

Welcome to Borneo

It's a jungle out there! Borneo has some of the world's most species-rich equatorial rainforests with prime patches that are easily accessible from modern, multi-ethnic cities.

Ancient Rainforests

If you've always longed to experience the humid fecundity of a real equatorial rainforest, Borneo will fulfil your wildest dreams. The island's jungles conjure up remoteness and adventure, bringing to mind impenetrable foliage and river trips into the 'heart of darkness'. But look a little closer and nuances emerge: the pitcher plants, lianas and orchids of the lowland forest give way to conifers and rhododendrons as you ascend the flanks of Mt Kinabalu. Deforestation makes for depressing headlines, but significant parts of the Bornean rainforest remain intact, protected by conservation projects whose viability depends in part on income from tourists.

Jungle Wildlife

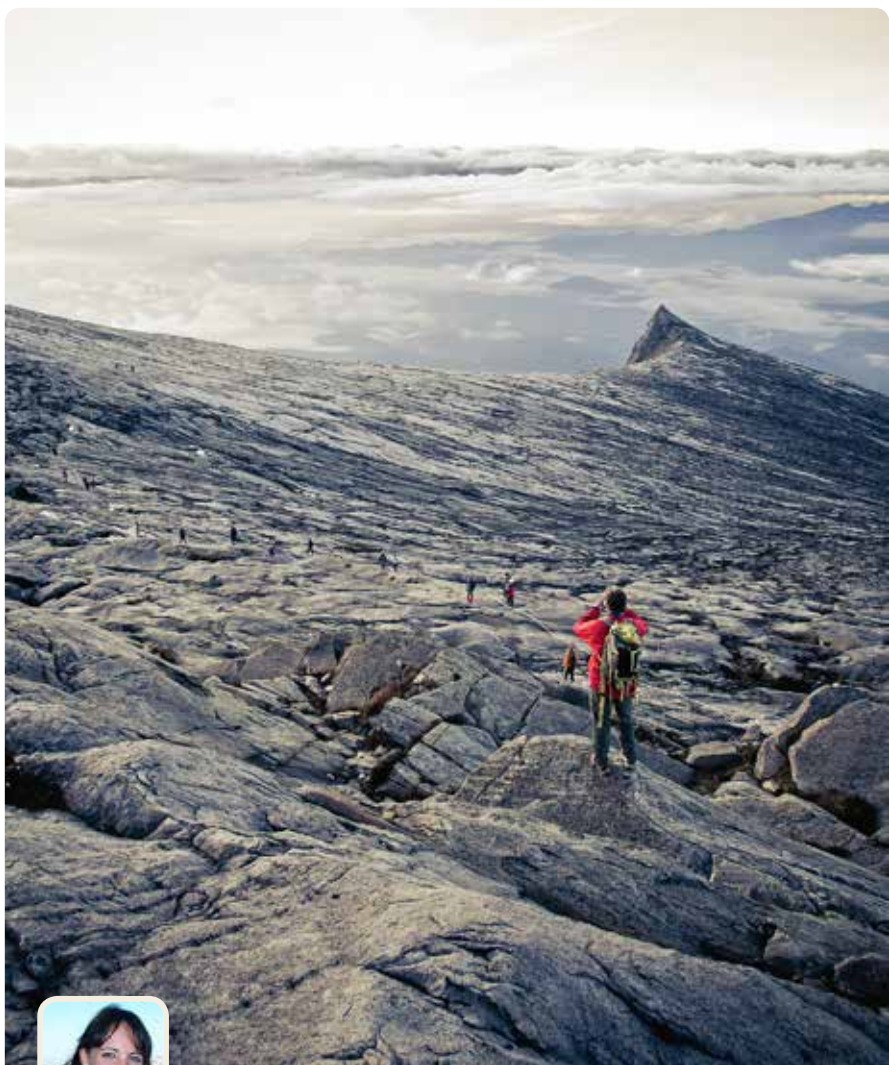
For many visitors to Borneo, their most memorable moment is glimpsing a wild orangutan swinging through the jungle canopy, spotting an Irrawaddy dolphin in the shimmering waters of the South China Sea, or locking eyes with the reptilian gaze of a saltwater croc. Jungle animals are shy by nature, but a good guide can help you tell the difference between a vine and vine snake, between a twig and a stick insect, and between the call of a gibbon and the cry of a hornbill.

Cultural Riches

Borneo brings together an astonishing array of cultures, religions and languages, and age-old traditions of hospitality mean visitors are welcomed. Most cities have significant Chinese communities, while the picturesque coastal *kampung* (villages) of Sabah and Sarawak are populated mainly by Malays, but head inland and the dominant culture is indigenous. Borneo's Dayak groups stopped headhunting long ago, but many other ancient customs and ceremonies live on in longhouse communities. There's no better way to experience the indigenous way of life than to drop by for a visit – easy to arrange with a local guide.

Culinary Melting Pot

The varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds of Borneo's people means the island's cuisines are as wide-ranging as they are delicious. Seafood from the South China Sea is served fresh at Chinese restaurants, smoky chicken satay stalls beckon at Malay night markets and Indonesian eateries offer spicy sambal. Even tiny Brunei has its own culinary traditions, not to mention Borneo's numerous indigenous groups. From the sublime cooking of the Kelabit people – including Bario rice and pineapple curry – to dishes such as bamboo chicken and *midin* jungle fern, Dayak cuisine is unlike anything you've ever tasted.



Why I Love Borneo

By Isabel Albiston, Writer

I've often found that it's in places of true wildness and potential peril that human warmth and kindness is most immediate, and nowhere is that more true than in Borneo. There is a sense of magic in this land where the forest itself is believed to be inhabited by spirits who may or may not wish you well, and trekking from longhouse to longhouse means shimmying across rickety bamboo bridges, collecting wild mushrooms and fiddlehead ferns for dinner and keeping an eye out for wildlife – possibly even shaggy orangutans – moving through the canopy above.

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