



TreeClimbing extravaganza, Batang Ai National Park, Sarawak

Location: Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo

Duration: 17th – 26th April

Focus: See wild orangutan habitat from the perspective of the orangutan in this unique opportunity to climb the trees of one of the world's oldest rainforests. Visit two of the world's orangutan rehabilitation centres.

Spend time with indigenous tribes



Who we are

Orangutan Project Sdn Bhd is a Malaysian conservation company specialising in operating meaningful and responsible tours and volunteering projects in order to generating funding for wider conservation objectives. Our work is currently focused on Borneo, and though the primary focus has historically been orangutan welfare and conservation, we are interested in helping any and all protected wildlife, wherever possible.



We are proud to present a model of true eco-tourism, where funds generated by the volunteers and tourists that we work with are spent directly on our conservation and welfare work at the centres and in the areas that we are based. Though a lot of our work resembles that of charities or NGOs, we have chosen to operate as a commercial company to promote a more charitable means of running a business. We see no shame in a company aiming to achieve a profit, but our choice is to spend that profit on a cause in need, and the cause we care **passionately** about is the plight of endangered species.



In developing our tours we look to create something that has a minimal detrimental impact on the environment, people and/or animals involved at the locations visited. We are then working in these areas and with the indigenous communities on wider conservation goals. Our eco-tourism groups can also be an important source of revenue for these communities, meaning we can decrease their incidents of logging or hunting as we can provide an income through alternate, sustainable means.

We also run volunteering projects, currently at two of the rehabilitation centres on Borneo – Matang Wildlife Centre in Sarawak and Ketapang Orangutan Centre in West Kalimantan. Volunteers typically join us for two or four week projects and get involved with works on the ground to improve and expand these centres. Our volunteering projects are entirely separate to our tours, and though you will visit the two rehabilitation centres in Sarawak during the two weeks, you will not be heavily involved in voluntary work during this time.

Please see our website for our volunteering options if this is something you would rather do with your holiday.

www.projectorangutan.com

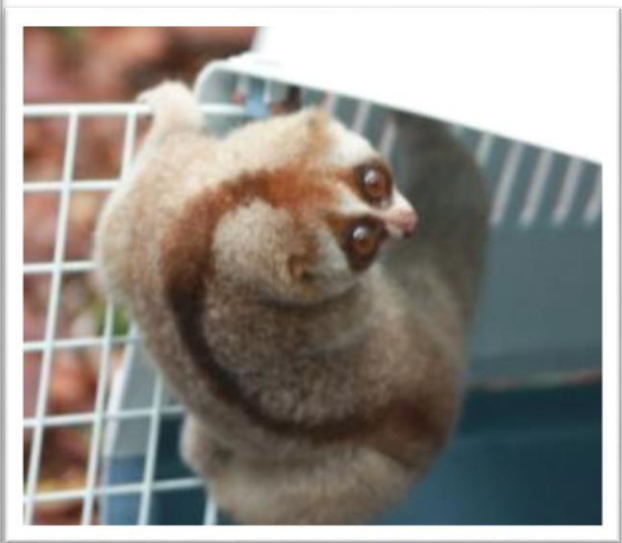


Destinations

Matang Wildlife Centre

You will spend two days and two nights at Matang Wildlife Centre, which is surrounded by Kubah National Park. Matang Wildlife Centre opened in 1997 and is the second rehabilitation centre for orangutan in the state of Sarawak. Its partner, Semenggoh Nature Reserve, opened in 1975 and is a rehabilitation centre for orangutan with currently 20+ individuals living semi-wild, never returning to cages or enclosures and breeding in the trees. However, the carrying capacity of this forested area has long since been reached, which inspired the construction of Matang. Both the animal centres and all the national parks in Sarawak are owned by the government and managed by Sarawak Forestry Corporation.

Matang is unique among the 8 rehabilitation centres on Borneo and Sumatra in that it is also attempting to rescue and rehabilitate all protected wildlife within Sarawak. This makes the potential of Matang to be a conservation tool for endangered species almost unlimited – however it also presents a huge challenge as it is almost impossible to be adequately informed about the basic biology, ecology and rehabilitation techniques of every animal living on Borneo!



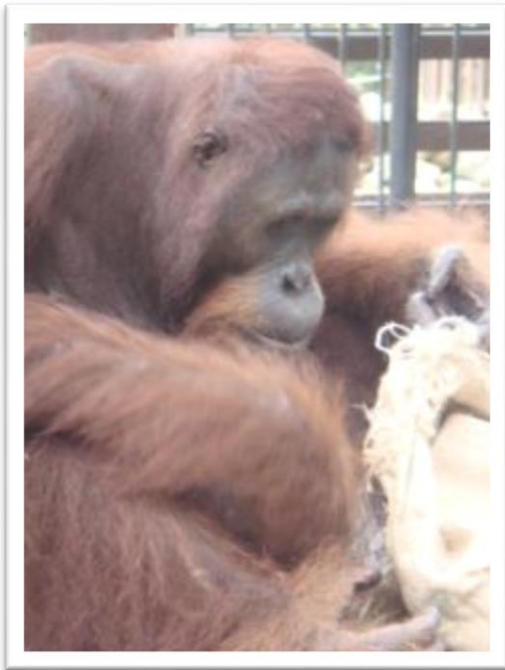
Orangutan Project have been in situ at this centre since 2006. Since 2008, with increased numbers of participants on our programs and consistently being fully-booked, we have been able to have a real impact at Matang, which you will see during your short stay at the centre.

Rehabilitation centre, or animal sanctuary?

A lot of the media surrounding animal rescue centres focuses on the good-news stories, providing the feel-good factor (often to elicit donations from viewers/readers) and creating the impression that rescuing animals and subsequently releasing them is the standard procedure and easily done.

Unfortunately, this is incredibly **far from the truth**, and the reality on the ground often leads visitors to 'rehabilitation' centres feeling jaded; as if they have just spent time in a make-shift zoo rather than a rehabilitation centre. People assume all the animals will be outside of enclosures, again due in large part to the Western media portraying close encounters with wild animals as safe, desirable and common place in centres like Matang.

The vast majority of the animals resident at Matang have been **confiscated** or **surrendered** from illicit pet trade; this means taken from their natural habitat (often as a result of their mums being killed), kept in highly inadequate housing for days/weeks/years, fed an incorrect diet and being incredibly humanised. All of these factors mean that an animal rescued from this is unlikely to return to a successful life in the wild – see the [IUCN Guidelines for the Placement of Confiscated Animals](#) for a more thorough look at some of these issues.



For the small percentage of animals that may be considered for release, it is important to not simply 'dump' them back in the forest and consider the job a success. Where scientists have tracked ex-captive animals after release back to wild, they have reported close to **100% mortality** over a 12 month period, with a variety of species. The most common causes of mortality are conflict with humans and starvation. Where release is possible, it is important to do so responsibly, and track the animal in question to ascertain success (or not). Having inadequate housing at a rescue centre is not reason enough release an ex-captive animal into the wild, and assume it will lead a happier life.

Your time at Matang

During the short time you spend at this centre, you will be treated to 'back stage passes' and will be given a tour by the centre's resident expert staff. There will be the opportunity for a lecture from one of the conservationists, though this is subject to staff availability. You will create enrichment for the orangutan and sun bears that reside here, and see how these simple devices play an essential role in keeping the rescued animals healthy, both in body and mind.

You will also explore the surrounding national park of Kubah. This is a chance for a gentle introduction to the rainforest, and usually the first opportunity for you to test out your trekking skills!

When working around the orangutan, you will be expected to follow best practise guidelines for volunteering with great apes, which include:

- **No physical contact** at any time with any of the orangutan. This is for two main reasons

1. The aim of the rehabilitation centres is to return the orangutan to the semi-wild, or wild in some cases. Close physical contact with many different people has an extremely detrimental effect on the behaviour of these animals. Orangutan are very smart, and learn very efficiently through observation and imitation. Therefore, the more humans they are exposed to, the more they try to behave like us, rather than like orangutan, which only **impedes** their return to the trees.
2. There is a very real risk of **disease** transmission from humans to orangutan (zoonosis), and in the 0-3 year old orang-utan, even a common cold can be fatal. Increasing the number of people who have close contact with the orangutan simply increases the chance that a potentially fatal pathogen is transmitted to these animals. Permanent staff that have contact with the animals are all subject to blood screening, which we do not insist on for volunteers.

Please see Orangutan Project's No Contact Policy for further discussion of this issue

- **Facemasks** are to be worn at all times when in close proximity to the orangutan
- No food or drinks (outside of the diet provided by the centre) to be given to the orangutan at any time.
- Always listen to and follow the instructions of your supervisor/the animal keepers/the rangers.
- When observing semi-wild orangutan, do not take food or drink into their areas, keep a safe distance from the animal and always follow the directions of the member of staff you are with.

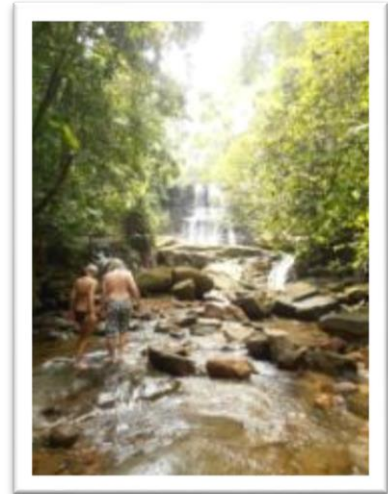
These guidelines are for the safety both of yourself, and the animals that you are coming to help.

We are working to create a new model of tourism and volunteering, where the interaction with the orangutan is kept to an absolute minimum, yet the impact and educational value to the human participant is incredibly high.



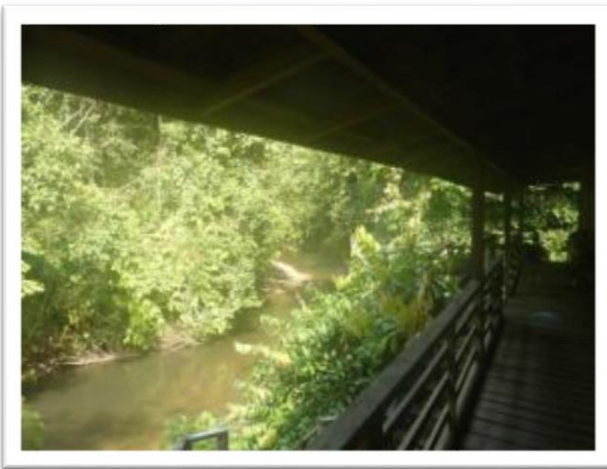
Batang Ai National Park

This is the largest national park in Sarawak, and home to the state's only remaining population of wild orangutan. There are roughly 1350 individuals left in the wild here and you could not be better situated to stand a chance of seeing one of these endangered great apes; however, the orangutan is one of the most challenging animals to see in its natural habitat, so it is by no means guaranteed that you will see one during your time here.



From the city of Kuching you will take a bus to a jetty of the Batang Ai dam, which takes approximately 5 hours. From this jetty, you will catch a longboat which will transport you down river through pristine tropical rainforest. This boat journey takes roughly 2 hours, after which time you will arrive at the lodge where you will spend 5 nights of your tour. These simple longboats do not have any shelter. If it rains while you are on the river, suffice to say you will get slightly damp! We will provide dry bags for you to keep your belongings in, in case of this eventuality, but you should be prepared to travel **very lightly**. Think 'minimalist', and then remove a few items.

You will probably be pleased to leave most of your luggage behind, as the jungle is rather damp, humid and mouldy, so anything you take will certainly adopt a distinctive smell while you are out there!



There are not many opportunities left in this day and age to be completely isolated and cut off from all the trappings of technology and the Western consumerist way of life. This, however, is one of them. Electricity is provided by generator and runs for 3-4 hours per day. Other than that, there is no power, no telephone signal and no internet. It is you, and the jungle, and that is it.

You will be living across the river from a small Iban community that have resided in this area of the rainforest for many generations.

Orangutan Project is working with this Iban community to try to create a sustainable business for them to manage autonomously in time. For each tour group that visits this community, we pay their members as guides for treks, kitchen assistants and boat drivers for the pick up, collection and drives to trails. We also pay a contribution to the community for each person that visits, known as the Head Man Tax. We constructed the lodge where you will stay through profits made from our tours, and gifted this lodge to the community for them to further other tourism endeavours that they may wish to explore. We believe that by working with the indigenous people this way we can decrease incidents of hunting and logging through provision of revenue, and also provide an incentive for these people to retain ownership of their land and maintain residence in the area, as custodians of the forest.



You will have the chance to take part in a couple jungle treks. The terrain here is challenging to say the least. For your best chance to spot wildlife, you will be trekking up steep ridges in areas of forest that sometimes have not been walked before. Do not expect well cut paths that are easy to navigate. However, the exertion is more than worth it – how often can you say you have been in the middle of virgin Bornean rainforest?

Roughly one third of our groups have encountered a wild orangutan while resident at this location. It is certainly more than a little bit of luck, though increased numbers of treks, early starts and quiet walkers will all help towards the likelihood of seeing the elusive orangutan. Even if you do not see one, you will be surrounded by signs that they, and other species of animal, are around. Your guide will point out orangutan nests, foods that have been eaten by different animals, the claw marks on trees climbed by sun bears and various other signs, sights and sounds. You will be left in no doubt that you have spent some time in a rather magical place, filled with life.

Tree Climbing with Tree Monkey Project

Experience the High life of the Orangutans and other arboreal animals in the Jungle!

This Part of the Tour will include, for the first time, **TREE CLIMBING in Primary forest, from which you will be able to observe the trees, plants and animals from a new perspective.**

Experienced Arborist guides will show you the ropes and techniques to exploring the canopy of Primary forest for a view very few people in the world will ever see.

This is a moderate to strenuous activity but using simple techniques, using your arms and legs, of



ascending ropes into the trees the same way professional arborist use all over the world. You will be able rest at any level and stop at any height. No experience is necessary and participation is not mandatory.

A portion of the cost of this tour will go directly to helping Tree Monkey Project teach staff of Orangutan Project and other non-profits tree climbing techniques to help support the Rescue, Research and Rehabilitation of endangered tree animals.

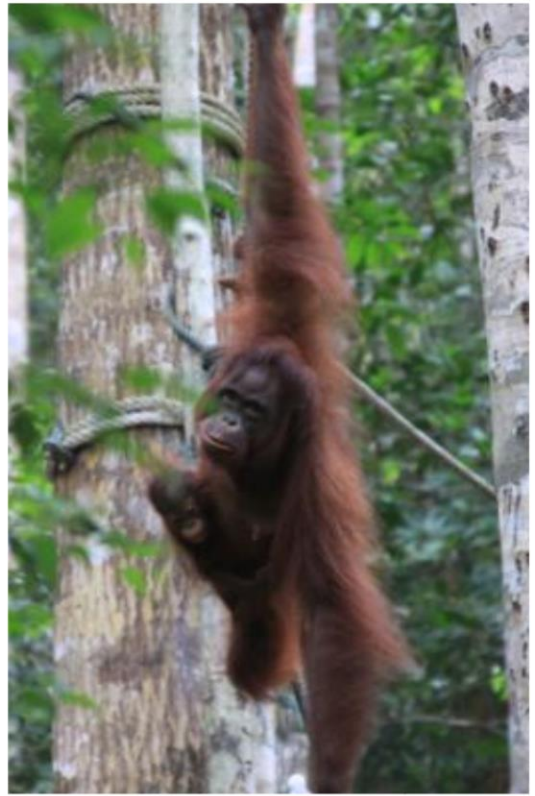


Semenggoh Orangutan Centre

Semenggoh is Sarawak's first orangutan rehabilitation centre and was opened in the 70s. For many years, it was Sarawak's only rehabilitation centre of any kind. It now focuses only on its resident orangutan population, all of which are living semi-wild in this nature reserve. Any new orangutan that require rescue or rehabilitation in Sarawak will be sent to Matang Wildlife Centre.

As of 2015, Semenggoh has a population of 10-15 individuals, and these orangutan are always free-ranging. There have been a number of successful births at this centre, and visits here will almost always include a sighting of a mother with her baby. There is one dominant male orangutan here, named Ritchie, who is definitely not a guaranteed sighting but he is one extremely impressive animal and makes a lasting impression on those humans lucky enough to meet him!

As with many of the orangutan rehabilitation centres, Semenggoh is only open at select times during the day. As of 2015 it opened for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon, times that coincide with the daily feeds of the orangutan. Visitors station themselves in view of the feeding platform and wait to see if the orangutan are hungry enough to show themselves. Very occasionally in the middle of the fruiting season, none of the orangutan return to take the food provided by the humans, as they can find enough for themselves in the forest. However, more than 95% of visitors to Semenggoh will see at least one orangutan, so your chances are very good indeed.



Your arrival day

What to do when you arrive

You will arrive in Kuching the capital of Sarawak Malaysian Borneo. There is no airport tax on arrival or departure that needs to be paid at the airport. These taxes would be paid with the flight ticket.

- Volunteers with valid European passport will be given at most 3 months social/holiday visa on arrival – free. Extension can be applied for at Immigration in Malaysia for an extra 30 or 60 days.
- Volunteers from Europe and US and Australia will not need a letter of invitation from us.
- By law volunteers should always have their passports on them or to hand.

When will we be met?

We will be picking you up at the airport and failing unforeseen delays, will be awaiting you at the arrivals lounge. We will then drive you to Basaga Holiday Residences, where you will be spending the first night of your trip.

You will then have a welcome dinner with us and your fellow volunteers at 6pm. If your flights arrive some days prior please ensure you are at Basaga at this time. Transfer to Batang Ai will commence the following day at around 8am.

What to do if we don't meet you?

It is incredibly unlikely that we will not be at the airport, awaiting you in the arrivals lounge. At worst, we may be a little late due to bad traffic or terrible weather. If we are running late though, and you'd like to call us to make sure we're coming, please use:

- (006) 0138456531 for Leo Biddle or
- (006) 0148856488 for Natasha Beckerson

Basaga Holiday Residences

Basaga provide boutique accommodation within walking distance of Kuching. They have been our chosen partners now for more than three years, and always offer an excellent service to our guests. The staff are very friendly and helpful, and the facilities are excellent.

As well as your first night in Kuching, you will spend your last night with us in this accommodation too. For more information, please visit their website:

www.basaga.com

Itinerary:

- 17th – arrive to Kuching, spend the night in Basaga Holiday Residences
- 18th – travel to Batang Ai
- 19th – 23rd – Tree climbing and trekking activities in the park
- 24th – travel to Matang Wildlife Centre
- 25th – tour of Matang, travel to Kuching via afternoon visit to Semenggoh
- 26th – departure from Kuching

Things to bring

- A torch – for night trails and areas without electricity
- Lightweight clothes that you do not mind getting dirty/ruined
- Comfortable walking shoes
- Mosquito net – single size will suffice
- Books, iPods, pack of cards etc
- Sun cream
- Rehydration sachets
- Travel plug adapter – Malaysian plug sockets are the same as England (3 pins), so if you are coming from the UK you will not need an adapter
- Poncho or waterproof coat – this is personal preference. If you are caught in a proper tropical downpour, nothing is really going to keep you dry! Lightweight cotton clothing will dry very quickly anyway, and we always find that an extra layer simply makes you sweat more, so you end up wet regardless.
- A towel
- Top sheet or sleeping bag liner
- Money – a float of RM300-400 should easily see you through the basics.
 - The UK pound is equal approximately to 5 Malaysian Ringgits though this does fluctuate widely. Malaysia is relatively cheap once you stay away from western outlets, eateries etc. food is cheap at approx. £1-2 pounds for breakfast or lunch –including juice, and £2-3 for dinner. Alcohol is more expensive at £1 for a can of beer. Western bars are same price as at home or sometimes more expensive. Local bars are much cheaper but nightclubs are same price as London on average. Hostels can range from very cheap and grotty at £1.5 to very clean and nice hostels for £8-10 pounds. Hotels can range from £25 for 2-3 stars. 4 and 5 stars will be over £40.
- **Telephones** – there is (strangely) very good coverage within many of the national parks, Batang Ai being the exception, so your mobile phones will work well. Roaming charges, however, can often be horrendous. It is often worth buying a local SIM card when in country – they cost less than RM10, and international phone calls are incredibly cheap (to landlines, calls to other mobiles are more expensive). It may be worth unlocking your phone before travelling, or alternatively very cheap mobiles phones (less than RM80) can be bought.
- The expectation to be hot, dirty and sweaty for most of the time!