

ORANG PANTAI TIMUR



Population	Major Religion	Language
2,100,000	Islam	Bahasa Malaysia

Who are the Orang Pantai Timur?

Orang Pantai Timur (People of the East Coast) consists of Malay peoples along the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. They are primarily located in the two states of Terengganu and Kelantan though some reside in other parts of Malaysia where job opportunities are more abundant. The Orang Pantai Timur speak the national language of Malaysia, Bahasa Malaysia. However, their own distinct accent identifies them as different from other Malay people groups in Malaysia, Brunei, and Singapore.

What are their lives like?

While many Orang Pantai Timur are progressing and securing lower-level government jobs or white-collar professions, the majority still adhere to traditional trades, the largest being fishing. Farming rice paddies and vegetables is frequent as well. It is still common for women to stay home as housewives and rear the children.

Selection of mates has evolved from the previous era of arranged marriages. Today, prospective partners are chosen by the individual. Parents and family still have “veto” power if the candidate is unacceptable for a particular reason. Partners are most acceptable if they are from the states of Terengganu or Kelantan. Persons from different states are fine as long as they are Malay and are upright in character.

Couples are married at either the home of the bride or the groom. This is a unique practice of the Orang Pantai Timur as many other Malay peoples hold weddings at the local Islamic place of worship. In keeping with *adat temenggung* (male inheritance), the wedding often takes place at the home of the groom. Couples may live on their own as newlyweds. However, common cultural practices emphasize living in the home of the groom’s parents.

Another common cultural practice is having children soon after being married. If newlyweds are poor, they may wait to have children. A decision to wait often invites pressure from family members. Consequently, even today families tend to be very

large. It is not uncommon for Orang Pantai Timur couples to have between three and seven children.

What do they believe?

Orang Pantai Timur are Islamic and devoutly follow the standards of the Muslim faith. Women wear a head covering and full-length dress or pants, but no veil is necessary. Men follow a less strict dress code, but those who are truly devout often wear the Muslim hat and traditional outfit.

Having multiple wives is common among the Orang Pantai Timur men. In keeping with Islamic law, a husband can have up to four wives. However, it is emphasized that only those men who can afford to provide for all his wives and children on an equal basis may take an additional spouse.

The Orang Pantai Timur observe all Islamic holidays with special emphasis being given to the main three: *Hari Raya*, *Hari Korban*, and *Haji*. A point of distinction with other Malay peoples is that Orang Pantai Timur emphasize *Hari Korban* (sacrifice day). Animals sacrificed include goats, cows, water buffalo, and even imported camels.

Funerals are also consistent with Islamic beliefs. A corpse will be washed and then wrapped in white cloth. The body will be buried the same day as the death. The family of the departed observes prayer rituals for seven nights after the death. If the deceased was a male, the remaining widow or widows must remain in the home for sixty days following the funeral. No such restrictions exist for widowers.

What are their needs?

Although the east coast is rich in oil revenues, the Orang Pantai have not benefited. Terengganu and Kelantan are among the poorest of Malay states. Economic development remains a political battleground with the Orang Pantai stuck in the middle. May the few local believers offer hope and blessing to the Orang Pantai people.