

Greater KL: Good for the Game

We meet many expats attached to companies related to oil and gas, manufacturing, and education. This is fairly expected in Greater Kuala Lumpur. But meeting Andre Stiegler, a German expat who most recently lived in the UK, was altogether different. Andre looks after the KL branch of Codemasters, a software company widely known for its games, produced primarily for the Xbox and PlayStation gaming platforms.

Codemasters Studio Kuala Lumpur was established in 2006, and represented the first production facility for the company to be opened outside of the UK. Today, the office handles the artwork for a plentiful array of award-winning games, including the licensed franchise of Official Formula 1 racing games, a series which has enjoyed strong sales and considerable industry acclaim.

As for Andre, who has worked for Codemasters for the last 10 years, he relocated to Greater KL back in mid-2010. Now after completing six years here in the Malaysian capital, he feels he's found his home away from home. "I really enjoy Greater KL," he told me in a recent conversation. "I'm fairly active in the local scene, and in my years here, have made quite a few Malaysian friends."

After talking with Andre for a while, it came as no surprise that he's found Greater KL so much to his liking. He was impressed with the city right from the start, even when he visited prior to his relocation. "We made a few good trips here before my assignment," he explained, "and I remember my first impression being one of surprise. I really didn't expect the city to be so modern, so developed. In a way, it almost didn't feel Asian enough, because it didn't quite fit my expectations of what an Asian city should be. Many signs were in English, people spoke English, everything seemed modern, I felt quite comfortable. It was a very good first impression... just a surprising one."

And once he moved here, the surprises continued. "Honestly, it was in some ways an upgrade in my lifestyle," Andre laughed. "I had been living in a fairly

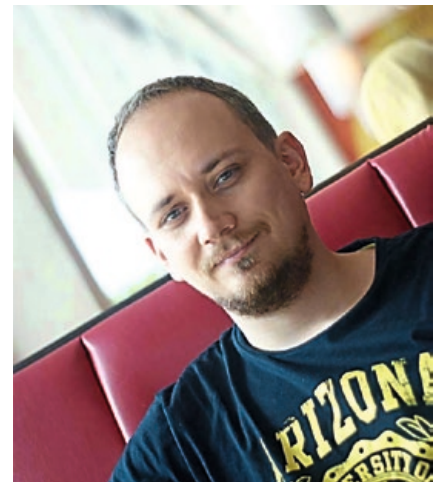
small city in the UK. Once I arrived in Kuala Lumpur, I found a nice place with a great swimming pool and a gym – things I didn't have back in England."

Today, Andre both lives and works in the KL Sentral area, a convenience he very much appreciates. "That was something I noticed once I moved here," he said. "When I was visiting, I was looked after by the local team. Once I moved here, though, I had to manage on my own. I had to get around on my own. There are places in Greater KL where you really just have to have a car to reach – or use taxis or ride-sharing services." He pointed out the need for better public transit, noting the ongoing projects to upgrade and expand the rail system in the city. Much of this will come on line later this year and in early 2017, and Andre – like many others – is looking forward to the difference it will make.

I asked him how well he feels Greater KL competes with other regional cities from a business standpoint. "Oh, I think Greater KL does a good job. All the cities are trying, of course, but there are certain advantages here. For one, the pool of talent is good and the city both attracts and retains it. We look for diverse, competent, and creative people, and have not had any difficulties finding them. The cost of living here is much lower than places like Singapore or Hong Kong, and the infrastructure competes very favourably when compared with other capital cities like Jakarta or Manila."

Another factor Andre touched on, perhaps often overlooked or taken for granted, is the reliability of utilities and services here. Electric supply, internet, phone service, water – these services are virtually never disrupted, outside of the rare scheduled downtimes. For a gaming company that depends on a reliable supply of electricity and consistent access to blazing-fast broadband internet, Greater KL delivers.

Like most expats, Andre enjoys the easygoing lifestyle here, too. "Both my parents are chefs," he smiled, "so I was raised with an appreciation for good food, for trying new and different things, and I love that there is so much variety available here. I eat out all the time. It's affordable and fantastic." Travel



opportunities also earn Andre's praise, and he cites Langkawi and Bali as two of his favourite places to vacation. "Greater KL is centrally located in the region, and has great air connections and airports, so it's easy to escape to any number of destinations," he noted.

I asked Andre, now beginning his seventh year in Greater KL, if he has considered staying here even longer-term. "I can see it," he replied. "Of all the places I've been, Kuala Lumpur is the easiest city to live in. Good infrastructure, modern, I can get by speaking English, and it's easy to get great German food here. So yes, I'd say Greater KL and Malaysia in general will be my preferred home in 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.