

# Borneo's Rainforest Mammals

## Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

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### Outline Itinerary

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| <b>Day 1</b>     | Depart London   |
| <b>Day 2</b>     | Arrive Kuala Lumpur and fly Sandakan, overnight Sepilok |
| <b>Day 3</b>     | Orangutan & Sun Bear Centres                            |
| <b>Day 4 - 6</b> | Kinabatangan River                                      |
| <b>Day 7 - 9</b> | Tabin Wildlife Reserve                                  |
| <b>Day 10/11</b> | Depart Sandakan/Arrive London                           |

### Departs

March

### Focus

Borneo's mammals, birds and other wildlife

### Grading

**B.** Wildlife walks, vehicular and boat safaris

### Dates and Prices

See website (tour code MYS05) or brochure

### Highlights

- Wild Orangutans, Proboscis Monkeys and other rare primates
- Possibilities of rare mammals including: Asian Elephants, Western Tarsier, Binturong and Bornean Gibbon
- Diverse and colourful birdlife, including several Bornean endemics
- Clouded Leopard even a possibility and has been found!



Bornean Orangutan, Leopard Cat, Proboscis Monkey



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## Introduction

Borneo's rainforests are extremely rich in wildlife, and this new tour focuses on the diverse and interesting range of mammals found in the Sabah region. Borneo is home to approximately 200 mammals, of which 44 are endemic, and can be found only in the Bornean rainforests. On this 11-day tour, we will be based along the Kinabatangan River and nearby reserves, where all 10 of Sabah's primate species can be found. Wild Bornean Orangutans, plus Maroon, Silvered and Hose's Langurs, Bornean Gibbons, Pig-tailed and Long-tailed Macaques, and the peculiar Proboscis Monkey are all highlights of this region.

We will begin our tour in Sepilok, where we will visit the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, and the Sun Bear Conservation Centre to learn about the ongoing efforts to protect these iconic species. We will then journey upriver to the award-winning Sukau Rainforest Lodge, to explore the nearby tributaries and oxbow lakes on daily boat trips to, hopefully, see our first truly wild Orangutans. In the evenings, we can enjoy spotlighting sessions to seek out such elusive nocturnal specialties as Slow Loris, Flat-headed and Leopard Cat, as well as one of the many Civet species found in the region.

After three days spent amongst the varied fauna surrounding the Kinabatangan River, we will travel deeper into the rainforest, to the 112,000 hectare Tabin Wildlife Reserve. This vast reserve consists of a mixture of mature primary and secondary lowland rainforest, combined with active volcanic mudflats, all of which is home to a variety of Borneo's remarkable mammals, including its larger species. By day, we will explore the reserve's tracks and trails in search of Orangutans, Bornean Pygmy Elephants, Giant Squirrels, Binturong and Lesser and Greater Mouse Deer. As night falls, we will again take to the forest in search of Borneo's nocturnal specialties, such as Colugo, Western Tarsier, and if we are extremely fortunate, Pangolin and Clouded Leopard!



Sepilok

## Itinerary

*NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.*

### Day 1

### In Flight

We will depart around midday from London Heathrow onboard a scheduled flight to Kuala Lumpur.

### Day 2

### Sepilok

We will arrive in Kuala Lumpur in the morning and after a transit, we will board an onward flight to Sandakan in Sabah, and then drive just 45 minutes to the Sepilok Nature Resort.

Sepilok was established in 1964 to return orphaned Bornean Orangutans to the wild. This endearing ape has suffered badly over the past few decades due to ongoing deforestation and illegal capture for the pet trade. Staff at Sepilok undertake invaluable work helping the animals return to their



Bornean Orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*)

rainforest home, as well as studying wild Orangutans in the surrounding forests. Since the sanctuary is located on the edge of the 43 square kilometre Kabili Sepilok Forest Reserve, it is an excellent area in which to look for mammals and other wildlife.

We will spend tonight at the attractive Sepilok Nature Resort located on the edge of Kabili Sepilok Forest Reserve, close to the Orangutan sanctuary.

### Day 3

### Sepilok

After breakfast at the resort, we will take a short walk to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre where we will spend the morning visiting the Centre and exploring the surrounding forests. On arrival, we will learn from an informative video presentation about the plight of the Orangutan and the valuable conservation work they carry out at the centre rehabilitating these endearing creatures ready for life back in the wild. Sepilok is a fascinating place to begin our tour and learn about Orangutan ecology and an excellent introduction before heading off into the rainforests in search of the wild animals. Semi-rehabilitated animals live in the surrounding forests but make their way back to the centre twice a day for the free meals on offer consisting of banana and milk, although attendance at meal times may be affected by the counter attraction of ripening fruits in the forest! Here we will not only hope to see Orangutan, but other visitors may include: Plantain Squirrel,



Prevost's Squirrel, Giant Squirrel, Maroon Langurs, Red Giant Flying Squirrel, Bornean Gibbon, Pig-tailed, & Long-tailed Macaques.

For those interested in birds, we will look out for such species as the spectacular Black-and-Red Broadbill, Scarlet-Rumped Trogon, the endemic Bornean Bristlehead and various species of barbet, sunbirds, flycatchers and spiderhunters in the surrounding forest reserve, whilst those interested in insects are sure to be amazed by the staggering diversity of butterflies which will include several species of spectacular bird-wing butterflies.

In the afternoon we will visit the Sun Bear Conservation Centre. This relatively new Centre, established in 2008, provides care and rehabilitation for orphaned and captive Malay Sun Bears, with the goal of releasing them back into the wild and raising awareness of their plight. The Malay Sun Bear is the smallest of the bear species and found only in south-east Asia. Like the Orangutan, it is threatened by ongoing deforestation and is also hunted illegally for medicine, and captured for the pet trade. After spending the afternoon observing these magnificent mammals, we will return to the Sepilok Nature Resort for a second night.



Malay Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*)

## Days 4 – 6

## Kinabatangan

This morning we return to the Sepilok Rehabilitation Centre for a second chance to view the Orangutans and other visiting wildlife at feeding time before driving the short distance to Sandakan. Here we will take a boat upstream on the Kinabatangan River to the Sukau Rainforest Lodge where we will spend the next 3 nights. The Kinabatangan River is the second longest river in Malaysia, and is dotted with oxbow lakes, sandstone hills and limestone outcrops. The surrounding floodplains consist of low-lying wilderness covered by a patchwork of natural rainforest and ever-encroaching palm oil plantations, and is the home to a wealth of wildlife. It is here that we have the opportunity to see our first truly wild Orangutans, and the remarkable Proboscis Monkey. Whilst staying at the Sukau Rainforest Lodge, our days will consist of early morning and mid-afternoon boat trips along the river and into the tributaries and oxbow lakes. Once off the main river channel the boatman of each of our motorised canoes will turn off the noisy diesel engine and switch on the low-powered and silent electric motor, enabling us to really enjoy the sights and sounds of this rich wilderness. Here, we will hope to see wild Orangutans making their way slowly through the riverside canopy, or in late afternoon, watch them making their night-time nests. Amongst the sounds of the

rainforest, we will be sure to hear the distinctive 'whoop whoop' vocalisation from the Bornean Gibbon, echoing through the forest. These vigorous calls and displays are a way in which these charismatic primates defend their strict territories. We will scan the canopy in search of this energetic species, however catching a glimpse may be a challenge as they are the world's fastest moving primate, swinging through the trees at an impressive 34mph! The Kinabatangan River is also an excellent place to watch troupes of the bizarre Proboscis Monkey crashing through the branches and jumping across the flooded channels. These comical looking creatures will often sit in the trees and watch us float by, hands resting beside their huge pot-bellies, with the males displaying their extraordinary floppy noses.

Whilst travelling along the river, we have a chance of encountering a herd of Pygmy Elephants, feeding on the riverside vegetation or bathing in the shallows. Weather permitting, our evenings will be spent cruising the river, spotlighting in search of the more elusive nocturnal species of the Bornean rainforest. With a little luck we can hope to encounter a Slow Loris foraging amongst the trees, or a Leopard or Flat-headed Cat moving stealthily across the forest floor. Fruiting trees are likely to attract the attention of Civets, and very occasionally we may even come across the smallest of Borneo's primates, the Western Tarsier or the tiny Temminck's Flying Squirrel.



Borneo Pygmy Elephant (*Elephas maximus borneensis*) taken on tour by A. Riley

In addition to an impressive array of mammals we also hope to see some of Borneo's magnificent avifauna including Rhinoceros, Helmeted, Black, Oriental, Pied, Bushy-crested, Wreathed and Wrinkled Hornbills, Blue-eared and Stork-billed Kingfishers, Jerdon's Baza, Blyth's Hawk-Eagle, Black-and-red and Black-and-yellow Broadbills, and if we are very lucky perhaps a pair of the endangered Storm's Storks.

We will also take time to wander very gently along the short trails into the secondary forest just around our lodge where, with patience, a great variety of birds can be found, with more chances for wild Orangutan. Many mammals and birds can also be seen from the lodge veranda, while we can relax with a cold drink, especially if one or two of the adjacent trees are fruiting. It is also a great place for photographing dragonflies and butterflies.

On the afternoon of Day 6 we will take a short boat ride to the village of Sukau and then a short drive to the spectacular Gomantong Caves. Here, there are two complex cave systems that penetrate deep inside the largest limestone outcrop, known as Gomantong Hill. The caves are located in a protected area, surrounded by lowland rainforest, and are inhabited by wild Orangutans and other primates, not far from the Kinabatangan River. The two intricate cave systems are divided into the Simud Hitam, meaning Black Cave, which is the accessible cave we will be visiting, and Simud Putih, meaning White Cave, which lies above. The cave systems tower to staggering heights of 100 metres or more and are home to literally millions of bats and swiftlets. It is here that every 3-4 months local tribesmen come, for a week at a time, to gather the nests that are harvested to make 'birds-nest soup'. This ancient tradition is a high risk job, and the way in which these people reach the heights of these caves on precarious, locally-made ropes and bamboo ladders is terrifying and incredible. Standing at the bottom it is almost impossible to see the tiny specks of these fearless men clinging and climbing along the crevices in the roof of the caves. Although the middle men take most of the money it is still of such economic value to the tribesmen that each of the cave entrances are guarded day and night throughout the year.

Four species of swiftlet nest inside the caves, Black-nest, Mossy-nest, Edible nest and Glossy Swiftlet. The Black-nest Swiftlet is by far the most abundant, and its nests, (which are black because they are lined both inside and out with body feathers) form the bulk of the harvest. However, it is the Edible-nest Swiftlets' white nests made entirely of saliva, found in the Sumid Putih, which fetch the highest prices as the greatest delicacy of all. To ensure minimum disturbance the nests that are taken are strictly those that are empty, and to judge from the numbers of swiftlets, this harvest which has been going on for centuries is not doing too much harm! In addition, the edible birds' nests are protected under the Birds' Nest Ordinance and the Forest Enactment of 1968 and locals must have a license for collecting the nests. As well as going inside one of the main caves on a wooden walkway, we will look for wildlife in the adjacent rainforest, perhaps finding a Blue-headed Pitta,



Gomantong Cave

Wreathed or Bushy-crested Hornbills, or even another Orangutan. At dusk we will wait outside the caves to observe the spectacular exodus of millions of bats (10 or more species roost in the caves) and to watch the 3 or 4 Bat Hawks and 2 or 3 Peregrines that regularly gather to hunt for their supper.



As this spectacular show draws to a close we will retrace our steps back to Sukau Rainforest Lodge for a final night alongside the Kinabatangan River.

**NB: Please note that currently the Gomantong Caves are closed due to damage to the boardwalk there. We are uncertain of when the caves will reopen. If we are unable to visit, more time will instead be spent on the wildlife-rich Kinabatangan River so it will be time very well spent. If you are keen to visit a cave system, we can arrange an extension to Mulu. The caves at Mulu are far more extensive and it is an excellent experience.**

## Days 7 - 9

## Tabin Wildlife Reserve

This morning we should have time for a final boat trip or forest walk before taking the short boat ride back to Sukau. We will then drive to Tabin, where we will be spending the next three nights, exploring the reserve through a mix of walks and drives.

Tabin Wildlife Reserve embraces mature secondary and primary lowland rainforest, and is home to many of Borneo's larger iconic mammal species including the Sumatran Rhinoceros, Bornean Clouded Leopard, Malay Sun Bear, Orangutan, Bornean Gibbon, Pygmy Elephant, and the Tembadau. The 112,000 hectare reserve is an important area for conservation as it is one of the last remaining areas of Sabah's original lowland forest. The surrounding palm oil plantations have, however, in some cases proved to be beneficial to Bornean wildlife, as they provide an alternative source of food, and also act as a hunting ground. Many of the common mammal sightings are often



Clouded Leopard (*Neofelis nebulosa*) – taken on tour by Fredoline Florence

seen on the road between the wildlife reserve and the oil palms. Pygmy elephants are often found crossing the road into the plantations in search of palm shoots to feed upon. It is also here that two of Borneo's elusive and endangered cat species can be found crossing into the palms to hunt at night. On evening excursions, we will keep any eye out for a glimpse of the endemic Bornean Bay Cat, which has recently been deemed the rarest cat species in the world. We will also search for the Clouded Leopard, which recent studies have estimated there to be between 8 and 17 individuals found per 100km<sup>2</sup> (39 sq. miles) in the Tabin Wildlife Reserve.

This superb area is not only a great place for mammals, but also for birds and boasts a reserve list of over 250 species and with luck it is possible to see 70 or 80 species in a day including many Borneo specialties. Highlights of the birding at Tabin might include Great Argus and Crested Fireback Pheasants, Great-billed Heron, Large Green, Thick-billed and Little Green Pigeons, Blue-headed and Black-headed

Pittas, Leafbirds, Hornbills, Malkohas and Trogons, Brown Wood Owl, Great Slaty, Crimson-winged and Olive-backed Woodpeckers, Blue-banded Kingfisher, White-fronted Falconet, various spiderhunters and sunbirds, numerous bulbuls and babblers etc. We will be accommodated in the Tabin Nature Resort in ideally situated tourist cabins, with a private balcony for views either into the forest, or across the Lipad River, ensuring we are right in the heart of the wildlife for our visit.

One of the many highlights of Tabin are the mineral-rich active mud volcanoes which attract high concentrations of wildlife into the reserve, and form a remarkable habitat in which to identify the tracks, and prints of the more elusive species. With many trails to choose from throughout the reserve, we will use our time to ensure that we maximise our mammal-watching opportunities in this delightful tract of forest.

## Day 10

## In flight

We will spend as much time as possible wildlife-watching in the Tabin Reserve but later in the morning we must retrace our steps to Lahad Datu to catch a domestic flight to Kota Kinabalu where we connect with onward services to Kuala Lumpur and London.

## Day 11

## London

After a change of aircraft at Kuala Lumpur, and an overnight flight, we are due to arrive back in London in the early morning.

## Tour Grading & Focus

The principle focus of our holiday will be the mammals of Borneo but, as we visit some of the most magnificent

rainforests on Earth, we will also be entering the domain of many wonderful birds, reptiles and insects. Most of this tour is graded A – gentle walks from our lodges. Most of the trails at Sepilok, Tabin and those from Sukau Rainforest Lodge are good, although some become a little more difficult if the season is very wet. Whilst the walks should not be strenuous, the heat and humidity can be tiring at times.



Tabin Lodges



## Weather, Clothing & Equipment

Malaysia has a typical tropical climate. It is hot and humid all year round. The temperature rarely drops below 20C, and usually climbs to 30C or more during the day. The wet season in Sabah is generally considered to run from June to December (November and December being the wettest). However, being a tropical country it can rain at any time, frequently and heavily. When not raining, however, it is usually sunny! Recently locals have begun to deny any pattern to the weather, saying that relying on wet and dry seasons is a thing of the past. You can reasonably expect plenty of sun, plenty of rain and hot temperatures. Binoculars are of course essential for this holiday into the rainforests.

## What's Included

All food and accommodation is included in the price of this tour, except for dinner on day 10. You should allow about £20 for this.

As of September 2017, the Bornean government has implemented a tourist tax to be paid upon checking in/out of hotels, at the cost of MYR10 per room per night. Please be aware that this cost will need to be covered by yourself at each lodge and hotel throughout your holiday.

At Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, for any camera with zoom lens from 100 to 400mm, video camera or other video recording equipment for personal use are chargeable at RM10.00 per unit (around £2). For any camera (**fixed-lens** - 400mm and above) or any film-making equipment are chargeable at RM1,000.00 per unit (around £200). Mode of payment is cash only.

## Extending Your Holiday

We can arrange many popular extensions to this holiday and please speak to operations manager Tom Mabbett if you are considering this. The tour is action packed, with long hours from the start



Gaya Island extension

so an extra night at Sepilok at the start may be something to consider. Following the holiday a visit to Mt Kinabalu National Park will provide a real contrast to the lowland forests of the main tour or you may wish to visit another lowland rainforest lodge. For relaxation an extension to Gaya Island Resort just offshore of Kota

Kinabalu offers a lovely beach, some snorkeling (and diving for those who wish) with swimming pools and excellent food. There is some nice habitat on the island with a nature interpretation centre and walks available with an in house naturalist.

## How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at [www.naturetrek.co.uk](http://www.naturetrek.co.uk), or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements at the time of booking.

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Cover photos with thanks to Andy Hawkins (Leopard Cat & Proboscis Monkey)



Western Tarsier (*Cephalopachus bancanus*)