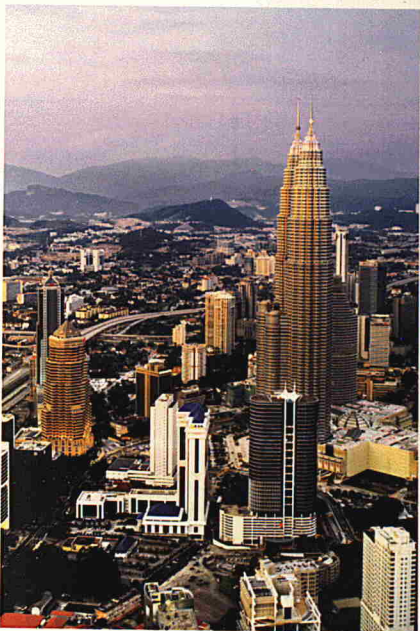


For Chin Chin, Chien Aun & Shuk Huay

A Random Walk In
Kuala Lumpur



TELAH DISEMAK

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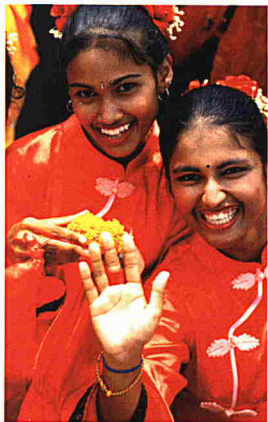
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A Random Walk In Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia is a melting pot of several races - the Malays, Chinese, Indians, Eurasians and indigenous people. More than a century of living together, they have contributed to the cultural richness that makes Malaysia unique in South East Asia. Added to this richness is the influence of a British colonial past.

This uniqueness is reflected in Kuala Lumpur more than in any other city. It is a vibrant hub for two million people of different races, offering a study of contrasts as it races ahead to become a world-class metropolis. Investments have brought people from around the world to settle, albeit temporarily, in Kuala Lumpur. Besides the Europeans, the Japanese are a big community, making their presence felt not only in the board rooms but also in prestigious residential areas, shopping complexes and restaurants.

Kuala Lumpur is a young city compared with Paris, London, New York or Rome. It is still growing and maturing and it has all the vibrancy of youth. The sound of construction in the redevelopment of the city never seems to stop.

However, visitors will find that Kuala Lumpur, despite the trappings of a big city - concrete jungle with skyscrapers of metal and glass and grit-lock traffic jams - has its very own personality derived from the potpourri of a multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural society.

Beyond the modern structures, visitors will find that nestled in their shadows the footprints of the past...like the Moghul-styled mosques, ancient temples that look like they've just been imported from China, shop-houses built when Chinese immigrants first came to work in the tin mines, quaint wooden Malay houses on stilts and pillars, and mansions built during the British colonial era.

Its people are friendly and never too much in a hurry to spare some moments for the tourist in need; they live and work together as one community and speak in their own mother tongues and also a brand of Manglish or English mixed with local dialects. It is interesting to sit and watch the world go by in Kuala Lumpur. One can see a Chinese girl wearing the *baju kurung*, Malay girls wearing traditional headscarves with jeans and T-shirts, fashion conscious teenagers in navel-bearing blouses and hipster jeans as well as Malay men on the way to the mosque in *baju Melayu* and *songkok*.

Eating places are noisy places as there's so much to say and laugh about in between mouthfuls while waiters believe in shouting orders to the kitchen. Uniquely Malaysian and popular particularly in Kuala Lumpur are *mamak* stalls run by Indian Muslims that offer their distinct brand of "pulled tea" or *teh tarik*.

Festivals are a big thing and much exploited by the shopping complexes. It is fascinating to see how overnight, a shopping centre that is dressed for Christmas can be transformed into a mini Chinatown for the Lunar New Year.

The facets of Kuala Lumpur are a feast for the eyes. There is nothing like taking a random walk down the streets and savouring the sights and sounds.