

We all know how easy it is to fill two spare hours with things you don't really want to do. Rush-hour commuting, cleaning out your wardrobe, preparing your taxes—the world is full of mundane activities waiting to ambush 120 minutes of your precious time. And when you're far from home, on a business trip packed with long days of meetings and long evenings of reports, the last thing you want to do is squander your only two free hours looking for a decent place to eat or shop. So here's the answer: *VIVE's* two-hour guide to getting the most out of any city you're in, no matter how briefly.

TWO HOURS IN Kuala Lumpur

One of Asia's best-kept secrets, Kuala Lumpur is more than just a stopover en route to Europe. Cleaner than Bangkok, more charismatic than Singapore and less manic than Hong Kong, the city affectionately dubbed 'KL' is an exotic mix of east and west. Its religious and business structures will keep your neck craned skyward, the shopping will keep your overdraft high and the warmth of the Malaysian people will have you booking your next visit before you leave. But don't tell anyone: once the word is out, Kuala Lumpur may just lose its magic.

TRAVEL NOTES **RACHAEL OAKES-ASH**



Indulge in spa treatments at the Mandarin Oriental Vitality Club.

TRAVEL TIPS

The Golden Triangle is the nickname for Kuala Lumpur's financial zone—and where there's finance, there's shopping. You'll find most international hotels, banks and shops in this area, which is actually a square bordered by the thoroughfares of Jalan Sultan Ismail, Jalan Bukit Bintang and Jalan Ampang.

Be warned: the city's inner districts have no names and most buildings have no street numbers. If you can see the Twin Towers, then the safe bet is that you're still in the city.

If you're planning to chew gum, don't: like Singapore, signs consistently outline fines for spitting gum on the streets. It seems to work—the city streets are very clean.

Public transport in Kuala Lumpur is modern, with both a rail system and a monorail. Taxis are metered, reasonable in price and air-conditioned to make those late nights home a breeze.



Petronas Twin Towers.

SEE

PETRONAS TWIN TOWERS

Kuala Lumpur City Centre

Tel: +60 3 2382 3359

www.suriaklcc.com.my

The city skyline is dominated by the Petronas Twin Towers. With no water views to haggle over, views of the Twin Towers push up real estate prices. These impressive glass-and-steel twins cost over US\$1 billion (AU\$1.3 billion) to build and stand 451m high over 88 stories. They were the world's tallest buildings until 2003, when they were topped by Taiwan's 508m Financial Centre. Islamic design influences the foyer's intricate tiling and latticework. Make sure

you visit the linking bridge on the 41st floor. Tickets are free, but queue between 8.30am and 11am to secure entry for views across the city and beyond.



Thean Hou Chinese Temple

THEAN HOU CHINESE TEMPLE

65 Persiaran Endah (off Jalan Syed Putra)

Malaysia is a mix of Malay, Chinese and Indian cultures, with Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism all co-existing. This makes for some excellent temples, and the Thean Hou is the most impressive of the Chinese ones. Walk barefoot to the main hall on a stone pathway and into the temple itself, a masterpiece of reds, golds and pinks. Light a prayer candle and spin the wheel to read your fortune. Legend has it that washing your hands in the holy water will boost fertility.

LAKE GARDENS

Jalan Perdana

City flyers can take time out in these 92 hectares of groomed gardens, which hold butterflies, orchid displays, lakes and a mammoth jogging track (a good way to keep your jetlagged body in shape). Created in the late 1800s by British colonialists, Lake Gardens still holds many of the original botanical treasures. Walk to the northern end to see the Parliament buildings.

SHOPPING

SURIA KUALA LUMPUR CITY CENTRE (KLCC)

Tel: +60 3 2382 3359

www.suriaklcc.com.my

It is considered sacrilege to leave Kuala Lumpur without shopping. The Suria KLCC shopping complex is at the base of the Twin Towers—a good place to kill some time while waiting for your skyline viewing.



Suria KLCC.

But don't let Chanel, Ferragamo and Gucci scare you into thinking it's all high-end shopping. You'll find local designers and even franchises such as Marks & Spencer alongside the haute couture. Stick your head out at the food court for a view of KLCC's 20 acres of parks and gardens.

MID VALLEY MEGAMALL

Mid Valley City, Lingkaran Syed Putra

Tel: +60 3 2938 3333

www.midvalley.com.my

'Mega' says it all, though for the committed shopper 'Mecca' may be a better description. This mall is the size of a small city, with 18 cinemas, a bowling alley and over 400 shops. It's not as upmarket as KLCC, which means more shopping bags to haul home.

TIMES SQUARE

Tel: +60 3 2117 3111

www.timessquarekl.com

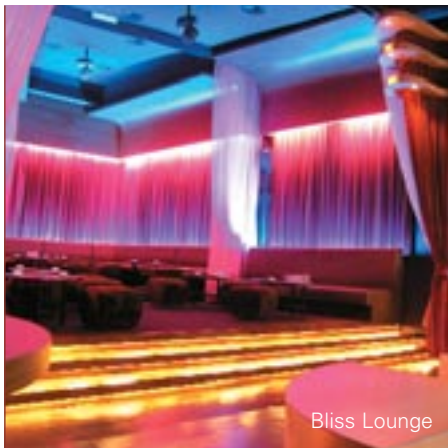
Put your walking shoes on—Times Square is the largest shopping mall in the country, with more than 1,000 outlets. Better still, buy some shoes there from one of the hundreds of shoe stores. There's a theme park, Imax cinema and even a branch of London's Debenhams. You may never want to leave.

JALAN PETALING NIGHT MARKETS

Petalang Street, nightly

Kuala Lumpur's *pasar malam*, or 'night markets', are an extreme contrast to the air-conditioned malls. Markets can be found around the city each week but Jalan Petaling is open every night in Chinatown, for haggling over DVDs, music, clothes and handicrafts. Pick up a fake Louis Vuitton bag,

dine on claypot chicken and inhale the energy of this old-time shopping heartland.



Bliss Lounge

DRINK & DANCE

BLISS LOUNGE

12 Jalan Sultan Ismail
Tel: +60 3 2145 9196
www.twelvesi.com.my

The city's newest champagne bar is located in the 12SI complex, which also houses the trendy Barfly and Atmosphere Nightclub. The bar serves Mœt in Swarovski crystal, among other high-class aperitifs, and cool French DJ Mikus appears regularly.

BAR BLONDE

50 Jalan Doraisamy
Tel: +60 3 2691 1088
www.barblonde.com.my

Bar Blonde is New York in Asia. The all-white bar, extensive cocktail list and live bands attract the city's movers and shakers. Check out the outdoor bar for post-monsoon cocktails under the stars.

EAT

THE IVY

48 Jalan Doraisamy
Tel: +60 3 2693 2260

If you're desperate for a taste of home, head to The Ivy. You won't find the Hollywood stars that frequent the infamous Ivy restaurants of London and Los Angeles, but you will find a traditional English pub with decor and lager to match. Popular with ex-pat crowds and tourists looking for Australian accents.

YOKO'S RESTAURANT & BAR

36 Changkat Bukit Bintang
Tel: +60 3 2144 3378
www.yokounique.com

Bukit Ceylon is the most happening street in Kuala Lumpur. And just around the corner is Yoko's, the city's premier Japanese fusion restaurant, set inside a 1940s house. Swan around the patio or lounge with the visiting Singaporeans at the long bar.

LI YEN

Ritz Carlton, 168 Jalan Imbi
Tel: +60 3 2142 8000

Eat like a local at Li Yen, at the Ritz Carlton. Book for dim sum, or yum cha, as it's very popular with the Malaysian Chinese who come for the authentic Cantonese cuisine. The old-world China atmosphere makes it the perfect venue to impress your local corporate colleagues.



CoChine

COCHINE

64 Jalan Darasaimy, Asian Heritage Row
Tel: +60 3 2697 1180

Jalan Doraisamy, also known as Asian Heritage Row, is a strip of renovated heritage houses fitted with contemporary bars and restaurants. CoChine, owned by Singapore's IndoChine group, is decked out like a traditional opium den, with wood, cushions and a vibrant red colour scheme. Try the Saigon-style pomelo and prawn salad with the peppered garlic beef. Then head downstairs to Bar Savanh with its decor of four-poster beds, Buddha heads and carp ponds for cocktails and a turn on the dance floor.

NERO VIVO

3A Jalan Ceylon
Tel: +60 3 2070 3120
www.nerovivo.com

A new restaurant serving fine Italian food in a modern trattoria-style setting. The single-storey building was once a 1920s brothel and now features a terrace bar with ten different styles of grappa.

STAY

THE RITZ CARLTON

168 Jalan Imbi
Tel: +60 3 2179 8772

www.ritzcarlton.com/hotels/kuala_lumpur/ Kuala Lumpur is an international hotel junkie's heaven, but for personalised service, it's hard to walk past the Ritz Carlton. The winner of every award known to hoteliers, it has butler service for every room. There is a complimentary laundry service, the bar serves great hors d'oeuvres and the staff always remember your name. With a poolside lounge, spa retreat and king-sized beds in every room, you may never venture outside.

RELAX

THE MANDARIN ORIENTAL VITALITY CLUB

Tel: +60 3 2179 8772
www.mandarinoriental.com/hotel/

The spa's location, next door to Suria KLCC, means you can shop and relax on the same day. A walkway links the buildings, so you need only glide next door for marine-based treatments, including the Thalgo Water Body Therapy. They may have to pick you up off the floor afterwards, as a deep sleep is guaranteed. A nautical theme, complete with porthole windows, complements the treatments. Enjoy a soak in the private whirlpool afterwards.

GETTING THERE

Malaysian Airlines and Virgin Atlantic operate a codeshare from Sydney to Kuala Lumpur. If you go Business Class get the upstairs cabin, where you'll think you're flying First Class. The Malaysian Airlines seats are wide and comfortable, with personal entertainment units and an attentive, helpful crew. www.malaysiaairlines.com www.virgin-atlantic.com ■