

MDAC, Passport and Visa

Three Different Questions

A practical pre-departure guide for Malaysia

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PASSPORT

Identify

VISA

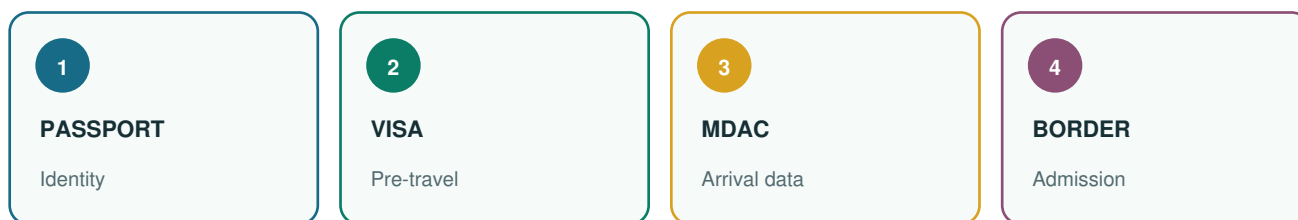
Qualify

MDAC

Register

BORDER

Admit



You can have a valid passport and still need a visa. You can have the right visa and still need to submit Malaysia's arrival card. You can complete both and still have to receive permission to enter at the border.

That is not needless duplication. Each step answers a different question.

This guide gives you a clean pre-departure check for a short visit to Malaysia. Immigration rules depend on nationality, travel document, purpose, route and current policy, so use the official Malaysian Immigration Department pages linked below for your own case. Do not treat an old screenshot, a travel forum or another traveller's nationality as your answer.

The four-part picture

Item	The question it answers	What it does not do
Passport or recognised travel document	Who are you, and what travel document are you presenting?	It does not by itself give you permission to enter Malaysia.
Visa or eVISA, if required	Did you obtain the pre-travel authorisation required for your nationality, document, purpose and route?	It does not guarantee admission or decide the exact period you may stay after arrival.
Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC), if required	Did you register the requested arrival and trip details in the official system before arrival?	It is not a visa, does not repair a passport problem and does not extend a pass.
Admission and the pass/entry record issued at the border	Has an immigration officer admitted you, for what purpose and for what authorised period?	It is not determined by the length of your hotel booking, return ticket or visa validity alone.

The practical rule is simple: check all four. Completing one never proves that the other three are settled.

A 60-second route check

Use this sequence before opening any form:

If this is true...	Do this next	Do not assume...
You changed or renewed the passport you will carry	Recheck the ticket, visa or approval and every arrival record against the new document	That an old passport number transfers automatically
Your real purpose includes work, study or residence	Identify the correct pass or approval first, then check the visa and arrival steps attached to it	That a tourist entry process covers the activity

If this is true...	Do this next	Do not assume...
Your itinerary includes a connection in Malaysia	Confirm whether you must collect bags, change terminals landside, check in again or stay overnight outside transit	That the word "transit" keeps you outside immigration
Your nationality appears visa-exempt	Check the dated note, route condition and permitted purpose on the official country table	That visa-exempt means exempt from MDAC or border examination
The MDAC portal or a search result asks for money or sends you off the government domain	Stop and reopen the MDAC route from the Immigration Department home page	That payment, a logo or a high search ranking proves the site is official

The sequence is deliberate: **document -> purpose and visa -> route -> MDAC -> border admission**. If an earlier answer changes, revisit every later answer.

Question 1: Is your passport ready?

Start with the actual document you will carry, not a photo of it and not the passport you used for an earlier booking.

Check:

- the passport number, nationality, name, date of birth and expiry date;
- whether the document is damaged or has been reported lost or stolen;
- whether the airline, ferry operator and Malaysian authorities accept the document and its remaining validity for your journey;
- whether your ticket and any visa or approval use the same biographical details; and
- whether you changed passports after obtaining a visa, approval or making a booking.

Do this early. A correctly submitted MDAC cannot make an unacceptable travel document acceptable. If the passport is replaced, reassess every linked item rather than assuming the old passport number will transfer automatically.

Avoid turning a general rule into false certainty. Passport-validity and document requirements can differ by document type and journey. Confirm your case with the Malaysian Immigration Department and your carrier before travel.

Question 2: Do you need a visa or another pre-travel approval?

Visa requirements are not decided by where you live or where you bought your ticket. They can depend on your nationality, travel document, purpose of travel, entry route and current exemptions.

Use the Immigration Department's current **Visa Requirement by Country** page. If it says you need a visa, follow the official Malaysian eVISA or other stated route. Watch for footnotes: a temporary exemption, entry-by-air condition or special approval requirement can change the answer.

Those footnotes are not decorative. Checked on 24 October 2026, the official table marked countries with an asterisk as permitted to enter by air only and separately showed a time-limited visa exemption for Indian citizens ending on **31 December 2026**. That is an example of why a traveller must read the current note beside the relevant nationality instead of copying a simple “visa required” or “visa-free” label from another source. Recheck the official table for the actual travel date; do not carry this dated example forward as a promise about a later trip.

Ask these questions in order:

- 1 What passport or travel document will I present?** Dual nationals should check the document they will actually use.
- 2 What is my real purpose?** Tourism, business meetings, study, employment, dependent residence and long-term stay are not interchangeable.
- 3 Does my nationality or document require a visa for that purpose?** Read the current official page, including notes and expiry dates for temporary policies.
- 4 Does my route matter?** A rule may distinguish travel by air from travel by land or sea, or distinguish remaining airside from passing immigration.
- 5 Do I need a separate pass or approval?** Work, study and other long-stay activity normally require the appropriate permission; an arrival card is not a substitute.

Visa validity is not authorised stay

A visa can have a period during which it may be used for travel. That is different from the period of stay granted on entry. Do not calculate your permitted stay from the visa's last-valid date, the return date on your ticket or the number of hotel nights.

After admission, inspect the pass, endorsement or electronic entry record that governs your stay. If anything appears wrong, ask at the immigration counter before leaving the controlled area.

Question 3: Do you need to submit the MDAC?

The Malaysia Digital Arrival Card is an online arrival registration. It collects details connected to the traveller and planned arrival. It does not replace your passport, a required visa or the officer's admission decision.

For travellers to whom the requirement applies, the official instructions say to submit the MDAC within the three days before arrival in Malaysia. Because requirements and exemptions can change, check the current Immigration Department instruction close to departure rather than relying on a saved social-media post.

Check whether an MDAC exemption applies

The Immigration Department's current MDAC FAQ identifies exemption categories that include **Singapore citizens; holders of diplomatic or official passports; Malaysian permanent residents and long-term pass holders; and Malaysia Automated Clearance System (MACS) holders**. These are category labels, not permission to guess: eligibility can depend on the exact document or pass held. Open the official FAQ immediately before travel and match its latest wording to the document you will actually present. A visa exemption is not automatically an MDAC exemption, and an MDAC exemption does not remove the passport or border-admission checks.

Use the official portal:

<https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/mdac/main>

The safest route is to start at <https://www.imi.gov.my/> and follow its MDAC link. The Immigration Department has published a warning about false MDAC portals. A page that resembles a government form is not proof that it is official. Before entering passport details, confirm the address is on the **imi.gov.my** government domain.

A careful MDAC routine

- 1 Confirm the current requirement and any exemption for your traveller category.
- 2 Open the portal from the Immigration Department website or type the official address carefully.
- 3 Copy details from the passport you will carry.
- 4 Enter your travel and accommodation details as they actually stand.
- 5 Review the passport number, nationality, dates and email address character by character.
- 6 Submit within the official time window when required.
- 7 Save the confirmation or acknowledgement somewhere you can reach without mobile data.
- 8 If your passport or material trip details change, consult the official instructions instead of guessing that an old submission remains sufficient.

Saving the acknowledgement is practical evidence that you completed the step, but it is not an admission guarantee.

Question 4: What happens at the border?

The final decision to admit a foreign visitor is made through border control. Be ready to present your passport and, as applicable, a visa or approval, MDAC acknowledgement and supporting travel evidence.

Supporting evidence may include:

- a confirmed onward or return journey;
- the address of your first accommodation;
- a credible explanation of the visit;
- evidence relevant to funds or arrangements for the stay; and

- any approval or pass documentation connected to study, work, residence or another non-tourist purpose.

An officer may ask questions even when you submitted the MDAC correctly. Answer the question asked, keep your explanation consistent with your documents and do not describe work or study as tourism if that is not your true purpose.

Before leaving immigration, verify the authorised period and conditions recorded for your entry. If the record is electronic, retain whatever official confirmation or access method applies to you. Your responsibility is to comply with the permission actually granted.

Four worked examples

1. A visitor whose nationality is visa-exempt for the trip

The visitor still needs an acceptable passport. They check whether the MDAC applies, submit it in the official window if required, carry their itinerary and seek admission at the border. "Visa-exempt" does not mean "exempt from every entry step."

2. A visitor who already has an eVISA

The eVISA answers the pre-travel visa question. The traveller still checks passport details and validity, completes the MDAC if required, carries the eVISA in the form specified by the official instructions and seeks admission on arrival. The eVISA is not the MDAC and is not the final entry decision.

3. A student, worker or dependent returning to Malaysia

The traveller checks the passport and the validity and re-entry conditions of the relevant pass or approval. They also check the current MDAC rule for their category. Submitting an MDAC cannot renew, extend or replace an expired pass.

4. A passenger connecting through a Malaysian airport

"Transit" is not a complete answer. A passenger who remains airside and continues on the same through journey may face different requirements from someone who must collect baggage, change terminals, stay overnight landside or check in again. Confirm whether the itinerary requires passing Malaysian immigration. Check both the official immigration rule and the operating carrier's instructions; do not assume that the word *connection* keeps you airside.

Common mistakes and the correction

Mistake: "I completed an arrival card, so I do not need a visa."

Correction: Check visa requirements separately. The MDAC is arrival registration, not a visa.

Mistake: "My visa is valid for three months, so I may stay for three months."

Correction: Visa validity and the stay authorised at entry are different. Check the permission actually granted.

Mistake: “The website charged me, so it must be official.”

Correction: A charge is not proof of government status. Start from the Immigration Department website and verify the domain before entering personal information.

Mistake: “My friend used the same rule last year.”

Correction: Nationality, passport, purpose, route and date can all change the result. Use the current official page for your own trip.

Mistake: “My airline let me check in, so entry is guaranteed.”

Correction: Carrier document checks do not replace the immigration officer's admission decision.

Mistake: “My ticket says Malaysia, so all internal entry controls are identical.”

Correction: Sabah and Sarawak have immigration controls that can matter even on travel within Malaysia. Check the requirements for every part of the itinerary instead of assuming the first entry check answers all later ones.

Stop-and-fix triggers

Do not continue by guesswork if any of these appears:

- the passport number or spelling differs between the passport, booking, visa or MDAC;
- the travel purpose you plan to describe is not the purpose shown by your approval or supporting documents;
- a land, sea or landside-transit segment appears after you checked only an air-route rule;
- the official country table contains a footnote, expiry date or special approval requirement you have not resolved;
- the MDAC acknowledgement cannot be found, or it shows details that no longer match the trip; or
- the admission record at the border shows an unexpected period or condition.

The fix is to return to the exact official step that controls the mismatch. A later step cannot cure an earlier one: an MDAC cannot repair a passport or visa problem, and an airline check cannot rewrite border permission.

The ten-minute pre-departure check

Complete this using the passport you will carry.

- My name, passport number, nationality and birth date match across my ticket, visa or approval, and MDAC.
- My passport or travel document is acceptable for this journey and has the required remaining validity.
- I checked the current official visa requirement for my nationality, document, purpose and route.
- If a visa or other approval is required, I have it in the form the official instructions specify.

- I checked whether the MDAC applies to my traveller category.
- If required, I submitted it through the official portal within the three days before arrival.
- I saved the MDAC acknowledgement and can reach it offline.
- I have my first address, onward or return itinerary and relevant supporting documents.
- I know that border admission and the authorised stay are separate from visa validity.
- I will inspect my entry permission before leaving the immigration area.

If your plans change

Recheck rather than improvise when you:

- replace the passport;
- change nationality document;
- change from tourism to work, study or another purpose;
- add a land or sea border crossing;
- alter a connection so that you must enter Malaysia;
- change the arrival date outside the MDAC window; or
- plan onward travel to Sabah or Sarawak.

For a material mismatch or a rule you cannot resolve, contact the Malaysian Immigration Department or the relevant Malaysian mission before travelling. An airline can explain its carriage and document-check requirements, but it does not grant Malaysian immigration permission.

Official sources to open before travel

Checked for this guide on 24 October 2026. Government pages and temporary exemptions can change.

1 Malaysian Immigration Department home page

<https://www.imi.gov.my/>

2 Official MDAC portal

<https://imigresen-online.imi.gov.my/mdac/main>

3 Official MDAC FAQ

https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/faq_mdacjim/faq-malaysia-digital-arrival-card-mdac/

4 Visa Requirement by Country

<https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/visa/visa-requirement-by-country/>

5 Entry Requirements into Malaysia

<https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/entry-requirement-into-malaysia-en/>

6 Types of Visas

<https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/en/main-services/visa/types-of-visas/>

7 Official Malaysia eVISA service

<https://malaysiavisa.imi.gov.my/>

8 Immigration Department warning about false MDAC portals

<https://www.imi.gov.my/index.php/pengumuman/makluman-portal-palsu-malaysia-digital-arrival-card-mdac/>

The useful mental model is not “Which one document lets me in?” It is: **identity document, pre-travel permission, arrival registration, then admission and authorised stay**. Check each in that order and the process becomes much harder to confuse.