

Hasanti's Fabulous Kuala Lumpur Dining Guide

Dining in Malaysia is a truly gastronomic experience. The multicultural nature of Malaysia's population has provided a rich legacy of local cuisine. The huge variety of food ensures that eating out anywhere in Malaysia is a pleasant and memorable experience. Dining out is a relatively inexpensive experience in Malaysia. Visitors have the opportunity of dining in 5 star hotels, food courts, hawker stalls, coffee shops, restaurants, fast food chains or roadside stalls.

Malaysia offers a variety of ethnic flavours to be enjoyed by those willing and adventurous enough to sample the many dishes and styles of cuisine available. Along with the traditional Malay style of cooking, you can also enjoy Chinese, Indian and Pakistani, Nyonya- a fusion of Chinese and Malay cuisine- Portuguese, Korean, Japanese as well as Italian and Western. The choice is yours.

MALAY CUISINE

Home grown ingredients feature predominantly in Malay cuisine. Coconut, chilli, lemon grass, lime leaves, spices and turmeric are base ingredients for meat, fish or vegetables. A traditional accompaniment is a *sambal* made from ground chilli, prawn paste and condiments. Some of the more popular dishes recommended for visitors to taste include:

SATAY - Skewers of marinated beef or chicken are barbecued over charcoal and served with sweet and spicy peanut sauce. It is accompanied with sliced cucumber, onion, and *ketupat* - rice cubes boiled in palm leaf.

NASILEMAK - This is a popular breakfast dish in Malaysia. It is a spicy and fragrant meal of rice steamed in coconut milk served with a selection of curried chicken, beef, fried anchovies and sambal - all neatly served on a banana leaf.

NASIPADANG - Plain rice served with a selection of dishes including curries and rendang- a spicy beef dish.

NASICAMPUR - White rice surrounded by a small selection of meat, vegetables and condiments.

LAKSA JOHOR - A rice noodle dish served with fish curry gravy and vegetables.

CURRY LAKSA - Noodles served with spicy gravy including chicken, seafood, pork, tofu and bean sprouts.

MEE GORENG - Noodles fries with chilli paste, tomato, tofu, prawn and egg.

CHAR KWAY TEOW - Stir-fried flat rice noodles mixed with seafood, pork, chicken and egg.

This dish has a lovely, smoky flavour and will soon become a favourite.

MEE JAWA - Noodles in thick, spicy gravy accompanied with prawn fritters, sliced potato and tofu.

SOTO AYAM - Spicy chicken soup with rice cubes and vegetables.

SAGO MELAKA - A dessert of chilled sago with brown sugar syrup.

ROJAK - Found in hawker stalls these steamed balls of glutinous rice flavoured with coconut are served cut and covered in sweet soy sauce that is slightly spicy. A cheap and tasty snack.

ICE CENDOL - Can be called Malaysia's national dessert. Shaved ice with jelly candies and agar-agar, red sugar and coconut milk makes this a cool and refreshing experience.

Along with the hundreds of restaurants and local eateries in Kuala Lumpur are the various hawker stalls and market eateries available throughout the city. Some interesting places to try include:

Jalan Kejora

Various Market Stalls

7pm-late

Formerly known as Jalan Alor this famous food street was renamed by the city of KL in October 2008. The word "kejora" is Malay for the planet Venus and the re-naming of the street is part of the re-branding exercise for Bukit Bintang, which translates as "Star Hill".

Located North West of Jalan Bukit Bintang is a wide selection of local food. Some of the best Chinese hawker stalls as well as good coffee shops can be found here. The food is very inexpensive but the quality is excellent. The whole street is full of hawker type of food stalls and all offer tasty local delicacies. One restaurant I have tried and would recommend is Shui Kee Restaurant at 37 Jalan Kejora. They are open from 5pm to 4am and their Char Kway Teow is excellent.

China Town Night Market

CNR Jalan Sultan & Jalan Hang Lekir

5pm-late

A few Ringgit will buy you the best Hokkien noodles in town. Another interesting thing to try is the steamboat skewers- various edibles are put on skewers and diners are charged according to what is cooked or eaten- according to the number of skewers on the table.

Chow Kit Market

Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman Little India

7pm-late

Saturday nights are popular at these markets and many people congregate here to enjoy the all night *nasi lemak*. Many come after parties for a cheap but tasty meal. There are many Indian food stalls here selling a great range of Indian delicacies.

Bangsar

5pm-late

Bangsar is a favourite hangout for expats and wealthy locals. The area has many international restaurants and pubs and is a good place to visit if you are looking to find a familiar accent or are feeling a little homesick. There are several pubs where you can relax with a steak and a beer and watch sport on the satellite TV. Bangsar is a short taxi ride from the Bukit Bintang area or you can catch the Light Rail Transit System, which is equally convenient.

Feast Village

Starhill Gallery

12pm ~ 1am

Feast Village is a concept eatery located on the lower ground floor of Star Hill Gallery, an upmarket concept shopping plaza located in the Bukit Bintang area on Jalan Bukit Bintang. It is also connected to the JW Marriott Hotel and the Ritz Carlton Hotel by walkways.

Each restaurant is themed and all offer a fabulous dining experience as well as atmosphere and ambience, right down to the bathrooms. Some of the restaurants you will find at Feast Village include Enak (Malay/Indonesian), Fisherman's Cove, Jake's Charbroil, My Thai, Tarbush (Lebanese), Koryo-Won (Korean), Luk Yu Tea House (Chinese), Sentidos Tapas (Spanish), Vansh (Indian), Shook! (Fusion) and the Village Bar - with each offering a unique twist on theme.

Feast Village is ideal for a special occasion dinner with dimmed lighting, paved and boarded walkways and mellow music to add to the experience.

Suria KLCC

Lunch and Dinner

There are many restaurants and cafes offering many cuisines at Suria KLCC. This shopping centre boasts some of the best dining experiences in Kuala Lumpur. The restaurants and cafes at Suria KLCC will cater to any taste from pizza, sushi, steak, Chinese banquets, Indian, Sudanese, Japanese, Arabian, Vietnamese to coffee shops, like Dome, Café, Gloria Jeans, Starbucks and Delifrance and bakeries and confectionery shops. There are 2 food halls in the complex: Rasa Food Arena on Level 4 and Signatures Food Court on Level 2.

A great Malaysian/Asian restaurant is Madam Kwan's on level 4. The food is great with fresh ingredients and very authentic. Great casual dining with plenty of seating to watch the world go by as you indulge in some local cuisine.

Food Republic

Pavilion Shopping Complex

11am - late

This is a new shopping complex with a great food hall downstairs. There is a myriad of restaurants, fast food outlets, health food cafes and coffee shops to choose from, a favourite is Madam Kwan's with its fabulous Eastern menu and fresh ingredients. Some of the restaurants in this complex include Athena's (Turkish cuisine), Carlos Mexican Bar & Grill, Charcoal Steak House, Ichiban Boshi, Laksa Shack, PastaMania, Spice India, Thai Express to name a few. The range of food and outlets will make the decision difficult as to where to have your meal.

Food Halls

Located in all major shopping centres

There are many wonderful and incredibly inexpensive food halls around Kuala Lumpur which will give you a wonderful and satisfying meal for a few ringgit. All are quite safe to eat at and many have truly authentic flavours compared to hotel or resort dining.

The food court at *Sungei Wang* on the lower ground floor is quite small but has a great Curry Laksa with coconut milk. Next to this vendor is an eatery with wonderful vegetable dishes with rice or noodles. Both were meals under RM 10.

Berjaya Times Square has a huge food hall which is advertised as the biggest in Kuala Lumpur. This food hall has a huge array of food, drinks and desserts and the food hall is spacious, clean and modern with plenty of seating. Meals here are equally reasonable, especially given the upmarket location and image of the complex.

Mid Valley Mega Mall in the suburbs also has great food halls and restaurants to suit any taste and budget. Here also the variety on offer is huge and prices are low. Not as modern as Times Square, though. The food hall is located on the 5th floor while the supermarkets, take away food, fast food and bakery outlets are located on the lower ground floor.

There are also the ever-present fast food outlets wherever you go including KFC, McDonalds, Burger King etc. They are always popular with the younger Malaysian and tourists alike.

Along the streets on KL there are numerous eateries, restaurants, café's coffee shops, hot dog stands, pizza shops, bakeries, noodle shops, restaurants, ice cream parlours, drink stands, and more that you can choose from. Much of the fare will be recognisable but if not, ask and it will be explained to you.

All Malaysians love their food and will be happy to recommend dishes for you to try, if you are adventurous and are ready for a gastronomical delight. The freshness and the flavours all make the food incredibly tempting and you should try some of the national dishes before you leave Malaysia.

Clubs and Bars Throughout Kuala Lumpur

There are some great clubs, pubs and bars around KL city and surround that will keep you entertained all night long and into the tiny hours of the morning if that's what you're looking for.

Around the Bukit Bintang area there are several street bars which offer evening drinks as well as something to eat. *Lekha Lekha* is a great Middle Eastern street bar which also has the Shisha for you to try – great to sit and relax and watch the people walk by.

Shook! located in the Feast Village at Starhill Gallery is also a great venue for drinks especially as an array of restaurants are at your fingertips for dinner afterwards.

Most of the hotels around the Bukit Bintang area also have some great bars: *QBA* at the Westin Hotel, *Pulse* at the Grand Millennium Hotel are two to recommend.

Traders Hotel also has a great bar called *Sky Bar* located on the 35th floor which has unobstructed views of the Petronas Twin Towers fully lit up at night.

Other bars around town include *Zouk* on Jalan Ampang and *Heritage Row* on Jalan P Ramlee. Jalan Pinang also has several bars and night clubs, some are better than others. These include *Rum Jungle*, *Beach Club* and *Aloha*.