

KL's overlooked tourist spot

KUALA Lumpur is one of the most visited cities on the planet. It is a multicultural city, a melting pot of various ethnicities.

The city's Chinese heritage is represented in Chinatown in Jalan Petaling while the Indian community has placed its mark on Little India in Brickfields. Malay heritage is largely focused around Kampung Baru.

All these enclaves are well-linked with RapidKL's MRT-LRT transport systems. Chinatown is linked with Masjid Jamek and Pasar Seni stations while Little India is located near KL Sentral, the hub of Kuala Lumpur's public transportation system. Kampung Baru currently has one LRT station with a new MRT station slated to open in March.

Nevertheless, Kampung Baru is less celebrated in terms of tourism when compared with Chinatown and Little India.

Kampung Baru has all the potential to be a tourist hotspot like the Malay Cultural Centre in Singapore. It is in a great location, linked by the beautiful Saloma Bridge near the Kuala Lumpur City Centre and Kampung Baru LRT stations. The food bazaar at Jalan Raja Muda Musa is located just a stone's throw away from the LRT station. This street is a



Historic: A photo taken in 2015 of a house in Kampung Baru that was built in 1932. — Filepic/The Star

heaven for Malay and local food lovers. Kuala Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) or RapidKL should upgrade the station with proper signage to guide commuters and tourists exploring Kampung Baru.

In addition, there are several kampung houses displaying Malay architectural designs scattered all over the enclave.

The government should utilise Kampung Baru and beautify it like how the Melaka state government has successfully given

Kampung Morten a graceful makeover. Kampung Morten is now a crown jewel of tourism in Melaka, showcasing Malay arts and culture.

The government had the opportunity to showcase Malay and native architectural designs when Putrajaya was developed. Unfortunately, this opportunity was not exploited to the fullest as most buildings in Putrajaya today display architectural designs of Middle Eastern origins.

If Thai culture can be easily

observed when one visits Bangkok, Malay culture must be given the same attention in Kuala Lumpur, albeit without undermining the other cultural heritages of multiracial Malaysia.

Lessons must be learnt from what has happened to Kampung Abdullah Hukum – it has been redeveloped into a high-rise enclave without much historical value. Kampung Abdullah Hukum, a 200-year-old settlement has been largely erased from history.

DBKL must ensure this will not happen to Kampung Baru. It must be preserved and given a proper upgrade and sensitive makeover for tourists to enjoy and appreciate the beauty of Malay culture and heritage.

Kampung Baru should be the heart of the “Malay world” in KL, a unique tourism attraction that would definitely boost Malaysia's persona as a destination that is really “Truly Asia”.

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