

DIFFERENT TRAVEL – BORNEO

BORNEO (MALAYSIA)

Borneo is the third largest island in the world and also the world's third highest as the highest point on the island, Mount Kinabalu, is 4,095 metres above sea level. Administratively the island is divided between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Indonesian Borneo is called Kalimantan, Malaysia's region of Borneo is called East Malaysia or Malaysian Borneo. Borneo is rich in biodiversity with about 15,000 species of flowering plants, 300 species of trees, 221 species of mammals and 420 species of resident birds. The Borneo rainforest is the only remaining natural habitat of the endangered Bornean Orang Utan. It is also an important refuge for the Asian Elephant, the Sumatran Rhinoceros and the Bornean Clouded Leopard. Historically the island had extensive rainforest cover but much of this has been decimated due to heavy logging for the needs of the Malaysian plywood industry. What's more, palm oil plantations are rapidly encroaching on the last remnants of primary rainforest. Malaysian Borneo is divided into two states, Sabah and Sarawak. We will be spending our time in the state of Sabah.

Sabah is known as the 'Land below the Wind' and once out of the capital, Kota Kinabalu, much of the state remains forested. Sabah is situated at the northeast corner of Borneo, below the typhoon belt in East Malaysia. Most visitors to Sabah are lured by the natural splendour of the state and the unique experience of its national parks. The rugged landscape is perfect for outdoor enthusiasts with some of the highest mountains in Malaysia to climb, and one of the richest and least spoilt underwater ecosystems in the world to dive in. Other extreme sports like paragliding and skydiving are adding to Sabah's growing reputation as an adventure destination.

Itinerary

Day 1 London – Kota Kinabalu

Fly from London to Kota Kinabalu.

Day 2 Kota Kinabalu

Arrive in Kota Kinabalu and transfer to your hotel.

KOTA KINABALU

Kota Kinabalu is a vibrant city on Sabah's west coast. Located in the South China Sea it's a bustling city with a mixed population. Once known as Jesselton when Sabah was British North Borneo, it was mostly rebuilt after World War II. The Sabah Museum is built in the longhouse style of the Rungus and Murut communities, it showcases a wealth of ethnic treasures and handicrafts. The Sabah Tourism Building is one of only three buildings in Kota Kinabalu to have survived World War II. Other attractions in the city include the State Mosque, Museum of Islamic Civilisation, Atkinson Clock Tower and Signal Hill.

Day 3 Kota Kinabalu

This morning enjoy a guided sightseeing tour of the city and a visit to the Heritage Village. The visit to the Heritage Village & museum will give you a closer view of Sabah's ethnic diversity highlighted by the unique local architectural styles of homes in North Borneo and the colourful costume display. After time spent here continue on a city drive taking in major landmarks such as the State & City Mosque, Tg. Aru Beach & the highest building, Tun

Mustapha Tower. Enjoy some free time mingling with the local people at the Handicraft market. The afternoon is free for more sightseeing or relaxing. (B)

Day 4 Kota Kinabalu Park

The jagged granite peaks of Mount Kinabalu (4095m) tower above one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world. Nominated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site, Kinabalu Park is a natural wonder that offers visitors a glimpse into the fascinating, and often unique, world of flora within the park. Trek through the rainforest and witness life in the treetops as you walk along the 100ft high Canopy Walkway (*If closed, it will be replaced with a visit to the Tropical Gardens*). (BL)

Day 5 Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park

A relaxing day of sun, sea and sand. Take a 15-minute boat ride to the Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park for a day of some serious relaxation. Swim or snorkel in the blue South China Sea. Or just settle down with a good book. (B)

Day 6 Kota Kinabalu – Sukau

Take an early morning flight from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan, from where you will then be driven for approximately three hours to the village of Sukau, located in the lower Kinabatangan, along the Kinabatangan River. On arrival check-in to your accommodation and enjoy a briefing on Kinabatangan and the programme. In the evening, you will be given a slide show on the Orang Utan research, conservation, community involvement and overview of the Kinabatangan ecology. As you will be living in the village, you have all the time to get involved in the local activities such as a game of volleyball or the traditional straw ball game called “sepak takraw” or even fishing along the river bank. (BLD)

SUKAU

Sukau has Malaysia's greatest wildlife concentration. Prolific bird species and animals such as Orang Utans, crocodiles and proboscis monkeys live along the riverine wetlands.

Days 7 - 10 Orang Utan Research Centre

Each day starts early as you set off at 7.30am for the Orang Utan research centre. During these four days there will also be time to go fishing with the locals, take an early morning cruise on the Oxbow lake alongside the Kinabatangan River for a spot of bird watching and enjoy an afternoon and night cruise on the river to spot wild animals even maybe an Orang Utan, and enjoy a cultural performance of the ‘Orang Sungai’ (meaning ‘River People’).(BLD)

Day 11 Sukau – Kota Kinabalu

We leave early this morning for Sandakan, making a visit to the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre en route. The centre is an initiative of the Sabah Wildlife Department to rehabilitate and train young Orang Utans to survive again in the wild. From Sandakan we fly back to Kota Kinabalu and transfer to your overnight hotel. (BL)

Day 12 Kota Kinabalu

A day at leisure in this fascinating city. (B)

Day 13 Kota Kinabalu – London

Fly from Kota Kinabalu back to London. (B)

THE PROJECT

One of the largest Orang-utan populations in Malaysia is found in the lower Kinabatangan, a floodplain with diverse flora and fauna. The Kinabatangan river is also Sabah 's longest river. Palm oil plantations have reduced much of the wildlife habitat; paradoxically, this has resulted in wildlife being concentrated in a small area (which is now protected as a reserve). Other rare animals include the magnificent Banteng (wild cattle) and clouded leopard; recently there was even a footprint of the very rare Asian two-horned rhinoceros. Other endemic primates found here are the proboscis monkeys and the Bornean gibbons. Mammals such as the Asian Elephants are also inhabitants of the floodplain. Bird life is enormous, with a record of about two hundred species of bird. The most commonly spotted are hornbills and kingfishers. Water birds such as Oriental Darters and Storm's Storks can be seen near the lakes. When the tide is low, Estuarine Crocodiles are seen resting still under the sun along the sand bank. Cruising along the river early in the morning or late afternoon is a wonderful opportunity to spot birds and other wildlife.

The Orang-Utan Conservation Project was set up in 1998 by HUTAN, a French NGO conducting an Orang-Utan research and conservation project in the Kinabatangan, in collaboration with the Sabah Wildlife Department. Its goal is to achieve long-term viability of Orang-utan populations in Sabah.

The project's objective is to restore harmonious relationships between people and the Orang-utan, which in turn will support local socio-economic development compatible with habitat and wildlife conservation.

The project is managed by a core team of villagers. They have been intensively trained as research assistants and nature guides by HUTAN. Today, the project consists of a highly motivated team of 35 trained staff from the Kinabatangan community, who will ensure that the initiative continues to protect their heritage.

Tourism benefits are directly channelled back into the communities as guides, research assistants, boatmen and homestay owners are all locals from the village. Thus the villagers feel they have an economic stake in their own environment. Community funds for tourism and conservation were also created to support education and the protection of wildlife and habitat. Hence, there is a positive and ongoing relationship between tourism, conservation and community.

The number of visitors allowed into the study site on any one day is restricted, and only homestay visitors may enter the study site. You will be accompanied by experienced research assistants into a protected area that is also Malaysia's only in-situ orang-utan research site. It is important to remember that the orang-utans along the Kinabatangan are wild and have never been in any physical contact with humans. About 20 orang-utans live in the 4 sq km study site, so the chances of seeing an ape are good. (It is estimated that over 1,000 orang-utans inhabit the Lower Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary of which this is part). Dividing into 2 groups, the first group will proceed to the study site to look for Orang-Utans while the second group will proceed to collect wild seedlings from the tree species that form part of the Orang Utan diet. These seedlings are collected for germination and tree planting purposes. You will see how research is done - from data collection to analysis of biological, ecological and ethological surveys. The group will take it in turns to do each part of the programme.

AN A-Z OF INFORMATION ON MALAYSIA

A is for Arrival. To enter Malaysia only a valid passport is required. Please ensure that your passport has a minimum validity of six months. No visas are required for UK citizens unless you plan to stay more than ninety days.

C is for Communications. The International dialing code for Malaysia is +60. Malaysia is linked nationally and internationally by telephone, fax and via internet. Most hotels provide International Direct Dial telephone services, but are expensive. In cities and towns public phones are available in bus stations and shopping complexes, using coins or phone cards. Phone cards come in denominations of RM5, RM10, RM20, RM50 and are available at newsstands and petrol stations. Mobile networks cover most of the country; the local mobile phone operators use GSM networks, which are compatible with most international phones. Internet cafes are widely available in tourist areas.

C is also for Customs. Malaysia is largely Muslim and therefore Islamic customs should be respected, especially during the month of Ramadan when eating, drinking and smoking in public should be avoided, as it is forbidden by Islamic law. Dress, particularly for women, should be conservative, and arms and legs should be covered when visiting places of worship. It is customary to remove shoes before entering homes and places of worship. When eating or exchanging money the right hand is used. Homosexuality is illegal. Public behaviour is important in Malaysian culture, most Malaysians refrain from displaying affection (ie embracing or kissing) in public. It would be appropriate for visitors to do the same.

D is for Departure Tax. There is a departure tax payable of 45RM (correct at time of writing).

E is for Expenses. Allow money for personal items other than accommodation such as meals, guide and entrance fees, laundry, drinks, personal spending money, personal equipment, souvenirs and tips.

E is also for Electricity. Voltage is 220 volts, 50Hz. UK-style 3-pin plugs are used.

F is for Food. Natural, home-grown ingredients figure prominently in Malay food. Coconut, chilli, lemon grass, lime leaves, spices and turmeric are basic ingredients cooked with fish, meat and vegetables. Malaysia's signature dish is *satay*, consisting of skewers of thick, succulent marinated meat barbecued over charcoal fire and served with peanut dip. In Sarawak, Borneo, rice and meat are placed in hollow bamboo tubes and cooked over a fire while in Sabah pickled dishes are a local speciality. Popular local dishes include *roti canai*, a light crispy pancake made from wheat flour and cooked on a griddle. Try it with a cup of *teh tarik* – tea pulled from one mug to another to give it a smoother flavour. Malaysia also has a great variety of tropical fruits, some are seasonal whereas others are available throughout the year. *Mangosteen* is loved for its sweet, juicy white flesh while the adventurous should try the *durian*, controversial for its smell but loved by the locals.

H is for Health. You should seek medical advice before travelling and ensure that all appropriate vaccinations are up to date. For further information on health, check the Department of Health's website at www.dh.gov.uk. No inoculations are required for entry. Please note that there is an all-year round risk of malaria in Sabah.

H is also for Homestay. All the homes are located close to shops, public phones and the main village. Facilities in each home are simple. Most homes have a huge living room adjacent to a dining area. The toilet and wash room is often connected to the kitchen. The kitchen is where the family spends a lot of its time. There are individual guest rooms ready with beds, bedding and furniture. Rooms are available for single, twin and triple occupancy. Guests share a common bathroom with proper sanitation and, upon request, hot water for bathing is available. Visitors usually take baths with a bucket of water and dipper in the same area where the toilet is located. Guests can take as many baths as desired due to the hot and humid weather. Electricity is only available for a few hours a day. Generators are used in some homes for 24 hour electricity supply. Otherwise, traditional lamps are used to light the house at night.

Meals are served in traditional Malay style. Vegetarians can be catered for with prior notice. Food is generally classed as "excellent" and is as authentic as you can get as visitors eat the same food that the family eats. The families aim to please their guests and will try to work out their food preferences by observing what their guests eat and don't eat. Families also rely on past experiences, steering clear of certain dishes, in particular ones that are very spicy. Coffee, tea and drinking water are available throughout the day. Alcohol is not available as this is a Muslim community.

Language barriers are obvious but visitors will soon learn words like Makan (eat), Minum (drink), Mandi (bathe), Terima kasih (thank you), and Sama sama (you're welcome). Most people in Sukau know basic English but may be too shy to use it. Although the language difference can be challenging it can also be fun and will certainly be a learning experience!

I is for Insurance. Different Travel will do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, certain risks are involved and should be recognised by participants. Thus, we highly recommend the purchase of short-term travel insurance for our expeditions. Travel Insurance is a cost effective way to protect yourself and your equipment in the event of problems due to cancelled trips, delays, medical problems, baggage loss or damage.

L is for Language. B

ahasa Melayu (Malay) is the national language but English is widely spoken. The ethnic groups also speak various languages and dialects including Cantonese, Hokkien, Mandarin, Tamil and Hindi. Here are a few useful words and phrases in Malay:

- Selamat pagi Good morning
- Selamat petang Good evening
- Selamat tinggal Good-bye
- Terima Kasih Thank you
- Berapa harga ini? How much is that?
- Maafkan saya Excuse me

Makanan Food
Ayam Chicken
Daging Meat
Sayur Vegetables
Ikan Fish
Nasi putih White rice
Minuman Drink
Satu One
Dua Two
Tiga Three
Empat Four
Lima Five

M is for Money. The Malaysian currency is normally referred to as the Ringgit or RM. The RM comes in denominations of RM1, RM2, RM5, RM10, RM50 and RM100. Coins are denoted as sen. These include 1 sen, 5 sen, 10 sen, 20 sen, 50 sen and RM1. Travellers are advised to take a combination of traveller's cheques, cash and credit cards. Credit cards are widely used in larger shopping establishments and hotels. Smaller establishments accept transactions in cash only. Foreign currency can be exchanged in banks, airports and money changers around the country. Banking hours are from 9.30am to 4.00pm on weekdays and 9.00am to 11.30am on Saturdays. All banks close on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of the month.

P is for Packing. Bring as little as possible but bring everything you need. Travelling light is much less of a hassle, so do not bring things you can do without. If you need to wear jewellery keep it simple and inexpensive. The general rule is that if you don't need it, don't bring it. Please carry medicines, camera, money, jewellery, passports and urgently needed items in your hand luggage. All other items can be packed in your main baggage to be unpacked at the hotel.

P is also for Personal Safety. Malaysia shares a threat from terrorism with the rest of South East Asia, including places frequented by Westerners. Visitors should be aware that street crime such as bag snatching, pick-pocketing and scams are a problem. It's always important to keep your belongings in a safe place, either in a money belt secured upon your person underneath your clothes or in the hotel safe.

R is for Religion. Islam is the official religion but other religions are practiced freely.

S is for Souvenirs. Batik from the east coast of the peninsula, carved masks from Borneo, Sarawakian cotton and Kelantanese *wayang kulit* puppets are all worth bringing home. Sabah is famed for its splendid souvenirs including beads, accessories and bamboo products. Prices are fixed in department stores but elsewhere bargaining is worth a try.

T is for Tipping. Tipping is not customary in Malaysia although most hotels and restaurants levy a 10% service charge and 5% government sales tax on bills. However, should you want to show your appreciation for good service, a small tip will do.

T is for Time Zone. GMT +8.

W is for Weather. Malaysia has a tropical, humid climate with warm weather all year round with an average temperature of 30C. The major change in seasons is marked by the arrival of the monsoons that bring heavy downpours on the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia, the northeastern part of Sabah and the western end of Sarawak (from November to February).

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