

MEDIA FEATURE

A (FREE) WALK DOWN KUALA LUMPUR'S MEMORY LANE



Above: the Sultan Abdul Samad building (left) sits across from the Padang and Royal Selangor Club (right)

Kuala Lumpur is such a historically rich city despite its youthful age – only 155 years old compared to other major cities of the world. And yet, it has gone through several rites of passage – a tin boom in the mid-19th century, a devastating fire, a big flood, the Japanese Occupation and 151 years of British rule.

This city on the banks of the Kelang and Gombak rivers is the capital of Malaysia. It recently emerged as the fourth best shopping destination after New York, Tokyo and London. Not bad for a city whose name refers to the muddy confluence of the two rivers that run through it!

Today, all this rich history serves as a highlight to one of the city's newest tourist attraction – the Free Heritage Guided Tours of Dataran Merdeka.

Offered three times a week, these guided tours organized by Kuala Lumpur City Hall take in the history and architecture of the city's landmark, Dataran Merdeka, and the ten heritage buildings surrounding the historic patch of field.

While Dataran Merdeka is an iconic attraction in the city, not many people know the stories behind the ten interesting historical landmark buildings aged over 100 years within the vicinity. Most of the buildings were built in the late 1800's and early 1900's, with a blend of old colonial, Moorish, Tudor, Neo-Gothic and Islamic architectural styles.



The walking tour is the perfect way to admire the classic beauty of these important buildings in their entire original splendor. Tourists will be guided by professional English speaking tour guides with stops at the following heritage buildings:

- **The Sultan Abdul Samad Building**

Built between 1894 and 1897, it is the first example of Moghul architecture in Malaysia and features a 41-metre high clock tower, arched colonnades and copper domes. Before serving as the office for the Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture, it used to be an administrative office, a High Court and a Supreme Court.

- **Old City Hall (built in 1896)**

The Old City Hall, built in 1896, stands out from the surrounding buildings with its black domes and interesting roofline of Islamic arches and dome-shaped pavilions. Now it serves as one of the oldest theatres in the country and those fortunate enough to catch a performance here will appreciate the old-world glamour of the experience.

- **The Government Printing Office**

Architects A.C. Norman and J. Russell built this magnificent Moghul-India inspired building in 1898 to meet the printing needs of the then British Malaya Administration. Government reports, official government books and even train tickets were printed here. Today, it is known as the KL City Gallery with a Tourist Information Centre.

- **Federated Malay States Railway Station (built in 1905)**

This building is distinguishable by its design of alternating red bricks and white plaster bands and an Islamic-style façade with raised onion-shaped domes derived from Moghul architecture. The building now houses the National Textile Museum.

- **The Chartered Bank (built in 1919)**

This three-storey symmetrical building with a protruding porch and arches on the ground level expresses Moghul architecture eloquently. The building has been turned into Restoran Warisan, a restaurant serving local traditional food for lunch and dinner.

- **The Cathedral of St Mary (built in 1895)**

This is the first brick church in the Federated Malay States and it is also one of the oldest Anglican churches in the region. It was rebuilt in its English Gothic style after a fire in 1922. The church's pipe organ is a masterpiece from 1895 built by one of the greatest organ makers in the world, Henry Willis – and it still works!

- **Former High Court Building (built in 1909)**

This two-storey building has a Moorish exterior with four towers and is now occupied by the Ministry of Information, Communications and Culture.



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- **Victorian Fountain**

The fountain, estimated to be more than 100 years old, was brought in from England and assembled in Kuala Lumpur; it features lovely Art Nouveau tile work.

- **Kuala Lumpur City Library**

This new building serves as a public library with an auditorium, conference area and multi-purpose hall. Visitors can browse through a collection of 50,000 titles of both adult and children's books and it also has a good collection of audio and visual material as well as ebooks.

- **The Padang**

The Padang, or today known as Dataran Merdeka (Merdeka Square), is where the British Union Jack was lowered and the flag of an independent Federation of Malaya, raised for the first time on 31st August 1957 – to end British rule over Malaya after 151 years. It was also the site for many a cricket match organised by the Royal Selangor Club.

- **Royal Selangor Club or The Dog (built in 1884)**

The Royal Selangor Club was established as an exclusive club for the growing expatriate community back in the day but has since been open to Malaysian membership as well. Its Mock Tudor stylings fronting an expanse of well-trimmed green lawn harks back to its English beginnings and is a refreshing change from the modern skyscrapers of Kuala Lumpur. Tourists registered under this heritage tour have the exclusive privilege of entering the premises for refreshments at the "Long Bar" as they imagine what it was like to witness a live and thrilling rugby or cricket match at the Padang!

The tour takes place at 9.15 am on every Saturday, Monday and Wednesday for a duration of 2.5 hours. Tourists can continue to explore the area on their own and visit nearby attractions such as Central Market for souvenirs and one of the oldest mosques in the city, Masjid Jamek.

The Dataran Merdeka Heritage Tour is free for tourists and bookings can be made through pelancongan@dbkl.gov.my For more details, go to www.visitkl.gov.my. This guided tour is the second in a series being developed by Kuala Lumpur City Hall. The first such free guided culture tour is conducted at Little India in Brickfields and runs every Saturday morning at 9.00am.

For other enquiries or more details please contact Puan Noraza Yusof, Head of Tourism Unit, KL City Hall at (tel) +603 2698 0332 or (mobile) +6013 339 9915 or email norazayusof@gmail.com.

For more media releases, media info and media features on Malaysia's tourism industry, kindly visit the Media Centre of Tourism Malaysia's website at <http://www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my/>

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industry players, Tourism Malaysia focuses on the specific task of promoting Malaysia at the domestic and international level. Driven by its aspiration to promote Malaysia as a destination of excellence in this region, Tourism Malaysia has grown by leaps and bounds since its inception and has emerged as a major player in the nation's socio-economic landscape. In 2012, Malaysia registered 25 million tourist arrivals and RM60.6 billion in tourist receipts.

In 2014, Malaysia will celebrate its fourth **VISIT MALAYSIA YEAR (VMY)** with the theme "Celebrating 1Malaysia Truly Asia". The VMY 2014 promotional campaign has started this year with a series of year-long special events and activities leading to VMY 2014. It will contribute to the Government's target to receive 36 million tourist arrivals and RM168 billion in receipts by 2020, as outlined in the Malaysia Tourism Transformation Plan (MTTP) 2020.

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