

Malaysia Directory

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ACCOMMODATION

Malaysia's accommodation possibilities range from rock-bottom flophouses to luxurious five-star resorts. Outside the peak holiday seasons (around major festivals such as Chinese New Year in January/February) big discounts are frequently available – it's always worth asking about special offers.

Budget places are those indicated with prices under RM70 per room (under RM100 in Kuala Lumpur); at such hotels and guesthouses don't expect much in the way of comfort, although most will offer a choice of rooms with or without air-conditioning and with or without attached bathrooms.

Midrange (in KL, RM100 to RM400; elsewhere RM70 to RM200) hotels will offer pleasant extras such as swimming pools, nicely designed rooms, and facilities such as restaurants and business centres. Top-end hotels charge over RM200 (in KL over RM400) per room.

Top end and a few midrange places often quote prices exclusive of tax (5%) and service charge (10%) – these charges are represented as ++ (called plus-plus), for example RM120++ for a double. Net means that tax and any service charges are included – these are the prices quoted in practically all budget and many midrange places. Tax and service charges are also applied to food, drinks and services in top hotels and the more expensive restaurants. We quote net prices for all budget and midrange places.

Warning: bed bug infestations are common in Malaysia's hotels and are a particular problem at the budget end of the market; see p603 for more details.

Camping

Many of Malaysia's national parks have official camping grounds and will permit camping in nondesignated sites once you are deep in the jungle. There are also many lonely stretches of beach that are ideal for camping. Likewise, it is possible to camp on uninhabited bays on many of Malaysia's islands. A two-season tent with mosquito netting is ideal. A summer-weight sleeping bag is OK, but the best choice is a light-weight bag-liner, since even the nights are warm.

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. You'll find the true, insider low-down on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

PRACTICALITIES

- Connect to the reliable electricity supply (220V to 240V, 50 cycles) with a UK-type three-square-pin plug.
- Read the English-language newspapers the *New Straits Times*, the *Star* and the *Malay Mail*. In Malaysian Borneo you'll also find the *Borneo Post*, the *Eastern Times* and the *New Sabah Times*.
- Listen to Traxx FM (www.traxxfm.net; 90.3FM), HITZ FM (www.hitz.fm; 92.9FM) and MIX FM (www.mix.fm; 94.5FM) for pop music and Fly FM (www.flyfm.com.my; 95.8FM) for news (these frequencies are for the KL area). In Sabah, listen to Traxx FM (90.7FM) or Muzik FM (88.9FM); in Sarawak tune in to Traxx FM (89.9FM), or Wai FM (101.3FM) for tribal music.
- Watch Malaysia's two government TV channels (TV1 and TV2), four commercial stations (TV3, NTV7, 8TV and TV9) as well as a host of satellite channels.
- Use the metric system for weights and measures.

Homestays

Staying with a Malaysian family will give you a unique experience many times removed from the fast-paced and largely recognizable life of the cities and towns. It's worth enquiring with **Tourism Malaysia** (www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my) and each of the state tourism bodies about the homestay programs operating throughout the country in off-the-beaten-track *kampung* (villages). Also see p201 about a homestay program in Penang.

Hostels & Guesthouses

At beach resorts and in the main tourist cities you will find a variety of cheap hostels and guesthouses. These options may be huts on the beach, private homes or houses divided by partition walls into a number of rooms. Dormitory accommodation is usually available. Rooms are spartan, but this is the cheapest accommodation option around and often the nicest, with a real family atmosphere. These places often cater only to foreign travellers and offer their customers lots of little extras to outdo the competition, such as free tea and coffee, bicycles and transport. You'll normally pay around RM6 to RM30 for a dorm bed or RM15 to RM70 for a hotel-style room with air-con.

Hotels

Standard rooms at top-end hotels are often called 'superior' in the local parlance. Most hotels have slightly more expensive 'deluxe' or 'club' rooms, which tend to be larger, have a better view and include extras such as breakfast or free internet access. Many also have suites.

At the low end of the price scale are the traditional Chinese-run hotels usually offering little more than simple rooms with a bed, a table and chair, and a sink. The showers and toilets (which will sometimes be Asian squat-style) may be down the corridor. Note couples can sometimes economise by asking for a single, since in Chinese-hotel language 'single' means one double bed, and 'double' means two beds. Don't think of this as being tight; in Chinese hotels you can pack as many into one room as you wish.

The main catch with these hotels is that they can sometimes be terribly noisy. They're often on main streets, and the cheapest ones often have flimsy walls that stop short of the ceiling – great for ventilation but terrible for acoustics and privacy.

Longhouses in Malaysian Borneo

These communal homes, the traditional dwellings of the indigenous peoples of Borneo, may contain up to 100 individual family 'apartments' under one long roof. These days there are two main types of longhouse: tourist longhouses and authentic longhouses. While a visit to (or a stay overnight in) a tourist longhouse is easy enough, it's unlikely to be of much interest. A visit to an authentic longhouse can be a magical experience, but is tricky to arrange and there's a very specific etiquette; see p430 for details.

Resthouses

A few of the old British-developed resthouses in Malaysia are still operating. These were set up during the colonial era to provide accommodation for travelling officials, and later