

# Cultural Impact

Tips to a

successful

work experience in Malaysia



# Preparing your stay in Malaysia

## 01 - Have the right expectations

Undertaking a work experience abroad, is not just about finding a job. Before being able to perform in your job, you will need to settle and get familiar with your new environment. Be clear about where you are going: Kuala Lumpur or remote area, large multinational company or small family business.

## 02 - Be prepared

The best way to adjust your expectations is to research, research, research. The first week or two can be challenging. Make sure you start on the right track by planning ahead where you will be staying and what you'll do.

## 03 - Establish a few connections before arriving

Knowing someone in a new place always makes it easier to find your way around. Contact people you might be interested in meeting, social groups, sports club, friends of friends, institutions. If things are more challenging than you expected at first then you'll have someone to talk to!

## 04 - Know why you chose to come to Malaysia

Besides what you will learn professionally, what else do you want to take away from your experience: discover Malaysia, learn a new language, become a silat master? Identifying your goals will help you better cope with the challenges that you will face.

## **05 - Understand Culture Shock**

After a first period of excitement (that can last from 5 mn after you land to several weeks into your stay), it is not unusual to be discouraged and find it hard to cope. Just ride the wave, find someone to talk to and know that it will get better.

## **06 - Be ready to meet strange, puzzling and irritating situations**

Malaysia is the land of contrasts: from the cosmopolitan KLIA to the very basics hostels, From the 5 stars hotels to the road side food stall. People are in general gentle and well mannered, yet you will see them rushing into an elevator before you can get out and if you are a girl, you might hear “cat kisses” following you as you walk down the street. Don’t be overwhelmed by these behaviors, focus on your goals and the many positive sides of Malaysia and the Malaysians

## **07 - Be flexible**

In a new country there is a good chance not everything will go according to your plans and expectations. Be ready to embrace and solve the situations as they come.

## **08 - How will you stay in touch**

Get your friends and family on Skype, and social media, so you can have a sympathetic ear that will listen to you when you need it!

## **09 - Know what to bring**

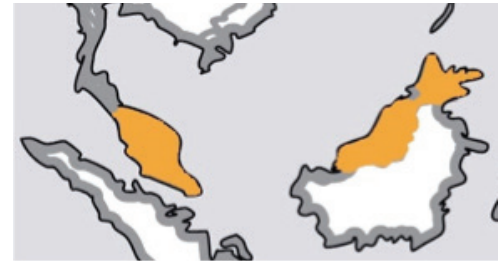
Malaysia is under the tropics and often well knows for its beaches, You will be in a working environment, dress conservatively! Same goes outside work, if you want to avoid drawing attention. Bring the appropriate cloths. Although most thing are available in KL if you need specific medication or personal care products, you might want to bring those with you.

## **10 - Have a good sense of humor**

Whatever happens, take some distance and have a good laugh at yourself!

# Learn

## 10 things you should know about Malaysia



### 01 - The oldest tropical forest in the world

Malaysia rain forest is 130 millions years old, making the Amazon look like a new-bee. Malaysia is also one of the 17 Megadiverse countries (BiodiversityA-Z.org) in the world.

### 02 - A land protected from most natural disasters

Malaysia is protected from the typhoons, is away from the ring of fire, and sheltered on the West by Sumatra and on the East, the South China Sea, only brings the North East monsoons from October to March.

### 03 - An ancient civilization

The early Malays Kingdoms have been established since the beginning

of our current era. The kingdom of Malacca was the center of the Malay World during most of the 15th Century. The Malay language was one of the first 4 foreign languages taught in France in the 17th Century at l'Ecole des Langues Orientales, the School of Oriental Languages.

### 04 - At the cross-roads of Indonesia and Singapore

The history of these 3 countries is intimately linked. Kuala Lumpur has the look of Singapore, but you still can find pockets of very traditional, almost rural areas within the capital city. In Kuala Lumpur, one can go from the frenzy of a cosmopolitan capital to the quiet, much less developed kampung (village) atmosphere just

by crossing a highway.

### 05 - A multi-ethnic society

The first thing that people often notice about Malaysia, is the diversity of its people. Although the country slogan is 1Malaysia, there are many Malaysias to explore. The 3 main ethnic groups (Malay, Chinese, Indian) still maintain very strong ethnocentric traditions, which add to the colorful cultural landscape of Malaysia.

### 06 - A religious country

Although Islam is a state religion, the constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Only less than 1% of the population has no faith, and religious activities permeate in the Malaysia public and social life.





## 07 - A young country

Malaysia only exists in its current border since 1965. It is a young nation.

## 08 - A country in economic transformation

For the past decades Malaysia has been striving toward achieving the status of developed country by 2020. Although it seems now unlikely that this objective will be reached before 2030. The country has a lot to show in terms of development over the past 20 years.

## 09 - A country in political mutation

Since independence the parliament and government have been led by the coalition of Barisan Nasional. For the first time in 2008, the opposition managed to secure a significant number of seats, leading to more open contestation of the leaders in power.

## 10 - Food as a national value

The one thing that unites all Malaysians is for sure the food. Discovering Malaysian food is certainly the best way to explore the country !



# Connect

## 10 tips to connect

- 01 - Listen and observe
- 02 - Respect hierarchy
- 03 - Be kind
- 04 - Make a point to talk to all your colleagues
- 05 - Be helpful
- 06 - Check that people can understand your English
- 07 - Check that you understand correctly
- 08 - Be humble
- 09 - Become part of the group
- 10 - Use social Networks to connect with your colleagues







# Perform



## 10 tips to perform

### 01 - Know your place in the company

Hierarchy and respect of the elders is an essential value in Malaysia. Malaysian companies are very structured.

### 02 - Refrain from expressing your opinion bluntly

Unlike in many western countries it is not acceptable to simply voice your opinion, without considering the position and status of the person you are talking to, as well as taking into account the general opinion on that matter.



**03 - Learn from your colleagues, use them as mentors**

**04 - Use your time efficiently**

If you are finished with your assignment, use your free time to understand how the company functions, what your colleagues are doing and spend your time building relationships.

**05 - Get used to Malaysian time - Be punctual, but be flexible**

In Malaysia setting an appointment means agreeing on the idea of meeting up. The time and day will need to be reconfirmed a few times, and might be subject to last minute changes, and that's Ok.

**06 - Preserve harmony at all cost**

Loosing one's temper, arguing, being in disagreement with the group are situations that will jeopardize harmony and must be avoided. Disagreement should not be expressed in a confrontational manner.

**07 - People First**

Establishing strong relationships is the key to a successful experience in Malaysia. In order to perform with colleagues as well as with clients, it is important to put emphasis on getting to know the people you are dealing with before focusing on the task to be done.

**08 - Respect and accept religion in the public sphere**

In Malaysia were 98% of the population as a declared religion, faith is not a private matter. Religion is present in many aspects of public life and piety, compassion are qualities that are admired by most Malaysian.

**09 - Learn to "give face"**

**10 - Work with the system**



# Balance

01 - Gain a better understanding of your own values

02 - Learn how to explain why you do the things you do

03 - Understand your own cultural bias

04 - Understand where your colleagues are coming from based on their cultural background

05 - Keep a diary and reflect on all the situations you encounter

# What do young graduates gain from a professional experience in Malaysia ...

More patience, and resourcefulness.

Sarah Floriani - Kuala Lumpur

I learned how to open up to all the different cultures in Malaysia. Mostly I learned how to take care of myself, how to appreciate people, cultures, food and nature.

And there are many many beautiful and caring people in Malaysia.

Anke Noordhoek - Petaling Jaya

A lot! Learning to adapt to the culture, to work in a great diverse business environment and so on.

Jill Schreuder - Kuala Lumpur

A different mindset and a lot of personal growth.

Matthias Vinke - Johor Bahru

Meeting wonderful people that gave me a different view on many aspects of life!

Lisanne Veltman - Kuala Lumpur

Being patient, working with different people than I was used to. Seeing life in a differently. Seeing differences I can learn from.

Jelle Waardenburg - Shah Alam







## Top 10 tips to newcomers

01 - Learn a bit of local language

02 - Things will be different to what you are used to

03 - Expect the unexpected

04 - Take charge of your new experience

05 - Observe and be patient

06 - Get involved, meet local people

07 - Open up and don't be judgmental

08 - Choose your accommodation wisely

09 - Learn from others

10 - Enjoy





## What do young professionals recommend...

# Cool things to do in Malaysia







Be open to everything and try to learn as much as possible from the culture and the people during your stay.

Leonore - Kuala Lumpur

Try out everything and judge only then

Don't try to prove that you know better because of where you come from.

Gauthier - Rawang

Don't get stressed out when things don't happen as they should. Chances are you just have to wait a day or two for things to happen.

Rodrigo - Kuala Lumpur

Be patient with people here and, if you are a woman, also be prepared because men sometimes will ignore you...!

Aurore - Bangi

The working environment is different, don't expect to give many opinions or input.

Cosette - Shah Alam

Your own experience in Malaysia...





# Cultural Impact

## Who we are

Cultural Impact is a boutique consultancy that works with companies and institutions that value diversity. At Cultural Impact we believe culture plays an essential role in how well we communicate and interact with one another. Our vision is to enthuse people to learn about each other's culture. We strive to deliver programs that improve understanding and effectiveness in a multicultural environment.

## What we do

Cross-cultural training, intercultural team-building and consultancy for expatriates and multicultural teams in Malaysia and Asia

### - Competences Assessment

The Intercultural Readiness Check (IRC)© Intercultural Business Improvement B.V. assesses employees' intercultural competences and finds new ways to optimize their strengths.

### - Cross Cultural Training and Workshops

Develop cultural competences and help individuals create better opportunities and strategies at work and in their personal lives.

### - Cultural Audit and Consulting

Optimize the benefits of diversity within organisations, synchronise expectations, improve communication and maximize results in multicultural teams.

## What our clients say about our programs

"Great Workshop! Useful tips and information to help better integration and working relationship between a foreigner and local."

"It answered all my questions. It explained the culture in a way that allowed me to understand it a lot better."

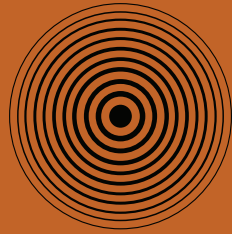
"It was very good as we had a mixed group: locals and Europeans. Therefore an immediate feedback was possible."



# Cultural Impact

Cultural Impact Sdn Bhd  
B-13A-1 Stonor Park - 8 Jalan Stonor  
50450 Kuala Lumpur  
[www.culturalimpact.org](http://www.culturalimpact.org)  
[info@culturalimpact.org](mailto:info@culturalimpact.org)  
tel: +60-3-2181 0107





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