



PUSAT PENGAJIAN BAHASA, LITERASI DAN TERJEMAHAN
SCHOOL OF LANGUAGES, LITERACIES AND TRANSLATION

INTENSIVE ENGLISH PROGRAMME

Pre-arrival Guide

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BEFORE LEAVING HOME

Pre-Departure Checklist

This guide will assist you with your transition to Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia (Minden campus). Please read it carefully and make sure you complete all the steps in the pre-departure checklist. Feel free to contact the Intensive English Programme coordinator **Ms. Maryam Hamzah** at maryhamz@usm.my or **Ms. Tasneem Meera Mohaideen** at tmeera@usm.my. You may also visit our website at <http://www.ppblt.usm.my>

1.1 Purchase your travel insurance

It is advisable that you purchase a comprehensive travel insurance. Please send a copy of your Travel Insurance policy for the university's International Office officer.

1.2 Accommodation

Ensure accommodation arrangements have been confirmed prior to your arrival and the full address is kept in your hand luggage. The complete details for the off-campus accommodations are attached together with this checklist.

1.3 Update your contact details with the home campus

Ensure your postal, emergency contact and home (i.e. Malaysian) addresses and telephone numbers are all up to date so that both your home and host campus can keep in touch with you.

1.4 Make copies of all important documents to bring in your hand luggage

1.4.1 *Offer letter of the Intensive English Programme*

1.4.2 *Student Pass*

1.4.3 *Passport information page*

1.4.4 *Other formal identification*

1.4.5 *International driver's license and/or driver's license from your home country (optional)*

1.4.6 *Travel insurance certificate*

It is important that you have all these documents with you throughout your stay in Malaysia. We suggest that you put a second copy of each in your suitcase and leave a third copy at home with your family.

1.5 Classifying an Intensive English Programme Student

You will be classified as an *Intensive English Programme* (IEP) student. Other international students at USM, most of whom are doing full degrees, make up quite a big and diverse group of students who study at this campus. A lot of the information for international students on the website will be useful for you, however not all information is relevant to you.

1.6 Student Pass

Student Passes are regulated by the Immigration Department of Malaysia and are valid for the duration of your exchange. Once you have accepted your exchange offer, USM will apply for your Student Pass. It may take between 6 and 8 weeks to obtain a Student Pass. Once your Student Pass application is approved, the Student Pass approval letter will be sent to you before the commencement of your exchange program. You must NOT travel to Malaysia without this letter.

1.7 Visa

Apart from the Student Pass, you may be required to also apply for a visa depending on your country of origin. For this purpose, you will require your Student Pass approval letter which we will send to you (see 1.8 Student Pass). Please check with the nearest Malaysian diplomatic mission if you are required to apply for a visa and prepare the necessary documentations for your visa application. Due to possible lengthy visa processing time, you are advised to contact the Malaysian diplomatic mission upon accepting your exchange offer.

1.8 Student Pass Endorsement

You must enter Malaysia on a Student Pass and not a Tourist Pass. When you present your Student Pass to Immigration upon arrival, a temporary 'Special Pass' will be stamped in your passport. During orientation week, you will be required to submit your passport to the respective International Office officer at University Sains Malaysia (Minden campus) to arrange for an official Student Pass endorsement on your passport. Together with the submission of your passport, you will be required to pay for the Student Pass Endorsement and a Visa levy (rates vary by country). The Student Pass Endorsement process usually takes between 6-8 weeks and you are advised to not make any travel arrangements during this period as you will be unable to travel outside Malaysia.

1.9 Immigration Department of Malaysia.

You should familiarise yourself with the travel requirements at <http://bheaa.usm.my/> and <http://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/>

2.0 Electrical Equipment

The electricity supply in Malaysia is 240 volts and 50-60 MHz. Ensure you check with the manufacturer if the appliances you are planning to bring would operate safely. Most modern laptops can operate on 5 multiple voltages but make sure you check yours with the manufacturer. You are advised to bring along an adaptor as the plug point design in Malaysia may vary from the ones in your home country.

2.1 Weather

Malaysia experiences tropical weather all year-round. Temperatures range from 26°C to 33°C. Higher

elevations are much colder with temperatures between 18°C to 25°C. Annual rainfall varies between 2,000mm to 2,500mm. If you are commencing in the first intake (January), you will arrive at the middle of the monsoon season but do expect heavy down pour every now and then. Starting from March until September will be the dry season where the weather will be hot and humid, with little rain. Generally, October until February will be the monsoon period whereby heavy rain can be expected almost every other day. A good poncho or big umbrella will be very handy at this time. Activities in the east coast islands off Peninsular Malaysia are minimal during this time until early the following year where rainfall will lessen gradually. See the following site for more information on Malaysian weather: www.met.gov.my

2.1 Banking Facilities

Many banks in Malaysia offer a wide range of services including savings and current accounts, Automated Teller Machines (ATMs), fixed deposits, safe deposit boxes, loans, overdrafts and transfers, travellers cheques and currency exchange. Major banks are Maybank, Public Bank, CIMB Bank, Hong Leong Bank and RHB Bank. You may open an account at the bank of your choice. You will be provided a letter from the Prospective Student Office – International Student Pass (PSO-ISP) to open a bank account during orientation. The Minden campus has a CIMB bank located near Anjung (cafeteria)

2.2 Other Useful Information

For information on life as a student in Malaysia, click on

- <http://www.educationmalaysia.gov.my/global-education-hub/affordable-tuition-fees-and-cost-of-living/cost-of-living-in-malaysia/>
- http://sunway.edu.my/university/international_office/living-in-malaysia

Airport Arrival and Getting To Your Accommodation

2.3 Airport Arrival

Upon arrival at the immigration counter, you would need to show your Student Pass approval letter and IEP offer letter to the immigration officer. This will ensure that you have entered Malaysia as an international student.

2.4 Getting To Your Accommodation

All airport taxis must operate using a pre-paid coupon system. You are advised to purchase the pre-paid coupon at the taxi counters inside the arrival hall. Please do not entertain any touts that offer you cheaper taxi fares.

Upon clearing Immigration and Customs, you will enter the International Arrival hall. Proceed to the taxi counter in the arrival hall and purchase a taxi coupon to your pre-arranged accommodation.

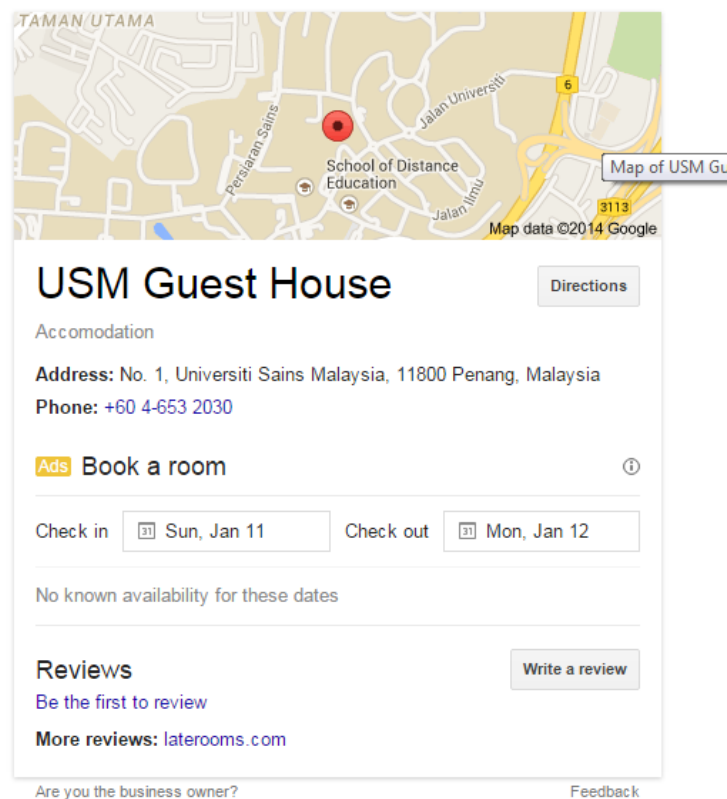
2.5 Cabs counter

Economy taxi fare to USM guest house is RM30 and Recsam is RM40. Premium class taxis will incur a much higher fare. You would need to inform your preferred taxi class (economy or premium) during purchase otherwise you will be assumed to purchase the premium taxi. You would need to provide the address of your destination to the taxi officer.

2.6 Accommodation

All students will need to arrange for their off-campus accommodation. Eight single bedrooms are grouped into apartment-style units with shared bathrooms, pantry and living room. Each room is equipped with a bed, mattress with mattress protector, LCD TV, study table & chair, wardrobe, tempered glass notice board & mini-bar fridge. Students will not know their room allocations until they arrive.

Depending on the type of room, accommodation rates range between MYR 1050 (USD\$350) to MYR 1,500 (USD\$500) per month. Utility charges for water and electricity are included in the accommodation rates subject to a monthly quota. More accommodation details can be found at <http://www.recsam.edu.my/index.php/accomodation> and USM guesthouse;



2.7 Orientation Week

The Orientation program for students will be held in Week 1 or Week 2. Attendance for orientation is compulsory.

2.8 Finances Upon Arrival

You should bring along sufficient funds to cover your expenses for the initial period you are here. This should include your accommodation deposits and rental, meals and Student Pass Endorsement Fee. Cost of living may differ according to individual preferences.

2.9 Living in Malaysia

Culture

Malaysia is home to many ethnic groups which comprise of 3 main races - Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Along with a wide range of customs and practices, Malaysians celebrate a variety of colourful festivals. This includes the Muslim festival Eid ul-Fitr, known locally as Hari Raya Aidilfitri. This festival marks the beginning of Syawal, a new year in the Muslim calendar. Prior to the celebration, Muslims observe a month of fasting, beginning from daybreak until sunset. The Chinese community in Malaysia celebrates various festivals such as the Lunar New Year, Mid-Autumn Festival and Chap Goh Meh. Hindu celebrations include Deepavali, Thaipusam and Ponggal. The people of Sabah and Sarawak celebrate harvest festivals known as Tadau Ka'amaton in Sabah and Hari Gawai in Sarawak. Christians all over the country celebrate Christmas.

Food and Beverages

Penang is a food heaven. You may find a lot of local street food like Char Koey Teow, spicy noodles and etc. Muslims consume halal food (permissible by Muslim law) and only dine in restaurants which are certified halal. Pork and alcohol are not consumed by Muslims.

Dressing

A majority of Muslim women wear garments that fully cover their bodies. The usage of headscarves is also common. Visitors are encouraged to take note of local sensitivities and dress modestly.

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 do request for permission first.

3.0 Dos and Don'ts

When visiting Malaysia, visitors should observe local customs and practices. Some common courtesies and customs are as follows:

- *Although handshakes are generally acceptable for both men and women, some Muslim ladies may acknowledge introductions to gentlemen by merely nodding and smiling. A handshake should only be initiated by ladies. 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 outstretched hands, and then brings his hands to his chest to mean, 'I greet you from my heart'. The visitor should reciprocate the salam.*
- *It is polite to call before visiting a home.*
- *Shoes must always be removed when entering a Malaysian home.*
- *Drinks are generally offered to guests. It is polite to accept.*
- *The right hand is always used when eating with one's hand or giving and receiving objects.*
- *The right forefinger is not used to point at places, objects or persons. Instead, the thumb of the right hand with four fingers folded under is the preferred usage.*
- *Toasting is not a common practice in Malaysia. The country's large Muslim population does not drink alcohol.*
- *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.*

3.1 Other Issues

Working in Malaysia

All international students with a student visa are not allowed to work and receive an allowance at the same time. Students are able to participate in voluntary or social work where there is no exchange of money for work completed. The work visa regulations place restrictions on the type or nature of work that students engage in.

3.2 Hospitalisation and Surgical Insurance

Under Malaysian Government visa regulations, all international students must be covered for Hospitalisation and Surgical Insurance which covers the costs of basic medical and hospital care. The policy is provided by a private insurance company and arranged by USM. Students are required to pay the insurance premium during registration as part of the student pass endorsement process.