

Malaysia's Visa Liberalisation Plan

The unveiling of Malaysia's Budget 2024 marked a pivotal moment as the Malaysian Government introduced the Visa Liberalisation Plan with a series of impactful measures to bolster the national economy. The initiatives introduced under the Visa Liberalisation Plan encompass the following:

- i. Granting approval of Employment Passes for strategic investors in key sectors.
- ii. Introducing the Long-Term Social Visit Pass for international students who have graduated to meet the needs of the industry's skilled workforce.
- iii. Improving the Visa-On-Arrival, Social Visit Pass and Multiple Entry Visa facilities.

During the tabling of the Malaysia Budget 2024, the Malaysian Government also agreed to ease the stringent Malaysia My Second Home ("MM2H") programme conditions to attract more investors to Malaysia. The official details in respect of the revised MM2H conditions will be announced in mid-December, according to the Tourism, Arts and Culture Minister, Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing¹.

The Prime Minister, who also serves as the Finance Minister, declared an allocation of RM350 million to elevate tourism with the aim of reclaiming Malaysia's position as the world's leading tourist destination.

Preparations at the local, state, and national levels will be undertaken to organise Visit Malaysia Year 2026, with an ambitious goal of attracting over 26 billion foreign tourists to visit Malaysia with an estimated domestic spending of RM97.6 billion².

Impact on Immigration Requirements

30-Day Visa-Free for Chinese and Indian Nationals

In celebration of 50 years of diplomatic relations with China, Malaysia has granted a 30-day visa-exemption to Chinese nationals. The Chinese Government has also reciprocated the effort by implementing a 15-day visa free policy for Malaysians travelling to China for business, tourism, family visit and transit

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purposes from 1 December 2023 to 30 November 2024. Those who do not meet the purpose of visit and duration of stay mentioned earlier will need to apply for visas to China³.

Similarly, the 30-day visa free policy has also been extended to Indian nationals. Such exemption will be in effect from 1 December 2023 until 31 December 2024.

A snapshot of requirements:

- i. The 30-day visa-free privilege is contingent on nationality and is not restricted to the point of entry. Chinese and Indian nationals can still enjoy a visa-free stay of up to 30 days regardless of which country they depart from to enter Malaysia provided they have valid passports.
- ii. The 30-day visa-free is strictly limited to tourism and business purposes. Chinese and Indian nationals who enter Malaysia for the purposes of employment and study are still required to apply for a Visa with Reference (VDR) prior to their entry to Malaysia.
- iii. No extension can be made beyond the 30-day visa-free period.

To accommodate the influx of tourists, the Immigration Department of Malaysia has expanded its capacity by adding an additional 14 counters supplementing the existing 78 counters at KLIA 1 and KLIA 2⁴.

Introduction of New Visas

In a series of 10 frequently-asked-questions published by the Immigration Department of Malaysia, the Government has indicated the launch of new visa categories which are listed below:

- i. Graduate Pass

A Graduate Pass is a Long-Term Social Visit Pass curated for international students from 23 countries who have completed their bachelor's degree or higher at any institution of higher education in Malaysia.

The Graduate Pass is valid for a maximum period of 12 months, and it is available for international students holding any of the following nationalities:

1. Australia
2. New Zealand
3. Brunei
4. Singapore
5. Korea
6. Japan
7. Germany
8. United Kingdom

9. France
10. Canada
11. Switzerland
12. Netherlands
13. Saudi Arabia
14. Kuwait
15. United Arab Emirates
16. Qatar
17. Sweden
18. Norway
19. Denmark
20. Finland
21. United States
22. Bahrain
23. Oman

ii. *Umrah* Transit Visa

The *Umrah* Transit Visa is available to *Umrah* pilgrims who wish to travel to Malaysia before or after *Umrah*. The *Umrah* Transit Visa holder will be allowed to stay in Malaysia for a period of seven days. The application can only be applied through authorised agents registered under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture of Malaysia. The official guidelines in respect of this visa are yet to be announced and the implementation of which remains to be seen.

Extension of Social Visit Pass Period from 14 Days to 30 Days

Individuals who are nationals of visa required countries from Angola, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Hong Kong, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Niger and Rwanda, are allowed to stay in Malaysia for up to 30 days for tourism and business purposes, provided they obtain a valid visa prior to their entry. Before the implementation of the Social Visit Pass extension on 1 December 2023, the maximum period for social visits was 14 days.

Mandatory Completion of Malaysia Digital Arrival Card

As part of the enforcement measures amid the implementation of the Malaysia's visa liberation policy, the Immigration Department of Malaysia has mandated all foreign travellers to complete the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card online three days prior to their arrival or upon reaching Malaysia⁵. The submission can be made through the [official portal](#). This requirement is applicable to all travellers, except for three specific categories:

- i. Travellers who transit or transfer through Singapore without seeking immigration clearance.
- ii. Permanent residents of Malaysia.
- iii. Malaysian Automatic Clearance System Holder.

The recent developments announced by the Malaysian Government represents a significant shift in the entry procedures for foreigners. The efforts to facilitate entry for foreigners align with broader strategies to boost economic sectors and promote the country on the global stage.

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Disclaimer: The information in this article is accurate as of 5 December 2023. The concessions referred to are subject to change based on Government policy.

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/4unf5k4c>.

² <https://tinyurl.com/2t4rxfb8>.

³ <https://tinyurl.com/2p822ur9>.

⁴ <https://tinyurl.com/wcy2jvc>

⁵ <https://tinyurl.com/yc4fws4b>.

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