

Day in the life of an international teacher in...Malaysia

There are always questions bouncing around from teachers based in the UK who are considering a move overseas. So what's it like?

Almost eight years ago I packed up my life on the sunny south coast of England and headed out to Kuala Lumpur to my second international teaching post. A move within my school group and I am now in Penang, a tropical island off the west coast of Malaysia, soon to be heading into my seventh year here.

It sounds idyllic, and once you settle in and get the work - life balance right, it really is.

Holly Laceby has written [here](#) about her experiences of living in Malaysia, specifically Kuala Lumpur and rather than repeat what she says (and all fantastic points by the way!) so I'm sharing more about a day in the life of....

Here are my highlights of being an expat teacher in an international school in Malaysia:

- 1. Rising early** - being closer to the equator means there is less change in sunrise and sunset so Malaysia has on average 12 hours of daylight every month of the year. I get up in the dark to get to school just after 7am but the best thing is it is always warm, no bracing yourself to jump out of bed, and never a need for a jacket or tights! An early start means an earlier finish. Most schools offer a comprehensive CCA programme at it's likely you are expected to host a club at least one night after school but the rest of the afternoon and evening is yours!
- 2. Respect for all** - my three school experiences in South-East Asia have had wonderful students, respectful and appreciative for their education. Meaning you can take risks in your classroom without it being a disaster. The majority are hardworking and there are very few behaviour issues, of course, working with young people mistakes are made and homework does get forgotten but their diligence helps you keep the focus on all the positives.
- 3. Early years to young adults** - as a secondary specialist it is fantastic to be on a campus with the littlest learners as well. They make your day as they wave enthusiastically as you pass their classroom. It's highly likely if you pop in, one of them will introduce you to every single member of their class. Our older students support through various initiatives including buddy reading, students council and are role models for our younger students. Many events bring us all together and it really is special to be a part of a through-school.
- 4. Curriculum choice** - the curriculum is carefully created for our students, not for Ofsted. As an international school we have more autonomy over the curriculum and can take all the best bits to piece together a bespoke offer to our community. In addition to the academic offer, one example is the creation of a Leadership & Life Skills subject. Making time to deliver wellbeing sessions like meditation, local charity or sustainability projects are linked in, leading into students hosting community campus events.
- 5. Climate** - corridors are open, the school is green and airy. Outside routes are covered to protect you from rain in the rainy season or shade you from the sun. During rainy season, the daily hour or two of rain and thunder is so loud that on the top floor you have to raise your voice to be heard!

- 6. Sharing and collaborating** - with our national and international curriculum on offer there are four schools sharing facilities - the cafeteria, the swimming pool and the library, music and languages teachers transition through the key stages and, PE adapts between international and national syllabuses. The calendar is carefully curated. Shared festivals and events, creates unity and shared purpose. As a teacher from the UK there is so much to learn from colleagues on our thriving and diverse campus, and for our group of nine campuses across Malaysia sharing and collaborating goes way beyond the teacher next door!

- 7. Public Holidays** - Malaysia loves a public holiday! Although many of them are absorbed into the long school holidays there are numerous extras that you can take advantage with a long weekend adventure somewhere. Malaysia has also been known to spring one on us too, always a welcome surprise!

I blog about my experiences of teaching, leadership and learning [here](#). If you have any further questions, get in touch!