

Selamat Datang... Welcome to Malaysia

COUNTRY- The Federation of Malaysia comprises Peninsular Malaysia made up of 11 states, three Federal Territories and the states of Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo. Its capital is Kuala Lumpur.

CLIMATE- Tropical climate with warm weather all year round with temperatures ranging from 21°C to 32°C. Annual rainfall varies from 2,000mm to 2,500mm.

RELIGION- Islam is the official religion but other religions are practised freely.

LANGUAGES- Bahasa Melayu (Malay) is the national language but English is widely spoken. The ethnic groups also speak various languages and dialects including Cantonese, Hokkien, Mandarin, Tamil and Hindi.

CURRENCY- The unit of currency is the Malaysian Ringgit indicated as RM. Foreign currencies can be converted at banks and moneychangers.

IMMIGRATION AND CUSTOMS- Visitors to Malaysia must be in possession of a valid passport or travel document with a minimum validity of six months beyond the period of stay. Most nationalities do not require visas for social or business visits. For further information, please check with the nearest Malaysian Mission or Tourism Malaysia office in your country. Alternatively browse www.tourismmalaysia.gov.my or www.imi.gov.my. Trafficking in illegal drugs is a serious offence and importing large amounts of foreign currencies requires a declaration.

GETTING TO MALAYSIA- The main gateway to Malaysia is through the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA) in Sepang, located approximately 50km south of Kuala Lumpur. The Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT), which is 20km away from KLIA Main Terminal Building, caters mostly to passengers of the budget airline, AirAsia. Other international airports which serve as entry points are situated in Penang, Kuching, Kota Kinabalu and Langkawi. Over 40 International airlines fly into the country while the national carrier, Malaysia Airlines, has a global network that spans six continents and a national network that covers more than 36 local destinations.

From KLIA there are several transport options to the city among them being the high-speed KLIA Ekspres train, taxis and buses. A non-stop 28-minute ride on the KLIA Ekspres will connect you from the airport to the KL City Air Terminal (KLCAT) at the KL Sentral Station. This state-of-the-art transportation hub offers flight and baggage check-in services for Malaysia Airlines, Cathay Pacific and Royal Brunei Airlines. KLIA Ekspres departs every 15 minutes during peak hours (5am-9am, 4pm-10pm) and every 20 minutes during off-peak times (9am-4pm, 10pm-12 midnight).

Airport limousine taxis (budget or premier) at KLIA operate using a prepaid coupon system.

The main entry point by sea to KL is Port Klang, about 50km away from KL. Malaysia is also accessible by rail and road from Singapore and Thailand.

GETTING AROUND MALAYSIA

By Air The national carrier, Malaysia Airlines as well as Firefly and the budget airline AirAsia offer domestic air travel to major cities in the peninsula and to the states of Sabah and Sarawak. Points linked to Kuala Lumpur include Ipoh, Penang, Alor Setar, Langkawi, Kota Bharu, Kuala Terengganu, Kuantan, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Lahad Datu, Tawau, Labuan, Kuching, Sibul, Bintulu and Miri. Private carrier Berjaya Air has direct flights to the islands of Pangkor, Redang and Tioman from the Sultan Abdul Aziz Shah Airport near Kuala Lumpur. Note that upon your arrival in Sabah or Sarawak, you will need to present your international passport even if you are arriving from Peninsular Malaysia.

By Rail Trains are a comfortable, efficient and economical means of exploring Malaysia. The main line extends from Thailand in the north, southwards to Singapore. Another line radiates from Gemas in Negeri Sembilan to Kota Bharu on the east coast. In Sabah, a line connects from Kota Kinabalu through rainforests to Tenom and is not to be missed by train buffs. You can travel in air-conditioned comfort while sleeping berths are available for overnight journeys. Rail service in Peninsular Malaysia is operated by Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM) or Malayan Railway offering privileged passes for easy travel. The Eastern & Oriental Express is one of the world's great train journeys. The journey links the cities of Singapore and Bangkok passing through Kuala Lumpur and includes a tour of Penang's capital Georgetown.

By Sea Ferry services also operate from Malaysia to Thailand, Singapore and the Indonesian Islands of Batam and Sumatra. Within Malaysia there are regular ferry services to and from main destinations like Penang, Kuala Perlis and Kuala Kedah to Langkawi, Lumut to Pangkor and from various points on the east coast to the offshore islands of Tioman, Perhentian, Redang and the Johor islands.

The principal cruise operator in Malaysian waters is the Malaysian-owned and operated, Star Cruises. Port Klang, the biggest port serving Kuala Lumpur, is one hour's drive away. It is where the Star Cruises Passenger Terminal is located.

The main ports of call in Malaysia for cruise ships are Melaka, Port Klang, Penang and Langkawi. Occasionally, cruise ships also drop anchor off the East Coast islands, in particular, Tioman Island. In East Malaysia, Kota Kinabalu in Sabah is the main port visited by cruise ships.

By Road Self-drive Holidays - Most points in Peninsular Malaysia are accessible via the North-South Expressway, which links up to coastal roads and the rest of the road arteries in the country. The Expressway is an excellent road network, which allows you to drive through Peninsular Malaysia. There are also other tolled highways equipped with amenities such as rest areas, restaurants, souvenir shops and Suraus (prayer rooms for Muslims), which connect towns and villages throughout the length and breadth of the country. Malaysians drive on the left side of the road. For foreign tourists an international driving licence is required.

Rental car companies can be found in most cities and airports around the country.

By Bus - Express air - conditioned buses are available to all states in Peninsular Malaysia. They offer a comfortable ride at reasonable rates. The main terminals in Kuala Lumpur are the Puduraya Bus Station, Hentian Putra, Pekeliling and Hentian Duta. There are set charges for outstation travel. Taxis can also be hired from these stations.

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION IN THE CITY Besides public buses and taxis, the RapidKL Light Rail Transit (LRT) services, KL Monorail and the KTM Komuter inter-city rail services offer hassle-free accessibility to well-known landmarks in KL as well as outlying districts and nearby towns.

PLACES TO STAY There is accommodation to suit every visitor to Malaysia. The capital city of Kuala Lumpur and the main towns in each state have international-class hotels ranging from modest two star to luxury five star properties. International chains like Hyatt, Marriott, Ritz- Carlton, Sheraton, Hilton, Le Meridien, Westin, Shangri- La, Renaissance, Nikko, Seri Pacific and Mandarin Oriental have established or managed properties in Kuala Lumpur and other cities. Be pleasantly surprised by some of Asia's most affordable rates. Discerning travellers will find uniquely Malaysian hotels with an authentic Malay ambience and traditional architecture ranking amongst the world's best. Long-staying guests may appreciate the serviced-apartments situated within the city of Kuala Lumpur.

MEETINGS, INCENTIVES, CONVENTIONS AND EXHIBITIONS (M.I.C.E.) Malaysia is one of the leading destinations in the region for international meetings and exhibitions. Most of the major hotels and exhibitions centres are equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to cater for all types of M.I.C.E. events. In view of the country's easy accessibility from most parts of the world and modern transportation infrastructure, Malaysia has played host to numerous high-profile forums such as the inaugural Commonwealth Tourism Ministers' Meeting and the 13th Non-Aligned Movement Summit.

MALAYSIA MY SECOND HOME PROGRAMME This programme is offered to foreign citizens from all over the world along with their spouses and children, to retire and reside in Malaysia. This exciting and unique programme is offered by the Government of Malaysia. For more information visit www.mm2h.gov.my.

TRAVELLING ON A BUDGET Budget accommodation is rated according to the Orchid Classification Scheme and includes hostels, bed and breakfast establishments, inns, boarding houses, rest houses and lodging houses. In Kuala Lumpur's city centre, there are well-managed budget accommodation along Jalan Bukit Bintang, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman and Chinatown. The Seri Malaysia chain provides excellent value-for-money accommodation throughout Malaysia.

MONEY MATTERS Travellers are advised to bring a combination of traveller's cheques, cash and credit cards. Credit cards are widely used in larger shopping establishments and hotels. Smaller establishments accept transactions in cash only. Those embarking on an island trip are advised to make prior financial arrangements on the mainland. Foreign currency can be exchanged in banks, airports and money changers around the country. Banking hours are from 9.30am to 4.00pm on weekdays. Banks in the states of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu operate from 9.30am-4.00pm from Saturdays to Wednesdays.

WORKING DAYS Government offices in all states, with the exception of Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, operate on a five-day week from Monday to Friday. Some private establishments are open for half day on Saturday. Government offices in Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu are open from Sunday to Thursday. They are closed on Friday and Saturday.

POST OFFICES Open from 8.00am to 5.00pm daily except on Sunday and public holidays. In Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu, post offices are closed on Friday and public holidays.

HISTORY There is a strong interlink between the country's multiracial and multicultural make-up and its history. Besides the local Malays and the native groups, immigrants from China, India, Indonesia and other parts of the world have all contributed to the multiracial composition of its population. Its interesting cultural diversity can be largely attributed to the country's long and on-going interaction with the outside world and colonial rule by the Portuguese, Dutch and the British. Consequently, the evolution of the country into a cultural melting pot is evident in the unique blend of religions, socio-cultural activities and traditions, dressing, languages and food.

ECONOMIC PROFILE Manufacturing constitutes the largest single component of Malaysia's economy. Tourism and primary commodities such as petroleum, palm oil and natural rubber and timber are major contributors to its economy.

GOVERNMENT Parliamentary democracy with a bicameral legislative system. The Head of State is the Yang di-Pertuan Agong and the Head of Government is the Prime Minister.

TIME Eight hours ahead of GMT and 16 hours ahead of US Pacific Standard Time.

ELECTRICITY The voltage used throughout Malaysia is 220-240 volts A/C, at 50 cycles per second. Standard 3-pin square plugs and sockets are used.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES Malaysia uses the metric system.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS Malaysia is linked nationally and internationally by telephone, facsimile, telegraph, telex and via the Internet. Most hotels provide International Direct Dial (IDD) telephone services. In cities and towns, public phones are available at high-traffic areas, such as bus stations, shopping complexes and office buildings, using coins or phone cards.

INSURANCE Visitors are strongly advised to obtain adequate insurance cover before travelling to Malaysia.

GREETINGS Although handshakes generally suffice for both men and women, some Muslim ladies may acknowledge an introduction to a gentleman with a nod of her head and smile. A handshake is only to be reciprocated if the lady offers her hand first. The traditional greeting or Salam resembles a handshake with both hands but without the grasp. The man offers both hands, lightly touches his friend's hands, then brings his hands back to his chest to mean, "I greet you from the heart". The visitor should reciprocate the Salam.

CONDUCT Public behaviour is important in Malaysian culture. Most Malaysians refrain from displaying affection (i.e. embracing or kissing) in public. It would be appropriate for visitors to do the same.

PLACES OF WORSHIP Shoes must be removed when entering places of worship such as mosques and temples. Some mosques provide robes and scarves for female visitors. Taking photographs at places of worship is usually permitted but request for permission first.

TIPPING Most hotels and restaurants levy a 10% service charge and 5% government sales tax on bills. Therefore, tipping is not customary. However, should you want to show your appreciation for good services, a small tip will do.

SOCIAL VISITS Before visiting a home, it is polite to call and inform of one's arrival. Shoes must always be removed when entering a Malaysian home. Drinks are generally offered and it would be polite to accept.

Malaysia..... truly Asia

Endowed with a diversity of cultures, Malaysia offers a 'truly Asian experience'. Discover a delightful fusion of three of Asia's oldest civilisations – Malay, Chinese and Indian. A potpourri enriched with the indigenous traditions of the KadazanDusuns, Ibans and other ethnic communities of Sabah and Sarawak. Experience the country's alluring wonders – colourful festivals, breathtaking skyscrapers, charming heritage buildings, enchanting islands and beaches as well as a million-year-old rainforest with fascinating flora and

fauna. Meet the warm and friendly people and enjoy world-class facilities. Marvel at the bewildering range of shopping delights and tempt your palate with mouthwatering delicacies. Bursting with colour, pulsating with life, Malaysia awaits you.

Malaysia is a fascinating holiday destination offering something for everyone to enjoy. There are three distinct destinations in the country- Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak in East Malaysia. Visitors are often surprised to discover how developed the country is, yet rich and varied in cultural tradition.

The country's main gateway is the Kuala Lumpur International Airport (KLIA). Other major international airports are Langkawi, Penang, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu and Kuching.

Kuala Lumpur or KL is a modern cosmopolitan city boasting the world's tallest twin towers towering at a height of 452m. Its architecture is representative of the country's dominant cultures-the Malay, Chinese and Indian. Combined with the colonial legacy of the British and Moorish influences, KL has one of Asia's most dynamic cityscapes.

Malaysia's long coastline and many coral-fringed islands, with the Straits of Malacca to the west and the South China Sea to the east, give rise to a large number of fabulous beaches. Islands like Langkawi, Tioman and Pangkor are world-renowned resort destinations. Penang is another island famous for its history, relaxing beaches and cultural mix. Further south, Melaka is known for its history, museums and the unique Baba- Nyonya community. The charming east coast of the peninsula with its laid back lifestyle, is the country's cultural heartland.

The states of Sabah and Sarawak await nature lovers and adventurers. Discover the prolific marine life and dense rainforest while exploring the underwater world and wilderness of Borneo.

Malaysia has many exciting places of interest and during a holiday of just two weeks, visitors will get a mere glimpse. One thing's for certain; everyone wants to return to discover more of Malaysia.

Kuala Lumpur- Rich Past, Visionary Future

Established in 1857 at the confluence of the Klang and Gombak Rivers, Kuala Lumpur (KL) is one of Asia's most dynamic cities. The city began as a mining settlement in the late 1800's with the discovery of tin. Its impressive skyline includes the world's tallest twin towers, the old Moorish styled railway station and numerous mosques, temples and churches.

Rapid infrastructural growth over time has not diminished KL's garden city image. Beautifully landscaped parks and an abundance of greenery have been retained to provide the city's green lungs.

The other essential component of KL is the soul of its people who give the city its distinctive and truly Asian, character. English is widely spoken and locals are typically obliging when approached by tourists looking for directions. Visitors will enjoy a wonderful time in KL and are advised to respect cultural norms and sensitivities.

Kuala Lumpur is a city of contrasts. While Malaysians are justly proud of their new structures, older buildings also appeal. Its architectural heritage includes Moorish styled edifices, stately colonial buildings and old shophouses. Modern offices and condominiums tower overhead.

There are many places of interest in KL which can be accessed easily as distances between them are near. It's possible to discover the capital by foot, by organised tours or public transport. The theatre of the city unfolds on the streets and is best experienced on foot. Alternatively, join a tour or negotiate with a taxi driver. A series of pamphlets on heritage walking trails produced by the Heritage of Malaysia Trust (Badan Warisan Malaysia) is available from tourist information centres around the city.

Merdeka (Independence) Square is a good starting point to explore KL. Here the national flag flies atop a 100m flagpole, the tallest in the world. Within the square is a

field fronting the **Royal Selangor Club** where Malaysians converge every year to celebrate independence. Formerly known as the Selangor Club Padang (Selangor Club Field), it was extensively used for cricket, hockey, tennis and rugby matches.

Opposite is the ornate **Sultan Abdul Samad Building**, built in 1897 with Moorish features, clock tower and copper domes. Beautifully illuminated at nights this well-known landmark in KL was formerly the Secretariat for the British administration. It is now the venue of the Supreme and High Courts. A much photographed spot is the Moorish styled old railway station. The **National Mosque**, **Jamek Mosque** and **National Monument**, constructed to honour the country's fallen heroes are other attractions to discover in KL.

The immaculately landscaped **KL Lake Gardens** near the city centre is its premier green lung. Here one can enjoy scenic views of Parliament House and the city's landmark buildings.

Visit the **Butterfly Park** and **Deer Park**, both within the Lake Gardens. Not to be forgotten is the **Bird Park** with over 2,500 birds from hundreds of species flying freely in a natural environment. The park also has a list of regular activities such as Hornbill and Ostrich Feeding. Also in the vicinity is the **Orchid Garden**, with over 800 species of exotic Malaysian orchids including some rare ones. Close by is the **Hibiscus Garden** with more than 500 varieties of colourful blooms.

Within walking distance, **Central Market** is an art deco building and former wet market. It is now a one-stop souvenir, handicraft and restaurant centre. Nearby, along **Petaling Street** or **Chinatown**, shops open all day and sell mostly accessories and clothes.

In the city centre, **Menara Kuala Lumpur** or **KL Tower** at 421m is the best location for a 360° aerial view of the city. There is a revolving restaurant with a highly recommended evening buffet. Another panoramic view is possible from the 41-storey high bridge connecting the **Petronas Twin Towers**. Visitors can opt to visit an interactive gallery known as Petrosains, which focuses on Malaysia's oil and gas industry. It is housed within the **Kuala Lumpur City Centre (KLCC)** next to the towers.

Beyond the City

There are several major attractions in the vicinity of KL and many of these can be visited within a day on organised or self-drive tours.

Putrajaya, 25km to the south, is the nation's new administrative capital. Hailed as an intelligent garden city, it is a model township constructed with detailed planning, innovative urban design and preservation for the environment. Attractions here include the **Botanical Gardens**, **Putrajaya Lake** and **Putrajaya Wetlands**.

View the **Prime Minister's Office** and **Residence**, the pink-domed **Putra Mosque** and waterfront promenade. While taking a boat ride on one of the many lakes here, admire the impressive architecture of the bridges around Putrajaya.

Batu Caves in the state of Selangor to the north, is a massive limestone outcrop with huge caves. This famous destination draws people from all over the world during the annual Hindu festival of Thaipusam. Scaling the 272 steps up to the main temple cave is a highlight here. **Selangor** is bounded by the Federal Territories of Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya which further enhances the touristic appeal of the state. Selangor dazzles with a fascinating variety of attractions. Its flourishing capital, **Shah Alam**, urban centres and the royal town of Klang abound with modern facilities, from excellent healthcare institutions, international colleges to huge shopping malls and recreation centres.

This exciting destination is also the venue of world-class sporting events such as the Petronas F1 Grand Prix.

Peninsular Malaysia-

Peninsular Malaysia offers the visitor a wealth of attractions and holiday options.

Head north from KL up the west coast to explore historic cities, sun-drenched beaches, cool mountain retreats and to experience the local lifestyle. The North-South Expressway makes travel around the peninsula easy and fast. Adventurous travellers can explore the far north and head through scenic mountainous terrain to the rustic east coast. Interesting sights here include quaint fishing villages, cultural pastimes and numerous islands off the coast.

South of KL, the states of Melaka, Negeri Sembilan and Johor beckon with a wealth of historical and cultural attractions. The **Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah Mosque** in Shah Alam is reputedly one of the most stunning structures in the country. Commonly referred to as the 'Blue Mosque', it boasts the tallest minarets in the world.

Nearby **FRIM**, is a forestry research institute ideal for walks, swimming and picnics. The **National Zoo** located in KL's suburbs has over 1,000 animal species from around the world.

The historic spice trade port of **Melaka** has many old buildings like the **Stadthuys**, **Christ Church**, **Porta de Santiago** and antique shops along Jalan Hang Jebat (**Jonker's Street**).

Other day trip possibilities include the cool hill resorts of Genting Highlands, Fraser's Hill and the French-themed Colmar Tropicale at **Bukit Tinggi**. **Genting Highlands**, dubbed the 'City of Entertainment' offers indoor and outdoor theme parks, hotels, an 18-hole golf course and a casino. **Fraser's Hill** is a bird watchers' paradise with more than 265 species of wild montane birds within the resort's boundaries. It is also the venue for the annual International Bird Race.

Take a drive north to the wetlands of **Kuala Selangor** to see migratory birds, feast on fresh seafood and see a fascinating evening firefly display in Kampung Kuantan.

Penang- Old-world Charm and Beach Retreat

Penang founded in 1786 by Captain Francis Light of the British East India Company is a cultural melting pot and the oldest British Straits Settlement. Its historic heart of **Georgetown** was where ships refuelled and served as a centre for the spice trade as well as tea and cotton from China and India. The island's alluring beaches and old-world charm has made Penang a popular tourist destination. Locals swear Penang has Malaysia's best food and will delight in taking visitors to the multitude of open-air stalls along **Gurney Drive**. Nyonya food (a Chinese and Malay culinary blend) is also best sampled in Penang and Melaka. Penang's maze of narrow streets offers an insight into the past where little has changed since the days of the East India Company. This is the place to 'get lost' amongst joss stick shops, fresh noodle makers and other old crafts.

Walking through Georgetown with its eclectic blend of colonial, Moorish, Indian, and Chinese architecture is a sensory journey of fascinating sights, sounds and aromas. Relax and take a trishaw to discover Georgetown's heart and soul. See the clan houses or kongsi established by Chinese settlers the most famous being **Khoo Kongsi** with its elaborate decorations.

Ride past **Kapitan Keling Mosque** established by Penang's Indian Muslims. Nearby is the **Kuan Yin Teng** or Goddess of Mercy Temple, the oldest Chinese temple in Penang. In the Pulau Tikus suburb is a Thai temple, **Wat Chayamangkalaram** with its reclining Buddha; reputed to be one of the world's longest. Many Penangites are Buddhists and Wesak Day is a major festival. Thaipusam is a colourful Hindu festival observed in Penang and a few places worldwide.

The famous Eastern and Oriental Hotel is the place to unwind and be reminded of an era when it was a popular venue for the city's elite. Visitors can stay in the renovated 19th

century **Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion**, one of the most well-preserved mansions outside China.

To enjoy cool mountain air and a panoramic view of the city, take the unique funicular train up **Penang Hill. Batu Ferringhi** on the northern coastline is a favourite playground for visitors from near and far. Its casuarina-lined beaches from Tanjung Bungah to Teluk Bahang boasts several international deluxe resorts as well as attractions such as the Toy Museum, the first of its kind in Asia and the largest in the World.

The Penang Bridge, one of Asia's longest, links mainland Peninsular Malaysia to the island. Penang is also accessible by ferry from Butterworth, where the state's main rail and bus terminal are located. The Penang International Airport has direct flights from Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Thailand.

Perlis and Kedah- Malaysia's Rice Bowl States

A visit to Perlis and Kedah will reveal a land of serene natural beauty surrounded by the greenery of paddy during the planting season and golden hues at harvest time.

From Ipoh northwards, rounded limestone hills rise above the paddy or rice fields. Caves are found within many of these hills, with several being open to visitors. Caves accessible to the adventurous include **Gua Kerbau** in Kedah, **Gua Kelam** and caves in the **Perlis State Park**. Bukit Kayu Hitam is the main entry point for vehicles from Thailand. Other entry points are Padang Besar (by train) and Wang Kelian.

Notable landmarks in **Alor Setar**, Kedah's capital are the **Zahir Mosque** with its distinctive black dome and **Balai Nobat**, which houses the instruments of the Royal Orchestra.

Alor Setar can be reached via air and rail from Kuala Lumpur.

Langkawi- Intriguing Legends and Nature's Wonders

The Langkawi archipelago consists of 99 islands situated in the Andaman Sea, south of Thailand. Tourists flock here for the delightful beaches, superb resorts and refreshing nature-based activities. The best beaches include **Pantai Cenang, Burau Bay, Pantai Kok and Pantai Datai**.

Accommodation ranges from world-class resorts such as the Four Seasons Resort, The Datai and The Andaman to affordable family chalets and facilities for budget travellers.

Pulau Payar Marine Park, 20km south of Langkawi is a popular diving and snorkelling site. Boats from Langkawi take day trippers to the park where there is a viewing platform for relaxation between underwater adventures.

Langkawi is a duty-free island, offering an attractive range of goods. Shops in the main town of Kuah and the Langkawi International Airport offer the island's best shopping.

Ferry services operate during daylight hours from Kuala Perlis and Kuala Kedah on the mainland, to Langkawi and from Penang to Langkawi. Malaysia Airlines, the national carrier, operates daily direct flights to Langkawi from Kuala Lumpur. In addition, the budget carrier AirAsia flies to Langkawi from Kuala Lumpur and Bangkok. Other airlines that fly to Langkawi include Firefly (from Kuala Lumpur) and Silk Air (from Singapore).

Most tourists agree that Langkawi's biggest attraction is its natural, undisturbed state. Rice fields with grazing buffaloes give the island its rustic appeal. The landscape of the islands are characterised by limestone outcrops blanketed in an emerald rainforest.

A host of nature-based adventures await the visitor. Go on a fascinating boat ride through the mangroves. The rare experience of feeding eagles to their natural setting is the highlight of the trip. In the vicinity are large caves; roosting grounds for thousands of fruit-eating bats. Alternatively, discover the rainforest or take the ride of a lifetime, on the thrilling rainforest canopy adventure. Tourists can go on self-guided walks to **Seven Wells (Telaga Tujuh)** and swim in mountain pools. Take the **Langkawi Cable Car** to

the summit of **Gunung Mat Cincang** at 700m for a spectacular view of the islands including neighbouring Thailand.

Sailing is a popular activity with first-class marinas providing berths for many international yachts. Yacht charters of varying durations are possible. Explore sea caves, deserted beaches, mangroves and freshwater lakes. Sunset cruises on luxury motorised and bare-boat charter yachts combine to make Langkawi a year-round sailing destination.

Perak- Historic Towns and Resort

Ipoh and Taiping in the state of Perak were two cities that boomed after tin was discovered in the 19th century. Malaya was then the world's largest tin and rubber producer.

Situated at the base of **Bukit Larut** or **Maxwell Hill**, the Taiping **Lake Gardens** is surrounded by old tin mines, a small golf course and a zoo, providing the town with a refreshing ambience. The colonial buildings, church and war cemetery in this charming town are reminiscent of the British era. Maxwell Hill is a perfect retreat for those who appreciate tranquility and accommodation in quaint rest houses.

Visit Ipoh's colonial heart and its historic quarter to appreciate how tin enriched the city- the railway station, HSBC Building and St. Michael's Institution are such examples. The playing field or padang is surrounded by various architectural styles including the **Royal Ipoh Club**, **City Hall** and **Masjid India**. Another interesting feature of the town are Buddhist temples set amongst limestone hills such as **Sam Poh Tong**. Ipoh is reputedly one of the best places to sample local Chinese delicacies.

Just north of Ipoh is the royal town of Kuala Kangsar where **Istana Iskandariah** is home to the Sultan of Perak. Of interest here is the **Ubudiah Mosque** and the **Istana Kenangan**, which houses the Royal Museum.

Lumut, a small coastal port 80km from Ipoh, is the staging point to **Pangkor Island**. Both Pangkor island and the smaller **Pangkor Laut Island** are lined with golden beaches and overhanging trees. Fishing and boat building communities are located on Pangkor Island. Pangkor Laut Resort promotes itself as 'one island, one resort'. It is a private island featuring a spa village and **Emerald Bay**, one of Malaysia's best beaches.

Melaka- Malaysia's Historical City

Melaka is a famous historic port strategically located on the Straits of Malacca. It was founded by a Sumatran Prince named Parameswara and thereafter flourished under the Melaka Sultanate. The state was known as the Venice of the East when it was the centre of spice trade in the region.

Turn down any street in its historic heart to discover something fascinating. Old buildings and traditional trades and crafts make this one of Malaysia's most visited destinations. Buildings reflect Portuguese, Dutch and British influences and the city centre is ideal for walking around.

Historical places include the **Stadthuys**, **Christ Church**, **St. Paul's Church** and the **A' Famosa** fortress built by the Portuguese in 1511. Jalan Hang Jebat (Jonker's Street) is home to antique stores, galleries and souvenir shops.

For something different, take a ride in a colourful trishaw around Melaka. **Ayer Keroh**, 15km from town offers attractions like Zoo Melaka, Melaka Crocodile Park and Mini Malaysia.

Ujong Pasir is a Portuguese settlement, south of town where visitors can enjoy its lively square and eat Portuguese-inspired seafood dishes. Visit during festivals such as San Juan and San Pedro held in June.

Another interesting sight is the **Hang Li Poh Well**, named after a Ming emperor's daughter sent to marry Sultan Mansor Shah to seal relations between the two countries. **Bukit Cina**, a gift from the Sultan was established as their residence. The well was

constructed by her followers for her personal use and was also the main source of water for the town. Bukit Cina has two adjoining hills, which form a Chinese graveyard with over 12,000 graves, some dating back to the Ming dynasty. Melaka is known as a museum town. The **Independence Memorial Museum** houses documents relating to the transition from colonial Malaya to independent Malaysia. The **Maritime Museum** is a replica of the Portuguese galleon, Flora de la Mar, which sank off Melaka. It displays exhibits of Melaka's maritime history from the Melaka Sultanate to the colonial era. Melaka is home to Malaysia's unique Baba and Nyonya community. Known as Peranakan or Straits Chinese, they are descendants of the original Chinese settlers who married Malays. Nyonya cuisine, with its use of different spices and Chinese cooking styles, is a culinary delight here. The **Baba Nyonya Heritage Museum** on Tun Tan Cheng Lock Street is housed in an ancestral home with authentic furniture, ceramics and textiles.

Johor- Beaches, Golf and Fruit Farms

Johor is Peninsular Malaysia's southernmost state and is linked to Singapore by a causeway. Attractions here include golf courses, seafood villages, plantations and nature parks. The east coast of Johor provides access to beaches and islands while the west coast fronts the Straits of Malacca.

Agro tours to rubber and oil palm plantations and fruit farms are popular. In the north, **Gunung Ledang** or Mount Ophir at 1,276m provides a challenging two-day return trek, passing through waterfalls and forests.

Explore the vast wilderness rainforest in **Endau- Rompin National Park** straddled across Pahang and Johor. This 80,000 hectare-park is one of the peninsula's largest virgin lowland forests. It is a remote destination that appeals to adventurous explorers.

Golfers are never far from a championship course in Johor with 30 venues from which to choose. Several are resorts providing accommodation, recreation and spas. Leading courses include **Pulai Springs** (two 18-hole courses) and **Desaru Golf and Country Resort**.

Situated along the popular Lido Beach, **Danga Bay** is a great place to unwind, relax and just watch the city go by. Sample the delicious fare available from the number of restaurants serving both local and international cuisine, shop at the Danga Festive Street Mall and make a stop at the various Rumah Limas, traditional Malay houses unique to the state of Johor. Visitors can also try the river cruise along the straits up to Kampung Melayu. On this trip, you can see the kelong (huge fish trap built on stilts) and visit fish farms.

Desaru near the peninsula's southeastern tip is a 25km beach resort destination for Johor folk and neighbouring Singapore. While there are several resorts, it has a remote and tranquil atmosphere. Further south, **Sebana Golf and Marina Resort** includes a marina, hotel and an 18-hole golf course.

Customs and immigration facilities exist for ferry passengers travelling to and from Singapore.

Tanjung Piai, 90 minutes west of Johor Bahru is the southernmost tip of the Asian continent. Boardwalks and hides offer an opportunity to appreciate the wetlands and there is a small resort and seafood restaurant. The state capital, **Johor Bahru** is a shoppers' paradise especially for Singaporeans who flock here for bargains. The city is known for its colourful nightlife, busy coffee shops, bars, nightclubs and open-air night markets. It has a border town atmosphere with hawkers, moneychangers, unloading and loading of goods and round-the-clock activity.

In 1866, Sultan Abu Bakar the father of modern Johor built the magnificent **Istana Besar** as his official residence. Today it houses the Sultan Abu Bakar Museum, showcasing rare and beautiful treasures from all over the world. The **Sultan Ibrahim Building**, housing the state secretariat dominates the Johor Bahru skyline.

Johor Bahru is a transport hub for travellers within the region. Trains head south into Singapore and northwards to Kuala Lumpur, Thailand and Kota Bharu in the northeast. Ferries also depart from Johor to destinations off Singapore and various parts of Sumatra.

The state's beautiful offshore islands, **Sibu, Besar, Rawa, Aur, Pemanggil, Hujung** and **Tinggi** are accessible from Mersing and Tanjung Leman. Simple resorts are the order of the day but there's no compromise on comfort or facilities and the rates are competitive.

Negeri Sembilan

Magnificent Minangkabau Architecture

In Negeri Sembilan, **Minangkabau** architecture, with its distinctive horn-shaped roofs dating back to 17th century Sumatra, dominates in **Seremban**, the capital. Observe the magnificent roofs rise into two peaks like buffalo horns.

Sri Menanti is the royal state capital located 40km east of Seremban. Of interest here is the 100 year-old **Istana Lama Sri Menanti** (old palace), now a museum housing weaponry, costumes and a bridal chamber.

Port Dickson or 'PD' is a small town and gateway to beaches extending 16km south to Tanjung Tuan (Cape Rachado). The shaded beachfront, proximity to Kuala Lumpur and delicious seafood here attracts holidaymakers. Casuarina-lined beaches like Bagan Pinang, Teluk Kemang and Blue Lagoon have hotels, apartments, restaurants, souvenir shops and golf courses.

Yachting was introduced to Malaysia in Port Dickson and the calm waters are perfect for sailing with the **Admiral Marina and Leisure Club** offering excellent yachting facilities.

At **Tanjung Tuan**, a pleasant forest trail leads to the historic lighthouse. Bird watchers know the location as one of the best to spot Honey Buzzards and other migratory birds flying from Europe to Australia.

SABAH AND SARAWAK

Sabah- Nature's Wonderland

Sabah is known as the **Land Below the Wind** and once out of Kota Kinabalu (KK) the capital, much of the state remains forested. There are over 32 ethnic communities speaking 80 dialects in Sabah. The main festival here is **Ka'amatan** when the **KadazanDusun**, Sabah's largest ethnic group, offer thanksgiving for a bountiful harvest to the spirit of the paddy.

Kota Kinabalu is a vibrant city on Sabah's west coast and the gateway to eco-adventures like mountain climbing, white-water rafting, caving, diving and river cruising.

Located in the South China Sea, it's a bustling city with a mixed population. Once known as Jesselton when Sabah was British North Borneo, it was rebuilt after World War II. Places of interest are the **State Museum**, the **Sunday Gaya Street Market**, which offers fresh produce, handicrafts, foodstuff and jungle products in the open air. The five islands of the **Tunku Abdul Rahman Park** in the vicinity of Kota Kinabalu offer peaceful solitude in the sun. Enjoy a stay in many superb resorts like **Sutera Harbour** and **Shangri-La Tanjung Aru**. Just out of town, the resorts of **Nexus Karumbunai** and **Shangri-La Rasa Ria** have extensive seaside facilities.

While ascending the 4,095m high **Mount Kinabalu**, Southeast Asia's highest peak, is achievable, descending 600m to the ocean floor off the famed dive site of Sipadan is not humanly possible. Sabah is a global wildlife sanctuary with the **Kinabalu Park** being Malaysia's first World Heritage Site.

The 754km² park has one of the world's richest assemblages of plants and the two-day return walk to the summit of Mount Kinabalu, challenges intrepid climbers. The nearby **Poring Hot Springs** and canopy walkway will rejuvenate your body and mind.

Other eco-treasures in Sabah include the **Turtle Island Park, Sepilok, Tabin** and the **Kinabatangan River**. White-water rafting on the **Padas** and **Kiulu Rivers** offers thrills and spills.

Sandakan, 45 minutes by air from Kota Kinabalu, is the gateway to fascinating nature reserves like Turtle Island, Kinabatangan River, Gomantong Caves and Sepilok.

Sepilok is a sanctuary for Orang Utans where 200 primates, rescued from illegal captivity, have been retrained for jungle living. Get close to them in their natural habitat during the twice-daily feedings.

Sukau on the Lower Kinabatangan River has Malaysia's greatest wildlife concentration. It is Sabah's longest river where Orang Utans, macaques, Red and Silver Leaf Monkeys, elephants, crocodiles, otters and Proboscis Monkeys live along the riverine wetlands. Boat trips along the Menanggul River provide guaranteed sightings. On the way to Sukau, visit **Gomantong Caves**, home to millions of swiftlets whose nests are prized for birds' nest soup.

Lahad Datu provides access to the **Danum Valley**, home to Sabah's largest expanse of lowland dipterocarp forest. Walk the canopy bridge for aerial views or trek into the **Maliau Basin** wilderness and **Tabin Wildlife Reserve**.

Take a ride on the antique train from Kota Kinabalu to Tenom through the picturesque **Padas Gorge** or enjoy the North Borneo steam train to Papar.

Many islands are found off Sabah in the Sulu, Celebes and South China Seas. Diving is possible around most with **Sipadan Island** being the jewel; marine biologist Jacques Cousteau rates it one of the world's best. This is the 'must-dive' reef and Malaysia's only deepwater oceanic island. **Layang Layang** in the Spratly Islands, some 300km northwest of Kota Kinabalu is East Malaysia's remotest island. Wall diving for hammerhead sharks, rays and barracuda is possible. In the small island resort of **Lankayan**, northwest of Sandakan, diving is perfect.

Mantanani, located north of Kota Belud, is one of Sabah's newest dive islands surrounded by seagrasses and reefs. **Turtle Island Park** is the place to watch turtles nesting between July and October.

Labuan- Pearl of Borneo, Where Business and Leisure Meet

Labuan, one of Malaysia's three federal territories, is an international offshore financial centre. Located 10km off the Sabah coast, it offers duty-free shopping, wreck diving, golfing and **World War II Memorials**. Several resorts and hotels provide a holiday atmosphere and interesting sights include **An'Nur Jamek Mosque, Tao Chinese Temple** and a Sikh Temple inspired by Amritsar's Golden Temple. Other attractions include the **Labuan Bird Park** and two water villages. Several dive sites are situated in the **Labuan Marine Park** and four sunken ships provide unrivalled wreck diving. Labuan's free port status, numerous international hotels and excellent telecommunications facilities also make it an ideal venue for meetings and incentive events.

Sarawak- A Paradise for Eco-Adventures

Sarawak, the **Land of the Hornbills** is the country's largest state forming part of East Malaysia in Borneo. It is characterised by distinctive ethnic groups, many of whom still live in riverside settlements.

James Brooke, the first 'white rajah' ruled Sarawak from 1841 after resolving a dispute between the Sultan of Brunei and local chieftains. The legacy of the Brooke Dynasty and the British includes many colonial buildings in Kuching.

Fondly known as 'Cat City', **Kuching**, the capital, is located on the Sarawak River. Its tourist belt is the **waterfront** and **Main Bazaar** which features old shophouses selling local pepper, artefacts, antiques, birds' nests and exotic forest products. The **State**

Mosque is perched on the riverbank and nearby markets offer a mind-boggling range of produce. At the other end of the Main Bazaar, **Tua Pek Kong Temple** built in 1876 is an important place of worship for Chinese.

Kuching lays claim to nine museums, many within walking distance of each other. Visit the **Sarawak Museum** which has one of the region's best ethnographic collections. The city also has several well-preserved colonial buildings. Other interesting spots include **Fort Margherita**.

Damai Beach, 45 minutes from Kuching, is a pleasant playground of beaches, golf course and resorts. The nearby **Sarawak Cultural Village** is a themed attraction showing the diverse lifestyles of the ethnic groups in the state and is host to the annual Rainforest World Music Festival.

Enjoy the hospitality of Sarawak's indigenous communities who live in longhouses along the **Lemanak, Rejang, Skrang** and **Batang Ai Rivers**. Access is normally via long motorised boats. In the past, paddling meant arduous journeys but today, small outboards make the task easier. The largest group is the **Ibans**, once headhunters. Other groups include the **Bidayuhs, Melanaus** and **Orang Ulu** (upriver people).

Visitors can stay with their hosts and watch the community make jungle products, join in cultural dances, go trekking or relax in jungle streams. Women weave traditional pua cloth on old back-strap looms.

Gawai is a thanksgiving festival held in June at the end of a bountiful rice harvest. Tuak or rice wine and other traditional delicacies are offered at 'open houses' in longhouses around the state.

Sarawak is an eco-adventure destination popular for trekking, caving, mountain climbing, kayaking, biking, rafting and diving. There are many national parks and wildlife reserves such as the **Bako National Park**, close to Kuching, which contains many plant species endemic to Borneo.

Kubah National Park, Matang Wildlife Centre and **Semenggoh Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre** provide rehabilitation for endangered animals like Orang Utans.

Similajau National Park has emerald waters, a tropical rainforest and long, golden beaches where Green Turtles lay their eggs. The 10,736 -hectare **Loagan Bunut National Park** contains Sarawak's largest natural lake and is a bird watchers' paradise. The **Niah Caves** is the archaeological site of 40,000 year-old human remains. The **Mulu National Park** is a World Heritage Site and contains the world's largest cave chamber and an intricate network of caves. Challenging treks include the **Pinnacles Trail** to Gunung Api and climbing Gunung Mulu.

Avid divers can try the excellent **Belais Reef** off Miri and **Luconia Shoals** in the South China Sea, both accessible by air and boat.