

ACCOMMODATION

Hotels on our Borneo Discovery tour are generally of a 3* to 4* international standard. Each property has private bathrooms and air conditioning. All the hotels serve tea and coffee facilities in their rooms except for the Lodge/chalet while in Sandakan region. Please keep in mind that all levels of hotels can sometimes suffer from minor problems and technical difficulties (**see Electricity**). At each hotel your Tour Leader will try to organise the rooming arrangements to suit everyone's requirements. If you are travelling as a couple please note that we cannot guarantee the availability of double beds.

TRANSPORT

Road – Left hand drive with modern roads for the majority of the country.

Air – There are several domestic flights during this tour flying Malaysian Airlines and its partners. Domestic flights within Borneo are generally no different to flying in Australia.

Boat – During the tour you will undertake numerous boat trips in various forms of boats ranging from long-tail speed boats on the rivers to a small ferry to and from Selingan Turtle Island (approximately 1 hour each way). The long boats used on the river (Sungai) cruises may or may not have canopies (so as to not obstruct the view), so make sure you bring sun screen and a wide brimmed hat and insect repellent at the ready. They are generally conducted early in the day, mid-evening or night. Binoculars are also handy to view the wildlife.

MEALS

All meals are included in your package throughout Borneo. The cuisine of Malaysian Borneo is a mixture of Chinese, Malay, Indian and Philippino with a lot of seafood available. Breakfast is buffet style at your hotel. Lunch and dinner is generally at local restaurants or hotels and served in either banquet or buffet-style. All beverages will be at your own expense.

Alcohol and mixes – Unlike Brunei which is a dry country, alcohol is available in Malaysia.

WATER

It is best to avoid tap water as bottled water and carbonated soft drinks are widely available throughout the country. All the ice served in drinks, even in the most basic coffee shops, is made from treated water and is safe.

SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS

Vegetarians – Every meal will generally include a vegetarian dish. However in order to ensure that you are properly catered for at each meal, please advise us if you are a vegetarian so that arrangements can be made for you.

Food Allergies - If you have food allergies or preferences, please make them known to your Tour Leader who will do their best to ensure that your requirements are met in advance. Unfortunately we can give no guarantee that special requirements can always be met.

HAGGLING

Bartering is expected in markets. As a general rule, respond with an offer of 40% of what the seller asked for and negotiate from there. In

all cases please remember that this process is a bit of fun and should be undertaken with a generous dose of humour and patience, resulting in both parties reaching a mutually beneficial outcome.

PHARMACEUTICAL GOODS

It is recommended that you take any pharmaceutical products that you may require on your tour. This could include items such as sleeping pills, tablets to relieve stomach upsets, headaches, motion sickness and any other medication that you usually take. For any prescribed medication we strongly recommend that you have a letter from your doctor.

TIPPING

It is customary to show appreciation of good service in Borneo towards your drivers and guides, who will appreciate a small gratuity for a job well done. Full details of the tip amount recommended in Borneo will be included in your final documents. Tipping is not a strong culture yet in this part of the world. Most hotels and restaurants include a 10% service charge on the bill. If you want to leave a small addition that is fine, but it is not always necessary.

ENTRANCE FEES & OPTIONAL EXTRAS

All of your entrance fees for attractions listed in the itinerary are included in the price of your tour. However, you may be offered extra sightseeing that is not included on the itinerary. Participation in this is at the discretion of the passenger and is not part of your tour; therefore any additional costs will need to be paid directly to the guide.

WEATHER

The climate is tropical with temperature ranging from a cool 22° C in the evenings to a sultry 34° C in the daytime.

Sarawak receives an abundance of rainfall (averaging 200-250 cm a year); the rainy season is normally during the 'Landas', a local term for the monsoon rains that come between November to February each year. Sabah is less wet than Sarawak and because it lies just below the typhoon belt, it is often known as 'the land below the wind'.

The monsoon period should not deter visitors to the region as it is not cold; in fact the rains during this time may be heavy but it is intermittent and they bring respite from the tropical heat. This is also the time of the year when the local tropical fruits unique to the region are in abundance.

WHAT TO WEAR

Out of respect for local values we ask that you follow your Tour Leader's advice at all times. You cannot wear hats inside temples and monasteries nor can you wear a jacket around your waist.

Clothing: The tropical days are hot and humid and we recommend light, comfortable cotton clothing. Casual wear is acceptable for most occasions in the city as are shorts and T-shirts. Bring swimming gear to cool off from the tropical heat. Please remember, however, to respect local modesty and dress appropriately at all times (**see Etiquette & Customs**). Light rain wear is a must as invariably, there will be encounters with rain. Don't forget sunscreen and sun hats (to protect against the tropical sun). These items can be locally obtained easily and cheaply.

Footwear: For days that require a great deal of walking through rainforest or rugged terrain, comfortable hiking or walking shoes that are suitable for jungle streams or muddy trails are recommended. For shorter trips that do not require a great deal of walking, a good pair of sneakers will do. A pair of flip-flop, slippers or thongs should be included. Note that locally, there may be difficulty in getting footwear in large sizes.

Equipment: A backpack and water bottle will come in handy. Bring along plastic bags to keep clothes and cameras dry in case of rain. For the Mulu National Park caves, include a pair of light cotton gloves for good grip and protection against sharp surfaces.

Refer to your packing list for a more detailed outline.

PHOTOGRAPHY

You should always ask permission before taking anyone's photograph and respect their decision if they say no. Your guide will indicate when you cannot take photographs.

IMPORTANT notes pertaining to Selingan Island

Visitors are invited to witness a female laying her eggs

- No flash photography or **Video/Digital Video Cameras are allowed at night.**
- Visitors are forbidden from exploring around the island on their own without a ranger between 6:00pm – 6:00am.
- Don't wear any footwear on the beach in case there are little hatchlings moving around. Beware of scorpions hiding in shrubs.
- Don't use any form of flash or torch light directly on the turtles as this aggravates them. Watch from a distance.
- Do not touch the turtle unless under the instruction of the ranger.
- Only one turtle is shown to the visitors per night.

SAFETY & SECURITY

Most people find that generally the island of Borneo is a very friendly and hospitable place to visit and feel comfortable wandering around its colourful streets. Kuching has to be one of the safest cities in the world; muggings and attacks on tourists are so rare that it makes the headlines if it happens. Kota Kinabalu requires some extra precautions in some areas, but it is also generally quite safe. In both cases it is best to apply the standard principle of leaving your valuables in the hotel safe and not carry more cash than you really need.

VISAS AND IMMIGRATION

Australian Passport holders do not require a visa for Malaysia. Many visitors from Western countries are allowed in without a visa requirement for a stay of 1-3 months. Validity on passports should be 6 months or more. There is severe penalty for drug traffickers.

LUGGAGE & INCIDENTAL ITEMS

On all tours, passengers are limited to 1 suitcase per person, weighing no more than 20kg and 1 piece of hand luggage weighing no more than 7kg. A camera, umbrella, torch, insect repellent and sun block are recommended. Tour members should also bring an overnight bag to be

used as a daypack. Refer to your packing list and itinerary for more detailed information.

INSURANCE & HEALTH

Comprehensive Travel Insurance is compulsory. If you have chosen to decline the insurance offered by your agent or Wendy Wu Tours please ensure you have arranged the appropriate cover for your holiday, as overseas medical costs are expensive and Medicare and Australian private health insurance will not cover you outside of Australia. A health certificate is not required for travel to Malaysia, however we strongly advise you consult your doctor or contact the Travellers Medical and Vaccination Centre in your capital city for advice on appropriate inoculations. If you are taking out travel insurance with your **credit card company**, you need to investigate the policy's inclusions and conditions fully. You should receive a policy number, an international access phone number to contact them in an emergency and a copy of full conditions. If you are concerned, please call our office to ensure that you are receiving the coverage needed for Borneo.

MONEY

Local Currency - The Malaysian currency is the ringgit (RM) which is subdivided into 100 sen. The denominations of notes come in RM1, RM5, RM10, RM50 and RM100. Coins come in 1 sen, 10 sen, 20 sen and 50 sen. You are able to bring in any amount of foreign currency but amounts over USD 2500 have to be declared upon entry. It is illegal to bring in or to take out more than RM1000 in local notes. Currently AUD 1 will buy 3.05 RM.

Changing Money, Credit Cards and ATMs - Banks can be found in most cities and sizable towns where it is possible to exchange cash and travellers cheques. They are generally opened Monday to Friday from 0930-1600 and 0900-1200 on Saturday. Many hotels also offer currency exchange and offer a faster service at similar rates. Most outlets take the major credit cards and ATM machines are readily available. Not all ATM machines take all cards; many will not take Visa or MasterCard, or will take one but not the other. Please ensure that you look for the credit card logos on the ATM signs and be aware that many machines do not have a 24 hour operation. It is advisable to inform your credit card company/bank that you intend to be in Borneo prior to your departure.

TIME DIFFERENCE

While on holidays, most people like to contact their family members or friends but it is often difficult to work out the time back home. Malaysia has a single time zone and it is 2 hours behind Australian Eastern Standard Time and 3 hours during daylight saving time in the Australian summer.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Phone: Public telephones are available but some are either coin or prepaid telephone card only. IDD calls from hotels can be expensive. Buying a prepaid IDD call card from one of the many retailers in the shopping malls can produce substantial savings. To call Wendy Wu Tours the number would be 00 61 2 9224 8888.

Mobile Phones/Internet: Mobile phones are very popular in Malaysia and you should have coverage as long as you have activated Global Roaming. Malaysia has wireless broadband.

Post: Open from 0800-1700 daily except Sunday and Public Holidays.

ELECTRICITY

Voltage: The electricity supply is 220/240 volts at 50 hertz. The electrical plugs and sockets used are similar to those used in Britain; this plug has three rectangular prongs that form a triangle. Australians will have to use adaptors which are readily available from Duty Free stores and major hotels.



LONG HOUSES

On your tour you will visit a long house in Batang Ai. A longhouse is basically a terraced street of separate dwellings covered by one roof, under the authority of a headman, or *tuai rumah*. Each family lives in its separate apartment, or *bilik*, and communal activities take place outside on the verandah, or *ruai*. Tour groups are usually greeted with a glass of *tuak* (rice wine) and a welcome dance. They are then shown around and treated to various cultural performances. You will usually be invited to attempt the *ngajat* dance. *Do not try to refuse as guests are expected to contribute to the entertainment just like the hosts*. Be prepared to reciprocate and recite or perform a dance, folk songs or poems, no matter how badly you think you are at performing.

ETIQUETTE & CUSTOMS

In most cases your Tour Leader will brief you on etiquette; however there are a couple of good points which are worth noting.

- Shoes must always be removed before visiting a home and places of worship such as mosques and temples.
- Drinks are generally offered to guests – it is polite to accept
- The right hand is always used when eating with ones hand or when giving and receiving objects.
- The country's large Muslim population does not drink alcohol
- The right forefinger is not to be used to point (use thumb of your right hand instead with fingers tucked under)
- Hugging and kissing in public places is frowned upon as is revealing clothes for women.

BORNEO OPERATOR

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BORNEO

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO



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