

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW CHARTER FLIGHT CONNECTING CHENGDU TO KOTA KINABALU ENHANCES VM2026 CAMPAIGN

KOTA KINABALU, SABAH — Tourism Malaysia today marked the arrival of the inaugural charter flight from Chengdu to Kota Kinabalu operated by Qingdao Airlines, further strengthening air connectivity between China and Malaysia while supporting the continued growth of inbound tourism to East Malaysia.

The charter service, operating with a seat capacity of 180 passengers per flight, will run until June 2026, reflecting sustained travel demand from China and Kota Kinabalu's growing appeal as a key leisure destination.

The inaugural flight was welcomed by representatives from Tourism Malaysia, together with representatives from Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) and Chengdu Haiyou Holiday International Travel Agency Co. Ltd.

In a statement, Mr. Mohd Amirul Rizal Abdul Rahim, Director General of Tourism Malaysia said, the Chengdu–Kota Kinabalu charter service opens new opportunities for Chinese travellers to explore Sabah's distinctive offerings. "From pristine islands and vibrant marine ecosystems to rich cultural heritage and immersive nature-based experiences, Kota Kinabalu continues to attract visitors seeking diverse and authentic journeys. Services such as this not only enhance travel convenience but also support local tourism businesses, generate economic opportunities, and contribute to Malaysia's broader tourism objectives in line with Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026)," he said.

China remains as one of Malaysia's key tourism source markets. In 2025, Malaysia welcomed 4.6 million visitors from China, representing a 25.1 per cent year-on-year increase, underscoring strong market demand and sustained confidence in Malaysia as a preferred travel destination.

Kota Kinabalu and its surrounding regions offer visitors a compelling blend of natural wonders and cultural heritage, highlighted by Sabah's prestigious UNESCO "Triple Crown." From exploring traditional villages and participating in cultural festivals to discovering Sabah's unique flora and fauna, travellers can enjoy meaningful experiences in a destination that celebrates both nature and culture. The introduction of this Chengdu charter service provides greater access for more visitors to experience these unique attractions firsthand.

Tourism Malaysia welcomed the launch of the charter service and expressed its appreciation for the close collaboration with industry partners, including Qingdao Airlines, Malaysia Airports Holdings Berhad (MAHB) and Chengdu Haiyou Holiday International Travel Agency Co. Ltd., while reaffirming its commitment to strengthening Malaysia's position as a preferred destination for international travellers under the Visit Malaysia 2026 campaign.

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About Tourism Malaysia

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, also known as Tourism Malaysia, is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC). It focuses on promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination and has, since its establishment, played a significant role in strengthening the country's presence and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape.

Visit Malaysia 2026 (VM2026) underscores Malaysia's commitment to sustainable tourism development, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). The campaign aims to showcase the nation's diverse natural attractions, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant tourism offerings, while driving inclusive growth and long-term value for local communities and industry stakeholders.

For more information, visit Tourism Malaysia's website www.tourism.gov.my and social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#).

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