

BIG FIVE[®]

TOURS & EXPEDITIONS

Enriching Lives Through Distinctive Journeys

Destination Information Guide

Malaysia

(Including Borneo)



Big Five Tours & Expeditions, USA
1551 SE Palm Court, Stuart, FL 34994
Tel: 772-287-7995 / Fax: 772-287-5990
800 BIG FIVE (800-244-3483)
www.bigfive.com & www.galapagos.com
Email: info@bigfive.com

Big Five Tours & Expeditions Ltd. Canada
80 Corporate Drive Unit 311
Scarborough, Ontario M1H 3G5 Canada
Tel: +416-640-7802 / Fax: 1-647-463-8181
Toll Free: 888- 244-3483
www.bigfivetours.ca Email: info@bigfivetours.ca

Welcome to the World of Big Five!

The following general outline offers practical information, suggestions and answers to some frequently asked questions. It is not intended to be the definitive guide for your trip.

Big Five Tours & Expeditions is pleased to welcome you on this exciting adventure. We take great care to insure that your travel dreams and expectations are well met. Our distinctive journeys allow you to experience the finest aspects each destination has to offer. We also aim to provide you with a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the places you'll visit and the people you'll meet.



Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Elevation: 72 feet Latitude: 03 07N Longitude: 101 33E

Average Temperature

Years on Record: 21

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	82	81	82	82	83	83	82	82	82	82	81	81

Average High Temperature

Years on Record: 21

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	89	89	90	91	90	90	89	89	89	89	88	88

Average Low Temperature

Years on Record: 21

YEAR	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
°F	74	73	73	74	75	74	74	74	74	74	74	73

WEATHER

Tropical without extremely high temperatures. Days are warm with cool nights. The main rainy season in the east is between November and February. August is the wettest period on the west coast. East Malaysia has heavy rains November to February in Sabah and in Sarawak. Rainfall differs on the east and west coasts according to the prevailing monsoon winds (northeast or southwest). Average daytime temperatures in Kuala Lumpur are around 82°F year round.

TIME ZONES & TRAVELING TIME

GMT + 8.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

Passports: For international travel, a passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing at least 3 blank pages are necessary.

Visas: Many countries require travelers to obtain visas prior to arrival. Big Five Tours & Expeditions has appointed Trivisa to process required visas for our passengers. You can find the necessary forms from Trivisa's website at: www.trivisa.com. Please use account code JP1551, and follow the directions.

Important: Even if you do not need a visa prior to departure, please check your passport well in advance of departure to insure:

- 1) It is valid for at least six months after the date of travel.
- 2) You have sufficient blank pages for visa/entry stamps that will be added as you travel in and out of various countries.

Please note: *Pages reserved for amendments and endorsements cannot be used for visas.*

AIRPORT FORMALITIES

Upon arrival, proceed through immigration and baggage claims and customs. You can also exchange money at this time at the bank windows located in the airport. Big Five personnel or their representatives will assist you with your baggage and escort you to your hotel. They will assist with check-in formalities.

Currently, a departure tax is now MYR51; may be included in the air fare. All taxes are government imposed and subject to change without notice.

CUSTOMS INTO MALAYSIA

The following goods may be imported into Malaysia without incurring customs duty: 200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 225g of tobacco; 1 liter of spirits or wine or malt liquor; cosmetics, perfume, soaps and toothpaste up to the value of RM200; gifts and souvenirs not exceeding a total value of RM200 (except goods from Langkawi and Labuan, up to a value of RM500); 100 matches; a total of RM75 for dutiable food preparations; maximum three pieces of new clothing plus one pair of shoes; one unit of each portable electrical or battery-operated appliance for personal care and hygiene.

Prohibited Imports

It is prohibited to import any goods from Haiti. Non-prescribed drugs, weapons, any imprint or reproduction of any currency note or coin and pornographic material are prohibited. Also, it is prohibited to import any goods from Haiti and Israel ***Drug-smuggling carries the death penalty.***

US CUSTOMS

Duty-Free: Returning U.S. residents are allowed to bring back \$800 worth of merchandise duty-free. Travelers 21 or older may bring back 1 liter of alcohol duty free, 100 non-Cuban cigars and 200 cigarettes. Regulations frequently change. For a list of exempt items & current regulations you can Contact the nearest Customs Office, write US Customs Service, Box 7407, Washington, DC 20044, or visit the website for US Customs & Border Protection at www.customs.gov/xp/cgov/home.xml.

HEALTH

International travelers should be in generally good health. Talk with your personal physician about any shots or boosters recommended depending on your personal health profile and your itinerary. Tetanus and polio vaccines should be up to date. Currently, there are no required vaccinations, unless you are coming

from an infected area, in which case you will be required to have a yellow fever certificate.

Yellow Fever: Yellow fever inoculation is required if one of the following applies:

- If you are coming from any area other than the United States, Europe, or Canada.
- If you plan on visiting more than one African country.

Hepatitis C and E occur and hepatitis B is hyper endemic. Epidemics of dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis can occur in both urban and rural areas. Outbreaks of meningococcal meningitis can occur. Rabies is present; if bitten seek immediate medical advice. There have been confirmed avian influenza deaths in chickens.

Note: If you are on medication, be sure to bring enough for the duration of the trip, but not an excessive amount that would raise suspicion. Also, it's a good idea to ask your doctor for a note detailing the drugs you are taking. *For Customs inspections, you must have medications in their original containers.

Health insurance is strongly advised during any foreign travel. Please check the latest regulations with your local health office or the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747); fax: 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or their main telephone number in Atlanta, 404-332-4559. Or, visit the CDC Internet home page at <http://www.cdc.gov>. Malaria risk exists only in certain regions. Urban and coastal areas are usually safe.

CLOTHING

*For general clothing information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials. See pre-departure information for general packing check list.*

Lightweight clothes are worn throughout the year. Waterproofing is advisable all year.

LUGGAGE

*For general baggage information, please review the **Travel Handbook** in your pre-departure materials.*

MONEY

Currency: Ringgit (MYR; symbol RM) = 100 sen. Notes are in denominations of RM100, 50, 10, 5, 2 and 1. Coins are in denominations of 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 sen. The Ringgit is often referred to as the Malaysian Dollar. The best currency for exchange is the Pound Sterling, but US Dollars are also widely accepted. All commercial banks are authorized foreign exchange dealers; major hotels are only licensed to buy or accept foreign currency in the form of notes and traveler's checks. It may be difficult to exchange foreign currencies outside the main tourist centers.

Credit/Debit Cards and ATMs

American Express, Diners Club, MasterCard and Visa are accepted.

Traveler's Checks Accepted by all banks, hotels and large department stores. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travelers are advised to take traveler's checks in Pounds Sterling, US Dollars or Australian Dollars or Euros.

LANGUAGE

Bahasa Malaysia is the national & official language. English is widely spoken. Other languages such as Chinese (Cantonese and Hokkien), Iban and Tamil are spoken by minorities.

ELECTRICITY

220 volts AC, 50Hz. Square three-pin plugs and bayonet-type light fittings are generally used.

FOOD & DRINK

Water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Use bottled water for drinking, brushing teeth, cleaning contacts, or making ice; or if not bottled, it should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilized. Use bottled water for Milk is unpasteurized and should be boiled. Avoid unpasteurized dairy products. Only eat well-cooked meat and fish. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure

that it is reconstituted with pure water. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled. In multiracial Malaysia, every type of cooking from South-East Asia can be tasted. Malay food concentrates on subtleties of taste using a blend of spices, ginger, coconut milk and peanuts. There are many regional types of Chinese cooking including Cantonese, Peking, Hakka, Sichuan and Taiwanese. Indian and Indonesian food is also popular. Korean and Thai food are available in restaurants. Western food is served throughout the country. Although the country is largely Islamic, alcohol is available.

National specialties: Sambals (a paste of ground chili, onion and tamarind) is often used as a side dish. Blachan (a dried shrimp paste) is used in many dishes. Ikan bilis (dried anchovies) are eaten with drinks. Satay (consists of a variety of meats, often chicken, barbecued on small skewers and served with a spicy peanut dipping sauce and a salad of cucumber, onion and compressed rice cakes). Gula Malacca (a firm sago pudding in palm sugar sauce).

National drinks: Locally brewed rice wine (only available in Borneo), sugar cane juice, lemongrass drink, ginger tea, bubble tea and tamarind juice drink. Beers such as Tiger and Anchor are available.

TIPPING

Tipping should be done at your discretion and as a reward for good or exceptional service.

For general tipping guidelines please refer to:

<http://www.cntraveler.com/travel-tips/travel-etiquette/2008/12/Etiquette-101-Tipping-Guide>

SHOPPING

Shopping in Malaysia ranges from exclusive department stores to street markets. Bargaining is expected in the markets, unless fixed prices are displayed. Kuala Lumpur is a popular shopping destination, rivaling Singapore and Hong Kong. Suria KLCC, a shopping mall with a spectacular fountain, gardens and a beautiful piazza, houses a great selection of leading couture outlets. Times Square, the city's largest mall, Star Hill and Lot 10 are popular shopping

centers. The islands of Labuan and Langkawi are duty-free zones. Cameras, pens, watches, cosmetics, perfume and electronic goods are available duty-free throughout Malaysia. Malaysian specialty goods include pewterware, silverware and brassware; batik; jewelry; pottery; and songket. Enquire at Malaysian Royal Customs and Excise about claiming cash back on duty-free goods.

SOCIAL CONVENTIONS

Malaysia's population is ethnically and culturally diverse. Malays account for more than half the population and lead a calm life governed by the authority of elders and a strong sense of respect and etiquette. The Indian, Pakistani and Sri Lankan members of the population originally came to Malaysia to take up positions in the civil service, police and local government departments, as well as in the new rubber plantations, but many are now among the professional classes. European influences (British, Dutch and Portuguese in particular) are also very marked in Malaysia, although the European section of the population is now small. The Malaysian equivalent of 'hello' is the Muslim 'peace be with you'. Malay men are addressed Encik (pronounced Enchik) with or without the name; single Malay women should be called Cik (pronounced Che) and married women Puan. Touching the hand to the chest is a sign of respect and a relaxed wrist and gentle touch should be adopted when shaking hands. Chinese and Indians usually use Western forms of address. Hospitality is always warm, lavish and informal. When eating food by hand, only the right hand should be used. Visitors should respect religious beliefs and follow the Malaysian example, such as wearing appropriate clothing. Footwear should be taken off at the door when entering a house or temple. Dress should be informal, but not over-casual.

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia today is a complex and richly diverse country that spreads across a network of islands, which encompasses an eclectic collage of ethnic groups, cultures and religions. The economic and spiritual heart is the impressive capital of Kuala

Lumpur on Peninsular Malaysia, while other mainland cities worth visiting include the haunting colonial beauty of Georgetown on the island of Penang and the ramshackle sprawl of Malacca in southern Malaysia. On the western and eastern coasts of Peninsular Malaysia a myriad of islands, many blessed with stunning beaches, recline in the tropical sun and to the east the East Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak boast superb beaches and wilderness.

Kuala Lumpur: KL, as it is locally known, is Malaysia's hub; a huge, bustling, cosmopolitan city that is the business heart of the nation. Its ethnic mixture of Chinese, Indian and European cultures is part of the attraction. Often overlooked by many tourists KL has a wealth of attractions, Merdeka Square is at the very heart of old Malaysia, with the stunning highlight the Sultan Abdul Samad Building, which bizarrely blending Victorian and Moorish architectural styles. **Excursions:** The Batu Caves lie a few miles to the north of the city. These large natural caves, reached by 272 steps, house the Hindu shrine of Lord Subramaniam. Nearby is the Museum Cave, a fascinating display of brightly colored statues and murals from Hindu mythology. Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, about five miles north of KL, is 1,483 acres of tropical forests, both primary & secondary; with a wealth of flora and fauna of approximately 15,000 species of plants. The area is rich in scenic beauty, jungle paths with smaller wildlife of monkeys, rodents, squirrels, monitor lizards. A 218-yard Canopy Walkway is suspended nearly 100 feet above the ground, and lagoons and waterfalls are also within the park's boundaries.

Perak & Pangkor: Perak derives its name from the rich silver tin ore deposits once so fruitful in the region. Perak translates as 'silver' in the Malay language. Major towns within Perak include Ipoh, the administration center and capital, Kuala Kangsar, and Taiping.

Ipoh: Dubbed the 'City of Millionaires' (due to its tin mining wealth) Ipoh, Malaysia's third largest city, offers the ghosts of its grand colonial days with the mixture of colonial and

modern architecture, the best example of the former is the Moorish and Victorian pastiche of the train station. The city centre also boasts many colonial era shops, which retain their original atmosphere today. The Kuala Gula Bird Sanctuary in Ipoh, is of great interest to all nature lovers. In addition to over 160 different species of birds, lucky visitors may get a chance to see smooth otters, long-tailed macaque and ridge-back dolphins. The best time to visit is between September and December when many migratory birds arrive at the sanctuary.

Kuala Kangsar: Just north of Ipoh at Jalan Kuala Kangsar, Perak Tong, a limestone cave temple, houses over 40 statues of Buddha. 385 steps in a cave behind the main altar lead up to a magnificent viewpoint, from which to survey the surrounding countryside. Sam Poh Tong and Kek Lok Tong near Gunung Rapat, are impressive cave temples where statues of Buddha stand alongside magical stalactites and rock formations. Both temples have Buddhist vegetarian restaurants in the temple grounds. Kuala Kangsar is the birthplace of the rubber industry. In 1877, nine rubber trees were first planted here and the industry was born. Three of the town's most beautiful buildings include, Istana Iskandariah, the royal palace, Istana Kenangan, the former royal palace now home to the Perak State Museum and the Ubudiah Mosque.

Penang: The island of Penang is just off the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia. Recently a network of expanded tourist facilities has been created, which have ruined many of the island's main beach charms. Some of the beaches that are popular with resort developers, in particular those around Batu Feringgi on the north coast, have become blighted by jet skis, private hotel stretches of sand and various touts and hawkers. Despite this uncontrolled development to the north much of the rest of the island is still a beautiful tropical oasis of palm trees and sandy beaches, and it is also the main international gateway to northern Malaysia. It was the natural harbor that first attracted the British to Penang in the late 18th century, and the port is still one of the most important in the country today. There is a regular ferry service between the

island and the town of Butterworth on the mainland and a spectacular road bridge.

Georgetown: Charming Georgetown is Penang's main settlement, a thriving hub where Malay, Chinese, Thai, Indian and European cultures merge, as does the architecture which, in the space of a few miles, takes in a British colonial-style cricket pitch and a rumble of Chinese stilt houses. The main shopping is on Campbell Street and Canarvon Street. Worth visiting are Khoo Kongsi, an old Chinese clan house, Fort Cornwallis, a British 18th-century fortress, Penang Museum and Art Gallery and many churches, temples and mosques found throughout the town. The city became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008.

Langkawi: More than 100km (60 miles) north of Penang, 104 islands, many just outcrops of coral, make up Langkawi. The largest, Langkawi land, is the only one with sophisticated tourist facilities, including duty-free shopping. Several international hotels and resorts have opened as the government and international developers flood into what is set to become Malaysia's premier island beach resort. The island's many coves, lagoons and inlets make it ideal for water sports such as swimming, sailing, fishing and scuba diving. Horseback riding and golf are available.

Malacca: Two hours by road south of Kuala Lumpur, the city of Malacca became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2008. River cruises that open up the city's history are increasingly popular. Founded in the early 15th century, Malacca remains predominantly a Chinese community, although there are many reminders of periods under Portuguese, Dutch and British rule; some of these can be seen in the Malacca Museum. Architectural remains include the Cheng Hoon Teng Temple in the center of the city, the gateway of the A Formosa Portuguese fortress, St Paul's Church with the grave of St Xavier, the Stadthuys, the Dutch Christ Church and the Tranquerah Mosque, one of the oldest in the country. There are several international hotels in Malacca, augmented by a fully equipped resort complex 12km (7 miles)

outside the city. Some Malay fishing villages still exist along the river.

The East Coast: This part of the country contains many of the finest beaches, including some of the least spoilt in southern Asia. In effect, the whole east coast is one huge beach, backed by jungle. The region, which covers two-thirds of Peninsular Malaysia, comprises the states of Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and Johor, as well as the islands of Tioman and Rawa.

Pahang - The Coast: Kuantan, the state capital of Pahang, is fast gaining popularity as a beach resort. The region around Kuantan is also well known for village festivals and for the craft of weaving pandanus leaves into mats, hats and baskets. Woodcarving and batik are also traditional crafts in this part of the country. Telek Chempadek, just 5km (3 miles) north of Kuantan is another popular beach resort with a wide range of water sports available, including windsurfing, water-skiing and sailing. It has a good selection of restaurants along the seafront. 7km (4 miles) north of Kuantan, Besaroh, an attractive fishing village, is famed for its shellcraft, batik and crafts modeled from coconuts. Asia's first Club Mediterranée holiday village is in Cherating, about 45km (30 miles) north of Kuantan. The beaches at Cherating are some of the finest on the east coast.

Kota Kinabalu: The capital and main gateway to Sabah, Kota Kinabalu does 1 natural surroundings. It is a new city built upon the ruins of Jesselton, which was badly damaged during the Second World War, and designed around the gold-domed State Mosque. From Signal Hill there is a good view of the city and the surrounding mountains and sea.

Sarawak: The state of Sarawak shares East Malaysia with Sabah, but is a vastly different destination than its neighbor with a greater degree of ethnic and tribal diversity leading to a more interesting culture and more varied cuisine. Most people who live in Sarawak use the intricate network of waterways to get about. Visitors are encouraged to do so too, although taxis and hire cars are available in the larger

towns for those who prefer more conventional means of transport. Separated from Peninsular Malaysia by 650km (404 miles) by the South China Sea, Sarawak can be reached by direct flights from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

Kuching: Situated on the banks of the River Sarawak, Kuching is a charming historic town, as well as being a gateway to a huge hinterland of dense tropical rainforest and mountain ranges. Villages on stilts still cling precariously to the river banks. Kuching has many places of interest worth visiting. A visit to the Sarawak Museum affords valuable insights into the history, wildlife and anthropology of Borneo. The Court House, built in 1847, is adorned with

local art forms and is regarded as one of the finest buildings in Sarawak. The Hong San Temple, built in honor of the God Kuek Seng, dates back to 1895. The Chinese community reveres Kuek Seng, who became a god 1000 years ago. At the heart of Kuching is the splendor of Sarawak State Mosque, with its magnificent gilt domes is a majestic sight. Situated at the Junction of Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman and the Main Bazaar, 'Tua Pek Kong Temple is Kuching's oldest Chinese temple, which dates back to 1876.

SUGGESTED READING LIST

Many comprehensive and readily available guides produced by Lonely Planet, Fodor, Insight, The Rough Guide, etc., many books relating to East Africa. Here are a few selections we thought might interest you. Longitude Books at <http://www.longitudebooks.com> has an extensive collection of books, searchable by country.

MALAYSIA TRAVEL PACK

Helen Oon

All the information you need on a destination in one handy pack. This exciting new addition to the Globetrotter range offers exceptional value for money by combining Guide and Map in a pocket-sized, plastic wallet. Each pack contains the relevant Globetrotter Travel Guide and a full-size Travel Map folded to fit the wallet.

WILD MALAYSIA, THE WILDLIFE AND SCENERY OF PENINSULAR MALAYSIA, SARAWAK, AND SABAH

Junaidi Payne, Gerald Cubitt

A volume in the definitive new series on wild areas around the world, this handsome book combines stunning color photography, detailed maps and a series of well written essays by a scientist working in the region. After introducing each of the geographical areas of Malaysia, the book offers detailed portraits of each of the national parks and reserves

FORGOTTEN ARMIES: THE FALL OF BRITISH ASIA, 1941-1945

Christopher Bayly, Timothy Harper

A gripping history of Britain's WWII campaigns in India, Burma and Malaysia by two Cambridge University historians. The authors draw on multiple perspectives, including that of the Japanese, in this authoritative history of famous and horrifying battles. With 34 black-and-white photographs and seven maps.

LORD JIM

Joseph Conrad

First published in 1900, this novel has become a classic: the story of a young British sailor in Malaysia who abandons ship in a moment of cowardice, an act which marks his life forever. The introduction to this edition traces the real life events that were the inspiration for the novel. Another lesser-known novel set in the region is Victory, a powerful story of rescue and tragedy set in the Malaysian archipelago.