

# PLAN YOUR TRIP

## YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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# UNDERSTAND BORNEO

## GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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**THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY**

**Daniel Robinson**  
**Adam Karlin, Paul Stiles**

➤ **Every listing is recommended by our authors, and their favourite places are listed first**

➤ **Look out for these icons:**



Our author's top recommendation



A green or sustainable option



No payment required

# On the Road

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# Borneo



# Top Experiences >

**Mt Kinabalu**  
By far Borneo's  
highest peak (p56)

**Sepilok Orang-Utan  
Rehabilitation Centre**  
Orangutans up close (p77)

**Sungai Kinabatangan**  
River banks teeming  
with animals (p82)

**Danum Valley**  
Primeval jungle, pygmy  
elephants, orangutans (p88)

**Kelabit Highlands**  
Cool air, smiles, great  
trekking (p186)

**Derawan Archipelago**  
Unspoilt tropical  
islands (p239)

**Loksado**  
Mountain retreat (p263)





## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London, Oakland and Delhi, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Daniel Robinson

**Coordinating Author, Plan Your Trip, Sarawak, Understand Borneo, Survival**

**Guide** Daniel has been covering Southeast Asia and its rainforests since 1989, when he researched Lonely Planet's first, award-winning guides to Vietnam and Cambodia. On his many visits to Sarawak, he has developed a fondness for travelling *ulu-ulu* (way upriver) by longboat, tramping through the jungle in search of gargantuan Rafflesia flowers, and slurping *Sarawak laksa*. Daniel,

who holds a BA in Near Eastern Studies from Princeton University, writes on travel for a variety of magazines and newspapers, including the *New York Times*.

Read more about Daniel:

[lonelyplanet.com/members/daniel\\_robinson](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/daniel_robinson)



### Adam Karlin

**Diving Pulau Sipadan, Sabah, Brunei** Adam thinks Borneo is like a savage garden,

which may explain why he loves it truly, madly, deeply. On this trip, his second exploring Sabah (and third exploring Malaysia) for Lonely Planet, he glimpsed primates, hiked jungle mountains, held his own in expat drinking games and floated on his back down a river through virgin rainforest – a pretty good moment, that. He has written or contributed to some 30 titles for Lonely Planet.

Read more about Adam:

[lonelyplanet.com/members/adamkarlin](http://lonelyplanet.com/members/adamkarlin)



### Paul Stiles

**Kalimantan** Paul specialises in islands, ecotourism, and adventure travel for Lonely Planet, so Kalimantan was a natural fit. For this book he completed the entire Cross-Borneo Trek, crossing the Muller Range in five days. His only regret is that he did not have his camera when a rare clouded leopard swam right in front of his boat. Guide: 'I don't know, looks like a wild cat... Oh my god, *macan dahan!*'

Read more about Paul:

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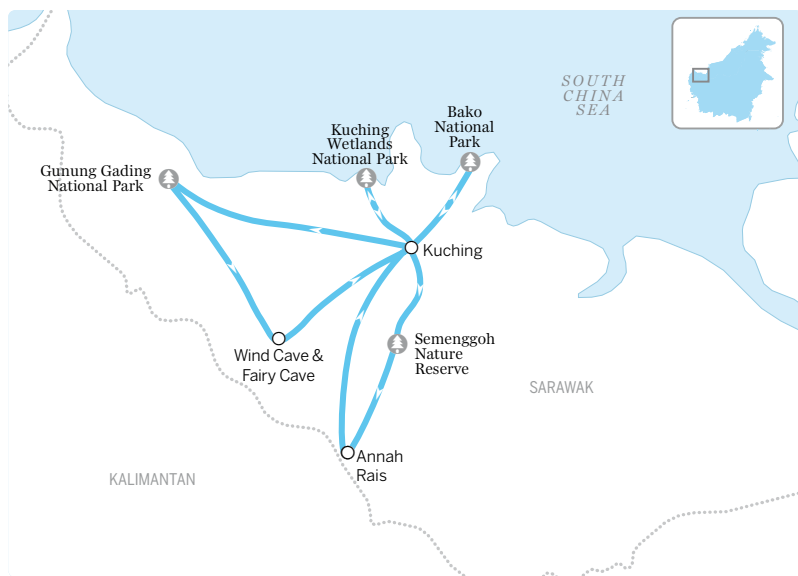
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# itineraries

*Whether you've got six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.*



## One Week Kuching Excursions

Spend your first day in **Kuching** tuning into the vibe of the city's kaleidoscopic mix of cultures and cuisines. Explore the narrow streets of Old Chinatown, ride a tiny passenger ferry to the English Renaissance-style Fort Margherita, and take a sunset stroll along the Waterfront Promenade. If it's Saturday, head to the Satok Weekend Market in the afternoon; if it's Sunday, visit in the morning; and if a giant *Rafflesia* flower happens to be in bloom in **Gunung Gading National Park**, drop everything and rush over before it fades away. On the way back, explore the **Wind Cave** and the **Fairy Cave**. On other days, combine a daytime excursion with an evening enjoying Kuching's fine eateries and chic but laid-back nightlife. Spend a half-day spotting orangutans at **Semenggoh Nature Reserve**, then drive further inland to the longhouse of **Annah Rais**, where you can stay overnight. Take a boat to **Bako National Park**, keeping an eye out for proboscis monkeys, macaques and pitcher plants as you hike around the peninsula. One day spend the sunset hour cruising around **Kuching Wetlands National Park**, alert for fireflies, crocs and proboscis monkeys.





## Three Weeks Around Sabah

Arrive in **Kota Kinabalu** (KK) and give yourself two days to pre-book accommodation in places like Sungai Kinabatangan, the Semporna Archipelago (if you plan on diving) and Mt Kinabalu – accommodation at the latter should ideally be booked before you get to Sabah. Whilst in KK, make sure to eat at the Night Market and take a trip to the Mari Mari Cultural Village, Sabah Museum and Lok Kawi Wildlife Park – you can get a taste of the cultures, landscapes and animal life you're about to encounter firsthand. Party on the KK waterfront your first night in town, but try to keep your head clear the morning you leave Sabah's capital.

If you decide to climb **Mt Kinabalu**, it's easiest to leave from KK. You'll need to allow two to three days for the mountain – there's the climb itself, and the day of rest you'll need afterwards! Whether you climb the highest mountain in Borneo or not, give yourself a few days to explore northwest Sabah. In the vicinity of **Tuaran** you can visit a lovely water village, while in **Kota Belud** you can relax at Mañana guesthouse and see, if you time things right, the famous Sunday *tamu* (market). Heading north are the hidden beaches of **Kudat**, and offshore, the isolated, off-the-tourist-trail islands of **Pulau Mantanani** (easier to get to from Kota Belud) and **Pulau Banggi**. This area is great for homestays.

Now a little over a week into your trip, head east to **Sepilok** and its famous orangutan sanctuary. After watching our arboreal cousins being fed in a wildlife reserve, try to spot them in the wild during a river cruise down the **Sungai Kinabatangan**. There are great lodges and homestays out this way. Relaxing in these two spots could easily fill four days to a week. Now decide – do you want to finish by diving in the **Semporna Archipelago**? Or trekking in the **Danum Valley** or **Maliau Basin**? All of these options are possible, but to be practical and give these destinations the time they deserve, allow five days for each. If you want to both dive and see Danum or Maliau, cut out the days allotted above for exploring northwest Sabah.



## Three Weeks Kuching to Brunei

Fly into **Kuching** and spend a few days exploring this multicultural mini-metropolis, delving into its scrumptious cuisine scene for breakfast (Sarawak laksa), lunch and dinner. Take day trips to nearby national parks in search of orangutans, proboscis monkeys and exotic flora. Then hop on the daily express ferry to the mostly Chinese river port of **Sibu**, where you can continue to eat well – don't miss the Foochow specialities on offer in the vast Central Market.

Sibu serves as the gateway to the mighty Batang Rejang (Rejang River), the 'Amazon of Borneo'. Board an early-morning 'flying coffin' express boat and head upriver to **Kapit**, a bustling trading centre founded in the days of the White Rajahs. If the river level is high enough, continue on to back-of-beyond **Belaga**, jumping-off point for short treks to a number of fascinating **Orang Ulu longhouses**.

A bone-jarring 4WD ride will get you down to the coastal city of **Bintulu**, Borneo's natural gas capital. Avoid the less-than-fetching city centre and head straight to the beaches, rain-forest trails and bungalows of oft-overlooked **Similajau National Park**, which stretches along the coast for 30km.

Hop on a bus heading northeast to **Batu Niah Junction**, situated just a few kilometres from the vast caves, chirping bat colonies and prehistoric archaeological sites of **Niah National Park**. Next stop is the shiny petroleum city of **Miri**, home to a flourishing guest-house scene that nicely complements the excellent dining options (especially fish). Chilling here amid mod cons is a great way to spend a day or two before flying into Borneo's interior for a few days – travellers speak glowingly of both **Gunung Mulu National Park**, a Unesco World Heritage site, and the gorgeously green and amazingly friendly **Kelabit Highlands**.

After flying back to Miri, take a bus – or the newspaper delivery van – to **Bandar Seri Begawan**, the surprisingly laid-back capital of the tiny, oil-rich sultanate of Brunei. Several museums showcase Bruneian culture, and culinary creations can be enjoyed at BSB's superb – and surprisingly inexpensive – hawker centres. End your Bornean odyssey back in the primeval rainforest by taking a speedboat, a car and finally a longboat to the pristine jungles of **Ulu Temburong National Park**.



## Three Weeks Around Kalimantan

Fly into **Berau**, preferably via hopping **Balikpapan** (where you can get your visa on arrival), and explore the nearby **Derawan Archipelago**, home to some world-class diving. You can spend the night swapping stories with backpackers on **Pulau Derawan**, or head to the little-touristed outer islands, like **Pulau Maratua** (backpacker heaven) or tiny **Nunukan Island**, a resort perched on a blackened reef. Once back in Berau, head south to unspoiled **Wehea Forest** where you will find virgin rainforest at its very best. Look for rare wildlife and stay overnight in an ecolodge on a rushing stream. From there it's on to exotic **Samarinda**, gateway to the **Sungai Mahakam** and home to an eye-popping mosque. Head upriver to **Tenggarong**, with its resplendent *keraton* (palace) and golden *lembuswana* (mythical winged creature with an elephant's trunk); take a gaily-coloured *ces* (longtail canoe) on an unforgettable journey through the marshes and waterways around **Mancong**; and overnight on a *kapal biasa*, a river ferry that acts like a floating hostel. Side trips to **longhouses** reveal local Dayak culture past and present. Don't miss fascinating **Jantur**, a large town with riverside boardwalks on the edge of an enormous wetland. After returning to Balikpapan, take a bus to the pleasant village of **Kandagan**, gateway to the **Pegunungan Meratus (Meratus Mountains)**, and then a car to **Loksado**, a charming mountain hamlet that will capture your heart, where you can equally enjoy trekking, bamboo rafting or doing nothing. Continue on to **Banjarmasin**, where you can catch the floating market in the early hours, then fly to **Tanjung Puting National Park**, where you can cruise the Sungai Sekonyer in search of wildlife and watch wild orangutans emerge from the forest to feed, in one of Indonesia's most popular destinations. Then it's onto nearby **Pangkalan Bun** airport, where you'll wonder how you ever packed all that into three weeks.