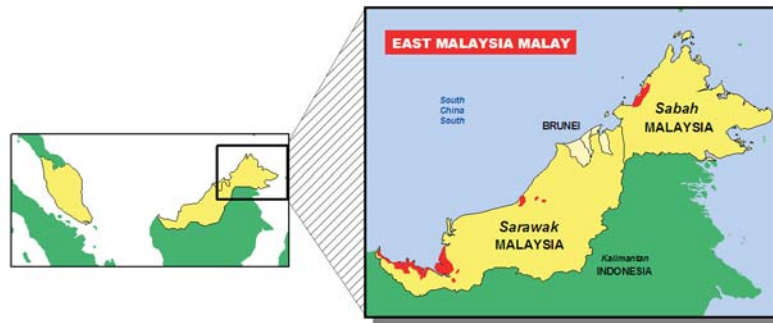


EAST MALAYSIA MALAY



Population	Major Religion	Language
250,000	Islam	Bahasa Malaysia

Who are the East Malaysia Malay?

Sarawak and Sabah, Malaysia's 12th and 13th states, are home to many different people groups including the East Malaysia Malay. They number a substantial minority in Sarawak and a smaller minority in Sabah. Like other Malay peoples, this people group brings its own distinct cultural practices that are different from other people groups of Sabah and Sarawak.

Bahasa Malaysia is the language spoken.

What are their lives like?

Traditionally, the East Malaysia Malay worked as fishermen and traders. Today, many of them are employed in logging industries, palm-oil plantations, and civil industries. In addition, many work as government servants.

Intermarriage with other people groups is common for the East Malaysia Malay as long as the prospective partner is a Muslim. A non-Muslim spouse is expected to embrace Islam. Hence, the value of being a part of a family is significant.

For the most part, they dwell in villages consisting of Malay communities with shops, *surau* (small prayer hall), and other facilities. Some live alongside other East Malaysia people groups like the Bajau in waterfront homes. Due to years of fishing and using the ocean as a major source of transportation, homes are built on stilts right at the ocean's edge. Sleeping in one of these homes is quite an experience, as the water will gently rock the house with the movement of the waves. They also reside on land in different villages.

Good manners and respect is very important especially shown to the elders by the younger people. Elders are much respected by the community especially when they hold positions of *Penghulus* (village head), *Pemajasa* (someone who takes care of the law in the village), or *Temenggong* (similar to a policeman in the village), in

their respective communities. Hence, as is the case with most other Malaysian people groups, social networks function with a hierarchical system.

The value of saving face, observed in the community and workplace, is also deemed significant. It is unbecoming to cause another person to lose face. As a result, it is common to use members of another people group to convey a message which would be uncomfortable for the recipient.

What do they believe?

As followers of Islam, the East Malaysia Malay participates in the five pillars of Islam, and mosques are common landmark across the landscape of the state.

But as with their wedding traditions, traces of animistic and Hindu beliefs are still evident and openly discussed. The legend of the *Penanggal* (either a male or a female who is looking for the blood of a baby or a virgin girl) is a classic example. The *Penanggal* comes out at night and his head detaches from the body and flies around searching for a victim. Since those bitten by a *Penanggal* will die, people are careful to stay away from anyone who is suspected of being such a creature.

Funerals are consistent with Islamic practice as is male and female circumcision.

What are their needs?

There is a need for improvement in the basic standards of living among coastal Malay peoples.

Working conditions because the Malay are a minority can be difficult in the logging and other export industries. Pray that believers in the main coastal cities would be eager to love and encourage their fellow East Malaysia Malay.