

Malaysia

Travel Guide (Includes Borneo)



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.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Elevation: 72 feet

Latitude: 03 07N

Longitude: 101 33E

Average Temperature

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

Average Precipitation

in.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
	6.4	6.7	9.1	10.9	7.7	4.9	5	5.6	7.7	10.5	11.1	9

GENERAL INFORMATION

Area: 329,733 sq km (127,311 sq miles).

Population: 23,266,000 (official estimate 2000).

Population Density: 70.6 per sq km.

Capital: Kuala Lumpur. **Population:** 1,297,526 (2000).

Geography: Malaysia is situated in central South-East Asia, bordering on Thailand in the north, with Singapore and Indonesia to the south and the Philippines to the east. It is composed of Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak on the north coast of the island of Borneo, 650-950km (404-600 miles) across the South China Sea. Peninsular Malaysia is an area of forested mountain ranges running north-south, on either side of which are low-lying coastal plains. The coastline extends some 1900km (1200 miles). The west coast consists of mangrove swamps and mudflats which separate into bays and inlets. In the west, the plains have been cleared and cultivated, while the unsheltered east coast consists of tranquil beaches backed by dense jungle. Sarawak has alluvial and, in places, swampy coastal plains with rivers penetrating the jungle-covered hills and mountains of the interior. Sabah has a narrow coastal plain which gives way to mountains and jungle. Mount Kinabalu, at 4094m (13,432ft), is the highest peak in Malaysia. The major islands are Langkawi (a group of 99 islands), Penang and Pangkor off the west coast; and Tioman, Redang, Kapas, Perhentian and Rawa off the east coast.

Government: Constitutional monarchy since 1963. Gained independence from the UK in 1957. Head of State: King Syed Sirrajuddin ibni al-Marhum Syed Putra Jamalullail since 2001.

Head of Government: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohammad since 1981.

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

Religion: Muslim (53 per cent) and Buddhist (19 per cent) majorities. The remainder are Christian, Taoist, Confucianist, Hindu and Animist.

Time: GMT + 8.

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

COMMUNICATIONS:

Telephone: Full IDD is available. Country code: 60. Outgoing international code: 00. Public coin-operated phones can be found in many areas, such as supermarkets and post offices. Local calls cost 10 sen. Public cardphones can be found throughout the country. Cards can be purchased at airports, petrol stations and some shops for amounts ranging from RM3-50. There are currently two types – Kadfon and Unicard – and these can only be used in their appropriate marked phone booths.

Mobile telephone: GSM 900 and 1800 networks cover practically the whole country.

Fax: Centres for public use are located in the main post offices of all large towns. Most main hotels also have facilities.

Internet: There are numerous Internet cafes. Hotels and hostels often have facilities.

Telegram: Telegrams can be sent from any telegraph office.

Post: There are post offices in the commercial centre of all towns, open Mon-Sat 0800-1700.

PASSPORT / VISA

Passports: For international travel, a U.S. passport valid for at least six months from date of departure, containing **at least** two blank pages is necessary.

Visas: U.S. and Canadian citizens do not require visas in advance. Citizens from other countries, consult the nearest Malaysian consulate.

Important: Please look at your passport prior to travel to insure that:

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

MONEY

Currency: Ringgit (RM) = 100 sen. Notes are in denominations of RM1000, 500, 100, 50, 10, 5, 2 and 1. The RM1000 and RM500 notes are now being phased out. Coins are in denominations of RM1, and 50, 20, 10, 5 and 1 sen. There are also many commemorative coins in various denominations which are legal tender. The Ringgit is often referred to as the Malaysian Dollar.

Currency exchange: The best currency for exchange is the Pound Sterling, but US Dollars are also widely accepted. Although all major currencies can be exchanged easily in the main tourist centres, problems may occur elsewhere. It is difficult to exchange Malaysian currency outside of Malaysia, Singapore or Indonesia. All visitors need to fill in a Travellers Declaration Form (TDF); see Currency restrictions below for details.

Credit & debit cards: MasterCard, Visa, Diners Club and American Express are accepted. Check with your credit or debit card company for details of merchant acceptability and other services which may be available.

Travellers cheques: Accepted by all banks, hotels and large department stores. To avoid additional exchange rate charges, travellers are advised to take travellers cheques in Pounds Sterling, US Dollars, or Australian Dollars.

Currency restrictions: All visitors entering Malaysia (including children) must declare amounts over RM1000 that they have in their possession (local and equivalent in foreign currencies) on a Travellers Declaration Form (TDF), which can be obtained at the airport or Malaysian embassies, high commissions and tourist offices. On departure, the TDF has to be filled in prior to immigration clearance.

The import and export of local currency is limited to RM1000. The import of foreign currency is unlimited. The export of foreign currency is limited to the amount imported on arrival.

Banking hours: Mon-Fri 0930-1500, Sat 0930-1130. Banks in Sabah open at 0800 and usually break for lunch (1200-1400).

DUTY FREE

The following goods may be imported into Malaysia without incurring customs duty: *200 cigarettes or 50 cigars or 225g of tobacco; 1l of spirits or wine or malt liquor; 1 bottle of perfume up to the value of RM200; gifts and souvenirs not exceeding a total value of RM200; 100 matches.*

Controlled and prohibited items: It is prohibited to import any goods from South Africa and Israel. Non-prescribed drugs, weapons, pornography, any cloth bearing the imprint or reproduction of any verses of The Koran, as well as any imprint or reproduction of any currency note or coin, are prohibited. Drug-smuggling carries the death penalty.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

Jan 1 New Year's Day.
Jan 22-24 Chinese New Year.
Feb 2 Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice).
Feb 22 Hari Raya Tussa (Islamic New Year).
May 1 Labour Day.
May 2 Birth of the Prophet Muhammad.
May 4 Vesak Day (Birth of the Buddha).
Jun 5 Official Birthday of HM the Yang di-Pertuan Agong.
Aug 31 National Day.
Nov 12 Deepavali Festival. (Indian New Year)
Nov 14-16 Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadan).
Dec 25 Christmas Day.

Note: (a) Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given above are approximations. During the lunar month of Ramadan that precedes Hari Raya Puasa, Muslims fast during the day and feast at night and normal business patterns may be interrupted. Many restaurants are closed during the day and there may be restrictions on smoking and drinking. Some disruption may continue into Hari Raya Puasa itself and Hari Raya Haji may last anything from two to ten days, depending on the region. For more information see the World of Islam appendix. (b) Buddhist festivals are also timed according to phases of the moon and variations may occur.

HEALTH

Inoculations: A yellow fever vaccination certificate is required from travelers over 1 year of age arriving within 6 days from infected areas. Those countries formerly classified as endemic by the WHO are considered by the Malaysian authorities to be infected areas.

Following WHO guidelines issued in 1973, a cholera vaccination certificate is not a condition of entry to Malaysia, although it may be required if travelling on to a cholera-infected country. However, outbreaks have been reported in Malaysia in the recent past.

Malaria risk exists only in certain isolated inland regions. Urban and coastal areas are safe, with the exception being Sabah where there is a risk, predominantly in the malignant falciparum form, throughout the year. The falciparum strain is reported to be highly resistant to chloroquine and resistant to sulfadoxine/pyrimethamine.

Food & drink: All water should be regarded as being potentially contaminated. Water used for drinking or making ice should have first been boiled or otherwise sterilised. Milk is unpasteurised and should be boiled. Powdered or tinned milk is available and is advised, but make sure that it is reconstituted with pure water. Avoid dairy products that are likely to have been made from unboiled milk. Only eat well cooked meat and fish, preferably served hot. Pork, salad and mayonnaise may carry increased risk. Vegetables should be cooked and fruit peeled.

Note: It is generally considered safe to drink water straight from the tap; however, as no authority is absolutely clear on this matter the above advice is included as it reflects the necessity for caution for visitors who are unused to the Malaysian way of life.

Other risks: Hepatitis A, C and E occur and hepatitis B is hyperendemic. Epidemics of dengue fever and Japanese encephalitis can occur in both urban and rural areas. Immunisation against tetanus, TB, diphtheria, hepatitis A and E is recommended. In 2002, the Malaysian Health Ministry declared a nationwide meningococcal meningitis alert after three people died from the disease. Typhoid risk exists, especially in rural areas.

There may be some risk of rabies in certain areas. For those at high risk, vaccination before arrival should be considered. If you are bitten, seek medical advice without delay. For more information, consult the Health appendix.

Health care: Health insurance is strongly recommended. Hospitals are found in all the main cities and can deal with all major needs. Private hospitals, some managed and staffed by British-trained doctors and nurses, provide a high standard of medical care and include Gleneagles Intan Medical Centre in Kuala Lumpur and Ampang Puteri Specialist Hospital,

Selangor. Smaller towns and rural areas have private clinics. In an emergency, dial 999.

TRAVEL - INTERNATIONAL

Approximate flight times: From Kuala Lumpur to London is 14 hours.

Departure tax: RM45 for international departures.

TRAVEL - INTERNAL

Note: During major festivals (especially Hari Raya Pusa, the Chinese New Year and Hari Raya Haji), internal travel becomes extremely difficult unless tickets have been pre-booked long in advance. Domestic express bus tickets often go on sale up to two months before the festivals and sell out within one or two weeks. Even domestic flights tend to be packed during these periods. For festival dates, contact Tourism Malaysia.

Departure tax: RM6.

SOCIAL PROFILE

Food & Drink: 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. Sambals (a paste of ground chilli, onion and tamarind) is often used as a side dish. Blachan (a dried shrimp paste) is used in many dishes and ikan bilis (dried anchovies) are eaten with drinks. Popular Malay dishes include satay, which consists of a variety of meats, especially chicken, barbecued on small skewers with a spicy peanut dipping sauce and a salad of cucumber, onion and compressed rice cakes. The best sauce often takes several hours to prepare to attain its subtle flavour. Gula Malacca (a firm sago pudding in palm sugar sauce) is also served in restaurants. There are many regional types of Chinese cooking including Cantonese, Peking, Hakka, Sichuan and Taiwanese. Indian food is also popular, with curries ranging from mild to very hot indeed. Vegetarian food, chutneys and Indian breads are also available. Indonesian cuisine also combines the use of dried seafoods and spiced vegetables with the Japanese method of preparation with fresh ingredients cooked to retain the natural flavour. Japanese-style seafood such as siakiau beef (grilled at the table), tempura (deep-fried seafood) and sashimi (raw fish with salad) are excellent. Korean and Thai food are available in restaurants. Amongst Malaysia's exotic fruits are starfruit, durian, guavas, mangos, mangosteen and pomelos. Western food is served throughout the country and includes US, Spanish, Italian and French cuisine. Kuala Lumpur has several restaurants which rival the high standards set by established Western restaurants in Singapore and Hong Kong. Table service is normal, and in Chinese restaurants chopsticks are customary. Indian and Malay food is eaten with the fingers. Set lunches, usually with four courses are excellent value for money.

Although the country is largely Islamic, alcohol is available. Local beers such as Tiger and Anchor are recommended and the famous Singapore Gin Sling. International beers are also available.

Nightlife: Kuala Lumpur has a selection of reputable nightclubs and discotheques, most belonging to the big hotels. Nightclubs generally stay open until 0500 or 0600 and usually request a cover charge which includes the first drink. Many of Kuala Lumpur's bars have a 'Happy Hour', offering

two drinks for the price of one, between 1700-2000 or 2100. Bintang Walk is a lively spot and has a good selection of alfresco bars and coffee shops. Penang is also lively at night, larger hotels having cocktail lounges, dining, dancing and cultural shows. There are night markets in most towns, including both Kuala Lumpur and Penang Chinatown. Malay and Chinese films often have English subtitles and there are also English films. The national lottery and Malaysia's only casino at Genting Highlands are government approved and visitors are not supposed to gamble elsewhere. Keno and Chinese Tai Sai, roulette, baccarat, french bull and blackjack are played at the casino. Dress is relatively formal and visitors must be over 21 years of age.

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, rivalling 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. Star Hill and Lot 10 are popular shopping malls and there were plans underway to develop and finish an additional mall – Times Square. 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 speciality goods include pewterware, silverware and brassware; batik; jewellery; pottery and songket. Enquire at Malaysian Royal Customs and Excise about claiming cashback on duty-free goods. **Shopping hours:** Most shops keep their own opening hours, usually within the range of 1000-2200.

Special Events: Annual Malaysian festivals, which celebrate significant religious events and public holidays are staged throughout the year and are magnificent spectacles, bursting with vibrancy and colour. Each of the different communities has its own customs, traditions and festivals.

Social Conventions: Malaysia's population is a mixture of diverse cultures and characters. In general, the racial groups integrate, but keep to their individual traditions and lifestyles. Malays still form more than half of the total 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 (Dutch, British and Portuguese in particular) are also very marked in Malaysia, although the European section of the population is now small. As far as greetings are concerned, the Malaysian equivalent of 'hello' is the Muslim 'peace be with you'. Malay men are addressed Encik (pronounced Enchik) with or without the name; Malay women should be called Cik (pronounced Che) if they are single and Puan if they are married. 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. Within towns, smoking has now

become the subject of government disapproval and fines are levied in a number of public places, such as cinemas, theatres and libraries.

Tippling: 10 per cent service charge and 5 per cent government tax are commonly included in bills. Taxi drivers are not tipped.

BUSINESS PROFILE

Economy: A fully fledged 'tiger' economy, from the 1970s onwards Malaysia grew rapidly at around 10 per cent annually. This extraordinary economic development had been achieved through the familiar East Asian combination of a strong state allied to unfettered capitalism. The government plays a central role in guiding the country's economic progress – the New Development Policy was unveiled in 1991 as the country's economic blueprint for the following 20 years. However, in 1997 the Asian financial crisis brought this process to a shuddering halt. Malaysia has recovered reasonably well since then, although the headlong pre-1997 expansion has been replaced by a more measured pace of growth of between 4 and 4.5 per cent per annum in 2002 and 2003. Inflation was a respectable 1.8 per cent in 2002 and Malaysia enjoys a substantial trade surplus (\$18 billion in 2002). The government also took the key decision in September 1998 to fix the Malaysian currency, the ringgit, to the price of the US dollar.

The manufacturing sector produces electronics, transport equipment, machinery steel and textiles. There are also reserves of oil and natural gas and mineral deposits of tin (of which it is a major producer), bauxite, copper, iron and gold. In the agricultural sector palm oil, of which Malaysia is the world's leading producer, is a major export commodity. Timber production remains important although it has been limited by the introduction of conservation measures in the mid-1990s. Other cash crops include rubber (again, Malaysia is one of the world's top producers), cocoa and pepper. Tourism dominates the service sector.

Malaysia's largest single trading partners are the USA, Japan and Singapore, followed by the EU and China. Malaysia is a member of the Pacific Rim organisation APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Forum), which is assuming an increasingly important role in the regional economy. The essential stability of Malaysia's financial sector meant that although it suffered short-term damage, it was able to recover quickly. Over the last 5 years, Malaysia has averaged annual growth of 3 per cent.

Office hours: These vary between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia. In general most offices are open by 0830 and close between 1600 and 1730. Almost all close for an hour between 1200 and 1400. Most close at 1200 Saturday.

CLIMATE

Tropical without extremely high temperatures. Days are very warm, while nights are fairly cool. The main rainy season in the east runs between November and February, while August is the wettest period on the west coast. East Malaysia has heavy rains (November to February) in Sabah and in Sarawak. However, it is difficult to generalise about the country's climate, as rainfall differs from the east and west coasts according to the prevailing monsoon winds (northeast or southwest).

Required clothing: Lightweight cottons and linens are worn throughout the year. Waterproofing is advisable all year.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

History: The region now known as Malaysia was first mentioned in Chinese and Sanskrit records of the seventh and eighth centuries. In subsequent centuries the area was under the influence and loose control of various Thai and Indonesian empires, including the great Sumatra-based civilisation of Sri Vijaya. This was followed in the 14th century by the Majapahit empire based in Java. Sri Vijaya and Majapahit, Bhuddist and Hindu respectively, both left a mark on the peninsula. But even by the 14th century, Islam – already well established in parts of India – was steadily spreading eastwards through the substantial trade between India and Malaya. The first Muslim empire in Malaya, based on the trading port of Malacca on the western side of the peninsula, was formed under the rule of King Parameswara in the first quarter of the 15th century. Early in the 16th century, the Portuguese moved in and, after capturing Malacca, established a number of fortified bases in the region. Sultan Mahmud, the ruler of Malacca at the time, was unable to recapture it immediately. However his successors, who had moved to Johore on the southern tip of the Malay Peninsula, noted the arrival of the Dutch in the region at the end of the century and formed an alliance with them to expel the Portuguese in 1641.

Over the next century and a half, the Dutch steadily expanded throughout the region until the Dutch East Indies became the heart of a most prosperous colonial trading operation. Coming at the end of the 18th century, the British were relatively late arrivals to the region, but they were to play a key role following the European wars of the 1790s and, in particular, the defeat of the Netherlands by France in 1795. Rather than hand them over to the French, the Dutch passed control of some of their most valuable resources to the British in what became a series of exchanges. Gradually, during the 19th century, the British took control of the peninsula using economic pressure (particularly their monopoly of the tin trade) rather than outright military force: local rulers were permitted substantial internal autonomy provided that they posed no threat to British interests. The Federated Malay States were created as an entity in 1895, and remained under British colonial control until the Japanese invasion of 1942. After the defeat of Japan in 1945, the 11 states were once again incorporated as British Protectorates and in 1948 became the Federation of Malaya.

In the same year, communist guerrillas – the bulk of whom were ethnic Chinese – launched an armed struggle aimed at establishing an independent socialist state. 'The Emergency', as the colonial authorities dubbed it, lasted formally until 1960. However, the serious fighting was over by the mid-1950s and in 1957, Britain proceeded with its plan to grant independence to the Federation of Malaya.

In 1963 the Federation of Malaya merged with Singapore and the former British colonies of Sarawak and Sabah (North Borneo) to form Malaysia. Singapore seceded to become an independent state in its own right in 1965, leaving Malaysia in its present form. Tunku Abdul Rahman, who had taken over as premier of the federation in 1957, remained as Prime Minister of the newly expanded republic. He remained in office until 1970, when he was replaced by Tunku Abdul Razak. The dominant political organisation was the United Malay National Organisation (UMNO) which allied itself with several smaller formations to create the Barisan Nasional (NF, National Front). In 1982, the NF won the general election scheduled for that year under the new leadership of Mahathir Mohammed.

Mahathir's style was characterised by maverick policy-making, an acerbic tongue, strident nationalism, acute political antennae and a ferocious intolerance of opposition from any quarter. In his two decades in power, he stamped his authority on Malaysian politics. His ruthlessness was exemplified after falling out with his former deputy and heir apparent, Anwar Ibrahim, over Malaysia's handling to the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Anwar was framed for alleged homosexuality (which is illegal in Malaysia) and corruption; after a show trial he was then imprisoned for fifteen years.

At first, Anwar and his wife became a focus of opposition to Mahathir. Although the NF had comfortably won every poll in the 1980s and '90s, many people, including influential figures within UMNO, believed that Mahathir had finally overreached himself. The acid test came at the general election of November 1999. In the event, Mahathir ran a well-judged campaign which returned the NF to office with, once again, a substantial majority. Both the democratic opposition, organised around residual supporters of Anwar, and the Islamist opposition centred on the Pan-Malaysian Islamic Party (PAS) were comfortably dealt with. In particular, Mahathir made effective use of the '9/11' attacks in the US to demonise his Islamist opponents.

With his political position now all but unassailable, Mahathir's announcement in June 2002 of his intention to resign the following year was a huge surprise. The shock was followed by scepticism, and then by a further surprise in October 2003 when Mahathir did indeed stand down. The main political task for his chosen successor, Abdullah Ahmad Badawi – formerly a senior civil servant – is to prevent any further progress by the Islamist PAS. Elections due in early 2004 will indicate the extent of Badawi's success. Failure may lead to splits within UNMO and the disintegration of the NF.

Mahathir's truculence applied equally to his foreign policy. On occasion he has cut off relations with both Britain and Australia because of uncomplimentary media coverage. Though strongly anti-communist, he established diplomatic relations with Vietnam and Malaysia's other communist neighbours in 1989 in the face of strong objections from Washington. A strong proponent of Asian regional solidarity, he firmly believed that East Asia should develop political clout to match its economic power. Malaysia is also an active member of the Commonwealth.

Government: Malaysia has a complex federal political system, with extensive local power still in the hands of nine hereditary sultans, who elect the head of state (entitled HM the Yang di-Pertuan Agong) every five years from among their number. There are 13 states plus two 'Federal Territories' (Kuala Lumpur and the island of Labuan). Legislative power is in the hands of the bicameral parliament, comprising the Dewan Rakyat (House of Representatives) with 192 members directly elected for a five year term, and the 70-strong Dewan Negara (Senate), of which 40 members are appointed by the Head of State and 30 members elected by the country's 13 regional assemblies. Executive power is held by the Prime Minister, who is formally appointed by the head of state but in practice by the leader of the largest party in the Dewan Rakyat. The Prime Minister governs with the assistance of an appointed ministerial cabinet.

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 their own charms, including superb beaches and unspoilt 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 very ethnic diversity is part of the attraction with Malays, Chinese, Indian and European cultures melting together on the tropical streets. Often overlooked by many tourists KL has a wealth of attractions, with the voluminous Petronas Twin Towers at a height of 436m (1453ft) amongst the tallest buildings in the world. From the viewing level of the Towers the city unfolds with its old mosques and ramshackle buildings, contrasting with the gleaming skyscrapers that have sprouted as Malaysia has become one of the regional economic powerhouses. 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. The Tasek Perdana Lake Gardens are one of the city's best known natural landmarks, a popular spot for picnics and walking. Within the gardens are Parliament House and the National Monument. The National Monument, an impressive brass sculpture, is one of the world's largest free-standing sculptures. Close by is the National Museum, which houses many historical exhibits. The building incorporates various different Malaysian architectural styles and craftwork from different parts of the nation, making the National Museum an embodiment of many aspects of the nation. Near the railway station is the National Mosque surrounded by lawns ornamented with fountains. This modern mosque, built in 1965, gleams every bit as brightly as any of Kuala Lumpur's skyscrapers. The main dome is moulded in the shape of an 18-point star to represent the 13 states of Malaysia and the five central Pillars of Islam. The huge main prayer hall can hold up to 10,000 worshippers, although this section of the mosque is closed to non-worshippers. Nearby is the old Chinese clan house of Chan See Yuen and the colourful Indian temple of Sri Mahamariamman. Shopping and eating are other key attractions with retail opportunities including everything from huge air-conditioned malls with bargains on many items, through to local handicrafts sold by the people who make them. KL has a smorgasbord of eating opportunities with fine dining restaurants, through to local eateries that showcase the finest culinary delicacies from all over Malaysia. Then there are the street markets, with their food stalls, where some of the best and cheapest food is to be found for the adventurous. The Friday Mosque, situated astride the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers at the point where the first Europeans scrambled ashore, is the most stunning and popular sight in the city. The best time to visit is at sunset or during the muezzin's call to prayer, which echoes around the ornate domes and palm trees, lending the mosque an air of calm amidst the skyscrapers.

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 coloured statues and murals from Hindu mythology. Templar Park, 22km (14 miles) north of Kuala Lumpur, is a well-preserved

tract of primary rainforest, which is rich in scenic beauty. Jungle paths, swimming lagoons and waterfalls all lie within the park boundaries. Malaysia's latest agricultural park, located at Cherakah in Shah Alam, Selangor, has a large playing area with facilities for skateboarders and rollerskaters.

The Forestry Research Institute, 15km northwest of KL, is a genuine example of 'Eco-tourism' in that it is stretch of jungle that has been protected and is now being used to study how this unique eco-system works. The centre also looks at ways of sustainable development and at ways of protecting this environment. There are a number of low eco impact trails that visitors can explore.

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 centre and capital, Kuala Kangsar, the royal town 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 macque and ridge-back dolphins. The best time to visit is between September and December when many migratory birds arrive at the sanctuary.

Excursions: Thirty minutes drive from Ipoh, near Batu Gajah, stands the impressive Kellie's Castle. Surrounded by rubber plantations, the magnificent ruins of the unfinished castle are all that remains of Scotsman William Kellie Smith's nostalgic ambition to recreate an authentic piece of his Scottish homeland. Work halted with the sudden demise of Smith in 1926, and since his death the rumours and mystique surrounding the castle have intensified. Reputed to be haunted, the castle is also believed to possess secret rooms and tunnels, undetected to this day.

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.

Taiping

Although it may be known as the 'Town of Everlasting Peace', Taiping grew to fame as a raffish tin mining centre, though the importance of the industry has declined since a major slump in the 1980s. Some of the wealth from the tin mining was pumped into Taiping's main attraction, the disused

mining pools that were transformed in the late nineteenth century to become the stunning, carefully landscaped Lake Gardens. Taiping is also home to some impressive colonial architecture and the charming Ling Nam Temple, which is reputed to be the oldest Chinese temple in Perak. The more sinister history of Taiping emerges in the old prison, that was used by the Japanese in World War II, and the Allied War Cemetery, the last resting place of hundreds of victims of the Japanese invaders.

Pangkor Island

No longer is Pangkor Island, about 100km (60 miles) south of Penang Island, unspoilt and seldom-visited. Over recent years it has gained in popularity, which has brought better facilities at the expense of increasing crowds and development of the pristine environment. Since 1996, an internal air link to the island has facilitated access for tourists. Innumerable bays boast excellent sandy beaches and all kinds of watersports.

Penang

The island of Penang, eulogised as the 'Pearl of the Orient', lies 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 harbour 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 the many churches, temples and mosques found throughout the town. The first class laksas and unique Penang dishes are reason for visiting alone, with many meals enjoyed outside at the ubiquitous food stalls.

Rest of Penang

Penang has more than just beaches. One of the most unusual attractions is the Snake Temple, which swarms with poisonous snakes, but their venomous threat is countered by heavily drugging them with incense. Wat Chayamangkalaram Temple contains an enormous gold-plated reclining Buddha, which at 33 metres long, is believed to be the third largest in the world. Penang Bird Park is a must for bird lovers' and horticultural enthusiasts alike. The landscaped park in Seberang Jaya is home to over 400 species of birds. Specially designed aviaries are placed among man-made islands with beautiful waterfalls and gardens ablaze with ornamental flowers and tropical greenery. A wide variety of orchid and hibiscus can also be seen. Over 100 species of butterflies and insects can be seen in the gardens of Penang

Butterfly Farm in Teluk Bahang. The farm is open daily to visitors. In the centre of the island is Penang Hill, with a 700m (2300ft) summit, where tourists who can bear the massive queues to ascend the cable car are rewarded with splendid views and jungle walks.

Langkawi

More than 100km (60 miles) north of Penang lie the 104 islands, many of which are just outcrops of coral, that make up Langkawi. The largest, Langkawi Island, is the only one with sophisticated tourist facilities (it has been declared a free port and duty-free shopping is available). 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 all kinds of watersports such as swimming, sailing, fishing and scuba diving. Horseriding facilities and golf courses are also available. Travel to Langkawi is by air from Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Alor Setar or by road and sea.

Kelantan

Bordering Thailand in the north is the state of Kelantan, whose capital Kota Bharu is a colourful, vibrant city, very much the archetypal South East Asian border town. The beaches here are clean and unspoilt and the sea ideal for swimming, diving and fishing. The state is renowned for its many cultural festivals, some of which are unique to the region. Puja Umur (the birthday of the Sultan) is celebrated with a week-long festival, beginning with a parade in Kota Bharu. A form of art unique to Kelantan is the Ma'jong, a combination of ballet, opera, romantic drama and comedy, originally a form of court entertainment.

Genting Highlands

Less than 1 hour by road from Kuala Lumpur is Genting Highlands, which boasts Malaysia's only casino (passports required). Genting Highlands can also be reached by regular helicopter service from Kuala Lumpur. Facilities include four hotels, golf courses with a magnificent clubhouse, an artificial lake, a health and sports centre, and an indoor swimming pool.

Fraser Hill

Set in lush jungle 100km (60 miles) north of Kuala Lumpur, Fraser Hill is popular with both holidaymakers and golf enthusiasts. A wide range of other sports are available. There is also a self-contained township, self-catering bungalows and an international standard hotel.

Cameron Highlands

Still further north, about four hours from Kuala Lumpur, are the Cameron Highlands. These are among the best-known mountain resorts in Asia, and consist of three separate townships: Brinchang, Tanah Rata and Ringlet. An international-standard hotel and many bungalows are set around a golf course in lush green surroundings. Tennis, squash, badminton, jungle walks and swimming are available. From here you can visit Gunung Brinchang at 2064m (6773ft) above sea level, the highest inhabited point in Peninsular Malaysia and therefore a magnificent viewpoint.

Negeri Sembilan

The state of Negeri Sembilan is located in the southwest corner of Peninsular Malaysia. It is famed throughout the region for its Minangkabau-style architecture, which reflects the influence of its first inhabitants from Sumatra.

Seremban

Negeri Sembilan's capital is 64km (39 miles) south of Kuala Lumpur. Journey time from Kuala Lumpur by car is about 30 minutes. Seremban Lake Gardens is one of the town's most attractive features, it has two beautiful lakes, one of which has a floating stage where cultural shows are performed. The State Mosque, which has nine pillars to represent the nine districts of the state, overlooks the tranquil gardens.

The Cultural Handicraft Complex at Labu Spur houses the Negeri Sembilan State Museum. Historical artefacts representative of the state and its inhabitants are on display in this museum, built entirely from wood.

Port Dickson

Port Dickson is on the coast, about one and a half hour's travelling time from Kuala Lumpur and 32km (19 miles) from Seremban. Malaysians flock here from the city at weekends, but with 18km (11 miles) of beach there is always plenty of room. The bays are fine for all kinds of watersports and fishing and there are facilities for water-skiing, motor cruising and deep-sea fishing. The water quality is not always good, though, and the sea around the beaches is often too shallow for decent swimming. The only real tourist attraction apart from the beaches is the Tanjong Tuan Lighthouse, where the coastline of Indonesia across the Straits of Malacca can be made out on a clear day.

Fort of Raja Jumaat

The Fort of Raja Jumaat (a 19th-century Bugis Warrior) is 7km (4 miles) from Port Dickson, in Kota Lukut. Remains of an old royal palace and a royal burial ground can be viewed, along with the remains of the fort, built in 1847 to control the tin trade in the vicinity.

Pedas Hot Springs

Pedas Hot Springs are 30km (18 miles) south of Seremban. Visitors wanting to take the restorative waters will find bathing enclosures, dining and recreational facilities.

Malacca

The city of Malacca may only be 2 hours by road south of Kuala Lumpur, but it is centuries away in ambience. Old men in fishing boats still cruise up through the centre of the modern city with the catch of the day, which can be enjoyed in the city's excellent restaurants. 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 centre 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.

Johor

In the southern state of Johor, Johor Bahru is Malaysia's southernmost gateway, and also the road and rail gateway from Singapore via a 1.5km (1-mile) causeway that connects the island to Peninsular Malaysia. Places of interest in the State include Johor Lama, the seat of the Johor Sultanate after eviction from Malacca; the Kota Tinggi Waterfalls; the Ayer Hitam ceramic works; Muar, famous throughout the country for its ghazal music and trance-inducing Kuda Kepang dances; the rubber and palm-oil plantations; and

Desaru, one of Johor's newest resorts. Desaru boasts unspoilt beaches and jungle. All kinds of sports are played here, from swimming, canoeing and snorkelling to pony riding and jungle trekking. Accommodation is in Malaysian-style chalets and hotels, and campers are also welcome.

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 watersports available, including windsurfing, water-skiing and sailing. It has a good selection of restaurants along the seafont.

7km (4 miles) north of Kuantan, Besaroh, an attractive fishing village, is famed for its shellcraft, batik and crafts modelled from coconuts.

Asia's first Club Méditerranée 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 and conditions are particularly favourable for windsurfing.

Pahang - The Interior

Malaysia's answer to Loch Ness is Lake Chini, in whose waters mythological monsters are said to lurk, guarding the entrance to a legendary sunken city.

Kenong Rimba Park, located in the valley of the Sungai Kenong, is a must for adventure seekers. Activities available include cave explorations, jungle trekking, fishing and rock climbing.

In the north of the state is Malaysia's largest national park, Taman Negara. Surrounded by the world's oldest tropical forest (supposedly 130 million years old), the park has remained virtually untouched and is a favourite haunt for outdoor enthusiasts, especially birdwatchers. The journey to the park headquarters involves travel by train, road and a 3-hour boat ride. Accommodation is mostly modest and the more comfortable lodgings are limited.

Tioman

The island of Tioman, in the South China Sea off the coast of Pahang, will be familiar to fans of the film *South Pacific*, as it was here that the film-makers found their mythical Bali Hai. The sweeping palm trees and luxuriously white beaches are still there, but fame has come at a price with a rush of development, which on one side has brought the ease of direct flights and express boats from the mainland, but also a raft of accommodations, not all of them of the same quality and aesthetic standards. Tioman is the largest of a group of 64 volcanic islands, and also the largest island on Malaysia's east coast. The three most popular resorts are ABC, Salang and Juara. Tioman is also one of the best destinations in Malaysia for scuba diving and snorkelling. The jungle clad interior is also popular for trekking, with many swathes of jungle still unspoilt. The cross island trek from Telek to Juara is the most popular trek with no special equipment needed.

Terengganu

The state of Terengganu has 225km (140 miles) of white sandy beaches. Swimming and all forms of watersports are favourite pastimes. There are several turtle-breeding beaches; at Rantau Abang, the Visitor Centre can arrange for guests to watch giant turtles laying their eggs.

Perhentians Islands

Many Malays consider the twin islands of Perhentian Besar and Perhentian Kecil to be the two most beautiful islands in the country. They both boast pristine white beaches, crystal clear waters and are still relatively unexploited. The strict local beliefs mean that alcohol is not common and this has helped deter major companies from setting up here, leaving the islands in their natural state for those who do choose to visit. The islands are popular for scuba diving and snorkelling with easy access to reefs and good visibility.

Sabah

Separated from Peninsular Malaysia by 950km (600 miles) of the South China Sea, Sabah, on the northern tip of Borneo, can be reached by direct flights from Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. Known as 'The Land Below The Wind', Sabah is an adventure playground, home of the world's oldest jungles and one of South-East Asia's highest peaks, Mount Kinabalu. Sabah also offers the unique opportunity to see orang-utans in their natural environment.

Mount Kinabalu

The ascent to the top of one of the highest mountains in South East Asia is a magical, but not too taxing experience that can be enjoyed even by inexperienced climbers. The region also offers excellent opportunities for expeditions and technical rock climbing. The Mount Kinabalu National Park is famous for containing over 500 species of birds and over 800 species of orchids. The vast range of plant species, which include alpine meadow plants, rhododendron forests and pitcher plants make the rich flora almost unrivalled in diversity throughout the world. Poring Hot Springs, where visitors can enjoy beneficiary sulphur waters, is 43km (26 miles) northeast of the park headquarters. A canopied walkway built through the treetops, provides excellent views of the lush rainforest below. The walkway also gives visitors the chance to see Rafflesias (the world's largest flower). Overnight accommodation in the park and at the springs is available.

Kota Kinabalu

The capital and main gateway to Sabah, Kota Kinabalu does little justice to its spectacular 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.

Excursions: Just south of Kota Kinabalu is the resort of Tanjung Aru, where the recently opened beach complex has been designed with both business traveller and holidaymaker in mind. As well as conference and meeting facilities, there is also a ferry-shuttle service into the town.

Tuaran is half an hour's drive northeast of Kota Kinabalu. The road runs through lush valleys, forested hills and rubber plantations. The town has a good 'Tamu' (market).

Sandakan

Nearly 400km (250 miles) from Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan is the old capital of Borneo. The Sandakan Orchid House

displays a rare collection of wonderful orchids and is a must for green-fingered enthusiasts. Also of interest is the Crocodile Farm, located outside Sandakan along the 7th mile Labuk Road. Over 1000 crocodiles, of varying sizes inhabit the farm at any one time. 24km (15 miles) from the town is the Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre, home of the 'wild men of Borneo', the world's largest orang-utan population. The sanctuary is a rehabilitation centre where orang-utans reap the benefits of inhabiting virgin rainforest in a protected environment. Now one of Sabah's top tourist attractions the centre is no flippant tourist site as it actively manages to take in injured or orphaned orang-utans and return them to the wild once they are rehabilitated. There is no guarantee of seeing an orang-utan, but they usually turn up for their twice-daily feedings.

Turtle Islands

40km (24 miles) north of Sandakan, Pulau Selingan, Pulau Bakungan Kecil and Pulau Gulisan collectively form the Turtle Islands. Visitors get the opportunity to witness the amazing sight of Hawksbill and Green turtles coming ashore in the evening to lay their eggs. The islands can be visited all year round, but from July to October the number of turtles visiting the island increases. Accommodation is available, but highly sought after.

Tenom

The Tenom region can be reached from Kota Kinabalu by Sabah's only railway line. A spectacular and thrilling experience, it follows the Padas River up through narrow jungle gorges in the Crocker Range. Tenom town is renowned for its style of longhouse building, unchanged in centuries, and for the traditional songs and dances performed there.

Labuan

The island of Labuan is 10km (6 miles) off the coast of Sabah, and covers an area of 98 sq km (38 sq miles). It is a duty free port and operates as Malaysia's offshore financial centre. Excellent duty free shopping and wide expanses of white sandy beaches throughout the island make Labuan a popular tourist destination. It is also a popular destination for divers and has four established wreck diving sites. The Cement Wreck is suitable for beginners, but the Blue Water Wreck requires more advanced diving experience. It is possible to penetrate the hull of the Australian and American wrecks, but these dive sights are only accessible to qualified wreck divers with relevant experience. Religious buildings of interest on the island are the An'nur Jamek Mosque, Kwong Fook Kung Temple and Lauan Gurdwara Sahib. The mosque, a place of worship for Labuan's Muslim community, has a progressive futuristic design. The temple, constructed in 1952 is the oldest Chinese temple on the island. The Hokkien community stages a deity procession with trance-like dances and food offerings each year in March. Lauan Gurdwara Sahib, a place of worship for Labuan's Sikh community was built in 1957. The Sikh 'Golden Temple' in Amritsar inspired the design. The Peace Park at Layang-Layangan, commemorating World War II, is a tranquil retreat. Japanese-inspired pavilions and ponds with stone bridges are dotted throughout beautifully landscaped gardens.

Pulau Papan

An island only five minutes by boat from Labuan, Pulau Papan is a popular retreat for weekenders from Brunei. Attractive landscaping throughout the island and a colonial lighthouse enhance Pulau Papan's natural charm. Chalet

accommodation is available; the only alternative for anyone wanting to stay overnight on the island is camping.

Sarawak

The state of Sarawak shares East Malaysia with Sabah, but is a vastly different destination than its neighbour 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 honour of the God Kuek Seng, dates back to 1895. The Chinese community reveres Kuek Seng, who became a god 1000 years ago. It is supposed that he grants all requests from his devotees. At the heart of Kuching, the splendour 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.

Excursions: Overnight excursions can be made up the Skrang River, with accommodation provided in longhouses. There are also downriver trips to Santubong, an ancient trading post on the coast.

The Bako National Park, covering an area of approximately 26 sq km (10 sq miles), has interesting wildlife and vegetation, including carnivorous plants, long-nosed monkeys and Sambar deer. Excursions are organised from Kuching.

Gunung Mulu National Park, a World Heritage Site, has over 3500 different plant species and is home to an abundance of wildlife including exotic birds and butterflies, fish and mammals. Small Borneo gibbons swinging through the trees are a common sight. The magnificent limestone caves in the park are the main tourist attraction, and include Deer Cave, Clearwater Cave and The Cave of the Winds.

Other excursions, often via Miri, can be made to the Niah Caves, which show evidence of human existence dating back to 5000 BC. The caves are also valued for their guano and bird's nests, the latter being used to make soup. Many of the caves – and some are more easily accessible than others – may be visited with a guide.

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LUGGAGE

Traveling light is always the first and best rule! We recommend passengers limit their luggage to one medium-sized soft bag per person or two small duffle bags. In this security conscious era, airline luggage restrictions may change without notice. Also, luggage limits vary depending on

ticket class, plane size, destinations, etc. It is always best to confirm with airlines for specific limitations.

Generally speaking, from the US, economy class passengers are allowed to check in two (2) normal size pieces of luggage (each piece measuring no more than about 62 linear inches, which means length plus width plus height), and not exceeding 70 pounds per bag.

Scheduled flights from other countries and within foreign countries generally limit luggage to 44 pounds total, plus one carry-on personal item. Further restrictions apply for charter flights. We will advise you of those restrictions in your final documents.

Most airlines now allow only one carry-on bag in addition to one personal item such as a laptop or handbag. Most bags within the 22 x 14 x 9 (or, a total of 45 linear inches) size restriction will be considered legal carry-on size by major domestic U.S. airlines. Many US airlines check-in desks have sizing boxes within which your bag must fit. Obviously, no knives or cutting instruments are allowed in carry-on baggage.

All luggage should have identification inside as well as secure baggage tags on the outside.

Please note that the US National Transportation and Safety Board now suggests that you do not lock your checked luggage. If a screener has to open your bag, the locks may have to be broken. This applies to flights within the US and international flights originating in the US. This, however, does not address other international travel issues. We suggest that you lock your luggage and bring a couple of spare locks in the event one or more are cut off. But the choice is up to each individual traveler to make.

Hint: Some companies such as Aurora Luggage (<http://www.auroraluggage.com/>) post the most current luggage requirements for many individual airlines on their web sites.

CAMERAS & FILM

Photography: Please, approach people with an attitude of respect, just as you would want to be treated. Do not take anyone's picture without permission. Many times it is necessary to negotiate a fee beforehand. Never take any photos of airports, police or government buildings, military installations, or borders.

Equipment: Bring cameras and lenses you are comfortable using. If you get new equipment before you go, do so as far in advance as possible. Shoot and develop at least a dozen rolls before departure to work out problems. And, don't forget your camera operation manual, filters, and a flash unit. Cameras should be packed with good cushioning. The roads are sometimes rough, and constant vibration can do damage. Keep your camera with you as much as possible, and do not leave it on the floor of the vehicle when on the road. Make sure you have lens caps for all your lenses. Clean your equipment frequently. Bring along a puffer brush and lens cleaning tissues.

Lenses: A combination of fixed and/or zoom lenses with focal lengths from 28 mm to 200 mm is good for general travel photography, although you can take excellent photographs with only a 50 mm lens. Zoom lenses such as 35-80mm, 70-210 mm, or 100-300 mm will help you capture the sights in a variety of different settings. Serious photographers will want them handy. A macro lens is helpful for shooting close-ups, but a good set of extension tubes will work very well. A 2x converter is also a handy. Point and shoot cameras are nice

for a group or indoor shots, but leave something to be desired when photographing outdoors. Bring a small cleaning kit and blower brush to keep equipment clean.

Video: If you are planning to shoot video on a safari, be sure to bring plenty of tape and batteries with you. Do not plan to buy videotape. Videotape is not affected by airport x-ray; only magnetic fields or prolonged exposure to heat will damage videotape. Your battery charger should be capable of automatically adjusting to 240 volts. You will probably have no problem finding a plug in most of the lodges and larger tented camps, but be prepared with plenty of batteries

Batteries: Put fresh photo-quality batteries in your camera and other electric equipment before you leave and bring at least two sets of spare batteries with you. Your camera will be useless without them, and batteries can be hard to find and expensive.

Film: It is always best to bring along whatever you need with you. Film is generally more expensive abroad and it may be hard to locate. You'll be surprised at how much film you use when you are trying to capture all those special moments. Even those not all that interested in photography will probably shoot a couple of 36-exposure rolls per day, and enthusiastic shooters will easily double or triple that amount. Be sure film is fresh and, when possible, keep it refrigerated. A film speed of ASA/ISO 64 is an excellent choice for color slide film. Use this speed when possible rather than higher speed films. There is a noticeable difference in quality that it is worth the extra effort to keep your camera steady at a somewhat slower shutter speed than you would otherwise use. For color prints, there are several good choices, including Kodak and Fuji films (ASA/ISO 100 & 200) for daylight photography, ASA/ISO 400 & 1000 are good for lower light and nighttime situations.

It is helpful to set up a numbering system for your film, marking each roll with masking tape and numbers or letters, before leaving home. This way you can code the rolls of film and where they were shot. It's quite a job to sort through hundreds of pictures with no clue where or when they were taken.

Avoid airport x-ray machines whenever possible and request a hand search of your film only. While security people are often obliging, some are not so allow a little extra time. X-rays are cumulative on exposed and unexposed film so the more times film is x-rayed, the more risk of damage. This is especially true with older machines found in many countries. Lead bags for film are available for purchase and are worth the small investment. Do not have film in your camera because it may be opened for inspection.

NOTE: *Recent news reports warn that new explosive detectors used in more than 100 US airports to scan checked baggage will ruin unprotected, unexposed film. This technology will eventually be in place at all airports worldwide. Experts suggest either carrying your film in your carry-on luggage and/or placing film in safety, lead-lined bags to prevent X-ray damage.*

SAFETY

Common sense safety precautions you normally observe when traveling anywhere should be followed to minimize the risk of personal injury or property loss.

Leave jewelry at home! Do not leave cash, traveler's checks, airline tickets, etc. in an unattended room, even in a locked suitcase. Most of the accommodations have safe deposit facilities at the front desk for your valuables. Use them.

In cities here as in cities at home, be aware! During the day and in crowds, be careful when carrying purses or cameras. Do not carry large amounts of currency or valuables. Take taxis from hotels and do not accept rides from unauthorized cabs. Do not walk around unfamiliar cities alone at night. Be wary of entering into conversation with unknown people on the street. These are the same precautions a visitor would observe in North American cities. Common sense is the best defense.

Pamphlets addressing safety issues abroad are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402, or from Bureau of Consular Affairs' website at <http://travel.state.gov>.

TRAVELER'S ETIQUETTE

You are guaranteed to come up against cultural differences between our society and that of other countries that may think and do things differently from the way we do them. Traditions and philosophies, some of which are very old, govern attitudes toward time, business, family, and politics. But this is at the heart of why we travel -- to experience the world through other cultures and other people.

Travel necessitates being a good-natured realist as well as a romantic. Being a genial traveling companion makes for an enjoyable travel experience for everyone and a great safari. Observing simple rules of common courtesy will better assure the success of your travel.

DEALING WITH JET LAG

With the joys and adventures of international travel come certain unavoidable inconveniences such as occasional lost luggage or bouts of jet lag. In fact, studies reveal that as much as 90% of long distance travelers experience a degree of jet lag.

Jet lag describes that out-of-sorts feeling associated with long flights, particularly those across time zones. Symptoms and severity vary but may include drowsiness, fatigue, irritability, difficulty concentrating, headaches, insomnia, and swelling of the extremities.

The number of time zones crossed affects the severity of jet lag. The internal body clock follows circadian rhythm, which is controlled by the hypothalamus that processes nerve signals. That clock is designed for regular cycles of light and darkness. Depending on the number of time zones crossed, it may take several days for that rhythm to be restored.

But that is not the only influence. Other factors include cabin pressure, stale air, lack of humidity, and your overall physical condition at the beginning of your trip.

Although jet lag can not be completely avoided, there are some simple things you can do to help minimize its affects.

Consider the following for your next scheduled trip.

- Start your trip well rested with a good night's sleep prior to departure. Getting adequate rest before starting on your journey will help minimize the amount of catching up you'll have to do when you arrive at the destination. Once home, try to schedule a day of rest before returning to work.
- Drink plenty of fluids -- water and juices will help you to stay well hydrated. Seasoned travelers recommend that you carry a bottle of drinking water with you and drink eight ounces every hour.
- Avoid alcohol and caffeine just before and during flights. Both possess diuretic properties that promote dehydration. Alcohol also causes drowsiness and contributes to feeling sluggish.
- Once settled onboard, reset your watch to the time zone to which you are traveling. This small act helps you begin adjusting to your destination's local time.
- As much as possible, create a dark environment during flight. Studies have shown that bright lights strongly affect individuals' body clocks. If necessary, try eyeshades and earplugs to help block distractions and convince your body that it is nighttime. Closing window shades and turning off overhead lights may also help. Sleep on the plane if your flight has an early morning arrival time.
- Wear loose-fitting clothing and comfortable shoes that will help in the event you experience mild swelling. Experienced travelers often bring lightweight slippers to wear during flights.
- Although not always feasible, look for opportunities to walk around while in flight. Do simple isometric exercises (contracting and relaxing as many muscle groups as possible) in your seat. These will improve circulation, help promote increased alertness, and reduce chances of swelling.
- If you arrive in the morning, plan to stay awake. If possible, wait until the local bedtime to sleep. Many people swear that this is key in determining how quickly they adapt to local conditions. You will sleep better and will be less likely to suffer insomnia than if you nap upon arrival.
- During extended stopovers, showers are sometimes available. If you have the opportunity, shower. Trans-Pacific pilots report that taking a shower in Hawaii helps them recover more quickly from the general effects of jet lag after the flight.