



Exploring Malaysia's Digital Haven:

The De Rantau Nomad Pass

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Introduction

Nomads are people who wander from place to place in search of food and shelter. For them, the world is an oyster. In the modern digital era, digital technologies have given birth to digital nomads who can work from anywhere and at anytime. They are not bound by place or time. They can pursue their travel desires whilst working sufficient hours for a living.

Are you a digital nomad looking for an exciting country to work from? Many countries these days offer the perfect destination for their nomadic instincts. Malaysia is one of them.

In this article, we will discuss the De Rantau Nomad Pass issued by the MDEC (Malaysia Digital Economic Corporation).

Who is the Nomad Pass for?

The DE Rantau Programme is open to digital freelancers, independent contractors, and remote workers in various domains such as IT (software development, UX or user experience, UI or user interface, cloud, cybersecurity, blockchain, AI or artificial intelligence, machine learning, etc), digital marketing, digital creative content, and digital content development. For example, a programmer working for a US-based company who is allowed to work remotely, or a freelance website developer can apply for the DE Rantau Nomad Pass.

How to obtain the Nomad Pass?

Applications must be submitted online, and MDEC takes approximately six (6) to eight (8) weeks to process each application. However, the processing time may be extended if additional information or documents are required during the due diligence exercise.

Once the DE Rantau Nomad Pass is approved, the participants are issued with a Professional Visit Pass (PVP) with a validity period of between three (3) to twelve (12) months.

However, the DE Rantau Nomad Pass holders have the option to renew the pass for a maximum of an additional 12 months. The renewal can be done two (2) months prior to the pass's expiry, thereby allowing the DE Rantau Nomad Pass holders to stay in Malaysia for a total of up to 24 months.

Additionally, unlike regular PVP holders, the DE Rantau Nomad Pass holders can bring their spouses and children to Malaysia as dependents.

Accommodation at DE Rantau Hubs

The Malaysian Government has created the DE Rantau Hubs, which are accommodation certified to be fit for the digital nomad lifestyle, based on the following criteria:

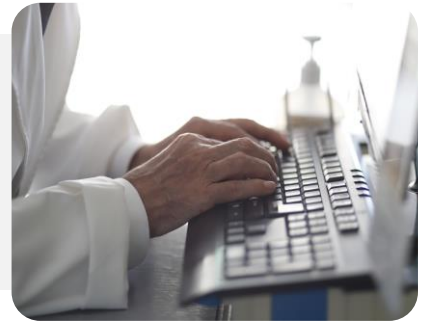


Lodging

Shared or self-contained facility with bed, washroom, desk and chair for workspace, a kitchen / pantry, listed on an accommodation hosting platform, and has cashless facility and security.

Internet

Appropriate internet speed provided through broadband connectivity, Wi-Fi, or mobile internet, with a minimum of 30 Mbps.



Vibrancy of livelihood

Located in a neighbourhood with available cafes, stores, entertainment areas, recreation facilities, access to public transport, and has a sharing economy and digital platform services.

Engagement

Has an induction programme and hosting of gatherings for nomad communities.



The Allure of DE Rantau Hubs

Although the internet speed in certain areas of Malaysia may not be optimal, digital nomads can find solace in DE Rantau Hubs, where they don't have to worry about this issue. DE Rantau Hubs offer guaranteed high-speed internet connectivity along with a range of services from digital platforms.

Additionally, digital nomads can take advantage of networking events, fostering connections and collaborations with like-minded individuals. Workshops and seminars aimed at professional growth and development are also available to enhance their skills.

Notably, the Malaysian Government is actively seeking partners to create a comprehensive ecosystem for digital nomads throughout the country.



Where are the DE Rantau Hubs?

At present, the DE Rantau Hubs are available in:



Kuala Lumpur



Melaka



Penang



Kedah (Langkawi)

Each of these locations possesses its own unique charm, offering distinct atmospheres, vibes, and lifestyles. Digital nomads who prefer a vibrant city life will undoubtedly be enamored with Kuala Lumpur. The bustling metropolis is adorned with iconic landmarks like the renowned KLCC, a plethora of shopping malls, and numerous dining establishments. Here, they can savor not only local cuisine but also indulge in Japanese, Korean, Middle Eastern, and various other international delicacies.

If they prefer the tranquil countryside, they might be interested in Langkawi, a very popular beach destination situated in Kedah, a state nicknamed the "rice bowl of Malaysia" due to the vast paddy plantations in the area. Shopaholics would love this duty-free zone island, and they can also enjoy the picturesque view of the first UNESCO Geopark in Southeast Asia.

History and architecture enthusiasts may not want to miss the opportunity to stay in Malacca city, which was officially declared a historical city on 15 April 1989, by the then Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, and was awarded the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation nearly 20 years later. Penang's capital city, Georgetown, has also received the same award. Digital nomads would be thrilled to be surrounded by amazing buildings/structures in Georgetown, some of which were built as early as the 18th century and are still well preserved. On the other hand, the buildings/structures in Malacca are much older, dating back to the 15th century.

Comparisons with other digital nomad destinations

Approximately one (1) month before Malaysia launched the DE Rantau Programme, its neighbouring country, Thailand, introduced the **Long-Term Resident visa**.

This visa is valid for ten (10) years and is not limited to digital nomads but is available to four (4) categories of persons:

- high-income foreign individuals,
- foreign retirees,
- foreigners intending to work remotely from Thailand, and
- foreign professionals with special skills.

All categories require an annual income of at least USD80,000 (or USD40,000 per year if additional requirements are met), compared to Malaysia's DE Rantau Nomad Pass, which only requires a salary of USD24,000 per year.

For foreigners intending to work remotely from Thailand, their current employer must be a public company listed on the stock exchange or a private company that has been operational for at least three (3) years with a combined revenue of at least USD150 million in the past three (3) years.

The requirements for Thailand's Long-Term Resident visa are more stringent, and the application fee is significantly higher compared to Malaysia's DE Rantau Nomad Pass. Although Thailand has reduced the application fee from THB100,000 (approximately RM13,200) to THB50,000 (approximately RM6,600), it is still considerably higher than the application fee for the DE Rantau Nomad Pass, which is only RM1,060 for the main applicant.

From the perspective of the digital nomads, who typically do not stay in one place for long periods, Malaysia's DE Rantau Nomad Pass appears to be a more favorable option than Thailand's Long-Term Resident visa.

The requirements are easier to fulfil, the fee is much lower, and the pass holder can stay in the country for up to 12 months, with the possibility of extending the pass for another 12 months.

Therefore, a DE Rantau Nomad Pass holder can stay in Malaysia for a total of up to 24 months.

Summary



Other neighboring countries such as Singapore and Indonesia have yet to introduce passes suitable for digital nomads. Malaysia has instead thrown its doors wide open. With a low minimum salary requirement of only USD24,000 per year, affordable cost of living, a peaceful and beautiful environment, diverse and delicious food, and friendly people who mostly can communicate in English, Malaysia is a highly attractive destination for digital nomads.

The Malaysian Government welcomes digital nomads to embark on a journey of discovery, adventure, and professional growth in Malaysia. Enjoy the work-life balance and the facilities provided while working remotely.

Contact our Crowe Immigration team today to learn more and begin your exciting new chapter in this remarkable country.



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