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GUIDE

# YOUR DESTINATION

Everything you need to know about your destination



YOUR WAY ABROAD

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## STUDY DESTINATION

# MALAYSIA

### 1. ARRIVAL IN MALAYSIA

We recommend traveling to Malaysia at least a few days before the start of the study program, if possible. This will give you a chance to get to know the surroundings and recover from possible jetlag before the beginning of your semester. However, we don't recommend arriving in Malaysia too early, especially with a tourist visa because the immigration officer might ask you to exit the country and re-start your visa application. Please let us know if you for some reason are unable to arrive in Malaysia in time.

Once you arrive at Kuala Lumpur International Airport, go through the Immigration and Customs control. Present your passport and other documents when asked to the immigration officers. Please be polite to all the officials at the airport. After the inspection, go to the luggage pick-up area to collect your luggage. There is also a possibility to purchase a local SIM card from the airport, but you can also do it later after being settled to your destination.



There are different options for transport from the airport. Find out more about transportation in Malaysia from below.

## 1.1. Documents you need when arriving

Please have the following document at hand when arriving in Malaysia:

- **International Passport** (The passport must be valid for a minimum of six months after arriving in Thailand. A passport with a validity of 18 months is required after the end of your exchange semester is required. Please note this also when sending Asia Exchange your application for the study abroad program.)
- **Official Acceptance letter**
- **A valid travel and health insurance in English**
- **Electronic Visa Approval Letter (EVAL)**
- **Single Entry Visa (SEV) or Evisa**

## 1.2. Registering with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

We recommend that all students register their trip at their home country's embassy or Ministry for Foreign Affairs before the start of the study abroad program. Once you have a local cell phone subscription, you can give the number to your local embassy. Most countries offer citizens the possibility of registering online.

Registration includes giving out your personal data, contact information for the duration of your trip and information about your stay abroad to the ministry in case of emergencies or crises.

All independent travelers are advised to register their trips.



## 2.HOST UNIVERSITY – UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) is one of the leading research universities in Malaysia and is internationally acknowledged among the top 200 universities (QS World Ranking, place 132). UPM is a public university that was founded in 1931, and the university achieved its modern state as a multidisciplinary institute in 1973.

Its 16 faculties and approx. 32 000 students are divided between the Serdang main campus and the Bintulu branch campus. You can find the campus maps attached to this guide. UPM's educational style and strategy come from the Oxbridge (Oxford and Cambridge) model of higher education, in line with Malaysia's past as a British colony. The main teaching language at UPM is, hence, English and the majority of all the degree programs are taught in English.

UPM is located in Serdang, approximately 25 km from Kuala Lumpur Sentral. The campus has several facilities for students, such as cafeterias as well as security services, on-campus transportation, sports and recreation facilities, medical clinic, accommodation and banking and postal services.



### 3. WORKING IN MALAYSIA

You are not allowed to work in Malaysia with either a tourist or student visa. Malaysia has very strict rules regarding employing foreign nationals because they try to prevent foreigners from taking up positions that can be filled by a native.

### 4. CONTACTS

UPM's Mobility and International Office (iPUTRA) and its staff will be your main contact point for practical matters related to studying, housing on campus and visas after you have arrived in KL.

Name: Ms. UMAIRAH SAFIAH BINTI NOOR AZMI

Position: Inbound Coordinator – 2000 to 3000 level students

Email Address: [umairahsafiah@upm.edu.my](mailto:umairahsafiah@upm.edu.my)

Name: Ms. Nur Syafinaz Shaari

Position: Postgraduate application- Inbound and Data Coordinator

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Name: Ms. NURSYAREIZA BINTI AZALI

Position: Administrative Assistant (School of Graduate Studies)

Email: [nursyareiza@upm.edu.my](mailto:nursyareiza@upm.edu.my)

### 5. MONEY

We recommend exchanging some of your national currency into RM before leaving home, so that you will have some cash with you when you arrive. However, the most affordable way of buying RM is bringing cash in your national currency with you and exchanging it at a currency exchange at the study location. Remember to compare the exchange rates first and be attentive during the actual exchange. Some unofficial exchange offices may offer good exchange rates, but there is a bigger risk of being cheated. You can also get a relatively good exchange rate just by withdrawing money from an ATM.

#### 5.1. Cash withdrawing money, and credit cards

ATMs are everywhere, including the airport and near the campus. You have to pay a commission for every withdrawal so we advise you to withdraw the maximum amount at once.

We recommend taking at least a VISA Electron and/or a credit card with you. Do not wait until you are all out of cash to withdraw more money, because sometimes you may face technical difficulties when using the ATMs. However, compared to other countries in Southeast Asia, there are plenty of ATMs in Malaysia and especially in the center of Kuala Lumpur.

It is good to keep in mind that as some cards as e.g. VISA Electron require real-time card authorization when paying, it is possible that it cannot be accepted as a payment method everywhere. For that reason, it is always a good idea to keep multiple payment options with you.

If you wish to open a Malaysian bank account for the duration of your semester, this is possible during the registration week with the help of the local student buddies.

Memorize the exchange rate of RM and some exemplary prizes. You can find more information about finances e.g. from Lonely Planet guidebooks or online.

## **5.2.Tipping**

Tipping in Malaysia is not mandatory, but you can always leave a few extra Ringgits if the service exceeds expectations. In restaurants, a 10 percent service charge will be included on the final bill and is considered a sufficient tip. With taxi drivers, depending on the quality of their service it's kind to show your appreciation by rounding up the total sum or let the driver "keep the change".

## **5.3. Bargaining**

Like all over Asia, bargaining is common at street markets, also in Malaysia. At first it might feel stressful, but you will get used to it. Do not take bargaining too seriously. You will get the best price with a good sense of humor. Bargaining can be even a pleasant experience for you and for the seller. You can try out your bargaining skills, e.g. in Chinatown.

# **6. PHONE CALL AND CELL PHONE SUBSCRIPTION**

## **Getting a Malaysian SIM card**

As you arrive in Malaysia, you are advised to get a local pre-paid SIM card. There are many network providers (e.g. Hotlink, Maxis, DiGi etc.) and you will see the first booths already at the airport arrivals hall. Also, you can buy your sim card in many small shops and kiosks in the city. People in the shop are very helpful and will show you how to get started.

## **Internet and cell phone coverage**

Free wi-fi is very common in Malaysia, especially in the city area and tourist destinations. However, the connection is not always the best. On the campus, there is free wi-fi available for the students.

When traveling, it is good to keep in mind that there are places in Malaysia with no internet and cell phone coverage.

## **Calling home from your Malaysian number**

Ask your operator or use Google to find the most affordable ways of calling abroad. Most operators offer international discount code, which is dialed before the actual phone number. The international discount code is placed before the country code, so for instance a phone call to Germany would begin with xxx 49 instead of the usual +49.

Before calling home, remember to find out which international rates apply to your home country with which discount codes. If you call without a discount code, the price can be over 2 €/min, but with an international discount code, the price can drop dramatically.

Different data packages for internet use are readily available; the prices and registration processes vary a little and you should consider a few different possibilities based on your individual needs.

E.g. from Finland it is possible to call to a Malaysian number with less than 10 cents per minute with using a discount code. Companies in Finland offering discount calls are e.g. [Call99577](#) and [TeleAle](#). For making discount calls your friends and family need to dial the discount code + country code + your Malaysian number.

The discount codes are usually not valid when sending text messages.

## Malaysia Emergency telephone numbers:

- 999 or 112 - Police & Ambulance
- 994 – Fire & Rescue
- 991 – Tourist Police Hotline

## 7. TRANSPORTATION IN MALAYSIA

Traffic culture in Malaysia, as well as in other parts of Asia, may be hectic compared to the traffic culture of your home country. However, getting around is rather comfortable. Just memorize some bus and train routes and avoid rush hours. KL metropolitan area has a relatively good and cheap transport system, especially compared to many other Asian cities. Serdang is well connected by train to KL city.

### Taxis

Being in an air-conditioned taxi on a sunny day is most often a relief. Prices are very affordable; just remember to make sure that the driver turns the meter on. Malaysian taxi drivers are famous for not turning the meter on, overcharging foreigners, pretending they do not know the way to the destination, and getting lost on purpose. Sometimes they really do not know the way, so it might be a good idea to carry map of KL and the UPM campus so that you can show the driver where you need to go.

Normal red and white taxis (RM3 first 2km, then around RM0.90/km) and bright blue executive taxis (RM6 flag fall + a slightly higher per kilometer rate) are good options if you can get them to use the meter. There are also various small surcharges for radio call (RM2), baggage (RM1 per piece), etc. There are also other types of taxis and most of them are reliable. It is always a good idea to ask for a phone number from a good taxi driver if you meet one.

Drivers are less likely to use the meter when demand exceeds supply, such as during the rush hour or when it rains. Prices then become negotiable (before setting off) and inflated (2-10 times the meter price). This is illegal but realistically the only thing you can do is walk away and find a different driver. A cab hailed off the street is more likely to use the meter than one that stalks tourist spots. If stuck with a driver that will not use the meter, negotiate hard: RM5 should cover most cross-town trips of 15 min or so, even with traffic.

## Buses

RapidKL operates a cheap and comprehensive public bus network in and around Kuala Lumpur, but low frequencies (2-3 per hour on most routes) and the near-total lack of signs makes this a poor option for the casual visitor. The buses themselves have clear destination information; so, if you happen upon one heading in the right direction, jump on board - though be prepared for cramped waits in rush hour traffic. If you do venture on board a RapidKL bus, it is worth noting that these buses are broadly divided in three categories:

- Bandar (B) routes are city center shuttles,
- Utama (U) buses travel to outlying suburbs
- Tempatan (T) buses are feeder services for train stations.

For all three RapidKL routes, you can buy zone-based single tickets (RM1 for Zone 1, up to RM3 for Zone 4) on board, or use a Touch 'n Go card (not sold on board). In addition, Ekspres (E) services use the highways and cost a flat RM3.80. Buses run from 6AM-11PM or so, with no night services.

Universiti Putra Malaysia premises are very big, so the campus has its own bus line. Moving around in UPM is not a problem because of the efficient campus bus service. When using the bus service, students can choose one of two options; take a bus that plies solely within the campus area or take one that services UPM and destinations outside the campus. The latter service is provided by bus companies that have been assigned by UPM to service the campus. The monthly bus service fee is 15 MYR, which you do not have to pay if you do not plan on using the on-campus bus services.

## Trains

Urban rail comes in four distinct flavors, which are not always very well connected to each other:

- LRT - run by RapidKL, which also runs the urban buses; it is the closest thing to a metro though it is mainly elevated on concrete pillars with only the most central stations underground.
- KL Monorail - entirely elevated and loops through the Golden Triangle in a semicircle. Riding its whole length gives a good overview of the city center.

- KTM Komuter - two lines that meet in the city center and run out to the suburbs, including the Batu Caves and Midvalley MegaMall. Trains are not as frequent as on the LRT or Monorail: plan for a 20 min wait but 5-10 minutes is more likely. With KTM trains you can also get to nearby towns on low costs. KTM serves Serdang station from where you can take a bus or taxi to UPM campus.
- KLIA - trains run between KL Sentral and KL international airport. Express trains run direct. Transit trains stop at Putrajaya and Salak Tinggi en route.

## **Grab**

A mobile app, where you can tell the taxi your pick-up spot and destination and it will already tell you the price of the journey in advance. You will pay the fare in cash at the end of your journey or it can be charged from your credit card via the app.

Fares are generally cheap (from RM1). Connectivity between the different lines is often poor. If it rains, you might get wet when travelling between lines. The Touch 'n' Go card (RM10 at major stations) can be used on all lines except the airport express. Photo ID is required to buy the card.

## **7.1 Making your way to the airport**

There are two international airports in Kuala Lumpur:

KLIA (Kuala Lumpur International Airport) and  
KLIA 2 (previous name: LCCT Low Cost Carrier Airport).

The journey from the airports to UPM campus or to the city center will take 30- 90 minutes depending on your transport and traffic.

- At Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) payment for taxis can be made by purchasing taxi coupons available from a counter just before you enter the arrivals hall, or at another counter in the arrival's hall.
- A cheaper option is to order a driver through the online app called Grab. You should download this app on your phone and connect to the airport wi-fi to order a driver to pick you up from any of the airport exits.
- Even cheaper options, although less convenient especially if you carry luggage, are the buses and KLIA Express Train.

## **KLIA**

From the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, you can get to the city center by taxi (about 45 minutes) or by KLIA Express Line. The KLIA Express Rail Link Station is located on the ground level of the airport. The train takes you to KL Sentral from where you can travel to your choice of accommodation.

The KLIA express train takes only 28 minutes.

One-way ticket is appr. MYR 55. If you buy online in advance with MasterCard, you might get a 20 percent discount.

If you are going straight to campus, you can take a taxi/Grab to UPM. Alternatively, you could also take a KLIA Transit line train to the Putrajaya station. The journey takes approx. 15 minutes. At the Putrajaya station, you can get a taxi for approximately MYR 13.00 to any location within the university grounds.

## **KLIA 2**

From KLIA 2 (Air Asia airport) you can get to KL Sentral by KLIA Express Line (33 minutes), KLIA Transit Line for appr. MYR 55 or by taking a bus to KL Sentral (or to another destination in the city depending where you are staying the first few days) and then continue from there with a taxi or KTM train. The cost to KL Sentral by bus starts from 10 RM (11/2015).

A Grab taxi is the most convenient in case you are carrying luggage.

A lot of students arrive in KL before the orientation week and stay in a hostel before moving to campus accommodation or to off-campus housing closer to Serdang.



# YOUR WAY ABROAD

The world has an interesting way of giving great experiences  
to the ones who are passionate about their dreams.

*Miia Muukkonen, Asia Exchange student*

