

A Rewarding Work-Life Balance in Greater KL

IN MUCH OF LIFE, BALANCE IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS. EDITOR **CHAD MERCHANT** RECENTLY INTERVIEWED ONE EXPAT LIVING IN GREATER KL WHO HAS FOUND THAT THE FAVOURABLE BUSINESS CLIMATE, ABUNDANT LEISURE OPPORTUNITIES, AND FRIENDLY, ACCEPTING PEOPLE MAKE ACHIEVING A GREAT WORK-LIFE BALANCE HERE AN EASY PROPOSITION.

For working expats, one of the most rewarding aspects of living overseas is striking a healthy balance between work life and personal time spent in the host country. The ability to find this balance varies, of course, from place to place. For some expat assignments, safety and security concerns are so extreme, the ability to even enjoy a normal life is compromised; for others, the opportunities simply aren't readily available: Integrating into the culture is difficult, language barriers complicate matters, and the expat's life revolves almost completely around work.

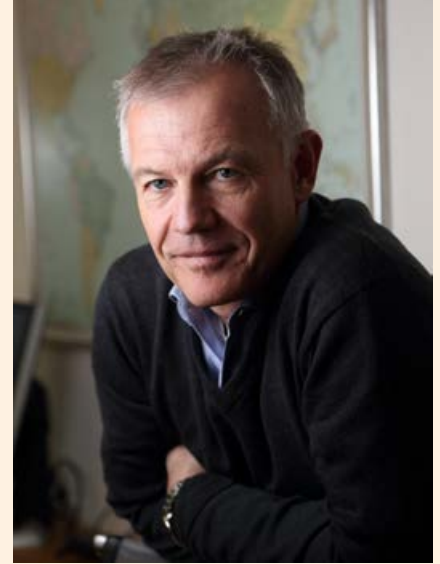
For expats living in Greater KL, however, nothing could be further from the truth. A welcoming and multifaceted culture, plenty of easily accessible leisure opportunities, widely spoken English, and a host of incentives ensure that the expat assignment here is one many aren't keen to see end! We spoke recently with Carl Schou, president of Wilhelmsen Ship Management, about his experiences with taking care of business and indulging in leisurely pursuits in his home base of Greater KL. We first asked him for a bit of background – both for him and for the company he heads up.

"Wilhelmsen Ship Management has a long history here in Malaysia and Greater KL. We have had a presence here for more than 20 years. The Head Office was moved from Greater KL back to Oslo, Norway in 2004 then relocated back to Greater KL in 2009, in connection with my taking up the position as President. Therefore, my first challenge was to move the HQ from Oslo back to Malaysia's capital city. During this time, I have to say that I have enjoyed my time thoroughly. At first, Malaysia seemed a far way off from what I was used to in Norway – but the hospitality of the people here made it an easy move and easy for me to feel accepted. In many ways, relocating to Greater KL has been

a continuation of a longer journey. I was born and raised in Zimbabwe, before moving to Norway. In my late 20s, I started working in the cruise industry and spent nearly 10 years in the US. Adapting to new places has been part of my life for a long time."

But what about that elusive work-life balance so important to an enjoyable overseas experience? Carl gave high marks on both sides of the equation: "Workwise, Malaysia is a good country to do business from," he explained. "Geographically, it is very easy to get to the many countries we do business with, and many flights go either directly or with one stop to most countries. The business atmosphere here is unique; I feel that the country is successfully attracting foreign companies because of what it offers. I must say that InvestKL is instrumental in this, as recently seen by the golf tournament arranged by InvestKL, where companies were able to meet each other as well as important counterparts in government and public offices."

When it comes to leisure and personal time, Carl was even more effusive. "Greater KL is a very easy place to live," he said. "The huge variety of foods, the many possibilities for outdoor sports and the general offering of activities are excellent. My daughter, who is studying in Norway, flies over a couple of times a year and loves the city with all its vibrancy." And when it comes to Greater KL's favourable location, Carl was quick to point out the myriad travel opportunities available from the Malaysian capital. "We are an active family and we really like to travel, so being here, we are well-situated to travel to the many countries surrounding Malaysia, as well as to some great destinations in Malaysia itself. And even around Greater KL, outdoor sports such as golfing and biking are high on the list of our family's activities."



He continued, praising Malaysia's eclectic cultures, "There is a lot to enjoy in this wonderful country. The diversity is one of the things we like the most. The many cultures ensure that the best of all comes out, which is something we really like."

Leisure and business converge quite seamlessly in Greater KL, Carl explained. "We feel that the opportunities are endless in this country. If expats are willing to step outside their comfort zone, there are a lot of opportunities for doing business and a lot to see and do during the time off. Workwise, the access to competent local workers is a big plus point," he explained. "And our offices are located by KL Sentral which is very convenient, as many of us travel a lot. Plus, as Malaysia is a country that genuinely wants expats here, and wants multinational companies to be here, the different initiatives which have been implemented for companies makes Greater KL a natural place to be if one wishes a presence in Southeast Asia."



Tasked by the Malaysian government to attract and facilitate large global multinationals to set up their regional business, innovation, and talent hubs in Greater Kuala Lumpur and strategically grow their business in Asia, InvestKL works with other government ministries, entities, and agencies to formulate attractive fiscal packages and help corporations identify business opportunities while strengthening their competitiveness regionally and globally.