



Malaysia

📍 60 / POP 29.6 MILLION

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Best Places for Culture

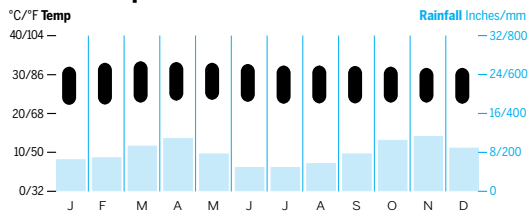
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Why Go?

Malaysia is like two countries in one, cleaved in half by the South China Sea. The multicultural peninsula flaunts Malay, Chinese and Indian influences, while Borneo hosts a wild jungle of orang-utans, granite peaks and remote tribes. Throughout these two regions is an impressive variety of microcosms ranging from the space-age high-rises of Kuala Lumpur to the smiling longhouse villages of Sarawak. And then there's the food. Malaysia (particularly along the peninsular west coast) has one of the best assortments of cuisines in the world. Start with Chinese-Malay 'Nonya' fare, move on to Indian curries, Chinese buffets, Malay food stalls and even impressive Western food. Yet despite all the pockets of ethnicities, religions, landscapes and the sometimes-great distances between them, the beauty of Malaysia lies in the fusion of it all into a country that is one of the safest, most stable and manageable in Southeast Asia.

When to Go

Kuala Lumpur



Dec–Feb High season: school holidays and Chinese New Year. Prices rise; bookings essential.

Nov–Mar Monsoon season sees many east-coast peninsular islands shut; Cherating fills with surfers.

Jul–Aug Many restaurants close during the day for Ramadan. Food bazaars open at night.

Don't Miss

You'll find excellent food markets and hawkers all around the country but the west coast, and in particular Kuala Lumpur and Penang, has a thriving street food scene that offers up some of the best eats in Southeast Asia. Hit up Jalan Alor or the Imbi Market in KL or try any on our list of hawker centres in Penang. Every place has a speciality but follow your nose, appetite and instincts to choose your favourite noodles, rice dishes, salads, grilled meats and icy desserts. Go for busy stalls, where the wok is kept hot and you'll avoid tummy troubles too.

ITINERARIES

One Week

Gorge on endless street food in Penang then cool off in the Cameron Highlands by exploring mossy forests and tea plantations. Hop over to the Perhentian Islands for snorkelling, diving and beachside revelry.

Two Weeks

Follow the one-week itinerary backwards then catch a flight to Kota Kinabalu and spend the next week trekking the wild jungles of Borneo, perhaps ascending Mt Kinabalu, one of the highest mountains in Southeast Asia.

Essential Food & Drink

➔ **Breakfast** *Nasi lemak* (coconut rice served with a variety of accompaniments), *roti canai* (Indian flat bread), *won ton mee* (egg noodles and wontons), dim sum or rice congee (savoury rice porridge).

➔ **Barbecue** Fish, lobster, prawns, squid, cockles and stingray. Point to it then watch it get slathered in sambal and grilled in a banana leaf.

➔ **Noodles** Fried or in soup. The best include *char kway teow* (fried noodles with egg, soy sauce, chilli and a variety of additions), *laksa*, *curry mee* (curry noodles), *Hokkein mee* (fried noodles with chicken, pork and other additions) and *won ton mee*.

➔ **Rice** *Nasi campur* is a lunch favourite of rice and a buffet of toppings.

➔ **Dessert** Malaysians *drink* their sweets via sugared fruit juices, sweetened condensed milk in hot beverages and scary looking icy concoctions such as *cendol* and ABC (shaved ice covered in coconut cream, jellies, beans and other crazy stuff).

AT A GLANCE

- ➔ **Currency** Malaysian ringitt (RM)
- ➔ **Language** Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese (Hakka & Hokkien), Tamil, English
- ➔ **Money** ATMs in large towns
- ➔ **Visas** Most nationalities get a 30- to 90-day visa on arrival
- ➔ **Mobile phones** SIMs start at RM10, calls are 15 sen per minute, data 4G plans are RM7 per week

Fast Facts

- ➔ **Area** 328,600 sq km
- ➔ **Capital** Kuala Lumpur
- ➔ **Emergency** 999

Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	RM2.95
Euro Zone	C\$1	RM4.50
Indonesia	10,000 Rp	RM4.54
Singapore	S\$1	RM2.60
Thailand	10B	RM1.00
UK	UK£1	RM5.45
USA	US\$1	RM3.30

Set Your Budget

- ➔ **Guesthouse room** RM45
- ➔ **Meal (hawker stall)** RM6
- ➔ **Beer** RM8
- ➔ **Snorkelling** RM35

Entering the Country

Kuala Lumpur is the main flight hub on the peninsula while Kota Kinabalu receives most Sabah flights and Kuching Sarawak flights.