

I am Holly Laceby, an expat from the UK (Wolverhampton to be exact) currently living and teaching in beautiful Malaysia. I moved to the vibrant capital city of Kuala Lumpur as a single 32 year old in July 2018. It was honestly the best move of my life. Skip forward 4 years and I am getting married and have twins on the way. It just shows how much life can change for the better when you make a brave move.

As a primary teacher, I had taught in so many different schools and contexts in the UK and always longed for something a bit different. A chance visit to some friends whilst on a career break in May 2018 brought me to KL and two days later I had applied for a job, been interviewed and offered. It was crazy! The variety of schools out here is great and will suit a range of teachers. Like most International schools, they are privately run and require a certain level of experience so it is always worth checking beforehand. The 'Top Tier' schools will want more teaching experience but equally some like post ECT year teachers who are passionate and ready to learn.

I work at a large International School (four form entry Primary) set in a beautiful parkland just 20 minutes from the city centre. The students are absolutely fantastic and I have jumped from Year 6 to Year 4 in recent years and the transitions are seamless. We take in a wonderful variety of students from all over the world (one of the things I really love) and they make teaching so fun. Their behaviour is impeccable and the families are so supportive. Parents have high expectations but if you are the kind of teacher who loves a challenge and throwing themselves into school life then I highly recommend it. There are plenty of career opportunities too within the schools; I was promoted to Head of Year within 12 months and have just completed the National Professional Qualification for Senior Leadership (NPQSL) which is a UK affiliated qualification.

One of the big advantages of working in Malaysia as a teacher is the financial aspect. As a class teacher in a top-tier school, you are likely to bring in around 2700 GBP after tax (this goes up and down depending on how many years you have been in the country so worth checking with your school). Most good international schools will pay you a monthly allowance for your rent and in Malaysia there is a great savings scheme called the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) which comes out of your salary and a percentage is matched by your employer. It is put aside in the EPF account and can only be drawn once you leave the job. It has helped lots of my friends save for a house in their home country years before anyone normally could!

Living costs in Malaysia really do vary depending on what you are buying. Food and groceries are where most of my budget goes and alcohol is extremely pricey (15GBP for a cheap bottle of wine). You can choose to buy your fruit and vegetables from the local markets which are fabulous but not as convenient. House bills are the cheapest things to pay for and actually work out around 60GBP per month for all electricity, water and gas etc.

Accommodation is varied and you can rent condominiums (flats) or houses anywhere in the city. If you are looking at schools, I would strongly recommend living nearby as traffic in KL is notoriously bad! I lived in a two bed condo in my first year teaching here, which comes with the use of a lovely pool and gym as part of the complex. It cost around 700GBP per month which was fully covered by my school. This is very normal out here which is something I still find so brilliant.

Now for the fun bit, what is it actually like to live here? Most expat teachers will choose to live in the bigger hubs of Kuala Lumpur or Penang as they offer the best jobs and living. Penang is a coastal town with lots of history and a quieter scene. Kuala Lumpur is very much the opposite and is a metropolitan hub of bars, shops, restaurants and much more. If you like relaxing, your condo pool will be the best place to unwind after a busy week and with average temperatures at 26 degrees (feeling like 34 degrees) you will be sure to need that cool water. For the more adventurous, Malaysia's tropical climate means a lot of jungle to explore. Many families and friends hike the jungles and take to the waterfalls on their days off. Many expats join sports teams such as gaelic football, rugby, netball and golf which are great ways to meet like minded people and exercise at the same time.

When it comes to longer holidays, Malaysia is a dream location. The East coast is home to the most stunning islands with picturesque white sandy beaches and blue waters (Tioman, Perhentian and Rawa to name a few). Here you can really enjoy island life by kicking back on the beach or enjoying the superb snorkelling or scuba diving. All of the islands are within a 5 hour drive from Kuala Lumpur which makes them great for even a 3 day weekend. You can also visit the other Malaysian islands a short flight away of Sarawak and Sabah which sit right next to Borneo famous for its orangutan and elephant sanctuaries.

If you want to explore further afield, Malaysia is the perfect location. For city breaks you have Singapore and Bangkok just short flights away and for more beach exploring; Bali, Thailand, The Philippines and Vietnam are so easy to get to and booked in advance can be so cheap to fly to.