

Type: Travel Article – Theme Park

Destination: KidZania Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

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WHERE KIDS RULE

DARYL YEP CHECKS OUT KIDZANIA, THE NATION FOR KIDS, AND IS FASCINATED
BY THIS AWARD-WINNING THEME PARK



Fancy being a paramedic or dentist for a day? These are among the 90 authentic role-playing activities that await kids at KidZania

Kai! That's probably the first word you'll hear as you step into KidZania, Kuala Lumpur's latest indoor family edutainment centre. Here's how greetings are exchanged instead of hello. It's personal; giving kids an instant sense of belonging and a feeling of being connected and accepted within a place meant only for them.

KidZania even has its own dance and song, not to mention currency, the kidZos.

Hailed from Mexico City, this award-winning theme park was first opened in 1999. It has since been established in eight cities worldwide including Monterrey, Tokyo, Dubai and Seoul.

Think it's another children's theme park with rides and arcade games? Well, think again. KidZania has none of those. Instead, it's a place where children can lead independent lives and understand the world of grown-ups better, by being grown-ups themselves.



CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP LEFT): At CIMB bank; kids trying out wall climbing; firefighters putting out a ‘fire’ at a hotel

Put simply, KidZania is where kids experience the world of adults in a replica of a real city. They now have a place where they can freely and openly do things that would otherwise send mummy into a screaming frenzy.

Here, if you’ve reached the age of 4 and fulfil the minimum height requirement, you can even climb a building – how about that?

Putting on lipstick and nail polish are not forbidden either. Kids can even get a beauty makeover. Yeah, your five-year old daughter must be gleaming with joy knowing this. In fact, she can even earn ‘money’ if she applied them on others.

Most parents would agree that kids simply enjoy imitating adults. KidZania is the answer to satisfy their curiosity of the adult’s world and their desire to be an adult through fun role-playing activities. Targeted at those aged 4 to 14, it is truly a nation for kids.

Let’s face the fact that those days where a game of Snake & Ladder or reruns of Tom & Jerry is enough to keep kids occupied for hours have long gone.

In this day and age where Apple products are placed on top of most kids’ wish list and Internet-access has become a necessity, traditional games can no longer satisfy the amazing development of their brainpower.

They are hungry for information and tasks that challenge their intelligence. Hence, they require experiences that are stimulating, hands-on, engaging and educational, yet fun. They are still kids, after all.



CLOCKWISE (FROM TOP LEFT): A pilot and his co-pilot inside a cockpit; in the courtroom; making burgers at Marrybrown; in the NSTP newsroom

At KidZania, children are empowered to take charge and make their own decisions. They are encouraged to choose or try out whatever that strikes their fancy. It is to remind them that life is about options. In a way, it'll foster confidence and independence.

There are 60 “establishments” in KidZania offering 90 authentic role-playing activities. Kids can play and experience the jobs that their parents are doing – from surgeon and pilot to fashion model and hair stylist.

These outlets are sponsored by well-known local and international brands such as AirAsia, Celcom, Honda, Marrybrown, and the New Straits Times.

To enter the city, kids need to go through an airline check-in counter by AirAsia. They'll get a boarding pass, a map to the city and a cheque for 50 kidZos to begin their exciting journey of discovery.

They need to head straight to the bank to cash the cheque first.

In the city, kids can spend their kidZos and earn it when it runs out. All the establishments have tasks for the young workers to carry out for a specific duration.

They can be a surgeon and perform surgery on a mock patient on the operating table; pilot an airplane; dispatch parcels as postmen; go on a fire engine as firefighters to put out a fire; or be a journalist.



TOP: The 80,000 sq ft KidZania; **RIGHT:** kidZos, KidZania's own currency

Staff members, known as Supervisor, will be on hand to guide and assist the kids in each of the establishments.

By completing the prescribed tasks, kids earn kidZos which can be saved in the bank, or spent purchasing other goods and services.

If at the end of the session they have kidZos left, they can open an account at the bank and deposit the kidZos, to be used for their next visit. They'll get an ATM card that can be used at the ATM machines within KidZania.

According to KidZania, the role-play activities are specifically designed to aid physical and intellectual growth. They also contribute to the development of skills and attitudes.

With so many roles that kids can assume here, it reflects the importance every person has in the development of a community, thus teaching them the value of equality and respect for others.

Kids also learn about financial literacy and money management at KidZania. As they have the freedom to decide on what to do with their kidZos, they can choose to spend or save them, as well as what and where to spend them on.

Parents must try not to interfere with the choices of their children. It is, after all, their hard-earned cash.

The diverse learning experience of KidZania Kuala Lumpur will benefit children in their life at school, home and when they are out with friends. It'll give them much to talk about.



Safety is always a prime concern when bringing kids to a theme park especially one where you can just drop them off like KidZania.

Here, all visitors will be given a security bracelet that doesn't allow children to exit the premise without the accompanying adult. There's a tracking system on each child where the ID bracelet will be scanned each time they enter or leave an establishment.

Children aged eight and above can be left at KidZania without parents' supervision. Parents have the option of dropping off their kids for a fun-filled time at KidZania, or they can pay a fee and enter the city as well.

While their kids are 'working', parents can relax at the Parents' lounge, which is equipped with Wi-fi and TVs.

Toddlers too are not left out. There's an exclusive section to cater to them called 'Urbano's House'. Here, those aged 3 and below can take part in story-telling and puppet shows, make their favourite meals, jump around on an inflatable bed, enjoy games, colouring books, puzzles and many more.

Understandably, KidZania can be really packed during holidays.

"Brace yourself for hours of queuing up at certain establishments," related a friend who had brought her son there during the school holiday.

Whether children would eventually find KidZania interesting or enriching, I'll leave it to them to judge. After all, the city is created for them.

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FAST FACTS:

<i>Location</i>	:	<i>The Curve NX in Mutiara Damansara.</i>
		<i>It is connected to the Curve shopping mall via a link bridge.</i>
<i>Size</i>	:	<i>80,000 sq ft spread across 2 levels.</i>
<i>Capacity</i>	:	<i>1,700 people at any one time.</i>
<i>Operating hours</i>	:	<i>10am – 5pm (Mondays to Fridays)</i>
		<i>10am to 3pm & 4pm to 9pm (Weekends, Public and School Holidays)</i>
<i>Website</i>	:	<i>www.KidZania.com.my</i>
<i>Facebook</i>	:	<i>www.facebook.com/KidZaniaKualaLumpur</i>
<i>Careline</i>	:	<i>1 300 88 KIDZ (5439) – 9am to 8pm (Mondays to Sundays)</i>

Entry Fee:

<i>Infants (under 2 years)</i>	:	<i>FREE</i>
<i>Toddlers (2 – 3 years)</i>	:	<i>RM35 (MyKad & Non-MyKad)</i>
<i>Kids (4 – 17 years)</i>	:	<i>RM55 (MyKad) / RM75 (Non-MyKad)</i>
<i>Adults (18 years & above)</i>	:	<i>RM35 (MyKad) / RM55 (Non-MyKad)</i>
<i>Senior Citizens (60 years & above)</i>	:	<i>RM30 (MyKad & Non-MyKad)</i>

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