



Kuala Lumpur

Relocation Guide

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Welcome to Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur has a lot to offer and we have created this guide to help you decide on, or prepare for your move to this amazing city. A thriving economy, social diversity, quality of life and fantastic job opportunities make Kuala Lumpur (KL) a popular destination for talented digital experts from around the world. If you have not found your next career step yet, we are happy to advise and help you. Start creating your future at www.welovesalt.com





Why move to Kuala Lumpur?

Malaysia is an incredibly diverse country, steeped in history and culture and separated into two sections by the South China Sea; the mainland peninsula and East Malaysia, which sits within the island of Borneo. The peninsula is home to rapidly expanding cityscapes, colonial architecture and misty tea plantations, whilst East Malaysia hosts wild jungles of orangutans, granite peaks and remote tribes.

Malaysia is one of the largest countries in the ASEAN region, with Kuala Lumpur as its capital, which offers an increasingly 'space age' panorama including the iconic Petronas Towers holding centre stage. The country as a whole is a triumph of multicultural social cohesion with Malay, Chinese and Indian as the primary influences, though the major cities host a growing expat population. As such, populations of Muslim, Buddhist and Christian faith all co-exist very successfully in this vibrant melting pot.



Living in Kuala Lumpur

The economy and work culture

Malaysia is one of the consistently fastest growing economies in Asia. This economic stability has led to a booming local job market across industries like infrastructure and engineering, technology, digital and financial services.

In numbers:

Population: 31 million

Area: 330,803 km²

Capital: Kuala Lumpur (1.76 million inhabitants / Klang Valley (Greater Kuala Lumpur): 7.25 million)

Unemployment: 3.4% (February 2016)

Religion: Islam (61.3 %) Buddhism (19.8%) Christianity (9.2%) Hinduism (6.2%)

Exports: USD\$175.7 billion (2015 est.)

GDP growth: +6.5% annual average

Malaysia recently ranked 21st in a global Bloomberg report on levels of openness and creativity. Rather than slowing down, more international businesses are looking to come here based on favourable regulatory and innovative economic policy, cost factors and depth of talent. A good example is the Digital Free Trade Zone (DFTZ), endorsed via its well-known links with Jak Ma, which removed trade boundaries on goods bought and sold online, which will certainly stimulate growth in the e-commerce sector.

Politically, Malaysia runs as a constitutional monarchy, operates a federal system with 13 separate states and is a democracy. The ruling party is a 13-party coalition known as Barisan Nasional.



Exciting developments around KL include:

KLIC: Kuala Lumpur Internet City – Premier Digital hub for global and local internet-related businesses.

TRX: Tun Razak Exchange, an iconic 70-acre development in the heart of Kuala Lumpur that is set to become a leading centre for international finance and business.

Bandar Malaysia: Transport Centre, a high-speed rail terminal between Singapore and the digital trading hub.

Riverside Promenade: The project to beautify 100km of riverside through the city along the banks of the rivers Klang and Gombak.

Cost of accommodation

KL offers an outstanding quality and range of accommodation at reasonable price levels – and has beautiful enclaves with something for every personal taste. The price is highly dependent on what you are after. When looking for accommodation it is always good to inquire about the local traffic in the area, and to double-check the daily routes you will take, as a short distance can become a long commute during rush hour traffic, which means being near to an MRT or LRT station (city's train system) can be critical.

Renting a two-bedroom condo in an upmarket area of Kuala Lumpur can cost up to RM 4,500 and above per month. Accommodation in other districts is sometimes half the price you would expect to pay in central KL. Household running costs also vary, but budgeting an average of 600-700 RM/month for expenses such as electricity, water and gas (excluding condo fees) should be sufficient.

Average budget for 1, 2 or 3 bed condo is:

			
Downtown KL	RM 2,5-3,5K	RM 3-6K	RM 6K+
Outer KL	RM 1,5-2K	RM 2-4K	RM 4K

Cost of living

The cost of living in Malaysia is relatively low compared to neighbouring countries like Singapore. Malaysia has a favourable tax system; the highest rate of personal income 'supertax' comes in at 28% and will probably be much lower than that for most expats since this only kicks in over RM1,000,000 earnings. For most, the highest rate will be 25% which applies to RM400-600K and anything below this is less. Feel free to refer to the link below for full tax schedule:

www.hasil.gov.my

*Please note that for ex-pats, during the first year, they will be charged at 28%, but any over-payments based on actual earnings will be reimbursed the following year.

Cost of education

KL has a range of educational institutions with very high-quality standards that will ensure your child is eligible for a host of international qualification criteria to tertiary education. For locals, education until the age of 18 is largely free, though for expats looking to put their children through private schooling to achieve their UK, Australian or Baccalaureate system will need to make a substantial investment. Whilst not as expensive as some neighbouring countries, indexed to local salaries and cost of living, the costs can be quite high for the most prestigious schools. That said, schooling can be provided for between the ranges of RM3-5K/month, bearing in mind that costs go up as the student moves through the grades. Additional costs must be borne when registering your child up for a particular school, which also includes a substantial deposit payment for around three months' fees.

Cost of transport

MRT & LRT are massively extended ultra-modern rail services across the city. Travelling around is very easy with the options of road or rail (MRT, LRT, LRT3, monorail, Taxi services like Grab, Uber & LIA, KLIA). KL offers some of the best and cheapest flight connections in Asia.

Cost of food and household goods

Food prices are generally quite low, particularly if you are buying local products. Malaysia has a fine range of cuisine from across the world, and this is reflected in the many types of restaurants available. Street food in Malaysia is a great experience and provides for a cheap night out; even restaurant meals will rarely cost more than RM 65. A main course meal at a foreign restaurant (e.g. an Italian restaurant) will cost around RM 80. Alcohol gets expensive though, so drinks can increase the meal bill substantially.

Expats moving to Malaysia are sure to enjoy the local markets where you can dine on street food, often better, and cheaper than a sit-down meal. Expats will notice that shopping at the supermarket can push costs up since many of the products will have been imported, so in this sense, things can be more expensive than home turf.

At the most authentic end of the scale, you have fantastic local market options such as the wet market at TTDI, where you can source local produce such as meat, vegetables and spices at 'local' prices.





Cuisine

KL is a gastronomic paradise, with Indian, Malay, Chinese influences and combinations, which is a reflection of its rich cultural heritage and history of immigrants and tradespeople moving to and through Malaysia over the centuries. There are 3 primary influences to be aware of:

Malay food, in general, is rich with herbs like lemongrass, tamarind, dried and fresh chillies, ginger and garlic. Popular dishes that cannot be missed are such as nasi lemak (coconut milk steamed rice), sambal belacan (shrimp paste with pounded chillies), beef rending (dried curry) and serunding (beef floss). Satay, or barbecue meat on a stick, originated from Malay cuisine and has a presence in restaurants all over the world today.

Indian food, on the other hand, has very much integrated Northern Indian and Southern Indian cuisines when they reach Malaysian shores. Popular for their curries, banana leaf rice and bread such as chapati, naan and roti (prata in some countries). Indian food has also been assimilated with Malay food through their mix marriages of Indian Malay. The resultant is Mamak food, which is unique to Malaysia and cannot be found in India, itself. Examples are teh tarik (tea with milk), murtabak and rojak (a mixture of fruits with peanut sauce).

Chinese food, like Indian food, has been assimilated with local cuisines. In China itself, Chinese are divided into so many provinces namely the Cantonese, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainan, Teochew and so forth. In Malaysia, Cantonese food makes the most presence with its stir-fry and steaming methods. Chinese dishes such as dim sum, sweet and sour dishes, char siew (sweet barbecued pork), bak kut teh (herbal soup) are a few popular choices. Steamboat or fondue is also widely available and is a fantastic experience.

The indigenous Malay cuisine and the strong influence of Indian and Chinese based on the evolving demographics over the last 2 centuries have led to very high standards. As such, most global cuisines are widely on offer in KL and the city has become a foodie heaven for even the most discerning palate.



Culture shock

Malaysia is a triumph of cultural cohesion – see Muslim, Chinese and Indian national holidays – where in the world do we see that? Kuala Lumpur is the 11th most international city in the world by population – this means KL has a larger expat population by proportion than Brussels or Los Angeles. Malaysia manages to preserve its cultural heritage, yet is extremely accommodating to expats as a gateway to the East. English is the primary business language.



Safety

Malaysia/Kuala Lumpur is a generally safe place for all. However, like most major global cities there is no harm practising common sense and precautions like you would do at home. Most Malaysians speak English well as it is the second language in the country so there should not be a problem communicating with the locals. Serious crime is extremely rare, though in some parts of KL it is sensible to be aware of petty crime and theft.



Banking

The Malaysian banking system is well established. Sometimes opening a bank account can be complicated for foreigners, particularly if they don't have the correct visa or work permit. Once you have opened an account, banking in Malaysia is easy and hassle-free.

Although many expats prefer to bank with a foreign bank, such as Bank of America or HSBC, as they can link to their account in their home country, there are numerous local banking options available to expats in Malaysia. The central bank is Bank Negara Malaysia, while local banks include Bank Islam Malaysia, Bank Muamalat Malaysia, CIMB Bank, Public Bank and RHB Bank. Malaysian banks have all the services customers have come to expect, including Internet and mobile banking.



Money

The currency in Malaysia is the Malaysian Ringgit (MYR or RM), divided into 100 sen (cents)
(4.29 MYR - 1 USD)

Notes: 1 RM, 5 RM, 10 RM, 20 RM, 50 RM, 100 RM

Coins: 50 sen, 20 sen, 10 sen, 5 sen



Healthcare

According to the World Health Organization's report on national healthcare performance, Malaysia is ranked number 50 worldwide. The capital, Kuala Lumpur, provides both private and public healthcare. The quality and standard of medical care are widely accepted to be high, as most hospitals are well equipped and staff competent. Healthcare is moderated by MS ISO9002 certification and accredited by the Malaysian Medical Society for Quality.

With world-class facilities, internationally trained medical professionals and affordable services, Kuala Lumpur has also become a medical tourism destination. Expatriates living in Kuala Lumpur can, therefore, benefit and access a range of public and private hospitals offering high-quality, competitively priced healthcare.

Recreation

Whether you like mountain tops, jungles with phenomenal bio-diversity or tropical beaches flanked with coral and shoals of fish of all colours, you don't need to leave Malaysia for holiday; It's all here. Malaysia is simply stunning. City break options within 2 hours around KL are KLCC Park for an amazing variety of indigenous trees, Genting and Cameron Highlands for scenic views of the mountains and jungle, Redang and Langkawi for tropical island beauty and East Malaysia for remote jungles and Orangutans.



KL boasts 2 of 10 largest shopping malls globally – Mid Valley and One Utama. KL caters superbly for mid-range shopping needs, offering a host of familiar global brands including Western and unique Asian brands from the likes of Japan. You will also find exclusive malls dedicated to high-end shopping for exclusive brands in areas like fashion, jewellery and watches, such as Star Hill or Pavilion Mall in Changkat. For the truly Asian experience, you can head to one of the famous ‘night markets’ in Chow Kit for a rich array of local artisan crafts, produce, and street food. For the ultimate Chinese shopping experience, you have the famous market of Petaling Street for an incredible mix of culture and street trade, or Pasir Seni which is very nearby this oldest part of KL city centre.

Dress code

Kuala Lumpur itself (along with other primary Malaysian cities like Johor Bahru and Penang) is cosmopolitan and multi-cultural, so dress styles are relatively relaxed and informal, especially within Digital or Technology companies. That said, when travelling to certain remote parts of the country, it is advisable to dress modestly and be respectful, especially in areas of stronger Muslim religious sensibilities such as the Northeastern states of Peninsula Malaysia.

Gender equality and salaries

There is completely equal opportunities to both males and female and there are plenty of affordable and accessible childcare services available for working families. Malaysia also has statutory maternity leave allowance in place of 90 days.



Communication



WIFI

Malaysia is blanketed with hot spots for WIFI connections (usually free). Internet cafes are less common these days but do still exist. Only in the jungles and the most remote reaches of the peninsula and Malaysian Borneo are you likely to be without any internet access.



Mobile Phones

If you have arranged global roaming with your home provider, your GSM digital phone will automatically tune into one of the region's networks. If not, buy a prepaid SIM card (passport required) for one of the local networks on arrival. The rate for local calls and text messages is around 36 sen.

There are three main mobile-phone companies, all with similar call rates and prepaid packages:

Celcom (www.celcom.com.my) This is the best company to use if you'll be spending time in remote regions of Sabah and Sarawak.

DiGi (www.digi.com.my)

Maxis (www.maxis.com.my)



Phone

Landline services are provided by the national monopoly Telekom Malaysia (TM; www.tm.com.my).

International dialing code: +60



Electricity

240V/50hz



Visas

In recent years, the visa process in Malaysia has eased significantly thanks to modernisation of the process. Bringing highly skilled expats into Malaysia will help to boost skill levels and productivity. The main platform for expats working in Malaysia is via a standard Employment Pass.

An Employment Pass...

applies to those wanting to work in Malaysia and who have specific skills, generally in technical or managerial positions. It is usually issued for a minimum period of two years. Before the Employment Pass can be issued, the employment of the foreign worker must be approved by the Expatriate Committee or the relevant regulatory agency.

Documents required for work permit applications

Generally, the following documents are required when applying for a work permit for Malaysia:

- Application letter and letter of appointment from employer
- Offer of acceptance letter or employment contract
- Relevant visa application forms
- Letter of approval from Ministry of Home Affairs
- Original receipts of payment of application
- Copy of employee's passport
- Passport photos
- Copies of employee's CV and qualifications
- Medical report from the employee's country of origin approved by the Malaysian Ministry of Health

A key development has been the role of government agencies in promoting and facilitating the granting of EPS to highly skilled workers:

Talentcorp – companies registered on this platform will be able to secure a set number of visas per annum for a cost of c RM5000 per visa, for a 2-year period and the process is about 3 weeks per application.

MDEC – for companies in the digital sector, accreditation via this platform is easily achieved (MSC status) and whilst volumes of visas granted are monitored, the process is very slick and the granting thereof is fairly liberal given the perceived significance of digitally skilled labour to the economic and developmental interests of Malaysia as a whole.

For more details and requirements, check the website of the Immigration Department of Malaysia (www.imi.gov.my/index.php/ms).

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