

Orangutan, Rainforests & Tribes Tour



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Please think of the trees and don't print me!



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WHO ARE PROJECT BORNEO?



Project Borneo is a Malaysian conservation organisation and UK-based charity, and is a development of Project Orangutan (established in 2006). Founder and CEO Leo Biddle has over 20 years' experience working in the conservation sector in the developing world and is one of the pioneers of truly ethical wildlife tourism. Originally the orangutan themselves were our sole focus, but as we encountered more amazing wildlife in need of our help and built relationships with the extraordinary people here, we realised that we could be doing so much more...

And so Project Borneo was born! Of course the plight of the orangutan remains of paramount importance, but now we also care for a whole spectrum of endangered species indigenous to Borneo at the Matang Wildlife Centre. As well as working in the field, we continuously strive to create new, innovative projects and sustainable solutions to some of the problems faced by animals and ecosystems in Borneo.



THE TOUR ITINERARY



We are passionate about wildlife conservation and this “volun-tour” invests in local communities whilst providing participants with a very unique and low-impact way to experience the natural beauty of Borneo. The funds generated by this ethical tourism support a sustainable way of life for both wildlife and native people.

During the tour, the itinerary described below is the one which we are able to work to, most of the time. However please be aware that factors outside of our control sometimes mean that we have to make slight changes to the itinerary. The order in which you visit each of the destinations is subject to change, and can be dependent upon unpredictable factors such as the weather or plans that the various communities we work with have to adhere to. Please bring with you an open mind, a relaxed attitude and a willingness to go with the flow at all times!

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Location: | Various in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo |
| Departs | 03rd of the month (Oct-Apr); 03rd & 17th of the month (May-Sept) |
| Duration: | 14 days |
| Price: | £999 |
| Included: | All essential food and drink, accommodation, airport transfers, expert guide at all locations, contribution to animal welfare and conservation work |
| Not Included: | Flights, travel insurance |



THE TOUR ITINERARY



Day 1: Arrive in Kuching

We collect you at the airport and transfer you to Basaga Residence in Kuching to meet Project Borneo staff and your fellow travellers for a welcome dinner and briefing. Basaga is one of two hotels part-owned by Project Borneo, and from which 50% of the profits go straight to the charity. It is a very comfortable way to start the trip - make the most of the hot shower, air conditioning and swimming pool before departing to more rustic jungle accommodation!

Day 2-4: Matang Wildlife Centre

This centre is the focus of our fundraising and conservation work, and is also where the volunteer programme is based. Matang is unique among orangutan rehabilitation centres in being a rescue centre for all protected wildlife, as well as the majestic primates themselves, and aims to rehabilitate and release any animal where possible. Considering the diversity of Borneo's wildlife this is a very ambitious mandate, and Project Borneo has committed to helping this centre both physically and financially for the foreseeable future.

You will tour around the park meeting the conservationists working in the field, before getting your first taste of a gentle jungle trek in neighbouring Kubah national park.

This will also be your opportunity to help out directly with the conservation effort, in the form of creating enrichment for some of the centre's

residents. Enrichment is the process of providing captive animals with stimulating environments that encourage naturalistic behaviours - or put another way, making toys for them to play with. The only limit is your imagination - so don't be shy with your ideas! It's great fun - and watching the animals playing with your creations is extremely rewarding. Ask us for a copy of our Enrichment Catalogue for some ideas before you arrive.

No contact policy

When working around the orangutan and other wildlife there will be no physical contact with the animals at any time. This is for three reasons:

1. The aim of the rehabilitation centre is to return the orangutan to the semi-wild, or the wild in some cases. The more humans they are exposed to, the more they try to behave like us, rather than like orangutan, which only impedes their return to the trees.
2. There is a very real risk of disease transmission from humans to other animals and vice versa (zoonosis). All permanent staff that have contact with the primates are subject to blood screening.
3. Regardless of how long they have been in captivity and how "tame" they appear, these are wild animals. They are usually well equipped with an arsenal of survival tools which you would not want to experience too close-up.

THE TOUR ITINERARY

Please see our website www.projectborneo.com for a more detailed version of the Policy.

Note: if you are more interested in the hands-on volunteer work than the eco-tour, please see our website for further details of how you can be part of the volunteer project at Matang.

Day 4-5: Bako National Park

From Matang you will travel about 1 hour by car to a boat dock, followed by a short 15 minute boat ride around the peninsular to the entrance of Bako National Park. Bako is cut off by road and thus it is a relatively well protected little microcosm, rich with wildlife and stunning scenery.

If it is wild animals that you are interested in spotting, you could not find a better location. Bako is the oldest national park in Sarawak and is famed for its population of proboscis monkeys - a unique and highly endangered primate. There are two other species of primate at Bako; the silvery langur and the long-tailed macaque. The latter of these has unfortunately grown so used to humans that they will brazenly steal food from your plate - or indeed anything else they can get their paws on. Please try not to carry tempting food items around on your person - make no mistake the macaques recognise crisp and candy packets and will come after them! You should also be mindful of the items you store in your rooms, as the macaques are rather adept at breaking and entering.

In addition Bako is teeming with amazing bird life, reptiles, bearded pigs, carnivorous pitcher plants

and a vast array of incredible nocturnal mammals. We recommend strongly that you join the guided night-walk to try and spot nocturnal creatures like the colugo (a type of flying lemur), western tarsier and slow loris.

There are 7 distinct types of ecosystem within the park, all accessible on well-marked trails which range from 2-15km in length. You will be accompanied by an expert guide for the duration of this tour, so you never need to worry about taking a wrong turn. If relaxation is on your group's agenda, Bako has many picturesque beaches, which can be accessed via a jungle trek or an easier boat ride. The scenery is magnificent and often your group will find that you have the beautiful beaches all to yourselves.

Accommodation at Bako is very basic, and you will be sharing with up to three other participants on your tour. However, you will be spending little time in your room, so the functional nature of the lodgings will not affect you much.



THE TOUR ITINERARY



Day 5-7: Telok Serabang

Telok Serabang is an isolated Malay community situated in a beautiful coastal area of Sarawak. The beach that they live on is a nesting site for the endangered green turtle, and the chief of the community, along with a handful of trusted local guides, has developed a responsible eco-tourism project in order to protect them.

Accommodation here is in traditional Malay housing, right on the beach front. Rooms are shared, as are amenities like toilets and showers (which are cold of course!). Your guide and members of the community will be preparing your meals, and you are welcome to get involved and help if you'd like. When spending time here you will need to be particularly aware and respectful of the Islamic faith and associated customs; shoulders need to be covered at all times and a modest dress code should be adhered to.

The exact itinerary at Telok Serabang will depend on the weather, and the needs of the community at that time. Previous activities have included:

- Snorkelling, with the chance to see green turtles in their natural habitat
- Beach clean-up to remove any rubbish that gets washed up with the tide
- Community work, such as maintenance work in the village and painting of the local school
- Trekking in the neighbouring national park, Tanjung Dato, where there is the chance to see wild gibbons, flying lemurs, bearded pigs, amazing insects and other wildlife

- Nocturnal patrols of the beach to protect any turtles that may be making the journey to nest
- Crafting traditional jewellery with the community

Alternative destination: Permai Rainforest Resort

Telok Serabang is a more weather-sensitive destination than most. During rainy season (approximately October-April), or at any time of year when the weather is poor, the sea becomes too rough for snorkelling, and there are unlikely to be any turtles on the beach. In these circumstances you will stay an extra night at the stunning Bako National Park, before visiting the equally beautiful Damai region, where you will stay one night at the Permai Rainforest Resort.

Permai is nestled in the jungle and is a great place for spotting wildlife. There will be another opportunity to do a night walk here, and a day-trek to a glorious waterfall. There is also a swimming pool fed by freshwater stream, for a cooling dip. Whilst in this region you will visit Damai Cultural Village to learn about Dayak culture and explore an array of traditional longhouses.

THE TOUR ITINERARY



Day 7-9: Padawan

From Telok Serabang you will travel to Padawan to stay with a Bidayau community, one of the native Dayak groups of Sarawak. Your accommodation will again be in a traditional wooden long-house made from bamboo, with shared bedrooms and amenities. You will learn about the culture of this tribe and may be encouraged to take part in traditional dancing or perhaps learn how to play the gong!

There will also be the opportunity to enjoy trekking in areas of rainforest not commonly frequented by other tourists. During one of your treks you will be invited to enter a sacred place where human skulls are kept, remnants of the ancient practice of head-hunting. You will learn about the cultural significance of this tradition, as well as the myriad ways that the bamboo plant sustains the lifestyle of the Bidayu. One example is raft-building, and you will get the chance to glide serenely through the rainforest on one of these expertly-made crafts. Your guides will collect food from the river banks along the way before preparing you a meal in the forest; coffee, tea and a huge selection of food - all made within bamboo, using bamboo utensils.

Day 9-13: Batang Ai National Park

This is the largest national park in Sarawak, and home to the state's only remaining population of truly wild orangutan. There are roughly 1,350 individuals left here and you could not be better situated to stand a chance of seeing one of these endangered Great Apes. However, the orangutan is one of the most challenging animals to see in its natural habitat, so it is by no means guaranteed that you will see one during your time here.

To get there you will take a bus to a jetty of the Batang Ai dam, which takes approximately 5 hours. From here you will catch a longboat which will transport you up river through pristine tropical rainforest. This boat journey takes roughly 2 hours, and these simple vessels often have no shelter, so prepare to get wet if it rains!

You should be prepared to travel very lightly for this section of the tour. Think 'minimalist', and then remove a few items - but don't worry, you can always leave excess luggage in Kuching where it will be stored safely until you return.



THE TOUR ITINERARY



Jungle living

There are not many opportunities left in this day and age to be completely isolated and cut off from all the trappings of technology and the modern way of life. However, this is one of them. Electricity is provided by generator and runs for 3-4 hours per day. Other than that, there is no power, no telephone signal and no internet! It is you, and the jungle, and that is it. You will be living in a basic long house situated right on the side of the river; toilets and showers are outside down a steep flight of stairs so you will definitely need your torch for any midnight loo trips! You are surrounded by forest and some groups have even seen orangutan from the longhouse.

Your neighbours will be a small Iban community which has resided in this area of the rainforest for many generations. Project Borneo is working with this community to create a sustainable and ethical business which the community will manage autonomously in time. For each tour group that visits we pay their members as guides for treks, kitchen assistants and boat drivers. We pay a contribution to the community for each visitor, known as the Head Man Tax, and we constructed the lodge where you will stay through profits made from this tour. The lodge has since been gifted to the community to enable them to explore other ethical tourism opportunities.

We believe that by working with the indigenous people this way we can decrease incidents of hunting and logging through provision of revenue, and provide an incentive for these people to retain ownership of their land and maintain residence in the area, as custodians of the forest. It also gives

us the chance to learn about their culture, and groups in the past have been involved with activities such as weaving, traditional cooking and games (usually involving rice wine).

Trekking

You will take part in several jungle treks in Batang Ai, with members of the community as your guides. The terrain here is challenging to say the least. For your best chance to spot wildlife, you will be trekking up steep ridges in areas of forest that sometimes have not been walked before. Do not expect well-cut paths that are easy to navigate. You may also need to walk/wade/swim across rivers at points along some of the trails. There's no escaping moisture here; you'll either be soaked from sweat, rain or riverwater - although everyone else will be as damp and smelly as you so nobody will notice! The other national parks that you will have visited earlier in the tour will have provided good training, however Batang Ai is rather more hard-core. That said, the exertion is more than worth it. Roughly one third of our groups have encountered a wild orangutan while staying at this location. Having luck on your side certainly helps, though increased numbers of treks, early starts and quiet walkers will all increase the likelihood of seeing the elusive ape. Even if you do not see one, your guides will point out orangutan nests, foods that have been eaten by different animals, the claw marks on trees climbed by sun bears and various other signs, sights and sounds. You will be left in no doubt that you have spent some time in a magical place, filled with life.



THE TOUR ITINERARY



Day 14-15: Semenggoh and return to Kuching

We travel back to Kuching, stopping at Semenggoh Orangutan Centre on the way. Semenggoh was Sarawak's first orangutan rehabilitation centre and was opened in the 1970s. It focuses only on its resident orangutan population of about 20 individuals, all of which are living semi-wild in this nature reserve. There have been a number of births at the centre, and visits here will often include a sighting of a mother with her baby. There is one dominant male orangutan, Ritchie, who is definitely not a guaranteed sighting but he is one extremely impressive animal for those lucky enough to see him! As with many of the orangutan rehabilitation centres, Semenggoh is only open for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon; times that coincide with daily feeds. Visitors station themselves in view of the feeding platforms and wait to see if the orangutan are hungry enough to show themselves. Occasionally in the middle of the fruiting season, none of the orangutan come to take the food provided by the rangers, as they can find enough for themselves in the forest. However, more than 95% of visitors to Semenggoh will see at least one orangutan, so your chances are very good indeed.

Spend a final night back at Basaga Residence for a farewell dinner with your group, before transfers to the airport the following day.



PRACTICAL POINTS

Know before you go

You will need to book your own flights, travel insurance and so on. We are not able to provide medical advice so prior to travel we recommend that you speak to a doctor about any vaccinations or medications you may need. Being prepared and doing some of your own research is always wise to help you manage your own expectations.

Cultural differences: Malaysia is officially a Muslim country although Sarawak is very culturally and religiously diverse. It is imperative that we respect local customs and religious sensitivities.

Accommodation: Apart from the first and last nights at Basaga Residence, all other accommodation throughout the tour consists of very basic wooden huts in the jungle. You will have running water and western toilets but if you're looking for a luxury jungle getaway then this not it.

Changes to the itinerary: Due to unforeseen circumstances there is always the chance we have to change aspects of the tour at the last minute.

Jungle reality: Borneo is full of beautiful rainforest and wildlife. Ants, moths, spiders and general bugs are plentiful so be prepared to encounter these types of critters on a daily basis. Some are absolutely stunning and bizarre, and some can cause injury if you accidentally stumble across them, so always be alert.

Physical Fitness/ Heat and Humidity: To participate on this project, a good level of fitness is required. The terrain can be difficult and the heat and humidity add an extra challenge. You need to always keep well hydrated and take regular breaks.

Personal Safety: You are travelling to a relatively safe area, though as with all places opportunistic crime and theft of valuables can occur. There is a severe penalty (death) for taking and dealing drugs. We hold a zero tolerance policy on drug use. Drinking alcohol is acceptable but rowdiness and excessive drinking is frowned upon.

Arrival day

When you arrive in Kuching:

- We will meet you in the arrivals lounge. In the unlikely event that we are not there when you arrive, it is probably due to bad traffic or terrible weather. You can always contact Leo, Project Borneo CEO on (+60) 0138 456 531 if required.
- By law you should have your passport on you at all times.
- There is no airport tax on arrival or departure that needs to be paid at the airport. These taxes would have been paid with the flight ticket.



PRACTICAL POINTS

Things to bring

- Lightweight clothes that you are comfortable walking in and do not mind getting dirty/ruined. Hoodies, long-sleeved shirts and long trouser options are handy for the evenings
- Comfortable walking boots and/or shoes and ample pairs of long socks
- Underwear - bring plenty. If you get caught in the rain or have to wade through a river you'll appreciate a dry pair!
- Swim-wear and towel
- Work gloves
- Poncho or waterproof coat
- Sun hat, sunglasses and sunscreen
- Flip flops or sandals
- Re-usable water bottle; at least 1litre capacity
- Snacks: Especially if you are a vegan or have allergies we recommend bringing some of your own snacks from home
- Day pack - ideally a dry-bag, or a waterproof bag for phones and cameras
- Torch
- Toiletries - try to go for things like bars of soap and solid shampoos to minimise the amount of plastics you leave behind. There is no plastic recycling in Borneo

- Laundry soap bar
- Mosquito net - double-bed size - and insect repellent
- Personal first-aid kit. As well as your own medications this should include something for diarrhoea and constipation, rehydration sachets and something to soothe itchy bites
- Books, iPods, pack of cards etc
- Travel plug adapter. Malaysian plug sockets are the same as the UK (3 pins)
- Money - make sure you've told your bank that you are travelling. We advise not to travel with too much cash, but very few places here take card payment
- Mobile phones. Local SIM cards are very cheap (less than RM10), as are international phone calls to landlines - calls to other mobiles are more expensive. It might be worth unlocking your phone before travelling, although coverage at all destinations apart from Kuching and Matang is patchy to non-existent. Most people choose to have a holiday from their phones
- For the ladies - tampons aren't readily available so you might want to come prepared!



PRACTICAL POINTS



Being a minimal waste traveller

Of course there is an environmental footprint associated with flying half-way across the world to Borneo, but arguably the bigger footprint is the amount of waste we generate in our day-to-day lives. There is no plastic recycling on Borneo so we suggest you spend a little bit of time planning your packing list in order to avoid bringing too many single-use plastic items. Some easy essentials are mentioned in the list on the previous page. Please resist the urge to buy new clothes specifically for the tour; especially if you intend to bin them when you're finished. At the end of each fortnight we are inundated with clothes people leave behind. Depending on the condition they are in we do wash most of this abandoned clothing and either donate it locally or use it for enrichment. However, the 'fast fashion' industry is incredibly exploitative of humans and damaging to our planet. Therefore, if you don't have any clothes at home that you're happy to get muddy, sweaty and generally ruined then pop down to a charity shop and pick some bits up; it'll save you money and it won't cost the earth.

For more info about these issues you can check out:

Blue The Film: <https://bluethemovie.org/>

The True Cost: <https://truecostmovie.com/>

The Story of Stuff: <https://storyofstuff.org/>

