

MALAYSIA - Ultimate Budget Travel Guide

Backpacking Malaysia? I made the decision to hit Malaysia from [Thailand](#) and (like most of my decisions) it was made out of curiosity. I'd often heard about it but nothing beyond the city limits of Kuala Lumpur and the luxury resorts off the coast of Penang, and I knew there had to be more to be discovered. Curiosity killed the cat, right? Well maybe the cat was onto something! I spent a couple of weeks backpacking Malaysia and the country totally blew me away. Backpackers rejoice! Visa entry to Malaysia is **super** easy - combine that with a rich local culture, stunning religious sites, backpacker friendly prices and plenty of adventure antics and you're onto an absolute winner!



When Backpacking Malaysia you come across some beautiful scenes.

I spent a few weeks backpacking Malaysia, eating a lot of weird and wonderful foods, exploring steaming jungles and peaceful tea plantations. I met with many amazing people, hiked to one of the [largest flowers in the world](#) and got to grips with Malaysian history. And now, amigos, I am proud to unveil the broke backpacker guide to backpacking Malaysia on a budget...

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Arriving into Malaysia

I arrived into Malaysia through the Thailand/Malay border. We hired a local man and his van to drive us to the border in Thailand and then walked through and caught another man in a van on the other side. Men with Van... helping broke backpackers explore the world since the age of the hippies!

There are long distance bus services that will take you from Thailand to Malaysia as well but this costs a little more and takes a little longer as well. If you're short on time or simply a baller, flights from Thailand to Kuala Lumpur are very cheap; simply check out [Air Asia online](#).

If you're coming from outside of Asia, the International flights hub is Kuala Lumpur, you can get great deals with an array of different airlines. I have found Malaysian Airlines and Emirates (via Dubai) offer some of the best prices into Malaysia. Flying to other airports in Malaysia is easily done but will often cost more and you will stopover in Kuala Lumpur anyway, so you may as well hop off and explore! Here is some additional [travel inspiration](#) for you in case you need a friendly nudge. :P

Travelling Around Malaysia

Malaysian roads are top notch in tourist areas but will quickly turn to gravel and dirt tracks as you venture further away from backpacker hubs and out of the cities. Buses are a comfortable and affordable way to travel around Malaysia but are not the fastest option. To travel around Malaysia quickly would involve a lot of flights, but you'd be missing out on some epic overland scenery and road-trips. Travelling in Malaysia is, after all, a part of the appeal - there is so much to be seen from the road...



The epic Cameron Highlands, Photo Courtesy: Agoda.com

By Bus: One of the best ways to get around when backpacking in Malaysia is by bus. Most buses have english translations and super helpful drivers. It may take longer than flying but buses tend to be air conditioned and the scenery is pretty beautiful. I wouldn't recommend using buses in the cities though; they are slow, more expensive and due to congestion are not able to stop exactly where you need to be.

By Train: Malaysia is revamping its train service and if you are looking to get from the top to the bottom **pretty** quickly it's a comfortable ride. I didn't use the long distance train service whilst backpacking Malaysia, but it is perfect for those short on time. It is pricier than the bus service and most train services run on a one-line system that will restrict the stopping options you have on the way through the country.

By Domestic Flight: I did not take any domestic flights within Asia but you can pick these up relatively cheap in country through the likes of Malaysian Airlines and Air Asia for as little as \$10 - \$30 one way to most destinations in Malaysia. If you only have a short time in Malaysia this is a great way to travel.

By Car: Driving in Malaysia, once out of major cities, is relatively straightforward and I would dare to say, one of the sanest places to drive in South East Asia. With good road infrastructure in the cities, traffic lights and well marked signs your biggest pest will be tailgating and the lack of signal use. Venture into the countryside expect gravel and dirt roads but beautiful and plentiful view stops. If you are exploring by car in monsoon season I would recommend hiring a 4x4 car if possible, getting stuck in the mud is never too much fun!



Epic Road Trip!

By Metro: Kuala Lumpur's metro is the best if not, the only way to travel inner city. The metro will connect to all the must see places in town as well as shopping district, nightlife and areas such as little India. They even have air con. Running every few minutes, why waste your time and money hailing a taxi when the metro will beat the traffic and even take you as far out as the Batu Caves! Ladies there is even female only carriages if you are travelling alone and/or feeling slightly anxious about mixed carriages and local customs.

By Taxi: In Malaysia you'll get the best deal on a metered taxi. Don't jump in a non-metered taxi without agreeing the price first, you will definitely pay A LOT more than you need to. Always haggle the price with a non-metered taxi, if they won't budge move on, always check your options, there's always someone with a much better deal. Even better, simply call an Uber...

Hitchhiking In Malaysia

Hitchhiking in Malaysia is uncommon but not at all difficult; for broke backpackers on a tight budget hitchhiking offers one of the most cost effective ways to get around whilst backpacking Malaysia.

The busier roads in Malaysia are often highway, which can make scoring a ride a little tricky. The best tip I was given was put yourself in a spot that if you score a ride and they come in at speed, you can get out the way. Malaysians are curious and ridiculously friendly, on a good day it shouldn't take you longer than 5 minutes to hitch a ride.

Expect short distance riding, especially in rural areas where not many people are driving by. It's far more likely you will catch lots of short rides rather than one long one. Make friends with other tourists at gas stations and café stops, you never know who has a spare seat in their car.

Before hopping in the car it's a good idea to clear the air and make sure the driver is aware you are hitchhiking, not hailing a taxi. That would make for an awkward exit...

Useful Phrases when hitchhiking Malaysia

Where are you going? - **Di Mana anda akan pergi?**

I am going to.. - **Saya mahu pergi ke....**

Please stop here - **Sila berhenti di sini**

I have no money - **Saya Tidak Ada Duit**

Thank You - **Terima Kasih (Treema- Kahseh)**

I am Hitchhiking - **Saya sedang hitchhiking**

These are some useful phrases to know, making the effort to speak the language is always a compliment. Most people in Malaysia will speak pretty good English, even in the most rural of places so don't worry if you get a little stuck. Be sure to download the free language app, [uTalk Go](#), before travelling to Malaysia.

Top Tips for Hitchhiking Malaysia

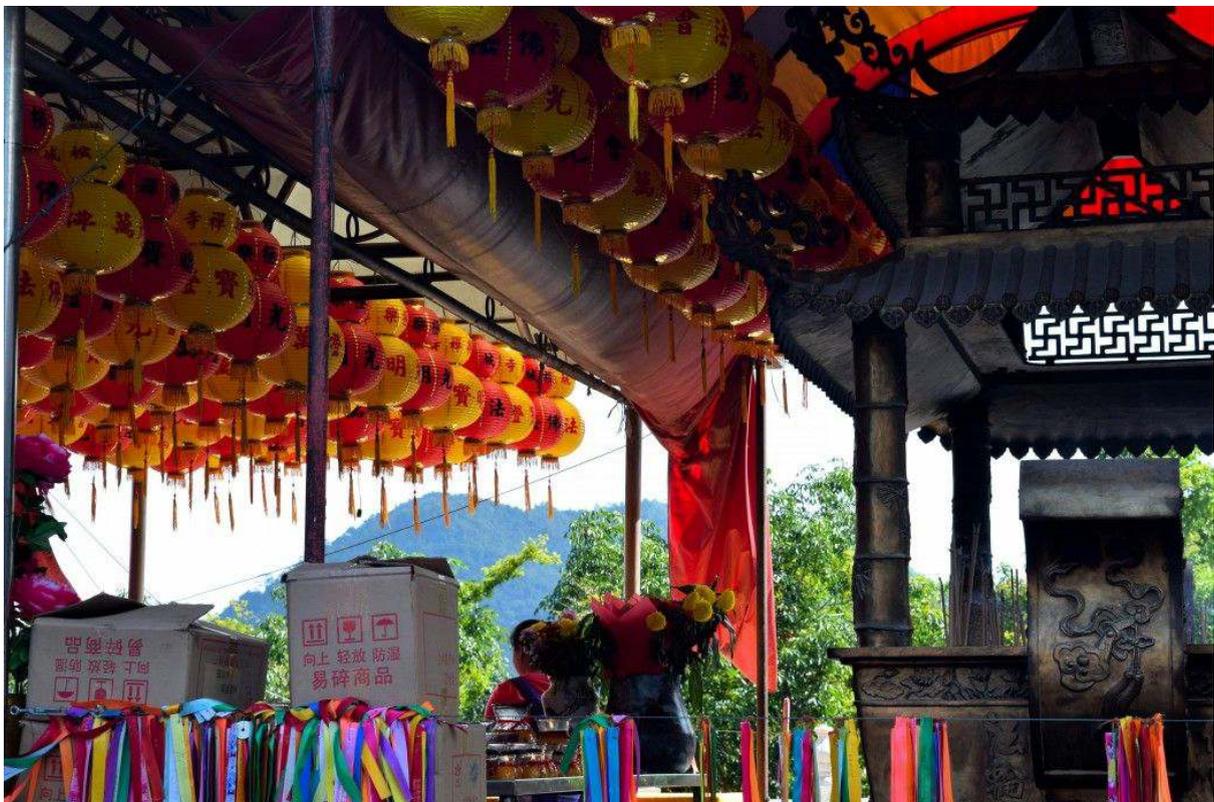
Look like a tourist. People know what hitchhiking is and they are interested in foreign visitors, so make sure you look like a tourist. On busy roads, sometimes the wait time is less than 5 mins.

Don't hitch right on the motorway. Unlike in other countries in Asia, it's not advisable to hitchhike right on the motorway. Police won't bother, but cars are much more unlikely to stop, if they are too fast or there is no safe place to stop.

Have a sign with 'Tumpang' written on it. This can help especially if you choose to walk on the Expressway.

Learn some useful phrases. Drivers usually speak English and stop easily but its always helpful to know a few local phrases like the ones listed above.

Cars are modern and fast. Local roads are often in good condition, and are enjoyable to hitch. So hitch away!



Finding beautiful and bright decorations travelling in Malaysia

Entry Requirements when Backpacking Malaysia

As of 2016 the majority of nationalities will be able to get a [visa on entry](#) into Malaysia for no cost at all, which is fantastic! For the UK, you will be permitted to stay for a maximum of 3 months on arrival, be careful not to overstay this. Malaysia, unlike many other Asian countries, is having a big crack down on illegal immigration and overstaying your visa may be a tricky (and expensive) situation to get out of.

If you know you will be staying longer than 3 months in Malaysia it is recommended you visit the [Malaysian Diplomatic Mission](#) in your own country to obtain the correct visa. If you are in country head to your local embassy or otherwise just hop out of the country and come back in again.

Once through immigration, Malaysia is a relatively safe and welcoming place to travel. A couple of months is heaps of time to explore this beautiful country. Entering overland into the country you will have your fingerprints taken, passport scanned and you may be asked about your exit plans, especially if you don't have a flight out of the country booked. Malaysian immigration are not new to backpackers so as long as you have an idea of how you will leave, you should be fine. It's a good idea to have a rough idea of when/how you will be leaving and someone you can call who will vouch for you, just in case.

Need help organising your visa, checkout [iVisa](#).

What to Wear When Backpacking Malaysia

Malaysia has to be one of my favourite places in Asia for shopping and you will find that most people – especially in the busier areas – take a lot of pride in what they wear. The more modern areas of Malaysia such as Kuala Lumpur will be a lot more westernised in their dress sense and you can pretty much wear what you would at home on a day-to-day basis, with some exceptions. In the more rural areas it is a wise to be respectful and dress a little more conservatively, especially if you are a woman. Malaysia is a melting pot with a mixture of religions, the most prominent practice being that of [Islam](#).

Showing a lot of flesh for men or women will attract a lot of attention or worst-case scenario, cause offence. Try to avoid exposing too much flesh. Jeans and a t-shirt, covering shoulders and cleavage is perfectly fine. Try to keep shorts/skirts/dresses at or just below the knee. Tight and fitted clothing will attract attention such as harmless stares, if you would rather not have this wear loose fitting clothing, not only will the stares reduce but the sweat stains will be more avoidable!



Melaka was one of my favourite stops while backpacking Malaysia

Accommodation in Malaysia

Hostels are only just beginning to pop up throughout Malaysia and during my time there I chose to stay at Guesthouses rather than the hostels, as they were cheaper! Throughout Malaysia, guesthouses, hotels, [AirBnB](#) and [CouchSurfing](#) will be your main options for accommodation.

Guesthouses are fantastically priced for us broke backpackers and you can score a bed for as little as \$5 - \$15 a night! If you are backpacking Malaysia in peak season use AirBnb as an alternative. Often just as cheap, the added bonus is you may get a whole apartment! If not, you'll make some awesome local friends! Use this [AirBnB coupon code](#) for \$35 off your first stay at a great property!

Use sites such as [Hostelworld](#) to find your accommodation, they list many of the Guesthouses here. I would recommend the [Grand Inn Penang](#) and the [Fenix Inn](#) in Melaka. You can also [save on hotels with discount codes](#).

Unmarried couples generally won't have a problem travelling and staying together when in Malaysia. You may have to request a double bed in some places (if necessary) but otherwise you will be met with friendliness and the beautiful hospitality that Malaysian people are famous for.

Kuala Lumpur	Paper Plane Hostel	Cute little hostel with good facilities. Chill out in the glasshouse lobby or on the rooftop garden overlooking the city.
Penang	Tipsy Tiger Party Hostel	Great social hostel with free drinks every night! They know how to throw a party here & keep us backpackers entertained.
Langkawi	Sweet Monkey Backpackers	I can never go past free breakfast when i'm travelling. The social atmosphere is great & the location is literally a 30 second walk to the beach.
Melaka	Tony's Guesthouse	Cosy guesthouse, full of colour & fun artwork. I loved the backpacker scene here & friendly staff
Cameron Highlands	Orchid Haven	They offer an awesome cooking class & free breakfast, tea and coffee. I loved the garden here!

Book Your Malaysian Hostel Here!

Money in Malaysia - Easy Peasy

DO NOT buy Malaysian Ringgit before travelling to Malaysia. Why? You will get a crappy exchange rate. Money is easily exchanged upon arrival in Malaysia and you'll get a much better exchange rate in the country.

Malaysia accepts the majority of international cards so long as they are Visa or MasterCard. If travelling to rural areas cash is always best, ATMs will become scarce fast. If arriving by land either exchange only what you absolutely need before entering Malaysia. Some drivers will accept US dollars as payment if you have nothing else, but don't count on it.

If they accept it, make sure you have an idea of how much your journey will cost in US dollars before hand, it's such an easy way to get ripped off if you're not familiar with the exchange rate.

Traveller's Cheques are massively outdated and should be avoided. These are harder to exchange and you will probably incur fees and a bad rate of exchange.



Colourful Malaysian ringgits!

Where to go Backpacking in Malaysia

Malaysia is a country full of variation and surprises and after a couple of weeks travelling in Malaysia, it truly left me wanting more. Below are a few of my favourite spots that I recommend checking out on your own adventure backpacking across Malaysia.



Kedah

Entering Malaysia you will most likely pass through the beautiful state of Kedah. While most travellers will just pass through, Kedah has plenty to offer and it's worth stopping to explore. Explore some of the first European Colonial Streets and experience the beauty of Gunung Jerai (Mount Jerai). The ancient Malays proclaimed Gunung Jerai sacred and some stunning temples were built throughout the mountain; many of them are still standing today. If you want to know more, the cheeky Malays have placed a great information board at the top of the mountain - all you have to do is climb 1175 meters to reach it!



Photo credit: Sini Kaki

Langkawi

A popular spot for Thai visa-runs and a great place to chill out for a few days, the peaceful island of Langkawi sits upon an ancient Limestone shelf and is home to one of Southeast Asia's largest eagle populations. This is a great place to head off on an adventure and if you head away from the party beaches you will find some great treks, snorkelling and scuba diving. Cenang Beach is where most of the action is - plenty of jet skiing and other watersports but the beach itself is not that great and is usually pretty crowded, to see the real Langkawi hire a motorbike and take to the open road for a day of exploring.



Whilst in Langkawi, I took to the trees with [Skytrex Adventure](#) for an action-packed afternoon of high ropes (don't look down!) and zip-lining through the Forest Canopy. I've done a few high ropes and zip-lining courses around the world and this was one of the more challenging ones, definitely worth a go if you want to kick-start your day.



There's lots of great accommodation options in Langkawi - everything from chilled backpacker dorms and quiet AirBnBs to super posh resorts if you plan on splashing out. If you want to stay somewhere really decent that is also affordable, I recommend [Yacht club Hotel](#) - This hotel has a cool bar offering a great view over the attached Marina where you can boat-watch as people bring their yachts (lucky bastards) in for the night. This hotel also has some of the best WiFi I found on Langkawi so if you need to work, it's a good place to stay.

[Book Your Langkawi Hostel Here!](#)



Penang

One of the first major areas in Malaysia occupied by the Europeans and once a major trading hub for ships around the world, Penang keeps much of its colonial heritage intact and is an incredible place to chill for a couple of days. ‘Old Penang’ is one of the best places to go for a stroll and is filled with [UNESCO](#) sites, it’s a bit like stepping back in time... **Hire a bike** for cheap – only around \$5 for the day – and explore [Georgetown](#) and its legendary street art. Get lost in the beautiful colonial streets, venture through vibrant Little India and follow the street art around the city.



Inside the incredible Kek Lok Si Temple

You can't go to Penang and not visit [Kek Lok Si Temple](#) or, ‘Temple of Ultimate Happiness’. This Buddhist temple faces the sea and overlooks the ever-growing city of new and old Penang. You can hire a guide at the car park relatively cheap which I highly recommend. The guide will immerse you in the incredibly beautiful and sometimes, gory history behind each of the 10,000 carved symbols. If this doesn't convince you, this temple also has one of the biggest statues you will ever see – standing at 99ft (seven stories) [Kuan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy](#) is pretty awe-inspiring.

Broke Backpacker Tip: Get to this temple around [Chinese New Year](#). Why? Well for 30 days the temple is decorated with thousands of lanterns. This sight is so beautiful that it will give you Goosebumps.



Backpack Malaysia at Chinese New Year don't miss Kek Lok Si Temple. - photo credit: Wikipedia

Ever wondered what a Burmese Temple looked like? [Dhammikarama Temple](#) is a favourite of mine due to its quiriness! Explore the gardens of the temple and you will come across a Giant Globe. It is said if you focus on your hearts desires, close your eyes and point you will be directed to where you need to go – while also taking a cheesy picture of yourself. You'll also find a wishing well of fortune? Throw a coin and land it in one of the moving, engraved cups; each with a different future trait – I got Bon Voyage; I think it was pretty accurate.

Want more to do in Penang? Check out this awesome [guide to Georgetown...](#)

Book Your Penang Hostel Here!



If you can dream it, you can do it. Cheesy quote to go with a cheesy picture!

Cameron Highlands

A relatively new backpacker area, the Cameron Highlands are breathtakingly beautiful and should not be missed when travelling in Malaysia. Moving away from the cities and hitting the dirt roads, you will see some truly gorgeous mountainous scenery, cascading tea plantations and mysterious cloud forest. Hire a car (or a man with a van) and navigate the dirt track roads leading you into the **incredible tea plantations**. Learn about the tea making process – which is actually a lot more interesting than I first thought it would be – sample the leaves, take a walk through the plantations and even befriend the pickers who will laugh at your attempt at picking the correct leaves at a good enough pace... It's harder than it looks!



Janey exploring off the beaten track backpacking Malaysia, Cameron Highlands is pretty magical

I hired a local guide and we went into the [cloud forest](#), where we went in search for the rare and beautiful [Rafflesia](#) (one of the world's largest flowers). It kind of looks like a giant upside down mushroom, but more red and according to my guide depending on the time of year it smells like a dead elephant – thankfully it did not when we found it.



We found one of the worlds largest flowers! Does look kind of mushroom like to you?

Hacking my way through the cloud forest was incredible, the trails are not well trodden, the views are incredible (when the trees break) and the knowledge the locals have on the plants and conservation in the area is extraordinary. If you're after a real adventure whilst backpacking Malaysia, this is it.

Book Your Cameron Highlands Hostel Here!

Kuala Lumpur

The capital of Malaysia and arguably, the most westernised place you'll visit while here in Malaysia. This is often where most backpackers in Malaysia will start, as it is the main hub for international flights in Malaysia. I only spent a short time in Kuala Lumpur, as it was a lot more expensive than the other areas I visited. Stay in the central [Mayview Glory Hotel](#), very basic but in a perfect spot for exploring. If you only do one thing in Kuala Lumpur check out the incredible [Batu Caves](#).



One of the highlights from Backpacking Malaysia was the incredible Batu Caves..

[The Batu Caves](#) are a short and cheap KTM metro ride from central Kuala Lumpur and a great day trip. The incredible Hindu Temple and Shrine attracts both worshippers and visitors alike. It isn't one for the unfit – unless you want to stand at the bottom of the stairs and look up – to get inside the temple you have a great stair workout ahead of you and the humidity will make sure even the fittest person ends with beautiful sweat stains. At the top explore the inside of the cave and meet the locals (monkeys!) – during 2016 there is major renovation work happening inside the cave, but still worth a visit.

On the way down from the Batu Caves stop at the **Bat Cave** and take the 45 minute tour inside – around 35MYR – wandering into complete darkness and meet the animals that live down here. You may see spiders; bats, snakes, scorpions and plenty of cave dwelling bugs. The guides are extremely knowledgeable and it's an experience that a lot of travellers miss on the way down!

If you haven't spent all your money before you leave KUL head up the **KUL tower**. It's around 105 MYR for both decks. Here you will get a pretty awesome view of the city, even better in the evening! Make sure you take a good cheesy picture with the Petronas Towers, here's mine...

Book Your Kuala Lumpur Hostel Here!



Melaka

A three hour bus ride from Kuala Lumpur, this beautiful small town has an incredibly strange obsession with Hello Kitty and the city itself resembles a small town in Europe. Once the 'must see' place in Malaysia before Kuala Lumpur developed it is now a more sleepy backpacker city and mass tourism has moved to the other ever growing cities within Malaysia. Melaka is a cheap place to hang out, making it a perfect rest stop for broke backpackers travelling in Malaysia.



Cool art on the streets of Melaka

UNESCO protected, Melaka is filled with an incredible history with many of the old colonial buildings still in incredible condition and being used today. Melaka is easy to navigate by bicycle or foot, wander the streets and enjoy the bright colours, colonial buildings and reflective water canals. Head down Jonker Street where the city's heritage meets some crazy museums, awesome market shopping and some epic food. It's a little quirky and a great place to find things you will never need but want anyway. A stop you shouldn't miss when backpacking Malaysia.

Book Your Melaka Hostel Here!



Must try Experiences in Malaysia

Street Food: I mean, what visit to Asia is complete without trying the [local delicacies](#)? Try the authentic food, which in my opinion is not as spicy as Thai food and is, in fact, more flavorful. You will get a HUGE portion for such a tiny price!

Hire a Bike: The best way to explore the small, hidden and beautiful winding streets. The cars on the road are relatively sane drivers here, so you'll be fine.

Stay with a local: Take one of your new local friends up on a [free couch](#) for a night. You will get some great local knowledge, an insight into their life and probably a lot of food too. Local friends are the best friends, right?

Haggle for goodies: Super common in Malaysia and also great fun. The only way to get a good deal, you should be able to get a discount of at least 20%. Read up on our [haggling guide](#) for more details.



Backpacking Malaysia is not complete without trying the street food.... or all of it.

Malaysian Hospitality

Malaysians are incredibly friendly people; they have grown up in one of the biggest melting pots of cultures I have come across. They are so interested in your story and will often ask you a lot of questions. They love to take pictures with the people they meet, this even happened to me at the border crossing. If you don't want your picture taken just politely decline, they may take a sneaky one anyway.

It is not uncommon for Malaysians to invite you for tea or for dinner, it is up to you if you want to accept this offer, but I mean, why wouldn't you? I have yet to meet an unfriendly Malaysian and found everyone to be extremely respectful. You will not be without friends when backpacking in Malaysia.



How Much does Backpacking Malaysia Cost?

You can backpack Malaysia for as little as \$15 a day. Sometimes more if you want a fancy cocktail rather than a beer for a change. Stick to cheap guesthouses, good street food and buses rather than flights and trains and you shouldn't spend more than fifty dollars a day.

Average room cost: \$5 - \$15 per night

Average Meal Cost: \$1 - \$5

Long Distance Coach: \$3 - \$10

Entrance to a site cost: \$0 - \$25

Budget Tips for Broke Backpackers

Eat the Street Food: Put your stomach to the test! Nah! Just kidding, the street food in Malaysia is awesome and I didn't encounter any stomach to bathroom problems while here. The trick, as with anywhere serving street food, is to go for the one that already has a queue. No one queues for bad food, ever. This will be the cheapest way to eat, if you're not convinced then head to the food courts (which are basically the same thing) where the food is cheap and is slightly more restaurant styled, with a bathroom nearby.

Haggle: It is commonplace for market shopping to haggle for your goods. Even if you think it is cheap for you, without haggling you are not getting a local's price or a good deal. It's heaps of fun as well, so [get your game face on](#) and snag some random goodies!

Hitchhike or bus: [Hitchhiking](#) is a great way to meet the locals, it may even score you a free bed for the night as well – two for one is always good right? If you're not comfortable hitchhiking take the bus, super cheap and relatively comfortable it's by far the easiest way to travel in Malaysia.

Guesthouses: Cheaper than most hostels and way cheaper than hotels, this is the best way to save money while travelling through Malaysia. Often family run too so you will meet some awesome locals. If you want to book something online, [Agoda](#) offers some of the best deals in Asia.

Pack your bible: Learn how to travel the world on \$10 a day whilst you get your shit sorted, discover the secrets to long term travel and build an online income. [Check it out here.](#)

Backpack Malaysia for Free

So Malaysia has captured your heart and you want to stay a little longer? Perhaps one of the best options for backpackers wanting to explore Malaysia long-term and experience living in this truly incredible country is to get a Teaching English as a Foreign Language course online. [TEFL courses](#) open up a huge range of opportunities and you can find teaching work all over the world. To find out more about TEFL courses and how you can teach English around the world, read my in-depth report on [teaching english abroad](#).



Teach English in Malaysia

Learning Malay When Backpacking Malaysia

Malay is a language with an incredible history. Dating back thousands of years with estimations going back into the BC era, it is an incredibly old yet modern language. Just like Malaysia, Malay as we recognise it now has been influenced by different cultures and religions, the main being Islamic Religion. The Language itself was influenced greatly by the Islamic literature and an influx of Arabic, Tamil and Sanskrit vocabulary which also makes it pretty tricky to learn. But not impossible.

Malay is relatively tricky to pick up but the basics can go a long way especially when you head out into the rural areas in Malaysia. Whilst backpacking Malaysia I used this wickedly awesome app called [uTalk Go](#). An amazing learning app that helped me get to grips with the basic, but essential phrases as I backpacked Malaysia.

My favourite phrases for backpacking Malaysia

Hi! - **Hi Friend!**

How are you? - **Kwan Apa Khabar?**

Very Good - **Sangat Bagus**

What's your name? - **Siapa nama anda?**

My Name Is.... - **Nama saya ...**

Goodnight - **Selamat malam**

Goodbye - **Selamat tinggal**

How much Is This? - **Berapa harganya ini?**

Where's the toilet? - **Di mana tandas?**

Would you like to dance with me? - **Mahukah saudara menari dengan saya?**

This gentleman/lady will pay for everything - **Dia akan bayar semuanya**

Thank you - **Terima kasih**

Please - **Tolong**

I'm From - **Saya dari ...**

Where are you from? - **Dari mana asal saudara?**

Eat! Eat! - **Makan makan!**

I don't understand - **Saya tidak faham**

Partying in Malaysia

Alcohol in Malaysia is pretty pricey this is down to it being forbidden for Muslims to drink however those who are not are free to drink if they wish. Many restaurants won't serve alcohol but will turn a blind eye to those bringing in their own to have with their meal.

House parties are pretty common in Malaysia and are heaps of fun! You'll find modern clubs in the main cities such as Penang and Kuala Lumpur; be prepared to pay a pretty penny to get in!

The penalties for drugs in Malaysia are severe if you're enjoying a cheeky smoke keep your wits about you (as much as possible!) and don't get caught.



Remember to look up when backpacking Malaysia and wandering the side streets.

Safety While Travelling in Malaysia

Backpacking Malaysia is completely safe. The majority of people you will meet when travelling in Malaysia are incredibly friendly and genuine people. Malaysia is a peaceful country and incredibly accepting and respectful of other cultures, be respectful back and don't break the rules. If you do, you may find yourself in a bit of a tough spot.

The Best Time to Travel Malaysia

Malaysian seasons range from Wet, Comfortable, Hot and Humid. The West and East Coast can experience completely different weather from one another so it really depends on where you want to go in Malaysia.

Overall, the west coast is best between October – March and the East coast is best from March to October.

The East Coast gets quite a bit more rain than the West and if travelling to Malaysia in the Wet season you may find a lot of stores, hotels and guesthouses closed.

I traveled Malaysia in December – End of January and the weather was spot on.



Gorgeous, untouched beaches

Border Crossings in Malaysia

The main peninsula of Malaysia shares borders with [Singapore](#) and [Thailand](#) both of which are relatively easy to cross. The overland border from Malaysia to Singapore requires A LOT of time and patience. Malaysia also borders with Indonesia if you are over in Borneo.

When you are ready to move on from Malaysia (I highly recommend [Thailand](#) - make sure you check visa requirements and border crossing restrictions.

Thinking about moving on to [Indonesia](#) or the [Philippines](#) after backpacking Malaysia? Why not follow in the footsteps of the explorers of old and hop on a boat? With some journeys taking just eight hours, to reach the Philippines, and ferry prices being relatively cheap, catching a boat out of Malaysia can be an adventurous alternative to flying...

Onwards travel to Indonesia via ferry is not as common as it once was and, these days, it can be hard to find a boat heading in the right direction. Melaka is the best place to find a ferry onwards to Malaysia, from here it is likely your arrival port will be Padang (sumatra) in Indonesia. Book any ferry service when in Malaysia, ask for the most up to date advice and price from guesthouses and locals as the information online is relatively outdated.

Onwards travel to the [Philippines](#) via ferry is recommended from Sandakan using either [Aleson Lines](#) or [SRN Fastcraft](#). Neither of these companies offer comprehensive websites, so again check the latest information when in country and haggle for the best price. Aleson Lines takes around 16hrs while SRN Fastcraft is only 8hrs to reach the Philippines.

For a more adventurous and unique way to sail to Indonesia or the Philippines (or really anywhere else) check out [findacrew.net](#). Basically, this is couchsurfing for sailors. You will find locals, travellers, expats with their own boats looking for crew to help them adventure over sea to their next destination. Perfect if you have a lot of time on your hands and a limited (or non existent) budget. Many captains don't require you to have any previous experience and you may even get paid a little for helping out!

Personally I can't think of a better way to begin a new adventure after backpacking Malaysia, I will definitely be trying this on my next trip.



Boat it from the Philippines!

Useful Apps to Download Before Backpacking Malaysia

Be warned, free wifi in Malaysia is hard to find and will probably be painfully slow. Don't use your precious moments downloading apps while backpacking Malaysia, prepare before you go!

uTalk Go – The backpacker's secret weapon when it comes to learning languages, I cannot recommend uTalk enough; whilst backpacking Malaysia and the rest of Asia, this is your secret weapon.

Maps.Me - Prone to getting lost or taking that 'shortcut' that adds another few hours onto a simple walk? This app is definitely for you. My favourite offline maps app, download your map and route before you venture out to keep you on track.

XE Currency - I used this a lot when backpacking Malaysia. If you have multiple currencies to exchange or pay your initial taxi in US Dollars, this will keep you right.

Books to Read on Malaysia

Backpacking Malaysia will be made even more incredible with a little background knowledge. To truly get an idea of the incredible range of cultures, religions and traditions I highly recommend chucking some of these books into your backpack before travelling in Malaysia.

The Backpacker Bible - Learn how to ditch your desk and travel the world on just \$10 a day whilst building a life of long-term travel with an online income. Shameless bit of self promo here but this book is basically my dissertation on backpacking, nine years of tips and tricks and your purchase helps keep the site going. If you've found the content on this site useful, the book is the next level up and you will learn a ton - if you don't, I'll give you your money back. [Check it out here.](#)

Floating on a Malayan Breeze: Travels in Malaysia and Singapore - A great insight into how Malaysian culture developed and grew after splitting with Singapore and how different the two places are.

A Town Like Alice - The story of Jean Paget, a young Englishwoman who becomes romantically interested in a fellow prisoner of World War II in Malaya, and after liberation emigrates to Australia to be with him, where she attempts to generate economic prosperity in a small community — to turn it into "a town like Alice".

Stranger in the Forest: On Foot Across Borneo - If this doesn't convince you to go and explore the wild side of Borneo I don't know what will.

Malaysia - Culture Smart!: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture - I don't normally take guide books with me, but this was a good read before I left.

A History of Malaysia - A great informative read if you are interested in the complex past of Malaysia.

The Harmony Silk Factory - A fantastic read comparing different cultures and how they lived and worked together. One of my favourites!

Sweet Offerings - a tale of Malaysia's historical political and cultural changes during its transition from colonial rule to independence.

The Long Day Wanes: A Malayan Trilogy - A really great read, one of my favourites.

If you are Hitchhiking it's worthwhile picking up a [road map of Malaysia](#).

I love reading before taking my next trip, actually, I just love to read in general. Check out more of my [favourite books to read on the road here](#).

Insurance for Backpacking Malaysia

Whenever you hit the road and go travelling, you need insurance. I have been backpacking for years and have had to claim from time to time; if I didn't have insurance I would have been utterly screwed on all occasions. It's just not worth the risk to go without.

I recommend [World Nomads Travel Insurance](#) – they hands down have the best support and if you do need to claim they will help you get it sorted quickly.

Even if you don't get insurance with World Nomads, Please do get some sort of insurance from somewhere, there are lots of decent options online. So there you have it amigos, everything you need to know to hit the road and begin backpacking Malaysia. So get out there already.

[Want to learn how to travel the world on \\$10 a day?](#)

[Check out the Broke Backpacker's Bible...](#)

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