

# Greater KL: An Easy Expat Experience

For first-time expats, Malaysia is generally regarded as a fairly comfortable introduction to Asia. For well-seasoned global nomads, a posting here is often considered a walk in the park. Editor **Chad Merchant** talks to one such expat, who has found life in Greater KL to be both easy and enjoyable.

**W**e recently sat down with Ashley Mills, Managing Director of Linde Malaysia Sdn Bhd, to talk about his experience in Greater KL.

**The Expat:** Hi Ashley. Can you tell us where you're from and how long you've been here in Malaysia so far?

**Ashley Mills:** I'm from the Birmingham/Sheffield area in England. I arrived in Greater KL in August 2014, so it's coming up on a year quite soon.

**Whereabouts do you live? Is this your first experience with Malaysia?**

I live in Bangsar, and really enjoy the area. I've found it to be so convenient, and there are some great restaurants here, too. I had actually been in Bangkok previously – spent about 12 years there – so I had been to KL plenty of times, and travelled back and forth a good bit before being posted here last year.

**Let's talk about lifestyle first. What are your thoughts on living in Greater KL now that you've been here for a while?**

Well, probably the first thing I'd say is that the fact English is so widely spoken here makes it considerably easier to live here. Though I did learn Thai during my time in Bangkok, being in a city where English is not spoken makes everything just that much more challenging for a new expat. That's one less thing new expats in KL have to worry about, and it's a big one. Not having a serious language barrier makes everything much easier.

I would also say that expats in general look for ways to make their overseas lives easier, and Greater KL really excels at that, especially compared with many other Asian cities. Food is easy to get – as anyone will tell you! There's a great range of food, whatever you might want, at a range of prices, and plenty of it is available at any time, day or night.

Technology today also makes life easier. Taxi apps and things like Waze make

getting around the city less stressful. That extends to connectivity, too. There's great broadband coverage, 4G, satellite TV, all these things that really do make life easier and, in turn, more enjoyable.

Socially, I've found KL a bit harder than Bangkok, but I will say this. The expat community in KL is stronger, and there are plenty of things for expats to do, both with locals and with other expats. Sports, clubs, golfing, you name it. One of my favourite pastimes is scuba diving, and for avid divers, Malaysia is just a brilliant place to be with loads of terrific dive sites within easy reach. Of course, most expats will be familiar with Changkat Bukit Bintang. There are some great bars and a good expat scene right in my Bangsar neighbourhood, but Changkat is really the one to beat. So many great bars and restaurants down there.

One of the best times I've had here so far was a "food tour" – not surprising that Malaysia has something like this! It was incredible... almost five hours of eating. Malay, Chinese, Indian food, and it didn't end there. There was plenty of beer, and even pancakes on this tour! Truly a great time, and something I'd really recommend for expats who want a fun and informative local experience.

**And what about the business side of things? As MD of Linde, what are your insights about working here or basing a company here?**

Also quite positive. I've worked in nearly a dozen countries across Asia, and Malaysia really has a lot to offer. Here in Greater KL in particular, there's a good talent pool, you've got a multicultural and multilingual population, and I'd also add that there's a fine level of education in the talent pool, too, particularly in fields like oil and gas, electronics, and engineering.

What I mentioned earlier about connectivity also definitely applies to business, perhaps even more so for multinationals. Telecommunications



infrastructure is excellent here, and the internet speeds and reliability are very good, so for business, this strong connectivity makes Greater KL that much more attractive, something that isn't always the case in other Asian cities.

Increasingly, too, Greater KL is able to boast "green" credentials in its buildings and initiatives, and that's something that's important to investors as well as customers. Taken on the whole, my first year here has been enjoyable from both a personal and professional perspective, and I'm keen to see how things will continue to unfold.



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.