DISCLAIMER

The Country Orientation Guides are provided as a service for faculty travelling to international destinations for teaching purposes. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in the Country Orientation Guides, neither the Office of Training nor the Fischler School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University can accept responsibility for any errors that may appear in information, editorial content, maps, text, representation, or illustrations as printed. The publisher does accept any responsibility for content of editorial. Additional copies of this publication may be obtained in the Office of International Affairs at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services in North Miami Beach.
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Welcome

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for accepting to teach in Malaysia!

The Office of International Affairs (OIA) at the Fischler School of Education and Human Services has prepared this country guide to provide you with basic and general information on the country you are about to visit.

This guide is intended to help you prepare for your trip. As you travel in the country, please let us know if you find that there are details that need to be added or changed so that we can keep our guides updated. Although we have tried to make it as comprehensive as possible, all of us know that our world moves very rapidly and changes happen everyday; however, we have tried our best to include all of the details you need to make sure you are comfortable in your new environment.

This information has been compiled with the help of the Office of Strategic Initiatives and Global Enterprises for Academic Development (SIGEAD), and the contribution from the OIA team members and our Field Associates and Regional Liaisons around the world. To all of them, and to you, thank you very much for helping these programs become as successful as they are today, and as a result, for making a difference in our students' lives, wherever they are located.

Have a wonderful experience and please be sure to meet with us upon your return so we can discuss your experience and solicit your input for future cohorts. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can be any assistance to you prior to your departure, or while you are teaching.

Bon voyage!

Anthony DeNapoli, Dean of International Affairs

Alejandra Parra, Associate Dean of International Affairs
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<tr>
<td><strong>Contact at the Office of International Affairs</strong></td>
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<td>Dr. Anthony DeNapoli, Dean</td>
<td>Office-954-262-8733</td>
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<td>Travel Office 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.</td>
<td>Office-954-262-8888</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Office (ONLY after contacting airline or hotel directly)</td>
<td>1-800-809-8858</td>
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<td>There is a charge of $20 if you contact this number.</td>
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Passport Issues
A passport is an internationally recognized travel document that verifies the identity and nationality of the bearer. A valid U.S. passport is required to enter and leave most foreign countries. Only the U.S. Department of State has the authority to grant, issue, or verify United States passports.

The Passport Services Office provides information and services to American citizens about how to obtain, replace or change a passport.

To obtain a passport for the first time, you need to go in person to one of over 9,000 passport acceptance facilities located throughout the United States with two photographs of yourself, proof of U.S. citizenship, and a valid form of photo identification such as a driver’s license.

Acceptance facilities include many Federal, state and probate courts, post offices, some public libraries and a number of county and municipal offices. There are also 13 regional passport agencies, and 1 Gateway City Agency, which serve customers who are traveling within 2 weeks (14 days), or who need foreign visas for travel. Appointments are required in such cases.

You will need to apply in person if you are applying for a U.S. passport for the first time:

- If your expired U.S. passport is not in your possession;
- If your previous U.S. passport has expired and was issued more than 15 years ago;
- If your previous U.S. passport was issued when you were under age 16;
- Or if your current valid U.S. passport has been lost or stolen.

*To obtain more information on obtaining a passport please visit

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/first/first_832.html

*To renew an existing passport please visit

http://travel.state.gov/passport/get/renew/renew_833.html
Weather Information
For weather information on specific countries please visit:
http://worldweather.wmo.int/

Central Intelligence Agency-The World Factbook

The World Factbook provides valuable geographic and demographic information. For more information on individual countries, please visit:

TSA Travel Tips

Make Your Trip Better Using 3-1-1

3-1-1 for carry-ons =

- 3 ounce bottle or less (by volume);
- 1 quart-sized, clear, plastic, zip-top bag;
- 1 bag per passenger placed in screening bin.

One-quart bag per person limits the total liquid volume each traveler can bring. 3 oz. container size is a security measure.

Consolidate bottles into one bag and X-ray separately to speed screening.

Be prepared. Each time TSA searches a carry-on it slows down the line. Practicing 3-1-1 will ensure a faster and easier checkpoint experience.

3-1-1 is for short trips. If in doubt, put your liquids in checked luggage.

Declare larger liquids. Medications, baby formula and food, breast milk, and juice are allowed in reasonable quantities exceeding three ounces and are not required to be in the zip-top bag. Declare these items for inspection at the checkpoint.

Come early and be patient. Heavy travel volumes and the enhanced security process may mean longer lines at security checkpoints.

TSA working with our partners. TSA works with airlines and airports to anticipate peak traffic and be ready for the traveling public.
Useful Phone Numbers
Sources of information include:

U.S. Dept. of State Travel Advisory: tel. 202-647-5225 (manned 24 hr.)

U.S. Passport Agency: tel. 202-647-0518

U.S. Centers for Disease Control International Traveler's Hotline: tel. 404-332-4559

Lost & Found
Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. To report a lost or stolen

**American Express** - To protect your information, you can only report a lost or stolen card by calling American Express Customer Service at 1-800-992-3404. Outside the United States call, collect 336-393-1111.

**Diners Club** - Call Diners Club Customer Service at 1-800-234-6377. Outside the United States call, collect 702-797-5532.


If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union**. Call tel. 1-800-325-6000 www.westernunion.com.

Identity theft and fraud are potential complications of losing your wallet, especially if you have lost your driver's license along with your cash and credit cards. Notify the major credit-reporting bureaus immediately; placing a fraud alert on your records may protect you against liability for criminal activity. The three major U.S. credit-reporting agencies are **Equifax** (tel. 800-766-0008; www.equifax.com), **Experian** (tel. 888-397-3742; www.experian.com), and **TransUnion** (tel. 800-680-7289; www.transunion.com). Finally, if you have lost all forms of photo ID, call your airline and explain the situation; they might allow you to board the plane if you have a copy of your passport or birth certificate and a copy of the police report you have filed.
US Department of State - Tips for Traveling Abroad

Here are some quick tips to make your travel easier and safer:

- **Register so the State Department can better assist you in an emergency**: Register your travel plans with the State Department through a free online service at [https://travelregistration.state.gov](https://travelregistration.state.gov). This will help us contact you if there is a family emergency in the U.S., or if there is a crisis where you are traveling. In accordance with the Privacy Act, information on your welfare and whereabouts will not be released to others without your express authorization.

- **Sign passport, and fill in the emergency information**: Make sure you have a signed, valid passport, and a visa, if required, and fill in the emergency information page of your passport.

- **Leave copies of itinerary and passport data page**: Leave copies of your itinerary, passport data page and visas with family or friends, so you can be contacted in case of an emergency.

- **Check your overseas medical insurance coverage**: Ask your medical insurance company if your policy applies overseas, and if it covers emergency expenses such as medical evacuation. If it does not, consider supplemental insurance.

- **Familiarize yourself with local conditions and laws**: While in a foreign country, you are subject to its laws. The State Department web site at [http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html](http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1765.html) has useful safety and other information about the countries you will visit.

- **Take precautions to avoid being a target of crime**: To avoid being a target of crime, do not wear conspicuous clothing or jewelry and do not carry excessive amounts of money. Also, do not leave unattended luggage in public areas and do not accept packages from strangers.

- **Contact us in an emergency**: Consular personnel at U.S. Embassies and Consulates abroad and in the U.S. are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to provide emergency assistance to U.S. citizens. Contact information for U.S. Embassies and Consulates appears on the Bureau of Consular Affairs website at [http://travel.state.gov](http://travel.state.gov). Also, note that the Office of Overseas Citizen Services in the State Department’s Bureau of Consular Affairs may be reached for assistance with emergencies at 1-888-407-4747, if calling from the U.S. or Canada, or 202-501-4444, if calling from overseas.
U.S. Customs Restrictions – What You Cannot Bring Back With You

Some items may not be brought into the U.S., or may only be brought in under certain restrictions. For information on U.S. customs regulations and procedures, see the Customs and Border Protection booklet “Know Before You Go,” available at http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/vacation/kbyg.

Customs and Border Patrol Top 10 Travelers Tips

1. Have all required travel documents for the countries you are visiting, as well as identification for re-entry to the U.S.
2. Declare everything you are bringing in from abroad, even if you bought it in a duty-free shop. This merchandise is also subject to U.S. duty fees and other restrictions.
3. Be cautious when buying something from a street vendor. Keep in mind that the merchandise may be counterfeit and/or unsafe and you might have to surrender it to U.S. Customs and Border Protection when you get home.
4. Know that the things bought abroad for personal use or as gifts are eligible for duty exemptions. If you are bringing them back for resale, they are not.
5. Know the difference between prohibited merchandise (such as ivory, tortoise shell products, absinthe, and counterfeit items) and restricted merchandise.
6. Be aware that many foreign-made medications are not FDA-approved, and you cannot bring them into the U.S. Also, when traveling abroad, bring only the amount of medication you will need during the trip.
7. Do not bring any Cuban-made products into the U.S., not matter where you purchased them.
8. Do not bring any food into the U.S. without first checking to see if it is permitted. Also, any and all live birds and bird products, whether for personal or commercial use, may be restricted and/or quarantined.
9. Understand that CBP officers can inspect you and your belongings without a warrant. This may include your luggage, vehicle, and personal searches, and is meant to enforce our laws as well as protect legitimate travelers.
10. Read our helpful brochure, “Know Before You Go,” before traveling. Print copies may be requested online, or view the web version at www.cbp.gov under the Travel section.
Malaysia

Country Overview

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy with an elected federal parliamentary government. The country is comprised of 13 states, 11 on the Malay Peninsula and two, Sabah and Sarawak, on the island of Borneo. There is also a federally administered set of territories: the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, the administrative center of Putrajaya, and the island of Labuan. Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country of 27 million people. Malays form the predominant ethnic group. The two other large ethnic groups in Malaysia are Chinese and Indians. Islam is the official religion and is practiced by some 60 percent of the population. Bahasa Malaysia is the official language, although English is widely spoken.

Malaysia's multi-racial society contains many ethnic groups. Malays comprise a majority of just over 50%. By constitutional definition, all Malays are Muslim. About a quarter of the population is ethnic Chinese, a group that historically played an important role in trade and business. Malaysians of Indian descent comprise about 7% of the population and include Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians. Non-Malay indigenous groups combine to make up approximately 11% of the population.

Population density is highest in peninsular Malaysia, home to some 20 million of the country's 27 million inhabitants. The remaining 7 million live on the Malaysian portion of the island of Borneo in the large but less densely-populated states of Sabah and Sarawak. More than half of Sarawak's residents and about two-thirds of Sabah's are from indigenous groups.

Banking

Banking hours -- Banks are open from 9am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday and 9:30 to 11:30am on Saturday. Government offices are open from 8am to 12:45pm and 2 to 4:15pm Monday through Friday and from 8am to 12:45pm on Saturday. Smaller shops like provision stores may open as early as six or 6:30am and close as late as 9pm, especially those near the wet markets. Many such stores are closed on Saturday evenings and Sunday afternoons and are busiest before lunch. Other shops are open 9:30am to 7pm. Department stores and shops in malls tend to open later, about 10:30 or 11am until 8:30 or 10pm throughout the week. Note that in Kuala Terengganu and Kota Bharu the weekday runs from Saturday to Wednesday.
**Currency** - The national currency is the Ringgit Malaysia or RM. The currency is denominated into 100, 50, 10, 5, 2 and 1 RM notes. Coins include 50 cents, 20 cents, 10 cents, 5 cents and 1 cent.

**Communication**

**Language** -- The national language is Malay, or Bahasa Malaysia, although English is widely spoken. Chinese dialects and Tamil are also spoken.

**Internet** -- Service is available to all of the nation. Internet cafes are available in the most surprisingly remote places. Although the major international hotels will have access for their guests in the business center, charges can be very steep.

**Postal Service** -- Post office locations in each city covered are provided in each section. Overseas airmail postage rates are as follows: RM0.50 (10¢/5p) for postcards and RM1.50 (40¢/20p) for a 100-gram letter.

**Telephone** - The international access code for Malaysia is +60. The outgoing code is 00 followed by the relevant country code (e.g. 001 for the United States). City/area codes are in use, e.g. (0)3 for Kuala Lumpur, (0)4 for Penang. International Direct Dial is available throughout the country, but the service can be erratic. Hotels can add a hefty surcharge to their telephone bills; it is best to check before making international calls. Coin and card-operated public phones are widespread, and phone cards can be purchased at the airport, petrol stations and newsagents. Cards are not transferable between phone companies: Uniphone and Telekom phone boxes are the most common. Mobile networks cover most of the country; the local mobile phone operators use GSM networks, which are compatible with most international phones.

**Documents Needed**

American citizens are required to have a passport valid for at least six months to enter Malaysia, but Americans do not need to obtain a visa in advance for a pleasure or business trip if their stay in Malaysia is 90 days or less. Immigration officials will then place an entry stamp in their passport. While in Malaysia, Americans should carry their passports with them at all times.

Travelers are required to carry their passports for travel from peninsular Malaysia to eastern Malaysia (on the island of Borneo) and between the provinces of Sabah and Sarawak, both of which are on Borneo. Social visit passes (visas) issued at immigration points such as KLIA airport, Johor Bahru, and Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) for entry into peninsular Malaysia are not valid for entry into the state of Sarawak and usually have 3 months’ validity. New social visit passes must be obtained upon arrival at Kuching or Miri airports in Sarawak. In most cases, social visit passes issued by Sarawak immigration officials are valid for any part of Malaysia and usually have 1 month’s validity.
Malaysian immigration authorities routinely have detained foreigners who overstay their social visit passes (visas). In light of the arrests of several American citizens in connection with immigration sweeps conducted by Malaysian police and immigration authorities, American citizens should carry their passports (containing the Malaysian entry stamp) with them at all times. Depending upon the nature of the violation, detentions may last from a few hours to several weeks, pending a formal hearing. American citizens are urged to check their visa status periodically while in Malaysia and strictly follow immigration laws and regulations.

For more information on the latest entry procedures and requirements, contact the Embassy of Malaysia, 3516 International Court NW, Washington, DC 20008, telephone: (202) 572-9700, email: malwashdc@kln.gov.by; the Malaysian consulates located in New York, telephone: (212) 490-2722, email: malnyc@yahoo.com; or Los Angeles, telephone: (213) 892-1238, e-mail: mwla@pacbell.net; or visit the Malaysian government’s web site, which has information on Malaysian embassies and consulates abroad at www.kln.gov.my.

Electricity
The voltage used in Malaysia is 220-240 volts AC (50 cycles). Three-point square plugs are used, so buy an adapter if you plan to bring any appliances. Also, many larger hotels can provide adapters upon request.

Emergencies
Embassies & Consulates -- American citizens living in or visiting Malaysia are encouraged to register their stay in Malaysia on line through the State Department’s Travel Registration web site or in person by visiting the U.S. Embassy’s American Citizen Services (ACS) section. The U.S. Embassy is located at 376 Jalan Tun Razak 50400, Kuala Lumpur. The local mailing address is P.O. Box No. 10035, 50700 Kuala Lumpur. The U.S. Embassy’s telephone (60-3) 2168-5000 is available 24 hours a day for emergencies such as arrests, serious illness/injury, or death of Americans, (after business hours, please press 1 at the recording). The ACS Unit’s telephone number is (60-3) 2168-4997/4979, and the Consular section’s fax number is (60-3) 2148-5801. The U.S. Embassy’s general fax number is (60-3) 2142-2207 and web site is http://malaysia.usembassy.gov. The Consular section’s e-mail is klconsular@state.gov.

Hospitals - Medical facilities and services are adequate in the larger cities, where Western-trained doctors can be found. The American Embassy can provide a list of English-speaking doctors and hospitals upon request. Psychological and psychiatric medical and counseling services are limited. Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost thousands of dollars or more. Doctors and hospitals often expect immediate cash payment for health services although major credit cards are acceptable.

Malaysian ambulance attendants lack training equivalent to
U.S. standards. Callers to Malaysia's "999" emergency number (equivalent to the U.S. 911) are connected to the Red Crescent and patients are directed to whichever hospital the dispatcher chooses. Americans staying in Malaysia for extended periods, especially those who have known health problems, are advised to investigate private ambulance services in their area and to provide family and close contacts with the direct telephone number(s) of the service they prefer.

Air quality in Malaysia is acceptable most of the time. However, when burning of vegetation occurs in Malaysia and nearby countries, especially from March through June and during September and October, air quality can range from “unhealthy for sensitive groups” to “unhealthy.”

Recorded information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747), fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or from its web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad and other health information for travelers consult the World Health Organization’s (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en/.

**Police** - Police/Ambulance dial 999. Fire and Rescue dial 994.

**Holidays**

Muslim festivals are timed according to local sightings of various phases of the moon and the dates given below 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. Some 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 Raja Haji may last anything from two to 10 days, depending on the region. (b) Buddhist festivals are also timed according to phases of the moon and variations may occur.

2008

- October 1 – 2 - Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadan)
- October 28 - Deepvali.
- December 8-9 - Hari Raya Haji (Feast of the Sacrifice)
- December 25 - Christmas.
- December 29 - Awal Muharram (Islamic New Year)

2009

- January 1 - New Year's Day
- January 20 - Awal Muharram (Islamic New Year)
Safety
The Department of State remains concerned about the possibility of terrorist attacks against U.S. citizens in Southeast Asia. Extremist groups in the region have demonstrated the capability to carry out attacks in locations where Westerners congregate, and these groups do not distinguish between civilian and official targets. The United States Government has designated two such groups, Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) and the Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) as Foreign Terrorist Organizations. JI is linked to al-Qaeda and other regional terrorist groups, such as the ASG, and has cells operating throughout Southeast Asia.

There are indications that both criminal and terrorist groups continue to plan acts of violence against foreigners. The most recent incident involving American citizens occurred in 2000. The most recent incident involving other foreigners occurred in 2003. The ASG, based in the southern Philippines, has kidnapped foreigners in Malaysia. Criminal elements are also responsible for kidnapping and piracy committed against foreigners. These acts of violence have occurred in the eastern islands and coastal areas of the state of Sabah, closest to the maritime border with the Philippines.

Violent crime involving tourists and expatriates in Malaysia is relatively uncommon. Petty theft, particularly purse snatching and pick-pocketing, and residential burglaries are the most common criminal activity directed against foreigners. Other types of non-violent criminal activity include credit card fraud and automobile theft. Malaysia’s national emergency number is 999 (equivalent to the U.S. 911). An alternate number is the Royal Malaysia Police Operations Center in Kuala Lumpur, 2115-9999. In tourist areas such as Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, and the main square in Malacca, the police have established small “Tourist Police” stations.

Purse-Snatching: In most incidents, two men on a motorcycle speed up from behind a victim and the passenger on the back snatches a purse, handbag, or cellular phone. Thieves have also
conducted snatch-thefts while leaning out of the passenger side of moving vehicles. These thefts occur at all hours and often in front of large groups of witnesses, even in upscale neighborhoods frequented by expatriates. Women walking by themselves or with small children are the most common targets. Victims have been injured and even killed after falling and being dragged by thieves in cars or on motorcycles.

To avoid becoming the victim of a purse snatching, be alert and aware of your surroundings. Pedestrians should walk facing traffic and keep a close eye on all vehicular traffic, particularly motorcycles. If possible, try to walk on the sidewalk away from the curb. Avoid poorly lit streets, shortcuts, and narrow alleys. Purses or shoulder bags should be closed and tucked under the arm. Do not wrap the strap around your arm or shoulder. People have been injured or killed by being pulled to the ground by their purse straps as the thieves speed off. If your purse or bag is snatched, report the incident as soon as possible to the police.

Credit Card Fraud: Travelers in Malaysia should avoid using credit cards, except at reputable establishments, and credit card numbers should be closely safeguarded at all times. Credit card fraud continues to be a serious problem in Malaysia, although enhanced technology has somewhat reduced reported instances of fraud. Unauthorized charges may not show on a credit card account for several months, but can unexpectedly appear in amounts of $5,000 or more. One of the more common methods is for retailers to swipe the credit card under the counter where account information is received into a machine containing a mobile phone SIM card and is transmitted to a criminal organization for reproduction. Travelers should watch retailers closely and any “under the table” transactions should be reported to the local police. In some cases sophisticated criminal organizations have tapped into data lines emanating from retail establishments. Credit card information is then stolen while it is being transmitted to financial institutions. If you must use a credit card in Malaysia, you are advised to check your account information frequently for fraudulent charges. ATM cards are safer as long as the machines where they are used are associated with reputable Malaysian banks.

**Time**

Malaysia is on GMT + 8, or EST + 13 hours. Malaysia does not recognize daylight savings time.

**Transportation**

**Airports** - Airports in Malaysia are numerous and interspersed throughout the country. The Malaysian airports are of avant-garde quality and these airports have contributed remarkably in coping with the tourist pressure. As a result of the millions of people visiting Malaysia the airports have become extremely busy; however, special arrangements have been made in the airports to ensure the safety and welfare of the passengers. The International Airport of Kuala Lumpur is the largest and busiest airport in the country and other important airports are airports are Penang, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.
All the major airlines of the world have flights that fly to and from these airports to different parts of Malaysia and other parts of the world. The official airline of the country is Malaysia Airlines and it operates flights from all airports to different parts of the country. There are also many international airlines operating in the airports of the country like Thai Airways International, Transaero, Uzbekistan Airways, Vietnam Airlines, Air China, Air India and many others.

**Taxi** - In Kuala Lumpur, taxi fares are based on a metered rate and are available 24 hours a day. Extra charges apply for services after midnight or for services booked by phone. Passengers have the right to object if the taxi driver stops to pick up other passengers along the way. Outside the city, as well as in other parts of Malaysia, taxis operate on a fixed rate depending on the distance. Airport limousine taxis (budget or premier) at the KLIA operate using a prepaid coupon system and visitors are required to make their payment at the counter.

**Rental Car** – Malaysia has the established rental car companies available in the airport as you come in. Driving is on the left side of the road.

**Water**

Water in Kuala Lumpur is reported to be potable; however, most locals boil the water before drinking it. Hotels will supply bottled water in your room.

**Academic System**

**Structure of School System**

**Primary**

- Length of program in years: 6
- Age level from: 7 to 12
- Certificate/diploma awarded: Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (Primary School Evaluation Test)

**Lower Secondary**

- Length of program in years: 3
- Age level from: 13 to 15
- Certificate/diploma awarded: Penilaian Menengah Rendah (Lower Secondary Evaluation Test)

**Upper Secondary**

- Length of program in years: 2
- Age level from: 16 to 17
- Certificate/diploma awarded: Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian Certificate of Education)

**Vocational Secondary**
Length of program in years: 2  
Age level from: 16 to 17  
Certificate/diploma awarded: Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia Vokesyenal (for vocational schools), Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (for technical schools)

**Pre-university**
Type of school providing this education: Kolej  
Length of program in years: 1  
Age level from: 18 to 19  
Certificate/diploma awarded: Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia (Malaysian High School Certificate)

**K-12**
Primary education lasts for six years leading to the Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah. Secondary education covers seven years, divided into three stages: lower (forms I-III); upper (forms IV and V) and pre-university. Lower secondary school covers three years leading to the Penilaian Menengah Rendah. Upper secondary school covers two years. There is selective entry. Most pupils study in academic schools in either Arts or Science, while the others apply to vocational or technical schools. Only pupils with a solid background in Mathematics and Science are admitted to technical schools. Studies lead to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia. Vocational/technical schools studies lead to the Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia Vokesyenal. There is selective entry to sixth forms. At the end of the pre-university course, pupils take the Siji Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia organized by the Malaysian Examination Council or the A level examination.

**Higher Education**
Higher education is provided by universities, polytechnics and colleges. There are both public and a wide variety of private higher education institutions. In 2004, the Ministry of Education was revamped and a new Ministry of Higher Education was created to supervise higher education policy in the country.

**Professor/Student Relationship**
Malaysian culture places teachers in a place of respect, like parents. Such perception is rooted in religious traditions, be it Hinduism, Buddhism or Islamic. The principle of this relationship is that knowledge is best conveyed through a strong human bond based on the concept of students' respect for, commitment, devotion and obedience to, the teacher. Under it through personal instruction, the student eventually masters the knowledge that the teacher embodies.

**Teacher education**
Training of pre-primary and primary/basic school teachers - Primary school teachers are
trained in a two-and-a-half-years' post SPM course at a teacher-training college leading to a Teaching Certificate.

**Training of secondary school teachers** - Secondary school teachers are trained in a one-year postgraduate course leading to a Diploma in Education or a Bachelor in Education in public universities. Teacher Training Colleges offer a three-year Diploma in Teaching (Diploma Perguruan Malaysia).

**Etiquette**

**Cultural Orientation**
The individual ethnic Malay makes decisions based upon the immediate situation and the relationships among those involved. The highly religious may refer to Islamic guidebooks which detail the proper way to handle every decision in life. Ethnic Malays are quick to organize and have the support of the group behind their decisions. They are not good at confrontations and try to communicate in such a way as to alleviate conflict. They seldom use a categorical "no." It is important for foreign business executives to develop a personal relationship with their Malaysian counterparts.

**Business Practices**
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. Malaysians prefer to do business 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 slower than in the West. Be patient; it would be unusual to complete a complicated business deal in only one visit. Expect to take several trips over a period of months. Indeed, little will happen at the first meeting except getting acquainted. Courtesy is the single most important attribute for successful relationships in Malaysia. This civility in no way hinders the determination of Malaysian businesspeople to get their own way.

The exchange of business cards is a formal ceremony in Malaysia. After introductions are made, the visiting businessperson should offer his or her card. Make sure you give a card to each person present. Present your card either with both hands or with your right hand (with the left hand lightly supporting your right). Give your card to the recipient with the print facing him or her (so the recipient can read it). He or she will receive the card with both hands, and then study the card for a few moments before carefully putting it away in a pocket. You should do the same when a card is presented to you. Never put a card in your back pocket (where many men carry their wallets). Do not write on someone's business card.
Protocol

Malaysia has three major ethnic groups, each with its own traditions: Malay, Chinese, and Indian. 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 gentle and lasts for some ten or twelve seconds. Often, both hands will be used. In Malaysia, westernized women may shake hands with both men and women. Malaysian businessmen usually wait for a woman to offer her hand. It is perfectly acceptable for a woman to simply nod upon an introduction rather than offering her hand. Ethnic Malays are generally Muslim. Traditionally, there is no physical contact between Muslim men and women. (Indeed, if a religious Muslim male is touched by a woman, he must ritually cleanse himself before he prays again.) Because of this, women should not offer to shake hands with Malay men, nor should men offer to shake hands with Malay women. Of course, if a westernized Malay offers to shake hands, do so.

Aside from handshakes, there is no public contact between the sexes in Malaysia. Do not kiss or hug a person of the opposite sex in public—even if you are husband and wife. On the other hand, contact between people of the same sex is permitted. Men may hold hands with men or even walk with their arms around each other; this is interpreted as nothing except friendship.

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 if you can use your right hand instead. Accept gifts and hold cash in the right hand.

It is impolite to point at anyone with the forefinger. Malays use a forefinger only to point at animals. Even pointing with two fingers is impolite among many Indians. When you must indicate something or someone, use the entire right hand (palm out). You can also point with your right thumb, as long as all four fingers are curled down. (Make sure all your fingers are curled—older Malays would interpret a fist with the thumb and little finger extended as an insult.)

Pounding one fist into the palm of the other hand is considered obscene. 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. Among Indians, a side-to-side toss of one's head indicates agreement, although westerners may interpret it to mean "no." Watch carefully; the Indian head toss is not quite the same as the Western negative nod (which leads with the jaw).
As a foreigner, you should dress conservatively until you are sure what degree of formality is expected. Men should wear a suit jacket and tie. Because of the heat and humidity, business dress in Malaysia is sometimes casual. Standard formal office wear for men is dark pants and a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and tie, without a jacket. Businessmen may also wear a short-sleeved shirt with no tie. Businesswomen wear light-colored long-sleeved blouses and skirts, or business suits. Many Malaysian men wear an open-necked batik shirt to work. This is also popular for casual wear. Jeans are acceptable for casual wear, but shorts should be avoided. In deference to Muslim and Hindu sensibilities, women should always wear garments that cover at least their upper arms. Skirts should be knee-length or longer.

**Tipping**
People in Malaysia do not really tip; however, you might want to give your bellhop something. In a nicer hotel, at least RM5 per bag should be fine.
References


