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MyExecutive MY PAPER WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 11 2013

## Journeys » A16



### TRAVEL WITH CANDYLICIOUS LAPTOP BAGS

The latest Huemix collection from American Tourister features bright, candy-coloured laptop bags that are designed for business travellers on the move. The lightweight-polyester bags feature a magnetic front flap for easy access to your mobile phone, tablets and pens, as well as a smart sleeve that allows your bag to be placed on top of your luggage.



CRAFT WITH CHARM: The flagship Tulisan store at Darmawangsa Square offers fabric bags and accessories in beautiful limited-edition graphic prints and hand illustrations. PHOTO: ANA OW

# Jakarta is my new regional fave

BY ANA OW

**I** LEFT my heart in Jakarta, I think. My mother is Indonesian, born in that very city, so I guess I count myself as connected to it by blood. Also, there's the fact that I understand the language fairly well, although speaking it doesn't come as naturally.

But the tipping points that made Indonesia's capital my new favourite regional destination (dethroning Hong Kong by a mile) were its pockets of chic spots, overtly fabu-

lous malls and hotels, as well as good eats.

### OUTDO, OUTLAST, OUTSIZE

One thing that is immediately noticeable about the cityscape is that big is better. Even the city's "minor league" malls dwarf our best ones in Orchard Road.

Our hotel of choice was the home-grown – but in no way homely – Mulia Senayan in Jalan Asia Afrika Senayan.

This is the place to spend a night or two if you're really in the mood to feel like a celebrity. Its foyer is opulent, with a dou-

ble-height ceiling, plush fittings and baroque touches in the decor and furnishings.

Everything is a tad overdone, but if you like things grand, then let this place bring out the Ibu ("society lady" in Bahasa Indonesia) in you.

### FOR THE HIPSTERS

The more we explored the city, the more we drifted away from the gargantuan malls and found solace – and friendship – with some native hipsters.

I found a friend in Mr Luthfi Hasan, who is, by reputation, the city's foremost authority on vintage-furniture styling. His house has been featured in Martha Stewart Jakarta and Elle Decoration.

An ad-man who owns his own agency, he loves to go hunting in markets out of town for antique treasure. He searches in places like Bogor or a bit farther away like, say, Toronto.

While running a blog called Jakarta Vintage, the trained architect fills his weekends by sourcing for mid-century chairs and sofas to refinish and upcycle.

For shopaholics wondering what to get in Jakarta, here's a tip: Beyond the kek lapis (traditional Indonesian layer cake) and batik sarongs, seek out the less ordinary.

While at Darmawangsa Square, check out the flagship Tulisan store and stock up on fabric bags and accessories in beautiful limited-edition graphic prints and hand illustrations.

The products are so well-received that there are 41 outlets in the United States and Mexico, and four in Hong Kong.

Elsewhere, Alun Alun in Grand Indonesia Shopping Town is a concept store featuring works by Indonesia's best contemporary designers, who eke out modern designs using traditional fabrics and materials.

### THE TRADITIONAL ROUTE

For those who prefer something with less snob appeal and that is more traditional, soak in the city's more down-home offerings.

Start with the macet (traffic jam) – there's nothing more truly Jakartan than this.

Do yourself a favour by mapping out your travel route with your hotel concierge or Google Maps before you venture out to your destination. Then give yourself a lead time of at least 45 minutes to get stuck in traffic.

Once you have the jam figured out, do not let it ruin your day. Relax instead with a Javanese massage at any one of the branches of Martha Tilaar spa (www.marthatilaarspa.com), where luxury body treatments cost approximately S\$48 for 90 minutes.

Or stuff your face with Daeng Tata's slurplastic sop konro (a mutton stew which is a hybrid of our own sup kambing

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**BLAST FROM THE PAST:** Vintage stylings by Mr Luthfi Hasan, an antique-treasure hunter. The ad-man's house has been featured in Martha Stewart Jakarta and Elle Decoration. PHOTO: ANA OW



**SLURPTASTIC:** Indulge in Daeng Tata's sop konro (a mutton stew which is a hybrid of sup kambing and sup tulang), which goes great with rice and spicy sambal belachan. PHOTO: ANA OW

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and sup tulang), along with some beef ribs in a rich gravy.

Tuck into them with lots of rice to soak up the gravy and, if you're game, some spicy sambal belachan. The place is kind of hard to find unless you're a local, and there's virtually no place to park.

But, if you're adventurous, look for it in Jalan Casablanca, Tebet.

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blogs about travel and family at [www.travellinginthrees.com](http://www.travellinginthrees.com)

**HELP DESK 我的字典**

**Overtly:** 明显 míng xiǎn

**Opulent:** 豪华 háo huá

**Upcycle:** 升级改造 shēng jí gǎi zào

**Hybrid:** 混合 hùn hé

» How to get there and where to stay



**TREAT YOURSELF:** Stay at the Mulia Senayan, and let the grand hotel bring out the Ibu ("society lady" in Bahasa Indonesia) in you. PHOTO: MULIA SENAYAN

**HOW TO GET THERE**

Jetstar flies to Jakarta daily. Other carriers include Singapore Airlines and Garuda Indonesia.

From the airport, take a Silver Bird taxi (the premium line of the well-known and highly recommended Bluebird cab company) for a smooth and safe ride.

**WHERE TO STAY**

Treat yourself and stay at the Mulia Senayan. You can save 20 per cent off room rates if you book 30 days in advance.

For more rewards, book through Preferred Hotel Group at [www.preferredhotelgroup.com](http://www.preferredhotelgroup.com)



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