

CUSTOMS & ETIQUETTE

Tips For Tourists To Malaysia

Malaysia
Truly Asia



FACT FILE

Country

The Federation of Malaysia comprises Peninsular Malaysia made up of 11 states, three federal territories and the states of Sabah and Sarawak situated in Borneo. Its capital city is Kuala Lumpur.

Geographical Location

Located between 2° and 7° north of the Equator, Peninsular Malaysia is separated from the states of Sabah and Sarawak by the South China Sea. To the north of Peninsular Malaysia is Thailand while its southern neighbour is Singapore. Sabah and Sarawak share a common border with Indonesia while Sarawak also shares a border with Brunei Darussalam.

Area 329, 758 sq km **Population** 27 million

Language

Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) is the national language but English is widely spoken. The ethnic groups also speak various languages and dialects.

Religion

Islam is the official religion but all other religions are practised freely.

Climate

Tropical climate with warm weather all year round. Temperatures range from 21°C to 32°C. Annual rainfall varies from 2,000mm to 2,500mm.

Government

Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislative system. The Head of State is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister.

Entry Requirements

Visitors to Malaysia must be in possession of a valid passport or travel document with a minimum validity of six months beyond the period of stay. Most nationalities do not require visas for social or business visits. For further information, please check with the nearest Malaysian Mission or Tourism Malaysia office in your country. Alternatively browse www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my or www.imi.gov.my.

Time

Eight hours ahead of GMT and 16 hours ahead of US Pacific Standard Time.

Passengers to the Low-Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) in KLIA can board the shuttle bus from KL Sentral Station. Feeder buses to LCCT are available from various other spots in the city.

Express air-conditioned buses are available to all states in Peninsular Malaysia. The main terminals in Kuala Lumpur are Puduraya Bus Station, Hentian Putra, Pekeliling Station and Hentian Duta. Tickets must be purchased early during festive seasons. Visitors are advised to carry adequate small change before boarding buses and taxis.



- *KTM Rail Service*

The Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) or Malayan Railway offers a well-connected rail network to all states in Peninsular Malaysia as well as neighbouring countries. Tickets can be purchased at KL Sentral.

- *KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit*

The KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit are the fastest modes of transport that ply between the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, and the city. A non-stop 28-minute ride on the KLIA Ekspres will connect you from the airport to the KL City Air Terminal (KLCAT) at the KL Sentral Station. This state-of-the-art transportation hub offers flight and baggage check in



services for Malaysia Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Royal Brunei Airlines. KLIA Ekspres departs every 15 minutes during peak hours (5.00am - 9.00am, 4.00pm - 10.00pm) and every 20 minutes during off-peak times (9.00am - 4.00pm, 10.00pm - 12.00 midnight). The KLIA Transit makes three intermediate stops en route to the airport and its journey takes 36 minutes.

Note: KLIA Ekspres and KLIA Transit are also known as the Express Rail Link (ERL) service.

Currency

The Malaysian currency is normally referred to as Ringgit or RM.

The RM comes in denominations of RM1, RM2, RM5, RM10, RM50 and RM100. Coins are known as sen. These include 5 sen, 10 sen, 20 sen, and 50 sen. Foreign currencies can be changed at banks, airports and money changers.

Safety

Malaysia is a relatively safe country. However, visitors are advised to take certain precautionary measures to ensure their safety. Safeguard your valuables at all times. Strap or sling your bags when on the move and walk against oncoming traffic. Keep your handbags and wallets safe and close to you especially when in crowded areas. Avoid entering dark and quiet alleys.



Drop in at any of our Tourist Information Centres to obtain further information or call 1 300 88 5050

COMMON PHRASES IN MALAY

Good morning	<i>Selamat pagi</i>
Good afternoon	<i>Selamat tengahari</i>
Good evening	<i>Selamat petang</i>
Good night	<i>Selamat malam</i>
Thank you	<i>Terima kasih</i>
You are welcome	<i>Sama-sama</i>
Excuse me	<i>Maafkan saya</i>
Welcome	<i>Selamat datang</i>
Goodbye	<i>Selamat tinggal</i>
How are you?	<i>Apa khabar?</i>
Fine, thank you	<i>Khabar baik, terima kasih</i>
Entrance	<i>Masuk</i>
Exit	<i>Keluar</i>
Restroom	<i>Tandas</i>
Road/Street	<i>Jalan</i>
Caution	<i>Awas</i>
Floor	<i>Tingkat</i>
Level	<i>Aras</i>
Food	<i>Makanan</i>

SOCIAL ETIQUETTE

Introduction

In Malaysia, introductions are normally acknowledged with a handshake. In the Muslim culture, handshakes are generally exchanged between people of the same gender. Some Muslim ladies may acknowledge an introduction to a gentleman with a nod of her head and smile. A handshake can be reciprocated if the lady offers her hand first to a man.

The traditional Malay greeting or *salam* resembles a handshake, but with both hands outstretched and without the grasp. The man offers both hands, lightly touches his friend's hands, then brings his hands back to his chest to mean, "I greet you from my heart". The visitor should reciprocate the *salam*.

Addressing a Person

Malay men and women can be addressed by their first names. For instance, Amirul bin Yusof should be addressed as Mr Amirul and not Mr Yusof, as the latter is his father's name. The term *Bin* means 'son of' and *Binti* means 'daughter of'. Hence, they need not be mentioned.

Chinese people have surnames which precede their given names. For instance, a lady whose name is Chia Wei Li can be addressed as Ms Chia. Some Chinese people have English names, such as James Wong. It would be proper to address him as Mr Wong.

Indians can be addressed with their given names. For instance, Anand a/I Ravindran should be addressed as Mr Anand. The abbreviation 'a/l' stands for 'anak lelaki', meaning 'son of' and 'a/p' means 'anak perempuan' or 'daughter of'.



Sometimes, names are preceded by the terms *Encik*, *Puan* or *Cik*. These are Malay terms for Mr, Mrs and Miss, respectively.

Titles

A number of Malaysians have been conferred titles by the Malaysian Government. Among these titles are *Tun*, *Tan Sri*, *Dato'* and *Datuk*. It is appropriate to address them by their titles. Political dignitaries are conferred titles such as *Yang Berhormat* (YB) and *Yang Amat Berhormat* (YAB). The term Mr or *Encik* will not be necessary when addressing a person who has been conferred titles.



Social Visits

Before visiting a home, it is polite to call and inform of one's arrival. Shoes must always be removed when entering a Malaysian home. Drinks are generally offered to guests. It would be polite to accept.

Gestures

The right hand is always used when eating with one's fingers or when giving and receiving objects. The right forefinger is not used to point at places, objects or persons. Instead, the thumb of the right hand with the four fingers folded under is the preferred usage.

Conduct

Public behaviour is especially important in Malaysian culture. Most Malaysians refrain from displaying affection (i.e. embracing or kissing) in public. It would be appropriate for visitors to do the same.

RELIGIOUS ETIQUETTE

Festivals

Malaysians celebrate a variety of colourful festivals. The most grand is the Muslim festival *Eid ul-Fitr*, locally known as *Hari Raya Aidilfitri*. This festival marks the beginning of *Syawal*, a new month in the Muslim calendar. Prior to the celebration, Muslims observe a month of fasting, beginning from daybreak until sunset.

The Chinese community in Malaysia celebrate various festivals such as the Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival and *Chap Goh Meh*. Hindu celebrations include *Deepavali*, *Thaipusam* and *Ponggal*. The people of Sabah and Sarawak celebrate harvest festivals known as *Tadau Ka'amatan* in Sabah and *Hari Gawai* in Sarawak. Christians all over the country celebrate Christmas.

Food and Beverage

Muslims consume *halal* food (permissible by Muslim law) and only dine in restaurants which are certified *halal*. Pork and alcohol are not consumed by Muslims.

Dressing

A majority of Muslim women wear garments that fully cover their bodies. The usage of headscarves is also common. Visitors are encouraged to take note of local sensitivities and dress modestly.

Places of Worship

Shoes must be removed when entering places of worship such as mosques and temples. Some mosques provide robes and scarves for female visitors. Taking photographs at places of worship is usually permitted but request for permission first.



BUSINESS & FORMAL OCCASIONS

Business Cards

It is customary to exchange business cards with those in your business circle. Business cards are usually given with both hands or with the left hand holding up the right one. It is polite to spend some time studying the card.

Dressing for Formal Occasions

For men, business attire is commonly made up of dark pants or slacks, long-sleeved shirts and tie. Suits are worn during presentations and formal meetings.

The attire for Malaysian women is more flexible and creative. Working women may wear appropriate attire such as skirts, slacks or traditional costumes. Revealing attire is discouraged. Batik attire is considered both appropriate and fashionable when attending formal occasions. This unique and versatile Malaysian fabric features hand-painted or block motifs.



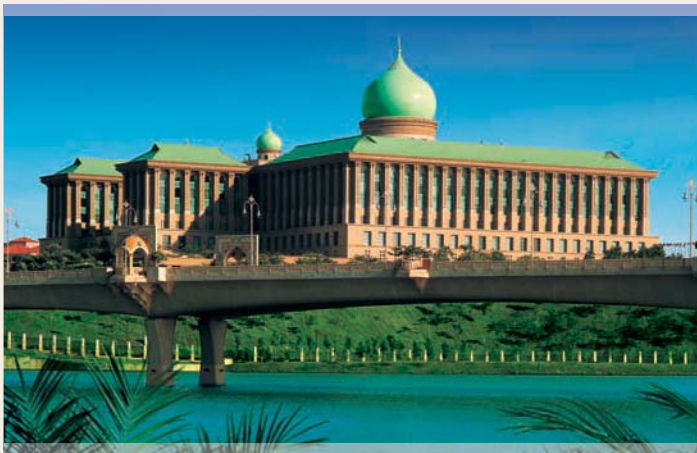
Working Days and Public Holidays

- *Government Offices*

All government offices operate on a five-day week. In all states, except Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, offices are open from Mondays to Fridays and are closed during the weekend. Government offices in the states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu operate from Sundays to Thursdays. They are closed on Fridays and Saturdays.

If a public holiday (for festivals and special occasions) falls on a non-working day, the following day will be declared a holiday.

The working hours for government offices in Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya are from 8.00am to 5.30pm. In Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, government offices are open from 8.00am to 4.45pm (from Sundays to Wednesdays) and 8.00am to 4.30pm (on Thursdays). In all other states, working hours are from 8.00am to 5.00pm. There is a long lunch break on Fridays (12.15pm - 2.45pm) to allow the Muslims to perform their prayers.



- **Banks**

All states except Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu:

Mondays - Fridays

9.30am - 4.00pm

Saturdays

11.00am - 2.00pm (major branches only)

Sundays

Closed

Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu:

Sundays - Thursdays

9.30am - 4.00pm

Fridays

Closed

Most banks are closed on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

This is only a general guide. Visitors are advised to obtain further information on local banking hours upon arriving at their destinations.

Tipping

Most hotels and restaurants levy a 10% service charge and 5% government sales tax on bills. Therefore, tipping is not customary. However, should you want to show your appreciation for good service, a small tip will do.



LEISURE

Shopping

All purchases are done in Malaysian Ringgit (RM). Major credit cards are accepted in most dining and retail outlets.

Hypermarkets, supermarkets and most retail outlets have fixed prices for their goods, which are displayed on the products. However, bargaining is acceptable at selected retail outlets. Bargaining is most common at night markets (*pasar malam*), or at bazaars.

Shopping centres operate from 10.00am to 10.00pm with extended hours during sale and festive seasons.



Dining

Most eateries operate until late night. Selected eateries are open 24 hours.

Some Malaysians enjoy their meals using their fingers. Adventurous visitors can try savouring their meals with their fingers too. Otherwise, it is perfectly normal to request for cutlery.

Mealtimes in Malay villages or *kampungs* will be especially interesting. Villagefolk prefer to enjoy their meals while seated on a mat spread on the floor. Here too, families eat using their fingers. Before the meal, hands are washed using a *kendi*, a container resembling a teapot.

During feasts or *kenduri*, the host and other locals will say their prayers before beginning their meal. As a close-knit society, villagers will also invite guests for second or third helpings in a warm and friendly manner. Visitors can politely decline if they do not wish to.



GENERAL INFORMATION

Insurance

Visitors are strongly advised to obtain adequate insurance coverage before travelling to Malaysia.

Getting There

The state-of-the-art Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) is the main gateway into the country, and services over 45 international airlines. The newly-opened Low-Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT) is situated 20km from the main terminal building.

Getting Around

The country has a well-developed and efficient public transportation system served by buses, taxis and trains. In Kuala Lumpur, the RapidKL Light Rail Transit (LRT), KL Monorail and KTM Komuter trains provide regular and hassle-free accessibility within the city as well as to several outlying towns. The KL Sentral Station, situated 1.5km from the city centre, is a modern transportation hub which converges various modes of transportation. Car rental agencies can be found in most cities around the country.

- *Taxis*

In Kuala Lumpur, taxi fares are based on a metered rate and are available 24 hours a day. The flag-off rate is RM2.00 and 10 cents is charged for every subsequent 150 metres. Extra charges apply for services after midnight or for services booked by phone.

Passengers have the right to object if the taxi driver stops to pick up other passengers along the way.

Outside the city, as well as in other parts of Malaysia, taxis operate on a fixed rate depending on the distance. Airport limousine taxis (budget or premier) at the KLIA operate using a prepaid coupon system and visitors are required to make their payment at the counter.

- *Buses*

In Kuala Lumpur, bus services such as RapidKL and Metrobus ply a network of routes. Feeder buses are available from LRT stations to designated surrounding areas.

HEAD OFFICE

17th Floor, Menara Dato' Onn

Putra World Trade Centre

45 Jalan Tun Ismail, 50480 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Tel: 603 2615 8188 • Fax: 603 2693 5884

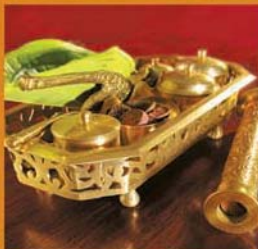
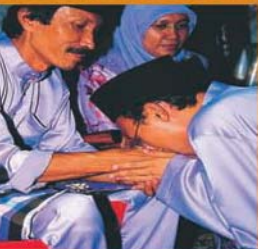
Tourism Infoline ((within Malaysia): 1 300 88 5050

Website: www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my

E-mail: enquiries@tourism.gov.my

e-Portal: www.virtualmalaysia.com

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USEFUL CONTACTS

Ambulance/Police/ Fire & Rescue Department	999
KL Tourist Police	03-2146 6154
Malaysia Tourism Centre	03-9235 4800
KLIA Information	03-8776 2000 (Malaysia Airports Aid: KLIA)
Telekom Malaysia Directory Service	103
Telekom Malaysia Operator Assisted Calls (Domestic and International)	101

Credit Cards

American Express	03-2050 0000	MasterCard International	1 800 80 4594
Diners' Club	03-2730 3388	Visa International	03-8880 1410

Embassies/High Commissions

Arab Saudi	03-4257 9433	www.saudiembassykualalumpur.com.my
Australia	03-2146 5555	www.malaysia.highcommission.gov.au
Britain	03-2170 2200	www.britain.org.my
Canada	03-2718 3333	www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/kualalumpur
China	03-2142 8495/ 03-2141 1729	http://my.chineseembassy.org
France	03-2053 5500	www.ambafrance-my.org
Germany	03-2170 9666	www.german-embassy.org.my
India	03-2093 3509/3504	
Indonesia	03-2145 2011	www.kbrikl.org.my
Italy	03-4256 5122	www.ambkualalumpur.esteri.it
Japan	03-2142 7044	www.my.emb-japan.go.jp
New Zealand	03-2078 2533	www.nzembassy.com
Singapore	03-2161 6277	www.mfa.gov.sg/kl
Spain	03-2142 8776	
Thailand	03-2148 8222	www.thaiembassykl.org
United States	03-2168 5000	usembassymalaysia.org.my

Transport

RapidKL Bus/	03-7650 7788/
Putra LRT Train	03-7625 6999
KL Semasa Sentral -	
• Transport	03-2279 8888 (Office)
• Info. Counter	03-2279 8699
KLIA Ekspres/	
KLIA Transit	03-2267 8000
KL Monorail	03-2273 1888
Malaysia Airlines	1 300 88 3000
AirAsia	03-8775 4000
Hertz Rent-A-Car	03-8776 4507
Avis Rent-A-Car	03-8787 4087

Taxis

Comfort	03-8024 2727
KL Radio Cab	03-9221 4241/ 03-9221 7600
Public Cab	03-6259 2020
Sunlight	03-9057 5757
KLIA Airport Limo	03-9223 8080/ 03-8787 3030
Outstation Taxi (Puduraya)	03-2078 0213

ENJOY YOUR STAY IN MALAYSIA AND SEE YOU AGAIN.

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**TRAFFICKING IN
ILLEGAL DRUGS
CARRIES THE
DEATH PENALTY**

Selamat Datang **WELCOME TO MALAYSIA**

Malaysia is a country with fascinating people and an enthralling range of attractions. Its three major races, the Malays, Chinese and Indians, along with the ethnic traditions of the KadazanDusun, Iban and many more in East Malaysia make up the delightful multicultural fabric of Malaysia. The potpourri is enriched further with the influence of the British, Portuguese, Dutch and Thais.

In Malaysia, visitors will discover a wide range of customs and practices. Some of these customs may be different than what is practised in other parts of the world. This is a guide to help visitors understand the country and its people better, for a smooth and pleasant stay in Malaysia.

Malaysia
Truly Asia

