

JAKARTA IN POLE POSITION

Indonesia's commercial hub will thrive long after the nation's new capital is open for business

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Even as Indonesia's capital moves from Jakarta to Nusantara in Borneo, the country's most populous city will remain the commercial heart of the nation of 281 million people. Home to more than 10 million of them, Jakarta will continue to welcome business travellers from well beyond the country's borders after the government has set up shop in Nusantara – and it will do so well into the future.

Soekarno-Hatta International Airport – the nation's largest international gateway, situated in the Greater Jakarta metropolitan area – is welcoming new arrivals. In April the nation's flag carrier Garuda Indonesia began daily flights from Jakarta to Doha, in a codeshare partnership with Qatar Airways. Star Alliance member Egyptair now operates direct flights from Cairo to Jakarta following its October 2023 inaugural flight (the airline served the city previously, but stopped in 2016). And this September Taiwan's Starlux Airlines is expected to embark on five flights a week from Taipei to Jakarta.

In March this year the government announced 14 new National Strategic Projects – aside from hundreds

more under outgoing President Joko Widodo – in several provinces, funded by the private sector. One new project is Pantai Indah Kapuk 2 (PIK2) by Indonesian conglomerates Agung Sedayu Group and Salim Group. Dubbed “The New Jakarta City”, it spans North Jakarta and Banten. Covering some 6,000 hectares and built from scratch to include two reclaimed islands, the area is expected to bring in 20 million tourist visits and 10 million new jobs, according to Sandiaga Salahuddin Uno, Minister for Tourism and Creative Economy. PIK2 is still expanding – and now offers mangrove safaris and the newly constructed Chinatown Pantjoran PIK, as well as multiple dining and entertainment options, among other attractions. As the name suggests, there is also a PIK1 (800 hectares), with the reclaimed Golf Island and Riverwalk Island connecting the two areas.

Jakarta and Surabaya will still be the primary business and economic centres of Indonesia

“With the new National Strategic Projects, it is hoped that new economic hubs will develop, supporting each other across regions and thereby ensuring the continuous and robust movement of the economy,” the minister told *Business Traveller*.

“It will take five to seven years for these projects to generate a multiplier effect, allowing their benefits to be fully realised,” he added, citing a study of national infrastructure projects conducted by Bappenas, the country's development agency. “Jakarta and Indonesia's second-largest city of Surabaya will still be the primary business and economic centres of Indonesia”.

Getting around

Despite all the good news, Jakarta remains infamous for its *macet* (traffic jams). Well aware of the congestion's negative impact and poor reputation they lend the city, the government has launched →



KAI Commuter service
RIGHT: Jakarta International Stadium





The MICE business is moving because people don't want to be stuck in traffic from the airport

several initiatives to boost public transport and ease the gridlock.

The KAI Commuter runs from the airport to BNI City station (also known as Sudirman Baru station) in downtown Central Jakarta and takes 48 minutes, eventually reaching Manggarai station in East Jakarta in six more. The fare ranges from IDR25,000 to 70,000 (about US\$1.5 to US\$4.2) each way. E-money cards issued by Bank Mandiri and Bank Central Asia, available throughout the city, are valid as a payment method on this and many other forms of public transport. The city also has an extensive Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) train system, and a Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system serving mainly the outer areas.

The Transjakarta network takes residents and visitors around the capital and to neighbouring Greater

Jakarta cities. Operating since 2004, it now has 251 routes served mainly by buses and minivans. The bus network – claimed to be the largest of its kind in the world – covers more than 400km. Every bus ride charges a flat fee, regardless of the length of the trip.

Indonesia's ride-hailing app Gojek covers taxi rides, as does its Singaporean competitor Grab. Bluebird – an older Indonesian transport company operating since 1972 – has several types of taxi available for booking on its own mobile app.

FROM TOP:
Chinatown Pantjoran PIK; Terminal 3 departures, Soekarno-Hatta International Airport

MICE facilities

Among various stakeholders, Agung Sedayu Group has developed and contributed to a wide range of MICE venues and other properties in Indonesia's capital. "In Jakarta, the business centres are also getting more spread out, so things are not just happening in the CBD," says Natalia Kusumo, CEO of Amantara, a commercial and hospitality subsidiary of the group. "They are also happening in the west, and

they are also very much happening in the north. More and more groups are coming in from China and Europe to North Jakarta to have business meetings."

To welcome more international business travellers, the group is developing the 30-hectare, 11-hall Nusantara International Convention Exhibition in PIK2, set to be completed in the second half of 2025. The nine-hectare Tokyo Garden Hall PIK2 – comprising event, exhibition and community spaces – is also in the works.

There are also existing venues such as the 13-event-room Jakarta Convention Center and the 44-hectare Jakarta International Expo – both in Central Jakarta. The former hosted last year's Asean Summit, and the latter a technical meeting for this year's Jakarta Fair.

"There are so many great hotels, restaurants – you name it – all can be found in Jakarta," says Heben Ezer, head of the inbound and domestic tour division of the Indonesian Travel Agents Association (Astindo). "Jakarta's prospect for MICE is huge."

With the city making the most of its business credentials, many international hotel brands have a presence there – and many are investing in the MICE sector. The Mövenpick Hotel Jakarta City Centre in Pecanongan had a June 2024 soft opening. Close to several government ministries and foreign embassies, it offers two ballrooms and 15 meeting rooms.

"In this part of town, the government is a very important client," says Antoine Weinstein, the hotel's general manager. "With our

FROM TOP:
Swissôtel Jakarta PIK Avenue's St. Gallen Presidential suite; front desk of Mövenpick Hotel Jakarta City Centre



meeting rooms [and ballrooms], depending on the set-up, we can have meetings of 8 to 600 people –there's demand for that."

In the north, Swissôtel Jakarta PIK Avenue – opened in 2019 – sees the potential of the area in which it is situated. The hotel, with its four ballrooms and nine meeting rooms, benefits from being just 15 minutes by car from the airport. It takes at least twice as long to reach the downtown area of the city.

"We've had a number of international MICE events," says Sean Halpin, the hotel's general manager. "A lot of this business that used to happen in the downtown area is moving to the north because people don't want to be stuck in traffic from the airport and then all the way downtown. It's all about convenience."

"PIK's a destination where international business travellers can come – they can do the events in the hotel," he says. "But they can also play golf, they can do some leisure activities, they have the white-sand beaches and there's some tours they can do through the mangroves here." →



Archipelago fare


Meanwhile, Jakarta's eclectic dining scene reflects its rich heritage. Tugu Hotels & Restaurants' Lara Djonggrang (*bar pictured above*) in Menteng, Central Jakarta, is one of them. It serves Indonesian cuisine from several provinces of Java, Sumatra and beyond. Situated inside a former Dutch colonial-era mansion, it features paintings and other collectibles dating back to the Majapahit Empire – which ruled between the 13th and 16th centuries.

Aside from signature flavours of the nation, cuisines from other parts of the world are also well represented in the capital. For instance, Henshin restaurant and rooftop bar – part of The Westin Jakarta – serves Nikkei (Peruvian-Japanese) dishes.

Meanwhile, Japanese restaurant Morimoto – part of The Langham, Jakarta – is Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto's first foray into Southeast Asia, and combines contemporary Japanese cuisine with Western and other elements. Vong Kitchen – in the Alila SCBD Jakarta hotel, Sudirman business district – is the creation of New York-based chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten and his son Cédric. It serves mainly French-American cuisine using Indonesian ingredients.

The outlook

Jakarta is set to celebrate its 500th anniversary in 2027. The city has served as a trading hub for centuries, and is the starting point for businesses to explore Southeast Asia's most populous market. Despite the fact it's losing its capital city status, it looks likely to thrive.

"It's safe to say that Jakarta, for the next two decades, will still remain the country's financial and business hub," says Amantara's Kusumo. 



HOTELS

MÖVENPICK HOTEL JAKARTA CITY CENTRE

This hotel has 256 rooms in five categories. It has seven F&B outlets, including Wilde Cut steak house and the Indonesian restaurant Ginger Flower. It is close to the Merdeka Presidential Palace and several prominent office towers.

movenpick.accor.com

SWISSÔTEL JAKARTA PIK AVENUE

Swissôtel's first venture in Indonesia offers 412 rooms and suites. Head to The Chinese National for Cantonese fare, or the Brownmilk 24-hour deli. The hotel is close to a highway exit – handy in Jakarta.

swissotel.com/hotels/jakarta

THE WESTIN JAKARTA

With 255 rooms and suites, The Westin Jakarta, atop the 285m Gama Tower (*pictured above*), is close to government ministries, embassies and offices. It has fabulous views from its rooftop bar. We review it on page 70.

westin.marriott.com

PARKROYAL JAKARTA

Set to open in Q4 this year, this 162-key property is situated in Luminary Tower. It will have direct underground access to the upcoming Dukuh Atas MRT station and shares the development complex with sister properties Parkroyal Serviced Suites Jakarta and Pan Pacific Jakarta.

panpacific.com