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ACCENTS by MELINDA ROOS

Why it's good to live in KL

The city offers an endless list of places to enjoy good food and drinks



MANY lists have been made about the "best of Kuala Lumpur," mostly by journalists who fly in, experience this bustling city for a few days, write a travel log and then go off.

Those are just impressions. But sometimes they are exactly right.

However, to really experience a place, one has to go beyond the one-week holiday and really breathe in what makes a place what it is.

There are barely three weeks to go before 2013 comes to an end and 2014 begins.

It's this time of year that we become reflective, and having lived in Kuala Lumpur and writing this column for the past two-and-a-half years, I thought about what I like about this city.

Obviously, food is on top of the heap.

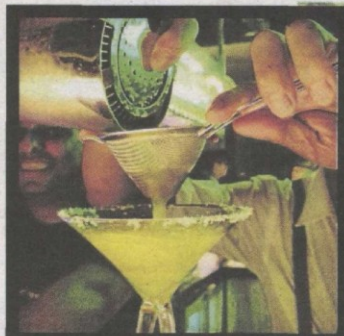
When you're entertaining and receiving many guests from abroad, some of them repeat and long-staying guests, it can be pretty challenging to find new dining spots to take them to, places and attractions for them to visit and new things to do. I've finally solved this dilemma by developing a personal directory.

It's time to share my favourites on why it's good to be living in Kuala Lumpur.

- Endless choices of roof-top bars and sky-dining with stunning views.

- Wide selection of fine-dining restaurants for Western cuisines, wine bars and even molecular gastronomy if you're inclined.

- Sunday lunches are sometimes destined at *dim sum* places and it's great to have all these wonderful choices to be able to enjoy



Let your hair down: There are endless choices of roof-top bars with stunning views of KL.

it. Alternatively, there are places serving fast and easy Cantonese cuisine and delicious *xiao long bao* (meat dumplings that contain soup within).

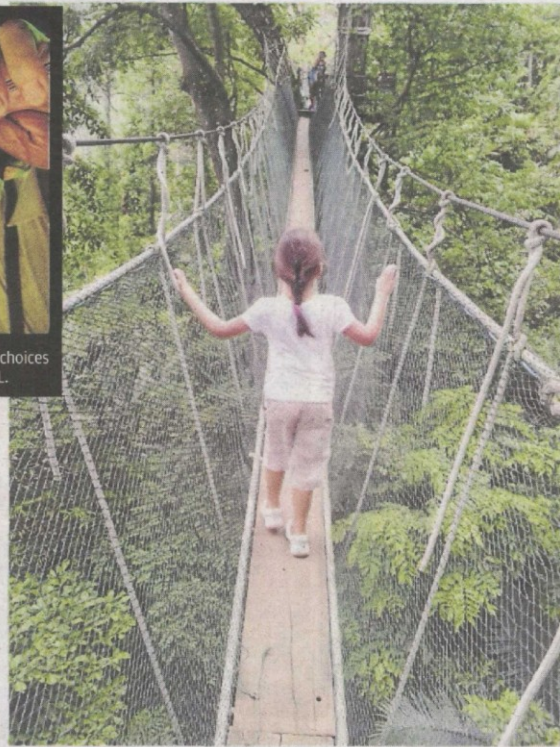
- There is also no lack of divine Indian cuisine if you're craving for *tandoori*, *masalas* and curries, whether chicken, seafood or vegetables.

- For the brunch crowd, there are Australian-inspired cafés that serve a mean eggs benedict, and other trendy cafes that dish out heavenly salads.

- There is no shortage of bakeries serving dense, nutty bread reminiscent of European breads, even the organic variety if your heart so desires.

- Kuala Lumpur (and Petaling Jaya) also has the best crab places.

- Changkat Bukit Bintang because it's always alive and vibrant. Its rows of bars and restaur-



Just a short drive away: The Canopy Walk above FRIM's tropical rainforest offers a wonderful respite from the city's bustling traffic.

rants make for a no-brainer destination to bring your guests from other countries.

- There there are the neighbourhood pubs with a cool band playing

cool music. They are unpretentious and packed with an eclectic mix of all kinds of wonderful and weird people. You can even forgive the place for making your hair smell

like an ashtray as you leave around past midnight.

Apart from the dining and nightlife, the other reasons that makes settling into Kuala Lumpur fairly easy for me at least is finding a service that delivers seasonal organic vegetables — Asian or European depending on your preference, free-range eggs and completely dressed organic chicken.

When you've had enough of the bright lights and the city and want to "get away", the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia or FRIM is located nearby. The tropical rainforest with a canopy walkway is a wonderful respite from the bustling traffic, and walking through the "jungle" atmosphere is relaxing and the fresh air calms down your senses.

World-class hospitals and a wide choice of international schools also make it easy for expatriates and foreigners alike to find the right kind of medical and educational services that match their needs.

And when you really just want to get away from it all, Kuala Lumpur has proximity to everywhere: an hour to Singapore and Phuket, one hour to Bali and three hours to Cebu in the Philippines.

KL International Airport is one of Asia's major hubs and makes traveling really easy. Low cost or regular airfare flights going to anywhere around, this makes for an ideal city to be based in.

■ Born and raised in the Philippines, Melinda is a marketing executive, entrepreneur and writer who moved from the Netherlands to KL. She loves scuba diving, good food and wine, and is happy to be back in the tropics.