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Malaysia: Passport, Pass (residence permit) and visa

The following note describes the Malaysian passport, including issuance procedure, price and validity, the Malaysian 'Pass' corresponding a residence permit and the Malaysian visa.

The note briefly describes fraud with Malaysian passports. However, for a more exhaustive description of fraud with Malaysian documents, including Malaysian passports, and corruption, consult the note from the Danish national ID Centre: *'Malaysia: Document fraud trends and corruption'*

The note is primarily based on an interview with the Malaysian Immigration Department conducted in Putrajaya in Malaysia in October 2023 and information from official websites of the Malaysian government.

The Malaysian passport

The Malaysian Immigration Department is responsible for the issuance of Malaysian passports. There are three versions of the Malaysian passports; an ordinary passport, an official passport and a diplomatic passport.¹ The current version was launched on 2 February 2010.²

The three versions are physically identical with exception of the name of the passport. They all have the same red cover and contain the same security features.³

Diplomatic passports are issued based on applications from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to ensure that the applicant meets the requirements for a diplomatic passport.⁴

There is not a Malaysian passport for foreigners (e.g. refugees).⁵

¹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

² Official website of the Immigration Department, year of issue n/a, Passport, Introduction.

³ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁴ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁵ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

There is an online passport database. The database is not the same as the ID card database, but the Immigration Department have access to the ID card database and can verify if a presented ID card is genuine or not.⁶

Passport issuance

There are 96 passport-issuing offices in Malaysia within the Immigration Department, of which 73 have equipment to personalise passports. At 23 Malaysian diplomatic representations, passport application can be submitted. Of these, the following seven have personalisation equipment (Melbourne, London, Jeddah, Singapore, New York, Hong Kong, and Doha). Passports from the 17 mission without personalisation equipment are personalised in Malaysia.⁷

All first time applicants are required to present themselves at an Immigration office or a Malaysian diplomatic representation.⁸ Personal attendance is required due to capture of biometrics and live enrolment of facial image.⁹ Children below the age of four are encouraged to bring along a photo.¹⁰

The specific requirements to documentation differs if the applicant is under or above the age of 18. However, all first time applicants must prove to have Malaysian citizenship by submitting a birth certificate or a MyKad (Malaysian ID card issued to Malaysian citizens). If the applicant is below 18 years, the parents' MyKad is also required to be submitted. When a MyKad is presented, the 12-digit personal identity card number is controlled up against the ID Card database.¹¹

The price of a passport differs according to the age of the applicant (above and below 12 years and above and below 60 years), if the person is a student attending a degree program abroad, disabled or a pilgrim.¹² For specific requirements and price, please consult the official website of the Malaysian Immigration Department: <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/passport/malaysian-international-passport/>.

Issuance of a Malaysian passport can be a very fast procedure and in some cases, the passport is issued within 30 minutes from the submission of the application. There is a passport issuing office in Kuala Lumpur International Airport from where the passport can be issued within 30 minutes.¹³

⁶ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁷ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

⁸ Official website of the Immigration Department, year of issue n/a, Passport, Malaysian International Passport.

⁹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁰ Official website of the Immigration Department, year of issue n/a, Passport, Malaysian International Passport.

¹¹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹² Official website of the Immigration Department, year of issue n/a, Passport, Malaysian International Passport, Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹³ Western Embassy A, Kuala Lumpur, October 2023..

Renewal

For renewal of the passport, the most recently issued passport is required to be submitted. It is possible to apply for a renewal of the passport at one of the issuing offices in Malaysia or abroad, and if the applicant is above the age of 12, it is also possible to apply online for renewal of the passport.¹⁴

The specific requirements for online renewal can be found at the official website of the Malaysian Immigration Department (only in Malaysian): <https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/eservices/myPasport?lang=en>.

Lost and stolen passports

Different requirements and fees apply to a person if his/her previous passport is lost or stolen. The Immigration Department can deny to issue a passport to a person who has lost his/her passport.¹⁵

According to the Malaysian Immigration Department, lost and stolen Malaysian passports are registered in Interpol's database.¹⁶

Validity

All Malaysian passports are valid for five years. The passport can be valid for five years and six months if the previous passport was valid for more than 6 months when renewed. There is no other validity period possible for Malaysian passports.¹⁷

A passport must be valid for a minimum of six months if used for travelling abroad.¹⁸

Control mechanism

Passports are issued only with live enrolment of biometrics including photo. Fingerprints are checked 1:1 up against previous captured fingerprints during reissuance of passports.¹⁹

The Malaysian visa

A visa is required to enter Malaysia for third country nationals that requires visa.²⁰ Visa is required for 35 countries; persons holding two types of documents from the United Nation as well as UNHCR Laissez Passers issued to refugees (see list below²¹). Entry to Malaysia is prohibited for citizens of Israel.²²

¹⁴ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁵ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁶ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁷ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁸ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

¹⁹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²⁰ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²¹ Afghanistan, Angola, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Myanmar (Burma), Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo Brazzaville, Congo Democratic Republic, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Hong Kong, India, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mali, Montenegro, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Refugee (UNHCR) traveling with Laissez passer, Rwanda, Serbia, Sri Lanka, Western Sahara, United Nation Titre De Voyage, United National Laisses Passer.

²² The Government of Malaysia's Official Gateway, year of issue n/a, Getting tourism information.

Citizens from other than the 35 countries may enter Malaysia without a visa and can legally stay for up to 90 days.²³

Citizens from the following countries can apply for an e-visa; Serbia, Montenegro, China (PRC), Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India and Pakistan.²⁴

The e-visa is digital but a physical page holding information about the application, including personal information and a picture of the applicant, can be printed out by the applicant.²⁵

The e-visa is only used in order to enter Malaysia and is not a proof of legal stay.²⁶



Image 1: Malaysian visa (NIDC reference material).

Visa free nationals will get an entry stamp in the passport on arrival and an exit stamp on departure.

The Malaysian Pass (residence permit)

The Malaysian pass is a proof of legal stay in Malaysia and corresponds to a residence permit.²⁷

The pass is issued to foreigners who have a legal stay in Malaysia with the exception of tourists. The pass is a sticker placed in the passport. From the pass, the type of permit can be read (e.g. student or work) and the duration of stay.²⁸ The physical pass is issued within Malaysia and the person applying has three days after entering Malaysia to address an office of the Immigration Department in order to apply for a pass.²⁹

²³ The Government of Malaysia's Official Gateway, year of issue n/a, Getting tourism information.

²⁴ The Government of Malaysia's Official Gateway, year of issue n/a, Getting tourism information.

²⁵ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²⁶ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²⁷ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²⁸ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

²⁹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

Tourists (both visa free and entering Malaysia on an e-visa) get a stamp in the passport on arrival and departure, and do not have to go to the Immigration Department to apply for a pass.³⁰



Image 2: Malaysian Pass (NIDC reference material).

Fraud with Malaysian passports

According to the Malaysian Immigration Department, there are cases of fraud with Malaysian passports. The fraud is mainly imposters using genuine Malaysian passports.³¹

Forged or counterfeit passports are more widespread with foreign passports and not Malaysian passports. However, according to the Immigration Department, the quality is often very low and the documents will be detected by the Immigration officers at the airports.³²

There have been cases with children from Sri Lanka using genuine Malaysian birth certificates in order to have genuine Malaysian passports issued.³³

Most cases of fraud with Malaysian documents relates to counterfeit Malaysian passes (stickers, long term stay).³⁴

For a more exhaustive description of fraud with Malaysian documents, including Malaysian passports, and corruption, consult the note from the Danish national ID Centre: *'Malaysia: Document fraud trend and corruption'*

³⁰ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

³¹ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

³² Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

³³ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

³⁴ Immigration Department, Putrajaya, October 2023.

References

Oral sources

Immigration Department (October 2023): interviewed in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

Western Embassy A (October 2023): interviewed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Western Embassy B (October 2023): interviewed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Written sources

Official website of the Immigration Department (year of issue n/a): Passport, Introduction: <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/passport/>, retrieved 17 October 2023.

Official website of the Immigration Department (year of issue n/a): Passport, Malaysian International Passport: <https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/passport/malaysian-international-passport/>, retrieved 17 October 2023.

The Government of Malaysia's Official Gateway (year of issue n/a): Getting tourism information, <https://www.malaysia.gov.my/portal/content/133>, retrieved 17 October 2023.