

WORK + HOLIDAY = LONGER GETAWAY

The two best working holiday visas for Malaysians

TEY'S YEAR-LONG AUSTRALIAN ADVENTURE

BY Alexis Lee

At 30, Tey Kher Ying is already a veteran globetrotter. Her travels around the world started eight years ago when she was 22 and fresh out of university. To date, Tey has visited 66 locations and she managed to do it on a budget. She took her first trip with only US\$400 in her wallet.

Tey tells *#edGY* that the best way to travel for a long time and keep costs manageable is to score a working holiday visa. This enabled her to work temporarily to supplement her funds while she explored a country. Having a part-time job while travelling also helped her build up funds for her next trip.

The first working holiday she took was to the UK in 2008 while the working holiday scheme was still available to Malaysians. A few years later, she decided that she would do the same in Australia.

She knew that exploring Australia wasn't going to be cheap due to the strong Australian dollar. But if she could find work, she could make her holiday worthwhile.

"Minimum wages offered in Australia are decent. I knew I could save up enough to travel around," says Tey. But her first challenge was to get through the application process.

Take the application seriously, be kiasu

Tey applied for the Australian working holiday visa in July 2012. At the time, the process was slightly more daunting as visa applicants had to queue up for hours outside the Australian High Commission's Kuala Lumpur office once applications opened.

Tey and other hopeful young Malaysians started queuing up as early as 11pm the night before and the line grew longer as morning approached.

"We felt like refugees camping outside the Australian High Commission's office in order to secure a number," she jokes, "Some people say it's easier getting into Harvard than getting this visa."

In fact, it was so competitive that almost all the 100 spots were filled by 3am, Tey says. Latecomers who showed up after 7am were turned away.

But the process was changed — some say for the better — last year. Applicants are now required to make an appointment online or by telephone.

The first 100 applicants that get an appointment can then lodge their applications at the Australian Visa Application Centre at Jalan Ampang, Kuala Lumpur. No online or postal application can be lodged as biometric check is a requirement for the visa.

Tey notes that an element of "kiasuness"

helps to ensure that applicants are constantly updating themselves with the latest information and requirements.

She also advises applicants to prepare all the relevant documents well in advance, especially the Certificate of Good Conduct from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which can take several weeks to obtain.

"If you are among the first 100 who have prepared all the required documents and fulfilled all the stipulated qualifications, a working holiday visa is almost guaranteed," says Tey.

Getting a job

For Tey, the opportunity to experience life in Australia was certainly worth the hassle of the application process.

When she arrived in Melbourne in August, one of the first things she did was to get a job via a website called gumtree.com.au, which she also recommends for getting good deals, cheap accommodation and second-hand items.

She secured a job as a barista in a pizzeria. For many students and backpackers, jobs in the food and beverage industry are a good starting point. They can offer decent pay and casual hours, and may even throw in a free meal or two. Tey eventually got two other casual jobs, one at a Greek fusion restaurant and another café on the weekend. Her average wage was A\$18 per hour.

Tey says cafés and restaurants prefer to hire people with prior experience, especially with knowledge of coffee, or the Responsible Service of Alcohol certificate in order to work at establishments that serve alcoholic beverages.

When she started work, she did not have experience operating a coffee machine but she was lucky to have found an employer who sent her for barista training.

Apart from skills and certification, Tey says having the right attitude goes a long way.

"Take the initiative and walk into any bar or restaurant with your résumé. Be prepared to do hard work, always be friendly and you'll be rewarded."

What else to do

Apart from F&B work, Tey says working holiday visa holders can also look for jobs at popular tourist destinations outside the city centre. Work spots can double as holiday destinations. Some tourist favourites in Australia include Byron Bay, Cairns, Whitsunday Islands, Airlie Beach and Ayers Rock.

Getting a casual job is easy but Tey cautions against getting permanent office-bound jobs since the primary purpose of the visa is for travel. One of the visa's conditions is that the visa holder must not remain in the same job for more than six months.

Ultimately, what matter most on a prolonged holiday are the experiences you take away with you.

"There are so many places to see and things to do in Australia. I suggest that you try them all. Swim with whale sharks, dive in the Great Barrier Reef,

many countries offer young citizens of other countries the opportunity to stay for a short-term working holiday. There are various visa arrangements but these typically depend on the bilateral arrangements between the countries.

The reality is that many of these options are not available to Malaysians. In the past, a popular choice for them was to go on a working holiday to the UK. This option is no longer available.

At the moment, the two best working holiday visas for young Malaysians are those from Australia and New Zealand. The visa application process is fairly straightforward and convenient.

#edGY recently spoke to two girls who went on a long holiday in the southern hemisphere. Globetrotter Tey Kher Ying spent almost a year in Australia while working in cafés to supplement her travel funds while professional photographer Naomi Aw stayed in New Zealand for almost six months. They share the sights and sounds from their extended holidays, but more importantly, how they applied for the visas and what they did when they got there. ■

hike in Tasmania, camp in the Great Outback, go surfing, try strange foods, taste fine wine, the list goes on."

Tey did many things that were out of her comfort zone during her time in Australia. Some of it helped her stretch her travel money. She backpacked, hitchhiked, dumpster dived and couch surfed throughout her stay.

To be sure, she is not advocating a totally shoe-string lifestyle during the holiday in Australia but she believes it is possible to significantly reduce travel expenditure by cooking most of your own meals, getting around on a second-hand bike and couch surfing whenever possible.

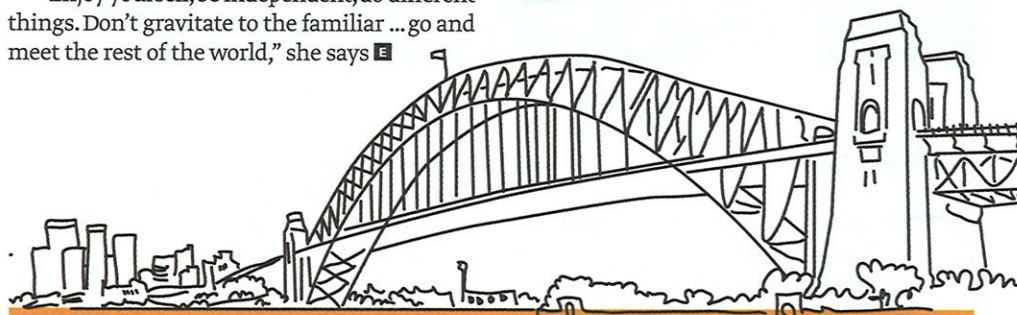
She and her friends even managed to furnish their shared flat by collecting unwanted furniture left on people's front lawns.

If Tey had chosen to stay put in Malaysia, she might never have experienced all that or met new friends along the way in her year in Australia.

"Enjoy yourself, be independent, do different things. Don't gravitate to the familiar ... go and meet the rest of the world," she says ■



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AUSTRALIA

Work and holiday visa (subclass 462)

Who can apply?

This visa is for you if you are a Malaysian between the ages of 18 and 30 at the time of application. You must demonstrate fluency in English and meet the character and health requirements. Apart from that, you must have finished at least two years of undergraduate university study or hold a tertiary qualification. If you have held this visa before, you cannot apply for it again.

How long can I stay in Australia?

Having this visa allows you to be in Australia for up to 12 months. During this time, visa holders can enter and exit Australia multiple times. While you are in Australia, you may work a maximum of six months with each employer and undertake up to four months of study.

How much money do I need?

The visa application fee is A\$420 (around RM1,200) and can be paid via cash or bank draft. You'll need to show a bank statement with about A\$5,000 balance to prove that you have the funds to sustain yourself in Australia. You'll also have to show that you can afford to buy a ticket out of Australia once your visa runs out.

When can I apply?

Appointments to lodge a work and holiday visa

application will be available sometime in July. Last year, appointments opened on July 22. Check out the Australian High Commission's website for up-to-date details. Every year, only 100 working holiday visas are awarded to Malaysians. So, get a head start on preparing your application.

Where do I go to apply?

Applicants have to make an appointment, either by phone or online, to lodge their applications at VFS Global at Wisma MCA on Jalan Ampang. Once you secure an appointment, you'll have to show up in person to submit your completed Visa Application Form 1208 (available online) along with supporting documentation. Biometric checks are conducted.

What else?

Pay attention to the full list of documentation you'll need to support your application. Prepare the required paperwork ahead of time. You should also obtain a Certificate of Good Conduct from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in advance. Remember to check out medical insurance options and apply online for an Australian tax file number before your trip.

Check out the full list of requirements at www.immi.gov.au and look for information relating to the visa subclass 462.



Tey and her friend travelled around Australia in a van that was equipped with a kitchen