

## Malaysia - A Country Focus

Generally what people think of when talking about Malaysia is the 421-metre high Kuala Lumpur Petronas Twin Towers, which were the tallest buildings in the world from 1998 to 2004 and remain the tallest twin towers. The country consists of thirteen states and three federal territories, and has a total landmass of 330,803 square kilometres.

### Biggest and Best

Malaysia has a fair reputation for superlatives, and natural phenomena. As one of 17 megadiverse countries on earth, with large numbers of endemic species, it is home to 60 species of lizards, 14,500 species of flowering plants and trees, and more than 200 species of mammals. If you need somewhere to park your Boeing 747-200 then it will fit into the largest cave chamber in the world, the Sarawak Chamber in Gunung Mulu National Park. The largest flower in the world is found there, the Rafflesia, together with the largest undivided leaf in the world, *Alocasia macrorrhiza*, which comes from Sabah. A specimen found in 1966 was 3.02 metres long and 1.92 metres wide. Ophidiophobics should look away now as the longest king cobra in the world, measuring 5.54 metres, was captured alive in Port Dickson in April 1937 and grew to 5.71 metres in captivity.

Malaysia's 65,877 km of highway would encircle the earth one-and-a-half times. The country has adjusted time many times. On December 31, 1932, clocks were advanced by 20 minutes to "lengthen" daylight;

September 1, 1941 sped up another 10 minutes; in 1942, during the Japanese occupation, they were forwarded two hours to follow Tokyo time; at liberation in 1945 reverted to 1941 time; and on January 1, 1982 they were pushed forward 30 minutes so that Sabah, Sarawak and the peninsula followed Malaysian Standard Time. Now they have ended up eight hours ahead of GMT.

### Economics

Malaysia has one of the best economic records, and the economy in 2014–2015 was one of the most competitive in Asia, ranking sixth in Asia, and ahead of Australia and France. It is set to become the world's 21<sup>st</sup> largest economy by 2050, with a GDP of \$1.2 trillion (year 2000 dollars) and a GDP per capita of \$29,247 (year 2000 dollars) according to HSBC. The life expectancy of Malaysian men and women in 1957 was 55.8 years and 58.2 years respectively. Today, it is 72.7 for men and 77.3 for women. Major causes of death include coronary heart disease, strokes, infectious diseases, and cancers, with a prominence of lung diseases. As with other parts of South East Asia, the country has prepared with a national influenza pandemic preparedness plan (NIPPP) in case of another influenza pandemic coming from the region.

There are more than 60 sub-ethnic groups in Sabah and Sarawak alone, with many languages spoken. Healthcare is mainly under the responsibility of the government's Ministry of Health. There is a two-tier system, with a universal government-run system alongside private healthcare.



Traditional medicine is still considered important in rural areas, despite the best efforts of politicians and healthcare providers. However, things are changing, in part due to an expansion of the system and development of healthcare, putting 5% of the government social sector development budget into public healthcare – an increase of more than 47% over the previous figure.

Regional hospitals have the country's best healthcare equipment and specialists in the field. Urban private hospitals have the latest diagnostic and imaging facilities and staff, and as such are much more attractive for those with the funds to secure treatment. Public hospitals suffer from staff shortages, but have innovative ideas to improve patient care such as medicine by post, using the country's mail system to dispense repeat prescriptions. Both the government and private sectors are developing the health tourism industry, for Malaysia to become a healthcare destination, regionally and internationally. Patients can choose from an array of options including cataract surgery, teeth implants and hernia repairs.

Government agencies have invested heavily in healthcare companies. About a third of private hospital beds are in concerns with government investment. Newly-qualified doctors must serve the Malaysian healthcare system for three years in public hospitals, to ensure that the manpower in these hospitals is maintained, and incentives are used to attract foreign doctors to apply for employment in Malaysia. There remains a shortage of highly-trained specialists, so that certain treatments are available only in large cities.

This has not prevented around a thousand studies taking place, concentrating both on traditionally western diseases and also endemic infectious diseases, including TB and malaria, and for vaccines and travel-related medicines catering to the international traveller rather than the local population.

### Importing Trial Materials

An import licence is required, and the importer or consignee must apply at the National Pharmaceutical Control Bureau (NPCB). This institution was established to implement quality control on pharmaceutical products. They maintain a list of importers, known as the QUEST list, which allows for online submission by product licence holder, manufacturer, importer, re-packer, reseller and other related users to conduct product registration, variation, licensing, market sampling, renewal and other transactions.

Commercial invoices must be printed on shipper's letterhead and include Incoterms. For any shipments including those containing products of animal origin, a veterinary health certificate is required, signed and stamped by an official vet from the exporting country. Most shipments are cleared in Kuala Lumpur but some must be cleared in Penang. It is vital to check, as this is based on the consignee.

All imports are subject to a goods and service tax of 6%, based on CIF value. If the payable amount exceeds MYR 7500 (approximately USD 2000), then it is advisable to pre-transfer payment to ensure that there are no delays. Clearance can take as little as two hours and for weekend clearances, pre-clearance for weekend arrival can be done on Friday mornings. However, if the health department insist on an inspection, this can only be done on the next working day. This is much more likely for non-QUEST company shipments.

### Disaster Relief Storage in Malaysia

Malaysia acts as a regional hub for the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Kuala Lumpur. They support emergency preparedness and response in Asia, in addition to procuring, storing and rapidly dispatching items on behalf of humanitarian partners. In 2015, partners using UNHRD's Kuala Lumpur depot included: ASEAN, Australian Aid, Irish Aid, JICA, Mercy Malaysia, Shelter Box, UNDP, UNFPA, WFP, WHO, and World Vision International. In 2015, the Kuala Lumpur depot dispatched 570 MT of emergency supplies (worth USD 3.1 million) which supported humanitarian interventions in 10 countries.

This is a country not to be ignored for sponsors of trials and manufacturers alike. A growing economy on this scale, with such a serious commitment to healthcare, bodes well for future development and as a resource for the entire South East Asia region.



**Sue Lee** has worked for World Courier for 25 years. During this time she has experienced a variety of customer service and operational functions, including the setting up of numerous, multi national, clinical sites for the transportation of biological samples in her capacity as Head of the Major Clinical Trial Unit. Sue has orchestrated the shipping thousands of shipments with very specific temperature requirements to a host of challenging locations, and each presenting their own obstacles and dilemmas. More recently in her role as Regional Quality Manager, Sue has been auditing and developing procedures and systems for regulatory compliance, package and vehicle testing, as well as temperature control and mapping. Currently, Sue's role includes delivering pertinent, technical information and updates on latest industry developments via technical presentations, articles and white papers, workshops, association and discussion group involvement and direct links with other industry professionals. This also includes direct involvement delivering and maintaining World Courier's online presence. Email: [slee@worldcourier.co.uk](mailto:slee@worldcourier.co.uk)