

Malaysia

Medical Summary

The health risk information presented here is summarized from Shoreland Travax[®], a decision-support tool used by health care providers to perform a detailed health risk analysis based on specific locations, individual travel styles, and traveler risk behaviors. Travax provides practitioners current, independently researched malaria risk and prevention recommendations in a map-based format that goes beyond the annual WHO and US CDC statements included here. Not included here are current reports from Travax of disease outbreaks or environmental events that may pose elevated risks to travelers' health and safety. The Providers section of this site offers a directory of health care providers who utilize Shoreland Travax for travel health counseling. Learn more about the detailed reports and maps available from these practitioners (includes links to samples).

General Information

Malaysia is a developing nation classified as upper middle income. Located in Southeast Asia in the South China Sea (south of Vietnam), the climate is classified as predominantly humid equatorial (no dry season), with cooler temperatures in some high-altitude areas.

Vaccinations

Yellow Fever

Although yellow fever does not occur in Malaysia, an official yellow fever vaccination certificate may be required depending on your itinerary.

- *Requirement:* A certificate proving yellow fever vaccination is required for travelers aged ≥ 1 year coming from countries with risk of YF transmission. This also applies to airport transit stops (no exit through immigration checkpoint) longer than 12 hours in risk countries.

Other Vaccines

Depending on your itinerary, your personal risk factors, and the length of your visit, your health care provider may offer you vaccination against cholera, COVID-19, hepatitis A, hepatitis B, influenza, Japanese encephalitis, measles, mumps, rubella, rabies, or typhoid fever. Routine immunizations, such as those that prevent tetanus/diphtheria or "childhood" diseases, should be reviewed and updated as needed.

Malaria

The following is current information as reported by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC):

WHO—*International Travel and Health* (current online update, Country List)

(2021) Malaria risk exists only in limited foci in the deep hinterland of the states of Sabah and Sarawak and the central areas of Peninsular Malaysia. Urban, suburban and coastal areas are free from malaria. Human *P. knowlesi* infection has been reported.

- Recommended prevention in risk areas: **C** – Risk of *P. falciparum* malaria, in combination with reported chloroquine and sulfadoxine–pyrimethamine resistance. Mosquito bite prevention plus atovaquone–proguanil or doxycycline or mefloquine chemoprophylaxis (select according to reported side effects and contraindications) ^a

^aAlternatively, for travel to rural areas with low risk of malaria infection, mosquito bite prevention can be combined with stand-by emergency treatment (SBET).

WHO Country List footnote: When available, the date of the most recent update or confirmation is indicated in parentheses in the country list. If no date is indicated, the most recent update or confirmation was provided before 2013.

CDC—*Health Information for International Travel* (current online edition)

Areas with malaria: Present in rural areas. None in Georgetown, Kuala Lumpur, and Penang State (includes Penang Island).

- Drug resistance³ : Chloroquine.

- Malaria species: *P. falciparum*, *P. vivax*, *P. knowlesi*, *P. malariae*, and *P. ovale*.
- Recommended chemoprophylaxis: Rural areas: Atovaquone-proguanil, doxycycline, mefloquine, or tafenoquine.⁴

³ Refers to *P. falciparum* malaria unless otherwise noted.

⁴ Primaquine and tafenoquine can cause hemolytic anemia in people with G6PD deficiency. Patients must be screened for G6PD deficiency before starting primaquine or tafenoquine. See *Tafenoquine Approved for Malaria Prophylaxis and Treatment* for more information.

Other Concerns

Travelers' Diarrhea

Moderate risk exists throughout the country, with minimal risk in deluxe accommodations. Community sanitation and food safety measures may be inadequate. Some itineraries (e.g., remote destinations, austere accommodations) and activities (e.g., ecotourism, eating street or local-market food) further increase risk.

Travelers should observe food and beverage precautions, which reduce the likelihood of illness.

Travelers should carry loperamide for self-treatment of diarrhea and, if risk is moderate to high, an antibiotic to add if diarrhea is severe. Consult a knowledgeable health care provider regarding which antibiotic is appropriate for you and most effective for your destination.

Other Food-Borne Illnesses

Precautions to prevent seafood poisoning may be needed.

Insect- and Arthropod-Borne Diseases

Chikungunya, dengue, murine typhus, scrub typhus, West Nile virus, Zika may pose a risk. Personal protective measures are important.

Other Disease and Health Risks

Additional concerns include air pollution, altitude illness, enteroviruses, helminths, hepatitis C, leptospirosis, marine hazards, melioidosis, Nipah virus, sexually transmitted infections, snakebites, tuberculosis.

Consular Advice

The material below includes information from the US Department of State (DOS), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCO), Global Affairs Canada (GAC), and Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), as well as from additional open-source material. Standard safety precautions that apply to all international travel can be found in the Library article Safety and Security.

Consular Travel Advice

Due to kidnapping and ongoing security concerns, UK (FCO), Canada (GAC), and Australia (DFAT) advise reconsidering travel (or avoiding nonessential travel) to coastal areas of eastern Sabah State (from Kudat to Tawau), including outlying islands. US (DOS) has no current warning.

Terrorism Risk

Risk of attack by domestic and transnational terrorist groups exists throughout the country, including Kuala Lumpur. Targets may include domestic and international organizations and businesses; public places and events, including those frequented by tourists; and transportation systems.

High risk of kidnapping by terrorist groups exists in eastern areas of Sabah State, including surrounding islands in the Sulu Sea. Targets may include foreigners (especially Westerners).

Crime

Low risk of violent crime (home robbery and sexual assault) and high risk of petty crime exist throughout the country, mainly in Kuala Lumpur and in areas frequented by tourists, including shopping centers and airports.

Theft of valuables by criminals in passing vehicles is common.

Risk exists of robberies and/or assaults occurring after consuming intentionally drugged food or drink; tourists are frequently targeted.

Civil Unrest

Protests and demonstrations may infrequently occur and have the potential to turn violent without warning. Bystanders are at risk of harm from violence or from the response by authorities. Disruption to transportation, free movement, or the ability to carry out daily activities may occur.

Unsafe Areas

A dangerous security environment may exist in eastern areas of Sabah State, especially along the coast from Kudat to Tawau. Piracy (involving commercial and private leisure vessels) may occur in coastal and international waters, especially in the Strait of Malacca and the Sulu and Celebes seas.

Water Safety

Passenger boats may be unsafe, including ferries, small crafts, and speedboats. Decline water transportation in vessels that appear overloaded or lack personal flotation devices or life jackets.

Basic safety standards for recreational water activities (including scuba diving, snorkeling, jet-skiing, rafting, kayaking, and tubing) may not be in place. Rent water sports equipment from reputable operators. Scuba dive only with personnel certified by PADI or NAUI and use equipment only from PADI- or NAUI-certified dive operators.

Transportation Safety

Significant risk of traffic-related injury or death exists. The road traffic death rate is more than 24 per 100,000 population, the highest risk category. Carefully assess the safety of transportation options before any road travel.

Speed laws are poorly enforced.

Seat belt laws are poorly enforced.

Drunk driving laws are poorly enforced.

Airline Safety

The US Federal Aviation Administration has determined that the civil aviation authority of this country oversees its air carriers in accordance with minimum international safety standards.

Natural Disasters

The monsoon season is from October through February, coinciding with the typhoon season. Floods, mudslides, and landslides may occur.

Seismic activity occurs, including in Sabah State.

Consular Information

Selected Embassies or Consulates in Malaysia

- United States: [+60] 3-2168-5000; my.usembassy.gov
- Canada: [+60] 3-2718-3333; malaysia.gc.ca
- United Kingdom: [+60] 3-2170-2200; www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-high-commission-kuala-lumpur
- Australia: [+60] 3-2146-5555; malaysia.highcommission.gov.au

Malaysia's Embassies or Consulates in Selected Countries

- In the U.S.: www.kln.gov.my/web/usa_washington/home
- In Canada: www.kln.gov.my/web/can_ottawa/home
- In the U.K.: www.kln.gov.my/web/gbr_london/home
- In Australia: www.kln.gov.my/web/aus_canberra/home

Visa/HIV Testing

HIV and hepatitis testing is required to obtain a work or residence visa. Travelers, including short-term travelers, may be detained or deported after arrival if found to be positive for HIV or hepatitis.

