

Guide to Brunei Darussalam

GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE & TIME ZONE

Climate

Hot and wet climate year round, characterized by temperatures ranging between 23 to 32 degrees Celsius, and an average annual rainfall of 320 cm. Rainfall occurs throughout the year, but is at the heaviest between September and January. Average humidity is 79%.

Location

Located on the northern shore of the Island of Borneo, between longitudes 114°04' and 114°23' East and latitudes 4°00' and 5°05' North. Brunei, although occupying less than 1% of Borneo's land area, is the only sovereign country on the island, which it shares with the Indonesian provinces of West, East, South and Central Kalimantan and the Malaysian states of Sabah and Sarawak.

Land Area

5,765 sq. km.

Population

415,717 (July 2013 est.)

Capital City

Bandar Seri Begawan

Bounded on all sides by the Malaysian state of Sarawak, except for a 161 km long stretch of coastline along the South China Sea to the north.

Administrative Divisions

4 Districts: Brunei-Muara (housing the capital city), Tutong, Belait, and Temburong

Country Dialing Code

673

Time Zone

GMT/UTC +8

Electricity

220 – 240V 50Hz

BRUNEI CULTURAL HERITAGE & HISTORY

Head of State

His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu'izzaddin Waddaulah Ibni Al-Marhum Sultan Haji Omar 'Ali Saifuddien Sa'adul Khairi Waddien, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam. His Majesty is the 29th ruler of his line.

National Philosophy

Since gaining independence from the British in 1984, Brunei has adopted the national philosophy of the Malay Islamic Monarchy (Melayu Islam Beraja), a system that encompasses strong Malay cultural influences, stressing the importance of Islam in daily life and governance, and respect for the monarchy as represented by His Majesty The Sultan. It is a philosophy of tolerance, which allows other cultures to follow individual traditions and to practice other religions.

Religions

Islam (official): 67%; Buddhism: 13%; Christianity: 10%; indigenous beliefs and other: 10%

Language

Bahasa Melayu (Malay) is the official language, but English is widely spoken. Mandarin, Chinese dialects and native languages of Borneo are also spoken by segments of the population.

Ethnic Groups

Malay: 67%; Chinese: 15%, indigenous tribes: 6%; other: 12%

CUSTOM AND COURTESY

Bruneians are generally very tolerant and will understand that visitors are not familiar with all of our customs and Islamic traditions. Nonetheless, keeping these few things in mind will go far in showing the Bruneian people that you respect and appreciate our culture:

- Tourists should observe the local dress code and dress modestly. Clothing comfortable for hot weather is acceptable, except when visiting places of worship or for social and business functions.
- Bruneians shake hands by lightly touching the hands and then bringing the hand to the chest. Please bear in mind, some people do not to shake hands with members of the opposite sex.
- You should not point with your index finger; instead, use the thumb of your right hand with the four fingers folded beneath it.
- When visiting a mosque, all visitors should remove their shoes. Women should cover their heads and not have their knees or arms exposed. You should not pass in front of a person in prayer or touch the Koran.
- Gifts (particularly food) should only be passed with the right hand, although it is acceptable to use the left hand to support the right wrist.
- It is polite to accept even just a little food and drink when offered. When refusing anything offered, it is polite to touch the plate lightly with the right hand.
- During the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan, Muslims do not take food from sunrise to sundown. It would be inconsiderate to eat or drink in their presence during this period.
- In deference to the Muslim majority, alcohol is not sold in Brunei, but private consumption by non-Muslims is allowed. Non-Muslim tourists are allowed a generous duty-free allowance of 2 bottles of alcohol (wine, spirits, etc) and 12 cans of beer per entry, and may consume alcohol with sensible discretion in hotels and some restaurants.

HEALTH

Health, Safety & Security

Brunei is free from malaria and other tropical diseases, is outside the typhoon belt, has no volcanoes, and is not prone to earthquakes or other major natural disasters. The country also enjoys government stability and economic prosperity, resulting in a very low crime rate.

There are two main hospitals in the vicinity of the capital. The Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Saleha (RIPAS) Hospital is the national hospital of Brunei and is equipped with highly modern medical facilities. Jerudong Park Medical Centre (JPMC) is a private hospital situated in the scenic Jerudong Park area. There are also a number of private clinics in all 4 districts of Brunei.

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TRANSPORTATION



Many of Brunei's attractions lie within walking distance of each other in the heart of the capital city, Bandar Seri Begawan. The airport is about 11km from the capital. A comprehensive public bus system serves the capital and other destinations. Driving around Brunei is similar to the UK – on the right side of the road.

Taxis

There are no metered taxis in Brunei. Taxis are available at most hotels, shopping centres and the airport. In the capital, taxis are located at the Jalan Cator car park. It is advisable to prearrange your taxi rides by contacting the following numbers:-

DISTRICT	NUMBER
Bandar Seri Begawan	673 2222214 / 2226853
Kuala Belait	673 3334581
Seria	673 3222020 / 3222155
Airport Taxi Service	673 2343671

You can also book a ride through Dart, the Brunei equivalent of Uber. Please visit www.dartbrunei.com for more information

Car Rentals

Self-drive or chauffeur-driven cars are available for hire from major hotels and the airport.

NAME	CONTACT NUMBER
Avis Rent-A-Car	(673) 2426345 / 2442284 / 2446380
Avis Branch - Radisson Hotel	(673) 2227100
Azizah Car Rental	(673) 2229388 / 7859888 / 8818880
Booklink	(673) 2446380
Budget-U-Drive	(673) 2345573 / 2345574
Ellis and Sukma Car Rental	(673) 2427238 / 2423777 / 8750285
Hani Car Rental	(673) 2611666 / 8837845
Hertz Rent-A-Car	(673) 2452244
L&W Automobile Rental & Services Sdn Bhd	(673) 8752783
Qawi Enterprise (Rent-A-Car)	(673) 2655550 / 2655551 / 2655552
Sabli Development & Eng. Co.	(673) 2391122 / 8779421

Buses

There are six bus routes serving Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB) area and Brunei Muara District - the Central Line, Circle Line, Eastern Line, Northern Line, Western Line and Southern Line. They usually operate from 6.30am - 7.00pm. Fares start from B\$1.00.

Buses to other major towns such as Tutong, Seria and Kuala Belait depart from the bus terminal located at the Jalan Cator car park in downtown Bandar.

MONEY AND TAXES

Banking

There is a good range of international banks in Brunei, all of which offer standard facilities such as current, deposit and savings accounts, ATM facilities, chequebooks, credit cards and loans. Some ATMs offer global access too, so you can withdraw money from your foreign accounts.

List of Banks in Brunei:

SCB <https://www.sc.com/bn/en/>

UOB

RHB Bank <http://www.rhb.com.my/branches/brunei/>

Maybank

BIBD <http://www.bibd.com.bn/>

Baiduri Bank <http://www.baiduri.com.bn/>

TAIB <http://www.taib.com.bn/>

The Brunei dollar is on a par with the Singapore dollar, which is also accepted in Brunei.

Major credit cards such as Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted in Brunei. Brunei is an income tax free country.

FOOD, SHOPPING & EVENTS

Food



For the adventurous, the food stalls offer Malay favourites, such as satay (barbecued meat on a skewer) and local dishes prepared with curry or coconut milk. Chinese, European and Indian cuisines are also widely available. Majority of eateries serve halal food. Alcohols are not sold in eateries in the country.

Shopping

Department stores and shops offer goods ranging from cosmetics and stereos to local handicrafts such as the keris (an ornamental dagger), miniature brass cannons, and kain tenunan, a cloth woven with gold and silver threads.

Two largest supermarkets are Hua Ho Department Stores and SupaSave where you can find variety of imported goods from the UK and Australia.

Main shopping malls in the Capital are The Mall Gadong, Times Square, The Airport Mall, Citis Square and Kiulap Mall.

On Friday, all businesses are closed from 1200hrs to 1400hrs for Friday prayers. During the fasting month of Ramadhan, restaurants serve only take-outs during the daytime and begin serving dine-in guests from the breaking of fast.

FESTIVAL AND CELEBRATIONS

National Day (23rd February), Hari Raya (the end of the Muslim fasting month) and His Majesty the Sultan's birthday (15th July). Other public holidays include Chinese Lunar New Year and Christmas.

SPORTS & OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Brunei offers many exciting and adventurous outdoor activities such as forest trekking, diving, sailing, hiking, golf, archery, paintball, ATV tours and many more. For more information, please visit <http://www.bruneitourism.travel/>

The Royal Brunei Yacht Club is widely visited by expatriates living in Brunei as it offers many water sport activities and events for families. For more information, please visit www.royalbruneiyachtclub.com.

Stretching the full length of Brunei's coastline is a pristine, sun-drenched ribbon of sand caressed by the South China Sea. More popular public open beaches include Muara beach, Serasa beach, Jerudong beach, Meragang beach and Seri Kenangan beach.

MEDIA AND COMMUNICATIONS

Radio Television Brunei has nightly news bulletins and a range of popular entertainment in both English and Malay. Cable network and Malaysian television programmes can also be received. There are three local daily newspapers namely: The Borneo Bulletin (English), The Brunei Times (English), Pelita Brunei (Malay) and Media Permata (Malay). Other regional and international publications are also available at newsstands.

TelBru is the premier telecommunications company in Brunei Darussalam, a leading service provider for Fixed Line, and Internet and Broadband services, along with providing leased lines and data services. TelBru plays an integral part in the ICT eco-system of Brunei Darussalam by providing a comprehensive range of products and services in the quadruple-play space. For information, please visit <http://www.telbru.com.bn>

DST Communications Sdn Bhd (DST) which provides the country's mobile services for 2G, 2.5G and 3.5G in providing Mobile Broadband on HSPA Broadband network capable of supporting download speeds of up to 14.4 Mbps. For information on rates, please visit www.dst-group.com

Progresif Cellular Sdn Bhd (PCSB) is a new entrant in Brunei's mobile telecommunications industry, offering mobile and broadband services to its customers over a 3G network. For information on rates, please visit www.progresifcellular.com.bn