... 106 B7	Thai Airways.....(see 111)
Sixty Nine Bistro..... 88 C8	Starhill Gallery..... 107 D6	Vietnam Airlines..... 122 B5
Skybar..... 89 E3	Sungei Wang Plaza..... 108 C6	

Tue-Sat) and – of course – great views of the Petronas Towers. In the early evening, it can seem like everyone in town has come down here to watch the glowing towers punching up into the night sky.

Kids and kidults can fill an educational few hours at **Petrosains** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2331 8181; www.petrosains.com.my; Level 4, Suria KLCC; adult/child RM12/7; ☎ 9.30am-4pm Tue-Thu, 1.30-4pm Fri, 9.30am-5pm Sat, Sun & holidays), an interactive science discovery centre in Suria KLCC. Many of the science-oriented displays and activities focus on the wonderful things that petrol has bought to Malaysia – no prizes for guessing who sponsors the museum. There are all sorts of buttons to press and levers to pull; you don't have to be a boy to enjoy it, but it probably helps.

The impressive **Aquaria KLCC** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2333 1888; www.klaquaria.com; Concourse level, KL Convention Centre; adult/child RM38/26; ☎ 11am-8pm) is a short stroll from Suria KLCC, in the basement of the KL Convention Centre. As well as tanks of colourful fish and touch-a-starfish type activities, you can walk through a 90m underwater tunnel

to view sinister-looking (but mostly harmless) sand tiger sharks and giant gropers. If possible, time your trip to coincide with the shark feeding (3pm on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday).

You can swap consumerism for culture at the interesting **Galeri Petronas** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2051 7770; www.galeripetronas.com; 3rd fl, Suria KLCC; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun), an art gallery which showcases contemporary photography and paintings. It's a bright, modern space and the work on display often delves deep into Malaysian history and culture. Check the website for details of upcoming shows.

DHARMA REALM GUAN YIN SAGELY MONASTERY

Just down the road from the consumer excesses of Suria KLCC, you can retreat into quiet meditation at this expansive **Buddhist temple** (Map pp84-5; 161 Jln Ampang; ☎ 7am-4pm). Although modern, the calm spaces, potted bonsai, mandala ceilings and giant gilded statues create an appropriately contemplative mood. The shrine is dedicated to Guan Yin, the Buddhist goddess

of compassion, represented by the central statue in the main shrine.

MENARA KL & BUKIT NANAS FOREST RESERVE

Although the Petronas Towers are taller, the 421m **Menara KL** (KL Tower; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2020 5448; www.menarakl.com.my; 2 Jln Puncak) offers the best views over the city. Surrounded by a dense area of pristine jungle, this lofty spire is KL's answer to Seattle's Space Needle or Auckland's Sky Tower. This is the world's fourth-highest telecommunications tower – the bulb at the top contains the revolving restaurant Seri Angkasa (p112) and an **observation deck** (adult/child RM20/10; ☎ 9am-10pm) with soaring views over KL. This is the best place to appreciate the phenomenal growth of the city – on clear days you can see planes taking off

from Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, 20km from the town centre. A free shuttle bus runs between the tower and Jln P Ramlee.

The Menara KL stands atop the **Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 7am-6pm), gazetted in 1906. A series of nature trails snake through the jungle, which contains a variety of animals and plants typical of lowland dipterocarp forests. You can access the park from Jln Raja Chulan, Jln Bukit Nanas or from the Menara KL. Free guided tours leave from the base of the Menara KL at 11am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm and 4.30pm daily lasting around 45 minutes. Drop into the **information centre** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2698 8244; www.forestry.gov.my; ☎ 9am-5pm) on Jln Raja Chulan to see displays on the wildlife inside the park.

Near the base of the tower, **AJ Hackett** (☎ 2141 0822; www.aj-hackett.com; adult/child RM30/15; ☎ 11am-7pm) operates the Flying Fox, a giant,

OBJECTS IN THE ARCHITECTURE

For reasons best known to themselves, the British decided that Indian Mughal architecture was the perfect look for colonial KL. In more recent years, Malaysians have had their own ideas, creating buildings with a distinct local identity inspired by traditional ceremonial objects and motifs from Islamic art. The most famous example of this is the Petronas Towers (see p83) by the Argentinean architect Cesar Pelli. The cross-section of each tower is an eight-sided star that echoes the patterns from Arabic tiles, the five tiers represent the five pillars of Islam and the crowning masts call to mind two gigantic minarets.

Other striking buildings to look out for include the following:

- Chulan Tower (Map pp84-5; 3 Jln Conlay) – completed in 2006, this new skyscraper on the edge of the Golden Triangle resembles a vast Chinese pagoda, jacked up on top of a red-marble tower.
- Istana Budaya (p121) – designed by Mohammed Kamar Ya'akub, the building's soaring roof is based on a traditional Malay floral decoration of betel leaves, while its footprint resembles a *wau bulan* (Malay moon kite).
- Kompleks Dayabumi (p77) – this 35-storey marble-clad tower is one of KL's most graceful buildings. It was designed by Nik Mohammed and the hanging marble screens pay tribute to the pierced screens on medieval mosques.
- Menara KL (above) – the tower's bulbous pinnacle is inspired by a Malaysian spinning top, and the interior features Arabic inscriptions and stucco work that recalls a mosque mihrab (the niche that points towards Mecca).
- Menara Maybank (Map pp78-9; 100 Jln Tun Perak) – designed by Hijas Kasturi, this was one of KL's first skyscrapers but it still stands out today for its chunky design inspired by the handle of a kris, the traditional Malay dagger.
- National Library of Malaysia (p74) – one of the city's most striking buildings, created by architect Shamsuddin Mohammed; traditional motifs from Malay fabrics are incorporated into both the roof and interior walls.
- Tabung Haji (Map pp84-5; 201 Jln Tun Abdul Razak) – another of Kasturi's creations, this striking tower houses the Haj pilgrimage funding body. The five main exterior columns represent the five pillars of Islam while the overall structure recalls the drum used to summon pilgrims to the Haj and the shape of a traditional Arabic perfume vessel.

HERITAGE UNDER THREAT

Once upon a time, the entire business district of Kuala Lumpur (KL) was dominated by elegant colonial-era mansions belonging to tin and rubber tycoons. One by one, these stately homes have been bulldozed in the name of progress and profit, replaced by sky-piercing office blocks and aircraft hangar-sized shopping malls. The few mansions that remain face an uncertain future. Some – like the MTC (see p76) – have been saved by becoming embassies or government offices but many are abandoned, used as car parks until developers find the money to start the concrete pouring. You can witness one of these sad stories just behind the (ironically named) Asian Heritage Row: **Wisma Loke** (Map p92; Jln Medan Tuanku), the fading former home of tin and rubber mogul Loke Yew, is slowly falling into ruin. Similarly threatened are the wooden Malay houses of Kampung Baru, where permission for development is already being granted.

In 2005 the government passed the National Heritage Bill which allows the authorities to protect properties of historic note by declaring them heritage buildings. The Malay version of the UK National Trust, **Badan Warisan Malaysia** (Heritage of Malaysia Trust; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 9273; www.badanwarisan.org.my; 2 Jln Stonor; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) is itself housed in a restored colonial mansion. Trustees are campaigning to save similar historic buildings around Malaysia. One of the trust's big success stories was the **Rumah Penghulu** (Map pp84-5; Badan Warisan Malaysia, 2 Jln Stonor; suggested donation RM5; ☎ tours 11am & 3pm Mon-Sat), a glorious wooden stilt-house saved from dereliction and moved to the trust headquarters from Kedah. The Trust also holds exhibitions in the mansion, which has a good shop selling antiques, crafts and books on Malay architecture and history.

high-speed death-slide, one of several thrill rides dotted around the city.

OTHER SIGHTS

Immediately southwest of Berjaya Times Sq is the looming hulk of **Pudu Jail** (Map pp84-5). The star-shaped building was constructed by the British in 1895 and hundreds of prisoners were executed here (many for drug offences) before the prison was closed in 1996. Painted around the perimeter wall is the world's longest mural, a frieze of tropical trees and islands created by prisoners with 2000L of paint. Many locals believe that the prison is haunted and local travel agents occasionally organise ghost tours of the decaying cells and corridors. See p99 for a list of agents, and contact them to see if any tours are currently running.

A short stroll east is the gleaming modern **Masjid Albukhary** (Map pp78-9; Jln Hang Tuah; ☎ 6am-midnight). Its dome features stunning blue tile work outside and detailed stucco work inside. Visitors are welcome outside of prayer times.

Brickfields, KL Sentral & Around

The following attractions are best reached from KL Sentral.

NATIONAL MUSEUM

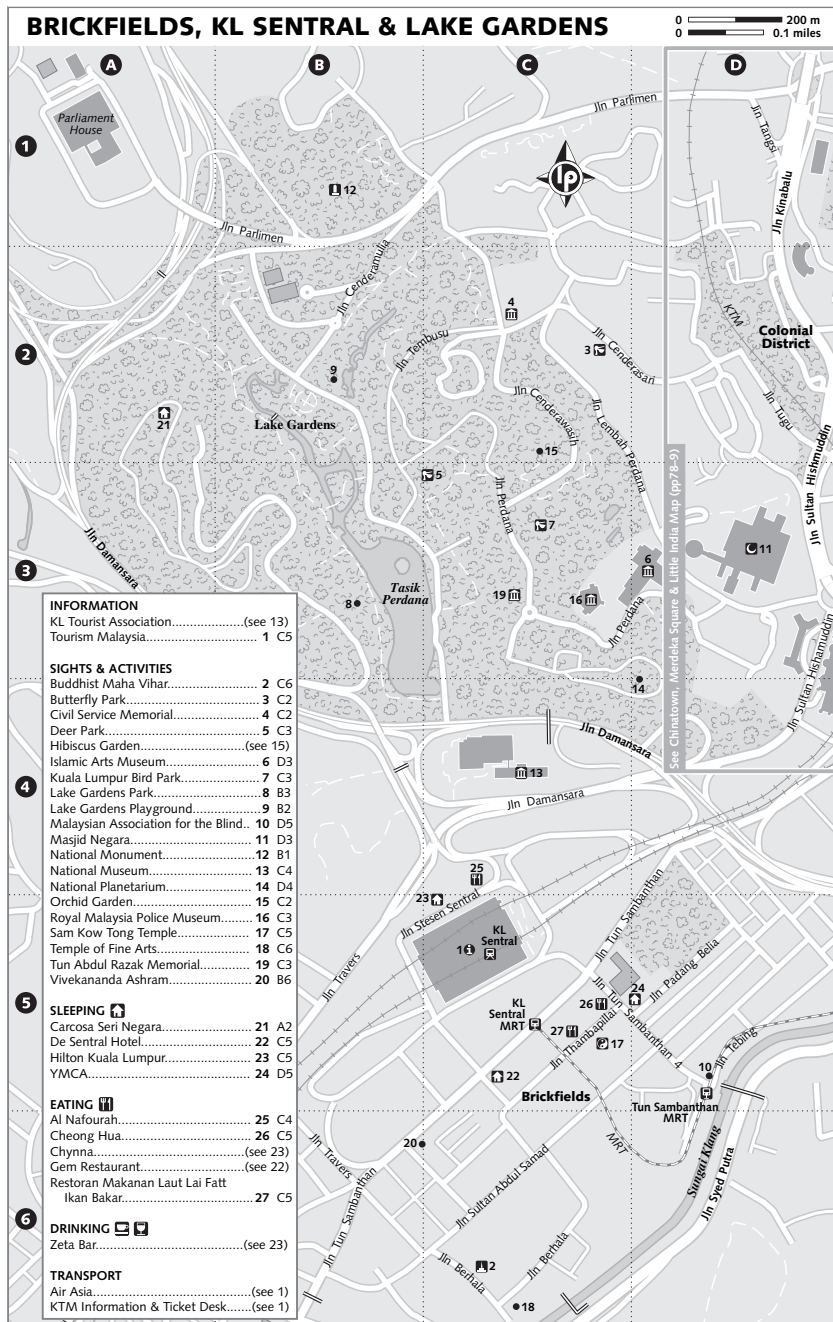
Housed in a striking 1960s building styled after a Sarawak longhouse, this **museum** (Muzium Negara; Map p90; ☎ 2282 6255; www.museum.gov.my; Jln

Damansara; adult/child RM2/free; ☎ 9am-6pm) has an extensive but musty collection of exhibits on the history, economy, arts, crafts and culture of Malaysia. The galleries are slowly being renovated but most of the new displays seem to concentrate on the achievements of modern Malay royals and politicians. Probably the most interesting exhibits are the cultural displays in the main building, the treasures from Malay shipwrecks in the annexe and the 19th-century stilt house in the garden (formerly owned by the Sultan of Terengganu). The KL Tourist Association (p76) office occupies a wooden pavilion in the grounds. Free museum tours (in English and French) leave the ticket desk at 10am on Tuesday and 11am on Thursday – contact **Museum Volunteers Malaysia** (☎ 2282 6255; mvmenquiries@yahoo.com) for more information.

Although the museum is very close to KL Sentral station, it's surrounded by a snarl of spaghetti junctions – the easiest way to get here is by taxi, or via the walkway over the highway south of the Lake Gardens.

OLD KL TRAIN STATION

Midway between Chinatown and KL Sentral is another of AB Hubbock's Moorish-inspired fantasies. **KL Train Station** (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan Hishamuddin) opened with much pomp and circumstance in 1911 to receive trains from Butterworth and Singapore. This wonderful



confection of turrets and towers looks particularly impressive in the golden afternoon sunlight – half close your eyes and you can imagine the old *Orient Express* steaming in from Singapore. The soaring domes and arches were skilfully restored in the 1980s, but the station was replaced by the new KL Sentral station in 2001. Today the platforms are only used for KTM Komuter trains to the suburbs. Although it's looking a bit dishevelled these days, it's still worth coming here to imagine the glory days.

The station is mirrored by the equally handsome **Malayan Railway Administration Building** (Map pp78–9) across the road. Walking here from Chinatown, the best route to follow is to take the pedestrian bridge across from the Central Market to Kompleks Dayabumi and then head south around the back of the post office to the underpass leading to the Masjid Negara.

THEAN HOU TEMPLE

The Chinese community has created some impressive modern temples around KL, including this ornate **temple** (off Map pp72–3; ☎ 2274 7088; www.hainannet.com; Persiaran Endah, admission free; ☎ 8am–10pm), off Jln Syed Putra, just south of Brickfields. Crowning a forested hilltop, this towering shrine is full of gaudy statuary and topped by a soaring dragon roof. The main shrine is dedicated to the Heavenly Mother, Thean Hou, flanked by Guan Yin (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) on the right and Shuiwei Shengniang (the Goddess of the Waterfront) to her left.

There are great views from the temple's upper decks, while the basement level houses hawkers stalls and stalls selling prayer beads and other religious bric-a-brac. To reach the temple, take a taxi or catch bus 27 or 52

from Klang bus station and then walk up the hill (ask to be dropped off near the temple). Another option is to take the monorail to Tun Sambanthan station, cross Jln Syed Putra using the overpass and walk up the hill.

OTHER SIGHTS

There are several other interesting religious monuments in Brickfields. The small **Sam Kow Tong Temple** (Map p90; 16 Jln Thambapillai; ☎ 7am–5pm) has an impressive dragon roof but a slightly sterile interior. Nearby you'll find the redeveloped **Temple of Fine Arts** (Map p90; ☎ 2274 3709; 114 Jln Berhala) and the huge **Buddhist Maha Vihar** (Map p90; ☎ 2274 1141; www.buddhistmahavihara.com; 123 Jln Berhala), centred on a stucco Buddhist shrine dating from 1895, founded by Sinhalese Buddhists.

On the far side of the river, off Jln Istana, is the **Istana Negara** (Map pp72–3), the official residence of the Sultan of Malaysia. The palace itself is only distantly visible through the trees, but locals flock here to see the hourly changing of the palace guard (from 8am to 4pm weekdays).

Pudu

PUDU MARKET

South of the Golden Triangle, accessible by LRT from Hang Tuah station, **Pudu Market** (Map pp72–3; Jln Pasar Baru; ☎ 6am–2pm) is KL's biggest wet and dry market. It's a frenetic place, full of squawking chickens, frantic shoppers and porters forcing their way through the crowds with outrageous loads. Stalls here sell everything from goldfish in bowls to pig heads, cows tongues and durians in baskets. Arrive early in the morning to experience the market at its most lively and pungent. You can recover from the sensory overload at the attached hawker court – see p113. Pudu Market

NIGHT MARKETS

As well as the permanent markets dotted around KL, atmospheric *pasar malam* (night markets) are held once a week at several different locations around the city. The night markets are quite a spectacle – whole streets vanish suddenly under a sea of hawker stalls, traders' tables and motorcycles modified into mobile kitchens. Stalls are piled high with grilled fish, fragrant curries in tin pots and mysterious rice cakes bundled up in banana leaves. Rice and noodles swish around in giant woks, roti and *dosa* (paper-thin Indian pancakes) sizzle on oily hot plates, and locals gather in their hundreds to feast until the early hours of the morning. The top *pasar malam* in KL are the Saturday night markets on Jln Raja Muda Musa in Kampung Baru (see p114) and Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman in Little India (p113), and the Sunday night market on Jln Telawi in Bangsar (p113).



INFORMATION		Sheraton Imperial.....14 B4		Ivy.....26 B4	
Alliance Française.....1 E1	British Embassy.....2 F4	French Embassy.....3 F4	Hospital Kuala Lumpur.....4 B1	MSL Travel.....5 A2	National Library of Malaysia.....6 D1
Post Office.....7 A4	SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Bazaar Baru Market.....8 B3	Imperial Spa.....(see 14)	Kampung Baru Mosque.....9 C3
Kuala Lumpur Craft Market.....(see 10)	National Art Gallery.....10 C1	Tatt Khalsa Diwan Gurdwara.....11 B3	Wisma Loke.....12 A4	DRINKING	
SLEEPING		Ben Soo Homestay.....13 A3	DRINKING		Bed.....25 B4
EATING		Bujang Lapok.....16 C3	Chop 'n' Steak.....17 C3	CoChine by Indochine.....18 B4	D'Istana Jalamas Café.....(see 28)
ENTERTAINMENT		Cynna.....27 B4	Garçon.....(see 29)	Istana Budaya.....28 C1	Loft.....(see 27)
SHOPPING		Lotus Hotel.....20 A4	Pasar Malam (Night Market).....21 C3	Pesona Food Court.....(see 31)	Restoran Buhary.....22 B4
TRANSPORT		AAM (Automobile Association Malaysia).....33 E3		Long-Distance Taxi Station.....(see 34)	
		Pekeliling Bus Station.....34 A1			

is five minutes' walk from Pudu LRT station; go south along Jln Pudu, right onto Jln Pasar, then right down Jln Pasar Baharu, passing the colourful temple **Choon Wan Kong** (Map pp72-3; Jln Pasar Baharu) dating from 1879.

Chow Kit & Titiwangsa

Access the following sights from Chow Kit or Titiwangsa monorail station.

BAZAAR BARU MARKET

This lively **market** (Map p92; 469-473 Jln TAR, Chow Kit; ☎ 8am-9pm) sells clothes, toys, buckets, stationery, noodles, spices, fresh meat and live, flapping catfish, as well as a staggering array of weird and wonderful tropical fruit (see p81). Overweight cats loiter around the wet market looking for scraps, and locals struggle through the narrow aisles with huge bags of shopping. Just wandering round is a heady, sensory experience, particularly for the sense of smell. Stroll east along Jln Raja Alang to peek at the **Tatt Khalsa Diwan Gurdwara** (Map p92; 24 Jln Raja Alang), the largest Sikh Temple in Southeast Asia and spiritual home for KL's 75,000 Sikhs.

TAMAN TASIK TITIWANGSA

Head to relaxing **Taman Tasik Titiwangsa** (Map pp72-3; ☎ daylight hours), a recreational park surrounding Lake Titiwangsa, for a picture-postcard view of the city skyline. As well as relaxing walking paths and jolly boating on the lake (from RM3 per hour), there are tennis courts, squash courts and a remote-controlled car racing track where enthusiasts stage miniature Formula Ones. The park is a favourite spot for courting Malaysian couples (and the religious police on the lookout for improper

behaviour). Temporary attractions are often set up on the lakeshore – in 2007, the park played host to the Eye on Malaysia, an oversized big wheel styled after the London Eye.

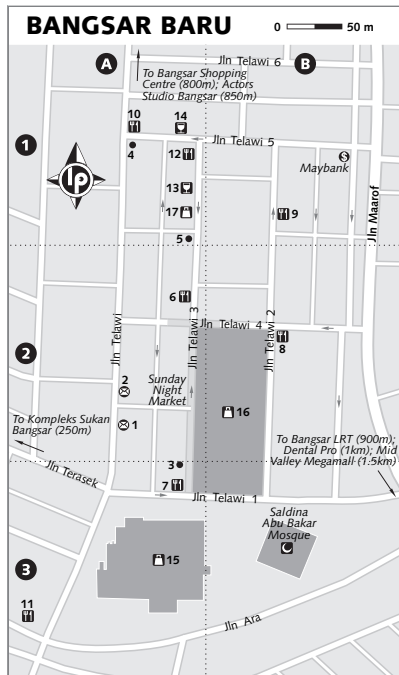
Taman Tasik Titiwangsa is a 10-minute walk east of the Titiwangsa monorail station. Rapid KL bus B101 runs between Titiwangsa and KL Sentral, via Jln Cheng Lock in Chinatown. Bus B102 runs here from Jln Bukit Bintang and bus B103 runs here from the KLCC.

NATIONAL ART GALLERY

Housed in a striking pyramid-shaped block between Jln Tun Razak and the park is KL's main **art gallery** (Balai Seni Lukis Negara; Map p92; ☎ 4025 4990; www.artgallery.gov.my; 2 Jln Temerloh), showcasing the best of contemporary Malaysian art. The gallery was closed for renovation at the time of writing, but it's set to reopen in 2008 – check locally for the latest information on opening times and entry fees. Next door to the gallery is the Istana Budaya (see p121), built according to traditional principles of Malay architecture but almost certainly influenced by the Sydney Opera House.

Kampung Baru

Just a few hundred metres from the high-rise business district, the Malay neighbourhood of Kampung Baru looks like a rural Malaysian village smuggled into the heart of the city. Despite overwhelming pressure to develop this area, the streets are lined with old-fashioned wooden houses and people go quietly about their business on the leafy residential streets – except on Saturday night when a bustling *pasar malam* (night market) takes over the area around Jln Raja Muda Musa (see p114).



This is a place to just come and soak up the sleepy village atmosphere. The Kampung Baru LRT station provides easy access to the backstreets and it's worth coming here for lunch any day of the week. Jln Raja Muda Musa is lined with hawker-style restaurants serving excellent Malay food to hordes of hungry city workers – see p114 for some recommendations.

Nearby on Jln Raja Alang is the **Kampung Baru Mosque**, built in 1924, with a handsome gateway decorated with eye-catching tiles in traditional Islamic patterns. Stalls around the mosque sell religious paraphernalia, including white *kopia* and black songkok, the traditional head coverings for Malay Muslim men. It's a short stroll west from here to Chow Kit and the Bazaar Baru market.

ACTIVITIES

Bowling & Pool

Pool halls are a popular diversion for folk in the city and most of the big malls. Most of the big malls also have enormous bowling alleys – the going rate is around RM5 per game plus RM2 for shoe hire. Good

INFORMATION	
DHL.....	1 A2
MPH Bookstores Bangsar.....	(see 16)
Post Office.....	2 A2
Silverfish Books.....	3 A3
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES	
Celebrity Fitness.....	(see 16)
Touches de Siam.....	4 A1
Yoga 2 Health.....	5 A1
EATING	
Alexis Bistro.....	6 A2
Bangsar Seafood Garden Restaurant.....	(see 11)
Country Farm Organics.....	(see 15)
Cungdin.....	(see 11)
Delicious.....	(see 16)
Devi's Corner.....	7 A3
Hawker Court.....	8 B2
La Bodega.....	9 B1
Nasi Kandar Pelita.....	10 A1
One Bangsar.....	11 A3
Saffron.....	(see 11)
Sagar.....	(see 11)
Telawi Street Bistro.....	12 A1
DRINKING	
Bakerzin.....	(see 15)
Bar Flam.....	13 A1
Bar Upstairs.....	(see 6)
Finnegan's.....	14 A1
SHOPPING	
Bangsar Village I.....	15 A3
Bangsar Village II.....	16 B2
Mumbai SE.....	(see 16)
Planet Scuba.....	(see 10)
Valentine Willie Fine Art.....	17 A1

places to send balls and pins flying include the following:

Ampang Bowl (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 8323; 5th fl, Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi; ☎ 10am-1am, to 3am Fri & Sat)

Brewbull Pool (off Map p94; ☎ 2938 3893; 3rd fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ noon-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat) Pool tables cost RM3/12 per game/hour.

Cosmic Bowl (off Map p94; ☎ 2287 8280; 3rd fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-1am, to 2am Fri & Sat)

Golf

KL has a half a dozen world-class golf courses, but most are only open to paid-up members or guests from affiliated international clubs. The following clubs welcome visitors without the rigmarole of being nominated by an existing member. Call ahead to check club rules and rates.

Kelab Darul Ehsan (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 4257 2333; www.berjayaclubs.com/kde; Taman Tun Abdul Razak, Jln Kerja Air Lama; 9/18 holes from RM50/80; ☎ 10am-7pm, to 8.30pm Sat & Sun) Respected nine-hole course on the northeast city limits.

Titivangsa Golf Club (Map pp72-3; ☎ 2693 4903; Aras 17172, Taman Tasik Titivangsa; 9 holes RM31.50; ☎ 7am-6pm Tue-Sun, 2-6pm Mon) Nine-hole course behind Taman Tasik Titivangsa.

Gyms & Yoga

All the top-end hotels have gyms, and there are several chains dotted around the city. Note that most places require you to have an interview with a personal trainer to draw up an exercise regimen – a bit of a hassle if you just want a workout. Ask about short-

term membership deals – these can work out far cheaper than the usual admission charge of RM50.

California Fitness (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 1000; www.californiafitness.com; Menara Standard Chartered, Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 6.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-9pm Sat, 10am-9pm Sun)

Celebrity Fitness (Map p94; ☎ 2092 8000; Bangsar Village II, Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 6am-midnight)

Fitness First (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2711 3299; www.fitnessfirst.com.my; Wisma SPK, 22 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 6.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat & Sun)

A KUALA LUMPUR PAMPERING

Spa treatments are all the rage in KL and even men are getting in on the act with dedicated treatments for male wellness at many of the city's exclusive spas. The best spas are generally found in big five-star hotels, but more accessible spas are appearing all over the city. KL's spas draw on traditional therapies from India, China and Southeast Asia, reflecting the diverse ethnic groups who inhabit the city – a perfect way to unwind after a cramped flight or the train ride from Thailand or Singapore.

The best place to start your quest for indulgence is the swish Starhill Gallery (see p122) on Jln Bukit Bintang. The 'Pamper' floor is dedicated to exclusive spa and beauty treatments: **Spa Indrani** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 3868; www.spaindrani.com; ☎ 10am-10pm) offers Asian therapies for men and women; **Ayurvedium** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 2202; www.ayurvedium.com; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) specialises in traditional Indian herbal treatments; and **Esentials** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 3288; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) specialises in facial treatments.

Next door at the JW Marriott, the award-winning **Starhill Spa** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2715 9000; JW Marriott, 183 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9pm Mon-Sat, 9.45am-7pm Sun) offers aromatherapy baths, exfoliating scrubs and various styles of massage, plus steam rooms and plunge pools. Nearby at the Ritz Carlton, **Spa Village** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 9090; Ritz Carlton, 168 Jln Imbi; ☎ 9am-9pm) offers a similarly indulgent menu of Chinese, Indian and Southeast Asian healing and toning therapies.

There are many more upmarket spas in the Jln Bukit Bintang area. At Berjaya Times Square, **JoJoBa Spa** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 7766; www.jojoba.com.my; 15th fl, East Wing, Berjaya Times Square Hotel, 1 Jln Imbi; ☎ 11am-12.30pm) claims to be Malaysia's largest tourist spa – come for seaweed wraps, coffee scrubs and ginger tea. Around the corner on Jln Imbi, **Rustic Nirvana** (Map pp84-5; www.rusticnirvana.com; 173-175a Jln Imbi; ☎ 11am-8.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat) offers a host of health pampering and holistic treatments for women only.

Chinatown is only just getting the spa bug, but **Old Asia** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2273 9888; 1st fl, Central Market; ☎ 10am-9pm) in the Central Market offers a full range of rubs and scrubs. Bangsar Baru has half a dozen exclusive spas. **Touches de Siam** (Map p94; ☎ 2287 2866; www.toucheadesiam.com.my; 2a Jln Telawi; ☎ 10am-10pm) specialises in Thai massage, which focuses on the entire skeletal-muscular system. Another spa worth the trip across town is the **Imperial Spa** (Map p92; Sheraton Imperial, Jln Sultan Ismail, Dang Wangi; ☎ 10am-10pm) at the Sheraton Imperial.

If the top-end spas seem out of reach, there are numerous Chinese massage and reflexology centres strung out along Jln Bukit Bintang. Pricing is fairly consistent – around RM65 per hour for a full body massage and RM25 for 30 minutes of foot reflexology, though you can bargain down – but standards vary and some places are slightly seedy. One reliable option on the strip is the local branch of **Old Asia** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 9888; 14 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-10pm); as well as massages and reflexology, you can try ear candle and hot stone treatments.

Another interesting option is to visit one of the blind masseurs in Brickfields. There are numerous massage centres here, employing blind people who might otherwise be forced to beg for a living. Contact the **Malaysian Association for the Blind** (Map p90; ☎ 2272 2677; www.mab.org.my; Kompleks MAB, Jln Tebing, Brickfields) for recommendations.

Yoga 2 Health (Map p94; ☎ 2282 3866; www.yoga2health.com.my; 1st fl, 21A Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; nonmembers RM45-50; 🕒 11am-7pm Tue-Sun) Conveniently located yoga centre in Bangsar Baru.

Yogshakti (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 4252 4714; www.yogshakti.com; 1 Lorong Damai 13; classes RM45; 🕒 beginners 7pm Mon-Wed, intermediate 7pm Thu, Sat & Sun) Hatha yoga centre in the embassy district east of Jln Tun Razak, off Jln Ampang.

Swimming & Other Sports

Hotel pools in KL are generally only open to guests, but there are some excellent water parks, including the Desa Waterpark (p130) and Sunway Lagoon (p129). As well as the following sports centres, you can rent tennis courts at the YMCA (see p104) provided you have your own racket.

Chin Woo Stadium (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 4602; admission RM4; 🕒 2-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun) Great city views at this 50m outdoor pool. All swim suits must be tight fitting. Located off Jln Hang Jebat.

Kompleks Sukan Bangsar (off Map p94; ☎ 2284 6065; 3 Jln Terasek 3, Bangsar Baru; entry adult/child RM1.50/60 sen 🕒 9.30am-noon, 2pm-4.30pm & 6-8.30pm) Entry fee covers one 2½-hour session. You can also rent courts for badminton from 8am to 2am (per hour RM4) and tennis from 7am to 11pm (per hour RM4).

Theme Parks

There are numerous theme parks and water parks dotted around KL. The most convenient is **Cosmo's World** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2117 3118; Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi; adult/child RM25/15; 🕒 10am-10pm), located inside the Berjaya Times Square shopping centre. Despite the mall location, there's a full-sized looping coaster plus a good selection of thrill rides for teenagers and gentler rides for families. (Avoid the DNA Mixer unless you want too see your *nasi lemak* a second time.) You'll find more thrill rides and wet and wild activities at Sunway Lagoon (see p129), Mines Wonderland (see p130) and Genting Highlands (p133).

WALKING TOURS

Although KL places many obstacles in the path of walkers, Chinatown and Little India are great places to explore on foot. The following walking tours will take you to the best of the sights.

Chinatown Walk

This tour starts at **Pasar Seni LRT station (1)** and explores the temples and sights of Chinatown. Walk along Jln Cheng Lock to **Central Market (2; p77)** on the corner of Jln Hang Kasturi.

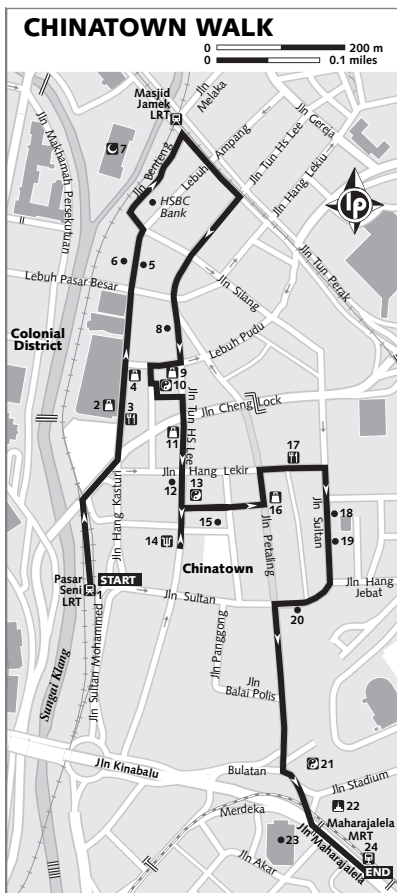
WALK FACTS

Start Pasar Seni LRT Station

Finish Maharajalela Monorail Station

Distance 2km

Duration 1½ hours



Browse the craft stalls, then pop over the road for a top-notch *roti canai* (flat bread with curry sauce) and a mug of *teh tarik* (tea with evaporated milk) at **Restoran Yusooif Dan Zakhir (3; p110)**. Continue north on Jln Hang Kasturi and take a peek at the aromatic **Soon Hing Cheong Ginseng shop (4)** on the corner of Lebuhr Pudu, a popular centre for traditional Chinese medicine. Next, cross Lebuhr Pasar Besar into

Medan Pasar (5), the site of KL's original market, marked by a clock tower built in 1937 to commemorate the coronation of King George VI. Note the striking **painted shophouses (6)** along both sides of the road.

Continue north behind the HSBC Bank along Jln Benteng for the best view of the colonial-era **Masjid Jamek (7; p76)**, KL's most atmospheric mosque. If dressed appropriately, you can peek inside, except during the weekly Friday prayers. Next cut back along Jln Tun Perak and turn right into Jln Tun HS Lee. Stroll south until you reach the bus stand at Lebuhr Pudu, then look right to see the glorious but time-ravaged frontage of the **Bank Simpanan Building (8)**, built in 1914 (it now houses Le Village hostel, p101). Cross over Lebuhr Pudu and duck into **Thin Yee (9)**, a Chinese store selling incense, spirit money and crockery.

Continue west along Lebuhr Pudu then duck down the next alley to the back gate of the historic **Sze Ya Temple (10; p77)**. Exit via the gatehouse on Jln Tun HS Lee and cross over busy Jln Cheng Lock. Note the pint-sized pines in the **bonsai shops (11)** to your right then cross Jln Hang Lekir, passing the four-storey Art Deco **Lee Rubber Building (12)**, the tallest building in KL when it was constructed in the 1930s (the bookstore on the ground floor is good for postcards and stationery).

Further along Jln Tun HS Lee on the right is the **Guandi Temple (13; p77)**, another Taoist temple filled with the scent of incense smoke. On the other side of the road is the 22m-high **gopuram** (temple tower) of the **Sri Maha Mariamman Temple (14; p76)** – step inside to see devotees making fragrant offerings of jasmine flowers and carnations. Cross the road again and duck down **Jln Sang Guna (15)**, the covered arcade housing Chinatown's pungent wet and dry market.

Beyond is the famous **Petaling Market (16; p77)** – if you arrive any time after midday, the whole street will be crowded with stalls selling fake everything. Head north through the market and turn right Jln Hang Lekir, passing several **street-side restaurants (17)** where you can grab a quick satay. Next, turn right along Jln Sultan – as you head south, grab some tropical fruit from the well-stocked **fruit stall (18)** opposite Swiss-Inn and pop into **Shanghai Books (19; ☎ 2078 4642; 63C Jln Sultan; 🕒 10am-7pm)** to check out the *chop* (Chinese seals) and calligraphy materials.

Follow the road round to the right, passing a string of creature-crammed **pet shops (20)**, then turn south down Jln Petaling. Turn left at the end of the road to reach the ornate **Chan She Shu Yuen Temple (21; p77)** and **Guan Yin Temple (22; p77)**. Over the footbridge is the **Chinese Assembly Hall (23; p121)**, built during the British era and now a focal point for the campaign to stop discrimination against Indian and Chinese Malaysians. Finish your walk at **Maharajalela monorail station (24)** and let the air-conditioned monorail whisk you to your next destination.

Colonial KL & Little India Walk

Starting from the **Sultan Abdul Samad Building (1; p80)**, this walk takes in the highlights of colonial Kuala Lumpur and Little India.

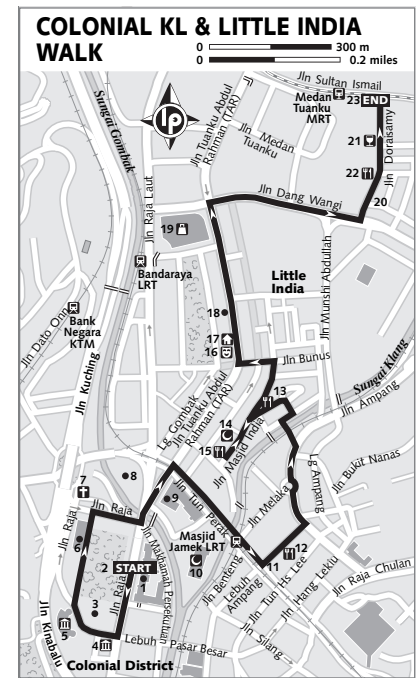
WALK FACTS

Start Sultan Abdul Samad Building

Finish Medan Tuanku

Distance 2km

Duration Three hours



Begin your walk by examining the handsome frontage of this outrageous Victorian Mughal fantasy, formerly the Secretariat of the British colonial government and now home to one of Malaysia's highest courts. The building looks even better from across the road in **Merdeka Square** (2; p80), which used to resound to the thwack of leather on willow during cricket matches held by the British administration.

After pausing to note the enormous **flagpole** (3) where the Malaysian flag was first raised on 31 August 1957, take a circuit around the cricket field, ducking into the **National History Museum** (4; p81) to swot up on Malaysian history. Next, check out the gallery at the **Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library** (5; p74) and stroll past the front of the mock-Tudor **Royal Selangor Club** (6; p80), still a meeting point for KL high society. Cross Jln Raja and pop into **St Mary's Cathedral** (7; p82), a white-washed British colonial church from 1894.

Returning to Jln Raja Laut, head north, passing the bizarre **pitcherplant fountain** (8), a theme-park creation set in a small garden marooned by a cat's cradle of roads. Turn right at the next major junction onto Jln Tun Perak, passing another mock-Mughal building – the **Sessions & Magistrates Courts** (9; Jln Tun Razak), designed by AB Hubbock, who also created the Sultan Abdul Samad Building and the landmark **Masjid Jamek** (10; p76), a short walk east along Jln Tun Perak. Nip inside the mosque if you're dressed appropriately, then continue along the same road to the junction with **Lebu Ampang** (11), which marks the edge of Little India.

The sights, sounds and smells of South India will engulf as you stroll north up Lebu Ampang – shops are piled high with Ganesh statues and incense, radios blast out Bollywood soundtracks and busy **restaurants** (12) serve inexpensive South Indian vegetarian food and Indian sweets (see p109). At the end of the road, turn left into Jln Ampang then take the footbridge over the river and stroll through the bustling alleyways to emerge near Jln Masjid India, passing a covered **food court** (13) serving tasty Indian snacks. You're now in the thick of Little India – note the goldsmiths, sari shops and flower vendors on all sides.

Detour south to **Masjid India** (14), the main place of worship for local Muslims, and take a peek at the surrounding covered market. The bazaarlike atmosphere of the streets is enhanced every Saturday from late afternoon when a **pasar malam** (15; p108) sets up along

Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman – the narrow alley sandwiched between Jln Tuanku Abdul Rahman (Jln TAR) and Jln Masjid India. Stroll north to Jln Bunus and cross Jln TAR to the historic **Coliseum Cinema** (16; ☎ 2692 5995; Jln TAR), which now screens nonstop Tamil and Bollywood blockbusters. Next door is the similarly historic **Coliseum Hotel** (17; p103) – although faded, this colonial relic is a great spot to eat or drink or even sleep.

Continue north along Jln TAR passing the fabulously renovated frontages of a string of chichi silk shops – the Art Deco beauty containing **Euro Moda** (18; ☎ 2694-0805; 126 Jln TAR; ☎ 10am-8pm) at No 126 is particularly striking. Continue past **Sogo** (19; p122), one of KL's better department stores, then turn right onto Jln Dang Wangi. Head east until you reach Jln Doraisamy, aka **Asian Heritage Row** (20). Don't expect too much heritage – this renovated street is all about upmarket restaurants and trendy bars and clubs. If you don't have the energy to party, opt instead for a relaxing pint at the **Ivy** (21; p117) or a mango smoothie at **Buharry** (22; p110) before finishing up at the nearby monorail stop **Medan Tuanku** (23).

QUIRKY KUALA LUMPUR

Berjaya Times Square Attend a manga comics expo or an Ultraman convention, then ride a rollercoaster above the milling crowds (p122).

Istana Negara Join the locals marvelling at the changing of the guards at the home of the King of Malaysia (p91).

National Planetarium Indulge a few *Spinal Tap* memories at the scale model of Stonehenge by this planetarium in the Lake Gardens (p83).

Sentul Park Koi Centre (Map pp72-3; ☎ 4045 1311; www.ytlcommunity.com; Jln Strachan) Discover a little piece of Japan and pools of giant koi carp.

Sze Ya Temple Let wooden sticks tell your fortune at this Chinatown temple (p77).

Tugu Drum Circle Bang your drum on Sunday afternoons with this drum circle at the National Monument in the Lake Gardens (p83).

COURSES

There are some unusual cultural courses on offer if you'll be staying in KL for a while.

Arts & Crafts

Gajah Gajah Gallery (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2164 2100; Central Market Annexe, Jln Hang Kasturi; painting classes RM50; ☎ 10am-9pm) This small art studio offers informal classes in Malaysian tribal painting; children will love the bright colours and hands-on painting style.

Kompleks Budaya Kraf Kids and adults can try traditional Malay crafts such as batik or pottery at the craft village in the grounds of this one-stop crafts complex. Check with the information desk for prices (p123).

School of Hard Knocks (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 4145 6122; visitorcentre.royalselangor.com; 4 Jln Usahawan 6, Setapak Jaya; classes RM50; ☎ 9am-5pm) This famous pewter centre offers entertaining 30-minute classes where you make your own pewter bowl; advance booking required.

Music & Dance

Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre A variety of performing arts courses are offered here, including courses in traditional instruments such as the *gamelan* (traditional orchestra). Contact the centre for prices and timings (p121).

Sutra Dance Theatre Courses in Odissi and other forms of classical Indian dance are offered at this cultural centre near Taman Tasik Titivangsa. Contact the theatre for prices and timings (p121).

Temple of Fine Arts This Indian cultural centre was under renovation at the time of writing, but the courses in classical Indian dance, song and music were due to resume when it reopens. Stage shows take place here throughout the year. The temple also runs the Annalakshmi restaurant (p114) in Bangsar. Contact the centre for prices and timings (p91).

Meditation, Yoga & T'ai Chi

Buddhist Maha Vihar This Brickfields landmark offers a variety of courses. Meditation and chanting classes plus dharma talks take place most days. Contact the centre for timings; classes are run on a donation basis (p91).

Chan She Shu Yuen Temple Runs t'ai chi classes at various locations around Chinatown and Brickfields (p77). Contact Mr Eng on ☎ 2274 3246 for details.

Vivekananda Ashram (Map p90; ☎ 2272 5051; 220 Jln Tun Sambanthan, Brickfields) This historic Indian ashram is part of the global Ramakrishna movement. Classes in *kundalini* yoga take place at 6.30pm on Tuesday – call for details.

Cooking

International School of Home Cookery (☎ 2274 1571; 9 Jln Teluk Pulai, Taman Seputeh) Lim Bian conducts classes on Nyonya, Chinese, Thai and Indian cuisine.

Kings Kitchen Klub (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2773 8689; www.westindian.com.my; Westin Kuala Lumpur, 199 Jln Bukit Bintang; classes incl lunch RM168) On fixed Saturday and Sunday mornings throughout the year, the chefs at the Westin's prestigious restaurants offer 12-person cooking classes covering everything from Indian and Malay cooking to Italian pasta and Chinese dim sum.

Norrihan Bakers (☎ 7876-3336; 22 Jln 22/49 Len Seng Garden, Petaling Jaya) Occasional courses in Malay cooking are offered here. Phone for details.

Rohani Jelani (www.rohanijelani.com) Cookbook author Rohani Jelani offers hands-on courses in her KL kitchen. Classes are small (you need to book ahead) and end with a sit-down meal of the dishes prepared that day.

Languages

YMCA (p104) Want to learn the local lingo? Go to the YMCA for its Bahasa Malaysia classes. Other languages include Thai, Mandarin/Cantonese and Japanese, as well as courses in martial arts and different dancing types.

KUALA LUMPUR FOR CHILDREN

KL is probably the most child-friendly city in Southeast Asia. Malaysians love children and there are dozens of attractions around the city set up specifically to keep little ones entertained.

A good starting point is the Lake Gardens, particularly the Bird Park (p82), Butterfly Park (p82) and the playground and boating pond in the Lake Gardens Park (p82). The waterfall splash pool (p86) in the KLCC Park is great for waterbabies, as is the adjacent adventure playground and the Aquaria KLCC (p87).

Kids will also enjoy KL's malls. Berjaya Times Square (p122) has shops for kids of all ages plus a boisterous indoor theme park. Most big malls have bowling alleys (see p94) and cinemas (see p119) showing blockbuster kids' films. For younger kids, try Megakidz (off Map p94; ☎ 2282 9300; www.megakidz.com.my; 3rd fl, Mid Valley Megamall; entry weekday/weekend RM17/21) in the Mid Valley Megamall – there are storytelling sessions, art activities and an indoor adventure playground, and the centre provides a crèche service (RM30 to RM35 for two hours) for kids aged four and over.

There are more theme parks dotted around KL, including the indoor and outdoor parks at Genting Highlands (p133) and the wet-and-wild park at Sunway Lagoon (p129). Close to Sunway, the Pyramid shopping centre has a popular ice rink (p130). For nature activities, head to Zoo Negara (p131) or the canopy walkway at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (p132). The splash pools at Templer Park (p132) are also fun for a family picnic.

As well as these sights and attractions, there are plenty of child-friendly courses available in KL – see opposite.

TOURS

Local agencies offer various tours of the city and attractions around KL. Probably the easiest

city tour is the **KL Hop-On Hop-Off** (☎ 2691 1382; www.myhoponhopoff.com; adult/child RM38/17; 🕒 8.30am-8.30pm), an air-con tourist bus that does a circuit of the main tourist sites half-hourly throughout the day. Stops include the KLCC, Jln Bukit Bintang, Menara KL, the Malaysian Tourism Centre, Chinatown, Merdeka Sq and the attractions of Lake Gardens. The ticket lasts all day and you can get on and off as often as you like.

Based at the Malaysian Tourism Centre (p76), **Malaysian Travel Business** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2163 0162; MTC, 109 Jln Ampang) runs a decent selection of tours: half-day city tours and trips to the Batu Caves (RM50), day tours of Putrajaya (RM150), evening trips to see the fireflies at Kuala Selangor (RM180) and day tours to the Kuala Gandah elephant sanctuary (RM190 including an elephant ride). Cheaper rates apply for children under 12. Similar tours are offered by **Impressions** (Leisure & Incentive Tours; Map pp78-9; ☎ 2070 8667; www.impressions.com.my; 4th fl, Plaza Warisan, Jln Tun HS Lee, Chinatown), located inside the Plaza Warisan shopping arcade.

Based at the Backpackers Travellers Inn (opposite), **Going Places Tours** (☎ 2078 4008; www.goingplaces-kl.com; 60a Jln Sultan, Chinatown) runs a huge range tours to sights around KL tailored to the backpacker market. Popular tours include trips to the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (RM130), firefly-spotting tours near Kuala Selangor (RM180) and trips to the Batu Caves (RM85). It also offers city tours (RM50), rock-climbing days at the Batu Caves (RM150) and rafting trips to Perak (RM255).

Several agents specialise in overnight trips to Taman Negara National Park in the north of Peninsular Malaysia, a 4343-sq-km reserve protecting one of the world's oldest tropical rainforests. **Travel Han** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 0899; www.taman-negara.com; Ground fl, RADIUS International Hotel, Changkat Bukit Bintang) offers three-day, two-night packages from KL from RM350 to RM500 per person, including park fees, accommodation and meals.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The capital is a good venue for Malaysia's major holidays and festivals, including Chinese New Year, Deepavali and Thaipusam; see p219 for more information. Dates for nonreligious events shift from year to year so check the exact dates of the following festivals locally.

Flora Fest KL goes flower-crazy in January/February with exhibitions and the international Floral Parade.

City Day KL commemorates becoming a federal territory on 1 February each year with celebrations at Tasik Perdana and Lake Titiwangsa gardens.

KL International Tower Jump (www.kltowerjump.com) Adrenaline junkies descend on KL in March for the one day they can legally Base jump off the Menara KL.

Malaysian Grand Prix (www.malaysiangp.com.my) Special shopping promotions accompany the annual Formula One race at Sepang International Circuit in March/April.

Malaysia Fest (Colours of Malaysia) Two weeks in May – a celebration with exhibits of traditional arts and special cultural performances around town.

Shopping Carnival Shopping in KL becomes even more of a bargain as prices plummet during this annual June sale.

KL Festival (www.klfestival.org.my) July is a month of events showcasing Malaysian art, dance, theatre and music.

National Day Join the crowds in Merdeka Sq at midnight on 31 August to celebrate the anniversary of Malaysia's independence in 1957. There are parades and festivities the next morning – check with the MTC (p76) for this year's venue.

KL International Buskers Festival (www.malaysia-buskers.com) The streets fill with performers for nine days of musical and acrobatic fun during December.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering opportunities in KL are mainly geared towards Malaysians and Bahasa speakers. Most travellers who volunteer in the capital arrange a placement with a volunteering agency in their home country. Placements can be arranged in all sorts of fields, from community work with disadvantaged youngsters to local environmental projects – contact volunteering organisations before you leave home to secure a placement. One volunteer opportunity you can arrange after arrival is a day helping out at Zoo Negara (p131). You can volunteer any day of the week (minimum of four hours). See www.zoonegara.org.my/volunteer.html for details.

Another good place to find information on volunteering opportunities is your national embassy in KL – most diplomatic offices are involved with local community projects and can point you in the right direction. People with experience in development or community work could try contacting non-government organisations (NGOs) directly – there are useful listings of locally based NGOs on www.mycn.com.my/malaysia/ngo.html and www.msc.com.my/expatriate/volunteer_service.html.

SLEEPING

KL has accommodation to suit all budgets, from ultracheap backpacker hostels to tow-

TRANSITTING THROUGH KUALA LUMPUR?

If you arrive at the international airport (see p124) in the early hours of the morning, you might find the **Airside Transit Hotel** (☎ 8787 4848; Satellite Bldg, KLIA; d for 6 hours RM140-200; 🕒 📺 📺) useful. There's a fitness centre, business centre, spa and sauna, and all rooms come with attached bathroom and TV.

Alternatively, treat yourself to the overnight package at the luxurious **Pan Pacific KLIA** (☎ 8787 3333; www.panpacific.com/klairport; r from RM400; 🕒 📺 📺), linked by a bridge to the main terminal. Rooms are extravagantly appointed, there are three restaurants, a bar, a pool, tennis courts and a fitness centre, and there's a check-in desk by the luggage carousel in the airport so you can go straight to your room on arrival.

ering five-star palaces. One thing to note is that top end hotel rates in KL are fantastically good value for what you get – a five-star hotel room can be had for as little as RM250. At the other end of the spectrum, you can find a backpacker dorm bed for as little as RM9, though you may end up sharing it with unwelcome blood-sucking companions (itch, itch). Midrange hotels have traditionally been a little thin on the ground, but new places are now opening up to plug this gap in the market.

The main area for midrange and budget accommodation is the Golden Triangle, particularly the area around Jln Bukit Bintang. Hotels here range from basic hostels to big tower-block hotels at midrange prices. There's another group of budget hotels – some pretty grimy – in Chinatown, KL's original traveller centre. However, you need to watch your step as some hotels here are fronts for prostitution (targeting locals rather than foreigners). There are more inexpensive hotels in Little India and Chow Kit, though the same caveats apply. Top-end hotels are largely concentrated in the Golden Triangle – particularly along Jln Ampang and Jln Sultan Ismail – and above KL Sentral.

Rates quoted here are official rack rates, but most midrange and top-end places offer endless promotions which slash rates by up to 50% – always ask about special deals. Advance booking is a sensible precaution during the peak tourist season and on big public holidays. We have three categories for hotels in KL: budget (double room or dorm bed for RM70 or less); midrange (doubles from RM71 to RM250); and top end (doubles for RM251 plus).

Budget

CHINATOWN & LITTLE INDIA

Chinatown is awash with cheap backpacker hostels and budget hotels. However, some of

the cheap hotels are basically brothels – not the most wholesome places to stay. Hotels in Little India mainly cater to visiting traders; rooms have decent facilities but little character. The following options are legit.

Lee Mun Guest House (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 0639; 5th fl, 109 Jln Petaling; dm/s/d RM9/22/27; 🕒 📺) Don't expect the Ritz; this small boxy guesthouse is elevated above the competition by a cheerful collage of pictures cut out of magazines and plastered all over the walls. The super-cheap rooms share bathrooms, but you have a choice of fan or air-con (for about RM20 extra). The entrance is via an anonymous lift on Jln Sultan.

Backpackers Travellers Inn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 2473; www.backpackerskl.com; 60B Jln Sultan; dm RM10, d without RM25-28; d RM50-60; 🕒 📺 📺) Travellers have been pulling up at this original Chinatown backpacker inn for decades. Although small and sparsely furnished, the rooms are clean, bedbug free and excellent value. There's a left-luggage service, a roof-top bar and café and a travel agent offering backpacker tours around Malaysia (see opposite). Considering the temperatures in KL, it's worth paying extra for an air-conditioned room.

Le Village (Map pp78-9; ☎ 019-278 9677; numa777777@yahoo.co.uk; 99A Jln Tun HS Lee; dm/s RM12/20, d RM30-35) A bohemian air hangs over this shabby yet atmospheric hostel in a fading colonial building (the 1914 Bank Simpanan Building). Rooms are so-so but the communal spaces are livened up by colourful artworks created by the owner. Clean bathrooms, cooking facilities and free coffee and tea add to the appeal.

Pudu Hostel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 9600; www.puduhotel.com; 3rd fl, Wisma Lai Choon, 10 Jln Pudu; dm/s/d RM12/30/40; 🕒 📺 📺) This big, institutional hostel has a huge open lounge area and pokey box rooms with a shared bathroom. It's opposite

the Puduraya Bus Station, so the bus to your next destination is just minutes away. To get here, take the lift on Jln Pudu to the 3rd floor.

Red Dragon Hostel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 9366; www.hostelreddragon.com; 80 Jln Sultan; dm RM20, s/d/tr RM40/50/60; ☹ ☹) A hostel in an old cinema sounds like a great idea – the reality is rather less exciting. The rooms don't have much character but are a decent size and everything is clean, plus it's cheap and centrally located. There's an internet centre and a simple café for breakfast.

our pick Coliseum Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2692 6270; 98-100 Jln TAR; r RM35-45; ☹ ☹) A real KL institution, the Coliseum has hardly changed since the 1920s. The same could be said of the bedsheets, but the fading wood-panel rooms still manage to exude a tangible colonial charm. Bathrooms are shared, but there's a delightfully timeless bar and Indian-style restaurant (p109) downstairs serving old-fashioned cocktails and nice fat steaks.

Casa Villa Travellers Lodge (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2031 1971; 24 Jln Pudu Lama; d without bathroom RM40, d with bathroom RM60-70; ☹ ☹) A simple Indian-run guesthouse that benefits from being quiet and cheap. Box rooms have high ceilings which helps air circulation and there's a shaded patio with a pool table and darts. A two-minute stroll from the Puduraya bus stand.

Hotel Lok Ann (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 9544; 113A Jln Petaling; d from RM60; ☹ ☹) It doesn't look like much from the outside but Lok Ann is a bright light among the gloomy cheap hotels of Chinatown. It's run by elderly Chinese staff who live on-site and keep the rooms brushed, cleaned and polished. All rooms have air-con and hot water. Rates are discounted by RM10 for single occupancy.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC

There are numerous small guesthouses in the alleys north of Jln Bukit Bintang.

Red Palm (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 1279; www.red-palm-kl.com; 5 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/s/d/tr incl breakfast RM25/40/65/90; ☹ ☹) There's no sign outside this cosy shophouse hotel, which ensures a pleasantly informal atmosphere inside. Rooms are typical for the area – small and thin-walled with shared bathrooms – but the communal areas are great and the owners charming.

Pondok Lodge (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 8449; www.pondoklodge.com; 3rd fl, 20 Changkat Bukit Bintang; dm/s/d from RM25/50/55; ☹ ☹) This cheerful little guesthouse above the Ceylon Bar (p117) makes

more effort than most. The spacious rooms are kept in tip-top shape and there are several airy guest lounges and a magnificent rooftop sitting area with chairs under plant-covered pergolas. Shoes should be left at the door. Rooms with windows cost extra.

Green Hut (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 3339; www.thegreenhut.com; 48 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/s/d incl breakfast RM25/50/65; ☹ ☹) The ever-popular Green Hut is a wholesome travellers' choice with a varied selection of rooms and lots of communal spaces to relax in. It's bright and inviting and the air-conditioned rooms are a bargain. You can check your email and play pool. Pay more if you want a private bathroom.

Trekker Lodge (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 4633; www.trekkerlodge.com; 1-1 Jln Angsoka; dm/s/d without bathroom RM25/50/70; ☹ ☹) Owned by the same team as Green Hut, the Trekker Lodge is another popular traveller-oriented place, with clean, brightly painted rooms, plus free internet access for guests and a relaxing TV lounge. The best rooms are the doubles without bathroom – the en-suite rooms (which cost extra) can be slightly musty.

Bintang Guesthouse (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 3398; 27 Jln Tong Shin; s/d/q RM30/50/90; ☹ ☹) Located inside an old shophouse, this simple guesthouse attracts locals as well as foreigners, a rarity in this area. Rooms are the usual boxy wooden affairs with shared bathrooms, but the place has central air-con and a few rooms have tiny TVs. You can pay RM5 extra for a doubles with private bathroom and air-con.

our pick Number Eight Guesthouse (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 2050; www.numbereight.com.my; 8-10 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/tw without bathroom from RM30/85, d from RM95-135; ☹ ☹) Head and shoulders above the competition, Number Eight is a beautifully conceived guesthouse spread over two shophouses. We love the tea-lit tables on the patio, the comfy sofas in the TV lounge and the fact that the rooms are laid out like real hotel rooms, with wooden furniture, eccentric ornaments and old B&W photos on the walls. The rooms with bathroom have TVs; other rooms share an immaculate shower block at the back. Breakfast is included.

Rainforest Bed & Breakfast (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 1466; rainforest_kl@hotmail.com; 27 Jln Mesui; d incl breakfast/without bathroom RM80/70; ☹ ☹) Lush greenery cascades down the front of this tasteful guesthouse. The wood-panel rooms are as clean as an Ikea showroom (you can pay extra if you want windows) and there are several TV

rooms, terraces and balconies where guests can unwind. Rates go up by RM10 at weekends.

CHOW KIT

Ben Soo Homestay (Map p92; ☎ 012-675 6110; bensoohome@yahoo.com; 2nd fl, 61B Jln Tiong Nam; s/d RM30/35; ☹ ☹) Off Jln Raja Laut, this long-established homestay has just two rooms. Staying here is like visiting a family home – quite a different experience from the other guesthouses in town. The owners are very welcoming and the location quiet. Rooms with air-con cost extra.

Midrange

CHINATOWN & LITTLE INDIA

Hotel China Town Inn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2070 4008; www.chinatowninn.com; 52-54 Jln Petaling; d RM80-100, tr RM130; ☹ ☹) The better of the two China Town Inns on Jln Petaling, this place offers cool, carpeted rooms and a calm escape from the hectic market outside. All rooms have attached showers and TV but only deluxe rooms have windows.

Palace Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2698 6122; www.palacehotel.com.my; 40-46 Jln Masjid India; d from RM120; ☹ ☹) Indian tourists favour this neat hotel arranged around a central atrium, right in the thick of things in Little India. Superior rooms have windows overlooking the bustle of Jln Sultan Masjid.

Mandarin Pacific Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2070 3000; mandpac@tm.net.my; 2-8 Jln Sultan; r from RM128; ☹ ☹) A decent, well-run place close to Pasar Seni LRT station. Rooms have been improved by a recent renovation – all have mosaic-tile bathrooms with tubs. We recommend paying the extra RM20 for a deluxe room with fridge and an external window.

Hotel Noble (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2691 7111; nobelkl@po.jaring.my; 4th fl, 165 Jln TAR; d incl breakfast with/without window RM180/150; ☹ ☹) One of the better Little India hotels, Hotel Noble is reached by an anonymous door behind a silk store. Rooms have bathrooms, minibars, safes, coffee- and tea-making facilities and TVs. To preserve the freshly cleaned aroma and clean white sheets, durians and mangosteens are banned.

Swiss-Inn (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 3333; www.swissgarden.com/hotels/sikl; 62 Jln Sultan; d RM155-200; ☹ ☹) The Swiss connection is pretty vague, but facilities at this centrally located hotel are good for the price. Rooms with windows are worth the extra investment and there's an internet centre and a pleasant patio café. Enter from Jln Sultan rather than busy Jln Petaling.

Ancasa Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2026 6060; www.ancasa-hotel.com; Jln Tun Tan Cheng Lock; d RM165-265, q RM416; ☹ ☹) A tower hotel beside the Puduraya Bus Station offering big-hotel ambience at mid-range prices. The above-average rooms have TVs, fridges, coffee- and tea-making facilities and in-room safes, and some have good views out over the city.

Also recommended:

Kowloon Hotel (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2693 4246; www.kowloonhotelkl.com; 142-6 Jln TAR; s/d from RM90/115; ☹ ☹) A decent midrange hotel with chintzy furnishings but a handy location in Little India.

Hotel Malaya (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 7722; www.hotelmalaya.com.my; cnr Jln Hang Lekir & Jln Tun HS Lee; d with/without window from RM161/138; ☹ ☹) Off from the Petaling Market; offers worn but comfortable rooms with fridges, TVs and tubs.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC

Replica Inn (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 1771; www.replicainn.com; Changkat Bukit Bintang; s/d/tr from RM128/138/178; ☹ ☹) Curious name but a good hotel. The striking modern exterior conceals immaculately clean rooms that look like they received their first guests yesterday. The pricier rooms are bigger and face the front, admitting more natural light.

Hotel Imperial (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 1422; h.imperial@hotmail.com; 76-80 Changkat Bukit Bintang; s/d from RM128/168; ☹ ☹) The bright entrance promises much but the design ethos doesn't extend far beyond the lobby at this small tower hotel just off the main strip. Still, it's a decent choice, and very handy for Jln Alor food street (p106). Rooms have TVs, air-con, fridges and phones.

Hotel Fortuna (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 8310; www.fortuna.kl.com; 87 Jln Berangan; d RM148-270; ☹ ☹) A friendly place in the alley behind Jln Bukit Bintang. Rooms are excellent value and there's a good Middle Eastern restaurant downstairs, Restoran Sahara Tent (p112), where you can suck on a shisha. It's worth paying extra for the superior rooms with tasteful Chinese-style wood panels and screens.

Allson Genesis (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 2000; www.allson-genesis.com; 45 Tingkat Tong Shin; r from RM150, ste from RM255; ☹ ☹) Another hotel offering top-end facilities without the steep price tag. Although small, rooms are very contemporary. The main difference between the standard and deluxe rooms is the view – go deluxe for a glimpse of the Petronas Towers.

Bintang Warisan Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 8111; www.bintangwarisanhotel.com; 68 Jln Bukit Bintang; s/d from

RM173/196; 🏠) A pre-independence façade adds character to this small hotel in the thick of things on Jln Bukit Bintang. There's a pub and coffee shop, and the rooms in the tower behind are thoroughly modern.

Radius International Hotel (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2715 3888; www.radius-international.com; 51A Changkat Bukit Bintang; d RM202-260, ste from RM374; 🏠 📶 🚰) Slightly out of scale with its surroundings, this big tower hotel has all the facilities of an international chain hotel but at lower prices. Rates are almost always on promotion and the tasteful 'premier' rooms have kettles, safes, tubs and LAN (Local Area Network) internet access.

Hotel Capitol (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2143 7000; www.fh-hotels.com; Jln Bulan; d from RM207; 🏠 📶 🚰) Hemmed in by shopping malls, the Capitol shares a pool with the flashier Federal Hotel but charges slightly less stratospheric rates. Uncluttered, well-laid out rooms have safes, kettles, LAN internet access (RM24 per day) and 24-hour room service.

Swiss-Garden Hotel (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2141 3333; www.swissgarden.com; 117 Jln Pudu; d from RM242; 🏠 📶 🚰) Around the corner from the other Bukit Bintang hotels, with upscale rooms and a full suite of facilities, including a fitness centre.

BRICKFIELDS

De Sentral (Map p90; 🏠 2272 3748; 128 Jln Tun Sambanthan; s/d 60/75; 🏠) Extremely handy for KL Sentral – just across the road in fact – this small, tidy hotel has pocket-sized rooms with showers, TV and air-con. If you just want to freshen up before jumping on the train, the day rate is RM50 for four hours.

YMCA (Map p90; 🏠 2274 1439; www.ymca.com; 95 Jln Padang Belia; d/tw RM80/80, tr without bathroom RM100; 🏠) A great cheap choice near KL Sentral, the YMCA offers spic-and-span rooms with TVs, telephones and proper wardrobes for hanging up your clothes. There's an internet café, laundry, shop and café, and also tennis courts for hire. The education centre offers a broad programme of language courses (see p99).

Heritage Station Hotel (Map pp78-9; 🏠 2272 1688; Old KL Train Station, Jln Sultan Hishamuddin; s/d/tr RM98/108/128; 🏠) Offering a chance to stay in a piece of KL history, the hotel at Old KL Train Station (p89) has an evocative lobby but rather shabby, dated rooms. You can get here by KTM Komuter train and it's just a short walk to Chinatown or the Lake Gardens.

CHOW KIT

ourpick Tune Hotel (Map p92; 🏠 7962 5888; www.tunehotels.com; 316 Jln TAR; r RM10-100; 🏠) Midway between Little India and Chow Kit, and not far from Medan Tuanku monorail station, this bright red-and-white hotel takes the Air Asia principle and applies it to hotel rooms. The ultraminimalist rooms can only be booked online and prices decrease the further ahead of time you book (down to a minimum of just RM10!). The basic rate just gets you the room – air-con, toiletries and other perks are extra.

Top End

Most top end hotels in KL offer heavily discounted promotional rates, so ask when you check in. Note that breakfast is usually extra.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC

Hotel Istana (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2141 9988; www.hotelistana.com.my; 73 Jln Raja Chulan; r from RM375; 🏠 📶 🚰) An outrageously ostentatious lobby gives way to more restrained styling in the rooms. Tasteful colours and ethnic fabrics create relaxing feng shui and there are fine city views. The outside pool is pleasantly cloaked in greenery and in-room amenities include LAN internet access, tea- and coffee-making facilities, safes, TVs, minibars and your own personal prayer rug.

Royale Bintang (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2143 9898; www.royale-bintang-hotel.com.my; 17-21 Jln Bukit Bintang; d from RM400; 🏠 📶 🚰) Bright décor and tasteful details score points for this towering hotel on the Bukit Bintang strip. There's a lovely palm-shaded pool area, and rooms have all the expected mod cons, including minibars, safes and everything you need to make tea and coffee. Room service is 24-hour and rooms from the 15th floor up have LAN internet access. Promotional rates can slash the listed prices to almost midrange levels.

Impiana (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2141 1111; www.impiana.com; 13 Jln Pinang; d from RM437; 🏠 📶 🚰) A sleek hotel that benefits from a great location (just metres from the KLCC) and a boutique design sensibility. Rooms have parquet floors and all the usual top-end amenities. The well-regarded spa has an infinity pool that seems to run right to the base of the Petronas Towers. There's wi-fi in the lobby and LAN internet access in the rooms.

JW Marriott (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2715 9000; www.ythotels.com.my; 183 Jln Bukit Bintang; d from RM460; 🏠 📶 🚰) Linked to Starhill Gallery (p122) by a shimmering hall of lights, the Marriott is the first

choice for travellers with big bank accounts and expensive tastes. Rooms have real grandeur and the overall mood is classical and refined. Several huge ballrooms host conferences and showy weddings. Business travellers will appreciate the work station with broadband internet access.

Shangri-La Hotel (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2032 2388; www.shangri-la.com; 11 Jln Sultan Ismail; r from RM520; 🏠 📶 🚰) Opulence verging on decadence is the stock in trade of the Shangri-La. The glitzy rooms are almost as extravagant as the lobby and the gold-trimmed elevators. The restaurants here are highly regarded and there's a fair-sized pool and a gorgeous tropical garden. Laptop users will find wi-fi in the lobby and LAN internet access in the rooms.

Westin Kuala Lumpur (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2731 8333; www.westin.com/kualalumpur; 199 Jln Bukit Bintang; r from RM563; 🏠 📶 🚰) Service is the watchword at the Westin – staff here are courteous and extremely professional. The tasteful rooms feature huge windows – some with grand views towards the Petronas Towers – and famously powerful showers. Commendably, children under 18 can sleep free in the same room as their parents.

ourpick Hotel Maya (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2711 8866; www.hotelmaya.com.my; 138 Jln Ampang; r from RM575; 🏠 📶 🚰) A designer hotel in every sense of the word, the Maya is full of polished stone and timber, unusual textiles and funky designer furniture. In case you can't be without your cappuccino and email, rooms have espresso machines and LAN internet access. The Maya has several chichi restaurants and the decadent glass-walled bathrooms have power showers and tubs. To seal the deal, the hotel is just a 200m stroll from the KLCC. Look out for discount promotional rates at weekends.

Mandarin Oriental (🏠 2380 8888; www.mandarinoriental.com/kualalumpur; KLCC, Jln Pinang; d from RM780; 🏠 📶 🚰) Backing onto the greenery of KLCC Park in the shade of the Petronas Towers, the Mandarin is unashamedly luxurious. Silks and batiks lend an Asian feel to the rooms, which have every conceivable amenity: slippers and robes, ironing boards, internet access, the works. There's a spa and infinity pool that seems to merge into the parkland beyond.

Ritz Carlton (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2142 8000; www.ritzcarlton.com; 168 Jln Imbi; d from RM1000; 🏠 📶 🚰) Only a handful of hotels in Asia offer this degree of sophistication. Dark wood and marble create a nostalgic old-world atmosphere, and

rooms are extravagantly appointed. Ceramic tiffin pots and other pieces of Asian bric-a-brac add a hint of colonial grandeur. The on-site Spa Village (p95) is highly recommended. Promotional rates bring the room prices into the range of ordinary mortals.

Also recommended:

Coronade Hotel (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2148 6888; www.coronade.com; Jln Walter Grender; d from RM255; 🏠 📶 🚰) Well-equipped modern hotel behind Lot 10, with good views from upper floors.

Renaissance Kuala Lumpur (Map pp84-5; 🏠 2162 2233; www.klrenaissance.com; cnr Jln Sultan Ismail & Jln Ampang; r from RM385; 🏠 📶 🚰) Notable for its excellent facilities and huge landscaped pool.

ELSEWHERE

Sheraton Imperial (Map p92; 🏠 2717 9900; www.starwood.com/kualalumpur; Jln Sultan Ismail, Dang Wangi; r from RM350; 🏠 📶 🚰) An elegant and sophisticated hotel that combines top-end amenities with the illusion of antiquity. Rooms are extremely well appointed and the hotel is right on the doorstep of Asian Heritage Row. Work out some tension at the opulent spa (see p95) before supper.

Hilton Kuala Lumpur (Map p90; 🏠 2264 2264; www.hilton.com; 3 Jln Stesen Sentral; r from R385; 🏠 📶 🚰) Sharing a fabulous landscaped pool and spa with the Meridien next door, the Hilton is a design diva's dream. Sliding doors open to join the bathroom to the bedroom, picture windows present soaring city views and rooms are decked out from floor to ceiling in eye-catching materials. It's almost on top of KL Sentral and there are five respected restaurants and two bars on-site.

ourpick Carcosa Seri Negara (Map p90; 🏠 2295 0888; www.ghmhotels.com; Taman Tasik Perdana; ste RM1100-3500; 🏠 📶 🚰) Scents of jasmine and lemongrass waft around the airy corridors of this colonial-era retreat in the heart of the Lake Gardens. Spread over two mansions – Carcosa and Seri Negara – this was once the residence of British Government representative Sir Frank Swettenham. When the hotel opened in 1989 the very first guests were Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip of England. Staff are courteous and discrete, and the only sound to disturb your privacy will be the chirp of insects and the chatter of jungle birds. Facilities are luxurious and there are two excellent restaurants – Gu Lei House (serving great Chinese food) and the Dining Room (one of KL's most exclusive French restaurants).

EATING

KL is a world-class place to chow down. Every cuisine under the sun is represented here, from Malay and Nonya cooking to Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Thai food, plus dishes from across Europe and the Middle East. You can start the evening with tapas and finish with tamarind ice-cream – indeed, many restaurants deliberately combine cuisines, creating curious hybrid dishes such as spaghetti korma. And the best thing about eating in KL is the price – you can get as tasty a meal from a RM5 *mamak* (Indian Muslim) stand (see the boxed text, p110) as you can from a RM300-per-head fine-dining restaurant.

To some degree, food is localised to the areas where the different ethnic minorities live. Chinatown, Bukit Bintang and, to a lesser extent, Chow Kit are good places for Chinese food, while Little India has excellent South Indian vegetarian food. Kampung Baru shows off the pinnacle of Malay home cooking. See boxed text, below, for some essential KL snacks.

For international food, make a beeline for the five-star hotels or the big shopping malls. Starhill Gallery has a whole floor devoted to swish restaurants (an update on the traditional Asian idea of ‘food streets’) and Asian Heritage Row (Jln Doraisamy) is awash with upmarket eateries and bars. Some whole districts are being taken over by restaurants – you’ll find an incredible range of food on offer in Bangsar, Desa Sri Hartamas and on the alleyways north of Jln Bukit Bintang.

As well as the following recommendations, it pays to consult **Friedchillies** (www.friedchillies.com), a great website blog written by KL food-

ies. Two other useful sources of dining inspiration are the *Malaysia Tatler's Malaysia's Best Restaurants* (RM30; updated annually) and the *Star newspaper's Star Guide to Malaysian Street Food* (RM38).

Unless otherwise stated, the restaurants listed are open daily for lunch from noon to 2.30pm and dinner from 6pm to 10.30pm.

Food Streets

The grouping of restaurants onto ‘food streets’ has a long history in Asia, and this tradition has been continued by the builders of modern KL. Although some old-fashioned food streets remain – most notably Jln Alor – the concept has been updated in swish developments such as Asian Heritage Row, One Bangsar and the Starhill Gallery.

JALAN ALOR

KL’s biggest collection of roadside restaurants sprawls along Jln Alor, just north of Jln Bukit Bintang. From around 5pm till late every evening, the street transforms into a continuous open-air restaurant, with hundreds of plastic tables and chairs and rival caterers shouting out to passers-by to drum up business. Most places serve alcohol and you can sample pretty much every Malay Chinese dish imaginable, from grilled fish and satay to *kai-lan* (Chinese greens) in oyster sauce and fried noodles with frogs’ legs. The best way to experience the food street is to stroll along looking at the signs and the dishes on the tables to see what takes your fancy.

Stalls to look out for include: 1+1 (Map pp84–5), good for ‘drunken’ chicken *mee* (noodles)

with rice wine, dim sum and wontons; Wong Ah Wah (Map pp84–5), good for spicy chicken wings, grilled seafood, tofu and satay; and the unnamed but ever-popular frog porridge stall (Map pp84–5; bowl RM7) – you can choose to have ‘spicy’ where the frogs legs are served separate or ‘nonspicy’ where they’re mixed in with the tasty rice gruel (per bowl RM7).

ONE BANGSAR

Jln Ara in Bangsar Baru has recently been redeveloped as ‘One Bangsar’ – an upmarket food street with a diverse collection of restaurants catering to Bangsar foodies. There are some great places to eat here – just stroll up and down the strip and pick a restaurant to match your mood.

Cungdinh (Map p94; ☎ 2283 5088; www.cungdinh.com; 63D-G Jln Ara; mains from RM30; ☺ lunch & dinner) Steaming bowls of *pho* (rice-noodle soup) and imperial dishes from Hue roll out of the kitchen at this popular Vietnamese restaurant. There’s live traditional music from 8pm most evenings.

Saffron (Map p94; ☎ 2287 1158; www.saffron.com.my; 63G Jln Ara; mains from RM30; ☺ lunch & dinner) Saffron offers summer colours and Mediterranean food – tapas, salads, grilled scallops and the like. Food is good but it can get busy here at weekends.

Sagar (Map p94; ☎ 2284 2532; www.sagarrestaurant.com; 63A Jln Ara; mains RM30-100; ☺ lunch & dinner) The Bangsar branch of Sagar serves artfully prepared North Indian food in convivial surroundings. There’s a sister restaurant in the Hotel Istana (see p112).

Bangsar Seafood Garden Restaurant (Map p94; ☎ 2282 2555; 63 Jln Ara; mains RM40-100; ☺ lunch & dinner) A huge, hangarlike seafood restaurant with tanks full of fish and crustaceans, and chefs on hand to cook them any way you fancy. It’s popular at weekends for big family lunches.

STARHILL GALLERY FEAST LEVEL

The entire Feast (ie lower ground) Floor of the Starhill Gallery (p122) is given over to upmarket, themed restaurants, creating an underground food street. You’ll need a healthy wallet but the food is some of the best in town. There are more choices away from the other Starhill restaurants on the Relish Floor.

Sentidos Tapas (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 3385; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; tapas RM5-20) A stylishly designed tapas bar, with a casual ambience and a huge range of authentic tapas on offer. There’s an

excellent-value tapas buffet on Sunday, with all-you-can-drink wine and sangria (RM60) or champagne (RM150).

our pick **Mythai Jim Thompson** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 6151; www.jimthompson.com; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; mains RM15-60) Silk cushions and drapes abound at this Thai place that aims to create the colonial mood of Jim Thompson’s villa in Bangkok. Refreshingly, style does not triumph over substance – the Thai food is excellent, with numerous regional dishes from around Thailand.

Vansh (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 6162; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; mains from RM30) This place offers high-quality Indian cuisine at prices that match the posh surroundings. Look out for imaginative fusion dishes such as tandoori-marinated lobster.

Gonbei (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 3801; Relish Fl, Starhill Gallery; mains RM30-100) This brilliantly conceived Japanese restaurant is entered through a Zen walkway of leaning beams. There’s a broad sushi and sashimi menu, including seasonal *fugu* (blowfish) for the brave. Diners sit around a series of open kitchens.

Shook! (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2719 8535; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; mains RM80-100) A huge sprawling place with open kitchens and dedicated chefs preparing Pacific Rim, Japanese, Italian and Chinese food. The wine cellar is fabulously well stocked and the menu features loads of fresh seafood. Evening reservations advised.

Also recommended:

KoRyo-Won (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 2189; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; mains RM20-60) Excellent Korean barbecue dishes prepared at the table.

Jogoya (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 1268; Feast Fl, Starhill Gallery; lunch/dinner RM78/88) Huge family-friendly Japanese buffet restaurant.

ASIAN HERITAGE ROW

As well as trendy bars, Asian Heritage Row (aka Jln Doraisamy) is lined with upmarket restaurants, perfect for a preparty feast. As well as the following choices, there’s great hawker-style food at Buharry (see boxed text, p110).

Yé Chine (Map p92; ☎ 2694 1888; 28-40 Jln Doraisamy; meals RM30-80; ☺ lunch & dinner) Round Chinese doorways create a suitably imperial mood at the restaurant downstairs from Loft (p120) and Cynna (p120). Come for dim sum at lunchtime or filling claypot casseroles after a night on the dancefloor upstairs.

That Indian Thing (Map p92; ☎ 2698 6357; 52 Jln Doraisamy; mains RM60-100; ☺ 11am-3pm & 6-11pm) The

MALAYSIAN TIFFIN

When the British came to Malaysia, they brought with them the Indian concept of tiffin – in simple terms, snacking between meals, which is now an integral part of Malaysian food culture – you’ll see locals stopping off for a quick snack at any time of day. The undisputed king of tiffin snacks is *roti canai* (‘ro-tee cha-nai’), fried unleavened bread served with several rich and spicy dipping sauces. Originally a South Indian creation, *roti canai* has been adopted by all communities in Malaysia. Some restaurants serve plain roti while others mix in onion and egg, but few places charge more than RM2 for this delicious snack. If you’ve been to southern Thailand, you may recognise roti as the basis for Thai-style chocolate pancakes. Another Malay favourite is *nasi lemak* – rice cooked in coconut cream, typically wrapped in banana leaves in a pyramid-shaped bundle with dried anchovies and peanuts.

The standard accompaniment to either dish is Malay-style tea, which comes in several forms – *teh tarik* is hot tea with condensed milk; *teh o* is hot black tea; *teh ais* is iced tea with milk; and *teh o ais* is iced black tea, usually with sugar and lemon. *Kopi* (coffee) is available in similar configurations.

Indian choice on the strip serves very good North and South Indian food, with some curious fusion dishes such as spaghetti korma.

our pick CoChine by IndoChine (Map p92; ☎ 2721 2811; 62-66 Jln Doriaswamy; mains RM60-200; 🕒 11am-2.30pm & 6.30-11pm) The KL branch of a famous Singapore restaurant, Cochine serves dishes from Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, a subtly spiced and full of flavour. The décor plays tribute to Khmer temples and there's a popular bar, SaVanh (p117), downstairs.

Chinatown, Little India & Around HAWKER STALLS & FOOD COURTS

Chinatown has some of the best street food in KL. From late afternoon the pavements along Jln Sultan and Jln Tun HS Lee fill with plastic chairs and tables, and mobile kitchens are set up in the street, serving an astonishing array of Malay and Chinese dishes. Many of the food stalls stay open till midnight or later and you can get a filling meal of rice and spicy stir-fried beef with a cold beer for as little as RM20. Everything is prepared fresh so the food is almost always safe to eat. To be absolutely safe, stick to stalls with lots of customers.

The best time to visit Little India is during the Saturday *pasar malam* on Lorong Tuanku Abdul Rahman, the alley between Jln TAR and Jln Masjid India. From midafternoon, this narrow lane becomes crammed with food stalls serving excellent Malaysian Indian food, as well as favourite dishes of the Chinese and Indian communities.

Masjid India Hawker Court (Map pp78-9; Jln Masjid India; meals RM2-10; 🕒 8am-9pm) A bustling cov-

ered hawker court serving all the usual Malay, Indian and Chinese favourites. Good to visit if you can't make it the Saturday *pasar malam*.

Puduraya Hawker Court (Map pp78-9; Puduraya Bus Station, Jln Cheng Lock; meals RM3-15; 🕒 7am-10pm) The cheapest place for hawker food is this bustling food centre inside the Puduraya Bus Station. A bowl of spicy *tom yam* (red-chilli-based hot-and-sour seafood soup) soup will set you back just RM5.

Mangrove Food Court (Map pp78-9; Central Market; meals RM5-25; 🕒 10am-10pm) Various Asian cuisines are showcased at this upmarket food court, upstairs at the souvenir market.

Two recommendations for something out of the ordinary are **Madam Tang's stall** (Map pp78-9; Jln Petaling; sweets RM2-5), run by an elderly lady who makes her own tasty *mochi* (Japanese-style fruit jellies with rice starch) and the **Hong Kee stall** (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan; mains RM10-20) in front of the KK convenience store, which specialises in barbecued Portuguese-style seafood and chicken rice, slow-cooked in a clay pot.

CHINESE

Probably the most popular restaurants for travellers are the open-air cafés (open 11am to 11pm) on Jln Hang Lekir, which cuts across the Jln Petaling Market, where meals cost about RM10 to RM30. These places all serve cold beers at reasonable prices (around RM12 for a big bottle of Tiger) and Chinese and Malay staples of varying quality. Based on our experiences, the satay (grilled meat skewers) tends to be good while fried rice and noodles are less

successful. The main attraction is watching the crowds of tourists from as far afield as Sydney and Saudi Arabia haggling furiously over fake goods at the surrounding market stalls.

Sing Seng Nam (Map pp78-9; 2 Medan Pasar; mains RM5-10; 🕒 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) A popular workers' canteen specialising in inexpensive bowls of chicken rice and 'curry fish'.

Purple Cane Tea Restaurant (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2272 3090; 1 Jln Maharajalela; mains RM10-20; 🕒 11.30am-3pm & 6-9pm Mon-Fri, 11.30am-9.30pm Sat & Sun) Tucked behind the Chinese Assembly Hall, this laid-back place uses tea as an ingredient in most of its dishes. Intriguing specials include chicken soup with tea and ginseng, and beef simmered in lychee tea.

Restoran Oriental Bowl (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2032 5577; 5-7 Leboh Pudu; mains RM10-30; 🕒 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) Chinese office workers are lured to this health-food restaurant by the menu of Chinese dishes cooked with ginseng and medicinal herbs from the traditional Chinese pharmacy downstairs.

Chinatown also has a number of informal hawker-style restaurants, with various food stations serving classic Malay Chinese dishes. Almost all offer fried rice, fish curry, rice porridge, *mee* and tofu dishes – a meal should cost less than RM20. Recommendations include **Restoran Zhing Kong** (Map pp78-9; Jln Hang Kasturi; 🕒 7am-9pm), **Kedai Kopi Lai Foong** (Map pp78-9; Jln Cheng Lock; 🕒 6.30am-8pm) and **West Lake Restoran** (Map pp78-9; 15 Jln Sultan; 🕒 7am-2am).

EUROPEAN & FUSION

As well as the following restaurants, you can get decent Western meals at the Reggae Bar (see p116).

Coconut House (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2031 2830; 30 Jln Pudu Lama; pizzas RM15-30; 🕒 noon-midnight, to 1am Fri&Sat) Hidden away on an alley north of Jln Pudu, this cheerfully bohemian restaurant serves great pizzas that have been prepared in a wood-fired oven.

Coliseum Café (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2692 6270; 100 Jln TAR; meals RM15-60; 🕒 10am-10pm) Resisting the passage of time, the café at the Coliseum still enjoys a good reputation for its sizzling steaks. Even if you don't come for dinner, it's worth stopping by for a cocktail at the atmospheric wood-panelled bar next door.

Café Café (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2141 8141; www.cafecafe.com; 175 Jln Maharajalela; mains RM80-100; 🕒 6pm-midnight) Chinatown has a noticeable shortage of venues for a romantic dinner but Café Café is one of

a kind. Flickering candles, crystal chandeliers and soft piano music conjure up exactly the right mood. The menu features a sophisticated selection of French and Italian dishes.

INDIAN

Capital Café (Map pp78-9; Jln TAR; satay sticks 50 sen; 🕒 7.30am-9pm) If you're wandering through Little India, drop into this hole-in-the-wall café for excellent Malay satay sticks (beef and chicken) with peanut sauce.

Lakshmi Vilas (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 2166; Lebu Ampang; mains RM4-10; 🕒 5am-10.30pm) One of several good vegetarian curry houses on Lebu Ampang serving tasty *thali* (plate meals) for just RM4. Leave some space for *barfi* (milk fudge) and other Indian sweets.

Bilal Restoran (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 0804; 33 Jln Ampang; mains RM4-10; 🕒 8am-9pm) This anonymous-looking canteen just east of Little India has a good reputation for South Indian Muslim food, served canteen-style with fresh roti and naan bread.

Sangeetha (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2032 3333; 65 Lebu Ampang; mains RM5-20; 🕒 8am-midnight; 🍷) Tasty *thalis* and other South Indian dishes are sold at this restaurant that has the added bonus of powerful air-conditioning. The Friday lunch buffet (RM14) always pulls in a crowd.

MALAY & NONYA

our pick Old China Café (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2072 5915; www.oldchina.com.my; 11 Jln Balai Polis; mains RM20-60; 🕒 11.30am-10pm) Housed in the old guild hall of the Selangor & Federal Territory Laundry Association, this atmospheric café captures some of the charm of old KL. The walls are huge, and covered with old bric-a-brac, and the cook prepares Nonya dishes from Melaka and Penang, including a fine beef rendang (coconut and lime-leaf curry) with coconut rice and fiery Nonya laksa soup with seafood.

Precious (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2273 7372; 1st fl, Central Market; mains RM20-60; 🕒 11.30am-10pm) The owners of Old China Café also run this upmarket place in the Central Market, which manages to recreate the mood of mining-era KL despite the mall setting. The food is good and the art and antiques on display are mostly for sale.

THAI

Gin Ger (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2273 7371; 1st fl, Central Market; mains from RM30; 🕒 noon-10pm) Wooden screens and Thai knick-knacks disguise the mall

HAWKER-STALL WORKER JOAN CHAN

Joan Chan works at the Hong Kee claypot chicken and Portuguese fish barbecue hawker stall (above) in Chinatown, run by three generations of the same family.

What is life like when you work on a hawker stall? Our stall is a family business – like most hawker stalls I think – but we've been here 25 years. My uncle and auntie work here, and so do my brothers. There are nine of us in total. It's hard work but it's nice to work with your family, and we only work in the afternoons when things start to cool down. Other people have to go to work in the mornings when the day is getting hotter and hotter. Why do we only cook these dishes? Well my grandfather tried claypot chicken and barbecued fish and decided it was so good we had to go out and cook it ourselves! It's not all work though. On my days off I do the same stuff as other people – I go to Times Square (p122) and Sungei Wang (p122) to buy clothes and go bowling with my friends, or sing karaoke. That's the great thing about KL – there's so much to do.

What are your tips for finding good street food in KL? Look for lots of people sitting around in the street and food being cooked fresh on the spot. Don't expect things to be toned down for foreigners though – we Malaysians like our food spicy!

MAMAK RESTAURANTS

A modern update to the traditional hawker stalls run by Indian Muslims, *mamak* restaurants have taken Kuala Lumpur (KL) by storm. These huge canteens offer some of the best food in KL, from spicy fish curries and fried rice to *dosa* (lentil flour pancakes), *roti canai* (flatbread with curry sauce) and fabulous tandoori chicken. There's no alcohol, but patrons wash down meals with huge mugs of Malay-style tea and coffee or fruit juices and lassi (Indian drinking yogurt). There are plenty of fruit and shaved ice desserts for pudding – ask for *ais kacang* ('ice ka-chang') or ABC (short for *air batu campur* meaning mixed ice). Best of all, most *mamak* restaurants are open 24 hours. Prices are a bargain – *roti canai* costs less than RM1, and a full meal of tandoori chicken, vegetable curry and naan bread shouldn't set you back more than RM15. Order your food by walking around the various food stations; a waiter will come to the table to take your drinks order and add up your bill, which is paid at the cashier when you finish. Try the following recommendations:

Devi's Corner (Map pp94; cnr Jln Telawi 1 & Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 6am-5am) A pavement-café mood prevails at this foliage-drenched canteen facing the Bangsar Village malls. The tray curries are excellent, with plenty of fish, prawns and other seafood.

Lotus Hotel (☎ 24hr) Chow Kit (Nasi Kandar Penang; Map p92; 1 Jln Medan Tuanku); KLCC (Map p92; Jln Binjai) Just north of Little India, Lotus is Chow Kit's favourite *nasi kandar* (Penang-style steamed rice) canteen. Expect huge trays of fish curry and lots of spicy fried meat and vegetables.

Nasi Kandar Bestari (off Map pp72-3; Jln 23/70a, Desa Sri Hartamas; ☎ 24hr) The most popular *mamak* house in Desa Sri Hartamas, serving tasty snack meals and rehydrating tea and coffee to people staggering home from pubs and bars.

Nasi Kandar Pelita (☎ 24hr) Bangsar Baru (Map p94; cnr Jln Telawi & Jln Telawi 5); KLCC (Map pp84-5; 149 Jln Ampang) Serves exquisite Indian Muslim food, including magnificent *roti canai* and *hariyali tikka* (spiced chicken with mint, cooked in the tandoor). The swish, fan-cooled pavilion near the KLCC is probably the flashiest of all the *mamak* canteens in KL.

Restoran Buharry (Map p92; 22-24 Jln Doriaswamy; ☎ 7am-2am Mon-Sat, 8.30am-10.30pm Sun) Giant fans blow cool, moist air around this popular hang-out for office workers on Asian Heritage Row. All the usual *mamak* favourites are on offer, plus excellent *tom yam* (red chilli-based hot-and-sour soup) and delicious mango smoothies.

Restoran Hameed's (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan Mohamed; ☎ 5am-11pm) Conveniently located near Pasar Seni LRT station, Hameed's has steaming trays of hot curries, biryani and fried rice. Come at lunchtime for mouth-watering swimmer crabs and prawns, fried whole in chilli sauce.

Restoran Yusooif dan Zakhir (Map pp78-9; Jln Hang Kasturi; ☎ 24hr) A huge banana-yellow and palm tree-green canteen opposite Central Market serving huge portions of delicious *mamak* food. Fresh coconuts are chopped open at the entrance to provide a refreshing natural accompaniment to the spicy dishes served inside.

location at this upmarket Thai restaurant inside Central Market. It's a quiet place but the food is excellent. Try the Thai salads.

Golden Triangle & KLCC

HAWKER STALLS & FOOD COURTS

As well as the following options, be sure to visit Jln Alor food street (p106) for more top-notch hawker grub.

Signatures Food Court (Map pp84-5; Level 2, Suria KLCC; mains RM3-20; ☎ 10am-10pm) KLCC's best food court, showcasing a wide range of Asian cuisines. There's a smaller food court in the Ampang Wing on level Four.

Medan Selera Food Court (Map pp84-5; Lot 10, 50 Jln Sultan Ismail; mains RM3-20; ☎ 9am-1am) Extensive Asian food court on the lower level of Lot 10.

Avenue 10 Food Court (Map pp84-5; 10th fl, Berjaya Times Square, 1 Jln Imbi; mains RM3-20; ☎ 10am-10pm) Well stocked but slightly soulless food court in the Times Square mall.

CHINESE

Blue Boy Vegetarian Food Centre (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 9011; Jln Tong Shin; mains RM3-10; ☎ 7.30am-9.30pm) A cheerful hawker-style cafeteria that prepares vegetarian food so artfully that even hardened carnivores come back for another helping. It occupies the base of an apartment block, just past the end of Tingkat Tong Shin.

U Village (Map pp84-5; Jln Bulan 1; mains RM3-15; ☎ 9am-10pm) Locals pack into this bustling canteen throughout the day for Hong Kong-style Cantonese food at bargain prices, served in

double-quick time. The barbecued pork rice is a treat. It's near the back door to Sungei Wang, opposite Plaza Chow Kit.

Restoran Dragon View (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 4111; Changkat Bukit Bintang; mains from RM10; ☎ 24hr) Diners are lured into this partly open-air Chinese restaurant by a kitchen window hung with crisp fresh vegetables. Food is prepared in a dozen different styles with a choice of beef, pork, fish, prawns, chicken, tofu or frog meat.

Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 2338; Annex Block, Lot 10, 50 Jln Sultan Ismail; mains RM15-40; ☎ 11am-10.30pm, from 10.30am Sat & Sun) A huge photographic menu makes ordering easy at this highly regarded Chinese restaurant at Lot 10. Specialties include steamed *xiao long bao* (Shanghai-style soup dumplings) and *la mian* (long hand-pulled noodles) fried or served in meaty soups.

Restoran Oversea (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 7567; www.restoranoversea.com.my; 84-88 Jln Imbi; mains RM15-50) An unpretentious banquet restaurant that should feel comfortingly familiar to anyone who has spent time in mainland China. Specialties include pork belly, fish (cooked in various styles) and streaky bacon cooked in a pot with dried chillies.

Shang Palace (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2074 3904; Shangri-La Hotel, 11 Jln Sultan Ismail; mains RM20-300; ☎ 10.30am-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm) Seafood is the speciality at this gorgeously designed Chinese banquet restaurant. Topping the bill is 'Monk Jumps Over the Wall': shark fin, abalone, scallop and sea cucumber served in a monk's bowl (RM290). It's worth coming just to see the fabulous temple-style entrance.

Si Chuan Dou Hua (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2147 2303; Grand Plaza Parkroyal, Jln Sultan Ismail; mains from RM30) For a break from Cantonese seafood and dim sum, head to this sleek modern place in the Parkroyal hotel and try fiery Sichuan dishes from southwest China. Green tea flows freely from giant long-spouted teapots.

Tai Thong Grand Restaurant (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2162 4433; www.taiithong.com.my; 2nd fl, North Block, Wisma Selangor Dredging, Jln Ampang; meals RM30-100) A popular lunchtime stop for dim sum, this upmarket Chinese banquet house switches to a Cantonese à la carte menu in the evening. Locals come here for the filling set meals.

EUROPEAN & FUSION

Palate Palette (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 2148; 21 Jln Mesuji; mains RM10-30; ☎ noon-midnight Tue-Thu, noon-2am Fri & Sat) Picasso and Mondrian colours set

the mood at this upbeat bar and restaurant just off Jln Nagansari. Arty locals come here for the broad fusion menu that features dishes as diverse as shepherds' pie and teriyaki salmon.

Bon Ton (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 3848; www.bontonkl.com; 8 Jln Conlay; mains RM20-70; ☎ noon-midnight Mon-Sat) Housed in an atmospheric Malay-style wooden pavilion just east of the Bukit Bintang tourist area, Bon Ton serves excellent Euro-Asian fusion food, plus a series of set menus showcasing cooking from around Malaysia. Sample such unusual dishes as *tom yam* carbonara, and black pepper and mango chicken.

Top Hat (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 8611; www.top-hat-restaurants.com; 7 Jln Kia Peng; mains RM30-70; ☎ closed Sun lunch) Set in an old mansion behind the KLCC, Top Hat offers more imaginative European and Asian cooking plus set menus of traditional Malay cooking. Whatever you order for mains, start with the house speciality, *pie tee* (crispy hat-shaped shells stuffed with shredded vegetables). Also check out the Top Room jazz bar (p120) upstairs at the weekends.

Frangipani (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 3001; 25 Changkat Bukit Bintang; mains RM30-100; ☎ 7.30pm-10.30pm Tue-Sun) Much feted for its innovative approach to European fusion cooking, Frangipani is leagues ahead of most of the competition. The décor is as slick as the menu, with a stunning dining room surrounding a reflecting pool, and there's an equally stylish bar upstairs.

Nerovivo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2070 3120; www.nerovivo.com; 3A Jln Ceylon; mains RM50-100; ☎ noon-3pm & 6pm-midnight) Italian food all round at this refined, partly open-air restaurant uphill from Changkat Bukit Bintang. Pizza and pastas are sublime and there's a good value antipasti buffet lunch (RM20).

Le Bouchon (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 7633; www.lebouchonrestaurant.com; 14-16 Changkat Bukit Bintang; mains RM60-100; ☎ noon-2pm Tue-Fri, 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun) The dining room at this tasteful French-owned place could have been plucked straight from a Burgundy chateau. The wine list is extensive and the house bouillabaisse (seafood soup with saffron) is highly recommended.

Prego (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2773 8013; Westin Kuala Lumpur, 199 Jln Bukit Bintang; mains RM60-100) Arguably KL's finest Italian restaurant, Prego offers delectable Italian pizzas and pasta in chic but family-friendly surroundings. Come on Sunday for the free-flowing champagne brunch

(RM128/188 for three/five courses), with a balloon-twisting clown to entertain the kids.

Lafite (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2716 3111; Shangri-La Hotel, 11 Jln Sultan Ismail; mains RM60-200; ☎ noon-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 7-10.30pm Mon-Sat) The elegant French restaurant at the Shangri-La Hotel serves very fine food in very fine surroundings, with a wine cellar to match. The menu runs to foie gras, duck confit and Brittany oysters.

INDIAN & MIDDLE EASTERN

Srirekha (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 4339; 39 Jln Sultan Ismail; mains RM10-30; ☎ 11.30am-11.30pm) Probably the Golden Triangle's most authentic Indian restaurant, Srirekha pulls in huge crowds of Indian tourists (which can slow down the service). The Chettinad specialities are excellent and the house *thali* is cracking value at RM8/9 (veg/nonveg).

Restoran Sahara Tent (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 8310; Hotel Fortuna, 87 Jln Berangan; mains RM10-30; ☎ 11am-2am) Probably the most authentic of the new Middle Eastern restaurants opening up around Jln Bukit Bintang. Come here for Turkish coffee, meaty kebabs and couscous, then sit back with a bubbling shisha (RM15).

Spice of India (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2164 9221; Level 4, Suria KLCC; mains RM30-60; ☎ 11.20am-10.30pm) Don't be put off by the mall location – Spice of India offers some of the best North Indian food in the capital. Tandoori dishes are the house speciality, and the atmosphere is refreshingly informal.

Sagar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 2532; Hotel Istana, 73 Jln Raja Chulan; mains RM30-100; ☎ lunch & dinner) The sophisticated restaurant at Hotel Istana enjoys an enviable reputation for spicy North Indian food. There's a branch in the One Bangsar food street (see p107).

JAPANESE

Most of the malls have fast-food sushi bars, but the following restaurants are worth a visit.

Kameya Restoran Jepun (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 0153; Federal Hotel Bldg, off Jln Bukit Bintang; mains RM20-50) A small, cosy and authentic Japanese restaurant situated near Plaza Low Yat. The menu covers everything from sushi and sashimi to tempura and *edamame* (boiled green soya beans).

Wa-Raku (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 0448; 3 Jln Stonor; mains RM50-200; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Japanese expats gather at this upmarket restaurant on the edge of the business district for authentic food and

a sense of Zenlike calm. The sashimi is great and there are some good-value set menus.

MALAY & NONYA

Restoran de Kitaro (Map pp84-5; Jln Bulan 1, off Bukit Bintang; mains RM1-20; ☎ 7am-midnight) A busy open-air canteen next to BB Plaza serving possibly the cheapest *roti canai* (80 sen) and *nasi lemak* (RM1.50) in KL.

Restoran Nagansari Curry House (Map pp84-5; Jln Nagansari; meals RM5-10; ☎ 7am-midnight) This simple hawker-style restaurant serves a good selection of Malay dishes – soup *mee*, *tom yam* and so on – with a few Indian favourites thrown in for good measure. Fans blow moist air around the dining hall to keep diners cool.

Restoran Sakura (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 4315; 163-169 Jln Imbi; mains RM10-25; ☎ 11.30am-1am) Try this huge restaurant on the road behind the Ritz Carlton for Malay food in more upmarket surroundings. Look out for good-value late-lunch and early-supper specials.

Little Penang Kafé (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2163 0215; Level 4, Suria KLCC; mains from RM15; ☎ 11.30am-9.30pm) Probably the most enticing of the midrange restaurants on the 4th floor of Suria KLCC, this airy café serves authentic food from old Penang, including specialities such as curry *mee* (spicy soup noodles with prawns) and spicy Siamese *lemak laksa* (curry laksa).

SeriMelayu (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 1833; www.serimelayu.com; 1 Jln Conlay; set lunch/dinner RM35/60) Housed in a vast wooden pavilion, Seri Melayu firmly targets the coach-tour crowd, but the dinner show (starting at 8.30pm) is nevertheless good fun, the food is tasty and the buffet is all-you-can-eat.

our pick Bijan (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2031 3575; www.bijanrestaurant.com; 3 Jln Ceylon; mains RM60-100; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6.30-10.30pm Mon-Sat, 4.30-10.30pm Sun) One of KL's best Malay restaurants, Bijan offers skillfully cooked traditional dishes in a sophisticated dining room that spills out into a tropical garden. Must-try dishes include *rendang daging* (dry beef curry with lemongrass), *masak lemak ikan* (Penang-style fish curry with turmeric) and *ikan panggang* (grilled skate with tamarind).

Seri Angkasa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2020 5055; www.serimelayu.com; Menara KL, Jln Puncak; buffet lunch/dinner RM69/115) The owners of Seri Melayu also run this glitzy revolving restaurant atop the Menara KL tower (p88). As well as the lunch and dinner buffets, there are set

meals for brunch and high tea at weekends, plus a full à la carte menu. There's a dress code so wear long trousers and shoes rather than sandals.

THAI & VIETNAMESE

Old Siam (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 3449; 23 Tingkat Tong Shin; mains RM20-60; ☎ 7.30pm-10.30pm) Part of a large Thai restaurant group, Old Siam still manages to feel cosy and inviting, partly because of the old-fashioned shophouse setting. The Thai food is competently prepared and there are happy-hour specials on drinks before 9pm.

our pick Sao Nam (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 1225; www.saonam.com.my; 25 Tingkat Tong Shin; mains RM30-70; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 7.30-10.30pm Tue-Sun) This excellent Vietnamese restaurant is decorated with colourful propaganda posters. The kitchen turns out huge plates of delicious Vietnamese food, garnished with basil, mint, lettuce and sweet dips. Despite being listed as a starter, the *banh xeo* (a huge Vietnamese pancake with meat, seafood or vegetables) is a meal all by itself.

Brickfields & KL Sentral

Gem Restaurant (Map p90; ☎ 2260 1373; 124 Jln Tun Sambanthan, Brickfields; mains RM5-20; ☎ 11.30am-11.30pm; ☎) A Brickfields stalwart, this calm, air-conditioned restaurant serves good South Indian food, including specialities from Chettinad, Andhra Pradesh and the Malabar coast. The *thali* is great value.

Chynna (Map p90; ☎ 2264 2266; Hilton Kuala Lumpur, KL Sentral, Brickfields; mains RM60-150; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6.30-

10.30pm) The best of the Hilton's cutting-edge Studio restaurants, centred on Frank Woo's sculpture, *Dancing Shadow*. Shanghai-chic décor and lots of upmarket Cantonese and east-coast Chinese cooking.

Al Nafourah (Map p90; ☎ 2263 7888; 8th fl, Le Méridien, 2 Jln Stesen Sentral, Brickfields; mains from RM100; ☎ noon-3pm & 6.30-11pm) The opulent Ottoman-style décor at this Levantine restaurant at the Méridien is worth a visit all by itself. Happily, the food matches the ostentatious surroundings. There's even a resident belly dancer.

Brickfields also has a number of informal hawker-style restaurants serving tasty Malay Chinese dishes for RM2 to RM15. Try **Cheong Hua** (Map p90; 1A Jln Tun Sambanthan 4; ☎ 6am-10pm) for fish porridge and noodle soups or **Restoran Makanan Laut Lai Fatt Ikan Bakar** (Map p90; 25-29 Jln Thambapillai; 5pm-2am) for delicious fresh seafood and *ikan panggang* (grilled skate with tamarind paste).

Chow Kit

The best hawker food in Chow Kit is found inside the Bazaar Baru market (p93); the atmosphere is lively, the food tasty and cheap and you can pick up an astonishing variety of tropical fruit for dessert at the surrounding market stalls.

Pesona Food Court (Map p92; 2nd fl, Maju Junction mall, Jln TAR; ☎ 7am-7pm) This is a decent shopping-centre food court near the Tune Hotel.

Bangsar Baru & Mid Valley City

As well as the following suggestions, there are dozens of restaurants dotted around the

PUDU MARKET HAWKER COURT

Kuala Lumpur (KL) has dozens of intriguing, off-the-beaten-track places to eat – our favourite is the permanent hawker court at Pudu Market (p91), known locally as **Pusat Makanan Peng Hwa** (Map pp72-3; Jln Pasar Baru; mains RM3-15; ☎ 24hr). This congregation of cooks sprawls beneath a gigantic tin roof behind the wet and dry market. The pavilion is as big as an aircraft hangar – fans on the ceiling whirl ineffectually, failing almost completely to drive away the tropical fogg. Nevertheless, as the sun sets, this is *the* place to be. The hundred or so plastic tables and chairs fill suddenly with locals ordering big bottles of ice-cold Tiger beer and bags of Chinese marinated sunflower seeds. Waitresses in matching T-shirts fight their way through the crowds, crunching over the discarded sunflower husks with trays of beer and mugs of *teh tarik*. (tea with evaporated milk) Foreigners are a rarity here – diners at the surrounding tables cast curious looks but raise their glasses in greeting as soon as you make eye contact. Come with some friends and make a night of it.

The food stalls around the edge of the hangar serve excellent noodles, wanton soups, fried rice, stir-fries and grilled seafood, all at bargain prices. Finish with a huge mound of *ais kacang* (shaved ice, syrup, sweet beans and fruit) then jump on the last LRT train home.

city-sized Mid Valley Megamall (see p122) and more upmarket choices in One Bangsar (see p107).

HAWKER STALLS & FOOD COURTS

Held on Sunday evenings, the Bangsar Baru *pasar malam* on Jln Telawi is an institution; you'll find all manner of tempting take-away food stalls serving local treats such as *otak otak* (spicy fish paste grilled in banana leaves) and the crepelike *apam balik*. If you can't wait till Sunday, there's a permanent hawker court (open 8am to 10pm) at the junction of Jln Telawi 4 and Jln Maroof.

Food Junction (off Map p94; Level 3, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10.30am-10pm) Spic-and-span food court in the Mid Valley Megamall serving all sorts of Asian treats.

EUROPEAN & FUSION

Country Farm Organics (Map p94; ☎ 2284 2094; Ground fl, Bangsar Village I, 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; snacks from RM6; ☎ 10am-10pm) This place has lots of veggie options and everything is organic.

La Bodega (Map p94; ☎ 2287 8318; www.bodega.com.my; 14 & 16 Jln Telawi 2, Bangsar Baru; mains RM10-40; ☎ 8am-1am) This popular, trendy place is four venues in one: an all-day deli-café serving good sandwiches; a chilled-out tapas bar; a formal dining room; and a lively lounge bar. Good wine and authentic tapas and paella complete the Spanish mood.

Alexis Bistro (Map p94; ☎ 2284 2880; www.alexis.com.my; 29 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; mains from RM30; ☎ noon-midnight, to 1am Fri & Sat) Consistently good food is delivered at this Bangsar stalwart where Asian favourites such as laksa mix it up with European fare. After your meal, move on to its ultrasmooth Bar Upstairs (see p118).

Delicious (Map p94; ☎ 2287 1554; Ground fl, Bangsar Village II, Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; mains from RM40; ☎ 11am-midnight, to 1am Fri & Sat) Shoppers break for lunch to enjoy healthy salads, pasta, sandwiches and pies at this neat and contemporary place in the Bangsar Village II mall.

our pick Telawi Street Bistro (Map p94; ☎ 2284 3168; www.telawi.com.my; 1 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; mains RM50; ☎ noon-1am Mon-Fri, 10am-1am Sat & Sun) Bangsar's favourite bistro, with a fine menu of European and Asian fusion cooking (grilled meats and seared scallops set the tone) and a lively upstairs bar. You'll find that the best tables are on the balcony overlooking the street.

INDIAN

Annalakshmi (off Map p94; ☎ 2284 3799; Boulevard, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; prices discretionary; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6.30-10.30pm) Run by the charitable Temple of Fine Arts (p91), this Indian buffet restaurant serves hearty, spicy South Indian vegetarian food. Prices are discretionary – you pay what you think the meal was worth and proceeds help fund the charitable work of the foundation.

Kampung Baru

Saturday evening is the best time to eat in Kampung Baru, when dozens of hawker stalls set up around Jln Raja Muda Musa for the weekly *pasar malam*, which rolls through till early Sunday morning. You can find all sorts of Malay specialities here, from *ikan panggang* to *rojak* (spicy fruit-and-vegetable salad), and the night market positively crackles with energy.

Plenty of hawker-style restaurants stay open all week to cater to the crowds of city workers who descend on Kampung Baru every lunchtime in search of a cheap meal. The following places can furnish you with a tasty Malay meal for RM15 or less.

Warong Perasan (Map p92; Jln Raja Muda Musa; ☎ 8am-4am) Good for *mee soto* (noodle soup), *nasi ayam* (chicken rice) and fried fish.

Ikan Bakar Berempah (Map p92; Gerak 21, Jln Raja Muda Musa; ☎ 24hr) Well-known for its excellent barbecued fish.

Bujang Lapok (Map p92; cnr Jln Daud & Jln Raja Alang; ☎ noon-midnight) This place serves similar food to Ikan Baka Berempah in a tiled, fan-cooled pavilion.

Chop 'n' Steak (Map p92; 16 Jln Daud; ☎ 5pm-2am) A Malay-style steak and chicken restaurant arranged around mock-up of a fishing boat.

Desa Sri Hartamas

This happening drinking-and-dining area is awash with Japanese and Korean restaurants.

Hartamas Square (off Map pp72-3; Jln 23/70a; mains RM20-30; ☎ 5pm-3am) A huge covered hawker court with sports on big TV screens, cold beers and a mass of hawker stalls serving excellent grilled fish, noodles, fried rice, curries and other Malay Chinese treats. The most fun place to dine in Desa Sri Hartamas.

Matsuba Japanese Restaurant (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 6201 1100; 1st fl, 19 Jln 19/70a; meals RM20-50; ☎ noon-2pm & 6-10pm) An unpretentious Japanese place

that attracts a younger crowd with good value bento box sets (including sushi, sashimi and teriyaki).

Restoran Edo Jo (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 6201 8212; 9 Jln 22a/70a; meals RM20-100; ☎ 6pm-midnight, to 1am Fri/Sat) Top-notch Japanese food served in a tasteful wooden dining room with raised banquet rooms hidden by paper screens. Japanese expats come to Edo Jo for a taste of home.

To reach Desa Sri Hartamas, take a taxi or pick up Rapid KL bus U7 from in front of the Pekeliling Bus Station in Titiwangsa (near Titiwangsa monorail station and LRT). In the reverse direction, hail a taxi on Jln 23/70a. The journey takes 20 to 40 minutes, depending on traffic.

Elsewhere

There are several other interesting restaurants and food courts dotted around the city.

Medan Hang Tuah (Map pp72-3; 4th fl, The Mall, Legend Hotel, Jln Putra; meals RM5-15; ☎ 10am-10pm) A Pudu-based re-creation of an old city street, complete with mock shophouses. The food stalls here serve excellent and cheap Malay, Chinese and Indian food.

D'Istana Jalamas Café (Map p92; ☎ 4025 3161; Jln Tun Razak, Titiwangsa; mains from RM10; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) The café at Istana Budaya serves *mamak* favourites such as fish-head curry in classier than average surroundings.

Yu Ri Tei (Map pp72-3; ☎ 4044 0422; Sentul Park Koi Centre, Jln Strachan; mains RM15; ☎ 11am-9pm) If you come up to KLPac (p121) to see a show, drop into this charming Japanese teahouse

surrounded by ponds at the Sentul Park Koi breeding centre. The menu runs to ramen, tempura and various types of dumplings and fried rice. Jln Strachan is off Jln Ipoh.

Restoran Nelayan Titiwangsa (Map pp72-3; ☎ 4022 8400; www.nelayan.com.my; Taman Tasik Titiwangsa; mains RM15-60; ☎ 11am-2.30pm Sat-Thu. 6.30-10.30pm daily) Housed in a wooden pavilion at Taman Tasik Titiwangsa, Restoran Nelayan offers a popular Malaysian buffet (lunch/dinner from RM18/28). There's touristy but entertaining cultural shows (8.30pm daily except Monday), free with buffet supper.

DRINKING

The Golden Triangle is the epicentre of the drinking scene in KL, though party people are increasingly focusing their attention on Asian Heritage Row (Jln Doraisamy), close to the Medan Tuanku monorail station. Bangsar, south of the city centre, remains popular, though the bars here are losing out to the new pubs and clubs in Desa Sri Hartamas, a half-hour taxi ride west of the centre. Wear shoes rather than sandals if you want to visit the more upmarket bars in town. For a more peripatetic night out, see the Monorail Pub Crawl boxed text, below.

Coffee-drinkers are also well catered for in KL. As well as the ubiquitous Starbucks and Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf branches found all over the city (normally with free wi-fi internet access), there are several informal cafés where you can drink without contributing to the demise of small coffee shops around the world.

A MONORAIL PUB CRAWL

Many of the best drinking holes in Kuala Lumpur (KL) are accessible on the monorail, opening up the possibility of a pub crawl right across the city. Starting in Chinatown, wet your whistle at one of the streetside restaurants in the Petaling Street Market (p77) or the traveller-friendly Reggae Bar (see p116), or join the hardened Chinese drinkers for a tumbler of rice wine at the **Chinatown Liquor Shop** (Map pp78-9; Jln Sultan, Chinatown; ☎ 10am-9pm). Suitably refreshed, jump on the monorail at Maharajalela and ride the rails to Bukit Bintang.

Depending on the depth of your wallet, you can either sip with the beautiful people in the Village Bar (p117) or Tiffin Bay (p117) at Starhill Gallery, or join the chill-out crowd in the Green Man (p116), Finnegan's (p116) or the Ceylon Bar (p117). Either way, it pays to invest in some tasty street food on Jln Alor (p106) before jumping back on the monorail to Medan Tuanku.

Asian Heritage Row should be your final destination. For a late-night party, take your pick from SaVanh (p117) or Bed (p117), or enjoy a calmer drink in Brit-style pub the Ivy (p117). To go all out, make sure you are still presentable then continue to the Loft (p120), Cynna (p120) or Maison (p120) to dance till the wee hours. With any luck, Restoran Buharry (p110) should still be open for a rehydrating mango smoothie before you take a taxi home.

Chinatown & Around

CAFÉS

Old Town Kopitiam (Map pp78-9; Ground fl, Central Market; coffee & snacks from RM5; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) A convincing recreation of an old-fashioned *kopi tiam* (Malay Chinese coffee shop) serving *teh* (tea), *kopi* (coffee) and breakfast snacks such as eggs, toast and soup. There's another branch in Plaza Low Yat (p122).

Other venues for serious tea and coffee enthusiasts:

Purple Cane Tea House (Map pp78-9; 3rd fl, 6 Jln Panggong; ☎ 11am-8pm) Serves a broad range of Chinese green and jasmine teas.

Ikopi (Map pp78-9; 1st fl, 6 Jln Panggong; ☎ noon-10pm Wed-Mon) Coffees from around the world are brewed in contraptions that look like they were built by mad scientists.

BARS

Chinatown has few formal bars – Bukit Bintang is a much better area for nightlife. For an inexpensive night out, the Backpackers Travellers Inn (p101) has a grungy traveller bar on its roof. Lots of travellers sip beers at the open-air restaurants in the Petaling Street Market (p77).

Reggae Bar (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2272 2158; 158 Jln Tun HS Lee; ☎ 10.30am-3am) Travellers gather in droves at this laid-back bar near the Petaling Street Market. Bob Marley dominates the sound system most nights and there are beer promos, pool tables and pub grub, served till late.

Zeta Bar (Map p90; ☎ 2264 2264; www.kl-studio.com; Hilton Kuala Lumpur, 3 Jln Stesen Sentral, Brickfields; ☎ 6pm-1.30am, to 3am Fri & Sat) If you're down in Brickfields, the classy and expensive bar at the Hilton pulls in a well-to-do 30-something crowd. Big-name DJs and artists of the calibre of Blondie sometimes appear in the hotel ballroom.

BREWS WITH A VIEW

With all of this city's towering skyscrapers, it would be unthinkable for there not to be some bars to enjoy the sky-high views from in Kuala Lumpur (KL). Some of KL's most exclusive nightspots are perched on top of cloud-busting towers, offering dizzy views over the whole of the city. Topping the bill is **Luna** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2332 7777; Level 34, Menara PanGlobal, Jln Puncak; cover Fri & Sat RM50; ☎ 5pm-1am), which lords it over the city from the top floor of the Pacific Regency Suites. This is KL at its most chic – the bar coils around a swimming pool, and features giant, soft furnishings, screens of crystal beads and chill-out booths with glass walls and views that plummet to street level. Things can get very busy at weekends. Enter via the elevator on the 7th floor of the hotel.

The other elevated bar currently pulling in a crowd is the **Skybar** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2332 9888; Level 33, Traders Hotel, KLCC; ☎ 7pm-1am, to 3am Fri & Sat) in the Traders Hotel, a lofty chill-out space overlooking the KLCC Park. It's chic, futuristic and exclusive. Dress to impress.

Golden Triangle

CAFÉS

Olé Café (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 9007; 48 Changkat Bukit Bintang; tea & coffee from RM7; ☎ 11am-midnight) A roomy coffee shop with free wi-fi, blissful air-con and good tea, coffee and cakes.

Sixty Nine Bistro (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 3369; 14 Jln Kampung Dollah; ☎ noon-1.30am, from 2pm Fri & Sat) A very funky youth venue with junk-shop treasures on the walls and resident fortune tellers.

Wings (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 3309; www.wingsmusicafe.com; 16 Jln Kampung Dollah; ☎ 6.30am-1am, to 2am Fri & Sat) A few doors down from Sixty Nine Bistro, this cheerful student hang-out has regular live music, though most drinkers prefer to chill out on the front terrace.

PUBS

Finnegan's (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 1930; www.finneganspubs.com; 51 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 10am-1am) This Irish chain-pub faithfully recreates the mood of a local boozier. It's a good place for a knees-up, with stout and bitter on tap and a decent pub-grub menu. Happy-hour prices apply before 8pm.

Green Man (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 9924; www.greenman.com.my; 40 Changkat Bukit Bintang; ☎ noon-1am, to 2am Fri-Sun) Another Irish-ish pub with Guinness and bitter on tap, plus a menu of stodgy British food and a pool table. It's calmer indoors than on the busy terrace.

BARS

There are two main districts for drinking in the Golden Triangle: Jln P Ramlee and the streets north of Jln Bukit Bintang.

Legends (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2166 6603; 20 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 11am-2am) A bawdy, boisterous sports bar with big screens showing all the big rugby,

GAY & LESBIAN KL

The gay scene in Kuala Lumpur (KL) took a knock recently with the closure of Liquid, formerly KL's most relaxed and friendly gay venue. But don't worry – there are several other bars and clubs where the scene is still going strong. Visit www.princeworldkl.com and www.utopia-asia.com/klbars.htm for more listings of gay nights and special events in KL.

Blue Boy (Map p84-5; ☎ 2142 1067; 54 Jln Sultan Ismail; cover RM20; ☎ from 6pm) At the bottom of the heap is this grungy pick-up joint just off Jln Sultan Ismail behind the rebranded Millennium Hotel. Come before 11pm to sing karaoke with the winking lady boys; later it gets packed with a rent-boy crowd.

Frangipani Bar (Map p84-5; ☎ 2144 3001; 25 Changkat Bukit Bintang; cover RM30; ☎ 6pm-1am) On Friday nights, the seductive bar above the restaurant of the same name (p84-5) hosts a stylish and discrete gay crowd.

Garçon (Map p92; ☎ 2381 2088; www.maison.com.my; Maison, 8 Jln Yap Ah Shak; cover RM25-30; ☎ 9pm-3am Sun) This is the Sundaynight gay-friendly session at club Maison (p92) in Asian Heritage Row. It's a glam space that attracts a glam crowd, with the DJs from former gay haunt Bliss.

La Queen (Map p84-5; ☎ 017-325 9985; Nouvo, 5 Jln P Ramlee; cover RM20-35; ☎ 9pm-3am Fri & Sat) This unashamedly hedonistic gay venue at the Nouvo club is rapidly growing in popularity. It's big on theme parties with lots of events supporting local gay organisations.

cricket, American football and premiership soccer games.

our pick **Ceylon Bar** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 7689; 20-2 Changkat Bukit Bintang; ☎ 4pm-1am, from 11am Sun) Big, comfy lounges, inexpensive drinks and a genuinely convivial mood make this one of the friendliest drinking holes in KL. Come early to bag one of terrace tables or the sofas inside.

No Black Tie (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 3737; 17 Jln Mesui; ☎ 6pm-1am Mon-Sat) Blink and you'd miss this discrete bar and bistro, hidden away on a residential street north of Jln Bukit Bintang. The bar was founded by Malaysian concert pianist Evelyn Hii and jazz bands and classical-music ensembles play from around 9.30pm.

Tiffin Bay/Tiff's Jazz Lounge (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 3870; 4th fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ noon-1am) Reminiscent of the Mad Hatter's tea party, the upstairs bar at Starhill Gallery features oversized polka-dot lounges and lamp stands made from piles of crockery. Jazz bands play from 9pm in front of a shimmering light display.

our pick **Village Bar** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 3852; Feast Level, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ noon-1am) Columns of glasses and bottles and cascades of dangling lanterns lend an *Alice in Wonderland* quality to this bar on the Starhill Gallery food floor (p107). Prices are high, but the décor is rather spectacular.

SevenAteNine (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2167 7789; Ground fl, The Ascot, 9 Jln Pinang; ☎ 5pm-1am Mon-Fri, 6pm-1am Sat) White sheets hang over the tables and sofas at this sleek nightspot near the KLCC. There's a

sophisticated dinner menu and acoustic bands play on Thursday.

Jln P Ramlee has numerous theme bars with live music or DJs and happy-hour specials. Unfortunately, these places tend to attract lots of sex workers and sexpats. **Beach Club Café** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2166 9919; 97 Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 6pm-3am Tue-Sun) and **Rum Jungle** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 0282; Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 5pm-3am) are the most popular places in this part of town.

Asian Heritage Row

SaVanh (Map p92; ☎ 2697 1181; 64 Jln Doriaswamy) The downstairs bar at CoChine (p108) is dark and moody, with trickling water features and Khmer temple carvings on the walls. A place for creatures of the night.

Ivy (Map p92; ☎ 2693 2260; 48 Jln Doraisamy; ☎ 11am-2am) The Ivy faithfully recreates the feel of a British gastro pub. The downstairs bar has draft beers (including Guinness) and bar snacks, while the upstairs restaurant showcases modern European cooking.

Bed (Map p92; ☎ 2693 1122; www.bed.com.my; 33 Jln Yap Ah Shak; cover Fri & Sat RM40; ☎ 9pm-3am Tue-Sat) The famous Bed concept has been imported from Bangkok to KL. The resulting bar is small but ubercool, with an upbeat DJ soundtrack and glowing neon furniture.

Bangsar Baru, Desa Sri Hartamas & Around

CAFÉS

Bakerzin (Map p94; Ground fl, Bangsar Village 1, 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 8.30am-11pm) Delicious cakes

MANAGING EDITOR JOHN LIM

John Lim is managing editor of *KLue* (www.klue.com.my), the capital's leading lifestyle and entertainment magazine, which keeps his finger on the pulse of nightlife in Kuala Lumpur (KL).

How do you find the best places to eat in KL? I recommend Foodster at FriedChillies (www.friedchillies.com). It's a fantastic blog site run by people who are really passionate about food. The dining scene in KL is pretty dynamic. There are lots of new European and fusion places opening up, particularly around Changkat Bukit Bintang, but some of the best places to eat are small local restaurants that have no name. They never make it into the dining guides, but you'll find loads of reviews on FriedChillies.

What would be the perfect KL night out? I'd tell people to start off on Asian Heritage Row p107 – just walk up and down and take your pick from the hip modern clubs and cool places to chill out. Then head on to Zouk (p120), KL's only superclub. At the end of the night, head to one of KL's *mamak* (Indian Muslim) restaurants for a delicious late-night snack. *Mamak* food grew out of Indian hawker stalls, but sit-down *mamak* restaurants (see p110) are springing up all over KL.

Who are the big Malaysian film makers to look out for? There are several directors making interesting arthouse films and documentaries, exploring the boundaries of religion and race. If you only see one Malaysian film, make it *Sepet* by Yasmin Ahmad. The word means 'slit eyes', a Malay nickname for Chinese Malaysians. The story is a bittersweet romance between a Chinese boy and a Malay girl. It's a story lots of Malaysians can relate to. James Lee is quite the local film auteur, although he's not as well known in his own country as he is abroad – his best-known pictures are *Room To Let* and *Beautiful Washing Machine*. Amir Muhammad is considered a 'controversial' film maker in Malaysia because his work pushes the boundaries when it comes to issues that the government won't allow to be discussed in the public arena. His movie *Lelaki Komunis Terakhir* (The Last Communist Man) was banned, along with his follow-up movie *Apa Khabar Orang Kampung* (Village People Radio Show).

and pastries are the stock in trade at Bakerzin. Come for breakfast or a naughty-but-nice treat after a hard afternoon's shopping.

PUBS & BARS

Bar Upstairs (Map p94; ☎ 2284 2880; www.alexis.com.my; 29 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 6pm-1am, to 2am Fri & Sat) The bar at this popular bistro is probably the most chilled-out drinking spot in Bangsar Baru. Comfortable chairs and soothing sounds on the decks.

Bar Flam (Map p94; ☎ 2284 6721; www.flams.com; 16 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru) This is a stylish, modernist lounge-bar and attracts design darlings and Bangsar trendies. Most people dine at the attached restaurant before they dance.

Black Hole (☎ 2300 1170; 22 Jln 25/70a, Desa Sri Hartamas; ☎ 5pm-2am) Older locals come to this big Desa Sri Hartamas party pub to wine and dine outside and dance upstairs. It's brash, boisterous and good honest, fun.

There is a popular branch of the Irish pub chain **Finnegan's** in Bangsar (Map p94; ☎ 2284 0476; 6 Jln Telawi 5). There's also a branch located in Desa Sri Hartamas (☎ 2300 0538; 70-72 Jln

27/70a, Desa Sri Hartamas). The upstairs bars at Telawi Street Bistro (p114) and La Bodega (see p114) are also excellent spots to dine and dance the night away, attracting a young professional crowd.

ENTERTAINMENT

KL has a remarkably upbeat nightlife for an Islamic country, though much of the credit for this goes to the Chinese and Indian communities and their relaxed attitudes to alcohol and dancing. Don't expect the all-out hedonism of Bangkok – drinking in KL tends to be more restrained, unless of course you visit Zouk (p120) or one of other clubs and dance bars dotted around the city. Attitudes to drinking are founded in religion – places catering to Chinese and Indian Malaysians and foreigners normally serve alcohol and places that target Malays stick to tea, coffee and juices.

As well as the pubs, bars and clubs, KL has numerous cinemas, karaoke bars and venues for live music, particularly jazz and local guitar-based rock.

Cinemas

Most of the big shopping centres have plush multiplexes showing international blockbusters, plus Malay, Chinese, Cantonese and Hindi films. Tickets range from RM6 to RM12, depending on the time of day. Most of KL's cultural centres (see p74) screen occasional arthouse films – contact them directly for details.

DiGi IMAX Theatre (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2117 3046; www.timesquarekl.com/imax.html; 10th fl, Berjaya Times Square, 1 Jln Imbi; adult/child RM15/10) Shows blockbusters as well as IMAX specials.

Golden Screen Cinemas Golden Triangle (Map pp84-5; ☎ 8312 3456; www.gsc.com.my; 3rd fl, Berjaya Times Square, 1 Jln Imbi); Mid Valley (off Map p94; ☎ 8312 3456; www.gsc.com.my; Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City) Book a seat in Gold Class (RM40) for La-Z-boy-style reclining chairs and a drinks service.

Tanjung Golden Village (Map pp84-5; ☎ 7492 2929; www.tgv.com.my; Level 3, Suria KLCC)

Karaoke

Karaoke bars are everywhere in KL but, like elsewhere in Southeast Asia, some have a seedy side. One place you'll get no funny business is **Neway** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 3999; 4th fl, Berjaya Times Square; cover RM12-32; ☎ 11am-4am), a futuristic karaoke complex in Berjaya Times Square that attracts hordes of teenagers and whole

families at weekends. The price for sharing the gift of song (ahem) varies depending on the time of day.

Live Music

KL has a vibrant live music scene, with lots of local bands performing original compositions – a refreshing change from the ubiquitous covers bands in other Southeast Asian capitals. The jazz and indie scenes are particularly animated, and big international artists are increasingly adding KL to their Asia tours. A collective of KL bands and singers has created the website Troubadours (www.troubadourskl.blogspot.com) to publicise shows by local artists – a good resource for listings of upcoming gigs and other live events. It's also worth checking the line-up of indie bands at Laundry (p120). The Istana Budaya (p121) hosts regular classical-music concerts, particularly during the KL Festival (p100).

Hard Rock Café (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2715 5555; Hotel Concorde, 2 Jln Sultan Ismail; cover charge RM35 Fri & Sat; ☎ 11.30am-2am, to 3am Fri&Sat) Ok, so it's a tacky international chain, but it's worth swinging by for the impressive line-up of live bands. Weekends have the best live acts.

Planet Hollywood (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 6602; KL Plaza, 170 Jln Bukit Bintang; cover charge RM35; ☎ 11am-3am) A similar experience is offered by the

RESTAURANT & BAR OWNER-MANAGER MARIA DANKAR

Maria Dankar is the manager of Top Hat (p111), a popular restaurant and jazz bar in a handsome old Kuala Lumpur (KL) mansion. Maria moved to the capital in the 1950s so she's seen half a century of change in the Malaysian capital.

How has KL changed over the years? Oh my goodness! The city is changing so fast these days. It's best not to leave the house because the street will change as soon as you turn your back! I saw the Petronas Towers go up right in front of me. Now there are just a few old houses like ours left in the centre. The developers are always knocking at the door. If you live in one of these old houses, the maintenance is so high. We need three gardeners just to tend our grounds. And the developers can see the money in the sky – every new floor is more money in the bank. Some people even end up living in apartments in skyscrapers on the site of their old houses!

Is there a distinctive KL identity? I think our diversity is our identity. We all come from different ethnic groups but we've learned to work together to accommodate all these different religions and different ways of doing things. We're very conscious of each other's needs. And now Air Asia is bringing in people from right across Asia; it's making the city even more cosmopolitan.

What is the jazz scene like in KL? There are only about five proper jazz places in town, but we're all busy. Some places do the modern stuff, but we're not really a Hard Rock Café kind of place – we like that old-fashioned, New Orleans kind of jazz. But we're trying to start up a jazz association to get the next generation interested in our kind of music.

local branch of Planet Hollywood. Bands play from around 10pm.

Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2051 7007; www.malaysianphilharmonic.com; Box Office, Tower 2, Petronas Towers, KLCC; tickets from R20-210; ☎ box office 10am-6pm Mon-Sat) A state-of-the-art concert hall inside the Petronas Towers. The respected Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra plays here (mostly at weekends) along with other local and international ensembles. Smart dress is required.

Jazz bands and singers do the rounds of the intimate stages at No Black Tie (p117) and Tiff's Jazz Lounge (p117).

Other jazz venues:

Top Room@Top Hat (Map pp84-5; 7 Jln Kia Peng; cover RM20-50; ☎ 10.30am-1am Fri & Sat, 5pm-late Sun) See boxed text, p119, for more on this venue.

Bangkok Jazz (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 8708; Chulan Sq, Jln Raja Chulan; ☎ 5pm-1am)

Clubs

KL's lively club scene is fast and frenetic – places go in and out of fashion overnight, so for the latest information check the pages of local street press listing (see p75) or visit www.nightspots.com.my. The following nightspots are all stalwarts of the scene. Most clubs impose charge a cover of RM20 to RM50 from Thursday to Saturday, which includes one drink.

ASIAN HERITAGE ROW

Maison (Map p92; ☎ 2381 2088; www.maison.com.my; 8 Jln Yap Ah Shak; ☎ 9pm-3am Wed-Sun) Just off Asian Heritage Row, five shophouses have been knocked together to form this huge bar and club complex. It's urban, trendy and very slick – dress your best to make it past the bouncers. If you need a break from the hip-hop and House beats inside, there's a streetside shisha bar out front.

A linked balcony that gets crammed with beautiful people in beautiful outfits at weekends. **Loft** (Map p92; ☎ 2692 5668; www.loftkl.com; 28-40 Jln Doriaswamy; ☎ 9pm-3am) and **Cynna** (Map p92; ☎ 2694 2888; www.loftkl.com; 28-40 Jln Doriaswamy; ☎ 6pm-3am) are two stylish clubs with separate entrances. Dress smartly to get past the clipboard nazis on the door.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Espanda (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 6666; 97 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 6pm-3am Tue-Sun) A long-established club in the Jln P Ramlee entertainment district with

resident DJs and regular theme nights. Zouk has stolen some of Espanda's thunder but it still gets busy at weekends.

Passion (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 8888; www.poppy-collection.com; 18-1 Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 4pm-2am, to 3am Fri & Sat) Part of the Poppy Collection – a group of bars, clubs and restaurants on Jln P Ramlee – Passion attracts trendy 30-somethings with an inclination towards R&B and House.

Ruums (Map pp84-5; ☎ 012-638 0666; www.ruumsclub.com; Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 4pm-3am) A huge dance club in the Life Centre complex, with hectares of floor space and a booming sound system playing straight-forward commercial club sounds.

ourpick Zouk (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2171 1997; www.zoukclub.com.my; 113 Jln Ampang; ☎ 9pm-3am Tue-Sun) Housed in a striking amoeba-shaped complex located on Jln Ampang, the Malaysian branch of this famous Singapore superclub is the undisputed king of the KL club scene. (For many people Zouk is the KL club scene.) There are four separate venues under one roof. Filled with bulbous organic forms, the two-storey Zouk Mainroom hosts glitzy theme nights, big-name DJs and over-the-top dance parties with lots of competitions and freebies. Dance music connoisseurs head to the more sophisticated Velvet Underground or the smaller and edgier Loft, where leading Malaysian DJs road test personal projects. For a less frenetic night out, try the Terrace Bar (no cover; open 5pm to midnight Sunday to Tuesday, 5pm to 3am Wednesday to Saturday) by the main entrance. For an inside view, see p39 for a profile on Zouk's regular DJ, Gabriel.

DESA SRI HARTAMAS & PETALING JAYA

Several trendy club-bars have opened at the Curve complex (off Map pp72-3), west of Sri Hartamas in Petaling Jaya. Rapid KL bus U88 runs here from Bangsar LRT station, or you can take a taxi or bus from the Kelana Jaya LRT station.

Laundry (☎ 7728 1715; laundrybar.blogspot.com; The Curve, Mutiara Damansara; admission free; ☎ 5pm-2am) The first of the new breed of suburban club-bars in KL, Laundry has a reputation for slow service but brilliant live music. The attitude can be a bit overbearing but the bar does a commendable job of supporting local musical talent, particularly indie bands.

Sanctuary (☎ 7710 5033; Level 1, The Curve, Mutiara Damansara; admission free; ☎ noon-1am) A very slick concept nightspot, Sanctuary has indoor and

outdoor bars, a Southeast Asia restaurant and an 'ice bar' serving chilled vodka in (dare we say it) chilled-out surroundings.

Soda Club (☎ 6201 3778; Jln 23/70a; cover RM35; ☎ 5pm-2am) A gigantic, flashing neon Sri Hartamas club. Dress up to get past the bouncers and expect lots of drinks promos, theme nights and fast-paced House.

Cultural Shows

Central Market (p77) hosts a regular programme of free events, including traditional Malay, Indian and Chinese dance and music from Borneo. Pick up a monthly calendar from the information desk. The Malaysian Tourism Centre (p76) hosts a song-and-dance extravaganza in its auditorium (adult/under 12 RM5/free) at 3pm on Tuesday, Thursday and weekends, probably the most professional show in town. There's also an evening dance show at 8.30pm daily in the attached restaurant **Saloma** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2161 0122; evening buffet RM70; ☎ 11am-midnight).

Several tourist restaurants in KL offer stage shows based on traditional Malay dance. The shows are colourful and energetic, though the authenticity of some of the dances is debatable. Restoran Nelayan Titiwangsa (p115) has cultural shows at 8.30pm daily except Monday (free with the buffet supper). Seri Melayu (p112) runs traditional Malay music and dance performances from 8.30pm nightly, backed up by an extensive buffet (RM60 including show).

Spectator Sports

Malays follow football (soccer) and basketball enthusiastically, but the big spectator sport in Kuala Lumpur is motor racing. About 60km south of the centre, the **Sepang International Circuit** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 8778 2222; www.malaysiangp.com.my; Jln Pekeliling, Sepang) hosts some of the biggest events in Asian motorsports, from the Malaysian Motorcycle Grand Prix (in October) to the Petronas Malaysian Formula One Grand Prix (in March/April). Events take place throughout the year so check the website for listings or visit the office (☎ 2273 9335; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat) in KL Sentral.

Footy fans can catch international matches at the **National Sports Complex** (Kompleks Sukan Negara; off Map pp72-3; ☎ 8994 4660; www.ksn.com.my; Sri Petaling, Bukit Jalil), accessible from the Bukit Jalil LRT station. For information on fixtures, contact the **Football Association of Malaysia** (☎ 7873 3100;

www.fam.org.my). Basketball games run by the **Malaysia Amateur Basketball Association** (MABA; www.malaysia-basketball.com) take place at the **Stadium Bola Keranjang** (Map pp78-9; Jln Hang Jebat) in Chinatown.

Theatre

Actors Studio Bangsar (off Map p94; ☎ 2094 0400; www.theactorsstudio.com.my; Level 3, West Wing, Bangsar Shopping Centre, Jln Maarof) Theatre and comedy are staged at this studio located in a shopping centre a couple of kilometres north of Bangsar Baru. Prices depend on the performance.

Chinese Assembly Hall (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2274 6645; 1 Jln Maharajalela) Stages occasional shows of Chinese traditional dance and theatre, though no English translation is provided. Prices depend on the performance.

Istana Budaya (National Theatre; Map p92; ☎ 4026 5555; www.istanabudaya.gov.my; Jln Tun Razak, Titiwangsa; tickets RM100-300) The National Theatre is the setting for big-production music, dance and theatre shows. Keep an eye out in the local press for traditional musicals and shadow-puppet shows, and plays inspired by events in Malay history. The website has a listing of upcoming shows.

Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPAc; Map pp72-3; ☎ 4047 9000; www.klpac.com; Sentul Park, Jln Strachan; tickets RM20-300) Part of the Sentul West regeneration project, this modernist performing-arts complex puts on a wide range of progressive theatrical events. You can combine a night at the theatre with a stroll in peaceful Sentul Park and dinner at the Sentul Koi Carp Breeding Centre (see boxed text, p98).

Sutra Dance Theatre (Map pp72-3; ☎ 4021 1092; www.sutradancetheatre.com; 12 Persiaran Titiwangsa 3, Titiwangsa) Indian classical dance is showcased at this dance studio and cultural centre in Titiwangsa. See the calendar on the website for upcoming shows and prices.

Taman Budaya (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2078 1542; www.heritage.gov.my; Jln Tun HS Lee) A good venue for performances of traditional Malaysian theatre and dance. The building – an AC Norman construction from 1893 – used to be a school. Shows take place at weekends at 8.30pm; contact the centre for details of upcoming events and prices.

SHOPPING

When it comes to shopping for brand-name consumer goods, KL is nipping at the heels of

Hong Kong and Singapore. Prices for clothes are incredibly competitive, and cameras and electronics are also good value, though not quite as cheap as in Bangkok or Singapore. Malaysia also has one of the most prolific counterfeit industries in the world, producing everything from fake Calvin Klein jeans to pirate DVDs and computer software, but why waste money on fakes when you can buy the real thing for not much more in a department store sale?

The capital is the best place to find original handicrafts from all over the country, although many crafts are imported from Indonesia, Vietnam, Thailand, India or China.

Shopping Malls

You'll find most of what you need at these gigantic shopping malls.

Avenue K (Map pp84-5; Jln Ampang; ☎ 10am-9pm) A relatively new arrival, this slick mall is slowly filling up with exclusive designer boutiques (eg CK, Hugo Boss) and upmarket home-décor stores. It's above the KLCC LRT station.

Bangsar Village I & II (Map p94; cnr Jln Telawi 1 & Jln Telawi 2, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 10.30am-10.30pm) These twin malls offer upmarket fashions (including international brands such as Ted Baker and local Malay designers), plus some good stores for kids and a decent Western-style supermarket.

Berjaya Times Square (Map pp84-5; www.timesquarekl.com; 1 Jln Imbi; ☎ 10am-10pm) Teen fashions and toy stores abound at this youth-oriented mall just south of Bukit Bintang. The Metrojaya department store has good deals on clothes and there's a big branch of Borders bookstore. Regular kids' expos are held here, from comic fairs to pint-sized talent contests. The centre also has a bowling alley, karaoke, a cinema, an IMAX cinema and an indoor theme park with a looping roller coaster.

Curve (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 7710 6868; www.thecurve.com.my; Mutiara Damansara; ☎ 10am-10pm) The latest addition to the KL shopping scene, this uber-modern mall has loads of international names, including Ikea and Tesco. It's about 15km west of the centre in Petaling Jaya; a free shuttle bus runs three times a day between the mall and the Royale Bintang Hotel on Jln Bukit Bintang (see the website for details).

Imbi Plaza (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 7425; Jln Imbi; ☎ 11am-9pm) A good IT mall selling mainly parts, peripherals and blank digital media.

Lot 10 (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2716 8615; www.ytlcommunity.com/lot10; 50 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm)

Lots of genuine brand-name fashion stores and a branch of the reliable Isetan department store.

Mid Valley Megamall (off Map p94; ☎ 2938 3333; www.midvalleycity.com; Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-10pm) Mega is the only way to describe this enormous mall, off Jln Syed Putra. The Megamall has 300 stores, two department stores (Metrojaya and Jusco), an 18-screen cinema, a bowling alley, a huge food court and a colourful Hindu temple. The IT World Zone on the 2nd floor is good for electronics. The new KL Komuter Mid Valley station makes getting here a cinch. There are also Rapid KL buses to Chinatown and a free shuttle bus to Bangsar LRT station.

Plaza Low Yat (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 3651; 7 Jln 1/77; ☎ 10am-10pm) KL's best IT mall, with laptops and digital cameras on the ground floor and mobile phones and computer peripherals and accessories upstairs. Digital camera memory cards, card-readers and portable hard drives are particularly good value. It's off Jln Bukit Bintang.

Starhill Gallery (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2782 3855; www.starhillgallery.com; 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) Pack the platinum charge card – this glitzy mall is packed with exclusive fashion brands including Louis Vuitton, Salvatore Ferragamo and Alfred Dunhill. The basement level is a virtual village of upmarket restaurants (see p107), while the 'Pamper' floor has some of KL's best spas (see boxed text, p95).

Sungei Wang Plaza (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 6109; www.sungeiwang.com; Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 9.30am-9.30pm) This mall, interlinked with BB Plaza (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 7411), is confusing to negotiate but jam-packed with youth-oriented fashions and accessories. There's a branch of the Parkson Grand department store, plus a post office and various fastfood restaurants.

Yet another reason for heading to the KLCC is the fine Suria KLCC (p86) shopping complex at the foot of the Petronas Towers. It's strong on both local and international brands and there's a huge branch of the Isetan department store.

Department Stores

The best places to buy clothes are the big shopping mall department stores (see above), particularly during the sales. You can also try the following independent department stores for inexpensive shirts, shorts and swimwear:

Sogo (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2698 2111; Jln TAR, Little India; ☎ 10am-9.30pm)

UO Superstore Chinatown (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2032 1201; Jln Sultan; ☎ 10.30am-10pm); Chow Kit (Map p92; ☎ 2691 9951; Jln TAR; ☎ 10.30am-10pm)

Craft & Souvenir Shops

House of Suzie Wong (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2143 3220; www.houseofsuziewong.com; Muse fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) Antiques from across Asia are gathered together in informal room settings at this eccentric Starhill Gallery store. Staff can tell you the individual history of where each item was found.

Kompleks Budaya Kraf (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2162 7533; www.kraftangan.gov.my; Jln Conlay; ☎ 10am-6pm) A government enterprise, this huge complex on the outskirts of the business district mainly caters to coach tours, but it's worth a visit to browse the shops and stalls selling batik, wood carvings, pewter, basketware, glassware and ceramics. You can see craftsmen and artists at work in the surrounding Art Colony (check www.artkoloni.com), and the complex runs informal craft classes.

Peter Hoe Evolution (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2026 0711; 2 Jln Hang Lekir; ☎ 10am-7pm) Peter Hoe's original batik designs on sarongs, shirts and dresses are the main draw, but the shop also has an impressive range of Asian home-décor items. There are several similar stores on the same block.

Pucuk Rebung (Map pp84-5; ☎ 3382 0769; www.pucukrebung.com; Level 3, Suria KLCC, cnr Jln Ampang & Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 10am-10pm) Half museum, half shop, this upmarket arts-and-craft store offers genuine antiques and Malay ethnological items. Only some of the items are for sale – it's worth popping in to see the cannons, carvings and old photos, even if you can't afford the hefty price tags on the things you can buy.

Royal Selangor Pewter Factory (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 4145 6122; visitorcentre.royal Selangor.com; 4 Jln Usahawan Enam, Setapak Jaya; ☎ 9am-5pm) Located 8km north-east of the city centre, the world's largest pewter manufacturer offers some very appealing souvenirs made from this malleable alloy of lead and silver. You can try your own hand at creating a pewter dish at the School of Hard Knocks (p99). The factory has an interesting visitor centre (to get here, take the LRT to Wangsa Maju station and then a taxi) or you can visit the retail outlets in KL's malls.

Tenmoku Pottery (Map pp84-5; ☎ 6187 5898; www.tenmokupottery.com.my; Level 3, Suria KLCC, cnr Jln Ampang & Jln P Ramlee; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) Based near the Batu Caves, Tenmoku Pottery specialises in vases,

bowls and other ceramics inspired by natural forms. There are branches at the Central Market and the Mid Valley Megamall.

Formerly held on the first Saturday of the month in front of the National Art Gallery (p93), the Kuala Lumpur Craft Market is on hold until the gallery reopens in 2008. Check with the gallery to see if the market is up and running again. Chinatown's Central Market (p77) is also a handy spot for handicrafts and fabric, and the gift shop at the Islamic Arts Museum (p83) is stacked with interesting arts and crafts from across the Islamic world.

Art Galleries

Kuala Lumpur is turning out some eye-catching modern art (often inspired by tribal and religious themes) and much of it is for sale in the art galleries dotted around the city. As well as the following high-brow galleries, you can commission oil portraits for as little as RM250 at the painters studios in the Central Market Annexe (Map pp78-9).

Art Seni (Map pp84-5; Muse fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) One of several upmarket galleries at the Art Colony in the Starhill Gallery mall, with lots of paintings and photos by up-and-coming Malaysian artists.

Galeri Tangsi (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2691 0805; PAM Centre, 6 Jln Tangsi; ☎ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) Interesting art space in a heritage building west of Merdeka Sq.

Sarawak Paradise in Borneo (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 6113; 25 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-10pm) Part tourist office for Malaysian Borneo, this government enterprise stocks paintings by popular Sarawak artist Ramsay Ong (see www.artrageouslyasia.com).

Valentine Willie Fine Art (Map p94; ☎ 2284 2348; www.artsasia.com.my; 1st fl, 17 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☎ noon-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat) One of KL's best galleries, with frequent shows representing some of the country's top artists.

Specialist Stores

British India (off Map p94; ☎ 2938 3826; Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) The Mid Valley Megamall store of a flashy chain selling sophisticated fashions with an ethnic flavour. (There are branches of this store in most of KL's big malls.)

Jim Thompson Silk (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 8689; Explore fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-7pm) KL branch of the Thai silk company founded by Jim Thompson, who disappeared

in 1967 in Malaysia's Cameron Highlands. You can buy sumptuous loose silk as well as ready-made clothes.

Mumbai Sé (Map p94; ☎ 2287 0810; Ground fl, Bangsar Village II, Jln Telawi 1; ☎ 10.30am-10.30pm) This is the first KL branch of this upmarket Singapore store selling iridescent Indian fashions and home bric-a-brac.

Purple Cane Tea Arts (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2031 1877; 11 Jln Sultan; ☎ 10am-10pm) One of several specialist tea shops in Chinatown where you can sample and buy exotic teas, plus all the tea-making paraphernalia to go with them. There's another branch in the Mid Valley Megamall.

Silk Street (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2694 0402; 136 Jln TAR; ☎ 10am-8pm) A huge multistorey silk store with reams of silk sold by the yard and a resident tailor.

Tear Proof (Map pp84-5; Level 3, Suria KLCC; ☎ 10am-10pm) Good for backpacks, rugged outdoor wear and camping equipment. There are branches in Berjaya Times Square, the Curve and the Mid Valley Megamall.

Teratai (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 8866; www.teratai.com.my; 4th fl, Lot 10, Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) An upmarket Asian arts and crafts, tailored towards Western home décor.

Yogini Mystical Treasures (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 2889; www.yoginimystical.com; 4th fl, Lot 10, Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ 10am-9.30pm) A treasure house of Tibetan Buddhist art imported from across the Himalaya.

If you plan to do any scuba diving or snorkelling in Malaysia, these stores can kit you out with everything you need:

Dive Station (off Map p94; ☎ 2282 1948; 3rd fl, Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City; ☎ 10am-10pm)

Planet Scuba (Map p94; ☎ 2287 2822; Jln Telawi 5, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 11am-9pm Tue-Sat, 11am-6pm Sun)

Markets

There are several interesting daily markets, including the Petaling Street Market (p77) in Chinatown, the Bazaar Baru Market (p93) in Chow Kit and the Pudu Market (p91) in Pudu. Another useful market is the nightly **clothes market** (Map p92; Jln Haji Taib; ☎ 3pm-midnight) in Chow Kit, which sells similar goods to the Petaling Street Market at slightly lower prices.

See the boxed text, p91, for information on KL's *pasar malam*.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

KL is the main gateway to Malaysia, with numerous flight, train and bus routes fanning

out across the country and Asia. Penang is easily accessible by bus, train and plane (including cheap flights on Air Asia), while Melaka is just two hours away by bus or long-distance taxi – close enough for a day trip.

Air

KL's main airport is **Kuala Lumpur International Airport** (KLIA; off Map pp72-3; ☎ 8777 8888; www.klia.com.my), 75km south of the city centre at Sepang. At the international arrivals hall there's a useful **Tourism Malaysia office** (☎ 8776 5651; ☎ 9am-midnight), a **celcom stand** (☎ 7am-11pm) selling prepaid SIM cards for your mobile phone, and counters for all the main car-rental firms (see p234). Note that airline regulations are strictly enforced – only one carry-on bag is permitted and liquids can only be carried on board in bottles of less than 100mL, which must be presented for screening in a clear plastic bag.

All of Air Asia's flights are handled by the nearby **Low Cost Carrier-Terminal** (LCC-T; off Map pp72-3; ☎ 8777 8888; http://lcc.airasia.com). Air Asia tickets are best purchased online at www.airasia.com. You can get information and book (using online terminals) at their small **office** (Map p90; ☎ 1300-889 933; ☎ 9am-9pm) in KL Sentral station. See p227 for listings of other airlines with offices in KL.

Berjaya Air's flights arrive at **Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 7845 8382) at Subang, around 20km west of the city centre.

Boat

Several private companies run ferries to Tanjung Balai and Dumai on Sumatra in Indonesia from Pelabuhan Klang (Port Klang), accessible by KTM Komuter train from KL Sentral or by public bus (RM3.50) from the small Klang bus stand by Pasar Seni LRT station in Chinatown. Ferries run to Tanjung Balai (RM100, 3½ hours) at 11am Monday to Saturday. Ferries to Dumai (RM100, 3½ hours) leave between 9am and 10am daily. Note that you need an Indonesian visa in advance for the crossing to Tanjung Balai.

Bus

KL has several bus stations. Chinatown's Puduraya Bus Station handles most long-distance buses to Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. However, buses to Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu and the jetty for the Perhentian Islands leave from

the Putra Bus Station on Jln Tun Ismail, and buses to Kuala Lipis, Jerantut and Temerloh leave from the Pekeliling Bus Station at Titivangsa.

If you're travelling to Singapore and want to avoid the stress of dealing with Puduraya, **Aeroline** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 6258 8800; www.aeroline.com.my) runs six services daily (adult/child from RM80/50, five hours) from outside the Corus Hotel on Jln Ampang, just east of KLCC, using comfortable, air-conditioned double-decker coaches. **Plusliner/NICE** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 2272 1586; www.plusliner.com) runs a similar up-market service from outside the Old KL Train Station on Jln Sultan Hishamuddin. There are around eight daily buses to Singapore (adult/child RM80/60) and six daily buses to Penang (five hours) – NICE coaches cost RM27/13.50, Plusliner coaches cost RM58/43.

PEKELILING BUS STATION

Next to the Titivangsa LRT and monorail stations on Jln Tun Razak, **Pekeliling Bus Station** (Hentian Bas Pekeliling; Map p92; ☎ 4042 7256) is in the north of the city, just off Jln Tun Razak next to Titivangsa LRT and monorail stations. There's a left-luggage counter (RM3 per bag per day) open from 8am to 8pm.

Transnasional Express (☎ 4256 8218) has departures to Kuala Lipis (RM11.20, four hours, six daily) and Raub (RM8.30, 2½ hours, three daily). Several companies including **Plusliner** (☎ 4042 1256) run hourly services to Kuantan (RM16.90, four hours) till around 10.30pm; many go via Temerloh (RM8.60, 2½ hours). Buses to Jerantut (RM13, three hours, four daily) also go via Temerloh. Buses to Genting Highlands (RM5.60, one hour) leave half-hourly from 7am to 9pm.

PUDURAYA BUS STATION

Huge, hectic, crowded and invariably overheated, **Puduraya Bus Station** (Hentian Bas Puduraya; Map pp78-9; ☎ 2070 0145) is the kind of place you want to get in and out of quickly. The crowds provide plenty of cover for pickpockets and bag-snatchers, and agents for the bus companies will pounce on you as soon as you walk in the door with spiels to convince you that their company is the best choice for your destination. This said, buses run from here across Malaysia and further afield to Singapore and Thailand, and departures are fast and frequent throughout the day. Inside the main entrance on Jln Pudu, you'll find a small informa-

tion counter and a booth for the **tourist police** (☎ 2115 9999). Head to the back of the station for the **left-luggage counter** (☎ 6am-midnight; per day per bag RM3) and the food court (see p108).

Buses depart from the basement level, but tickets are purchased from the ticket desks at the back of the main concourse. To find a bus, wander up and down the aisles checking the lists of departure times – staff will shout out their destinations as you walk past but make sure the departure time suits you, as agents sometimes sell tickets for buses that won't be leaving for several hours. Government-owned **Transnasional Express** (☎ 2070 3300) is the largest operator, with buses to most major destinations. To find your bus, look for the name of the bus company on the signboards by the steps that lead down to the basement. There are more private bus company offices over the road on Jln Pudu.

Services are so numerous that you can often turn up and get a seat on the next bus, but to be safe, book the day before, or a few days before during peak holiday periods. When taking night buses, check what time the bus arrives in the morning; if you arrive too early, you'll have to wait until the hotels open their doors before you can check in.

Typical adult fares and journey times from KL follow:

Destination	Fare (RM)	Duration (hr)
Alor Setar	30	6
Butterworth	24	5
Cameron Highlands	18-23	4
Had Yai (Thailand)	40	7
Ipoh	13-14	3
Johor Bahru	24	5
Kuantan	18	4½
Melaka	9-10	2
Penang	27	5
Singapore	30	5½

PUTRA BUS STATION

Several services to the east coast leave from the quieter and less intimidating **Putra Bus Station** (Hentian Bas Putra; Map pp72-3; ☎ 4042 9530) on Jln Tun Ismail, opposite the Putra World Trade Centre. To get here, take the LRT to PWTC station, or a KTM Komuter train to Putra station. There's a left-luggage counter (RM3 per bag per day) open from 7am till 10pm.

At around 9.30am and 9.30pm, there are buses to Kota Bharu (RM31 to RM35, eight hours), Kuala Terengganu (RM30,

seven hours), and the jetty for boats to Pulau Perhentian (RM31, five to six hours).

Car

KL is probably the best place to hire a car for touring Peninsular Malaysia, though driving out of KL is complicated by a confusing one-way system and contradictory road signs that can throw off your sense of direction completely – see p233 for more on driving in Malaysia. All the major companies have offices at the airport. City offices – generally open from 9am to 6pm weekdays and 9am to 1pm Saturday – include the following:

Avis (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 4487; www.avis.com.my; Ground fl, Angkasa Raya Bldg)

Hertz (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2148 6433; www.hertz.com.my; Ground fl, Kompleks Antarabangsa, Jln Sultan Ismail)

Mayflower (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 1188; www.mayflowercarrental.com.my; 42 Jln Sultan Ismail)

Orix (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 3009; www.orixcarrentals.com.my; Mezzanine Level, Federal Hotel, Jln Bukit Bintang)

Long-Distance Taxi

With plenty of cheap flights and comfortable trains and buses, there is little reason to use long-distance taxis – they take just as long as buses but they cost more and they only leave when they have a full compliment of passengers, or when one passenger agrees to pay the whole-taxi fare. However, they are cheaper than ordinary taxis for long journeys.

If you feel inclined to take a shared taxi, whole-taxi fares from the depot on the 2nd floor of the Puduraya Bus Station include Melaka (RM140), Penang (RM360), Johor Bahru (RM300), Ipoh (RM200) and the Cameron Highlands (RM200). There's a smaller stand at the Pekeliling Bus Station serving Temerloh, Jerantut, Kuantan and Raub. Toll charges are normally included, though some unscrupulous drivers make passengers pay extra.

Train

KL Sentral station is the national hub of the **KTM** (Keretapi Tanah Melayu Berhad; Map p90; ☎ 2267 1200; www.ktmb.com.my; ☎ info office 10am-7pm, ticket office 7am-10pm) railway system, which extends through Malaysia into Thailand and Singapore. You can buy tickets in advance at the station or get the handy **ticket delivery service** (☎ 2267 1200; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) to speed the ticket to your hotel room for RM4. Services run daily to Singapore,

Butterworth (for Georgetown, Penang) and Hat Yai (connecting with trains to Bangkok and other parts of Thailand) – see p235 for more information.

The same company runs the **KTM Komuter** train service around KL (see p128).

GETTING AROUND

On paper, KL should have one of the best public transport systems around, with numerous bus routes and a sophisticated rail-based mass transit system made up of the KTM Komuter, **KLIA Ekspres**, **KLIA Transit**, **LRT** and monorail systems. Unfortunately the systems are poorly integrated. As a rule, you need a different ticket for each service and many of the 'interchange' stations are actually on different streets, linked by a series of walkways and overpasses.

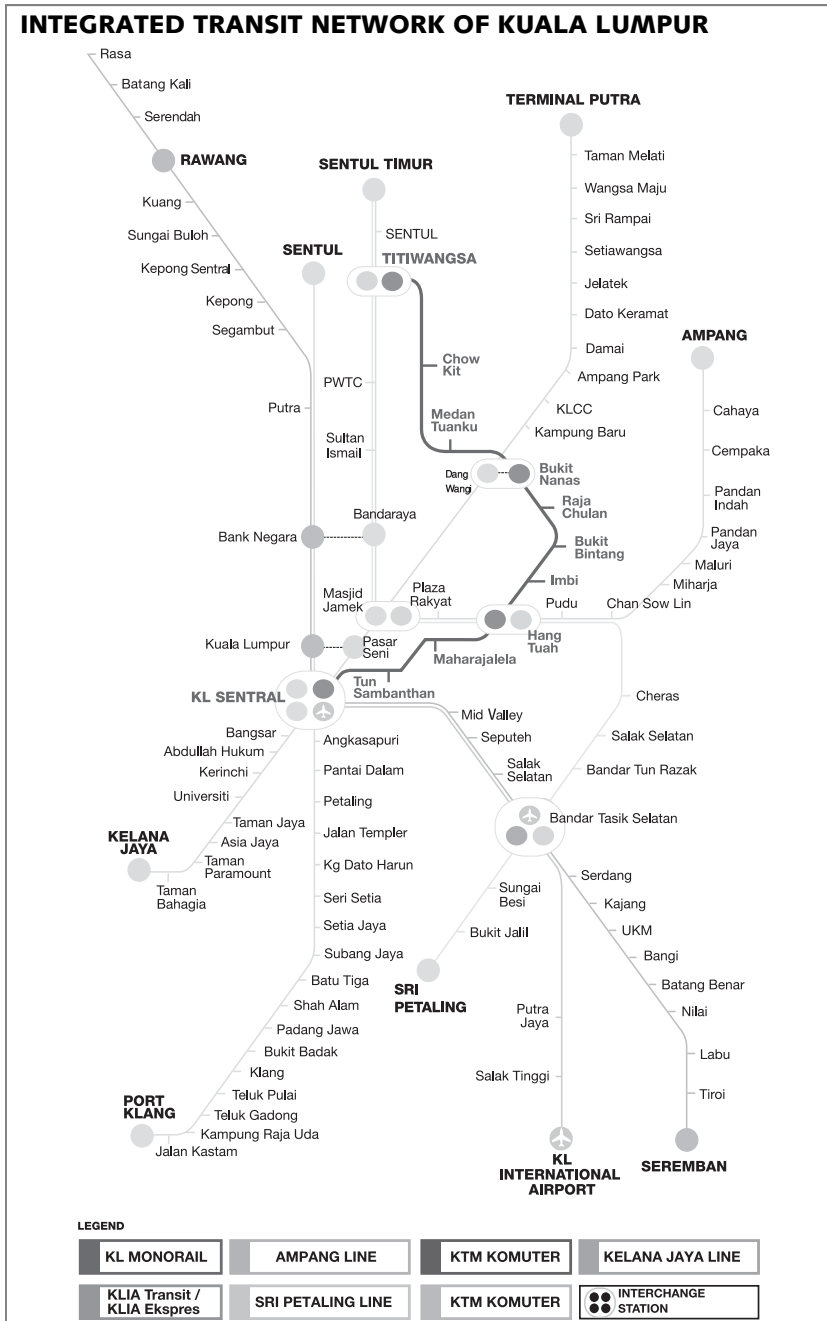
This said, the monorail and Kelana Jaya/Terminal Putra line of the LRT provide access to most points of interest in the city centre, avoiding the traffic jams that plague the inner-city roads. The rechargeable **Touch & Go** stored value card (available at all LRT stations for an RM10 deposit) can be used at the electronic gates to the LRT, train and monorail systems.

See the transit network map, p127.

To/From the Airports
KLIA

The most hassle-free way to reach KL from **KLIA** is the **KLIA Ekspres** (☎ 2267 8000; www.kliaekspres.com; one-way adult/child RM35/15, return adult/child RM70/30). This comfortable express train departs every 15 to 20 minutes from 5.45am to 11.45pm and completes the journey to KL Sentral station in just 28 minutes. From KL Sentral, you can transfer to your final destination by monorail, LRT, KTM Komuter trains or by taxi. If you're flying from KL on Malaysia Airlines, you can check your baggage in at KL Sentral before making your way to **KLIA**. The half-hourly **KL Transit** service (adult/child one-way RM35/15) also connects **KLIA** with KL Sentral, but it stops at three other stations en route (Salak Tinggi, Putrajaya and Bandar Tasik Selatan) so the total journey takes about 35 minutes.

KL has a useful shuttle bus service between the airport and the city. The **Airport Coach** (☎ 8787 3894; one-way RM10) departs hourly from 5am until 10.30pm to KL Sentral (one hour) and from 6.30am to 12.30am to **KLIA**.



The bus stand at KLIA is clearly signposted inside the terminal.

To reach central KL by taxi head to the taxi coupon desk inside the terminal (look for the yellow sign in arrivals). Standard taxis cost RM67 for up to three people, premier taxis for four people are RM93 and the journey takes around one hour. If you try to negotiate a fare directly with the taxi drivers waiting outside the arrivals hall, you'll pay hundreds of ringgit for the same ride. When going to the airport by taxi, make sure that the agreed fare includes tolls; expect to pay RM65 from Chinatown or Jln Bukit Bintang.

If you're changing to a flight on Air Asia, there's a useful shuttle bus between KLIA and the LCC-T – it runs every 20 minutes from 6am to midnight and the fare is RM1.50. Penny-pinchers can use this bus to get to Nilai (RM3.50) to connect with the KTM Komuter train to KL Sentral (RM4.70). A taxi between the two airports costs RM33.

LCC-T

To reach the LCC-T from KL Sentral, jump on the **Skybus** (www.skybus.com.my); buses run half-hourly from around 4.30am to 12.45am and the fare for the one-hour journey is RM9. Travelling from the LCC-T, prepaid taxis charge RM62 to Chinatown or Jln Bukit Bintang (50% more from midnight to 6am). Buy your coupon at the desk near the arrivals hall exit. A taxi from the city to LCC-T will cost around RM65.

SULTAN ABDUL AZIZ SHAH AIRPORT

The easiest way to reach the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport is to take a taxi (around RM40).

Bus

Although there are several smaller companies, most buses in KL are provided by either **Rapid KL** (☎ 1800-388 228; www.rapidkl.com.my) or **Metrobus** (☎ 5635 3070). Rapid KL buses are the easiest to use as destinations are clearly displayed. Its buses are divided into four classes, and tickets are valid all day on the same class of bus. Bas Bandar (routes starting with B, RM2) services run around the city centre. Bas Utama (routes starting with U, RM2) buses run from the centre to the suburbs. Bas Tempatan (routes starting with T, RM1) buses run around the suburbs. Bas Ekspres (routes starting with E, RM4) are express buses to distant suburbs.

You can also buy an all-day ticket covering all nonexpress buses (RM4) and a ticket covering all Rapid KL buses and trains (RM7). All the bus routes have recently been renumbered – there's an **information booth** (Map pp78-9; ☎ 7am to 9pm) in front of Pasar Seni LRT station where you can pick up a route map and information on various season tickets.

Local buses leave from half a dozen small bus stands around the city – useful stops in Chinatown include Jln Sultan Mohamed (by Pasar Seni), Klang Bus Station (south of Pasar Seni), Bangkok Bank (on Lebu Pudu), Medan Pasar (on Lebu Ampang), Central Market (on Jln Hang Kasturi) and the Kota Raya department store (on Jln Cheng Lock); see Map pp78-9.

KL Monorail

KL's air-conditioned **monorail** (☎ 2273 1888; www.monorail.com.my; RM1.20-2.50) zips from KL Sentral in the south to Titiwangsa in the north, linking up many of the city's sightseeing areas. Trains run from 6am to midnight. Useful stops include KL Sentral (for the train station and airport transport), Maharajalela (for Chinatown), Imbi and Bukit Bintang (for the Golden Triangle), Medan Tuanku (for Asian Heritage Row and Chow Kit) and Titiwangsa (for the Pekeliling Bus Station).

KTM Komuter Trains

The **KTM Komuter** (☎ 2267 1200; www.ktmb.com.my) service provides a suburban rail link using long-distance railway lines, with its main hub at KL Sentral. There are two lines: Rawang to Seremban and Sentul to Pelabuhan Klang. Useful stops include Mid Valley (for the Mid Valley Megamall), Subang Jaya (for Sunway Lagoon), Nilai (for the cheap local bus to the airports) and Pelabuhan Klang (for ferry services to Sumatra). Trains run every 15 to 20 minutes from approximately 6am to 11.45pm. Tickets start from RM1 for one stop.

Light Rail Transit

As well as the buses, **Rapid KL** (☎ 1800-388 228; www.rapidkl.com.my) runs the Light Rail Transit (LRT) system. There are three lines: Ampang-Sentul Timur, Sri Petaling-Sentul Timur and Kelana Jaya-Terminal Putra. However, the network is poorly integrated because the lines were constructed by different companies (there are rumours that this was done intentionally to spread money around between

KL's political elite). As a result, you need a new ticket to change from one line to another, and you may also have to follow a series of walkways, stairs and elevators, or walk several blocks down the street. See the table below for useful stops on the different lines.

An electronic control system checks tickets as you enter and exit via turnstiles. Single-journey fares range from RM1 to RM2.80, or you can buy an all-day pass for RM7, which also covers you for Rapid KL buses. You can buy tickets from the cashier or electronic ticket machines but, for some reason, these only accept a single note for each transaction – the rest of the ticket price must be made up in coins. Trains run every six to 10 minutes from 6am to 11.45pm. If you're going to be in KL for a while, consider investing in a monthly combined travel card (RM90 or RM125 including Rapid KL buses).

Station	Line	Use for
KL Sentral	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Brickfields, buses & trains to the airports
Pasar Seni	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Chinatown, Puduraya Bus Station
Masjid Jamek	All Lines	Interchange station; Masjid Jamek, Merdeka Sq
KLCC	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Petronas Towers, KLCC
Dang Wangi	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Asian Heritage Row
Kampung Baru	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Kampung Baru
Kelana Jaya	Terminal Putra–Kelana Jaya	Sunway Lagoon
PWTC	Ampang–Sentul Timur, Sri Petaling–Sentul Timur	Putra Bus Station
Titiwangsa	Ampang–Sentul Timur; Sri Petaling–Sentul Timur	Pekeliling Bus Station, Titiwangsa Park

Taxi

KL has plenty of air-conditioned taxis, which queue up at designed taxi stops across the city. You can also flag down moving taxis, but drivers will only stop if there is a convenient place to pull over. Fares start at RM2 for the first two minutes, with an additional 10 sen for each 45 seconds. From midnight to 6am there's a surcharge of 50% on the metered fare, and extra passengers (more than two)

are charged 20 sen each. Luggage placed in the boot is an extra RM1 and there's an RM12 surcharge for taxis to KLIA.

Unfortunately, some drivers have a limited geographical knowledge of the city, and many are reluctant to use the meter, even though this is a legal requirement. Taxi drivers lingering outside luxury hotels are especially guilty of this behaviour, citing KL's traffic or the out-of-the-way location of your destination as a reason for an elevated cash fare. This is baloney. If a driver demands a fixed fare, bargain hard, or walk away and find another taxi. As a guide, you can get right across the centre of town for RM5 on the meter or RM10 after bargaining. Note that KL Sentral and some large malls have a coupon system for taxis where you pay in advance.

AROUND KUALA LUMPUR

You don't have to spend your whole trip confined to the city. There are easy transport links from KL to attractions like the Batu Caves, Zoo Negara and the theme parks at Genting Highlands and Sunway Lagoon. The following places can easily be visited as day trips from the city by taxi, train or bus.

SOUTH OF KUALA LUMPUR Sunway Lagoon & Around

About 10km southwest of Kuala Lumpur in Petaling Jaya, **Sunway Lagoon** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 5639 0000; www.sunway.com.my/lagoon; 3 Jln PJS 11/11, Bandar Sunway; wet & dry parks adult/child RM45/30, all parks RM65/50; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon-Fri, from 10am Sat & Sun) is Malaysia's best water park, with all sorts of splashastic water slides and a surge pool with waves big enough to surf on. The park was built over an old tin mine and the theming is outrageous – some parts have a Wild West theme, some parts are African, faux waterfalls cascade on all sides and a 428m pedestrian suspension bridge stretches across the entire lagoon. On weekends, you can surf from 5pm to 6pm and body board from 3pm to 4pm. As well as the watery attractions, there's a dry amusement park with roller coasters and a log flume, an 'extreme park' with paintball and quad bikes, a slingshot G-force ride and a petting zoo for kids. Out of respect for Muslim sensibilities, there's a dress code:

one-piece swimsuits or leggings and a T-shirt are preferred attire for women, while speedos or tight shorts (à la Daniel Craig's James Bond) are preferred attire for men.

Looming over Sunway Lagoon is the equally wacky **Sunway Pyramid Mall** (☎ 7494 3000; www.sunway.com.my/pyramid; 3 Jln PJS 11/15, Bandar Sunway; ☎ 10am-10pm), styled like an Egyptian pyramid, complete with hieroglyphs and a looming fibreglass sphinx (it used to have a human face but it was remodelled as a lion after protests from the local mosque regarding the depiction of the human form, forbidden under some strict interpretations of the Quran). As well as the usual brand-name stores, there's a good selection of mall-restaurants, a bowling alley and a full-sized **ice rink** (☎ 7492 6800; weekday/weekend RM13/16; ☎ 9am-8pm, to 10pm Sat & 9pm Sun).

The easiest way to get to Sunway is take the Putra LRT to Kelana Jaya (RM2.10), then feeder bus T623 (RM1) or a taxi (RM11) to the Sunway Pyramid. Shuttle buses U63, U67 and U756 run here from Subang Jaya station on the KTM Komuter line. A taxi all the way from central KL will cost around RM21.

There are more waterslides and wave pools east of Sunway at **Desa Waterpark** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 7118 8338; www.desawaterpark.com.my; Taman Danau Desa; adult/child RM18/12; ☎ noon-6pm Mon-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). It's smaller than Sunway Lagoon, but generally less crowded. The best way to get here is by taxi from Salak Selatan KTM Komuter station (on the Rawang-Seremban line).

Mines Resort City

About 10km south of KL, this **resort** (off Map pp72-3; www.mines.com.my; Seri Kembangan, Selangor Darul Ehsan) was built over the workings of the world's largest open-cast tin mine. This former wasteland has been reborn as a flashy leisure resort with lakes, shopping malls, amusements, a golf club, a convention centre and several luxury hotels, including the glitzy, Mughal-themed **Palace of the Golden Horses** (www.palaceofthegoldenhorses.com.my).

The main attraction for visitors is the **Mines Wonderland** (☎ 8942 5010; www.mineswonderland.com.my; adult/child RM32/21; ☎ 6pm-11pm Tue-Fri, 5pm-11pm Sat & Sun), an evening-only leisure park with an illuminated musical fountain, boat rides, an animal park with white tigers, a selection of mostly gentle rides, a sculpture park full of gaudily painted Chinese dragons and a winter

wonderland where locals come to experience the thrill of getting cold. It's tacky as anything, but kids seem to love it.

To get here, charter a taxi or take the KTM Komuter train to Serdang station, cross the highway on the footbridge then walk for about 15 minutes to the park.

Putrajaya

The city that is destined to be the new capital of Malaysia is slowly taking shape about 20km south of KL, on the way to KLIA. Covering 4932 hectares of former rubber and palm-oil plantations, the planned city will one day house 320,000 civil servants and their families, forming the new epicentre of Malaysian politics and international relations. Monumental new buildings have already been constructed to house the judiciary and other government ministries, as well as the offices and new official residence of the prime minister. Several huge mosques have already appeared, but so far there are no religious monuments for any other ethnic groups – further fuel for claims of government bias against Indian and Chinese Malaysians. Thus far, there is no real commercial life to speak of, but it's worth visiting to see the striking modern architecture and explore some of the formal parks and gardens.

The main street in Putrajaya is Persiaran Perdana, which runs from the modernist **Putrajaya Convention Centre** (☎ 8887 6000; www.pcc.gov.my; Precinct 5) (worth visiting for the views) to **Dataran Putra** (Putra Square) and the imposing, mosquelike **Perdana Putra**, housing the offices of the prime minister. On the way, you'll cross two of Putrajaya's striking modernist bridges; there are nine in total, all built in different styles. Just before the Perdana Putra, the handsome **Putra Mosque** (Persiaran Perdana; ☎ for non-Muslims 9am-1.30pm & 3-6pm Sat-Thu, 3-6pm Fri) has space for 15,000 worshippers and an ornate red-tile dome, influenced by Safavid architecture from Iran. Appropriately dressed non-Muslim visitors are welcome outside of prayer times.

North of Perdana Putra, near the prime minister's official residence, the **Taman Botani** (Botanic Gardens; ☎ 8888 9090; Precinct 1; admission free; ☎ 10am-7pm daily, visitors centre 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 10am-7pm Sat & Sun) features attractive tropical gardens on the lakeshore. A tourist tram trundles between the flower beds and trestles, and you can hire bicycles for RM4 for two hours (RM4

for one hour on weekends). Further north is the serene **Wetland Park** (☎ 8889 4373; Precinct 13; admission free; ☎ 7am-7pm; visitors centre ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sat, 10am-7pm Sun), a contemplative space with peaceful nature trails, soothing birdsong, fluttering butterflies and picnic tables overlooking the lake. Canoeing and boating trips can be arranged from Tuesday to Sunday.

Cruise Tasik Putrajaya (☎ 8888 5539; www.cruise.tasikputrajaya.com) offers 45-minute cruises around the lake (adult/child RM30/20) from the jetty near the Putra Mosque, plus more intimate half-hour trips in gondalalike *perahu* (RM20/10).

The easiest way to reach Putrajaya is on the KLIA Transit train from KL Sentral (RM9.50, every 30 minutes 5.30am to midnight). From the bus stand at Putrajaya Sentral, local Nadi Putra buses fan out around the compound, charging a flat fare of 50 sen. Taxis operate on a coupon system – it costs RM9 to reach any of the major sights in the park or RM30 for an hour of sightseeing. A new monorail system was under construction at the time of writing, but the project is likely to take several years to complete. A taxi to central KL or KLIA costs RM48.

NORTH OF KUALA LUMPUR

Batu Caves

The Hindu temples in downtown KL are just appetisers for this huge Hindu **cave complex** (off Map pp72-3; admission free; ☎ 8am-9pm), 13km north of the capital. The Batu Caves were first discovered around 120 years ago by American naturalist William Hornaday, but the Hindu community soon adopted the site as their principle place of worship. Today the caves are dotted with Hindu shrines and statues painted in outrageous colours. The central Temple Cave – open to the sky and dripping with stalactites – is reached by a flight of 272 steps, which ascends beside a 43m-tall golden statue of Muruga (Lord Subramaniam), the patron deity of the caves. Cheeky macaque monkeys use the caves as their own adventure playground, leaping from stalactite to stalagmite and soliciting snacks from pilgrims and tourists. The monkeys bite, so keep your distance. The caves are busy most days, but 1.3 million pilgrims descend on the complex every January/February for the Thaipusam festival, which features surreal acts of self-mortification – see the boxed text, p221, for more on this fascinating celebration.

About halfway up the steps, a path branches off to the smaller **Gua Gelap** cave system which you can explore with a head-torch on a half-hour guided tour (adult/child RM35/23). There are some dramatic limestone formations but the caves are damp and muddy and you may have to do some wriggling and crawling to squeeze through the narrow tunnels. At the bottom of the steps, another path leads to the **Art Gallery** (admission RM1; ☎ 8am-1pm & 4-8.30pm), a collection of statues and dioramas telling tales from Hindu legends.

Taxis from KL charge around RM12 on the meter, or about RM20 if you have to bargain. In the opposite direction, you'll always have to bargain. Alternatively, take Metrobus 11 (RM2; 45 minutes) from the Bangkok Bank bus stand in Chinatown.

Zoo Negara

About 13km northeast of KL, this **zoo** (☎ 4108 3422; www.zoonegara.org.my; Hulu Kelang; adult/child RM15/6; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-10.30pm Sat & Sun) is one of Asia's better zoos. Although some of the enclosures could definitely be bigger, the animals seem mostly content. The zoo boasts an impressive range of beasts, from hippos and giraffes to elephants, lions and tigers. Animal shows take place throughout the day and there are several cafés and snack stands. See the boxed text, p132, for details on feeding the animals.

Taxis charge around RM30 from central KL or you can take Metrobus 16 (RM2) from in front of the Central Market in Chinatown.

Orang Asli Museum

In the sleepy village of Gombak, 25km north of KL, the this **museum** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 6189 2113; www.jheoa.gov.my; Gombak; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Sat-Thu) is devoted to the history, rituals and customs of Malaysia's aboriginal people. More than 150,000 Orang Asli (Original People) are found in Peninsular Malaysia, divided into three sub-groups – the Negrito, Senoi and Proto-Malays.

Despite playing an important role in the development of modern Malaysia – the Orang Asli helped the colonial authorities discover all sorts of valuable natural resources in the rainforests and provided invaluable support for troops fighting the communists during the Emergency – the tribes are increasingly marginalised today. The museum is run as a social project by Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang

FEEDING TIME AT ZOO NEGARA

There can't be many zoos where you get to feed the animals yourself. The vendors at Zoo Negara selling bags of carrot chips and bunches of green bamboo are not here to promote a new low protein diet – these veggie snacks are destined for the elephants, camels, deer and giraffes waiting eagerly at the low fences to their enclosures. As animal management strategies go, this has some merit. The foodstuffs on offer are selected to compliment the animals' natural diet and you'll see little of the heart-rending pacing found in many zoos in Asia. Even if you worry about the dignity of these magnificent beasts, you'd have to have a heart of stone to not feel some sense of childlike wonder while feeding strips of green bamboo to a snuffling jumbo.

Carnivore feeding time is something else. Do not be fooled into thinking that the live rats are anything other than crocodile food. The quick splash and sudden snap can be a little unsettling, but it's arguably closer to the natural feeding habits of predators than the sanitised feeding practices at many Western zoos. And the crocodiles seem to like it – Zoo Negara was the first zoo to successfully breed false gharials and African dwarf crocodiles in captivity.

Asli (JHEOA), the department of aboriginal affairs. Inside you can see some thought-provoking displays on the various tribes of the region, and there's a small shop selling the eye-catching wood carvings by the Mah Meri people and *tongkat ali* – a form of wild ginseng alleged to have Viagra-like properties!

You can get here on Metrobus 174 from Lebu Ampang in Chinatown (RM2), but check locally to see if this has changed during the reshuffle of bus numbers. The museum entrance is hidden so ask the driver to let you know when you've arrived.

Forest Research Institute of Malaysia

Escape the crush of the city at this 600-hectare rainforest **reserve** (FRIM; Map pp72-3; ☎ 6279 7575; www.frim.gov.my; Selangor Darul Ehsan; admission RM5), around 16km northeast of KL. FRIM was established by the British in 1929 to conduct research into the sustainable management of Malaysia's rainforests. Its work has become increasingly important with the growing threats from logging and urban expansion. Numerous tours run here from KL (see p99), or you can make your way by public transport. The park has some interesting diversions for visitors who brave the humidity and mosquitoes.

As well as a network of nature trails, there's an excellent **information centre** (☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) and a **museum** (admission free; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun) with displays on FRIM's conservation activities. The main attraction is a 200m **forest walkway** (adult/child RM5/1; ☎ 0am-1.30pm Tue-Thu & Sat), suspended 30m above the forest floor. As well as inducing instant vertigo, the walkway will take you

right into the canopy, offering great views of the rainforest, with the towers of KL rising behind. If you've ever imagined what life is like for monkeys, this could be your chance to find out.

A series of well-marked **nature trails** wind through the trees, passing scenic picnic spots and waterfalls you can splash around in. Hardcore mountain-bike enthusiasts head deep into the jungle on a series of rough forestry tracks (2.5km to 23km).

To get here, take the KTM Komuter train to Kepong (RM1.30) and then a taxi to FRIM (RM5). Ask the driver to come back and pick you up a few hours later. Most people bring a picnic but there's decent canteen serving Malay food. You can also camp here if you give the centre advance notice.

Templer Park

About 22km north of KL beside Hwy 1, this **nature park** (off Map pp72-3; ☎ 24hr) was once part of a rubber estate, but the Forestry Department took over in the 1980s, preserving 1200 hectares of primary jungle from the developers. Today it's a popular weekend retreat for nature-oriented locals, with walking and jogging trails (also good for mountain bikes), picnic tables and a series of ponds, streams and waterfalls where you can swim (modestly dressed of course). The park covers a huge area but there are no signs saying 'Templer Park' – look instead for the sign saying 'Hutan Lipur Kanching' which marks the path to the waterfalls area.

Metrobus 43 runs here every 15 minutes from the Bangkok Bank bus stand on Lebu Pudu in Chinatown (RM2).

Genting Highlands

There are two reasons to come to the **Highlands** (☎ 2718 1118; www.genting.com.my; complex & casino admission free, other attractions extra; ☎ 24hr). One is the cool, mountain air. The other is the sheer spectacle of this huge, tacky casino-cum-theme-park-cum-resort-hotel-cum-shopping-centre-cum-entertainment-palace. Set on a lofty hilltop about 54km north of KL, Malaysia's answer to Las Vegas is completely over the top and you'll either love it or loath it. There are several casinos here (minimum age 21, closed to Malaysian Muslims), plus hotels, restaurants, bars, shops and venues, and two big theme parks.

The relentlessly commercial **indoor theme park** (adult/child RM21/19; ☎ 9am-midnight, from 8am Sat & Sun) is much less exciting than the **outdoor theme park** (adult/child RM33/22; ☎ 10am-7pm Mon-Fri, 8am-10pm Sat, 8am-8pm Sun), which has looping roller coasters, sudden-drop rides and a log flume. You can buy an all-day pass or pay for individual rides. Note that the outdoor park is sometimes shut down by swirling clouds during the monsoon. Nearby, the 6000-seater **Arena of Stars** is the place to come to see Malaysian crooners singing big production numbers on ice skates with backing singers dressed as St Bernards dogs. We're not kidding.

The **Genting Skyway** (one-way/return RM5/10; ☎ 7.30am-11pm, to midnight Sat) runs from the base of the hill to the casino complex, with dramatic

views over the rainforest. Just downhill from the casino complex, you can connect with Malaysia's spiritual side at the **Chin Swee Caves Temple** (☎ daylight hours). Dominated by a towering Chinese pagoda, this Taoist fantasy is dotted with Buddhist statues and ornate pavilions. The main shrine is dedicated to Chin Swee, a revered 11th-century monk from Fujian, China, and there's a monumental seated-Buddha statue in the gardens. Shuttle buses run here hourly from Genting (RM5 return) or you can take the Awana Skyway to the Temple stop.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Whichever way you come to Genting, the journey from KL will take about an hour. The most convenient way to get here is to take the **Go Genting** (www.genting.com.my) bus from KL Sentral – package tickets cost RM26 (RM39 on weekends and public holidays) including entry to the theme parks and the ride on the Skyway. The bus leaves approximately hourly from 8am to 7pm; book at the ticket desk inside the station building. The fare for the bus transfer only is RM8.30/6.70 per adult/child. Shuttle buses also run between Genting and the Pekeliling Bus Station in Titivangsa (RM5.60). Taxis flagged down in the street charge around RM70/150 one-way/return from central KL; slightly cheaper shared taxis (RM50) leave from the 2nd floor of the Puduraya Bus Station.

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