

# Directory

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## ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation in Borneo runs the gamut from international-standard hotels to rickety longhouses deep in the jungle. Naturally, in the bigger cities of the coasts, you'll have a wide range of choices. In smaller towns, on outlying islands, and in the hinterlands, you may be limited to very simple lodgings

### BOOK YOUR STAY ONLINE

For more accommodation reviews and recommendations by Lonely Planet authors, check out the online booking service at [www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels](http://www.lonelyplanet.com/hotels). You'll find the true, insider lowdown on the best places to stay. Reviews are thorough and independent. Best of all, you can book online.

indeed. Sabah and Sarawak have the best range of accommodation, particularly in the upper brackets. Kalimantan has fewer international-standard hotels and resorts. Brunei has the world's most expensive hotel, but beyond that, the range of accommodation is fairly limited.

In terms of cost, Borneo is good value. If you really want to stretch your money and don't mind simple accommodation, you can spend as little as US\$5 per night on accommodation in most places in Borneo, with the exception of Brunei, where you'll have to double that. Upper budget accommodation is also good value, at least compared to many other parts of the world, especially if you book online.

## International-Standard Hotels

There are international-standard hotels in Kota Kinabalu, Labuan, Kuching and Bandar Seri Begawan, and hotels of near international standard in most of the other big cities of Borneo. These have all the mod-cons and amenities you'd expect. Booking online is the way to go at most of these places and you'll often get rates half or less than the rack rates – you can often get excellent rooms for less than US\$100 per night, sometimes half that.

## Local Hotels

Small local hotels are the mainstay of budget travellers and backpackers across Borneo, and you can generally find a room in one of these places for between US\$10 and US\$15 per night. These simple places are usually run by locals of Chinese ancestry, but Muslim places also exist.

These hotels are generally fairly spartan: bare floors and just a bed, chair and table, wardrobe and sink. The showers and toilets are usually en suite, but may occasionally be down the hall. Your usual choices with these rooms are fan versus air-con and standard versus deluxe. It's often worth paying extra for a deluxe room, as these have often been refurbished recently and are sometimes *much* nicer than standard rooms for only a bit more money – it never hurts to ask if you can see a room.

**PRACTICALITIES**

- Electrical sockets are 220V AC; 50 Hz. Sarawak and Sabah (Malaysia) and Brunei use UK-style plugs with three square pins. Kalimantan (Indonesia) uses European-style plugs with two round prongs.
- Video recorders use the PAL system, also used in Australia, New Zealand, the UK and most of Europe.
- Brunei, Indonesia and Malaysia use the metric system.

One thing to look for in these local hotels is tile floors. Carpets do very poorly in the tropics and after only a year or two, they take on a dank fug that makes any room unpleasant.

**Resorts**

There are island and beach resorts of various classes along Borneo's coast and on its offshore islands. Sabah has several excellent seaside resorts right in Kota Kinabalu, as well as two more a short drive up the coast. In addition to these, there are resorts on several of Sabah's offshore islands like Pulau Mantanani, Pulau Manukan, Pulau Tiga, Layang Layang and off of Semporna. Sarawak's most famous resort area is the Santubong Peninsula, just north of Kuching, as well as a few beach resorts in Miri. Kalimantan has several seaside and island resorts along its coast, including the quaint island of Derawan.

**Guesthouses & Backpackers**

In the major tourist cities of Borneo you will find accommodation specifically designed for foreign travellers on a budget. These places are usually pretty similar, offering a choice of dorm beds or simple private rooms (usually with common bathrooms), a common area, an internet terminal or two, a basic kitchen and, if you're lucky, a rooftop garden for hanging out in the evening. Some of these places rent bicycles and conduct tours of local sights. Dorm rooms in places like these average about US\$5 per night and private rooms run around US\$12. Dorms are the better value here, since you can often get a much better private room in a cheap hotel for about the same price.

**Longhouses**

Longhouses are the traditional dwellings of the indigenous peoples of Borneo. These communal dwellings may contain up to 100 individual family 'apartments' built under one long roof. The most important area of a longhouse is the common veranda, which serves as a social area. These days there are two main types of longhouse: 'tourist longhouses' and 'authentic longhouses'. While a visit to a tourist longhouse is easily enough arranged it is unlikely to be of much interest. A visit to an authentic, living longhouse is likely to be of more interest. The best place to visit a longhouse is Sarawak or Kalimantan. For details, see boxed text, p32.

**Camping**

Camping is another good, cheap option in Borneo. Many of the national parks have official campgrounds and a few will permit camping in nondesignated sites once you are into the back country. There are also many lonely stretches of beach along the coast and on islands that are ideal for camping. If you do decide to camp in Borneo, a two-season tent with mosquito netting is ideal. As for sleeping bags, a summer-weight bag or just a bag liner will usually suffice, unless you intend to do some climbing (the mountains of Borneo get colder than you'd imagine).

**ACTIVITIES**

The name of the game in Borneo is adventure sports: trekking, mountain climbing, diving, snorkelling, river rafting, mountain biking and caving. For information on these sports, see the Borneo Outdoors chapter (p54). Apart from outdoor sports, you can also study the culture of Borneo's indigenous people at various longhouses in Kalimantan, Sabah and Sarawak. You can also study Malay cooking in cities like Kuching (p166).

**BUSINESS HOURS**

Government offices are usually open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4.15pm. Most close for lunch from 12.45 to 2pm, and on Friday the lunch break is from 12.15pm to 2.45pm for Friday prayers at the mosque. On Saturday the offices are open from 8am to 12.45pm.

Bank hours are generally 10am to 3pm on weekdays and 9.30am to 11.30am on Saturday. Shop hours are variable, although a good rule of thumb for small shops is that they're open