



MALAYSIA

Malaysia is like two countries in one, cleaved in half by the South China Sea. While peninsula flaunts bustling cities, colonial architecture, misty tea plantations and chill-out islands, Malaysian Borneo hosts wild jungles of orangutans, granite peaks and remote tribes, along with some pretty spectacular diving. Throughout these two regions is an impressive variety of microcosms ranging from the space-age high-rises of Kuala Lumpur to the traditional longhouse villages of Sarawak.

If there was one thing that unites all its pockets of ethnicities, religions and landscapes, it's food. Between the Chinese-Malay 'Nonya' fare, Indian curries, Chinese buffets, Malay food stalls and Dayak specialties, with some impressive Western-style food thrown in for good measure, travellers will never go hungry here.

People:

Malaysia is a multicultural society. While Malays make up a 52% majority, there are also 27% Chinese, 9% Indian and a miscellaneous grouping of 13.5% "others", such as the Portuguese clan in Melaka and 12% of indigenous peoples (Orang Asli). There is hence also a profusion of faiths and religions, with Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Sikhism and even shamanism on the map.

Climate:

The climate in Malaysia is tropical. The north-east monsoon (October to February) deluges Borneo and the east coast in rain and often causes flooding, while the west coast (particularly Langkawi and Penang) escape unscathed. The milder south-west monsoon (April to October) reverses the pattern. The southern parts of peninsular Malaysia, including perennially soggy Kuala Lumpur, are exposed to both but even during the rainy season, the showers tend to be intense but brief.

Malaysia is close to the equator, therefore warm weather is guaranteed. Temperatures generally range from 32°C/89.6 °F at noon to about 26°C/78.8 °F at midnight. But like most Southeast Asian countries, Malaysia's sun-shining days are interrupted by Monsoon season from November and February every year, and night temperatures can hit a low of about 23°C/73.4 °F on rainy days.

Temperatures tend to be cooler in the highlands, with the likes of Genting Highlands, Cameron Highlands and Fraser's Hill having temperatures ranging from about 17°C/62.6 °F at night to about 25°C/77 °F in the day. Mount Kinabalu is known to have temperatures falling below 10°C/50 °F

Cities:

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| ✚ Kuala Lumpur | - | the multi-cultural capital, home of the Petronas Towers |
| ✚ George Town | - | the cultural and cuisine capital of Penang |
| ✚ Ipoh | - | capital of Perak with historic colonial old town |
| ✚ Johor Bahru | - | capital of Johor, and the gateway to Singapore |
| ✚ Kuantan | - | capital of Pahang, and commercial centre of the east coast |
| ✚ Kota Kinabalu | - | close to tropical islands, lush rain forest and Mount Kinabalu |
| ✚ Kuching | - | capital of Sarawak |
| ✚ Malacca (Melaka) | - | the historical city of Malaysia with colonial-style architecture |

- ✚ Miri - resort city of Sarawak and gateway to UNESCO World Heritage Site Gunung Mulu National Park

Other destinations:

- ✚ Cameron Highlands - famous for its tea plantations
- ✚ Fraser's Hill - a time warp to the colonial era
- ✚ Kinabalu National Park - home of Mount Kinabalu, the tallest mountain in South East Asia
- ✚ Langkawi - an archipelago of 99 islands known for its beaches, rainforest, mountains, mangrove estuaries and unique nature. It's also a duty-free island
- ✚ Penang (Pulau Pinang) - formerly known as the "Pearl of the Orient", now bustling island with excellent cuisine which has retained more colonial heritage than anywhere else in the country
- ✚ Perhentian Islands (Pulau Perhentian) - glittering jewels off the East Coast still undiscovered by mass tourism
- ✚ Redang (Pulau Redang) - popular island destination for scuba divers
- ✚ Taman Negara National Park - a large area of rainforest spanning Kelantan, Pahang and Terengganu
- ✚ Tioman(Pulau Tioman) - once nominated one of the most beautiful islands in the world

Food:

The crossroads of Malay, Chinese and Indian cuisine, Malaysia is an excellent place to makan (eat in Malay). Look out for regional specialities and Nyonya (Peranakan) cuisine, the fusion between Malay and Chinese cooking. There is even unique Eurasian cooking to be found in the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca, the heartland of the Eurasian community of Portuguese descent.

Malaysians are very proud of their cooking and most towns or even villages have their own delicious specialities such as Penang char kway teow, Kajang satay, Ipoh bean sprout chicken, Sarawak laksa, Kelantanese nasi dagang, Sabahan hinava, and many, many more.