

Getting here and advice about your stay

Entry requirements

Passport validity

You do not require a visa to enter Malaysia, but your passport must have at least six months validity from the date of entry into Malaysia. You can stay for up to 90 days for tourism, business discussions or social visits.

Visas

British nationals do not need a visa to visit Malaysia. You will normally be given permission to stay for three months on arrival. Visas for longer stays or for non-tourist purposes must be obtained from the nearest Malaysian diplomatic mission before you travel. See: www.kln.gov.my/web/guest/home

The Malaysian authorities are running a vigorous campaign against illegal immigration. Do not overstay your visa, or violate the terms of entry. Even if you overstay for just a few days, you can be fined, detained and deported.

If you are travelling between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia, (sometimes known as Malaysian Borneo and comprising of the states of Sabah and Sarawak), you will need to carry your passport.

Work permits

You will need a Malaysian Employment Pass to take up employment for a minimum period of two years. See: www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/expatriate/2nd-stage-application-for-employment-pass. If you are travelling to Malaysia for business, check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice before you travel: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malaysia.

Yellow Fever certificate requirements

Check whether you need a Yellow Fever certificate by visiting the National Travel Health Network and Centre's TravelHealthPro website: www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/137/malaysia#Vaccine_recommendations. See also the World Health Organization site: www.who.int/csr/disease/yellowfev/en/ for the up-to-date list of countries with Yellow Fever.

UK emergency travel documents

UK emergency travel documents (ETDs) are accepted for exit from Malaysia. If you plan to use an ETD to enter or transit through Malaysia, check entry requirements with the nearest Malaysian Embassy or High Commission before you travel.

Dual nationals

Malaysia does not recognise dual nationality. Technically you can be refused entry if you are found to be holding two passports of different nationality.

Exchange control rules

You can import or export up to RM 10,000 (Malaysian Ringgit) without prior approval. There are no limits on the amount of foreign currency you can import or export, but you must declare any amount in excess of US \$10,000. Penalties include a fine of up to RM 1 million and up to three years imprisonment.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Local laws and customs

Malaysia is a multicultural country, but has a Muslim majority. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions, especially during the holy month of Ramadan, other religious festivals or if you intend to visit religious sites.

In 2017, Ramadan is expected to start on 27th May and finish on 25th June. See the FCO's 'Travelling during Ramadan' guidance: www.gov.uk/guidance/travelling-during-ramadan

You should also dress modestly, particularly in conservative and rural areas and when visiting places of worship.

If you are a Muslim you may be subject to local Sharia law.

There are severe penalties for all drug offences; this includes amphetamine-type stimulants. Trafficking incurs a mandatory death penalty. Possession incurs a custodial sentence and possible whipping.

You could be asked to take a urine test on arrival in Malaysia if you are suspected of having used drugs before your visit. If the test is positive, you could be referred for rehabilitation treatment or deported.

Importing unlicensed firearms and ammunition into Malaysia is prohibited and can carry the death penalty.

Homosexual acts are illegal.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Safety and security

Sabah

In February 2013, around 100 armed men from the Sulu archipelago landed on the eastern coast of Sabah and occupied the small village of Kampung Tanduo approximately 100 km east of Lahad Datu. On 1st March 2013 there was an exchange of fire and a number of fatalities. On 3rd March 2013 there were reports of further incidents on the coast between Lahad Datu and Semporna. Additional Malaysian security forces were sent to the area on 4th March 2013 and on 5th March 2013 airstrikes and other military action was reported against locations held by the armed group from Sulu around Kampung Tanduo.

The Malaysian authorities have designated some areas of eastern Sabah as coming under the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM). The Malaysian security forces have strengthened their presence in this area and introduced measures to reduce the risk of unauthorised boat landings. Transit points have been unaffected.

Petty crime

Take sensible precautions to protect yourself from petty crime. Avoid carrying valuables and take particular care of your passport whilst walking, or in aircraft, cafes, airport and railway terminals, and hotel rooms. Do not open your hotel room door to strangers, especially late at night. This applies particularly to women travelling alone. Credit card and ATM fraud is widespread. Take great care when using your card.

Incidents of bag snatching are common, including by thieves on motorbikes. Bags with shoulder straps should either be carried with the bag towards the pavement rather than the road, or tucked under the arm. Do not wrap the strap around your arm or shoulder and do not try to hold on to your bag. People have been injured or killed by being pulled to the ground by their bag straps.

Taxi coupon systems are in place at airports and the larger shopping centres; in other areas taxis should use a meter.

Be careful if you are offered a drink by a stranger, even in a reputable bar or restaurant. These approaches can involve spiked drinks, and have resulted in cases of robbery and assault.

If you are a victim of crime, inform the local police and get a police report.

Road travel

You can drive in Malaysia using a valid UK driving licence.

Road conditions in Peninsular Malaysia are generally good, but less so in East Malaysia. Vehicles (particularly motorcycles) do not always stop at traffic lights or pedestrian crossings. If you are involved in a road accident you are obliged by law to stay at the scene until the police have arrived. If a crowd gathers, it may be safer to leave the scene and report to the nearest police station.

There have been a number of fatal bus crashes, particularly on overnight journeys. Choose a reputable operator for your journey.

If you rent a motorbike you should take the same safety precautions as in the UK. Malaysian law states that helmets must be worn.

Driving under the influence of alcohol is a serious offence and the traffic police regularly carry out breath tests. Anyone over the legal limit can face a heavy fine or a jail sentence.

Sea and river travel

Piracy in Southeast Asian waters is an ongoing problem. There have been a number of attacks against ships in and around Malaysian waters, particularly in the Strait of Malacca and the waters between Sabah and the southern Philippines. Be vigilant and take appropriate precautions. Reduce opportunities for theft, establish secure areas on board and report all incidents to the coastal and flag state authorities.

Some passenger boats have sunk due to overloading and/or poor maintenance. Take care at all times when travelling by passenger ferry or speedboat and avoid travelling on vessels that are clearly overloaded or in poor condition. Make sure life jackets are available.

Water sports and scuba diving

If you rent jet skis or any other type of water sports equipment, make sure adequate safety precautions are in place. Only use reputable licensed operators, insist on training before use and make sure you are insured.

Check dive operators' credentials carefully and make sure you are insured. Check that safety equipment is available on the boat, including oxygen. Ask about contingency plans, which should include the ability to call for help while at sea and to evacuate divers to the nearest hyperbaric chamber if necessary.

The sites of HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales, which lie in international waters off Kuantan, have been declared 'protected places' under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986. You should only dive there on a 'look not touch' basis. Do not attempt to penetrate the wrecks, which lie in deep water. You should also take great

care. A British diver died in November 2011 while diving on HMS Repulse. Make sure any boat operator you use holds a licence for diving at the wreck site.

Political situation

Police have sometimes used tear gas and water cannons to control public protests. Monitor local and international media and avoid all demonstrations. Under Malaysian law it is illegal for foreign nationals to take part in demonstrations.

Organised crime

Cigarette smuggling in shipping containers from Malaysia's commercial ports represents the major organised crime threat to the UK. Malaysia also has a considerable domestic cigarette smuggling problem with market penetration of illicit brands standing at almost 40%. Recent ratification of a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty between Malaysia and the UK provides for effective gathering of evidence in criminal matters. International co-operation on crime issues is good.

Indigenous crime syndicates are limited in size although trans-national crime networks are active in the fields of counterfeiting goods and credit cards, human trafficking, prostitution and smuggling. Piracy has effectively been eradicated in the Straits of Malacca since the establishment of the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) in 2004 although there are indications that small scale activities are beginning to return, particularly off the coast of Sabah.

There is evidence of growing human trafficking into and through the country particularly into Sabah from the Philippines. Illegal immigrants frequently end up working as indentured labour or as prostitutes. The State Department's 2014 'Trafficking in Persons' Report places Malaysia in Tier 3 largely due to Malaysia's failure to tackle the underlying issues and its treatment of the victims. Security at the borders has been tightened by the introduction of biometric controls at entry points and the deployment of army patrols along borders. Improvements in both the numbers of personnel and the assets of the MMEA have strongly reinforced the country's maritime borders.

The government is working hard to improve both its physical and technological capabilities in order to address a growth in transnational crime. The number of police on the streets in urban areas has grown visibly over the past year and the number of reported criminal incidents has fallen markedly in line with key performance indicators set by the PM. The government is reaching out to other nations to co-operatively tackle trans-border crime and has signed a memorandum of understanding on Transnational Crime with the UK in 2011. Cybersecurity is a key issue for the government.

[Source: FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Terrorism

There is a high threat from terrorism. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners. In January 2016, the Malaysian police said the country was on the highest security alert; from time-to-time the police presence increases in public areas.

On 28th June 2016, there was a grenade attack at a bar in the town of Puchong, injuring eight people. Malaysian authorities have confirmed this was a terrorist attack by individuals with links to Daesh (formerly referred to as ISIL).

There is a threat from kidnapping in East Malaysia, particularly on the islands off eastern Sabah due to its proximity to the Sulu archipelago in the southern Philippines. There has also been a case in Sandakan on mainland Sabah. Boats travelling to and from off-shore islands and dive sites are possible targets.

The Abu Sayyaf Group, based in southern Philippines, has previously kidnapped foreigners from the east coast of mainland Sabah, the islands and the surrounding waters. A number of hostages have been murdered by the group. The Malaysian authorities have increased security in the region in response to these incidents.

There is considered to be a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

Find out more about the global threat from terrorism, at: www.gov.uk/guidance/reduce-your-risk-from-terrorism-while-abroad including how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Natural disasters

Malaysia is affected by seasonal storms between October and February, which occasionally result in heavy flooding.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Registering with the British High Commission

The LOCATE system is no longer used for registering details of British nationals. You can keep up to date with this travel advice by subscribing to email alerts at: public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKGOVUK/subscriber/new.

You can also subscribe to a new SMS alert system which the British High Commission use to alert British nationals to real-time incidents relating to safety and security. To

subscribe for SMS alerts text 'regv' (for visitors) or 'regp' (for permanent residents) to +44 7537 404 755.

Read the FCO's guidance for further information and advice: www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-deal-with-a-crisis-overseas.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

Business risk

Bribery and corruption

Bribery is illegal. It is an offence for British nationals or someone who is ordinarily resident in the UK, a body incorporated in the UK or a Scottish partnership, to bribe anywhere in the world.

In addition, a commercial organisation carrying on a business in the UK can be liable for the conduct of a person who is neither a UK national or resident in the UK or a body incorporated or formed in the UK. In this case, it does not matter whether the acts or omissions which form part of the offence take place in the UK or elsewhere.

The UK Government takes a very serious view on bribery and corruption, and any UK company considered to be involved in corrupt practices will feel the full weight of the law bear down on them under the UK Bribery Act 2010. The UK Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS, formerly Department for Business, Innovation and Skills – BIS) has published a number of documents on their website. See:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-business-energy-and-industrial-strategy for assistance in this area.

The ruling coalition in Malaysia, the BN – and in particular the largest component party, UMNO – is regularly confronted by charges of corruption from the opposition. Allegations have included the use of “money politics” to secure positions within the party, as well as the distribution of government contracts to cronies and political allies.

Many major companies in Malaysia are GLCs (government linked companies). These are companies in which the government maintains equity holdings and are often the preferred vehicle for implementing government projects, albeit with foreign partners. This has resulted in accusations of anti-competitiveness from some quarters and allegations that revenue is used to fund political activities.

The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) was formed on 1st January 2009 modelled on Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption and replacing the previous Anti-Corruption Agency. The Commission has launched a number of high-profile investigations since its formation.

Malaysia ranks 55th out of 176 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2016. See: www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016#results-table

The country is also a signatory to the following agreements:

- the UN Convention against Corruption;
- the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime;
- the ABD-OECD Plan for Asia-Pacific.

It was named on an OECD blacklist of uncooperative tax havens at the 2009 G20 summit but has since been removed following agreement to implement OECD recommendations.

Visit the GAN Business Anti-Corruption portal at: www.business-anti-corruption.com providing advice and guidance about corruption in Malaysia and some basic effective procedures you can establish to protect your company from them.

[Source: FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Intellectual property (IP)

Intellectual property rights (IPR), as intangible assets, are a key factor in the competitiveness of your business in the global economy. IPR can protect your innovation from competitors and can also be an important source of cash flow through licensing deals or selling IP. IPR infringement can lead to loss of business, revenue, reputation and competitive advantage unless you take steps to protect your IP both in the UK and abroad.

When exporting to Malaysia, it is essential to register your rights in Malaysia as soon as possible in order to be able to defend and enforce them. IP rights are territorial in nature which means that registrations in the UK or another country's jurisdiction are not automatically enforceable in others.

Intellectual property protection in Malaysia comprises that of patents, trademarks, industrial designs, copyrights, geographical indications and layout designs of integrated circuits.

Malaysia is a member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a signatory to the agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) signed under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

It is a signatory to a number of international intellectual property (IP) treaties administered by WIPO:

- the Paris Convention – protection of industrial property.
- the Berne Convention – relating to the protection of copyright and;
- the Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) – provides for a common patent filing system.

Therefore, Malaysia's intellectual property laws are in conformance with international standards and provide adequate protection to both local and foreign investors, although as in many countries there can be problems with enforcement.

A full list of World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) references to Malaysia can be found at: www.wipo.int/tools/en/gsearch.html?cx=016458537594905406506%3Ahmturfvwzzq&cof=FORID%3A11&q=Malaysia

IP top tips for businesses:

Malaysia is part of the ASEAN Patent Examination Co-operation (ASPEC), a regional patent work-sharing programme among nine participating ASEAN member states (AMS). The purpose of this programme is to share search and examination results between the participating offices to allow applicants in participating countries to obtain patents faster and more efficiently. ASPEC is free of charge and operates in English. See:

www.aseanip.org/Services/ASEAN-Patent-Examination-Co-operation-ASPEC/What-is-ASPEC for more information.

There is no customs record system in Malaysia. It is not possible to register IP with customs for detaining counterfeit products.

It can be challenging to reach the correct person within the Malaysian authorities to deal with IP. It is beneficial to use a reputable lawyer to assist with registering rights.

Businesses are generally encouraged to learn more about IP issues relevant to their specific industry sector and to consider defensive measures early in their plans to enter the Malaysian market.

The UK Intellectual Property Office has an IP attaché based in Singapore with specific focus on providing support and advice to UK companies in Malaysia. Contact:

Christabel Koh
British High Commission Singapore
100 Tanglin Road
Singapore 247919

Tel: +65 6424 4229

Email: Christabel.Koh2@fco.gov.uk

Useful information can also be found at:

- The UK Intellectual Property Office – the UK Government agency providing free and impartial advice on protecting and registering your IP in the UK and abroad. See: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/intellectual-property-office
- ASEAN IPR SME helpdesk, a project funded by DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission to provide free information and training for European SMEs in the ASEAN region: www.ipr-hub.eu
- the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (MYIPO): www.myipo.gov.my/en/myipo/

[Source: FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Protective security advice

The UK Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) also provides protective security advice to businesses. See: www.cpni.gov.uk

[Source: FCO Overseas Business Risk/gov.uk]

Health

Visit your health professional at least four to six weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures. Country-specific information and advice is published by the National Travel Health Network and Centre on the TravelHealthPro website: travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries, and by NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx.

Useful information and advice about healthcare abroad is also available on the NHS Choices website: www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcareabroad/Pages/Healthcareabroad.aspx

For information and advice about the risks associated with Zika virus, visit the National Travel Health Network and Centre website: www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/country/137/malaysia#Other_risks

Mosquito-borne diseases like dengue fever occur all year round. There has been an increase in the number of cases of dengue fever, including in Kuala Lumpur. You should take appropriate precautions to avoid being bitten by mosquitoes.

The states of Perlis, Kedah and Penang have been declared as rabies infected. You should take precautions to protect yourself if you are travelling in these areas. See: www.travelhealthpro.org.uk/factsheet/20/rabies

From June to October, Malaysia can experience air pollution from forest fires in Indonesia. Monitor the Air Pollutant Index Management System (APIMS) updates at: apims.doe.gov.my/public_v2/home.html and health advisories issued by the Malaysian Department of Environment at: www.doe.gov.my/portalv1/en

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 999 or 112 from a mobile and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

FCO travel advice

If you are travelling to Malaysia for business, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website has travel advice to help you prepare for your visits overseas and to stay safe and secure while you are there.

For advice please visit the FCO travel section pages on the gov.uk website: www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/malaysia

Travel insurance

Government and private hospitals in Malaysia charge for all services, and private care is expensive. Before you travel, make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation. See FCO foreign travel insurance: www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance

Contact FCO travel advice team

This email service only offers information and advice for British nationals planning to travel abroad. Email: traveladvicepublicenquiries@fco.gov.uk

If you need urgent help because something has happened to a friend or relative abroad, contact the consular assistance team on 020 7008 1500 (24 hours).

If you are abroad and need emergency help, please contact the nearest British Embassy, Consulate or High Commission.

[Source: FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk]

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