



MEDIA INFO

THE MANY COLOURS OF MALAYSIA

There is no better time to see Malaysia in its entirety than during the month of May and June. This is when the whole country comes alive with music, rhythm, a kaleidoscope of colours and a spectacular show of the individual diverse customs, arts and culture.

During the month-long celebration of *Colours of Malaysia*, or *Citrawarna*, the whole of Malaysia will be on parade and revelers will bask in the beauty of Malaysian's individual customs and practices.

This is the time, when Malaysia's unique blend of multicultural diversity -- from her people, food, language and culture and arts -- will come together in one festive celebration of life.

Yes! This colourful happening can easily be termed the festival of life as that is what each and every Malaysian is proud of and look forward to celebrate every year.

In fact, there is no real need to devote an entire month for the celebration, as Malaysians are thankful each and every day for the blessings they received, for being able to live in peace and harmony together since they gained independence in 1957.

But they felt they had to put aside a special month for it so that visitors, especially foreigners, could also enjoy the celebration.

This gave birth to *Citrawarna*. The first celebration was showcased in 1999 and since then, it has become a major tourism event bringing thousands of visitors from near and far. What makes it more intriguing is that even the locals look forward to this festival.

It is the best time for visitors to see at a glance the entirety of Malaysia – enjoy the song and dance, revel in the culture and beauty of each ethnic group, lavish in the food of various cuisine, drink in the way of life and the elements that make each and every one of them truly unique.

Each of Malaysia's distinctive communities – Malay, Chinese, Indian, Kadazan and Gawai -- has its own unique lifestyle including traditions and architectures and also language.

Malaysia is a nation proud of its culture and heritage. Tolerance, acceptance and appreciation of one another's cultures are traits that are intrinsic to Malaysians – so diverse, yet at the same time, unique. Underneath it all lies the same spirit – the spirit of being Malaysians, of being united and diverse.

THE LAUNCH

The month long Citrawarna will kick off with a full scale parade where each of Malaysia's 14 states will put on a spectacular show filled with song, dance and culture.

No less than 5,000 participants dressed in their colourful best ethnic costumes will perform their home state's traditional song and dance.

The venue of the launch, **Dataran Merdeka**, or Merdeka Square, will be filled with pulsating music and lively dance on May 24.

Following this, each state will put on their own *Citrawarna* festival, promising visitors an experience to remember until the end of the festival on June 22.

From Kuala Lumpur, you can conveniently journey north, south or east of Malaysia or to the three federal territories. The Peninsula is made up of Perlis, Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya, Negri Sembilan, Malacca, Johor, Pahang, Terengganu and Kelantan. Sabah, the Federal Territory of Labuan and Sarawak on the mystical island of Borneo, make up the rest of fascinating Malaysia.

Each state will have on parade the very best of their individual culture, be it through dance performances and cultural shows.

Visitors can expect to see lots of colour and to hear vibrating and pulsating traditional sounds from string instruments and drums.

STATES OF MALAYSIA

Each of the 14 states has its own set of customs and traditions. Contrary to belief that an ethnic group is the same everywhere, *Citrawarna* will show you what makes each and every one different. And yet despite the differences, they still live in peace and harmony.

During the grand *Citrawarna* parade, each state has chosen some part of their self to highlight and show you.

However, if you miss the grand parade, do not worry as each state will have their own set of activities including their own unique parade.

Kedah Darul Aman

Kedah, home of the country's paddy fields, is close to the Thai border which explains the influence the Siamese have on the state's tradition and culture. This time around the state will feature the *Cinta Sayang* dance , a true symbol of the state's loving and caring nature. Many have said that the gracefulness of the Kedah Malay's is reflected in this dance that also portrays their courteous and polite manner.

The rhythm and movement of each dancer combined with their beautiful smiles fills the air with merriment in a carnival like atmosphere. Originally, fishermen and farmers do this dance during the paddy harvest period to entertain themselves after a hard day's work.

Perlis

Located along the Malaysian-Thai border, the people of this northern state is an intriguing mix of Malay and Siamese cultures. Also known as the rice bowl of Malaysia, paddy fields dot the horizon as far as the eye can see. Its people are always comfortably dressed

in *sarongs*, *baju Melayu* and *baju kurung*, the traditional garb of the Malays. Some say that Perlis food tend to be spicier than traditional Malay food due to the influence of Thailand.

Pulau Pinang

The vibrant island boasts its own unique and distinctive culture. This state will reminisce and pay tribute to the late Tan Sri P.Ramlee who was born in the “Pearl of the Orient” on March 22, 1929. He is known as a multi-talented artiste who has contributed endlessly to the entertainment industry through film and song between the 1950s and 1960s. He has left a great impact on the culture and social history of Malaysia and Singapore. The performance by the state will feature excerpts from some of his famous films such as *Hujan Panas* and *Ali Baba Bujang Lapok*.

Perak

The silver state of Malaysia due to its famous mining past has a predominantly Chinese population as workers from China had come here to seek their fortune but ended up settling here. The most famous product which has every tourist in awe is the *labu sayong* – a calabash shaped urn used during mystical rituals or simply for storing water. It's a wonder as the water stored in it is always cool. The people of Perak even have a dance called the *labu sayong*.

Selangor

Selangor is the melting pot of Malaysia as you can find a cross section of all the main races in Malaysia that is Malay, Chinese and Indian. Here is where you can easily find each group's house of worship.

Kuala Lumpur

This presentation will use the local element of the different races that is Malay, Chinese and Indians that revel and bask in the beauty of their art and culture. The synergy of rhythm and movement through instruments, props and individual dances display the aesthetic values and prestigious image of the three main races in Kuala Lumpur.

When the cadence starts, it will instantly move the people's natural instinct. When the drum sounds it will call to the people's spirit. Musical drums are the ground of this presentation and the combination of the different ethnic group's drumming is a true reflection of unity and harmony. The dance movements show a merry and understanding mood that colour the life of Kuala Lumpur.

Negri Sembilan

This state, situated in the central of Peninsula Malaysia, holds in high regard the monarchial rule and their custom known as *adat*

perpatih. Negri Sembilan uses the open umbrella concept in the parade this year to symbolise the way of life of the people, which holds strongly to the *adat perpatih*. The umbrella is a symbol of the monarchical rule, which always protects the people. The song and dance of the people known as “*Bongai*” combines the music of *Cak Lempong*, *Paluan Gendang* and *Tumbuk Kalang* which becomes the main elements of the performance. This will be accompanied by the dances of *Endang*, *Piring*, *Joget* and *Pesta*, which will make add to merriment of this repertoire.

Malacca

Malacca is a state that is proud of its history and legacy. It was founded in the 1400s by Parameswara and during this era it became a thriving port for traders in the region. Malacca is renowned for its Baba and Nyonya community which is why this year’s parade chose to put on show the *dondang sayang*, a charming musical performance that is a feature at any gathering. It involves no less than two singers who engage in jovial banter accompanied by a traditional musical group. The grace and beauty of this performance is reflected in their every move, which symbolizes the customs of the state.

Johor Baru

Johor is said to be the home of classical Malay culture. Its people boast a colourful Javanese and Bugis ancestry. Many events

and traditions have evolved from this multi ethnic mix. For the parade, they will put on the Zapin, a popular dance of the people in Johor. Among the *Zapin* dances are *Zapin Lenga*, *Pekajang*, *Tenglu*, *Zapin Pulau*, *Mastar*, *Bunyian*, *Tanjong*, *Laboh*, *Serkat*, *Zapin Arab* and others.

Pahang

This is Peninsula Malaysia's largest state renowned for its natural wonders including Taman Negara, believed to contain the world's oldest rainforests, and tranquil lotus covered lakes. Its cultural offerings include dance, martial arts, that is *silat*, *wayang kulit* (shadow play) and a remarkable trance dance, *Olek Mayang*, and *Rodat*, a fishermen's dance.

Kelantan

This state is dotted with beautiful swaying palms and scenes of village folk spinning tops and flying beautifully decorated kites or *wau* in the mother tongue. The people speak a distinctive dialect and its women dominate the local trade industry. People of Kelantan come from all walks of life including fishermen, merchants and farmers. The most famous song from Kelantan is the *dikir barat* which offers lively, raucous and riotous hand clapping. It is made up of incantations in praise of *Allah* and his prophet. A lyricist will sing verses and rhymes while his ensemble will sing and clap, accentuated with intricate hand movements to liven up the performance.

Terengganu

This state's performance this time around will highlight the state's various districts interpretation of their inner self, customs, culture and religious values. Based on these values, a dance was choreographed to symbolise the way of life of the people in Terengganu.

Sabah

The people are a diverse mix of ethnicity and their beliefs and customs date back to time immemorial. They are most popular for their bamboo dance, a high spirited and energetic dance which require you to hop, skip and jump in between clanging bamboo poles. This is also home of the *Sumazau* dance, an enchanting dance of the *Kadazan* community which see slow movements likened to the flight of birds. Other dances include the *Murut* tribe traditional dance and the *adai-adai* dance, another traditional and popular Sabahan dance.

Sarawak

Multi racial Malaysia is rich with each ethnic groups unique tradition, religion and culture. Malaysia is divided into two groups that is the Peninsula and the Borneo islands consisting of Sabah and Sarawak.

This time around, the *Citrawarna* parade will combine the art and culture of the Borneo islands and the Peninsula to show camaraderie and unity as well as democracy among the two by using a golden bridge made from bamboo.

The bridge is a symbol of brotherhood the Peninsula shares with Sabah and Sarawak which is separated by the South China Sea. This is the unity and strength needed to achieve Vision 2020 as symbolized by the strong bamboo stem of the Malaysian flag. The spirit of Malaysians and their cooperation can be reflected in the intertwining of bamboo for the raft which was the main mode of transport decades ago. The display of the magnificent golden bridge adds colour to the harmony of Malaysia as a peace and loving environment.

MORE THAN SONG AND DANCE

Other than the parade and display of culture, tradition and customs, there are other aspects of Malaysia that one should not miss out. Food – another important element of Malaysia – is in itself a celebration.

Each ethnic group has its own traditional food and during Citrawarna, all would be accessible to visitors to savour and enjoy.

The hotels and even restaurants will join in the festivities and serve a delicious spread of local and ethnic cuisine for all to savour. It would definitely be an interesting experience tasting from spicy to savoury to sweet, sour, salty and simply lip smacking!

Traditional handicraft would also have visitors in awe. Its intricacies, delicate workmanship and various textures would easily inspire anyone.

Another aspect of Malaysia that makes your stay here an unforgettable experience is the warmth and hospitality of the local folk. Malaysia has, and still is, highly appreciated as the “Land of a Thousand Smiles”. And there is a reason for this!

At the same time, do not forget to enjoy Malaysia’s scenic beauty as she has destinations that would surely captivate you for a lifetime. Whatever your heart desires, Malaysia has it ... long, sandy white beaches, remote islands with exquisite diving spots, cool highlands, adventure and nature trails, thriving nightlife and classical entertainment and also world-class shopping malls.

There is so much to say and do about Malaysia’s diverse culture and way of life. The best way to enjoy and experience it all is during the *Citrawarna*, a time where you can bask in **Malaysia Truly Asia** -- experience it all here in beautiful Malaysia.

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