







... TRAVEL BLUEPRINT

# BORNEO

Shared by Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei, the tropical rainforest and remote rivers of this steamy South-East Asian island are home to orang-utans, hornbills and headhunting history. Tamara Thiessen beats a path through the jungle



**B**orneo – the very name evokes a place of remote jungle beauty, tropical adventure and tribal cultures.

Straddling the equator, Borneo – three times the size of the UK – is the world’s third-biggest island. Shaped by a history of seafaring migrations, tribal headhunting and colonialism, the island is divided between three nations: Malaysia, Brunei and Indonesia.

The two East Malaysian states, Sabah and Sarawak, lie in the north, surrounding the small, oil-rich Islamic Sultanate of Brunei, while the Indonesian state of Kalimantan occupies most of central and southern Borneo.

Recognised as a ‘biodiversity hotspot’, Borneo is home to half of all known plant and animal species. Many thrive in the diverse lowland tropical rainforests, home to orang-utan, plus the Sumatran rhino, the Bornean pygmy elephant and thousands of unique flowering plant species.

Like many paradises, it is under threat. Over the past century, up to

half of Borneo’s tropical rainforests have been lost, along with much of its precious flora and fauna, and traditional ways of life. Responsible tourism will play a vital role in conserving the nature and culture of the island, helping to create alternatives to resource-intensive industries – a good reason to visit now, to support and encourage sustainable ventures.

Inhabited by more than 200 indigenous tribes (collectively called Dayaks in Kalimantan and Sarawak) plus large populations of Chinese and Malay people, ethnicities are woven into the distinct landscapes like the colours of the local handicrafts. This rich tribal tapestry is one of the most distinguishing attributes of a Borneo voyage, to be lapped up at marketplaces and cultural shows, during longhouse stays and treks through remote highland villages.

Over half of Borneo is covered by marshy coastal wetlands, including mangroves and swamp forest; only 5% lies above 1,000m, culminating in Sabah’s Mount Kinabalu (4,095m) in Kinabalu National Park

## BORNEO VITAL STATISTICS

Region	Brunei	Kalimantan	Sabah & Sarawak
<b>Country</b>	Brunei	Indonesia	Malaysia
<b>Capital(s)</b>	Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB)	Pontianak (West); Samarinda (East); Palangka Raya (Central); Banjarmasin (South)	Kota Kinabalu (Sabah); Kuching (Sarawak)
<b>Population</b>	388,000	12 million	3 million (Sabah); 2 million (Sarawak)
<b>Language</b>	Bahasa Malaysia	Bahasa Indonesia	Bahasa Malaysia
<b>Time</b>	GMT+8	GMT+7 (West & Central); GMT+8 (South & East)	GMT+8
<b>International dialling code</b>	+673	+62	+60
<b>Currency</b>	Brunei dollar (B\$), B\$2.3 to the UK£	Rupiah (Rp), 16,600Rp to the UK£	Ringgit (RM), 5.8RM to the UK£

– a World Heritage-listed botanical and ornithological paradise with more than 300 bird species and 5,000 flowering plants. This colossal granite outcrop is sacred to the Kadazandusun tribe – it’s where souls come to rest, and climbers should make an offering to avoid offending the spirits.

While trekking is a great way to explore, rivers are still the only

means of access to some remote villages. This is a river-etched island: for example, between its 750km coastline and mountainous hinterland, Sarawak – the largest Malaysian state – has 55 major rivers, which form a navigable network of 3,300km. No visit to the island is complete without making a longboat trip upriver, towards the heart of Borneo. ➤

## Borneo Unmissables

**Kinabalu National Park, Sabah** Trek, bird-watch or plant-spot in this wildlife wonderland, or climb the namesake peak

**Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, Brunei** The perfect symbol of a sultry, swish sultanate. Built in 1958, the mosque is a lagoon-side magical apparition of stained glass, granite and marble

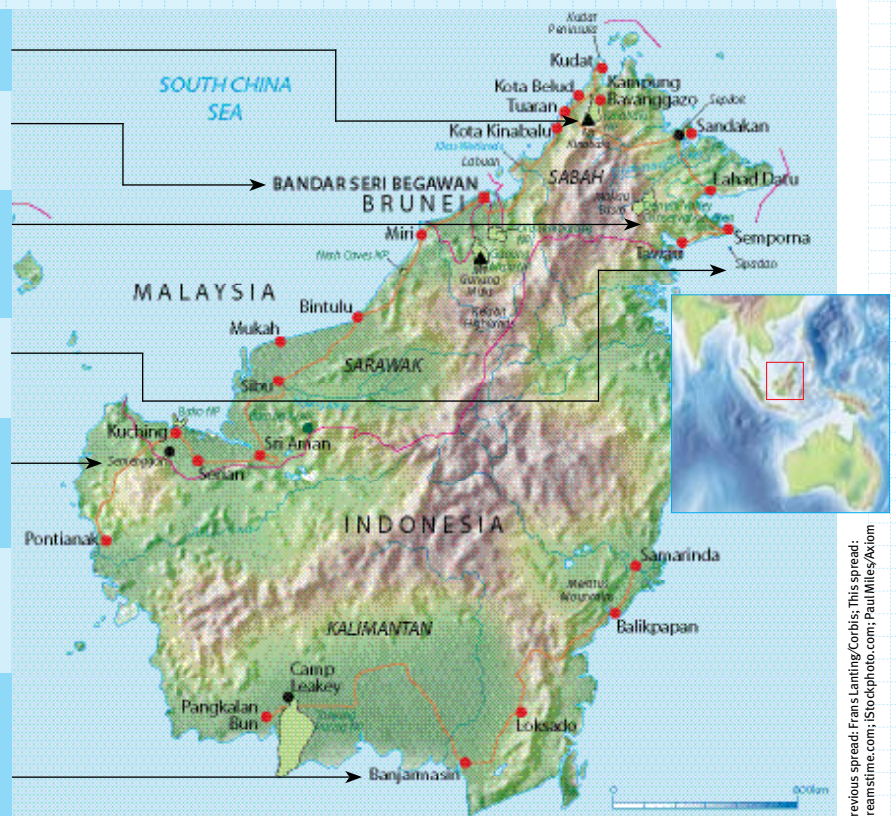
**Danum Valley Conservation Area, Sabah** One of Borneo’s last remaining primary tropical rainforests, its giant dipterocarp trees, creepers, fruit trees and palms provide a vital ecosystem for orang-utans, pygmy elephant, sun bears and more

**Sipadan, Sabah** Dive or snorkel with sea turtles, leopard sharks and scalloped hammerheads in the marine reserve of Pulau Sipadan, a small coral atoll rising 700m from the seabed

**Great ape gazing** The tropical rainforests of Borneo are home to 90% of the world’s orang-utan – the ‘man of the forest’. For easy viewing visit orang-utan rehabilitation centres, or explore wildlife reserves and national parks

**Rice Harvest Festivals** Witness the song, dance and shamanistic rituals of the May-June thanksgiving celebrations: the Tadau Ka’amatan (Sabah), the Pesta Gawai (Sarawak) and the Naik Dango (Kalimantan) mark the end of the harvest

**Floating market, Banjarmasin, Kalimantan** Take a *klotok* (longboat) to Pasar Kuin, a phenomenon of urban river life – hundreds of longboats, tugs and barges loaded with fruit and squirming sago worms gather to trade

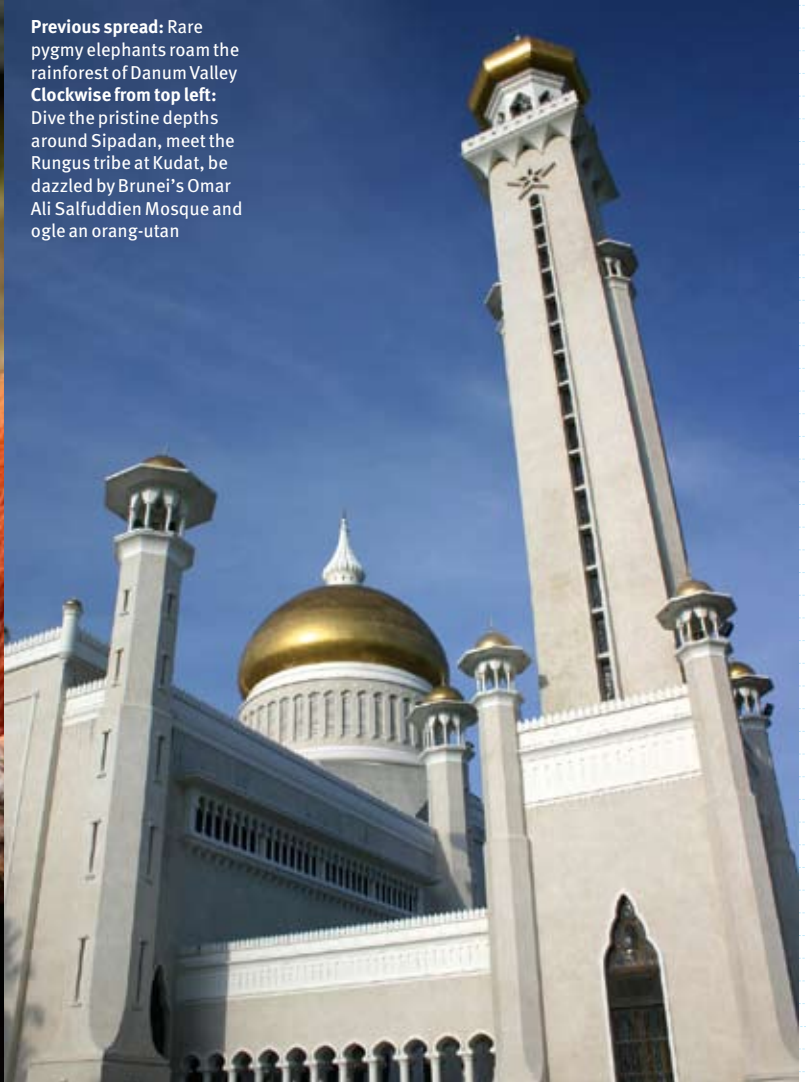


Previous spread: Frans Lanting/Corbis; This spread: Dreamstime.com; iStockphoto.com; Paul Willey/Axion





Previous spread: Rare pygmy elephants roam the rainforest of Danum Valley  
Clockwise from top left: Dive the pristine depths around Sipadan, meet the Rungus tribe at Kudat, be dazzled by Brunei's Omar Ali Salfuddien Mosque and ogle an orang-utan







From left: Mt Kinabalu is the highest point between the Himalaya and Papua New Guinea; experience traditional culture at a longhouse – deep inland, or near Kuching

## How to avoid a rice wine hangover

When you mingle with the locals in longhouse communities and villages expect to be plied with copious amounts of fermented rice wine – called *tuak* by the Iban in Sarawak and *lihing* among the Kadazandusun in Sabah.

Eat well before drinking – this is strong stuff. And if you can't face it, instead of saying 'no' or shaking your head at the suggestion of another round, it's more polite to touch your glass lightly with your right hand and decline with a smile.



## Exploring Sabah Highlands, islands & wildlife

**DURATION:** two weeks

Kota Kinabalu – Kinabalu NP – Sandakan – Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre – Kinabatangan River – Lahad Datu – Semporna – Sipadan

Spend a couple of days wallowing in the watery charm of Kota Kinabalu (KK). Don't miss the markets – fish, craft and *pasar malam* (night market) – held along the waterfront stretch of Jalan Tun Fuad Stephens; if your trip coincides, visit the Sunday market on Jalan Gaya. For the best city view climb Signal Hill; to escape altogether, take a speedboat out to the nearby islands of the Tunku Abdul Rahman NP.

Next, head to Kinabalu NP – the winding journey passes vegetable markets and craft stalls. The 17km-return Summit Trail to the top of Mount Kinabalu requires an overnight stay, permits and a guide; book well ahead. End the walk with a night at Poring Hot Springs, where rangers post alerts of any *Rafflesia* flowers in bloom. From one of the park lodges you can also spend two days soaking up the scenery on unguided walks; head to Park HQ for a map.

Return to KK for a flight to the coastal city of Sandakan: the views over the rickety water village and harbour, full of old-world fishing vessels, are ethereally beautiful. Head off to the afternoon feeding session at nearby Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre, then explore the sights of Sandakan by foot.

The next day head off with a local operator (try [www.borneocotours.com](http://www.borneocotours.com) or [www.sitoursborneo.com](http://www.sitoursborneo.com)) along the 560km-long Kinabatangan River – the trip into the mighty (yet blighted by forestry and oil palm plantations) interior along Malaysia's second-longest waterway is one of the most magical journeys in Borneo.

In the mangrove and freshwater swamp habitats of the Lower Kinabatangan Sanctuary you may come into close contact with orang-utans, proboscis monkeys, Bornean gibbons, pygmy elephants, Sumatran rhinos and pit vipers, plus a range of birds including eight types of hornbill, lesser fish eagles, stork-billed kingfishers and bulbuls.

After your river trip head south to Lahad Datu, gateway to some of the largest remaining areas of 'old growth' virgin rainforest including the Tabin Wildlife Reserve and the Danum Valley Conservation Area. Spend at least two days taking in the wildlife: Danum and the surrounding forests are home to 4,000 orang-utans (the world's largest population of the primate), yet there are serious concerns about encroachment on the 438 sq km reserve by logging 'concessions' and oil palm plantations. For a seriously rugged, though pricey, add-on adventure, head off to the Maliau Basin – a 'Lost World' of waterfalls, escarpments and wildlife.

Wind up in the Bajau sea gypsy territory of Semporna, springboard to great diving and snorkelling around Sipadan, Mabul, Kapalai and Matakang. You can stay on the islands or – a cheaper option – stay in town and make day trips.

### INSIDER TIP: Sir Peter Crane Botanist



"Be warned: clothes and camera gear never dry out here. The ubiquitous leeches take every opportunity to gorge themselves on any passing mammal – leech socks are a must."





## Borneo's best eco sleeps

- BORNEO RAINFOREST LODGE** (Danum Valley; [www.borneorainforestlodge.com](http://www.borneorainforestlodge.com)); three days from £400) Fan-cooled cabins with forest-view balconies
- SUKAU RAINFOREST LODGE** (Kinabatangan River; [www.sukau.com](http://www.sukau.com)); two days from £150) Solar-powered lodge with bird- and wildlife-viewing decks, a hornbill boardwalk and elephant passes
- SUTERA SANCTUARY LODGES** (Kinabalu NP; [www.suterasanctuarylodges.com.my](http://www.suterasanctuarylodges.com.my)); doubles at Mesilau from around £140) Varied accommodation options dot this magical setting, including secluded Mesilau Nature Resort
- PERMAI RAINFOREST RESORT** (Damai Beach; [www.permairainforest.com](http://www.permairainforest.com)) Stilted treehouses in the canopy
- ULU ULU RESORT** (Temburong NP; [www.ululuresort.com](http://www.ululuresort.com)); around £150 for a two days) River-facing, Malay-style villas in the heart of the park
- RIMBA ORANGUTAN ECOLOGE** (Tanjung Puting NP; [www.ecolodgesindonesia.com](http://www.ecolodgesindonesia.com)); rooms from around £40) Basic and friendly, with decent meals
- BORNEO SAMBOJA LODGE** (near Balikpapan; [www.sambojalodge.com](http://www.sambojalodge.com)); from around £33 pppn for volunteers) Run by the Borneo Orang-utan Survival Foundation, this place offers either a relaxing or a roll-up-your-sleeves-volunteer stay in regenerating rainforest

## Sabah, Brunei & Sarawak

Longhouses, temples & archaeological treasures

**DURATION:** ten days-two weeks

Kota Kinabalu (Sabah) – Tuaran – Kota Belud – Kampung Bavanggazo – Kudat – Tip of Borneo – Klias Wetlands – Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei) – Ulu Temburong NP – Miri (Sarawak) – Niah Caves NP

After a couple of nights in KK, travel north towards the longhouse settlements, rural towns and *tamu* (farmers' markets) of the Kudat Peninsula.

The KK-Kudat Highway passes mangrove swamps and water buffalo in rice paddies – stop at a roadside stall for some *kelapa* (coconut pudding) or detour to the riverside town of Tuaran (33km from KK) to buy excellent *martabak* (roti bread, filled and grilled) at its food stalls.

Kota Belud, 75km from KK, is home to the horse-loving Bajau tribe (the 'cowboys of the East'); its Sunday *tamu* is one of Sabah's oldest and most lively markets. Further north, stop at some of the Rungus villages (try Kampung Bavanggazo) for honey, handicrafts and cultural shows.

TYK Adventure Tours (<http://tykadventuretours.com>) will organise day or overnight visits to longhouses; alternatively, bed down in Kudat and eat excellent seafood at its inexpensive open-air *gerai makan* (food stalls). The next day take the 11km road through coconut palms to the Tip of Borneo –

this beach-skirted promontory at the island's northernmost end has amazing views.

Leave early the next morning for KK, and continue south to the sago-palm- and mangrove-flanked Klias Wetlands; stay at a lodge on the Klias River and paddle out to see the enigmatic proboscis monkey.

Catch the earliest boat from Menumbok to Labuan (speedboats for a quick, adrenalin-pumping journey; ferries for smooth, slow sailing), then the connecting boat to Brunei's capital, Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB), your base for two nights.

Head out immediately for a taste of the Sultanate's cultural and culinary kaleidoscope: the night views of the Istana Nurul Iman palace, golden mosques, the water village of Kampung Ayer and the flavours of the Gadong district night market. An overnight trip to Ulu Temburong NP combines thrilling river journeys with the 50m-high canopy walk, offering bird's-eye views over the heart of Borneo's jungle.

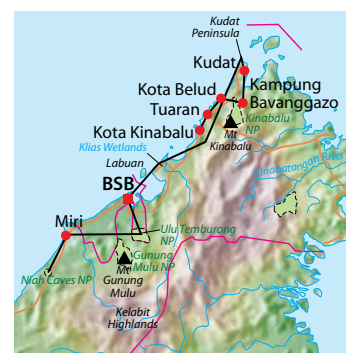
Next, head to Sarawak's lively old oil-capital-turned-resort-town, Miri, which has myriad hotel choices. After a day of relaxation, set out for the Painted and Great caves of Niah Caves NP – this archaeological site is a long yet comfortable day trip from Miri, with the choice of staying in the city of Bintulu or in park accommodation.

If you want to extend the itinerary, Miri is the departure point for the remarkable limestone caves of Gunung Mulu NP and longer trekking ventures into the Kelabit Highlands. >

### INSIDER TIP: Tham Yau Kong Founder, TYK Adventure



"There are great off-road cycling adventures in Sabah. People think it will be a piece of cake, when in fact the humidity and heat make it hell!"





Monkey business: Big noses, pot bellies, sunburned shoulders – no wonder female proboscis monkeys find their mates irresistible



## Land of the headhunter

Following bloody inter-tribal feuds, the ultimate trophies in these parts were the freshly collected heads of one's enemies – skinned, smoked and dried over a fire, then hung in the longhouse. The skulls were used to ward off evil spirits and misfortune, and to bring fruitful crops and favourable weather.

In Sarawak the brutal practice ended under 19th-century colonial rule but resumed during the Second World War, when some 1,500 Japanese noggins were lobbed off – prized for being 'nice, round heads with good hair and gold teeth'.

For insights into tribals ways, visit the Monsopiad Cultural Village ([www.monsopiad.com](http://www.monsopiad.com)) near KK, or the Sarawak Museum in Kuching and the Sarawak Cultural Village (35km from Kuching; [www.scv.com.my](http://www.scv.com.my)). Or try the Headhunters' Trail from Limbang to Gunung Mulu NP, Sarawak.

## Into tribal Sarawak

River journeys & tribal colours

**DURATION:** eight days

Kuching – Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre – Bako NP – Santubong Peninsula – Serian – Batang Ai NP – Sibiu – Mukah

With its airs of an old Chinese trading town, Kuching's beauty emanates from the banks of the Sarawak River. Spend two days here and use the *tambang* (covered wooden boats) to cross over and eat in the restaurants of the Malay *kampung* (village) by night. Or charter one to float down the river past the city's mosque – a perfect piece of Arabia on the Kuching skyline. Allow time to see the museums and colonial buildings, and shop for handicrafts along the waterfront Jalan Bazaar. One of Borneo's best places to see 'semi-wild' orang-utan is the Semenggoh Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, 32km south of the city.

North of Kuching, accessed by speedboat, are the mangroves, amphibians and proboscis monkeys of Bako NP – take a day trip, or stay overnight in a basic park chalet after tackling one of the 16 walking trails. A more comfortable option is to chill out on Damai Beach, on the neighbouring Santubong Peninsula.

Next day, head to the Sri Aman district skirting the Indonesian border, the heartland of Sarawak's most populous tribe, the Iban. Along the way stop at Serian, a small market town distinguished by its 'Big Durian' – the king of local fruits – and undercover

tamu, whose stalls sell fruit and snacks such as *pisang goreng* (fried banana).

Sri Aman, sitting on the Lupar River 195km from Kuching, is the gateway to the Batang Ai NP. More-traditional longhouse communities in the park can only be reached by boat, which leave from the jetty at the Batang Ai hydroelectric dam. It's best to book a trip with a Kuching-based operator, including a two-night stay, either in the luxurious Hilton Batang Ai or a simpler longhouse. Borneo Adventure ([www.borneoadventure.com](http://www.borneoadventure.com)) runs the Ulung Ai Jungle Lodge, and organises multi-day treks on the arduous Red Ape Trail ([www.redapetrail.com](http://www.redapetrail.com)), which has been endorsed by the Orangutan Foundation and mapped out with the local Iban communities.

From Lubuk Antu junction, near Batang Ai, the road heads north towards central Sarawak, whose lifeblood is the 760km-long Rejang River, Malaysia's longest. At the confluence of the Rejang and Igan rivers, Sibiu is a transport hub for the whole Rejang Basin; explore its huge harbour, Chinese temples and gardens. With its population of Chinese, Melanau, Iban and Orang Ulu, Sibiu has some of the best-quality and -value food in Borneo: spend at least a day at the markets and coffee shops, sampling dishes such as *mee udang* (river prawns in spicy broth) and *mee sua* ('longevity' noodles).

Stay in Sibiu another night and visit a longhouse on the Rejang, or take an express boat north to the coastal region of Mukah to experience the seafaring Melanau people's culture. With a few more days you can head north to Gunung Mulu, Niah Caves NP and Brunei. ▶

### INSIDER TIP: Angela Ak Linsam Iban guide



"At Serian's *tamu* there's pickled peanuts, squirming sago and many different ethnic faces; in Lachau ('cowboy town') you'll see people with whole hens in a bag on their shoulder."

Barbara Walton/epa/Corbis







**Floating fruit:** Tuck into the treats on offer at Banjarmasin's floating market

## Kalimantan circuit

Offbeat jungle journeys

**DURATION:** one week-ten days

Kuching (Sarawak) – Pontianak (Kalimantan) – Pangkalan Bun – Tanjung Puting NP – Lamandau River – Banjarmasin – Loksado – Meratus Mountains – Haratai – Samarinda

The ten-hour bus journey from Kuching over the Indonesian border to the equator town of Pontianak points to the difficulty of travelling in Indonesian Borneo. You must count largely on boats, on slow, pot-holed bus trips, and on plane travel – especially to reach the densely forested interior of Central Kalimantan.

Soak up Pontianak's bustling river city atmosphere on the evening of your arrival by walking the banks and bridges of the Kapuas River. The next morning fly to Pangkalan Bun Airport, the gateway to the Tanjung Puting NP and remote Dayak villages of Central Kalimantan.

The quality of a three-day stay will mainly depend on the tour company: travel by motorised longboat or klotok up the Sekonyer River, whose waters are *teh tarik* (pulled tea) in colour from tannins, and see orang-utans, proboscis monkeys and gibbons at the Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre of Camp Leakey.

### INSIDER TIP: Peltana Danson Borneo Eco Tours, Kalimantan



"See all the traders meeting at Banjarmasin's floating market in the Kuin River estuary. This market has existed for hundreds of years."

After a day walking in the park, head off to visit more isolated Dayak settlements on a four-hour trip from Pangkalan Bun up the Lamandau River. During a longhouse stay Dayaks will treat you to hornbill dances, rice wine, rainforest walks and indigenous forest expertise.

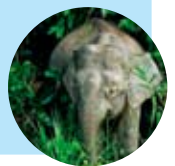
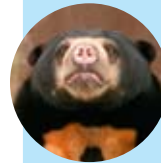
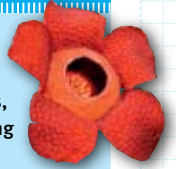
From Pangkalan Bun, fly to Banjarmasin – the capital of South Kalimantan is a mesmerising mix of mosque silhouettes, canals, stilted bamboo houses and floating markets. Spend two nights in the 'River City', discovering its waterways, islands and floating markets (such as the Pasar Kuin) by klotok.

The next day venture into the Loksado area, a few hours from Banjarmasin, for some trekking or bamboo-rafting. To avoid a very long day trip you can either book a longhouse stay or base yourself in a Kandungan river lodge. Keen hikers may wish to linger in the Meratus Mountains: the trail from Loksado to Haratai passes rivers, wooden bridges, forest and waterfalls, and you can organise a homestay for the night in Haratai.

For an off-the-beaten-path extension of this itinerary, make a 17-hour bus trip to Samarinda and travel along the evocative Mahakam River, Borneo's second longest. You can then either fly out of the country from Balikpapan, or travel by ferry to Tawau in Sabah and follow the Exploring Sabah itinerary in reverse. ▶

## Top 7 wild & weird

- 1 Rafflesia** The most famous of Borneo's rainforest power flowers, this rotten-flesh-smelling bloom grows up to 1m in diameter and 7kg in weight.
- 2 Nepenthes** These carnivorous pitcher plants trap prey in their cup-shaped leaves; the largest ever recorded contained 4L of liquid and a half-digested rat!
- 3 Proboscis monkey** The mangrove-dwelling *Nasalis larvatus* has partially webbed feet and is an accomplished swimmer
- 4 Western tarsier** This large-eyed, big-eared primate comes out at night and makes spectacular leaps of up to 40 times its body length between the trees
- 5 Sun bear** Also called the honey bear, this animal uses its long, sharp claws to reach beehives at the top of tall trees
- 6 Hornbill** Named for the large casques that crown their colourful beaks, these birds are a symbol of Sarawak
- 7 Pygmy elephant** Shy and highly endangered, the WWF reckons there are no more than 1,000 of these pachyderms left in Borneo





## Getting started

### Visas

Not required by UK nationals visiting Malaysia or Brunei, but required for Indonesia, where visas are available on arrival at major airports such as those in Jakarta and Bali, as well as at Sepinggan airport in Balikpapan in East Kalimantan (seven-day US\$10; 30-day US\$25). It's advisable to organise visas ahead of arrival. Contact the Indonesian Embassy (38 Grosvenor Square, London W1K 2HW; 020 7499 7661, [www.indonesianembassy.org.uk](http://www.indonesianembassy.org.uk)); 60-day visas cost £35.

### When to go

With its steady equatorial-tropical climate, average daily temperatures year-round are 28°C on the coast and 21°C in the highlands. The dry season generally occurs from May to October, the wet season from November to April. Each season has its advantages, though the wet season can be more encumbering for active and adventure holidays. Heavy rains may cause cancellation of flights into remote regions, and of riverboat trips.

### Getting there

The main international airports in Borneo are in Bandar Seri Begawan (Brunei), Kota Kinabalu (Sabah), Kuching (Sarawak) and Balikpapan, Pontianak and Banjarmasin (Kalimantan).

Malaysia Airlines (MAS; 0871 423 9090, [www.malaysiaairlines.com](http://www.malaysiaairlines.com)) flies non-stop from London to Kuala Lumpur, with connecting flights to several cities in Sabah and Sarawak, as well as to Brunei. Singapore Airlines (0844 800 2380, [www.singaporeair.com](http://www.singaporeair.com)) flies non-stop from London to Singapore and offers connecting flights to Borneo. Royal Brunei Airlines (020 7584 6660, [www.bruneiair.com](http://www.bruneiair.com)) flies from the UK to Brunei via Dubai. Long-haul low-cost carrier AirAsia X (0845 605 3333, [www.airasia.com](http://www.airasia.com)) flies from London to Kuala Lumpur

from £149 one way, with connecting flights across the region from £9.

Flight time from London to Kuala Lumpur is around 13 hours; return fares start from around £450. Onward flights to Borneo start from around £20-30 one way.

### Getting around

Inexpensive and abundant, air travel is sometimes mandatory for getting around Borneo, due to poor roads and prohibitive distances. MAS operates hundreds of daily flights in Sabah and Sarawak, as does AirAsia. MAS also flies between Kuching and Pontianak in Kalimantan, with rural services operated by MASWings ([www.maswings.com.my](http://www.maswings.com.my)). The MAS 'Discover Malaysia Pass' offers travel to up to three destinations within Malaysia for US\$199/£130, including the return trip from Kuala Lumpur to Borneo (flying in to Sabah and out of Sarawak) and an internal flight.

Batavia Air ([www.batavia-air.co.id](http://www.batavia-air.co.id)) links Kalimantan to the rest of Indonesia, as well as offering flights between Pontianak, Banjarmasin and Balikpapan.

Air-conditioned express buses are the economical way to travel long distances within, and sometimes between, Borneo's different states. Driving is a leisurely way to travel through much of coastal Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei; roads are less developed inland.

Ferries linking Labuan Island, Brunei, KK, Limbang and the east coast of Kalimantan are an efficient way of travelling between the Borneo states and islands. Fascinating and easy on the pocket, use the public express boats for journeys to coastal and inland towns such as along the Rejang River or from Kuching east to Sibu. Longboats are often used to travel along rivers and into the jungle – you can charter one on the spot, but it is cheaper to book ahead on a package trip.



In the swing: delve into the forests of Gunung Mulu NP

### Cost of travel

Depending on your choice of package tour or independent travel, and your class of hotels, food, activities and transport, count on an average daily expenditure of £20 for budget travellers, £50-70 for mid-range, and £100-plus for a more upscale trip. Meals and basic accommodation can be very cheap; trips into the jungle and out to dive sites bump up the price.

### Health & safety

Immunisations against tetanus, polio, diphtheria and hepatitis A are recommended. While largely eliminated, there are occasional outbreaks of mosquito-borne malaria in remote rural areas – seek medical advice on the most suitable prophylaxis. Food hygiene is generally good and crime levels relatively low (and almost non-existent in Brunei). Unkempt roads and footpaths pose one of the greatest hazards, along with falling durian fruits!

### Further reading

*Borneo* (Bradt Travel Guides, 2009) by Tamara Thiessen, the author of this article.

*Borneo* (Lonely Planet, 2008)

*Into the Heart of Borneo* (Penguin, 2005; originally published 1984) Redmond O'Hanlon's charming, sometimes hilarious travelogue of an arduous journey into the centre of Borneo.

*Stranger in the Forest: On Foot Across Borneo* (Vintage, 2000; originally published 1988) Eric Hansen's classic account of a 4,000km trek across Borneo in 1976.

*The Birds of Borneo* (latest edition: Natural History Publications, 1999) Bertram Smythies' essential reference on Borneo ornithology.

*Sylvia, Queen of the Headhunters* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007) Philip Eade's sharp biography of Lady Sylvia Brooke, wife of the last white Rajah of Sarawak.

### Further information

#### Tourism Malaysia

57 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 5DU; 020 7930 7932, [www.tourism.gov.my](http://www.tourism.gov.my)

#### Sabah Tourism Board

[www.sabahtourism.com](http://www.sabahtourism.com)

#### Sarawak Tourism Board

[www.sarawaktourism.com](http://www.sarawaktourism.com)

#### Indonesian Tourism

[www.my-indonesia.info](http://www.my-indonesia.info)

#### Brunei Tourism

[www.tourismbrunei.com](http://www.tourismbrunei.com) ■

*Author of the new Bradt guide to Borneo, Tasmanian-born Tamara Thiessen has a penchant for real, wild places. Between exploring the wonders of Sydney Harbour and the bookshops of Paris, she can be found upriver in Borneo with her camera and notebook.*

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