

## Jump to

- Top 4 Highlights
- Borneo Essentials
- Tips for Travellers
- Wildlife & Animals
- Wildlife Gallery & Video
- Sabah or Sarawak?
- Know Before You Go
- Food & Drink
- Borneo Transport
- Photography & Gadgets

## Borneo travel guide & tips

### What to expect in Borneo

From ancient rainforests, filled with some of the world's most unique species of wildlife to the enchanting cultural riches of Borneo's cities, and the indigenous communities found deep in the jungle, your senses are sure to be wowed by this diverse island.

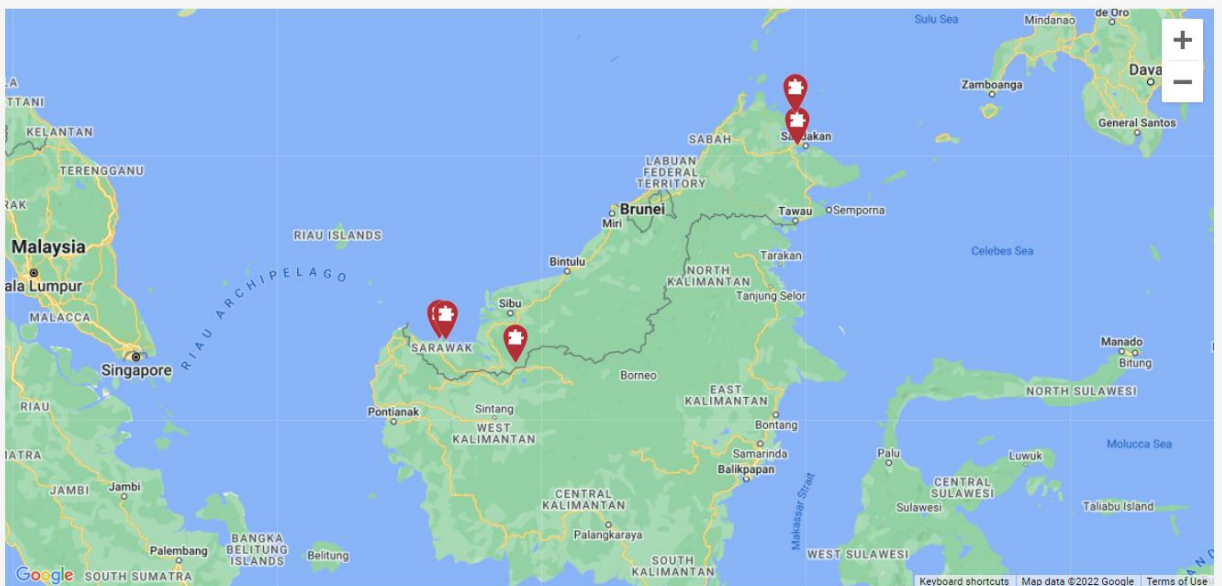
Throw in some truly idyllic beaches, crystal clear waters, and tantalising street food, and you're sure to have an unforgettable trip. Take a read of our Borneo travel guide to get you inspired and ready for an adventure of a lifetime.



#### Borneo's great for:

- **Getting back to nature:** Borneo's finest asset is most definitely its glorious variety of flora and fauna, from the world's biggest flower (known as 'Rafflesia arnoldii') to its endangered orangutans and stretches of lush national parks. Borneo really is a nature lover's dream.
- **Trekking & walking:** Keeping on the adventurous side, Mount Kinabalu is Malaysia's highest mountain and offers some of the most beautiful views of Borneo (if you don't mind putting the work in). Trekkers will find it challenging but not too demanding, and for those who prefer walking, with jungles, beaches and national parks galore, you'll be delighted too.
- **Learning about tribal life:** Borneo is one of the rare places on Earth where tribes can be found deep in the jungle, from the Rungus people in Kudat to the Iban tribe in Batang Ai. Staying with these communities offers a rewarding opportunity to learn about another culture and way of life.












#### Top 4 Borneo experiences:



1. **Meeting the Iban tribe:** What could be more exciting than heading deep into the jungle, and meeting some of the Iban Headhunters who live in the Batang Ai National Park? Luckily, no headhunting is done any more (phew), but the area has been turned into a self-sufficient eco-tourism spot, giving the locals jobs and sharing their customs with you.
2. **Spotting orangutans** – Of course, we can't talk about the top experiences in Borneo without mentioning orangutans. Borneo is one of only two regions in the world (the other being Sumatra) where orangutans can be found in the wild or semi-wild. Our endangered ginger friends can be visited in Semmenggoh Orangutan Centre in Sarawak or the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre in Sabah, both sanctuaries do incredible work to reintroduce these great apes back into the wild.
3. **Bako National Park** – Another fascinating primate, endemic to Borneo, is the proboscis monkey, Famous for its long nose (hence the name) proboscis monkeys can be spotted in the jungles of Bako National Park, near Kuching.
4. **Escape to Lankayan Island** – After your travels and adventures in Borneo, we highly recommend Lankayan Island for an idyllic paradise; perfect for snorkelling, lounging on the white sands or even watching turtles hatch if you go at the right time.

[View top 10 highlights](#)

## Borneo Essential Information

 <p><b>LOCAL TIME</b> <b>+8 GMT</b></p> <p>Current time is 00:26 in the morning.</p>	 <p><b>BEST TIME TO GO</b></p> <p>JAN FEB MAR APR MAY JUN</p>  <p>Borneo can be visited during the entire year. The most rain falls from October through February, with December and January producing the most rainfall.</p> <p><a href="#">View more</a></p>	 <p><b>LANGUAGE</b> <b>Bahasa Malaysia</b></p> <p>Other languages spoken include Chinese, Tamil and English.</p>
 <p><b>PLUG TYPES</b> <b>G</b></p> 	 <p><b>POPULATION</b> <b>21.3m (2014)</b></p>	 <p><b>VISA REQUIREMENTS?</b> <b>Required, free</b></p> <p>If you're a UK passport holder, you'll be granted a 3 month visa on arrival, so there is nothing you need to do in advance.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more</a></p>
 <p><b>TIPPING</b> <b>Not required</b></p> <p>Unlike other countries in Asia, it isn't customary to tip in Borneo, and restaurants generally include a service charge. In areas visited more frequently by tourists however, tipping has become more common.</p>	 <p><b>FLIGHTS</b> <b>Indirect</b></p> <p>There are no direct flights to Borneo from the UK. Stopping over in Kuala Lumpur, Singapore or Hong Kong are popular choices.</p>	 <p><b>BORNEO CURRENCY</b> <b>Malaysian Ringgit</b></p> <p>The national Malaysian currency is the ringgit (RM), also referred to as the Malaysian Dollar. All hotels and banks offer currency exchange services, however the best exchange rate can be found at smaller currency exchange desks in shopping malls.</p> <p><a href="#">Find out more</a></p>

## Borneo – tips for travellers

### What to wear in Borneo

In the heat and humidity of the rainforest, we recommend packing lightweight and loose-fitting clothing. Merino wool is a great option here as it has thermoregulating properties and is also sweat/odour resistant too. Alternatively, thin cotton works well. Don't forget, your clothing will get wet (you'll likely be in rainforest after all), so it's worth packing clothes that are quick-drying. Brightly-coloured or dark clothing often attract unwanted mozzies, so we'd also suggest sticking to pale colours like khaki and beige.

Having a good hat to protect yourself from the sun and rain is really important, especially for boat journeys, as the sun's reflection off the water and deck can double-up your potential sunburn. Make sure you pack a poncho, kagool or light jacket with you.

Malaysia is a Muslim country, so dress respectfully in populated areas, wearing clothing that covers the knees and shoulders.

### Footwear

Trainers with good grip are essential here, the paths and pavements can be very slippery given the climate, but expect them to get muddy. Lightweight walking boots are also great if you have them.

### Rickshaw tip

Most places in the rainforest sell rubber shoes that cost around £2-5 and are just perfect. Similar to football boots, with rubber studs to grip the mud, you can simply rinse them in the water afterwards, so they're very easy to clean.

## Wildlife in Borneo

Borneo is one of the most biodiverse islands. With 15,000 species of plant, 1,400 species of amphibian, 222 species of mammal and 10 species of primate, you'll be venturing through one of the richest biomes in the world.

Some of our favourite wildlife from Borneo:

- Bornean Pygmy Elephant
- Bornean Bearded Pig
- Civets
- Short-Nosed Fruit Bats
- Treeshrews
- Bornean Gliding Frog (discovered 2013)
- Proboscis Monkey
- And of course.. the orangutan



### Wildlife evolution history

Borneo has been a hive of scientific interest for over 150 years. Alfred Wallace (one of the fathers of evolution, along with Charles Darwin) spent many years in Sarawak in the 19th century which led to his theory of natural selection.

[Learn more about wildlife in Borneo](#)

### Protection from wildlife

You'll be surrounded by diverse and unique wildlife wherever you go in Borneo, however jellyfish and leeches can be a nuisance in some places. Leech socks are handy but can also be pricey, so we recommend tucking long socks into your trousers to keep the leeches away from skin- it's not the strongest fashion statement, but it saves pennies and can work just as well.

If you're snorkelling on Lankayan Island, take a rash top or skinny diving suit with you to stave off any unwanted stings from pesky miniature jellyfish. Don't worry, their strings aren't dangerous but we're sure you'd rather avoid them!

## Which is best for me, Sabah or Sarawak?

### Sabah

**Sabah** is perfect for first-time travellers to Borneo, with incredible wildlife, beaches and an easier terrain to navigate. Whether you're up for meeting the tribes of Northern Sabah, and learning from the locals [how to make handicrafts](#), or seeing the vivid colours of Kota Kinabalu with Mount Kinabalu as your backdrop, you're sure to love it.

*Ideal for: Honeymoons, families, mature adventurers*

### Sarawak

**Sarawak** is perfect for more seasoned travellers or those looking for a unique, authentic and off-the-beaten-track experience with local encounters. It's ideal for people who haven't been before but is a little more demanding than Sabah. You'll have the chance to get to know the [Iban people of Batang Ai](#), staying in the community Nanga Sumpa Lodge, right in the heart of the rainforest. Here, you'll learn from the locals about their crafts, how they live off the land and the history of the infamous headhunters. If you're lucky, you might even see the orangutan in its natural environment.

*Ideal for: Adventurous families or couples, seasoned travellers, culture lovers*



---

## When to visit Borneo

Depending on when you want to visit Borneo, you might find the weather a little easier from one side to another. However, it **can be visited all year round** and some people prefer going during the rainy season as the humidity eases off, although chances of seeing primates may be reduced.

Sabah has two weather seasons: the dry season from **February to August** and the wetter season from **September to January**. If you're looking to see **turtles hatching** in Lankayan, we suggest going from **May to September**.

[View more](#)

---

## Take a peek at our favourite Borneo itineraries



### Great Apes & Beach Escapes

From 10 days / 9 nights (flexible)

📍 **Borneo**, Kota Kinabalu - Mount Kinabalu National Park - Kota Kinabalu - Sandakan - Sepilok - Kinabatangan - Sukau - Sandakan - Lankayan

[View itinerary](#)



### Explore the Wild Heart of Borneo

From 8 days / 7 nights (flexible)

📍 **Borneo**, Kuching - Semenggoh Orangutan Centre - Bako National Park - Kuching - Batang Ai - Kuching

[View itinerary](#)



### Rainforests, Rivers & Remote Tribes

From 13 days / 12 nights (flexible)

📍 **Borneo**, Kuching - Batang Ai - Santubong - Semenggoh - Damai Peninsula - Gaya Island

[View itinerary](#)



---

## Food & drink in Borneo

The majority of trips with Rickshaw in Borneo include breakfast. If you like a cheeky tipple, then buy a bottle or two in duty-free before you arrive as alcohol is expensive, especially in Sabah.

### Food you can expect to find:

- **Sarawak Laksa** – Sarawak's signature dish is a delight for the senses. Comprising a spicy soup of chilli paste, coconut milk and thin (mee hoon) noodles topped with beansprouts, chicken and shrimp. Tone down its spicy kick with a squeeze of fresh lime.
- **Kolo Mee** – A stir-fry dish of yellow egg noodles, barbequed pork and vegetables. This is a street-food staple.
- **Mee Sua** – Made with wheat rice noodles, chicken and mushrooms as part of a large broth that's laced with wine.
- **Lok-Lok** – Delicious skewers of fish, meat or veg that are deep-fried or boiled and eaten with sweet and sour or satay sauce.

We suggest eating at busier local restaurants whenever you can as the locals obviously like them. You'll be pleasantly surprised at the authentic dishes on offer, plus the local cuisine will likely be cheaper in smaller-run eateries, compared to western restaurants. In bed and breakfast resorts, make the most of the buffet in the morning to fuel you up for the day. Have a light snack in the afternoon and then you'll be ready to devour your main meal in the evening.



## How to get to Borneo?

There are no direct flights to Borneo from the UK, unfortunately. However, there are several major hubs nearby which will get you there fairly easily. The costs vary depending on the season, but you can expect to pay between **£800-£900 per person**.

### The best airport hubs are:

- **Kuala Lumpur** (Malaysia Airlines)
- **Singapore** (Singapore Airlines)
- **Hong Kong** (Cathay Pacific)

These airlines fly from London Heathrow and can be combined with connecting flights to Kota Kinabalu or Kuching.

# £550

In quieter months, we've seen air fares as low as £550 so it always pays to consider travelling in the low or shoulder seasons.

## Getting around Borneo:

- **Domestic flights** – Most trips will have at least one domestic flight, as destinations are quite far apart and often less developed in between. These are surprisingly inexpensive and can be sorted before you go.
- **Private car & driver** – We recommend most of your transfers being done by private car with a driver. Giving you the flexibility to stop where you fancy, and you might get some insider information from your local driver.
- **Boats** – During your adventure, you'll undoubtedly encounter a lot of rivers. Luckily, boats are one of the most commonly used modes of transport in Borneo and will help you find the real heart of the country.
- **Bikes** – We obviously want to do as much as we can to reduce carbon emissions and keep Borneo beautiful. When you're in a rural area you can rent bikes to explore yourselves.

## Photography & gadgets

Having a decent **zoom or telephoto lens** on the camera is a must if you're wildlife spotting. Alternatively, if you don't want the worry of lugging a big camera around, having a good pair of binoculars will come in very handy when spotting wildlife from afar. There'll be so many opportunities to see and capture incredible wildlife, it'd be a shame to miss them.

### We recommend:

- **Nikon Prostaff S7 binoculars:** These are water resistant, good for low light conditions, lightweight and shock resistant.
- **A headlamp:** If you're up early or late, it's good to be able to see where you're treading.
- **A telephoto lens:** (for SLR/DSLR users) depending on the camera you have, we recommend taking a reasonable telephoto lens if you can.
- **Tripod/Monopod:** It'll be challenging to find flat support while you're in the jungle, so if you can, bring a lightweight tripod, or a monopod to stabilise your shots.
- **A rain cover:** This doesn't need much explanation. Keeping your camera safe while there's a flash shower is crucial.

## Tips for fitness

Depending on which trips you're up for, there might be some trekking involved. We've put together [5 training tips](#) for preparing for a trekking holiday with one of our local personal trainers in Brighton.

Excellent 

Rated 4.8 / 5 based on [1,308 reviews](#) on  Trustpilot

Showing our favourite reviews

 20 March  
Ellen Wallace

#### Joe at Rickshaw Travel is amazing

My husband and I just returned from a wonderful wild life trip in Borneo. Joe at Rickshaw Travel organised everything. We were so impressed with Joe. He was

[Reply from Rickshaw Travel 3 April](#)

[Read more](#)

 14 February  
Kathy

#### Coollest trip ever! ...and we never knew where Borneo was before this

I took a chance and reserved a trip to Borneo through a company and individual I never heard of, not to mention located in another country. ...could have been a

[Read more](#)

 15 September  
Michael

#### Amazina Familv Trip to Borneo

 15 October  
Ranji

#### Amazing Trip to Borneo

Just came back from a 3 week holiday in Borneo. We had a great time and it was a unique experience. Joe from Rickshaw Travel was very helpful to us from the first

[Reply from Rickshaw Travel 17 October](#)

[Read more](#)

 24 September  
Sue


#### Highly recommend Rickshaw Travel

Highly recommend Rickshaw Travel, the holiday they created covered every aspect we required, will definitely use them again!

[Reply from Rickshaw Travel 25 September](#)

[Read more](#)

 22 September

 5 August

## Prefer to chat things through?

We're always happy to help. If you have any questions feel free to get in touch...

☎ 01273 322 398

Enquire now ↗



## Sign up to our email newsletter

For more travel inspiration, handy advice and meaningful stories.

<input type="text" value="First name"/>	<input type="text" value="Last name"/>	<input type="text" value="Email address"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> I'm not a robot		<input type="button" value="Sign up to our newsletter"/>

By signing up, you've opted in to receive our newsletters – don't worry, you can unsubscribe at any time, via the link at the bottom of our emails. We genuinely care about you and treat your data security and with respect. We tell you all about it in our Privacy Policy.

## As featured in

The Guardian

Wanderlust



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC TRAVELER

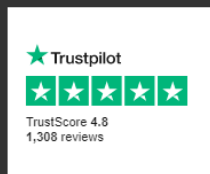
PSYCHOLOGIES

The Daily Telegraph

### Information

- |                      |                           |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| Contact us           | Booking conditions        |
| Financial protection | Health and safety         |
| Your Package Holiday | FCDO travel advice        |
| Blog                 | Coronavirus travel advice |

Connect with us     



### Get in touch

We're a friendly bunch and always ready for a chat so feel free to get in touch.

Call us:  
**01273 322 398**

Email us:  
**hello@rickshawtravel.co.uk**

Contact us >



### Sign up for our newsletter