

Greater KL Offers Exciting Change to New Expats

EVEN WHEN MOVING FROM ONE ASIAN COUNTRY TO ANOTHER, THE EXPAT EXPERIENCE IS ONE OF NEW PLACES, DIFFERENT CULTURES, AND EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES. FOR AN EXPAT EXPERIENCE THAT EMBODIES JUST SUCH ENJOYABLE CHANGE, GREATER KL COMPETES ESPECIALLY FAVOURABLY.

For expats, whether relocating to Greater KL from faraway Europe or America, or from other Asian countries relatively nearby, the first few months in their home away from home are often a whirlwind of excitement, change, and new experiences. Though every assignment brings its own unique challenges and rewards, many of the themes we hear from newly arrived expats are similar. We recently spoke with one such expat, attached with IBM, who arrived recently from India and is settling into his new home in Greater KL and enjoying the experience and all the city has to offer.

Hi there, thanks for speaking with us. Can you tell us your name and position with IBM?

Ramesh Alwan, Leader of IBM Client Innovation Center Malaysia | Cyberjaya

Where in India are you from? When did you move to Malaysia?

I originally hail from Chennai, but have been living in Bangalore (or Bengaluru as it's now officially called) for the last 13 years. I moved to Malaysia in September 2015, so not that long ago.

Are you here with your family? If so, can you share a bit of information (kids' ages, family's reaction to moving to Malaysia, etc.)

I am alone here for now. My family continues to live in Bangalore as our only son, Adhithya, will complete high school in the next academic year. Fortunately, my wife, Sudha Ramesh, has been supportive of the move because she understands that it's a good career opportunity.

Had you visited Malaysia prior to relocating here? Did you have any preconceptions about the country prior to your arrival?

Yes, my family and I visited Malaysia as tourists for a week back in 2009, and we really enjoyed our time here. I did not really have any preconceptions, but was certainly curious how would living here would be – it's of course different than



being here as a visitor. Now, having lived in the capital city for a few months, I find some similarities to home – such as foods and language – which makes adjusting to the culture here easier. Kuala Lumpur is a fascinating, exciting place to live.

Do you find the Indian community here in Greater KL to be similar to that in India itself?

Yes, in a lot of ways, but naturally, one cannot expect everything to be the same when you move across oceans. Starting from the food habits all the way down to observance of religious practices, it is very similar. There are the obvious differences because of the geographical separation like the ability to adapt to technological changes and things like that, but this has not been an issue for me. It's been quite easy for me to adapt.

Have you travelled around Malaysia yet? Any particular destinations you're keen to visit?

Yes I have been to Penang and I visited Langkawi during the recent Christmas break last year when my family joined me here in Malaysia. I am looking forward to go to Mount Kinabalu in April, which I was told is the right season to climb the mountain. I was impressed with Penang. It was truly a heritage city from the rickshaws to the street food and the street art... what a cultural mix. I was awestruck eating Indian food in Malaysia in a Malay restaurant playing Beatles music! It was just so diverse, it was an amazing experience! The Penang bridge was a sight to behold with the sea on both sides.

Do you think Greater KL provides a good environment for foreign companies?

Yes, it certainly does in a lot of ways. The infrastructure is good, the government is very encouraging and supportive, and above all the people are very hospitable. Any new start up should find it pretty easy setting up their business in Kuala Lumpur.

What about the expat lifestyle in Malaysia and in Greater KL? Have you found it to be satisfactory in the short time you've been here?

Yes, I'd say it is extremely good. The lifestyle and living conditions are very good here and the climate has been very supportive, too – at least for me as I love the tropical climate! Apart from the hazy stint in late September and early October, I have found expat life in Greater KL to be really enjoyable.

What are some of the best Indian restaurants in the Greater Kuala Lumpur area that you've enjoyed?

There are plenty of those! Anna Lakshmi in Kuala Lumpur, Malgudi in Petaling Jaya, and Jaipur Mahal in Cyberjaya are a few that I can quickly recall. ■



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.