

From pitch to prestige : How Sultan Ibrahim Stadium kicks off sports tourism with heart

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Dhaka : If Ted Lasso ever found himself in Johor, Malaysia, you can bet he would be right at home at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium-smiling wide, high-fiving everyone from groundskeepers to JDT players, and probably handing out biscuits to anyone within 10 feet.

I recently had the chance to visit this football fortress on a media trip organized by Tourism Malaysia on the sidelines of ASEAN Tourism Forum 2025 held in Johor, and let me tell you: it is not just a stadium-it is a love letter to the beautiful game, a bold swing at turning sports tourism into something downright magical.



The JDT-themed Hummer tour gives visitors a glamorous spin around the stadium grounds, complete with unbeatable photo ops

Located in the heart of Iskandar Puteri, the stadium is the crown jewel of Johor Darul Ta'zim FC-JDT for the fans. Since opening in 2020, it has become more than just a home ground. It is a 35,000-seater tribute to passion, ambition, and that very Malaysian knack for blending culture and sport with flair.

Now, it is open for tours-not just for fans, but for families, first-time visitors, and even those who just want a taste of something electric.

Think of it like stepping into the locker room of a dream. The JDT Stadium Tour lets you do exactly that-and more. You will wander through player tunnels, sit where legends prepare for glory, lounge where strategy meets superstardom, and walk pitch-side with the kind

of reverence usually reserved for sacred temples.



The media delegation of ASEAN Tourism Forum 2025 soaks in the pitch-side atmosphere at Sultan Ibrahim Stadium

Speaking of sacred, have you ever cruised around a stadium in a JDT-themed Hummer limousine? Neither had I-until I did. The JDT Hummer Tour is ten minutes of pure delight. It is a ride fit for a champion, but open to anyone willing to part with RM 35 and a sense of seriousness. You will cruise, wave like royalty, and wonder if this is how Beckham feels on a good day.

The stadium's design is no afterthought either. Inspired by the banana leaf-a symbol of unity and growth-it rises out of the Johor skyline like something straight out of a football fairytale. Also, in 2020, it won Stadium of the Year, beating 19 global contenders-not bad for the new kid on the block.



The JDT dressing room offers a rare behind-the-scenes glimpse into where matchday magic begins

Tours run Friday to Sunday, and during school and public holidays. RM 60 gets you the full backstage pass, while kids under three and differently abled guests get in free-a thoughtful touch that Ted Lasso would absolutely call "diamond dogs behavior."

Sultan Ibrahim Stadium is not just kicking goals for JDT. It is scoring big for Malaysia's tourism dreams, proving that a great stadium can be more than steel and turf-it can be a place where memories are made, stories are told, and strangers leave as fans.

In Ted Lasso's words, "Believe," and believe me-you will leave Sultan Ibrahim Stadium believing in football, Malaysia, and maybe even yourself just a little more.