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The Valley of Golf

There are well over 200 golf courses in the country and some of the most well-known can be found in the Klang Valley straddling the capital city of Kuala Lumpur to Shah Alam and its periphery, Subang and beyond the new administrative capital of Putrajaya.

Kuala Lumpur features premier golf courses like the marvelously challenging Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club, Royal Selangor Golf Club, Kelab Golf Perkidmatan Awam as well as Bukit Jalil Golf & Country Club.

South of the city, the choices are varied and fantastic with leading golf clubs the likes of world-class Saujana Golf & Country Club, Glenmarie Golf & Country Club, Kelab Golf Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah and the country's first public golf course, Seri Selangor Golf Club. Further to the south, in the vicinity of the administrative capital of Putrajaya, the friendly layout of Palm Garden Golf Club (the refurbished layout scheduled to open soon) is a must try.

After a total revamp, completed last year, Kuala Lumpur GCC (www.klgcc.com) boasts of two world-class standard championship layouts with professional golf pedigree. The 6,368-metre, par-72 West Course is the venue of the Maybank Malaysian Open for the last two years while the East Course is the host venue of the Sime Darby LPGA Malaysia.

Both courses feature 'Salam' Seashore Paspalum grass for its lush fairways, tee-boxes and roughs, while the greens are turfed with Paspalum Supreme, ensuring smooth, true-roll putting surfaces.

The West Course quickly earned plaudits from the golfing fraternity fuelled even more by world renowned turf expert Eddie Adams, who rates the course as the fifth best golf course in the world. Truly KLGCC is becoming a benchmark for golf course standard in the country.

Situated a mere 15 minutes drive from the city centre, Bukit Jalil Golf & Country Club (www.berjayaclubs.com) is a Max Wexler's design that plays to 6,228-metre, par-72. Demanding yet forgiving, the layout presents different sets of challenges for golfers of various skill levels.

Golfers will be delighted with the quality of golf on offer at Glenmarie GCC (www.glenmarie.com.my). There are two scenic 18-hole layouts, the Garden Course and the Valley Course, which can easily cater even the most discerning of golfers.

At 6,432 metres off the black tees, the Garden, sculpted on gently rolling

hills, is regarded as the championship course. The Valley, at 6,325 metres is a tad shorter but somewhat more challenging with its dramatic plunging downhill holes, some severely sloping uphill holes, doglegs and blind holes.

Sprawled over 240 acres of former tin mines, the Mines Resort & Golf Club (www.mines.com.my), which is the

venue of the first PGA Tour event in Asia, the CIMB Asia Pacific Classic, boasts a par-71 championship layout that plays to a distance of 6,189 meters.

The natural contours of the land were used to the maximum, where ravines and cliffs come into play while undulations of the Greenless Park Couch fairways added test and challenge to golfers.

Kelab Golf Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah (www.kgsaas.com.my) or affectionately known among the locals as Kampung SAAS is perhaps the first golf club in the world to offer night golfing facilities in 1993. Since then, the idea of nocturnal golf has become popular in the country as shown by the number of clubs offering the facilities now.

This parkland layout was designed by five-time Open Champion, Peter Thomson. The constantly undulating layout features Thomson's trademark pot bunkers, rolling fairways and medium-to-large elevated greens in abundant, is challenging without being overly difficult to the social golfers.

Kota Permai Golf & Country Club (www.kotapermai.com.my) may be one of the later golf clubs to open for play in the Klang Valley but within that short span it has already been established as one of the more popular courses with golfers of all levels.

Ideally located within the eye-pleasing township of Kota Kemuning in Shah Alam, just 12 minutes away from

Petaling Jaya and half an hour from Kuala Lumpur city centre, Kota Permai was designed by Ross Watson.

Perhaps it is the calming influence of the surrounding greenery serving as a welcome respite away from the maddening life of city development just outside the fences of the area. Or maybe the Mayan-inspired architectural and landscaping themes are simply working wonders to the battered souls.

Some will say Monterey Golf & Country Club (www.monterez-golf.com) is a perfect hideaway from the hustle and bustle of city life away from the fast track of a rat race life, just the place to relax and rejuvenate. For most, the shortish 5,699-metre, par-71 layout is a perfect

place to nurture their swings without taking too much of a beating from the Auld game.

Having successfully negotiated the perpetually maddening traffic mess on the way to the club, arriving at Kelab Golf Seri Selangor (www.seriselangor.com.my) is akin to returning to your kampung (village) home – rustic, comfortably familiar and fuss-free.

Since its official launching in 1998, not much change has been done to the façade of the country's first bona fide public golf course, but its meandering layout, designed by Ross Watson, has gone through several upgrading, the results of which are one of the slickest greens in the country.

The Grand Dame of Subang still stands quietly imposing. A befitting accolade to describe Kelab Golf Negara Subang (www.subanggolf.com), the brainchild of the nation's first Prime Minister, YAM Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Alhaj.

Cruising up the driveway towards the Clubhouse, one is soothingly enveloped in a serenity that only the established, pioneer clubs exude. Magnificent ancient trees with their lush foliage and gnarled trunks stand guard, buffering all within the premise from a maddening mayhem of literally being 'wrapped' by busy highways.

Its hallowed halls of aged timber, worn smooth through the years hold many memories, a keeper of untold tales.

Impressively mature, the KGN5 Championship Putra Course comprising the Agong nine and Tunku nine; and the Kelana Course and its Sultan nine and Tun nine pose a formidable challenge to players. Kelab Golf Negara Subang also boasts a multi-tiered 42-bay turfed driving range for golfers to hone their skills.

Off Course Attractions

The Klang Valley is a huge conurbation comprising of the Kuala Lumpur city and its adjacent townships of Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Shah Alam, right up to Klang and Port Klang.

Within this sprawling area there are numerous tourist attractions to cater to its 6.5 million inhabitants as well as the travelers. Shopping for instance, is a major attraction with

Kuala Lumpur alone boasting 66 shopping malls and it is the retail and fashion hub for Malaysia.

Furthermore, concerted efforts by the

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Tourism Ministry to promote shopping via the Malaysia Mega Sale campaign – held in March, May and December – for more than a decade now has also boost Kuala Lumpur's reputation as a shopping haven.

The upmarket Suria KLCC is one of Malaysia's premier shopping destinations. It has the advantage of location being beneath the iconic Petronas Twin Towers – the third tallest building in the world.

The city's premier shopping district, the Bukit Bintang area in Kuala Lumpur's Golden Triangle resembles Tokyo's Ginza, New York's Fifth Avenue and Singapore's Orchard Road and has the highest concentration of shopping outlets in Kuala Lumpur, which cater to varying budgets.

Among the leading shopping complexes, the Pavilion Kuala Lumpur is a recent addition to the cluster of shopping malls in this area and houses a wide range of international retail brands in an ultra-modern complex.

Several popular malls lie outside the Golden Triangle. The Bangsar and

Midvalley areas are home to some of the best shopping malls in Kuala Lumpur, including the upmarket The Gardens, the more cozy Bangsar Village and Bangsar Shopping Center in Bangsar.

The Damansara area north-west of Kuala Lumpur, though not in the city-proper, also has one of the highest concentration of shopping outlets in the Valley. It houses various shopping malls like The Curve, Ikano Power Centre and 1 Utama.

Meanwhile, the Sunway Pyramid is located near Subang Jaya is a very nicely designed shopping mall offering a line-up of branded goods. Adjacent to it is the popular Sunway Lagoon Water Theme Park which features thrilling rides for adults and children alike.

Still on the subject of shopping, souvenir hunters will be delighted with the offering at the Central Market. Also known as Pasar Seni in Malay, this former produce market has been converted into an art and craft market.

The Little India near Jalan Masjid India is a popular haunt for the locals looking for various fabrics for use, especially during local festivals. Most of the fabrics are imported from countries like Indonesia, India and China while some are locally produced.

For nature lovers, Sungai Gabai, located in Hulu Langat, offers a picturesque view of several waterfalls which cascade down over 100 meters, culminating in a broad, photogenic plunge into a series of small pools suitable for swimming.

A visit to the huge Forest Reserve Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) located in Kepong on the north-western fringe of Kuala Lumpur is educational as visitors can gain an insight into Malaysia's

tropical flora and fauna.

Walk through the nature trails or visit the herb gardens and marvel at its 15,000 species of plants. The park's canopy walkway, suspended 30m above ground level, offers a memorable and thrilling experience. On clear days, visitors can enjoy a breathtaking view of the city

skyline and the surrounding greenery from up here.

A visit to Shah Alam is not complete without a short stop at the Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque. Easily one of the most stunning structures in the country, the mosque, also known as the 'Blue Mosque', boasts the tallest minarets in the world.

As visitors approach the mosque, the awe-inspiring blue dome welcomes them. Decorative Islamic calligraphy dominates the edges surrounding the dome and main prayer hall, while the interior architecture exhibits ethnic Malay design elements.

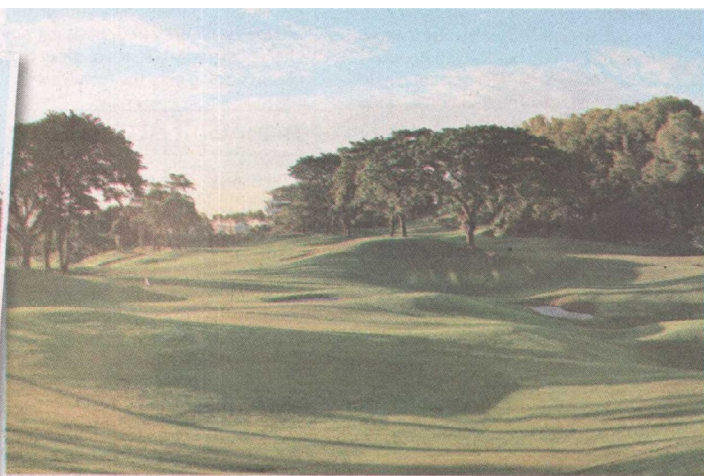
Perhaps, Putrajaya is the perfect place to end your trip to the Klang Valley. Located approximately 45 minutes drive south of Kuala Lumpur, the Federal Government's new Administrative Centre for Malaysia boasts some of the most breathtaking architecture.

Based around very contemporary Arabic styles, Putrajaya's architecture and buildings are refreshingly modern, and create a distinct air of grandeur while blending in well with the beautiful surrounding landscape.

Spread across 11,320 acres (46 sq km) of largely palm oil estates and rubber plantations, the whole area has undergone massive development since its establishment in 1995. Among many of Putrajaya's interesting sights and attractions – Putrajaya Lake is a 650ha man-made lake situated at the centre of Putrajaya, designed for recreation and creating a natural cooling system for the city.



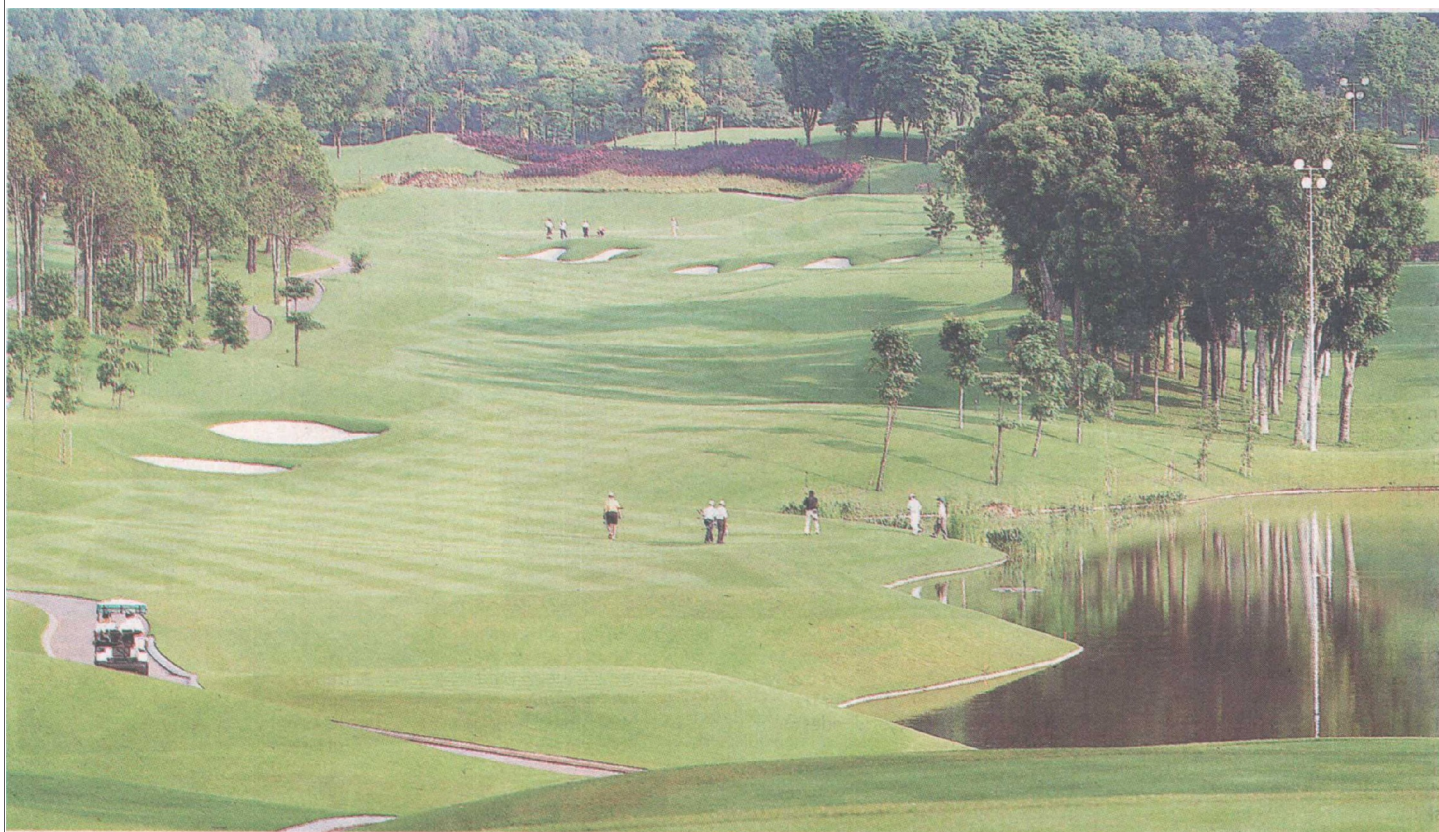
Kota Permai Golf & Country Club.



The Mines Resort & Golf Club

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Kuala Lumpur Golf & Country Club.



Glenmarie Golf & Country Club.

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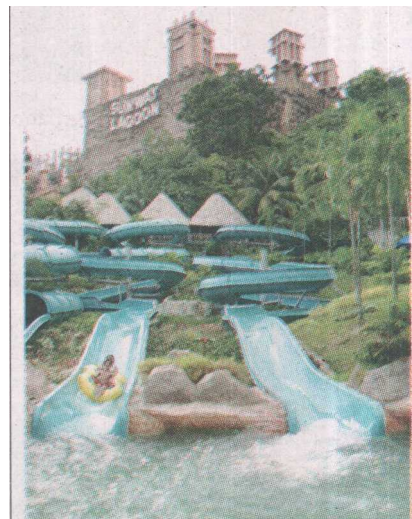
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Shopping for fabrics at Little India.



Petronas Twin Towers.



Sunway Lagoon.

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Kuala Lumpur – a bustling metropolitan.



The FRIM forest reserve.