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SPOTLIGHT ON SURABAYA

The city in East Java is set to expand as it capitalises on its historic roots and status as an important trading centre

WORDS RANDY MULYANTO

Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, is renowned for being the site of a fierce 1945 battle during the Indonesian National Revolution. Soon after the nation declared independence in August of that year, its forces fought against the British and their allies some weeks later. The republican forces prevailed, and Heroes' Day is celebrated nationwide each year on November

10. Eight decades on, Surabaya is making the most of its position as one of the country's most prominent business centres.

The city – the capital of East Java province – is an important port (and has been for centuries), with a population of more than 3 million. It is home to several foreign consulates, banks and big corporations and, as a major regional centre, is well served by airlines: Indonesia's Batik

ABOVE:
Tunjungan Plaza in
the city centre

OPPOSITE PAGE
FROM LEFT:
Heroes Monument
commemorating the
Battle of Surabaya;
Kota Lama, a
renovated Dutch
colonial-era building

Air launched direct flights from Surabaya to Kuala Lumpur on August 1 this year, while Cathay Pacific has direct flights to the city from Hong Kong. Both Garuda Indonesia and Singapore Airlines fly to Singapore. The central business district is a 45-minute drive from Juanda International Airport; a taxi, or car arranged by a hotel are the best options for those travelling on business. And while a rail link



connecting the airport and city centre has been mooted, for now at least, that option does not exist.

Surabaya has good MICE credentials, including the Grand City Convention and Exhibition in the mall carrying the same name, and the JX International Convention Exhibition, while many of the top hotels also have good facilities for events and meetings. The government is, of course, keen to promote that sector in the city. "Surabaya, with its strategic location and facilities benefits from well-prepared infrastructure, sufficient MICE capacity and supporting amenities such as accommodation, accessibility and entertainment centres," says Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, the country's Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy.

What to see

Surabaya has its fair share of historical attractions, including the Heroes Monument and the 10 November Museum. Ady Setyawan, tour guide and founder of the preservation NGO Roode Brug Soerabaia, describes it as a city of defence and industry. "This city has two important roles," he says. "The maritime side is interesting and is the selling point here. Plus, there's the revolution and the Battle of Surabaya." He also recommends a visit to the Indonesian Navy Museum.

The Dutch colonial-era fortress of Kedung Cowek is another highlight. "There are still lots of gunshot holes left over from the Battle of Surabaya," Ady says. "It really is a

forest atmosphere with World War II bunkers, so in my opinion, that is a potential that should be elevated."

But what he sees as the city's overdevelopment of shopping malls concerns him. "Since 10 or 15 years ago, the government has been promoting 'Sparkling Surabaya.' What they have been promoting are its shopping centres," he says. "That is what I feel as a resident – mall development seems to get the most attention."

Surabaya's Old Town has both colonial-era and Chinese buildings, while its Chinatown, centred around Jalan Kembang Jepun, is well worth a visit, especially now that it has been revitalised. "The plan is to widen [the revitalisation] towards the Arab village settlements to the Malay village. Those will be beautified later," he says, referring to other parts of Old Town. Chinatown is a great place for authentic Chinese dishes and Indonesian-Chinese fusion fare, and the Kya-Kya food centre is a good place to start.

Those with some time on their hands can head out of the city to experience another side of Java. The Tugu Kawisari coffee plantation was established in 1870 and claims to be the island's first of its kind. It is situated between the steep slopes of Mount Kawi and Mount Kelud. Adventurous types can head to the Mount Bromo volcano or Ijen Crater, further to the east and famous for its blue flames of ignited volcanic gas. Meanwhile Bali (see page 28) is about an hour's flight from the city. **BT**



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HOTELS

JW MARRIOTT HOTEL SURABAYA

Close to Tunjungan Plaza, Surabaya's biggest shopping centre, the hotel is situated in the city's downtown area. It has 308 hotel rooms, 22 residential suites and 76 suites. [marriott.com](https://www.marriott.com)



VASA HOTEL SURABAYA

Situated about half an hour away from Juanda International Airport, this five-star hotel has 383 rooms, suites and residences. [vasahotelsurabaya.com](https://www.vasahotelsurabaya.com)

