

Malaysia At A Glance

TIME – Malaysia is 8 hours ahead of GMT and 16 hours ahead of the US Pacific Standard Time.

CLIMATE - Malaysia is warm, sunny and humid all year round. There are no distinct seasons and temperatures vary very little year round, ranging from 21°C in the night to 32°C in the day with cooler temperatures in the hill stations. Average annual rainfall varies from 2,000 to 2,500 mm. November to January are generally the wetter months on the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia, while the west coast experiences more rain in the months of April, May, October and November.

CLOTHING – Light clothing is worn all year round. Informal dress is the order of the day with emphasis on comfort. For formal occasions however, gentlemen usually put on jackets and ties, while ladies appear in dresses. Alternatively, *batik*, a local fabric, may be worn. *Batik* is favoured even for formal occasions because of its comfort in tropical climate. In the hill stations, it is advisable to bring along a light jacket or sweater. If it rains, carry an umbrella as the locals do.

LANGUAGE – Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) is the national language of the country. English is widely spoken and is used in business. Other languages and dialects used are Cantonese, Mandarin and Tamil.

RELIGION – Islam is the official religion of the country, but Malaysia enjoys freedom of worship and it is not uncommon to see mosques, temples and churches sharing a common neighbourhood. Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism and Christianity are among other religions practised in Malaysia.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE

- **Currency** - The unit of currency is the Ringgit Malaysia (RM) which is divided into 100 *sen* or cents. Currency notes are issued in denominations of RM1, Rm2, Rm5, Rm10, Rm50 and Rm100.
- **Banking** - Banking hours are usually from 0930 hours to 1600 hours

on weekdays. For Johor, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, banks are closed on Friday. Some banks may have branches in shopping mall which open daily.

- **Money Exchange** - Licensed money changers give better rates and you can find them in most of the tourist districts. Hotels too offer money exchange facilities.
- **International Conversion Rates** - The current rate of exchange for the Ringgit Malaysia to the US Dollar is based on money market. However, Ringgit Malaysia is forbidden to trade outside Malaysia.
- **Credit Cards** - Most establishments in Malaysia will accept internationally-known credit/charge cards. Cash may also be withdrawn with your credit cards from selected local ATMs.

BUSINESS HOURS - Departmental stores, supermarkets and other shops in shopping centres usually operate from 10 am to 10 pm 7 days a week. Most other stores open 11 am to 8 pm from Mondays to Saturdays. Restaurants operate from 7 pm to 11 pm while entertainment outlets close at 1 am. Many hawker stalls open from 11 am and may stay open to as late as 2 am. Public holidays differ according to each state. Sunday is the official weekend break for most states, while Friday is observed as a weekend in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu.

GOVERNMENT OFFICES – Government office hours are as follows:-

- Mondays to Fridays 0800 hours to 1615 hours
- Saturdays 0800 hours to 1245 hours (closed on alternate Saturdays)

For Johor, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, government offices are open from 0800 hours to 1245 hours on Thursdays and closed on Fridays.

HEALTH REGULATIONS – No immunity shots or vaccinations are required for travellers entering Malaysia. However, travellers are advised to purchase health insurance for the duration of their visit. Yellow-fever

vaccinations are required for arrivals from infected areas and from yellow fever endemic zones except for children under 1 year of age. Travellers venturing into the jungles are advised to carry anti-malarial tablets which are available locally.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

- **Hospital / Clinic** – All hospitals and some clinics in major cities in Malaysia operate 24 hours a day. Most good hotels also offer doctor-on-call services.
- **Pharmacy / Drug store** - Pharmacies are open from 1000 hours till 2000 hours seven days a week and a certified pharmacist is usually on duty on weekdays until 1700 hours. Most prescription drugs are available here but to avoid inconvenience, it is advisable to bring enough of your prescription to last the duration of your visit.

ELECTRICITY – 220 volts AC, 50 cycles throughout Malaysia. If you plan to bring any electrical equipment with 110 volts, please pack a converter.

POSTAL SERVICES – Most post offices are open from 0800 hours to 1700 hours from Mondays to Saturdays. Stamps and postcards are available at most hotels. Please check with the front desk.

TELECOMMUNICATION

- **Telephone & fax** - Public phones are available at practically every street corner in the major cities. Currently, local calls cost 13 sen per unit. Telephone cards for local and international calls can be purchased from post offices, bookstores and convenience stores. Fax services are available from your hotel.
- **Mobile phone** - Roaming facilities for your mobile phones through our local GSM and PCN service providers are available in Malaysia. Please check with your service provider from your country of origin on the availability of roaming service for your mobile phone in Malaysia.

- **E-mail** – Cyber cafes or e-mail kiosks are available in hotels, shopping centres and even in small towns and villages. Please ask your tour guide or hotel concierge for assistance.

TRANSPORTATION

- **Taxis** – Each taxi is allowed a maximum of 4 passengers. Currently, in Kuala Lumpur, the meter starts at Rm2 for air- conditioned taxis. A small surcharge applies for 3rd and 4th passengers, as well as for luggage. There is a 50% surcharge on the metered fare between midnight and 6 am.
- **Buses** – There are regular city bus services in every major city in the country. In Kuala Lumpur, bus fares currently range from Rm1. Most buses operate on fixed fares. Do have exact change ready.
- **Light Rail Transit (LRT)** - The LRT operates in Kuala Lumpur from 0600 hours to 2400 hours everyday. The fares begin at Rm1 and tickets can be obtained from the boarding stations.
- **Express Rail Link (ERL)** - The ERL is a non-stop high speed rail service between KL Sentral and KLIA. It departs every 15 minutes from both terminals and the journey takes 28 minutes. The current one way adult fare is RM35.
- **AIRPORT TAX** – Airport tax is collected at all airports. Due to changing regulations, please refer to the airline, your travel agent or the airport authorities for the correct prevailing taxes.

DUTY-FREE GOODS - All types of cameras, watches, pens, lighters, cosmetics, perfume, portable radio cassette players and mini compos are duty-free in Malaysia. Each person is allowed to bring 1 litre of liquor and 1 carton of cigarettes into the country tax-free. All goods and services are duty free in the island of Langkawi and Labuan.

TIPPING

- **Restaurants / Hotels** - A service charge of 10% plus applicable government service tax (currently 6%) is added automatically to restaurant and hotel bills. Therefore, tipping is unnecessary, unless the service is exceptionally good.
- **Hotel Porters / Airport Porters** - Usually RM1 per piece.
- **Guides** – At your discretion based on your satisfaction of their services.