

VISAS

All international students are required to apply for student pass for purpose of their study at USM. USM will apply for the pass on behalf of the students and students are required to submit the following documents for the application:

- 3 copies of the international passport, inclusive of the hard cover and all the used pages
- 4 passport-sized photographs
- payment of RM120.00

These payments are to be paid to the USM International during the orientation week.

Application for the student pass is made to the Malaysian Immigration Department in Penang. Application process takes at least two weeks and students will be sent a copy of the student pass once it is approved. **Students are not allowed to enter Malaysia before the student pass is approved.** Students who enter Malaysia without prior approval of the student pass will be fined **RM500 ≈ USD135.00**.

Full-Fee Students

For full-fee students, besides the above requirements, the Malaysian Immigration Authority requires USM to sign a Personal Bond on behalf of the applicants binding the University for a said sum. To comply with this requirement, USM requires an applicant to deposit RM1,900.00 ≈ USD500.00 with the University for the purpose of the Personal Bond. This amount will be reimbursed to the students on completion of study at USM.

Student Pass

The student pass allows you multiple entries to Malaysia during its validity. In case you plan to travel during your exchange year, please find out about the visa requirements to those countries you wish to enter. Embassies and consulates can assist you further.

(For contact information, please see *Useful phone numbers* section).

Extending your student pass

It is your responsibility to maintain your legal status at all times while you are in Malaysia. Students who allow their visa (student pass) to expire are considered as “overstayers”. In this case the student’s ability to enter Malaysia in the future may be affected.

If you wish to stay in Malaysia after your student pass expires, you have two options:

1. You can leave Malaysia **before** your student pass expires and then re-enter the country as a tourist. For citizens of most countries, no visa is needed for short social visits, usually up to 30 days.
2. You can apply for an extension on your student pass **before** it expires. The extension can be granted for 6 months max. You have to apply at least one month before the expiry of your current student pass and your passport will be handed over to the immigration for part of the time. For the application you should submit a copy of your passport details, copy of the cover sheet, and a copy of the student pass (showing the expiry date) to the USM International. You are also required to submit an administrative fee of RM80 - RM100.

ACCOMMODATION

Living at the USM students hostels

The exchange students will be allocated a shared room at the student hostels, usually on a twin sharing basis with shared bathroom, cost being then RM4 per day/per person. A bathroom will be

shared. All rooms are equipped with basic furniture, i.e. a bed with a mattress, a table, a chair, a wardrobe, a fan, rubbish bin and a broom. Pillows, linen and additional cleaning equipment are not provided. Cleaning service takes care of the public places but it is the students' responsibility to clean their own room. The hostels have no kitchen though facility for boiling water is available. Public phones and coin operated laundry machines are also available.

Students are required to pay a breakage deposit of RM20 and students' activities fee of RM10. The activities fee entitles students to participate in events and activities organized by the hostels. The residents will be given a bill, including rent and deposits, either during the orientation or after the semester starts.

There are different hostels for women and men. Men are not allowed to visit the hostels for women, and vice-versa. Overnight visitors are not allowed but your friends are welcome to visit you at daytime. There should be silence after 12 am and all the residents are required to return to their hostels by that time.

At least some of the restaurants will be open during the school breaks if enough students will stay at the campus. In case you wish to continue living at the hostel after the exams, you can apply for a permission to do that. The hostel will inform you about the application procedure, as well as about handing out the keys and getting the deposits returned when moving out. No application is needed for staying at the hostel during shorter school breaks.

Off-Campus accommodation

If you prefer finding housing outside the campus, please make sure you are clear about all the costs involved in your housing arrangements. Usually water and electric bills are not included in the rent. Be also prepared for paying deposit, usually worth of one month's rent.

Electricity is costly in Malaysia so do not leave lights or air conditioning on when leaving the apartment. If you wish to leave the air condition on over night, please be careful, as it gets surprisingly cold in a few hours. To avoid catching a cold, a fan is usually better option while sleeping.

In case you need a hotel accommodation during your stay for yourself or for your guests, **hotels that are nearest to the university are:**

Vistana Hotel **04 – 646 8000**
213 Jalan Bukit Jambul

Equatorial Hotel **04 – 643 8111**
1 Jalan Bukit Jambul

Hotels in the Georgetown area includes:

Cititel Penang **04 – 370 1188**
66 Jalan Penang

City Bayview Hotel **04 - 263 3161**
25A Farquhar Street

Hotel Grand Continental **04 - 263 6688**
68 Jalan Gurdwara

Hotel Shangri-La Jalan Magazine	04 - 262 2622
Sunway Hotel 33 Lorong Baru	04 - 229 9988
Sheraton Penang 3 Jalan Larut	04 - 226 7888

GETTING AROUND

Around the island

Penang Bus Map contains useful information about getting around the island. However, there have been some changes on the routes so it is worth checking with the driver before taking a bus. You can purchase the bus map from the Tourist Information Office at KOMTAR Shopping Complex.

Mini busses have several routes in the city. The usual cost is 80 cents. There are also city busses, which have routes around the whole island. They charge above RM 1, depending on how far you go. Always carry some coins with you, as the drivers will not provide you with change. The local busses do not have accurate schedules: usually the bus leaves when it is full. During the daytime the busses run frequently but be prepared for waiting towards the evening. Most public transportation finishes around 10 pm – 11 pm and starts again around 6 am – 7 am.

You might see yellow busses with the text “*Sekolah*” passing a bus stop without stopping. These busses are for children’s school transportation and will not, therefore, take other passengers. The same applies to some blue busses, which take factory workers to their work place. These busses have the text “*Kilang*” on them.

The transit places for busses are at Pengkalan Weld (ferry terminal) and at KOMTAR Shopping Complex. From KOMTAR you can also take long distance busses to the mainland, Thailand and Singapore. Fares for long distance busses are cheap and the seats can be booked in advance. Busses across the Thailand border are usually old mini buses, where as modern and comfortable busses take travelers to the mainland and Singapore. For the tickets and schedules, contact the travel agencies at KOMTAR.

Taxis

There are several taxi operators in Penang. Some of them operate only during certain hours, some of them serve 24 hours a day. You can either book a taxi in advance or stop a passing one. During Friday and Saturday nights taxis are busy, so consider making a booking around 1 hour in advance.

Taxis in Penang do not use a meter; always negotiate the price in advance and be prepared to bargain. Taxi from USM to Georgetown costs around RM10 - RM15 during daytime, and RM17 - RM25 during nighttime. **Taxi from USM to the airport is around RM20.** For a booked taxi, the driver might charge you RM2 or more. Though Penang is generally safe, we recommend women travelers not to take a taxi alone at night.

Sunshine taxi service	04 - 646 7095
Jade Auto Co taxi	04 - 226 3015

Railway

The trains in Malaysia are comfortable and affordable, just like the long distance busses, but there are basically only two lines on the mainland. Therefore busses are more commonly used. To get information about the trains, please call 03 - 2267 1200 or visit www.ktmb.com.my.

Motorcycles, cars and bicycles

Consider twice before renting a motor vehicle, as driving in Malaysia can be quite challenging. However, if you feel comfortable and want to hire a motorcycle or a car, several places around Georgetown offer these services. An international driver's license is needed.

Always check the vehicle's condition first and make sure you are covered with sufficient insurances. Study the local traffic rules and keep a first aid-kit with you in case of an emergency. Make sure you know what is at your and what is at the owner's responsibility in case of any damage or loss.

Renting a motorcycle for a day costs about RM15. If you rent one for longer time period you can get much cheaper rate. For a car a daily rental is between RM60 - RM100, depending on a model. With around RM150 to RM250 you can buy a bicycle. For buying or renting one, please visit the bicycle shops in Georgetown.

Yet another word of warning: no matter which means of transportation you use, watch out for the motorcyclists. Though they are basically bound by the same traffic rules as other motor vehicles, it is not unknown to see them speeding up through red lights.

Trishaws

A trishaw ride is a funny and interesting way of seeing Penang. Traveling in this open-fronted three-wheeled vehicle is convenient in the city, as it allows you to stop basically anywhere. There is no standard fare so agree on the price before you step on the trishaw.

MEDICAL CARE

University Clinics

The exchange students are entitled to the treatment at the University Medical Center (*Pusat Kesihatan*) and panel clinics. All students are required to pay RM60 per semester, after which most of the services are free of charge. Please bring your matric card with you to the clinic to prove your student status.

There are several clinics close to USM for the student's convenience. Opening hours vary between the clinics, most of them being closed in the afternoon during lunchtime.

Medical Center (Pusat Kesihatan)

USM (building C15 on the campus map)

Tel: 04 - 653 3464 or 04 - 653 3411

Klinik Universiti 04 - 656 2607

35 Jalan Sungai Dua

Sungai Dua

Poliklinik Perdana 04 - 656 4473

559-E, Kompleks Sri Saujana

Jalan Sungai Dua

Sungai Dua

Klinik Syifa 04 - 657 6159

363-Q Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah

Klinik Zainal **04 - 643 4330**
247-D Sungai Nibong Besar
Bayan Lepas

Poliklinik Desa Permai **04 - 656 4345**
No. 34, Lorong Helang 2
Desa Permai Indah
Sungai Dua

24 hours clinics

Klinik Joe Fernandez **04 - 644 6699**
1-L Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah

Klinik Aman **04 - 658 1361**
11 Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah

Treatment in the private hospitals can be relatively costly compared to public services, but queuing times are usually shorter.

Private hospitals in the area include:

Penang Adventist Hospital
Tel: 04-226 1133
465 Jalan Burmah
10350 Penang

Gleneagles Medical Centre
Tel: 04-227 6111
1 Jalan Pangkor
10050 Penang

Loh Guan Lye Specialist Centre
Tel: 04-228 8501
Emergency Hotline: 04-226 6911
19-21, Logan road
10400 Penang

Hospital Lam Wah Lee
Tel: 04-657 1888
141 Jalan Tan Sri The Ewe Lim
11600 Penang

Ambulance service: 999

Dental care

Dental care is available only on emergency. If you have pain or other urgent need for a dentist, please contact USM Medical Center (Pusat Kesihatan) at 04 - 653 3464. They will then further assist you about the procedure and the possible fees.

HEALTH HAZARDS

Heat

The most common threat for health in Malaysia is the sun. The weather is hot and humid all year around and the impact of the sun is very strong. Around the equator a sensitive skin can get painful sunburns in less than 15 minutes. To avoid sunburns, sunstroke, and dehydration, please protect yourself properly and drink plenty of water during the day.

Diarrhea

Sometimes changes in the diet can cause diarrhea even though the food taken is of a good quality. It is very important to drink plenty of liquids to avoid dehydration. Keep drinking small amounts often. If needed, you can get dehydration salts and other medicines from USM Medical Clinics. While recovering, avoid spicy food. Go slow with spicy food. Get yourself introduced little by little before really indulging yourself. We would advise students to go for fresh cooked meals. Avoid ready made food served on trays at the restaurant.

Dengue fever

Other, less common hazards are dengue fever and malaria. Dengue is a serious disease caused by a virus that is transmitted to humans by the bite of an infected mosquito. The mosquitoes that have bitten a person with dengue virus can transmit the virus after about a week while biting a healthy person. Dengue cannot be spread directly from person to person.

The main symptoms are high fever, severe headache, backache, joint pains, nausea and vomiting, eye pain, and rash. If you think you might be infected, please proceed to the doctor as soon as possible. A blood test will be taken, showing whether you are infected or not. Usually dengue patients are advised to stay in a hospital for a few nights.

Others

There are some venomous plants and animals in Malaysia. Snakes, spiders, scorpions, centipedes, bees and wasps can occasionally cause health problems, especially for the person with allergies. Do not touch any plant or insect unfamiliar to you, and wear proper shoes and clothing when walking in the forest. If you plan to spend time in the sea, find out whether the area has jellyfishes. There are some in certain parts of Batu Feringghi (the beaches in the north of Penang), so be aware of that when jumping into +30 degree water for a swim.

Bedbugs are tiny little bugs that live in dirty mattresses, bedding, and places alike. They are not dangerous but very uncomfortable, as they leave itchy bites in neat rows. If you stay in a hostel or bungalow where you feel unsure about the hygiene, spraying the bed with a bug spray might help.

Be on the look out for red ants when sitting under trees or walking through fields. The red ants' bites are really painful and can itch for days.

SECURITY

Malaysia is a safe country and usually a common sense is enough to keep you out of troubles. To make your stay even safer, please keep in mind the following issues.

Never leave your valuables unattended and avoid carrying large sums of cash with you. Be especially cautious about motorcycle thieves who try to steal pedestrians' bags while driving pass.

If you use a credit card, do not let the sales person take your card out of your sight. There have been some rare cases where a seller has, with some excuse, disappeared to the backroom for a few minutes and made a copy of the card. Consider also network security before paying any bills on the Internet with your card.

In addition to these general precautions, some issues concern especially women travelers. Walking alone after dusk is not recommended, as some unfortunate harassment and molestation cases do occasionally occur. What is much less serious but sometimes disturbing is probably the attention that female travelers tend to get from men. Women might hear hissing, whistling, calls and comments, while moving around. The best way to deal with it is to ignore it, as usually the person harassing then gives it up. Taking a taxi alone at night should be avoided unless you know the driver in advance.

Police: 999

COMMUNICATION

In case you have any inquiries, do not hesitate to contact USM International. All our staff members, including the buddy students, are happy to assist you.

USM International opening hours are:

Mon-Thurs 8.10 am - 1.00 pm
2.00 pm - 4.40 pm

Friday 8.10 am - 12.15 pm
2.45pm - 4.40 pm

Second and fourth Sat of each month
8.10 am - 1.00 pm

Closed on Sundays and public holidays.

Telephone

Local phone calls are cheap and there are several public phones around the streets. They require either coins or phone cards to make a call. There are two types of phone cards available:

- 1) those you actually insert into a public telephone, and
- 2.) those which contain a pin code and a number you should dial, followed by an automatic instructions about how to make your phone call.

Phone cards are the cheapest way to call overseas. Several telecommunication companies offer phone cards, so compare the prices to find the cheapest and most reliable one for your needs.

A card called **iTalk** costs RM30 and allows speaking 59 minutes to most countries. Also **Nation Calling Card** has good rates to certain countries. Prices vary depending on the time of call, and whether you call to a fixed line or a mobile. If you are calling from an apartment's fixed line the connection is usually better compared to public phones. In case you do not have a fixed line in your apartment, you may call from USM International with your phone card.

If you wish to get a local mobile number, you can choose a prepaid starter kit with a SIM-card from several operators. Usually you have to pay for it but you will get credit on your calling account in return. You can top up your account with a prepaid top up card.

Phone cards and top up cards are available in most grocery stores (also opposite USM), as well as 7-elevens and Happy Marts. Mobile starter kits can be bought from booths along the streets, and shopping centers.

To call overseas, dial 00 for an international call, then the country code, the area code without the first zero, and then the local number.

The country code to call Malaysia is 60, followed by an area code without the first digit. An area code to Penang is 04. If one wishes to call to Penang from overseas, he should dial + 60 4 followed by the

local phone number. To call a local mobile follows the same principal. If the local mobile number is 012 - 555 6622, an international format would be + 60 12 555 6622.

If you wish to inquire a phone number, please dial **103** for domestic, and **108** for foreign numbers. For information online, visit www.yellowpages.com.my.

Fax

You can receive faxes free of charge through USM International's fax number: +60 4 653 2781. You can also send faxes but rates do apply depending on the country and the amount of pages.

Internet

There are a limited number of computers at USM. Booking has to be made in advance and the maximum duration of one session is 30 minutes. Therefore using the Internet services outside USM may be more convenient. A common price is RM2 - RM4 per hour and in most places you can get printouts and burn CD's (also the pictures from a digital camera). There are several Internet services opposite USM and in the shopping centers. The speed of the connection varies greatly depending on the place.

Post

Malaysia has efficient postal system with several services, such as registered mail, express delivery and parcel service. You can also pay most of the bills at the post office (cash only). Opening hours may vary between the states.

General opening hours in Penang are:

Mon – Sat 8.30 am – 5.00 pm

The USM post office has exceptional opening hours:

Mon – Fri 8.00 am – 4.30 pm

Saturday 8.00 am – 2.30 pm

Closed on Sun and public holidays.

MONEY AND BANKING

The Malaysian currency is the ringgit (RM) and sen, though people often refer to the currency as dollars and cents. A hundred sen make up one ringgit. Coins come in 1, 5, 10, 20, 50 sen and 1 ringgit. Notes in circulation are RM1, RM2, RM5, RM10, RM20, RM50, and RM100. There are also notes for RM 500 and RM1000 denominations but they are rarely seen in normal transactions.

Be sure to carry plenty of small bills with you, as many shops and small businesses cannot give change for notes bigger than RM50. Usually, they do not accept a credit card either. You can change currency and travelers checks at the banks and money changers. The commissions and exchange rates vary so do comparisons and use only the authorized money changers. USM has banking and ATM facilities. Moneychangers can be found in Georgetown and in major shopping centers.

Banking hours are:

Mon – Fri 9.30 am – 4.00 pm

Saturday (in most states) 9.30 am – 11.30 am

Closed on Sun and public holidays.

If you wish to open a local bank account, visit a bank that best suits you and bring your passport with you. You will then be further assisted about the procedure.

SHOPPING

There are several shopping complexes in Penang, with a wide variety of services. The stores at the shopping centers open usually after 10 am, some as late as 12 pm. They close between 7 pm and 10 pm. Most stores are open seven days a week.

KOMTAR, also known as Kompleks Tun Abdul Razak, is Penang's biggest shopping center with all the possible services from travel agencies to banking. It has supermarkets, movie theatre, stores, restaurants, and other services in several floors, in several buildings. It also serves as a transit place for busses. KOMTAR is located on Penang Road (Jalan Penang). Mini busses number 25 and 29 take you there from USM in about 30 minutes.

Kompleks Bukit Jambul on Jalan Rumbia is smaller than Komtar, but it also has many shops, restaurants and a movie theatre. From USM the same mini busses, 25 and 29, will take you close by in about 15 minutes.

Another popular shopping center is **Gurney Plaza** on Gurney Drive. It is on the way to Batu Ferringi Beach. A city bus number 93 leaves from KOMTAR towards Gurney and drops you at the walking distance.

Makro, located close to USM on Jalan Sungai Dua, is a good place to purchase miscellaneous items. It is a wholesaler type of supermarket, selling food, linen, kitchen utensils etc. Make sure you have enough cash with you as only Maybank's Visa card is accepted beside cash.

BEACHES

If you want to head to the beach take a city bus number 93 from KOMTAR. It will take you to Batu Feringghi, an area in the Northern part of the island. Batu Feringghi has several beach resorts, hotels, restaurants and tourist shops. Ask from local people which beaches are safe for a swim, as there might be jellyfishes in certain areas. There is also a night market every evening, selling clothes and souvenirs. It is open from around 7 pm until 11 pm, provided that it is not raining.

ENTERTAINMENT

There are many sports facilities that can be found on campus. Swimming pool, tennis courts, badminton courts can be used by students for a small fee. Students need to buy tickets/coupons for the usage of the facilities and it costs about 50 cents for students. Other than that, there are many clubs and societies for students. Interested students may find information about these clubs and societies from the Division of Students Affairs and Development.

If you wish to see a movie, take enough clothes with you, as movie theatres can be very cold. Tickets cost around RM 8 and some theatres have promotions for students. Movie theatres in Penang are:

Mega Pavillion (at Bukit Jambul)

04 - 646 6888

Mega Pavillion (at Komtar)

04 - 261 1888

Golden Screen Cinemas (at Gurney Plaza)

EXTRA LUGGAGE

After the semester ends, most students resign their apartment and travel before flying home. USM International provides storage for extra luggage in case a student does not want to take his/her entire luggage with him/her.

If you wish to use this option, please pack your belongings into a suitcase and label it. Do not pack any food inside as that attracts the mice. Please remember that you can access your luggage only during the office opening hours. The luggage in storage is at your own risk, as USM International is not liable for any loss or damage.

After a semester at USM, students tend to accumulate a lot of personal belongings. To send some of the belongings home, students are advised to use the parcel service provided by the post office. Please take note that extra luggage taken through flights can be expensive.

USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

Police	999
Ambulance	999
Fire Bridge	994
Rescue	991

Phone number inquiries

For domestic numbers:	103
For foreign numbers:	108

Taxi

Personal Taxi	016 - 462 3056
(From 9.00am until midnight)	
Sunshine taxi service	04 – 646 7095
Jade Auto Co taxi	04 - 226 3015

Ferry (Georgetown)	04 - 210 2363
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Food delivery

Pizza Hut (Jalan Sungai Dua)	04 – 658 0698
McDonald's (Jalan Sungai dua)	1300 88 1888

Movies

Mega Pavillion (Bukit Jambul)	04 - 646 6888
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Mega Pavillion (Komtar)	04 - 261 1888
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Golden Screen Cinemas (Gurney Plaza)	04 - 222 3456
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Hospitals:

See the section “Medical care”

Hotels:

See the section “Accommodation”

Embassies and Consulates in Malaysia:

Australia 03 - 2146 5555

6 Jalan Yap Kwan Sweng
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Brunei 03 - 2161 2800

Tingkat 19
Menara Tan & Tan
Jalan Tun Razak
50400 Kuala Lumpur

Canada 03 - 2718 3333

7th Floor Plaza OSK
172 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Fiji 03 - 2732 3335

Level 2, Menara Chan
138 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Finland 03 - 425 77746

5th Floor Wisma Chinese Chambers
258 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

France 03 - 2053 5500

196 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Germany 03 - 2170 9666

3 Jalan U Thant
55000 Kuala Lumpur

India 03 - 209 33504

No.2 Jalan Taman Duta
Off Jalan Duta
50480 Kuala Lumpur

Indonesia 04 - 227 5141

467 Jalan Burma, Penang

233 Jalan Tun Razak 03 - 2142 1151

50400 Kuala Lumpur

Iran 03 - 4251 4824

1 Lorong U Thant Satu
Off Jalan U - Thant
55000 Kuala Lumpur

Ireland Ireland House 218 Jalan Ampang 50450 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2161 2693
Japan 2 Jalan Biggs Penang	04 - 226 8222
11 Persiaran Stonor Off Jalan Tun Razak 50450 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2142 7044
Laos 12 A Persiaran Madge Off Jalan Ampang Hilir 55000 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 4251 1118
Libya No.6 Jalan Madge Off Jalan U Thant 55000 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2141 1035
Myanmar No.10 Jalan Mengkuang Off Jalan Ru 55000 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 4257 0680
Netherlands Suite 7.01, 7 th Floor The Ampwalk, South Block 218 Jalan Ampang 50450 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2168 6200
New Zealand Level 21 Menara IMC Jalan Sultan Ismail 50250 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2078 2533
Norway Suite CD, 53 rd Floor Jalan TunRazak 50400 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2162 1200
Pakistan 132 Jalan Ampang 50450 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2161 8877
Philippines 1 Jalan Changkat Kia Peng 50450 Kuala Lumpur	03 - 2148 4233

Singapore 03 - 2161 6277
209 Jalan Tun Razak
50400 Kuala Lumpur

South Africa 03 - 4024 4456
No.12 Lorong Titiwangsa 12
Taman Tasik Titiwangsa
53200 Kuala Lumpur

Spain 03 - 2142 8776
200 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Sweden 03 - 2115 0408
6th Floor Bangunan Angkasa Raya
123 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

Switzerland 03 - 2148 0622
16 Persiaran Madge
55000 Kuala Lumpur

Thailand 04 - 226 9484
1 Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman
Penang

206 Jalan Ambang 03 - 2148 8222
50450 Kuala Lumpur

United Kingdom 03 - 2148 2122
185 Jalan Ampang
50450 Kuala Lumpur

USA 03 - 2168 5000
376 Jalan Tun Razak
50400 Kuala Lumpur

Airlines

Malaysia Airlines 04 - 262 1405
or 1300 88 3000

Cathway Pacific 04 - 226 0411

China Airlines 04 - 228 9227

Garuda Indonesia 04 - 646 5011

KLM Royal Dutch Airlines

03 - 2711 9811

Qantas 1800 88 1260

Royal Brunei Airlines 03 - 2070 7166

Singapore Airlines 04 - 226 3201
Thai Airways 04 - 226 8000

Tourist attractions and info in Penang
Penang Bird Park (on the mainland)
 04 – 399 1899

Botanical Gardens 04 - 227 0428

Penang Butterfly Farm 04 - 885 1253

Tropical Fruit Farm 04 - 227 6223

Kek Lok Si Temple 04 - 828 3317

Reclining Buddha Temple 04 - 226 8503

Burmese Temple 04 - 226 9575

Penang Hill Railway (Top station)
 04 - 829 9412

Penang Hill Railway (Bottom station)
 04 - 828 3263

Penang Museum 04 - 261 3144

Penang Tourist Board Association
 04 - 261 6663

Tourist Information at KOMTAR
 04 - 261 4461

ABOUT THE CULTURE

Malaysians are warm and hospitable people, with a mixture of different cultures. Malaysian culture has its own unique features as all the cultures do. Therefore many things may seem different compared to your own cultural background. Below are a few issues that you might come across during your stay.

Time concept

Unlike in some countries, the concept of time in Malaysia is flexible. If you have a personal meeting, try to be on time. However, if your landlord promises a plumber to come on Monday at 9.00 am, do not be surprised if he rings your doorbell on Tuesday evening. When asking from a travel agent how many hours a bus trip from Penang to Krabi takes, he might say 8 hours though the reality would be closer to 12. In other words, be ready for waiting. Busses may not leave on time, but eventually the driver will start the engine. In some situations, any time in Malaysia is “on time”.

Forms of address

Choosing the right form of address is sometimes difficult in Malaysia, as persons from different ethnic groups are addressed differently. A good guideline is to use the first name, or what appears on paper as the first name. The following forms of address are commonly used:

Puan	Mrs. / Ms.
Cik	Miss
Encik	Mr.
Tuan	Mr.
Kakak/Kak	elder sister
Adik	younger sibling

Malays and Indians do not have first names and surnames. They have their own given name, followed by their Father's given name.

A typical name for Malay female could be **Nursyuhada binti Abdullah**. Nursyuhada (or Noor Syuhada) is the first name, though some people prefer using only part of it (Syuhada). Binti, or bte, means simply the "daughter of". Abdullah is then the family name. If the person is married, appropriate form of address would be Puan Nursyuhada or Puan Syuhada. If she is not married, use Cik Nursyuhada or Cik Syuhada. If you are uncertain about her marital status, Puan should be used instead of Cik.

In the example above the person could introduce herself also as Kakak (Nur)Syuhada, or Kak (Nur)Syuhada, providing she is older than you. This is less formal than Puan and can be used with persons you know and are closed with. Generally, it is safer to use Puan unless the person introduces herself as Kakak/Kak.

The word Adik is another less formal form of address. It means younger sibling. So an elder person might call you Adik, followed by your first name.

A typical Malay name for a male could be **Abdul Razak bin Mohamad**. Abdul and Razak are the first names, Mohamad is the last name, and "bin" means the "son of". He could be address as Encik Abdul Razak, or Encik Razak. This applies to both married and unmarried men. Tuan is used only for married men.

You might also see a name like **Rajeswary Mahalingam** or M. Rajeswary. This is an Indian name for a female, Mahalingam being her father's name. If the person is not married, she should be called Miss Rajeswary. The same way men should be addressed as Mister, followed by their first name. So **Munusamy Subramanian** should be addressed as Mr. Munusamy.

After marriage most Indian women start using their husband's name. If Rajeswary Mahalingam married Munusamy Subramanian, she would become Mrs. Munusamy.

Among **Sikh** communities females may have Kaur (Ms.) and males Singh (Mr.), in their names. A female called Jasbir Kaur would often be incorrectly addressed as Miss Kaur. The correct form would be Miss Jasbir.

The Chinese start their names with their family name first: **Tong Jiun Kee**. This person should be addressed as Ms/Mrs Tong or Puan Tong.

Though all this formality might sound very confusing to you, do not worry: even Malaysians themselves get sometimes confused with the forms of address. Even if you do not get it right, people will appreciate your sincere attempt.

Saving face

The concept of saving face, i.e. preserving person's dignity, is very important among Malaysians. It is considered very rude to break the norms as it makes other people feel uncomfortable and embarrassed. Saying negative things too straight forward or expressing disagreement by getting loud, are examples of an inappropriate behavior. Softer approach is appreciated. Malaysians might even laugh or giggle in a face-saving attempt. For example, if you see a person stumbling on the street, the first reaction from many Malaysians is to laugh. This does not mean that somebody falling over amuses them; it is just their way of trying to lighten the unfortunate situation

Personal questions

Very often Malaysians will ask you questions, which you might consider very personal. People might be curious about your age, salary, marital status, and so on. Also your appearance might be commented quite openly. Do not be insulted as none of this is done with bad intentions. If you feel uncomfortable answering, just be vague and try to go around the issue.

Receiving gifts and compliments

There is a whole ritual involved when somebody is offered something. For instance, when you give your local friend a gift she is likely to say something like "You should not have bothered", and put the gift aside. Though she appears to ignore it she actually appreciates it. She just does not want to seem too eager, nor does she want you to feel embarrassed about her looking at your gift while you are still there. Therefore she might open it later.

The same idea applies if you compliment somebody. Your compliment "That is a nice skirt" might be denied by saying "It's just an old one". Your compliment is still appreciated and it makes the receiver happy. It is just a cultural habit to reject it.

Paying a bill at a restaurant is another situation that confuses foreigners sometimes. If you are having a dinner with your new local friend and you offer to pay the bill, she might reject by saying that you are the guest so she should meet the bill. If it is the first time she is paying, then let her pay. However, if you are regularly meeting for a dinner, you will need to insist on paying the bill. The insistence is an expected custom.

Norms and habits

Like in every country, there are certain Do's and Don'ts in Malaysia as well. Knowing these norms helps you to understand the prevailing behavior better.

Animals

Firstly, Muslims avoid dogs for religious reasons, where as in some Chinese societies dogs are associated with bad luck. Another animal that is a taboo for Muslims is a pig. Therefore pork is not served in Muslim restaurants. Unlike Muslims, Chinese might serve pig as a special treat. For the Indians, they do not take beef in their food.

Dinner invitation

If you are invited for a dinner to someone's house you should remove your shoes before entering. If you wish to bring a little gift to the host, fruits and cookies are welcomed among all the ethnic groups. Do not buy flowers as the meaning of different flowers varies among the ethnic groups. Drinking is not allowed in Islam or Hinduism, so do not bring a bottle of wine as a gift either.

If you are worried about the spices in the food, just take plenty of rice with only little bit of sauce, as the rice eases the burning feeling in your mouth. If your host is Chinese, avoid piling all the food in your plate at once. Take a little bit and finish that first before taking more.

When eating in an Indian home you might notice that as long as you keep finishing the food, more will be piled on. If you are already full, you can leave a small portion of food on your plate to show that you have already had plenty.

Gestures

There are also some gestures that should be avoided. Pointing with your forefinger is considered rude, so rather use your full hand. Use only your right hand for giving or receiving something. The use of left hand is rude because it is used for washing after going to the toilet. For the same reason only right hand is used if eating with fingers.

Patting someone on the head is another gesture to avoid, as it is offensive despite the person's age or sex. Shaking hands is a common habit in urban areas, whereas in rural Muslim areas a smile instead of a handshake might be used. In some Muslim societies it is considered inappropriate for men and women to touch hands and therefore your outstretched hand might be ignored.

Entering a sacred place

Entering a mosque, temple, or any other sacred place should be done with consideration. Remove your shoes (even if there are no signs) and please keep it quiet, as most likely there are people praying or conducting religious ceremonies. Often, at least in some parts of the temples and mosques, photographing is forbidden. Your arms and legs should be covered, and for women to visit a mosque also a headscarf is needed. Women are not allowed to enter the mosque during menstruation, and certain hours on Fridays are meant only for men. The prayers on Friday afternoon last for longer time than on other days, and most mosques will be packed then. This might cause traffic jams and some Muslim operated businesses might be closed too.

FEW FACTS ABOUT MALAYSIA

The country and its people

Malaysia comprises Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo. Malaysia's neighbors are Brunei, Thailand, Singapore, Indonesia and The Philippines. Population of 23 million people consists of Malays, Chinese, Indians and Indigenous people. Two million people inhabit the capital, Kuala Lumpur.

The official language is Bahasa Melayu though English is widely spoken. Chinese dialects, Indian dialects and indigenous languages are also used.

Though the official religion is Islam, also other religions are widely practiced. Hinduism, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, and Animism are only few of the religions in the country.

The climate

Malaysia is located 7 degrees north of Equator, on the tropical climate zone. Temperature is around +30C throughout the year with high humidity. Areas around highlands and mountains are cooler. Heavy rains come normally between November and October, though there are showers during other months too.

Clothes

As the weather in Malaysia is warm and humid, light cotton clothes are comfortable to wear. Certain dress codes do apply. Generally speaking a shirt that covers shoulders, and skirt/pants that come down to the knees is considered appropriate for females. Men are usually dressed up in long pants and a shirt. It is very unlikely for you to see local men wearing shorts outside the beaches, though they are not offensive.

Swimming attire is required everywhere: topless bathing is definitely not acceptable. Sandals and shoes are acceptable footwear, and so are high-heeled slippers. Flip-flops (rubber slippers) can be worn to the beach and shopping centers but are not decent enough for formal or semi-formal occasions, including school. Please, take your cue not from other travelers, but from local people.

As the air-conditioning is widely used indoors, a sweater or a jacket might be needed in the classrooms, restaurants etc. Long distance busses, trains and ferries can be surprisingly cold so be prepared for a chilling experience.

Food

Malaysia has huge variety of cuisines and food is available basically everywhere. However, for those who prefer their diet without animal products it might be challenging to find diverse nourishment. This is because usually fish oil or shrimp paste is used for cooking the vegetables.

You are likely to find chili with other hot spices in your meal unless you request for non-spicy serve. Though tap water in Penang is usually of a good quality, either filtered or bottled water is recommended for drinking. When buying food at home, use tightly covered containers to protect your food from ants. Fruits and bread are safer when placed in the fridge. Try the food of all kinds to find your own favorites: there definitely is a lot to choose from!

Tipping

Tipping is not a common practice: more expensive restaurants will have a service charge on the bill where as cheaper places do not expect tips.

Business hours for government offices

Mon-Thurs 8.00am-1.00pm 2.00pm-4.30pm

Friday 8.00am-12.15pm 2.45pm-4.30pm

Second and fourth Sat of each month

8.00am-1.00pm

Closed on Sun, first and third Sat of each month, and public holidays.

Events

Follow the newspapers and music magazines to keep you updated about current events. Penang Tourist Newspaper has a comprehensive listing about what is going on. You can purchase it e.g. at Tourist Information at KOMTAR. The following web sites are also very useful for finding any information about Penang, or Malaysia in general:

www.exoticpenang.com.my

www.kakiseni.com

www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my

www.tourismpenang.gov.my

ENJOY YOUR STAY!