



Taking a walk on the wild side

Chris Orme, Audley's South East Asia Programme Manager, reflects on a recent trip he took to witness the spectacular wildlife of Borneo.

Stepping off the Malaysia Airlines plane at Kota Kinabalu in Borneo, we were welcomed with a clear blue sky and bright early morning sunshine...



AN ORANG-UTAN

Our first excursion saw us venturing to the foot of Mount Kinabalu, the highest peak in South East Asia. Deciding not to attempt the climb up to the summit we walked some of fascinating trails through the National Park at the base. Our guide, Alicia, introduced us to the incredible flora of the region, including huge pitcher plants which gain their nutrition by luring insects into their interior. The nearby hot springs at Poring proved an excellent antidote to tired legs before we returned to Kota Kinabalu for a traditional Malaysian meal at the colonial Jesselton Hotel.

A short flight the following day took us to Sandakan, where we visited

the famous orang-utan rehabilitation sanctuary at nearby Sepilok. This is definitely the best place in the world to come face to face with these remarkable and gentle primates. Continuing on by boat to the tropical paradise of Turtle Islands National Park, we spent the afternoon snorkelling in the crystal blue waters and that night we waited in anticipation of witnessing a mother hawksbill turtle coming ashore to lay her eggs. Our patience was rewarded in the early hours when a turtle emerged through the light surf and hauled herself up the beach, magical.

Returning to the mainland we headed away from the city along a

bumpy road to the Kinabatangan River. We based ourselves in the friendly Proboscis Lodge, named after the rare breed of monkey that inhabits this region. Taking a leisurely, late afternoon river trip we spotted gibbons, monitor lizards, orang-utans, all sorts of monkeys and even a quick glimpse of a family of elephants. This is the best area in Borneo to see wildlife and we weren't disappointed. The next morning saw an early start as we took a dawn trip to a nearby ox-bow lake to observe the fascinating Proboscis Monkeys coming down to the shore to take an early morning drink. That day we said goodbye to our fellow travellers and ventured



MOUNT KINABALU, SOUTH EAST ASIA'S HIGHEST PEAK



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deeper into the jungles of Borneo to the Danum Valley Conservation Area. This protected area of pristine wilderness is considered one of the best areas for birdlife in Asia and is

Tanjong Jara

Ideally situated on the unspoilt east coast of the Malay Peninsula, the luxury Tanjong Jara resort has been built using local architectural styles and the end result is a spectacular place to stay. The award winning design features spacious rooms constructed of rich polished timber and set in tropical gardens overlooking the sea. Bumbung rooms are on the first floor with excellent views; Serambi rooms are on the ground floor and have a wooden deck and Anjung suites feature an outdoor bath and private

also home to over 110 species of mammals including the rare Sumatran rhino. However, the highlight for us was a walk along the canopy walkway strung between the treetops 25 metres above the ground. From here we could see nesting orang-utans and magnificent rhinoceros hornbills perching on nearby branches. The most amazing thing was the lack of human visitors to this area – a real bonus for wildlife enthusiasts like us.

We spent our last day at Danum relaxing on our balcony overlooking the Danum River where we watched a huge variety of birds swooping through the valley and the local wild boar snuffling around the gardens below us. Eventually, we had to leave and head to the small airport at Lahad Datu to catch the flight back to Kota Kinabalu. Before returning to the UK, we managed to spend a few days relaxing at the Tanjong Jara resort on the east coast of Peninsula Malaysia. Here, we were able to relax and let the remarkable wildlife experiences we had enjoyed in Borneo sink in.



garden. The spa is one of Asia's finest and the resort runs innovative trips into the surrounding villages and jungle. For a 360 degree tour of this splendid resort visit our website www.audleytravel.com.

Travel File

The trip taken by Chris can be incorporated into a 15-day itinerary. The guideline price is £1,850 per person based on a twin share basis and is dependent on season.



A HAWKSBILL TURTLE

15-day itinerary

- Day 1:** Fly from London Heathrow to Kota Kinabalu via Kuala Lumpur. Overnight on the aircraft.
- Day 2:** On arrival in Kota Kinabalu, you will be met and transferred to your hotel. Jesselton Hotel.
- Day 3:** Full day excursion to Kinabalu National Park and Poring Hot Springs. Jesselton Hotel.
- Day 4:** Transfer to the airport for your flight across to Sandakan. Afternoon visit to Sepilok orang-utan sanctuary. Renaissance Hotel.
- Day 5:** Transfer to the jetty for the boat out to Turtle Island. Evening turtle watching. Selangan Chalets.
- Day 6:** Return to the mainland and drive to the Kinabatangan River. Evening river trip. Proboscis Lodge.
- Day 7:** Full day exploring the area by boat and on foot. Proboscis Lodge.
- Day 8:** Transfer by road into the Danum Valley. Afternoon nature walk. Borneo Rainforest Lodge.
- Day 9:** Full day exploring the area with your guide. Borneo Rainforest Lodge.
- Day 10:** Transfer by road to the airport at Lahad Datu in time for your flight back to Kota Kinabalu. Jesselton Hotel.
- Day 11:** Transfer to the airport for your flight across to Kuala Terengganu. Here, you will be met and transferred to your resort. Tanjong Jara Resort, Kuala Dungun.
- Day 12:** Full day at leisure on the beach. Tanjong Jara Resort.
- Day 13:** Full day at leisure on the beach. Tanjong Jara Resort.
- Day 14:** Transfer to the airport for your flight back to the UK. Overnight on the aircraft.
- Day 15:** Arrive UK.

To discuss this itinerary and other options please call our South East Asia specialists on 01869 276 200.