

Rediscovering KL

Besides iconic skyscrapers and modern landmarks that draw tourists by the busloads, KL is also dotted with atmospheric nooks and corners that even locals may not be familiar with. With a map in hand and photography tips gleaned from a walking workshop, KL resident **SREEREMA BANOO** sets out to discover the city through the eyes of a visitor. Here are some of her favourite finds.

Urban village

If ever there was a piece of real estate in KL that has developers salivating, it has to be **Kampung Baru** (which means 'new village' in Malay). Spread over 379 acres, the British gazetted this area as a Malay Agricultural Settlement back in 1900 to allow the Malays to retain their village lifestyle within the city. Over the years, while the rest of KL has seen waves of development, Kampung Baru has been relatively untouched. That it has managed to retain that unhurried pace of life so

synonymous with rural life is amazing given that it lies in the shadows of the city's towering buildings, including the Petronas Twin Towers just across the river.

Sample popular Malay dishes at the many roadside stalls and cosy cafes. The famous *nasi lemak antarabangsa* ('international' *nasi lemak*, a dish of creamy rice with spicy condiments) has its origins here and continues to do a roaring trade every night. Sat evenings are in particular a hive of activity thanks to the Pasar Minggu, which starts

at 6pm on Sat evening and ends in the wee hours of Sun morning, at 1am.

Discussions on Kampung Baru's future are not without controversy – there are those who are eager to redevelop the enclave entirely and make a hefty profit in the process, and there are those who argue for more sensitive development that would not displace its residents. Whatever shape it may take in the future, it is hoped Kampung Baru will continue to offer visitors a glimpse of village life in the heart of the city.

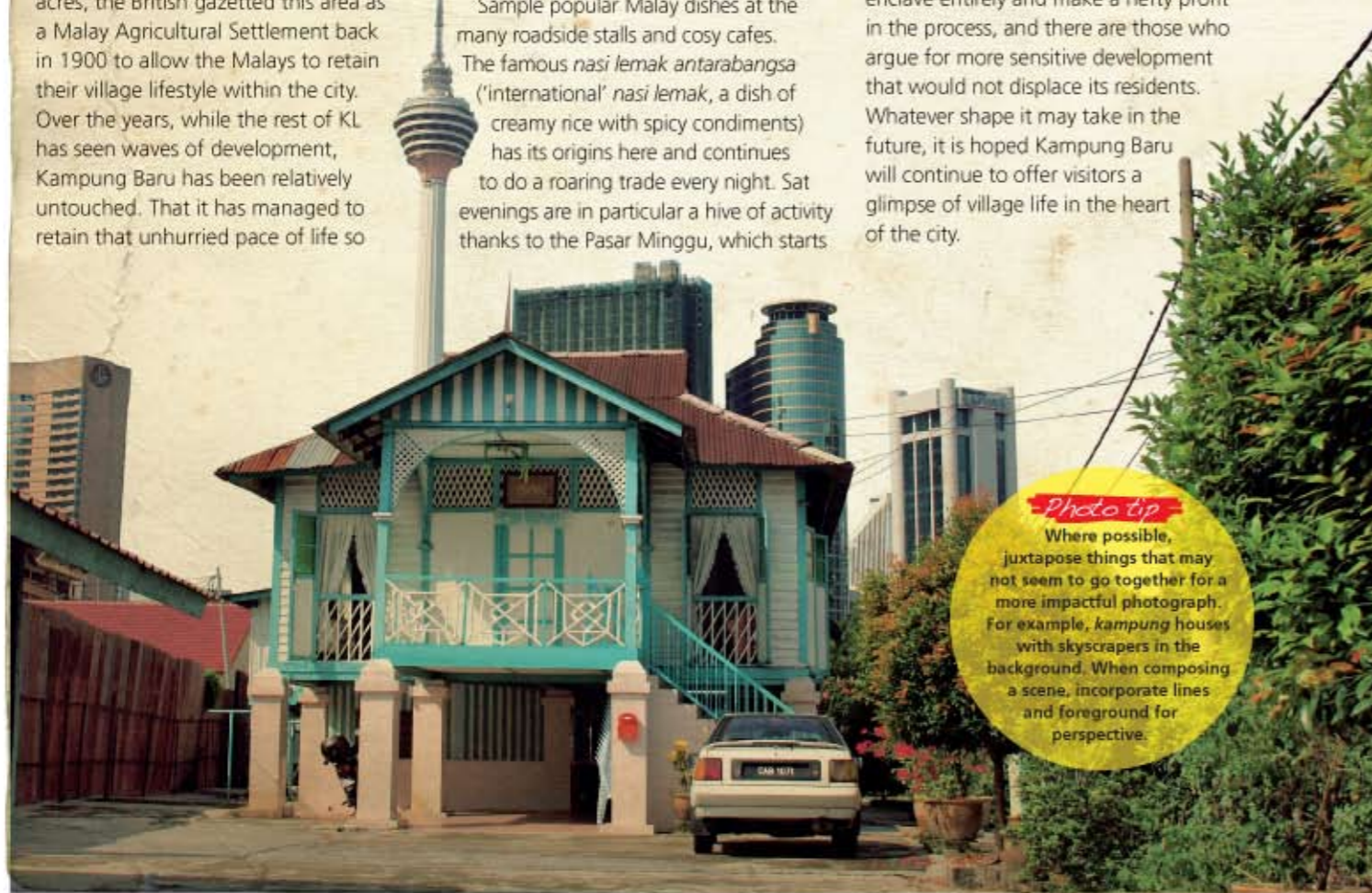


Photo tip
Where possible, juxtapose things that may not seem to go together for a more impactful photograph. For example, kampung houses with skyscrapers in the background. When composing a scene, incorporate lines and foreground for perspective.



Photo tip
Incorporate a 3D effect by using the foreground, midground and background, so that the audience can have a better feel of the surrounding.

Stylo Hair Dressing Saloon has maintained its original façade and interiors; locals playing chess on the five foot ways in Chow Kit; (facing page) a traditional kampung house in Kampung Baru juxtaposed against KL's modernskyscrapers, including the KL Tower



Photo tip
Keep in mind the story you want to tell through your photos. To get effective images, it helps to talk to the subjects to gain an understanding into their stories.

The grocer's guests

Chinatown is more than just Petaling Street and its bazaar. Running parallel to this bargain hunter's paradise is Jalan Sultan and located at number 78 is an interesting piece of architecture. This three-storey building, constructed in 1927, has all the hallmarks of a neo-classical structure, surmounted by a curved baroque pediment with stone scrolls and medallions. Once the home of the Selangor Grocer's Guild (a trade association representing the interests of Cantonese-speaking grocers, retail traders and sundry-shop owners in Selangor and KL), the building is today occupied by a budget hotel that's aptly named **Grocer's Inn**. It's well worth a visit for the antique furniture and photographs of guild members back in its heyday.

For a trim and a shave

At the end of Jalan Sultan, turn left onto busy Jalan Tun Tan Cheng Lock. At the junction with Jalan Tun HS Lee, you'll come across an Indian style barbershop

that's been in existence for more than 70 years. **Stylo Hair Dressing Saloon** was established in 1940 by the former Chairman of the Indian Barber Association, P A Thangayah, and is today run by his son Madhirajah. With its bottles of hair cream and talcum powder, combs and brushes, as well as posters of men in haircuts that were stylish back in the day, Stylo is both quaint and charming. What's more, the four sets of stainless steel Takara barber chairs imported from Japan in 1966 are still in use. Haircuts are strictly for men only and are priced at RM12; throw in a shave and it'll cost you RM15 in total. Another interesting feature is that the road fronting the shop has become higher due to surfacing works over the years. The owners have had to build steps leading down into the shop and change the doors to open inwards.

Colours of Chow Kit

'Di tengah bandaraya orang merata-rata, dari segala bangsa, tua atau muda' ('In the middle of the city, people are everywhere, all races, young and old') – so goes the song *Chow Kit Road* by the late and much-loved Malaysian singer, Dato' Sudirman Haji Arshad. His words could not be more true today; Chow Kit, a sub-district in central KL located at the northern end of Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, features a large Indonesian community and more recently, a small African community. Apart from the daily wet market that's KL's largest, Chow Kit features a night market that's also known as **Bundle Chow Kit**. Located on Lorong Haji Taib, this market is popular among those hunting for used clothing and accessories.

Anytime of the day, there are chess matches taking place on the sidewalks. ▶

Heritage

It's not unusual to find two or three games going on while onlookers gather around. Players sip copious amounts of tea and coffee in between with nary a thought as to what's going on around them. So convivial is the mood here that the onlooker is sometimes invited to join a match!

Busy, bustling and mind-boggling

Forget supermarkets and upmarket grocers, for an insight into KL's – and indeed Malaysia's shopping basket – head to the **Chow Kit market**. Yes, it's wet and no, it doesn't smell of roses or lavender-scented disinfectant but there is a vibrancy here that is invigorating, intoxicating and even a little intimidating.

Open daily from dawn to dusk, the market boasts an array of meats, poultry, seafood, veggies, fruits and dry goods. Some of the things sold here are simply mind-boggling for the visitor – from cow's head and feet to an odd-looking fruit called *buah jireng* (which the Malays eat raw in a salad).

As varied as the goods on sale are the people who come here, be it the shoppers or sellers. This diversity is not only seen, but can also be heard – local



and Indonesian-accented Malay as well as several Chinese dialects are spoken throughout the market. This is truly a place that feeds all the senses.

Ever faithful

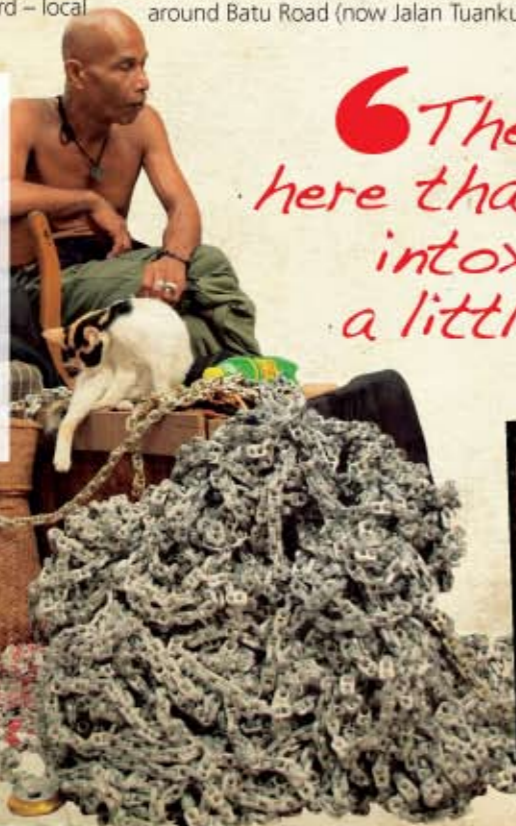
Built in 1863, **Masjid India** is the city's oldest mosque (the very grand Moghul-influenced Masjid Jamek was only built in 1909), and was initially constructed with bricks and timber. The construction of the mosque was financed by Indian Muslim merchants who lived and traded around Batu Road (now Jalan Tuanku

Abdul Rahman). At the time, because there was no piped water to Masjid India, worshippers would go to the nearby Klang River for ablution.

As the only Indian Muslim mosque in the city centre, Masjid India had to accommodate worshippers from the outskirts, particularly for Friday prayers. To make room for the growing numbers, the mosque was extended in 1900. A wooden annex was built in 1939, and another extension was constructed in 1952. In 2002, the entire mosque was given a facelift, and today the three-

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(Clockwise from top) There is diversity in the Chow Kit market, from the goods on sale to the different communities who shop here; dried white bait or *ikan bilis*, one of the key condiments for the unofficial national dish, nasi lemak; this gentleman in Chow Kit fashions pull tabs from aluminium cans into a chain - his goal is for the chain (the mound in the foreground) to run from Chow Kit to Central Market!



storey building boasts a polished granite cladding. The congregation at the mosque is said to be predominantly of Tamil Muslim origin, and the Friday sermon is delivered in Tamil.

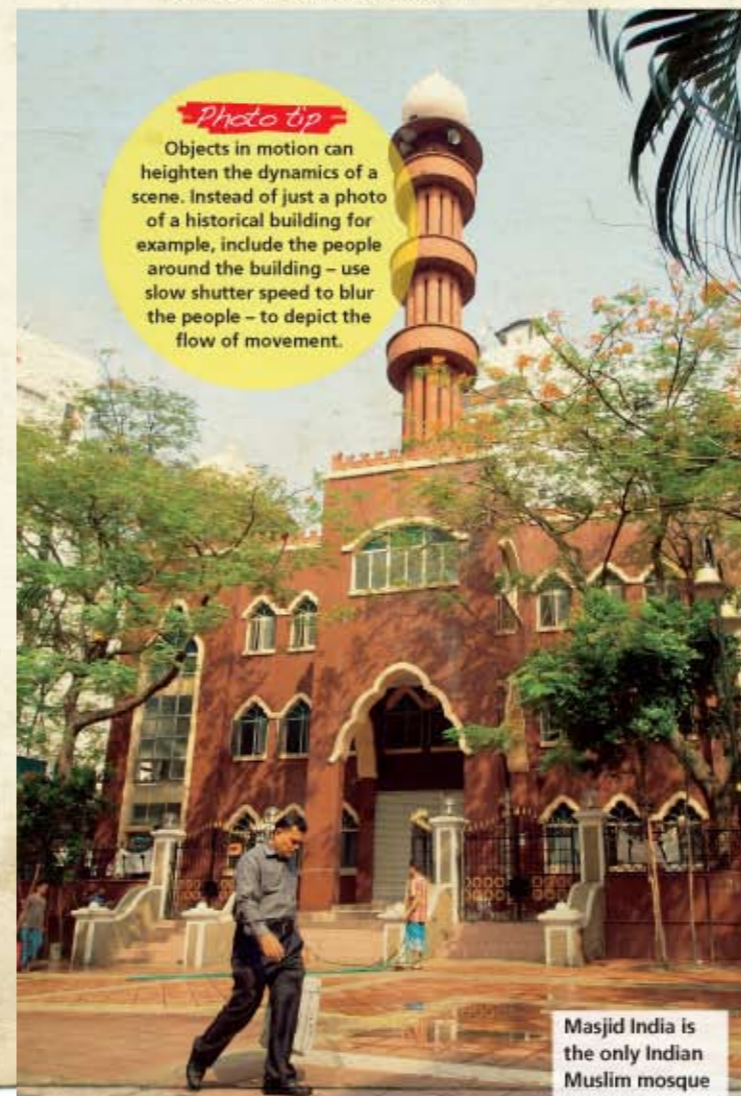
The area surrounding it, which gets its name from the eponymous mosque, is a thriving shopping haven. If you're on the hunt for sarees, Indian bangles and jewellery, then this is the place. In recent years, there has also been an increasing number of traders and shops selling *baju kurung* (a traditional Malay garment), *hijab* (Muslim head covering) and fabrics, making this enclave particularly busy in the run-up to Eid. 📷

F1 Professional photographer Nikt Wong conducts half-day street photography workshops that cover KL's central business district, temples, mosques and markets. Participants pick up photography and street shooting skills by being on the street and using street props. Tel +6016 358 6115 www.fotoseed.net

The ARCH Earth Guide has a detailed section on attractions and heritage sights around Chinatown and the KL city centre. It is available free from hotels and shopping malls in KL, and can also be downloaded from www.earthguide.com.my Be Tourist conducts a free Malaysia Heritage Walk that starts at 10.30am daily, from the main entrance of Central Market. Tel +6012 208 4260/+6017 989 1031

Photo tip

Objects in motion can heighten the dynamics of a scene. Instead of just a photo of a historical building for example, include the people around the building – use slow shutter speed to blur the people – to depict the flow of movement.



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