

# » Understand KL, Melaka & Penang

## **KL, MELAKA & PENANG TODAY ..... 186**

The tugs of war continue between heritage preservation and modernisation, cultural diversity and pro-Malay policy, democracy and the ISA (Internal Security Act)...

## **HISTORY ..... 189**

We explore how modern Malaysia emerged from, and was forged by, the lucrative spice-trade routes around the Malay Peninsula.

## **MALAYSIAN CUISINE ..... 200**

In Malaysia it's not 'How are you?' but '*Sudah makan?*' (Have you eaten yet?). Your entrée to the region's best bites.

## **CULTURE ..... 210**

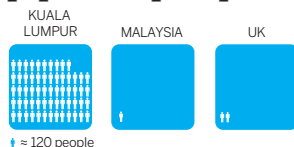
Malaysia's three main ethnicities – Malay, Chinese and Indian – bring a rich mix of customs, arts and religion to the multicultural table.

## **ENVIRONMENT & WILDLIFE ..... 219**

As one of the world's 'mega-diversity' countries, Malaysia's challenge is to balance conservation with economic development. How has the country fared?



## population per sq km



# KL, Melaka & Penang Today

## One Malaysia?

The tolerant mingling of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures in Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Penang are a large part of what makes these historic cities so appealing. Here, the stories of Malaysia's diverse ethnic groups and colonial empires are intertwined – south Indian cooks serve fiery curries from the doorways of Sino-Portuguese houses built as part of trade deals between European powers and the sultans of Melaka.

Interestingly, a poll by the independent Merdeka Centre published in July 2010 showed that only 39% of non-Malays believed the government's 1Malaysia policy ([www.1Malaysia.com.my](http://www.1Malaysia.com.my)) was a sincere effort to unite Malaysians of all ethnicities. That such a policy was deemed necessary at all speaks volumes about the underlying tensions and suspicions that continue to simmer beneath the seeming harmony.

## Improving Public Transport

If one thing does unite all Malaysians it's their frustration with public transport. You only have to look at the faces of KL citizens, squashed into a monorail or train carriage at rush hour, or stuck in a highway traffic jam, to know how they feel. 'It's not as bad as Bangkok or Jakarta,' says Steven Gan, editor of Malaysiakini ([www.malaysiakini.com](http://www.malaysiakini.com)), referring to KL's traffic, 'but if you want people to give up using their cars you have to improve the public service.'

To address the problem the government has earmarked funds to upgrade and integrate the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) system with the addition of three new lines, including a circular one that will span the KL–Klang Valley conurbation.

Over in Melaka the government is proud of its 1.6km-long new monorail that runs through the city centre tourist belt. Penang's second

Gross National Income per person:  
US\$13,770

Life expectancy:  
74.4 years

Inflation: 1.9%  
(July 2010)

Unemployment:  
3.7% (March 2010)

## Top Non-Fiction

**Malaysia at Random** (Editions Didier Millet) Quirky compendium of facts, figures, quotes and anecdotes.

**Found in Malaysia** (The Nut Graph) Compilation of 50 interviews with notable Malaysians

from the news and analysis website ([www.thenutgraph.com](http://www.thenutgraph.com)).

**The Consumption of Kuala Lumpur** (Zaidin Sardar) How the once sleepy capital has evolved into a modern economic marvel.

## Top Websites

**[www.malaysiakini.com](http://www.malaysiakini.com)**  
Malaysia's best online news site.

**[www.malaysiandigest.com](http://www.malaysiandigest.com)**  
Views from across the political spectrum.

**[www.themalaysianinsider.com](http://www.themalaysianinsider.com)**  
Events and personalities shaping Malaysia.