

# KL's Sensational Shopping

As a shopping destination, KL is on par with the likes of Dubai and Hong Kong, and has long been a popular place for picking up all manner of items at a huge variety of malls, markets, and shops. A range of local and federal government initiatives have been put in place over the past few years with the aim of making KL a greater lure for those with an eye for style. And though bargain shopping is readily available at night markets, shoptots, and even online, when it comes to really driving the retail scene in Malaysia, at the forefront is always the shopping mall. And in Greater KL, it seems like "the bigger the better" and "the more the merrier" certainly seem to be the sentiments in play anytime the subject centres around malls.

When it comes to the development of shopping malls in the country, opinions on the street are divided. Some people love the idea of having so many shopping malls within arm's length, while others dislike it for reasons such as increased traffic and the diminishing green lungs within the vicinity of their neighbourhood – but regardless of where your opinion falls, it's hard to deny that shopping in Greater KL has exploded in both popularity and scale over the last couple of decades. Today, the Malaysian capital city is home to some of the most impressive and comprehensive shopping malls found anywhere in Asia, places where the

crowds only seem to get bigger every year.

## SETTING THE STANDARD

Possibly the two grandest and most notable additions to the KL retail scene – malls which not merely expanded shopping options in the Malaysian capital but in many ways redefined it – are the country's *de facto* monuments to consumerism, Suria KLCC and Pavilion KL. Bright, bold, and unabashedly swanky, these malls, which opened in 1998 and 2007, respectively – put retail therapy in KL on an entirely new level. Suria KLCC, at the base of the soaring Petronas Towers, was built on the site of a former horse racing track, while Pavilion occupies the former site of the Bukit Bintang Girls' School, which was relocated to Cheras several years before construction on Pavilion began. Today, Pavilion's sister mall, the RM7 billion Pavilion Damansara Heights, is being built with a projected completion date of 2021, and will comprise not only another major mall in the city, but a quartet of soaring hotel and residence towers, and a baker's dozen smaller office towers.

Flashing back to the late '90s again, shortly after Suria KLCC opened, YTL Corporation acquired the 1996-built, but already-in-decline Starhill Shopping Centre along Jalan Bukit Bintang and transformed it into a luxury brand retail centre. In 2005, a

major renovation was undertaken and the mall was reopened in July of that year as Starhill Gallery. These days, with the world's most luxurious brands found in both Starhill Gallery and across the street at Pavilion's Haute Couture wing, shoppers can rack up staggering bills within a very small space.

Another massive mall, Berjaya Times Square, was opened in the heart of the city in 2003, delivering an eye-popping 7.5 million sq ft of space for retail, entertainment, hotel, and more – even an indoor amusement park. By sheer floor space, this edifice ranks as the world's ninth-largest building. The building boasts 48 floors and the mall itself comprises 13 floors, though the highest of these are not fully occupied. With over 1,000 shops, a multiplex cinema, restaurants galore, and direct connection to the Imbi monorail station, this huge mall packs in the crowds every weekend.

## SUBURBAN SHOPPING

Further from the city centre, nearly all of Greater KL's major malls have been built in the last two decades. One prominent exception is what is now called the old wing of 1 Utama, which was opened in 1995, and then greatly expanded a decade later, standing as the world's third-largest mall for a time, then fourth, and today, its seventh.

With the runaway success of Suria

KLCC evident before the new mall's paint had dried, developers wasted no time in opening another massive shopping complex, the aptly named Mid Valley Megamall, which was launched in 1999. Today the mall now shares a seamless link with The Gardens, a six-level premium shopping mall which opened in 2007, the same year as Pavilion KL.

Not many malls have a giant lion at their entrance, but the iconic Sunway Pyramid opened as Malaysia's first themed shopping and entertainment mall, opened in 1997, then another phase opened 10 years after that, with a third phase begun last year. A true landmark in the city, Sunway Pyramid also ranks among the world's largest malls, continues to reliably draws crowds from near and far.

## SHOP 'TIL YOU DROP

Of course, numerous other malls – large and small – have either debuted or been completely renovated in Greater KL over the last 20 years, too. Publika, Ikano Shopping Centre, Empire Subang, The Curve, Bangsar Shopping Centre, Fahrenheit 88, Tropicana City Mall, Paradigm, Sunway Giza, Sunway Putra Mall, Avenue K, Quill City Mall, Great Eastern Mall, Nu Sentral, KL Eco City, and plenty more. And the outlook for the future? More malls! A recent news report stated that by the end of next year, Malaysia will have close to 700 shopping malls in

total. It remains to be seen if Greater KL can sustain this level of shopping bacchanalia, but developers certainly seem to be hoping so.

Impressively, Kuala Lumpur was named by CNN back in late 2014 as the fourth-best shopping city in the world – a winning point for delivering the most gratifying and enjoyable shopping experience. Only global titans New York, Tokyo, and London ranked higher. Attracting shoppers worldwide for its winning combination of high-quality shopping, affordable prices, and reliable sales, the shopping scene here has played a part in putting Malaysia on the map, and has made a major impact on Greater KL's growth and appeal over the last quarter century. ■

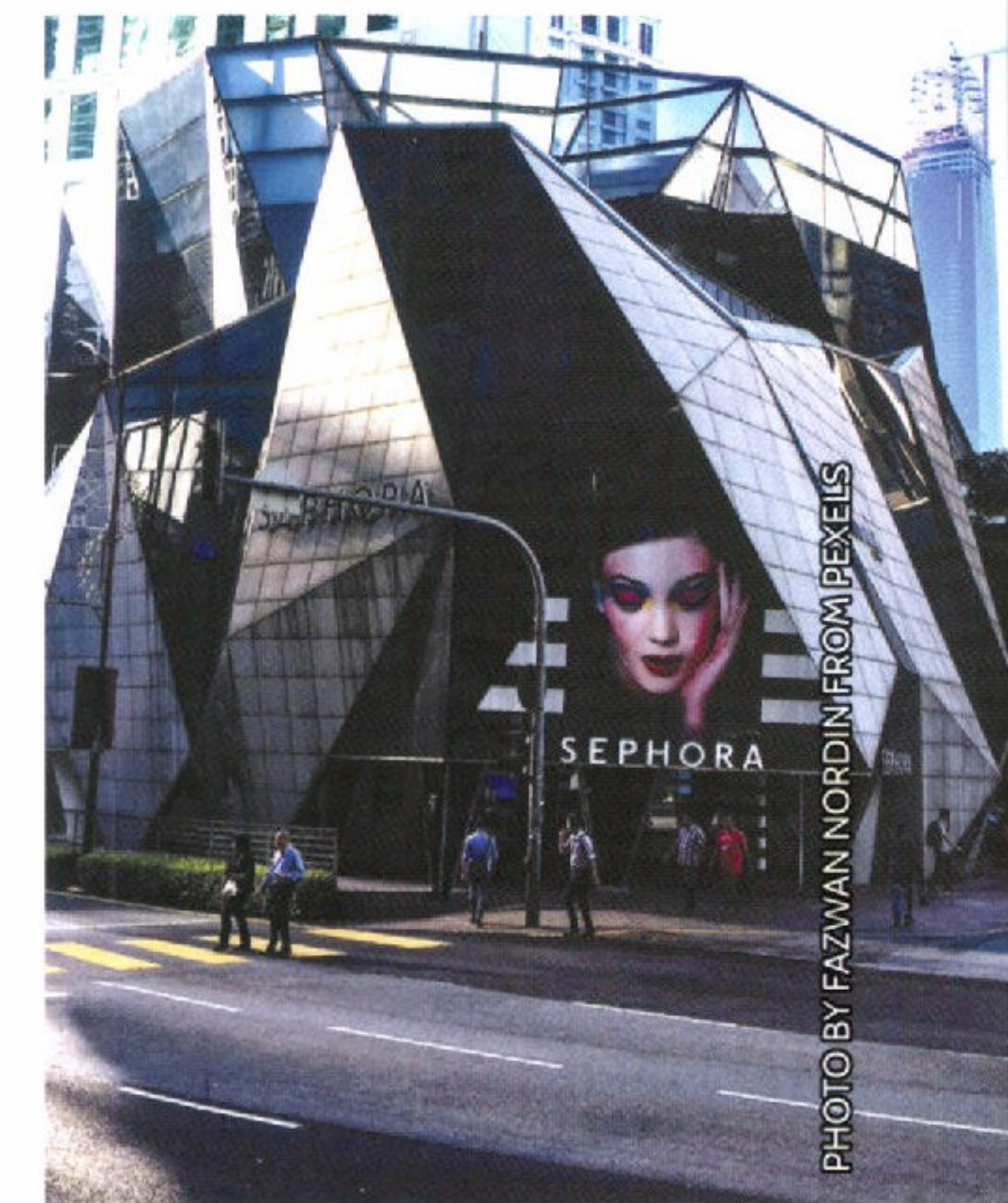


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