

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW WHEN TRAVELLING TO MALAYSIA

SEASONAL HIGHLIGHTS

- The climate in Malaysia is hot and humid all year round, with some rain in the afternoons.
- The average temperature ranges from 24°C to 30°C in the lowlands.
- The days are generally sunny and warm and the nights are cool.
- On the East Coast the rainy season is from early November to the middle of February

WHAT TO PACK

- It is recommended to wear loose-fitting "summer" clothing. If travelling to higher altitudes like Cameron Highlands and the mountain ranges of central Malaysia (Peninsular) and in Borneo some form of layering is required.
- Formal style clothing is not required, but for visits of various sights, especially religious sights, long trousers and long sleeves are needed the dress should be respectful. Laundry facilities are widely available and quick.

RETAIL HOURS

- Private shops are open from between 08:00 and 10:00, until between 21:00 and 22:00.
- During the Chinese New Year as well as Hari Raya, shops may be closed several days before and after, as well as during the festive holidays.

MONEY MATTERS

- The currency in Malaysia is the Malaysian Ringgit. Notes in circulation are RM 100, RM 50, RM 20, RM 10, RM 5 and RM 1. Coins in circulation are 50 sen, 20 sen, 10 sen, 5 sen.
- Money and traveller cheques of all major currencies can be exchanged at hotels, banks, and a licensed money changer in tourist areas. Banks and money changers usually offer the best rates.
- International credit cards are widely accepted in department stores, major hotels, up-market shops and restaurant. Make sure that you have enough cash in local currency before you leave for smaller towns or remote areas.

POPULAR SHOPPING OUTLETS

- Petaling Street – Street shopping in Kuala Lumpur
- Central Market – Kuala Lumpur
- Suria KLCC – Shopping Mall in the Petronas Towers
- Pavilion Kuala Lumpur
- Berjaya Times Square

DRINKING WATER

- Drinking tap water is not recommended.. Drink boiled water or bottled water please.

LANGUAGE

The national, or official, language is Malay which is the mother tongue of the majority of the Malay ethnic group. English is widely understood in service industries.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

- Malaysia is generally a laid back and relaxed country. However, it has its own customs and visitors should try to observe these practices when they arrive.
- To respect the culture, a handshake should only be initiated by ladies.
- The traditional greeting or Salam resembles a handshake with both hands but without the grasp. The man offers both hands, lightly touches his friend's outstretched hands, and then brings his hands to his chest to mean, "I greet you from my heart". The visitor should reciprocate the "Salam".
- The right hand is always used when eating with one's hand or 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 four fingers folded under is the preferred usage
- Shoes must always be removed when entering a Malaysian home.
- 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 always ask for permission beforehand.
- Public behaviour is 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.
- Drinks are generally offered to guests. It is polite to accept.
- Toasting is not a common practice in Malaysia. The country's large Muslim population does not drink alcohol.

DO'S AND DON'TS

- Trafficking of illegal drugs carries the mandatory death penalty in Malaysia.
- A special permit is required for the carriage of firearms and ammunition. Other prohibited items include flick knives, daggers and pornographic material.
- Taped videocassettes should be submitted for clearance by Customs.
- Export of antiquities and historical objects is not allowed unless an export license has been obtained from the Director General of Museums, Malaysia, or if the antiquity was originally imported and declared to customs.
- All passengers must declare the following items to the Plant Quarantine Office upon arrival: plants and plant parts (including fresh plant produce and processed products), insects and other organisms, microorganisms, herbarium, dried flowers, soil and growth or rooting media. Penalty for failure to do so is liable to a fine of up to RM 1,000 or up to six months imprisonment, or both. Penalty for maliciously introducing a pest or a plant into Malaysia is liable to a fine not exceeding RM 10,000 or imprisonment not exceeding two years, or both.

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TIPPING / PORTERAGE

- Tipping is not common in Malaysia, especially in the more rural areas. In most hotels and large restaurants, a 10% service charge is added to the bill along with 6% government tax.
- For tours and sightseeing we recommend some tip for the driver and guide, depending on the quality of the service. Porters and bellboys are usually tipped depending on the weight and size of the bags.

TRAVEL RESPONSIBILITY

- Learn a few words of the local language so you know what's considered polite in terms of eating, greeting and local values.
- Respect the local customs and culture, and avoid imposing your beliefs or behave in disrespectful manners.
- Obey the Malaysia laws and regulations, and behave accordingly.

GENERAL INFORMATION

- Always take very good care of your passport, travel document, personal belongs and valuables.
- Time is 6 hours ahead of South Africa.
- South African passport holders do not require a visa
- Malaysia uses 220V – 250 V AC electricity. Power outlets mostly feature three pin British plug sockets
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WHAT THINGS COST

- Cost varies from place to place.
- Bottled Water from MYR1, Cold Drink from MYR4, Beer from MYR7, Meals from MYR12, Coffee from MYR7.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

- Always take extra care of your belongings at all times.