



# Steph's Quick Budget Fact Sheet

## Malaysia - Kota Kinabalu

### Quick Facts

- ✓ **Capital:** Kuala Lumpur
- ✓ **Language:** Malay
- ✓ **Population:** ± 453,000
- ✓ **Sq km:** ± 351
- ✓ **Currency:** Ringgit (RM)
- ✓ **Country code:** +60 (8)
- ✓ **Visa:** Few countries, [check!](#)
- ✓ **Alarm codes:** 999 (*emergency*), 994 (*fire*)
- ✓ **Vaccinations:** DTP / Hep-A / Hep-B / Typhoid / Japanese Encephalitis / Malaria prevention



### History Recap Over 1 Drink

1400s: Prince Parameswara founds Melaka. 1511: Portuguese capture Melaka: center East-Indian spice trade. 1641: Dutch took over. 1786: British Captain Francis founds Penang. '24: Anglo-Dutch treaty spice trade: Melaka British → Colony of Straits Settlements. Indian/Chinese working immigrants. Protectorates over Malay Sultanates. '95: Federated Malay States. 1942-'45: Japanese occupation. '48: Federation of Malaya (British-ruled Malayan territories). '57: Independent from UK. Rahman Prime Minister (PM). '65: Singapore withdraws from Malaysia. '69: Anti-Chinese riots (frustration over their economic success). '70: Razak PM: National Front coalition. '71: Min. quotas Malays in business. '78-'89: Unrestricted Vietnamese asylum. '81: Mohamad PM. '89-'90: Communist insurgents sign peace accord with government. '93: Sultans lose legal immunity. '97: Asian financial crisis. 2001: Ethnic clashes between Malays & Indians. '02: New laws against illegal immigrants → exodus. '03: Badawi PM. '09: Ban recruitment foreign workers. Razak PM. 2010: First Islamic punishments: flogging women for extra-marital sex, allow underage marriage in Melaka. '14: MH17 flight from Amsterdam to KL crashes in Ukraine: shot down. '15: Razak took \$700m from sovereign wealth fund (1MDB) / corruption scandal. '16: Sultan Muhammad V new king.

### Travel Seasons

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wet												
Dry												
High Season												

Altitude: 13m. Climate: Tropical Rainforest Climate (Af) – always a chance on rain.

### Bucket List For Free

☺ **Sights:** Tanjung Aru Beach (*very polluted*) & Perdana Park, Kokol Hill, KK City Mosque, Sabah State Mosque, City Waterfront, Signal Hill Observatory Platform, Marlin Statue, Atkinson Clock Tower, Petagas War Memorial, Pu Toh Tze Temple, City Park.

👉 **National Parks & Reserves:** [Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park](#) and its islands Mamutik, Manukan, Sapi, Gaya, Sulug (*all very polluted*); [Weston Wetland Park](#) (*by boat tour*), [Mount Kinabalu](#) (*obligated expensive guide!*), Mount Kinabalu Botanic Garden, [Kota Kinabalu Wetlands](#), [Poring Hot Springs](#), [Tambunan Rafflesia Reserve](#), [Lok Kawi Wildlife Park](#), [Tabin Wildlife Resort](#).

### Be Rich To Enjoy Sabah ☺

👉 **Adventure sports:** [Sabah Indoor Climbing Center](#), River Rafting, Tubing, Waterskiing, Jetskiing, Ziplining, Kayaking, Scubadiving, Snorkeling.

👉 **Museums:** [Muzium Sabah](#), [Monsopiad Cultural Village](#), [Mari Mari Cultural Village](#).

👉 [North Borneo Railway](#).

The Earth Becomes My Throne

## Budget Bites

- ⌘ **Big supermarkets:** City Grocer, Familia, Giant, Sunny, Fresh Market, Merdeka, Tong Hing.
- ⌘ **Markets:** Gaya Street Sunday Market (*mainly souvenirs*), Filipino Market, Metro Town Weekend Market (*Saturday night*).
- ⌘ **Local food:** Nasi Lemak, Nasi Goreng (*rice dishes*), Satay (*skewer*), Cendol (*cold dessert soup*), Roti Canai (*Indian*), Laksa (*soup*), Fish Head Curry, Chicken Curry, Roti Jala (*netlike crepes*), Popiah (*spring rolls*), Mee Goreng (*noodles*), Beef Rendang (*curry*), Ikan Bakar (*grilled fish*), Bak Kut Teh (*pork ribs broth*), Sambal Udang (*spicy shrimp*), Rojak (*fruit & veggie salad with fish*), Chee Cheong Fun (*rice noodle rolls*), Lok Lok (*hot pot*), Durian, Otak Otak (*fish cakes*), Bee Hoon (*rice noodles*), Banana Leaf Rice (*Indian*), Murtabak.

⌘ **Go vegan:** Being vegan is very easy and cheap in Malaysia and especially in Kuching. Every bigger supermarket has vegan products and there are many vegetarian and vegan restaurants... check them on [Happy Cow - KK](#).

## Mama Said

- ☠ Kota Kinabalu is generally safe, but certainly has a dodgy side. Always be aware of pickpockets and bag-snatching. As in most places, don't walk alone at night.
- ☠ Boycott zoos like the Marine Aquarium where animals are held in captivity.
- ☠ Tap water is not drinkable.
- ☠ Only use licensed cabs or take an Uber / Grab.
- ☠ Only cash out inside of banks, not on street ATMs.
- ☠ The best advice of all: Don't go to Kota Kinabalu... really, you don't want to end up in this polluted tourist trap.

## Sleep Cheap

- ❖ Hostels and hotels are very cheap in Malaysia, although KK is more expensive than the rest of the country due to mass tourism. Be aware that there are scams with Air BnB and booking-websites, so book directly via hotel or verify first via reviews.
- ❖ Go [Couchsurfing](#) or [house-sitting](#)! Also check [WorkAway](#).

## Festivals

- ☼ Chinese New Year: Feb-Mar.
- ☼ Hari Merdeka (National Day): 31-Aug.
- ☼ Sabah Fest: May.

## Nights Best Spent

◆ Nightlife areas: Carpenter Street. Check out Mynt Club, B.E.D., Shenanigans. There's a 'sin tax' on alcohol, which makes it quite expensive.

## Free-Riding?

- KK has a rather compact city center, but it's really too hot and humid to walk long distances. Traffic congestion is an issue.
- Public transport is slow and rather unreliable, most buses and minibuses leaving whenever they're full. Times and frequency change on a daily basis, so verify before and make sure you always have a Plan B. There are 4 intercity bus terminals, check all info [here](#).
- Airport: Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI).
- Hitch-hiking is possible, locals are very willing to take a foreigner and have a chat. It can be a good back-up plan of the bus system fails again.

## Next?

- ➔ In Malaysia: Sepilok, Sandakan, Semporna, Miri, Mulu NP, Kuching.
- ➔ International destinations close by: Brunei, The Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore.