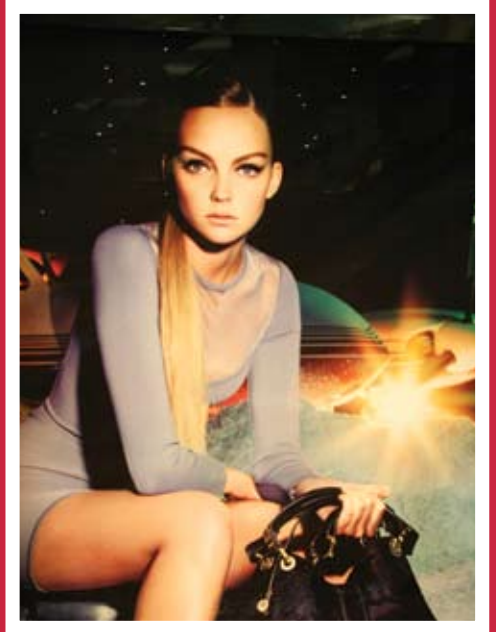




This page, be pleased by Prego. Opposite, clockwise from top left, have it all at Neroteca; grand Pavilion; glamorous Suria; Sky Bar is perfectly cool; elegant Louis Vuitton; Suria sits at the Twin Towers' base; jamming at No Black Tie; delectable Fukuya.



KUALA LUMPUR HOTLIST

It's difficult to keep up with Malaysia's booming capital, so let John Brunton lead you to the best new addresses in town.



Clockwise from above, No Black Tie brings a live jazz vibe to KL; everyday brings new glamour to Suria; chef Lauren Colin creates a feast for the tastebuds at The Dining Room.

PAVILION OF PLEASURE

PAVILION-KL While Kuala Lumpur is already as close as you can be to shopping heaven, the opening of Pavilion has taken it a notch higher. Billed as KL's version of Hong Kong's Causeway Bay or Tokyo's Ginza, this futuristic seven-floor emporium presents a dazzling 450 different outlets. In a city already boasting a dozen mega malls, Pavilion has been dubbed the first über-mall. Alongside ultra-luxury boutiques—Rolex and Hermès, Ferragamo and Versace, Burberry and Tiffany to name just a few—are trendsetting outlets like Shanghai Tang, Juicy Couture, EQIQ, and Thomas Pink. Shoppers are spoilt by bars, restaurants and lounges at this must-visit destination. *Jalan Bukit Bintang, tel: 03 2716 1088*

JAZZ PIZZAZZ

NO BLACK TIE KL has always had a vibrant music scene, with venues for live bands ranging from plush bars in the city's luxury

hotels to hip futurist nightclubs. Now it finally has its own genuine jazz club, the kind that boasts both the ambiance and quality musicians to make you think you're in New York or Paris. No Black Tie (NBT) is the brainchild of Evelyn Hee, a young classical pianist who has turned all her enthusiasm to creating the ultimate club both for musicians—the acoustic quality is simply outstanding—and jazz enthusiasts. Different acts play every night, and you may catch a cool samba session, a big-band tribute to John Coltrane, or a local crooner mixing Irving Berlin ballads with a moving Malay love song. NBT is as much about wine and dining as the music, and discerning clients can order outstanding wines such as Tignanello from Tuscany and Savigny Grand Cru from Burgundy, while the kitchen stays open until midnight, serving "Gastro-Japanese" dishes such raw tuna with fermented soya bean, deep-fried oysters and grilled salmon belly. *17 Jalan Masui, tel: 03 2142 3737*



HEART OF THE ACTION

SURIA KLCC The vibrant heart of Kuala Lumpur, KLCC is where tourists marvelling at the Twin Towers meet thousands of locals focused on shopping, dining and having a great time. The secret of Suria's success is simple: almost every day brings the launch of a new luxury boutique, tempting restaurant, or dazzling event. Most recently, Malaysian shoe designer Jimmy Choo saw his name arrive on a new boutique in his home country, while Bali's exclusive jewellery designer, John Hardy, now has his own store, too. Isetan has just opened a hip new café, and computer fans will love all the latest Apple innovations on display at Machine. *KLCC, tel: 03 2382 2828*

SHINING SUCCESS

LOUIS VUITTON, STARHILL Jalan Bukit Bintang is Malaysia's "Star Hill": drive up this glittering boulevard at night and your eye is caught by the glowing façade of Louis Vuitton's flagship boutique. A vast illuminated cube, its French



Clockwise from above, for a top night out, SkyBar reaches the peaks; there's more to Prego than fabulous brunch; style at Starhill with Louis Vuitton.



designers have successfully married local architectural style with Parisian elements including the famous LV monogram. Inside, shoppers are treated to irresistible displays of all the Vuitton classics, as well as a unique piece of jewellery—the Malaysian Kite Charm, exquisitely crafted in 18-carat gold and precious gems. Privileged clients are shown into the exclusive VIP room, a peaceful oasis away from the busy showroom, to view this priceless item and other LV creations. *Starhill Gallery, Jalan Bukit Bintang, tel: 03 2141 8790*

VIEW TO A THRILL

SKYBAR The moment the rooftop SkyBar opened its doors, it became the place to be seen in KL, combining fabulous views, cocktails, sushi, an in-house DJ—and an inviting pool for when the partying gets too hot. Situated at the 33rd floor of the hip new Traders Hotel, opposite the Twin Towers, the SkyBar offers the ultimate city panorama, especially at sunset when lights illuminate a glittering array of tall buildings. The bar is so popular that it is crucial to reserve—either a table by the pool or one of the private “cabañas”, where you can lounge on plump sofas and enjoy the view. Try the martini—especially mixed with lychee—and the sushi, served by the metre on a slender silver platter. On Fridays and Saturdays, SkyBar transforms into a DJ club, and is packed until 3am. *Traders Hotel, KLCC, tel: 03 2332 9888*

CLASSIC MEETS CONTEMPORARY

THE DINING ROOM For an unforgettable evening of gourmet cuisine and romance, reserve a table at The Dining Room, the restaurant of the Carcosa Seri Negara hotel. Once the British High Commissioner’s residence, this grand mansion sits among jungle-clad hills, with unparalleled views over the city below. Sit on the terrace, sipping a martini, while the ceiling fan whirrs, taking you back to the days of a Somerset Maugham novel. The Dining Room was recently voted the Best Western Restaurant in Malaysia, and French chef Lauren Colin has created a menu to rival that of any in Paris. Choose between classic dishes like *croustillants d’escargots au pesto de persil* and *pigeon roti aux épices* and more surprising creations such as sea-bass tartar with finely diced apples or grilled Wagyu beef accompanied by a hearty mix of oxtail and mashed potatoes. *Carcosa Seri Negara, Taman Tasik Perdana, tel: 03 2282 1888*

NOON FEAST

PREGO BUBBLY BRUNCH Sunday brunch is a sophisticated social institution in Kuala Lumpur, with hotels and restaurants offering a cornucopia of choices. Forget anything as simple as Eggs Benedict and a Bloody Mary, and be tempted by a 40-dish Chinese menu, a Japanese buffet of sushi, sashimi, teppanyaki and tempura, or a selection of good old English roasts. But for

a sumptuous splash-out, nothing beats the Bubbly Brunch at the Westin's stylish Italian restaurant, Prego. The "bubbles" come in the form of free-flowing Laurent-Perrier champagne, while unlimited cocktails and wine are also included. And from the moment you sit down, the dishes never stop coming—tasty antipasti like pepperoni *assoto al basilico* and honey-cured salmon, then a delicious risotto infused with saffron and white truffles or handmade tortellini stuffed with wild mushrooms. Save room for the irresistible tiramisu or chocolate soufflé, and before heading home, there is the obligatory *digestivo* of grappa or iced limoncello. *Westin Hotel, 199 Jalan Bukit Bintang, tel: 03 2773 8013*

SPICES IN THE SOUK

PRECIOUS His Old China Café brought a touch of chic to KL's ancient Chinatown: now dynamic restaurateur Johni Wong has doubled his success by opening his latest concept, Precious, in Central Market. The building began life as a food market before becoming a souk-like bazaar. Recently renovated, there is now a much wider variety of boutiques, and galleries and a performing arts space have opened. Precious is not easy to find but that is part of the fun. This elegant, peaceful haven has become a favourite evening address, and has the feeling of an intimate private club—an Aladdin's cave of antiques including centuries-old medicine cabinets from Shanxi filled with delicate porcelain and glittering crystal chandeliers. The cuisine is a homage to the traditional Nonya cooking from the owner's hometown of Malacca: "Dishes I love to cook at home for my friends," he says. Signature spicy treats include *acar awak*, pickled vegetables smothered in crushed peanuts, prawns cooked a delicious rich coconut *lemak* sauce, and *itik tim*, an aromatic duck soup with sour plums and cabbage. *nutmeg and tamarind. Central Market, Jalan Hang Kasturi, tel: 03 2273 7372*

ITALIAN INNOVATION

NEROTECA The brand-new sister restaurant of KL's favourite Italian restaurant, Nerovivo, Neroteca is a fun mix of café, bar, restaurant and delicatessen. In the lobby of an exclusive apartment building, it is open from 9.00am through till 2.00am. The open kitchen is overseen by Italian chef, Massimiliano Banauro, while his Jamaican-born wife, Lisa, buzzes between clients doubling as maitre d' and sommelier. Pop in at breakfast for a cappuccino and brioche, savour spaghetti with succulent king prawns or a plate of prosciutto and salami at lunch; in the evening, fashionable folk arrive for the homemade *salsiccia* sausages served with polenta, and juicy pork chops cooked "alla Milanese" in light breadcrumbs. Later, the action moves to the long bar for a glass of Prosecco. *8 Lorong Ceylon, tel: 03 2070 0530*

NOW AND ZEN



From top, once discovered, you'll want to share Precious' intimate ambiance; enjoy the gourmet delights of Fukuya before the crowds arrive; king prawn salad features among the Italian favourites at Neroteca.



FUKUYA This newcomer on the Japanese fine-dining scene is still a hidden secret, but reserve a table soon before it is discovered by the guide books. Fukuya is set back from a quiet residential road with a white path lined by six private zen dining rooms, and a main restaurant in a minimalist converted bungalow. The interior designer has cleverly used ancient timber planks, ropes and tree trunks, while glass walls let diners look out over lush bamboo gardens. Takao Ando has long been recognised as one of KL's finest Japanese chefs, and his cuisine has become even more inventive. Why not choose the *dégustation* menu—a traditional *kaiseki*, featuring two soups and seven dishes, such as sea bass wrapped in banana leaf and baked in sea salt, a cocktail of poached quail egg, salmon roe and raw scallops, or a grilled eel sushi roll peppered with fiery Malaysian chillies. *9 Jalan Delima, tel: 03 2144 1022*

VINTAGE FRANCE

LA TERRASSE The streets surrounding Jalan Ceylon have become the KL Golden Triangle's major fine- and fun-dining scene, a maze of gourmet restaurants, funky bistros and hip bars. Frenchman Philippe Le François was the first to open a smart restaurant here, and now his latest venture combines three different venues in a renovated 1940s building. The ground floor hums with a lively outdoor bar popular with local expats. Upstairs, a romantic dining room showcases hearty French cuisine. Cooking is done slowly, using the finest products, so expect traditional favourites like *coq au vin*, while the classic *soupe à l'oignon* is out of this world. Serious wine and cigar connoisseurs usually prefer a table upstairs, in the cosy "bar à vin", where the walls are lined with hundreds of cases of wine, and the evening invariably ends with a lengthy tasting of fine vintages. *33 Jalan Berangan, tel: 03 2145 4964*

JUNGLE BEAUTY

M SPA If the steamy humidity of KL's tropical climate overwhelm, head to the mountains, less than an hour's drive from the centre. Genting Highlands is a jungle-clad resort 1,500 metres above the capital. The main attraction here, apart from the cool weather, has always been its glamorous casinos, making it the Las Vegas of Malaysia. While here, you are surrounded by 100 million year-old forests instead of the baking desert, the casino owners ensure that guests are tempted not just by the roulette tables, but also luxury hotels, gastronomic restaurants, and celebrity entertainers. High rollers need to pamper their bodies too, and the latest attraction is the palatial M Spa, which offers a range of sensuous treatments including a detoxifying chocolate body wrap and the anti-ageing Oxyspa using 99% pure oxygen. *Genting Hotel, tel: 03 6105 2692* □