Tour Code
MA4

ADVENTURESABROAD

MALAYSIA & BRUNEI

featuring Peninsular Malaysia, Borneo & Sarawak

14 days

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Day 1 Arrival in Kuala Lumpur

Welcome to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's capital and a city that embodies Southeast Asia's blend of tradition and modernity. The name means "muddy confluence" in Malay - an apt description for a settlement that began in the 1850s as a rough tin-mining camp at the meeting point of the Klang and Gombak rivers. Chinese miners arrived first, followed by Malay, Indian, and European traders, creating the multicultural character that defines the city today. This diverse heritage remains visible in distinct neighbourhoods - a vibrant Chinatown, an Indian quarter, and Malay kampungs exist alongside gleaming skyscrapers.

This evening we gather with fellow travellers for our first meal together.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Included Meal(s): Dinner

Day 2 Kuala Lumpur: City Tour

Despite rapid development, Kuala Lumpur has retained considerable charm, with a skyline that blends colonial-era buildings and contemporary towers. We start at Menara Kuala Lumpur, the communications tower offering panoramic views across the city from 421 metres (1,381 feet) above sea level. From this vantage point, the contrast becomes clear - Indo-Moorish architecture from the British colonial period sits alongside the ultra-modern Petronas Twin Towers, which held the title of world's tallest buildings from 1998 to 2004.

We drive past the elegant Jamek Mosque, occupying the symbolic birthplace of Kuala Lumpur at the river confluence, and the bustling Chinatown at Petaling Street before a photo stop at the Istana Negara, the majestic Royal Palace.

After lunch we visit the National Museum, where exhibits trace Malaysian history from prehistoric times through colonial rule to independence. Time permitting, we stroll through the Lake Gardens, a colonial-era park located near the National Monument and Merdeka Square, where Malaysia's independence was declared in 1957.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Kuala Lumpur & Malacca

After breakfast we depart for Malacca, founded by a fleeing Sumatran prince in the 14th century. The city developed into a major trading port where ships from India and China converged, drawn by Malacca's strategic position controlling the strait that bears its name. From its early days as a traders' meeting point through successive colonial occupation by the Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Japanese, each culture left monuments and architectural influences. Today the city displays remnants of more than 500 years of layered history.

As the oldest established town in Malaysia, Malacca is particularly famous for its Town Square and surrounding monuments. We visit the red-coloured Stadhuys, built by the Dutch in 1650 and believed to be the oldest surviving Dutch building in the East. At Cheng Hoon Teng, the oldest Chinese temple on the Malay peninsula dating from 1673, we see how Chinese immigrants maintained their religious traditions. We explore the Portuguese fortress Porta de Santiago, built in 1511 - one of the few remaining Portuguese structures - and St Paul's Church on the hill above, where St Francis Xavier was temporarily buried in 1553.

Malacca is renowned for its Nyonya-Baba cuisine, a unique fusion created by the Peranakan people - descendants of Chinese immigrants who married local Malays. The cuisine blends Chinese cooking techniques with Malay spices and ingredients, along with Portuguese, Dutch, Indian, and British influences, creating dishes that are typically spicy and aromatic.

NOTE: Due to our likely early departure tomorrow morning, we include lunch today instead of dinner.

Overnight in Kuala Lumpur.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 4 Kuala Lumpur - Fly to Kuching, Sarawak (Borneo)

Today we fly to Kuching in Sarawak, located in northwestern Borneo.

This afternoon we explore Kuching, arguably one of Southeast Asia's most attractive cities. Despite modern development, the city has retained its old trading centre charm. Once home to the White Rajahs Brooke - an English family who ruled Sarawak as an independent kingdom from 1841 to 1946 - their legacy remains evident in buildings still in use today. Our tour includes the Cat Monument celebrating Kuching's feline namesake (kucing means cat in Malay), the Tua Pek Kong Temple, Sarawak's oldest Taoist temple dating from 1876, and the award-winning Catholic Cathedral. We visit the multi-purpose market where tinsmiths, rattan workers, coffin makers, Chinese herbalists, and goldsmiths ply their trades in a setting little changed from the 19th century. A highlight is the Borneo Cultures Museum, opened in 2022 and showcasing Sarawak's diverse indigenous cultures through extensive collections of artifacts, textiles, and historical exhibits.

We end the day at the Kuching waterfront. The Sarawak River remains central to the city's character, and the beautifully landscaped waterfront promenade provides a relaxing venue for strolls at any time of day.

Overnight in Kuching.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Kuching & Longhouse Visit

Early this morning we depart Kuching by road for a longhouse, an extended family dwelling where many families live under a single roof. Traditional longhouses feature an open verandah running the building's length, offering views of paddy fields, rubber plantations, and surrounding forest. While Sarawak's urban areas have largely modernised, rural regions still maintain longhouse communities where life remains simpler and more closely connected to nature.

We're greeted with a welcome dance followed by a walk through the community, where we experience various cultural performances including traditional dancing and drumming. Longhouses represent a communal way of life that predates modern Sarawak, with families sharing resources and responsibilities while maintaining individual living spaces within the larger structure. The architectural design - raised on stilts with covered walkways - reflects centuries of adaptation to Borneo's climate and terrain.

We return to Kuching in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Kuching.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 6 Kuching: City Tour - Fly to Miri

This morning we visit the Sarawak Cultural Village, an award-winning living museum set within 14 acres of equatorial vegetation. The village depicts the heritage of Sarawak's major ethnic groups through authentic traditional houses representing different communities - Bidayuh, Iban, Orang Ulu, Malay, Chinese, and Melanau. Craftspeople demonstrate traditional skills including weaving, carving, and sago processing, while cultural performances showcase the music and dance of each group. The village provides an accessible introduction to Sarawak's remarkable ethnic diversity, where over 40 sub-ethnic groups maintain distinct languages, customs, and architectural traditions.

This afternoon we fly to Miri, still in Sarawak, an oil town with its own interesting history and our gateway to the neighbouring country of Brunei.

Overnight in Miri.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Miri: Lambir Hills & Local Life

This morning we drive approximately 30 minutes south to Lambir Hills National Park, a compact 70-square-kilometre reserve protecting lowland mixed dipterocarp forest. Established in 1975, the park shelters over 1,200 tree species and ranks among the most biodiverse forests on Earth per unit area. The terrain rises gently from 150 to 450 metres above sea level, creating microclimates that support an extraordinary concentration of plant and animal life including hornbills, gibbons, and the endangered Bornean banded langur.

We follow a well-maintained trail through primary rainforest to Latak Waterfall, a multi-tiered cascade that pools invitingly at its base. The walk takes roughly 20 minutes and offers close encounters with the forest's characteristic features - towering dipterocarp trees with their distinctive two-winged fruits, strangling figs, and the constant symphony of insects and birds. Weather and conditions permitting, we have the opportunity to swim in the cool, clear water before returning to Miri.

After lunch at a local restaurant featuring Sarawak's characteristic blend of Malay and Chinese influences, we explore Miri's waterfront and markets. Though oil discovery in 1910 transformed Miri from fishing village to petroleum hub, the city retains its connection to the South China Sea. Time permitting, we visit one of the local markets where fishmongers, produce vendors, and hawker stalls create the sensory overload typical of Malaysian market life - a chance to observe daily rhythms largely unchanged by the city's industrial prosperity. We end the afternoon along the seafront, where locals gather as the day cools and the sun sets over the South China Sea.

NOTE: Niah National Park's Painted Cave - one of Southeast Asia's most significant archaeological sites containing 40,000-year-old prehistoric drawings and burial remains - is currently closed due to flood damage and will likely remain inaccessible for the foreseeable future. Should the Painted Cave reopen prior to your departure, we may modify this day's itinerary to include a visit to Niah, subject to operational feasibility.

Overnight in Miri.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 8 Miri, Malaysia - Brunei Darussalam

A two-hour drive this morning takes us to Brunei, a small oil-rich nation in Borneo's northwest corner, bounded on all landward sides by Sarawak. The landscape consists mainly of equatorial jungle cut by rivers, with most human activity restricted to coastal areas and estuaries.

Today's sightseeing includes the magnificent Jame Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque. The mosque, with its golden domes, mosaic patterns, and imposing minarets plated with 24-carat gold, was built to commemorate the Sultan's 25th year of reign. The building accommodates 5,000 worshippers and exemplifies the wealth that oil revenues have brought to this tiny sultanate.

In the afternoon we cruise to Kampung Ayer, the water village continuously inhabited since at least 1521. When Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan's crew arrived that year, they called it the "Venice of the East." Today around 30,000 people still live in traditional stilt houses built over the Brunei River, though modern amenities like electricity and running water now reach most homes. The village represents a way of life maintained across centuries, with schools, mosques, and shops all constructed on stilts above the water.

Our city tour also includes views of the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque, completed in 1958 and named after the 28th Sultan, and a visit to one of the local markets.

NOTE: Though unlikely, mosques can close at any time without notice due to security concerns, maintenance, or official visits by dignitaries or members of the royal family.

Overnight in Brunei.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Brunei Darussalam Touring - Fly to Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

We have most of the day in Brunei to continue our exploration. Today we visit the Royal Regalia Building, housing an impressive collection of chariots, weapons, crowns, thrones, and other ceremonial objects documenting Brunei's royal history and the Sultan's 1968 coronation. The building provides insight into one of the world's few remaining absolute monarchies and one of the world's wealthiest individuals - Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah.

We'll have a photo opportunity at the Istana Nurul Iman, the Sultan's palace and official residence. With 1,788 rooms spread across 200,000 square metres, it ranks as the world's largest residential palace - larger than the Vatican or Versailles. The palace opens to the public only during the annual Hari Raya celebrations at the end of Ramadan.

Later this afternoon/early evening we fly to Kota Kinabalu, the main city in the Malaysian state of Sabah.

NOTE: Due to the possibility of flying over the dinner hour, today's included meals are breakfast and lunch.

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 10 Kota Kinabalu: Mt Kinabalu & Sabah Tea Garden

Today we drive through paddy fields and Dusun villages, over the ridges of the Crocker Range to the foothills of Mount Kinabalu. At 4095 metres (13,435 feet), Mount Kinabalu is Southeast Asia's highest peak between the Himalayas and New Guinea. The mountain's name likely derives from "Aki Nabalu" meaning "revered place of the dead" in the Kadazan language - local indigenous groups traditionally believed spirits of the deceased inhabited the mountain's peaks.

We arrive at the park headquarters at the Kundasang Visitor Centre and Mountain Garden. Kinabalu Park, established in 1964 and designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000, protects extraordinary biodiversity. The park is home to 24 species of rhododendrons, 10 species of carnivorous pitcher plants, an estimated 1,400 species of orchids, over 600 species of ferns, more than 40 species of oak trees, and over 300 species of birds. The dramatic elevation range - from 200 metres to over 4000 metres - creates multiple climate zones that support this remarkable diversity.

From Kinabalu Park we continue to Sabah Tea Garden, Borneo's only tea plantation and one of the world's few organic tea estates. Established in the 1970s at an elevation of approximately 2000 metres, the plantation benefits from the cool highland climate, volcanic soil, and daily mist that rolls down from Mount Kinabalu. We tour the tea factory to observe the withering, rolling, oxidation, and drying processes that transform fresh leaves into finished tea, then explore the plantation's hillside trails through orderly rows of tea bushes with Mount Kinabalu's distinctive granite peaks providing a dramatic backdrop.

The estate also maintains Desa Deer Farm, where visitors can observe sambar and barking deer in landscaped enclosures - species native to Borneo's forests but increasingly rare in the wild. We conclude with tea tasting, sampling varieties produced on-site including black, green, and oolong teas cultivated without synthetic pesticides or fertilizers.

We return to Kota Kinabalu in the late afternoon.

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Kota Kinabalu - Fly to Sandakan - Sepilok Orangutan Sanctuary - Sukau

A short flight takes us to Sandakan on Borneo's far northern tip, from where we transfer to Sepilok, the world's largest orangutan sanctuary. Founded in 1964 to rehabilitate orphaned orangutans, the facility now protects 43 square kilometres of land at the edge of Kabili Sepilok Forest Reserve. Around 60 to 80 orangutans live free in the reserve, while the centre provides medical care for orphaned and confiscated orangutans as well as other wildlife species including sun bears, gibbons, Sumatran rhinos, and elephants.

At Sepilok we observe the feeding platform where rehabilitated orangutans come to feed. The centre's rehabilitation programme gradually

teaches young orangutans survival skills - foraging, nest-building, and climbing - before releasing them into protected forest. Borneo's orangutan population has declined by more than 50% over the past 60 years due to habitat loss from palm oil plantations and logging, making sanctuaries like Sepilok crucial for the species' survival.

Later we continue by road to our rainforest lodge in the Sukau region.

Overnight in Sukau region.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Oxbow Lakes & Sukau

We wake to the calls of gibbons and hornbills. Early this morning we take a river cruise up the Kinabatangan River to view birds and wildlife. The Kinabatangan, Sabah's longest river at 560 kilometres, is one of only two rivers in the world where 10 primate species can be found. We proceed to Kelenanap ox-bow lake, a crescent-shaped body of water formed when the river changed course, leaving a isolated section behind. These lakes provide important habitat for wildlife including crocodiles, kingfishers, and pygmy elephants.

In the afternoon we take another river cruise searching for wild proboscis monkeys as they settle into treetops along the Kinabatangan River for the night. Male proboscis monkeys, endemic to Borneo, are distinguished by their remarkable pendulous noses, which can grow up to 10 centimetres long. The nose serves as a resonating chamber that amplifies their calls across the river.

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

Overnight in Sukau region.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 13 Sukau - Sandakan - Fly to Kota Kinabalu

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

Sandakan's main attraction is its hot, steamy waterfront - a teeming, chaotic hub where the fish and central market, hawker stalls, and transport all combine in a profusion of colour and activity. In the market's dark aisles can be found enormous conch shells and fish bigger than shovels. Sandakan served as British North Borneo's capital from 1884 to 1946, and the city played a tragic role during World War II as the site of a Japanese prisoner-of-war camp and the starting point of the infamous Sandakan Death Marches, in which only six of 2,400 Allied prisoners survived.

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

Overnight in Kota Kinabalu.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Departure

Today we transfer to Kota Kinabalu Airport for our flight home.

SELAMAT JALAN!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast