

Borneo - Sabah & Sarawak Exploratory Tour (10 days)



Departs anytime (2021-2022)



Please note: This itinerary can be modified in any way to best suit your school's aims, learning objectives and budget.

Asia's largest island is a treasure trove of marine biodiversity, jungles pulsing with a menagerie of unique creatures and home to tribes who actively headhunted until 1956!

Commonly referred to as *Borneo*, this island features incredible jungle expanses providing a myriad of opportunities for those wanting to explore the world's largest accessible caves, learn of the country's rich indigenous cultures and get up close and personal with the region's most famous inhabitant, the orangutan. This region was also the site of some of the most decisive battles and tumultuous events of World War II, making it highly interesting for students of history and social studies.

This very active trip will include white water rafting, hiking, and fun and safe snorkelling activity as well as an incredible excursion to Mulu National Park to experience the grandeur of some of the world's largest caves, subterranean rivers and Jurassic era jungle.

Whilst the trip is designed to be educational and service-learning in nature, it is moreover intended to be highly enjoyable providing students with a very memorable introduction to this fragile and rapidly changing corner of Asia. ***NB: This trip is designed for active students and staff who maintain a good level of fitness. Anyone of a good standard of fitness should be able to participate in all the activities.***



David Eales
David Eales
Asia Manager

Day 1

Arrive Sandakan



It's a jungle out there! Prepare for a journey unlike any other. As we touch down we will be greeted by our tour leader in the remote town of Sandakan in Sabah State and escort us to our centrally located hotel. En route our tour leader will tell us all the things we need to know when travelling in this region as well as give us a quick Malay language lesson.

After check-in, we will run through the itinerary and answer any questions we may have before we wander down to Sandakan's bustling waterfront to enjoy the vibrancy of this pleasant city and our first taste of fine Malaysian cuisine. There will be a short time after dinner for an escorted tour of the

town before returning to our hotel. *(meals: dinner)*

Day 2

Sandakan *(Memorial Park, Sepilok Orangutan Sanctuary, village experience)*



After breakfast, we will visit the Sandakan War Memorial, the site of the worst atrocity suffered by allied servicemen during World War II. It was from this site that many thousands of British, Australian, Dutch and allied prisoners of war (POWs) were marched across Borneo, and event that came to be known as the *Sandakan Death March*, which saw all but a handful perish. An upbeat experience awaits us later as we journey to the *Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre* where young orangutans are coached to enable them to return to their natural habitat.

This region is home to what is widely acknowledged as the largest concentrations of wildlife species to be found anywhere in the world. Many rare and endangered animals are found here, such as the intriguing proboscis monkey, herds of Borneo's Pygmy elephant, the crocodile, the extremely rare Sumatran rhino and astounding birdlife.

At dusk, we will enjoy a wildlife observation cruise to see more of the Island's famous wildlife in this fragile yet beautifully preserved primeval rainforest, the likes of which has long since vanished in other parts of Asia. From here we will travel deeper into Sabah's jungle interior to a small Malay village where we will spend the coming days. *(meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

Day 3

Malay Village program *(service-learning activity)*



Option 1: This morning we will board boats to travel upriver where we will begin a short but vigorous jungle trek to learn of the various forest types and ethnobotany before later undertaking our community service's agricultural activity. This activity is part of a larger effort by the local community to revitalise (reforest) an area adjacent to the village. Working alongside local people, this effort is also intended to raise our awareness of the challenges facing this fragile habitat, which is under pressure from increasing population and government policies favouring the development

of palm oil plantations.

Option 2: Whilst in the village we will spend one afternoon teaching English to some of the local children. **NB: visiting students will require some basic English teaching training to make this a beneficial activity for the local students. This will entail instruction prior to the activity to learn basic English teaching skills, lesson planning, and methods of eliciting language to foster an effective teaching outcome. Please contact us for further information.** *(meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)*

Day 4

Nabutan (Death March trekking experience) 🚶



Today we will journey to the district of Nabutan to walk part of the Death March route along a jungle track. This section of the track was used by Japanese forces during the final months of World War II to march thousands of Malay, Thai, British, Dutch and other allied prisoners of war across Sabah. Historic records and subsequent interviews taken from survivors as well as Japanese soldiers, reflect that it was not the intention of the Japanese that any of the POWs survived the march, expecting most would perish en route as indeed they did. After our leisurely paced hike of approximately four hours, we will visit the small town of Ranau and a

memorial to the Australian and allied soldiers who died during this turbulent period of the 20th century.

Tonight, we will stay in a jungle lodge style accommodation. **NB: For schools seeking a more challenging hiking experience, this activity can be conducted over 2 days. (meals: breakfast, dinner)**

Day 5

Ranau (jungle adventure centre) 🏠



This morning we will visit Mt Kinabalu National Park affording great views of Southeast Asia's tallest mountain, Mt. Kinabalu. Following this, we will continue our journey to a jungle adventure encampment. There will be ample opportunity to try out the camp's rope courses as well as zip-lining, abseiling and outdoor rock climbing on the centre's training platform. After lunch, we will depart the training area to embark on a fun trek through the primeval Borneo jungle where we will spend the night. We will be required to cook our own meal as well as erect our jungle style hammocks, where we

will sleep tonight. All activities are supervised by our expert jungle guides. **NB: Whilst we will be sleeping in tent-style accommodation, there are very good washing and toilet facilities available during this activity. (meals: breakfast, dinner)**

Day 6

Kota Kinabalu (rafting activity) 🚣



For a safe and fun adrenaline rush, there is nothing quite like rafting. We will transfer to our starting rafting point where we will undergo a comprehensive safety briefing before embarking on our trip down the grade 2 & 3 rapids of one of Borneo's best watercourses, accompanied by our expert river guides. All students are required to wear life jackets/helmets. After about 2 hours on the river, we will arrive at the picnic area where lunch will be served and where we can clean up and get changed.

This afternoon we will travel about two hours to Borneo's premier city Kota Kinabalu. Urban allure meets rural charm as we set off to discover Sabah, starting with a scenic drive through its capital, Kota Kinabalu (KK). The city, formerly known as "Singgahmata" or "the place where the eye lingers", rose from the destruction of World War II to become a vibrant and modern city that still retains its traditional charms. Time permitting, we will have a chance to see some of KK's places of interests including its state mosque, a Chinese temple and the Sabah Museum to learn of the region's indigenous people. (meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 7

Kota Kinabalu (snorkelling activity) 🐠

Few destinations on earth offer the snorkelling opportunities that can be found in the waters surrounding Malaysia. With a variety of soft corals, tropical fish and several species of turtles, East Malaysian (and neighbouring Indonesia) is home to some of the richest marine life to be found on our planet.



This morning we will set out for a guided island & snorkelling trip in the safe waters of the *Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine National Park*, a 20-minute boat ride from Kota Kinabalu, to learn of Southeast Asia's rich marine diversity. Our program is specifically designed for students and intended to educate about the region's fragile and unique marine life. We will return to Kota Kinabalu and explore a bustling hawker market, where we will barter for our evening meal. *(meals: breakfast, lunch)* ***(NB: Students will buy their own dinner this evening).***

Day 8

Kota Kinabalu ✈️ Mulu National Park



Mulu National Park is Borneo's most important and spectacular nature reserve, featuring fast-flowing rivers and clear jungle streams, hidden underneath the forested slopes of one of the largest limestone cave systems in the world.

This cave system, a breathtaking natural wonder, contains many of the world's most significant caverns. It is not surprising to see why Mulu is world-famous, as it holds the world's largest cave passage (Deer Cave), largest natural chamber (Sarawak Chamber), and the longest cave in Southeast Asia (Clearwater Cave). Over two hundred kilometres of cave

passages have been surveyed, but this is thought to represent just 30-40% of the actual total. Millions of years of heavy rain and the action of rivers and running water carved out the vast subterranean system that exists today.

On arrival, we'll enjoy a quick local lunch before setting off to visit the Lang Cave. We will trek deeper into the Borneo jungle to visit an ancient cave, housing impressive stalactites and stalagmites. From here we will journey to the Deer Cave, which has the world's largest cave entrance. As dusk approaches, we will witness an exodus of millions of bats setting out for a night feeding before continuing a short distance to our rustic jungle accommodation. *(meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)* ***FLIGHT: Kota Kinabalu - Mulu (morning)***

Day 9

Mulu Caves National Park



Zippering along a jungle river in a longboat is a terrific way to start the day!

This morning, we will journey upriver to visit the Wind Caves and Clearwater Cave. The Wind Cave, named for the cool breezes blowing through, has several chambers; this includes the cathedral-like King's Chamber, filled with dreamlike forests of stalagmites and columns.

Subsequently, we will make the not too arduous climb of 200 steps up to Clearwater Cave and its adjacent subterranean river where we will enjoy a

picnic lunch and a dip in the natural pool.

This stunning natural setting will be of interest to students of biology, owing to its excellent habitat rich in species and high in endemism. In the afternoon, we will visit a village belonging to the Dayak minority tribe, whose headhunting prowess and skills with blowpipes made them a legend of this once fabled island.

(meals: breakfast, lunch, dinner)

Day 10

Depart Mulu  Home



After a final morning spent in this pristine wilderness, we will again board a short flight to the coastal town of Miri, home to Malaysia's most important oil production facilities.

This afternoon we will have ample time to explore this friendly town, visit its unique oil museum and possibly enjoy a swim before our afternoon flight to Kuala Lumpur on the Malaysian mainland from where we will join our connecting flight back home. Our tour leader will escort us to the airport and wave us farewell as we board the flight. *(meals: breakfast) Flight details to be advised*



Summary

Grading

Moderate - Challenging; Students and staff will be required to be in a reasonable state of fitness to participate in the activities described on this trip. Students and staff will need to be able to walk long distances and will be expected to carry their own luggage but only for short distances.

Accommodation

Student accommodation is on a twin/triple share basis. Teacher accommodation is on a single room basis. Hotels hold a 3-star equivalent rating.

Group Size

Minimum group size 20 students & 2 staff members travelling *free of charge*.

▲ [Smaller group sizes can be quoted upon application](#)

Specific Trip Activities

SANDAKAN

- Sandakan City tour
- former WWII POW camp site experience
- Water village home visit
- *Orangutan experience*
- River cruise (wildlife spotting) excursion
- Jungle Eco-lodge stay

NABUTAN

- *Death March* trekking experience

RANAU

- Jungle centre activity
- Ziplining & rope course
- White water rafting experience
- Agricultural restoration program
- *School visit activity (service-learning) #*
- [\(Please see below #5 - 7 things to check before choosing a student travel company\)](#)

KOTA KINABALU

- Kota Kinabalu city tour
- Guided snorkelling activity
- Museum visit (Kota Kinabalu)

MULU NATIONAL PARK

- Two-day Mulu cave exploration excursion
- *Longboat excursion*
- *Two-day hiking activity*
- *Jungle survival & camping activity*
- *Canopy exploration activity*
- Melinau Gorge swim
- Dayak minority tribe *blowpipe Activity*

MIRI

- *City tour*
- *Swimming activity*

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#Please contact [Student Educational Adventures](#) for a competitive flight quote for flights from your country to Malaysia.

Inclusions

- All accommodation, transport, activities, entrance costs and other programs as described in the itinerary
- **2 internal flights in Malaysia; Miri – Mulu NP return, Miri – Kota Kinabalu**
- Professional *Student Educational Adventures* tour leader throughout trip & additional specialist guides
- Community project sourcing and arrangements
- Extensive destination-specific risk management and assessments
- All meals (and drinking water) as listed in the itinerary
- 24 hours **IN COUNTRY** support from *Student Educational Adventures* staff
- Pre-departure support, briefings and planning meetings for students and parents
- All equipment
- Parents information evening presentation
- Parental & student advice for vaccinations & equipment etc.
- Tips for local guides & drivers
- **Cost of community project**

Exclusions

- International flights to/from Malaysia #
- 1 dinner, 1 lunch
- *Camera/video fee (at some sites)*
- Malaysia visa (Not required by most nationalities)

School visit activity

Visiting a local school as part of an educational travel program is a carefully planned activity that Student Educational Adventures staff initiate after consultation with local teaching staff.

This activity is always initiated based on a model of mutual learning and designed as an immersion experience. An understanding of the importance of an integrated approach to community development is useful to frame what students might see, learn or experience during such an activity.

Prior to the activity, visiting students are provided with basic teaching materials and rudimentary teaching skills (i.e. methods of eliciting language, lesson planning etc.). This preparation is conducted by our tour leaders, most of whom are trained primary or secondary teachers. Typically, visiting students are divided into small groups to teach English. If local students have a good grasp of English (as is often the case in Malaysia), the activity can be modified to be of a cultural exchange nature.

7 things to check before choosing a student travel company



Choosing the right travel company is one of the most important decisions you'll make for your students. As you compare different school travel providers, you'll need to weigh up everything from staffing arrangements to overall trip cost – and, of course, educational value.

To help you choose with confidence, we've created a checklist of seven essential factors to consider when you're assessing travel companies. You'll be pleased to know that these factors are a feature of every trip we run.

1. Does your travel provider have a truly local presence?

You might not know it, but many school travel companies have no local presence in the countries they send your students to. Behind the façade, these providers are marketing companies who outsource their trips to in-country operators – often importing a foreign manager at your schools' expense. Value for money aside, running trips in this way has far-reaching consequences in an emergency, when access to language skills and local knowledge are vital.

To make sure you're getting a genuinely local experience, it's important to choose a bonafide in-country travel company who has a real local presence in the country you're travelling to. For example, we use our own in-country supervisors and tour leaders to manage the school trips we run. As local experts, they travel with you and your students throughout your entire trip and are responsible for every aspect of your students' wellbeing.

2. Is your school trip *really* of value to your students?

A trip abroad with friends will appeal to any young person, and many will relish the chance to explore a world away from home. But to be of real and enduring educational value, a school trip should challenge students beyond the kinds of basic touristic experiences they might just as easily have on a family holiday.

To this end, your school travel provider should provide a customised itinerary that shows quality and depth of engagement. We tailor each of our itineraries to push students beyond a surface-level exchange and maximise their time in-country so they're learning the whole time they're travelling. Our activity-rich programs are big on cross-cultural interaction, team-building and authentic local experiences. We also include community service projects wherever possible, which make our trips not only highly educational but life-changing, too.

3. Is the person leading your students up to the task?

The best people to lead you through a country are the folk who live there. But on top of having expert local knowledge, the people leading your students should also be expertly trained to deal with young student travellers. A tour leader who's up to the task can teach across the full range of personalities, interests and abilities found among every student group.

For this reason, we make sure our tour leaders have at least three years' experience leading student groups before they go in-field with yours. And they're more than just guides – they're also teachers, translators and troubleshooters. Our tour leaders will welcome you warmly when your group arrive, manage all of your trip logistics, and work responsibly to make sure you and your students always stay healthy and safe.

4. How safe is your travel provider, really?

While some travel companies offer a 24-hour call centre, there's no substitute for having local people by your side and looking after you where you are. Local staff know the lay of the land, how to access the best medical attention in times of crisis and which dialect or language to speak when you need it most. This is especially important outside of major cities, where major providers' services can be limited.

Our in-country staff and tour leaders not only access the best international providers (such as SOS, Global Rescue and Columbia Asia), but also complement these with expert knowledge of the nearest and most appropriate medical attention within every local area. So, if a worst-case scenario happens – when you need to communicate with non-English speaking doctors; when a comprehensive first aid kit won't do the job; or when the phone number of an international medical provider just isn't sufficient – you can be sure your student group is in the best of hands, no matter where they are.

5. How authentic are your service-learning programs?

Today, having students raise money for their overseas trip is a common way for schools to give back to the places they visit. However, exchanging skills – and smiles – with local communities can leave a positive legacy that's even more powerful.

Fundraising, while well-intentioned, can be in vain if it's not done in consultation with local communities. To make sure your impact isn't simply an add-on, choose a school travel company that facilitates projects that solve real community problems and which help build local capacity.

Take our community service projects, for instance. We develop them through extensive cooperation with local people's committees, NGOs and women's organisations to ensure your students' altruism has a lasting impact. All our service components are meticulously planned, designed to be meaningful and transparent, and, most importantly, provide tangible long-term benefits for communities.

6. Does the program you're being offered match your students' learning needs?

No two school groups are the same, which is why no two school trips should follow the same itinerary. Check that the travel company you choose offers a customised program that's flexibly designed to match your students' unique interests. In our experience, nothing inhibits a successful trip more than 'off the shelf' programs with generic activities.

For this reason, each trip we run is tailored to your school's curriculum and your students' distinct learning needs. We also like to involve students in co-designing their itinerary. Prior to their trip, we run a series of student-initiated activities to promote agency and collaboration, setting them up for success once they're overseas.

7. Is the tour priced competitively?

A foreign travel experience for your students needn't cost the earth. And while variations in destinations, flights and trip durations add complexity to the task of pricing your trip, the school travel company you choose should offer you that transparency, without question.

Alongside integrity in pricing sit sound educational outcomes. If your trip provider can't quantify how your students will benefit from the trip, then you might ask whether they're the right fit for you and your school.

Because we operate entirely in-country, with exclusively local staff, our overheads are significantly lower compared to those of other travel companies. With us, your money goes directly toward creating your tour, rather than to overseas administration costs or third-party suppliers.

