

What's Available and What to Bring



You will likely be amazed at what is available in Penang. However, our budgets are limited and the salary we receive isn't large enough to be able to buy all the things that are available and that we would like to purchase! It's all a matter of prioritizing.

The following is a list of items that are available and suggestions of items you may wish to bring with you. You certainly don't have to go out and buy all these things. We just thought that it would be helpful for you to know items that staff usually choose to bring.

(Some staff have chosen to use duffle bags and/or Rubbermaid storage containers to bring out extra baggage instead of purchasing additional suitcases. You may also use a well-taped cardboard box as a piece of luggage. If you find you have a good deal of things to bring out with you, you may want to consider sending a crate. Read through the "Packing a Crate" letter to help you out.)

Food Stuff

What's Available: Most all kinds of food, or a local substitute, are available here. We do get peanut butter, maple syrup, cake and cookie mixes, canned frosting, jello and pudding mixes, taco sauce and seasonings, and a variety of salad dressings, ice cream toppings, chips, cereals, snacks. We get a moderate selection of spices imported from North America. We even get Pop Tarts and muffin papers. Sometimes we get chocolate chips and Kraft Macaroni & Cheese, but it's not a guarantee.

What to Bring: If you decorate cakes, bring cake décor as the selection is limited. We don't get Kool-aid, so if that's a favorite of yours, bring plenty. If you use flavored chips (i.e. peanut butter, butterscotch, mint chips), Maple flavoring for making your own maple syrup, cream of wheat, marshmallow cream (sometimes available here but expensive), Dream Whip, Velveeta cheese or canned chopped green chillies, bring them.

Note: As far as restaurants go, we have McDonalds, Kentucky Fried Chicken, and Pizza Hut within five minutes of Dalat. You will find several Starbucks, Gloria Jean and Coffee Bean coffee/sandwich shops and ice cream places such as Baskin Robbins and Haagen Dazs. Kenny Rogers Roasters, Domino's, and US Pizza are located close by. There are restaurants that serve Italian, Portuguese, German, Chinese, Thai, Japanese and Indian cuisine. Many staff choose to eat at the "stalls," which is the Malaysian equivalent of a "food court" in a mall - not as neat and clean, but the food is tasty and cheap.

Clothing

What's Available:

- In general, you can get most of the clothing you will need out here except larger sizes (women's size 12 and larger and men's XL and larger). Most Malaysian

people are smaller, so items sold "off the rack" will be smaller. Larger sizes can be tailor-made at reasonable rates. We simply take them a picture of the article we need, the tailor measures us, makes his or her own pattern, and we go for a fitting a week or so later.

- The Reject Shop and FOS (Factory Outlet Store) offer a selection of name-brand clothes such as Abercrombie & Fitch, Gap, Limited Too, Bugle Boy, etc. It's hit or miss shopping, but you will find great bargains.

What to Bring:

- It's rare to find good prices on denim articles, so bring your jeans, jean shorts and skirts. Elastic wears out very quickly here due to the heat and humidity so you will need to bring plenty of cotton underwear, bathing suits, sports socks, etc. (Pre-teenage girls have been the only ones to have much luck buying swimsuits in Penang.) Keep in mind the school's dress code as you go shopping.
- If you enjoy sewing you could bring your machine, patterns, and an assortment of thread and notions. Most sewing notions are available, and the sewing machine servicing, even for 110v, is excellent. Lovely fabric is available, but it does not have the quality or color-fastness of North-American materials. Good quality permanent press cotton is not available.
- You will need very few warm clothes. The Cameron Highlands is a favorite vacation spot in Malaysia and if you go there you will need a couple of sweaters and a pair of jeans, but keep this minimal. Our classrooms are air-conditioned. Many children wear sweaters or light jackets in school during the rainy season. Depending on fads, the older ones may even wear them on hot days. Clothing should be just as cool and comfortable as you can find. Mostly cotton fabrics are the nicest, but do need more ironing and will tend to wear out quickly!
- Sport shoes (tennis, soccer, and volleyball etc.) can be purchased here but they tend to be more expensive than if you find sales in North America. The problems occur when you need large sizes. Men have a variety up to size 11, but there are few options after that. For ladies' shoes, size 8 is often the limit; sometimes, however, size 9 or 10 are stocked. Bring comfortable shoes with good support. You will probably be on your feet a lot and our homes have concrete floors. Bring good quality sandals with durable arch support. Ladies occasionally dress up with heels. Leather high heels are plentiful, but not very comfortable here.
- Pack plenty of sport socks. Cotton socks are very difficult to find. Socks for children are very expensive -- \$4 per pair. They just don't have solid, dark colors for boys.
- Underwear for ladies is readily available if you are not too large, but it will be a bit "different" than what you've been used to. Cotton full-slips are difficult to find. Boys and men should get underwear in North America.
- More and more people are buying children's clothing here. There is nothing available that comes near the quality of Carters and Health-Tex clothing however. Clothing receives the ultimate test with the continual perspiration, extra washing in cold water without the benefit of cold water detergents, and the quick color loss from drying in the sun. If you do not require unusual sizes, you will probably be able to find shorts, jeans, shirts, etc. here. You will never be able

to beat the US Fourth of July summer sales though, so all you buy there will be a savings.

- Men rarely wear suits - the Junior/Senior Banquet (like a spring “prom”), Baccalaureate, and Graduation is about it. Administrators wear shirts and ties to school, but most men teach in casual short-sleeved shirts and casual pants or shorts.
- Women teach in pants, casual skirts, and some nice shorts outfits. Ladies will want to bring along nice dresses for banquets and the few formal occasions that we have (Christmas Banquet, Spring Banquet, and Junior/Senior Banquet). Hose for women are available, but they are small and control-top is difficult to find. You might use them only for dress occasions when the banquet hall is guaranteed to be cold!
- Even though it rains often, most raincoats are too hot to wear. Most people who ride bikes or coach a sport will buy a loose-fitting slicker. They are available and quite cheap.

Medication

What’s Available: There is a good selection of pharmacies and a number of prescription medications can be bought over the counter, most likely cheaper than in the States.

What to Bring: Some parents have mentioned that they like the Imodium that melts on your tongue which isn’t available here. They have also mentioned Gold Bond ointment (for mosquito bites), Gold Bond powder (many uses, but one is to keep ants off the beds), a good quality ointment for skin rashes or bites (a doctor’s prescription is needed for the good ones out here), and band-aids (the Malaysian kind either don’t stick or seem to have super glue adhesive). Bring your own vitamins if you can buy cheaply in bulk (i.e. Sam’s Club). Vitamins are available here, but in small bottles and moderately expensive. If you have little children, you may want to bring Sore Throat Bears, flavored Advil/Tylenol, and chewable Benadryl. It’s helpful to bring liquid hand cleanser for traveling. Public bathrooms use squat pots and are often not equipped with toilet paper or soap.

Toiletries

What’s Available: North-American brands are expensive, but the local brands are quite cheap. A bottle of Flex or Suave shampoo runs around \$4. Clairol, Pantene, Head & Shoulders and several other North American brands are available.

What to Bring:

- All the toiletries you bring will save you money, especially if you hit the sales. A number of US brands are now available for ladies at about equal prices. Bring lots of your favorite anti-perspirant deodorant. Men need to stock up on shaving cream and after-shave (US brands are \$3 to \$4). You will be amazed how quickly you adjust to a cold shave, as many of us do not have hot water in the bathroom sinks.
- If you buy make-up, cologne, and perfume here it will be about twice the North-American price. This includes men and women's items. If you have favorite facial

cleansers or medications, pack them. Any extras will make perfect gifts. Make-up in Malaysia tends to be for darker skin, so if you are light-skinned you might want to bring plenty of your own. There is no Cover Girl make-up but we do have Maybeline and L'Oreal plus Bath & Body Shop, and you can get an Avon catalog while you're here. However, the prices do seem to be more expensive. Bring what you can and then you can judge for yourself.

- Bring your own sun block, and make sure it is waterproof. It costs \$5 to \$8 a bottle here (protection 2-30 is available). Most common brands have a whitening cream.
- Most needs for contact lenses, even gas permeable, are available. Some are even cheaper than in North America. You will not find "Mirasept" or "Siba Geigy" here, however.
- Some ladies bring their own tampons as they are expensive here (\$5 a small box). The "super" size tampons here are the size of "junior" tampons in North America so it's a good idea to bring supers if you use them. Pads are reasonable.
- Other items people find helpful to bring are antibiotic ointments and Benadryl cream. Home permanents are rarely available here so bring a few if you use them. However, perms in the salons are not as expensive as in North America. You can buy permanent and casting hair coloring kits here.

Children

What's Available:

- Disposable diapers are reasonably priced. "Pull up" disposables are occasionally available but "Lil' Swimmers" are a rare find. Wet wipes are different than in North America, but reasonably priced.
- Bikes and sport toys are probably cheaper, but the quality is not the same. Many sizes of bicycle tires and tubes are available. It is a good idea if you are bringing you own bikes to pack a couple of extra tires and tubes until you can find out for sure that replacements are available here. Most people find mountain bikes to be the most useful.

What to Bring:

- If your children have accidents, quality mattress protectors (waterproof) are essential and you'll have to bring them with you.
- Wagons may be available at "Toys R Us." If your children really enjoy hauling things around, pack a wagon. Most of our homes have flat driveways ideal for bikes, tricycles, scooters, etc. All the yards are totally fenced. Many children have bikes at Dalat. The small twelve-inch bikes with training wheels are readily available. The tricycles for the very young ones are available, but are of very poor quality.
- The summer weather is eternal so children play outside constantly. Rollerblades and scooters are fun to have on campus. Some kids like to skateboard, also.
- If you're a Fisher Price, Lego, or Tonka fan, pack them as selection here is limited. They cost triple what they sell for in North America. Barbie dolls and such are a bit cheaper, but the accessories like cars, dollhouses, and furniture are expensive and never on sale. Soccer balls and all that gear are very reasonable. Tennis

rackets cost around \$40. Tennis balls are \$3 for a can of three. Table games are out of sight; a Monopoly game will cost about \$25.

- Quality baby furniture/equipment is best brought from North America, but much is available locally.
- Crayons and coloring books are triple the cost, and Crayola crayons are sometimes difficult to find. Malaysians more often use colored pencils or paints.
- If you have small children, pack your car seat. Malaysia has no laws regarding car seats. The North-American booster seats to use at the table are also nice to have for toddlers. Lightweight backpacks are good for carrying sleeping children through airports - not only on the initial trip to Penang, but for other travel times. High chairs are great to bring because they are available but expensive. Same goes for strollers.

Bedding/Linens

What's Available: Department stores carry a wide variety of sheets and towels. The sheet sets consist of a fitted sheet, pillowcases and bolster (long narrow pillow cover) - or a flat sheet, pillowcases and bolster cover. Bedding (depending on the quality of mattresses you receive here, or choose to buy) may be deep and require "deep pocket" fitted sheets. Most couples have queen size beds. Kids have twin size beds which are a little wider than in North America but deep pocket sheets should work. Towels tend to be of a lesser quality than you can find inexpensively in North America.

What to Bring:

- Pack sheets sets complete with fitted and flat sheets. Don't bring your old ratty ones because the elastic will wear quickly. Bring "deep pocket" ones. Extra flat sheets are a good idea as they are more difficult to find here.
- Linens are more than what they cost in North America, so you might want to bring your towels, bedspreads, a light quilt, mattress protectors, kitchen linens, hot pads, etc. Bring your large thick bath towels (can buy towels here but we joke that they work about as well as a chamois!)
- Bring a mildew-proof shower curtain with extra liners. Because the humidity is always high, mold thrives. Bring needed shower curtain hooks/rings and some extras. Bring toilet covers (bring a few since elastic wears out quickly and keep in mind toilet lids are shaped differently, the larger sizes seem to work better), bath mat without rubber backing (rubber backing rots here, there is beautiful selection of small area rugs here). Include anything with which you like to decorate your bathrooms. Bring plenty of shelf-liner.
- Stock up on a good stain remover like Spray 'N Wash. There is also a local brand called Kiwi that is very good. The clothes really take a beating and the laundry products are not the best. Rust removers come in handy.

Kitchen

What's Available: You can purchase a variety of pots and pans sets, stoneware, and plastic ware. The choices are more limited and the quality not the same. Stoves are smaller here so keep that in mind.

What to Bring:

- Pack every piece of Tupperware you can - it is essential for storage. Large pieces are nice for everything from batches of cookies to storing your flour and sugar in to keep them bug-free. Those glass canister sets, which seal airtight are nice also. Do not use the word Tupperware on your packing lists. Just call it a bowl, pitcher, cup, or container. One of Malaysia's main exports is rubber, and they do manufacture lots of local products. However, you will purchase five of their poor quality containers before you wear out one Tupperware product.
- Ziploc storage bags (all sizes) and those plastic twisties that come on bread and such things are helpful for storage. They can be purchased here but are a bit more expensive. It is amazing how quickly the weevils can bore through a box of spaghetti noodles! Many items you store in the cupboard in North America will have to be either in Tupperware or in a freezer bag in the refrigerator.
- You might want to bring along your pots, pans, and baking dishes. Glasses, dishes, etc. are available here. You can find most anything here at a price, but you could not afford to outfit yourself here. Pack your durable baking pans. Keep in mind that Malaysian ovens are quite small, usually 16 x 16", and your large size baking pans will not fit. You may consider bringing muffin tins and liners, cake pans for special occasions (i.e. heart shape, round), skillet, cookie cutters, hot pads, vinyl tablecloths in standard size (may be useful for picnics too), nice tablecloth for entertaining (although they have some lovely batik ones here), and lots of shelf liner.
- Bring an ice chest/cooler if you have one, pack things in it. They're available here but very expensive.
- Pack a couple cookbooks. Be sure at least one has the basic recipes for items you normally use (pancakes, favorite salad dressings, cakes, brownies, etc.).
- It's hot and humid here! You will use an unusual number of pitchers. Again, the Tupperware or Rubbermaid products are the best. Some of us make and drink powdered milk. Fresh milk is available for over \$1 a quart. You might want to bring at least one one-gallon pitcher. If you can buy rust proof salt shakers with covered lids, do it!
- If you enjoy entertaining, you will have unlimited opportunities. We always have missionary parents and guests around. We are important models to the students, and they love to come to our homes. It's a ministry to teach them to make a home pleasant and to be comfortable serving meals to guests, so it's nice to have your good dishes. Basic paper plates are available as are paper supplies like napkins, toilet tissue, and paper towels. If you enjoy holiday-decorated (i.e. Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter) paper products, be sure to bring them with you.
- Roach tablets and "roach coaches" are available, and you will need them. Ants are prolific in Penang. No one has found a way to maintain an ant free kitchen, but a product called "Terro" (from drug stores in the States) seems to help. You might want to purchase a couple of bottles to bring along.

Home Office/Electronics

- Three items that many families have and use are microwave ovens, food processors, and bread makers. The school does have computers and printers for staff use (IBM compatible) in a staff workroom and in the classrooms. The school has two IBM computer labs for the students and the journalism department uses Mac's. You can purchase computers here, most software is available here, kids' computer games too (many games are inexpensive but pirated and the original versions can be expensive so bring what you already own).
- The paper here is A4 size and not 8 ½ x 11 as in North America so don't bring binders and folders, you can purchase all that here. However if you like using legal pads bring those (we haven't seen them here) and post-it notes (which are more expensive here). You may want to bring your own stapler as staplers here are quite small. Make sure you bring plenty of staples in that case.
- Bring your video camera. You can purchase one here but it'll run on a different system. There is a wide variety of digital and regular cameras here and film and photo processing are comparable prices to North America.
- Hallmark cards, etc., are marked up 500%, but some local cards are being produced that are quite nice and cheap. Any boxed cards you can pack for birthdays, special occasions, party invitations, thank-you's, etc. will be of use to you. Stationary is becoming less expensive and we're finding a greater variety. If you do Creative Memories scrap booking or stamping, bring your pages, special paper and stickers. You can get some acid-free materials here, but not much (Pigma pens are cheaper here). If you have a magazine you read regularly, a subscription is nice to have; but check with us first because our school library might already get a copy that you can read. The school subscribes to USA Today and the International Herald Tribune as well as various magazines. You can buy a variety of magazines at the newspaper stand, such as Good Housekeeping and Reader's Digest, but they'll cost you about \$4 a copy.
- Although Christian tapes and CD's are available, there is not a wide variety. Regular tapes and CD's are readily available (tapes for \$4 and CD's for \$10). CD's seem to hold up better than tapes in this climate. Try to limit how many video tapes you bring with you because the humidity causes molding. You'll find an enormous selection of VCD's and DVD's (pirated for a little over \$1 or original for \$7-10).
- Bring any Christian books you may want to reread or reference. You can buy some books here and you can order most but it's a 2 or 3 month wait. Selection is limited. We do have a good library at the school, however.

Miscellaneous

- Pack decorations that make your house homey. If you have some items that you could not bear to lose, perhaps you'd better leave them in North America or hand-carry them out. We have all lost a few items due to theft and breakage. Crates have had to sit on docks in the rain. Those who have lined their crates with large plastic sheeting have had no water problems. Most of us are thankful for everything we've brought. You will be delighted with shopping and will pick

up some gorgeous curios, but having your own decorations is nice. Bring along craft items that you like to work on (stencils and paints, wallpaper border, etc.). The ceilings in our homes are often as much as twelve feet high (to allow for better ventilation) so there are vast wall spaces. All our homes off campus are concrete; that makes hanging items on the walls a challenge.

- Our floors are either red cement, terrazzo tile, or parquet flooring.
- The beaches are beautiful, but not always as clean as you'd expect because of the local villages' "effluents". If you like to snorkel and have the equipment, bring it along. If you don't, you can buy it here.
- One last note - you might want to bring along a few handy tools. Our maintenance and Industrial Arts shop has most everything you could ever need, but sometimes it's good to have tools closer to home. Tools are also available here. They are not high quality but usable.

If you want to be really sure you've gotten a good idea of what's available and what to bring, read through "Packing a Crate." The document may list some things you haven't yet considered. Also e-mail a current staff member who can give you up-to-the-minute feedback and advice. We try our best to give you some insight on how to pack but we know it's impossible to cover all the bases, keep up with all the new stuff in Penang, and meet people's individual needs. Asking specific questions is your best bet!