Places To Visit in Malaysia

One of the greatest privileges of working and living here are the opportunities to travel. Ask other staff families for suggestions and research around a bit until you find something that suits your family well.

State of Penang

1. Temple Shops – get someone to drive you there the first time, small clothing and curio shops line the steps up to the large Buddhist Kek Lok Si temple, fun activity with children (especially the giant gold fish at the top), take your camera and wear cool clothes, you can buy cold water along the way

2. Butterfly Farm (885-1253) – drive west past the resort area and then left at the round-a-bout, then drive a short distance along the west end of the island, RM 10/adult and RM 5/child, well-kept, beautiful butterflies and interesting bugs (you can even opt to have a giant stick bug climb up your shirt!), guided tours and scheduled programs, small museum, artist gallery, snack shop is expensive, open 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

3. Reclining Buddha and Burmese Temple near Gurney Plaza – no cost, interesting architecture, be sure to remove your shoes before entering temple

4. Fort Cornwallis – drive down near the Ferry and follow the signs, admission is RM 3/adult and RM 2/child, open 8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Signs explain historical aspects of the fort and displays demonstrate the use of cannons and other defenses, chapel houses a visual presentation of fort’s history, large park and playground area just outside the fort make it an ideal location for a family picnic

5. Botanical Gardens (229-0428) – free admission, open 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Take care not to feed the monkeys!

6. Youth Park, entrance at Jesselton Crescent – large playground area, bike paths, take first aid kit with you for scrapes (monkey feces on the ground make infection likely)

7. Batu Ferringhi – neighborhood of resort hotels on northern part of island, after 7:00 p.m. little street shops open up for a night market, fun to stroll along the sidewalk and see the wares, bartering is recommended and expected (start at ½ the price).

8. Little India – Indian quarter centered along Lebuh Pasar is popularly referred to as Little India, great location to purchase Indian jewelry, saris, stainless steel ware, handicrafts, spices, and Hindi music. Bargaining is expected.

9. Campbell Street – located off Penang Road, oldest and busiest business districts in Penang, pedestrian mall where you can purchase jewelry, antiques, cheap leather goods, textiles, and Chinese medicine. Bargaining is expected.

10. The Garage – across the street from the E&O Hotel on Lebuh Farquhar, old garage building converted to an affordable “specialist arcade” with unique décor and a couple cafes, moderate prices for gifts, decorative collectibles, and handicrafts

11. Akuarium, Fisheries Research Institute (626-3925, Norhazira@hotmail.com) - located on the southern part of the island, admission is RM 5/adult and RM 2/child. Be sure to visit the outdoor turtle tanks.

12. Bukit Jambul Orchid Hibiscus & Reptile Garden (664-8863) - open daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

13. Cheong Fatt Tze Mansion/Bed and Breakfast (262-0006) - located near the City Bayview Hotel, offers tours for about RM 10, check their website for cost of an overnight stay (www.cheongfatttze mansion.com)

14. Tropical Fruit Farm (227-6223) - great place to taste and learn about local fruits. Take the road past the Butterfly Farm. Cost is RM 20/person (includes tour and sampler plate)

15. Pinang Cultural Centre  (885-1175) - offers guided tours of the Cultural Village from 9:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., in the evening from 6:00–10:30 p.m., or catch the Dinner Show from 8:00–10:30 p.m., call for prices


17. Penang Hill – has traditionally had a cable car to allow visitors to reach the top. Since it’s stopped its operation, visitors must rent 4-wheel drive vehicles or hike. The canopy walk and
State of Kedah
1. Langkawi is actually a group of 104 islands with a wide variety of natural attractions. Contact the Langkawi Tourist Information Centre (04-966-7789, mtpblgk@tourism.gov.my) for more information. These interesting natural attractions have fascinating legends such as Telaga Air Hangat (hot springs), Tasik Dayang Bunting (Lake of the Pregnant Maiden), and Telaga Tujuh (Seven Wells) with its refreshing waterfalls. In addition to biking, jungle trekking, and snorkeling, you'll want to see the numerous stone outcrops that make Langkawi's coastline so beautiful. Day trips are available for boating, fishing, snorkeling or diving. In town you'll find many shops, handicraft bazaar, and an underwater aquarium.

2. Pedu Golf & Lake Resort (04-730-4888, www.jaring.my/biz/pedu) is a nice relaxing spot on a man-made lake. There are a number of outdoor activities including golf, boating, hiking, biking, and camping. It takes about 3 hrs. to get there (go across bridge to mainland, go north on highway to Gurun Exit, follow signs to Lake Pedu).

3. Peranginan Gunung Jerai (Kedah Peak) is a steep drive up a massive limestone outcrop just south of Alor Setar. The temperature is cool and the view is spectacular. Camping (04-423-4343) is about RM 4/person and there's a restaurant that serves Malaysian cuisine. Modest hotel accommodations are also available. (Directions –cross Penang bridge, go north on the highway to Sg. Petani, take exit 173 to Gurun, at highway 1/K10 take a left, at light take right toward Alor Star, go until you see the sign on your left for Kimba Rekriasia, turn left by green Gunung Jerai sign.)

4. Pulau Payar is a marine park with moderately nice snorkeling and an off-shore platform for viewing sea life. Contact the Langkawi Ferry Services (04-966-9439) to take the ferry from Langkawi or Penang. Snorkeling and diving day trips are available.

State of Perak
1. Bukit Merah Lake Town offers a number of relaxing activities including golf, boating, a large water theme park, and an eco-sanctuary with its own Orang Utan Island. It's about a 45 min. drive from Penang.

2. Gua Tempurung (05-545-8834) is one of the largest caves in peninsular Malaysia, stretching out 1.5 km. Contact Sham for a “Grand Tour” that lasts about 3 ½ hour and costs about RM 22. The tour begins at 9:30 a.m. On-site camping is about 5 RM/tent

3. Taiping Zoo and the Perak Museum are located at the base of Bukit Larut (Maxwell Hill). There are walking and bike paths which makes a nice outing with kids

4. Ipoh, the capital of Perak, is surrounded by awe-inspiring limestone outcrops and caves. Look to the Internet for more information about activities and attractions in Perak (www.perak.gov.my and www.hoteltravel.com/malaysia/perak/guides/top10things.htm). About 40 km south of Ipoh is Kellie’s Castle (05-366-8198). Is an unfinished mansion commissioned by an English rubber planter in the early 1900’s. It's believed to have hidden rooms and a secret tunnel.

5. Pangkor Island is a nice getaway close to Penang. From Lumut you must take a 45 min. ferry to the island. The towns are small but you can rent motorbikes and go sightseeing.

State of Selangor
1. The capital city of Kuala Lumpur (KL) hosts an enormous variety of shopping malls and restaurants, including some favorite North American ones such as Chili’s, TGI Fridays, Hard Rock Café, Burger King, A&W and the popular Aussie grill The Outback. The KLCC shopping
complex is at the base of the world-famous Petronas Twin Towers and next to the giant outdoor park and playground with its beautiful water fountains with sound and light shows. On the 4th floor of the KLCC is the Explorasi hands-on activity center for children sponsored by Petronas oil and gas. If you plan to visit the Twin Towers, be sure to book early in the morning and be flexible. There are many attractions in KL, including the night market (if you want to stay near the market, try the Swiss Inn, 03-2072-3333, resvns_sikl@swissgarden.com, cost is about RM 88), famous night food stalls, historical landmarks, museums and interesting architecture. Ask around and see what you want to focus your trip on. Driving in KL is a challenge, so factor that into your plans!

2. Fraser’s Hill offers a similar range of activities as the Cameron Highlands. There is golf, hiking, biking and horse riding for kids. Several peaceful retreats are available including Little England of Malaysia (03-7804-3422, www.geocities.com/frasershill).

3. Sunway Lagoon Theme Park with amusement rides and water attractions (Penang office, 04-643-9898) is located just outside KL.

**State of Melaka (Malacca)**

Malacca Town is a charming place, rich in historical and cultural heritage, beautiful architecture and host to a diverse number of shows. Visit the Portuguese Square and experience authentic Portuguese dishes, local cultural shows and handicrafts. The Bandar Hilir’s Padang Pahlawan hosts a sound and light show that recreates ancient scenes and historical events. The Malacca Historical Museum houses Portuguese and Dutch relics as well as traditional Malaysian antiques and an interesting bridal costume display. The architecture in Malacca is fascinating as you’ll readily see when visiting Christ Church, St. Paul’s Church, Porta De Santiago, St. John’s Fort, the Sultunate Palace, and the various temples, mosques and mausoleums. The Western theme park may be worth stopping at if you have young kids.

**State of Pahang**

1. Cameron Highlands provides a refreshingly cool and relaxing get-away often frequented by staff and dorms. Attractions worth visiting include the Boh Tea Plantation with its beautiful scenery and interesting factory tour, various hiking trails, many lovely gardens, strawberry harvests, and the Honey Bee Farm. Gunung Brinchang is the highest point at 6666 ft. above sea level. The Cameron Highlands Butterfly Gardens provides tours and the opportunity to hold big bugs (contact Mr. Maniam, 05-496-2527). Take your time to enjoy, and even purchase, roses, strawberries and rhubarb (across the street from the Butterfly Farm). There are quite a few places to stay in the Cameron Highlands:
   - OMF Bungalow (05-491-1275, e-mail: resthome@tm.net.my)
   - Baptist Bungalow (call office in Singapore for reservations, 02-284-2904)
   - Lutheran Mission Bungalow 15 minutes from Tanah Rata (05-491-2527).
   - Others have stayed at Strawberry Park, Merlin Inn, Equatorial, and the dorm-style accommodations at Gospel Hall in Tanah Rata.
   - Apartment to rent (contact Tan Sinew Heong, 05-491-1250).

2. Genting Highlands – You can make any number of reservations through the Internet (www.genting.com.my). Located up in the mountains just north of KL, Genting has quite a few attractions to offer in addition to its small town charm and beautiful views. The main attractions include an indoor/outdoor theme park and casinos. Because of it’s altitude, rain is frequent so check for rainy season before making plans. The outdoor park is worn by weather and the rides are faded and frequently under repair so keep your expectations reasonable. The indoor park is colorful and enchanting. There are indoor rides, shopping, restaurants (including Burger King), Asia’s biggest indoor climbing wall, simulated sky-diving SkyVenture, bowling, movie theaters, Snow World, and a Ripley’s Believe It or Not museum.

3. Taman Negara National Park is a fantastic place for canopy walks, river rafting, cave exploring. SASMalaysia Tours & Travel will help organize your trip (262-6688). There are 3 or 4-day packages for about RM 325 or 365/person.
State of Terengganu

1. Lang Tengah island hosts the Blue Coral Resort (www.aseaniaresorts.com) with air conditioned bungalows, swimming pool, and beautiful snorkeling right off the beach. The more modest Squarepoint (www.terengganu.net/squarepoint/) has a less rocky beach but less attractive snorkeling. Lang Tengah island is part of the marine sanctuary and has excellent snorkeling and diving. Follow their instructions to the Merang Jetty port and be prepared for a long boat ride.

2. Pulau Perhentian is also located in the marine sanctuary and has beautiful snorkeling and diving. Quite a few staff have stayed at Mama's Resort (found in Lonely Planet book). Lovely Travels & Tours will also organize your trip (09-697-4297 or visit their website at www.lovelytours.com).

States of Sarawak and Sabah

With the economical fares offered by AirAsia, Sabah and Sarawak have become much more accessible. Keep in mind these states are considered West Malaysia and require passports and certain visa requirements for immigration.

1. The state of Sarawak stretches out over the north-western side of Borneo. There are many natural attractions including a crocodile farm, Orang Utan rehabilitation center, botanical gardens with the famous rafflesia flower, river boating, fishing, and tours to various tribal longhouses. The Sarawak Cultural Center is worth visiting as it displays the diverse tribal houses, customs and clothing in a small, enclosed park. Visitors can see traditional dance, customs and even try a few themselves! The city of Kuching has its own attractions including the National Museum, the Cat Museum, the Istana (castle) and the waterfront shops which house antiques and Borneo handicrafts. The history, fact and legend, of Sarawak is very interesting and worth listening to. The first White Rajah ruled this state and brought peace and prosperity to the warring tribes. About 1 hr. north of Kuching is Damai Lagoon and Damai Beach Resort (owned by Holiday Inn), Sarawak Cultural Village and Santubong Mountain with its various hiking trails and waterfalls. These resorts are ideal for families since they provide so many activities in one location – snorkeling, water sports, mini-golf, archery, several pools and children’s activity center. Boats travel out to the turtle islands during dry season. The resorts are less expensive during rainy season and have several restaurants, but it’s wise to bring snacks from town.

2. Sabah occupies the most eastern area of Malaysia and is home to the famous Mt. Kinabalu National Park, Foring Hot Springs and the amazing pitcher plant, Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary, and the idyllic world-renowned diving spot of Pulau Sipadan. In addition to snorkeling, you’ll find white water rafting, caves to explore, longhouse tours, and plenty of trekking. You may want to plan a visit to the Turtle Islands (Pulau Selangan, Bukungan Kecil and Gulisan) between July and September. Chalet accommodations on Pulau Selangan must be made in advance. The primary city of Kota Kinabalu has several markets, night bazaar with cultural handicrafts, restaurants, malls and the whole range of hotels and resorts. Sutera Harbour Resort is where the crew of the first “Survivor” reality-TV show stayed (www.suteraharbour.com). For more information about Sabah, look on the Internet (www.sabahtourism.com, www.sabahtravelguide.com, www.visitborneo.com, www.infosabah).

(Special thanks to Kathy Williams who compiled much of the original information in May 2002, Barb Case’s grade 2 class in 2004 who created posters of the states of Malaysia, Valeri Brokaw and Karen Robertson who assisted in updating the information.)