




Borneo's Rare Mammals


Destination: Sabah, Borneo

Season: August – mid November

 Expert local guide & assistance from researchers in finding rare mammal species

 7 hours of spotlighting for mammals every night when in Deramakot Reserve

 Boat cruises along the Kinabatangan River looking for elusive primates and others

 The only trip dedicated to trying to see Borneo's rarest and most secretive animals

 Extra long night drives for spotlighting in the wonderful Tabin Nature Reserve

Dates:

Next group tour: 24th Aug – 7th Sept 2023

Private / Tailored Tour information:

This tour can be booked anytime between April and the middle of November (subject to availability), with a peak between August – mid November. It can possibly be booked at any time of year, however some local conditions such as the height of the Kinabatangan River can affect chances of seeing certain species. But the weather in Borneo can be hard to predict.

So we choose the dates we do as these are right at the end of the dry season when conditions are deemed the absolute best for our targeted species. However in recent years the rainy season has been harder to predict successfully.

Whilst we have a good success rate in filling tours some people prefer to book a private tour to avoid any disappointment and guarantee the departure.

We can run this tour with any number of people (up to a maximum of 8 people), however the price advertised for our group tour is our cheapest rate (based on a full trip), for lower numbers the per person price does increase.

We also have flexibility for the duration of trip you would like to book.

We have an optional extension to be included before the start of this tour, it is to explore the wonderful and diverse forested hills of Tawau and if you are interested you can find out more information on this.

Trips for any group size and any duration are possible, please enquire further for more information on our tailored Bornean wildlife tours.

Prices (2023 season):

Group Tour (15 nights)

£4,750 per person

*single supplement £895

Minimum group size 6

Maximum group size 8

Overview

Day 1: Lahad Datu /
Tabin WS

Days 2-4: Tabin WS

Days 5-6: Sukau

Day 7: Sukau /
Gomatong
Caves /
Deramakot

Days 8-14: Deramakot

Day 15: Home





Tour Information

Introduction

Borneo is a mecca for wildlife enthusiasts, species such as Bornean orangutan, Proboscis monkeys, 'Pygmy' elephants and 8 species of hornbill are all wonderful targets for anyone visiting Borneo for wildlife. However there is a vast wealth of wildlife to be found here. In particular the north-east state of Sabah is home to many wild and rugged reserves and parks that harbour populations of some of the world's most elusive species.

Among the most elusive and some of the most sought after are the nocturnal mammal species, Borneo has a host of rare and elusive nocturnal mammals including Sunda clouded leopard, Binturong, Sunda colugo, various species of civet, several species of slow loris and many other species. This tour is the first of its kind to target all of these species. Of course seeing many of these rarer animals is going to be very hard and require a great amount of luck, but this is the first and only tour that offers chances and dedicated time to try and see all of them in their various habitats, as well as a wealth of other mammal life in this wonderful region.

This tour will start in the now fabled Deramakot Forest Reserve, this managed forest has good sized populations of all of many species of mammals, particular ones that are very elusive elsewhere. Whilst staying here we will become as nocturnal as many of our mammal targets and spend several hours every night looking for Sunda clouded leopards, various species of squirrel, civets, Sunda leopard cats, Philippine slow loris and Marbled cats.

We then move on to the longest river in Borneo the magnificent and mighty Kinabatangan River where we will try for the Flat-headed cat as well as some of Sabah's incredible primates such as Bornean orangutans, proboscis monkeys and Sundiac silvered langurs.

Then we finish in the fantastic forests of Tabin, here the combination of pristine forest and palm oil plantation (running along the border of the reserve) means there is a mix of wildlife and many species (which utilize the palm oil plantation) which are seen here easier than elsewhere. We will explore this reserve in full and have negotiated extra long night drives whilst here in order to make the most of the wonderful nocturnal species which are known from here.

If you wish you can also add on a pre-tour extension which will head into the rugged Tawau Hills. This park is full of wonderful wildlife, much of which is not found in other areas visited on this tour, it is also a known location for just about the most elusive mammal in Borneo. The extremely rare and poorly understand Bay cat. A separate brochure can be sent with information about this can be sent out to you if you are interested.

Whilst our focus will be heavily on the rarer nocturnal species of mammals, it is impossible to travel and spend time in the forests of Borneo and not see various other species. As a result we hope to see more common animals like Proboscis monkey, Bornean orangutan, Bornean slow loris, Maroon langur, Sundiac silvered langur, Southern pig-tailed macaques, Long-tailed macaques, Asiatic elephants, Bearded pigs, Bornean Muller's gibbons and many more species and then when out spotlighting we hope for other rarities such as Sunda pangolins, Banded linsangs, various Civet species, moonrats and Sunda stink-badgers (but these require as much luck as perseverance); not to mention hundreds of species of birds including up to 8 species of hornbills found here and rare birds such as Storm's stork and some huge reptiles like Saltwater crocodiles, Reticulated pythons and Water monitors.

All in all we expect to see a wealth of life on this trip and we believe that no wildlife enthusiast will be disappointed, as with all wildlife (but particularly rare and elusive species) all we can do is get ourselves into the best place, at the best time and with the best people. We then put the time and effort into trying to see the wildlife and hope that the animals cooperate.

Below is our itinerary, for further information, photographs and booking information please contact us further.

Itinerary

Day 1 Lahad Datu / Tabin WS

Travelling & Spotlighting

Accommodation:

Tabin Lodge
(Wildlife Lodge /
Chalets)

Food:

Dinner in Tabin is the only meal included today.

Transportation:

Private vehicle &
Walking

Today you will be collect from the airport in Lahad Datu and start our drive towards Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary. Once we get to the sanctuary we will check in, and head out into the forest (the exact itinerary of our daytime activities is variable and may change but we will have a morning and afternoon excursion into the forest on each full day here); Today we may start with a guide walk with one of their expert local guides. Nestled within the rainforest beside the Lipad river, the resort is home to a surprising variety of birds, insects and small mammals, even right beside the buildings of the resort it is possible to see several species and discover the rich variety of jungle herbs, some endemic, used for generations by local folks for the treatment of various ailments.



In the afternoon we are likely to visit the active Lipad mud volcano which provides a mineral salt lick for wildlife. After trekking through the rainforest for around 20 minutes, we arrive at the elevated bare area of the mud volcano which is frequented by wildlife (elephants, bearded pigs, sambar, muntjacs and other species) and birds. The adventurous among us can try the effects of the volcanic mud, said to be responsible for a fine complexion, by applying the mud to their skin. Trek back to the resort along elephant trail, which is a great way to experience the forest and spot elusive species that live in the dense forests here.

We will have one pre dawn drive included over this couple of days as well.

After dinner we will have our first extended night drive and try and find some of the nocturnal mammals which are abundant here. With luck it is possible for Sunda clouded leopards, flat-headed cats and sun bears here but it is more likely that we will find various flying squirrels, several species of civets, yellow-throated martens, Philippine slow loris as well as reptiles and amphibians.

Days 2-4

Tabin Wildlife Sanctuary

Wildlife Watching & Spotlighting

Accommodation:

Tabin Lodge
(Wildlife Lodge /
Chalets)

Food:

All of our meals will be served at the lodge.

Transportation:

Private vehicle &
Walking.

For the next three full days we will explore Tabin further, we will in head out in the morning, afternoon and then after dark. We will trek along various trails, visit a watch tower and spend some time up there and wait for animals fly past, emerge from the forest and cross the road or climb along the canopy and into view. We will also drive the roads in search of as many species as we can find. In between our excursions into the forest we will return to the lodge for our meals and a little rest.

Once again our longer night drives here will give us the special edge in trying to find our elusive mammal species. It is always amazing to see that the vast majority of the wildlife seen in Tabin are found alongside the edge of the forest and the border with the palm oil plantation, many species enter the plantation to feed after dark and with the abundant rodent species in the plantation there are many Sunda leopard cats here, in fact Tabin is probably the best place in the world to see this species.

Day 5

Sukau / Kinabatangan River

Travelling & Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Greenview Lodge
(Wildlife Lodge)

Food:

Breakfast will be served at Deramakot and then lunch and dinner in Sakau.

Transportation:

Private vehicle,
Private boat &
Walking.

This morning we will leave Tabin after breakfast and then depart towards the village of Sakau along the banks of the Kinabatangan River. On our arrival we will check in and then have lunch. Afterwards we will be taken on the river for our first river cruise / safari.

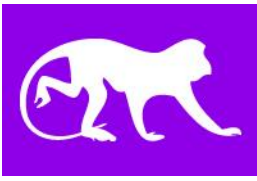
The longest river in Sabah, Kinabatangan River measures 560 km from its headwaters in the Crocker Range of southwest Sabah to its outlet at the Sulu Sea on the East coast of Sabah and according to the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Kinabatangan wildlife sanctuary is one of only two known places on Earth where 10 primate species can be found living wild. The enigmatic Bornean orangutan and the curious looking proboscis monkeys are the two most sought after primate species here however the ubiquitous long-tailed (or crab-eating) macaque is the most common.

Other than the primates mammals are well represented here however most species are nocturnal or very elusive. The largest inhabitants are Borneo's own endemic sub-species of Asiatic elephant (the Borneo pygmy elephant) which we will try to see and the incredibly rare and nearly mythical Sumatran rhino.

Another fairly common and large inhabitant here is the largest reptile in the world, the saltwater crocodile. This part of the river traces through lowland forest and mangrove swamps near the coast provide sanctuary for them.

With all these diversity going around, it is no wonder Kinabatangan wildlife sanctuary is the best destination to get close-up and discover its remarkable wildlife and fascinating habitats. Bird watchers usually find the Kinabatangan simply incredible while they spot incredible bird species from the famous Borneo's hornbills to the rare Storms storks.

After our first trip this afternoon we will return to the camp for dinner and then after dark head out again in search of semi aquatic flat-headed cat. There are some tributaries and sections of the main river in which it may be possible to see flat-headed cats. We will have a spotlight and search the river banks, here we will probably see the glowing eyes of the crocodiles as they watch from the riverbanks and hopefully spot flat-headed cats and other elusive species such as otter civets. We will return to the camp for the night after a hopefully successful search.



Day 6 Sukau / Kinabatangan River

Wildlife Watching

Accommodation:

Greenview Lodge
(or similar)
(Wildlife Lodge)

Food:

All your meals will be served at the lodge in between wildlife watching excursions.

Transportation:

Private Boat.

Today is a full day to explore the forest and river around the lodge further and of course after dark we will head out on our second and final specific search for the flat-headed cat.

Day 7 Gomantong Cave / Deramakot

Travelling & Spotlighting

Accommodation:

Tabin Lodge
(Wildlife Lodge /
Chalets)

Food:

Breakfast at the lodge in Sukau and then dinner in Tabin included today.

Transportation:

Private vehicle &
Walking.

This morning we will depart after breakfast from the Kinabatangan River and travel to Gomantong Cave, this is one of the world's most famous caves and was immortalised in the BBC's Planet Earth series due to the enormous mountain of guano and the millions of cockroaches and other invertebrates that live there. The forests around the caves are home to many species of wildlife including orangutans, in fact wild orangutans can possibly be seen throughout the entire trip we are taking, so it is always worth keeping an eye out for them in all of the forests. The cave is some 90m high and full of wildlife, alongside the innumerable invertebrates including the odd looking long-legged centipedes there are four species of swiftlet (white-nest, black-nest, mossy-nest and white-bellied) and around 27 species of bats (mostly wrinkle-lipped bats which number around 2 million in the cave). The black-nest swiftlets are the species whose nests are collected and eaten as a delicacy in China and South East Asia. The nest harvests are done sustainably now and the method for collecting them involves the locals having to climb high up into the caves on a network of rickety ladders and ropes. The nearly self-sufficient ecosystem inside the cave is completed with predators including bat hawks and pythons that feed on the bats and swiftlets as they come and go from the caves.

From here you will continue on to Deramakot Forest Reserve. This 55,000 hectare reserve is home to many of Borneo's large and iconic species including elephants, orangutans, Borneo gibbon, banteng and several elusive species which are seen here with more regularity than anywhere else in the world. It is these species which are the real highlight for us and our main targets when here. They are also largely nocturnal and so we will head out into the forest at night for extended drives.

This is to maximise our chances of seeing the wonderful Sunda clouded leopard, sun bear and marbled cat, but along with these species several other rare species have been seen here such as Sunda colugo, Sunda pangolin, banded linsang among other incredible and rare species.

Days 8-14 Deramakot Forest Reserve

Spotlighting

Accommodation:

Deramakot
Guesthouse
(Forest Chalets)

Food:

All of our meals will be prepared and served at the accommodation in between wildlife excursions into the forest.

Transportation:

Private vehicle &
Walking.

For the next seven full days we will become as nocturnal as our targeted species and spend the days rested and walking around the accommodation complex (there are many bird species that can be seen around here) and then after dinner at night we will explore the forest.

The reserve here is mature secondary and primary lowland rainforest, the large reserve is bordered with another, equally large, protected forest. Along with the incredible array of wildlife known from here and the apparently easy-going clouded leopards that live here the best part of visiting Deramakot is that there are not as many regulations as in other protected forests in Borneo and so we are largely free to explore at our own pace. As a result we will undertake extensive drives every night, often until late into the night, or starting in the middle of the night and heading out into the early morning, in the hope of seeing the forests charismatic wildlife. Along with the targeted cat species we will hopefully see more common species such as various civets, various flying squirrels and maybe even the rare sun bear.

As well as the incredible list of mammals here the forest is also full of birds and boasts list of over 250 species; with luck it is possible to see 70 or 80 species in a day including many Borneo specialties. Some of the birding highlights here might include great argus and crested fireback pheasants, great-billed heron, large green, thick-billed and little



green pigeons, giant, banded, blue-headed and black-headed pittas, white-fronted falconet, various leafbirds, various hornbills, various malkohas and trogons.

A good deal of flexibility is needed on this section of the trip as our local expert guides will dictate the best ways and the best times for us to head into the forest to search for wildlife and this is decided on a day to day basis. After 8 long-nights or spotlighting and hopefully many successful sightings we hope to have a good few sightings before we head to our next location tomorrow.

Day 15 Home

Travelling & Departure

Accommodation:

NA

Food:

Breakfast will be at the reserve and no other meals will be served today.

Transportation:

Private vehicles & International flight.

This morning we will have breakfast depart from Deramakot to catch your return flight home. Your departure flight needs to be booked to leave from Sandakan and as it takes several hours to get back to the airport we recommend you book your departure flight for the evening or late afternoon.

Your tour and all Royle Safaris services end upon transfer to the airport

Please note that the itinerary stated above is correct as our planned intentions for the tour. However adverse weather conditions and other local considerations can necessitate some modifications of the itinerary during the course of the tour; any changes will be made to make the best of the time, weather conditions and other constraints forced upon us and all changes will be made in conjunction with our terms and conditions.

Tour Inclusions

Absolutely everything mentioned in the above itinerary is included (except where it is expressly mentioned as an optional extra).

- All accommodation as mentioned above or of a similar standard as mentioned.
- All meals as mentioned in the itinerary; ***please note that some lunches and dinners are not included when travelling through Sandakan in this itinerary.***
- Bottled mineral or purified (boiled) water will be provided throughout and on request.
- Private vehicles and boats for all transfers and safari drives / cruises.
- Seven hours of spotlighting per night in Deramakot and extra-long night drives in Tabin– this section of the trip is a nocturnal one and the standard amount of time we hire guides at other lodges and reserves is used solely for the night.
- English speaking local driver and guide with years of experience in working in the areas we are travelling.
- All fuel, tolls, taxes and other expenses relating to driving.
- Professional zoologist escort provided by Royle Safaris from the airport in Sandakan to the end of the trip in Deramakot.
- All safari drives, hikes, boat trips and night safaris as mentioned in the itinerary.
- A selection of field guides of the local areas will be available on request from the zoologist escort.
- Also documentaries about the local area are sometimes available (depending on the electricity usage in the areas we are camping).
- Entrance fees and permits needed.

Tour Exclusions

Nearly everything you will need is included in the price you have already paid for the tour. However there are some things not included.

- International flights to and from the tour start and end points.
- Travel insurance including any fees that result from emergency medical or evacuation needs.
- Visa fees for entering the country(s).
- Vaccinations and any medication are not included.
- Any food other than the meals provided and mentioned in the above itinerary; ***please not that some lunches and dinners when travelling through Sandakan are not included in this itinerary***
- Any drinks not including in the meal.
- Any items of a personal nature are not included, such as souvenirs, medication, toiletries, laundry and phone calls.
- Tips are also not included.
- Any optional excursions or guide fees during the day in Deramakot and Tabin.
- If any internal flights are cancelled on this trip (should any be included in the itinerary); due to unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances then any extra costs incurred such as hotels, food and transfers are extra.
- Any departure taxes which may be due when leaving are not included (but may be included in the cost of your flights).

Please refer to our Terms & Conditions (<http://www.royle-safaris.co.uk/terms-conditions/>) before booking any trips – email or paper copies of Terms & Conditions can be provided if needed