



BorneoTravels
EXPLORE BORNEO



SABAH / SARAWAK / BRUNEI / KALIMANTAN

The Best of Borneo

A visual field guide across four regions

BORNEOTRAVELS.COM

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How to use this guide

Borneo is three countries, two big states and a long list of places worth a day or a week. This guide takes them one by one, with photographs, maps where a reliable base was available, and the facts the owners publish.

Start here

Chapter 20 helps you choose where to read first, by what you love. Chapter 21 shows how the places have been joined into routes. Chapter 18 covers timing and packing.

How facts are labelled

Each chapter ends with a sources page. It names the owner page, such as a national park or tourism board, and the date it was read. Notes marked "BorneoTravels advice" are our judgement, not the owner's. Fees and contact details change, so this guide prints none. The few hours it quotes are labelled with their source and date. Check the owner before you go.

Booking links

Some chapters end with a "Book a tour" box. Offers and availability change, so check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

Where it covers

Sabah, Sarawak, Brunei and Kalimantan, in 21 chapters. Some regions have more depth than others. The status page lists the gaps.

SABAH • CHAPTER 1

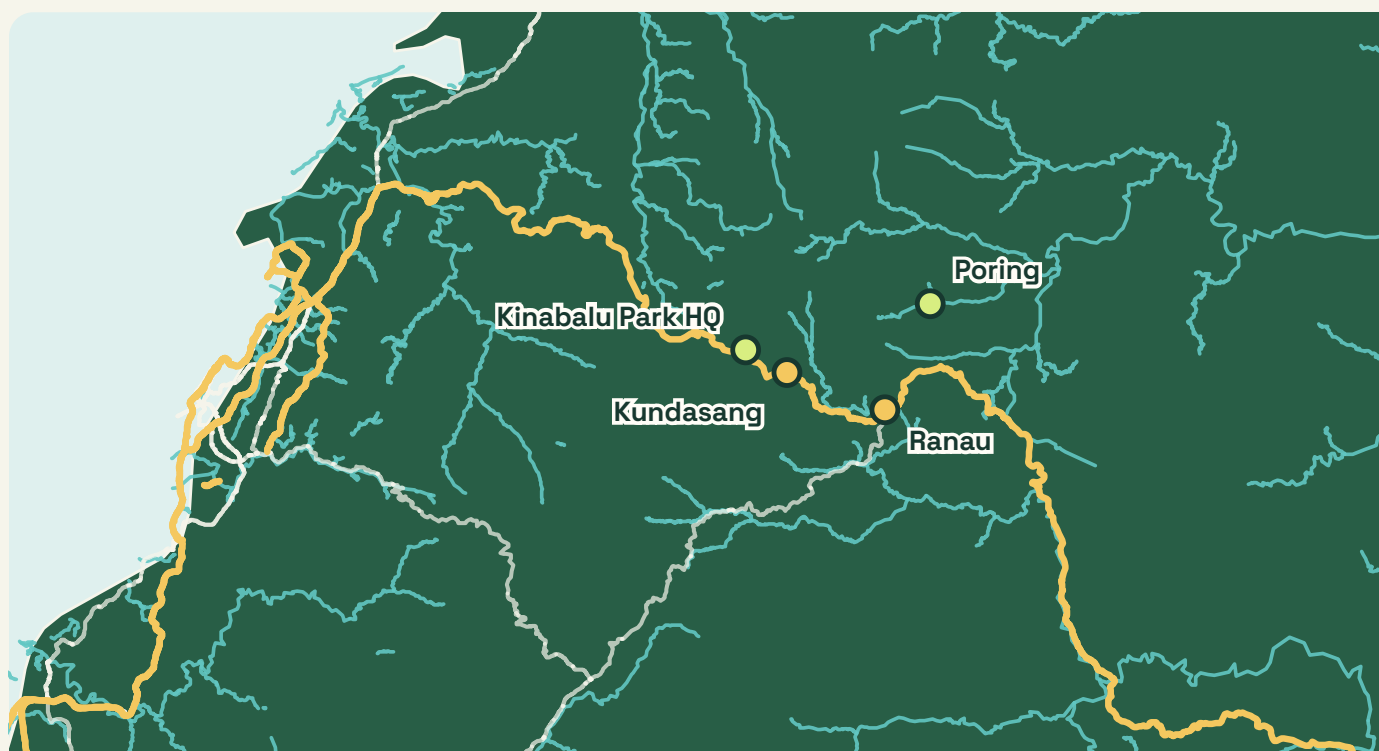
Kinabalu and the highlands

One mountain, one cool valley road, a hot spring and a dairy farm in the clouds. Give the highlands a night and they pay you back in mornings.

A valley road, four reasons to stop

Kinabalu Park headquarters sits about 92 km from Kota Kinabalu along the east-coast highway, at roughly 1,520 metres. Sabah Parks puts Poring about 40 km from the park headquarters, to the north-east and down at around 400 metres, among lowland forest. The two feel like different islands.

This chapter follows that road: the park and the climb, the cool plateau around Kundasang, and the hot springs and gardens at Poring. Plan it as one overnight, or as two if the summit is part of the trip.



Kota Kinabalu, on the west coast, is about 92 km from the park by road (Sabah Parks). Places are pins only; positions are approximate and not a navigation map. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Roads show context, not a recommended route.

CHAPTER AT A GLANCE

PARK HQ

About 1,520 m above sea level

PORING

About 400 m, around 40 km from park HQ

CLIMB

Separate official booking, one night on the mountain

WITHOUT A CLIMB

One night is enough for the park, Kundasang and Poring

Sources: Sabah Parks: sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/ and [/kinabalu-park/poring](https://sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/poring) (read 29 Oct 2026). Pins geocoded 29 Oct 2026.



Mike Prince · CC BY 2.0

THE PARK

More than a summit

Gazetted in 1964, Kinabalu Park was Sabah's first park. It covers about 754 km², and Sabah Tourism says it holds three UNESCO titles: Geopark, World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. The summit stands at 4,095.2 metres.

Sabah Parks describes habitats running from towering lowland trees through misty mountain forest to sculpted granite. That is the reason to come even if you never climb: the forest changes as the road rises.

Park hours are published as 8 am to 5 pm daily, with last entry to the Botanical Garden at 3 pm.

THE PARK IN NUMBERS

GAZETTED

1964, Sabah's first park

AREA

About 754 km²

HEADQUARTERS

Around 1,520 m

HOURS

8 am to 5 pm daily

GARDEN LAST ENTRY

3 pm

Do not assume a park visit means a climb. The park has worthwhile low-impact visits for non-climbers. The summit route is a separate, capacity-limited booking with a demanding altitude profile. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Sources: Sabah Parks: kinabalu-park; Sabah Tourism: destination/mount-kinabalu (read 29 Oct 2026).

Climb it, or look up at it?

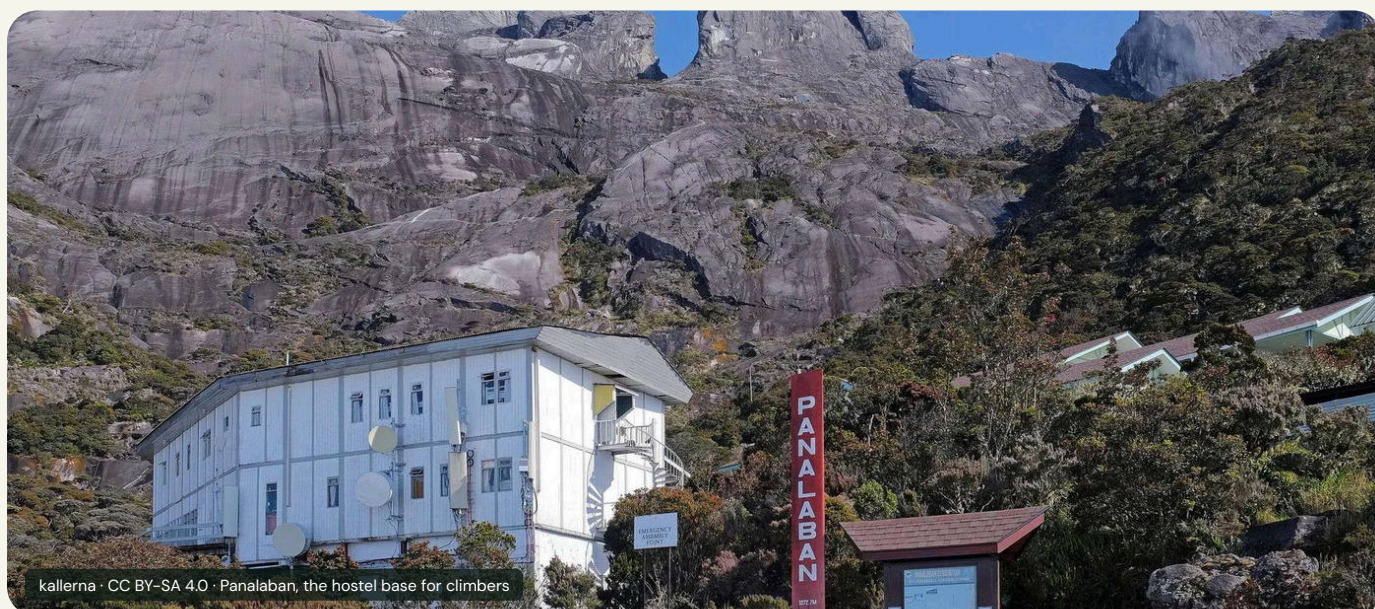
Everything else in the highlands follows from this one choice. The two trips need different bookings, different clothes and a different number of nights.

Climb

- Reserve through the official Sabah Parks booking first, then build travel around the confirmed date.
- One night on the mountain at Panalaban, in a hostel package.
- Alarm around 2 am, summit at sunrise, down to the gate by afternoon.
- Weather decides whether the summit is reached.
- Keep the night before and after near your logistics.

Look

- One night near the park or in Kundasang is enough.
- Walk forest trails and the Botanical Garden at the park.
- Add the Kundasang farm and Poring if time allows.
- Give the mountain more than one chance: cloud shapes the view.
- Stay for the morning, not just a photo stop.



kallerna · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Panalaban, the hostel base for climbers

STAY IF

you want cool air and big views, or you have a confirmed climb date.

SKIP IF

you expect to turn up and climb without a booking: it does not work that way.

Sources: Sabah Parks: services/mount-kinabalu-climbing (read 29 Oct 2026); advice lines are BorneoTravels guidance.



CLIMB • DAY 1

Gate to Panalaban

The official programme, as Sabah Parks publishes it. Your guide can change it for weather, trail conditions or safety.

7:00 TO 10:30 AM

Arrive and register

Pay the park conservation fee cashless at the main gate. Register at the climbing counter at the Visitor Centre with your booking invoice, QR code, identity document, copies and indemnity form. Pay your guide, transfer and optional porter in cash. Collect your permit tag.

AFTER REGISTRATION

Timpohon Gate

Transfer to the gate with your guide, attend the rules briefing and start climbing to Panalaban.

FROM 1:00 PM

Check in

Rest at the Lemaing or Panalaban hostel you booked.

4:30 TO 7:00 PM

Dinner

Served at Laban Rata Resthouse.

Sources: Sabah Parks climbing guide: sabahparks.org.my/services/mount-kinabalu-climbing (read 29 Oct 2026).



kallerna · CC BY-SA 4.0

CLIMB · DAY 2

Low's Peak at sunrise

2:00 TO 3:30 AM

Supper, then up

Supper at Laban Rata, then start the ascent to Low's Peak with your guide.

BY 5:30 AM

Sayat-Sayat checkpoint

Show your permit tag. Continue only as your guide and park officials direct.

AROUND SUNRISE

Summit and down

Allow about 10 to 15 minutes for photographs, then descend. Weather and safety decide whether the summit is reached.

7:30 TO 10:30 AM

Breakfast, check-out

Check out by 10:30 am; late check-out is charged.

AIM BEFORE 4:00 PM

Back at Timpohon Gate

A late return is charged per hour. Transfer back to the Visitor Centre.

Sources: Sabah Parks climbing guide (read 29 Oct 2026). Fees and charges change: use the official page for current amounts.

Book early, pay fast, check every name

Reservations are online only, through Sabah Parks, and subject to available slots. The package covers one night in a hostel, three meals, the climbing permit and insurance. Guide, transfer, porter and park fees are separate.

Two hostel packages

Lemaing is listed for Malaysian citizens. **Panalaban** is listed for Malaysian and international climbers. Choose the nationality and age category for each climber carefully.

Three steps from Sabah Parks

1. Choose date and hostel, entering each name exactly as on the identity document.
2. Pay online within the time shown: an unpaid reservation is cancelled without notice.
3. Save the invoice and QR code. Online self-check-in opens five days before the climb.

THE RULES THAT CATCH PEOPLE OUT

NAMES

Replacement of names is not allowed

CANCELLATION

Official page says cancellations are non-refundable

PAY AT THE PARK, CASHLESS

Conservation fee, parking, optional certificate

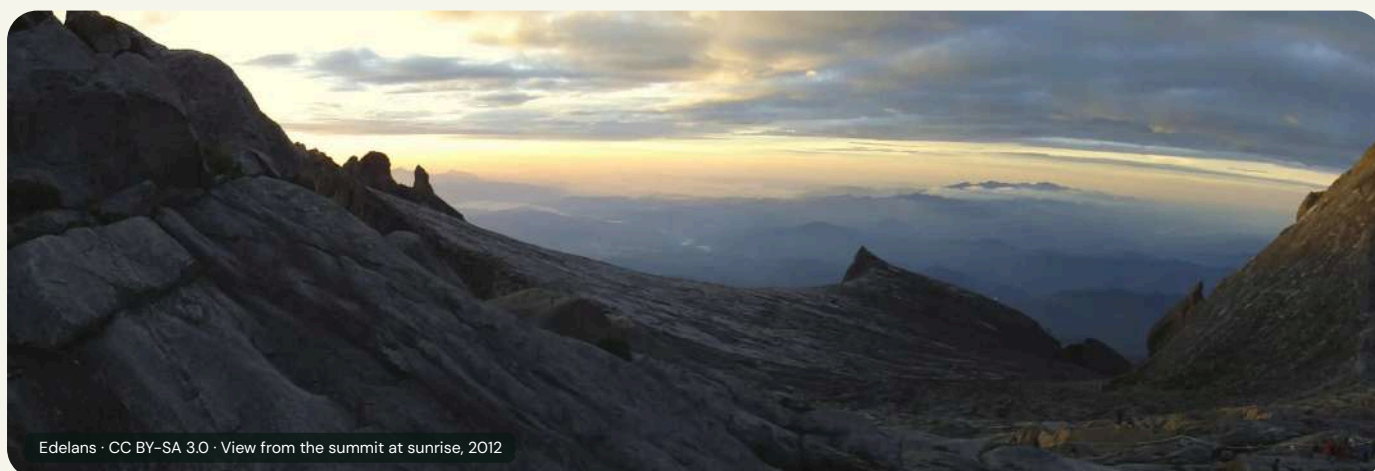
PAY AT THE PARK, CASH

Guide, transfer to Timpohon Gate, optional porter

BRING

Original ID plus a photocopy, booking invoice and QR, indemnity form

Booking status, dated. Sabah Parks' climbing page said, as of 19 September 2026, that bookings for the 2027 season had not opened and that dates are not necessarily fully booked. We have not checked it since. Look at the official booking site before planning around a date.



Edelans · CC BY-SA 3.0 · View from the summit at sunrise, 2012

Sources: Sabah Parks: services/mount-kinabalu-climbing (read 29 Oct 2026, 2026 season text).

What Sabah Parks tells you to bring

For the mountain

- Warm clothing for cold summit conditions
- Head torch (a waterproof one is recommended)
- Waterproof windbreaker
- Whistle for emergencies
- High-energy snacks such as chocolate, and drinks
- Waterproof gloves with a good grip
- Hiking shoes with a good grip

For every climber

- Original MyKad, MyKid or passport
- A photocopy of that document
- Booking invoice and QR code, saved for offline use
- Completed indemnity form after online self-check-in



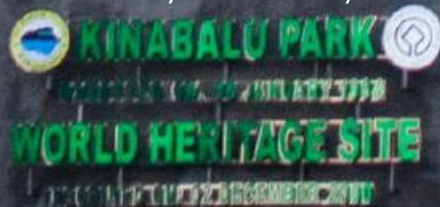
ReubenST · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Hill lodges, Kinabalu Park

The park is cool and often wet at headquarters level as well. A rain layer and a warm top are worth carrying for a non-climbing day. (BorneoTravels advice.)

KUNDASANG

The little New Zealand of Sabah

Sabah Tourism's nickname for Desa Cattle Dairy Farm: cool air, foggy surroundings and highland pasture that make you feel as if you are somewhere overseas.



A farm that tourists visit properly

The farm covers about 199 hectares, and most of its milking cows are Holstein Friesians, which Sabah Tourism calls the highest milk producers of all cattle breeds. It has grown into an agro-tourism business making fresh milk, yoghurt, cheese and gelato.

Visits are limited to three sessions a day with a limited number of visitors, and booking is required ahead. You feed calves with bottled milk, feed goats, see how milk is processed and join an educational tour.



Wiki Asmah · CC BY-SA 4.0 · A calf at Desa Dairy Farm

PLAN THE VISIT

SESSIONS

8 to 11 am, 11 am to 2 pm, 2 to 5 pm (per Sabah Tourism, page reviewed Oct 2023)

BOOKING

Required ahead, through the farm's own booking site

GETTING THERE

Minibus or taxi from KK to Kundasang town, then a private or chartered vehicle to the farm; or self-drive or e-hailing from KK

ASK FIRST

Sessions and limits were last reviewed in 2023: confirm with the farm

Stay for the morning. A night in Kundasang gives you an early look at the landscape before clouds build. Choose a place by how you will get around: some sit away from the main road. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Skip it as a day trip if you expect a slow highland experience. The road and the weather make it a long outing; an overnight gives you the quiet morning. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Sources: Sabah Tourism: [destination/desa-cattle-dairy-farm](#) (read 29 Oct 2026, page last reviewed 24 Oct 2023).

Vegetables, tea and a closed garden

Sabah Tourism says the Ranau district has a majority Dusun community and is famous for its highland vegetables and an aromatic local tea. The district page lists more to see: Sosodikon Hill, Maragang Hill, Pekan Nabal, the Kenipir memorial at the site of a prisoner-of-war camp, and village stops such as Bombon Marakau. We have not visited or checked any of these yet, so treat them as leads to ask your host about.



Mike Prince · CC BY 2.0

Mesilau is closed. Sabah Parks marks the Mesilau substation closed on its pages (read 29 Oct 2026). It describes a 2,000 m montane forest and the largest pitcher plant in the world, *Nepenthes rajah*, with a pitcher of up to 2 litres. Entry to the pitcher plant trail was historically with an official guide only. That is history now, not a plan: do not build a day around Mesilau until the park says it has reopened.

Why the pitcher plants are such a story

Sabah Parks says insects are lured by nectar, fall into a pitcher formed from a leaf and drown in digestive fluid. Some pitchers are small ecosystems: spiders, crabs, tadpoles and larvae live in them immune to the enzymes.



kallerna · CC BY-SA 4.0 · *Nepenthes villosa*, Mount Kinabalu (species as named in the Commons file title). A different species from the *Nepenthes rajah* described above; this is not a photo of a *rajah*

A close-up photograph of a Rafflesia flower, the world's largest. The flower has a large, central, dark opening surrounded by a thick, white, and bumpy ring. The petals are a deep red color with a bumpy, textured surface. The flower is growing on a forest floor covered with dry leaves and twigs.

PORING

The world's largest flower, if you are lucky

Sabah Tourism says lucky trekkers at Poring might catch a rare glimpse of Rafflesia. Sabah Parks keeps a dedicated Rafflesia garden alongside the hot springs and the forest walks.

Hot water in the lowland forest

Poring is named after a giant bamboo that grows abundantly in the area. It sits at about 400 metres, among dipterocarp trees that dominate the lowland forest trails.

The hot sulphur springs were first developed by the Japanese during the Second World War. Water from five springs, between 49 and 60 degrees Celsius at source, is channelled into tiled pools and tubs. Those figures are for the natural springs, not a bathing temperature: follow staff instructions at the pools.

To reach the pools you cross a short suspension bridge over the Mamut River and pass a grove of *Gigantochloa levis*, the bamboo that gave the place its name.



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Poring hot springs



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Poring pools

Canopy walkway: closed. Sabah Parks' notice, read 29 Oct 2026, says the Poring canopy walkway has been closed from 30 July 2025 until further notice for major maintenance and upgrades. Details of the walkway below are history, not a current offer. Confirm with the park before planning around it.

Sources: Sabah Parks: [kinabalu-park/poring](#) and [/poring/canopy](#); Sabah Tourism: [destination/poring-hot-spring-phs](#) (read 29 Oct 2026).

Book a tour

- [Kinabalu Park and Poring Hot Spring day tour](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

Walks, waterfalls and a canopy story

Kipungit Waterfall

The nearest: about 15 minutes (1 km) from the hot spring area. About 10 metres high and suitable for family picnics.

Langanan Waterfall

Poring's highest at more than 120 metres. About two hours (3.4 km) through lowland forest. The Sabah Tourism page calls it the furthest.

Bat Cave

About 30 minutes on foot from the main entrance, on the way to Langanan.

Ex-situ gardens

Butterfly farm, lowland tropical garden, orchid conservation centre, ethnobotanical, mini botanical, bamboo and Rafflesia gardens.

The canopy walkway, as it was

Sabah Parks describes three circuits totalling 373.6 metres, up to 41 metres above the ground, opened in May 1990, built from rope and steel-cable suspension bridges and aluminium ladders. Its argument for the walkway: an estimate that 75% of tropical rainforest animals spend most of their time in the canopy. It is currently closed (see the previous page).

PLAN THE DAY

PARK HOURS

8 am to 5 pm daily; last gate entry 3 pm

BUTTERFLY FARM

9 am to 4 pm

BRING

Rubber sandals, a change of clothes, a towel and swimwear (Sabah Tourism)

DISTANCE

About 40 km from Kinabalu Park HQ



Mike Prince · CC BY 2.0 · Langanan Waterfall (Commons file title: Langanan)

STAY IF

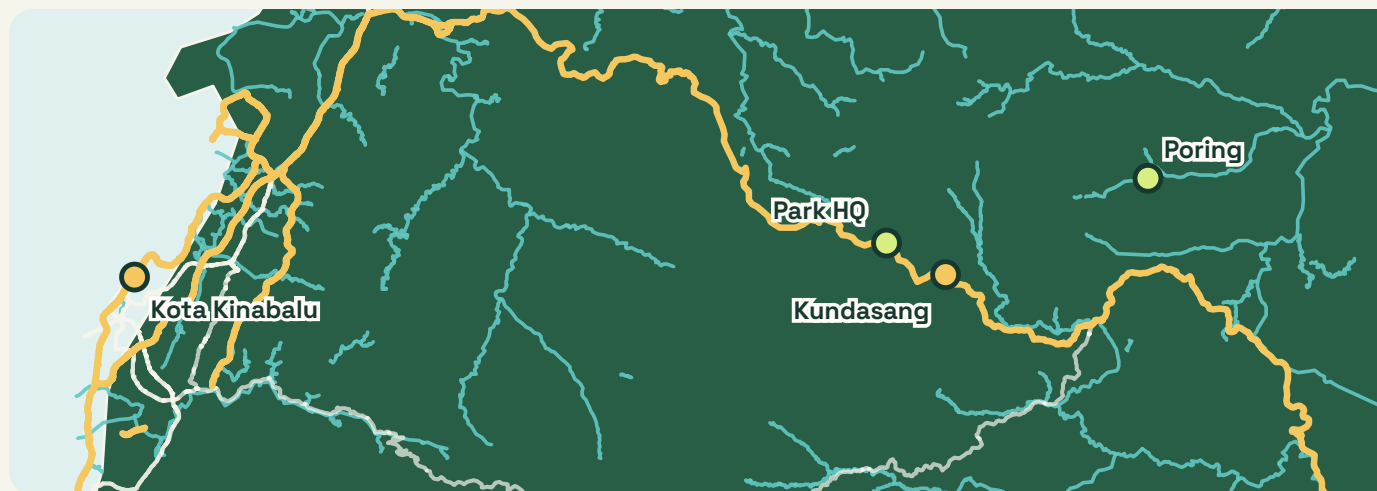
you like short forest walks and a hot soak after a cool-weather day.

SKIP IF

you only have a few hours: pair Poring with Kundasang or the park rather than rushing all three.

Sources: Sabah Parks: [kinabalu-park/poring/](https://www.kinabalu-park.com/poring/), [poring/exsitu/](https://www.kinabalu-park.com/poring/exsitu/), [poring/canopy/](https://www.kinabalu-park.com/poring/canopy/); Sabah Tourism: [destination/poring-hot-spring-phs/](https://www.sabah.com.sg/tourism/destination/poring-hot-spring-phs/) (read 29 Oct 2026). Hours can change.

One night, or two



Kota Kinabalu to Kinabalu Park is about 92 km by road (Sabah Parks). Pins only. Roads are map context, not a route plan: transfers need checking for your dates and vehicle. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Roads show context, not a recommended route.

If you are not climbing: one night

Day 1. Leave Kota Kinabalu early. Park HQ trails and the Botanical Garden (last entry 3 pm). Sleep near the park or in Kundasang.

Day 2. A clear morning view if you are lucky, the Desa farm if you have booked a session, then Poring on the way down or onward.

If you are climbing: two nights

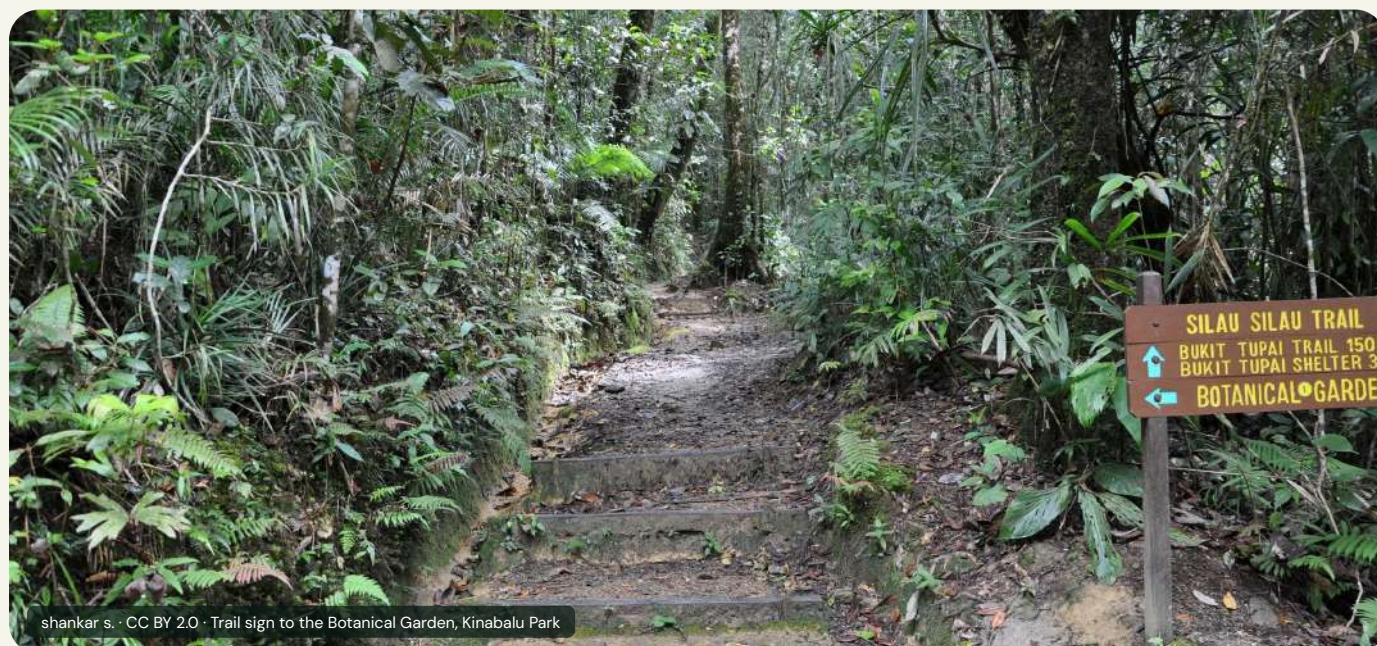
Night 0. Near the park, close to registration.

Day 1. Register, climb to Panalaban.

Day 2. Summit at sunrise, back at the gate in the afternoon.

Night 2. Soak at Poring or sleep in Kundasang. Keep your onward connection loose.

Sequence is BorneoTravels advice shaped by the published climb programme and park hours. Transfer times between the stops are not published here: ask your host or driver.

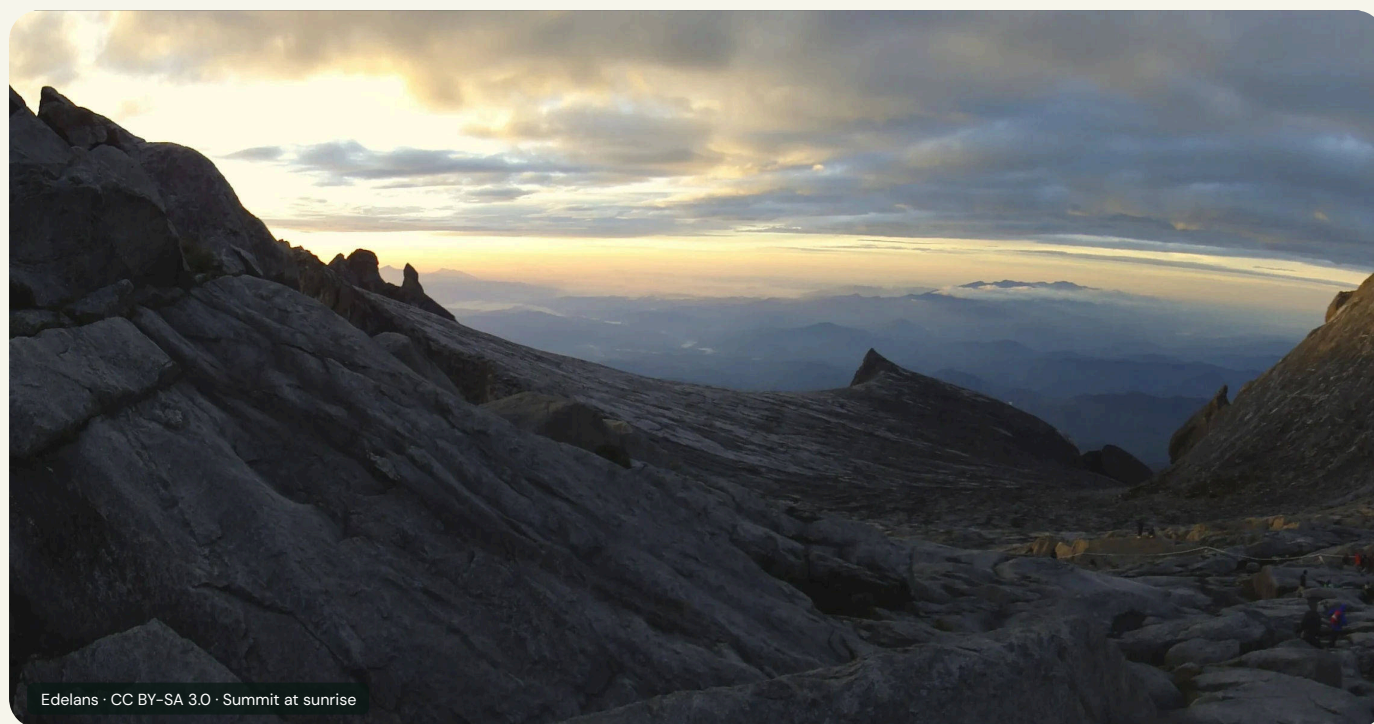


shankar s. · CC BY 2.0 · Trail sign to the Botanical Garden, Kinabalu Park

What was true on 29 October 2026

Official pages change faster than guidebooks. These are the notices that mattered while writing this chapter, with their dates. Check each again before you travel.

Item	What the owner page said	Owner
Mount Kinabalu 2027 bookings	Not yet open as of 19 Sep 2026. Not necessarily fully booked.	Sabah Parks
Poring canopy walkway	Closed from 30 Jul 2025 until further notice.	Sabah Parks
Mesilau substation	Marked closed.	Sabah Parks
Desa Dairy Farm sessions	Three sessions a day, booking required. Page last reviewed Oct 2023.	Sabah Tourism
Park hours	8 am to 5 pm; garden last entry 3 pm.	Sabah Parks
Poring hours	8 am to 5 pm; last gate entry 3 pm.	Sabah Parks



Edelans · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Summit at sunrise

Sources: <https://www.sabahparks.org.my/services/mount-kinabalu-climbing>
<https://sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/>
<https://sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/poring>
<https://www.sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/poring/canopy>
<https://www.sabahparks.org.my/index.php/kinabalu-park/mesilau>
<https://sabahtourism.com/destination/desa-cattle-dairy-farm/>
<https://sabahtourism.com/district/ranau/>
<https://sabahtourism.com/destination/mount-kinabalu/>
 (all read 29 Oct 2026)

SABAH • CHAPTER 2

Sepilok and Sandakan

A conservation visit, a hillside heritage walk and a harbour town.
Slow down and the east coast makes sense.

A visit, not a show

The Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre was set up in 1964 to rehabilitate orphaned orangutans, and it sits inside the Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve.

Sabah Tourism says visitors usually see orangutans at the 10:00 and 15:00 feeding sessions on the platform, and some at the outdoor nursery. The animals sometimes stay away. The main reason it gives is that they found food in the forest, especially in fruiting season. That is the point of the place: the aim is for the animals to understand that their home is in the wild.

Visitors are asked not to touch the orangutans, especially any that appear on the boardwalk. Orangutans share about 96% of our DNA, so human diseases can reach them.

SEPILOK, AS PUBLISHED

FEEDING

10:00 and 15:00, on the platform

VISITING HOURS

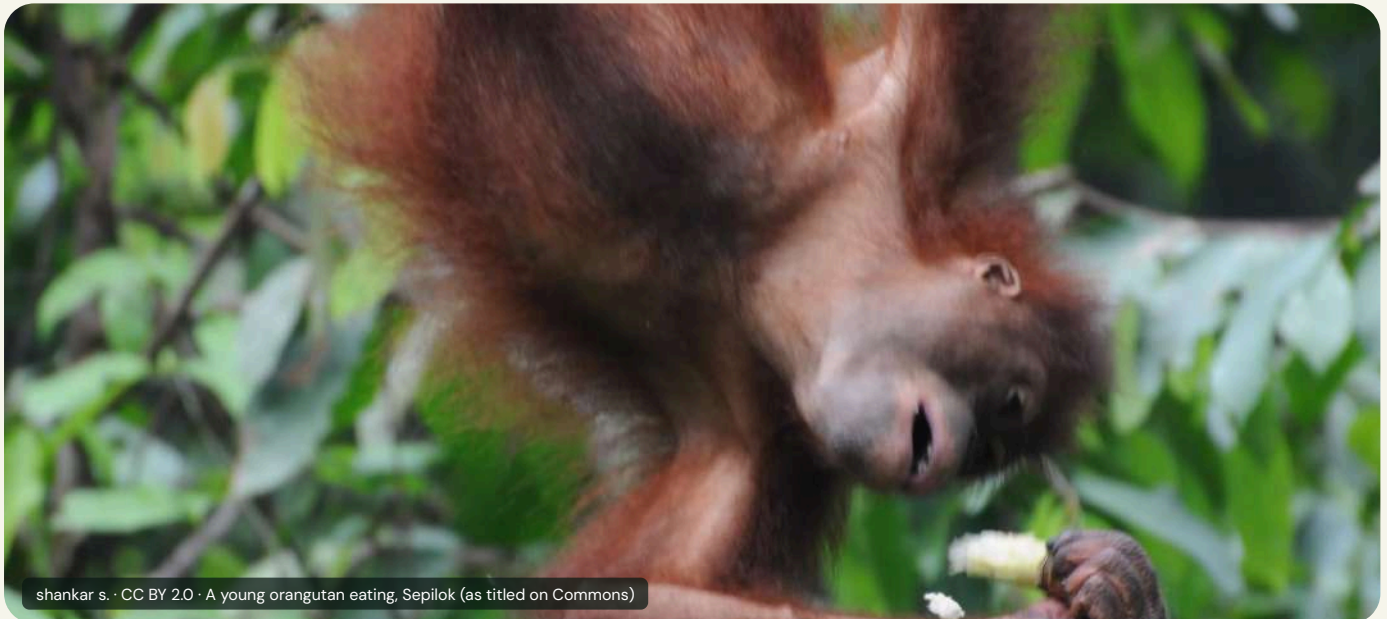
Mon–Thu, Sat–Sun 9–12 and 14–16; Fri 9–11 and 14–16

FROM SANDAKAN

About 23 km, about 40 minutes (Sabah Tourism estimate)

NEXT DOOR

Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre



shankar s. · CC BY 2.0 · A young orangutan eating, Sepilok (as titled on Commons)

Dated. Hours and sessions are from Sabah Tourism pages last reviewed 17 February 2025 and read on 29 October 2026. Confirm with the Sabah Wildlife Department before you plan around a session. Entry fees apply and change, so none are printed here.

STAY IF

you can give it a quiet half day and accept that the animals decide.

SKIP IF

you want a guaranteed close encounter: nothing here promises one.

Sources: Sabah Tourism: [sepilok-orangutan-rehabilitation-centre](#) (read 29 Oct 2026; full links on the sources page).

Bears, treetops and a night walk

Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre

Opened in 2014 to care for and rehabilitate rescued sun bears, with about 43 ex-captive bears in residence. It has an observation platform, a boardwalk, a visitor centre and a bear talk. Open daily 9:00 to 15:30, public holidays included. A camera-lens fee applies to very long lenses; check the centre before you bring one.

Rainforest Discovery Centre

Open daily 8:00 to 17:00, public holidays included. It is built around the Rainforest Skywalk, a Plant Discovery Garden and marked forest trails, about 22.5 km from Sandakan town. It also runs night walks, with a separate fee.



Josefito123 · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Rainforest Discovery Centre, Sepilok (2019)

A day that works. Give the orangutan centre the morning session, eat, then choose one neighbour for the afternoon rather than all three. Treat them as places with different purposes, not three animal attractions. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Sources: Sabah Tourism: [bornean-sun-bear-conservation-centre](#); [rainforestdiscoverycentre.org/our-facilities](#) (read 29 Oct 2026).

Book a tour

- [Sepilok orangutan and sun bear centres](#)
- [Sepilok and Kinabatangan 4-day itinerary](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

The hill, the steps and the bay

Sandakan is more than the airport. Sabah Tourism describes a one-hour heritage walk that takes you back over 100 years.

It starts at the 100-year-old Masjid Jamik, passes the Pryer Memorial (a granite memorial to William B. Pryer, founder of Sandakan), then climbs the Stairs with a Hundred Steps to a view over the town and bay. The steps lead to the Agnes Keith House.

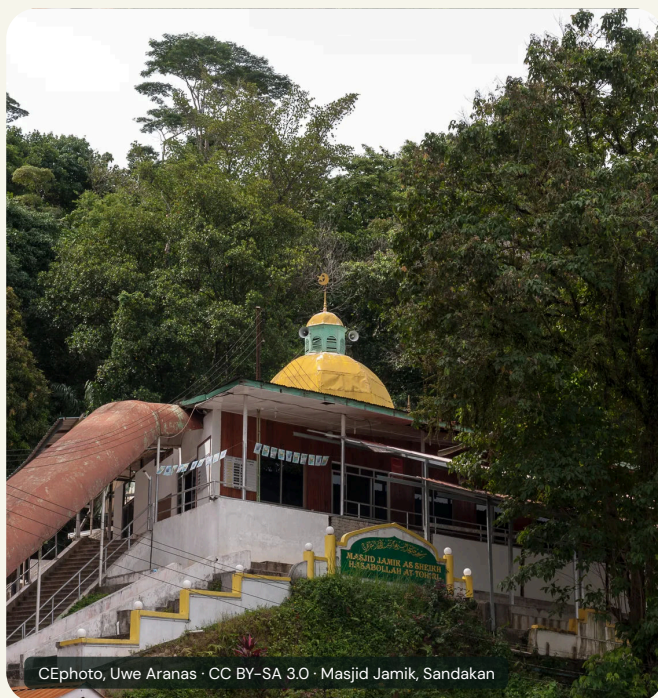
Other stops include the remains of an old staircase believed to be from the pre-war Chinese consulate, St Michael's and All Angels Church, and the Sam Sing Kung (Three Saints) and Goddess of Mercy temples.



AzahariZack · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Hundred Steps sign, Jalan Istana



Enziee · CC BY 4.0 · Agnes Keith House entrance



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Masjid Jamik, Sandakan

ON THE TRAIL

AGNES KEITH HOUSE

Heritage house with a gallery on the first floor; open daily 9–5 (Sabah Tourism, reviewed 17 Feb 2025)

HERITAGE TRAIL

About one hour; contact the Sandakan Heritage Trail Committee for a tour (page reviewed 15 Apr 2026)

Two stops on Sandakan Bay



Pins only, geocoded 29 Oct 2026. Sabah Tourism gives about 23 km and 40 minutes by road from the city centre to the centre; no route is drawn because transfers need checking for your date and vehicle. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026.

One night

Walk the heritage trail, eat, and leave fresh for Sepilok or the river. Pick your base by your first and last transfers, not the nightly rate. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Two nights

A proper conservation day at Sepilok without racing back to town. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Do not squeeze a same-day arrival from Kota Kinabalu into several fixed activities unless transport is confirmed. Leave a buffer before any onward flight. (BorneoTravels advice, from the site guide.)

Sources: Sabah Tourism: [sepilok-orangutan-rehabilitation-centre](#) (read 29 Oct 2026).

The Kinabatangan

Malaysia's second-longest river, and a place to watch wildlife from a boat at the edges of the day.

One river, ten primates

Sabah Tourism calls the lower Kinabatangan one of the richest ecosystems in the world. It is Sabah's first and Malaysia's largest Ramsar site. The river runs 560 km from south-west Sabah to the Sulu Sea on the east coast. The 26,000 hectare Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary was gazetted under the state's Wildlife Conservation Enactment of 1997. The surrounding forest is one of only two known places in the world where ten primate species live.

In 1881 William Pryer, founder of Sandakan, travelled the river and noted bright blue kingfishers and hornbills. Sabah Tourism says both are still common sights on a morning or evening cruise.



Apocru · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Proboscis monkey, Kinabatangan River (July 2025)

THE RIVER AS PUBLISHED

RIVER LENGTH

560 km, to the Sulu Sea

SANCTUARY

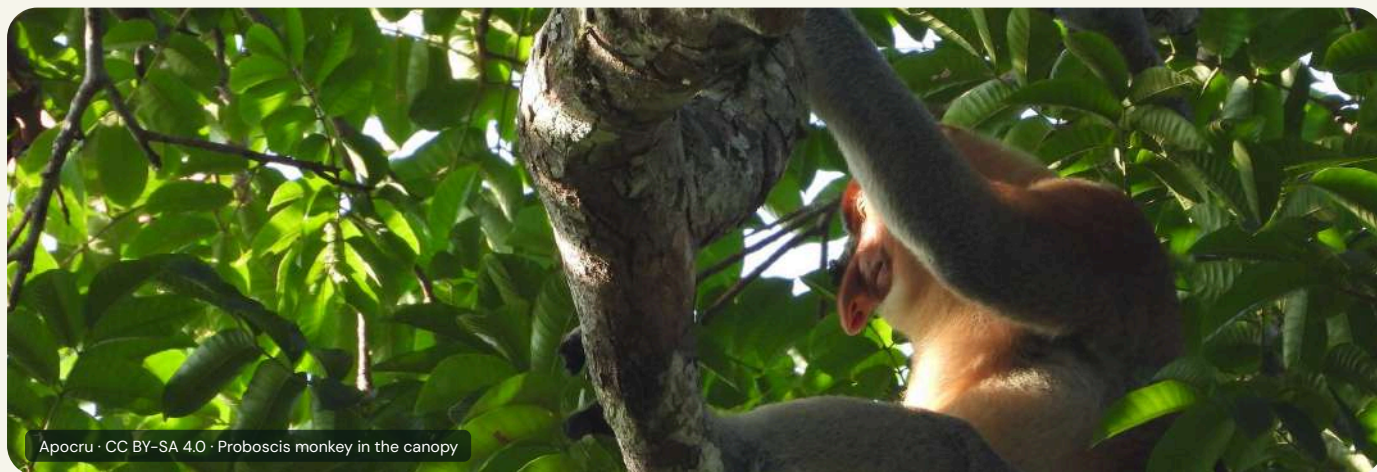
26,000 ha, gazetted under the 1997 Enactment

STATUS

Ramsar site (Sabah's first, Malaysia's largest)

PRIMATES

Ten species; one of only two known places in the world where that happens



Apocru · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Proboscis monkey in the canopy

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, page last reviewed 10 Mar 2026 (read 29 Oct 2026); link on the sources page.

Hornbills, elephants and crocodiles

Hornbills

All eight hornbill species found in Borneo live here, according to Sabah Tourism. The rhinoceros hornbill and the oriental pied hornbill are the ones you are most likely to spot. The river is also listed as an Important Bird Area.

Elephants and orangutans

The tourism page says you might see Bornean pygmy elephants feeding on the riverbank, proboscis monkeys leaping between trees, or a wild orangutan. It says might. Nobody can promise a sighting.



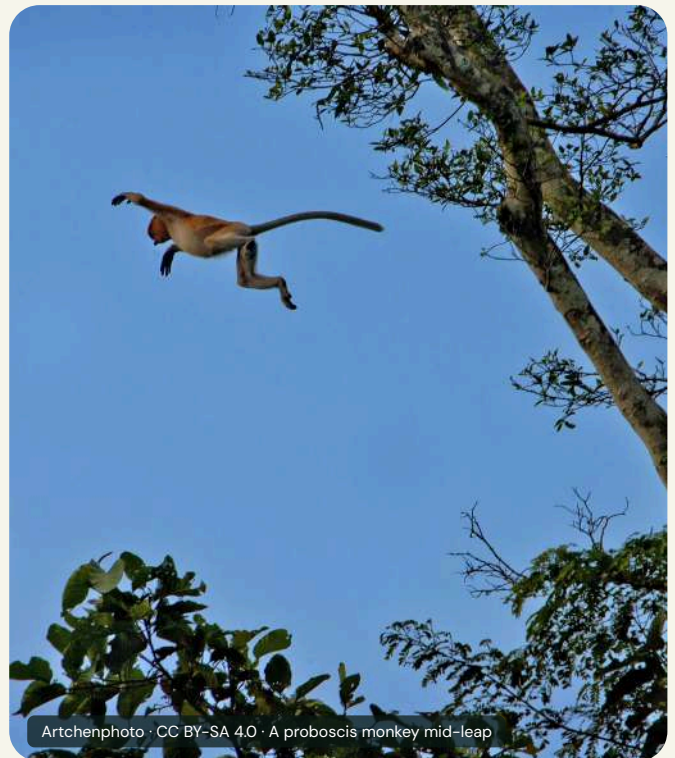
Crocodiles are real. Sabah Tourism notes that saltwater crocodiles often linger by the banks and that you can sometimes see only their eyes above the water. Keep your hands in the boat and follow your guide.

Dawn, dusk and three days

Sabah Tourism says a river cruise at dawn or dusk is the best chance to see wildlife.

An overnight trip is possible, but it recommends at least three days: a longer stay gives a better chance of spotting animals. Night walks and night cruises can be arranged to look for crocodiles, birds and nocturnal animals.

Many local tour companies run lodges around Sukau, Bilit and Abai with packages that include rooms, transport, meals and guided tours. Accommodation ranges from backpacker to luxury river lodge.



Artchenphoto · CC BY-SA 4.0 · A proboscis monkey mid-leap

AS PUBLISHED BY SABAH TOURISM, 2026

BEST TIME OF DAY

Dawn and dusk river cruises

MINIMUM STAY

Three days recommended (overnight is possible)

FROM SANDAKAN

By boat about 1.5 to 2 hours with some operators, or overland about 1.5 hours

BUS

Via Kota Kinabatangan, then arrange a pick-up

Stay if you can give the river two nights and want boat mornings rather than a rush. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Skip it as a day trip if you are set on spotting a particular animal. The odds improve with time. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Homestay. Sabah Tourism lists the MESCOT KOPEL homestay programme in the surrounding villages, where visitors can join Orang Sungai cultural activities. It also points to Gomantong Cave, which it calls the largest cave and the most important source of edible bird's nest in Sabah, and Agop Batu Tulug Cave.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary (read 29 Oct 2026).

The river behind Sandakan



Pins geocoded 29 Oct 2026. Sabah Tourism gives about 1.5 hours overland or 1.5 to 2 hours by boat from Sandakan with some operators; transfer times for your date need checking. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Roads are map context, not a route plan.

The Sandakan to Sukau connection pairs naturally with Chapter 2. Sepilok is a morning; the river is the following two days. (BorneoTravels advice.)

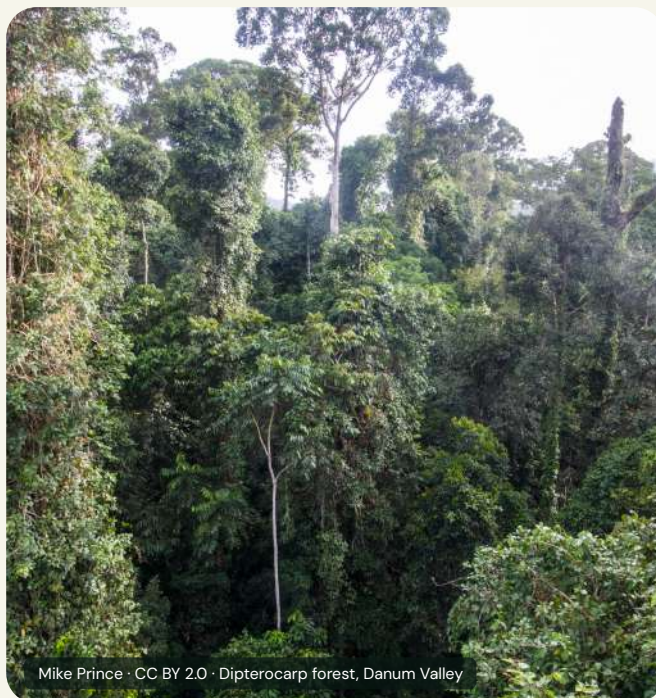
SABAH • CHAPTER 4

Danum Valley

Old lowland rainforest, a long way from anywhere, and worth staying in for more than a night.

One of Sabah's last stands of undisturbed lowland forest

The Danum Valley Conservation Area covers 43,892 hectares. It is a Class I (Protection) Forest Reserve, about 80 km from Lahad Datu. The management site describes it as one of Sabah's last strongholds of undisturbed lowland dipterocarp forest, with more than 200 tree species per hectare. Mixed dipterocarp forest covers 95 percent of the area and mountainous ground the other 5 percent. It says the forest sits on the oldest rock in Sabah and calls it a 130 million year old rainforest.



THE CONSERVATION AREA AS PUBLISHED

AREA

43,892 ha

PROTECTION

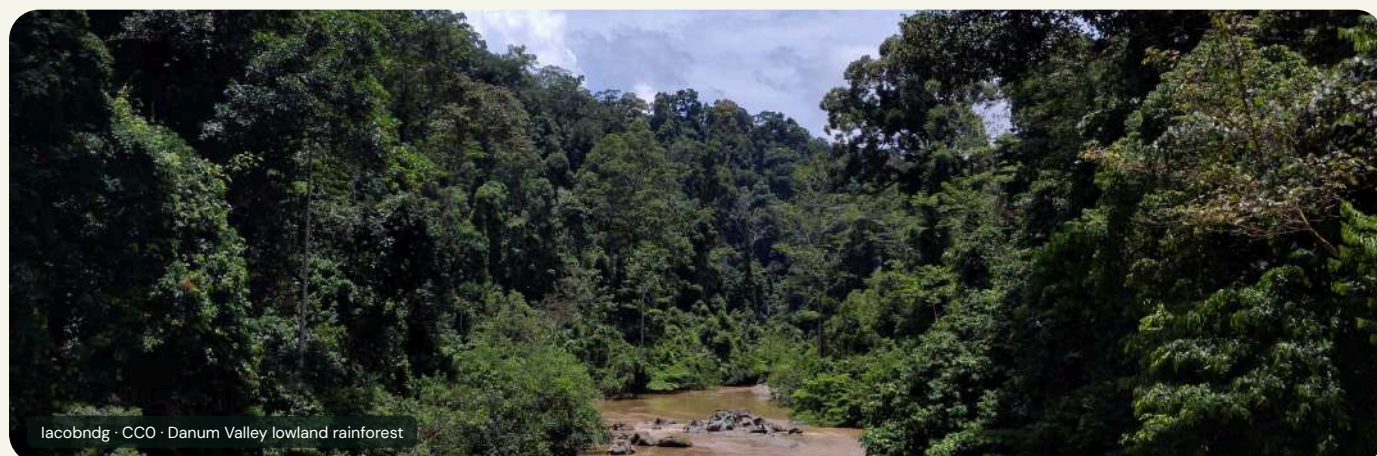
Class I (Protection) Forest Reserve

DISTANCE

About 80 km from Lahad Datu

FOREST

Mixed dipterocarp, 95 percent of the area



Sources: Danum Valley Conservation Area, About (read 29 Oct 2026); Sabah Tourism (read 29 Oct 2026). Links on the sources page.

Counted species, not promised sightings

What has been recorded

The conservation area lists more than 120 mammal species, including ten primates, plus 73 reptiles, 56 amphibians and more than 300 bird species. All eight Bornean hornbills are on its list. It names the Bornean pygmy elephant, orangutan, Malayan sun bear and clouded leopard among the notable animals.

What that means on a walk

A list is not a guarantee. Sabah Tourism says activities include guided treks, bird watching and night drives. Expect forest detail first: calls, insects, birds, frogs. (BorneoTravels advice.)



RECORDED SPECIES, AS PUBLISHED

MAMMALS

More than 120 species

BIRDS

More than 300 species

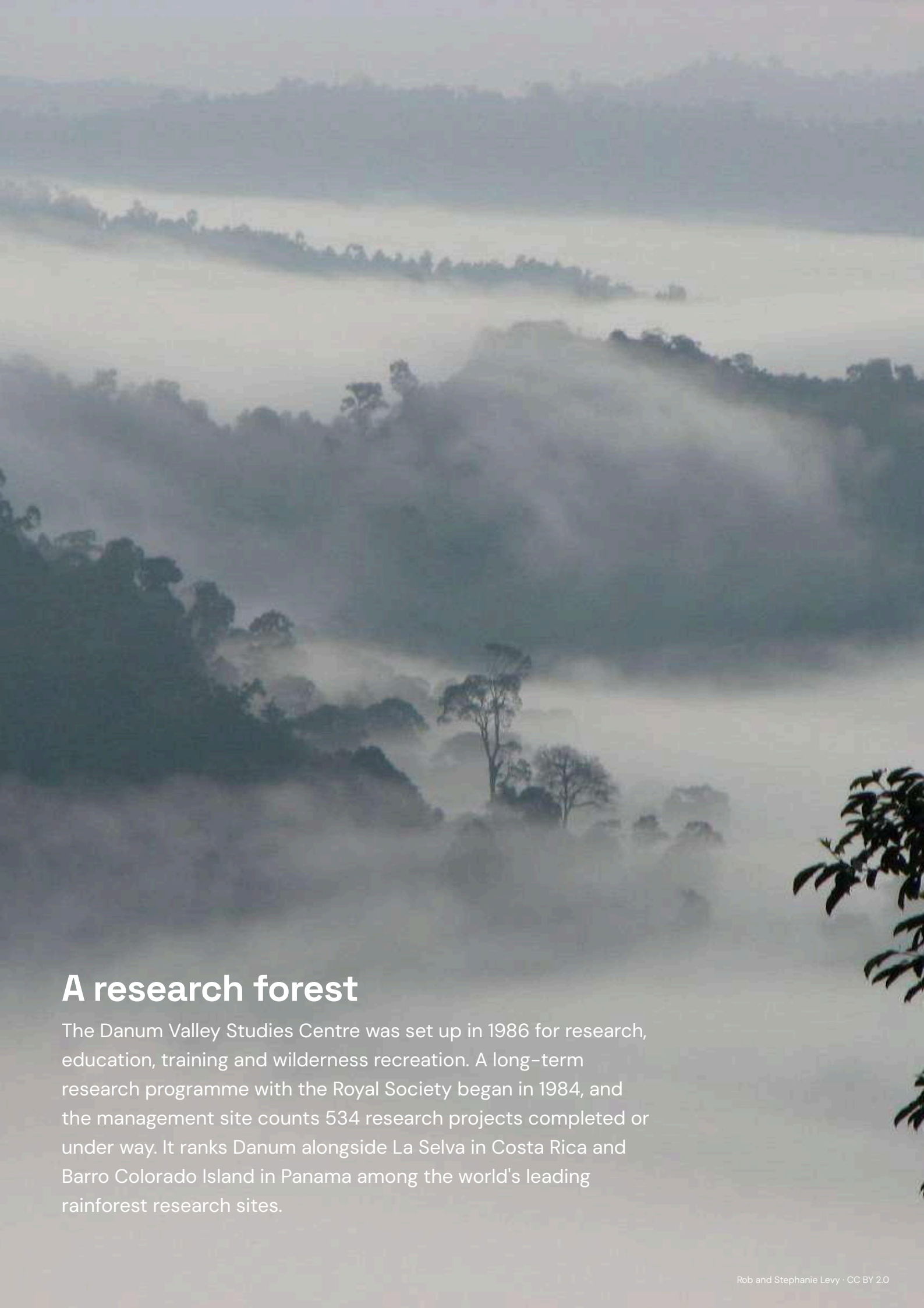
REPTILES

73 species

AMPHIBIANS

56 species

Sources: Danum Valley Conservation Area, About (read 29 Oct 2026).



A research forest

The Danum Valley Studies Centre was set up in 1986 for research, education, training and wilderness recreation. A long-term research programme with the Royal Society began in 1984, and the management site counts 534 research projects completed or under way. It ranks Danum alongside La Selva in Costa Rica and Barro Colorado Island in Panama among the world's leading rainforest research sites.

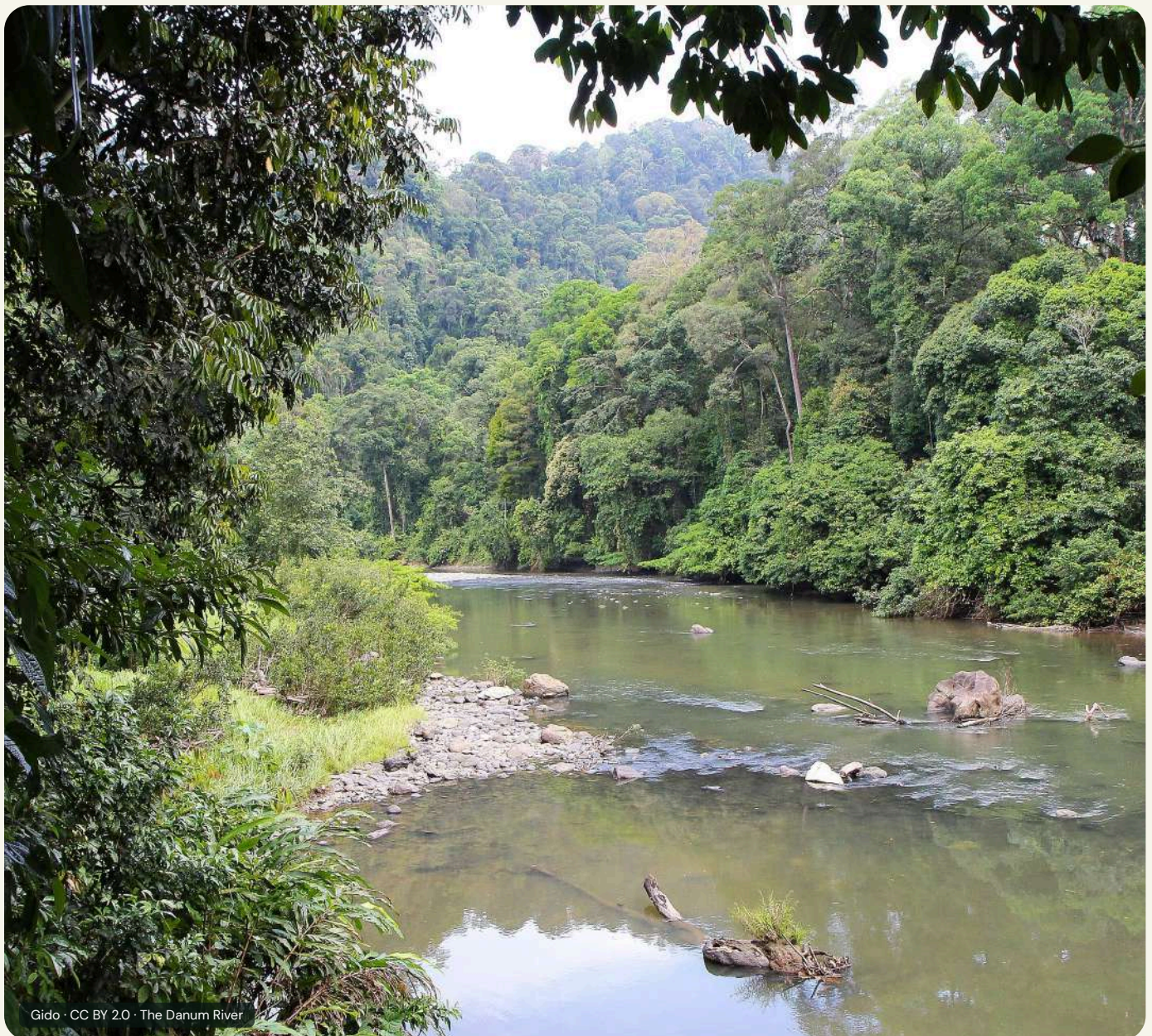
A very tall tree and old burial sites

Menara

Danum has a yellow meranti (*Shorea faguetiana*) called Menara, the Malay word for tower. Sabah Tourism measures it at 100.8 m and the management site at 101.8 m, so treat it as about 100 m. Both call it the tallest tropical tree in the world.

Burial sites

Sabah Tourism says visitors can see an ancient burial site with belian coffins and porcelain spirit jars. It reports three sites in the area, two near the field centre and one under a cliff overlooking Borneo Rainforest Lodge. Ask your lodge about access.



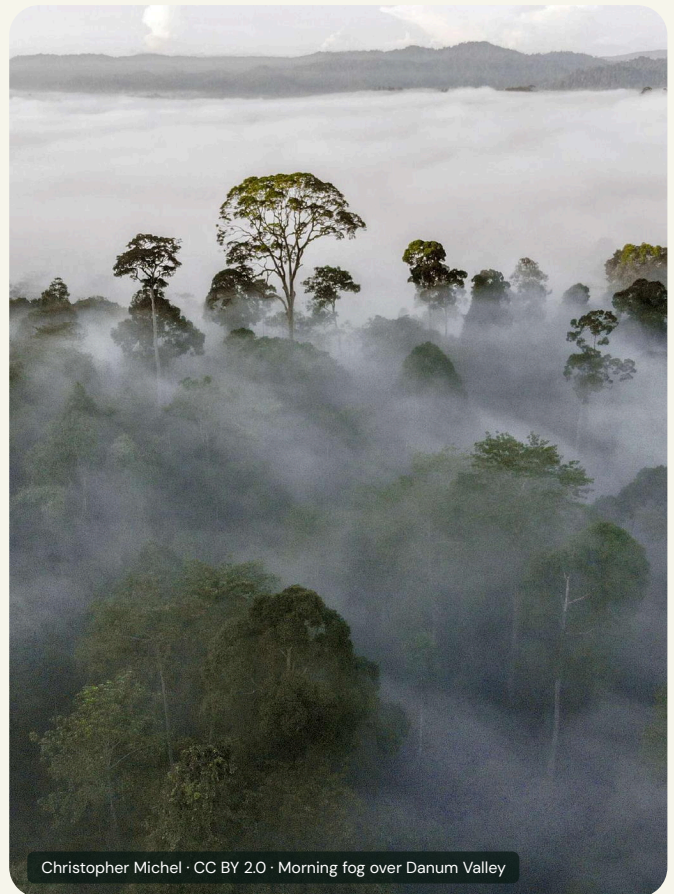
Gido · CC BY 2.0 · The Danum River

Sources: Sabah Tourism and danumvalley.my (read 29 Oct 2026).

Two or three nights, arranged ahead

Danum is not a roadside stop. Reservations for the conservation area go through the Conservation and Environmental Management Division of Yayasan Sabah; contact details are on danumvalley.my.

BorneoTravels suggests two to three nights, with a buffer day in Lahad Datu either side. Confirm the transfer in both directions and ask the lodge which guided activities run on your dates. Do not assume independent entry is possible. (BorneoTravels advice.)



Christopher Michel · CC BY 2.0 · Morning fog over Danum Valley

STAY IF

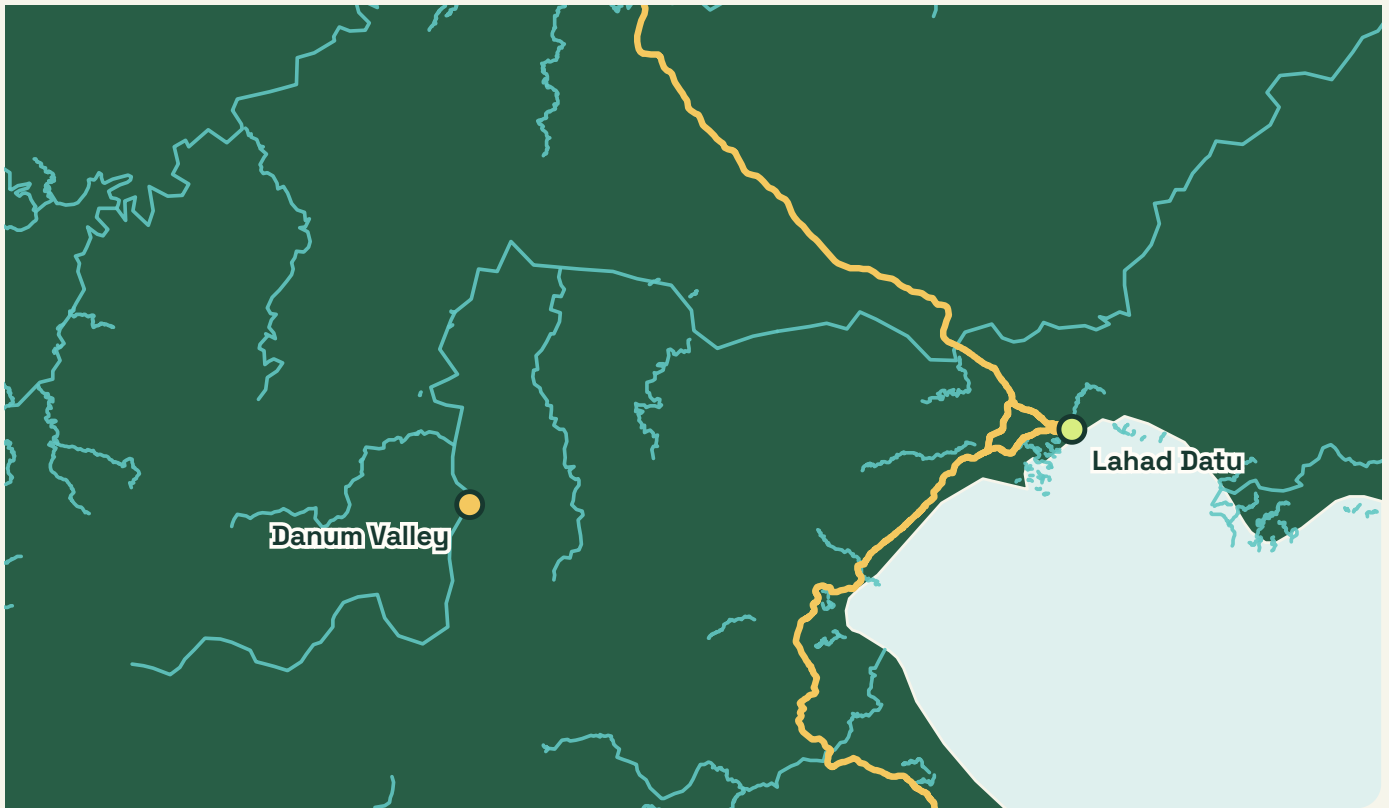
You want guided forest walks, birds and night drives, and can give the trip two or more nights.

SKIP IF

You have one night, or you want a short wildlife outing. Sepilok or a river stay fits better.

Check before you go. Fees, access rules and lodge schedules change. This guide prints none. Check the owner pages and your operator for your dates.

Inland from Lahad Datu



Pins geocoded 29 Oct 2026 and approximate. Sabah Tourism puts the conservation area about 80 km from Lahad Datu. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Roads are map context, not a route plan.

Danum or the Kinabatangan? Forest walks and lodge-led activities here, river cruises there. Many trips do both. (BorneoTravels advice.)



Mike Prince · CC BY 2.0 · Forest at Danum Valley

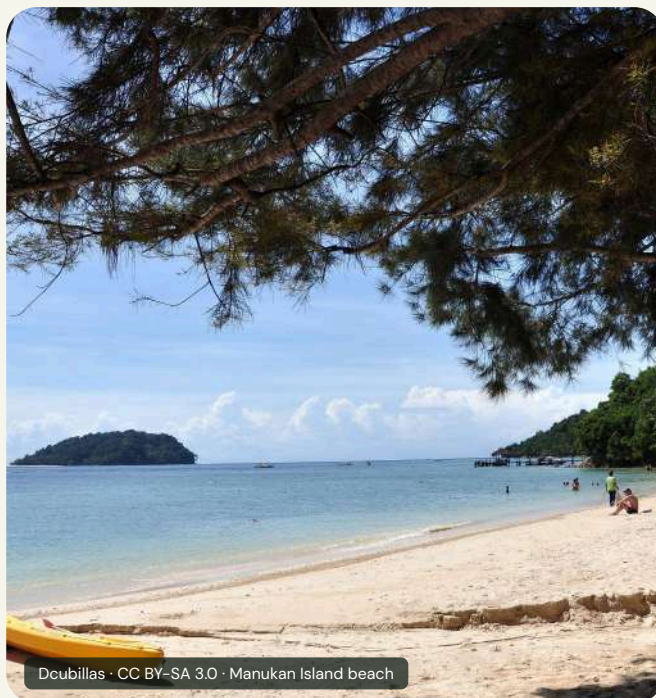
Five islands off Kota Kinabalu

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park: reefs, sand and forest trails, 3 km from the city.

A marine park you reach by boat from town

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park sits in Gaya Bay, 3 km offshore from Kota Kinabalu. Sabah Parks says it was gazetted in 1974 as Sabah's second national park.

It covers 50 square kilometres: five islands, their reefs and the sea around them. The park was named after Malaysia's first Prime Minister. Sabah Parks says the islands were once part of the Crocker Range and were cut off when sea levels rose after the last ice age.



Dcubillas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Manukan Island beach

THE PARK AS PUBLISHED

GAZETTED

1974, Sabah's second national park

AREA

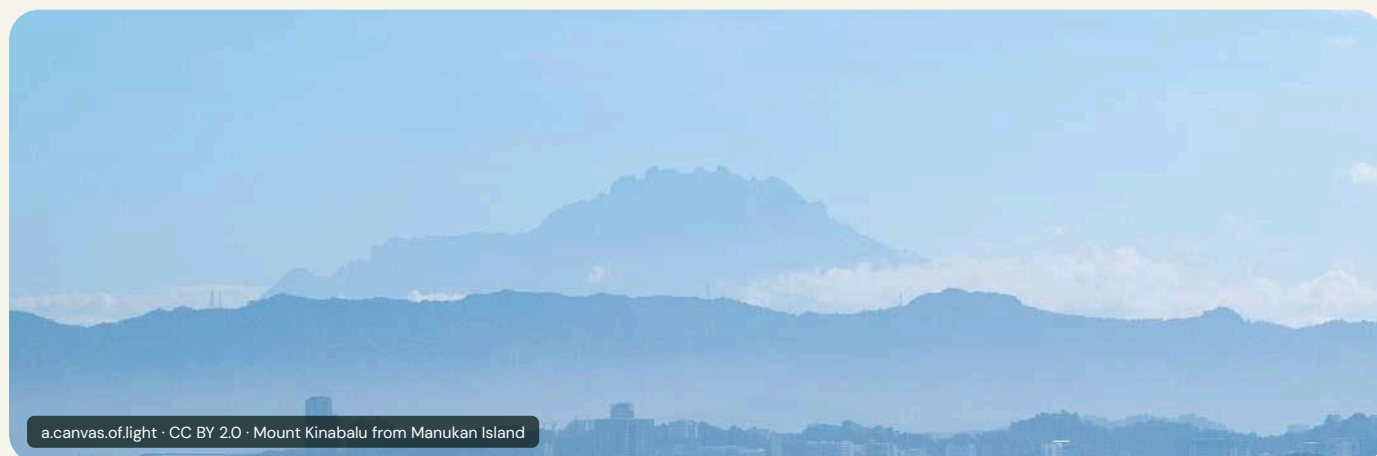
50 sq km: 5 islands, reefs and sea

DISTANCE

3 km offshore from Kota Kinabalu

PARK HOURS

8.00am to 5.00pm, Monday to Sunday



a.canvas.of.light · CC BY 2.0 · Mount Kinabalu from Manukan Island

Sources: Sabah Parks, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park (read 29 Oct 2026). Link on the sources page.

Gaya, Manukan, Mamutik, Sapi, Sulug

Gaya

The largest at 15 sq km, rising to 300 m. Sabah Parks lists 20 km of marked trails, including a plank walk across a mangrove swamp. The village on its eastern corner lies outside the park.

Manukan

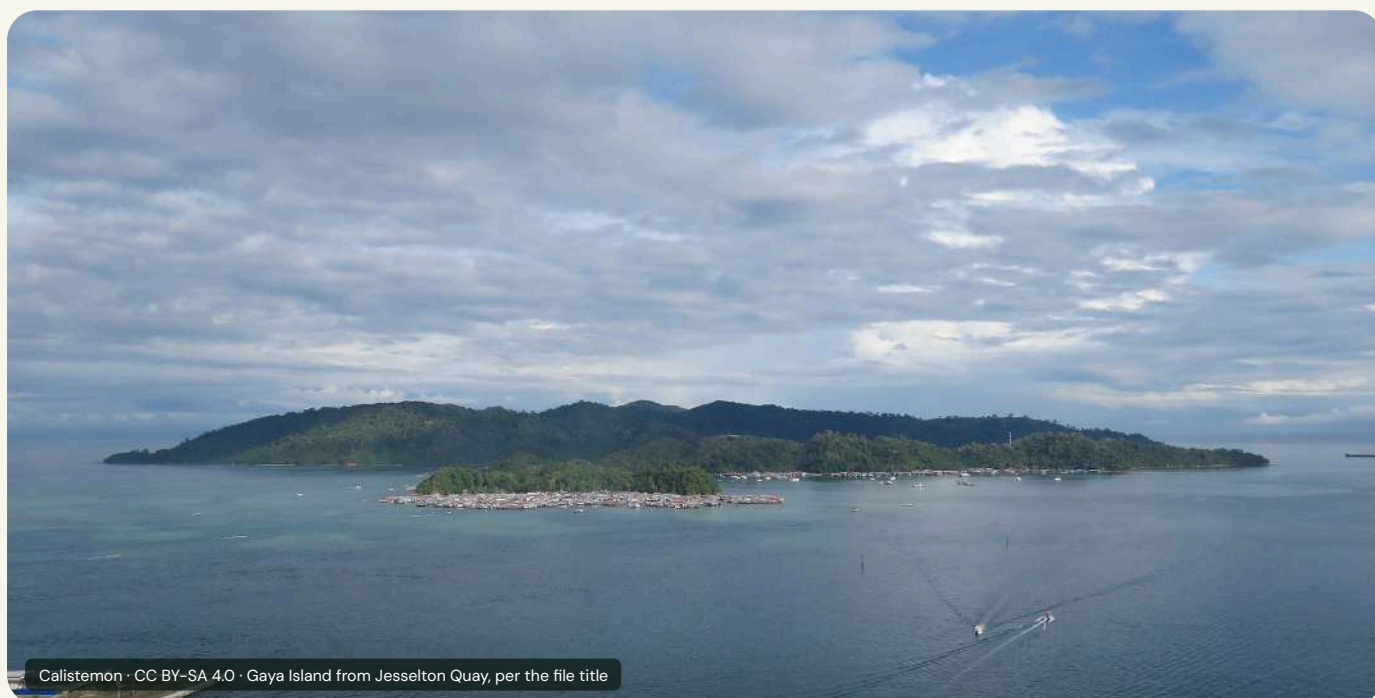
The second largest and the most developed, crescent shaped and 1.5 km long. Sabah Parks headquarters are here. The best beach is at the eastern tip, with snorkelling to the south and east.

Sapi

Only 200 m wide and half a kilometre long, with 5 km of trails. A sand bank links it to Gaya, and at low tide you can wade between them.

Mamutik and Sulug

Mamutik is the smallest and nearest to the mainland. Sulug is the furthest, a rocky island under 200 m across and a favoured swimming spot.



Calistemon · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Gaya Island from Jesselton Quay, per the file title



sussexbirder · CC BY 2.0 · Manukan Island, jetty and beach

Sources: Sabah Parks, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park (read 29 Oct 2026).

Reef below, lizards on the trails

The reef

Sabah Parks says over 200 hard coral species are found in the waters it manages, which include this park, and that the reef fishes are a "vast" array. Corals need clear, warm, shallow water and bright sunlight.

On land

The park lists forest, coastal plants, birds and mammals among the island life. The photographs here, titled as a Borneo forest dragon on Gaya, were taken by a visitor. Sightings vary.



Dick Culbert · CC BY 2.0 · Borneo forest dragon on Gaya Island, per the file title



Look, do not touch. Reef and wildlife are the park's reason for existing. Follow park rules and your boat operator's briefing.

Sources: Sabah Parks, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park and Marine Life pages (read 29 Oct 2026).

The water village outside the park

Gaya's eastern village lies outside the park boundary, Sabah Parks says. The photograph shows the stilt settlement from the air.

Treat the village as a place where people live, not a sight on the park ticket. Ask before photographing people, and keep to public paths. (BorneoTravels advice.)



kallerna · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Pulau Gaya water village from the air

Sources: Sabah Parks (read 29 Oct 2026).

An island day from the city

The park is open 8.00am to 5.00pm every day, according to Sabah Parks, and visiting hours and access may differ by facility, activity and weather.

Entrance fees apply and vary by visitor category. This guide prints none; check the Sabah Parks page for current amounts. For most visitors one island and one day is a good start. Manukan is the most developed. Sapi is small, with trails and a sand bank to Gaya. (BorneoTravels advice.)

STAY IF

You want an easy beach, snorkelling and a short trail close to Kota Kinabalu.

SKIP IF

You want remote reef diving. Look at Semporna and Sipadan instead.

Check before you go. Fees, hours and facilities change. The park lists scuba diving fees that it says need confirming, so confirm any diving with the park before planning it.



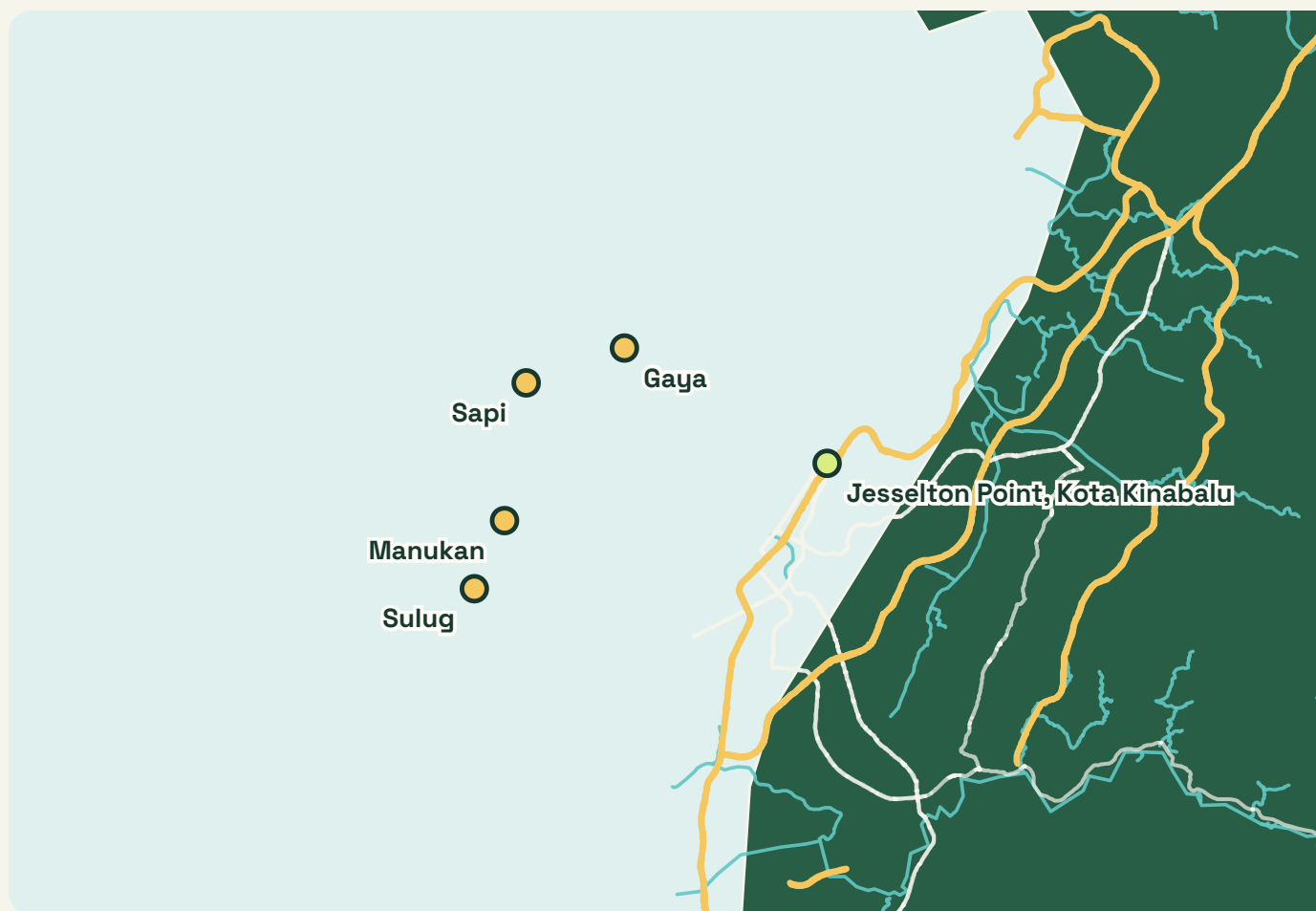
Bahnfreund · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Pulau Gaya at dusk, per the file title

Book a tour

- [Sapi and Manukan island hopping, snorkelling](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

Gaya Bay



Pins geocoded 29 Oct 2026 and approximate. Mamutik, the nearest island to the mainland, is not pinned because the geocoder returned a city location. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Roads are map context, not a route plan.

Pin positions are approximate. From Kota Kinabalu you reach the islands by boat; check the operator for crossing times. (BorneoTravels advice.)

SABAH • CHAPTER 6

One island, a permit and a reef wall

Sipadan and the Semporna gateway on Sabah's east coast.

Malaysia's only oceanic island

Sabah Parks describes Sipadan as an oceanic island rising 600 metres from the seabed, formed by living corals growing on a volcanic cone.

It lies in the Celebes Sea off the east coast of Malaysian Borneo, close to the borders of Indonesia and the Philippines. The island is about 45 minutes from Semporna town by speedboat in calm seas, says Sabah Parks.



Bernard DUPONT · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Green turtle (Chelonia mydas)

THE ISLAND AS PUBLISHED

WHAT IT IS

An oceanic island ringed by reef walls

GATEWAY

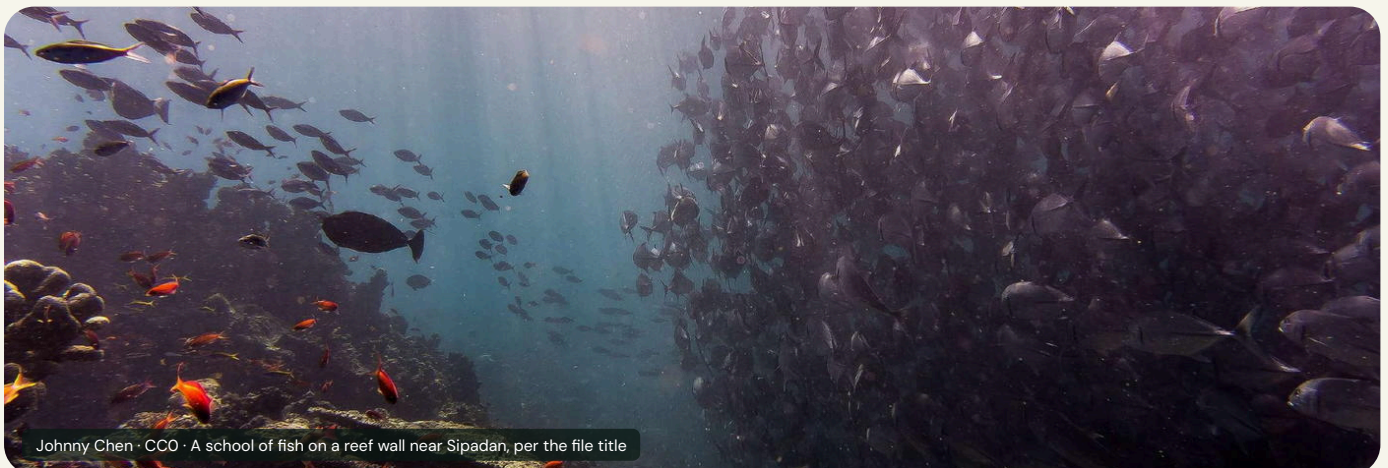
Semporna

STAY

Not on the island: Sabah Parks says accommodation on Sipadan closed in 2004

PROTECTED

Bird sanctuary from 1933, marine park from 2004



Johnny Chen · CC0 · A school of fish on a reef wall near Sipadan, per the file title

Sources: Sabah Parks, Sipadan Island Park (read 29 Oct 2026).

Turtles, barracuda and a wall that drops away

The reef

Sabah Parks says more than 400 species of fish and hundreds of coral species have been classified there. Sabah Tourism gives a much larger fish figure, "more than 3000 species". The figures differ in scope and date, so this guide quotes each with its owner and does not combine them.

Turtles

Sabah Tourism says green and hawksbill turtles gather to mate and nest, and that a diver seeing more than 20 on a dive is not unusual. Sightings are never guaranteed.



Bernard DUPONT · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Blackfin barracuda school

Sabah Tourism names Barracuda Point, and a drop-off a short walk from the beach, among the island's 12 dive points. The barracuda photograph is from a Commons file whose title does not name its location.

A bird sanctuary before a dive site

Above the surface Sipadan is covered in forest, Sabah Parks says.

The park lists kingfishers, sea eagles, sunbirds, starlings and wood pigeons, plus fruit bats and monitor lizards. At night a turtle may come ashore to lay eggs, and coconut crabs scurry into the water at the slightest sound. Sabah Tourism adds migratory wood sandpipers and megapodes.



Adznee Abas · CC BY 2.0 · Evening sky over the Semporna islands (file titled Tun Sakaran Marine Park)

Dated note. Sabah Tourism says Sipadan closes to tourists every December from 2020, to rest the coral. That page was last reviewed on 5 May 2025. Confirm any dates with Sabah Parks or a registered operator before you plan.

Sources: Sabah Parks; Sabah Tourism (read 29 Oct 2026).

The permit comes first

Sabah Tourism says a permit is needed to dive at Sipadan, with a daily quota of 252 permits. Each diver gets a one-day visit and at most two dives that day. The minimum certification stated is Advanced Open Water. Permits come only through licensed operators registered with Sabah Parks. A trip to Semporna does not guarantee one.

How booking works

Sabah Parks says registered operators may book up to six months ahead, pay a 50% deposit when booking, and pay in full two weeks before the dive date. Permit issue and availability are decided by Sabah Parks. Sabah Parks lists 42 registered operators.

STAY IF

You hold the certification, can fix your dates early and want a permit-managed dive day.

SKIP IF

Your dates are loose and nothing is confirmed in writing. Plan other reefs first.

Booking notice, read 29 Oct 2026. Sabah Parks sets cancellation terms and fees, and they can change. Check its current Sipadan pages and get your operator's terms in writing. This guide prints no fees.

The gateway town

Sabah Parks names Semporna as the gateway to Sipadan, and its Park Office for bookings is in the town. Treat Semporna as where boat days start, and Sipadan as one permit-managed option among them. Confirm the departure point, the last boat back and the plan for rough seas with your operator. (BorneoTravels advice.)



Irwandy Mazwir · CC BY 2.0 · Pulau Maiga, Sabah

Sources: Sabah Parks, Sipadan Island Park and Diving at Sipadan Island (read 29 Oct 2026).

Semporna and its islands



Sipadan position from Wikipedia (4.1147 N, 118.6288 E, read 29 Oct 2026); other pins geocoded the same day and approximate. Base map: Natural Earth; main roads and rivers © OpenStreetMap contributors (ODbL: <https://www.openstreetmap.org/copyright>), data of 29 Oct 2026. Map context only, not a route or boat plan.

Book a tour

- [Timba-Timba, Pom Pom and Matakang island-hopping from Semporna](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

SABAH • CHAPTER 7

A city between the sea and the hill

Kota Kinabalu: heritage, markets and a waterfront at the start of most Sabah trips.

Where Sabah trips usually begin

Kota Kinabalu sits on the west coast of Sabah, facing the islands of Gaya Bay. Most of what a visitor wants in the city is close together: the heritage buildings, Central Market, the Gaya Street area and the waterfront. Sabah Tourism lists them as separate places to visit in Kota Kinabalu. Give the city a day or two, then head for the mountain, the rainforest or the islands. (BorneoTravels advice.)



Sources: Sabah Tourism, Kota Kinabalu district page (read 29 Oct 2026).

Book a city tour

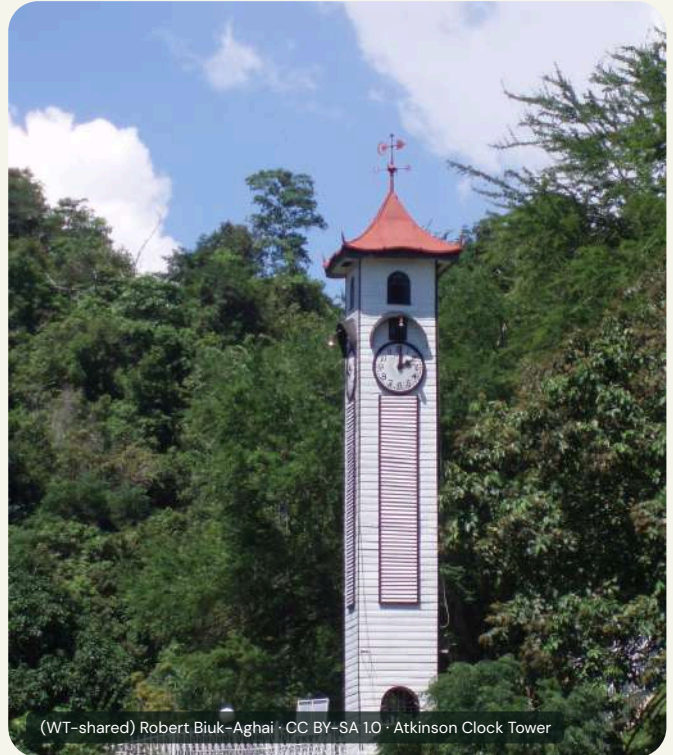
- [Kota Kinabalu city tour \(half day\)](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

The Atkinson Clock Tower and a heritage walk

Sabah Tourism describes a guided KK Heritage Walk that starts at Australia Place, one of the oldest established parts of the city.

It passes the Atkinson Clock, the Community Centre, the Sabah Tourism Building, the Jesselton Hotel, the Malaysia Monument, the War Memorial and the City Council Building. The Museum Kopitiam on the route keeps the coffee shop concept of the 1940s.



(WT-shared) Robert Biuk-Aghai · CC BY-SA 1.0 · Atkinson Clock Tower

Dated note. The Sabah Tourism page for the walk was last reviewed on 30 July 2021, so check that it still runs. This guide prints no price.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, KK Heritage Walk (read 29 Oct 2026).

Day trips from the city

- [Padas River white-water rafting](#)
- [Kiulu River white-water rafting](#)
- [Serusup mangrove kayaking, Tuaran](#)
- [Kadamaian rafting and river cruise](#)
- [Klias River wildlife and fireflies cruise](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

Fish, fruit and spices on the waterfront

Sabah Tourism calls Central Market a hub for fresh seafood, local produce, tropical fruit, spices and traditional delicacies.

It is a place to see everyday Kota Kinabalu life. Ask before photographing stallholders, and buy something if you linger. (BorneoTravels advice.)



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Pasar Besar Kota Kinabalu, the market building

Dated note. Sabah Tourism last reviewed the Central Market page on 11 August 2026. Opening hours are not printed here; check locally.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Kota Kinabalu Central Market (read 29 Oct 2026).

A weekend street of food and stalls

Friday and Saturday night

Sabah Tourism says the Api-Api Night Food Market closes Gaya Street from 6 pm to midnight on Friday and Saturday nights, with satay, murtabak, char kuey teow and more.

Sunday morning

The Gaya Sunday Market opens at 6 am and closes at 2 pm, says Sabah Tourism. It sells handicrafts, plants, fruit, coffee beans, homewares and antiques.

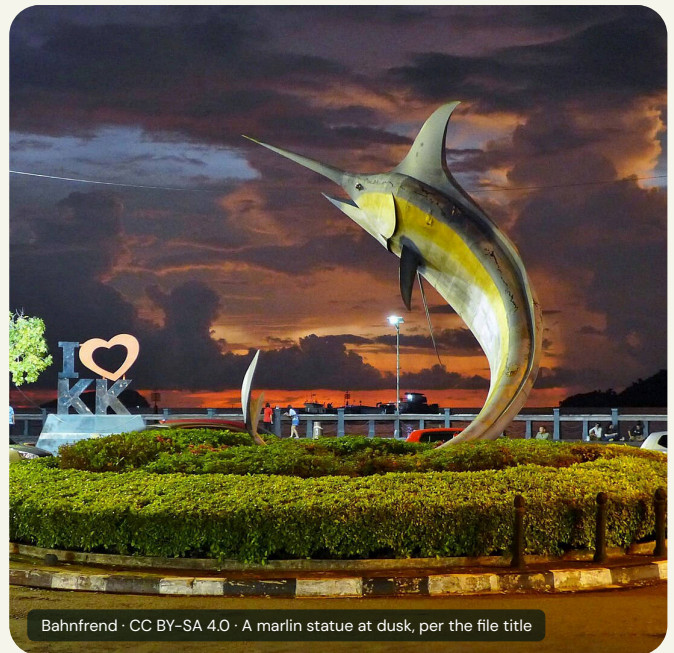


Dated note. These hours come from a Sabah Tourism article last reviewed on 26 October 2023. Check before planning your day around them.

Sea, sunset and the statues

Sabah Tourism describes the KK Esplanade as a spot overlooking the sea and the islands, good for a sunset.

It lists a wooden platform, a dolphin monument and smaller fish statues. The Esplanade page was last reviewed on 14 November 2024.



Bahnfreund · CC BY-SA 4.0 · A marlin statue at dusk, per the file title



Bahnfreund · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Boats at the Kota Kinabalu waterfront

Sources: Sabah Tourism, KK Esplanade (read 29 Oct 2026).

On the water

- [Kota Kinabalu dinner cruise](#)
- [Kota Kinabalu Discover Scuba](#)
- [Open Water Diver course, Kota Kinabalu \(PADI\)](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

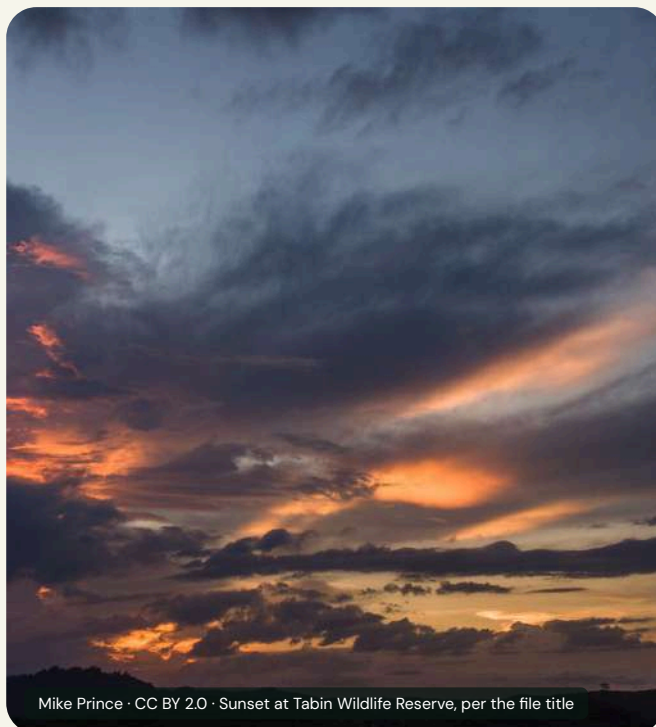
SABAH • CHAPTER 8

Lowland forest, mud volcano and elephants

Tabin Wildlife Reserve, in Sabah's east.

A lowland rainforest for big wildlife

Sabah Tourism says Tabin is home to endangered wildlife including Borneo pygmy elephants and tembadau, plus rich birdlife. It describes the reserve as covered in lowland rainforest with a very large number of tropical plants, some with medicinal uses. The page says photographers and birdwatchers will value a visit.



Mike Prince · CC BY 2.0 · Sunset at Tabin Wildlife Reserve, per the file title

THE RESERVE AS PUBLISHED

HABITAT

Lowland rainforest

WILDLIFE NAMED BY OWNER

Borneo pygmy elephants, tembadau, birdlife

STAY

One accommodation option inside the reserve, per Sabah Tourism

FEATURE

Mud volcano reached by a 20 minute jungle trek

Dated note. The Sabah Tourism page was last reviewed on 11 November 2022. Check access, tours and the stay with the operator before planning.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Tabin Wildlife Reserve (read 29 Oct 2026).

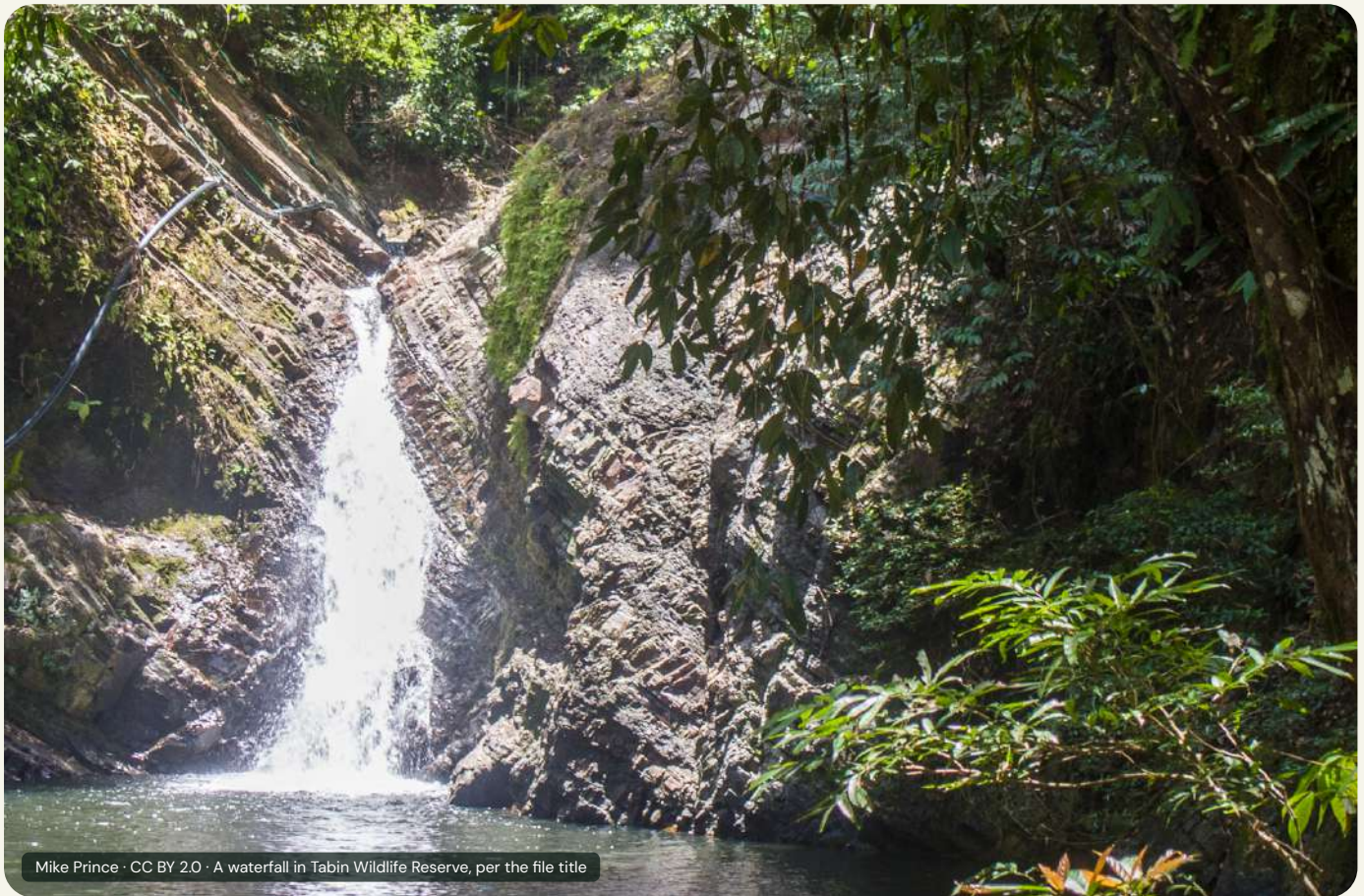
A salt lick that draws wildlife

Mud volcano

Sabah Tourism describes a football field sized mud volcano, a 20 minute trek through the jungle. It works as a mineral salt lick that attracts wildlife, and an observation tower is available for spotting animals near it.

Lipad Waterfall

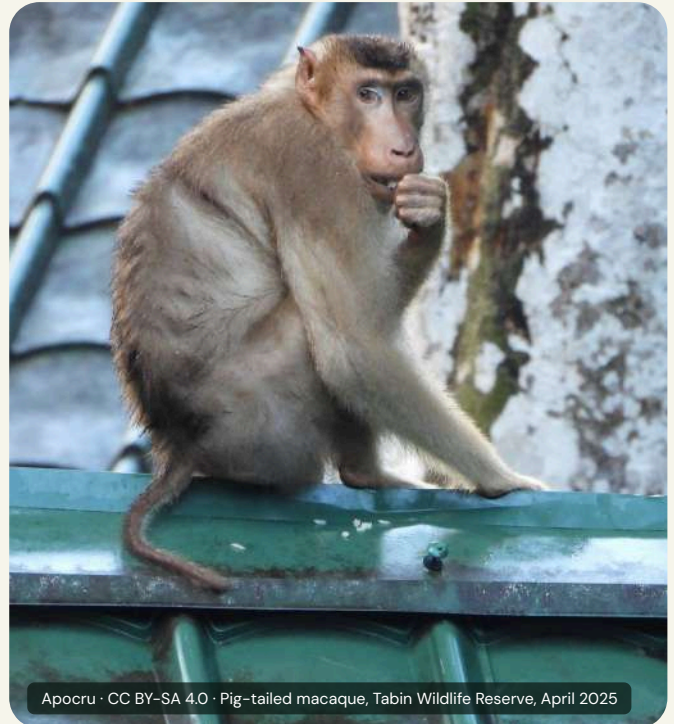
The same page suggests a dip at the Lipad Waterfall and a herbal foot soak after the treks. The photographs below are from visitors to the reserve and are not labelled as the Lipad Waterfall.



Sources: Sabah Tourism, Tabin Wildlife Reserve (read 29 Oct 2026).

What a visitor may see

Wildlife in Tabin is never guaranteed. Sabah Tourism names pygmy elephants, tembadau and birdlife. The macaque photograph below was taken at the reserve in April 2025, according to its file title.



Apocru · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Pig-tailed macaque, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, April 2025

STAY IF

You want lowland rainforest, wildlife watching and a long stay in one place.

SKIP IF

You have one day only. Danum Valley or the Kinabatangan is easier to fit in.

Look, do not feed. Keep distance from wildlife and follow your guide. (BorneoTravels advice.)

SABAH • CHAPTER 9

The Tip of Borneo

Kudat and Tanjung Simpang Mengayau, at the island's northern end.

Where two seas meet

Sabah Tourism calls Simpang Mengayau the northernmost tip of Borneo, on the Kudat Peninsula.

The name means "lingering junction". The page says the South China Sea lingers here and meets the Sulu Sea flowing from the east, and that sunsets and full moons are beautiful. It describes an easy stroll to the flagpole, the Globe and the rocky outcrop that forms the tip.



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Flagpole and globe monument, per the file title

THE TIP AS PUBLISHED

WHERE

Kudat Peninsula, northern Sabah

DRIVE FROM KOTA KINABALU

About three and a half hours, 215 km, per Sabah Tourism

ON SITE

Cafe, souvenir shop, washrooms

WALK

An easy stroll to the flagpole, Globe and rocky outcrop

Dated note. The Sabah Tourism page was last reviewed on 6 June 2023. A tourism press release on the same site mentions planned upgrades, so check current facilities before you go.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Tip of Borneo (read 29 Oct 2026).

A coast with a warning

Pantai Kalampunian

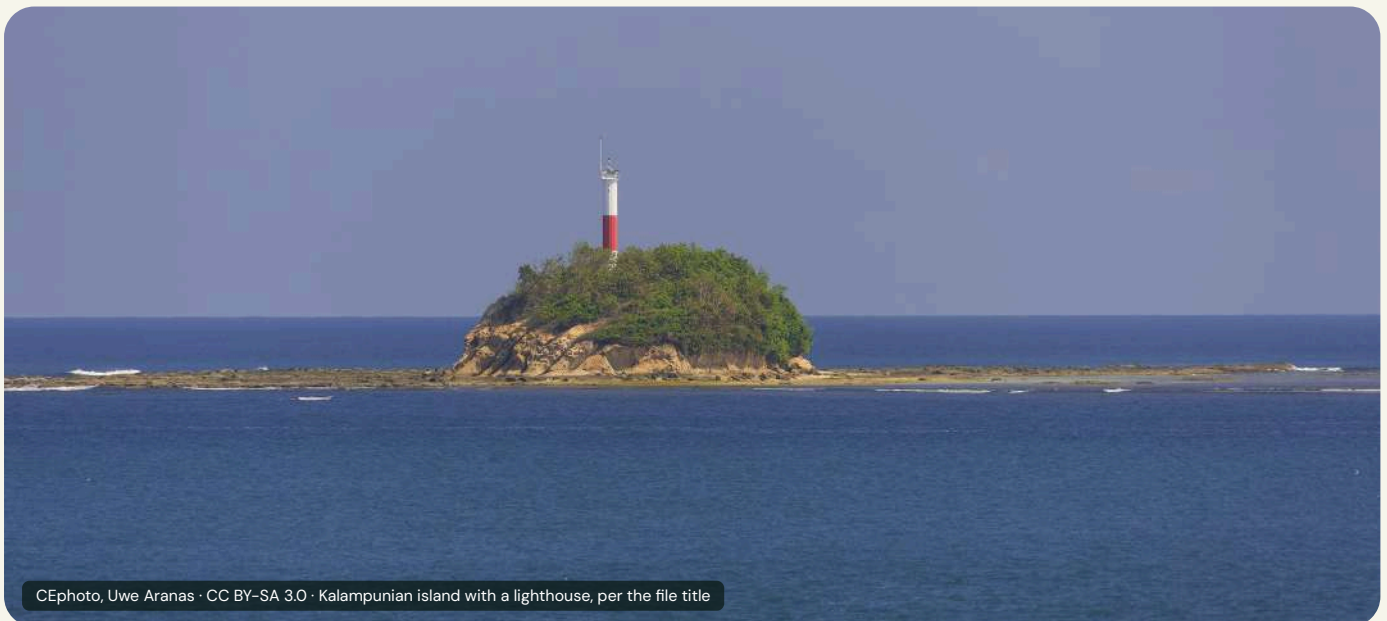
The owner page describes a long white sandy beach with azure water beside the tip, and a few rooms and chalets for those who want to stay overnight on the beach.

Kalampunian lighthouse

The Pulau Kalampunian lighthouse, the page says, is a reminder of the treacherous coastline and past shipwrecks.



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · A beach and rocky shore near Simpang Mengayau, per the file title



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Kalampunian island with a lighthouse, per the file title

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Tip of Borneo (read 29 Oct 2026).

Plan the long road north

The owner page lists taxi, self-drive or a tour agent.

It says four-wheel drives and permitted saloon cars wait near the Indian restaurant opposite the health clinic in Kampung Air. Fares are on the owner page and are not repeated here because they change.



STAY IF

You want a far-north sunset, a coastline walk and a different side of Sabah.

SKIP IF

You have a short stay in Kota Kinabalu. The drive alone takes most of a day.

BorneoTravels advice. With a drive this long, a guided day with a driver is easier than self-drive. Ask your tour planner what is included.

SABAH • CHAPTER 10

Mantanani

A small island off Kota Belud, off the beaten track.

Off the mainstream route

Sabah Tourism says Mantanani lies off the beaten tracks of other mainstream destinations. The journey, per the owner page, is a two hour drive to the Kampung Kuala Abai jetty in Kota Belud, then about an hour by speedboat. It describes clear water, clownfish, finger corals and wide reefs, and sunsets after a day on the water.



Eddie Yip · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Aerial view of Mantanani Island, per the file title

THE ISLAND AS PUBLISHED

GETTING THERE

Two hour drive to Kampung Kuala Abai jetty, Kota Belud, then about one hour by speedboat

ACTIVITIES NAMED

Fishing, diving, kayaking, snorkelling

FACILITIES NAMED

Jetty, restaurant, accommodation

Dated note. The Sabah Tourism page was last reviewed on 18 March 2025. Boat schedules and sea conditions change, so confirm with the operator.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Mantanani Island (read 29 Oct 2026).

Reefs, sand and sunsets

Diving and snorkelling

The owner page calls Mantanani a diver's paradise, with a different feature at each dive site and excellent visibility for underwater photography.

Evenings

After diving, snorkelling or kayaking, the page suggests watching orange light spread through the clouds at sunset.



Eddie Yip · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Aerial view of a Mantanani Island sand spit, per the file title

STAY IF

You want a small island, clear water and a slow pace.

SKIP IF

You are short of time. The drive and boat add up to about three hours each way, per the owner page.

Sources: Sabah Tourism, Mantanani Island (read 29 Oct 2026).

Book a tour

- [Mantanani Island snorkelling and Kawa Kawa river cruise](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

SABAH • CHAPTER 11

Waterfalls and tall forest

Tawau Hills Park, near Tawau in Sabah's southeast.

A forest that holds the water

Sabah Parks says Tawau Hills lies 24 km northwest of Tawau and was gazetted to protect water catchments.

At least seven major rivers start here. The Tawau River runs through the middle of the 27,972 hectare park and forms deep pools and waterfalls, among them the Table Waterfall. The terrain is hilly, with Gunung Magdalena at 1,310 metres and Gunung Lucia at 1,201 metres.

THE PARK AS PUBLISHED

LOCATION

24 km from Tawau

PARK AREA

27,972 hectares

PEAKS NAMED

Gunung Magdalena 1,310 m, Gunung Lucia 1,201 m, Bombalai Hill 530 m

STAY

Chalets, hostels and restaurants run by KOKTAS, the staff cooperative

Bombalai Hill

About a half hour jungle walk to 530 metres. Sabah Parks says the view takes in plantations, Tawau town and the Sulawesi Sea on the horizon.

Waterfalls and hot springs

The Table Waterfall has formed a natural swimming pool. Beyond it, about two hours of trekking leads past the Sulphur Spring to the Bukit Gelas Waterfall.

Mount Magdalena

A 14 km trail through lowland and lower montane forest to the park's highest peak. Sabah Parks says three days are required and recommended, with a hostel at km 10. Guides, porters and a climbing permit come from Sabah Parks before the climb.

Lowland Garden Walk

The garden showcases about 200 orchid species and some 60 species of ferns, per the owner page. It names the Elephant-Ear Orchid, a wild Borneo orchid found in Sabah only at Tawau Hills and Tenom.

STAY IF

You want rivers, waterfalls and forest walks in the southeast, or a multi day trek.

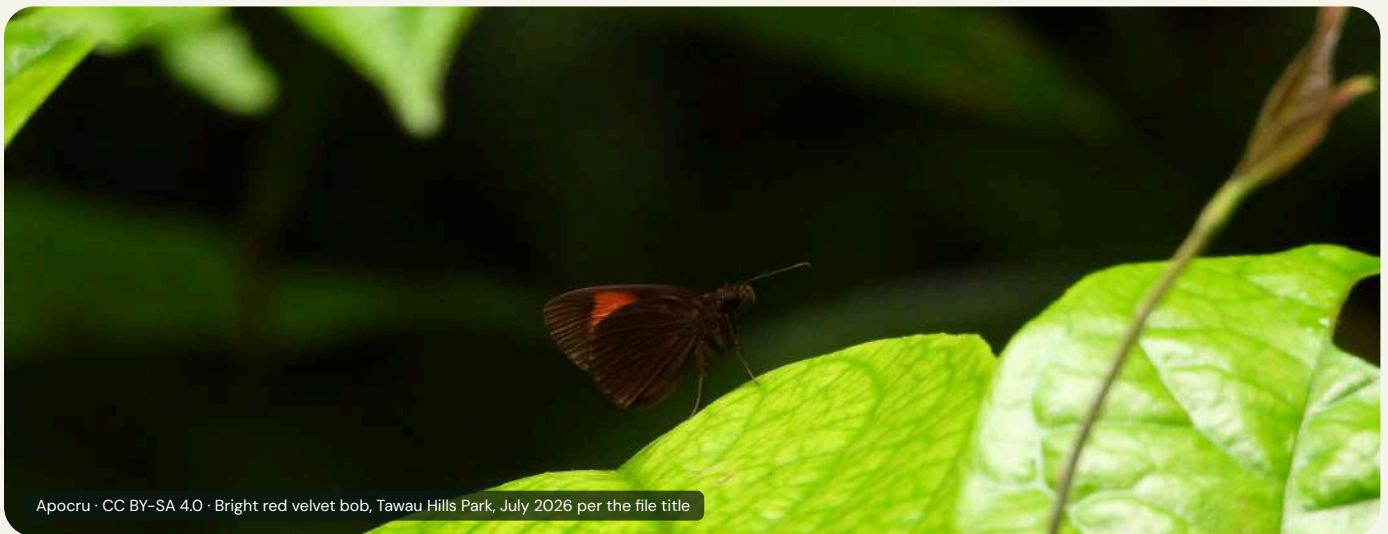
SKIP IF

You want a single easy sight. The park rewards a longer stay.

Dated note. Facts are from Sabah Parks pages read on 29 October 2026. Opening hours and fees are on the park page and change, so check them there.

Shy, but worth the wait

Sabah Parks says wildlife is abundant but shy and not easily seen. It names six of Sabah's eight hornbill species here, three pheasant species, gibbons and langurs.



No guarantees. The sightings above are individual photographs from visitors. They do not show what you will see on a visit. (BorneoTravels advice.)

SARAWAK • CHAPTER 12

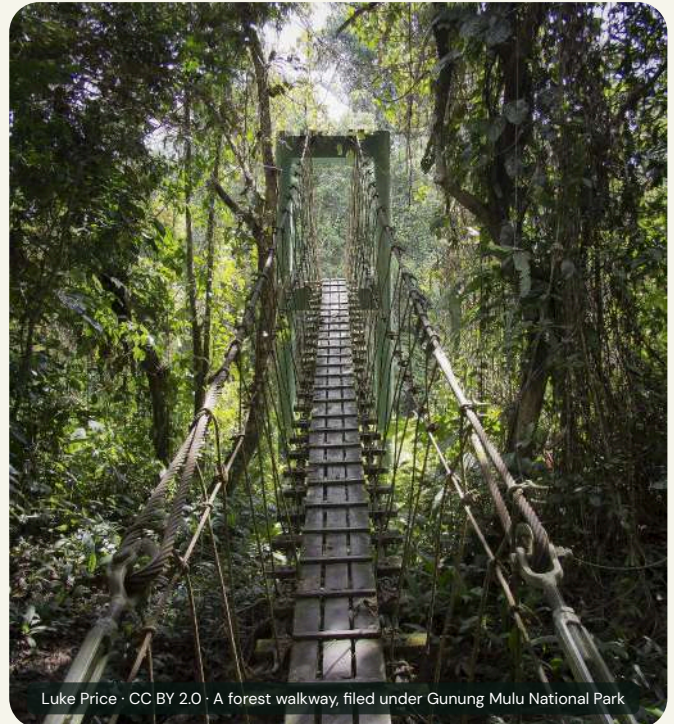
Caves, pinnacles and a million bats

Gunung Mulu National Park, Sarawak.

The most studied tropical karst

UNESCO describes Mulu as the most studied tropical karst area in the world.

Its 52,864 hectare park holds seventeen vegetation zones and some 3,500 species of vascular plants. The park is dominated by Gunung Mulu, a 2,377 metre sandstone pinnacle. At least 295 km of explored caves are home to millions of cave swiftlets and bats. UNESCO names the Sarawak Chamber, 600 by 415 metres and 80 metres high, as the largest known cave chamber in the world.



Luke Price · CC BY 2.0 · A forest walkway, filed under Gunung Mulu National Park

THE PARK AS PUBLISHED

AREA

52,864 hectares, per UNESCO

PEAK

Gunung Mulu, 2,377 m

EXPLORED CAVES

At least 295 km

LARGEST KNOWN CHAMBER

Sarawak Chamber, 600 by 415 m, 80 m high

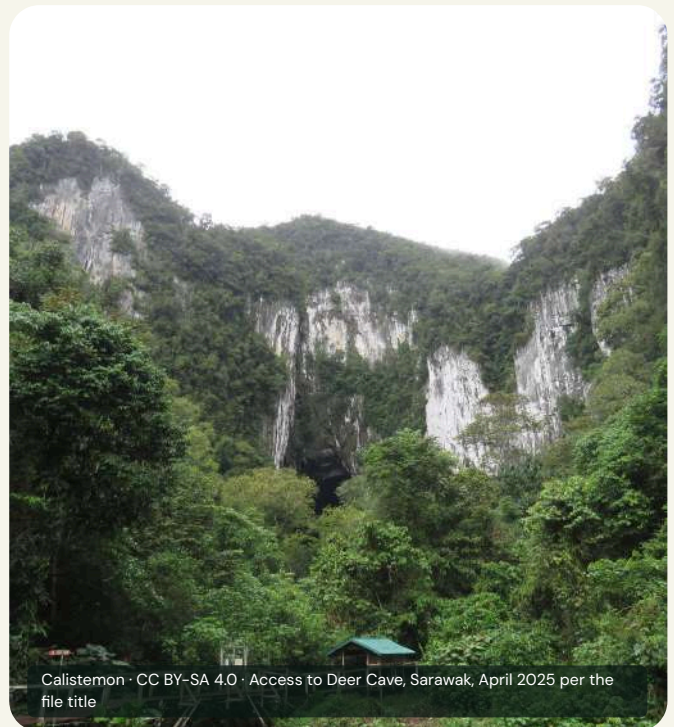
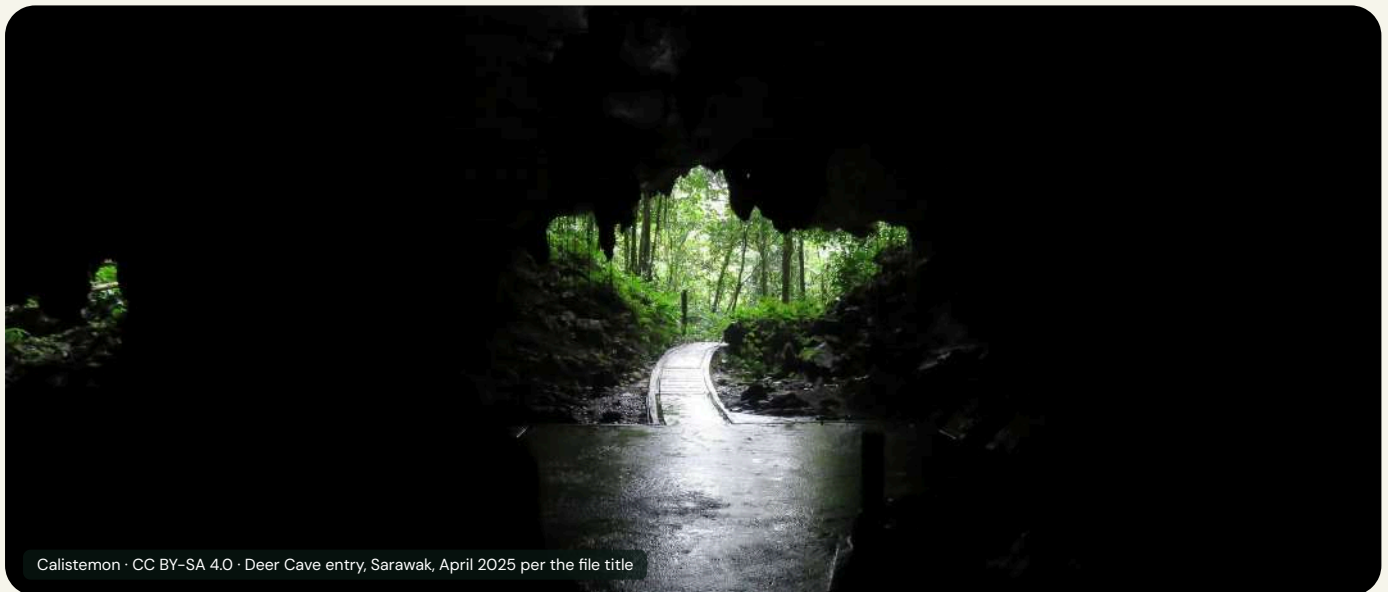
Source note. UNESCO text is licensed CC BY-SA IGO 3.0. Facts here are paraphrased from the World Heritage Centre page read on 29 October 2026.

Sources: UNESCO World Heritage Centre, Gunung Mulu National Park (read 29 Oct 2026).

The walk to the bat show

The park says the bat walk is a 3.8 km plank walk, about 45 minutes one way, and needs no booking.

It leads through forest and beside rivers to the bat observatory. The Deer & Lang tour page describes a flat 3 km plank walk, then 500 metres more to Deer Cave, with another cave, Lang Cave, on the return.



Dated note. Both park pages were read on 29 October 2026 and show no review date. Check the walk and guide rules at park headquarters.

Sources: Mulu National Park, Bat Exodus and Deer & Lang pages (read 29 Oct 2026).

A large flock of bats is captured in mid-flight against a clear, deep blue sky. The bats are concentrated into a dense, spiraling ribbon that curves from the upper left towards the lower right. The bottom of the image shows the dark, silhouetted tops of trees and foliage, indicating the scene is viewed from a low angle. The overall mood is serene yet dynamic, capturing a natural phenomenon at twilight.

DUSK

Spiralling ribbons

The park says the bats leave on most evenings between 17:30 and 18:30, and on rare occasions do not leave at all. Photo: bat exodus, location not stated in the file title.

What the park says about the exodus

Timing

Most evenings between 17:30 and 18:30. Rarely the bats leave as early as 16:30, and sometimes not at all. The Deer & Lang page says the tour is timed for an exodus that could start any time from after 17:00.

Wrinkle-lipped bats

The park's own pages put the colony at around 3 million: an estimate of 2.5 to 3.5 million on the Bat Exodus page, and more than 3 million on the Deer & Lang page. Counts vary with the season and the survey.

Deer Cave

Twelve bat species have been recorded in Deer Cave, per the park. Bat hawks wait on the cliff before the first bats appear.



Bernard DUPONT · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Bat exodus at dusk, location not stated in the file title

STAY IF

You want one of nature's evening shows and can plan around rain and a fixed evening time.

SKIP IF

You cannot be at the cave in the late afternoon. The show is the point of the walk.

You fly to Mulu

The park says Mulu can realistically only be reached by flight.

It lists daily flights from Miri (30 minutes), Kuching (1 hour 20 minutes) and Kota Kinabalu (55 minutes), subject to change, and sends visitors to AirBorneo for the current schedule. Heavy rain can cancel flights, so the park asks visitors to keep a flexible itinerary, especially on the way out.



Calistemon · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Boat landing at Clearwater Cave, April 2025 per the file title

PLANNING, PER THE PARK

WEATHER

Mulu can be visited all year, with frequent rain

TYPICAL DAY

Clear morning, rain often between 13:00 and 17:00, evenings usually fine

PEAK SEASON

June to September and holidays, book accommodation and guides ahead

Dated note. Flight details are from the park page read on 29 October 2026. The page says they are subject to change and points to AirBorneo for schedules.

Light, water and limestone

The park page describes Lang Cave as having limestone shawls, stalagmites and stalactites, and says bats are easier to see in this smaller cave.



Calistemon · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Cave of the Winds, April 2025 per the file title

The photograph shows the Cave of the Winds, per its file title, not Lang Cave.

Boat, cave and a cool-down by the river

The park describes a four-hour tour by longboat up the Melinau River that ends at Clearwater Cave.

The page lists three stops. First comes a visit to a Penan longhouse and market at Batu Bungan. Then Cave of the Winds, where you negotiate a long ramp and a few stairs. Last is Clearwater, where the underground river comes out of the cliff face. The page says you climb 200 stairs to enter the cave.



Calistemon · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Boat landing at Clearwater Cave, April 2025 per the file title

The cave

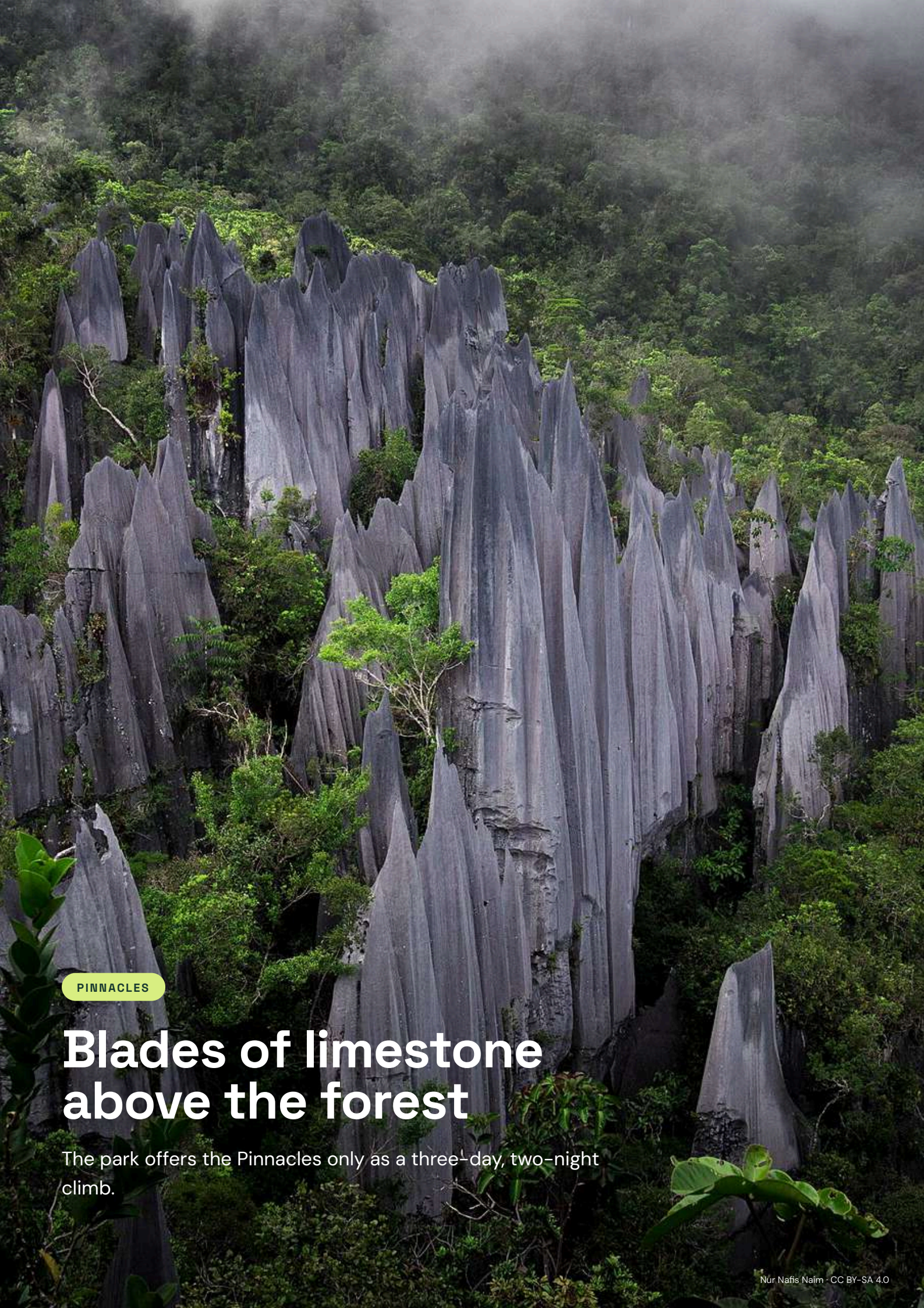
The park says Clearwater is one of the biggest cave systems in the world, more than 220 km long. Swimming inside the cave is not permitted. The page recommends a cool-down in the clear water at the picnic deck.

What to bring

Swimming costume, rain coat or poncho, sturdy non-slip shoes, a torch and insect repellent. The page says the tour includes no food or drink, and asks visitors to carry their empty packaging back to headquarters.

Dated note. The Mulu pages were read on 29 October 2026 and show no review date. Tour times, fees and booking rules are not printed here. Check them with the park before you plan.

Sources: Mulu National Park, Clearwater and Winds page (read 29 Oct 2026).



PINNACLES

Blades of limestone above the forest

The park offers the Pinnacles only as a three-day, two-night climb.

An extreme climb, not a trek

The park calls the Pinnacles a high-risk, extreme activity, and says it is not suitable for children 16 and younger.

Day one is a boat ride on the Melinau River, then a 9 km walk to Camp 5. The next morning the trail to the viewpoint is only 2.4 km long but rises 1,200 metres. The last section is near vertical, with ropes and steel ladders. The page says the descent can take five hours or more. It describes pinnacles up to 50 metres high, pitcher plants, rare orchids and mountain shrews on the way up.



Paul White · CC BY 2.0 · Pinnacles at Mulu, per the file title

Camp 5

The park describes Camp 5 as a basic forest shelter with raised timber platforms, roofs and half walls, and no windows, doors or insect screens. There is no mobile reception, only radio. Camping in tents is not permitted. Reservations are essential.

Not climbing?

The page says you can ask about walks to the Kerangas forest or the Melinau Gorge, depending on guide availability.

Dated note. The park warns that rescues are extreme and costly, and that injured visitors were often under-equipped or ignored their guides. This page was read on 29 October 2026 and shows no review date. Costs and booking terms are not printed.

Sources: Mulu National Park, Pinnacles page (read 29 Oct 2026).

SARAWAK • CHAPTER 13

Sandstone coves near Kuching

Bako National Park, Sarawak.

Mangrove, rainforest and sea cliffs

Sarawak Tourism Board calls Bako the oldest national park in Sarawak, and a companion story calls it the smallest. It has mangrove swamps, rainforest and coastal cliffs, with scenic treks to hidden beaches.

It names proboscis monkeys as the park's best known wildlife, along with bearded pigs and more than 150 bird species. A companion story from the same board describes silvered leaf monkeys and macaques, and says bearded pigs often wait on the beach.



THE PARK AS PUBLISHED

DISTANCE

About 40 km from Kuching, per the Tourism Board story

TRAILS

18 in all, 7 ending on the beach and 11 inside the park

WALK LENGTHS

From 30 minutes to 7 hours

BEST MONTHS

March to October for drier trekking, per the Tourism Board

Sources: Sarawak Tourism Board, Bako pages (read 29 Oct 2026, no review date shown).

Book a tour

- [Bako National Park tour from Kuching](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

Walks to hidden beaches



Peter Gronemann · CC BY 2.0 · Rock platform at Bako, per the file title



Thomas Quine · CC BY 2.0 · Rock cleft at Bako, per the file title

Telok Pandan Kecil

The Tourism Board describes a moderate 2.5 km trek to a cliffside view over a secluded beach.

Tanjung Sapi

Described as a short but steep trail with wide views of the coastline.

Tides and timing

The board advises checking the tide schedule before heading out on beach trails, and says wildlife is more active early or late in the day. Heavy rain falls from November to February.



Fabio Achilli · CC BY 2.0 · A boardwalk through heath, per the file title (location not stated)

STAY IF

You want rainforest, coast and wildlife within a day of Kuching.

SKIP IF

You are after a single long jungle trek. Bako rewards several short walks.

By road, then by boat

The Tourism Board describes a bus or taxi ride from Kuching to Bako Village, then a boat to the park.

It gives about 30 minutes for the road and 20 minutes for the boat. Boat timing depends on the tide, so confirm it on the day. (BorneoTravels advice.)

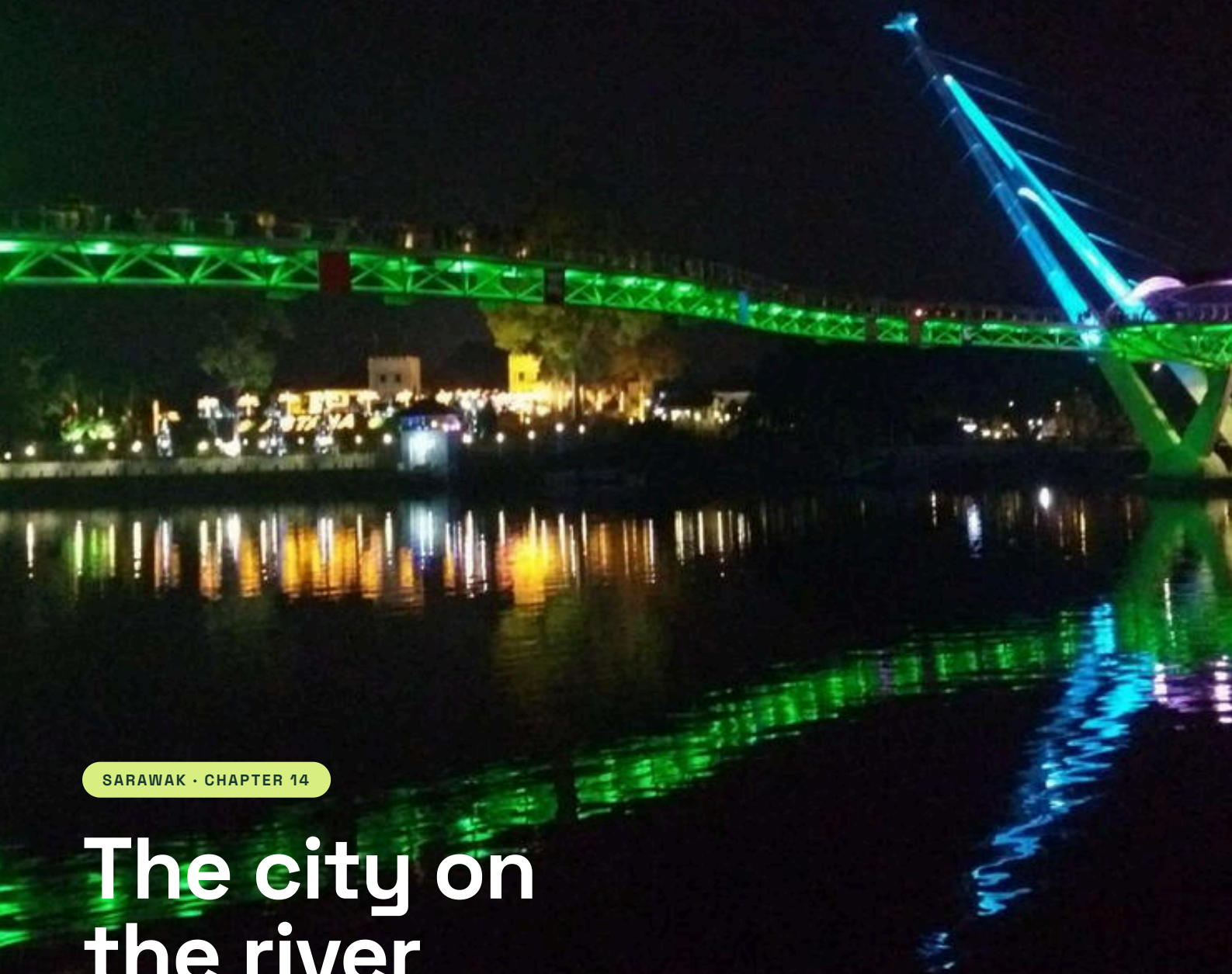


Thomas Quine · CC BY 2.0 · Sea stack at Bako, per the file title

Gap. We have not verified Sarawak Forestry fees, boat rules or lodging. Check current details directly with Sarawak Forestry.



Thomas Quine · CC BY 2.0 · Bako shoreline, per the file title



SARAWAK · CHAPTER 14

The city on the river

Kuching, capital of Sarawak.

A river promenade and a bridge

Sarawak Tourism Board calls Kuching the capital of Sarawak and the largest city on the island of Borneo.

It describes a mix of Iban, Bidayuh, Malay, Chinese and Melanau communities, colonial architecture, markets and cafes. The Kuching Waterfront, also called the Esplanade, runs about 1.5 km along the south bank of the Sarawak River, with the Astana and the Old Courthouse nearby.



Cerevisae · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Darul Hana Bridge at night, per the file title

THE CITY AS PUBLISHED

WATERFRONT

About 1.5 km along the south bank of the Sarawak River

DARUL HANA BRIDGE

Pedestrian bridge opened in 2017, S-shaped, lit at night

SEASON

Rain is frequent, especially November to February

Dated note. Facts come from a Sarawak Tourism Board page read on 29 October 2026 with no review date shown.

Sources: Sarawak Tourism Board, Kuching (read 29 Oct 2026).

Shophouses, a tower and a post office



Yeo Jiun Tzen · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Square Tower, per the file title

Square Tower

The board says it was built in 1879 at Pangkalan Batu, at the eastern end of the Kuching Waterfront.



Yeo Jiun Tzen · CC BY-SA 4.0 · General Post Office, per the file title

General Post Office

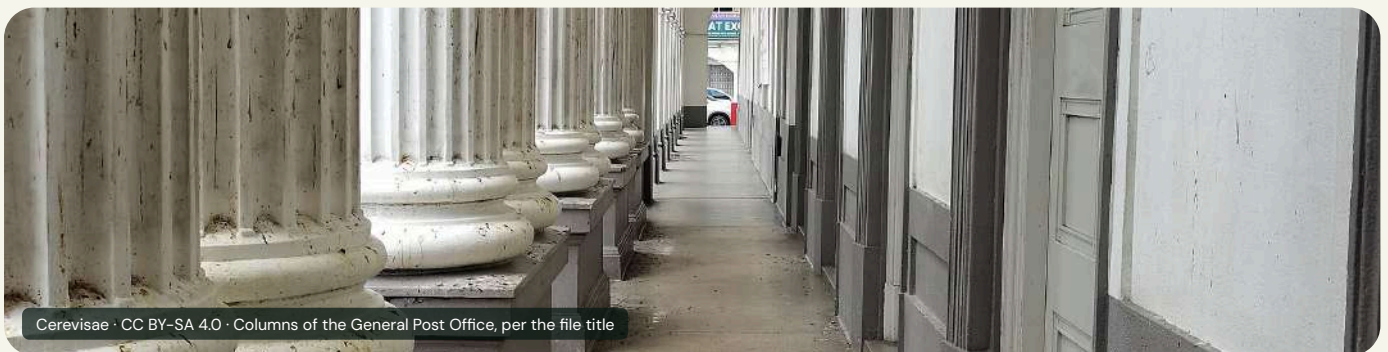
Built in 1931 in neo-classical style, and described as the only building in Sarawak with Corinthian columns. It is still used as the post office.

Carpenter Street

The board describes rows of colonial-era shophouses, many from the 19th century. It was first called Attap Street for its thatched roofs, then took its name from the carpenters who worked there.

Brooke Memorial

Commissioned in 1924 for Rajah Charles Brooke, with a 6 metre granite obelisk and bronze panels for the Dayak, Kayan, Malay and Chinese communities.



Cerevisae · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Columns of the General Post Office, per the file title

Day trips from the city

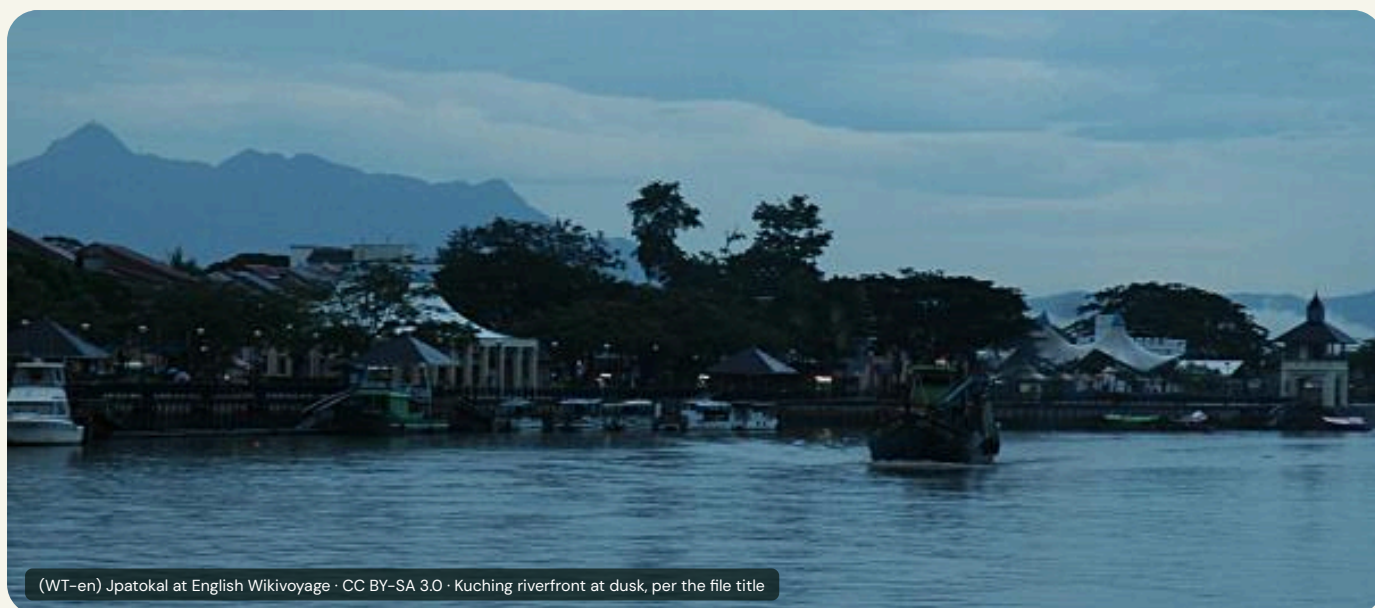
The board calls Kuching the gateway to Bako and Gunung Gading national parks. Bako has its own chapter in this guide.

Wind Cave Nature Reserve

Part of the Bau limestone formation, a belt of about 150 square kilometres in southwest Sarawak. The reserve covers 6.16 hectares and is described as a popular day trip and picnic spot within easy reach of Kuching.

Borneo Happy Farm

A farm practising MyGAP agriculture since 2016, with solar power and rainwater collection. The board gives about 45 minutes by road from the city centre.



(WT-en) Jpatokal at English Wikivoyage · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Kuching riverfront at dusk, per the file title

Gaps. No owner page was read for Semenggoh, the Cultural Village or the Wind Cave itself, so none is described here. Local tips from the board: keep cash or an e-wallet for stalls and night markets, and dress modestly at temples and mosques.

STAY IF

You want food, heritage buildings and a river walk, with parks a short trip away.

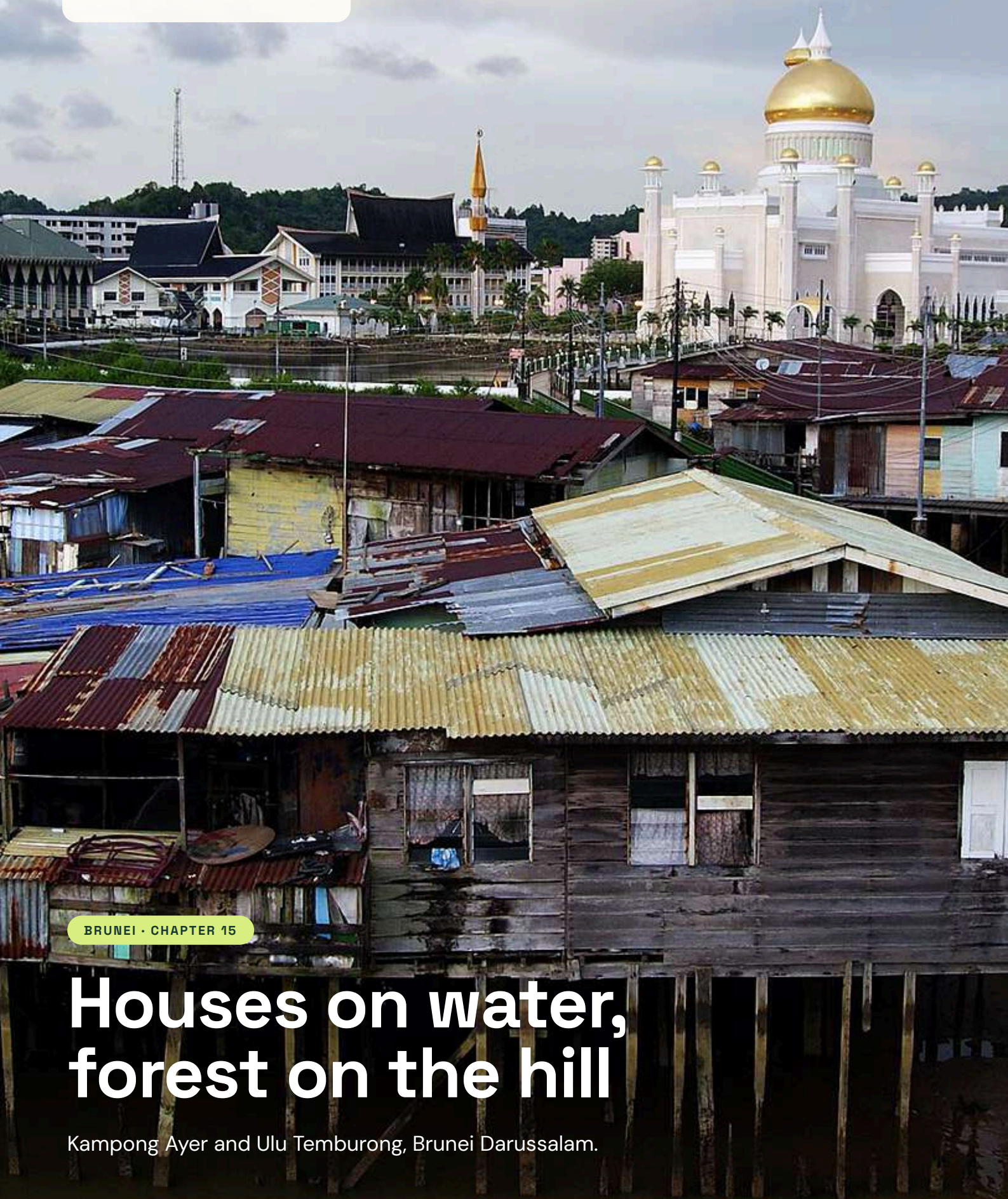
SKIP IF

You only have time for jungle. Kuching is a base for a night or two.

Book a tour

- [Semenggoh Wildlife Centre trip](#)
- [Sarawak Cultural Village half-day trip](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.



BRUNEI • CHAPTER 15

Houses on water, forest on the hill

Kampong Ayer and Ulu Temburong, Brunei Darussalam.

The village on stilts

Brunei Tourism describes Kampong Ayer as a settlement on stilts that has flourished for over a thousand years.

The official site calls it one of the largest water settlements in Southeast Asia, in Bandar Seri Begawan on the Brunei River. It suggests a boat ride on the river, then a walk along wooden paths and bridges, and ends at the Kampong Ayer Cultural and Tourism Gallery. The page says the gallery explains why the place is called the "Venice of the East".



JKT-c · CC BY 3.0 · Kampong Ayer, per the file title



Chin Yu Chu · CC BY-SA 2.0 · Aerial view of Brunei, 23 Sep 2024 per the file title

Dated note. Brunei Tourism pages were read on 29 October 2026 and show no review date. Check current opening times with the Tourism Development Department.

Sources: Brunei Tourism official site, Kampong Ayer (read 29 Oct 2026).

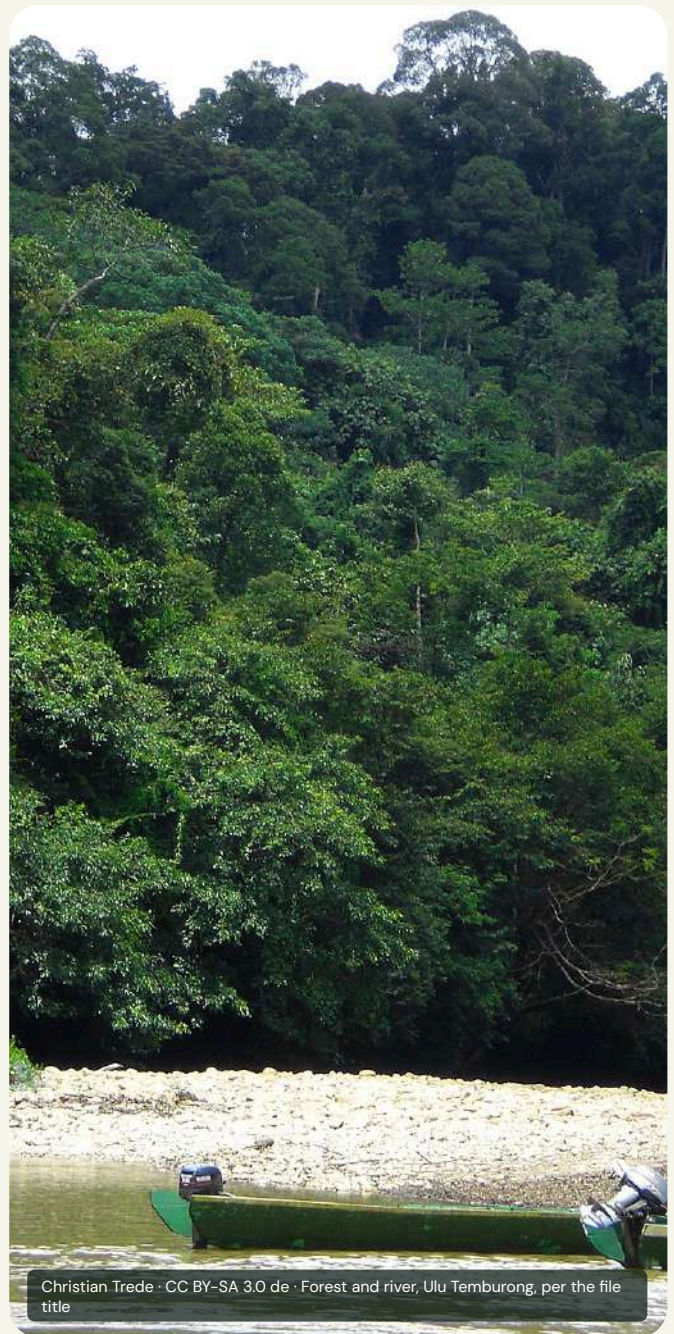
Brunei's green jewel

The official tourism site calls Ulu Temburong National Park the crown jewel of Brunei's green landscapes.

It lies in the easternmost Temburong district, a 50,000 hectare expanse of rainforest that covers most of the southern part of the district. The page describes lowland and mountain forest with many unique species, and the longhouse communities that belong to it. The Forestry Department page describes it as the first national park in Brunei, with rivers, tributaries and waterfalls.

What to bring

The Forestry Department advises long sleeves and a hat against sun and insects, training shoes because trails are slippery after rain, a water bottle and a rain jacket.



Christian Trede - CC BY-SA 3.0 de - Forest and river, Ulu Temburong, per the file title

Dated note. Both pages were read on 29 October 2026 and show no review date. This guide does not cover how to reach the park. Ask Brunei Tourism or the Forestry Department for current access details before you plan.

Mosques and local etiquette



Mosque visits

Brunei Tourism's Useful Tips page says women are required to cover head, shoulders and knees when visiting mosques, some mosques provide simple robes and shawls, and shoes are not worn inside. Its page for Jame' Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque lists visiting hours of 8 to 11.30 am and 2 to 3 pm, closed on Fridays.

Fridays

The Useful Tips page says banks, businesses, offices, shops, places of interest and food outlets close between 12 noon and 2 pm on Fridays for prayers.

Ramadan

The same page says that during the fasting hours of Ramadan, restaurants only allow takeaway or delivery. The month moves each year with the Islamic calendar.

Small courtesies

Keep quiet when you hear the call to prayer. Do not shake hands with someone of the opposite sex unless they offer first.

Dated note. Read on 29 October 2026 from Brunei Tourism's official site, which shows no review date on these pages. Hours and rules can change, so confirm before you travel.

Book a tour

- [Bandar Seri Begawan and Kampong Ayer half-day tour](#)
- [Proboscis monkey river tour, Brunei](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

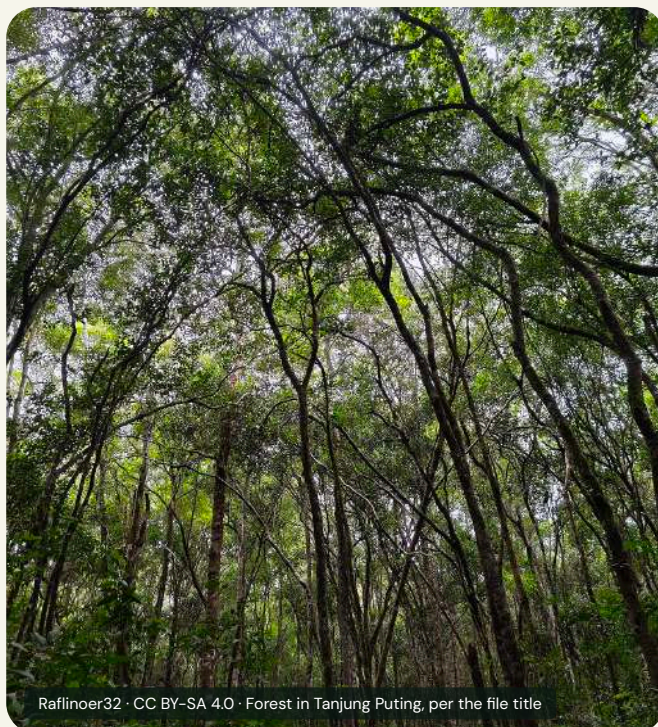
KALIMANTAN • CHAPTER 16

The river of the orangutans

Tanjung Puting National Park, Central Kalimantan.

Indonesia's first orangutan reserve

The Ministry of Forestry describes Tanjung Puting as the first conservation area in Indonesia created to protect orangutans. Its profile page gives an area of 412,548 hectares in Central Kalimantan. It began as a wildlife reserve set up by the Dutch government in 1936 for orangutans and proboscis monkeys, and became a national park in 1984. The ministry names orangutans, proboscis monkeys and hawksbill turtles as key species, and says visitors reach them along the Sekonyer River, past stands of nipa palm.



Raflinoer32 · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Forest in Tanjung Puting, per the file title

THE PARK AS PUBLISHED

AREA

412,548 hectares, per the ministry profile

RESERVE FIRST SET UP

1936, as a wildlife reserve

NATIONAL PARK

Designated 1984

RAMSAR SITE

2013, wetland of international importance

BIOSPHERE RESERVE

Named by UNESCO in 1977

Dated note. Facts are from the Ministry of Forestry profile page, read on 29 October 2026 with no review date shown. The page text is in Indonesian and paraphrased here.

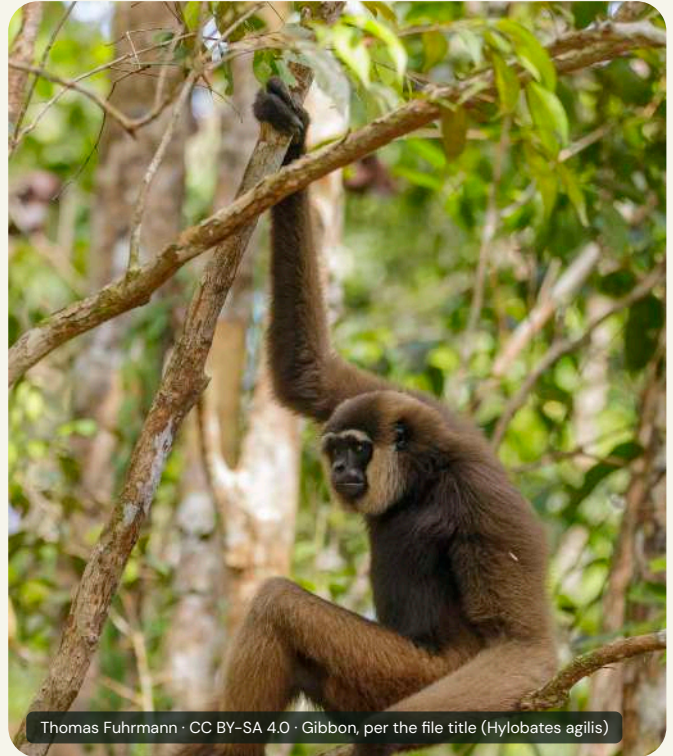
Sources: Ministry of Forestry, Profil TN Tanjung Puting (read 29 Oct 2026).

Orangutans and their neighbours

The ministry profile lists orangutan, proboscis monkey, hawksbill turtle and a gallery of birds and primates among the park's wildlife.



Thomas Fuhrmann · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Bornean orangutan, per the file title



Thomas Fuhrmann · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Gibbon, per the file title (*Hylobates agilis*)



USAID Indonesia · Public domain · Orangutan, Tanjung Puting, per the file title

No guarantees. These are individual photographs, not a promise of what you will see. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Book a tour

- [Tanjung Puting 3-day river cruise \(GetYourGuide\)](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

What the ministry reported in October 2026

Forest and land fires affected Tanjung Puting this month. This page records what the Ministry of Forestry published, with dates. It is history, not current advice.

18 OCT 2026**Fire fighting stepped up**

The ministry reported 26 water-bombing runs that day over the Sungai Perlu and Teluk Rengas areas, and ground crews working at Pesalat and Teluk Pulai.

26 OCT 2026**Rain and falling hotspots**

A ministry release said rain fell at Camp Leakey and Sungai Buluh Besar inside the park, and national hotspot counts were falling. It said this did not mean every fire was out.

28 OCT 2026**National count at 79**

The latest release read lists 79 hotspots nationwide and warns that no hotspot on satellite does not mean fires are finished, because peat fires can smoulder underground.

No travel-ready claim. Current opening times for visits, boats and camps are unverified. Check directly with the park authority before planning a trip.

CHAPTER 17

What to eat in Borneo

Noodles, fish salads and jungle greens, from the tourism boards' own lists.

Breakfast in Kuching

Sarawak Tourism Board calls Sarawak laksa and kolo mee the two signature breakfasts of Kuching.

The board describes Sarawak laksa as rice vermicelli in a spicy, sour, shrimp-based broth thickened with coconut milk, topped with beansprouts, prawns, shredded chicken and thin omelette, with sambal and calamansi on the side. The board notes that the dish was ranked first among Asian foods by TasteAtlas and that Anthony Bourdain called it the breakfast of the gods.

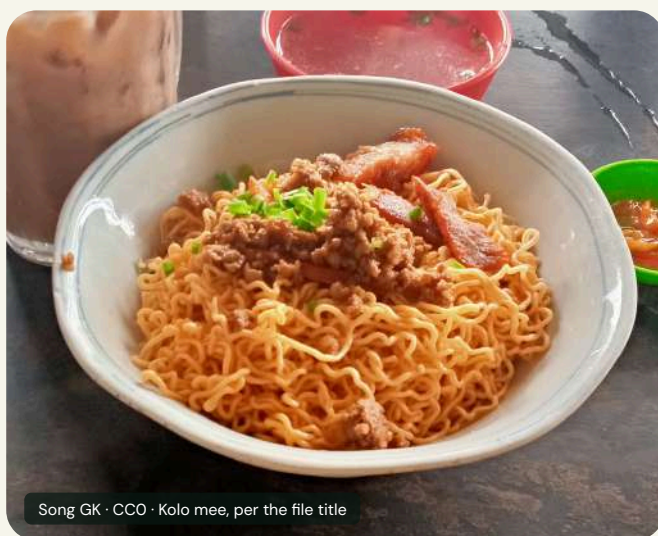
Kolo mee is al dente noodles tossed in oil, topped with char siew and minced pork, spring onion and chilli. The board says halal versions are sold at Muslim outlets.



Kdecruz · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Sarawak laksa, per the file title



Lemmas123 · CC0 · Kolo mee, per the file title



Song GK · CC0 · Kolo mee, per the file title

QUICK FACTS

MIDIN

Stir-fried jungle fern, usually with garlic or shrimp paste, per the board

DABAI

Called the Sarawak olive; eaten raw with salt or stir-fried, per the board

Fish salad and fried noodles

Sabah Tourism Board lists local dishes from nasi kuning and amplang to Beaufort mee, and gives a monthly recipe, with hinava for February.



Sweizhong · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Hinava, per the file title

The board describes hinava as sliced mackerel mixed with bird's eye chilli, ginger, red onion, bitter melon and lime juice. It describes pinasakan as basung fish braised with a tangy wild fruit, tamarind, turmeric and salt, usually eaten with rice or ambuyat.

Tuaran, about 32 km from Kota Kinabalu by the board's district page, is known for its fried Tuaran noodles, and the board says visitors travel there just to taste them.



CEphoto, Uwe Aranas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Tuaran noodles, per the file title

Tuhau. The board warns that tuhau, made from wild ginger, has a strong, pungent smell that may put off first-timers. (Owner article.)

CHAPTER 18

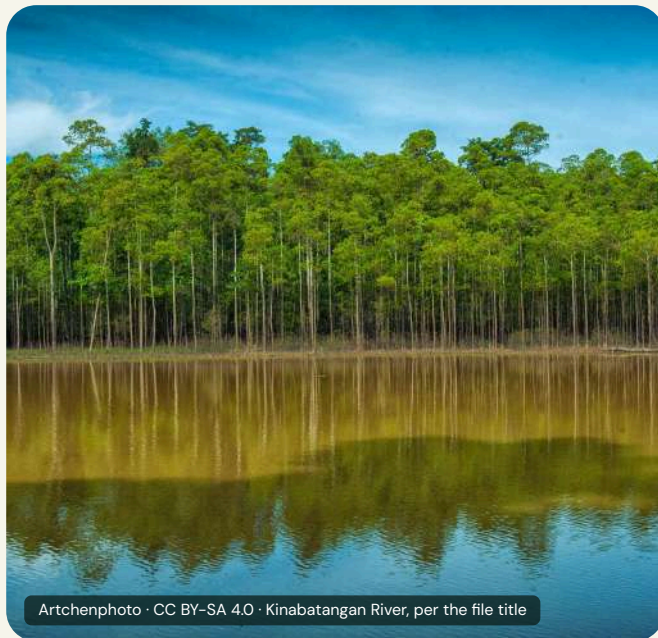
When to go, what to bring

Seasons and planning notes from Sabah and Sarawak tourism boards.

Dry months, wet months

Both tourism boards name March to September as the drier stretch, and both point to the months from October or November to February as the wet ones.

Sabah Tourism Board gives March to September as the best time to visit Sabah and says October to February is wetter. It adds that Sabah usually escapes the region's typhoons and monsoon extremes, which is why it is called the Land Below the Wind. For Gunung Mulu, Sarawak Tourism Board lists March to September as the drier season, better for trekking and caving, with heavy rain through the year and most of it from November to February. Its Kuching page gives June to September as the best time and names November to February as the monsoon months.



Artchenphoto · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Kinabatangan River, per the file title

QUICK FACTS

BIRDS

Sabah board: May to October is best for birding, when fruiting season brings fruit-eating birds to breed

LOWLANDS

About 32 degrees C on average at Kota Kinabalu, Kudat, Sandakan and Tawau, per the Sabah board

HIGHLANDS

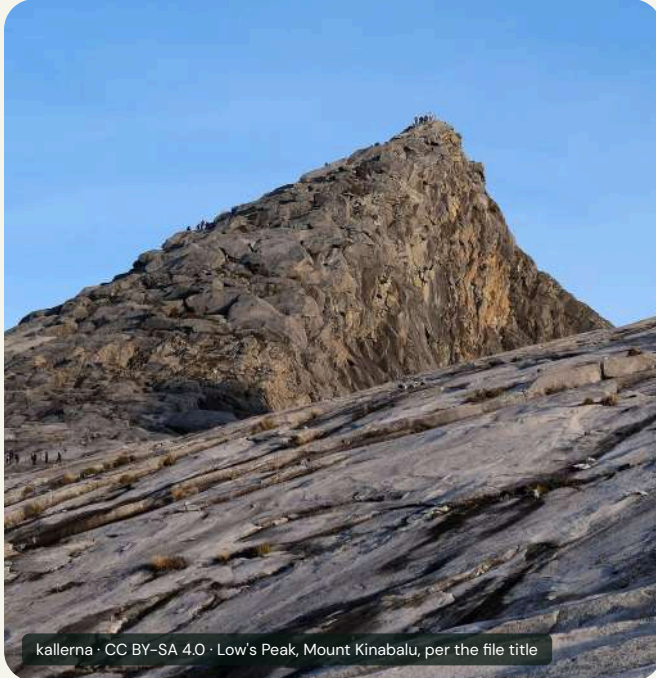
About 21 degrees C at Ranau, Kundasang and Tambunan; Kinabalu can reach freezing above 3,500 m

MULU

23 to 32 degrees C, per the Sarawak board

Pack for rain, leeches and cash

Small practical notes taken from the boards' own guides.



kallerna · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Low's Peak, Mount Kinabalu, per the file title

The Sabah board tells rainforest visitors to expect rain at any hour and high humidity. Its birders' guide suggests leech socks and insect repellent, rain covers for camera gear, a poncho, and a hand towel or wet wipes. It says these are cheap in Sabah's cities. For Kuching, the Sarawak board says many market stalls work in cash or e-wallets, so carry some cash. It advises going early to the Sunday market and Siniawan night market for the best pick. The Sabah board also suggests arriving a day early so you can sort last items before a tour starts.



Luke Price · CC BY 2.0 · Gunung Mulu National Park, per the file title

Book guided activities early. The Sarawak board advises booking tours and guides in advance for Mulu activities such as the Pinnacles trek and caving. (Owner page.)

Book a tour

- [Klook: search Borneo tours](#)
- [GetYourGuide: search Borneo tours](#)

Offers and availability change. Check the listing on the day. Booking links may earn BorneoTravels a commission.

SARAWAK • CHAPTER 19

Person of the forest

Semenggoh orangutans and the limestone caves of Bau, a day from Kuching.

A haven for semi-wild orangutans

Sarawak Forestry Corporation says Semenggoh Wildlife Centre was set up in 1975 to care for wild animals that were injured, orphaned or kept as illegal pets.

The corporation says the centre is best known for its orangutan rehabilitation. So many were reintroduced that the forest reached capacity, and rehabilitation work moved to Matang Wildlife Centre. Semenggoh now studies orangutan biology and behaviour and shelters semi-wild orangutans, including some born in the wild to rehabilitated mothers.

The corporation puts the centre at about 24 km from Kuching. Sarawak Tourism Board says about 20 km south. Both describe a short trip out of the city. Private cars cannot enter the centre, per the corporation.



KelvinToh · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Orangutan, per the file title

QUICK FACTS

NAME

Orang means person and utan comes from hutan, forest, per the corporation

WILD NUMBERS

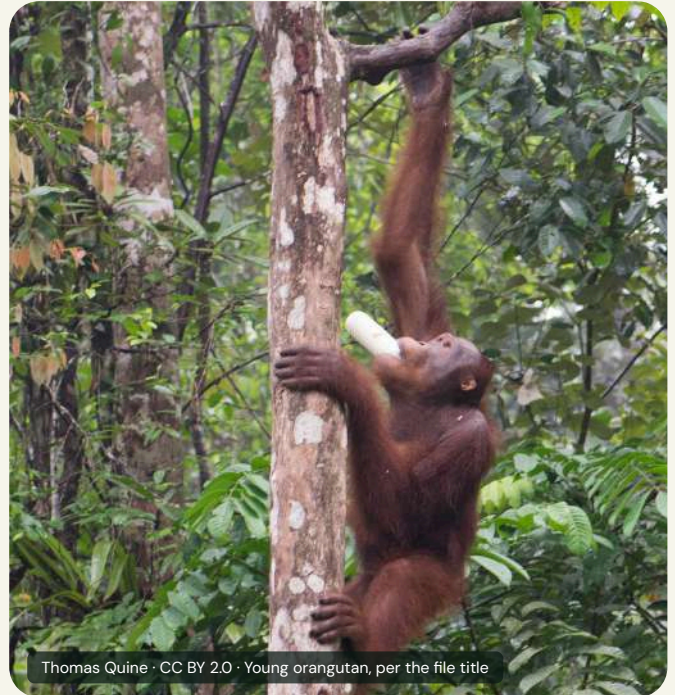
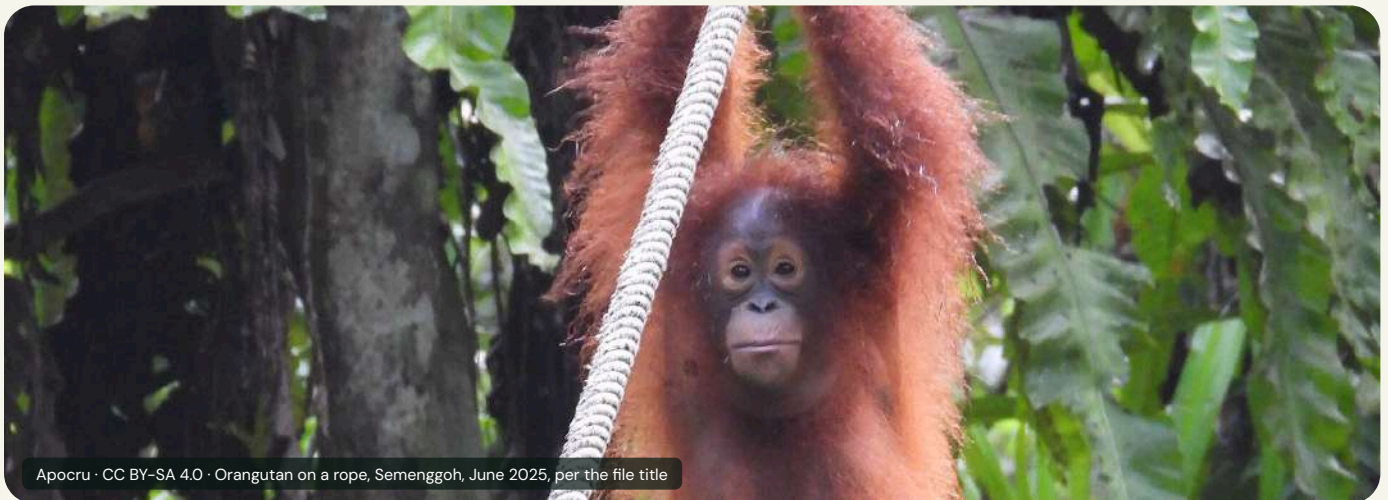
The corporation estimates 20,000 to 27,000 remain in the wild (no review date shown)

DIET

Mostly fruit, plus leaves, insects, bark, flowers and eggs

Visitors come at feeding time

Sarawak Tourism Board says the young orangutans spend most of their time in the forest and come back to the centre for a free meal.



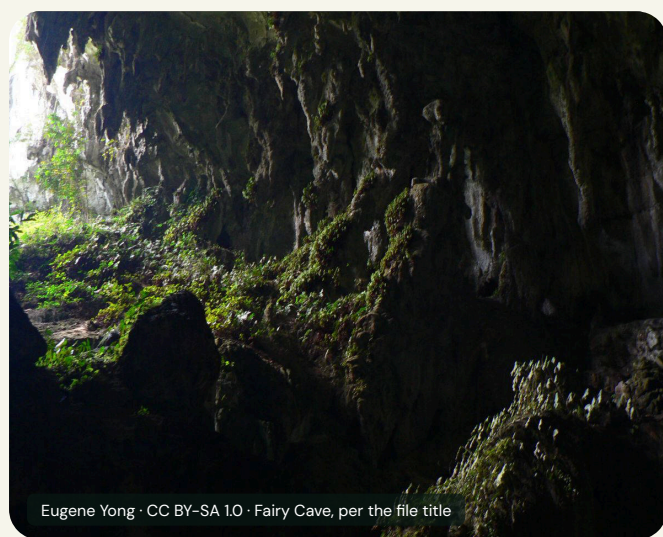
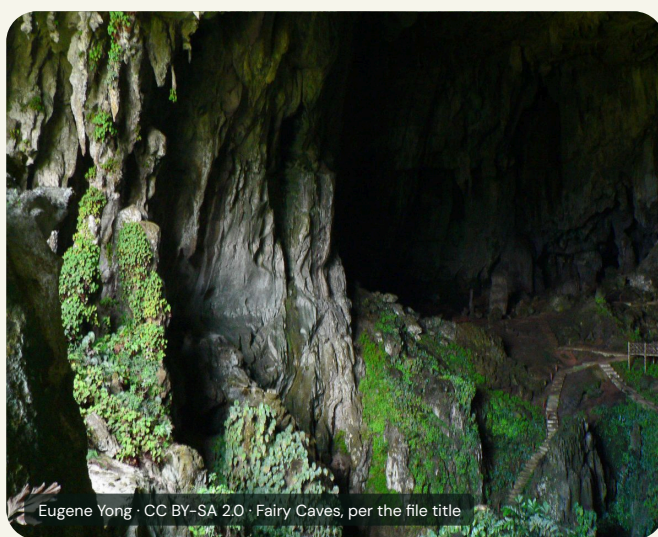
No guarantee. The corporation notes that orangutans may not appear during fruiting season or bad weather. These photos show individual animals. (Owner PDF; BorneoTravels advice.)

Caves in the Bau limestone

Sarawak Tourism Board says the Bau Formation is a narrow belt of limestone of about 150 square kilometres in southwest Sarawak, cut through with caves.

The board says Wind Cave is within easy reach of Kuching and is a popular day trip and picnic spot. The reserve covers 6.16 hectares, including the cave and the forest around it.

For Fairy Cave, about 50 km from Kuching, the board describes stalactites, stalagmites, moss-covered rock and sunlight through openings in the cave wall. It names a Twilight Trail and a Dark Trail, with viewing platforms and lighting. It lists June to September as the best time and warns of slippery trails in the wet months.



CHAPTER 20

Choose your Borneo

Which chapters to read first, by what you love. BorneoTravels advice.

Wildlife and wild places

If animals and forest are the point, start here. The chapters name what each owner says lives there; none promises a sighting.

QUICK FACTS

ORANGUTANS

Ch 2 Sepilok and Sandakan; Ch 16 Tanjung Puting (fire status dated); Ch 19 Semenggoh

RIVERS AND RAINFOREST

Ch 3 Kinabatangan; Ch 4 Danum Valley; Ch 8 Tabin; Ch 11 Tawau Hills

MOUNTAINS AND CAVES

Ch 1 Mount Kinabalu and Ranau; Ch 12 Gunung Mulu; Ch 19 Bau caves

COAST AND FOREST WALKS

Ch 13 Bako



KelvinToh · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Orangutan, per the file title



Luke Price · CC BY 2.0 · Gunung Mulu National Park, per the file title

Sea, towns and food

If you want water, streets and a good meal, start here.

QUICK FACTS

ISLANDS AND DIVING

Ch 5 Tunku Abdul Rahman Park; Ch 6 Sipadan and Semporna; Ch 10 Mantanani

COAST AND HEADLANDS

Ch 9 Tip of Borneo, Kudat

CITIES AND CULTURE

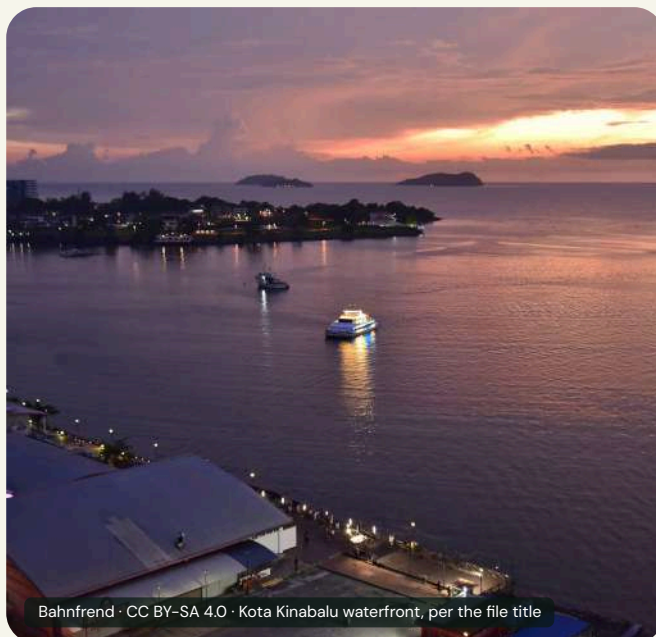
Ch 7 Kota Kinabalu; Ch 14 Kuching; Ch 15 Brunei

EATING

Ch 17 What to eat in Borneo

TIMING AND PACKING

Ch 18 When to go, what to bring



Bahnfreund · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Kota Kinabalu waterfront, per the file title



Dcubillas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Manukan Island beach, per the file title

Plan with the owners. Opening rules, fees and transport change. Each chapter links the owner page to check before you book. (BorneoTravels advice.)



CHAPTER 21

Joining it up: route outlines

How the places in this guide can be strung together, drawn from 2014–15 programme outlines.

Historical outlines, not current offers

These routes come from 2014–15 tour programme files in the BorneoTravels archive. The Sabah and Kuching outlines are supplier-format programmes. The Niah and Bario outlines come from a Planet Borneo Tours itinerary booklet, so they are third-party programmes, not BorneoTravels products. They show how the chapters in this guide fit together as one trip. They are not current offers. Flights, openings, permits, access and availability change. Prices, hotels and supplier terms are not printed here. Before planning any of these, confirm every leg with the owner pages in each chapter and with your operator. (BorneoTravels advice.)

THE OUTLINES IN THIS CHAPTER

BEST OF KOTA KINABALU, 6 DAYS 5 NIGHTS

City, cultural village, Kinabalu (park and Poring, or summit climb), island day. Ch 7, 1, 5

BEST OF SABAH, 8 DAYS 7 NIGHTS

The same, then Gomantong, Kinabatangan river and Sepilok. Ch 3, 2

BEST OF BORNEO, 11 DAYS 10 NIGHTS

Kuching, Batang Ai and Lemanak longhouse (no chapter yet), then Sabah. Ch 14, 19, 7, 1, 5, 3, 2

SARAWAK ADD-ONS

Niah caves from Miri, Bario Valley, Bario to Ba Kelalan trek. Ch 12 for Mulu



Apocru · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Kinabatangan River, per the file title

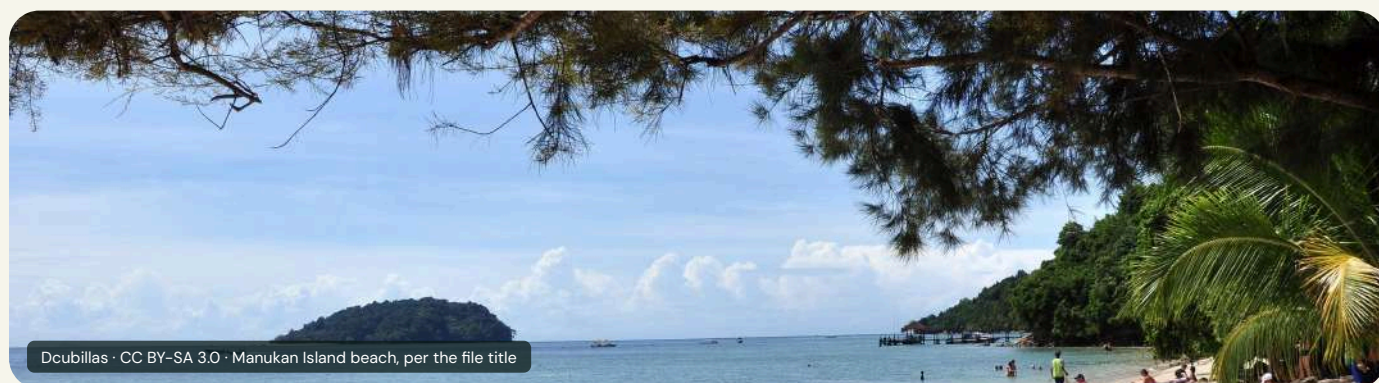
Six and eight days in Sabah

The 6-day outline stays in and around Kota Kinabalu. The 8-day outline adds the east. The shape comes from the 2014–15 files. Treat it as an outline to rebuild with current logistics.

DAY 1	Arrive in Kota Kinabalu. City orientation tour: landmarks, handicraft market, a visit to a water-village home. Ch 7
DAY 2	A cultural village: traditional houses, music and dance. Ch 7
DAYS 3-4	Choose one. Kinabalu Park, Kundasang war memorial, tea plantation and Poring, or the two-day summit climb. Ch 1
DAY 5	A day on the islands of Tunku Abdul Rahman Park. Ch 5
DAY 6	Transfer out. The 6-day outline ends here.
DAY 6 (8-DAY)	Fly to Sandakan. Gomantong caves, then the Kinabatangan river by road and an evening river cruise. Ch 3
DAY 7 (8-DAY)	Sepilok orangutan centre, with the sun bear centre or the Rainforest Discovery Centre as options. Ch 2
DAY 8 (8-DAY)	Transfer out.

How this compares with Chapter 3

The 8-day outline allows one night and one evening cruise on the Kinabatangan, after an early flight and the Gomantong caves. Sabah Tourism recommends at least three days there (Chapter 3). If the river is a main reason for your trip, treat the 8-day outline as a sampler and add one or two nights, then check the lodge's boat times against your flights. (BorneoTravels advice.)

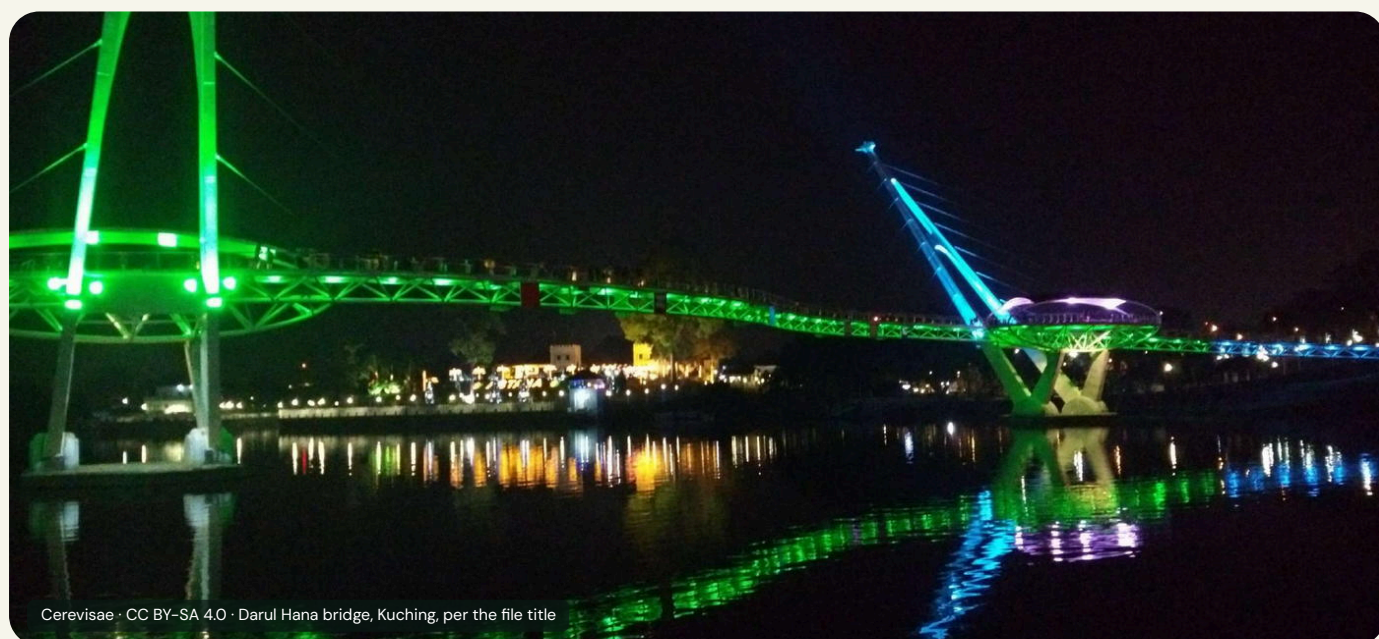


Dcubillas · CC BY-SA 3.0 · Manukan Island beach, per the file title

Eleven days across Borneo

The longest outline starts in Sarawak, flies to Sabah and ends at Sepilok. It is the 2015 shape of the programme, not today's timetable.

DAY 1	Kuching city tour: Chinese temple, Sarawak Museum, the riverfront. Ch 14
DAYS 2-3	Overland to Batang Ai via Semenggoh and Serian market, a night at the lake, then a longboat up the Lemanak river to an Iban longhouse. Semenggoh is in Ch 19. Batang Ai and Lemanak have no chapter in this edition.
DAY 4	Fly to Kota Kinabalu. City tour. Ch 7
DAY 5	Cultural village. Ch 7
DAYS 6-7	Kinabalu: park and Poring, or the summit climb. Ch 1
DAY 8	Island day, Tunku Abdul Rahman Park. Ch 5
DAY 9	Fly to Sandakan. Gomantong and the Kinabatangan evening cruise. Ch 3
DAY 10	Sepilok orangutan centre. Ch 2
DAY 11	Fly out from Sandakan.



Cerevisae · CC BY-SA 4.0 · Darul Hana bridge, Kuching, per the file title

Longhouses, caves and the Kelabit highlands

These short Sarawak options come from a Planet Borneo Tours itinerary booklet (2014–15), not from the Sabah programme files. Each needs a guide, an operator and current access checks.

NIAH, 2 DAYS

From Miri to Niah National Park, jungle trail, then the plank walk to the cave entrance. Park chalet stay in the 2015 outline.

IBAN LONGHOUSE

Half-day countryside drive from Miri to a longhouse.

BARIO VALLEY, 3 DAYS

Fly to Bario. Ulung Palang longhouse and village walk, then a trek of about 2 hours to Pa Umor, a Kelabit longhouse.

BARIO TO BA KELALAN, 5 DAYS

Multi-day trek between Kelabit and Lun Bawang villages through montane forest and Pulong Tau National Park. Guided, with homestay and jungle-shelter nights in the 2015 outline.

MULU

See Chapter 12 for the park, caves and owner pages.



Luke Price - CC BY 2.0 - Gunung Mulu National Park, per the file title

Owner pages, read 29 October 2026

Niah: Sarawak Forestry Corporation says the Niah caves heritage was inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in July 2024. Sarawak Tourism Board describes a 4 km trail to the Great Cave and Painted Cave and gives March to September as the drier months. The Niah Archaeology Museum lists weekday hours of 9 am to 4.45 pm and weekend hours of 10 am to 4 pm, closed on named public holidays, so the 2015 note about Monday closing no longer matches. Bario: a Sarawak Tourism Board newsletter (no date shown) calls the Miri to Bario flight, about 45 minutes, the most popular way in, with a road route as the alternative. Confirm flights and trail access with your operator.

Check before you go. Trekking in the highlands needs fitness, a guide and flight access that is not always daily. Confirm all of it with your operator and the owner pages. These outlines are from 2014–15. (BorneoTravels advice.)

Where these outlines come from

The day-by-day outlines come from 2014–15 programme files: supplier-format Sabah and Kuching programmes, and a Planet Borneo Tours booklet for Niah and Bario. The Lemanak longhouse stay also appears in a Straits Central Travel agent contract for Sarawak packages. They have not been checked against current operators. The Niah and Bario notes on the previous page come from owner pages read on 29 Oct 2026: museum.sarawak.gov.my/web/subpage/webpage_view/101, sfc.sarawak.gov.my/web/subpage/webpage_view/62, sarawaktourism.com Niah National Park page and the Hornbill Trail Bario newsletter. Fees, hotels and supplier terms from those files are not printed. Every current fact about a place sits in its own chapter, with owner links on that sources page.

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Kinabatangan River 2	Artchenphoto	CC BY-SA 4.0	File:Kinabatangan_River_2.jpg
Manukan Island Beach	Dcubillas	CC BY-SA 3.0	File:Manukan_Island_Beach.jpg
Gunung Mulu National Park. Sarawak, Borneo (14358333418)	Luke Price	CC BY 2.0	File:Gunung_Mulu_National_Park_Sarawak_Borneo_(14358333418).jpg
Darul Hana bridge in Kuching at night	Cerevisae	CC BY-SA 4.0	File:Darul_Hana_bridge_in_Kuching_at_night.jpg

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