

Malaysia



Capital:	Kuala Lumpur
Population:	24.3 million (approx)
Religion:	Islam is the national religion, and Muslims constitute about 53% of the population. Other prominent religions are Buddhism (about 17%), Taoism and Confucianism (about 12%), Hinduism (7%), and Christianity (about 3%).
Government:	Federal parliament democracy with a constitutional monarch, and a member of the British Commonwealth. The monarchy is rather unique: the nine hereditary sultans elect from among themselves a 'paramount ruler' (<i>Yang di-Pertuan Agong</i>) for a five year term. The paramount ruler, essentially a king with a five year reign, is the chief of state of Malaysia. The head of government of Malaysia is the prime minister.
Ethnic Groups:	59% Malay and indigenous inhabitants including the Orang Asli of West Malaysia and the Iban, Land Dayak, Bajan and Kadazan peoples of East Malaysia, 32% Chinese, 9% Indian, Pakistani, and Sri Lankan Tamil.
Language:	Bahasa Malaysia is the official language. Malaysian dialects include Iban (Sea Dayak) spoken in Borneo. Cantonese, Hokkien, Teochew, and Hakka dialects are spoken by the Chinese population. Tamil is popularly spoken by the Indians. English is spoken generally.
Currency:	The ringgit (dollar) is Malaysia's unit of currency, indicated by 'MYR' and divided into 100 sen.

- Malaysia lies directly on the sea routes between China and India. It consists of two separate parts (West/Peninsula and East Malaysia) in South East Asia. West Malaysia comprises the southern half of the Malay or Kra Peninsula. East Malaysia consists of the states of Sarawak in the north-west and Sabah in the north-east on the island of Borneo.
- Archaeological evidence indicates that areas of modern Malaysia were inhabited as long ago as 50,000 BC. Some of their modern day descendants still live in the jungles of Borneo, their traditional cultures scarcely changed by the outside world.
- Malaysia has long been a centre of international trade. It is the world's largest producer of rubber, palm oil, pepper, tropical hardwoods and tin, and it is rapidly growing its total economy by diversifying into manufacturing. The country is emerging as a major world supplier of basic electronics. The challenge is to produce enough prosperity to soothe all the racial groups and to bring the country into a developed nation status by 2020.

Business and Social Etiquette

- Malaysia has three major ethnic groups, each with its own traditions: Malay, Chinese, and Indian.
- The majority of Malaysian business people are Chinese; they are likely to be prompt. It is important to be on time for all business appointments. Making a Malaysian executive wait can result in a loss of face. The majority of government officials are ethnic Malays. Their culture is very different from that of the Chinese, and they have a looser concept of time.
- Age and seniority are highly respected. If you are part of a delegation, line up so that the most important persons will be introduced first. If you are introducing two people, state the name of the most important person first.
- With younger or foreign-educated Malaysians, a handshake is the most common form of greeting. The standard Malaysian handshake is more of a handclasp; it is rather limp and lasts for some 10-12 seconds. Often, both hands will be used.
- Westernised women may shake hands with both men and women.
- Ethnic Malays are generally Muslim. Traditionally, there is no physical contact between Muslim men and women. Because of this, women should not offer to shake hands with Malay men, nor should men offer to shake hands with Malay women.
- The traditional Malay greeting is the salaam, which is akin to a handshake without the grip. Both parties stretch out one or both hands, touch each other's hand(s) lightly, then bring their hand(s) back to rest over their heart. This greeting is done only between people of the same sex.
- Among Malaysian Chinese, the traditional greeting was a bow. However most now shake hands or combine a bow with a handshake.
- Many but not all Malaysian Indians are Hindu. Most Hindus avoid public contact between men and women, although not as vehemently as many Muslims. Men may shake hands with men and women with women, but only westernised Hindus will shake hands with the opposite sex.
- Use honorific titles if known, and use a fairly formal style in communicating with Malaysians.
- The exchange of business cards is a formal ceremony in Malaysia. After introductions are made, present your card either with both hands or with your right hand. Make sure you give a card to each person present. When you receive a card, be careful not to place it in your back pocket or write on it. Business cards should be printed in English.
- Malaysians do business only with persons they know and like. Establishing this personal relationship will take time, but it is vital for success.
- The pace of business negotiations in Malaysia is far slower than that in the western world. Be patient.
- Politeness is the single most important attribute for successful relationships in Malaysia. Since politeness demands that a Malaysian not disagree openly, the word

'no' is rarely heard. In Malaysia, 'yes' can mean anything from 'I agree' to 'maybe' to 'no'.

- In Malaysia, one who expresses anger in public has shamefully lost face. A person who loses his or her temper is considered unable to control himself or herself. Such a person will not be trusted or respected.
- Speak in quiet, gentle tones. Always remain calm. Leave plenty of time for someone to respond to a statement you make; people in Malaysia do not jump on the end of someone else's sentence. Politeness demands that they leave a respectful pause.
- Take advantage of any invitations to social events. Social occasions always involve food. Food is vitally important in Malaysian culture. But be patient, and let the Malaysians make the first invitation. You cannot successfully host a social event until you have been a guest at a Malaysian event.
- Among both Muslims and Hindus, the left hand is considered unclean. Eat with your right hand only. Where possible, do not touch anything or anyone with your left hand. The foot is also considered unclean, and you should not show the soles of your feet.
- The head is considered the seat of the soul by many Indians and Malays. Never touch someone's head, not even to pat the hair of a child.
- Accept and reciprocate any invitations to lunch or dinner. Never offer to pay your share of the meal. If you are the host, you pay; if you have been invited as a guest, your host will pay.
- Gifts are given between friends. Do not give a gift to anyone before you have established a personal relationship with them, otherwise the gift could be interpreted as a bribe (the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Agency has strict laws against bribery). It is not the custom to unwrap a gift in the presence of the giver. However if invited to someone's home, a gift (eg. chocolate/fruit) is appropriate.
- Because of the heat and humidity, business dress in Malaysia is often casual. Standard formal office wear for men is dark trousers and light coloured long sleeved shirt and tie, without a jacket. Business women wear light coloured long sleeved blouses and skirts (in deference to Muslim and Hindu sensibilities, women should always wear blouses that cover at least their upper arms. Skirts should be knee length or longer).
- Don't arrange meetings between 12.00 and 2.30pm on Fridays as this is prayer time for the Muslim population.

Language

- Malay names are made up of the given name, which comes first, and their father's name which follows. Many names have the word 'bin' or 'binti' included. 'Bin' = son of (eg. son of Saleem) and 'binti' = daughter of (eg daughter of Ahmad).
- Use Mr, Mrs or Miss with the given name. Names may appear different for members of the same family.
- Women generally keep their family names after marriage.

English	Bahasa Malaysia	Phonetics
How are you?/What's news?	Apa khabar?	Upa ka-bar
I'm fine/News is good	Khabar baik	Ka-bar byke
Welcome	Selamat datang	Slah-maht da-tahng
Good morning	Selamat pagi	Slah-maht pah-gee
Good evening	Selamat petang	Slah-maht puh-tahng
Good night	Selamat malam	Slah-maht mah-lahm
Yes	Ya	Yah
No	Tidak	Tee-dahk
Please	Sila or Tolong	See-lah or Toh-long
Thank you	Terima kasih	Tuh-ree-mah cah-see
You're welcome	Sama-sama	Sah-mah sah-mah
I don't understand	Saya tidak faham	Sah-yah tee-dahk fah-hahm

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