
Malaysia

Kuching Sarawak

Cultural Cities Profile
East Asia

May 2021

Contents

Introducing Kuching	05
City Vision/Mission/Slogan	07
Kuching in Numbers	08
Context	09
Location/Region	09
Ethnic Diversity	09
Cultural, Arts and Civic Policy	11
Capacity Building,	13
Digital Development and Wellbeing	
Environment and Sustainability	18
Regional and International Partnership and	21
Positioning	
Cultural Ecosystem and Infrastructure	23
Heritage Assets and Activation	24
Events, Festivals and Creative	32
Marketplaces (selected)	
Creative Infrastructure, Hubs and	36
Assets (selected)	
Sample of ‘Movers and Shakers’	39

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Introducing Kuching

Kuching City, a dynamic, fast-growing hub which merges traditional cultures with a contemporary creative scene, and sophisticated urbanism with environmental sustainability, is the capital city of the State of Sarawak on the island of Borneo. Greater Kuching includes Kuching North City¹ and parts of Kota Samarahan.²

The Sarawak state formulates its budget and policies in line with the federal Malaysia plans, with the latest budget focusing on 7 key economic sectors with 6 key enablers and 8 strategic thrusts. Broadly, it aims at: “Reinvigorating the Economy towards a Resilient, Caring and Inclusive Society”, and post-pandemic to realise the national aspiration to become a high-income economy by 2030.

The State of Sarawak will embark on a study of Kuching City – Local Plan 2030, to ensure a holistic and sustainable urban development, inclusive of a focus on culture and creativity. Sarawak Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth, and Sports Minister Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah envisions “Kuching to be a centre of the arts.”³

Kuching – the cat city.

Photo © Sarawak Tourism Board

¹ The 3rd National Physical Plan. P 3 – 6.

² Briefing by the Mayor of the City of Kuching North.

³ https://mtac.sarawak.gov.my/modules/web/pages.php?mod=news&sub=news_view&menu_id=&sub_id=&nid=451&m=8&y=2019



“

Sarawak exhibits notable diversity in ethnicity, culture, and language. The racial and cultural diversity in Sarawak is among the symbols of solidarity, harmony and strength of the people in the state that could become the best model for a multi-ethnic society to enjoy the prosperity of living together. Kuching being the capital city of Sarawak is well known for its ethnic diversity where the composition of the population with regards to ethnic and religious background is represented.

Suriya Charles Buas, Director of MOTAC Sarawak⁴

⁴ Interview with Penang Institute

City vision/Mission/Slogan

The vision of Kuching North City Hall is “Kuching... a vibrant liveable city of choice”.⁵ The vision of Kuching South City Council is to “enhance the quality of life of the people of Kuching South”. Its mission is to transform Kuching City South into a liveable place through effective implementation of policies, service delivery and community engagement.⁶

Kuching is Sarawak’s core city, where state, national, and international-level offices are based. The economy is heavily service-based with a strong dependence on tourism and hospitality. In recent years, the government has been pursuing economic diversification measures with a focus on digitisation and industrial revolution 4.0.

Having been awarded “International City for Crafts” status by the World Crafts Council in 2019, the Sarawak Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports Minister Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah declared that Kuching would be promoted as an arts, culture and crafts paradise.

- Sarawak Craft Council⁷ is the dedicated agency founded to promote local handicrafts. A dedicated Sarawak Handicraft Centre in Kuching is currently being considered. This will be aided by a holistic plan for talent development, production and retail of craftworks.⁸
- The range of indigenous crafts and skilled crafters that flow into Kuching has increased the city’s role as a hub for craft and design.⁹ This includes a diversity of traditions, ranging from trades such as Malay ‘*Keringkam*’, a silver metallic embroidery on sheer muslin cotton, to Chinese tin and metal smithing, to Bidayuh basketry in rattan and bamboo, to Iban ‘*Pua sungkit*’ weaving and more.

Baskets woven by Sarawakian weavers sold under the Ranee Artisan Gallery.

Photo © KitaKita

⁵ Vision and Mission of Kuching North City Hall. <https://dbku.sarawak.gov.my/page-264-284-323-Vision-And-Mission.html>

⁶ Vision and Mission of Kuching South City Council. <https://mbks.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-80-50-Vision-Mission.html>

⁷ <https://sarawakhandicraft.com.my/about-us>

⁸ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/09/09/minister-sarawak-eyeing-law-on-crafts-development/1901663>

⁹ <https://www.wccinternational.org>



Kuching in Numbers

Kuching has

**3 government hospitals,
8 private hospitals, and
32 government clinics**

as of 2018

Greater Kuching is administered by

3 municipalities

Greater Kuching
Population
(including the Samarahan District)

**≈ 804k
citizens**

in 2019

Equatorial Climate

≈ 23°C to 32°C

on Average

Bandaraya Melaka

9 metres

(30 feet)

Above Sea Level

Land Area

≈ 1,498 km²

Sarawak State GDP
RM53,358

≈ GBP9,402

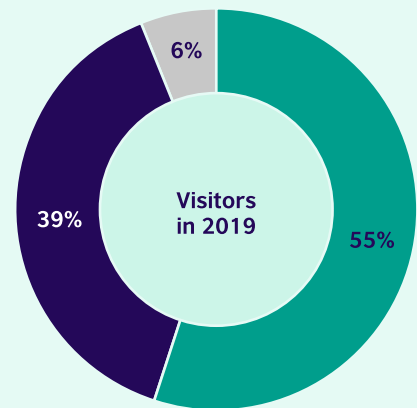
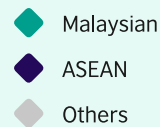
in 2018 – 2019

1 Malaysian Ringgit
(RM)

≈ 0.2 Pound

(GBP)

in 2019



**Sarawak
Cultural
Village**

saw 108K domestic
and 20K international
visitors in 2019

About **62%**
(7.72 million hectares)
of the State land mass
area is under

**forest cover,
7.34 million
hectares**

are hill mixed
dipterocarp forest

Kuching old bazaar are is **100+ year-old** and has
≈ 200 traditional shophouses

Context

Location/Region

Inaugurated as a city in 1988, Kuching counted 700K population in 2019, while the Greater Kuching area totalled 804K (including the Samarahan District).¹⁰ The Local Government Ordinance 1961 for Sarawak has been the primary governing legislation for Kuching. The districts in Greater Kuching are administered by the local governments under the Ministry of Housing and Local Government that formulates, executes, and monitors local government laws.¹¹

Ethnic Diversity

Sarawak has more than 40 sub-ethnic groups, where cities and larger towns are populated predominantly by the Malay, Melanau, Chinese, and a smaller percentage of Iban and Bidayuh who have migrated from their home-villages to seek employment.¹² In 2019, according to the Department of Statistics Malaysia, Kuching presents the following demographic breakdown:

- Bumiputera 433K
- Chinese 248K
- Others (includes Indians) 5.3K
- Non-citizens 15.1K

Commonly spoken by Kuchingites, Malay and English are both official languages in Sarawak and are both mediums of instruction in schools.¹³ Chinese mostly speak Foochow, Hokkien and Hakka in Kuching whereas indigenous groups such as Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau and others, utilise their respective native languages for daily communication.

Sarawakian Network



As the capital of the state of Sarawak, Kuching is a growing hub for culture and the creative economy. It provides connections to other cities across the state and amplifies the voices of the wider Sarawakian communities, including that of Miri.

Based in Miri, Borneo Jazz Festival features local and international talents from the world of Jazz. It has a strong emphasis on social responsibility

towards building up the Sarawak community sustainably.

The Tuyang Initiative, 2017 – present

This Miri-based, community-led arts management company seeks to secure the preservation of indigenous communities' culture and traditions by ensuring that these communities achieve a livelihood through arts.¹⁴

¹⁰ My Local Stats, Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2019.

¹¹ The Local Government System in Malaysia. <https://www.clgf.org.uk/regions/clgf-asia/malaysia>

¹² <https://photo.sarawaktourism.com/gallery.php?cid=002>

¹³ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2017/01/22/abang-johari-sarawak-to-keep-english-as-official-language>

¹⁴ Sarawak Tourism Board.

69

Although Kuching has a multi-ethnic population, the people have been living in peaceful unity for centuries. There are mosques and churches built side by side with Chinese and Indian temples nearby each other. In most coffee shops, we can see Muslims, Chinese, Indians, Ibans, Bidayuh and Orang Ulu operating food stalls under one roof. Muslims and non-Muslims eat at the same table and it is not uncommon to see Malays and other ethnicities chatting in Mandarin, Hokkien, Hakka and Iban dialects which are not their native tongues.

Suriya Charles Buas, Director of MOTAC Sarawak¹⁵



Carpenter Street.

Photo © Sarawak Tourism Board

¹⁵ Interview with Penang Institute

Cultural, Arts and Civic Policy

69

Kuching culture is one that proudly recognises its history and heritage, yet also embraces its modern incarnations, which is apparent in our food, our arts and our everyday lives. This is due to our unique history, governed as an independent state for a century by the Brookes from England. As Sarawak was never a colony, this has given rise to generations of Sarawakians and Kuchingites who are proud of their heritage and their place in the world.

Anette Chung, Social Media Manager of About Kuching¹⁶

Kuching's rich cultural heritage can be experienced through its food and seen via the various buildings and infrastructure in the city ranging from picturesque Malay villages (*kampungs*), a golden-domed mosque, a Victorian fort, a whole street of 19th century Chinese shophouses and an imposing wooden-roofed palace.

The city also possesses ornate Chinese temples, many fine examples of colonial-style architecture, a beautiful

waterfront and a number of interesting museums, including the historic Sarawak Museum.

Local delicacies – such as deer meat and jungle fern, *tuak* (local rice wine), and many more traditional foods of different ethnic communities – are easily available especially since a plethora of Iban and Bidayuh longhouses are within travelling distance from Kuching.¹⁷

¹⁶ <https://dayakdaily.com/new-museum-complex-to-become-must-visit-landmark-in-sarawak>

¹⁷ Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, is simply unique. <https://sarawaktourism.com/kuching>

Sarawak Tourism Master Plan 2020 – 2035 by Sarawak Economic Planning Unit and State Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry.

A study to develop Sarawak Tourism Master Plan 2020-2035 is currently being undertaken by the Sarawak Economic Planning Unit and the State Tourism, Arts and Culture Ministry, in consultation with key players and experts in the tourism sector, to address the negative impact of Covid-19 on the

tourism industry, develop new strategies and actions to boost its recovery, and ensure long-term growth. Strategies include:

- Establish and promote Sarawak as one of the best destinations for eco-tourism and holidays
- Target and attract domestic tourists through the Sia Sitok Sarawak tour packages
- Encourage business ventures, investments and partnerships.¹⁸

Community Care



The Sarawak government has been proactively improving the local infrastructure and the social welfare system, in their ambition to rebalance regional development.

Sarawak Endowment Fund (EFS), 2019 – present

The Sarawak Endowment Fund (EFS) is derived from the earnings of the sales tax on petroleum products.

- EFS gives RM1,000 (≈GBP176) to every Sarawakian newborn.
- The money, which is to be used only for education and work-related reasons, can be withdrawn when the child reaches the age of 18.¹⁹

Sarawak Post Covid-19 Exit Economic Strategy 2030. Economic Planning Unit.

The Sarawak Economic Action Council (SEAC) has been established to develop the Post Covid-19 Exit Strategy 2030 anchoring on digital economy and environmental sustainability. Focus areas include:

- Diversifying tourism offer beyond leisure tourism
- Regreening Sarawak
- Enhancing basic infrastructure, utilities and transportation system²⁰

¹⁸ Sarawak Tribune.

¹⁹ Sarawak Post Covid – 19 Exit Economic Strategy up to 2030.

²⁰ Sarawak begins third tourism master plan study. <https://www.theborneopost.com/2020/10/22/sarawak-begins-third-tourism-master-plan-study>

Capacity Building, Digital Development

In 2017, Kuching hosted the “International ICT Infrastructure and Digital Economy Sarawak (IDECS) – Transforming Sarawak through the Digital Economy” conference. Since then, the state government has set up dedicated agencies and devised a blueprint to drive its plan to diversify its economy to include a digital pillar.

Under such a government focus, Kuching has become the headquarters for the Sarawak Digital Economy Corporation, Sarawak Multimedia Authority, and is also

home to the first TEGAS Digital Innovation hub (there are now 3 in the state).

The state recognises its role to provide the necessary infrastructure and facilitate the growth of infrastructure building and ecosystem enablement.

In the coming years, the focus is on a post-pandemic recovery plan. Meanwhile, in his 2021 State Budget speech, the Chief Minister has listed development of connectivity and accessibility as priorities.



The digital economy strategy could boost the socio-economy of the state while increasing employment among the youth.

Prof Datuk Dr Khairuddin Ab Hamid, Vice-Chancellor of the University College of Technology Sarawak (UCTS)²¹

Key Policies in Digital Infrastructure

Sarawak Telecommunication Policy, 2018. Sarawak Multimedia Authority (SMA)

Telecommunication Policy is the guiding principle on telecommunications infrastructure and services, which aims to aid, facilitate and accelerate the development of telecommunications' infrastructure and services. As a two-way street, the policy aims to bring in investments for digital and telecommunications infrastructure, while encouraging telecommunication providers to contribute to the community.²²

Sarawak Digital Economy Strategy 2018 – 2022. State Service Modernisation Unit, Chief Minister's Department.

Launched in 2017, the Sarawak Digital Economy sets to speed up Sarawak's economic growth, lower socio-economic divide, and boost youth employment.

- Under the Arts and Culture sector, the objective is to protect and conserve Sarawak's culture and heritage physically and digitally. This includes, among others, keeping a digital record of images, documentation, and press coverage on arts and cultures; and to digitalise old heritage photos and information of Kuching through AR/VR Apps to reproduce real-life experience on heritage and culture.²³

²¹ <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2019/02/08/prof-sarawak-digital-economy-strategy-20182022-a-boost>

²² Telecommunication Policy in Sarawak. P. 3

²³ Sarawak Digital Economy Strategy. P. 6 & 23

Six enablers are listed in the Sarawak Digital Economic Strategy 2018-2022 to support future development of the digital economy in Sarawak: digital infrastructure, digital skills and talents, development, digital economy research and development, digital innovation and entrepreneurship, digital and data, cyber-security and digital inclusivity.²⁴ The state government has initiated the following:

Centre of Technical Excellence Sarawak (CENTEXS)

The state government has established the Centre of Technical Excellence in 2014 through Sarawak Foundation (Yayasan Sarawak). It aims to train more technical people to fulfil Sarawak's needs to industrialise the economy.

- In the digital economic plan, Sarawak government is going to build, develop and head hunt a workforce that is agile, digital-savvy and industry-ready. One of the programmes mentioned, is the collaboration with Huawei, CENTEXS-HUAWEI, which aims to supply talent for digital infrastructure especially for the state's digital economy.²⁵

- **Digital Village Ecosystem**

In 2018, Digital Village Ecosystem was set up by Sarawak Multimedia Authority (SMA) to offer services and opportunities for startups such as co-working spaces, funding and investment opportunities, access to the global market, and many more.²⁶

Digital innovation hubs have been set up in many cities in Sarawak including Kuching, Bintulu, Miri and Sarikei. The SMA-TEGAS Digital Innovation Hub (DIH) in Kuching is funded by SMA and managed by the Sarawakian Idea Economic Fund (Tabung Ekonomi

Gagasan Anak Sarawak, TEGAS). It provides access to affordable co-working spaces, entrepreneurship education and venture acceleration programmes, and Sarawak Digital Ecosystem network.²⁷

Creative Heritage Innovation Centre (CHIC), a community-driven shared work space for startups and entrepreneurs, was established in Kuching to provide a space for them to interact with each other and network with other fellow individuals, and to form a creative community working towards culture and heritage preservation in Sarawak.²⁸

- **Old Kuching Smart Heritage (OKSHe)**

In 2018, OKSHe's vision is for Old Kuching to attain the smart heritage city status by meeting the requirements of UNESCO in order to boost economic growth and enhance the quality of life in communities. OKSHe is departmentalised into four parts: Kampung Heritage, Historical Building Heritage, Business Heritage, and Riverfront Heritage.²⁹

- **Kuching Smart City, 2020**

Smart city is one of the digital economy sectors listed in the digital plan.³⁰ Sarawak Multimedia Authority has started a general survey on 21st February 2020 to gain a better understanding of the aspirations of the people as well as design a smarter city with better living conditions.³¹

There are also plans to implement a smart traffic light system in Kuching to increase the overall efficiency of traffic management and transportation systems. With the installation of smart traffic lights at 140 junctions in Greater Kuching, 30 percent of travel time is projected to be reduced through this initiative.³²

²⁴ Sarawak Digital Economy Strategy 2018 – 2022. P. 9.

²⁵ Centre of Technical Excellence Sarawak. https://www.centex-sarawak.my/new_11Nov2017b.php

²⁶ Our Mission & Vision. Digital Village Ecosystem. <https://sarawak.digital>

²⁷ About TEGAS Digital Innovation Hub. <https://www.innovatesarawak.com>

²⁸ About CHIC. Creative Heritage Innovation Centre. <https://chic.my/about-chic>

²⁹ About OKSHe. Old Kuching Smart Heritage. <https://oldkuchingsmartheritage.my/about-okshe>

³⁰ 5-year Plan to Turn Kuching into Metropolis, Smart City. <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2020/08/01/5-year-plan-to-turn-kuching-into-metropolis-smart-city>

³¹ Kuching Smart City Survey. https://www.sma.gov.my/pages.php?mod=announcement&sub=announcement_detail&id=19

³² Malaysia reveals new state-level smart city project. <https://opengovasia.com/malaysia-reveals-new-state-level-smart-city-project>

Intergenerational Connection



Preservation and conservation work has a long tradition in Sarawak, especially when it comes to protecting traditional culture and collecting oral histories of the indigenous and ethnic minorities.

Sarawak Dayak Iban Association, formed in 1919

The Sarawak Dayak Iban Association is an Indigenous community-based organisation championing the rights of the Indigenous peoples in Sarawak East Malaysia.³³

Oral History, Tun Jugah Foundation, founded in 1985

The Oral History Section of the Tun Jugah Foundation conducts research activities on oral history and literature of the Iban community in Sarawak to gather and preserve these priceless historic and literary pieces before they completely disappear.³⁴

Culture and Digital Enablement – case studies

Digital Economy Dream Realisation Programme (Program Realisasi Impian Ekonomi Digital, PRIME)

Sarawak Digital Economy Corporation (SDEC) is working with MyNIC, an agency under the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia (KKMM) to facilitate micro, small and medium size (MSMEs) businesses' transition into digital transformation. The programme provides free.BIZ.MY digital branding for 1 year to 20,000 MSMEs as incentive.³⁵

TriBE Digital Campus

TriBE Digital Campus is a platform that brings together business events planners and partners to develop new business initiatives and a stronger business events community through constant engagements and education.

- TriBE Digital Campus offers two types of activities: the TriBE INNOVATION and TriBE XCHANGE. The TriBE INNOVATION focuses on education and enables participants to gain up to date knowledge and information on relevant subjects or attend internationally accredited programmes. TriBE XCHANGE's focuses on business lead generation to enable fair and equal business opportunities for BESarawak Partners.³⁶

Arts and Education – case studies

Sekolah Seni Malaysia (Malaysia Arts School), Ministry of Education

Within the public education system, the Ministry of Education has introduced the Sekolah Seni Malaysia (Malaysia Arts School) programme with campuses in Kuala Lumpur, Kuching and Johor Bahru.

- Applicants have to undergo an audition to determine their aptitude. In lower secondary (Forms 1 – 3, aged 13 – 15), music, dance, theatre and visual arts are offered while in upper secondary (Forms 4 & 5), there are options for music, fine arts, design, visual communications, dance and theatre.
- Students from the Sekolah Seni Malaysia Sarawak are regularly invited to perform at functions. They often participate in arts competitions and one of its students won the teen folklore dance category at the 2020 International Online Festival contest organised by Sopravista Italy.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) project

The teaching and learning of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is being introduced in six schools in Sarawak as a pilot project to foster interest in these subjects and prepare students for the digital era.

³³ Sarawak Dayak Iban Association.

³⁴ The Tun Jugah Foundation.

³⁵ SDEC and MyNIC Collaboration. <https://sdec.com.my/web/prime>

³⁶ TriBE Camp Digital Campus. <https://businesseventssarawak.com/award-and-education/tribe-digital-campus>

- The STEM programme, a state initiative in addition to the national education policy, has been initialised to meet Sarawak's education needs, and its long-term target includes having STEM labs in at least two schools in every state constituency.
- The programme will expand to more schools in the state in the near future.³⁷

Creative Culture Programme

The Creative Culture Project, funded under the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) UK and Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MoHE) (under the Newton-Ungku Omar programme), is a collaboration between Coventry University and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak to address educational challenges within the context of inclusive learning for learners from the rural parts of Borneo, Malaysia.

- The Creative Culture Programme encourages the inclusion of Arts in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics education (STEAM) to facilitate innovation and new ways of thinking through creativity. It also seeks to discover and assess the impact of arts, design and culture in furthering creative thinking and development in both primary and secondary education, by using game design, and computational thinking.³⁸

Makerspace

Makerism focuses on DIY projects and encourages a culture of creation over consumption.

- The makerspace at the Sarawak Library allows community members to experience technology or activities that they previously were not able to access. They are now able to freely experiment with devices, programmes and software such as 3D Printers, Arduino, Coding and Robotics.³⁹

National Craft Agency (IKN: Institut Kraf Negara)⁴⁰

The National Craft Agency IKN opened a satellite campus in Kuching, providing weaving and craft certificate and training programme.⁴¹

Activating Traditions



Alena Murang, musician

Born in Kuching, Sarawak, to a Kelabit father, Alena Murang is the first female artist to professionally perform and teach the sape, a lute instrument of the highland tribes of the island.

Her first musical recording, *Flight* (2016), showcases interpretations of traditional Kelabit and Kenyah songs which have been presented in festivals across the world such as SXSW (USA), Colors of Ostrava (Czech Republic), Paris Fashion

Week (France), Rudolstadt Festival (Germany), OzAsia Festival (Australia), and Rainforest World Music Festival (Malaysia).

- Since then, her self-produced music videos in collaboration with like-minded artists, have been selected for film festivals in different corners of the world.
- She was also a youth representative at the UNESCO Youth Forum in Paris, and UNESCO Asia-Pacific for her work in intangible cultural heritage.⁴²

³⁷ Pilot project to teach science effectively. <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/community/2017/04/07/pilot-project-to-teach-science-effectively-state-targets-to-set-up-two-stem-labs-in-every-constituen>

³⁸ Teaching Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics subjects through fun and games. <https://dayakdaily.com/teaching-science-technology-engineering-arts-and-mathematics-subjects-through-fun-and-games>

³⁹ MakerSpace. <https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/pages.php?do=makerspace>

⁴⁰ <https://www.ikn.gov.my/en>

⁴¹ <https://www.bernama.com/en/general/news.php?id=1955229>

⁴² First Classe.

Gender and Inclusive Development – case studies

Tanoti, 2008 – present

Tanoti is a collective of Sarawakian women weavers and artisans dedicated to the production, promotion, and proliferation of hand-crafted fabrics. Tanoti is trying to improve the lives of indigenous and rural womenfolk and rural communities through the ancient art of *songket* weaving, by ensuring fair wages.⁴³

- This growing community of craftswomen had its origins in a workshop set up by a foundation established by Her Royal Highness the Queen of Malaysia in 2008, the Yayasan Tuanku Nur Zahirah – which was privatised in 2012.
- Tanoti has worked with similar-minded, heritage-inspired lifestyle brand such as Senijari to name a few.⁴⁴

Helping Hands Penan, 2016 – present

The non-profit entity is dedicated to the welfare of the Penan tribe in Sarawak. They work with female weavers and empower the community with economic sustainability. The social enterprise also dedicates resources in safeguarding local children and has helped introduce solar light to rural villages.⁴⁵

Alena Murang, Spirit,
at What About Kuching 2019.

Photo © Jee Photography |
What About Kuching

⁴³ <https://tanotiacrafts.com/our-story>

⁴⁴ https://www.britishcouncil.ph/sites/default/files/making_futures_philippines_-_press_kit.pdf

⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/HHPenan>



Environment and Sustainability

As Sarawak has a large area of fragile forest, the government is proactive in forest protection and environmental awareness. This is underpinned by a suite of legislation.

The **Natural Resources and Environment Board (NREB)** was established to protect and manage the environment and conservation of Sarawak's natural resources based on the principles of sustainable development.

- It services government departments, environmental consultants, project proponents, relevant agencies and the public with the aim to protect the environment for present and future generations.
- With the launch of the Malaysian Forestry Policy in 2021, it now serves as a guide for the Peninsula Malaysia Forestry Policy 2020, Sabah Forestry Policy and Sarawak Forestry Policy. This shared policy is aimed at strengthening forest management.

Forest Department Sarawak is the dedicated government agency overseeing the area. Detailed regulations on both federal and state levels also guide the use of forest resources and are updated regularly.

Culture and Urban Planning

Urban Planning comes under the purview of Sarawak's Ministry of Urban Development & Natural Resources (MUDeNR). The mission is to "... strive to ensure sustainable management of Natural Resources and Built environment towards enhancing the quality of life of *"Rakyat"*".⁴⁶

The Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg, during the 32nd Anniversary of Kuching city has committed to increase public-private partnership in the next 5 years in the redevelopment of Kuching North and South into a modernised city without compromising its traditional values.⁴⁷

“

Environmental sustainability will feature prominently in our future development plan. We will ensure that Sarawak achieves a clean, healthy and resilient environment for current and future generations.

Datuk Patinggi Abang Johari Tun Openg, Chief Minister of Sarawak⁴⁸

⁴⁶ <https://mbks.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-80-50-Vision-Mission.html>

⁴⁷ <https://www.utusanborneo.com.my/2020/08/01/kuching-selatan-utara-diberi-nafas-baru-ke-arrah-bandaraya-modern>

⁴⁸ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2020/05/06/s039wak-forms-council-to-draw-up-post-covid-19-economic-strategy-up-to-2030>

Forest Land and Preservation



About **62% (7.72 mil. ha)** of the State land mass area is under forest cover, as of the satellite imageries in 2018.

Sarawak has several different forest or vegetation types.

These include:

- Hill Mixed Dipterocarp Forest (7.35 mil. ha),
- Peat Swamp Forest (0.33 mil. ha),
- Mangrove Forest (0.07 mil. ha) and
- Others (Kerangas Forest, Montane Forest and Limestone Forest).

The State Government has designated about 6 million hectares of the forest areas as the Permanent Forest which is meant for sustainable forest management, and about 1 million hectares are designated as Totally Protected Areas.⁴⁹

Culture, Environment and Urban Landscape – case studies

Darul Hana Islamic Park, 2019 – present

Darul Hana Islamic Park is located in the grounds of the Darul Hana Mosque Kuching. The RM6.8 million park was developed by the Land Custody and Development Authority (LCDA) as one of the Sarawak government's initiatives to realise the 'Mosque in the Garden' concept. The total land area is around 12 acres.⁵⁰

Bring Back the Rainforest Project. 2016 – present

'Bring Back the Rainforest' (BBtRF) Project is an initiative by SARAWAK FORESTRY Corporation (SFC) to rehabilitate degraded forest areas in the Piasau Nature Reserve through the following two components: enrichment planting and adoption programme.⁵¹

The Regional Centre of Expertise Kuching, formed in 2018

Recognised by the United Nations University in 2018, the Regional Centre of Expertise Kuching (RCE Kuching) represents the first RCE in East Malaysia and the fourth in the country. It aims to develop and encourage sustainability literacy among communities in the city with its focus area and projects concentrating in and around the Sarawak River Kiri. To achieve this, RCE Kuching seeks to engage with all sectors in society, in particular, youth, to improve the sustainability literacy level of the rural and urban communities of Kuching.⁵²

Darul Hana Bridge, 2017 – present

The Darul Hana Bridge in Kuching, Sarawak, is intended to complement the new State Legislative Assembly Complex (DUN) to form a dynamic urban landscape. Officially opened in November 2017, the RM35 million bridge provides pedestrian access from the Kuching Waterfront in the south of the city to the new DUN, the Botanical and Orchid Gardens and beyond in the north. It will also provide pedestrian access from the surrounding villages to the city centre attractions, such as the Plaza Merdeka shopping mall, the international hotels strip and the cafés at the old Court House.⁵³

⁴⁹ Forest Department Sarawak.

⁵⁰ Kuching's Darul Hana Mosque, Islamic Park model for modern Malay settlement. <https://www.theborneopost.com/2020/10/29/kuchings-darul-hana-mosque-islamic-park-model-for-modern-malay-settlement>

⁵¹ Bring back the rainforest project. <https://sarawakforestry.com/bring-back-the-rainforest-project>

⁵² RCE Kuching. <https://rce.uccsiuniversity.edu.my>

⁵³ Darul Hana Bridge. <https://www.constructionplusasia.com/my/darul-hana-bridge>

Sama Jaya Urban Park, 2000 – present

Sama Jaya Urban Park, previously known as Stutong Protected Forest, is one of the oldest protected areas in the state of Sarawak. Facilities and infrastructure, such as an activity centre, conference room, timber and bamboo museum, and forest biology museum among others, can be found in the park. One unique feature of the park is the Hiroshima-Sarawak Friendship Garden which represents the close ties between Japan and the state of Sarawak.⁵⁴

Sarawak Eco-Warriors (SEW)

Formed in 2017, SEW is a recently-formed NGO by eco-conscious youths and students from Swinburne University of Technology Sarawak Campus. It aims to educate, empower, and inspire local communities through the conservation of nature. The group has been proactive in pushing policy change and urging government agencies to involve community stakeholders in climate-related decision making. In collaboration with artist Nia Latif, SEW's first project was held at a secondary school in Sematan. A 96-square-foot art piece was created from marine debris collected during a clean-up. The group also runs regular beach clean-ups together with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Malaysia Programme and Kuching Beach Cleaners.

Riverbank Transformation



The Kuching Waterfront New Extension aims to transform the Sungai Kuching riverbank into a multipurpose waterfront esplanade to enhance the appeal of Sungai Kuching for both local residents and tourists.

This new extension is the continuation of the existing Kuching waterfront esplanade, spanning a distance of approximately one kilometre from Grand Margherita Hotel.

It aims to transform the riverbank into a vibrant and modern waterfront development with an active promenade, and accommodate a variety of use and business activities. These include:

- Landscaped Garden Plaza, is a square for general public leisure, gathering and events.
- The Riverfront Pedestrian Mall, is a public waterfront promenade.

- The Festive Tourist and Entertainment Hub, to promote cultural stage performance, art and craft of local artists with outlets displaying local handicrafts and souvenir items.
- Office Park that houses both local and expatriate firms.
- Exclusive waterfront residential development with private jetty.

This project also involves improvement of public access and traffic linkage to waterfront area, such as: provision of new river taxi points; construction of new esplanade road of 600-metre length dual carriage, additional car parks and upgrading and landscaping of existing roads at Jalan Chan Chin Ann, Jalan Padungan Utara and Jalan Sungai Padungan.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Urban Spaces for All – The Sama Raya Urban Park Kuching, Sarawak. <https://www.planmalaysia.gov.my/index.php/agensi/penerbitan-planmalaysia/agensi-artikel/1940-urban-spaces-for-all-the-sama-ray-urban-park-kuching-sarawak/file>. Official website; <https://sarawakforestry.com/parks-and-reserves/sama-jaya-nature-reserve>

⁵⁵ Ibraco property development.

Regional and International Partnership and Positioning

Kuching has sustained active inter-city partnerships through sister city such as Quanzhou and Kunming in China since 2017 and Dali in China since 2019.⁵⁶



From the master plan, we will be able to identify and develop strategic directions and an action plan to spur both immediate and long-term growth, encourage innovation and allow existing tourism operators and potential investors to identify business ventures, in particular through public-private partnership.

Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, State Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports⁵⁷

The Ministry of International Trade and Industry, Industrial Terminal and Entrepreneur Development, Sarawak, MINTRED

This Ministry aims to position Sarawak as one of the top destinations for investments and trade to attract more investors, to boost industrial and entrepreneurial growth, and create more employment opportunities.⁵⁸

Society Atelier Sarawak, 1985 – present

Society Atelier Sarawak is a registered voluntary organisation which collects, preserves and shares knowledge on Sarawak arts and craft; encourages and promotes to other countries cultural exchanges of art and crafts like the *Pua* weaving; and seeks to uncover and study Sarawak's culture, arts and crafts in terms of its history and growth over time. It organises numerous activities such as discussions, arts and craft workshops, exhibitions by foreign artists, and many more.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ <https://dayakdaily.com/sarawak-and-yunnan-forge-closer-ties>

⁵⁷ <https://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/160357/charting-s-wak-tourism-master-plan-post-covid>

⁵⁸ MINTRED. <https://mintred.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-137-110-Objective.html>

⁵⁹ Society Atelier Sarawak. <https://raijindesigns.wordpress.com/about-us>

Alliance for Healthy Cities

The Alliance for Healthy Cities is an international network made of a group of cities and other organisations that focus on protecting and improving the health of city dwellers through the “Health Cities” approach initiated by the World Health Organization. Kuching was a member of their steering committee till 2020.⁶⁰

International Congress and Convention Association (ICCA)

ICCA is the global community and knowledge hub for the international association meetings industry. It represents key specialists in overseeing, transporting and accommodating meetings and events at the international level, and include over 1,100 member companies and organisations worldwide.

- Borneo Convention Centre Kuching and Business Events Sarawak (BE Sarawak, a non-profit organisation that links meeting planners to the right individuals/organisations to organise meetings, exhibitions, and etc.) are both members of ICCA.⁶¹

“

We are growing the ASEAN dimension, such as connecting with indigenous Taiwanese culture and Indonesia. But we also want to collaborate with artists from across the world - from Madagascar to Europe.

Jun-Lin Yeoh, director, Rainforest World Music Festival⁶²

The Origin Project by
Wendy Teo Atelier at
Rainforest Fringe Festival 2019.

Photo © Chon Fan Bong | Borneo Laboratory



⁶⁰ Alliance for Healthy Cities. https://www.alliance-healthycities.com/htmls/about/index_about.html

⁶¹ ICCA. <https://www.iccaworld.org>

⁶² Interview with TFCC

Cultural Ecosystem and Infrastructure

The State government in Sarawak recognises the importance of supporting not only art and culture (specifically the value of cultural tourism, heritage tourism as well as crafts), and the wider creative industries – via a comprehensive digital blueprint and initiatives encouraging youth-led ventures.

- To that end, the Sarawak Youth Creative Industry Fund (formerly known as the Sarawak Youth Venture Fund) was established by the Ministry of Youth and Sports.⁶³

- Government agencies such as Sarawak Craft Council and non-profits such as Sarawak Heritage Society, Sarawak Artists Society, and Craft Hub provide critical leadership and partnership opportunities.

In terms of private initiatives, more and more social enterprises and creative hubs are being established like: HAUS KCH, Tuyang Initiative based in Miri and others which try to bring the community together in pursuit of public private collaborations, bringing crowdfunding and crowdsourcing into the process.

69

We will make sure that tourism development will benefit not only the corporate sector, but also the public by involving them in the community-based tourism, arts and culture industry.

Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, State Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports⁶⁴

Dayak Cultural Foundation, 1992 – present

Dayak Cultural Foundation focuses on receiving and managing funds for culture, education, science, public welfare and other charitable causes. Its main activities revolve around showcasing Dayak Performing Arts; developing and promoting traditional music and dances; and encouraging the development and utilization of the Dayaks' languages among others.⁶⁵

Sarawak Youth Creative Industry Fund, 2019 – present

This state government fund, former known as the Sarawak Youth Venture Fund, aims to support new and emerging talents in arts, culture and other creative fields, particularly music and theatre. The fund is open to all Sarawakians, aged between 15 and 40, and applications can be made as individuals, groups, associations or organisations as long as their goal is to contribute to arts and culture for the benefit of the community at large.⁶⁶

⁶³ <https://myss.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-202-96-Sarawak-Youth-Creative-Industry-Fund-SYCIF.html>

⁶⁴ <https://www.dailyexpress.com.my/news/160357/charting-s-wak-tourism-master-plan-post-covid>

⁶⁵ Dayak Cultural Foundation. <https://dayakculturalfoundation.org.my/about>

⁶⁶ Sarawak Youth Creative Industry Fund (SYCIF). <https://myss.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-202-96-Sarawak-Youth-Creative-Industry-Fund-SYCIF.html>

Heritage Assets and Activation

The city is rich in natural, tangible and intangible heritage assets, justifying its ambitions to be listed as UNESCO World Heritage. However, their initial effort did not yet meet the criteria for listing, so the city authorities are now looking to list selected sites instead.

Sarawak Heritage Bill was passed in 2019 to better the legal framework to include underwater heritage and intangible cultural heritage.⁶⁷

- Mapping initiatives are also programmed around the old bazaar to document cultural landscape and economic activities, to provide narratives for the old bazaar and increase awareness around heritage preservation.⁶⁸



The old bazaar area, which has been there for more than 100 years, has about 200 traditional shophouses... It's not just about the buildings, we also want to preserve the businesses that have been going on in the area for many years, such as the tinsmiths and goldsmiths.

Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, State Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports⁶⁹

- Along the Kuching Waterfront – a popular venue for Kuching events and festivals – there are landmarks of old Kuching. The Sarawak government has embarked on an initiative with the private sector, academia and local community to create Old Kuching Smart Heritage trails. This is part of their effort to fulfil requirements to get Kuching listed as a smart heritage city.

⁶⁷ <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2019/11/05/sarawak-assembly-passes-bill-to-have-better-cultural-heritage-law/1807213>

⁶⁸ <https://dayakdaily.com/preserving-kuching-old-bazaar-area-traditions-heritage-to-promote-tourism>

⁶⁹ <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2020/10/03/preserving-more-than-just-buildings>

69

Sarawak will ensure that leasing out heritage buildings for commercial purpose will not be detrimental to the buildings but will contribute towards their longevity... The state will be improving the State Heritage Ordinance 2019 to ensure that tenants of heritage buildings maintain their main structure and historical value.

Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, State Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports⁷⁰

The Astana (Bangunan Astana)

Astana Kuching is an impressive palace built by Charles Brooke (the second “White Rajah” of Sarawak) in 1870 as a bridal gift to his wife, Margaret Alice Lili de Windt. Located on the north bank across the river from the Waterfront, this English looking manor represents the third and last residence constructed by the Brooke Rajahs. It was occupied by the reigning Rajah until the Japanese Occupation in 1941. Astana Kuching is presently the official residence of the Governor of Sarawak.⁷¹

The Old Court House (Bangunan Mahkamah)

Kuching Old Courthouse was built in 1874 by the second Rajah of Sarawak, Charles Brooke. This colonial baroque architectural style landmark used to house government offices and host state ceremonies till 1973. It was subsequently utilised as the administrative centre of the High Court of Borneo (now the High Court in Sabah and Sarawak) and magistrates.⁷²

⁷⁰ <https://www.theborneopost.com/2021/02/10/abdul-karim-leasing-out-heritage-buildings-can-add-value-ensure-conservation>

⁷¹ Astana Kuching. <https://sarawaktourism.com/attraction/astana-kuching>

⁷² Window into Kuching's old courthouse. <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2019/11/30/window-into-kuchings-old-courthouse>

69

Brooke Museums — three generations of the Brooke family governed Sarawak for a century before the Japanese occupation and Sarawak's shift to the Crown Colony, and eventually joining the Federation of Malaysia in 1963. Brooke Museums, presented through 2 small private museums (The Brooke Gallery at Fort Margherita and The Ranee Museum at the Old Court House), explore the influence of the Brooke governance on Sarawak identity and Kuching's architecture. Housed respectively in a fort and a former colonial-style court house, the latter (the Ranee Museum at the Old Court House) showcases the incredible journey of a young woman, Margaret DeWitt, better known as the Ranee Margaret, from England to Sarawak.

Anette Chung, Social Media Manager of About Kuching⁷³

⁷³ Interview with Penang Institute.

Fort Margherita (Kubu Margherita)

Fort Margherita, named after the wife of the second Rajah of Sarawak, Raneë Margaret, was built in 1879 to guard Kuching's river from pirates. Recently renovated, the fort has been turned into the Brooke Gallery and contains a wide range of memorabilia of the Brooke Era.⁷⁴

- **Brooke Gallery**

The Brooke Gallery contains rare historical artefacts during the Brooke era, Sarawak's White Rajah. It also brings to light the different people as well as the historical development of the different buildings and areas during that era.⁷⁵

- **Raneë Museum**

This museum centres on the life, legend and legacy of Margaret de Windt, wife of the second Rajah Brooke, Queen of Sarawak.⁷⁶

The Brooke Trust Digital Archive

This digital archive contains invaluable documents, photographs and other information materials from five generations of the Brooke family.⁷⁷

Square Tower, Kuching (Bangunan Square Tower), 1886 – present

Built in 1879, the Square Tower was originally meant as a prison but was converted into a fortress. It is located at the edge of the Waterfront along the south bank of Sarawak River.⁷⁸

Sarawak Museum

Developed in 1860 by Charles Brooke, the Second Rajah of Sarawak, the museum, while also acting as a research centre, showcases the rich culture and history of Sarawak and possesses the world's largest collection of Borneo's flora and fauna.⁷⁹

- To facilitate the museum's ascent as a global world-class institution, a new Sarawak Museum Campus is being established by the state government, through the Department of Museum and the Public Works Department. The campus will feature a new museum and an adjoining annexe building totaling a joint floor area of about 31,000 square metres.
- However due to the Covid-19 and associated restrictions and lockdown, the buildings which were supposed to be completed by 2020, are still in the process of being constructed.⁸⁰ The state government has yet to decide on the official name of the new museum.⁸¹

⁷⁴ Fort Margherita. <https://sarawaktourism.com/attraction/fort-margherita>

⁷⁵ The Brooke Gallery. <https://www.brooketrust.org/the-brooke-gallery>

⁷⁶ The Raneë Museum. <https://www.facebook.com/raneemuseum>

⁷⁷ Digital Archive. Brooke Heritage Trust. <https://www.brooketrust.org/digital-archive>

⁷⁸ Square Tower. <https://sarawaktourism.com/attraction/square-tower>

⁷⁹ Sarawak Museum Department. <https://museum.sarawak.gov.my>

⁸⁰ Sarawak Museum. <https://www.constructionplusasia.com/my/sarawak-museum>

⁸¹ Abdul Karim hopes state govt will stick to Borneo Cultures Museum as S'wak Museum Complex's official name. https://museum.sarawak.gov.my/pages.php?mod=news&sub=news_view&nid=23

Bidayuh Dance.

Photo © MOTAC Sarawak





[The new Sarawak Cultures Museum complex] is a cultural museum, it will showcase the custom, lifestyle and history of various ethnic groups in Sarawak... [and] will be the pride of Sarawak, because we have so many diverse ethnic groups and when they come to visit the museum, they will see a part of them here. The Orang Ulu, the Melanau, the Chinese, they will feel very proud of it.

Datuk Abdul Karim Rahman Hamzah, State Minister of Tourism, Arts, Culture, Youth and Sports⁸²

Library and Archive of Tun Jugah Foundation

Since 1985, the library has served as a reference library for members, college and university students, and local and foreign researchers attached to the Foundation. It contains monographs and materials on Borneo and West Malaysia as well as on general topics such as philosophy, religion and social sciences.

- The archive acts as a storehouse for the foundation's records, collections (primarily Iban field notes) and other materials such as primary research materials, photographs, tapes (open-reels and cassette tapes), video camera recordings, official documents, and old and rare monographs.⁸³

Sarawak Cultural Village

This award-winning Living Museum features the culture and lifestyles of many ethnic groups in Sarawak. The village also contains replica buildings of major ethnic groups in Sarawak such as Bidayuh, Iban, Orang Ulu, Penan, Melanau, Malay & Chinese and all these buildings showcase members of ethnic groups wearing traditional attires and performing traditional activities. The village also has an award-winning dance troupe who performs multi-cultural dances.⁸⁴

⁸² Interview with Penang Institute

⁸³ Library & Archive. TunJugah Foundation. <https://tunjukahfoundation.org.my/library>

⁸⁴ Sarawak Cultural Village. <https://scv.com.my>

69

There are many notable elements which can represent Kuching as a cultural model but I would say that The Sarawak Cultural Village is the top of the list. Sarawak Cultural Village is located at the foot of Mount Santubong, Kuching. Known as the ‘living museum’, it showcases the various ethnic groups carrying out traditional activities in their respective traditional houses. Cultural performances of every ethnic group in Sarawak are presented here. Sarawak Cultural Village is also the main venue for Rainforest World Music Festivals, the world famous indigenous musical events.

Suriya Charles Buas, Director of MOTAC Sarawak⁸⁵

Islamic Heritage Museum

The Sarawak Islamic Heritage Museum occupies a place that used to be known as the James Brooke Malay College. The museum was established to allow visitors to witness the grandeur of Islamic Civilization and gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of its contribution to civilizations.⁸⁶

Chinese History Museum

The premises of the Chinese History Museum, constructed in 1912, formerly functioned as a court by the Chinese community from 1912 to 1921. The museum showcases the history and tribulations faced by the various Chinese groups in Sarawak in the early days.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Interview by Penang Institute.

⁸⁶ Sarawak Islamic Heritage Museum. <https://museum.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-132-103-tid.html>

⁸⁷ Chinese History Museum. <https://museum.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-131-102-Chinese-History-Museum.html>

Tun Jugah Pua Kumbu Museum

Established by the Tun Jugah Foundation, the galleries focus on the Iban community's culture, more specifically on Iban textiles and weaving tradition to preserve them and ensure they do not go extinct. Talks, workshops such as the Indigo Dye Workshops on dying techniques, and many other activities are also organised by the Foundation.⁸⁸

Sarawak State Library

The Sarawak State Library (Pustaka Negeri Sarawak) serves as a major information resource centre. It gives access to a vast storage of information and provides a space for gathering for educational and cultural exchanges, programmes and other activities.⁸⁹ The library also possesses a portal named Sarawakiana Art Collection Online which enables visitors to view artworks on Sarawak and local artists.⁹⁰

Textile Museum

The building of the Textile Museum was built in 1907 with an architecture composed of a mixture of English Renaissance and English Colonial. It formerly served as a medical centre and later on as the headquarters of the Education Department.

- The museum itself features authentic local textiles and apparel made by the ethnic communities of Sarawak such as the Iban *pua kumbu*, a traditional ceremonial cloth, and the Sarawak Malay *kain songket*.⁹¹

Natural Heritage

Sarawak's national parks are protected by rigid laws to safeguard the state's rich, diversified and distinctive flora, fauna and wildlife. Some of the State's ethnic groups, with customs and lifestyles dating back ages ago, also inhabit these parks. Sarawak contains 46 national parks, 15 nature reserves and 5 wildlife sanctuaries. There are 4 national parks and 4 nature reserves in the area of Kuching: Bako National Park, Gunung Gading National Park, Kubah National Park, Tanjung Datu National Park (temporarily closed), Sama Jaya Nature Reserve, Semenggoh Nature Reserve, Wind Cave Nature Reserve (temporarily closed), Fairy Cave Nature Reserve (temporarily closed).⁹²

Kubah National Park, 1989 – present

Kubah National Park, dominated by the high Mount Serapi, is a mix of dipterocarp forest (rich orchids, pitcher plants and palms, with 93 species in the park) with small areas of scrub forest and isolated patches of heath forest. The park is also home to streams and waterfalls.⁹³

Kuching Wetland National Park, 2002 – present

Kuching Wetland National Park represents one of the last remaining areas of the Sarawak Mangrove Forest Reserve. It was designated as a Ramsar site, a wetland of international importance, in November 2005, due to the area's ecological significance and potential as a tourist destination.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ The Tun Jugah Foundation. <https://tunjughafoundation.org.my>

⁸⁹ Sarawak State Library. https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/pages.php?do=corporate_profile

⁹⁰ Sarawakiana Art Collection Online. https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/sarawakiana_gallery/index.php

⁹¹ Textile Museum. <https://museum.sarawak.gov.my/page-0-127-98-Textile-Museum.html>

⁹² Sarawak Forestry Corporation. <https://sarawakforestry.com/national-parks-nature-reserves>

⁹³ Kubah National Park. <https://sarawakforestry.com/parks-and-reserves/kubah-national-park>

⁹⁴ Kuching Wetlands National Park. <https://sarawaktourism.com/attraction/kuching-wetlands-national-park>

UNESCO Titles in or closer to Kuching

Gunung Mulu National Park – World Heritage, 2000, UNESCO

Important both for its high biodiversity and for its karst features, Gunung Mulu National Park, on the island of Borneo in the State of Sarawak, is the most studied tropical karst area in the world. The 52,864-ha park contains seventeen vegetation zones, exhibiting some 3,500 species of vascular plants. Its palm species are exceptionally rich, with 109 species in twenty genera noted. The park is dominated by Gunung Mulu, a 2,377 m high sandstone pinnacle. At least 295 km of

explored caves provide a spectacular sight and are home to millions of cave swiftlets and bats. The Sarawak Chamber, 600 m by 415 m and 80 m high, is the largest known cave chamber in the world.⁹⁵

Kuching – World Craft City, 2009, World Craft Council

Kuching has been awarded the status “World Craft City” because of the reputation of being the hub and gateway to the crafts of the indigenous tribes of Sarawak and entire Borneo. These crafts are testaments to the wealth and diversity of their traditions and cultures in the forms of textiles, fibres, ceramics and wood.⁹⁶



Traditional weaving, now a heritage practice, is constantly modernised into couture, showcasing the beautifully interwoven cultures of Kuching.

Suriya Charles Buas, Director of MOTAC Sarawak⁹⁷

Semenggoh Wildlife Centre – World Excellence Tourism Award, 2020, World Tourism Forum Ltd.

Sarawak’s first wildlife rehabilitation centre, the Semenggoh Wildlife Centre (SWC), one of the wildlife centre managed by Sarawak Forestry Corporation (SFC) was awarded the World Excellence Tourism Awards for Best Sustainable Tourism Program category for Eco Tourism (Wildlife Conservation Centre) in conjunction with the World Excellence Tourism Award 2020 Ceremony on March 13, 2020.⁹⁸

The Archaeological Heritage of Niah National Park’s Caves Complex – Tentative list of World Heritage, 2021

In terms of archaeological contribution, the Niah Cave Complex is of international significance given that it is one of the most important places in Southeast Asia with evidence of continuous human occupation from the late Pleistocene and early Holocene epochs. In addition, the discoveries in the West Mouth of Niah Caves, which included 25 human burials dating to the Early Holocene and over 200 burials with Neolithic material culture, are respectively the largest Mesolithic and Neolithic cemeteries in Island Southeast Asia.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Gunung Mulu National Park. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1013>

⁹⁶ Kuching. <https://www.wccinternational.org>

⁹⁷ Interview with Penang Institute

⁹⁸ Sarawak CM: Semenggoh Wildlife Centre recognised by World Excellence Tourism Awards 2020. <https://www.malaymail.com/news/malaysia/2020/02/15/sarawak-cm-semenggoh-wildlife-centre-recognised-by-world-excellence-tourism/1837818>

⁹⁹ Niah National Park. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/6502>

Events, Festivals and Creative Marketplaces

Kuching is rich in indigenous and diasporic cultures. The city celebrates the many festivals such as The Gawai Dayak Festival, the post-harvest festivals as well as those taking place across Malaysia and internationally such as Eid, Chinese New Year and Deepavali.

The Sarawak State has been able to successfully market its arts and culture in the form of events such as the Rainforest World Music Festival and its recent addition The Rainforest Fringe Festival.

The rich cultural heritage has been embraced by the younger Sarawakians and expatriates eager to innovate and introduce a contemporised form of heritage craft to the local and global market.

Creative marketplaces (selected)

Rainforest World Crafts Bazaar, 2008 – present

Organiser: Crafthub

This crafts bazaar is held inside the Rainforest World Music Festival and involves many international artisans who bring their handmade crafts made from natural materials much for the pleasure of all craft lovers and those attending the festival.¹⁰⁰

Small Town Art Market (STAM), 2016 – present

Small Town Art Market¹⁰¹ is an independent art, craft, fashion and design marketplace launched by a twin sister Marilyn and Rachel Ang. With an additional member mix media artist Nia Latif on board, the STAM team further launched Little Entrepreneurs Art Workshops and Junior Art Market for children aged 12 and below as a platform to encourage creativity in kids, hone social skills, as well as gain confidence and experience in entrepreneurship.¹⁰²

Events and Festivals (selected)

Kuching Festival, 1988 – present

Organiser: Kuching South City Council

Kuching Festival is an annual event organised to celebrate Kuching being awarded City status on 1st August 1988. The festival also serves as an avenue to stimulate local tourism and the food industry. Visitors to the festival are able to enjoy various events such as a food fair, dramatic performances, musical concerts, galleries, exhibitions, a garden show and many more.¹⁰³

Sarawakiana Carnival, 2011 – present

Organiser: Sarawak State Library

The carnival's main objective is to create awareness and promote the state's diverse culture and heritage through various activities such as traditional cooking demonstration, displays and sales of Sarawak handicrafts, cultural talks, and many more.¹⁰⁴

Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Carnival Sarawak, 2016 – present

Organiser: Sarawak Forest Department

The Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Carnival, held annually, seeks to help improve the livelihoods of rural communities in Sarawak by promoting non-timber or non-wood based forest products, helping market these products, and facilitating networking with potential customers. The carnival also includes other events such as ethnic performances, singing competitions, a concert, and many more.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Rainforest World Crafts Bazaar. <http://crafthub.com.my/rainforest-world-craft-bazaar-2019>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.facebook.com/smalltownartmarket>

¹⁰² <https://www.flintandsteelborneo.com/about>

¹⁰³ Kuching Festival 2019. <https://sarawaktourism.com/event/kuching-festival>

¹⁰⁴ Sarawakiana Carnival. https://stb.sarawak.gov.my/modules/web/pages.php?mod=event&sub=event_detail&id=68

¹⁰⁵ Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Carnival Sarawak 2019. <https://sarawaktourism.com/event/non-timber-forest-products-ntfp-carnival-sarawak>

69

Cultural events of each ethnic are celebrated in big ways in Kuching. Hari Raya Aidil Fitri are celebrated by the Muslim Malays, Chinese New Year celebration by the Chinese populations, Gawai Dayak Festivals of the Ibans, Bidayuhs and Orang Ulu to celebrate post rice harvest festivals and not forgetting Deepavali festival of the small Indian community. Visits to friends and relatives' houses are common practices during festivities to foster the friendships and relationships among the various races.

Suriya Charles Buas, Director of MOTAC Sarawak¹⁰⁶

Rainforest Fringe Festival, 2017 – now

Organiser: Sarawak Tourism Board

The Rainforest Fringe Festival, curated by Joe Sidek who previously helmed George Town Arts Festival, is a prelude to the Rainforest World Music Festival and Borneo Jazz Festival. This festival offers a variety of events and activities. Among them are food stalls, cultural exhibitions, cultural shows and many more.¹⁰⁷

Sarawak's Authors Festival, 2017 – present

Organiser: Sarawak State Library

This literary festival has been organised every year since 2017. The festival generally hosts numerous authors who provide presentations and readings, as well as other events over a three-day period, to promote and encourage writing among book authors.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Penang Institute

¹⁰⁷ Rainforest Fringe Festival. <https://www.facebook.com/pg/rffsarawak/community>

¹⁰⁸ Sarawak's Authors Festival 2018. <https://www.pustaka-sarawak.com/pages.php?do=saf2018>

69

The festival has a complex history because when it started we had to validate local indigenous people that their culture matters and that people would be interested in their traditional music like the nose flute. By bringing in traditional music from across the world, local people could see they have something distinctive and of value. The breakthrough came in year 4 or 5 when the audiences really started to grow.

Jun-Lin Yeoh, director, Rainforest World Music Festival¹⁰⁹

Rainforest World Music Festival, 1998 – present

Organiser: Sarawak Tourism Board

The Rainforest World Music Festival is an annual three-day music festival in Kuching to celebrate the world music's diversity. The festival contains music workshops, cultural and craft displays, food stalls and concerts.¹¹⁰

What About Kuching (WAK), 2017 – present

Organiser: About Kuching Sdn Bhd

WAK is a community-driven festival that celebrates arts, culture and lifestyles. It is a month-long event filled with many activities and shows such as comedy shows, music performances, Chinese opera and many more.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Interview with TFCC

¹¹⁰ Rainforest World Music Festival. <https://rwmf.net>

¹¹¹ WAK 2019 promises exciting events throughout the city in October. <https://dayakdaily.com/wak-2019-promises-exciting-events-throughout-the-city-in-october>. Official website: <https://aboutkuching.com/about-wak>

69

WAK — a community-driven month-long festival of the arts, culture and lifestyle of the people of Kuching and Sarawak. WAK goes beyond celebrating just the stereotypical symbols of Kuching and Sarawak, their programming projects a modern and urban view of the city combining among others, street dancing with samba, Chinese opera with English theatre, and world music with rock bands. Beyond quaint and historical, the festival enables Kuching to show its urban and chic side to the world.

Anette Chung, Social Media Manager of About Kuching¹¹²

Borneo Bengkel at
Rainforest World
Music Festival 2018.

Photo © Borneo Bengkel

¹¹² Interview with Penang Institute



Creative Hubs (selected)

In 2020, the Sarawak State announced that they will be spending over RM200 million to repurpose the State Legislative Assembly into the Sarawak Performing Arts Centre, thereby establishing a platform to showcase Sarawak's distinct arts and culture.

At a more micro level, a former building housing a supermarket, Ting & Ting, has been turned into a community arts space Think & Tink.

- Besides the arts, the space is also embarking on an urban green pocket project, involving the public by crowdsourcing single use plastic bottles to be turned into planters.
- The edible greens from this project in turn will be contributed to a community food bank. Such collaborations and crossover projects are becoming more common.

“

Local coffee shops, known as “kopitiam” exist alongside Starbucks and modern specialty coffee shops. Foods like laksa (which Anthony Bourdain called the “breakfast of gods” on his multiple trips here), kolo mee and other Sarawakian food are as popular as modern Korean, Japanese and European cuisine.

Anette Chung, Social Media Manager of About Kuching¹¹³

For more information on creative hubs in Kuching, see British Council Creative Hub Malaysia: <https://creativehubs.my>

¹¹³ Interview with Penang Institute.

69

Sarawak has an extraordinary history and milieu of peoples bringing about a real confluence over the years... his has brought about a unique fusion of the ways of life into the 'Sarawakian' way. It has made Sarawak a place for pleasant and quality living... Our wholesome, rich and varied heritage is a precious common good, first of all for Sarawakians but also for visitors and the world.

Datuk Seri Robert Jacob Ridu, president, Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS)¹¹⁴

Sarawak Heritage Society (SHS), 2006 – present

Organiser: Sarawak Tourism Board

The Sarawak Heritage Society is a registered Sarawak non-governmental organisation founded in 2006. Its mission is to promote the conservation, permanent preservation and sustainable management of Sarawak's unique cultural heritage assets, both tangible and intangible.¹¹⁵

HAUS KCH, 2016 – present

HAUS KCH is Kuching's first creative community hub and offers various events, workshops and other activities. Its aims are to harmonise visionary

aspirations for the local community; bring individuals from diverse backgrounds together; and ensure the sustainability of their work.¹¹⁶

- They have recently received launched the Klotak]ku Virtual Art Residency, as a project awarded under Cultural Economy Development Agency Visual Arts Showcase Funding Programme as well as a matching grant by Sarawak Digital Economy Corporation.
- This virtual residency programme aims to help the creative community continue practising during the pandemic and build up capacity for a sustainable career through good self-documentation practice.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2017/09/16/melting-pot-of-heritage-to-treasure>

¹¹⁵ Sarawak Heritage Association. <https://sarawakheritagesociety.com>

¹¹⁶ HAUS KCH. <https://www.hauskch.com/about-3>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.thestar.com.my/metro/metro-news/2021/01/14/out-of-box-idea-for-virtual-creativity>

Borneo744, 2016 – present

Borneo744 is set to become the first entrepreneur and arts district in Malaysia. Its premises are expected to stretch along five buildings totaling an area of 120,000 square feet with each building providing different types of activities.

- Borneo744 intends to be the top destination centre for incubation, co-location, mentoring, networking and collaborations for all types of entrepreneurship; small manufacturing, F&B and retail startups and; affordable and accessible places for training workshops, festivals, and performances among others.¹¹⁸

Borneo Laboratory, 2016 – present

Borneo Laboratory is a multidisciplinary platform that offers a multitude of diverse products such as publications, documentations, crafts, curation and architectural designs. It has collaborated on projects with people from different disciplines and from many countries in Asia and Europe.¹¹⁹

Think & Tink, 2020 – present

Think & Tink previously known as Ting & Ting Supermarket. It is currently planned by Borneo Laboratory as a mind factory of the city, with its end goal to populate the city with more thinkers.¹²⁰

Borneo Bengkel, 2017 – present

Borneo Bengkel is a platform for Borneo's creative community to gather, discuss and explore issues on indigenous traditional knowledge and culture, and the Bornean aesthetic.¹²¹

Art Street Kuching, 2018 – present

Art Street Kuching is an art-oriented forum and community experience in collaboration with local artists. It was born out of a need to create a platform to experiment with mediums, express and exchange ideas, and to engage with the public.¹²²

Creative Heritage Innovation Centre (CHIC), 2019 – present

CHIC is a community-driven shared work space for startups and entrepreneurs to facilitate networking; sharing and discussion of ideas; and opportunities for content creators to develop. It also seeks to preserve Sarawak's culture and heritage through the establishment of a creative community.¹²³

Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK), 2009 – present

The Borneo Convention Centre Kuching (BCCK) provides a space for meetings, conferences, events and exhibitions. The centre is equipped with the latest technologies in communication such as wireless internet, cutting ledge LAN infrastructure and the latest in Audio/Visual technology. World-class food and wine are also available upon request.¹²⁴

Urang Sarawak Gallery, 2016 – present

The gallery exhibits various types of artworks. It also enables visitors to learn more about the social and cultural aspects of the Sarawak people's lifestyles.¹²⁵

Wordsmiths of Kuching (WoK)

Wordsmiths of Kuching (WoK) is a collective of storytellers, performance poets, spoken word artists. The group holds regular in-house events including First Reading – a work in progress sharing/feedback session, as well as Word of Mouth KCH, a showcase opportunity for performers to read for a live audience.¹²⁶

Think and Tink project,
Creative Destination
Making Project. 2020.

Photo © Borneo Laboratory

¹¹⁸ Borneo744. <http://borneo744.com>

¹¹⁹ Borneo Laboratory is a Creative Agency, A Laboratory for Borneo Aesthetics. <http://borneoartcollective.org/about-us>

¹²⁰ Think & Tink. <https://www.facebook.com/Think-Tink-100236018589371>

¹²¹ Borneo Bengkel. <https://www.facebook.com/borneobengkel>

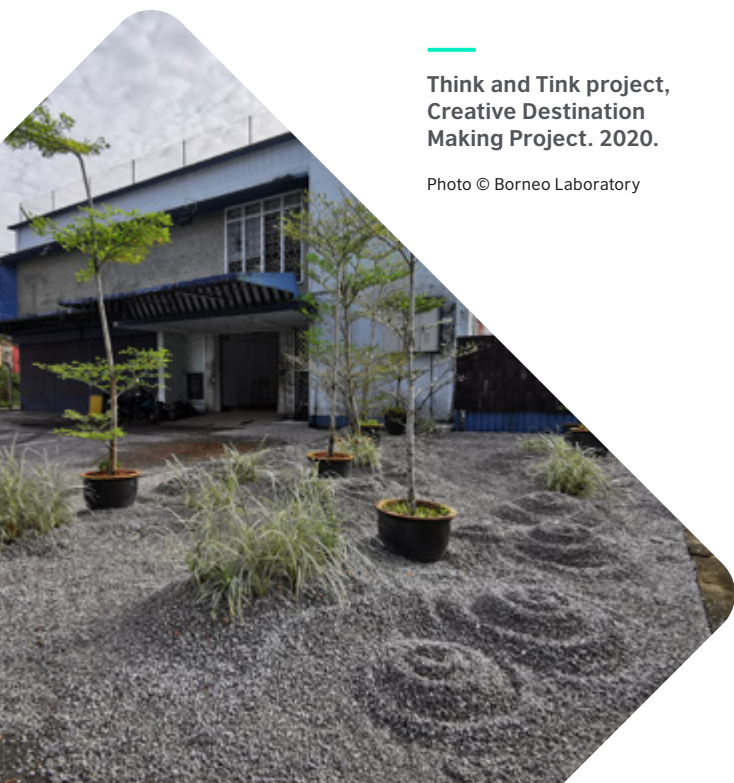
¹²² Art Street Kuching. <https://www.facebook.com/artstreetkch>

¹²³ About CHIC. <https://chic.my/about-chic>

¹²⁴ Borneo Convention Centre Kuching. <http://www.bcck.com.my/about>

¹²⁵ Urang Sarawak 'Pameran Tentang Kita' exhibition. <https://sarawaktourism.com/attraction/urang-sarawak>

¹²⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/wordsmithsofkuching>



Sample of ‘Movers and Shakers’ in the Cultural and Creative Sector of Kuching

Kuching has a vibrant independent art scene that attract talents from across the region to live and work. In addition to a rich portfolio of artists, performers, craft makers and designers, local organisations have helped nurture a collaborative ecosystem of creative and cultural practice.

- Youth-led hubs Haus KCH, is a testament to such vitality and entrepreneurship. As a community centre, they host regular hosting gigs, talks and incubation programmes.
- Community-focused Borneo Art Collective is another exhilarating example of the cultural influence of Kuching reaching national importance. They have recently transformed the old Ting & Ting Supermarket building into the Think and Tink arts venue, adding to the city’s expanding cultural ecosystem.

Table 1 Selected Kuching stakeholders¹²⁷

Media/Film/Digital	Arts	Crossover – Culture/Arts/Lifestyle
JayC Ho, TV host	Albot Gudang, ethnic artist	Edric Ong, architect
Orion, 2011	Alena Murang, musician	Heidi Munan, author
TV Sarawak	Andrew Bong, composer, orchestrator, and music producer	Wendy Teo, architect and founder of Borneo Art Collective
	Chung Hong Tsin, wheelchair dancer	Mike Boon, architect
	Georgette Tan, writer	Rosemary Wong, Founder of the Ranee Artisan Gallery
	Gerald Goh Teck Joo, artist	Jacqueline Fong & June Ngo, Co-founders of Tanoti
	Iona Moira Evemarie Danald, art teacher	Catriona Maddocks & Amalina Arip, Founders of Catama Borneo
	Leonard Siaw, mural artist	Donald Tan and Marina Foo, owner of The Village House and co-director of What About Kuching
	Miyo (Dewi Emilia binti Iskandar), graffiti artist	
	Walid Ali, performer	
	Zee Avi, singer-songwriter	

¹²⁷ For the purpose of this report, cultural influencers are defined as the media or cultural sector go to people comprising key opinion leaders who are networked into the public, private and cultural scene. They or their organisations, where possible, have a substantial following (>50,000 followers) especially on social media and/or digital channels and are seen as credible experts in their field and can influence change, innovating culture and arts practices through their programmes. In order to provide a sampling of the movers and shakers, they have been categorised into 3 key sectors comprising media, film and digitals, the arts, and those within a crossover of culture, arts and lifestyle.

Media/Film/Digital

JayC Ho, TV host

JayC Ho is a multi-talented and multidisciplinary artist. He is a R&B singer and the TV talk show host of 'The JayC Show', and is experienced in the marketing, advertising and photography fields among others. He also created 'Kuching Youth Jam', a local street dance community event that seeks to teach the community about street culture.¹²⁸

Orion, 2011

Orion is a digital media strategic company with its headquarter in Kuala Lumpur and regional office in Sarawak. It offers numerous services such as social media management, online advertising, digital strategising, brand monitoring, web designing and many more. They have worked with 135 famous brands like Giant, Caltex, 7/11, Digi, AEON and won 39 awards to date.¹²⁹

Arts

Albot Gudang, ethnic artist

Albot Gudang is a self-taught ethnic artist from the Bidayuh ethnic community in Sarawak. Rather than focusing on the typical canvas to paint, he uses the surfaces of any natural materials such as bamboo, leaves, wood pieces and many more to create his artworks which display Sarawak's ethnic motifs. In 2020, he was named the winner of the World Crafts Council Asia Pacific – Excellent Craft Award'.¹³⁰

Alena Murang, musician

Born in Kuching, Sarawak, to a Kelabit father, Alena Murang is the first female to professionally perform and teach the sape, a lute instrument of the highland tribes of the island. Her first musical recording, Flight (2016), showcases interpretations of traditional Kelabit and Kenyah songs which have been presented in festivals across the world such as SXSW (USA), Colors of Ostrava (Czech Republic), Paris Fashion Week (France), Rudolstadt Festival (Germany), OzAsia Festival (Australia), and Rainforest World Music Festival (Malaysia).

Andrew Bong, composer, orchestrator, and music producer

Andrew Bong is a Malaysian composer, orchestrator, and music producer from Sarawak. He has composed and orchestrated many soundtracks for movies, notably 'Upin & Ipin: Keris Siamang Tunggal' one of the top grossing animation films in Malaysia and part of the Best Animated Feature Film Oscar 2020 shortlist; and 'Tradition' which was showcased at two festivals in the US and Denmark and for which he received a Gold Awards for Best Score at the NYC Indie Film Awards (2016).

- Andrew is currently a member of The Society of Composers & Lyricists in the United States.¹³¹

Chung Hong Tsin, wheelchair dancer

Chung Hong Tsin is a Malaysian wheelchair dancer who did not let his disability stop him from pursuing his passion for dancing. In 2004, after years of hard work and determination, he won the Southeast Asian Wheelchair Modern Dance Open Championship in Hong Kong.

- In 2009, he was signed to Dua Space Dance Theater thus becoming the world's first ever wheelchaired professional dancer. With the troupe he was able to perform in numerous shows, domestically and abroad, and in 2011, he established his own dance company called 'PassionMove'.¹³²

Georgette Tan, writer

Georgette Tan is a professional writer with nearly 14 years of experience in print journalism and over 25 years of wrangling words into various forms. Currently, she is a freelance writer. She co-founded Wordsmiths of Kuching, a community for spoken word artists.

- She is also a founding member of Word Of Mouth KCH, an event featuring stories, poetry or anything done with the human voice. She is also a 2018 – 2020 Malaysian Writer's Society committee member representing Sarawak.¹³³

¹²⁸ JayC Ho. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/thejaycshow>

¹²⁹ Orion. <https://orion.my>

¹³⁰ A Master of Craft. <https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/a-master-of-craft>

¹³¹ About Andrew Bong. <https://chic.my/andrew-bong>

¹³² Chung Hong Tsin. <http://dodream.my/?p=252>

¹³³ Georgette Tan. <http://www.georgettetan.com>

Gerald Goh Teck Joo, artist

Gerald Goh Teck Joo is a third-generation potter and prominent artist who specialises in art glazes and stoneware ceramics. He has taken part in many art and craft exhibitions around the world and produced diverse creative artworks that focus on Sarawak's heritage, culture and beauty, to create an interest in Borneo's endangered heritage, both locally and internationally, as well as preserve it.

- Gerald is currently the President of the Sarawak Handicraft and Souvenir Association, Vice President of the Sarawak Artists Association and Founder of World Arts Convention, a platform that connects local artists and artisans to international networks.¹³⁴

Iona Moira Evemarie Danald, art teacher

Iona Moira Evemarie Danald works with the less fortunate and people with disabilities through visual arts. She helped adults with disabilities and taught art therapy during her residency at Asia Community Services' Stepping Stone, Penang, and volunteered to teach remedial classes at St Mary's Primary School, Kuching, in 2019. Currently, she's an art teacher at Mont Kiara, Kuala Lumpur.

- She is the Winner of Spotlight 2019 by Penang Art District and Malaysia Emerging Artist Award Finalist 2019. She has participated in numerous group exhibitions in Kuching, Penang and Kuala Lumpur. AYE : Across Sarawak and Scotland is her first solo exhibition.¹³⁵

Leonard Siaw Quan Cheng, mural artist

He is a full-time mural artist and a part-time graphic designer. His artworks specialises in infusing realism with optical illusion which accentuate the interaction between the viewer and his artwork. His creations became tourist landmarks in Kuching, Sarawak and gave impact to the local Street Art scene.

- Leonard Siaw is the first Asian to be part of the Wall to Wall Festival Benalla 2018 held at Melbourne, Australia.¹³⁶

Miyo (Dewi Emilia binti Iskandar), graffiti artist

Dewi Emilia binti Iskandar, aka Miyo, is Kuching's first female graffiti artist and possibly the only one in Malaysia. She has been experimenting her letters in Japanese before going back to her roots by studying Sarawak's native design motives.

- She is considered one of Kuching pioneers for graffiti and is the first Sarawakian female artist to leave her mark in Indonesia, Singapore and Brunei and hold a "graffiti 101" workshop in Kuching.¹³⁷

Walid Ali, performer

Walid Ali is a contemporary performance deviser, performer, and designer from Malaysia. He is a creative director in Luar Kotak Production, a contemporary theatre group in Malaysia. He is also an author for *Selut Press* and *Peanutzin*.¹³⁸

Zee Avi, singer-songwriter

Zee Avi, or also known as Izyan Alirahman, is a Sarawak-born singer-songwriter. Her song *Arena Cahaya*, the theme song of the film "*Ola Bola*", was voted as "Best Original Song" at the prestigious 53rd Annual Golden Horse Film Awards in Taiwan. The song also won the "Best Original Theme Song" award at the 28th Malaysia Film Festival in 2016.¹³⁹

Yung Kai Tender Trap album launch at HAUS 2.0, 2020.

Photo © Hazim Shahidan | HAUS KCH

¹³⁴ Gerald Goh Teck Joo. <http://www.saradise.my/saradise-gallery/featured-artists/gerald-goh-teck-joo>

¹³⁵ AYE: Across Sarawak and Scotland, a solo exhibition by Iona Danald. <https://penangartdistrict.com/aye-across-sarawak-and-scotland-a-solo-exhibition-by-iona-danald>

¹³⁶ Leonard Siaw Quan Cheng. <http://www.saradise.my/saradise-gallery/featured-artists/leonard-siaw>

¹³⁷ Meet Sarawak First Female Artist on a Mission to Color Kuching. <https://eksentrika.com/sarawak-first-female-street-artist>

¹³⁸ Walid Ali. <https://eksentrika.com/eksentriks/walid-ali>

¹³⁹ Zee Avi: Home is where her heart is. <https://www.edgeprop.my/content/1636713/zee-avi-home-where-her-heart>



69

There is so much local talent here especially in the underground music scene. The younger generation of Malaysians are so courageous and bold in expressing themselves and they do not defer to other people's expectations of them. These young artistes inspire me to be unapologetic about my own expressions too, and moving forward as an independent singer, I want to commit fully to my creative freedom.

Zee Avi, award-winning singer-songwriter¹⁴⁰

Crossover – Culture/Arts/Lifestyle

Edric Ong, architect

Edric Ong is an accomplished and celebrated designer and architect. He was trained as an architect and is the man behind the design of few landmarks, notably the Sarawak Cultural Village and the Kuching International Airport in Sarawak. As a designer, he has received many awards for his designs like the Malaysian

Designer of the Year 2009 awards, the ASEAN Silk Textile Awards and many more.

- He is consultant to UNESCO; President of Society Atelier Sarawak, the Arts and Crafts Society of Sarawak in East Malaysia; Past President of the ASEAN Handicraft Promotion and Development Association (AHPADA), and Vice President of the World Crafts Council Asia Pacific; and Convener of the World Eco-Fiber and Textile (WEFT) Network.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.edgeprop.my/content/1636713/zee-avi-home-where-her-heart>

¹⁴¹ Edric Ong. <http://www.indigo-indigenousdesignnetwork.org.au/edric-ong>

69

Craft is culture, and culture is people. Without culture, you have lost your identity... It's important to preserve our culture and heritage because that defines our identity as a people.

Edric Ong, architect¹⁴²

Heidi Munan, author

Heidi is a specialist in Sarawak's crafts and the director of Crafthub, a non-profit organisation which focuses on Sarawak handicrafts by promoting and marketing them and ensuring that they meet international quality control standards. She is also the author of numerous books and articles on Borneo's ethnic groups and cultures.¹⁴³

Wendy Teo, architect and founder of Borneo Art Collective

Wendy Teo is a UK ARB/RIBA Chartered Architect, Curator, Researcher and Tutor that seeing embedding social-culture dialogue in forming architecture as her ultimate pursuit. Her works has been translated into varied medium and scale throughout her commitment with Foster and Partners, Divooze Zein Atelier, Borneo Art Collective, Taiwan Architect Magazine, CanopyU and a number of workshop tutorship, one of the notable one is 2013/14 Archilab exhibition.

- In 2016, Wendy Teo founded Borneo Art Collective to document tangible and intangible cultural heritage of Borneo. The same year, she founded her own practice based in Borneo and operating in cross disciplinary scale.¹⁴⁴

Mike Boon, architect

Mike Boon graduated with a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Western Australia in 1989, and has been practicing in Kuching Since then, Boon has gained attention for his efforts in conserving heritage buildings in Sarawak. Other than his award-winning preservation work on the Old Court House in Kuching, he is also widely associated with promoting awareness on conservation. Following his involvement in the restoration of the Kuching Old Court House project in 2002, Mike has been actively promoting heritage conservation in Sarawak Besides working closely with the State Government on the conservation of heritage buildings, he is also a consultant for similar projects in the South-East Asian region.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² <https://www.goingplacesmagazine.com/keeper-of-tradition>

¹⁴³ Iban Stories. <https://arecabooks.com/product/iban-stories>

¹⁴⁴ Wendy Teo. <https://wendyteo.com/About>

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/community/2010/11/22/multiaward-winning-architects-works-are-steeped-in-conservation>

Rosemary Wong, Founder of the Ranees Artisan Gallery

With a Bachelor of Arts degree in printed textiles for Fashion and a Diploma in Interior Design, Rosemarie has always had a lifelong passion for indigenous handicrafts and heritage buildings. As the owner and creative designer of The Ranees Boutique Suites, The Marian Boutique Lodging House, The Granary Kitchen + Bar and The Ranees Artisan Gallery, Rosemarie has a definite mission: to create, connect and collaborate with local artisans to raise awareness and inspire change in the areas of preservation of crafts, heritage, helping to promote self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship in our developing economy.¹⁴⁶

Jacqueline Fong & June Ngo, Co-founders of Tanoti¹⁴⁷

Tanoti, co-founded by June Ngo and Jacqueline Fong, aims to improve the livelihoods of women in rural communities by teaching them how to weave *songket*. Tanoti is a congregation of Sarawakian women weavers and artisans dedicated towards the production, promotion and proliferation of hand-crafted fabrics. This continuously-growing community of craftswomen had its origins in a research and development workshop set up by a foundation established by Her Royal Highness the Queen of Malaysia in 2008, the Yayasan Tuanku Nur Zahirah.

- The workshop was privatised in 2012 pursuant to a restructuring exercise undertaken by the foundation. Tanoti aims to make good the vision of the foundation, that is to improve lives and livelihoods of womenfolk and rural communities through the ancient art of *songket* weaving.¹⁴⁸

Catriona Maddocks & Amalina Arip, Founders of Catama Borneo

Co-founders of social enterprise Catama Borneo,¹⁴⁹ Catriona Maddocks and Amalina Arip had a shared passion for Sarawakian craft and wanted to elevate it to a respected international art and help indigenous communities to gain sustainable economies through craft production whilst ensuring they passed on the skills to younger generations.¹⁵⁰

Donald Tan and Marina Foo, owner of The Village House and co-director of What About Kuching

Donald Tan and Marina Foo are the owners of The Village House¹⁵¹ boutique resort and advent supporters of Sarawakian culture. They are also the founders and directors of What About Kuching (WAK).¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ <https://www.theraneesofsarawak.com/about-us>

¹⁴⁷ <https://tanoticrafts.com>

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/nation/2018/09/16/fabric-of-time>

¹⁴⁹ <http://www.catamaborneo.com>

¹⁵⁰ <https://www.linkedin.com/in/catrionamaddocks>

¹⁵¹ <https://villagehouse.com.my>

¹⁵² <https://aboutkuching.com/about-wak>

69

Kuching has been described as “quaint and quiet” by many, but its culture is anything but. Kuchingites have always lived according to their own beat, blending the traditional and the modern, much like its people, who for centuries, have lived together alongside each other regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

Anette Chung, Social Media Manager of About Kuching¹⁵³

**Kelunan at
Damansara Performing Arts
Centre, 2019.**

Photo © Tuyang Initiative



¹⁵³ Interview by Penang Institute.

