



# MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE

TOP SIGHTS. AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

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## Welcome to Malaysia & Singapore

*Southeast Asia's dynamic duo offer sprawling metropolises, culinary sensations, beautiful beaches, idyllic islands, soaring mountains and national parks packed with wildlife. Equally rich and diverse is the region's fascinating multi-ethnic cultural mix.*

Malaysia is home to some of the most ancient ecosystems on earth, with significant areas of primary rainforest protected by national park and conservation projects. The biodiversity is mind-boggling: from the pitcher plants and orchids in the humid lowlands to the conifers and rhododendrons of the high-altitude forests. The most common sightings of wildlife will be a host of insects or colourful birdlife, but you may get lucky and spot a foraging tapir, a silvered leaf monkey or an endearingly downy orangutan. The oceans are just as bountiful, with shoals of tropical fish, paint-box corals, turtles, sharks and dolphins.

City lovers will be thrilled by Singapore, an urban showstopper with elegant colonial buildings, stunning contemporary architecture and world-class attractions. In Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur (KL), Malay *kampung* (village) life hums along cheek by jowl with the 21st-century glitz of the Petronas Towers, and shoppers shuttle from traditional wet markets to air-conditioned megamalls. In sharp contrast to the metropolises, Unesco World Heritage-listed Melaka and George Town (Penang) have uniquely distinctive architectural and cultural townscapes, developed over half a millennium of Southeast Asian cultural and trade exchange, and both should be high on your to-visit list.

*“ sprawling metropolises,  
culinary sensations, beautiful  
beaches ”*

Gardens by the Bay (p226), Marina Bay Sands (p240)  
and Marina Bay, Singapore



## Plan Your Trip

### Ultimate Itinerary



#### Week 1

##### Singapore to Kuala Lumpur

Fly into **Singapore** (p222) and spend a couple of days dipping into the city's various quarters and sampling its delicious dining and shopping options. Next head across to Peninsula Malaysia and one of the region's oldest cities.

🚗 4½ hours, 🚝 5½ hours to Melaka

**Melaka** (p160), an atmospheric time capsule of history and culture, is a great place to explore for a day before moving on to the nation's appealing capital.

🚗 2 hours, 🚝 3 hours to KL

Sightseeing must-dos in **Kuala Lumpur** (p34) include the Petronas Towers, Batu Caves and Chinatown. Then set your travel compass for the peninsula's interior.

🚗 4 hours to Kuala Tembling, then  
🚝 3 hours to Taman Negara

*This is Lonely Planet's ultimate Malaysia & Singapore itinerary, which ensures you'll see the best of everything these countries have to offer.*

*For other recommended paths to travel, check out our itineraries section (p26). For inspiration on themed travel, see If You Like... (p20).*





From left: Chinatown hawker stalls (p64), Kuala Lumpur; Pantai Cenang (p122); Flying foxes, Taman Negara (p142)

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## Week 2

### Taman Negara to Pulau Langkawi

Make some short jungle hikes in the magnificent national park **Taman Negara** (p142). Then swap steamy jungle for the cool breezes and undulating tea plantations of the **Cameron Highlands** (p78).

 4 hours to Cameron Highlands

Return to the west coast and make the short crossing by ferry or bridge to the island of Penang where the World Heritage listed core of **George Town** (p92) awaits urban exploration.

 5 hours to Penang

Finish up with some serious beach time on gorgeous **Pulau Langkawi** (p118).

 1 hour to Langkawi.




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## Staying Longer

### Kota Bahru to Semporna Archipelago

You'll have to return to Penang or KL to fly to the east coast city **Kota Bahru** (p132). From here the fastest way down the coast to beautiful **Pulau Tioman** (p150) is to fly to Johor Bahru then follow the coast back up to Mersing for the boat.

 1 hour to Kota Bahru, then  
 &  5 hours to Pulau Tioman

Singapore offers good connections to **Kuching** (p204), the natural base from which to arrange expeditions to Sarawak's national parks.

 1½ hours to Kuching

Having recovered from the ascent of **Mt Kinabalu** (p174), the roof of Borneo, dive into the tropical marine dream-world of the **Semporna Archipelago** (p190).

 1½ hours to Kota Kinabalu, then  
 1 hour to Tawau

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Meerkats, Singapore Zoo (p234)









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## George Town

### *Ancient cultures, colonial architecture, street food*

George Town has managed to cling to its relatively newfound reign as one of the region's hottest destinations. The 2008 Unesco World Heritage declaration sparked a frenzy of cultural preservation, and the city's charismatic shophouses have been turned into house museums, boutique hotels and chic cafes. George Town is one of the most rewarding cities in Southeast Asia to explore on foot, and it also boasts some of Malaysia's best food. Top: Mini banana pancakes, Gurney Drive Hawker Stalls (p103); Bottom: Staircase in the Blue Mansion (p98)





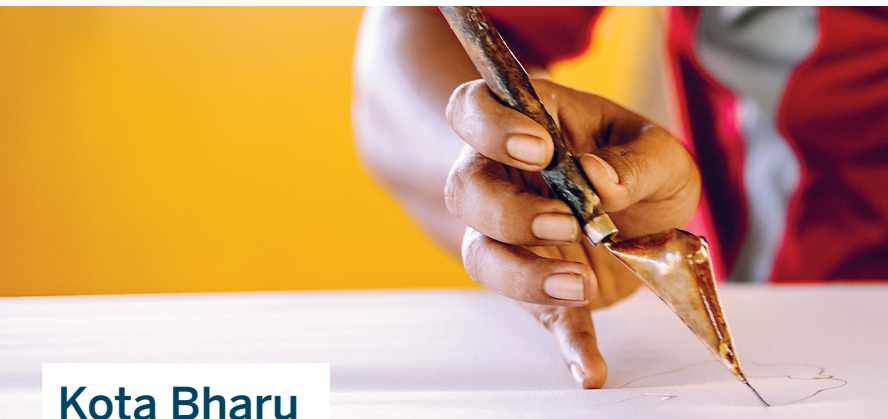
AGENCY ANIMAL PICTURE/GETTY IMAGES ©

## Semporna Archipelago

### *One of the best diving destinations in the world*

For the amateur diver or the seasoned veteran, the Semporna Archipelago is a dream destination, with the island of Sipadan the ultimate underwater adventure. Sipadan's seawall is filled with the world's most colourful marine life – from hundreds of chromatic coral species to the most utterly alien-looking fish (we're looking at you, frog fish), creatures here seem to have swum through every slice of the colour wheel. Sea slug, Sipadan (p194)

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## Kota Bharu

### *Crafts, cuisine and culture*

In this centre for Malaysian culture and crafts, visitors can lose themselves shopping for traditional items such as batik, *kain songket* (handwoven fabric with gold threads), hand-crafted silverware and hand-carved puppets. The Central Market is a great place to buy local goods. For shoppers inclined to roam, the bikeable road from town to Pantai Cahaya Bulan (PCB) is lined with factories and workshops dedicated to the creation of crafts of all sorts.

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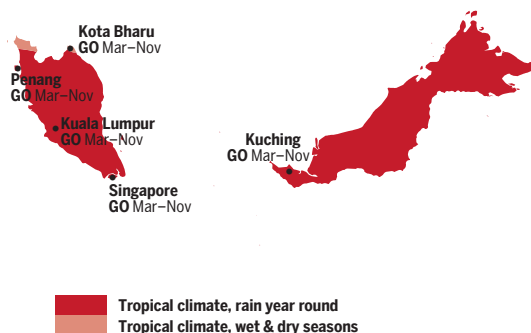


# Plan Your Trip

## Need to Know



### When to Go



### High Season (Dec–Feb)

- End-of-year school holidays and Chinese New Year push up prices; book hotels and transport in advance.
- Monsoon season for the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia and western Sarawak.

### Shoulder (Jul–Nov)

- From July to August, vie with visitors escaping the heat of the Gulf States.
- The end of Ramadan also sees increased travel activity in the region.

### Low Season (Mar–Jun)

- Avoid the worst of the rains and humidity.
- More chances to enjoy places in relative quietude.
- Be flexible with travel plans.

### Currency

Malaysian ringgit (RM)  
Singapore dollar (S\$)

### Languages

Bahasa Malaysia, English, Chinese dialects, Tamil

### Visas

Mostly not needed for stays under 60 days (Malaysia) and 90 days (Singapore).

### Money

ATMs widespread, but check first whether overseas cards are accepted. Credit cards accepted in most hotels and restaurants.

### Mobile Phones

Use local SIM cards or set your phone to roaming (but beware expensive charges).

### Time

Malaysia and Singapore are eight hours ahead of GMT/UTC (London).

## Daily Costs

### Budget:

#### Less than RM100/S\$150

- Dorm bed: RM15–50/S\$20–40
- Hawker-centre and food-court meals: RM5–7/S\$3–5
- Metro ticket: RM1–2.50/S\$1.60–2.70

### Midrange:

#### RM100–400/S\$150–350

- Double room in a comfortable hotel: RM100–400/S\$100–250
- Two-course meal at a midrange restaurant: RM40–60/S\$50
- Cocktails in a decent bar: RM30–40/S\$20–30

### Top End:

#### More than RM400/S\$350

- Luxury double room: RM450–1000/S\$250–500
- Meal at a top restaurant: RM200/S\$250
- Three-day diving course: RM800–1000

## Useful Websites

**Tourism Malaysia** ([www.malaysia.travel](http://www.malaysia.travel))  
Official national tourist information site.

**Your Singapore** ([www.yoursingapore.com](http://www.yoursingapore.com))  
Official tourism-board site.

**Lonely Planet** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com))  
Information, bookings, forums and more.

**Malaysia Asia** (<http://blog.malaysia-asia.my>) Award-winning blog packed with local insider info.

**Honeycombers** ([www.thehoneycombers.com](http://www.thehoneycombers.com)) A good online guide to Singapore, covering events, eating, drinking and shopping.

**XE** ([www.xe.com](http://www.xe.com)) For current exchange rates.

## Opening Hours

Use the following as a general guide:

**Banks** 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday,  
9.30am to 11.30am Saturday

**Bars & clubs** 5pm to 5am

**Cafes** 8am to 10pm

**Restaurants** noon to 2.30pm and 6pm to 10.30pm

**Shopping malls** 10am to 10pm

**Shops** 9.30am to 7pm

## Arriving in Malaysia & Singapore

**Kuala Lumpur International Airport** KLIA  
Ekspres premium non-stop train to KL Sentral (RM55, 28 minutes, every 15 minutes from 5am to 1am). Taxis from RM75 (one hour to central KL).

**Changi International Airport, Singapore**  
Frequent MRT train and public and shuttle buses to town from 5.30am to midnight, S\$2.50 to S\$9. Taxis cost S\$20 to S\$40, 50% more between midnight and 6am.

## Getting Around

**Air** Domestic routes from KL, other major Malaysian cities and Singapore are plentiful.

**Bus** Intercity buses are affordable, comfortable and often frequent; buy tickets at bus stations.

**Car** It's easy to rent self-drive cars everywhere.

**Public transport** Singapore's metro and buses are excellent; KL's public transport (metro, monorail, trains and buses) is improving, but is less reliable.

**Taxi** Singapore's metered taxis are affordable, reliable and honest; KL's are less so.

**Train** Slow but scenic; popular for overnight trips from the Thai border to Singapore.

