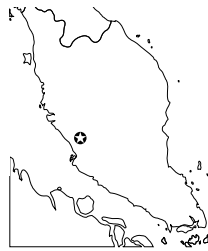


Kuala Lumpur



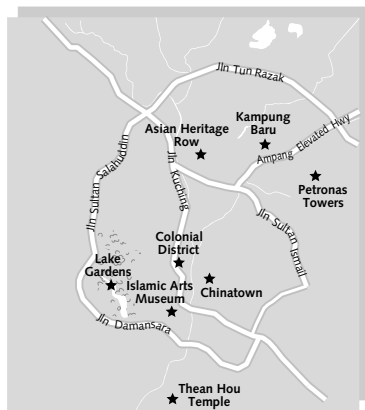
After years as a Southeast Asian runner-up, Kuala Lumpur (KL) is on a winning streak. More fun and easier to negotiate than Bangkok, grittier than Singapore and more eclectic than Hanoi, the buzz about KL is as palpable as its intoxicating aromas of sizzling satay, stinky durian, sweet incense and petrol fumes.

It's curious that a city where you still have to watch your step for pavement cracks and pot-holes can also feel cutting edge, but cast your eyes to the skyline and around the streets and you'll see what we mean. In just 150 years, KL has gone from a tin prospector's hovel in the jungle to a thoroughly modern metropolis, home of the shiny Petronas Towers, a design classic and until recently the world's tallest building. In the rush for the new, much of the old has been (and is being) demolished. Still, some impressive colonial-era buildings remain and the city's most atmospheric and colourful quarters are Chinatown, Little India and Kampung Baru, the heartlands of KL's Chinese, Indian and Malay communities.

It's this multicultural character that makes KL such a fascinating place – one moment you could be burning joss sticks at a Chinese temple, the next shedding shoes to enter a mosque or Hindu shrine. Hedonists will also be happy: you can eat and shop like a king in KL and the nightlife is cranking. For all its activity and urban landscapes KL also has its tranquil moments. This is a city where you can chill out in lush parks or escape to the countryside in the surrounding state of Selangor.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Discovering the historic **colonial district** (p95) and vibrant **Chinatown** (p88) on a walking tour
- Shooting up the jaw-dropping **Petronas Towers** (p88), then taking them in from the perspective of charming **Kampung Baru** (p91)
- Tucking into fabulous feasts at KL's **restaurants** and **night markets** (p104)
- Exploring the relaxing **Lake Gardens**, and visiting its showpiece **Bird Park** (p89)
- Admiring the beauty of Islamic art at the **Islamic Arts Museum** (p88)
- Paying respects to the heavenly mother at the **Thean Hou Temple** (p93)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ POPULATION: 1.8 MILLION

■ AREA: 243 SQ KM

HISTORY

In 1857, 87 Chinese prospectors in search of tin landed at the meeting point of the Klang and Gombak rivers and imaginatively named the place 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.

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 1885) took on the task with such ruthless relish that he's now credited as the founder of KL.

Loy had barely established control, however, when the Malay Civil War between local sultans fighting for the throne of Perak broke out. 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 that transferred the central government here, from Klang. By 1886 a railway line linked KL to Klang; by 1887 several thousand brick buildings had been built; and in 1896 the city became the capital of the newly formed Federated Malay States.

After occupation by Japanese forces during WWII (when many Chinese were tortured and killed, and many Indians sent to work on Burma's 'Death Railway'), the British temporarily returned, only to be ousted when Malaysia finally declared its independence here in 1957 at Dataran Merdeka (Merdeka Sq). KL continued to thrive but its confidence took a knock in 1969 when race riots that began in the Chow Kit area eventually claimed hundreds, perhaps thousands, of lives.

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 not elected but appointed on the recommendation of the ruling parties in government. There's very little accountability and a job on the council is largely seen by locals as a trip on the gravy train, especially as KL is Malaysia's political and commercial capital as well as its most populous and prosperous city.

CLIMATE

KL's temperature ranges from 21°C to 33°C and the average humidity exceeds 82%. Although there's rain through the year, March to April and September to November are the wettest months.

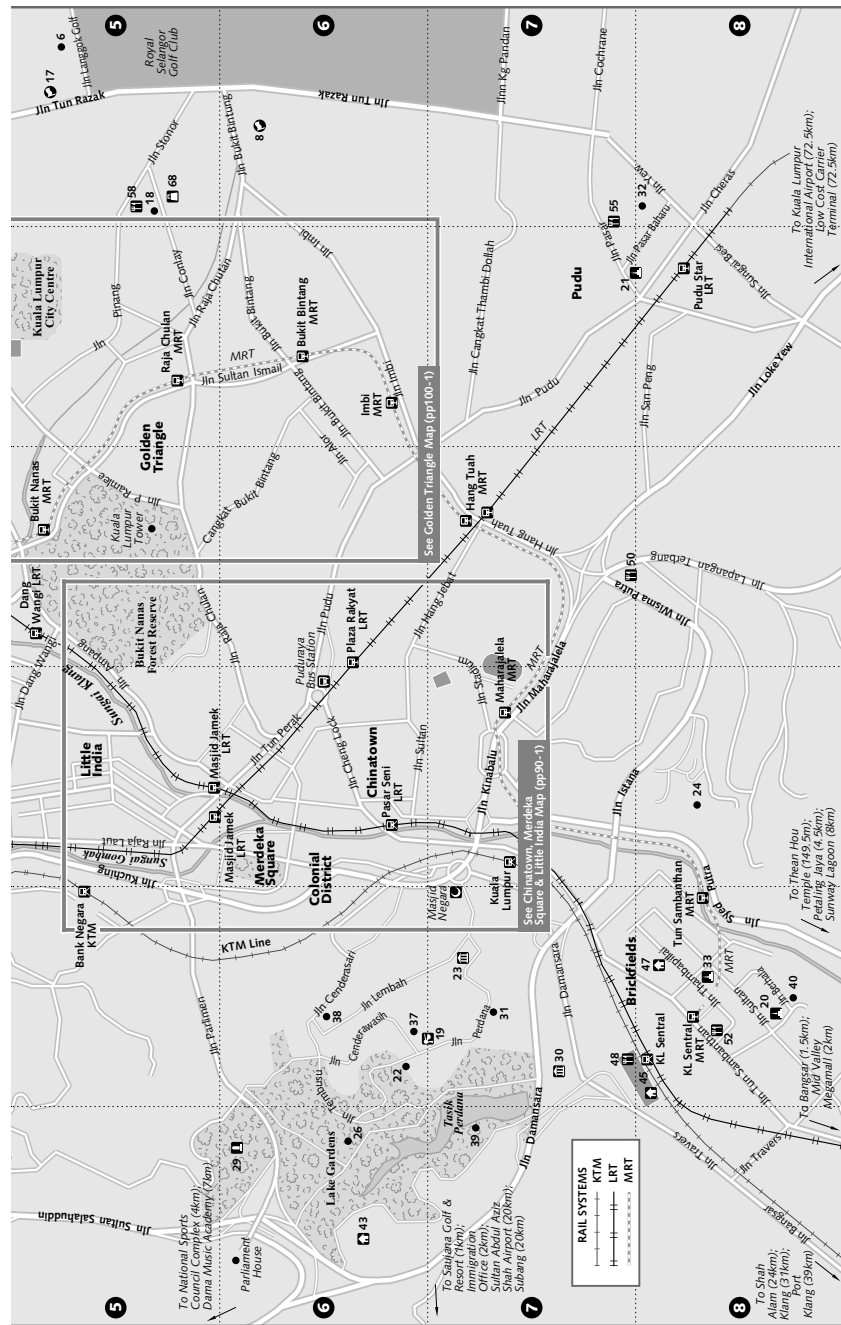
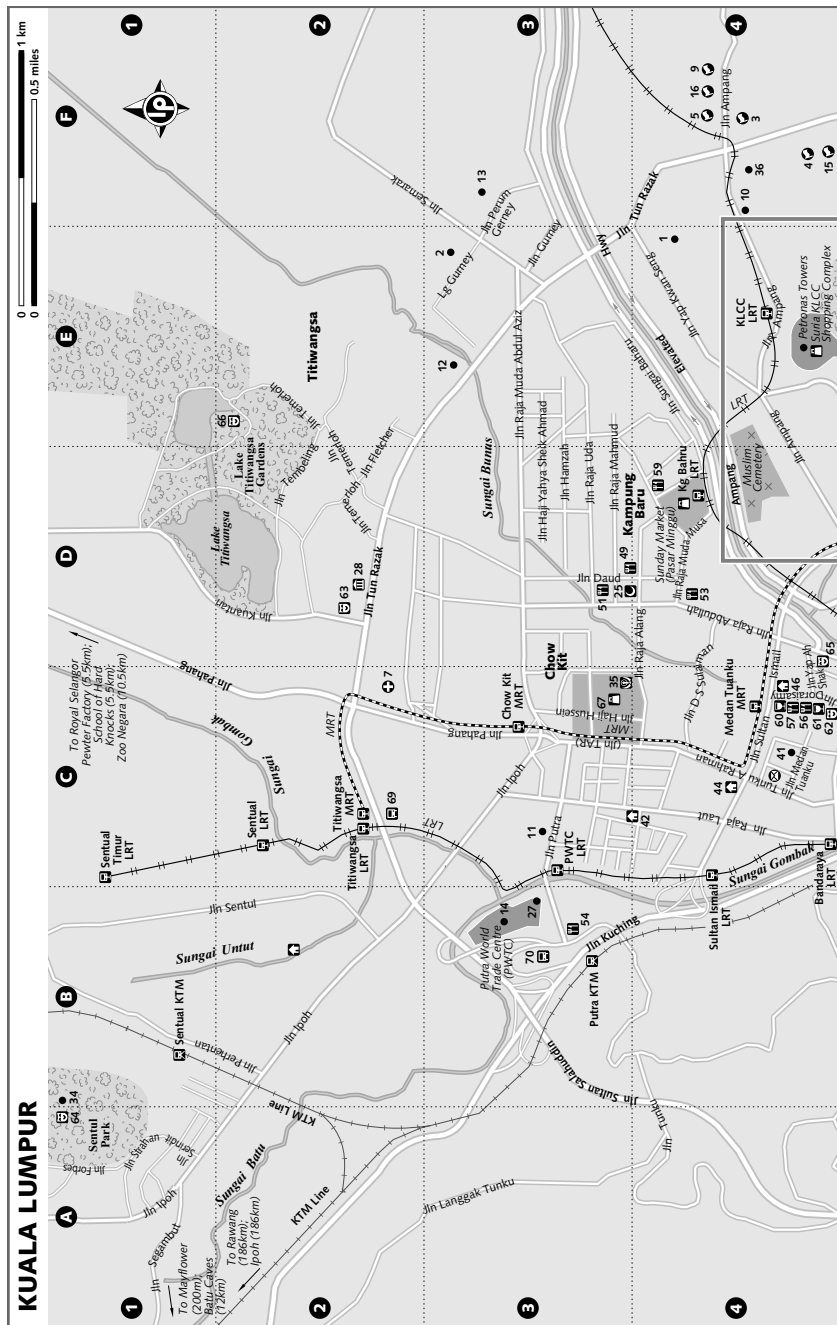
ORIENTATION

It's relatively easy to find your way around KL, although getting around on foot can be frustrating. Distances are short, but footpaths are often missing. When in doubt, the public transport system (p117) is quick, easy and cheap.

The old colonial heart of KL is Merdeka Sq, near the confluence of two rivers (the 'muddy confluence' from which the city takes its name). Southeast from here is bustling Chinatown, famed for its cheap accommodation and night market. West of Chinatown, across several busy highways and the train tracks, is the Masjid Negara (National Mosque), historic KL Train Station and the peaceful Lake Gardens. South of the Lake Gardens is KL Sentral, the new regional and international train terminus and the first place you'll most likely arrive in the city from the airport. KL Sentral is part of the area known as Brickfields. On the other side of the tracks further south is Bangsar, a nightlife nucleus of trendy bars and eateries.

Another major arrival and departure point is the Puduraya long distance bus station. East of Puduraya, the intersection of Jln Sultan Ismail and Jln Bukit Bintang marks the heart of the Golden Triangle, KL's premier business, shopping and entertainment district. Crowded with midrange and luxury hotels, the Golden Triangle encompasses an area that now stretches north to the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) development anchored by the Petronas Towers.

Back at Merdeka Sq, if you head against the one-way traffic northeast along Jln Tun Anku A Rahman (commonly called Jln TAR) you'll soon hit Little India, and further north, Chow Kit, a red-light area famed for its lively market. Immediately west of Chow Kit is the old Malay area of Kampung Baru. Jln Raja Laut runs almost parallel to Jln TAR and takes the northbound traffic towards Jln Tun Razak marking the outer northern boundary of the city centre; around here you'll find Lake Titivangsa and the National Art Gallery, Library and Theatre.



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| Brunei Embassy.....4 F4 | National Art Gallery.....28 D2 |
| Canadian Embassy.....(see 4) | National Monument.....29 A6 |
| French Embassy.....5 F4 | National Museum.....30 B7 |
| German Embassy.....(see 4) | National Planetarium.....31 B7 |
| Goethe Institut.....6 F5 | Pudu Market.....32 F8 |
| Hospital Kuala Lumpur.....7 C2 | Rumah Penghulu.....(see 18) |
| Indonesian Embassy.....8 F6 | Sam Kow Tong Temple.....33 B8 |
| Irish Embassy.....9 F4 | Sentul Park Koi Centre.....34 B1 |
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| Singapore Embassy.....15 F4 | Temple of Fine Arts.....40 B8 |
| Thai Embassy.....16 F4 | Wisma Lok.....41 C4 |
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INFORMATION

Bookshops

Borders (Map p100; ☎ 2141 0288; Level 2, Berjaya Times Sq, Jln Imbi)

Kinokuniya (Map p100; ☎ 2164 8133; Level 4, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang) Excellent range of English-language titles.

MPH Bookstores Bangsar (Map p108; ☎ 2282 7300; 2 Jln Telawi 2; ☎ 9.30am-10pm) Golden Triangle (Map p100; ☎ 2142 8231; Ground fl, BB Plaza, Jln Bukit Bintang) Strong on local titles and magazines.

Silverfish Books (Map p108; ☎ 2284 4837; www.silverfishbooks.com; 67-1 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar) Publisher of contemporary Malaysian literature.

Cultural Centres & Libraries

Alliance Française (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2694 7880; www.alliancefrancaise.org.my; 15 Lg Gurney)

Australian Information Library (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2146 5555; 6 Jln Yap Kwan Seng)

British Council (Map p100; ☎ 2723 7900; www.britishcouncil.org/malaysia; Ground fl, West Block, Wisma Selangor Dredging, 142C Jln Ampang)

Goethe Institut (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2142 2011; www.goethe.de/ins/my/kua/deindex.htm; 1 Jln Langgak Golf) Off Jln Tun Razak.

Japan Foundation (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2161 2104; www.jfkl.org.my; Level 30, Menara Citibank, 165 Jln Ampang)

National Library of Malaysia (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2694 2490; www.pnm.my; 232 Jln Tun Razak)

Immigration Offices

Immigration Office (☎ 2095 5077; Block I, Pusat Bandar Damansara) It's 1km west of the Lake Gardens; handles visa extensions.

Internet Access

Internet cafés are 10 a penny; the going rate per hour is RM3. If you're travelling with a wifi-enabled laptop, you can web-surf and email from scores of cafés, restaurants, bars and some top-end hotels for free; Starbucks started this trend and there have been stories since of canny entrepreneurs setting up virtual offices in its branches for the price of a few cappuccinos!

Media

Juice (www.juiceonline.com) Free clubbing-orientated monthly magazine available in top-end hotels, restaurants and bars.

KL Lifestyle (www.kl-lifestyle.com.my) A free monthly, available in the same places as *Juice*, but more general.

KLue (www.klue.com.my; RMS) Available from newsstands; the best listings magazine, with many interesting features about what's going on in and around the city.

Medical Services

Pharmacies are all over town; most common is Guardian, in most shopping malls.

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

Hospital Kuala Lumpur (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2615 5555; www.hkl.gov.my; Jln Pahang)

Tung Shin Hospital (Map p90; ☎ 2072 1655; www.tungshinhospital.com.my; 102 Jln Pudu)

Twin Towers Medical Centre KLCC (Map p100; ☎ 2382 3500; www.ttmcklcc.com.my; Level 4, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Money

You'll seldom be far from a bank/ATM. Moneychangers offer better rates than banks for changing cash and (at times) travellers cheques; usually open later hours and on weekends and found in shopping malls.

Post

Following are details for the main post office, and other useful branches around town. There's also one on Jln TAR near the crossing with Jln Sultan Ismail (Map pp84-5).

Main post office (Map p90; Jln Raja Laut; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed 1st Sat of month) Across the river from the Central Market. Poste restante is at the

information desk on the 2nd floor. Packaging is available for reasonable rates at the post office store.

Sungei Wang Plaza (Map p100; 3rd fl, Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 10.30am-6pm Mon-Sat, closed 1st Sat of month)

Suria KLCC (Map p100; KLCC, Jln Ampang) Basement branch.

Telephone & Fax

Many internet cafés offer competitive Net-phone and fax services.

Telekom Malaysia (Map p90; Jln Raja Chulan; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-12.30pm Sat) You can make international calls and send faxes.

Tourist Information

Malaysian Tourist Centre (MTC; Map p100; ☎ 2164 3929; www.mtc.com.my; 109 Jln Ampang; ☎ 7am-10pm)

Housed in a mansion built in 1935 for rubber and tin tycoon Eu Tong Seng, and almost a tourist attraction in its own right, this is KL's most useful tourist office; it hosts good cultural performances (see p112).

Tourism Malaysia (www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) KL Sentral (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 6063; ☎ 9am-6pm); Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA; ☎ 8776 5651); International Arrival Hall, Sepang); Putra World Trade Centre (Map pp84-5; Level 2 ☎ 4041 1295, Level 17 ☎ 2615 8188; 45 Jln Tun Ismail; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat)

Travel Agencies

MSL Travel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4042 4722; www.msstravel.com; 66 Jln Putra; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat)

STA Travel (Map p100; ☎ 2148 9800; www.statravel.com.my; Lot 506, 5th fl, Magnum Plaza, 128 Jln Pudu; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat)

KUALA LUMPUR IN...

Two Days

Get to the Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) early to secure one of the limited free tickets for the skybridge of the **Petronas Towers** (p88), then stroll through colonial Kuala Lumpur (KL) and colourful Little India (p95), where you could pause for a spicy lunch. Cool down inside the **Islamic Arts Museum** (p88) followed by late-afternoon tea at **Carcosa Seri Negara** (p104). In the evening dive into **Jalan Alor** for some tasty Chinese street food (p110).

On day two experience the avian orchestra tuning up in the Lake Garden's **Bird Park** (p89). Watch KL revolve around you while lunching at the **Seri Angkasa** (p106) atop **Menara KL** (p91). Go souvenir shopping at the **Central Market** (p113), then explore **Chinatown** (p96), ending up at **Jalan Petaling** for the night market.

Three Days

Start day three with a gentle stroll around **Lake Titiwangsa** (p92) and a visit to the **National Art Gallery** (p92). Amble through the Malay area of **Kampung Baru** (p91) then hop in a taxi to the splendid **Thean Hou Temple** (p93). Choose one of the many restaurants in the basement of **Starhill Gallery** (p114) for dinner, followed by a concert at the **Dewan Filharmonik Petronas** (p111) or a night of bar-hopping and dancing along **Asian Heritage Row** (p111).

SIGHTS

KL is bad news for pedestrians. Quite apart from the fact that you'll be a sweaty mess within 10 minutes of starting a walk, there's the frustrating problem of six-lane high-ways and flyovers that slice up the city, and cracked, narrow or nonexistent footpaths.

Even so, the best way to get a feel for KL's vibrant atmosphere is to walk. The city centre is surprisingly compact and many sights are so close together that it's often quicker to go by foot than take public transport or grab a cab (which could easily become snarled in traffic and KL's tortuous one-way system). For a couple of suggested walking routes, see p95.

Apart from the major sights listed here, leave time to explore the city's many colourful markets (p114) and some of its eye-boggling shopping malls (p114) – all part of the essential KL experience.

Petronas Towers & KLCC

Anchoring the huge Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC) urban development (with a park, convention and shopping centre and world-class concert hall), is the iconic **Petronas Towers** (Map p100; ☎ 2331 8080; www.petronastwin towers.com.my; KLCC, Jln Ampang). A visit to KL just isn't complete unless you've been here.

Opened in 1998, the 88-storey steel-clad twin towers rise up some 451.9m and are the headquarters of the national oil and gas company Petronas (p47), as well as housing several other companies, including Al Jazeera's new Asian broadcasting centre. The highest you can go is the 41st-floor **Skybridge** (Map p100; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2.30-4.45pm Tue-Sun) connecting the two towers, a modest 170m above ground. To be sure of scoring one of the 1400 free tickets issued daily, be in line at the ticket counter in the basement by 8.30am; all tickets (only one per person) are usually gone within two hours of opening. It's best to avoid visiting on weekends and public holidays.

Apart from shopping or dining in the Suria KLCC (p114) at the base of the towers, there are still plenty of other things of interest. The spacious **KLCC park** (Map p100) has a great kids' playground, paddling pools and synchronised fountains. All the family will enjoy both the interactive science discovery centre **Petrosains** (Map p100; ☎ 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) and the well-stocked **Aquaria KLCC** (Map p100; ☎ 2333 1888; www.klaquaria.com; Concourse Level, Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre; adult/child RM38/26; ☎ 10am-9pm) where you can view sand tiger sharks and giant groupers in a 90m-long underwater tunnel.

Galeri Petronas (Map p100; ☎ 2051 7770; www.galeripetronas.com; 3rd fl, Suria KLCC; admission free; ☎ 10am-8pm Tue-Sun) offers fresh, thought-provoking exhibitions of contemporary photography and paintings. Consider booking a ticket for a classical-music concert in the **Dewan Filarmonik Petronas** (p111) to see inside the beautiful state-of-the-art hall.

Islamic Arts Museum

Containing one of best collections of Islamic decorative arts in the world is KL's outstanding **Islamic Arts Museum** (Muzium Kesenian Islam Malaysia; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 2020; www.iamm.org.my; Jln Lembah Perdana; adult/child RM12/6; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). Aside from the quality of the exhibits, which include fabulous textiles, carpets, jewellery, calligraphy-inscribed pottery and an amazing reconstruction of an ornate Ottoman room, the building itself is a stunner, with beautifully decorated domes and glazed tilework. Its excellent Lebanese restaurant is as good a reason as any for turning up (big buffet lunch on Saturday and Sunday for RM51.75). There's also a shop selling beautiful Islamic crafts of higher quality than elsewhere in KL.

Chinatown

Just strolling around bustling Chinatown, mainly bounded by Jln Hang Kasturi and Jln Sultan, is an experience (see p96), but if you'd prefer the main sights first head to the polychromatic **Sri Mahamariamman Temple** (Map p90; 163 Jln Tun HS Lee; ☎ 8am-8pm). This large and ornate South-Indian Hindu shrine (1873) houses a large silver chariot that's paraded to the Batu Caves during the Thaipusam festival in January or February each year (p123). Leave your shoes at the entrance.

Also check out the fascinating Taoist **Sze Ya Temple** (Map p90; ☎ 8am-8pm) squashed between Jln Tun HS Lee and Lebuhraya. Its construction was organised in 1864 by 'Kapitan China' Yap Ah Loy (see p83); you can see a small statue of the man to the left of the altar. Near here you could also go shopping or grab something to eat in the Central Market (p113).

Lake Gardens

The 92-hectare Lake Gardens (Map pp84-5) lies at the edge of the central city area, around landscaped hills. Here the British elite built their fine houses, away from the hurly burly of downtown commerce and people of other races. What used to be the official residence of British government representative Frank Swettenham is now the luxury hotel Carcosa Seri Negara (p104).

The lush gardens contain a host of attractions and you can take a leisurely, if sweaty, stroll around. Alternatively hop on the **shuttle bus** (adult/child 50/20 sen; ☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Thu, Sat & Sun, 9am-noon & 3-7pm Fri), which does a loop of the gardens. At the centre lies **Tasik Perdana** (Premier Lake; Map pp84-5). You can rent boats on weekends and watch t'ai chi practitioners in the early morning.

The garden's highlight is the **Bird Park** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2273 5423; www.birdpark.com.my; adult/child RM28/17; ☎ 9am-7.30pm), a huge walk-in aviary with 160 (mostly Southeast Asian) species of birds. Get to the park for feeding times (eg eagles 2.30pm); the park's Hornbill Restaurant is also good for an inexpensive feed.

Some 6000 butterflies flutter through the **Taman Rama Rama** (Butterfly Park; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2693 4799; Jln Cendarasari; adult/child RM15/8, to take photos extra RM1; ☎ 9am-6pm). Exit through an insect gallery and marvel at the size of the spiders awaiting you in the Cameron Highlands.

Nearby are the **Taman Orkid** (Orchid Garden; Map pp84-5; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) and the adjacent **Taman Bunga Raya** (Hibiscus Garden; Map pp84-5; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm); both were closed for renovation when we visited, as was the **Deer Park** (Map pp84-5; admission free) which has a number of tame species, including the tiny *kancil* (mousedeer).

The massive **National Monument** (Map pp84-5) overlooks the Lake Gardens from the northern side. Sculpted in bronze in 1966 by Felix de Weldon, the creator of the Iwo Jima monument in Washington, DC, this memorial commemorates the communist defeat in 1950.

The quirky **National Planetarium** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2273 5484; 53 Jln Perdana; admission RM1; ☎ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun) shows short generic international science films (RM1 to RM6) in the theatre at regular intervals throughout the day. It's an

THE ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION OF ISLAM

For reasons best known to themselves, the British decided that Mogul- and Moorish-inspired architecture was the look for colonial Kuala Lumpur (KL). In more recent years, Malaysians have had other ideas, creating buildings with a distinct local identity, which combines traditional Malay forms with Islamic art.

The most famous example is the **Petronas Towers** (opposite) by Argentinian architect Cesar Pelli. The twin towers' floor plan is based on an eight-sided star that echoes arabesque patterns. Islamic influences are also evident in each tower's five tiers – representing the five pillars of Islam – and in the 63m masts that crown them, calling to mind the minarets of a mosque and the Star of Islam.

Other secular buildings to look out for:

Menara KL (KL Tower) The tower's bulbous pinnacled top is inspired by a Malaysian spinning top. Arabic script is also part of its decorative design; see p91.

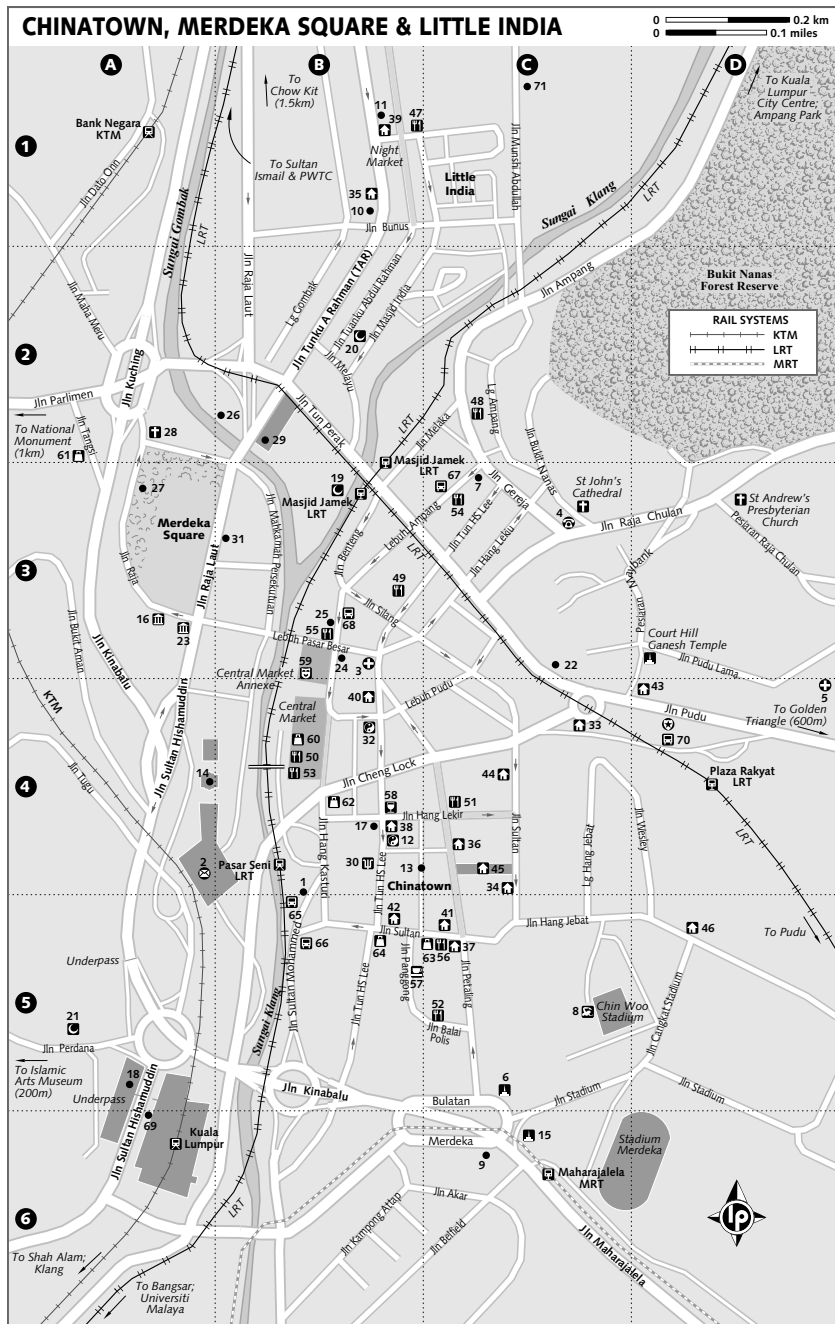
Istana Budaya (National Theatre) Designed by Mohammed Ka'amur Yaakub, the building's giant roof is based on a traditional Malay floral decoration of betel leaves, while its footprint resembles a *wau bulan* (moon kite); see p113.

Kompleks Dayabumi (Map p90; Jln Raya) This 35-storey marble clad tower, the previous headquarters of Petronas, is one of KL's most graceful buildings. Note the Islamic arches and recurring motifs. Designed by Nik Mohammed.

National Library of Malaysia Architect Shamsuddin Mohammed created one of the city's most striking buildings with traditional Malay designs incorporated on both the roof and interior walls; see p86.

Tabung Haji (Map pp84-5; on Jln Ampang and Jln Tun Abdul Razak) Hijas Katsuri designed this striking tower with the nipped waist. It houses the Islamic Bank of Malaysia and its five main exterior columns represent the five pillars of Islam.

Menara Maybank (Map p90; Pesiaran Maybank) Another of Katsuri's creations, this was one of KL's first skyscrapers and still stands out today for its chunky design inspired by the kris, the traditional Malay dagger.



| INFORMATION | | SLEEPING | | DRINKING | |
|-----------------------|------|-------------------------|-------|--------------------------------|----------|
| Bus Information Booth | 1 B4 | Ancasa Hotel | 33 C4 | Ikopi | 57 B5 |
| Main Post Office | 2 A4 | Coliseum Hotel | 35 B1 | Liquid | (see 59) |
| M&S Ally Company | 3 B3 | Hotel China Town Inn | 36 C4 | Reggae Bar | 58 B4 |
| Telekom Malaysia | 4 C3 | Hotel Lok Ann | 37 C5 | ENTERTAINMENT | |
| Tung Shin Hospital | 5 D4 | Hotel Malaya | 38 B4 | (pp111-13) | |
| | | Hotel Noble | 39 B1 | SHOPPING | |
| | | Le Village | 40 B4 | (pp113-15) | |
| | | Lee Mun Guest House | 41 C5 | Central Market | 60 B4 |
| | | Hotel Lok Ann | 42 B5 | Galeri Tangsi | 61 A2 |
| | | Mandarin Pacific Hotel | 43 D4 | Peter Hoe Evolution | 62 B4 |
| | | Pudu Hostel | 43 D4 | Peter Hoe Evolution | (see 17) |
| | | Red Dragon Hostel | 44 C4 | Purple Cane Tea Shop | 63 C5 |
| | | Library | 16 A3 | UO Supermarket | 64 B5 |
| | | Lee Rubber Building | 17 B4 | | |
| | | Malayan Railway | | TRANSPORT | |
| | | Administration Building | 18 A5 | Jalan Sultan Mohammed | |
| | | Masjid Jamek | 19 B3 | Bus Stop | |
| | | Masjid Little India | 20 B2 | Klang Bus Station | |
| | | Masjid Negara | 21 A5 | Lebuah Ampang | |
| | | Menara Maybank | 22 C3 | Bus Stop | |
| | | National History | | Medan Pasar Bus Stop | |
| | | Museum | 23 A3 | NICE Coaches | |
| | | OCBC Building | 24 B3 | Plusliner | |
| | | Painted Shophouses | 25 B3 | Puduraya Bus Station | |
| | | Pitcherplant Fountain | 26 B2 | Singapore Airlines | |
| | | | | Bungalows | |
| | | | | Bangles Café | |
| | | | | Bilal Restoran | |
| | | | | Coliseum Café | |
| | | | | Fatt Yan Vegetarian Restaurant | |
| | | | | Ginger | |
| | | | | Ikan Panggang Stall | |
| | | | | Old China Café | |
| | | | | Old Town Kopitiam | |
| | | | | Precious | |

interesting place to take children for a fun educational experience.

Bus 21C from the Sultan Mohammed bus stop, or bus 21B, 22, 48C or F3 from in front of Kota Raya shopping complex in Chinatown, will take you to the gardens.

Menara KL & Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve

Although it has been eclipsed by the Petronas Towers, the 421m **Menara KL** (KL Tower; Map p100) remains an impressive structure and still provides the highest view you're going to get of the city, bar chartering a helicopter. The **viewing deck** (Map p100; ☎ 2020 5448; www.menarakl.com.my; 2 Jln Puncak; adult/child ind audio tour RM20/10; ☎ 9am-10pm) is, at 276m, at least 100m higher than the Petronas Towers' skybridge; last tickets are at 9.30pm. To go one floor higher, consider having a meal or afternoon tea at the revolving restaurant Seri Angkasa (p106).

The world's fourth-highest telecommunications tower stands atop the **Bukit Nanas Forest Reserve**. A couple of short and well-labelled nature trails run through this 9-hectare pocket of lowland dipterocarp forest, which you can either explore alone, or on

a free guided tour starting from the entrance to the tower at 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm and 4.30pm daily and lasting about 45 minutes.

The giant slingshot contraption at the foot of the tower is **G-Force X** (Map p100; ☎ 2141 0822; www.aj-hackett.com; RM60; ☎ 9am-8pm), an antigravity thrill ride. The operators have plans to launch a skywalk around the perimeter of the tower head at 290m, a climb up the tower's exterior, and a controlled bungee jump-style dive from the top.

Kampung Baru

Like Chinatown and Little India, the charm of the Malay area of Kampung Baru (Map pp84-5) lies in just wandering the streets. The contrast with the Chinese and Indian areas couldn't be more acute. Kampung Baru retains its sleepy village atmosphere in the midst of the city: traditional Malay wooden houses stand amid lush gardens and people go quietly about their daily lives – with the exception of Saturday night when a lively *pasar malam* (night market) takes over the area close to the Kampung Baru Light Rail Transit (LRT) station (see p110).

A stroll in the area could be combined with a visit to Chow Kit Market (p114) to

KL'S ENDANGERED HERITAGE BUILDINGS

In the shadow of the Petronas Towers stands **Bok House** (Map p100; 121 Jln Ampang), one of central Kuala Lumpur's (KL's) grand old mansions, now shut up and steadily going to seed like a Malaysian Mrs Haversham. Behind Asian Heritage Row (a euphemism if ever there was one) the once impressive **Wisma Lok** (Map pp84-5; Jln Medan Tuanku) is in an even more precarious state. Some of these homes of KL's one-time tin and rubber tycoons have been saved by becoming embassies or government offices, such as the one occupied by the Malaysian Tourist Centre (MTC) on Jln Ampang; see p87. But others now face an uncertain future in a city hellbent on modernisation. Particularly at risk are the lovely wooden Malay houses of Kampung Baru where permission for development is already being granted.

In 2005 the government passed the National Heritage Bill that provides the mechanism to help rescue decaying properties of historic note by declaring them heritage buildings. Malaysia's version of the UK's National Trust, the **Badan Warisan Malaysia** (Heritage of Malaysia Trust; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2144 9273; www.badanwarisan.org.my; 2 Jln Stonor; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) is considering bringing a test case to see how the law will apply in action. It's already campaigning to save Bok House from being demolished to make way for a 60-storey tower.

Sourcing funds to restore buildings is another matter. To find out more about this NGO and to see inside one of the trust's success stories, visit its head office in a 1925 colonial bungalow. In its grounds you'll find the **Rumah Penghulu** (Map pp84-5), a handsome example of a restored Malay-style wooden house from Kedah. Tours of the house are held at 11am and 3pm Monday to Saturday (suggested donation of RM5). The trust also holds exhibitions in the bungalow, where there's a good bookshop and an interesting gift store stocking wooden antique furniture.

the west. Head east along Jln Raja Alang from Jln TAR and you'll soon pass the impressive **Sikh Temple** (Map pp84-5), the largest in Southeast Asia and spiritual home of KL's 75,000 Sikhs. Further along the road is the focus of the area's Muslim faithful, the **Kampung Baru Mosque** (Map pp84-5), built in 1924, with its gateway decorated in beautiful glazed tiles. Explore the streets around here at the junction with Jln Daud to find many old wooden houses. Even outside of Saturday night, this is a great area to come for tasty home-cooked Malay food at unpretentious roadside cafés and stalls.

Lake Titiwangsa & Around

For a picture-postcard view of the city skyline head to Lake Titiwangsa (Map pp84-5) and the relaxing park that surrounds it. If you're feeling energetic hire row boats, pedal boats and canoes (per hour from RM3) to glide across the lake, or go for a jog. The park is a favourite spot for courting Malaysian couples – and the religious police on the lookout for improper behaviour!

Squashed between Jln Tun Razak and the park is the **National Art Gallery** (Balai Seni Lukis Negara; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4025 4990; www.artgallery.org.my; 2 Jln Temerloh, off Jln Tun Razak; admission free; ☎ 10am-6pm). Pieces from the gallery's permanent collection, which was only started in 1958, are

found on the 2nd floor of the building dominated by a swirly Guggenheim Museum-style staircase. Look out for Zulkifli Moh'd Dohalan's wacky triptych *A Separate Reality*; the graphic work of Wong Hoi Cheong; and Ahad Osman's arresting *Agghh...Get Your Filthy Hands Out of My Face*. The gallery also has many temporary exhibitions.

Looming over the gallery is its neighbour, the Istana Budaya (National Theatre; see p113), with its blue-tiled roof reminiscent of an enormous piece of origami.

Lake Titiwangsa is an 800m walk east of the Titiwangsa monorail station. Buses 101, 102 and 103 run between Titiwangsa and Medan Pasar, while bus 104 runs here from KLCC.

Masjid Jamek

Set in a grove of palm trees is KL's most delightful mosque, **Masjid Jamek** (Friday Mosque; Map p90; off Jln Tun Perak; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-4pm, closed Fri 11am-2.30pm). Built in 1907, the mosque is a tranquil creation of onion domes and minarets of layered pink and cream bricks. Designed by the British architect AB Hubcock, who sought inspiration from Mogul mosques in India, it stands at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak rivers – where KL's founders first set foot. Dress appropriately.

Masjid Negara & Old KL Train Station

The huge and very modern **Masjid Negara** (National Mosque; Map p90; Jln Perdana; ☎ 9am-12.30pm, 2-3.30pm & 5-6.30pm) is distinguished by its spiky 73m-high minaret and the star-shaped main dome, its 18 points symbolising the 13 states of Malaysia and the five pillars of Islam. The overall design was inspired by the Grand Mosque in Mecca. Remove your shoes before entering and dress appropriately.

A short walk south of the mosque is another of AB Hubcock's Moorish- and Mogul-inspired fantasies, **KL Train Station** (Map p90), dating from 1911. Although restored in the 1980s, the station is now looking shabby and forlorn especially since KL Sentral took over most of its services. This said, it's still worth a look and is best seen from the forecourt of the superb **Malayan Railway Administration Building** (Map p90) opposite; step inside this building to admire the soaring central stairwell. An underpass from here leads you across the busy highway to inside the station where KTM Komuter trains still stop. To walk 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 & Brickfields

Off Jln Syed Putra, the multilayered and highly ornate **Thean Hou Temple** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 7088; www.hainanet.com; Persiaran Endah; admission free; ☎ 9am-6pm) is one of the most visually impressive in Malaysia. It's dedicated to the Heavenly Mother, Thean Hou. Her statue takes centre stage in the main hall,

with Guanyin (the Buddhist Goddess of Mercy) on her right and Shuiwei Shengniang (the Goddess of the Waterfront) to her left. Statues of Milefo (the laughing Buddha), Weituo and Guandi further contribute to this Taoist/Buddhist hodgepodge.

There are great views from the temple's upper decks, while at its base are tourist restaurants and shops. To reach the temple, 3km south of the centre of town, either take a taxi or bus 27 or 52 from Klang bus station and then walk up the hill (ask to be dropped off near the temple). Another route is to take the monorail to Tun Sambanthan station, cross Jln Syed Putra using the overpass and walk up the hill.

In nearby Brickfields, dragons fly off the corners of the much smaller-scale **Sam Kow Tong Temple** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 1239; 16 Jln Thambapillai), just around the corner from the monorail terminus, making for a striking contrast with the soaring hotel towers above KL Sentral. Nearby in this distinctly Indian area you'll also find the Buddhist Pagoda (p98) and the Temple of Fine Arts (p98).

National Museum

The building itself is the most impressive aspect of the **National Museum** (Muzium Negara; Map pp84-5; ☎ 2282 6255; www.jma.gov.my; Jln Damansara; adult/child RM2/free; ☎ 9am-6pm), with its Minangkabau roof and panoramic front murals. Inside are colourful, if somewhat fusty, displays on Malaysia's history, economy, arts, crafts and various cultures. Although the museum is very close to KL Sentral station, it's most easily accessed by a walkway over the highway south of the Lake Gardens, or by taxi.

QUIRKY KL

- Join the **Tugu Drum Circle** at the National Monument (Map pp84-5) in the Lake Gardens from 5.30pm to 8.30pm every Sunday, when they gather to make to percussive music.
- Discover a little piece of Japan and beautiful koi carp at the **Sentul Park Koi Centre** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4045 1311; www.ytlcommunity.com; Jln Strachan; ☎ 9am-6pm).
- Catch the changing of the guards on the hour outside the gates of the **Istana Negara** (Map pp84-5; Jln Istana).
- Check out the **'space rocks'** and **scale model of Stonehenge** on the way to the Planetarium (p89) in the Lake Gardens.
- Have your fortune told, along with a bubble tea or mango shake, at the **Sixty Nine Bistro** (p107).

SPAS, MASSAGE PARLOURS & REFLEXOLOGY

Heavenly urban spa-retreats abound in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and it's not just the top-end hotels that are in on the act. **Starhill Gallery's** 'pamper' floor (see p114) is entirely dedicated to spa and beauty treatments; try **Spa Indrani** (Map p100; ☎ 2782 3868; www.spaindrani.com; ☹ 10am-9.30pm), one of the biggest and most experienced operators offering an exotic range of treatments, including ones tailored to men.

Upstairs in the same building is the award-winning **Starhill Spa** (Map p100; ☎ 2716 8342; ☹ 8am-9pm), featuring more than 40 bath and body treatments. Nearby, tropical **Spa Village** (Map p100; ☎ 2142 8000; Ritz Carlton Hotel, 168 Jln Imbi; ☹ 8am-9pm) is a holiday in the city, complete with indoor and outdoor beauty and massage treatments, a sensory room, and a second outdoor pool with waterfalls. Health club facilities include 24-hour fitness centre, sauna, steam room and whirlpool.

Not to be outdone, **Berjaya Times Sq** (see p114) offers **JoJoBa Spa** (Map p100; ☎ 2141 7766; www.jojoba.com.my; 15th fl, East Wing Tower, Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi; ☹ 11am-12.40am), which claims to be Malaysia's largest tourist spa.

The top-end spas are competitively priced (anything from around RM200 for a standard massage to RM675 for a three-hour pamper package) but if your budget is limited there are plenty of alternatives. There's an abundance of Chinese massage and reflexology places scattered throughout the city, with a concentration along Jln Bukit Bintang, south of BB Plaza. The pricing is fairly consistent (an hour's full-body massage RM65), but because of the high competition, you can usually bargain this down to about RM50. Don't bother making a phone booking; it's much better to simply turn up and negotiate a price. Expect to pay no more than RM25 for 30 minutes of foot reflexology.

The quality of the massages along this strip can be hit and miss so, before committing, it's best to have a friendly conversation with the service provider about what you're after to ensure everyone knows what is expected – otherwise you may find yourself paying some sweaty guy for a crude back rub. **Old Asia** (Map p100; ☎ 2143 9888; 14 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☹ 10am-10pm) is one of the more reliable and pleasantly designed places on the strip, offering spa treatments as well as massages, with 20% off prices from noon to 7pm. Slightly more expensive at RM80 for a one-hour massage – but well worth it on account of the ambience – is **Liang Xin Reflexology Centre** (Map p100; 1st fl, Wisma Bukit Bintang, 28 Jln Bukit Bintang).

Kim Lovely

ACTIVITIES Gyms & Yoga

Most top-end hotels have gyms – the ones at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur (p104) and Westin Kuala Lumpur (p103) are particularly good. These and other big independent gyms will have yoga and other workout classes. It's a good idea to enquire about any short-term membership deals; these can work out far cheaper than the usual day rate of RM50.

California Fitness (Map p100; ☎ 2145 1000; www.californiafitness.com; Menara Standard Chartered, Jln Sultan Ismail; ☹ 6.30am-10pm Mon-Fri, 7am-10pm Sat, 10am-10pm Sun)

Fitness First (Map p100; ☎ 2711 3299; www.fitnessfirst.com.my; Wisma SPK, 22 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☹ 6.30am-11pm Mon-Fri, 7am-7pm Sat & Sun) It also has a branch in Menara Maxis at the KLCC (Map p100).

Yoga 2 Health (Map p108; ☎ 2282 3866; www.yoga2health.com; 1st fl, 21A Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru) Nonmembers pay from RM45 per session.

Swimming & Watersports

A fun place to swim is the Sunway Lagoon (p129). You can hire boats in the Lake Gardens (p89) and at Lake Titiwangsa (p92).

Bangsar Sports Complex (☎ 2284 6065; 3 Jln Terasek Tiga, Bangsar Baru; ☹ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) Swimming per 2½ hours costs RM1.50. Also has tennis courts, and squash and badminton facilities.

Chin Woo Stadium Swimming Pool (Map p90; off Jln Hang Jebat; admission RM3; ☹ 2-8pm Mon-Fri, 9am-8pm Sat & Sun) Fifty-metre outdoor pool.

Tennis

Besides being able to play a game at the top-end hotels, you can play tennis at the following organisations:

Bangsar Sports Complex (☎ 2284 6065; 3 Jln Terasek Tiga, Bangsar Baru; ☹ 8am-4.15pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat)

National Sports Council Complex (☎ 9058 1390; www.hptciaafforasia.org/iaaf/index.php; Jln Dutra)

YMCA (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 1768; 95 Jln Padang Belia)

WALKING TOURS

These walking tours of the colonial heart of KL, Little India and Chinatown are a great way to gain an insight into daily city life and the interaction between each of KL's main ethnic groups.

Colonial KL & Little India Walk

Start at the southern side of **Merdeka Square (1)**, part of the open cricket field formerly known as the Padang and once the heart of colonial KL. At midnight on 31 August 1957 Malaysia's independence (Merdeka) was proclaimed here. The Union Jack was lowered and the Malaysian flag raised on a 100m-high freestanding flagpole – claimed to be the world's tallest – that continues to anchor the square today. Crowds still gather here for New Year's Eve and on National Day to watch the parades (see p98) – expect a huge party in 2007 for the 50th anniversary of Merdeka.

Even if you're not into history, call in at the **National History Museum (2)**; ☎ 2694 4590; admission free; ☹ 9am-6pm); the raised view of the square from its 2nd floor is impressive. Exit the museum and walk clockwise around the square past the **Kuala Lumpur Memorial Library (3)** which occupies a new building that blends in well with the surroundings.

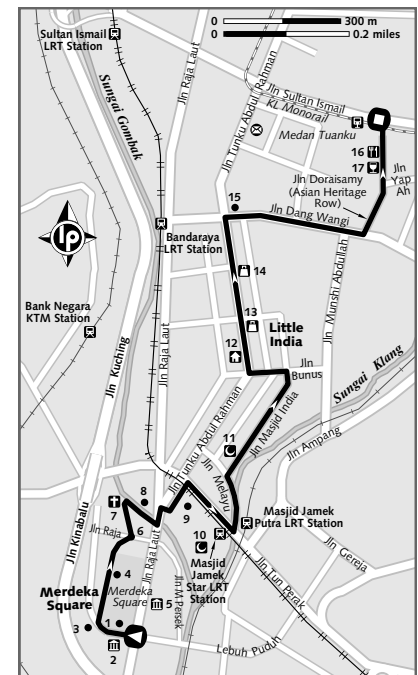
Sticking to the western edge of the grassy square, the extended mock-Tudor building to your left is the **Royal Selangor Club (4)**, the social centre for KL's high society in the tin-boom days of the 1890s, and still a gathering place for the KL elite. It's also the place where the, now worldwide, running and drinking club the Hash House Harriers kicked off in 1938.

East of the square across Jln Raja Laut you'll have a prime view of the **Sultan Abdul Samad Building (5)** with its distinctive copper-plated cupolas. This blend of Victorian, Moorish and Mogul architecture is typical of many of KL's colonial buildings. Designed by AC Norman (an associate of AB Hubbock, architect of the KL Train

Station) and built between 1894 and 1897, it was once the Secretariat Building for the British administration and is now one of Malaysia's highest courts. It looks particularly attractive at night when fairy lights illuminate its exterior.

Continue walking north towards the low **memorial arches (6)** inscribed with 'Dataran Merdeka' (Merdeka Sq). Across the road is another of AC Norman's creations, **St Mary's Cathedral (7)**, dating from 1894 and housing a fine pipe-organ dedicated to Sir Henry Gurney, the British high commissioner to Malaya, assassinated in 1951 during the Emergency (see p37).

Turn left at the corner and head north up Jln Raja Laut past the giant **pitcherplant fountain (8)** which dominates a small garden marooned amid a cat's cradle of roads. Cross at the junction with Jln Tun Perak heading towards yet another Mogul-inspired building – the **Sessions and Magistrates Courts (9)**. Stick to right-hand side of Jln Tun Perak for 50m until you reach the entrance to the landmark **Masjid Jamek (10)**; p92). If you're dressed appropriately, nip inside to experience



WALK FACTS

Start Merdeka Sq

Finish Medan Tuanku

Distance 1.5km

Duration 1½ hours

the calm core of this pretty mosque, yet another design by AB Hubbock.

Opposite the mosque follow curved Jln Melayu to the covered arcade of market stalls at the pedestrianised end of Jln Masjid India. Pick your way through the tightly packed stalls to find the Indian Muslim-style mosque **Masjid India (11)**, after which the street is named. You're now in the thick of KL's Little India, an energetic area defined by its preponderance of sari and scarf stalls, gold jewellers and DVD and CD shops playing Bollywood soundtracks at full blast.

The bazaar-like atmosphere of the streets is enhanced every Saturday from late afternoon when a *pasar malam* (night market) sets up along Lg Tuanku Abdul Rahman, the lane sandwiched between Jln Tuanku Abdul Rahman (Jln TAR) and Jln Masjid India. Originally called Batu Rd, Jln TAR was once a dusty track leading north out of the city to the caves and tin mines at Batu village (see p123).

The one colonial relic surviving at the south end of Jln TAR is the **Coliseum Hotel (12; p102)** where Somerset Maugham once drank. The hotel's certainly seen better days but it's still worth popping into for a reviving beer or even a meal at the Coliseum Café (p107). The Coliseum Cinema next door is of the same era and screens the latest Bollywood extravaganzas.

Continue north along Jln TAR passing the flamingo pink-and-gold highlighted Art Deco beauty at No 126, home of the chi chi fabric shop **Euro Moda (13)**. Opposite at No 185 is the long-running **Globe Silk Store (14)**, good for cheap clothes and batik.

Another Art Deco movie house the **Odeon (15)** is on the corner at the crossroads of Jln Dang Wangi and Jln TAR, opposite Sogo department store. Head east along Jln Dang Wangi until you reach Jln Doraisamy. This recently revived street of shophouses is now better known as Asian Heritage Row and is one of the trendiest of the city's dining and nightlife scenes. The **Vanilla Box (16; p106)**

is a good place for a snack or light lunch. Or you could sink a pint or two at the **Ivy (17; p111)** before finishing up at the nearby monorail stop, Medan Tuanku.

Chinatown Walk

Before exploring Chinatown proper, this tour takes you into an enclave of KL's Indian community. Starting from **Masjid Jamek LRT Station (1)**, keep to the northern side of Jln Tun Perak and walk one block east to Lebuah Ampang. This atmospheric street, lined with moneychangers, Indian cafés, and street vendors selling Indian sweets and flower garlands, has long been the preserve of the Chettians from South India. Note the striking **old shophouses (2)** at Nos 16 to 18

and Nos 24 to 30, and the ceramic peacock tiles on the **Chettiar House (3)** at No 85.

Backtrack across Jln Tun Perak and follow Jln Benteng, which runs beside the Sungai Klang, until you reach the junction with the south end of Lebuah Ampang. Here you'll find **Medan Pasar (Market Sq)**, the site of the city's original market. In the centre stands a clock tower built in 1937 to commemorate the coronation of King George IV. The **painted shophouses (4)**, at Nos 2 to 8, were all designed by the same architect in 1906.

Where Medan Pasar meets Lebuah Pasar Besar you'll see the **OCBC Building (5)**, a graceful Art Deco structure built in 1938 for the Overseas Chinese Banking Company. Turn east along Lebuah Pasar Besar, to the corner with Jln Tun HS Lee, where you'll find **MS Ally Company (6; ☎ 2078 6881; 89 Jln Tun HS Lee)**, a pharmacy in business since 1909. Twenty metres down Jln Tun HS Lee on your right is the ornate and colourful **Bank Simpanan Building (7)**, bearing the date 1914; it's now home to the hostel Le Village (p99).

Cross Lebuah Pudu, turn right and, after 25m, duck left into an alleyway leading to the atmospheric **Sze Ya Temple (8; p88)**, KL's oldest Taoist temple. Note the two gilded sedan chairs, dating from 1893 and encased in glass, flanking the temple's main entrance. Its odd position, squished between rows of shophouses was determined by feng shui.

Exit the way you came in, cross the street and walk through the alley opposite the **Central Market (9; p113)**. Previously the city's produce market, the Central Market, designed by TY Lee, is a fine Art Deco building that was saved by preservationists and refurbished as a centre for handicraft, antique and art sales. Even if you don't want to shop, pop inside because rotating art exhibitions and cultural shows are regularly held here.

At the southern end of the market, turn left onto Jln Cheng Lock, then right onto Jln Tun HS Lee. The shophouses along here are among Chinatown's oldest; note the unique feature of a five-foot way (pavement) lower than the road level. The competing scents of dried fish, herbs and fresh flowers hit you as you continue down to the junction with Jln Hang Lekir. On the south corner is the pale yellow-painted Art Deco-styled

Lee Rubber Building (10), occupied by Popular bookstore on the ground floor.

Further south along Jln Tun HS Lee, you won't miss the bright-red, incense-wreathed **Guandi Temple (11)**, which is also known as the Kwong Siew Free School. The figure at the rear of the temple is Guandi – the Taoist God of War – and on the altar in front of him are an impressive sword and halberd. Next door, duck into **Jalan Sang Guna (12)**, a covered arcade housing Chinatown's pungent wet- and fresh-produce market.

Having taken note of the fish, pigs' trotters and tofu at the market, return to Jln Tun HS Lee to admire the 22m-high gate tower to the **Sri Mahariamman Temple (13; p88)**, and to breathe in the sweet jasmine of the flower sellers outside. Continue south after exploring the temple to Jln Sultan where you turn left and then right onto Jln Panggong which sweeps around into Jln Balai Polis; along here is **Old China Café (14; p105)**, one of the nicest places to eat in Chinatown.

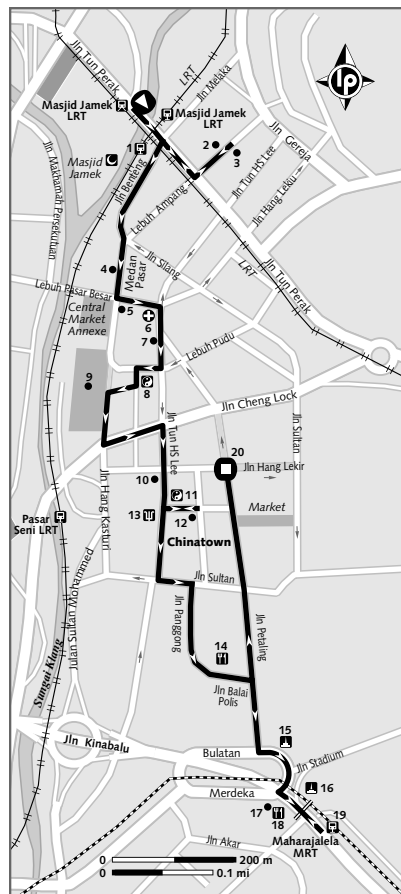
Don't stop yet, though, as there are a couple more temples to check out further south around the busy traffic roundabout of Bulatan Merdeka: the ornate ancestral **Chan See Shu Yuen Temple (15)**, and, across Jln Stadium, the **Koon Yam (Guanyin) Temple (16)**, dedicated to the Goddess of Mercy. The central effigy inside is Sakyamuni, to whose right is a statue of the South Sea Guanyin (complete with flashing halo); to Sakyamuni's left is a Qianshou (Thousand Arm) Guanyin.

Over the footbridge is the **Chinese Assembly Hall (17)**; plays and musical performances occasionally happen here, and at the back is the **Purple Cane Tea Restaurant (18; p104)**.

The **Maharajalela monorail station (19)** is close by if you want to finish your walk here. However, if it's evening, we recommend returning to **Jalan Petaling (20)** to experience the visceral excitement of the night market.

COURSES

Call ahead for sessions and times. **Academy@The Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre** (KLPac; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4047 9060; www.klpac.com; Sentul Park, Jln Strachan) A variety of performing arts courses are offered here, including acting, special-effects and guitar workshops, as well as yoga.



WALK FACTS

Start Masjid Jamek
Finish Jln Petaling
Distance 1.6km
Duration 1½ hours

Buddhist Pagoda (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 1141; www.buddhistmahavihara.com; 123 Jln Berhala) Built in the 1800s by Sinhalese Buddhists from Sri Lanka this Brickfields landmark offers a variety of courses at its institute. Meditation and chanting classes are held daily.

Dama Music Academy (☎ 6201 9108; www.damaorchestra.com; M-2-10 Plaza Damas, 60 Jln Sri Hartamas 1, Sri Hartamas) Take Chinese mandolin, guitar, violin and harmonica classes, as well as vocal and piano classes, with the talented musicians from the Dama Orchestra.

Kompleks Budaya Kraf (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2162 7533; www.kraftangan.gov.my; Jln Conlay) Try your hand at batik on a swatch of cotton (RM15), silk (RM20) or a T-shirt (RM35), or sign up for a pottery course at the craft village in the grounds of this one-stop crafts complex.

Prego Cooks (Map p100; ☎ 2773 8689; twkl.restaurants@westin.com; Westin Kuala Lumpur, 199 Jln Bukit Bintang) Every second and fourth Saturday morning the Westin's Italian restaurant Prego (p105) runs 12-person cooking classes (including lunch RM168) in its open kitchen.

School of Hard Knocks (☎ 4145 6122; www.visitorcentre.royalselangor.com; Royal Selangor Pewter Factory, 4 Jln Usahawan 6, Setapak Jaya) Call to book a place on this 30-minute introduction to the art of pewtersmithing (RM50).

Temple of Fine Arts (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 3709; tfa-i.org; 114 Jln Berhala, Brickfields) Classes are offered in classical Indian dance and music. It also has a café and Indian handicrafts shop. Performances are sometimes staged here.

YMCA (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 1439; www.ymcakl.com; 95 Jln Padang Belia, Brickfields) Want to learn the local lingo? Come to the YMCA for its Bahasa Malaysia classes. Other languages offered include Thai, Mandarin/Cantonese and Japanese, as well as courses in martial arts and different types of dancing.

KUALA LUMPUR FOR CHILDREN

The great Malaysian outdoors, and some of its wildlife, is within easy reach for parents visiting KL with their little ones. **Berjaya Times Square** (p114) has an indoor theme park but it's not a patch on the ones at **Sunway Lagoon** (p129) or **Genting Highlands** (p125).

Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM; p124) A mere 16km from KL, you could have fun on the canopy walkway at this jungle park in Selangor.

Kompleks Budaya Kraf (p113) For more hands-on activities, try doing some batik painting or pottery.

Lake Gardens (p89) Head to these gardens for the Bird, Butterfly and Deer parks as well as the informative Planetarium.

Petronas Towers (p88) There's an obvious wow factor to the spot, which includes the Skybridge, the interactive science centre Petrosains and a really great kid's play park and paddling pool (as well as, dare we say it, toy shops in the Suria KLCC shopping mall).

Sungei Wang Plaza (p115) Teenagers will be sure to appreciate the cute boutiques and game arcades.

Zoo Negara (p124) About 13km northeast of KL, this zoo provides a sampling of native Malaysian, Asian and even African wildlife.

TOURS

Backpackers Travellers Inn (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2078 2473; backpacker_inn@hotmail.com; 60B Jln Sultan) Also runs tours to see the fireflies near Kuala Selangor (p132).

Malaysian Travel Business (Map p100; ☎ 2163 0162; MTC, 109 Jln Ampang) Offers a similar wide range of tours at slightly cheaper prices.

MR Premier Holidays (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4042 1000; Level 3, Shopping Arcade, Pan Pacific Kuala Lumpur, Jln Putra) Offers a couple of half-day (RM55) and full-day (RM100) city tours, plus day trips further afield, including to see the fireflies at Kuala Selangor (RM200), Putrajaya (RM100) and the Kuala Gandah Elephant Conservation Centre (RM200).

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

The capital is a good venue for Malaysia's major holidays and festivals, including Chinese New Year and Deepavali; see p489 for more information.

City Day KL commemorates becoming a federal territory on 1 February. Celebrations take place at Tasik Perdana and Lake Titivangsa gardens (p92) in the north of the city.

KL International Tower Jump The only time you'll be able to see people legally flinging themselves off the Menara KL is when the international BASE-jumping fraternity are in town in March.

Kampong Fest (www.kampongfest.com) One-day festival of art and cultural performances at Desa Blonde, a private 4-acre orchard in the village of Hulu Langat, about 40 minutes drive east of KL. In June or July.

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

National Day At midnight on 31 August join the crowds in Merdeka Sq to celebrate the anniversary of Malaysia's independence in 1957. There are parades and festivities the next morning, usually at Commonwealth Stadium, but check with the Malaysian Tourist Centre (MTC).

Malaysia Fest (Colors of Malaysia) Two weeks of celebration in September, with exhibits of traditional arts and special cultural performances around town.

Shopping Carnival A chance to find bargains at selected KL shopping centres during this annual sale in October.

SLEEPING

KL is awash with luxury hotels at prices that are a fantastic bargain. At the other extreme, there are way too many grubby fleapits offering windowless boxy rooms, appealing only for their cheap rates. The boutique hotel revolution is yet to touch KL so outstanding midrange options are thin on the ground.

Don't worry, since practically all mid-range and top-end places offer endless promotions that can slash rack rates (what we quote here, including all taxes) by up to 50%; always ask about special deals. The only time you should book ahead to be sure of accommodation is public holidays, when room discounts will not apply.

In KL we class budget hotels and hostels as ones offering a double room or dorm bed for RM70 and under; midrange properties are RM71 to RM300; and top-end places charge RM301 plus. Chinatown remains crammed with budget places (most pretty awful) but there's now a very healthy backpacker scene in the Golden Triangle, too – this is where you'll find the pick of budget guesthouses and hostels. The best places will fill up quickly so book ahead. If everywhere is full, Little India and the seedy Chow Kit area further north also have plenty of low-priced accommodation, although many places are brothels, or close enough.

Jln Bukit Bintang in the Golden Triangle is a good hunting ground for midrange hotels. Top-end hotels are largely concentrated in the Golden Triangle, around KLCC and north of KL Sentral hotel.

KLIA TRANSIT HOTELS

If you arrive at Kuala Lumpur International Airport in the early hours of the morning, you might find the **Airside Transit Hotel** (☎ 8787 4848; Satellite Bldg, KLIA; d 6hr RM120; ☎ ☎) useful. The hotel includes a fitness centre, business centre, spa and sauna, and all rooms come with attached bathroom and TV.

The luxurious **Pan Pacific KLIA** (☎ 8787 3333; www.klairport.panpacific.com; s/d RM560/590; ☎ ☎ ☎) is linked by a bridge to the main terminal. There's a large range of restaurants and business-class facilities, including tennis court and gym. Promotional discounts can shave 50% off the rack rate.

Budget CHINATOWN

Lee Mun Guest House (Map p90; ☎ 2078 0639; 5th fl, 109 Jln Petaling; dm/s RM9/22, d RM27-35; ☎ ☎) It's worth popping into this no-frills hotel with cardboard partition walls just to witness the colourful collage of magazine clippings covering the walls. It offers as cheap a dorm bed (no air-con) as you're going to get. The staff are friendly and the communal bathrooms clean. The entrance is on Jln Sultan.

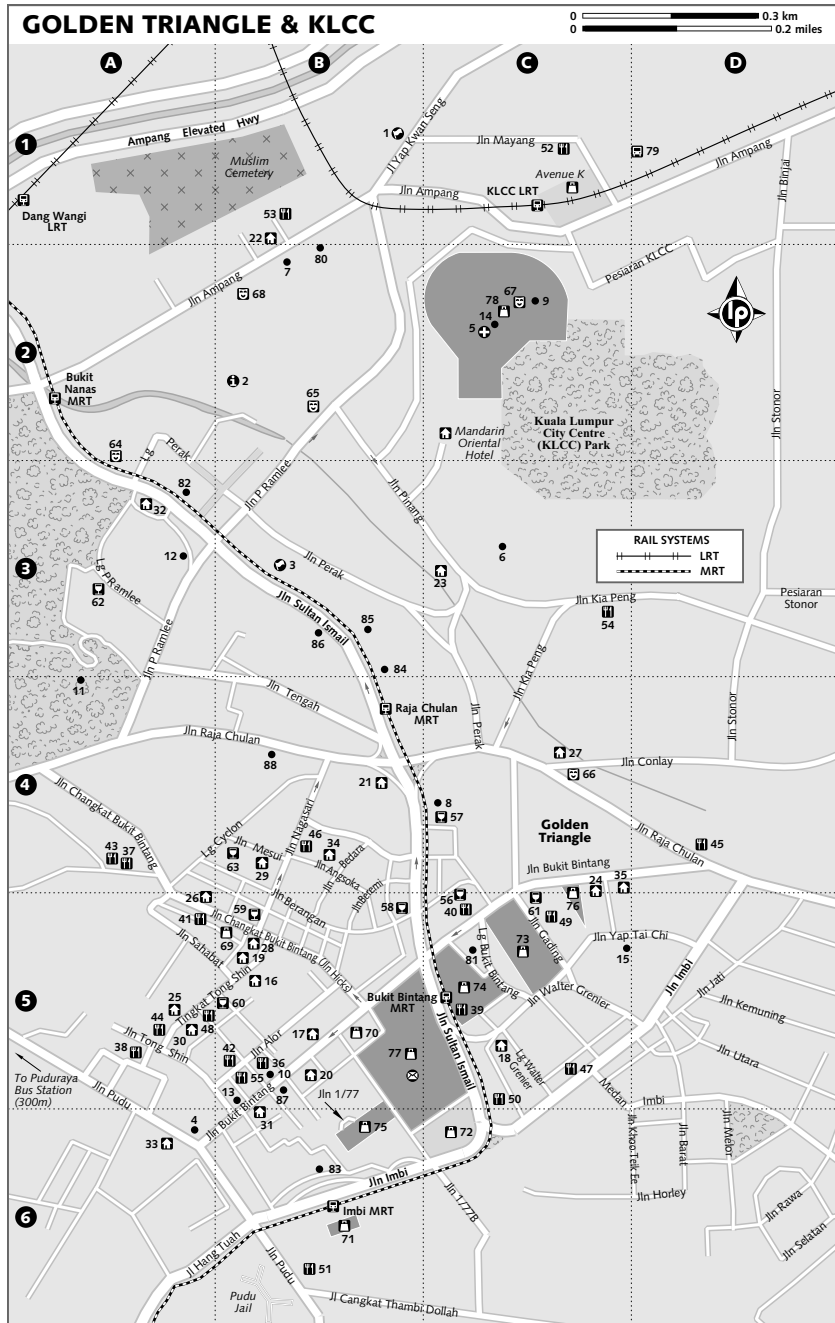
Le Village (Map p90; ☎ 017-256 9105; zhyme@hotmail.com; 99A Jln Tun HS Lee; dm RM12, s RM18-20, d RM25-35) A relaxed bohemian air hangs over this shabby, yet charming, hostel in a characterful colonial building decorated with local art. The manager Zaimi is a convivial chap. Clean bathrooms, cooking facilities and free coffee or tea add to the appeal.

Backpackers Travellers Inn (Map p90; ☎ 2078 2473; backpacker_inn@hotmail.com; 60B Jln Sultan; dm RM10, d with shared bathroom RM25-28, with private bathroom RM50-60; ☎ ☎) A whole range of rooms, all small and devoid of decoration, are offered at this long-established and well-run hostel. At its rooftop bar you can get breakfast, as well as hook up with fellow travellers late into the night. It also runs a travel agency and can arrange trips out to see the fireflies near Kuala Selangor (opposite).

Pudu Hostel (Map p90; ☎ 2078 9600; www.puduhostel.com; 3rd fl, Wisma Lai Choon, 10 Jln Pudu; dm/s/d RM12/30/40; ☎ ☎) The contrast between the Pudu's spacious lobby/lounge and its tiny, tatty rooms is acute. Still it's a busy traveller hangout bang opposite Puduraya bus station, and the management does arrange daily shuttle buses to Taman Negara, as well as other bus tickets. All rooms have shared bathrooms.

Red Dragon Hostel (Map p90; ☎ 2078 9366; www.hostelreddragon.com; 80 Jln Sultan; dm/s/d/tr RM20/35/45/50; ☎ ☎) It's a shame this hostel hasn't capitalised on the fact that it's based in an old cinema; the rooms are boxy and windowless and all share bathrooms. Still it's popular and has a café downstairs for breakfast (not included). Rates are slightly higher Friday to Sunday.

YWCA (Map p90; ☎ 2078 3225; ywca@streamyx.com; 12 Jln Hang Jebat; s/d/tr with shared bathroom RM30/50/70) A throwback to another generation, this quiet establishment tucked away east of Chinatown offers plain but very acceptable



| INFORMATION | | Prince Hotel & Residence | Frangipani Bar.....(see 41) | |
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| Kinokuniya; Royal Selangor Pewter Factory.....(see 78) | | Royale Bintang.....31 B6 | No Black Tie.....63 B4 | |
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| Bok House.....7 B2 | | Asian Flavours Food Court.....(see 78) | Hard Rock Cafe.....64 A2 | |
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| Liang Xin Reflexology Centre.....10 B5 | | Luk Yu Tea House.....(see 76) | Zouk.....68 B2 | |
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| Menara KL Viewing Deck.....(see 11) | | Ngau Kee Beef Ball Noodles.....44 A5 | Atreageously Ramsay Ong.....69 B5 | Aseana.....70 B7 |
| Menara UBN.....12 A3 | | Olé Caf .....(see 59) | BB Plaza.....70 B5 | Berjaya Times Square.....71 B6 |
| Old Asia.....13 B5 | | Prego.....(see 35) | Imbi Plaza.....72 C6 | Isetan.....(see 74) |
| Petronas Towers.....14 C2 | | Rakuzan.....45 D4 | KL Plaza.....73 C5 | Lot 10.....74 C5 |
| Petrosains.....(see 78) | | Restoran Nagasari Curry House.....46 B4 | Plaza Low Yat.....75 B6 | Pucuk Rebung.....(see 78) |
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| | | Tai Thong Grand Restaurant.....53 B1 | Avis.....80 B2 | |
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| | | Number Eight Guesthouse.....25 A5 | Royal Brunei Airlines.....(see 12) | |
| | | Pondok Lodge.....26 A5 | Thai Airways International.....88 B4 | |
| | | | | |

rooms with fan, desk and wardrobe. Only for women, couples and families.

Hotel Lok Ann (Map p90; ☎ 2078 9544; 113A Jln Petaling; s/d RM60/70; ☎) Best value of the cheap hotels in the area. Despite facing noisy Jln Sultan, this neat and clean place has spacious rooms with windows, TV, phone and large shower rooms.

Hotel China Town Inn (Map p90; ☎ 2070 4008; www.chinatowninn.com; 52-54 Jln Petaling; d RM60-80; ☎) Even though it's in the thick of Chinatown, a calm atmosphere reigns at this well-managed, good-value hotel. All rooms have attached showers and TV (DVD players

can be hired); note the more expensive deluxe rooms with windows overlook noisy Jln Petaling market.

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC

Pondok Lodge (Map p100; ☎ 2142 8449; pondok@tm.net.my; 3rd fl, 20 Jln Cangkat Bukit Bintang; dm/s/d RM15/40/55; ☎) A bit more effort has been made with the d cor at this spacious and justly popular hostel with airy common lounges and a rooftop sitting area. Bright rooms with shared bathrooms provide for a pleasant stay and the four-/six-bed dorms come with either fan or air-con.

Green Hut Lodge (Map p100; ☎ 2142 3339; www.thegreenhut.com; 48 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/s/d with breakfast & shared bathroom RM25/50/65, d with breakfast & bathroom RM85; 🍷 📺 📺) A classic traveller's choice, complete with towel-draped 12-bed dorm, notice boards and staff that speak Bahasa Backpacker. It's spotless and the jungle mural on the lobby wall is rather eye-catching.

Red Palm (Map p100; ☎ 2143 1279; www.redpalm-kl.com; 5 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/s/d/tr with breakfast RM25/40/65/90; 📺) Although its rooms are tiny and separated by thin walls and all bathrooms are shared, there's still much charm in the Red Palm's colourful and comfy communal areas – the place feels more like a home than a hostel, and management is welcoming.

Trekker Lodge (Map p100; ☎ 2142 4633; www.thetrekkerlodge.com; 1-1 Jln Angsoka; dm/s/d with shared bathroom RM25/50/65, d with bathroom RM85; 🍷 📺 📺) In an old apartment block this place offers pretty much the same deal as at Green Hut Lodge – no surprise since it's owned by the same people.

Rainforest Bed & Breakfast (Map p100; ☎ 2145 1466; rainforest_k@hotmail.com; 27 Jln Mesuji; d with/without bathroom RM90/70, with breakfast; 🍷 📺) Lush greenery tumbles off the façade of this pretty guesthouse. The cheaper windowless rooms seem larger than they are because of full wall mirrors. The rooftop area where breakfast is taken is lovely, but watch those rail-less stairs on the way up – not to be tackled after a few drinks!

Number Eight Guesthouse (Map p100; ☎ 2144 2050; www.numbereight.com.my; 8-10 Tingkat Tong Shin; dm/tw RM30/85, d with shared bathroom RM95, private bathroom RM115-135, with breakfast; 🍷 📺) In entirely another league from its competition is this very stylish guesthouse, its minimalist design offset by arty touches such as B&W photos of KL, a wall map of Asia crafted out of plaster, and flickering candles on the open porch. The rooms with bathroom are boutique-hotel quality, some with TVs and DVD players. It does its bit for the environment with solar-heated water.

LITTLE INDIA & CHOW KIT

Coliseum Hotel (Map p90; ☎ 2692 6270; 98-100 Jln TAR; r RM30-45; 🍷) To stay at this colonial institution book well in advance, as it's often full. It's really getting run-down, but if high-ceilinged rooms with ancient electric

switches and furnishings are your thing, you'll consider staying here money well spent. All bathrooms are shared.

Ben Soo Homestay (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2691 8096, 012-675 6110; bensoohome@yahoo.com; 2nd fl, 61B Jln Tiong Nam; s/d without air-con RM35/40, s/d with air-con RM40/48; 🍷 📺) Off Jln Raja Laut, this down-at-heel but quirkily charming place is very much a homestay. There are just two plain clean rooms with wooden floors and shared bathrooms, and the family who runs it is very welcoming.

Midrange

CHINATOWN

Ancasa Hotel (Map p90; ☎ 2026 6060; www.udaancasa.com; Jln Tun Tan Cheng Lock; d from RM147.20; 🍷 📺) Helpful staff make this Chinatown's best midrange option. It has something of a luxe feel despite its bargain price. All rooms are comfortable and feature in-house movies, satellite TV, small fridge, facilities for making coffee and tea, and in-room safe; you also receive a complimentary newspaper.

Also recommended:

Mandarin Pacific Hotel (Map p90; ☎ 2070 3000; mandpac@tm.net.my; 2-8 Jln Sultan; r from RM112; 🍷) For RM10 more you'll get a room with a window.

Swiss-Inn (Map p90; ☎ 2072 3333; www.swissgarden.com; 62 Jln Sultan; d with breakfast from RM140; 🍷 📺) Comfortable, clean and centrally located.

Hotel Malaya (Map p90; ☎ 2072 7722; www.hotelmalaya.com.my; cnr Jln Hang Lekir & Jln Tun HS Lee; s/d RM140/165; 🍷)

GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Allson Genesis (Map p100; ☎ 2141 2000; www.allson-genesis.com; 45 Tingkat Tong Shin; s/d RM150/175; 🍷 📺) This is a great option and great value for money. The rooms are spacious with contemporary furnishing that verge on boutique territory. The deluxe rooms at the front have great views towards the Petronas Towers and you can rent DVD players.

Hotel Capitol (Map p100; ☎ 2143 7000; www.fh-hotels.com; Jln Bulan; s/d from RM184/207; 🍷) Owned by the Federal Hotel, one minute around the corner on Jln Bukit Bintang (so you can use its swimming pool), this is a pleasing contemporary-styled hotel close to, but not directly on, the main drag.

Royale Bintang (Map p100; ☎ 2143 9898; www.royale-bintang-hotel.com.my; Jln Bukit Bintang; d RM218.50; 🍷 📺 📺) This stylish and very comfortable

hotel offers spacious rooms (with high-speed internet access, cable TV, complimentary newspaper), a bar, restaurant, and reasonable-sized gym and pool.

Radius International Hotel (Map p100; ☎ 2715 3888; www.radius-international.com; 51A Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang; d from RM287.50; 🍷 📺 📺) The cheapest rooms at this excellently located hotel have no minibar and are on the small side so it's best upgrading to premier room (RM402.50) which includes breakfast and a host of other goodies; with promotional discounts they're within the midrange.

Also recommended:

Bintang Warisan Hotel (Map p100; ☎ 2148 8111; www.bintangwarisan.com; 68 Jln Bukit Bintang; r RM150; 🍷) Attractive small hotel with pre-Independence façade but modern rooms.

Coronade Hotel (Map p100; ☎ 2148 6888; www.coronade.com; Jln Walter Grenier; d from RM207; 🍷 📺 📺) Behind Lot 10, but with good views from upper floors.

Swiss-Garden Hotel (Map p100; ☎ 2141 3333; www.swissgarden.com; 117 Jln Pudu; d with breakfast RM230; 🍷 📺 📺) High-standard rooms and facilities.

ELSEWHERE

YMCA (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2274 1439; www.ymcakl.com; 95 Jln Padang Belia; d/tr RM80/100; 🍷) Perfectly located for KL Sentral, the rooms here are spotless and come with TV, telephone and that rarity in a cheap KL hotel: a wardrobe to hang your clothes. It also runs lots of courses (see p98).

Grand Centrepoint Hotel (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2693 3988; www.grandcentrepoint.com; 316 Jln TAR; d with breakfast RM100; 🍷) Midway between Little India and Chow Kit, and not far from Medan Tuanku monorail station, is this acceptable, keenly priced business hotel. Rooms are clean and well insulated from traffic noise.

Hotel Noble (Map p90; ☎ 2711 7111; nobelkl@pojaring.my; 4th fl, 165 Jln TAR; d with breakfast RM150; 🍷) Staff are polite and the ambience is smart, clean and comfortable at this modern hotel on the door-step of Little India. Rooms with bathroom come with minibar, safety deposit box, coffee/tea-making facilities and TV.

Top End

GOLDEN TRIANGLE & KLCC

Prince Hotel & Residence Kuala Lumpur (Map p100; ☎ 2170 8888; www.princehotels.co.jp/kuala_lumpur-e/; 4 Jln Conlay; d/apt from RM310.50/1150; 🍷 📺 📺) The Prince gets things off to a great start

by offering a refreshing cool towel on arrival, and outstanding value for its modern, cream-coloured rooms. Some nice facilities include a kids' club, and its serviced apartments are good for long-term stays.

Impiana (Map p100; ☎ 2141 6233; www.impi-ana.com; 13 Jln Pinang; d with breakfast from RM437; 🍷 📺 📺) This sleek new hotel offers chic, spacious rooms with parquet floors and lots of seductive amenities. Another plus is an infinity pool with a stunning view across to the Petronas Towers.

JW Marriott (Map p100; ☎ 2715 9000; jwmh@po.jaring.my; 183 Jln Bukit Bintang; d from RM460; 🍷 📺 📺) The sumptuous Marriott delivers undeniable luxury and some breathtaking views of the Petronas Towers. The additional lavishness of the attached Starhill Gallery (p114) is icing on the cake.

Hotel Maya (Map p100; ☎ 2711 8866; www.hotelmaya.com.my; 138 Jln Ampang; r with breakfast from RM575; 🍷 📺 📺) It hardly gets trendier than this design darling a stone's throw from the Petronas Towers. Rooms sport timber flooring, floor to ceiling windows and contemporary furnishings. Rates include return limo transfers from KL Sentral (or one-way transfer to KLIA), as well as a host of other goodies.

Shangri-La Hotel (Map p100; ☎ 2032 2388; www.shangri-la.com; 11 Jln Sultan Ismail; s/d RM557.75/603.75; 🍷 📺 📺) Opulence is the byword of this luxury hotel with an impressive range of facilities and several top-class restaurants. The rooms are spacious and well equipped.

Hotel Istana (Map p100; ☎ 2141 9988; www.hotelistana.com.my; 73 Jln Raja Chulan; r from RM632.50; 🍷 📺 📺) The glitzy lobby is pure Malaysian Ivana Trump at this long-established and recently renovated hotel. More restraint is shown in the soothing rooms where beds sport batik throws and there are fresh flowers. There's also a good-sized swimming pool in a garden setting.

Westin Kuala Lumpur (Map p100; ☎ 2731 8333; www.westin.com/kualalumpur; 199 Jln Bukit Bintang; d/apt from RM697.50/1265; 🍷 📺 📺) The Westin makes a credible pitch for the contemporary chic high ground – it's spacious rooms are modern and appealing and it's easy to see why long-term residents love its serviced apartments. Great restaurants and bars and a good gym make this a top-class business or leisure hotel.

ELSEWHERE

Hilton Kuala Lumpur (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2264 2264; www.hilton.com; 3 Jln Stesen Sentral; r from RM361; 📶 📺 📺) It's boy-toy heaven at the super-stylish Hilton where contemporary 'innovation rooms' boast 42-inch plasma TV screens, and X-boxes and Playstations are on hand if you left your own at home. Sweeping city and Lake Garden views and on-the-spot access to KL Sentral are pluses, along with a fab range of restaurants and bars.

Sheraton Imperial (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2717 9900; www.luxurycollection.com/kualalumpur; Jln Sultan Ismail, Dang Wangi; r from RM660; 📶 📺 📺) Also recommended; handy for Asian Heritage Row's restaurants and bars.

Carcosa Seri Negara (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2282 1888; www.ghmhotels.com; Taman Tasik Perdana; ste RM1100-3500; 📶 📺 📺) The heady scent of tuber roses fills the lobby of this luxury property comprising 13 unfussy, spacious suites in two colonial mansions at the western edge of the Lake Gardens. Carcosa was the residence of British government representative Sir Frank Swettenham, and Seri Negara was the official guesthouse. It's very much the VIP choice, but even if you don't stay, consider splashing out on a meal in the Dining Room (right) or on afternoon tea (p107).

EATING

Prepare for one hell of a feast, as KL is a first-class dining destination. All kinds of cuisine are available, from local Malay and Nonya dishes to practically every permutation of Chinese, Indian, Southeast Asian and European. You can dine in incredible elegance or mingle with locals at a road-side stall – it's all good and it's seldom heavy on the pocket.

Chinatown is the obvious choice if you're hankering for Chinese food, but you will also find many good Chinese restaurants in the Golden Triangle area. For Indian food, Little India is obviously a good hunting ground. Plenty of coffee shops are to be found in the Jln Masjid India–Jln TAR area, and food stalls in this area specialise in cheap tandoori chicken, and various breads, such as naan (leavened bread baked in a clay oven), *dosa* (paper-thin rice-and-lentil crepes) and chapati (griddle-fried wholewheat bread).

For international food, zone in on the big shopping malls such as Starhill Gallery (its lower ground floor is a gorgeously designed dining arcade), and the Suria KLCC, as well as the major hotels and trendy dining areas such as Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang and Asian Heritage Row (Jln Doraisamy). Bangsar Baru is a long-time favourite haunt of expats and KL's well-to-do. To get there, take the LRT to Bangsar station, then jump into a taxi (RM3).

Chinatown & Around

CHINESE

West Lake Restoran (Map p90; ☎ 2072 3350; 15 Jln Sultan; meals RM10-15; 🕒 11am-midnight) Long-running eatery known for its *yong dou fu* (bean curd stuffed with minced fish) and *mee* (noodle) dishes.

Fatt Yan Vegetarian Restaurant (Map p90; ☎ 2070 6561; 57-59 Jln Tun HS Lee; meals RM20; 🕒 10am-10pm) Eat with a clean conscience at this Buddhist restaurant, which eschews meat on religious principles. Try one of the many *dou fu* (bean curd) dishes including the spicy Sichuan *mapo dou fu* (RM8), or try imitation-meat dishes like deep-fried spare ribs (RM10), or just the simple mixed vegetables (RM8).

Purple Cane Tea Restaurant (Map p90; ☎ 2272 3090; 1 Jln Maharajalela; meals RM20; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Tucked behind the Chinese Assembly Hall is this relaxing place where tea is used in many of the dishes – sample green-tea fried rice (RM4.50) or fried black pepper prawns with tea (RM22). Quench your thirst with its iced, honey black-tea.

EUROPEAN & FUSION

Café Café (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2141 8141; 175 Jln Maharajalela; meals RM80-100; 🕒 6-11pm) This candle-lit and crystal twinkling fantasy of a restaurant conjures a seductive atmosphere highly conducive to romance. Avoid the fancy foie gras dishes; stick to the simpler French and Italian concoctions and you'll do fine.

Dining Room (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2282 1888; Carcosa Seri Negara, Taman Tasik Perdana; meals RM200; 🕒 lunch & dinner) The Carcosa's dining room is an expert example of understated luxury, the chef's French-style cooking sublime. You won't regret treating yourself to the set lunch here (RM126.50), while for a real celebration there's the eight-course degustation dinner (RM322).

MALAY & NONYA

Old China Café (Map p90; ☎ 2072 5915; www.oldchina.com.my; 11 Jln Balai Polis; meals RM40-50; 🕒 lunch & dinner) The old guild hall of the Selangor & Federal Territory Laundry Association is the atmospheric home for this fine café specialising in Nonya dishes from Melaka and Penang – its speciality is the spicy coconut-milk soup, *laksa*. The fried chicken is also delicious and the Piee Tee (also called top hats – crispy rice flour pouches you stuff with minced chicken and vegies) is a fun DIY starter.

Precious (Map p90; ☎ 2273 7372; 1st fl, Central Market, Jln Hang Katsuri; meals RM60; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Decorated with beautiful antiques (most for sale) and modern Chinese art, this new sister establishment to the Old China Café offers a more upscale environment in which to enjoy trademark Nonya cuisine, as well as a long bar.

THAI & OTHER ASIAN

Ginger (Map p90; ☎ 2273 7371; 1st fl, Central Market; meals RM30; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Some effort has been made with the décor, which includes a tiny indoor waterfall, hardwood tables and soothing lighting. It serves a good range of Thai, Malaysian and Indonesian dishes.

Golden Triangle & KLCC

CHINESE

Blue Boy Vegetarian Food Centre (Map p100; ☎ 2144 9011; Jln Tong Shin; meals RM5-10; 🕒 7.30am-9.30pm) It's hard to believe that everything prepared at this spotless place at the base of a backstreet apartment block is vegetarian, but it's true. The cooks have been doing it for so long they're experts in the art of creating meat and fish substitutes. The *char kway teow* (broad noodles fried in chilli and black-bean sauce) is highly recommended.

Crystal Jade La Mian Xiao Long Bao (Map p100; ☎ 2148 2338; Annex Block, Lot 10, 50 Jln Sultan Ismail; meals RM20-40; 🕒 11am-10.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-10.30pm Sat & Sun) Dim sum (sweet and savoury minidishes) and other dishes made simple, with a photographic menu where the pictures and the delicious food actually bear much resemblance. Get there early for lunch, or expect to queue.

Tai Thong Grand Restaurant (Map p100; ☎ 2162 4433; 2nd fl, North Block, Wisma Selangor Dredging, Jln Ampang; meals RM30-50; 🕒 lunch & dinner) A bright

and spacious Cantonese restaurant favoured by families. Offers Peking duck (RM60), dim sum and a range of vegetable and tofu dishes as well as set menus from around RM50.

Restoran Oversea (Map p100; ☎ 2144 0808; 84-88 Jln Imbi; meals RM50) Popular with locals and in-the-know expats this unpretentious place is where you come for melt-in-the-mouth pork belly or fish, and streaky bacon cooked in a pot with dried chillies.

Si Chuan Dou Hua (Map p100; ☎ 2147 2303; Grand Plaza Park Royal Kuala Lumpur, Jln Sultan Ismail; meals RM50-70; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Dim sum in elegant surroundings. Try its signature Eight Treasure tea.

EUROPEAN & FUSION

Sentidos Tapas (Map p100; ☎ 2145 3385; Lower ground fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM50; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Stylishly designed tapas bar that's a great place for a sociable meal with friends. The tapas comes in generous portions. The set dinner including two tapas, a main and a drink for RM50 is great value.

Nerovivo (Map p100; ☎ 2070 3120; 3A Jln Ceylon; meals RM50-100; 🕒 noon-midnight Sun-Fri, 6pm-midnight Sat) Italian for grown-ups at this relaxed, sophisticated restaurant with both indoor and outdoor dining areas. Equally good whether you go just for pizza (16 types), or for pasta and salad or a juicy steak. There is also a lunch antipasto buffet (RM23) and free wi-fi is available.

Top Hat (Map p100; ☎ 2142 8611; 7 Jln Kia Peng; meals RM70; 🕒 noon-midnight) An old mansion behind the KLCC is the nostalgic setting for this convivial place where you can choose from a mix of European and local dishes, including Nonya tibbits. Its three-course set menu is good value. At the weekends check out the jazz bar, Top Room @ Top Hat, upstairs.

Shook! (Map p100; ☎ 2719 8535; Lower ground fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM80-100; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Dominating the atrium space in Starhill's collection of stylish restaurants is this sleek, busy place offering decent Japanese, Chinese and Western grill menus. Reservations are advised.

Prego (Map p100; ☎ 2773 8013; Westin Kuala Lumpur; 199 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM80-100; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Delectable Italian dishes spill from the open kitchen here. Sunday's free-flowing champagne brunch (RM147.20) is justly

popular and has a sociable family-oriented atmosphere with a balloon-twisting clown to entertain the kids.

Frangipani (Map p100; ☎ 2144 3001; 25 Changkat Bukit Bintang; meals RM100-150; ☎ 7.30pm-10.30pm Tue-Sun) One of a handful of places in KL that gets fine dining right. The chef is justified in waxing lyrical on the menu about his delicious creations using the freshest and most original of ingredients. The dining room, which surrounds a reflecting pool, is divine, and there's an equally stylish upstairs bar.

INDIAN

Vansh (Map p100; ☎ 2142 6162; Lower ground fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM80; ☎ noon-1am) The service can be a bit overbearing but there's no faulting the delicious Indian food served at this superstylish restaurant.

Restoran Nagansari Curry House (Map p100; Jln Nagansari; meals RM5-10; ☎ 7am-midnight) This simple place gets the thumbs up for its authentic banana-leaf meals, including a vegetarian set lunch for RM4.50.

JAPANESE

Dontaku Restoran Jepun (Map p100; ☎ 2143 4226; 148 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM30-40; ☎ lunch & dinner) This authentic-looking *izakaya* (Japanese pub) is a great place for a simple Japanese meal of noodles or tempura, or just beers and some salty *edamame* (soya beans).

Rakuzan (Map p100; ☎ 2145 6200; Chulan Sq, 92 Jln Raja Chulan; meals RM50-70; ☎ lunch & dinner) Great value and nicely presented traditional dishes can be found at this smart place with some Japanese-style rooms at the rear. Its all-you-can eat Sunday brunch (RM55.20) shouldn't be missed.

Wa-Raku (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2145 0448; 3 Jln Stonor; meals RM50-100; ☎ lunch & dinner) In a spacious mansion near the KLCC is this Zen restaurant, the choice of Japanese expats. The set menus (lunch from RM36, dinner RM75) will fill you up but if you really want to see what it's capable of go for one of its *kaiseki* (Japanese degustation) courses.

MALAY & NONYA

Little Penang Kafé (Map p100; ☎ 2163 0215; Level 4, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; meals RM15; ☎ 10am-10pm) Suria KLCC's level four is stacked with appealing restaurants – this is one of the best with a nostalgic look and tastily authentic

food. Set meals (RM12.50) let you sample several of the Nonya dishes that Penang is famous for including *lobak* (deep-fried tofu-rolled chicken strips) and the spicy Siamese *lemak* laksa (using coconut milk), only available Friday to Sunday.

Bijan (Map p100; ☎ 2031 3575; www.bijanrestaurant.com; 3 Jln Ceylon; meals RM60-80; ☎ lunch & dinner) While KL has plenty of places to enjoy good Malay food, there are very few where you can sample skilfully cooked traditional dishes in a sophisticated environment. This is the rare exception. Try *tempeh* (a type of fermented tofu) with anchovies, tomato rice, fried eggplant in spicy chilli sauce and a surprisingly pleasant durian cheesecake.

Seri Angkasa (Map p100; ☎ 2020 5055; www.serimelayu.com; Menara KL, Jln Puncak; meals RM70-100; ☎ noon-11.30pm) Watch KL pass by from this revolving restaurant high up in Menara KL (KL Tower). The very decent lunch buffet (between noon and 2.30pm) is RM66.70. Dining à la carte, there's a large range of local seafood and steaks. Book for evening meals, especially for sunset dining. There's a dress code but the staff will provide men wearing shorts with a sarong (to cover the legs).

THAI & VIETNAMESE

Sao Nam (Map p100; ☎ 2144 1225; 25 Tingkat Tong Shin; meals RM50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Delicious and authentic Vietnamese cuisine served in a colourful, propaganda-art setting. Food stops at 10.30pm but the bar stays open until 2am.

Mythai Jim Thompson (Map p100; ☎ 2148 6151; Lower ground fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; meals RM60-80; ☎ lunch & dinner) As you'd expect for a Jim Thompson operation, the décor here is lovely, with silk cushions and other decorative items that can be purchased at the store on the gallery's 3rd floor. The surprise is that the food is fantastic and includes dishes that you'd rarely find outside of Thailand. There's a fab vegetarian selection too.

Little India, Medan Tuanku & Northern KL

EUROPEAN

Vanilla Box (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2691 6007; 58 Jln Doraisamy; meals RM10; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 10am-9pm Sat) Apart from the *mamak* (Indian Muslim) stalls at the end of the street, this is one of

TIME FOR TEA (OR COFFEE)

A delicious indulgence is the colonial-style afternoon tea at **Carcosa Seri Negara** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2282 1888; www.ghmhotels.com; Taman Tasik Perdana; buffet RM69; ☎ 3-6pm). The spread here includes smoked-salmon sandwiches, freshly baked scones and 22 different kinds of fine leaf teas and infusions.

In a less lavish vein is the afternoon tea, including warm scones, served at the **Smokehouse** (Map p100; ☎ 2163 3136; 23 Jln Mayang; afternoon tea RM20.70), an appropriately half-timbered and chintzy place just off Jln Ampang near the KLCC.

Fancy a more local style of tea or coffee? Then head to the new 'old-style' *kopi tiam* (cafés) with marble-top tables, bentwood chairs and comfort dishes such as toast and *kaya* (coconut jam), serving up a dash of nostalgia to Malaysians with their *teh tarik* (milky tea) or *kopi-o* (black coffee). A drink at the following places will seldom cost more than RM3. **Uncle Lim's** (Map p100; Unit 01-25, 1st fl, Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi; ☎ 9.30am-10pm) is one such place, as is **Old Town Kopitiam** (Map p90; Ground fl, Central Market; ☎ 9am-10pm). **Sing Seng Nam** (Map p90; 2 Medan Pasar; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Sat) is the genuine object, busy with lawyers from the nearby courts enjoying breakfast or a cooling *kopi peng* (iced coffee with milk).

Caffine addicts should seek out **Ikopi** (Map p90; 1st fl, 6 Jln Panggong; ☎ noon-10pm Wed-Mon) where coffees from around the world are brewed in mad-scientist contraptions. Upstairs it's tea drinkers' heaven at the **Purple Cane Tea House** (Map p90; ☎ 2072 1349; 3rd fl, 6 Jln Panggong; ☎ 11am-8pm); if you like the brews here head to its **shop** (Map p90; ☎ 2031 1877; 11 Jln Sultan; ☎ 10am-10pm) for the full selection of teas and tea-making implements. For a traditional Chinese teahouse with much charm drop by **Luk Yu Tea House** (Map p100; ☎ 2782 3850; Lower ground fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ lunch & dinner).

Finally, a couple of pleasant café alternatives to the bars of the Golden Triangle are **Olé Café** (Map p100; ☎ 2148 9007; 48 Changkat Bukit Bintang; ☎ lunch & dinner) which has free internet access, nice teas and coffees and cakes; and **Sixty Nine Bistro** (Map p100; ☎ 2144 3369; 14 Jln Kampung Dollah; ☎ noon-1.30am), with its eclectic junk-shop-chic furnishings, milk and fruit shakes and resident fortune tellers.

the cheapest and least pretentious places on Asian Heritage Row. It's a cute spot to grab a Western-style breakfast, lunch-time sandwich or cake.

Coliseum Café (Map p90; ☎ 2692 6270; 100 Jln TAR; meals RM30; ☎ lunch & dinner) Resisting the passage of time, the Coliseum still enjoys a great reputation for its sizzling steaks, but it's worth coming just for the colonial-era ambience. The bar closes at 10pm.

INDIAN

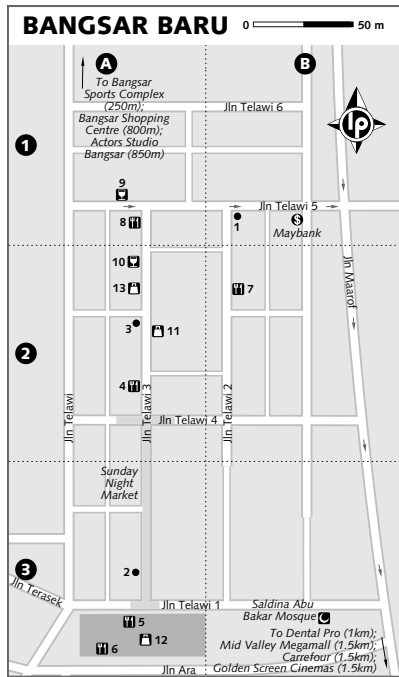
Bilal Restoran (Map p90; ☎ 2078 0804; 33 Jln Ampang; meals RM7; ☎ lunch & dinner) No points for ambience, but the Bilal is highly popular for its South Indian–Muslim dishes. There's a large range of *roti canai* (unleavened, flaky flat bread; RM1.30), including egg and *ba-wang* (onion); plus *ikan* (fish) and *kambing* (mutton) curries.

Bangles Café (Map p90; ☎ 2691 3088; Semua House, Jln Masjid India; meals RM10; ☎ 8am-8pm) Bangles has been dishing up respectable North Indian cuisine out at 270 Jln Am-

pang (☎ 4252 4100) for years, but you don't need to drag yourself out there to try it. Enjoy the good-value thali meals (rice or bread served with assorted vegetables and curries; RM8.80 to RM9.80) at this sidewalk café, and soak up the street life of Little India. Bangles also has an air-conditioned section.

Sangeetha (Map p90; ☎ 2032 3333; 65 Lebuhraya Ampang; meals RM10; ☎ lunch & dinner) Come to this professionally run vegetarian restaurant for its minitiffin (RM7) or set breakfast (RM4). It also serves lots of South Indian delights such as *idli* (savoury, soft, fermented-rice-and-lentil cakes) and *masala dosa* (which are rice-and-lentil crepes stuffed with spiced potatoes).

That Indian Thing (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2698 6357; 52 Jln Doraisamy; meals RM60-80; ☎ lunch & dinner) The funky design of this Indian entry on Asian Heritage Row is eye-catching – as are some of the confused fusion offerings on its menu. The more traditional dishes are very tasty.



JAPANESE

Yu Ri Tei (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4044 0422; Sentul Park Ki Centre, Jln Strachan; meals RM15-20; ☎ 11am-9pm) Beside the Sentul Park ki breeding centre, off Jln Ipoh, is this charming teahouse serving simple Japanese dishes such as noodles. A good idea to combine a meal here with a visit to the adjacent Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac; p113).

Bangsar Baru & Brickfields

CHINESE

Chynna (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2264 2266; Hilton Kuala Lumpur, 3 Jln Stesen Sentral, Brickfields; meals RM100; ☎ lunch & dinner) The big hit among the Hilton's 'Studio' concept restaurants, ranged around Frank Woo's striking giant sculpture *Dancing Shadow*. Chynna offers tasty Cantonese dishes in a Shanghai-chic setting, all opulent reds and golds. A herbal doctor is on hand to balance your chi.

EUROPEAN & FUSION

Alexis Bistro (Map p108; ☎ 2284 2880; 29 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; meals RM40; ☎ lunch & dinner) Consistently good food is delivered at this Bangsar

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stalwart where Asian favourites such as laksa mix it up with more-European fare. After your meal move on to its ultrasmooth Bar Upstairs (p111).

Delicious by Ms Read (Map p108; ☎ 2288 1770; Ground fl, Bangsar Village, Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; meals RM40; ☎ 11am-10.30pm Mon-Thu, 9am-10.30pm Fri-Sun) The food – mainly chunky sandwiches, big salads, pastas and homemade pies – at this pleasant, contemporary place really is delicious, especially the cakes and other desserts.

Telawi Street Bistro (Map p108; ☎ 2284 3168; 1 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; meals RM50; ☎ lunch & dinner) Yet another trusted crowd pleaser, the TSB is rightly famous for its lamb shank, with tender meat falling from the bone, as well as its thin-crust slab pizzas. A huge new branch is opening on Asian Heritage Row.

La Bodega (Map p108; ☎ 2287 8318; www.bodega.com.my; 14 & 16 Jln Telawi 2, Bangsar Baru; meals RM30-70; ☎ 9am-1am) There are three equally popular options here – the relaxed all-day café-deli, the full-scale restaurant and, upstairs, a lively bar that offers live music (check the website for details). As you'd expect from a Spanish joint, tapas and paella are available and enjoyable, and the wine list is good.

Also recommended:

Country Farm Organics (Map p108; ☎ 2284 2094; Ground fl, Bangsar Village, 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ lunch & dinner) Lots of veggie options and everything is organic.

Bakerzin (Map p108; ☎ 2284 7514; Ground fl, Bangsar Village, 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ lunch & dinner) Delicious cakes and pastries. Try its tea-time special of cake or pastry, plus a choice of beverage (RM13).

INDIAN

Gem Restaurant (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2260 1373; 124 Jln Tun Sambanthan, Brickfields; meals RM20; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Gem Restaurant is one of the most consistently good Indian restaurants in Brickfields. Come for its thali meals (RM7.90), the chunky and plentiful chicken tikka (RM13.90), and great range of vegetarian options, including creamy Indian-style veg (RM9.90).

LEBANESE

Al Nafourah (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2263 7888; 8th fl, Le Méridien; 2 Jln Stesen Sentral, Brickfields; meals RM100; ☎ lunch & dinner) Opulent Ottoman-style décor and a shimmying belly-dancer enhance the tasty meze and Levantine dishes at Le Méridien's signature restaurant.

Self-Catering

You'll find most of what you need at the following supermarkets; unless mentioned otherwise, all are open 10am to 9.30pm.

Carrefour (Mid Valley Megamall, Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra)

Cold Storage (Map p100; Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang)

Isetan (Map p100; Lot 10, Jln Sultan Ismail)

UO Supermarket (Map p90; cnr Jln Sultan & Jln Tun HS Lee)

Village Grocer (Map p108; Bangsar Village, 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru; ☎ 8.30am-10pm).

DRINKING

The Golden Triangle is stacked with bars and clubs, although Asian Heritage Row (Jln Doraisamy) near the Medan Tuanku monorail station is currently one of the hippest central KL spots to party. Bangsar, south of the city centre, remains popular, although we hear it's not as happening as it used to be.

Drinking isn't cheap – you can expect to pay at least RM10 for a basic beer and more for spirits and cocktails – and, as with all cities, the fancier the place, the higher the prices!

Unless otherwise noted standard opening hours are 5pm to 2am.

For nonalcoholic sessions at old-style *kopitiam* outlets, see p107.

Golden Triangle

Carnegie's (Map p100; ☎ 2141 7888; Central Plaza, 34 Jln Sultan Ismail) There's a pumping, fun atmosphere at this classic after-work bar adorned with album covers of the '80s and '90s. Live music kicks in from 8.30am.

Ceylon Bar (Map p100; ☎ 2145 7689; 20-2 Changkat Bukit Bintang) If you're buying Tiger beers, happy hour lasts all night long at this convivial bar with cane chairs on its veranda, sofas and board games at the rear and free wi-fi.

Finnegan's (Map p100; ☎ 2145 1930; 51 Jln Sultan Ismail) This identikit Irish bar is a first-rate place for a knees-up, with live ESPN sports coverage, enthusiastic staff, stout and a decent menu. There's also a popular branch in Bangsar Baru (Map p108) at 6 Jln Telawi 5 (☎ 2284 9024).

Green Man (Map p100; ☎ 2141 9924; 40 Changkat Bukit Bintang) Eternally popular, unstuffy expat hang-out, with pool table and quieter upstairs; there's simple food and outside seating.

La Bodega (Map p100; ☎ 2142 6368; 31 Tingkat Tong Shin; ☎ 7am-2am Mon-Fri, 8am-2am Sat & Sun) The food here is not as highly rated as at its Bangsar Baru branch but it remains a good spot for a drink and it also hosts the monthly Troubadours open mike night (see p111).

Lecka Lecka (Map p100; ☎ 6201 9000; 181 Jln Bukit Bintang) Most seductive of the several pavement café-bars lining Bintang Walk is this number, outside Starhill Gallery. It's decorated with chiffon curtains and furnished with soft seats from which to enjoy Lecka Lecka's trademark ice creams, as well as puff on a hubble bubble or sip a cocktail.

Luna (Map p100; ☎ 2332 7777; Menara PanGlobal, Jln Puncak) At this sophisticated bar surrounding a swimming pool, the twinkling view from atop the Menara PanGlobal building is the big drawcard. Avoid the place on Friday and Saturday nights when a young boisterous crowd descends and there's a RM50 cover charge.

No Black Tie (Map p100; ☎ 2142 3737; 17 Jln Mesui; ☎ 5pm-2am Tue-Sun) A classical concert pianist runs this small, but chic, bar and live-music venue – the stage is hidden behind the curtain to the rear; when concerts are held (usually Friday and Saturday nights) there's a cover of RM20 to RM50. Japanese-style nibbles accompany the drinks.

Rum Jungle (Map p100; ☎ 2148 0282; 1 cnr Jln Pinang & Jln P Ramlee) It's a jungle out there, and no more so than at this sprawling place packed with party animals roaming a complex of giant thatched huts.

Tiffin Bay/Tiff's Jazz Lounge (Map p100; ☎ 2782 3870; 4th fl, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang) With its lampshade stands made from piles of crockery and clashing-fabric-covered seating, the extraordinary décor of this

eye-catching place brings to mind the Mad Hatter's tea party. A great place for your own tea party, but head back again in the evening when it morphs into Tiff's Jazz Lounge, complete with strobing laser lights, cocktails and a good jazz band.

Village Bar (Map p100; ☎ 2782 3852; Feast Village, Starhill Gallery, 181 Jln Bukit Bintang; ☎ noon-1am) Like Ali Baba's Bazaar this enticing bar is hung with myriad coloured-glass lampshades. It's a fine place to start or finish an evening of grazing at the Starhill Gallery restaurants.

Asian Heritage Row

Bar Savanh (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2697 1180; 62-64 Jln Doraisamy) Singapore's Indochine group sprinkles its Vietnamese magic on Asian Heritage Row; the bar downstairs is a more reliable bet than the hit-and-miss restaurant CoChine upstairs.

Ivy (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2693 2260; 48 Jln Doraisamy) This British style gastro-pub has outdoor seats, a convivial bar downstairs and a smart restaurant upstairs.

Chinatown

This area is not great for drinking; the Backpackers Travellers Inn (p98) has a bar on its roof and you could also check out Liquid (see p112).

Reggae Bar (Map p90; ☎ 2272 2158; 158 Jln Tun HS Lee; beer by the glass/jug RM10/26) You'll be knee-deep in fellow travellers at this tribute bar to Bob Marley.

Bangsar Baru & Brickfields

Bar Upstairs (Map p108; ☎ 2284 2881; 29A Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru) Above Alexis Bistro is this supreme chill-out venue of subdued red lighting, opaque furniture and soothing sounds.

Flam's (Map p108; ☎ 2284 6721; www.flams.com; 16 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru) One of the most happening of Bangsar's nightspots is this combined restaurant and bar with a nice line in slinky décor and a fashionable crowd to match.

Zeta Bar (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2264 2264; www.kl-studio.com; Hilton Kuala Lumpur; 3 Jln Stesen Sentral, Brickfields) The classy and expensive Zeta pulls in the well-to-do and hip 30s to 40s crowd. When it hosts international DJ talent and stars of the calibre of Blondie and James Brown, the whole operation shifts to the hotel's ballroom.

ENTERTAINMENT Cinemas

The major shopping malls are the places to head for mainstream movies. Contact the cultural centres (see p86) about the art-house films they occasionally screen. Tickets are around RM10.

DiGi IMAX Theatre (Map p100; ☎ 2117 3046; www.imaxkl.com; 10th fl, Berjaya Times Sq, 1 Jln Imbi)

Golden Screen Cinemas (☎ 8312 3456; www.gsc.com.my; Mid Valley Megamall, Bangsar) KL's largest multiplex, with 18 screens.

Tanjung Golden Village (Map p100; ☎ 7492 2929; www.tgv.com.my; Level 3, Suria KLCC)

Music

Apart from the venues listed here, the Istana Budaya (p113) sometimes also hosts concerts.

Dewan Filharmonik Petronas (Map p100; ☎ 2051 7007; www.malaysianphilharmonic.com; Box Office, Tower 2, Petronas Towers, KLCC; tickets from RM10-210) Don't miss the chance to attend a concert at this gorgeous state-of-the-art hall at the base of the Petronas Towers. The top-class Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra plays here (usually Friday and Saturday evenings and Sunday matinees, but also other times) as well as other local and international ensembles. There is a dress code.

Troubadours/Open Doors (www.troubadourskl.blogspot.com) For something a bit more interesting head to the Tingkat Tong Shin branch of La Bodega (p109) on the first Sunday of the month and to the Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac; p113) on the third Sunday of the month to catch these sessions showcasing local musicians. The KLPac shows include screenings of short films made by local film makers. Check the website for times.

Listen to good live-jazz at the following venues:

No Black Tie (p109)

Tiff's Jazz Lounge (opposite)

Top Room @ Top Hat (cover RM50) See p105.

For rock and pop bands head to Carnegie's (p109) and **Hard Rock Café** (Map p100; ☎ 2715 5555; Wisma Concorde, 2 Jln Sultan Ismail).

Clubs

KL's lively clubbing scene is pretty fluid – places come and go; for the latest information check the pages of *Juice* or *KLue* (see p86).

NIGHT MARKETS, HAWKER STALLS & FOOD COURTS

With some 47,950 registered hawkers (plus an estimated additional 4000 illegal operators) you're clearly spoiled for choice when it comes to street food in Kuala Lumpur (KL). To narrow down the selection try the following tried and trusted areas.

In **Chinatown** tables are set up in the evenings outside Chinese restaurants on Jln Hang Lekir between Jln Petaling and Jln Sultan. Locals favour the spicy fish and seafood dishes from the **Ikan panggang stall** (Map p90; ☎ 5-11pm) outside Hong Leong Bank, unsigned and tucked behind the stalls on the corner of Jln Petaling and Jln Hang Lekir.

At **Kampung Baru** the Saturday *pasar malam* (night market) – called the **Sunday Market** (Pasar Minggu; Map pp84-5) because it runs into the early hours of Sunday morning – is the one to attend. The main action is focused at the end of Jln Raja Alang, not far from the LRT station, where you'll find the stall **Warong Perasan** (Map pp84-5) serving a good selection of Malay dishes. If you can't visit on Saturday there are other options in the area including **Ikan Bakar Berempah** (Map pp84-5; cnr Jln Raja Muda Musa & Jln Raja Abdullah; meals RM5; ☎ 24hr), serving a wonderful range of barbecued fish; the 1950s-style **Bujang Lapok** (Map pp84-5; cnr Jln Daud & Jln Raja Alang; meals RM10; ☎ 10am-midnight) and the restaurant **Chop 'n' Steak** (Map pp84-5; 16 Jln Daud; meals RM15; ☎ 5pm-2am), a classic old-style Malay steak and chicken restaurant with a full-sized boat in the middle!

There's a fantastic choice on busy **Jalan Alor**, lined with some of the best Chinese hawker stalls and restaurants in KL. Locals complain that the prices are on the high side, but it's still great value. Most stalls open around 5pm and close late although a few are open all day. Reliable operators include **Wong Ah Wah** (Map p100; ☎ 4pm-4am) at the southern end of the street, famous for its seriously addictive chicken wings (RM18), and **1 + 1** (21A Jln Alor; ☎ 24hr) does good dim sum. Opposite is the **frog porridge stall** (per bowl RM7; ☎ 5pm-2am): you can choose to have 'spicy' where the frogs legs (RM7) are served separately, or 'non-spicy', where they're mixed in with the tasty rice gruel. The **Ngau Kee Beef Ball Noodles** (Map p100; ☎ 24hr), one of the best hawker stalls in the area, is actually around the corner at the base of Tingkat Tong Shin. The dish (from RM4.50) comes in two parts – dry, steamed noodles topped with a thick soy-sauce mince, and the chunky beef balls in a clear soup – delicious!

In **Bangsar Baru**, Sunday night's *pasar malam* (Map p108) is an institution; you'll find all manner of tempting take-away food stalls including ones offering *otak otak* (spicy fish paste grilled in banana leaves) and the crepe-like *apam balik*. We can recommend the sweet-sour *asam laksa* (a version of laksa with prawn paste and tamarind-flavoured gravy) stall on the corner of Jln Telawi Tiga and Jln Telawi Empat.

Hygiene standards at hawker stalls are generally good and you should have little to fear from eating at them. However, if this is not your thing – or you just want air-con with your meal – then KL's many food courts offer an answer. The following are good options:

Central Market (Map p90; Jln Hang Kasturi) The recent multimillion ringgit upgrade of this shopping centre has an improvement in the selection of hawker food on level two.

Lot 10 (Map p100; cnr Jln Sultan Ismail & Jln Bukit Bintang) In the basement you'll find a wide range of Asian food. **Mall** (Map pp84-5; Jln Putra) On the top floor of the vast shopping centre opposite the PWTC is a re-creation of an old city street, complete with mock shophouses. It has an excellent selection of cheap Malay, Chinese and Indian favourites.

Suria KLCC (Map p100; KLCC, Jln Ampang) As well as plenty of restaurants and cafés, this swanky mall has two food courts: Signatures on level two specialises in international food, while Asian Flavours on level four is, as its name suggests, more local in its selection.

GAY & LESBIAN KL

Liquid (Map p90; ☎ 2078 5909; Central Market Annexe; ☹ 5pm-3am Wed-Sun) Relaxed gay bar offering up a range of different theme nights from retro tracks on Wednesday to Sunday's all-night happy hour. Catch the breeze on its spacious balcony overlooking the Klang River. On Saturday night it opens up the 2nd-floor **Disco** (cover after 11.30pm RM30), which quickly becomes a gyrating mass of sweaty bods.

Frangipani Bar (Map p100; ☎ 2144 3001; 25 Jln Changkat Bukit Bintang; cover Fri RM30; ☹ 5pm-1am Tue-Thu & Sun, 5pm-3am Fri & Sat) If it's Friday night, then the most stylish gay-friendly crowd can be found at this seductive bar, above the restaurant of the same name (p106).

Garçon (☎ 2381 2088; 8 Jln Yap Ah Shak; ☹ 9pm-3am Sun) This is the Sunday night gay-friendly session at new club *Maison* (below). It's a glam space sure to attract a glam crowd with the DJs from former gay haunt Bliss.

Blue Boy (Map p100; ☎ 2142 1067; 54 Jln Sultan Ismail; ☹ 5pm-3am) The entrance to this skanky workhorse of the KL gay scene is just off Sultan Ismail, behind the Regent Hotel. Come before 11pm if you wish to sing karaoke with the winking lady boys. Later it gets packed with rent boys and their admirers.

Unless otherwise noted, clubs are open Wednesday to Sunday and usually charge a cover (including one drink) of RM20 to RM30 Thursday to Saturday.

Cynna (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2694 2888; www.loftkl.com; Unit 28-40 Asian Heritage Row, Jln Doraisamy) Dress smart to make it past the clipboard nazis at the most stylish of Asian Heritage Row's clubs. Inside join a lively crowd knocking back cocktails and writhing to seductive sounds.

Loft (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2694 2888; www.loftkl.com; Unit 28-40 Asian Heritage Row, Jln Doraisamy) Sister club to Cynna and linked to it by a common balcony, Loft is just as popular. A catwalk allows podium queens to showcase their dance moves.

Maison (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2381 2088; www.maison.com.my; 8 Jln Yap Ah Shak) Just off Asian Heritage Row, five shophouses have been knocked together to form a great space for this new club where house music, in all its forms, rules.

Passion (Map p100; ☎ 2141 8888; www.poppy-collection.com; 18-1 Jln P Ramlee) The shaky floors, bouncing at your every step, add a surreal, temporary feeling to this club that's currently one of most popular at the epicentre of the Golden Triangle's party zone. The music is R&B and house.

Zouk (Map p100; ☎ 2171 1997; www.zouklub.com.my; 113 Jln Ampang) Housed in an amoeba-shaped complex, Singapore's top club brings its winning formula to KL, with a selection of spaces to suit everyone and a line-up of top local and international

DJs. As well as the main venue, a two-level space sprouting plastic palm trees, there's the more sophisticated Velvet Underground (including entry to Zouk RM45), with a dance floor that's glitter-ball heaven, and the edgier small club-bar Loft (RM20). To watch KL's gilded youth come and go, hang out at the Terrace Bar by the main entrance.

Cultural Shows

All of the following shows are geared to tourists:

Central Market (Map p90; ☎ 2031 0399; Jln Hang Kasturi; admission free) Hosts a regular programme of events, including Malay dance, Indian classical dance, Chinese dance and t'ai chi performances. Pick up a monthly calendar of events from the information desk.

Malaysian Tourist Centre (MTC; Map p100; ☎ 2164 3929; 109 Jln Ampang; ☹ 2-2.30pm Tue, Thu, Sat & Sun) Probably your best bet is this professionally staged traditional dance and music performance (adult/child under 12 RM5/free) held regularly in the mini-auditorium to the rear. It also has a similar dance show at 8.30pm daily in the attached restaurant *Saloma* (☎ 2161 0122; show only RM40, buffet & show RM65).

Restoran Nelayan Titiwangsa (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4022 8400; Lake Titiwangsa) Shows at 8.30pm daily except Monday; its buffet costs weekday/weekend RM25/28.

Seri Melayu (Map p100; ☎ 2145 1833; www.seri-melayu.com; 1 Jln Conlay) Traditional Malay music and dance performances (show only RM46, Malaysian buffet and show RM66.70) run from 8.30pm to 9.15pm. Its Malaysian buffet is extensive.

Theatre

Actors Studio Bangsar (Map p108; ☎ 2094 0400; www.theactorsstudio.com.my; Level 3, New 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.

Istana Budaya (National Theatre; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4026 5555; www.istanabudaya.gov.my; Jln Tun Razak) Big-scale drama and dance shows are staged here, as well as music performances by the National Symphony Orchestra and National Choir. There's a dress code: no shorts, and men must wear long-sleeved shirts.

Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Centre (KLPac; Map pp84-5; ☎ 4047 9000; www.klpac.com; Sentul Park, Jln Strachan) Lots of interesting work is getting staged at the new performing arts complex that's set in a lovely landscaped park in the north of the city.

SHOPPING

While not as overwhelming as in Singapore, KL's booming shopping scene is clearly headed in the same direction. Whether you want to browse for fake-label goods in street markets or find the real thing in a glitzy shopping mall, KL will deliver. Clothing and shoes are particularly good buys and camera gear, computers and electronic goods are also competitively priced.

The capital is also the best place to find original handicrafts from all over the country – although note that some of the cheaper stuff will have been imported from Indonesia, Thailand or elsewhere.

For bookshops see p86.

Art Galleries

You'll find the works of the best of Malaysia's contemporary artists for sale in KL. As well as the artist colony at Kompleks Budaya Kraf (right), check out the following places.

ARTalk Gallery (Map p108; ☎ 2282 8633; 1st & 2nd fl, 22 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☹ 6-10pm) Above Talk sushi bar, this gallery specialises in affordable art by students and recently graduated artists.

Artrageously Ramsay Ong (Map p100; ☎ 2141 2566; www.artrageouslyasia.com; 43 Changkat Bukit Bintang; ☹ 10am-6pm Mon-Sat, 2-7pm Sun) A gallery dedicated to the works of Sarawak artist Ramsay Ong. It also stocks original batik-

design clothes by Edric Ong, and jewellery designed by Cherie Thum.

Galeri Tangsi (Map p90; ☎ 2691 0813; PAM Centre, 6 Jln Tangsi; ☹ 10am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 11am-4pm Sat) Interesting space in a heritage building west of Merdeka Sq.

Valentine Willie Fine Art (Map p108; ☎ 2284 2348; www.vwfa.net; 1st fl, 17 Jln Telawi 3, Bangsar Baru; ☹ noon-8pm Mon-Fri, noon-6pm Sat) One of KL's best galleries has frequent shows and represents some of the country's top artists.

Craft, Fashion & Souvenir Shops

Aseana (Map p100; ☎ 2382 9988; Ground fl, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; ☹ 10am-10pm) Stylish and extensive selection of local fashion and craft goods, plus a café serving good Malay food and drinks.

Central Market (Pasar Seni; Map p90; ☎ 2031 0399; Jln Hang Kasturi; ☹ 10am-10pm) This is housed in a cavernous Art Deco building which was once a fresh-produce market beside the river in Chinatown. It's easy to spend an hour or more wandering around the various craft outlets, which sell souvenirs, batik, kites, clothes and jewellery. Overpriced Asian artefacts and antiques are also available, so bargain hard.

Kompleks Budaya Kraf (Map pp84-5; ☎ 2162 7533; www.kraftangan.gov.my; Jln Conlay; ☹ 10am-6pm) Large handicrafts complex stocking a big variety of locally produced batiks, carved wooden artefacts, pewter utensils, woven baskets, furniture, glassware and ceramics. A highlight of this place is the chance to meet craftsmen and artists in the surrounding gardens, where you find their Art Colony (www.artkoloni.com). The complex also has a small museum and offers batik-making courses.

Kuala Lumpur Arts Market (Laman Seni Kuala Lumpur; National Art Gallery, 2 Jln Temerloh; ☹ 8am-5pm) Held the first Saturday of the month, this outdoor market brings together over 80 artists and craft-makers to sell their wares. There are traditional arts performances such as *wayang kulit* (shadow puppets), free movie screenings and hawker-food stalls.

Peter Hoe Evolution (Map p90; ☎ 2026 0711; 2 Jln Hang Lekir; ☹ 10am-7pm) Peter Hoe's original batik designs on sarongs, shirts and dresses are the main drawcard here but you'll find many tastefully arranged Malaysian and imported Asian home goods, too. It now has a much bigger store (Map p90),

with a pleasant café, around the corner on the 2nd floor of the old Lee Rubber Building on the corner of Jln Tun HS Lee.

Pucuk Rebung (Map p100; ☎ 2382 0769; Level 3, Suria KLCC, Jln Ampang; ☎ 10am-10pm) This upmarket and pricey arts and craft store doubles as a gallery – it specialises in all kinds of Malaysian handmade goods.

Royal Selangor Pewter Factory (Map p90; ☎ 4145 6122; www.royal Selangor.com; 4 Jln Usahawan Enam, Setapak Jaya; ☎ 9am-5pm) Located 8km northeast of the city centre is Malaysia's leading manufacturer of pewter – the recent commissioning of hip designers has produced some very appealing gifts. For RM50 you can try your own hand at creating a pewter dish (see p98). Take the LRT to Wangsa Maju station and then a taxi (RM3). Alternatively, visit its main outlet (☎ 3182 0240) on level one of Suria KLCC (Map pp84-5).

Markets

Apart from the daily markets listed below, some of KL's streets come alive at night for busy *pasar malam* (night markets) with food stalls and vendors selling clothes, shoes, souvenirs and household goods. The most famous – both held every Saturday from around 4pm till late – are in Little India (along Lorong TAR; see p95) and Kampung Baru (along Jln Raja Muda; see p110). On Sunday from 4pm to 10pm Bangsar Baru's street market on Jln Telawi 3 (see p110) offers up a wonderfully atmospheric mix – watch out for the disabled beggars lying prone in the walkways, though.

Chow Kit Market (Map pp84-5; 469-473 Jln TAR; ☎ 8am-8pm) Tightly jammed stalls here sell everyday items: clothes, basketware and leather goods; good buys if you're prepared to bargain. Shops in the lanes around the market, particularly Jln Haji Hussein, specialise in made-to-order *songkok*, the traditional Malay-style fez.

Jalan Petaling (Map p90; ☎ 10am-11pm) The commercial heart of Chinatown is one of the most colourful and busiest shopping streets in KL, particularly at night when stalls cram the covered street. It offers everything from fresh fruit and cheap clothes and shoes to copies of brand-name watches and handbags, and pirated CDs and DVDs. Bargain hard – the same fake Prada bag can sell here for anything from RM30 to RM300!

Pudu Market (Map pp84-5; Jln Pasar Baharu; ☎ 6am-2pm) Arrive early in the morning to experience KL's largest wet (produce) market at its most frantic. Here you can get every imaginable type of fruit, vegetable, fish and meat – from the foot of a chicken slaughtered and butchered on the spot, to a stingray fillet or a pig's penis. Attached is Pusat Makanan Peng Hwa, an old-fashioned 24-hour food court where you can join locals and market traders wolfing down rice porridge, noodle soup or chicken rice (all under RM10). Pudu Market 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 Choon Wan Kong temple (Map pp84-5) dating from 1879.

Shopping Malls

You'll find most of what you need at these shopping malls, all open 10am to 10pm.

Bangsar Village (Map p108; ☎ 2282 1808; 1 Jln Telawi 1, Bangsar Baru) Small, but with several good dining outlets, as well as an excellent supermarket (open from 8.30am).

Berjaya Times Sq (Map p100; ☎ 2144 9821; www.timesquarekl.com; 1 Jln Imbi) Southeast Asia's largest mall is home to the British department store Debenhams, a huge Borders bookstore, an indoor amusement park and a multiscreen cinema. It lacks the pizzazz of other malls, though.

Lot 10 (Map p100; ☎ 2716 8615; www.ytlcommunity.com/lot10; 50 Jln Bukit Bintang) Sells genuine, affordable designer-label clothes, shoes and perfume, and has a good Isetan supermarket in the basement.

Mid Valley Megamall (☎ 2938 3333; www.midvalleycity.com; Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra) This colossal complex is indeed mega and probably the best one-stop shopping, dining and entertainment experience in KL. There are 300 stores, an 18-screen cinema, a bowling alley, a Carrefour hypermarket and a huge food court. The new KL Komuter Mid-Valley station makes getting here a cinch and there's also a free shuttle bus to/from Bangsar station.

Starhill Gallery (Map p100; ☎ 2716 8615; www.ytlcommunity.com/starhill; 181 Bukit Bintang) Time to break out your platinum charge card – this glitzy mall is where you'll find Louis Vuitton, Gucci and many other luxury brands, plus a

great range of restaurants in the basement, and spas on the 5th floor (see p94).

Suria KLCC (Map p100; ☎ 2382 2828; www.suriaklcc.com.my; KLCC, Jln Ampang) Yet another reason for heading to the KLCC is this fine shopping complex at the foot of the Petronas Towers; it's strong on both local and international brands.

Sungei Wang Plaza (Map p100; ☎ 2148 6109; www.sungeiwang.com; Jln Sultan Ismail) and **BB Plaza** (Map p100; ☎ 2148 7411; Jln Bukit Bintang) are two interlinked malls; the two form one of KL's biggest and most confusing complexes. You could lose yourself for hours exploring here. Sungei Wang is particularly good for youthful fashion and accessories including many up-and-coming Malaysian designers.

Two malls in the Golden Triangle, **Plaza Low Yat** (Map p100; ☎ 2148 3651; 7 Jln 1/77, off Jln Bukit Bintang) and **Imbi Plaza** (Map p100; ☎ 2148 7425; Jln Imbi) are the places to head to for digital and electronic goods, including computers, cameras and mobile phones.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

As Malaysia's principal international gateway and the crossroads for domestic bus, train and taxi travel there's no shortage of ways in and out of KL.

Air

KL's main airport is **Kuala Lumpur International Airport** (KLIA; ☎ 8777 8888; www.klia.com.my), 75km south of the city centre at Sepang.

All of domestic operator Air Asia's flights are handled by the nearby **Low Cost Carrier Terminal** (LCC-T; ☎ 1300 889 933). Tiny Berjaya Air's flights go from **Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport** (☎ 7845 8382) at Subang, around 20km west of the city centre. For transport options into town see p118.

At KLIA's international arrival hall there's a useful **Tourism Malaysia office** (☎ 8776 5651; ☎ 6am-midnight); a Celcom stand selling prepaid SIM cards for your mobile phone (open 7am to 11pm); and counters for several car-rental firms.

Air Asia's tickets are purchased online (www.airasia.com); it has a small information office in **KL Sentral station** (☎ 1300 889 933; ☎ 8am-10pm). Other airlines with offices in the city:

Air India (Map p100; airline code AI; ☎ 2142 0323; www.airindia.com; 14th fl, Angkasa Raya Bldg, 123 Jln Ampang; hub New Delhi International Airport)

Berjaya Air (Map p100; airline code J8; 2145 2828;

☎ Level 6, Menara Berjaya, KL Plaza, 179 Jln Bukit Bintang; hub Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport, Subang)

Cathay Pacific Airways (Map p100; airline code CX; ☎ 2073 5101; www.cathaypacific.com; Suite 22, Level 1, Menara IMC, 8 Jln Sultan Ismail; hub Hong Kong International Airport, Hong Kong)

China Airlines (Map p100; airline code CI; ☎ 2142 4125; www.china-airlines.com; Amoda Bldg, 22 Jln Imbi; hub Beijing International Airport)

Garuda Indonesian Airlines (Map pp84-5; airline code GA; ☎ 2162 1581; www.garuda-indonesia.com; Level 19, Menara Citibank, 165 Jln Ampang; hub Jakarta International Airport)

Japan Airlines (Map pp84-5; airline code JLN; ☎ 2161 1740; www.japanair.com; Level 20, Menara Citibank, 165 Jln Ampang; hub Narita Airport, Tokyo)

Lufthansa (Map p100; airline code LH; ☎ 2161 4666; www.lufthansa.com; 3rd fl, Pemas International Bldg, Jln Sultan Ismail; hub Frankfurt International Airport, Frankfurt)

Malaysia Airlines (Map p100; airline code MA; ☎ 1300 883 000; www.malaysiaair.com; Bangunan MAS, Jln Sultan Ismail; ☎ 2272 4260; KL Sentral station; hub KLIA, Sepang)

Royal Brunei Airlines (Map p100; airline code BI; www.bruneair.com; ☎ 2070 7166; Menara UBN, 10 Jln P Ramlee; hub Brunei International Airport)

Singapore Airlines (Map p90; airline code SQ; ☎ 2698 7033; www.singaporeair.com; 10th fl, Menara Multi-Purpose, Capital Sq, 8 Jln Munshi Abdullah; hub Singapore Changi Airport, Singapore)

Thai Airways International (Map p100; airline code TG; ☎ 2031 1900; www.thaiair.com; 30th fl, Wisma Goldhill, 67 Jln Raja Chulan; hub Bangkok International Airport)

Bus

Buses fan out from Puduraya, KL's main bus station just east of Chinatown, to all over Peninsular Malaysia as well as to Singapore and Thailand. The only long-distance destinations that Puduraya doesn't handle are Kuala Lipis and Jerantut (for access to Taman Negara) – buses to these places leave from Pekeliling bus station; and Kota Bharu and Kuala Terengganu, buses for which leave from Putra bus station.

If you're travelling to Singapore and want to avoid Puduraya (and who wouldn't?) there are alternatives. **Aeroline** (Map p100; ☎ 6258 8800; www.aeroline.com.my) runs five services daily (RM80, five hours) from outside the Corus Hotel, Jln Ampang, just east of KLCC. Its double-decker coaches are modern and comfortable. Also offering a more

INTERSTATE BUS FARES FROM KUALA LUMPUR

| Destination | Fare | Duration |
|-------------------|---------|----------|
| Alor Setar | RM30.10 | 5hr |
| Butterworth | RM24.10 | 5hr |
| Cameron Highlands | RM22 | 4hr |
| Ipoh | RM13.40 | 2½hr |
| Johor Bahru | RM24 | 5hr |
| Kuantan | RM16.90 | 4½hr |
| Lumut | RM18.80 | 4hr |
| Melaka | RM9.50 | 2hr |
| Mersing | RM23 | 5½hr |
| Penang | RM26.90 | 5hr |
| Singapore | RM30.10 | 5½hr |
| Sungai Petani | RM26.30 | 5hr |
| Taiping | RM19 | 3½hr |

upmarket service is **Plusliner** (Map p90; ☎ 2272 1586; www.plusliner.com); its NiCE coaches run from outside the old KL Train Station on Jln Sultan Hishamuddin. Its Singapore-bound coaches (RM79.10) leave at least 13 times daily. It also offers a service from here to Penang (Plusliner coach RM26.80, NiCE coach RM57.10).

KLANG BUS STATION

From the Klang bus station near the Pasar Seni LRT station in Chinatown, frequent buses include 338 to Shah Alam (RM2.50), 710 to Klang (RM2.50) and No 793 for Pelabuhan Klang (Port Klang; RM2.50), as well as Nos 27 and 30 to Petaling Jaya (RM2).

PEKELILING BUS STATION

In the north of the city, just off Jln Tun Razak next to Titiwangsa LRT and monorail stations, is **Pekeliling bus station** (Map pp84-5; ☎ 4042 7256). There's a **left-luggage counter** (per bag per day RM3; ☎ 8am-8pm).

Transnasional Express (☎ 4256 8218) has departures to Kuala Lipis (RM11.20, four hours, six daily) and Raub (RM8.30, 2½ hours, six daily). Several companies including **Plusliner** (☎ 4042 1256) run services to Kuantan (RM16.90, four hours) which leave at two-hourly intervals between 8am and 8pm; many go via Temerloh (RM8.60). Buses to Jerantut (RM12.80, three hours) also go via Temerloh. Buses to Genting Highlands (RM3.60) leave every half-hour between 6.30am and 9pm.

PUDURAYA BUS STATION

You'll need to stay alert at Puduraya (Map p90), a clamorous bus-and-taxi station centrally located on Jln Pudu, next to the Plaza Rakyat LRT station; a few travellers have reported being robbed late at night. Close to the main entrance is an information counter. At the rear is a **left-luggage counter** (per day per bag RM2; ☎ 8am-11pm), as well as the tourist police.

Inside are dozens of bus company ticket-windows. As you walk down the row of ticket counters, staff will shout out destinations, but check to be sure the departure time suits you, as they sometimes try to sell tickets for buses that aren't leaving for many hours. Buses leave from numbered platforms in the basement, and note that you'll have to look for the name of the bus company rather than your destination.

On the main runs, services are so numerous that you can sometimes just turn up and get a seat on the next bus. However, tickets should preferably be booked at least the day before, and a few days before during peak holiday periods, especially to the Cameron Highlands and east-coast destinations.

Government-owned **Transnasional Express** (☎ 4256 1055) is the largest operation here, with buses to almost all major destinations. Outside the terminal, on Jln Pudu, there are at least another dozen private companies handling tickets for buses to Thailand, Singapore and some Malaysian destinations.

There are only a few daily services to the Cameron Highlands and east-coast destinations, but there are frequent departures to most other places during the day, and at night to the main towns. For the latter, try to leave as late as possible; otherwise, shortened travel times on the Lebuhraya tollway mean you'll arrive at your destination too early in the morning.

For typical adult fares and journey times from KL see left.

PUTRA BUS STATION

Though Puduraya handles buses to the east coast, there are also a number of large-company coach services leaving from the quieter and less intimidating **Putra bus station** (Map p90; ☎ 4042 9530), opposite PWTC (easily reached by taking the LRT to PWTC station, or a KTM Komuter train to Putra station).

There are services to Kota Bharu (RM31, eight hours, 9am and 9.30pm), Kuantan (RM6.90, four hours, hourly 9am to midnight) and Kuala Terengganu (RM29.70, seven hours, 10am and 10pm).

Car

KL is the best place to hire a car for touring the peninsula; for sample rates see p506. However, navigating the city's complex (and mostly one-way) traffic system is not for the timid.

All the major companies have offices at the airport. City offices, which are generally open 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 9am to 1pm Saturday, include the following companies:

Avis (Map p100; ☎ 2144 4487; www.avis.com.my; Angkasa Raya, Jln Ampang)

Hertz (Map p100; ☎ 2148 6433; www.hertz.com.my; Ground fl, Kompleks Antarabangsa, Jln Sultan Ismail)

Mayflower (☎ 6253 1888; www.mayflower.com.my/html/car.htm; 18 Jln Segambut Pusat)

Orix (Map p100; ☎ 2142 3009; www.orixcarrentals.com.my; Ground fl, Federal Hotel, 35 Jln Bukit Bintang)

Taxi

Long-distance taxis – often no faster than taking a bus – depart from upstairs at Puduraya bus station (Map p90). Early in the morning the chances are reasonable of finding other passengers waiting to share on the main west-coast runs to Johor Bahru, Melaka, Ipoh and Penang. Otherwise you will usually have to wait to get a full complement of four passengers or you could charter a whole taxi.

Prices should include toll charges, but some taxi drivers, especially those on the Johor Bahru run, insist on charging extra. For fares see below.

FIXED FARES FOR WHOLE TAXI

| Destination | Fare |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| Fraser's Hill | RM160 |
| Cameron Highlands (Tanah Rata) | RM200 |
| Genting Highlands | RM50 |
| Ipoh | RM160 |
| Johor Bahru | RM300 |
| Lumut | RM200 |
| Melaka | RM150 |
| Penang | RM360 |

TRAIN FARES FROM KUALA LUMPUR

| Destination | Premier | Superior | Economy |
|--------------|---------|----------|---------|
| Padang Besar | - | RM40 | RM22 |
| Butterworth | - | RM30 | RM17 |
| Taiping | - | RM24 | RM14 |
| Ipoh | - | RM18 | RM10 |
| Tapah Rd | - | RM15 | RM8 |
| Seremban | RM19 | RM13 | RM7 |
| Tampin | RM27 | RM17 | RM9 |
| Johor Bahru | RM64 | RM33 | RM22 |
| Singapore | RM68 | RM34 | RM23 |
| Jerantut | - | RM25 | RM15 |
| Kuala Lipis | - | RM29 | RM18 |
| Wakaf Baharu | - | RM38 | RM28 |
| Tumpat | - | RM39 | RM29 |

Train

Kuala Lumpur is the hub of the **KTM** (☎ 2267 1200; www.ktmb.com.my) national railway system. Long-distance trains depart from KL Sentral (Map pp84-5) in the Brickfields area. The **KTM information office** (☎ 10am-7pm) in the main hall can advise on schedules and check seat availability. A **ticket delivery service** (☎ 2267 1200; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Sat) can get your ticket to you for RM4.

There are daily departures for Butterworth, Wakaf Baharu (for Kota Baharu and Jerantut), Johor Bahru, Thailand and Singapore; fares are cheap, especially if you opt for a seat rather than a berth (for which there are extra charges), but journey times are slow. For further information see p509. KTM Komuter trains also link KL with the Klang Valley and Seremban (see p118) and in 2008 with Ipoh and Tanjung Malim.

GETTING AROUND

KL Sentral (Map pp84-5) in Brickfields, 1km south of the historic old train station, is the hub of a sophisticated rail-based urban network consisting of the KTM Komuter, KLIA Ekspres, KLIA Transit, LRT and Monorail systems.

Unfortunately the systems – all built separately – remain largely unintegrated. Different tickets generally apply for each service, and at stations where there's an interchange between the services they're rarely conveniently connected. This said, you can happily get around much of central KL on a combination of rail and monorail services, thus avoiding the traffic jams that

plague the inner-city roads. And the Touch & Go stored value card (available at all LRT stations) can be used at the electronic gates to the LRT, train and monorail systems.

To/From the Airports

The **KLIA Ekspres** (☎ 2267 8000; www.kliaekspres.com) can whisk you directly from KL Sentral and KLIA in 28 minutes (adult/child one way RM35/15, return RM70/30, first/last train 5am/1am, departures every 15 minutes); it's the fastest way of reaching KL from the airport. From KL Sentral you can continue to your destination by KMT Komuter, Putra LRT, Monorail or taxi.

The **KL Transit train** (adult/child one way RM35/15) also connects KLIA with KL Sentral, but stops at three other stations en route (Salak Tinggi, Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, and Bandar Tasik Selatan), taking about 35 minutes. If flying from KL on Malaysia Airlines, you can check your baggage in at KL Sentral before making your way to KLIA.

Express buses (adult/child one way RM20/9, return RM34/16) connect KLIA with Hentian Duta terminal on the northern outskirts of KL; once you factor in the extra transfer costs to your hotel by feeder bus or taxi, not to mention the extra time taken, these are not good value. If you really want to save money, the way to do it is as follows: from KL take the KTM Komuter service to Bandar Tasik Selatan (RM1), then take a KLIA Transit service to Putrajaya (RM5.30), and finally take another KLIA Transit train to KLIA (RM6.20); reverse the process to get into KL from KLIA.

Taxis from KLIA operate on a fixed-fare coupon system. Standard taxis cost RM67.10 (up to three people), premier taxis for four people RM93.40 and family-sized minivans seating up to eight RM180.40. The journey will take around one hour and it's best to buy your taxi coupon before you exit the arrivals hall, to avoid the aggressive pirate taxis that hassle you to pay a few hundred ringgit for the same ride. Going to the airport by taxi, make sure that the agreed fare includes tolls, typically RM65 from Chinatown.

The **Skybus** (www.skybus.com.my) runs between KL Sentral and the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (RM9, 1¼ hours, every 30 minutes from 3.30am to midnight).

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

Bus

KL has streamlined its confusing bus system. Now you'll mainly see **Rapid KL** (☎ 1800-388 228; www.rapidkl.com.my) and **Metroliner** buses. There's an **information booth** (Map p90; ☎ 7am-9pm) at the Jln Sultan Mohammed bus stop in Chinatown, where you can pick up a route map and information on various season tickets.

Local buses leave from many of the bus terminals around the city, including the huge Puduraya bus station on Jln Pudu, the Klang bus station, the Jln Sultan Mohammed bus stop, and from along Medan Pasar and Lebu Ampang near the Masjid Jamek LRT stations. The maximum single fare is usually RM1 for destinations within the city limits. A RM2 ticket allows you one day's unlimited travel on Rapid KL's 15 different city routes.

Since KL's inexpensive taxis and reliable LRT systems are more efficient, not to mention air-conditioned, there's little point in using buses unless you're going to be in KL for some time. You'll only really need the bus for trips to outlying areas, such as the Batu Caves (p123).

City Train

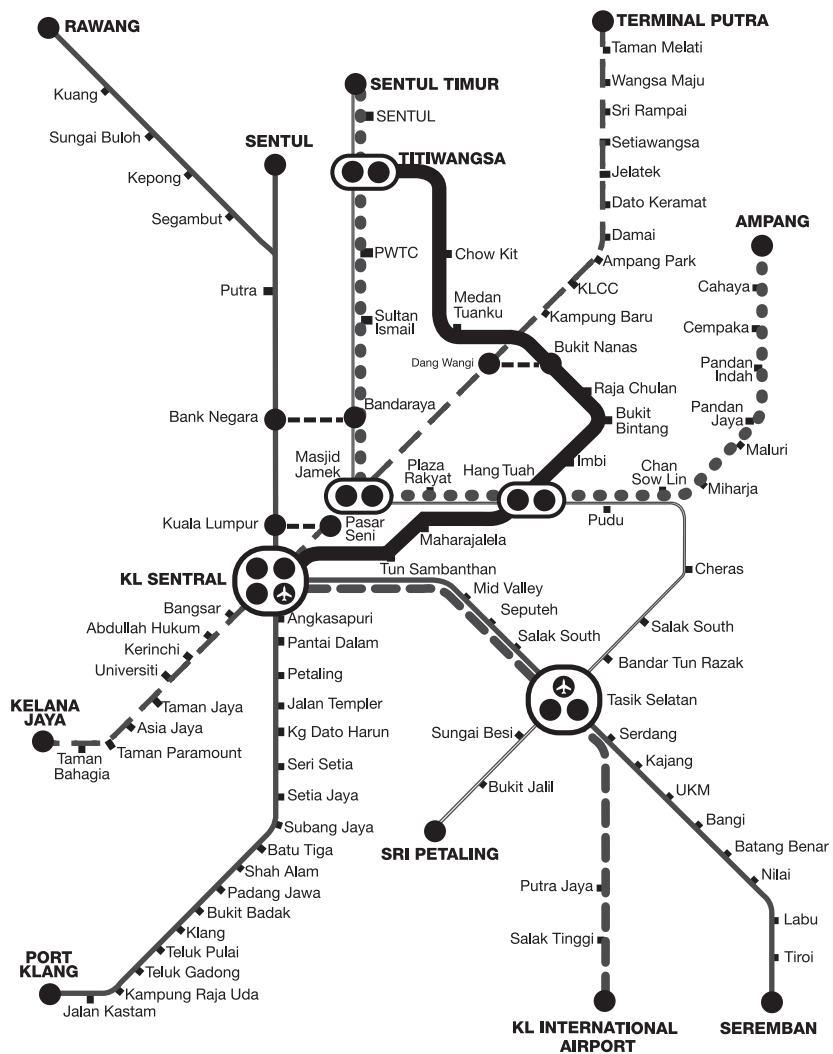
The **KTM Komuter service** (☎ 2267 1200; www.ktmb.com.my) runs along existing long-distance railway lines, stopping at KL Sentral. It's of limited use to visitors since it does not connect central KL with any of the city's attractions, but it may still be useful for day trips to Selangor and Negeri Sembilan.

The main north-south service runs from Sentul, just north of the city centre, to Pelabuhan Klang via Klang and Shah Alam in Selangor. The other line runs from Rawang, 20km northwest of the city centre, to Seremban in Negeri Sembilan, 66km southeast of KL. There are plans to extend this service from Rawang to Tanjung Malim by 2008.

Trains run every 15 to 20 minutes, beginning at approximately 5.45am and ending about midnight. Tickets start at RM1.

KL Monorail

KL's zippy **monorail** (☎ 2273 1888; www.monorail.com.my) runs between KL Sentral in the south to Titiwangsa in the north. It's a very handy service linking up many of the city's sightseeing areas and providing a cheap



LEGEND

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| KL MONORAIL | AMPANG LINE | KELANA JAYA LINE |
| KLIA Transit / KLIA Ekspres | SRI PETALING LINE | INTERCHANGE STATION |
| KTM KOMUTER | | |

air-con tour as you go. Fares range from RM1.20 to RM2.50 and it runs from 6am to midnight.

Light Rail Transit (LRT)

KL's **Light Rail Transit** (☎ 1800-388 228; www.rapidkl.com.my) is a fast, frequent and inexpensive 'metro'. The three lines are Ampang/Sentul Timur; Sri Petaling/Sentul Timur (formerly the Star lines); and Kelana Jaya/Terminal Putra (formerly the Putra line). Because the lines were built by different companies transfers between them are not smooth; for example, at Masjid Jamek, you have to exit one station and walk across the street to the other. An electronic control system for each checks tickets as you enter and exit via turnstiles. Fares range from RM1 to RM2.80.

Trains run every six to 10 minutes from 6am to 11.50pm (11.30pm Sunday and holidays). If you're going to be in KL for a while, consider investing in a monthly combined travel card; it costs RM90, or RM125 if you want to use Rapid KL buses too.

Taxi

KL has plenty of taxis, and fares are cheap, starting at RM2 for the first kilometre, with an additional 10 sen for each 200m. 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 costs an extra RM1.

Even though the law mandates the use of the meter, you'll often find taxi drivers unwilling to use it, citing KL's traffic or the out-of-the-way location of your destination as a reason. Taxi drivers lingering outside luxury hotels are especially guilty of this behaviour. Stand your ground and, if necessary, walk off and hail another taxi. If you choose to bargain, fares around town start at RM5 and it should cost no more than RM10 to go right across the central city area.

Be aware that taxis will often only stop at the numerous officially signposted taxi stands and although it is possible to wave one down, some drivers are reluctant to stop.

Selangor



As Malaysia's most industrialised state you'd expect that Selangor would be somewhere to pass through as quickly as possible while travelling to and from the federal territory of Kuala Lumpur (KL) which sits at its heart. However, we recommend you take your time because Selangor harbours some great attractions, both natural and man-made.

Many of these, such as the Batu Caves and Sunway Lagoon, are best visited on day trips from KL. But there are also rewarding stopovers such as the pleasantly cool hill station of Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser) and the old royal capital of Kuala Selangor with its wildlife watching and *kampung* (village) atmosphere. Three of Selangor's borders are aquatic: Selat Melaka (Strait of Melaka) to the west, Sungai Sepang (River Sepang) and Sungai Bernam (River Bernam) to the south and north respectively. The Banjaran Titiwangsa mountain-range watershed marks the eastern boundary. Cutting a broad commercial swathe west from KL to the coast is the Klang Valley. Along here you'll find Selangor's state capital, Shah Alam, notable for its huge mosque, and Klang with its reminders of the old sultanate. But it's not until you take a ferry to Pulau Ketam from Pelabuhan Klang that you finally leave the traffic and urban sprawl behind.

Going south the so-called 'Multimedia Super Corridor' (p47) culminates in the twin new towns of Putrajaya and Cyberjaya. In the decade since Malaysia's administrative capital was just a blueprint, Putrajaya is beginning to take proper shape and makes for a fascinating day trip from KL. Also, once a year the Formula One track at Sepang comes alive for the Malaysian Grand Prix (see p128).

HIGHLIGHTS

- Cooling off, relaxing and going bird-spotting in **Fraser's Hill** (p126)
- Being dazzled by the flickering light shows put on by fireflies near **Kuala Selangor** (p132)
- Splashing around in the wave pools and waterslides at **Sunway Lagoon** (p129)
- Viewing the impressive new Malaysian architecture of **Putrajaya** (p128) from a boat on its central lake
- Getting a treetop perspective on KL from the thrilling canopy walkway at the **Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia** (FRIM; p124)
- Climbing the 272 steps to the psychedelic Hindu galleries of **Batu Caves** (p123)



■ TELEPHONE CODES: 03, 09

■ POPULATION: 4.26 MILLION

■ AREA: 7960 SQ KM



History

In the 15th century, Selangor was under the control of Melaka's great *bendahara* (chief minister) Tun Perak. Once Melaka fell to the Portuguese, control of Selangor was hotly contested, partly because of its rich tin reserves. The Minangkabau settlers, who had migrated from Sumatra 100 years earlier, were displaced by Buginese immigrants from Celebes (present-day Sulawesi), who aided Dutch colonisation by hiring themselves out as mercenaries. By the middle of the 18th century, the Buginese had established the current sultanate, based at Kuala Selangor.

The 19th century was a boom time for the tin trade, attracting a large influx of

Chinese merchants and miners. Many attained powerful positions – in 1857 two Chinese merchants went into partnership with two Selangor chiefs and opened tin mines at Ampang, out of which grew the city of Kuala Lumpur. The success of the tin trade and the growing wealth of the Chinese communities led to conflicts among the Selangor chiefs and between the miners. The outcome was a prolonged civil war, which slashed tin production and saw the destruction of KL.

In 1874, with the civil war over, the British made their move to take control. The sultan was forced to accede to the installation of a British Resident at Klang, and for the next 25 years the state prospered, largely on the

back of another boom in tin prices. Perhaps the most famous of all of the British Residents was Frank Swettenham who, evincing more tolerance and cultural insight than his colleagues, smoothed relations between the sultan and the local chiefs. He cajoled the sultans of four states (Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) into an alliance that eventually became the Federated Malay States in 1896.

The federation was centrally administered from a phoenix-like KL, which had become a well-ordered and prosperous city by the turn of the 20th century. The Federated Malay States led to the formation of the Federation of Malaya in 1948 and, finally, the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. In 1974 Kuala Lumpur city was ceded by the sultan of Selangor and became the federal territory, while Shah Alam took over the role of state capital. Another piece of the state was hived off in the late 1990s to create the federal administrative capital of Putrajaya. As the nerve centre of the nation's economic and political life, Selangor has prospered and developed rapidly to become Malaysia's richest, most urbanised and most industrialised state.

Climate

Lowland Selangor has a tropical climate, with daily temperatures hovering between 21°C and 32°C year-round. There is occasional rain throughout the year. Temperatures in Fraser's Hill and the Genting Highlands are much cooler, ranging between 12°C and 22°C. Rainfall here is much heavier and more prolonged. Humidity averages around 85% to 90%.

National Parks

The Taman Alam Kuala Selangor (see p131) is an important wetland and forest reserve, some 75km northwest of KL, and home to a large number of rare bird species. Closer to KL you'll find the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve (p124) 16km northwest, and the primary rainforest enclosed in Templer Park (p124), 22km north of city.

Getting There & Away

KL is the transport hub of Selangor – for more information on services from KL to Selangor and other parts of the region see p115 and p117. Kuala Lumpur International

Airport (KLIA) is located at Sepang, in the southeast corner of Selangor, with road and dedicated rail links to the capital. The Lebuhraya (North–South Hwy), from Johor Bahru to the Thai border, runs the length of the state. Ferries to Sumatra depart from Pelabuhan Klang (p131).

Getting Around

Trains run to the north and south of KL, as well as westwards, along the Klang Valley through Shah Alam to Pelabuhan Klang. Bus services are more frequent and comprehensive, with links between KL and all major towns in Selangor. See p117 for information on the main bus and train stations and services.

NORTH OF KUALA LUMPUR

Batu Caves

Just 13km north of the capital, a short distance off the Ipoh road, a towering limestone outcrop is home to the impressive **Batu Caves** (admission free; car park RM2; ☎ 8am–9pm). The caves were officially discovered around 120 years ago by American naturalist William Hornaday. A short time later a small Hindu shrine was built in the vast open space, later known as Temple Cave.

A flight of 272 steps leads up to Temple Cave. Beyond the towering main cavern, the space opens to an atrium-like cave at the rear. Many are more spellbound by the monkeys that scale the vertical cliff faces than by the shrines, which are dwarfed by the scale of the cave. The whole spectacle has been enhanced of late by an enormous golden statue of Muruga, also known as Lord Subramaniam, to whom the caves are dedicated.

At the base of the outcrop, a couple more caves can be reached by crossing over a turtle pond. These contain psychedelically painted sculptures of various Hindu gods arranged to tell parables from the *Bhagavad Gita* and other Hindu scriptures.

Each year in late January or early February up to a million pilgrims visit here during the three days of Thaipusam (see the boxed text, p52). Lord Muruga's silver chariot takes pride of place as it makes its way from the Sri Mahamariamman Temple in KL's Chinatown (p88) to the caves. Get here by dawn at the latest, if you want to see anything amid the crowds, and bring food and water with you.

Take bus 11 (RM2, 45 minutes) to the caves from where Jln Tun HS Lee meets Jln Petaling, just south of Medan Pasar in KL. The bus also stops along Jln Raja Laut in the Chow Kit area. During Thaipusam special trains and buses carry devotees and onlookers to the caves. A taxi from KL shouldn't cost more than RM20.

Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)

Do yourself a favour and recharge your soul at the **Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)**; ☎ 03-6279 7525; www.frim.gov.my; admission RM1, cars RM5; ☎ 8am-6.30pm, where birdsong replaces the drone of traffic and air-conditioning and it's wall-to-wall greenery rather than concrete. You'd hardly credit that this 600-hectare jungle park at Kepong, part of the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve 16km northwest of KL, is so close to the city, until you catch sight of it again from the **Canopy Walkway** (adult/child RM5/1; ☎ 9.30am-2.30pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun) that is the FRIM's highlight.

The 200m walkway, hanging a vertigo-inducing 30m above the forest floor, is reached by a steep trail from FRIM's **information centre** (☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat & Sun), where you should go first to register and to pick up maps of the other trails in the park. Heading down from the walkway the trail picks its way through the jungle (follow the water pipe) to a shady picnic area where you can cool off in a series of shallow waterfalls. The return hike incorporating the walkway takes around two hours. Bring water with you.

Elsewhere in the park you can see a couple of handsome traditional wooden houses, relocated from Melaka and Terengganu, and tour the **museum** (☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) which has some interesting displays explaining the rainforest habitat and about the forest-related research carried out by FRIM. Several arboreta highlight different types of trees and there's also a wetland area.

There is no bus service from KL. The best way here is to take a KTM Komuter train to Kepong (RM1.30) and then a taxi (RM5); arrange for the taxi to pick you up again later. It's a good idea to bring a picnic to enjoy in the park, but, if not, FRIM's canteen Rukiah is open all day and serves decent home-cooked Malay food (around RM10 including a drink).

Orang Asli Museum

In the sleepy village of Gombak, 25km north of KL, the **Orang Asli Museum** (☎ 03-6189 2122; www.jheoa.gov.my; Jln Pahang; admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm Sat-Thu) is a fine introduction to the customs and culture of Malaysia's aboriginal people (see the boxed text, p38). The fascinating exhibits include clothes made from the bark of terap and ipoh trees, personal adornments, musical instruments and hunting implements, all accompanied by informative descriptions of the various Orang Asli cultures and ways of life. The helpful staff will play video documentaries on the Orang Asli, if you ask.

Do drop by the museum's shop to see the striking wood carvings of the Mah Meri people who mainly live on Pulau Carey, just off the Selangor coast not far from Pelabuhan Klang. They also sell tongkat ali, a kind of ginseng that's marketed as Malaysian Viagra!

To get here take bus 174 from the Lebu Ampang bus station in Kuala Lumpur (RM2, 1½ hours).

Zoo Negara

Established in 1963, **Zoo Negara** (National Zoo; ☎ 03-4108 3422; www.zoonegara.org.my; adult/child RM10/5; ☎ 9am-5pm), located about 13km northeast of KL, is laid out over 62 hectares around a central lake. Inside are key examples of native Malaysian wildlife, including tigers, as well as other animals from Asia and Africa. Though a good zoo by Asian standards, some of the animal enclosures are still sadly cramped. Elephant and pony rides (RM2) are available around lunch time and there are elephant shows in the morning and afternoon. A shuttle takes visitors around the landscaped grounds.

Take bus 170 from Lebu Ampang in KL's Chinatown or from along Jln Raja Laut in Chow Kit, from where you could also catch bus 17 to the zoo.

Templer Park

Beside Hwy 1, 22km north of KL, **Templer Park** (☎ 03-6091 0022; ☎ 24hr) is a 1200-hectare tract of primary jungle named after the last British high commissioner of Malaysia. There are a number of marked jungle paths, swimming lagoons, an artificial lake and several waterfalls within the park boundaries.

On the outskirts of the park's northern boundary is a sheer-sided, 350m-high limestone formation known as Bukit Takun. Nearby is the smaller Anak Takun. Both are popular with locals for caving and rock-climbing expeditions.

Templer Park is a half-hour ride on the Selangor-bound bus 66 from KL's Puduraya bus station.

Genting Highlands

☎ 03

Malaysia's bargain-basement Las Vegas is the Genting Highlands (check out the website www.genting.com.my), 50km north of KL on the Pahang border. Only opened in 1972, Genting is in stark contrast to the Old English style of other Malaysian hill stations, its *raison d'être* being a glitzy casino – the only one in the country. It can get busy – very busy – here; the resort's five hotels have beds for 10,000 people and three times as many punters usually turn up each day.

In its slender favour is the resort's cool weather; at 2000m above sea level there's no need for air-conditioning. The 3.4km-long **Genting Skyway** (one-way RM4; ☎ 7.30am-11pm Sun-Fri, 7.30am-midnight Sat) is a gentle, 11-minute cable-car glide above the dense rainforest. Kids will also enjoy the **indoor and outdoor theme parks** (outdoor park adult/child from RM32/21; indoor park RM20/16, both parks RM46/30); they include water slides, thrill rides, a climbing wall, Snow World, and a fierce wind tunnel for a simulated skydive!

If you do plan to visit the theme parks the best deal is the daily pass from KL that includes transport (RM31 Monday to Friday, RM39 Saturday and Sunday); buy the pass

from Genting's ticket office on the second floor of KL Sentral (p117) or from its main sales office (Map p100; ☎ 03-2718 1118; Wisma Genting, 28 Jln Sultan Ismail), where you can also book accommodation at the resort.

To find out about the resort's history drop by the **Visitors Galleria** (☎ 10am-8pm) in the lobby of the Genting Hotel.

SLEEPING & EATING

With a regular bus service it is easy to come here on a day trip from KL. If you do decide to stay, Genting offers a choice of five hotels in the main resort area, none of which is particularly outstanding though. Rates vary enormously, the most expensive nights generally being Saturday and all public holidays; check on the website (www.genting.com.my) or with the KL booking office at KL Sentral.

First World Hotel (r from RM85; ☎) With 6500 beds, this is Malaysia's largest hotel. The plain but quite acceptable rooms are the cheapest rooms in Genting.

Genting Hotel (r from RM235; ☎) This is the best of the five hotels; high rollers should enquire about the luxury rooms on the Maxims floors.

There's no shortage of places to eat, with plenty of cheap-fast food outlets and noisy food courts.

Olive (☎ 610 1118; Genting Hotel; ☎ lunch & dinner) This is the pick of the fine-dining options, serving fusion cuisine in (for Genting) surprisingly classy surroundings.

Coffee Terrace (Genting Hotel; lunch/dinner RM39.10/48.30; ☎ lunch & dinner) A wonderfully good buffet-style restaurant offering a range of food including Malay, Nonya, Thai, Western and Indian dishes.

RETREAT TO SERENDAH

On the Lebuhraya between Rawang and Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB) is the one-street village of Serendah. There's a prison here where drug addicts are sent for reform, and it will shortly be a stop on the new high-speed rail link from KL to Ipoh. All in all, not the most promising of credentials for a relaxing, ecofriendly getaway from the capital. However, drive east of the main road through the village, past two Orang Asli villages, and you'll find **Sekeping Serendah Retreat** (☎ 012-324 6552; www.serendah.com; mud/glass cabins RM200/300 Sun-Thu, RM250/350 Fri, RM350/500 Sat; ☎), four intentionally basic yet highly stylish cabins tucked away in the forest. The two partly mud-walled cabins each sleep two, while the double storey-glass, steel and wood units, with self-catering facilities, can house up to six in each. All the cabins have outdoor showers and there's a fantastic, purpose-built swimming pool, as well as a gurgling stream running through the property. A caretaker is on hand to provide a simple breakfast (RM3) or dinner (RM13) should you require.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses leave at hourly (and sometimes half-hourly) intervals from 7.30am to 8.30pm from KL's Puduraya bus station (adult/child RM7.50/3.75, 1½ hours) and KL Sentral (RM7.30/3.65); the price includes the Skyway cable car. A taxi will cost around RM60. There are also direct bus services from KLIA via Hentian Duta to the Highlands (RM22, including the Skyway).

Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser)

☎ 09

Of all the hill stations, Fraser's Hill (Bukit Fraser) retains the most colonial charm. Set at a cool 1524m altitude and across seven densely forested hills, this is not the easiest place to get to without your own transport, which is the main reason it's a quiet and relatively undeveloped place, attracting only a fraction of the visitors of Genting or the Cameron Highlands.

The area is named after Louis James Fraser, a tin-ore trader and mule-train operator who sometimes lived here in the 1880s. It's said he ran gambling-and-opium dens, but these had vanished (along with Fraser himself) by 1910, when Bishop Ferguson-Davie of Singapore came looking for Fraser and recognised the area's potential as a hill station.

As there's relatively little to do besides relax in the cool air, enjoy a forest stroll and indulge in a spot of bird-watching, Fraser's Hill can be done as a (long) day trip from KL, if you have a car or charter a taxi. If you'd prefer to take it easy, there's plenty of accommodation; on weekends and public holidays you will need to book ahead. Like the Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill is on the Selangor/Pahang border, but almost all visitors come through Selangor, and the state border actually cuts right through the station.

INFORMATION

The Fraser's Hill hill station's focal point is the tiny village at the western end of the golf course.

Fraser's Hill Development Corporation (FHDC)

office (☎ 362 2195; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) Further up the hill from the information and reservation service, this has some information on the area's bird life.

Fraser's Hill Information & Reservation Service

(☎ 362 2201; Puncak Inn, Jln Genting; ☎ 8am-5pm) Provides information, maps and brochures; staff can book accommodation and help arrange hiking guides.

Maybank (Jln Lady Guillemard; ☎ 9.15am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 9.15am-4pm Fri) Small branch at Shahzan Inn; accepts credit cards, exchanges foreign currency and travellers cheques. Nearest ATM is back in Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB) opposite the bus station.

WWF Nature Education Centre (☎ 362 2517; www.wwfmalaysia.org/fhnc; Sports Complex, Jln Genting; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Wed-Sun) Resource centre with a library and small museum on local flora and fauna.

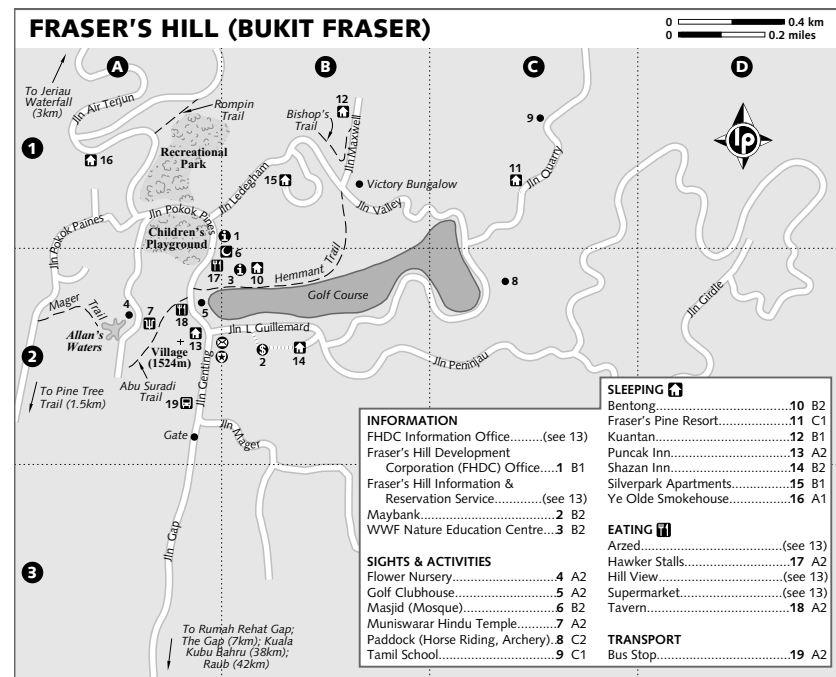
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

One of Fraser's Hill's main attractions is its abundant flora and fauna, in particular, its **birdlife**. With its lush, damp environment Fraser's Hill supports some 265 species of birds, including the Malaysian whistling thrush, the Kinabalu friendly warbler, the brilliantly coloured green magpie, and the long-tailed broadbill with its sky-blue chest. The high point of the local twitchers' calendar is June, when the hill station hosts its International Bird Race in which teams of birdspotters compete to record the highest number of species. For more information, you could check the website www.wwfmalaysia.org/fhnc.

Walks are mostly limited to quick strolls off and on the quiet paved roads. The **Hemmant Trail**, which takes only 30 minutes, is about 1km and leads from the mosque to Victory Bungalow. You'll need to arrange a guide for the **Pine Tree Trail**, which takes around four hours and is the area's most challenging. The Pine Tree Trail begins a few kilometres west of town and climbs steeply for 6km to the peak of Pine Tree Hill; call in at the tourist office first for details or contact the guide Mr Durai (☎ 013-983 1633) who charges around RM20 to RM30 per hour.

At the picturesque **golf course** (☎ 362 2129; Jln Genting; 18-hole game Mon-Fri/Sat & Sun RM32/42; hire of half-/full-set of clubs RM15/30) you'll most likely see dusky leaf monkeys wandering as well as the occasional wild boar. At the paddock to the east of the golf course, you can go **horse riding** (adult/child RM4/3) or practice **archery** (adult/child 10 arrows RM8/7). Aquatic enthusiasts can hire a paddle boat (per 15 minutes RM6) or do some fishing at **Allan's Waters**, a small lake next to the flower nursery and Muniswarar Hindu temple, both of which are open to the public.

About 5km northwest of the town centre, along Jln Air Terjun, is **Jeriau Waterfall**, with



a swimming pool fed from the falls. It's a 20-minute climb up from the road to reach them.

SLEEPING

Musty, damp hotel rooms and cottages go with the territory at Fraser's Hill. At the top-end places you can expect to pay around 20% more on weekends and public holidays.

Much of the accommodation is run by the FHDC; it has three bungalows for rent; Kuantan and Cini with three bedrooms and Bentong with two bedrooms. Although there's an element of faded colonial charm to these large stone buildings with pleasant gardens, and good views, they look far better on the outside than inside. Still, at RM88 per night for a room you can hardly grumble. If you opt for the full-board package (RM30 extra per person) then meals are taken at the FHDC's Silverpark apartments. Bookings for these bungalows and other private bungalows in the hill station can be made via the information service office (see opposite).

Puncak Inn (☎ 362 2201; d RM55-77, tr RM88)

Above the little shopping centre close to where the bus stops is this convenient FHDC-run place, though it has seen better days. The deluxe rooms are hardly that but at least they're spacious and have a view.

Rumah Rehat Gap (☎ 362 2227; r RM80) A recent lick of paint has made this quaint old place situated at the Gap, 8km south of Fraser's Hill, a more appealing place. It offers spacious rooms with huge bathrooms, a pleasant lounge and a reasonable restaurant.

Fraser's Pine Resort (☎ 362 2122; www.the.pines.com.my; Jln Pecah Batu; r from RM110) Everyone gets to sleep in three-bedroom, reasonably well-kept apartments here. For R50 extra you can rent one with an equipped kitchen.

Shazan Inn (☎ 362 2300; shazan8@tm.net.my; Jln Lady Guillemard; garden/golf course view r RM125/148) Overlooking the golf course this is one of the most attractive places to stay. There's a kettle and satellite TV in all rooms and a 20% discount is available to guests at the golf club.

MALAYSIAN GRAND PRIX

The **Sepang Circuit** (www.malaysiangp.com.my), 65km south of KL and a 10-minute drive east of the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, is where Formula One holds the Malaysian Grand Prix every March. You can buy tickets online starting from around RM500 for a one-day pass. We hear that it's possible to buy tickets much cheaper in KL closer to the date of the race. During the three days of the Grand Prix, KTM runs special train and bus transport to the circuit.

At other times of the year there's not a whole lot to see here but check the website for track days when the circuit is open to wannabe Michael Schumachers to rev up their own cars (RM150) or motorbikes (below 250cc RM70, over 250cc RM100).

Ye Olde Smokehouse (☎ 362 2226; www.the-smokehouse.com.my; Jln Jeriau; d RM308, ste RM385-440) Exposed beams, log fires, four poster beds and chintz – this classy place goes for broke on its English-charm offensive. Even if you don't stay here, drop by for a well-made pie or roast at lunch or afternoon tea (RM18) on the garden terrace.

EATING

Apart from the hotel restaurants, the small shopping centre beneath the Puncak Inn has a **supermarket** (☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-11pm Sat & Sun), and several simple restaurants, including the Chinese **Hill View** (☎ 362 2231; main dishes from RM10) and **Arzed** (☎ 362 2299; ☎ 7.30am-10pm) serving a variety of fried rice and noodle dishes as well as your standard *nasi lemak* (coconut rice; RM2.50).

The people from Arzed also run the nearby **Tavern** (Jln Genting; ☎ 10am-10pm) where, with your beer, you can get a 'ye olde sizzling black pepper steak' (RM38) or what purports to be 'East End traditional fish and chips' (RM19); our advice is to stick to the scones (RM12). Further uphill, beside the mosque, are some hawker stalls.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Fraser's Hill is 103km north of KL. The route here is via Kuala Kubu Bharu (KKB), 62km north of KL, just off Hwy 1 and the KL-Butterworth train line.

From KL's Puduraya bus station, take the half-hourly Selangor bus to KKB (RM4.50, 1½ hours). To ensure a connection you must take one no later than 8.30am, as there's only one bus a day (10.30am) from KKB to Fraser's Hill (RM3.60, 1½ hours). The bus pauses briefly at the foot of Jln Genting before returning directly (noonish) to KKB. A taxi from KKB to Fraser's Hill is RM50. A direct taxi all the way from KL's Puduraya bus

station costs around RM160; for a return taxi journey from KL reckon on paying RM360.

From the main KKB-Raub road Fraser's Hill is accessed via a one-way road. Going up you'll use the 11km-long road via the Tamil school and Fraser's Pine Resort; coming down you'll use the old 8km-long Gap road. It takes around 1½ hours to walk down the Gap to catch the KKB-bound bus from Raub that passes by around 2.45pm. If you plan to head east after visiting Fraser's Hill, be at the bottom of the Gap to meet the Raub-bound bus that passes by at around 5pm. From Raub you can continue to Jerantut and Kuala Lipis, though maybe not the same day.

Note, there's no fuel station in Fraser's Hill; the nearest ones are at Raub and KKB.

SOUTH OF KUALA LUMPUR Putrajaya

☎ 03

Covering 4932 hectares of a former rubber and palm-oil plantation, the new Federal Administrative Centre of Putrajaya (www.putrajaya.net.my), where most of Malaysia's government ministries are now located, is beginning to take impressive shape. As yet only around 50,000 people out of a planned population of 320,000-plus live here so it's almost always quiet and there's hardly any commercial life. Even so, a visit to this spacious green city, based around a 400-hectare man-made lake, allows you to see some grand examples of new Malaysian architecture and to marvel at the remarkable achievement of creating so much in a decade.

The city's construction has been mostly funded by the government's oil and gas corporation Petronas (see p47). The buildings are deliberately eye-catching as the overall plan is to make Putrajaya a tourist attraction.

No two of the government ministries are built in the same fashion and there are nine bridges, all in different styles. The longest, at 435m, is the **Putra Bridge**, which mimics the Khaju Bridge in Esfahan, Iran. At its northern end is the central **Dataran Putra**, a circular plaza bordered by the beautiful pink-granite mosque, **Masjid Putra**, and the Moghul-style **Perdana Putra**, the Prime Minister's office.

The bridges and buildings are all best viewed from Putrajaya Lake. **Cruise Tasik Putrajaya** (☎ 8888 3769; www.cruisetasikputrajaya.com; ☎ 10am-7pm), located just beneath the Dataran Putra end of the Putra Bridge, offers up two options: the gondola-like *Dondang Sayang* Perahu boats (adult/child RM20/12) departing anytime for a 30-minute trip around the lake; or a 45-minute air-con cruise on the *Belimbing* boat (adult/child RM30/20) leaving hourly from 1pm Monday to Friday and from 11am to 7pm at weekends.

As yet Putrajaya's only central hotel is the very classy **Putrajaya Shangri-la** (☎ 8887 8888; www.shangri-la.com; Taman Putra Perdana, Presic 1; r from RM390; ☎ ☎ ☎). Weekend packages are RM295 for two. Request a room with a view of the lake. Its Azur restaurant is a pleasant place for a Malaysian set lunch (RM40) or you can join the civil servants at the Selera Putra food court beneath Dataran Putra and enjoy the lakeside view.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Putrajaya is about 20km south of KL and 25km north of KLIA. KLIA transit trains from KL Sentral and KLIA stop here (from KL Sentral it costs RM9.50/15 one way/return).

The **Discover Putrajaya tour** (adult/child RM25/15), which covers both return tickets from KL Sentral and an excellent guided bus tour of the city covering all the sights, is recommended. The tour lasts around four hours, including time for lunch or a cruise on the lake; you must be on the 11.03am train from KL Sentral to catch the tour bus from Putrajaya-Cyberjaya station, but otherwise there's nothing to stop you leaving KL earlier or lingering on in the city once the tour is finished.

Taxis are really the only feasible way of getting about Putrajaya until the planned monorail/metro is completed (not for at least the next five years). The set fare from Putrajaya-Cyberjaya station to the Dataran Putra is RM9.

KLANG VALLEY

Heading southwest of KL along the Klang Hwy, the **Kota Darul Ehsan** ceremonial arch marks the boundary between KL and Selangor. Just over the boundary, Petaling Jaya (PJ) blends into Shah Alam, the state capital, which blends into Klang, the old royal capital – pretty much all in one seamless stretch of housing estates and industrial parks. Efficient public transport to and from KL make for easy day trips, but there's not a whole lot to see.

Sunway Lagoon & Around

☎ 03

The best reason for heading out to Petaling Jaya is to spend a day getting soaked in the vast swimming pools and water rides at **Sunway Lagoon** (☎ 5635 8000; www.sunway.com.my/lagoon; 3 Jln PJS, 11/11 Bandar Sunway; adult/child both parks RM39.90/26.90, adult/child dry or water park only RM27.90/19.90; ☎ 11am-6pm Mon & Wed-Fri, 10am-6pm Sat & Sun). Built on the site of a former tin mine and quarry, this African-styled theme park includes a grey-sand beach, waves you can surf and plenty of water slides; it's a great way to cool off on a sticky day. There's also a dry theme park attached with all the regular thrill rides, but it's not as much fun as the water park.

The park is approached through yet another vast shopping mall, the **Sunway Pyramid**, which is distinguished by its giant lion gateway, faux Egyptian walls and crowning pyramid! Here you'll find a **skating rink** (admission incl skate hire Mon-Fri RM13, Sat & Sun RM16; ☎ 9am-8pm) as well as a bowling alley, a multiscreen cinema and the usual plethora of shops and dining outlets. A second mall is due for completion in 2007, when the monorail transporting visitors around the vast site will be running again. Also under construction at the time of research were an **Extreme Park** (Jln Lagoon Selatan, Bandar Sunway), including paint ball and a karting circuit, as well as the attached **Sunway Petting Zoo** (www.sunway.com.my/peetingzoo).

Sunway Lagoon is so close to KL that staying over isn't necessary. However, the site does have several appealing accommodation options.

Pyramid Tower (☎ 7492 8000; www.sunway.com.my; r RM560; ☎ ☎ ☎) is a modern and quirkily designed business hotel attached to the mall.

Duplex (☎ 7492 8000; www.sunway.com.my; unit RM1200; 🚗 📶 📺 📺), a chic place for families, offers 12 townhouses each with three bedrooms and fully equipped kitchens.

There are 17 contemporary Asian-styled residences at **Villas at Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel** (☎ 7492 8000; www.sunway.com.my; villa from RM2200; 🚗 📶 📺 📺) each with their own infinity-style plunge pools, sunken baths and rain showers; great for a romantic getaway.

Take bus Nos 10 or 13 from outside KL's Kotaraya shopping centre (RM2.50, 20 minutes). Alternatively, ride the LRT to Kelana Jaya terminus, from where shuttle bus 900B runs every 30 minutes to Sunway Lagoon (50 sen). A taxi from Kelana Jaya is RM12, from KL RM21.

Shah Alam

📍 03

Thirty years ago Selangor's state capital was just a rubber-and-palm plantation, but in the late 1970s a massive building programme spawned a well-developed infrastructure, huge public buildings and a rapidly growing population. It's a staunchly Muslim city, where all closes early and bars are illegal.

The city's showpiece is **Masjid Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah** (☎ 5159 9988; Persiaran Masjid; 🕒 10am-noon & 2-4pm Sat-Thu), called the Blue Mosque for its azure dome covered in a rosette of verses from the Quran. This huge, gleaming mosque, one of the largest in Southeast Asia, accommodates up to 24,000 worshippers; its four minarets looking like giant rockets are the tallest in the world (over 140m). You'll need to be appropriately dressed if you want to look inside. Once you've seen the mosque there isn't a huge amount else to do so it's best to combine a visit here with a trip out to Klang and the coast.

Buses 222 and 338 go to Shah Alam from KL's Klang bus station (RM2, one hour) and will drop you in front of the PKNS Plaza mall, from where it's a short walk to the mosque. Frequent Komuter trains also run from KL to Shah Alam (RM2.50, 45 minutes), but from there it's another bus or taxi ride to the mosque.

Klang

📍 03

Around 10km towards the coast from Shah Alam is the pleasantly attractive town of

Klang, once the royal capital of Selangor. This is where the British installed their first Resident in 1874. Its few sights (should take no more than a couple of hours to see) are in the old city, south of the bus station and across the river, nearer to the train station.

About 1km south of the train station, along Jln Kota Raja, the **Masjid Di Raja Sultan Suleiman** is a striking blend of Art Deco and Middle Eastern influences. Opened in 1934, this was once the state mosque and several past sultans are buried here. Step inside to admire its stained-glass dome. On the hill behind the mosque, on Jln Istana, is **Istana Alam Shah**, the sultan's palace before the capital was moved to Shah Alam; it's not open to visitors but the park opposite gives a pleasant view of the city.

Back towards the station around Jln Stesen you'll find several gaily painted shophouses and old colonial buildings, including a grand white-washed one that was under renovation at the time of re-search and is set to become the town's new museum.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Klang's bus station is opposite the My Din shopping complex, on the northern side of the river. There are several buses every hour to KL's Klang bus station (RM2) or Kuala Selangor (RM2). Express buses between KL and Pelabuhan Klang also stop in Klang. Klang's taxi station is one block east, behind the bus station.

Coming from KL, KTM Komuter trains are more convenient as the train station, a 10-minute walk over the bridge from the bus station, is closer to the sights; there are trains every 30 minutes.

Pelabuhan Klang & Pulau Ketam

📍 03

End of the line for the KTM Komuter train is Pelabuhan Klang (formerly Port Swettenham). This ramshackle place was KL's main seaport until the establishment of a major new harbour on Pulau Indah.

The main reason for coming here is to either catch a ferry to Sumatra or Pulau Ketam (Crab Island). The 30-minute ferry trip (RM6) through the mangroves is a popular weekend excursion for locals. The island has a stilt fishing village and several Chinese seafood restaurants. Air-con ferries

leave from the wharf roughly every hour between 8.45am and 6.30pm (until 7.10pm on weekends); the last ferry back from Pulau Ketam is at 5.30pm (6pm on weekends).

Excellent, very reasonably priced seafood is also available at a number of restaurants out at the waterside village of **Bagan Hailan**, a RM10 taxi ride from Pelabuhan Klang station. Try **Bagan Seafood** (☎ 3176 4546; 🕒 11am-3pm, 6pm-11pm Mon-Fri, 11am-midnight Sat & Sun), where a fresh seafood meal shouldn't cost more than RM40 per person.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Pelabuhan Klang is 41km southwest of KL and 8km past Klang. Buses from KL's Klang bus station run to Pelabuhan Klang via Klang, but they terminate about a kilometre from the port. KTM Komuter trains also run to/from KL and Klang and the station is just a stone's throw from the ferry terminal.

Ferries to Tanjung Balai (Asahan) and Dumai in Sumatra depart from here. For Tanjung Balai (one way RM100, 3½ hours, 11am Monday to Saturday) you must have an Indonesian visa before boarding; for Dumai (one way RM95, 3½ hours, 10am daily) Australians, American, British and several European citizens can get a visa on arrival in Indonesia. To check on ferry details call **Aero Speed Enterprises** (☎ 3165 2545) at the ferry terminal.

Kuala Selangor

📍 03

Where the Sungai Selangor flows into the sea is the old royal capital of Kuala Selangor. The hilltop fort at this sleepy small town was briefly conquered by the Dutch when they invaded Selangor in 1784; Sultan Ibrahim took it back a year later. The town became embroiled in the Selangor Civil War (1867-73) when the fort was partly destroyed. Later the British built a lighthouse on the hill, which still stands and has become a symbol of the town.

Well off the beaten tourist track, Kuala Selangor has a friendly *kampung* atmosphere and a good wildlife park. It's possible to do as day trip from KL, or en route to or from Perak state, but an overnight stop is recommended so you can catch the nightly show put on by fireflies along the Sungei Selangor.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bukit Malawati

It's a pleasant, short walk through landscaped parklands to the top of Bukit Malawati, with views across the mangrove coastline. The hill has long been an ideal site for monitoring shipping in the Selat Melaka, first for the sultans of Selangor and then for the Dutch, who destroyed the sultan's fort during their invasion in 1784, then rebuilt it, naming it Fort Atlingsburg after their governor general.

All that remains of the old fort today are some sections of wall and cannons. At the summit you'll find the British lighthouse (dating from 1909), a podium for viewing the new moon, and a museum (closed at the time of research). Tame silvered leaf monkeys hang out here too, happy to be fed titbits by visitors.

The road up Bukit Malawati starts one block away from the old bus station in the town centre. It does a clockwise loop of the hill; you can walk up and around in less than an hour.

Taman Alam Kuala Selangor Nature Park

On the estuary of Sungai Selangor, at the foot of Bukit Malawati and reached by a flight of steps from the hill, is **Taman Alam Kuala Selangor Nature Park** (☎ 3289 2294; www.mns.org.my; Jln Klinik; adult/child RM2/50 sen; 🕒 7am-7pm). Inside the 240-hectare park are three ecosystems – secondary forest, a man-made lake and a mangrove forest with views out to sea – and you can explore them all on a series of five trails lasting between 20 minutes and two hours, including a raised walkway above the mangroves.

It's easy to spot the cheeky long-tailed macaques and silvered leaf monkeys at the accommodation huts at the entrance to park. There are also three bird-watching towers and several hides. Around 150 species of birds have been spotted in the park including mangrove waders such as the rare spoonbilled sandpiper and Nordmann's greenshank, best seen at dawn or dusk. On the lake you might also be lucky enough to see an endangered milky stork; the park cooperated with Zoo Negara on a breeding programme and now four storks still live on the lake. Other fauna you may see includes otters, nocturnal leopard cats and civets.

FLYING FIREWORKS

The Malaysian word for firefly is *kelip-kelip*, which recreates in sound what these insects are famous for – their spectacular displays of synchronised flashing. The local folded-wing fireflies (*Pteroptyx tener*) are quite large at around 6cm long, and both males and females flash, though only the brighter males flash in unison. They gather in particular *berembang* trees along the banks of Sungai Selangor, sometimes in the thousands, when their flashing becomes synchronised, at intervals of roughly three seconds. This natural light show can be seen at a few places, notably Kampung Kuantan, 9km east of Kuala Selangor. Malay-style wooden boats row out on the river to the ‘show trees’ and their dazzling displays. Boats take four people at RM10 each for the 45-minute trip, and leave on demand throughout the evening from around 7pm until midnight. The trips are not recommended on full-moon or rainy nights, when the fireflies are not at their luminous best. Take mosquito repellent.

To reach the village, take the turn-off to Batang Berjuntai, 2km south of Kuala Selangor. A taxi from Kuala Selangor costs RM40 for the return trip.

You can also see the fireflies at the Firefly Park Resort at Kampung Bukit Belimbing (below).

The **visitors centre** (🕒 8am-5.30pm) has some interesting displays on the nature in the park as well as a small shop selling Malaysian Nature Society goods and books.

SLEEPING

Taman Alam Kuala Selangor Nature Park (📞 3289 2294; www.mns.org.my; Jln Klinik; r from RM25) Offers simple A-frame huts (RM25) or two-bed (one single, one queen) wooden chalets (RM45) with fan and attached bathroom.

Hotel Kuala Selangor (📞 3289 2709; 90B Jln Stey-sen; r RM30, with bathroom RM40-90; 🍽️) Directly opposite the bus station, this budget option is the best of a few reasonably clean but uninspiring Chinese hotels.

Firefly Park Resort (📞 3289 1208; www.fireflypark.com; Kg Bukit Belimbing; chalets RM120-160; 🍽️) North of the river, this modern resort has comfortable four-person chalets perched on stilts over the river, and beautifully landscaped grounds. Boat trips to watch the fireflies cost RM10/6 for adults/children, and fishing trips cost RM30 per hour.

De Palma Inn Kuala Selangor (📞 3289 7070; Jln Tanjung Keramat; r from RM253; 📺 📺 📺) Around 1.5km north of the old bus station (follow the signs) is this good miniresort offering a range of accommodation in nicely furnished and well-maintained wooden chalets. It rents bicycles (RM5 for three hours) and can arrange a trip out to see the fireflies (RM18).

EATING

Both the De Palma Inn and Firefly Park Resort have decent restaurants, the former offering a good lunch buffet (RM17.25), the

latter specialising in fresh seafood. If seafood is what you’re after (and this close to the coast, why not?) then head to Pasir Penambang, a fishing village on the north side of the river, where a number of atmospheric seafood restaurants are clustered; a taxi from Pelabuhan Klang costs around RM10.

Back in town, next to the old bus station, you’ll find **Auntie Kopitaim** (No C3, Jln Sultan Ibrahim; 🕒 6am-6pm), an old-style coffee shop serving old-Malaysian favourites such as *nasi lemak* (RM4.50) and chicken chop (RM8.90). Next door is **Xtreme Station** (🕒 10am-10pm), an internet café (RM2 per hour) also serving snack food.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Rickety buses run roughly hourly from outside KL’s Puduraya and Medan Pasar bus stations (RM5.40, two hours). The first bus from KL is around 7.30am, the last 9.45pm; from Kuala Selangor the last bus runs back to KL at 7.45pm. There are more frequent buses between Kuala Selangor and Klang (RM4, one hour). Heading north from Kuala Selangor to Perak state, first take one of the old rattlers to Sabakbernam (RM5; 1½ hours) for connections to Teluk Intan.

Buses from KL will drop you at the old bus station beside Bukit Melawati, but many services elsewhere originate from the new bus station, 2km outside the town centre. A local bus from the old to new bus station is 60 sen, or it’s a 20-minute walk.

Approximate fares for a taxi ride from Kuala Selangor: KL (RM70 to RM80), Klang (RM50) and Teluk Intan (RM80).

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