TOUR CODE

MA5

ADVENTURESABROAD

MALAYSIA & INDONESIA

Featuring Borneo, Brunei, Sumatra, Java & Bali

27 days

Updated 22/11/2013

Day 1 *Arrival in Kuala Lumpur*

Today we arrive in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Malaysia's capital is a curious blend of the old and new. It is also a blend of cultures; the Malay capital has a vibrant Chinatown and an Indian quarter. Kuala Lumpur means "muddy confluence" which is an apt description of this town which grew up as a trading post and tin mining shanty town, and later became a modern cosmopolitan business hub.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Day 2 *Kuala Lumpur: City Tour*

Despite rapid development, Kuala Lumpur has managed to retain her charm, with a skyline that blends the Old World with the New. We start the day with a visit to the Menara Kuala Lumpur that offers a birds-eye view of the entire city and its surrounds. We will see the contrast of the distinctive Indo-Moorish architecture and the ultra modern edifices, the Petronas Twin Towers. Later we drive past the elegant Jamek Mosque, which occupies the symbolic birthplace of Kuala Lumpur and the bustling Chinatown at Petaling Street before a photo stop at the majestic Royal Palace.

After lunch we visit the National Museum where historical Malaysian artifacts and replicas among others are on display. Time permitting we will take a stroll at the beautiful Lake Gardens located within the vicinity of National Monument and Merdeka Square.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Day 3 *Kuala Lumpur - Malacca - Kuala Lumpur*

We depart after breakfast for a visit to the historic town of Malacca, founded by a fleeing prince from Sumatra in 14th century. Later it developed into a major trading port for ships from India and China. From its early days as a traders meeting point to the successive colonial occupation by the Portuguese, Dutch, English and Japanese, each culture left behind its mark or monument creating a historical showcase. Today you will find many remnants of the mixed history of this city dating back more than 500 years.

The oldest established town in Malaysia, Malacca is particularly famous for its Town Square and surrounding monuments. Our tour visits the red coloured Stadhuys, Cheng Hoon Teng, the oldest Chinese temple on the Malay peninsula, the Portuguese fortress Porta de Santiago built in 1511 and St Paul's Church where St Francis Xavier was buried.

Malacca is well-known for its eclectic food. Most notable of all is the Nyonya-Baba cuisine which is a mixture of Chinese (mostly southern Hokkien or Fujian influence), Portuguese, Dutch, Indian, British and Malay cooking with most dishes being spicy in nature.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Day 4 *Kuala Lumpur - Kuching (Sarawak)*

Today we fly to Kuching. Upon arrival we will transfer to our hotel.

This afternoon we travel to the award winning "Sarawak Cultural Village". This living museum depicts the heritage of the major racial groups in Sarawak and conveniently portrays the respective lifestyle amidst 14 acres of equatorial vegetation. Here it is possible to see Sarawak's ethnic diversity at a glance.

We end the day at the Kuching waterfront. The river is important as a transport link in the past, is still a central feature of the city with a beautifully landscaped waterfront promenade providing a superb and relaxing venue for strolls any time of the day.

Overnight in Kuching.

Day 5 *Kuching - Longhouse Visit - Kuching*

Early this morning we depart Kuching by road, passing pepper gardens, cocoa and rubber plantations. As we continue upcountry we make a few stops to see where a variety of jungle produce, such as edible ferns, bamboo shoots and unusual tropical fruit are on display. Our destination is a longhouse, which is, as its name suggests, an extended family environment where many families live out their existence under a single roof. The longhouse has an open verandah that offers a marvelous view of rural life in the form of paddy fields, rubber plantations and the like. Today in the more rural areas of Sarawak, there are longhouse dwellings where life is more simple, idyllic and nature-oriented.

We will be greeted with a glass of tuak (rice wine) and a welcome dance. Following that we will be shown around and treated to various cultural performances, including dancing and drumming.

Return to Kuching in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Kuching.

Day 6 *Kuching: City Tour - Miri*

This morning we embark on a tour of Kuching. Arguably one of the most attractive cities in Southeast Asia, Kuching has adapted modern amenities without losing its old trading centre charm. Once the home of the Rajahs Brooke, their legacy is evident in the old buildings still in use today. Included on our tour: the Cat Monument, Sarawak's oldest Tua Pek Kong Taoist Temple, the Civic Center, the award winning Catholic Cathedral, and the the multi-purpose market where tin smiths, rattan workers, coffin makers, Chinese herbalists and gold smiths ply their specialised trades in a setting little changed from the 19th century. A highlight of the day is a visit to the renowned Sarawak Museum, one of the finest in Asia, with its wonderful collection of Borneo artifacts.

This afternoon, we fly to Miri located in Northern Sarawak of Borneo island. Miri City is the gateway to Borneo and is also adjacent to the neighboring country of Brunei. Upon arrival we will drive up to Canada Hill overlooking the town to visit the 'Grand Old Lady', the first oil well dug in Malaysia. Built in the year 1910 by Anglo-Saxon Petroleum (now the Royal Dutch Shell Group of Companies), this oil well worked faithfully for SHELL for 62 years and outlived many of the other 624 wells in the Miri area known as the Miri Land Field. Altogether the Grand Old Lady produced some

660,000 barrels of oil. It has now been protected as a National Historical Monument.

Overnight in Miri.

Day 7 *Miri - Niah National Park and the Grand Cave - Miri*

This morning we drive 110 km to the world famous Niah National Park. Although one of Sarawak's smallest national parks, it is one of the most important and unusual with its main claim to fame being known as the birthplace of human civilization in the region. The oldest modern human remains in Southeast Asia along with many other relics of prehistoric man dating from 40,000 years ago were discovered here in 1958 making the park one of the most important archaeological sites in the world.

After registration at the park headquarters, and a brief look at the information centre we take a short boat to cross the river to visit Niah Museum. After our museum visit we walk 3 km along a level boardwalk to the main cave entrance. The walk to the Grand Cave takes about 45 minutes and is fascinating in its own right as you pass close to giant Tapang trees (Koompassia excelsa) with their enormous buttressed roots, pandanus plants twice the size of a person and colourful orchids and tree fungi.

In the Painted Cave you see the prehistoric wall drawing as well as the preserved remains of stone age people dating back 40,000 years. The Great Cave as the name suggests, is an enormous cavern surrounded by dense primary rainforest. The Great cave is not only important archaeological site, where it was inhabited by man for 40,000 years, but the cave is also full bats and birds, especially the Black-nest Swiftlets.

Return to Miri.

Overnight in Miri.

Day 8 *Miri, Malaysia - Brunei Darussalam*

A 2 hour drive this morning takes us to Brunei is a small oil rich country just 443 km (277 miles) north of the equator in the northwest corner of Borneo, bounded on all landward sides by Sarawak (Malaysia) which splits Brunei into two parts. The landscape is mainly equatorial jungle cut by rivers. It is a heavily forested state and most human activity is restricted either to coastal areas or estuaries.

Today our sightseeing tour will include the magnificent golden-domed Jame Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque. The mosque with its domes, mosaic patterns, surrounding gardens and imposing minarets plated with 24 carat gold, was built to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the King's reign.

In the afternoon we will take a cruise to visit the Kampung Ayer water village, said to be the largest water village in the world. This village has been in continuous habitation since 1521. Here we will witness a traditional way of life, with stilt houses built over the Brunei River (though today most of the inhabitants enjoy modern facilities).

Our tour of the city today will also include a view of the spectacular Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque and a visit to one of the local markets.

Overnight in Brunei.

Day 9 *Brunei Darussalam - Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia*

We have most of the day in Brunei to continue with our sightseeing tour. Today we visit to the Royal Regalia Building, with its amazing array of chariots, weapons, crowns, thrones and other paraphernalia. We will also see the unique and priceless collections contained within the Brunei Museum.

There will be a chance for a photo opportunity of the magnificent Istana Nurul Iman, the Sultan's Royal Palace for his first wife, and also the largest residential palace in the world.

We fly to Kota Kinabalu, the main city in the Malaysian state of Sabah later this afternoon. Time permitting, upon arrival we will have a brief city sightseeing drive tour including a visit to the excellent State Museum.

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Day 10 *Kota Kinabalu - Mt Kinabalu - Poring - Kota Kinabalu*

Today we drive through paddy-fields and Dusun villages, over the ridges of the Crocker Range to the foothills of the 1500 m / 5,000 foot high Mt. Kinabalu. We arrive at the park headquarters at the Kundasang Visitor Centre and Mountain Garden, home to some of the 24 species of flowering rhododendrons, 10 species of carnivorous pitcher plants, an estimated 1,400 species of orchids, over 600 species of ferns, and more than 40 species of oak trees and over 300 species of birds.

We continue 40 km / 25 mi journey to Poring where we explore tropical rainforest on a treetop canopy walkway suspended 41 m / 135 ft above the forest floor. After our visit we return to Kota Kinabalu.

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Day 11 *Kota Kinabalu - Sandakan - Sepilok Orangutan Sanctuary - Sukau*

A short flight takes us to Sandakan from where we transfer to Sepilok, the largest orangutan sanctuary in the world. Here you can see adolescents, adults, and babies in their natural habitat: the tropical rainforest. We visit in the afternoon after most tourists have left and orangutans are less shy.

Later we continue by road to our rainforest lodge.

Overnight in Sukau region.

Day 12 *Oxbow Lakes & Sukau*

Today we wake up to the calls of gibbons and hornbills. Early this morning we have a river cruise up the Kinabatangan River to view more birds and wildlife. We proceed to the Kelenanap ox-bow lake for a short jungle walk along the lake while searching for more wildlife. In the afternoon, we take a river cruise in search of wild proboscis monkeys as they settle down on treetops along the Kinabatangan River.

After dinner there is an optional night cruise for spotting nocturnal animals, crocodiles and birds.

Overnight in Sukau region. Meal plan: Lunch.

Day 13 *Sukau - Sandakan - Kota Kinabalu*

Today we return to Sandakan and, time-permitting, have some sightseeing in Sandakan before catching our flight to Kota Kinabalu.

Sandakan's main attraction is its hot, steamy waterfront -- a teeming, chaotic multi-purpose place where the fish and central market, hawker stalls and transport all seem to combine a profusion of colour and activity. In the market's dark aisles can be found conches and fish bigger than shovels.

Later today we transfer to the aiprort for our flight to Kota Kinabalu.

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Day 14 *Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia - Medan, Indonesia*

Today we fly to Medan, the main city in northern Sumatra.

North Sumatra is a land of great mountains, waterfalls, lakes, a mixture of cultural groups, plantations of rubber, tobacco, palm oil, and coffee.

Overnight in Medan. Meal plan: Breakfast and dinner.

Day 15 *Medan - Samosir Island, Lake Toba*

After breakfast we depart for a brief city tour of Medan. We stop to see the Maimoon Palace, recently renovated from its original founding in 1888 by the Sultan of Deli. We will also stop to visit the Grand Mosque, built in the Moroccan style.

Afterwards we travel southwards by road from Medan to Lake Toba, where we take a ferry across the lake to Samosir Island. At 630 sq km, Samosir is notable as being the largest island within an island, and the fifth largest lake island in the world. This is a full day of travel with stops for rest and points of interest.

Overnight on Samosir Island.

Day 16 *Samosir Island, Lake Toba*

The island is the centre of Batak culture, and has several villages of historical interest. Here, traditional houses are made of wood with high roofs; the main posts, walls, and gable ends carry carved decorations of buffalo horns.

We will learn about the animist culture of the Batak people with visits to the cultural centre and some unusual houses, with roofs shaped like boats. The Batak were formerly head-hunters and cannibals, and due to their isolation in the high mountains, they have retained many of the ancient proto-Malay cultural traditions. According to tradition, all Bataks are descendants of Si Raja Batak, a hero-ancestor of super-natural parentage born on a holy mountain adjacent to Lake Toba. Today they maintain a tight-knit and distinctive culture.

Our stops today include a visit to the King Sidabutar Tomb in Tomok, a stop at the 300-year old stone chairs, site of village discussions and decisions, and we explore the museum at Simanindo, converted from a traditional house lived in

by Rajah Simalungun, a Batak king.

We continue back to our hotel on Samosir Island for the night.

Overnight on Samosir Island.

Day 17 *Samosir Island - Berastagi*

This morning we take a long, leisurely drive toward Berastagi, starting across the narrow land bridge that connects the "island" to the mainland. This region of North Sumatra is volcanic in nature and many sulfurous hot springs are to be found. At the northern end of Lake Toba we stop to see the impressive 120 m (394 ft) high Si Piso-Piso Waterfalls. From the viewpoint at the top of the falls there is a 360-degree panoramic view over Lake Toba and the surrounding countryside.

The area to the north of Lake Toba is known as Karoland, or the Karo Highlands, as it is where the Karo Batak tribal people live. The five Karo Batak clans and 83 subclans inhabit a high, lush plateau of mountain slopes and rich volcanic valleys in the area between Lake Toba and Medan. There are many volcanoes in the area, some of them still steaming. Gunung Sibayak at 2070 m (6,790 ft) and Gunung Sinabung at 2417 m (7,930 ft) are the highest and can be seen from many locations as we explore the area. We will have the opportunity to stop in Lingga, a Karo Batak village.

Overnight in Berastagi.

Day 18 *Berastagi - Medan (Sumatra) - Yogyakarta (Java)*

This morning we drive from Berastagi to Medan (2-3 hours with stops) and fly to Yogyakarta, Java's cultural heart. Located at the foot of the volcano Merapi, the fertile plain of Yogyakarta was, in the 16th and 17th century, the seat of the mighty Javanese empire of Mataran.

NOTE: Our flight from Medan to Yogyakarta will likely transit through Jakarta.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Day 19 *Yogyakarta - Prambanan - Yogyakarta: City Tour*

Today we visit the most extensive Hindu temple site in Indonesia -- Prambanan.

Prambanan is the largest Hindu temple compound in Indonesia, located approximately 18 km east of Yogyakarta. The temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the largest Hindu temples in Southeast Asia. It is characterised by its tall and pointed architecture, typical of Hindu temple architecture, and by the 47m (154 ft) high central building inside a large complex of individual temples. It was built around AD 850 by either Rakai Pikatan, king of the second Mataram dynasty, or Balitung Maha Sambu, during the Sanjaya Dynasty. Not long after its construction, the temple was abandoned and began to deteriorate.

After our comprehensive guided tour, we return to Yogyakarta. This afternoon's sightseeing includes the Sultan's palace, the Kraton, a vast complex of courtyards, halls and pavilions in Javanese traditional style. The most important structure is the Golden Pavillion; ornately carved, and heavily gilded, its graceful roof is supported by finely carved wooden beams. Here the Sultan used to receive royal guests and hold balls and banquets.

We also visit the nearby Taman Sari (Water Castle), the ruins, pools, arches and underground passages of the former pleasure gardens. It was built in 1758 by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I as a rest house and pleasure park for the Royal Family.

At some point during our stay in Yogyakarta we hope to attend a performance of the Ramayana ballet, a dance based on ancient Hindu folklore.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Day 20 *Yogyakarta - Borobudur - Yogyakarta*

From Yogyakarta we drive north to the largest stupa-style Buddhist monument in the world -- Borobudur. This incredible monument, built and decorated before AD 800, should be on anybody's list of the ten greatest art-complexes in the world for its size, quality, sophistication and excellent state of preservation.

Borobudur was built in three tiers: a pyramidal base with five concentric square terraces, the trunk of a cone with three circular platforms and, at the top, a monumental stupa. The walls and balustrades are decorated with fine low reliefs, covering a total surface area of 2500 sq m. Around the circular platforms are 72 openwork stupas, each containing a statue of the Buddha. The monument was restored with UNESCO's help in the 1970s.

After a guided site tour, we return to Yogyakarta. Your afternoon is free. Wandering in the narrow streets of the markets you will see many beautiful crafts for sale, including the famous wayang wooden and leather puppets, but especially the batik. Yogyakarta is famous for its batik.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Day 21 *Yogyakarta (Java) - Denpasar (Bali) - Candidasa*

Today we fly from Yogyakarta to Denpasar (possibly via another connecting point) on the island of Bali and transfer to our hotel at Candidasa.

Bali is home to the vast majority of Indonesia's small Hindu minority. 93.18% of Bali's population adheres to Balinese Hinduism, while most of the remainder follow Islam. It is also the largest tourist destination in the country and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including dance, sculpture, painting, leather, metalworking and music.

On arrival at Denpasar airport, we travel by road through verdant Balinese countryside to the east coast town of Candidasa, a tranquil coastal area nestled between the Lombok Strait to the east and mountains to the west. Candidasa is within close proximity to many historical landmarks of Bali.

Overnight in Candidasa.

Day 22 *Candidasa: Eastern Bali & Besakih Temple*

Today we explore the highlands and the east coast area of Bali where elegant Balinese Hindu temples sprout amid lush green rice terraces.

We will also visit the native village of Tenganan, a symmetrically laid out Bali Aga village with walled homes and unique crafts. Bali Aga was the original inhabitant of Bali, before the arrival of Hindu Javanese. Tenganan retains its

ancient pre-Hindu customs through a strong code of non-fraternization with outsiders, further enforced by the protection of its surrounding walls.

We continue to the ancient law courts at Klung Kung. Klung Kung was the oldest Kingdom on the island, and its "raja" was the most exalted. At the walled-in "Court of Justice", which dates from the 18th century, a mural portrays punishment in hell and the rewards of heaven.

Our final stop is Bali's most important temple, Besakih, and sacred Mount Agung. This volcano is to the Balinese what Mount Olympus was to the ancient Greeks. Steps over 1,000 years old ascend through split gates to the main courtyard where there are many shrines. This temple was built on a site where animist rites, ceremonies and feasts once took place. The structure incorporates the holy triad of temples venerating the Hindu trinity. Every district of the island maintains its own temple within the complex.

Overnight in Candidasa.

Day 23 *Candidasa - Penglipuran - Lovina*

Today we journey from Candidasa to Lovina.

En route we will stop at Penglipuran village, well known for its tidy row of traditional Balinese entrance gates and its unique architectural traditions. The village has also succeeded in preserving its 75-hectare bamboo forest located in the northern part of the village.

We also stop at Kintamani, famous for its view of Mt. Batur and Lake Batur. The whole area around Kintamani is known for its orange groves. After a lunch break here, we continue to Beji Temple (Pura Beji), an excellent example of the colourful architectural style of northern Bali. The temple is famous for its Barong architecture and virtuoso relief carvings.

Our destination is Lovina, a coastal area on the northeastern side of the island containing the small villages of Temukus, Kalibukbuk and Anturan. It is becoming more popular with tourists but remains far quieter than the tourist hotspots of the island's south side. At night the whole fishing fleet is working, their lanterns glowing yellow along the ocean front.

Overnight in Lovina.

Day 24 *Lovina Area*

This morning we check out the spices and fruits at Lake Bratan market. Making our way back toward Lovina we visit the Buddhist monastery of Brahma Arama Vihara. It is a spectacular looking place, and a bit out of place in Hindu Bali. It is the most important Buddhist monastery in Bali and is complete with golden Buddha statues and a pristine natural setting. Strictly speaking the monastery is not a tourist site but accepts respectful visitors.

We return to Lovina in the afternoon.

Overnight in Lovina.

Day 25 *Lovina - Tanah Lot - Ubud*

Today we depart Lovina and travel past spectacular rice terraces to the artists' village of Ubud.

Along the way we visit the spectacular rice terraces at Pupuan. We proceed from there to Tanah Lot, an ocean temple built atop a huge rock surrounded by the sea at high tide by one of the last priests to come to Bali from Java in the 16th century. Its rituals include the paying of homage to the guardian spirits of the sea. Sea snakes found at the base are believed to guard the temple from evil spirits and intruders.

We continue to Ubud, a remarkable town located in the middle of the island. For more than a century, it has been the island's preeminent centre for fine arts, dance and music. While it once was a haven for scruffy backpackers, cosmic seekers, artists and bohemians, Ubud is now a hot spot for literati, glitterati, art collectors and connoisseurs.

Overnight in Ubud.

Day 26 *Ubud: Area Tour*

Today we a full day exploring the Ubud area. In the morning we attend a Barong traditional dance performance. The Barong play represent an eternal fighting between good and evil spirit. A Barong (a mythological animal) represent good spirit and Rangda (a mythological monster) represent the evil one. Bali is known for its fine arts, and it is in this village that most of the best batik painters, mask carvers, dancers, weavers, and musicians live. This is an excellent place to buy authentic Balinese handicrafts.

Overnight in Ubud.

Day 27 *Departure from Denpasar*

Today we transfer to Denpasar (+/- 1 hour). Departure from Denpasar.

BON VOYAGE! Meal plan: Breakfast.