

# Greater KL Offers Southeast Asia's Best Work-Life Blend

**W**e recently caught up with Anne Marie Brooks, an American expat who has definitely found her home away from home in Greater KL, and she talked with us about how Greater KL has proven to deliver an excellent blend of business advantages with an enviable lifestyle in Southeast Asia.

**The Expat:** Hi, Anne Marie, thanks for sharing your story with us. Can you tell us a little about your background and the company you're now with?

**Anne Marie Brooks:** It's a pleasure to share my views on Greater KL, as well as my experiences here. Although I grew up in the United States, I've lived in Southeast Asia – Singapore and Malaysia – for the last eight years, so I feel very comfortable here. I work for Honeywell International as their Director of Government Relations for Southeast Asia.

**How long have you lived in Greater KL and what do you think about the overall quality of life here for expats?**

When I first moved from Singapore to Kuala Lumpur over three years ago, one of my close friends described KL as “a great place for affordable luxury.” While weekly spa days and daily cocktail hours are not exactly my speed, I do certainly enjoy the great quality and affordable lifestyle that you can have in Greater KL. It is not as fast-paced as cities like Singapore or Hong Kong, yet you can still find art, theater, live music, and of course excellent restaurants once you know where to look. I also appreciate that the atmosphere here is more laid-back and that the city is much less crowded.

**So when you moved here from Singapore, what was your first impression about the lifestyle in Greater KL?**

My first impression of the lifestyle of KL was that, in many meaningful ways, it was much more similar to Singapore than I had expected. I was impressed with how clean, green, and lively it is, and how easy it is to get around, especially in the compact city centre area.

**Where in Greater KL do you live and work?**

I currently live near the city centre to be closer to work, but for my first two years in KL, I lived in Bangsar, an upscale residential neighbourhood nearer to the suburbs. These areas are certainly very

different from one another, but they each have their own advantages. Bangsar was a beautiful, green, quiet area to relax, while my current location near KLCC is a safe, upscale area that allows me to easily walk to work, great restaurants, and multiple shopping and entertainment options – nearly everything I would need on a daily basis.

**What do you see as the key factors for a company making a decision to locate in Greater KL, especially when it comes to placing their expatriate employees?**

For companies considering locating overseas, key business aspects are certainly the easy connectivity to the rest of the region, strong local market, good access to talent, a supportive government, and reasonable costs. Greater KL offers all of these.

Beyond the business side of things, companies who will be relocating expatriate employees should appreciate that Greater KL offers a comfortable and enjoyable life for their employees and families: well-regarded international schools, quality healthcare, grocery stores with foreign products, good restaurants for both local and international fare, and many of the conveniences and comforts they would have at home.

**So based on that, what advantages do you see Greater KL offering over other cities in the region?**

Well, I think Greater KL excels at all these things I've mentioned. But perhaps the aspect of locating in Kuala Lumpur that I believe doesn't get discussed enough is the advantage of Malaysia still being on a similar rapid development trajectory to many of its regional neighbours.

Compared with living in markets so developed that they are wholly dissimilar to their neighbours, living in Greater KL still gives a good perspective on the opportunities and challenges of rapidly growing Southeast Asian economies, and it allows executives based here to better understand and serve these markets.

**Tell us about your usual weekend here.**

Often I travel on weekends – either to the beaches or highlands of Malaysia, or around the region via Malaysia's easy flight connections. When I'm in town, I enjoy brunches, art galleries, and afternoons



reading by the pool. It's great to take advantage of Malaysia's tropical climate.

**What are some of your personal favourite spots in Greater KL and in Malaysia?**

Some of my favourite restaurants are Antipodean, La Mexicana, and Alexis Bistro for Western food, and Dancing Fish, Sao Nam, and Passage Thru India for Asian fare. Places to visit in KL that I love are Lake Gardens and the Islamic Art Museum, especially some of their special exhibits. On my weekend getaways where I venture out of KL, I really like Penang and Fraser's Hill for a quick trip nearby, and my favourite holiday place in Malaysia overall has been Sipadan. I've been to many of the world's top dive sites, and Sipadan is the best I've ever seen. ■



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.