

Heart of Malaysian *culture*

Brickfields in Kuala Lumpur is a popular township among locals and tourists, mainly because of its easy access via KL Sentral. *StarMetro* explores some of the attractions in the area such as places of worship, eateries, Indian grocery stores and book shops. >2&3

Bustling street: Colourful and vibrant, Little India in Brickfields boasts numerous Indian clothing shops, jewellery stores, provision shops and restaurants. — AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star



Vivekananda Ashram was named in honour of the Indian spiritual leader Swami Vivekananda who visited Malaya in 1893. His statue stands in front of the entrance. — Photos: AZHAR MAHFOF/The Star

By EDWARD RAJENDRA
edward@thestar.com.my

BRICKFIELDS' landscape juxtaposes glass-walled skyscrapers with colonial-era shophouses across the street.

Along the main road Jalan Tun Sambanthan, colourful archways along the pedestrian paths mark the core of Little India.

While the Kuala Lumpur township is known for being the location of Little India, it does have a multi-ethnic community.

This is reflected in the diversity of cuisines and places of worship that can be found there.

Chinese, Hindu and Buddhist temples as well as churches and mosques exist side by side in this hub of spirituality.

Since many places of worship are located here, expressions of religious devotion can often be seen or heard taking place.

Throughout the day, visitors to Brickfields have a variety of ethnic food to choose from.

Besides banana leaf rice outlets, *kopitiam* and food court options, there are Chinese eateries, Sri Lankan restaurants and numerous roadside stalls selling everything from curry puffs and *nasi briyani* to *char kway teow* and *ais kacang*.

Getting to Brickfields is easy as it is a major transportation hub.

The KTM Komuter, monorail, Kelana Jaya light rail transit and KLIA Ekspres (from the airport) all converge at KL Sentral station.

City buses go through Brickfields before reaching downtown Kuala Lumpur. KL Sentral station is also the terminus for airport coaches.

In the old days, KL Sentral was where clay pits and brick kilns used to line the railway tracks and it is believed that was how Brickfields derived its name.

Brickfields has much to offer day-trip tourists or people looking to explore its architecture, culture and history.

Here are a few places of interest, all within walking distance of each other.

Taking a passage through Little India

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Brickfields is a confluence of cultures, cuisines, shopping and spirituality in Kuala Lumpur



Flower stalls on this lane do brisk business during major religious events. (Right) Chiam has been selling fried snacks at the same location for about 40 years.

VIVEKANANDA ASHRAM No.220, Jalan Tun Sambanthan

Constructed in 1908, the ashram is an elegant building of Ceylonese design.

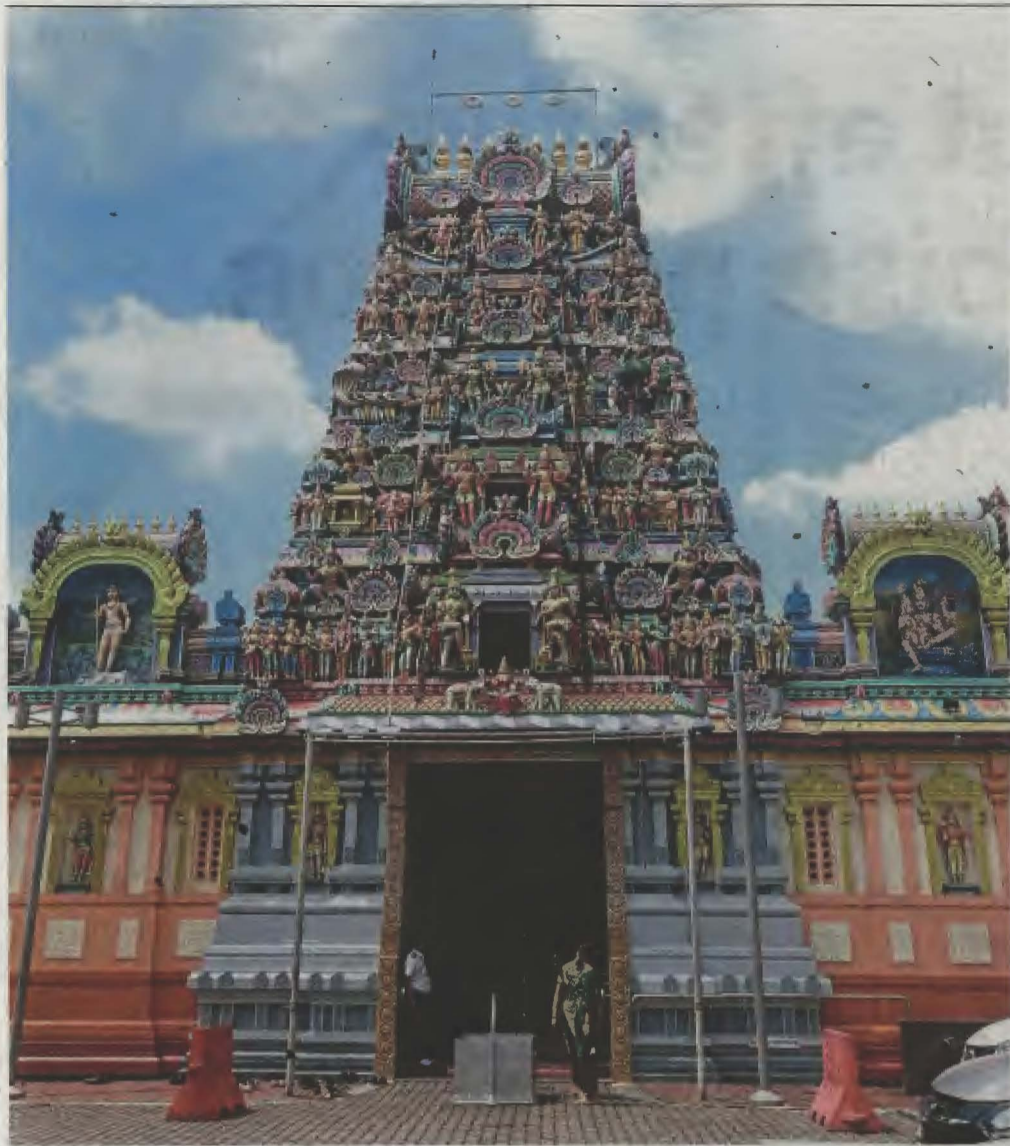
The ashram started as an institution by the Jaffna Tamil immigrants in 1904 in honour of Swami Vivekananda, who was a key figure in the introduction of Indian philosophies and yoga.

It was named in honour of the Indian spiritual leader, who visited Malaya in 1893. His statue stands in front of the building.

The building is dedicated to his work in providing education and spiritual development for youth and the community.

In 2016, the ashram was given national heritage status.





Sri Kandaswamy Kovil is a Hindu temple that has been at this site since 1902.



People seeking divine help for health, business and studies often offer prayers at the Sam Kow Tong temple.



Church of Our Lady of Fatima has over 1,500 multinational parishioners.

LITTLE INDIA
Jalan Tun Sambanthan

Colourful and vibrant, Little India has many shops selling textile, Indian clothing and jewellery besides restaurants. Bridal beauty parlours, grocery stores, shops selling kitchenware and prayer items sourced from India abound. Sweets are also sold along the pavements.

FLOWER STALLS
Jalan Tun Sambanthan

Eighteen flower stalls sell roses, jasmine garlands and other colourful blooms in a lane. Men can be seen arranging betel leaves, limes and chrysanthemums in bouquets as people buy the flowers as offering for deities at the nearby temples.

Chinese and Hindu temple devotees are regular customers of these stalls and traders do brisk business during major religious events.

CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF FATIMA
Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad

Established in 1963, the Church of Our Lady of Fatima serves a growing Catholic community in and around the Brickfields neighbourhood. With the many high-rise residential buildings catering to expatriates, the church has a multi-ethnic and multinational community of over 1,500 parishioners that reside in and around Brickfields, Bangsar, Taman Seputeh and Jalan Kelang Lama.

SAM KOW TONG CHINESE TEMPLE
No.16, Jalan Thambipillay

Sam Kow Tong temple is a Fujian-style temple decorated with elaborate sculptures of dragons.



The Young Men's Christian Association functions as a community centre that offers short courses, recreational activities and lodging.

According to caretaker KD Tan, 73, the temple is 108 years old and started as an attap-roofed building.

People seeking divine help for health, business and studies are often seen offering prayers.

YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YMCA)
No.95, Jalan Padang Belia
Tel: 03 2274 1439

The YMCA of Kuala Lumpur was established on Oct 27, 1905.

Its core purpose is to reach out to the community through social services and volunteering efforts throughout the Klang Valley.

It still remains a community centre offering short courses to empower children, youth development programmes, recreational activities and sign language classes.

It offers hostel lodging (from RM88 per night) with amenities like launderette, barber shop and cafe.

YMCA is also a place to learn dancing, martial arts, educational and enrichment courses.

MODERN STORE
No.233, Jalan Tun Sambanthan
Tel: 03 2272 1484
Business hours: 9am to 10.30pm

The Indian grocery store is a favourite among locals and Indian expatriates living in Brickfields and Klang Valley. It stocks items from all corners of India.

It is an importer and wholesaler that brings in a wide variety of provisions for the people here, from authentic Indian *masala*, spices, snacks and biscuits to Indian coffee, tea, cosmetics and Ayurvedic products.



P. Sivaguru Book Depot sells books and magazines imported from India and has been operating since 1925.

BRICKFIELDS PISANG GORENG AND CURRY PUFF STALL
Opposite YMCA entrance
Tel: 012 617 2511
Business hours: 11am to 5pm

Chiam Beng Hoe, 66, operates from a push cart that has been at the same spot for about 40 years.

Fried snacks such as curry puffs, crispy banana fritters, fried *nian gao* (glutinous rice cake) and sesame-coated balls filled with chopped peanuts are popular with tourists and locals.

P. SIVAGURU BOOK DEPOT
No.14, Jalan Scott
off Jalan Tun Sambanthan

This bookseller carries titles on religion, politics, literature and fiction that are mostly imported from India.

Popular among locals who follow political news in India, the store sees a brisk sale of magazines. This bookshop has been operating since 1925, surviving the pandemic lockdowns.

SRI KANDASWAMY KOVIL
Jalan Scott
Tel: 03 2274 2987

Over a century old, this Hindu temple is known to the locals as Scott Road temple. It is a Saivite temple that worships the deity Shiva. It has been at the present site since 1902.

An ornate main tower which is covered with Hindu deities, sculptural works and majestic pillars make the temple one of the most photographed buildings.

Rebuilt with Dravidian architecture to replace the previous structure, this impressive building was consecrated in 1997.