

Borneo's Mammals - Deramakot Forest Reserve

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Day 2	Arrive Kuala Lumpur and fly Sandakan, overnight Sepilok
Day 3 – 9	Deramakot Forest Reserve
Day 10 - 12	Kinabatangan River
Day 13/14	Depart Sandakan/Arrive London

Departs

All Year

Focus

Borneo's mammals, birds and other wildlife

Grading

B. A mix of walks, boat rides and night-drives.

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code MYS07) or brochure

Highlights

- Wild Orangutans, Proboscis Monkeys and other rare mammals
- Boat excursions along the Kinabatangan River
- Possible rare mammals including: Bornean Pygmy Elephants, Sunda Clouded Leopard, Sun Bear, Binturong, Marbled Cat
- Birds may include Bornean Bristlehead, Giant Pitta and a range of hornbills can be expected



Sunda Clouded Leopard, Bornean Pygmy Elephant, Western Tarsier



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Introduction

Borneo's Deramakot Forest Reserve has created quite a stir amongst the mammal-watching community, with numerous tales of South-east Asia's most sought-after species being seen on a regular basis, including the rare and elusive Sunda Clouded Leopard.

Deramakot is clothed in a mix of primary and secondary growth rainforest and is a flagship reserve for the Sabah Forestry Department; indeed it is the only 'Forest Stewardship Council' certified concession in the whole of South-east Asia. On account of an ongoing programme of selective logging, and without the luxurious accommodation so often found in Bornean eco-lodges, this reserve has remained largely off the tourist trail and, therefore, free from the rules and regulations that often impinge upon wildlife-watching elsewhere in Asia. With no structured programmes, visitors are free to explore at will and it is perhaps this fact above any other that has made Deramakot such an exceptional location for rare mammal sightings.

In recent years, groups have enjoyed a huge range of species including Sunda Clouded Leopard, Sun Bear, Binturong, Bornean Pygmy Elephant and Bornean Orangutan, Marbled Cat, Otter Civet, Banteng, Sunda Skunk and Pen-tailed Tree Shrew, and the reserve also offers some superb birding with Bornean Falconet, Bornean Bristlehead and Giant Pitta amongst many special species. It must be noted that Sunda Clouded Leopard does remain a very difficult species to find and should not be an expected species on this tour. We try very hard to find this elusive cat and we shall see a great deal as we search and hope for a sighting.

This exciting 14-day holiday begins with a night in Sepilok where we will have the opportunity to visit the Orangutan and Sun Bear rehabilitation centres. We shall then proceed overland, via the Gomantong Caves, to Deramakot Forest Reserve for a 7-night stay; our daily programme will be dictated by the latest sightings and will involve a lot of nocturnal drives and spotlighting.

We shall then transfer to the beautiful Kinabatangan River for a 3-night stay at the delightful Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort. Taking to the water, we will enjoy a mixed programme of walks and boat trips in search of Bornean Pygmy Elephant and Proboscis Monkey in particular while Otter Civet has been seen at the lodge at times. It will then be time for us to depart and return back to the UK, but should you wish to explore Borneo further then extensions can be arranged with more information on this below.

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

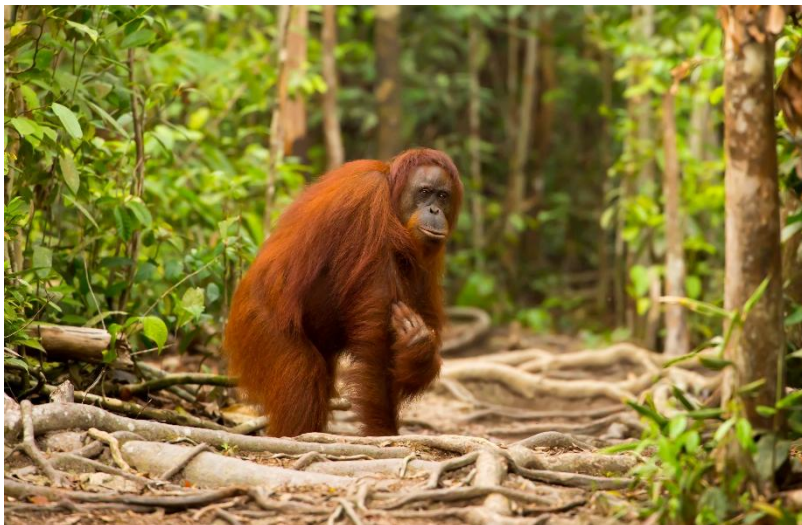
Sepilok, Orangutan Centre, Rainforest Discovery Centre

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 30 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 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.

After settling into our rooms, we will take a short walk to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre where we will spend a couple of hours visiting the centre and exploring the surrounding forests. Sepilok is a fascinating place to begin our tour and learn about Orangutan ecology. Rehabilitated animals live freely in the surrounding forests but make their way back to the centre twice a day for the free fruit meals on offer. Here we will not only hope to see Orangutan, but other wild species visiting may include: Plantain Squirrel, Prevost's Squirrel, Giant Squirrel, Maroon Langur, Pig-tailed, and Long-tailed Macaques.

We will also look out for such special bird species as the spectacular Black-and-red-Broadbill,



Bornean Orangutan

Scarlet-rumped Trogon, the endemic Bornean Bristlehead and various stunning species of barbet, sunbird, flycatcher and spiderhunter in the surrounding forest reserve. Those interested in insects are sure to be amazed by the staggering diversity of butterflies which will include several species of spectacular bird-wing butterfly.

Following our visit, we will then move to the nearby Rainforest Discovery Centre which is a very short distance from the lodge. This is a wonderful reserve with an impressive canopy walkway and the chance again to view some special wildlife. Wallace's Hawk Eagle, Chestnut-breasted Malkoha, Blue-rumped Parrot and Hooded Pitta are just some of the special birds we may see here, and it is one of the best places in all of Sabah to see Bornean Bristlehead. At dusk it is wonderful place to see Red Giant Flying Squirrels as they emerge from specially installed boxes before gliding away through the forest. For those who wish, we may carry out a short night walk here, searching for reptiles, amphibians, perhaps a Colugo and often roosting birds, before returning the short distance to the lodge.

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

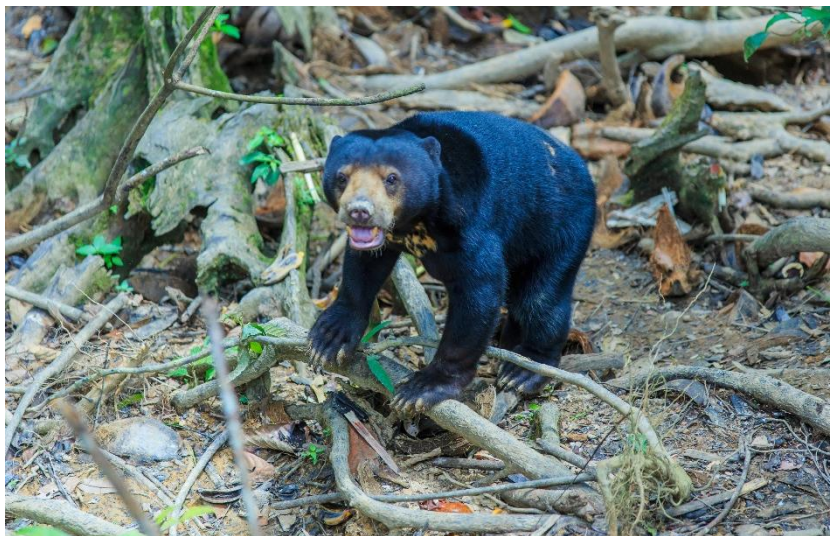
Day 3 Sun Bear Conservation Centre & transfer Deramakot Forest

After breakfast at the resort, we will visit the Sun Bear Conservation Centre. This centre, established in 2008, provides care and rehabilitation for orphaned and captive Malay Sun Bears, with the goal of releasing them to the wild and raising awareness of their plight. The Malay Sun Bear is the smallest bear in the world and is 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.

Following the visit, we shall leave and after an approximate four hour transfer over land we will arrive at Deramakot Forest Reserve, where will spend the next seven nights exploring the reserve through a mix of walks and drives. This is a far longer stay at the reserve than most tours make and reflects our strong focus on seeing the wonderful array of nocturnal wildlife to be found here with spotlighting sessions planned for each evening for those who wish.

Days 4 – 9 Explore Deramakot Forest Reserve

Deramakot Reserve embraces mature secondary and primary lowland rainforest and is home to many of Borneo's larger iconic mammal species including Sunda Clouded Leopard, Malay Sun Bear, Orangutan, Bornean Gibbon, Pygmy Elephant, and the Tembadau (Banteng). The 55,000 hectare reserve (along with its similar sized neighbour) is an important area for conservation as it is one of the last remaining areas of Sabah's original lowland forest. Here, the network of access roads



Malay Sun Bear

makes observing wildlife easier and without the rules and regulations so frequently found elsewhere in Asia, we are free to explore at our own pace.

We will undertake extensive drives every night, often until late into the night, or starting in the middle of the night, in the hope of seeing the forest's charismatic wildlife. Leopard Cats, Common Palm Civets, Malay Civets and Red Giant Flying-Squirrels are all likely to be quite common on our night safaris. On longer forays into the depths of the forest, we may encounter Banded and Small-toothed Palm Civets, Colugo, Moonrat, Bornean Slow Loris, Western Tarsier, Yellow-throated Marten or Black Flying-Squirrel and although it is rare and elusive species and of course cannot be guaranteed, Deramakot currently offers the best chance of seeing Sunda Clouded Leopard anywhere on the planet. With 7 nights to explore this outstanding reserve, we have an excellent chance of encountering some of Asia's rarest mammals, including Malay Sun Bear, Marbled Cat, Otter Civet, Sunda Skunk and Pen-tailed Tree Shrew.

This superb area is not only a great place for mammals, but also for birds and boasts a reserve list of over 250 species; with luck it is possible to see 70 or 80 species in a day including many Borneo specialties. Given our long stay at Deramakot we should have time to explore some of the forest here, although it is important to be aware that the search for night wildlife will be our overriding priority. Highlights of the birding variety might include Great Argus and Crested Fireback Pheasants, Great-billed Heron, Large Green, Thick-billed and Little Green Pigeons, Giant, Banded, Blue-headed and Black-headed Pittas, White-fronted Falconet, leafbirds, hornbills, malkohas and trogons. We will be accommodated in simple air-conditioned tourist chalets, with private bathrooms and shared communal areas, often with private balconies affording views either into the forest, or across the nearby Lipad River.



Giant Pitta

Day 10 Transfer to Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort, Kinabatangan River

We have time for a final dawn walk or drive and breakfast, before leaving the reserve and heading back to the main road and the outside world. It will now be time to continue onwards to the Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort, located on the Kinabatangan River. On the way there are two magnificent, 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 middlemen 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



Gomantong Cave

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, Wreathed or Bushy-crested Hornbills, or even another Orangutan.

Days 11 – 12

Explore Kinabatangan River

While staying at the Kinabatangan Wetlands Resort, 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 our motorised canoe will turn off the noisy diesel engine and switch on the low-powered and silent electric motor, enabling us to appreciate 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 the 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 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 Cat 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.



Black-and-red Broadbill

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.

Day 13

Fly Kuala Lumpur and take connecting flight to UK

A leisurely start to the day will see us enjoy a buffet breakfast before making our way back to Sandakan for a flight to Kuala Lumpur, before boarding our connecting flight to London.

Day 14

Land UK

We are due to arrive back in London in the early morning.

Tour Grading & Focus

The principle focus of our holiday will be trying to see some of Borneo's most elusive mammal species, particularly during our time at Deramakot Forest Reserve. As we visit some of the most magnificent rainforests on Earth, we will be entering the domain of many wonderful birds, reptiles



Yellow-throated Marten (Mike Gordon)

and insects. These will be enjoyed too of course. With the aid of local expertise, every effort will be made to locate mammals in particular but even on the most favourable of days it is unlikely that the animals will be viewable for more than a fraction of the time spent in the field. At all times, including during the searches for mammals, due attention will be paid to the wider

natural history of the country, and as the most conspicuous and widespread members of the fauna, we can expect to spend a significant amount of time enjoying the region's birds. It must always be remembered that when searching for birds and looking for the movement of birds, mammals are often then found. We are sure to see a very exciting range of mammals as we search for our ultimate target, the Sunda Clouded Leopard. Although groups have been successful with seeing Sunda Clouded Leopard, and we do everything we can to find one, it comes down to luck with this species and a sighting should be considered a bonus rather than an expectation.

Most of this tour is graded B – with occasional walks from our lodges. There is not a great deal of walking at Deramakot. Most of the trails at Deramakot are good, although some become a little more difficult if the weather is very wet. Whilst the walks should not be strenuous, the heat and humidity can be tiring at times. Please note that the nature and aims of this tour means that long hours will be spent in vehicles at night searching forest roads for mammals.

Guiding

This tour is led throughout by an excellent local guide who knows the areas extremely well. They will be with you throughout. From meeting you at the airport, to dropping you off there again at the end of the holiday. You will also have input from "in house" guides and drivers at Deramakot and on the Kinabatangan River. As the tour is locally led, we often find it difficult to gather a full tour report. If you would like to create a report we would be delighted to format it for you and produce a bound copy.

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 (December generally being the wettest but the climate varies a lot even within Sabah). 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

Accommodation during our time in Sepilok and on the Kinabatangan River will be in comfortable and well-situated eco-lodges, typically offering twin-bedded rooms with private facilities. During our time in Deramakot Forest Reserve we will be staying in simple air-conditioned tourist chalets with private bathrooms. Each chalet typically has two bedrooms with a shared communal area. The chalets pictured below are of a basic nature compared to Sepilok and our lodge on Kinabatangan River. This is a remote reserve and one of the very few which allows such extensive night time drives,



Above: The short, steep hill to the Restaurant.



Above & Below: Hills leading to accommodation, roughly 200-300m.

so we are really dealing with what we have here and those booking the holiday should be prepared for some basic accommodation at Deramakot in return for the chance to see a range of rare and difficult to see mammals and of course a range of birds too. The rooms though are clean and comfortable and adequate for our needs. The dining area is around 200 meters away down a fairly steep paved path.



All food is included in the price of the tour, except snacks or meals eaten at airports in transit. During our time at Deramakot Forest Reserve our meals will be prepared by our expedition chef, and meals will be eaten in a very informal dining room.

Toiletries and towels are provided at all lodges on the tour.



Chalet at Deramakot Forest Reserve.

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 times they do not charge this but official writing states it is payable.

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). Mode of payment is cash only. There is wording online that refers to **fixed-lens** cameras - 400mm and above being chargeable at RM1,000.00 per unit (around £200). It is worth stating here that we have never had a single person charged this £200. This is really for cameras that are being used for professional purposes. Many people carry 400 – 600mm lenses and when this happens the local guide just explains it is for personal use and there is no problem.

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 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, 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 Chris Still (Clouded Leopard) and Mike Gordon (Pygmy Elephant and Western Tarsier).



Proboscis Monkey