

# Expatriate Living: Food, Fun, and Family in Greater KL

Greater KL offers a highly competitive business advantage for companies looking to set up offices in the region. But beyond that, the Malaysian capital delivers an enviable quality of life for expats here, too. Editor **Chad Merchant** spoke with a seasoned expat about Greater KL and got his thoughts on what's so good about living here.

**W**e recently caught up with Mr Andy Nicol, a British expat serving as the Vice-President of Asia for Hobsons, an education advancement firm. Having set up a regional hub in KL a few years ago, Mr Nicol has had the uncommon experience of settling in Malaysia, then leaving for another Asian country, only to return here to find an increased appreciation of the benefits and lifestyle offered by Greater KL. Here's what we discussed:

## Can you tell us a little more about yourself and your job?

Well, I was born in the UK, near Cambridge, but as part of a military family, we moved around rather a lot when I was growing up. However, I returned to the UK for my later education. In 2010, I joined Hobsons, and very shortly thereafter, relocated with my wife to Greater KL, where we were establishing a regional hub to uncover the great potential in Asia for our company. Hobsons is a multinational education-focused company which creates and delivers a range of products and services to help students identify their strengths, explore careers, create academic plans, and reach their education goals. Currently, we're working with over 12,000 education institutions serving some 13 million students in over 100 countries.

## How long have you lived here in Greater KL? What do you and your family think about living here?

We've lived here since 2010, and my daughter was in fact born here in 2011. But there was a break in there, too. For about 18 months or so, we relocated to India to build our team there. I think it was a great experience, and a good thing to leave Malaysia, be exposed to something else, then return here to KL. Things we had perhaps come to take for granted here – the quality of life we enjoyed, the ease of doing business, and all the great restaurants and recreational opportunities – which were not so readily available elsewhere in Asia were

rediscovered with a much greater appreciation once we moved back to KL!

## That makes sense. You don't know what you've got until it's gone! So where in the city do you live, and where is your office?

Initially, we bought a place in Bangsar, not far from BSC. When we relocated to India, we decided to keep it and rent it out. Upon our return, we rented a place in Taman Seputeh, close to Mid Valley Mall. We're working on buying and refurbishing another place now, and expect to move in by the end of this year. As for work, our team in KL has grown significantly since we started business here, so we've had to move to bigger premises. We've just recently taken a much larger space in the KL Sentral area and think that will be a place we can stay and grow into.

## What factors come into play for a company making a decision to launch an overseas office, and what advantages do you think Greater KL offers over other regional cities?

Costs are of course a factor, and KL really shines here – the cost of labour, cost of doing business, and for expats, the cost of living. But beyond that, the pool of available local talent is an important consideration, as is the ease of setting up operations and the level of support offered. There are other factors, too. Are visa services straightforward? Is the infrastructure sound, particularly with regard to technology and telecommunications? Are quality schools available? How's the healthcare? Can expats own property? Is there a good lifestyle? In all of these points, Greater KL does very well and offers a real advantage over other cities in the region.

## What is a typical weekend like for you and your family? Any favourite places here in Greater KL or some getaway destinations you enjoy?

Well, just spending time together as a family, of course, and we have some places we frequent, like BSC and the



Telawi area in Bangsar. We love going to performances by the Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, and we also eat out rather a lot as a family... a good blend of nice restaurants and street food discoveries! We like Tatsu, the Japanese restaurant at the InterContinental, and also Chef Low's in Lucky Garden, Bangsar – two very different places that we both enjoy. We visit the wet market in TTDI regularly and have found a great place for roti around there. We really like going to Penang, Ipoh, and Melaka on weekends; it's very easy to just hop in the car and go. Living in Greater KL gives us many opportunities to explore, both in Malaysia and in the region, too – a real bonus for expats living here! ■



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.