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What's good in your state?

If you were a tour guide for a day in your home state, where would you bring visitors to? Malaysians dish out some travel recommendations in their hometowns.

By CHESTER CHIN, ARIESSA RAZALI and JAMIE YONG
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MALAYSIA is home to many wonderful states. This often translates to a variety of amazing travel experiences to discover throughout the country.

Peninsular Malaysia has a land mass of 132,149sq km, and the west coast beckons with colonial charm in states such as Penang and Melaka.

Meanwhile, Pahang, which spreads inward, houses a huge forest reserve.

The east coast – where states such as Terengganu and Kelantan are – calls out with its traditional culture and a more laidback vibe.

Cross the South China Sea to the island of Borneo, and you will find a treasure trove of natural wonders in Sabah and Sarawak. Borneo is also the third largest island in the world.

With such a big land area and beautiful waters along its coasts, Malaysia has much to offer in terms of attractions, food and culture.

Locals know best, so in conjunction with Malaysia Day, we find out what Malaysians from each state, and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, would recommend to tourists visiting their home state or hometown.

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Photo: AHMAD IZZAFIQ ALIAS/The Star

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Locals' top choices

13 SARAWAK
Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister

■ Favourite places
Mulu Caves, Mount Mulu

■ Favourite food
Sarawak-style asam pedas with terung asam




SARAWAK

"Mulu Caves is a must-visit, especially when you want to experience nature. Explore the beauty of the caves, hike along the trails of Mount Mulu and swim in the clear water. I have been there three times and it still mesmerises me to this day.

"If I were to choose my favourite food, it would be midin. Often I would ask the stalls to cook it for me as it is common in Sarawak for people to bring the raw ingredients they bought from the market straight to a stall.

"Aside from that, I also enjoy having umai and I love Sarawak's style of asam pedas with terung asam."

8 SELANGOR
Riad Asmat, AirAsia Malaysia CEO

■ Favourite places
FRIM, Bukit Jugra, Hulu Langat (cycling trail)

■ Favourite food
Jackson Burger in PJ Seksyen 14
Medan Selera Jalan 223




SELANGOR

"Start the tour with a visit to the Forest Reserve in Kepong to explore the bountiful ecosystem. Next, head to Kuala Selangor to visit the Lighthouse or Bukit Jugra, go for some seafood and firefly watching in the evening.

"For adventurous travellers, go on a cycling tour. One of my favourite locations is Hulu Langat.

"My go-to places when hunger hits is nasi lemak at Medan Selera Jalan 223; Jackson Burger in PJ Section 14 (you have to go for their crab burger!); Restoran Subang Ria, Kelana Jaya for kuey teow goreng and yong tau foo.

"For cool desserts, the ais kacang or cendol at Kwong Wah in Section 17 never disappoints. For high tea sessions, Cake Jalan Tiung in Shah Alam will satisfy your sweet tooth cravings."

JOHOR

"Johor Baru is a place where you can find almost everything that could cater to one's diverse interests.

"To those who value family bonding time, there are many theme parks available. If you are interested in heritage, architecture and culture, I recommend the Heritage Trails of Johor Baru, which covers the High Court Building, Sultan Ibrahim Building, Jalan Bahru Chinese Heritage Museum, Jalan Tan Hioh Nee and Jalan Wong Ah Fook, among others.

"Johor also offers a variety of food to choose from. Some places I would recommend are RZ Restoran (for sambal udang galah and ikan baung masak lemak) and Nasir Corner (ikan baung lemak cilipadi) in my hometown of Segamat."

12 JOHOR
Datuk Musa Yusof, Tourism Malaysia director-general

■ Favourite places
Heritage Trails of Johor Baru (High Court Building, Sultan Ibrahim Building, Johor Bahru Chinese Heritage Museum, Jalan Tan Hioh Nee and Jalan Wong Ah Fook)

■ Favourite food
RZ Restoran (Sambal Udang Galah and Ikan Baung Masak Lemak)
Nasir Corner (Ikan Baung Lemak Cilipadi) in Segamat




KEDAH

"Pekan Rabu is great for those looking to pick up souvenirs or a memento of their visit. So, whether you're in the market for songket, traditional kuli or the like – this is definitely a stop for everyone.

"Gunung Jeral was once a centre of commerce and a welcome beacon for weary seafarers who would spot it in the distance.

"If you're an avid golfer, I highly recommend a visit to Darulaman Golf & Country Club. In fact, did you know Bidong, Kedah has its very own Harvard? Harvard Golf and Country Club Course for you to complete 18-hole short course, that is.

"Some of my favourite restaurants when I balik kampung are Yasmeeh Nasi Kandar, Nasi Lemak Royale Kedah and a local restaurant called Kensem that serves the finest Thai dishes."

2 KEDAH
Captain Izzam Ismail, Malaysia Airlines group CEO

■ Favourite places
Gunung Jeral, Pekan Rabu, Darulaman Golf & Country Club, Harvard Golf and Country Club

■ Favourite food
Nasi Lemak Royale Kedah
Yasmeeh Nasi Kandar




PENANG

"Start the day with cycling through the countryside in Balik Pulau. In the afternoon, I will bring them to our Unesco site, George Town, where you can discover best – on foot – the stories of the past which blends with our culture at present.

"You will be spoilt for choice when it comes to award-winning hawker fare. You can even go café hopping when you get tired of hawker food.

"In the evening, catch the funicular train ride and try the world's steepest tunnel track up Penang Hill. Stay for the sunset and see the difference between the views of Penang before sundown and at night. Definitely worth the effort."

3 PENANG
Yeoh Soon Hin, Penang Tourism Development, Heritage, Culture and Arts committee chairman

■ Favourite places
Penang Hill (funicular train), Balik Pulau (cycling trail), Unesco heritage site in the city

■ Favourite food
Hawker food
Char kuey teow
Curry mee
Prawn noodles
Laksa




PERAK

"Being born in Taiping, I feel the city is ideal for overland tours due to its easy accessibility from the North-South Expressway. The must stop places of attractions are the Taiping Lake Gardens, Taiping Zoo and a tour of the historical buildings such as Clock Tower, Telegraph Museum, the All Saints Church and of course keep ample time for food trails. Do take a stroll around to enjoy some of the Taiping Heritage trails before departing for your next destination.

4 PERAK
Datuk Tan Kok Liang, Malaysian Association of Tour and Travel Agents president

■ Favourite places
Taiping Lake Gardens, Taiping Zoo

■ Favourite food
Larut Matang Food Court




"I suggest tourists visit the Larut Matang Food Court. With more than 120 stalls selling an array of local favourites, tourists may find it hard to decide what to eat as everything looks good."

PAHANG

"I was born and raised in Kuantan, so I would bring tourists to Teluk Cempedak because people usually only know Pahang for Cameron Highlands and Genting

7 PAHANG
Khaleeda Nora Asmieda Kamaruzaman, Entrepreneur

■ Favourite places
Teluk Cempedak

■ Favourite food
Mail Ikan Bakar (grilled fish)
Keropok Lekor Kak Cik (keropok lekor)





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Highlands. This is something different if they're looking for stunning scenery and back-to-nature activities that would not break the bank. The fresh air, clear waters and beautiful scenery, with water sports activities like jet skiing are what make the place so attractive.

"I also have some favourite food spots that might not be known to tourists, which are Mail Ikan Bakar for scrumptious grilled fish and Keropok Lekor Kak Cik."



1 PERLIS

Dinie Aiman Sukhaizar, Student

Favourite places



Tasik Timah Tasoh

Favourite food

Seafood and ikan bakar by the seaside



PERLIS

"What I love about my state is the many places where you can just sit down and enjoy a mesmerising sunrise or sunset.

Tasik Timah Tasoh is a famous picnic destination that's family friendly. The lake has a stunning view and is an ideal place to relax, but it also comes with exciting outdoor activities like kayaking and fishing.

"For food experiences, I would take them to Kuala Perlis to have a taste of freshly caught seafood cooked right by the seaside. I think aside from the scenery, people enjoy Perlis because it has such a peaceful and calm atmosphere."

TERENGGANU

Terengganu is a land rich with natural wonders and home to a very friendly community! I would take friends or family members to Pulau Perhentian. The water activities here are amazing and divers from all over the world flock here. You can enjoy



6 TERENGGANU

Nur Amalina Azam, Student Affair Executive

Favourite places

Pulau Perhentian (scuba diving and beach activities)



Favourite food
Dapo Pata in Tok Jemba

scuba diving, kayaking and snorkeling in the clear azure waters. The acres of beautiful sandy beaches can be enjoyed by families and backpackers alike.

"After hours of playing under the sun, I'll bring them to my favourite eatery which is Dapo Pata in Tok Jemba which is unique for their kitchen-by-the-beach concept and has recycled shipping containers as walls. The food ranges from ikan bakar to steak."



10 NEGRI SEMBILAN

Bernie Yong, Stretchen & Co founder

Favourite food

Haji Shariff Cendol

Quinn Beef Noodle Seremban (lou shi fun)



NEGRI SEMBILAN

"I would bring tourists to Quinn Beef Noodle Seremban for a hearty meal! Made fresh daily, they serve noodles known as lou shi fun with thick beef gravy. The gravy is

superb and they also make super good iced lemon tea. For an afternoon snack, I would suggest one of Seremban town's favourites - Haji Shariff Cendol. I would always bring my friends or family here if they're visiting. You can pair the bowl of cendol with any of their other mains like rojak or mee goreng so it's a place where you can definitely share a bit of everything with your friends and family."



14 SABAH

Britney Annelle Lim, Licensed Tour Guide

Favourite places



Kinabalu Park, Danum Valley Conservation Centre

SABAH

"Sabah is a great state when it comes to tourism because we have islands that are world-class diving sites and the oldest tropical rainforest in the world. Even our culture here is very unique. I would bring tourists to Kinabalu Park, which is home to more than 5,000 flora and fauna species and a great place for people to be wowed by Malaysia's rich biodiversity. Fun fact: This huge park is actually 755sq km in land size, meaning it's slightly bigger than Singapore!

"I would also take them to Danum Valley Conservation Centre because I'm always amazed to see all the trees there and learn about them. You get to see interesting wildlife and even the tallest tropical tree in this area."



9 KUALA LUMPUR

Veenith Balachandran, Fresh Graduate

Favourite places



Little India in Brickfields

Petronas Twin Towers, KL Tower

KUALA LUMPUR

"What I love about KL is how diverse it is. If you want, you can get a taste of the city life but you can also go for a retreat as well.

"A must-visit is Little India in Brickfields. It's a great place for people to explore and indulge in another culture. Often times, I come here just to get certain spices or groceries because I can't find them anywhere else.

"I would also take them to the Petronas Twin Towers and the Kuala Lumpur Tower. These buildings allow people to go up and take great pictures."



11 MELAKA

Raveena Nagotra, Final Year Law Student

Favourite places



A' Famosa fort, St Paul's Hill

Favourite food

The Baboon House



MELAKA

"I would start off by bringing tourists to the A' Famosa fort. It's such an iconic spot in Melaka as it's one of the oldest surviving European architectural remains in South-East Asia. Then we would climb up St Paul's Hill. The top of the hill overlooks the city of Melaka and as dramatic as it sounds, each time I look at the town I call home, I get an incredible sense of joy and happiness with the memories associated with this place.

"A hidden gem I would bring tourists to would be The Baboon House. Also situated in Jonker, this quaint cafe specialises in burgers but what got me going back is how they're incredibly committed to being as sustainable to the environment as possible through composting practices."



5 KELANTAN

Wan Harisun Wan Hamid, Intern

Favourite places



Pantai Senok

Favourite food

Pohja Lokcing Guchil Bayam in Kota Bharu (grilled satay ikan)



Kedai Dodol dan Serunding Hajah Wan Sabariah

KELANTAN

"Kelantan is a food heaven! So the first place I would bring visitors would be somewhere they can taste great local food. I would take them to Pohja Lokcing Guchil Bayam in Kota Baru for scrumptious grilled satay ikan, or what the locals call, lokcing. I would also bring them to a stall selling dodol called Kedai Dodol dan Serunding Hajah Wan Sabariah for a taste of traditional cuisines.

"If they are looking for somewhere to relax, Pantai Senok is a popular local spot, famous for its scenic pine-tree lined paths by the seaside, which is dubbed Malaysia's version of Nami Island (in South Korea)."



Scan for an interactive map of travel experiences in Malaysia

