



Country Intelligence Brief

Malaysia

Overall Risk Rating

2.75 - Moderate

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Ratings Overview

Security

2.75 - Moderate

Civil Unrest	● 2.75
Crime	● 3.00
Kidnapping	● 3.00
Terrorism	● 3.00
Armed Conflict	● 2.00
Security Services	● 3.00

Infrastructure

2.75 - Moderate

Ground Transport	● 3.00
Cyber	● 3.50
Maritime	● 3.75
Air Travel	● 2.00
Utilities	● 2.25

Environment

2.50 - Moderate

Man-Made Hazards	● 2.50
Seismic	● 2.50
Storm Systems	● 3.00
Natural Hazards	● 2.25

Health and Medical

2.75 - Moderate

Disease and Health Threats	● 2.25
Medical Facilities and Services	● 3.00
Mental Health	● 3.00
Food and Water Safety	● 1.50

Political

2.50 - Moderate

Corruption	● 3.25
Government Stability	● 3.00
Rule of Law	● 3.50
Sanctions	● 1.00

LGBTQ Security

4.00 - High

LGBTQ Legal Environment	● 5.00
LGBTQ Enforcement	● 4.00
LGBTQ Social Environment	● 4.00

FactBox

Location	Malaysia
Location	Southeast Asia, divided between Peninsular Malaysia and Malaysian Borneo, borders Thailand, Indonesia, and Brunei and lies along the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea.
Government Type	Federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary democracy.
Population	~36.3 million (est. 2026)
Languages	Official Language(s): Bahasa Malaysia (Malay). Other widely spoken languages: English, Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Thai, and Punjabi. Languages that should be used discreetly: None.
International Country Code	+60
Time Zones	UTC +8
Traffic	Drives on the left
Drinking Water	Generally safe to drink, except in some rural locations.

Overview

2.75 - Moderate

Overview

Malaysia presents a low security and operational risk for international businesses and travelers. Political stability, developed infrastructure, effective security services, and established commercial centers support routine operations. Key risks include cybercrime, political and religious tensions, maritime security, terrorism, and regional disputes in the South China Sea. Security conditions are generally stable across Peninsular Malaysia, while parts of eastern Sabah carry higher risks from kidnapping and cross-border criminal activity.

- **Trend:** Security conditions will likely remain broadly stable. Cybercrime, political and religious tensions, maritime incidents, and developments in the South China Sea will likely remain the main sources of short-notice disruption.

Current Situation

Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Penang, and other major commercial centers generally support normal business activity. Demonstrations occasionally occur over political, economic, or religious issues and can disrupt roads or government districts, particularly in Kuala Lumpur. Security forces generally contain protests without prolonged disruption.

Cybercrime presents a more persistent operational concern. Businesses face phishing, financial fraud, ransomware, data theft, and network intrusion. Financial services, telecommunications, government-linked companies, technology firms, and critical infrastructure operators face greater exposure because of their economic and strategic importance.

Malaysia also faces maritime security challenges. Commercial shipping routes through the Strait of Malacca and surrounding waters remain critical to regional trade. Piracy, robbery at sea, smuggling, and other criminal activity can affect vessels, although Malaysian security forces maintain substantial maritime capabilities. Territorial disputes in the South China Sea create an additional strategic concern, particularly around offshore energy activity and areas where Malaysian and Chinese maritime claims overlap.

Elevated Risk Areas

Eastern Sabah carries the country's highest security risk, particularly coastal and maritime areas near the southern Philippines. Kidnapping, smuggling, piracy, and activity by armed groups have historically affected the region. Malaysian authorities maintain an increased security presence and maritime controls in response to these threats.

Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Johor Bahru, and major tourism centers remain broadly accessible. Areas surrounding government buildings, diplomatic facilities, religious sites, and major transportation hubs may face temporary restrictions during demonstrations or specific security incidents.

Outlook

Kuala Lumpur will likely maintain domestic political stability while strengthening cyber defenses, maritime security, and protection of critical infrastructure. Political competition and debates over religion, ethnicity, and governance could generate localized demonstrations but are unlikely to significantly disrupt nationwide commercial activity.

Malaysia will likely continue balancing its economic relationship with China against its territorial interests and security partnerships in the South China Sea. A broader deterioration would become more likely if repeated maritime confrontations affect Malaysian offshore operations, a major cyberattack disrupts critical infrastructure, or domestic political tensions generate sustained unrest.

Triggers

- Malaysian and Chinese vessels become involved in a serious confrontation near disputed South China Sea waters, affecting offshore energy or commercial maritime activity.
- A major cyberattack causes sustained disruption to financial services, telecommunications, transportation, government systems, or critical infrastructure.

- A kidnapping, militant attack, or significant maritime security incident involving foreign nationals occurs in eastern Sabah.
- Political or religious demonstrations spread across major cities and cause prolonged road closures, violence, or commercial disruption.
- A major security incident in the Strait of Malacca disrupts commercial shipping or prompts tighter maritime controls.

Security

2.75 - Moderate

Petty opportunistic crime presents the primary risk for travelers and expatriates in Malaysia, including frequent incidents of pickpocketing, purse snatching, smash-and-grab theft, and residential burglary. Motorcycle-related snatch theft remains a recurring concern in both urban and residential areas, including higher-income neighborhoods.

Malaysia faces a low but persistent terrorism risk driven mainly by small, self-radicalized networks influenced by Islamic State (IS) ideology. Security forces detect and disrupt these groups through ongoing surveillance, intelligence operations, and arrests, which limit their operational capacity.

Civil unrest occurs intermittently, with demonstrations typically linked to political developments, socio-economic grievances, and ethnic or religious sensitivities. Most gatherings remain localized, particularly in Kuala Lumpur and other major urban centers, but they can cause temporary transport disruption and visible security deployments. Large-scale instability remains unlikely, and Malaysia maintains generally stable relations with neighboring countries.

Periods of elevated operational risk often coincide with politically sensitive events, such as general or state elections, party leadership contests, corruption-related proceedings, or major policy announcements. National holidays, including National Day (Aug. 31) and Malaysia Day (Sept. 16), can increase public gatherings and trigger additional security presence. Religious periods such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, and Thaipusam generate large crowds at places of worship and transport hubs, increasing exposure to opportunistic crime and localized congestion. Social media amplification of ethnic or religious issues can also trigger short-notice demonstrations, although authorities maintain a precautionary security posture during these periods.

Civil Unrest

● 2.75

Current Situation

Malaysia experiences intermittent, generally localized demonstrations driven by socio-economic grievances, political developments, environmental concerns, and ethno-religious sensitivities. Protests most commonly occur in major urban centers, particularly Kuala Lumpur, where government institutions, public squares, and transport hubs act as focal points. Most gatherings remain peaceful and are typically managed through a visible police presence, though they can result in temporary road closures and localized disruption. Large-scale unrest is uncommon, and violent incidents remain limited in scope.

Triggers

- Political developments, including electoral issues, governance concerns, and policy decisions, can prompt protests, particularly in urban areas.
- Ethno-religious sensitivities and issues involving Islam, race relations, or minority rights can escalate public demonstrations.
- Socio-economic pressures, including cost-of-living concerns, and environmental or land-use disputes linked to infrastructure and industrial projects, can also drive protest activity.
- Rapidly mobilized demonstrations via social media may increase the likelihood of short-notice gatherings and localized disruption.

Background

Malaysia maintains a regular but generally controlled protest environment, with most demonstrations concentrated in Kuala Lumpur and other major cities. Authorities typically deploy police units to monitor or disperse unsanctioned gatherings, and crowd-control measures may be used during larger events. While most protests remain peaceful, tensions related to ethnic relations and political competition can occasionally increase the risk of confrontation or arrest. Overall, protest frequency is moderate, with sporadic spikes linked to major political or social developments.

Crime

● 3.00

Crime in Malaysia is primarily concentrated in urban areas, particularly Kuala Lumpur, although incidents can also occur in rural locations and along highways. The main risks to travelers and expatriates stem from opportunistic, non-violent crime, including pickpocketing, purse snatching, and residential burglary. Motorcycle-related snatch-and-grab thefts remain a notable concern and can occur across both commercial and residential areas, including higher-end neighborhoods, sometimes resulting in injury.

Confidence-based scams are common and often involve impersonation tactics, such as individuals posing as government officials or law enforcement personnel. Tourists and foreign nationals are also targeted through fraud schemes involving fabricated emergencies or deceptive service offerings.

Violent crime, including robbery and assault, occurs less frequently but is more likely in urban entertainment districts, particularly at night. Incidents involving taxi or ride-hailing services, including robberies or disputes, have been reported in some cases.

Kidnap-for-ransom risks are largely concentrated in eastern Sabah and the surrounding maritime areas. Criminal and militant groups operating from the southern Philippines have previously exploited porous maritime boundaries to conduct abductions. Security operations in these areas remain ongoing, but response and recovery challenges persist due to cross-border jurisdictional limitations.

Kidnapping

● 3.00

The threat of kidnapping in Malaysia is moderate overall, but elevated in eastern Sabah State, including coastal and resort areas, where the risk is high. Kidnappers are more likely to target local individuals, although foreign nationals have previously been affected. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG), a militant Islamist group based in the southern Philippines, has conducted kidnappings targeting foreigners at resorts in Sabah and vessels operating off the eastern coast of the state.

Common forms of kidnapping in Malaysia include opportunistic kidnap-for-ransom incidents, high-net-worth individual abductions, and politically motivated kidnappings. In cases involving ASG or other cross-border criminal networks, victims may be held for extended periods, with release often dependent on ransom payment and no guaranteed safe recovery.

Terrorism

● 3.00

The risk of terrorism remains moderate. Security services detect and disrupt the activities of self-radicalized individuals and small extremist networks operating within the country. Regional conditions in Southeast Asia, especially proximity to the southern Philippines and Indonesia, increase cross-border movement of militants and criminal facilitators. Malaysia does not host large-scale terrorist bases, but some actors use its territory for transit, recruitment, and support activity.

Islamic State (IS) ideology drives most domestic concern. Small, decentralized cells operate in Malaysia and rely on online platforms for recruitment and coordination. Security forces monitor public spaces, transport hubs, and other civilian locations for potential attack planning. Authorities continue to arrest suspects and disrupt planned incidents, indicating a persistent but contained threat of locally inspired attacks.

Sabah State in the east faces a higher risk due to maritime proximity to the southern Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) conducts kidnappings and cross-border movement in coastal waters and nearby islands. The group has targeted foreign nationals in past incidents. Security operations reduce its ability to operate inside Malaysia, but maritime areas still face spillover risk from cross-border activity.

Malaysia enforces counterterrorism laws that allow preventive detention, expanded surveillance, and coordinated action by security agencies. These measures reduce the size and activity of extremist networks. Security forces maintain pressure on recruitment channels and online propaganda networks, but small-scale radicalization continues to appear through digital platforms.

Armed Conflict

2.00

The risk of armed conflict in Malaysia remains low. The main exposure comes from eastern Sabah, where proximity to the southern Philippines creates ongoing maritime security risks. Malaysian authorities maintain a permanent coastal security presence through the Eastern Sabah Security Command (ESSCOM), supported by coordinated land and maritime patrols, surveillance systems, and inter-agency operations. ESSCOM secures major coastal towns, islands, and sea lanes along the eastern seaboard and coordinates responses to cross-border threats. These measures have reduced the frequency of incursions and strengthened control over high-risk maritime areas in recent years.

Sporadic security incidents continue in the Sulu and Sulawesi Seas, mainly involving piracy, armed robbery at sea, and kidnapping-for-ransom activity carried out by criminal networks operating across porous maritime boundaries. These incidents occur at a lower frequency than in past years, but they still affect remote maritime zones and isolated coastal areas.

No recent armed incursions into Malaysian territory have occurred on the scale of earlier historical events. Security forces in Malaysia, together with regional partners, continue to disrupt cross-border militant and criminal activity and maintain sustained pressure on groups operating in adjacent waters.

Security Services

3.00

The capabilities and responsiveness of security services in Malaysia are generally adequate (risk is moderate). The primary law enforcement body in Malaysia is the police. The capabilities and responsiveness of security services in Malaysia are generally adequate, and the overall security risk is moderate. The primary law enforcement body is the Royal Malaysian Police (RMP), which operates multiple specialist and regional divisions. The Tourist Police unit assists foreign nationals in major urban and tourist areas, while community police units handle most routine engagement with residents and local staff. Police response times and service levels are generally stronger in major cities and established tourist destinations than in rural or remote areas.

The RMP maintains English-speaking personnel in key units, although most officers do not regularly use foreign languages in day-to-day interactions. Communication may therefore vary depending on location and the specific unit involved. Foreign nationals may experience differences in procedural familiarity and service consistency across jurisdictions.

Corruption and misconduct occur at a moderate level within the police force and can affect interactions in some cases. Allegations of human rights concerns have also been reported, although enforcement standards and oversight mechanisms remain in place. Overall, law enforcement capacity supports a stable operating environment, particularly in urban and high-traffic areas. The Malaysian Police (RMP) has several divisions. The tourist police are likely to be the most relevant for foreign nationals. Local staff and resident foreign nationals typically interact with community police. Police response to crimes is generally better in major urban and tourist centers. Although the RMP has English-speaking personnel, police officers do not generally speak foreign languages.

Infrastructure

2.75 - Moderate

There are no major concerns with aviation security affecting Malaysian airlines and airports.

While the road network is generally considered good across Malaysia, driving conditions are negatively affected by frequent flouting of road regulations, heavy congestion and crime risks.

The ports are considered relatively efficient.

Power supplies are adequate and largely reliable across the country, although aging infrastructure can trigger outages and blackouts, mostly in rural areas and towns of eastern Malaysia.

Internet infrastructure and penetration rates are high in Malaysia, although this expansion has resulted in an associated increase in cyber-crime risks.

Ground Transport

 3.00

Ground transport in Malaysia operates on the left-hand side of the road. Road infrastructure in Peninsular Malaysia is generally well developed, with paved highways, clear signage, and extensive expressway networks connecting major cities. Sarawak and Sabah in East Malaysia have less extensive road coverage, and travel between remote areas often takes longer due to lower road density and terrain constraints.

Urban traffic congestion occurs regularly in major cities, including Kuala Lumpur, particularly during peak commuting hours. Motorcyclists frequently filter between lanes and may fail to signal consistently, increasing the risk of collisions in dense traffic. Pedestrian crossings do not always receive consistent compliance from all road users. Smash-and-grab theft from vehicles occurs intermittently in urban areas, especially in slow-moving traffic.

Foreign nationals who choose to drive in Malaysia must adapt to local driving conditions, which include mixed traffic behavior, high motorcycle density, and variable adherence to road rules. Driving standards differ from those in many Western countries, and road conditions can change quickly in congested or urban environments. Road safety risks increase at night and in areas with heavy commercial or entertainment activity.

Taxis and ride-hailing services operate widely across urban centers. Authorities and users report inconsistent meter use in traditional taxis and occasional overcharging. Travelers generally rely on app-based services or pre-booked operators for greater transparency and safety. Intercity bus services connect most regions. In contrast, long-distance bus travel varies in safety standards depending on the operator. Reputable providers maintain higher safety performance, while lower-cost services may present higher operational risk, particularly during night travel or adverse weather conditions.

Local Buses

 Unrated

Intercity buses operate between most major cities in Malaysia. Safety standards vary significantly by operator, and serious accidents occur more frequently on long-distance routes, particularly during overnight travel. Petty theft can occur onboard or at terminals, and travelers face a moderate risk of opportunistic crime in bus stations and during transit.

City buses operate in most urban centers and provide regular intra-city connections. Safety performance is generally moderate, but service quality and driving standards vary by route and operator. Petty theft can occur in crowded buses and terminals, and travelers should remain aware of their belongings in congested conditions.

Mass Transit

 Unrated

Mass transit systems operate in major urban areas, especially in Kuala Lumpur, where metro and rail networks connect key commercial, residential, and transport hubs. These systems support high daily passenger volumes and form an important part of urban mobility.

Petty theft poses a notable risk on metro and rail services, especially during peak hours and in crowded carriages or stations. Travelers should secure personal belongings due to frequent opportunistic crime in dense commuter environments.

The terrorism threat to mass transit systems remains moderate. Security authorities monitor rail and metro networks as part of broader urban counterterrorism measures. No confirmed attacks on metro systems in Malaysia have occurred in the past decade, and security incidents remain limited.

Taxis ● Unrated

Taxis operate widely across Malaysia, especially in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, George Town, and Johor Bahru. Service quality varies by operator. Traffic accidents involving taxis occur, and passengers face a moderate risk of opportunistic crime and overcharging, especially when using street-hailed taxis or unregulated vehicles. Drivers may refuse to use the meter or negotiate fares rather than apply the standard rates.

Foreign nationals and business travelers generally reduce risk by using pre-booked taxis through hotels or verified providers, or by using app-based ride-hailing services. These options provide clearer pricing, GPS tracking, and driver identification, which improve safety and transparency.

Ride-hailing platforms such as Grab operate widely in urban and suburban areas and represent the most commonly used transport option for short-distance travel in cities. Availability remains strong in Kuala Lumpur and other major population centers, though coverage is more limited in rural parts of Sabah and Sarawak.

Train Travel ● Unrated

Train Safety

Rail services in Malaysia generally have a moderate safety record. Passenger rail incidents occur occasionally, including service disruptions and rare operational accidents, but serious derailments remain infrequent. Major stations in urban areas, including Kuala Lumpur, maintain a visible security presence and structured passenger flow management. Petty crime risk at stations remains low to moderate, with most incidents involving opportunistic theft in crowded conditions during peak travel periods.

Reliability and Availability

Malaysia operates a limited intercity rail network that primarily connects key corridors on the Peninsula. Rail services link major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Ipoh, and Johor Bahru, with additional commuter and regional lines supporting urban mobility. Train punctuality is generally moderate, with occasional delays related to congestion, maintenance works, or weather-related disruptions. Service frequency varies by route, with higher availability in central and southern Peninsular Malaysia compared to rural areas and East Malaysia, where rail infrastructure is more limited.

International Rail Travel

Malaysia maintains rail connectivity with Singapore via cross-border services between Johor Bahru and Singapore. Cross-border rail travel requires immigration and customs processing on both sides of the border. Passenger volumes can lead to processing delays during peak travel periods, particularly on weekends, holidays, and commuter rush hours. Border procedures remain structured and predictable, but travelers should expect additional time for clearance and potential queueing at both departure and arrival points.

Vehicles and Roads ● Unrated

Road safety conditions in Malaysia are generally moderate, with significant variation between urban and rural areas. Traffic drives on the left. Most roads in Malaysia are paved and in good condition on major routes, particularly in Peninsular Malaysia. Serious traffic accidents occur, especially involving motorcycles and mixed traffic in dense urban environments. Heavy congestion is common in major cities, particularly Kuala Lumpur, during peak hours. Opportunistic theft from parked and slow-moving vehicles occurs in urban areas. Foreign nationals who plan to drive in Malaysia must hold an International Driving Permit (IDP), and car rental services are widely available in major cities.

International Road Travel

Malaysia maintains international road connections with Thailand, Indonesia, Brunei, and Singapore. All cross-border road travel is subject to immigration and customs controls, and travelers must present valid passports and complete clearance procedures before crossing. Processing times may vary depending on traffic volumes and border post capacity, particularly during weekends, holidays, and peak travel periods.

Cyber

 3.50

Geostrategic Concerns

The cybersecurity environment in Malaysia presents an overall high level of threat, shaped by the balance between threat activity, institutional capacity, and digital resilience. Malaysia faces moderate exposure to state-linked cyber espionage, with frequent targeting of government institutions, defense, and critical infrastructure sectors such as energy and telecommunications. Broader risks include digital disruption, surveillance, and strategic data exfiltration, with exposure varying according to political alignment, regional alliances, and infrastructure resilience.

The legal and regulatory environment in Malaysia is evolving, with key measures including the Cyber Security Act 2024, amendments to the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA), and the Online Safety Act. The Cyber Security Act 2024 regulates National Critical Information Infrastructure and imposes risk assessments, incident reporting, and licensing requirements for cybersecurity service providers, while reinforcing the authority of the National Cyber Security Agency (NACSA). PDPA amendments introduce mandatory data breach notification, data portability rights, and the appointment of data protection officers, aligning Malaysia's data protection regime with international standards. The Online Safety Act focuses on online harm prevention and platform moderation frameworks. These laws impose requirements on data protection, breach reporting, and incident response, but their effectiveness is assessed as medium, reflecting selective enforcement, ongoing implementation challenges, and resource gaps. Institutional capacity is provided by agencies, including NACSA and CyberSecurity Malaysia, which ensure partial coordination between government, private sector, and critical infrastructure providers.

Cybercrime

Cybercrime in Malaysia is assessed as a medium threat. Common threats include phishing, ransomware, credential theft, and business email compromise schemes, with small businesses and multinational firms most vulnerable to compromise. Malaysia also experiences intellectual property theft, supply chain compromise, and overlaps between state and criminal actors in cyber operations.

Law enforcement capacity is moderate, with authorities proactive but sometimes under-resourced in addressing cybercrime, and regulatory enforcement is uneven. Cooperation with international partners is emerging through regional initiatives and accession efforts to conventions such as the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime. Systemic resilience depends heavily on public-private coordination, institutional resources, and global partnerships.

Maritime

 3.75

Malaysia suffers from widely spread opportunistic criminal boardings. The main region touched is the Singapore strait, with a piracy threat increasing from one year to another. Malaysia also endures the jihadist rebellion in the Philippines and the danger it causes to the North-eastern part of Borneo.

Air Travel

2.00

Air travel within Malaysia is safe, with the Federal Aviation Administration rating Malaysia in compliance with the standards of the International Civil Aviation Organization. Despite two high-profile accidents involving Malaysian Airlines, the country's flag carrier, there are no significant security concerns associated with its use. Malaysia also operates several low-cost airlines and domestic carriers that are generally assessed as reputable and safe. Most travelers to Malaysia do not need a visa for entry. However, travelers from Peninsular Malaysia to East Malaysia and travelers between the states of East Malaysia are required to show their passports.

Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KUL) is 50 km (29 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur, near Putra Jaya. Kuala Lumpur's city center is accessible via the Kuala Lumpur-Seremban Highway/KLIA interchange and the Shah Alam/North-South Central Link Expressway. International and domestic airports connect the capital to most provincial capitals and major tourist destinations. Several other domestic airports offer flights to destinations across the region.

Utilities

2.25

Malaysia operates a generally adequate national power network that supplies electricity across most regions of the country. The grid performs reliably in major urban and industrial centers, particularly in Peninsular Malaysia. In more remote areas, especially in parts of East Malaysia, infrastructure limitations and maintenance issues can lead to intermittent power disruptions. These outages may affect local areas or entire districts and can last for several hours before services are restored.

The national energy provider continues to invest in grid modernization and capacity upgrades to improve stability and reduce the frequency of disruptions. Overall reliability has improved in recent years, particularly in urban and high-demand zones.

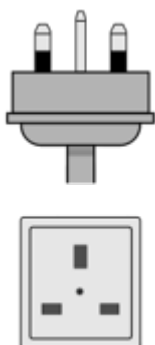
Water supply services operate across most populated areas, but localized disruptions can occur. These are typically linked to infrastructure strain, maintenance issues, or pollution incidents affecting river sources used for treatment and distribution. Authorities respond with temporary shutdowns or adjustments to treatment when contamination risks arise.

Electricity

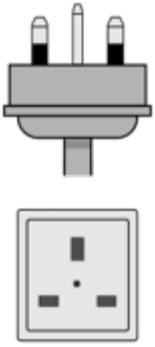
Unrated

Electricity in Malaysia is supplied at 240 V, 50 Hz. Malaysia uses Type G plugs.

Plug Types



Types de prises



Internet and Telecommunications

● Unrated

Internet services in Malaysia are widely available in major urban centers, including Kuala Lumpur, George Town, and Johor Bahru, with strong broadband and mobile data coverage supporting commercial and personal use. Most hotels, airports, shopping malls, and public venues provide reliable Wi-Fi access. Internet cafés still operate in some towns, but usage has declined due to widespread mobile connectivity.

Coverage becomes less consistent in rural areas and in parts of East Malaysia, particularly in remote areas of Sabah and Sarawak, where terrain and infrastructure limitations can reduce speed and reliability. Mobile networks generally offer broader coverage than fixed-line services, though signal strength can vary outside populated, developed areas.

Internet activity may be subject to monitoring under national regulations. Users may face content filtering or restrictions on certain platforms and services. Public Wi-Fi networks can present privacy and security risks, including exposure to unsecured connections and potential data interception. Foreign nationals typically use mobile data or registered SIM cards from licensed providers to reduce reliance on open networks.

Mobile penetration is high, and prepaid SIM cards are widely available at airports and retail outlets, subject to identification requirements.

Environment

2.50 - Moderate

The country's climate can be described as equatorial, characterized by year-round high temperatures and humidity levels on average of 90 per cent. Malaysia is prone to torrential downpours, particularly during the two rainy seasons, that have the potential to generate widespread flooding. Outside of the monsoon period, Malaysia frequently records potentially hazardous drops in air quality due to haze formed as a result of "slash-and-burn" agriculture. Malaysia is located in a seismically-active region, with the eastern state of Sabah the most vulnerable to potentially destructive tremors.

Man-Made Hazards

● 2.50

Malaysia is prone to periods of deterioration in air quality between the months of March through June and September-October when farmers and the agro-industry in the region, particularly in Indonesia, practice slash-and-burn agriculture. During these periods, thick haze is created by burning vegetation, posing a potential risk for all those involved in outdoor activities. Malaysia also has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world primarily due to palm oil plantations, illegal bauxite mining, logging, and the construction of large hydroelectric dams, particularly in its eastern states. These activities have resulted in periodic water shortages, river and stream pollution as well as increasing the impact of flooding and landslides during the annual rain seasons. An absence of government regulations for these industries and the rurality of affected areas has largely prevented any meaningful increase in more sustainable practices. Several instances of water pollution have also been reported in recent years, mostly as a result of factories dumping industrial waste into rivers and have resulted in water supply disruptions.

Seismic

2.50

Malaysian Borneo is located in a seismically-active region, although Peninsular Malaysia is less susceptible to tremors. Sabah state has historically accounted for the highest number of tremors, with periodic earthquakes of moderate-to-high intensity being recorded. These tremors have the potential to cause damages and casualties.

Storm Systems

3.00

Neither peninsular nor insular Malaysia is located within the tropical cyclone/typhoon belt where storms generally form and as such direct landfall over Malaysia is rare; however, coastal areas in particular can be prone to heavy rainfall and squally winds associated with the outer bands of passing storms. The Pacific typhoon season has no bounds and storms can form year-round, although most tropical cyclones typically develop May-October.

Tropical Storm Risk (TSR) is predicting above-average activity of around 25 percent in 2026 due to moderate to strong El Nino conditions. In 2026, El Nino conditions are forecast. Storm formation is likely to shift; countries and islands further east and north, including Micronesia, Guam, Japan, Korea, eastern mainland China, and Taiwan, are likely to see a greater number and higher intensity storms.

Forecast Parameter	Average (based on historical activity 1991-2020) Tropical Storm Risk	
Number of Named Storms	25.5	27
Number of Typhoons	16	18
Number of Intense Typhoons	9.3	11

Natural Hazards

2.25

Malaysia is affected by northeast and southwest monsoon winds, which form two distinct rainy seasons. The former lasts from October to March, while the latter runs from May to October. The northeast monsoon generally produces more rain than the southwest monsoon, but storms produced by the southwest monsoon result in yearly floods that are occasionally deadly. Most floods and landslides occur in Peninsular Malaysia, especially in the northeast states of Kelantan, Terengganu, and Pahang, the western state of Perak, as well as the federal capital Kuala Lumpur and its environs. These downpours have the potential to cripple overland travel and service delivery as well as result in large-scale evacuations.

Air Quality

Unrated

Air Quality

Air pollution routinely exceeds recommended thresholds in urban areas. Individuals with asthma or chronic cardiorespiratory conditions should consult with a healthcare provider and carry necessary medications. On days when air quality is particularly poor, affected individuals should take personal precautions to reduce respiratory stress ([map](#)).

Health and Medical

2.75 - Moderate

Vector-borne diseases, such as dengue and malaria, present the most common disease and health risks in Malaysia. Vaccines before travel are also required, for example, for yellow fever. The quality of healthcare services is adequate in major urban centers, but quality varies significantly in more rural areas. Cash payment is required upfront for all services. Tap water is not considered safe for drinking unless otherwise directed.

Disease and Health Threats

2.25

- **Altitude Sickness:** Some locations in Malaysia are above 2,440 meters (8,000 feet). Some people may experience adverse health effects at such altitudes. Ascend gradually to allow acclimatization and remain watchful for signs of altitude sickness or more severe manifestations.
- **Chikungunya:** Transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, mostly during daytime hours. Bite prevention is essential. Symptoms commonly include fever, joint pain, muscle pain, headache, and rash. People usually develop symptoms three to seven days after being bitten. Most people recover within a week, but joint pain can persist for months. The risk of infection exists nationwide and is highest from October to March.
- **Cholera:** Transmitted by contaminated food and water. Raw fish and shellfish from contaminated waters are likely to be infected. Most people infected with cholera have no symptoms or only mild diarrhea. However, approximately one in 10 infected patients develop severe cholera, which causes symptoms including profuse, watery diarrhea, vomiting, rapid heart rate, low blood pressure, muscle cramps, restlessness or irritability. Symptoms typically appear two to three days after exposure.
- **Dengue Fever:** Transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, mainly during the day. Bite prevention is essential. Symptoms of dengue fever include a sudden onset of fever and at least one of the following: severe headache, severe pain behind the eyes, muscle and/or joint pain, rash, easy bruising, and/or nose or gum bleeding. Fever and other symptoms generally appear abruptly four to seven days after being bitten. Some people have reported experiencing no symptoms. The risk of infection exists nationwide and is highest from October to March.
- **Hepatitis A:** Transmitted by contaminated food and water. Hepatitis A does not always cause symptoms. If they occur, symptoms appear two to six weeks after exposure and include fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fatigue, dark urine, loss of appetite, joint pain, and jaundice. Low risk in Malaysia.
- **Hepatitis B:** Transmitted through infected blood and bodily fluids and effectively prevented with vaccination. An unexpected medical or dental emergency may place the unvaccinated traveler at risk. Practice safe sex and ensure medical procedures, tattoos, or piercings are conducted using sterile equipment. Symptoms include fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, fatigue, dark urine, loss of appetite, joint pain, and jaundice. Low risk in Malaysia.
- **Hepatitis E:** Transmitted by contaminated food and water. Symptoms appear two to eight weeks after exposure and include fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, dark urine, joint pain, and jaundice.
- **HIV/AIDS:** Transmitted through infected blood and bodily fluids. Practice safe sex and ensure medical procedures, tattoos, or piercings are conducted using sterile equipment. Within two to four weeks of HIV infection, many people, but not all, experience influenza-like illness, including fever, swollen glands, sore throat, rash, fatigue, muscle and joint pains, and headache. These symptoms, also called acute retroviral syndrome (ARS), can last from days to weeks. Without treatment, the infection can lead to AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).
- **Japanese Encephalitis:** Transmitted through mosquito bites. Fewer than 1 percent of individuals infected develop symptoms. When symptoms do occur, they usually develop four to 14 days after being infected. Most individuals develop mild, influenza-like symptoms. However, some infections may progress to encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), which can be life-threatening. Risk is greatest for extended time in rural endemic areas and for those involved in agriculture, particularly in Sarawak.

- **Leishmaniasis:** Transmitted through the bites of sandflies. Risk is greatest from dusk to dawn. Cutaneous leishmaniasis is the most common form of *Leishmania* infection, causing skin sores that are usually painless. Visceral leishmaniasis is the second most common; typical symptoms include high fever, substantial weight loss, swelling of the spleen and liver, and anemia. If left untreated, this form of leishmaniasis is nearly 100 percent fatal within two years.
- **Leptospirosis:** Transmitted through exposure or ingestion of water contaminated with the urine of infected animals. Flooding poses an additional risk of contracting leptospirosis. Initial symptoms of leptospirosis typically develop two days to four weeks after exposure. Such symptoms include headache, fever, muscle aches, chills, diarrhea, vomiting, and abdominal pain. Those who may be at high risk can take an antibiotic prophylaxis.
- **Malaria:** Transmitted through mosquito bites. Symptoms of malaria most commonly include fever, chills, headaches and body aches, nausea and vomiting, and general malaise. These symptoms usually develop 10-28 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. However, there are reports of symptoms beginning as early as seven days to as late as one year. Preventative medications (prophylaxis) are available. The risk of infection is low and exists nationwide in rural areas.
- **Rabies:** Transmitted through the saliva of infected wild or domesticated mammals, usually by a bite or scratch. Do not approach unfamiliar animals. Wild and domestic animals pose a threat.
- **Schistosomiasis:** Transmitted via small parasite larvae through exposure to contaminated freshwater bodies. Symptoms include an itchy rash, fever, muscle soreness, and cough. Without treatment, schistosomiasis can persist for years, causing abdominal pain, blood in the urine, problems passing urine, blood in the stool, and an enlarged liver.
- **Traveler's Diarrhea:** Transmitted by contaminated food and water. This is the most common illness in travelers. People who become ill by an infectious agent that causes traveler's diarrhea most often experience nausea, vomiting, fever, bloody stools, and/or the urge to constantly pass stools despite an empty gastrointestinal tract. High risk in Malaysia.
- **Tuberculosis:** Transmitted through respiratory droplets released by coughing or sneezing. Individuals planning an extended stay should consider obtaining a PPD skin test to reference against future suspected infections. Symptoms commonly include chest pain, a bad cough lasting three weeks or longer, and coughing up blood and/or sputum. Some people also experience chills, weight loss, fever, weakness, night sweats, and loss of appetite. High risk in Malaysia.
- **Typhoid Fever:** Transmitted by contaminated milk, water, and food. Raw fish and shellfish from contaminated waters are likely to be infected. Symptoms of typhoid fever usually include fever, abdominal pain or discomfort, chills and body aches, weakness, and loss of appetite.
- **Zika Virus:** Transmitted through the bite of an infected mosquito, mainly during the day, or sexually through an infected partner. Mosquito bite prevention and practicing safe sex are essential. In many cases, the Zika virus is asymptomatic; however, in some, it may cause symptoms similar to dengue and chikungunya, including fever, rash, joint pain, and red eyes. Significant birth defects have been associated with Zika virus infection in pregnant women. Partners of women who have recently traveled to an area with Zika virus circulation are encouraged to use condoms for at least six months or the duration of a partner's pregnancy. The risk of infection exists nationwide and is highest from October to March.

Health Requirements

● Unrated

Yellow Fever: Vaccination Required

Malaysia is not considered at risk for **yellow fever**. Nevertheless, vaccination is **required** upon arrival for all travelers aged one year or over who have visited or transited for more than 12 hours through an airport in a country with risk of yellow fever transmission. Single dose, full-strength yellow fever vaccine is valid for life.

Health Recommendations

 Unrated

Recommended Immunizations for Travel to Malaysia

Travelers should ensure that they have routine vaccination courses and boosters. You should visit a healthcare professional at least four to six weeks before the trip. Routine vaccines include measles-mumps-rubella (MMR), diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis, varicella (chickenpox), polio, and the annual flu vaccine. Travelers should consider obtaining COVID-19 vaccination where available, even if the destination country does not require it.

- **Cholera:** Unless contraindicated, it is recommended for individuals staying in endemic areas or where there are current outbreaks. Cholera vaccine is not a substitute for thorough hand washing with soap and water, observing good personal hygiene, and taking food and water precautions. Three WHO pre-qualified oral cholera vaccines (OCV) exist: Dukoral, Shanchol, and Euvichol. All of these require two doses for full protection.
- **Hepatitis A:** Recommended for most individuals unless contraindicated. Two doses, administered at least six months apart, are required for long-lasting protection. It is recommended that all susceptible people traveling for any purpose, frequency, or duration to countries with high or intermediate hepatitis A endemicity be vaccinated or receive immune globulin before departure. A booster is recommended for partially vaccinated travelers.
- **Hepatitis B:** Recommended for most individuals unless contraindicated. Widely used formulations require three doses administered over the course of six to 18 months, depending on the recipient's age and vaccination history. Booster doses after a complete series are usually not required to maintain immunity. If exposed before finalizing the full series, individuals may receive a special booster within 24 hours for short-term protection.
- **Japanese Encephalitis:** Unless contraindicated, it is recommended for individuals who are moving to or planning stays of one month or longer in endemic areas, especially in rural areas with rice fields or marshland during the transmission season. Transmission occurs all year round, with the most cases reported in Penang, Perak, Selangor, Johor, and Sarawak. It is also recommended for travelers engaging in activities that increase the risk of infection, such as visiting rural areas, hiking or camping, or staying in places without air conditioning, screens, or bed nets. Widely used formulations require two doses administered 28 days apart. An accelerated series may be available, with the first dose required at least two weeks before travel.
- **Rabies:** Unless contraindicated, the WHO and CDC recommend vaccination for individuals who will be performing occupational or recreational activities that increase the risk for exposure to potentially rabid animals, such as animal handlers, field biologists, cavers, missionaries, veterinarians, and some laboratory workers. It is also recommended for travelers who might have difficulty getting prompt access to safe post-exposure prophylaxis. Malaysia has reported rabies in domestic and wild animals, thus most travelers are at risk. Bats are likely to carry bat rabies.
- **Typhoid Fever:** Recommended for most individuals unless contraindicated, especially those staying with friends or relatives in endemic areas or visiting smaller cities or rural areas. Widely used formulations require between two and four doses, depending on the formulation and the recipient's vaccination history. Booster vaccination is required every two or five years depending on the formulation. The last dose should be taken at least one week before travel.

Medical Facilities and Services

 3.00

Adequate and reputable medical facilities are available in most major urban centers. Outside of the urban centers, the quality and availability of healthcare decreases significantly. It may be difficult to find adequate medical care in rural areas. Government and private hospitals charge for all services, often in cash, and can be expensive. Most hospitals and doctors typically require upfront payment. Ambulance and paramedic services are available in major urban centers, although training standards can be low and response times slow. For major surgeries, medical evacuation to Singapore or Australia may be advised.

Medications and Pharmacy

 Unrated

Pharmacies across Malaysia are readily available. Supply of essential medicines is high; however, prescription narcotics are strictly regulated. Prior to travelling confirm the status of your "over the counter" medicines with accredited foreign government offices of Malaysia in your country. Always carry your prescription medication in its original packaging, along with your doctor's prescription and any other relevant documentation.

Mental Health

 3.00

Mental health service availability is limited and conditions are moderately managed.

Food and Water Safety

 1.50

Drinking water may be unsafe in Malaysia, especially in rural areas. Use only bottled, boiled, or otherwise purified water for drinking and cooking. Do not use ice cubes made from unpurified water sources. Eat only thoroughly cooked food served hot or fruits and vegetables that you have cleaned and peeled; avoid salads. Consume only pasteurized milk and dairy products, or use powdered or canned milk and cured cheeses. Avoid street vendors and unregulated food establishments.

Political

 2.50 - Moderate

Malaysia is a relatively stable federal constitutional monarchy with an active parliamentary system and regular elections. The political environment operates through coalition governments, which can shift and influence policy direction over time. Governance structures remain functional, with continued emphasis on economic development and foreign investment.

Corruption and patronage networks pose ongoing governance challenges and can undermine regulatory transparency and public-sector decision-making. Authorities continue to implement anti-corruption measures and institutional reforms, although enforcement outcomes vary across sectors.

The legal and political environment includes provisions that allow preventive detention in certain circumstances and grant authorities broad security powers under specific legislation. Political competition can at times generate allegations of selective enforcement, particularly in high-profile cases involving public officials or opposition figures.

Corruption

 3.25

Corruption remains a significant governance and business risk in Malaysia, with allegations reported across multiple levels of government and public administration. Anti-corruption enforcement operates through formal institutions, but political influence and institutional constraints have at times affected the prosecution of high-profile cases and senior officials. Major corruption scandals, including past cases linked to state investment vehicles, have shaped public debate and institutional reform efforts.

Structural factors contribute to corruption risk, including close links among political actors, public institutions, and private-sector interests. These overlaps can increase exposure to favoritism, procurement irregularities, and conflicts of interest in certain sectors.

At the operational level, low-level bribery risks exist in some interactions with enforcement authorities. Motorists and foreign nationals may encounter requests for unofficial payments in isolated cases, particularly during traffic stops or minor infractions. While not representative of all enforcement personnel, such incidents contribute to a perceived risk environment for travelers and businesses.

Government Stability

 3.00

Malaysia operates under a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system and maintains a relatively stable governing structure. The current unity government brings together multiple coalitions and supports continuity in administration and economic policy direction.

Coalition politics shape the national landscape, and shifts in political alliances can influence policy priorities over time. The government manages internal differences through negotiated power-sharing arrangements, which help sustain parliamentary support.

Reform measures, including anti-party hopping legislation, reduce the risk of elected representatives switching parties and destabilizing the government. While political competition remains active, the system continues to function within established institutional frameworks, and abrupt changes in executive leadership have become less frequent in recent years.

Rule of Law

 3.50

Malaysia maintains a common law-based legal system, but executive and political influence constrain judicial independence in certain cases. Courts operate within a formal institutional framework, and the judiciary handles civil, commercial, and criminal matters across federal and state levels.

Security legislation grants authorities broad powers in specific circumstances. These include preventive detention and expanded investigative powers under laws such as the Security Offenses (Special Measures) Act 2012 and the Prevention of Crime Act (PCA). These frameworks allow detention without formal charges in designated cases and support extended preventive detention for individuals assessed as security or organized crime risks.

The National Security Council has the authority to designate security zones, which enables the enforcement of special security measures, including curfews and warrant-based or warrantless actions under defined conditions. These mechanisms strengthen state security capacity but expand executive authority during designated operations.

Sanctions

 1.00

Malaysia is currently not subject to any international sanctions.

Legal

Unrated

Visitors to Malaysia must comply with local laws, which may differ significantly from those in their home country. Individuals found in violation of Malaysian law may face fines, detention, imprisonment, deportation, or other legal penalties depending on the severity of the offense, including prosecution in absentia in certain circumstances.

Foreign nationals are generally entitled to consular notification upon detention, allowing home-country embassies or consulates to provide limited assistance. The extent and timing of notification may depend on applicable bilateral arrangements and diplomatic procedures.

Consular officers may monitor cases and provide welfare support, but they do not intervene in judicial proceedings, provide legal representation, or pay legal fees or fines.

Dual nationality cases are assessed under Malaysian law, and local authorities determine the applicable nationality status for legal and consular purposes, which may affect access to consular assistance.

Emergency Contacts

● Unrated

Emergency Contacts

Ambulance 999

Fire 999/994

Police 999

Embassies and Consulates

● Unrated

Australian High Commission

Address 6 Jalan Yap Kwan Seng, 50450 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 2146 5555

Web Site <https://malaysia.highcommission.gov.au/>

Austrian Embassy

Address Wisma Goldhill, Suite 10.1-2, Level 10, 67, Jalan Raja Chulan 50200 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 20 300 400

Fax (60-3) 23 817 168

Web Site <https://www.bmeia.gv.at/en/austrian-embassy-kuala-lumpur>

British High Commission

Address Level 27 Menara Binjai 2 Jalan Binjai Kuala Lumpur 50450 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 21 702 200

Web Site <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-high-commission-kuala-lumpur>

Canadian High Commission

Address 17th Floor, Menara Tan & Tan, 207 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 27 183 333

Email klmpr@international.gc.ca

Web Site https://www.international.gc.ca/country-pays/malaysia-malaisie/kuala_lumpur.aspx?lang=eng

French Embassy

Address Level 31, Integra Tower (The Intermark), 348 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 20 535 500

Web Site <https://my.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/embassy-france-malaysia>

German Embassy

Address 26th Floor, Menara Tan & Tan, 207 Jalan Tun Razak, 50400 Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 21 709 666

Email info@kuala-lumpur.diplo.de

Web Site <https://www.kuala-lumpur.diplo.de>

US Embassy

Address 376 Jalan Tun Razak 50400, Kuala Lumpur

Phone (60-3) 21 685 000

Email klacs@state.gov

Web Site <https://my.usembassy.gov/>

Entry/Exit

Unrated

Travelers can obtain specific information about visas and other entry-exit requirements at: <https://entry-exit.crisis24horizon.com/>.

- Malaysia applies standard immigration and border control procedures for all foreign nationals.
- Entry requirements vary by nationality, travel purpose, and intended length of stay.
- Travelers must hold valid passports, and may require visas or entry permits depending on nationality.
- Immigration authorities retain discretion to approve or deny entry based on documentation, security, or health considerations.
- Border checks may include biometric screening and verification of travel purpose, accommodation, and onward travel.
- Nationals of Israel require a valid visa and a letter of approval issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs prior to entry into Malaysia.
- Women in an advanced stage of pregnancy (six months or more) may be refused entry unless Malaysia is only a transit point.

Pre-Departure

Unrated

- Travelers should plan their itinerary in advance and review current advisories for all regions they intend to visit, including Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak), as security conditions and infrastructure vary by location.
- Travelers should check vaccination requirements and recommended medical precautions before departure and carry prescription medications in original packaging with supporting documentation.
- Travelers should register with their embassy or consulate before departure. They store local emergency numbers and embassy contact details in an easily accessible format, and purchase comprehensive travel insurance that covers medical evacuation, hospital treatment, and travel disruption.
- Travelers should secure all required visas and travel documents before travel. They carry copies of passports, visas, and identification separately from originals and comply with Malaysian customs regulations, including strict rules on controlled items, undeclared currency, and prohibited goods.

- Travelers plan secure transportation in advance, particularly in urban areas where petty crime risks include pickpocketing, bag snatching, and vehicle-related theft.
- Travelers should use registered transport providers and official ride-hailing applications where possible, especially in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, to reduce the risk of overcharging and opportunistic crime.
- Travelers should download translation and mapping applications before arrival, as internet access may be less reliable in rural areas and parts of East Malaysia. Authorities and some security personnel may have limited English proficiency outside major urban centers.
- Travelers should encounter variable infrastructure standards across the country, including differences in road quality, communication coverage, and emergency response capacity, particularly outside major urban hubs.

On Arrival

● Unrated

- Travelers should complete immigration and customs procedures on arrival and comply with all instructions issued by Malaysian authorities. Entry requirements and processing times vary depending on nationality, documentation, and arrival location.
- Travelers should ensure their passports are stamped correctly and verify the permitted length of stay to avoid overstaying penalties.
- Travelers should use only licensed transport options at airports and border points, including official taxi counters and verified ride-hailing services, to reduce the risk of overcharging and scams.
- Travelers should remain alert to petty crime risks in arrival areas, including airports, transport hubs, and surrounding urban zones, where opportunistic theft may occur.
- Travelers should store valuables securely and avoid displaying passports, cash, or electronic devices in public areas.
- Travelers confirm accommodation details and pre-arranged transfers in advance, particularly for late-night arrivals or travel to less accessible areas.
- Travelers should monitor local conditions and transport availability upon arrival, especially in East Malaysia, where connectivity and infrastructure may differ from major Peninsular hubs.

In Transit

● Unrated

- Travelers should comply with all airport security, immigration, and transit screening procedures when transiting through Malaysian airports. Requirements vary depending on nationality, airline, and final destination.
- Travelers should check transit visa requirements before departure and obtain a transit visa in advance if required for their nationality, even if they are not leaving the airport.
- Travelers should remain in designated transit areas unless they meet entry requirements for Malaysia, and they follow all instructions from airport authorities and airline staff at all times.
- Travelers should allow sufficient connection time between flights, especially at Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA), to account for immigration, security screening, and terminal transfers during peak periods.
- Travelers should keep a close watch on their belongings in transit areas and avoid leaving luggage or personal items unattended to reduce the risk of theft.

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- Travelers secure passports, travel documents, and valuables in hand luggage and keep them with them throughout the transit process.
 - Travelers should regularly monitor flight information screens and airline notifications, and confirm gate changes or schedule updates promptly to avoid missed connections.

At Your Hotel

● Unrated

- Travelers should stay in reputable hotels or established serviced accommodations with standard security measures, particularly in major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, George Town, and Johor Bahru.
- Travelers should use registered transport services or verified ride-hailing apps when arriving at or departing from hotels to reduce the risk of overcharging and opportunistic crime.
- Travelers should confirm transport and travel arrangements directly with the hotel reception or official booking channels before departure, particularly for airport transfers and early-morning travel.
- Travelers should keep room doors locked at all times and use additional security features such as door chains, deadbolts, or electronic locks where available. They should verify visitors' identities before opening the door and meet unknown persons in public hotel areas.
- Travelers should store passports, cash, and valuables in in-room safes, when available, and avoid leaving important items unattended in rooms.
- Travelers should familiarize themselves with the hotel's emergency procedures, evacuation routes, and contact numbers upon arrival.
- Travelers should monitor official alerts from the Malaysian Meteorological Department and the National Disaster Management Agency during their stay, particularly during periods of heavy rainfall, flooding, or haze events that may affect travel and local mobility.

In the Street

● Unrated

- Travelers should be aware of local laws, cultural norms, and social expectations. Same-sex relationships are criminalized in Malaysia, and public expressions of LGBTQ identity may attract legal consequences or social hostility. Travelers should assess the risks of public displays of affection or participation in related events.
- Travelers should respect local customs and avoid behavior that may offend religious or cultural sensitivities. They should avoid photographing government buildings, military sites, or security infrastructure, as this may lead to questioning or detention by authorities.
- Travelers should avoid demonstrations, protests, and public rallies, as these gatherings can attract a strong security presence and may escalate into unpredictable situations with short notice.
- Travelers should maintain a low profile, avoid involvement in political discussions or activities, and refrain from commenting on sensitive political, ethnic, or religious topics in public spaces.
- Travelers should avoid displaying wealth and should dress modestly and appropriately for the local environment. They should avoid showing large amounts of cash, jewelry, or valuables, and should limit the use of high-value payment cards to reputable establishments.

- Travelers should carry a charged mobile phone with emergency numbers saved and should keep identification and essential medical information accessible at all times.
- Travelers should remain aware of their surroundings and avoid poorly lit or isolated areas after dark, particularly in unfamiliar urban neighborhoods. They should plan routes in advance and use navigation tools discreetly in public.
- Travelers should remain alert in crowded areas, as opportunistic theft can occur through distraction or close physical contact. They should secure personal belongings and avoid leaving bags unattended.
- Travelers should ignore verbal provocations from strangers, avoid confrontation, and refrain from engaging in arguments or from sustained eye contact with individuals who are behaving aggressively or suspiciously.

Culture

Unrated

Conducting Business - Malaysia

Business: Monday-Friday, 0800-1730; Sunday-Wednesday, 0800-1645, and Thursday, 0800-1630 in Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu
 Government: Monday-Friday, 0800-1730; Sunday-Wednesday, 0800-1645, and Thursday, 0800-1630 in Johor, Kedah, Kelantan, and Terengganu
 Banking: Monday-Friday, 0900-1700

Business attire in Malaysia is generally formal. Men should wear conservative business suits or long-sleeved shirts with a tie and trousers. Women should wear business suits or professional skirts and blouses that reflect a modest and formal standard.

Appointments should be scheduled in advance, with Monday to Thursday between 0900-1700 generally offering the most reliable availability. Travelers should arrive on time, as punctuality is expected in professional settings. Meetings often include informal discussion and may extend beyond the scheduled duration. When meetings include meals, hosts typically cover costs. Travelers should avoid alcohol during business lunches or dinners, as it is generally considered inappropriate in most professional contexts.

English is widely used in business environments. Attempts to use local language phrases are generally appreciated but not required. Travelers should exchange business cards with both hands or with the right hand and treat cards with respect. They should use formal titles (Mr./Ms. or professional honorifics) until invited to use first names. They should address senior participants first and follow hierarchical order in introductions. Handshakes are common at the beginning and end of meetings between individuals of the same gender. Cross-gender greetings may involve a nod or smile, depending on the situation and personal preference.

Gestures

Unrated

Business cards are widely used and are generally exchanged using the right hand or both hands in a respectful manner.

At the start of a meeting, participants typically greet everyone present with a handshake. Men generally wait for women to initiate the handshake. At the end of the meeting, it is customary to repeat handshakes with all participants. Maintaining direct eye contact during professional conversations is generally considered normal business etiquette.

Travelers should avoid certain gestures or behaviors that may be considered inappropriate or offensive in the local context, including:

- Pointing directly at a person or object using the index finger.
- Maintaining prolonged or intense eye contact in mixed social settings where it may be perceived as intrusive.

- Passing objects over people's heads.
- Entering a home, office, or place of worship while wearing shoes.

Religions

Unrated

Islam (official religion) 63.5%, Buddhist 18.7%, Christian 9.2%, Hindu 6.3%, Confucianism, Taoism, other traditional Chinese religions 1.3%, others or none 1%

Ethnicities

Unrated

Bumiputera 62.5% (Malays and indigenous groups), Chinese 20.6%, Indian 6.2%

Significant Dates

Unrated

2026 Significant Dates

Jan. 1	New Year's Day
Feb. 2	Thaipusam observed (multiple states)
Feb. 2	Federal Territory Day observed (Kuala Lumpur, Labuan, Putrajaya)
Feb. 17	Chinese New Year
Feb. 18	Second Day of Chinese New Year (Except KTN and TRG)
Feb. 19	First Day of Ramadan (Tentative)
March 20-21	Hari Raya Puasa (Tentative)
May 1	Labor Day
May 27-28	Hari Raya Haji (Tentative)
May 31	Wesak Day
June 1	The Yang di-Pertuan Agong's Birthday
June 17	Muharram (Tentative)
Aug. 25	Prophet Muhammad's Birthday (Tentative)
Aug. 31	National Day
Sept. 16	Malaysia Day
Nov. 8	Diwali (Except SWK)
Dec. 25	Christmas Day

Financial

Unrated

Financial systems vary across Malaysia depending on location and level of infrastructure development. Cash remains widely used, especially in smaller towns and rural areas, while debit and credit card acceptance is strong in major cities, hotels, shopping malls, and established businesses. Some smaller vendors may operate on a cash-only basis due to limited card-processing infrastructure.

Banks and licensed money changers generally provide official exchange rates, and travelers should use regulated providers for currency exchange. The import and export of both local and foreign currency is permitted; however, travelers must declare amounts exceeding the regulatory threshold on arrival and comply with customs requirements when entering or leaving the country.

Currency

● Unrated

Currency Name/Code

The official currency of Malaysia is the Malaysian ringgit (MYR). One ringgit is divided into 100 sen.

Currency Convertibility

Banks and licensed money changers provide the primary and most reliable exchange services in Malaysia. Licensed money changers operate widely in commercial and tourist areas and often offer competitive rates. Authorities regulate foreign exchange activity, and travelers should avoid unlicensed operators due to financial and compliance risks. Malaysia allows the export of local currency, subject to customs declaration requirements for large amounts.

Credit Card

● Unrated

Major credit cards are widely accepted at larger shops, hotels, and restaurants in urban areas across Malaysia. Smaller businesses, local vendors, and establishments in rural areas generally prefer cash due to limited payment infrastructure.

Taxes and Tipping

● Unrated

Tipping is not generally customary in Malaysia. Most hotels and restaurants already include a 10 percent service charge in the bill. Where a service charge is not applied, a tip of around 10 percent is considered appropriate but remains optional. Taxi drivers do not normally expect tips.

Bank and ATM

● Unrated

ATM Availability

Automated teller machines (ATMs) are widely available across cities and towns in Malaysia. Travelers should use ATMs located in secure, well-lit areas such as bank branches, hotels, or major commercial centers to reduce exposure to theft or tampering risks.

Bank Availability

Banking hours in Malaysia generally run from Monday to Friday, 0915–1630, although some banks close earlier on Fridays and selected branches may open on Saturdays. Cash advances on major international credit cards are permitted at most banks.

LGBTQ Security

4.00 - High

Malaysia's overall threat environment is high due to federal laws prohibiting same-sex sexual acts, Sharia laws targeting the LGBTQ community, and authorities' enforcement of such laws. Civil society groups and other institutions advocate for the LGBTQ community; however, the social environment threat remains high.

LGBTQ Legal Environment

● 5.00

Malaysia's legal environment poses an extreme threat to LGBTQ individuals. At the federal level, sections 377A and 377B of the penal code on "carnal intercourse against the order of nature" implicitly prohibit same-sex sexual acts and unions. Act 355 of Sharia law, reportedly only applicable to Muslim individuals, explicitly prohibits same-sex sexual acts. There is no legislation recognizing same-sex marriages, providing legal protections for LGBTQ individuals, or recognizing non-binary gender identities. Sharia law includes a section on a "male person posing as a woman," which officials use to prosecute transgender women. Punishments for these offenses include fines and imprisonment. The Film Censorship Act (2000) prohibits the ownership, production, distribution, and display of materials that the government deems "obscene" or "against public decency," which may be used to censor LGBTQ content. In 2021, the former Deputy Minister for Religious Affairs Ahmad Marzuk Shaary announced a proposal to amend Act 355 to include harsher penalties, such as increasing the number of strokes for whipping and raising the maximum fines for LGBTQ-related offenses. As of the end of 2024, lawmakers advise that they have drafted the amendments; however, they have not yet presented these changes to the cabinet.

LGBTQ Enforcement

 4.00

The enforcement rating for Malaysia is high, as authorities actively enforce federal and Sharia laws targeting LGBTQ individuals. Punishments include fines, imprisonment, and caning or whipping. Officials often use Sharia law to prosecute transgender women for contravening laws of "cross-dressing" and "public indecency," and Federal Territory Islamic Department (Jawi) officers have full autonomy to arrest transgender individuals. According to activists, transgender individuals are more frequently subjected to violence from society in general compared to other members of the LGBTQ community. However, such crimes are often under or misreported, as officials often intentionally misgender individuals in their case reports. Transgender individuals also fear prosecution when seeking justice, as Sharia law forbids men from dressing as women. Police also regularly use the law to raid suspected LGBTQ gatherings. On Oct. 31, 2022, Malaysia's Islamic religious officers broke up a large Halloween party and arrested and questioned 20 suspected LGBTQ individuals for cross-dressing. In October 2020, authorities arrested at least 30 transgender women in a raid on a birthday party in Kedah. Sharia law was also used to prosecute a transgender cosmetics entrepreneur for wearing traditional women's clothing in January 2021. In November 2019, the Selangor Sharia High Court convicted five men for attempting to engage in same-sex sexual acts and sentenced them to imprisonment, caning, and a fine. In September 2018, the Terengganu Sharia High Court sentenced two women to six lashes with a cane and a fine for attempting to engage in same-sex sexual acts. This was the first recorded instance of corporal punishment for female same-sex sexual acts in the state of Terengganu. In May 2023, Malaysian authorities reportedly seized over 160 watches featuring "LGBT elements" from over 10 Swatch stores in the country that were part of Swatch's Pride line. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, Swatch products were banned as they violated censorship laws by promoting, supporting, and normalizing the LGBTQ movement.

LGBTQ Social Environment

 4.00

The social environment poses a high threat to the LGBTQ community in Malaysia. Conservative and religious views perpetuate anti-LGBTQ societal and public officials' attitudes. The Malaysian government frequently censors content that it deems to be "harmful to morality, implicitly including LGBTQ content." In July 2023, the British band, The 1975, performed at Malaysia's Good Vibes Festival, during which the lead singer publicly criticized the Malaysian government's anti-LGBTQ laws and proceeded to kiss his male bandmate. The group has since been blacklisted from performing in Malaysia, and the government canceled the remainder of the weekend festival. In February 2023, the Home Ministry banned three books for "promoting LGBTQ lifestyles." In July 2022, Malaysian cinemas canceled the release of the Disney movie "Thor: Love and Thunder" due to purported LGBTQ elements present in the film. In March 2024, Home Minister Datuk Seri Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said the government does not recognize the LGBTQ lifestyle, and films depicting this lifestyle would continue to be banned. Several governmental and religious leaders periodically speak out against the LGBTQ community. In January 2023, Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim stated that he does not support legalizing same-sex sexual acts and that his administration would not recognize the rights of LGBTQ individuals. Conversion therapy is practiced, and in November 2023, the Johor provincial government announced plans to establish Conversion Therapy Practice (CTP) centers to "rehabilitate" LGBTQ individuals. There are some institutions and NGOs in Malaysia that advocate for the LGBTQ community. The Malaysian Bar has in the past spoken out against Jawi authorities targeting transgender individuals. A coalition of 14 Malaysian human rights organizations denounced the October 2020 birthday party raid in Kedah for perpetuating harmful stereotypes of transgender women, calling for a halt to all prosecution of transgender women in the state.

Active Alerts

No Alerts

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