

# Directory

## CONTENTS

Accommodation	215
Business Hours	216
Children	217
Climate	217
Courses	218
Customs Regulations	218
Dangers & Annoyances	218
Discount Cards	218
Embassies & Consulates	219
Festivals & Events	219
Food	221
Gay & Lesbian Travellers	221
Holidays	222
Insurance	222
Internet Access	222
Legal Matters	222
Maps	223
Money	223
Photography	223
Post	224
Telephone	224
Time	224
Toilets	224
Tourist Information	225
Travellers With Disabilities	225
Visas	225
Volunteering	225
Women Travellers	226
Work	226

## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Kuala Lumpur (KL), Melaka and Penang ranges from sky-scraping five-star hotels to grungy backpacker dives that scrape the bottom of the barrel. The good news is that accommodation is refreshingly inexpensive, even at the top end of the market. Outside of public holidays (around major festivals such as Chinese New Year in January/February) most midrange and top-end hotels offer big discounts – always ask about special offers.

For the purposes of this book, we have divided accommodation up into the following categories: budget is for rooms under RM70; midrange from RM71 to RM200 per room and top end at RM201 and above per room.

## BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

Promotional rates can bring rooms at many top-end hotels into the midrange category. A 5% government tax applies to all hotel rooms (including at cheaper hotels) and almost all top-end hotels levy an additional 10% service charge. Credit cards are widely accepted at midrange and top-end hotels; cash payment is expected at cheaper places.

As a rule, budget hotels offer poky boxy rooms, often with thin plywood partition walls and no windows; you normally have a choice of private or shared bathrooms and fan or air-conditioning. At midrange hotels air-con is standard, and rooms typically have TVs, phones, proper wardrobes and other appealing mod cons. Some offer full top-end facilities – restaurants, business centres and swimming pools – at midrange prices.

Top-end hotels in Malaysia pull out all the stops. Rooms have every conceivable amenity, from in-room internet access (typically over a LAN cable), to safes, minibars, slippers and robes, and even prayer mats for Muslim guests. Top-end hotels typically quote prices as ++ (called plus-plus), which means the 10% service charge and 5% government tax haven't been included in the price. We quote net prices for all budget and midrange places.

## Camping

Camping is possible on Pulau Besar near Melaka (see p163) and in Penang National Park (p207), Teluk Bahang Forest Reserve (p206) and Pulau Jerejak (p204) near Penang. The **Forest Research Institute of Malaysia** (FRIM; Map pp72-3; ☎ 6279 7575; [www.frim.gov.my](http://www.frim.gov.my); Selangor Darul Ehsan; admission RM5) also allows camping if you get permission in advance. Most sites are fairly

**PRACTICALITIES**

- The electricity supply (220–240V, 50 cycles) is highly reliable – sockets take a UK-type three-square-pin plug.
- English-language newspapers include the *New Straits Times*, the *Star* and the *Malay Mail*.
- Radio Malaysia has three main radio stations (KL frequencies given): HITZ FM (92.9 FM; top 40), MIX FM (94.5 FM; adult contemporary) and Light & Easy FM (105.7 FM; easy listening). Check locally for frequencies in Melaka and Penang. See [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice) for details of local frequencies for BBC Radio World Service.
- Malaysia has two terrestrial government television channels, TV1 and TV2, and three commercial stations, TV3, NTV7 and TV9, plus a host of satellite channels on the Astro network.
- Malaysia follows the metric system for weights and measures.

simple – just flat spaces for tents and sometimes a toilet block (usually with non-potable water). Bring your own tent, preferably with a mosquito net; see p132.

**Homestays**

Homestays with Malaysian families are becoming increasingly popular. Options in this book include the cheerful Ben Soo Homestay (p103) in KL, and Desa Paku House & Garden (p165) at Alor Gajah. Penang also has some beautifully converted mansions that offer a homestay-type experience. Contact local offices of Tourism Malaysia (p225) for more information on local homestay programmes.

**Hostels & Guesthouses**

Kuala Lumpur, Melaka and Penang all have cheap hostels and guesthouses, ranging from clusters of box rooms in city towers to informal huts on the beach. Most offer dorm beds (from as little as RM9) as well as basic rooms with shared or private bathrooms and a choice of fan or air-con. Seek out the smaller, family-owned places for a more relaxed, homestay-like experience. Many of these places do not provide a top sheet; bring a towel, blanket or sleeping bag-liner to keep the air-con chill at bay.

**Hotels**

All the cities in this book have numerous hotels, ranging from cheap Chinese-run places that target locals to five-star palaces that attract global high-fliers. Rooms almost always have telephones, air-con and private bathrooms, and extras such as TVs and fridges are usually available. In cheaper hotels, 'single' normally means one double bed, and 'double'

means two double beds – so four people can easily share a double room. To aid ventilation, the walls of cheaper rooms may not meet the ceiling, which is terrible for acoustics and privacy – bring earplugs.

In more upmarket hotels, 'superior' rooms are normally standard rooms, while 'deluxe' or 'club' rooms have better facilities. In many midrange hotels only the deluxe rooms have windows. Top-end hotels offer the same luxuries found worldwide – TVs, bathtubs, safes, minibars, hairdryers, tea- and coffee-making facilities and, off course, slippers and monogrammed terry robes.

**Resorts**

Penang Island and several other islands on the west coast have Asian-style beach resorts of varying standards, from simple huts to international-style resort hotels. Posher resorts have restaurants, swimming pools, evening entertainment and family-friendly beach activities.

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Most of Peninsular Malaysia works Monday to Friday, with Saturday a half day. Government offices are usually open from 8am to 4.15pm Monday to Friday. Most close for lunch from 12.45pm to 2pm (12.15pm to 2.45pm on Friday for Muslim prayers). Banks generally open 9.30am to 4.30pm on weekdays and 9.30am to noon on Saturday, though smaller branches may keep shorter hours.

Shop hours are variable – most are open from around 9.30am to 7pm from Monday to Saturday. Major department stores and shopping malls are open from around 10am until 9pm or 10pm, seven days a week.