

Borneo

Mount Kinabalu & Sabah's Fabulous Rainforests

A Greentours Itinerary

Day 1

Depart UK/Europe

Day 2

Arrive Kota Kinabalu and transfer to Hotel. Afternoon in Kota Kinabalu Wetland Ramsar Site

After an overnight journey our flight arrives into Kota Kinabalu late morning and after settling into the hotel we'll have a chance to visit the city's own wildlife reserve at Likas Bay. Here trails take us through mangroves where the riverine channels are lined with tall Golden Swamp Fern. Mudskippers pose on top of mounds of dried earth produced by the Mud Lobster! Fiddler Crabs wave their ridiculously enlarged right claws at each other. Abundant dragonflies hawk over the wetland and amongst the birds we'll seek are Black Bittern, Pacific Reef Heron, Rufous Night Herons, Pacific Golden Plover and Collared Kingfisher.

Day 3

Gunung Alab

We'll have an early chance to reach middle-montane levels on Gunung Alab, just fifty kilometres out of Kota Kinabalu. A road takes us through fabulous mossy forest full of beautiful birds and if the weather's decent, butterflies too. Great Orange-Tip is particularly common up here and we might also see the endemic Kinabalu Bluebottle, Black Prince and Straight-line Mapwing. At the end of the road is a hide well-known for giving great views of many species including Red-breasted Partridges. We'll also see Sunda Laughingthrush, Bare-headed Laughingthrush, Mountain Blackeye, Bornean Shortwing, Golden-naped Barbet, the gorgeous Temminck's Sunbird and with luck, overhead, Blyth's Hawk-Eagle.

Days 4 - 6(am)

Tambunan including the Tru Madi, Bulwer's Pheasant Hide and Rafflesia sites

Gunung Trus Madi is after Mount Kinabalu the second highest of Sabah's mountains, its peaks rising to 2642m with only stunted Rhododendron bedecked forest at the top. Indeed Trus Madi's biological diversity is legend partly as a consequence of having a such a variety of forest types in close proximity to each other - lowland mixed dipterocarp, hill mixed dipterocarp forest, lower montane forest, upper montane forest, and summit scrub.

Trus Madi is famed as one of the most beautiful places in the World. Amongst an abundance of weird and wonderful smaller species are a great diversity of Hawkmoths and bigger still the fabulous Atlas Moths *Archaeoattracus Staudinger* and *Archaeoattracus atlas*. Lights at the hotel attract various luminous lime-green *Agathias*, *Eucyclodes gavissima* whose green wings are crossed by forked lightning, and the lovely *Barsine* moths, all complex patterns of red, yellow, orange and white. We'll marvel at gorgeous lichen-mimic *Tambas*. There's exquisite little *Cossidias*, double-winged *Ortoplas* and intricate and brilliant *Siglophoras*. *Sinna floralis* is all bright yellow and red.

Some of Borneo's more unusual mammals can be seen as we walk Trus Madi's trails, notably Maroon Langur, Whitehead's Squirrel and Masked Palm Civet. There are hides so that we can watch and photograph some wonderful game birds such as Bulwer's Pheasant, and Crested, Red-breasted and Crimson-Headed Partridges. Other highlights will be Rhinoceros Hornbills, Bornean Banded Pitta, *Nepenthes reinwardtiana* pitcher plants, and if we are lucky with the timing, the remarkable huge blooms of *Rafflesia pricei*!

Butterflies are varied with many highlights, notably Rajah Brooke's Birdwing and the Green Dragontail. The Leaf Butterfly, its upperside a dazzling blue and orange and its underside the most wonderful leaf-pattern camouflage, inhabits shady forest near waterfalls. Other winged delights are Banded Swallowtail, Tawny Rajah, Map Butterfly, the Malayan Owl Butterfly, the Malay Harlequin and the giant *Amathuxidia amythaon*, its huge wings adorned by electric blue panels, showing to stunning effect as it takes off from a rotting Durian fruit. Asian Fairy Bluebirds and Banded Broadbills forage above the café whilst in the forest are Rufous-collared Kingfishers and Racket-tailed Drongos. A rich array of canopy birds such as various malkohas, Spectacled and Yellow-eared Spiderhunters, Orange-backed Woodpecker, Black-and-yellow Broadbill and Red-throated Barbet can be seen from a superb canopy walkway. Flying Lizards signal with their yellow throat flaps and with a flash of brilliant green they glide from tree to tree – sometimes landing right beside us. A nightwalk may reveal some surprising rainforest animals such as Slow Loris and Thomas's Flying Squirrel.

We'll find colourful Lantern bugs. Cicadas are ever-present and one of the loudest and most beautiful is *Tacua speciosa*. Giant Three-horned Rhinoceros Beetle, *Chalcosoma moellenkampii*, is one of the more common beetles that comes to light at night. On rocks we'll find the extraordinary *Paraphyllum antennatum*, a pygmy grasshopper that mimics dead leaves.

Days 6(pm) – 9

Mount Kinabalu National Park

After our arrival at Kota Kinabalu, Sabah's modern capital, we'll make the two hour drive to the *Nepenthes* Villas 5000 feet up in Mount Kinabalu National Park. Above us loom the huge buttresses of Kinabalu's summit, the granite worn smooth by ice sheets

a hundred thousand years ago. The bare summit rocks belie the richness of the montane heaths and forests below. Quite simply, Kinabalu is one of the world's greatest evolutionary hotspots with a degree of endemism found virtually nowhere else. The figures are quite staggering – over 4000 higher plant species are recorded from this mountain – including some 700 species of orchid. A whole suite of animal and bird species are known only from Kinabalu and the Crocker Range! No less than ninety per cent of the park contains primary habitat that we can explore at leisure along well maintained tracks and trails. Around our villas feed Temminck's Sunbird and Chestnut-crested Yuhina as well as rare Bornean endemics such as Black-sided Flowerpecker and Whitehead's Spiderhunter. Along the trails we can see some of the island's most stunning birds – the endemic Whitehead's Broadbill in its iridescent green livery and brilliant lime-coloured Short-tailed Green Magpies. Black and Crimson Orioles, Spangled Drongos, Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush and an assortment of babblers, bulbuls and flycatchers make up diverse feeding parties which will cross our path every now and then. By rushing torrents we can see White-crowned Forktails and Sunda Whistling Thrushes. Squirrels include over a dozen species and range from the large Kinabalu and Giant Forest Squirrels to the lovely ear-tufted miniature Whitehead's Pigmy Squirrel. Amongst thick moss in this fairyland of epiphyte-laden trees, rhododendrons and tree-ferns, live Kinabalu's famous insectivorous pitcher plants. *Nepenthes tentaculata*'s pitchers are only ten centimetres or so in height but come in all shades of green and red as they nestle in little clusters on the moss. At nearby Mesilau are elfin forests adorned with the striking pitchers of *Nepenthes burbidgea* and the 'daddy-of-them-all', giant *Nepenthes rajah* whose pitchers can hold up to an unbelievable 3.5 litres! Many orchids will be in flower, among them glorious *Paphiopedilums* and attractive cream, chocolate and butterscotch *Coelogyne radioferrens*. There is a wonderful selection of Rhododendrons in flower on the mountain and at Tambunan we can see one of the largest flowers in the world, *Rafflesia pricei*, perhaps the most beautiful of the genus. The bright pinky-red white-spotted flowers are about eighteen inches across but these pale into insignificance when compared to *Rafflesia keithii* whose immense blooms reach three foot or more across - but the latter are shy flowers and we have only a fifty-fifty chance of seeing one in bloom!

Days 10 – 11(am) **Sepilok**

Today we'll head south and east to world-famous Sepilok and during the afternoon and the next morning we'll have a chance to see at first hand the ongoing Orang-utan rehabilitation work that this centre has carried out for forty-five years, a tremendous achievement. Rescued and orphaned Orang-utans are brought in from logging sites, plantations and from the villages and are taught how to survive in the wild. You may later in the tour come across individuals that have been through the process and are now thriving in the wild. Sepilok is situated in a five thousand hectare forest reserve, much of it virgin rainforest, and so there's plenty of bird and butterfly

life. We'll see Blue-throated Bee-eaters, brilliant green and scarlet Blue-crowned Parrots, Lesser Leafbirds and White-bellied Blue Flycatchers. Bearded Pigs cross the path from time to time whilst striped Bornean Tree Skinks and Common Sun Skinks scuttle away from underfoot. More birds - Black & Red Broadbill, Black and Yellow Broadbill, both Purple-naped and Ruby-cheeked Sunbirds, Spectacled Spiderhunter, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo and the lovely Banded Woodpecker. Tree Nymphs fluttered delicately through the forest and altogether more powerful Clipper butterflies fly purposefully passed. In the forest canopy we might spot Crested Serpent Eagle or Wallace's Hawk Eagle.

Days 11(pm) – 14(am)

The Kinabatangan River and Gomantong Caves

After an early lunch we depart for the four hour overland journey to the banks of the Kinabatangan River. A short boat ride takes us to the excellent Sukau Rainforest Lodge, winner of numerous environmental awards for its eco-sensitive approach to tourism. We think you will find this both a pleasant and a rewarding base from which to explore the island's largest river. Electric-powered boats quietly propel us along channels and well-laid out trails allow on-foot exploration. Many groups of Proboscis Monkeys feed and sleep within a short boat-ride of the lodge. The white breeches and the huge distended belly, necessary to digest their leafy meals, give a rather comical air to these large monkeys, only added to by the males' extraordinary noses. Beautiful Maroon Langurs, their burnished fur shining in the evening sun, both Pig-tailed and Crab-eating Macaques, and the now rare Hose's Langur, can all be seen here. In the 'hope to see' category are Asian Elephant, Flatheaded Cat and Hairy-nosed Otter. Birdlife along the river and around the lodge is rich and varied. Black-and-red Broadbills feed in the grounds and Oriental Pygmy Kingfishers in the nearby forest. Long-tailed Parakeets fly overhead, the tiny endemic White-fronted Falconet watches from high vantage points and shimmering Blue-eared Kingfishers hunt along the riverbank. The globally endangered Storm's Stork has one of its last strongholds here. Lesser and Greyheaded Fish Eagles soar over the river on the lookout for the next big catch while in the evenings we can see Buffy Fish Owls. Sukau is a fantastic place to see hornbills. The huge comical bills and the expressive eyebrows, coupled with their striking plumages make these sought after birds a 'must-see' and at Sukau there are plenty of them. Perhaps the most stunning is the magnificent Rhinoceros Hornbill, pairs of which often let the boats drift close to them. Inside the atmospheric limestone Gomantong Caves roost vast numbers of bats and swiftlets. The latter include the famous Edible-nest Swiftlet – the nest of this species is worth more than its weight in gold! As dusk approaches, bats fly out in hugely impressive swirling formations from holes in the cave roof and waiting for them are Bat Hawks, Peregrines and Rufous-bellied Hawk Eagles – it is quite a show!

Days 14(pm) – 17(am) **Danum Valley Borneo Rainforest Lodge**

After breakfast we depart for the forests of central Sabah. Danum Valley contains some of the oldest and most magnificent rainforest in the world – indeed the largest rainforest trees on Earth are here. We stay at the gorgeous Borneo Rainforest Lodge, beautifully set deep in primary rainforest above a sweeping bend on the Danum River. A wonderful canopy walkway and numerous superb tracks and trails offer great insight into the life of the forest. Wild Orang-utans will be encountered during our wanderings, they often build their nests near the walkway. On average we see eleven wild Orang-utans on each of our holidays to Borneo. We wake to the evocative whooping cries of Bornean Gibbons, and later we may see them swinging across the trails, their extraordinarily long arms being put to good use. A strange odour may reveal the presence of that most unusual of primates, the diminutive Western Tarsier, which quite literally, stinks! Most likely we will see this animal on one of the nightwalks or night drives on offer. These can be very productive. Bearded Pigs, Greater Mouse-Deer and Red Giant Squirrels are seen on most evenings. Other species we hope to see are Malay Civet, the beautiful Banded Palm Civet, the cryptically-marked Flying Lemur and Leopard Cat. Diard's and Red-naped are amongst four species of Trogon one can see from the canopy walkway, a spot often frequented by the bizarre Bornean Bristlehead, a strange scarlet and black member of the crow family with a disproportionately thick bill. The loud calls of the Great Argus Pheasants reveal the locations of their leks – these are truly magnificent birds. On a walk to the jacuzzi pool Great Slaty and the perky little Grey and Buff Woodpecker, leafbirds, malkohas, yuhinas and an assortment of babblers and bulbuls pass by in richly diverse feeding parties while fragile 'paper handkerchief' butterflies, or Tree Nymphs, drift through the mid-canopy layer. Along the river and its tributary streams there's some fine *Odonata*. The damsels in particular are both diverse and beautiful. *Euphaea tricolor* has patches of shimmering blue or green on the wings, *Vestalis beryllae* is emerald-green with a long body, there's tiny red *Ceriagrion bellona*, and most stunning of all is the red, blue and yellow *Rhinagrion elopurae*. Dragonflies include the bright red *Orthetrum testaceum*, an equally red *Crocothemis* species, and the pink and grey-blue *Orthetrum pruinosum*. This lodge is perfect for those that love 'balcony wildlife-watching'. The garden is superb for butterflies. Magnificent black and green Raja Brooke's Birdwing, several other birdwings, the stunning green Banded Peacock, Black and White Helens and Great Orange-tips all frequent the exotic flowers. Bright blue flashes erupt from under our feet as Archdukes and various *Amathusiid* butterflies head for a quieter spot. The forest floor and understory is home to many weird and wonderful creatures. Praying Mantids of all shapes and hues, giant pill bugs and beautifully-marked leafbugs. Perhaps the most sought-after and brilliantly-coloured birds in all Borneo make this shadowy deep green world their home. There are seven species of dazzling pittas at Danum, the commonest being Borneo's stunning endemic Blue-headed Pitta, all metallic reds, blues and purples. While at Danum we'll take the opportunity to visit Bukit Silam, a forest-clad on which

are colonies of two pitcher plant species, *Nepenthes macrovulgaris* and *Nepenthes reinwardtiana*.

Day 17(pm)

Depart from Lahad Datu

Day 18

Arrive UK/Europe

Call 01298 83563 or visit www.greentours.co.uk for the latest trip report from our tours to Borneo. If you would like to ask about any other aspect of this holiday, please call 01298 83563 or email us at enquiries@greentours.co.uk.

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