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Discover Malaysia's Past: Its Earliest Structures

November 9, 2022



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In this post, Rise Malaysia would like to bring to your attention some of the first and oldest buildings in Malaysia, which include the country's first school, first hotel, first zoo, and first prison, as well as a great many others.

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First Buildings In Malaysia

- 1. First School – Penang Free School** Green Lane in George Town on the island of Penang in Malaysia is home to the oldest English-language school in all of Southeast Asia: Penang Free School (PFS). The academic success of this institution, which dates back to 1816, has earned it designation as a Cluster School and High Performance School by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. Although girls are accepted starting in Form 6, this secondary school has always been an all-boys institution. The Penang Free School, which is now part of Malaysia's historical canon, is operational as of the present day. Location Penang Free School, 12a, Jln Masjid Negeri, 11600 George Town, Pulau Pinang.
- 2. First Hospital – Taiping Hospital** The Chinese Pauper Hospital, also known as Yong Wah Hospital, was the first facility of its kind in the Federated Malay States. Founded in 1880 to care for the numerous Chinese coolies and tin-miners who became ill with conditions like diarrhoea, cholera, malaria, beriberi, dysentery, and lung ailments. In the same way that the town's economy grew rapidly, so did its establishment. When the State Government took over the Yong Wah Hospital at the end of 1880, it relocated to its current location on the Main Road and changed its name to Taiping General Hospital. This hospital, which claims the title of being nation's oldest buildings in Malaysia, is still in operation to this day. Location Hospital Taiping, Jalan Taming Sari, 34000 Larut & Matang, Taiping, Perak, Malaysia.
- 3. First International Class Hotel – The Federal Kuala Lumpur** After Malaya's independence, the Federal Kuala Lumpur was the country's first hotel of its calibre to open. To accommodate visiting dignitaries during the 50th anniversary of Malaya's independence, this hotel was constructed. Only three days before Malayan independence day on August 31, 1957, it first opened its doors. Initiated by Low Yat (father of Low Yow Chuan). Lee Yoon Thim was the architect of the original nine-story structure. In the early 1960s, construction began on the taller wing that now houses the rotating restaurant. The hotel still operates to this day. Location Federal Kuala Lumpur, 35, Bukit Bintang St, Bukit Bintang, 55100 Kuala Lumpur, Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Fun Fact : Mohammad Ali, a boxer who had previously held the title of world heavyweight champion, and Joe Bugner were both visitors at the Federal Hotel.
- 4. First Bank – Standard Chartered** As Malaysia's earliest and oldest bank, Standard Chartered Malaysia has always taken great pride in that fact. The company has been in the country since 1875, when it founded a business on Beach Street in Penang. It has, over the years, maintained a consistent dedication to the progress of the country. Standard Chartered Bank Malaysia Berhad was subsequently established on February 29, 1984 as a local corporation. The bank still operates to this day.

Location 86, Lebu Pantai, George Town, 10300 George Town, Pulau Pinang. 5. First Court – Penang High Court In 1808, the Penang High Court was established as the first court in what is now one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia. The original courthouse on this site dates back to 1808, and the current one was built to replace it in the early 1900s. In 1808, the first court in the Malay Peninsula, the Penang High Court (formerly called the Supreme Court), was created in neighbouring Fort Cornwallis. Its founding also heralded the arrival of a progressive legal system in Malaya, the precursor to what is now Malaysia's judicial system. The High Court still operates to this day despite being the oldest. Location Penang High Court, Lebu Light, George Town, 10200, Pulau Pinang. Fun Fact : During the 1920s, this location is notable for being the location where the Straits Settlements and Federated Malay States Bars welcomed its first female judge. 6. First Mall – Ampang Park Shopping Centre Located on Jalan Ampang in Kuala Lumpur, the Ampang Park shopping mall was the country's first of its kind. The mall opened on March 15th 1973. The Design Partnership, who also created Singapore's People's Park Complex, collaborated with Thomas A.S. Tiang of Kuala Lumpur to create the plans for this building. On December 31, 2017, Ampang Park was permanently closed and demolished , and in May 2018, demolition work began to make way for the MRT and new projects. Location Ampang Park Shopping Centre, Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur 7. First University – Universiti Malaya A public research institution, the University of Malaya (Malay: Universiti Malaya; abbreviated as UM or unofficially the Malayan University) is situated in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur. As the only university in post-independence Malaya, it holds the distinction of being both the most prestigious and one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia. It was established 117 years ago; 28th September 1905 and still serves the services to the public to this day. Location Universiti Malaya, 50603, Jln Profesor Diraja Ungku Aziz, Seksyen 13, 50603 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. Fun Fact : With a current QS World University Rankings position of #70, UM is the highest ranked educational institution in Malaysia and rank #8 in Asia and #3 in Southeast Asia. 8. First Church – St. Paul's Church Located in Malacca City, Malaysia, Saint Paul's Church is the oldest church in all of Malaysia and much of Southeast Asia, having been constructed in 1521. On top of St. Paul's Hill, it is now a part of the Malacca Museum Complex among the remains of A Famosa and the Stadthuys. The building was abandoned as a house of worship. Following the construction of the Dutch Christian Church, St. Paul's Church was converted into a cemetery . Nevertheless, it opens 24 hours as a tourism spot. Location St. Paul Church, 1935, Jln Kota, Bandar Hilir, 75000 Melaka. 9. First Temple – Sri Poyatha Moorthi Temple The Sri Poyatha Moorthi Temple in Malacca, Malaysia, is one of the few remaining active Hindu Chitty temples in Southeast Asia and, as such, is known across the world. Despite its unassuming appearance, it attracts the adoration of not only a sizable number of tourists, but also of devoted followers. It was reported that the temple was built in 1781 by the Chitty preacher Tha Vinayagar Chitty. When the Dutch colonial authority of Malacca handed Thavinayagar Chitty a piece of land in 1781 , he used it to construct the temple as a place of worship for his people. Vinayagar, also known as Ganesha, the elephant god (deity), is honoured in this temple. It operates every day with specific timing from 7 a.m till 11.30 a.m and reopens at 6 p.m till 9 p.m. Location Sri Poyatha Moorthi Temple, 5 to 11, Jalan Tukang Emas, 75200, Melaka. 10. First Mosque – Kampung Laut Mosque / Masjid Kampung Laut In

Malaysia, the oldest mosque can be found in Kampung Laut . No concrete proof exists of a specific time frame during which the mosque was constructed. Sometime between the 15th and 18th centuries, it was likely constructed on Jalan Kuala Krai in Nilam Puri, Tumpat District, Kelantan. Similarly to local homes, it follows a style that is indicative of local traditional architecture and is suitable for the local climate. As an additional cultural link, the style is a relic of ancient Hindu constructions in southern India. The first mosque, being as one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia was built using simple materials and designs, such as four pillars supporting the floor and a roof made of palm leaves. It opens every day from 4.19 a.m till 12 a.m. Location Masjid Kampung Laut, 448, Kampong Laut 1, 16040 Tumpat, Kelantan. Fun Fact : It has weathered two major floods in Kelantan, the first in 1926 during the Bah Air Merah and the second in 1966.

11. First Library – National Library Of Malaysia (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia In order to preserve and disseminate knowledge at the national level for both current and future generations, the National Library of Malaysia collects materials from across the country. The National Library is established in 1966 and being one the oldest buildings in Malaysia is committed to expanding its collection and is actively involved in this process through the deposit of library items under the Deposit of Library Material Act 1986, as well as through the purchase, donation, and exchange of books and other library materials. The tengkolok, a traditional Malay headdress, is a symbol of intellectual pride and respect in Malaysian culture, and this is reflected in the building's design. The roof tiles, which include designs influenced by the Kain Songket, are another distinctive feature (traditional hand woven cloth). It opens daily except on Monday from 10 a.m to 5 p.m. Location 232, Jln Tun Razak, Titiwangsa, 50572 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur.

12. First Cinema – The Coliseum Theatre (LFS Pawagam Coliseum Its doors were opened in 1920; The Chua family, headed by Chua Cheng Bok, constructed it in 1920. The Coliseum Theatre , one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia, has been open ever since Indian films dominate the premieres at this venue. About 900 people might have been seated in the orchestra and balconies when the theatre first opened. The colonial revival theater's abundance of columns. It was previously owned privately by a doctor and is now legally protected as a historic site. Location The Coliseum Theatre, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, City Centre, 50100 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur. Fun Fact: Following popular outrage, the government of Malaysia abandoned plans to convert the theatre into a cultural heritage centre in 2006. A subsequent government decision reversed the earlier one and the theatre remains open. Instead, they intended to construct a parking lot in the area.

13. First Prison – Taiping Prison Originally called Larut Prison and Taiping Training Centre, Taiping Prison is Malaysia's first and oldest modern prison complex, having opened in 1879. To top it all off, the prison was the largest of its kind at the time, hence deserves its recognition as one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia. Taiping Prison is still in use today. Location: Penjara Taiping, Jalan Taming Sari, Taman Tasik Taiping, 34000 Taiping, Perak. Fun Fact: During the years of the Japanese occupation (1941-1945), Taiping Prison served both as a public prison and a prison for Japanese prisoners of war. There was a time when the prison erased all of its records pertaining to its inmates.

14. First Theme Park – Mimaland (Mimaland Malaysia In Miniature Land) was a water park in Gombak, Selangor, Malaysia that had been abandoned . It debuted in 1975 and closed permanently in May 1994 due to landslide damage; it is widely considered Malaysia's first theme park.

Location: Mimaland, 84a, Jalan Gombak, Kampung Batu Sebelas, 68100 Batu Caves, Selangor. Fun Fact : There is still the entrance gate and the ruins of Mimaland to be seen today.

15. First Zoo – National Zoo Of Malaysia (Zoo Negara The National Zoo , often known as Zoo Negara , is a zoo in Malaysia that can be found at Ulu Klang, which is located in the Gombak District of Selangor. Tunku Abdul Rahman, the nation's first Prime Minister, presided over the ceremony that formally inaugurated it on November 14, 1963 and is still open to this day, every day from 9 a.m till 5 p.m. Location Zoo Negara, Jalan Taman Zoo, Taman Zoo, 68000 Ampang, Selangor. Fun Fact : Plans to relocate the zoo to different parts of Selangor were discussed in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Some developers wanted to capitalise on the zoo's valuable land, but the public was strongly opposed to the plans. Nonetheless, the [Selangor] State Government and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment supported keeping the zoo in its current location.

16. First Airport – Taiping Airport The airport serving Taiping, commonly known as Tekah Airport or Tekah Airstrip , is situated in the city of Assam Kumbang. The airport, which opened in 1929, is often regarded as the region's (and perhaps the world's) first purpose-built international airport. There has been a decline in maintenance at the airport in Assam Kumbang, which is close to Taiping. Despite being completely disregarded and receiving only the barest of maintenance, the runway's grass is nonetheless being regularly mowed. The airport's perimeter fence is damaged in a few spots. It's been a long time since the airport closed. The Airstrip, however, is still operational Location: Taiping Airport, Jalan Tekkah 1, Taman Tekah Jaya, 34000 Taiping, Perak. Fun Fact : Amelia Mary Earhart, a famous American aviator, made a pit call at Taiping Airport in 1937 during her circumnavigation of the globe to refuel her plane. Amelia Earhart was flying from Thailand to Singapore on June 7, 1937, when the Resident-General of Malaya granted her permission to land at Taiping Airport en route. (

17. First Museum – Perak Museum This country's museum history begins in Taiping, at the Perak Museum . In 1883, the fourth British Resident in Perak, Sir Hugh Low, established it (1877 to 1889). Extinct smoked clay and skeletons of once-living animals like the binturong and pulasan are just two examples of the rare and ancient artefacts on display at this museum. The Perak Museum, being one of the oldest buildings in Malaysia, was built in an old British art deco design. It still operates till this day every day, from 9 a.m to 5 p.m. Location Muzium Perak, Jalan Taming Sari, 34000 Taiping, Perak.

18. First Concert Hall (Classical Music) – Petronas Philharmonic Hall Dedicated to classical music, the Petronas Philharmonic Hall is the country's first concert hall of its kind and first opened on August 17th 1998. The New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the BBC Symphony, and the Vienna Symphony are just few of the world-famous orchestras that have performed at this venue, which is also home to the The Petronas Philharmonic Hall still operates to this day. Location PETRONAS Twin Towers, Level Two, Tower Two, Kuala Lumpur City Centre, 50088 Kuala Lumpur, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur

The Bottom Line Well, that wraps up our discussion. You should be familiar with these landmarks as they are among the earliest in Malaysia and will hopefully serve as a source of new information and appreciation. Despite their relative anonymity, the heritage of oldest buildings in Malaysia that make up the city's infrastructure and bear witness to Malaysia's history and growth are an important element of the country's cultural identity.