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Market trends

Chow Kit, Kuala Lumpur's old merchant district, is experiencing a new verve

Words by Sharon Crowther
Photos by All is Amazing

A short stroll west of KL's Petronas Towers lies Chow Kit, a neighbourhood with a chequered past. The northern end still buzzes with wholesalers, hawker stalls and Pasar Chow Kit, a wet market thought to be Malaysia's oldest. But venture south, away from the hustle, and you'll find quieter streets where new businesses are putting down roots.

1. Rise and Shine by Tapestry

Opening its doors on Jalan Kamunting in the second half of 2019, this restaurant has proved an instant hit with Kuala Lumpur's brunch-loving crowd with its high ceilings, exposed brick and natural light. Popular items include the *shakshouka* (eggs baked in tomato-based sauce with lamb meatballs) and the assorted smoothie bowls. Proudly local, they source ingredients for much of the menu from the nearby wet market. tapestrydining.my

2. MoMo's

This new kid on the block touts itself as a "social hotel", with a lobby that doubles as an event space for pop-up food vendors, artisans and DJs. There is also a taco bar serving tequila until the small hours. The boutique stay features minimalist-style rooms with quirky LED lighting. Located in the heart of Chow Kit, MoMo's is the ideal base for exploring both sides of this vibrant neighbourhood. stayatmomos.com

3. Loke Mansion

Chow Kit is home to dozens of heritage buildings, from pretty 1920s shophouses to the imposing Loke Mansion, built in 1892 by a local business tycoon. Tucked behind rain trees, the building was restored in 2006 by a local law firm that now uses its premises as its offices. Tourists are welcome to look around the mansion and admire its medley of architectural styles – from a Chinese moongate to Dutch gable ends.

4. The Row

On a mission to exemplify adaptive reuse and responsible urban regeneration in Chow Kit, The Row is a block of 1940s shophouses, beautifully restored in 2015 and repopulated with an eclectic mix of boutiques, cafés and other lifestyle businesses. Pick up artisanal gifts such as local Malaysian batik from Peter Hoe, grab a cuppa at the cosy Common Grind or peruse the community-run Sunny Side Up Market for handmade jewellery and cosmetics. fb.com/therowkl

5. Joloko

Residing opposite Rise and Shine, in a canary-yellow townhouse, this award-winning Afro-Caribbean cocktail bar has been shaking up Chow Kit's nightlife scene since July 2018. Often bustling with the city's trendy set, the lively bar is known for serving nearly 50 varieties of mezcal including *Almamezcalera*, rarely found outside Mexico but widely considered one of the world's best. bar-joloko.com

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