

Borneo



DIVE 
ADVENTURES
YOUR DIVING HOLIDAY SPECIALIST

Borneo/Sabah - General Information

Sabah- Borneo

The state of Sabah sits on the north-eastern tip of Malaysian Borneo. Considered to be one of the most biologically rich regions on earth, Sabah is virtually at the epicentre of where our planet's life is thought to have first developed. Encompassing a number of contrasting terrains and eco-systems, Sabah is a natural wonderland filled with exotic plant life and animal species; enchanted by amazing scenery both above and below the surface of its surrounding waters. The major Indo-Pacific Ocean currents of the South China Sea to the west and Sulu and Celebes Seas to the east cross Sabah's 1440km coastline, making it one of the most bio-diverse marine environments in the world. The diving around Sabah, in particular the island of **Sipidan**, was once described by the internationally renowned oceanographer and filmmaker Jacques Cousteau as "An untouched piece of art ... A jewel". The islands of **Mabul, Kapalai, Lankayan and Layang Layang** also appear on many a dive aficionados listings of the "world's best dive sites".

Borneo - where the jungle meets the sea



Photo: David Kirkland

As well as the magnificent underwater world, there are many parks and conservation areas to enjoy and explore. The majestic **Mount Kinabalu** at 4095.2 metres is the highest mountain in south-east Asia and a botanical paradise of bio-diversity and complexity. The mountain's pristine, tropical jungles house three entirely different eco-systems, containing a unique collection of plant and animal species. Among the numerous and unusual plants are; 26 species of Rhododendrons, countless orchids, the Pitcher plant and the world's largest flower, the **Rafflesia**. For the reasonably fit, a relatively straight forward climb to the mountain's summit will take 2-3 days.

View of Mount Kinabalu



Photo: Greg Towler

The Danum Valley Conservation Area takes in 438 square kilometres. The area is covered by lowland dipterocarp forest and is rich in indigenous plant life and an absolute haven for rare mammals. Sabah's 10 primate species, 275 species of birdlife, various reptiles and amphibians, 110 mammals, including the rare Sumatran rhino, clouded leopard, orang utan and proboscis monkey, reside here.



Rafflesia flower

Photo: David Kirkland



The floodplains of the **Kinabatangan River** with its shoreline of mangrove forests, is home to nature's funniest looking, leaf eating primate, the proboscis monkey. The Kinabatangan is also where the majority of Borneo's elephant population resides.

The **Gomantong Caves** house approximately 100,000 bats and nests of swifts. The area is rich in birdlife and butterfly groups.

The **Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre** at Sepilok is an adventure not to be missed. The centre is the largest of its kind and was set up to facilitate the return of injured or orphaned orang utans back into the wild. Visitors can observe these magnificent creatures up close in their natural habitat.



Proboscis Monkey

General information:

Climate: Tropical/equatorial with average temperatures between 25°C-32°C and an 85-95% humidity. The wet season is from November to February and water temperatures range from 22°C-25°C in Winter and 24°C-29°C in Summer.

Language: Bahasa Malaysian. English is also widely spoken.

Cultures and Religion. The population of approximately 2 million is a rich cultural mix of 32 ethnic groups. Islam, Christianity and Buddhism are the main religions, with many traditional festivals and ceremonies taking place throughout the year.

Currency: Malaysian Ringgits (MYR). Major credit cards are accepted at hotels, resorts and most shops.

Banking: Banks and ATMs are available in major city centres.

Water: Local tap water is considered safe for drinking. Hotels provide bottled water for their guests.

Electricity: 240 volt 50-cycle system.

Telecommunication: Quite good throughout the island.

Medical: Foreign patients are accepted at government hospitals in emergencies. Outpatients clinics are also available.

Car Hire: Arrangements can be made at the airport or hotels

Entry requirements: A valid passport with a minimum 6 months validity. Citizens of most countries do not require a visa for holiday visits.



Baby orang-utan

Kota Kinabalu

Kota Kinabalu is the capital and the gateway to Sabah's many natural treasures. Fondly known by the locals as KK, this modern, bustling city with its population of over 200,000, is situated by the sea, against the backdrop of the majestic Mount Kinabalu. Guided excursions and tours to Mount Kinabalu, the Kinabalu National Park and Poring Hot Springs are all available from here. Tunka Abdul Rahman National Marine Park, with its five unspoiled tropical islands is just off the coast and can be reached within half an hour by speedboat from the city pier. Golf, fishing, white water rafting, kayaking, jet skiing, sky diving, caving and jungle trekking are just some of the activities offered by local tour operators.

Great golf courses



Kota Kinabalu



Accommodation:

Promenade Hotel has 451 air-conditioned rooms and suites. Each offers a private bathroom, satellite TV, in-house movies, IDD phone and tea and coffee making facilities. The hotel offers 24 hour room service and has a restaurant and bar, coffee shop, fitness centre, swimming pool and sauna.

Hyatt Regency has 288 air conditioned rooms. All have a private bathroom, satellite TV, in house movies, radio, tea and coffee making facilities, in room safe and mini bar. The hotel offers 24 hour room service, a selection of restaurants, a bar featuring live entertainment, swimming pool, fitness centre, hairdressing salon and laundry service.

Layang Layang

Layang Layang also known as Swallows Reef, is a ring of 13 coral atolls situated in the midst of the South China Sea. This remote and isolated island has its own airstrip with regular flights operating from Kota Kinabalu. Located 300 kilometres north-west of Kota Kinabalu the man-made island was originally constructed for use by the Malaysian Navy. The small island has since been redeveloped into a resort that now attracts divers from all over the world. The pristine reefs, excellent visibility, diverse fish life and regular sightings of pelagics has given Layang Layang a reputation for being one of the worlds top ten diving destinations. The steep walls that drop down to almost 2000 metres surrounding the pristine reef, provide some spectacular dive sites. Most divers however do not venture beyond the 30 metre depth.



Aerial view Layang-Layang

Accommodation: **Layang-Layang Dive Resort** offers 76 rooms and 10 suites. Each room is air conditioned and has a private bathroom, T.V. fridge and a balcony. The resort has a restaurant and bar, swimming pool, souvenir shop, health spa, conference room and PADI dive centre.



Standard room

Poolside



Diving Layang-Layang:

The sea floor off the edge of the island drops down to almost 2000 metres and visibility is up to 30 metres. The corals are healthy and plentiful with

huge sea fans that filter the plankton from the passing currents. The reef has resident schools of barracuda, big eye trevally and frequenting green and hawksbill turtles. The 20 metre deep lagoon offers great macro life including; sea horses, pipefish and cuttlefish, while the outer reef walls attract schools of grey reef sharks, scalloped hammerhead sharks, leopard sharks, silver tip sharks and the occasional thresher shark. Manta rays, marbled eagle and pygmy devil rays are also regular visitors. On occasions divers can encounter whale sharks, orcas and melon head whales. Spinner and bottlenose dolphins often accompany the dive boats to locations and sometimes hang around inquisitively while you snorkel and dive.

Some Popular Dive Sites:

Dogs Tooth Lair: Dogtooth tuna cruise the drop-off where dense, healthy coral formations with overhangs and ledges can be explored. Schools of horse-eye jacks, fusiliers and surgeonfish swim and turtles glide along. A great photography site.

Wrasse Strip: Stunning colours, textures and patterns of hard and soft corals along with an abundance of marine life. Large coral bommies with caverns and overhangs are home to batfish, sweetlips and soldier fish. A busy and colourful site.



Diving Sipadan Island

Sipadan Island



Sipadan Island. The internationally renowned island of Sipadan is an oceanic island formed by living corals growing on the peak of an extinct, under sea volcano. Rising 600 meters from the seabed, this 40 acre unspoiled island lies just 5 degrees north of the equator in the Sulawesi Sea (Celebes Sea), 35 kilometres to the south of Semporna, on Sabah's mainland. Covered in a lush, dense forest and surrounded by a white, sandy shoreline, Sipadan sits at the heart of the Indo-Pacific basin - in the centre of the richest marine habitat in the world. More than 3000 species of fish and hundreds of species of coral have been classified in this rich eco-system. Unusually large numbers of green and hawksbill turtles gather there to mate and nest. Sipadan gained worldwide notoriety when the legendary French oceanographer, Jacques Yves Cousteau, produced the brilliant documentary "Ghosts of the Sea Turtle". Sipadan's underwater limestone cave with its labyrinth of tunnels and chambers contain many skeletal remains of turtles that became disorientated before drowning.

On the 1st of January 2005 Sipadan was officially declared a part of the Marine Protected Area. In order to protect the reef and its marine life for sustainable and conservation purposes, there is no longer any overnight accommodation available on Sipadan Island itself. The island is only accessible during daytime to a restricted numbers of divers and visitors. Accommodation is available at the nearby islands of Mabul and Kapalai.



Diving Sipadan: Walls surround 90% of the island with most sheer drops that extend out of sight into the blue depths. The twirling, tornado-like formations of the residential, schooling barracuda and big-eye trevally are on every divers wish list. It is not unusual for divers to see up to 20 turtles on each dive. Pelagics such as mantas, eagle rays, scalloped hammerhead sharks and whale sharks are also highly anticipated on each dive. As well as the large fish life to be seen at Sipadan there is a myriad of small and rare creatures, hiding out in between the reefs and on the walls.



Prolific marine life - Sipadan

Some of the more popular dive sites are:

Hanging Gardens: A spectacular wall dive covered in soft and hard corals dropping down to about 600 metres. Colourful corals hang from interesting cracks and crevices along the wall where hawksbill and green turtles live on the ledges.

Barracuda Point: This dive shows the true diversity of Sipadan where schools of chevron barracuda, jacks, batfish, bumphead parrotfish, turtles and sharks all abound.



Diver exploring "The Turtle Cavern"

The Turtle Cavern: is located on the Sipadan drop off, just a few metres from the beach. The underwater limestone cave extends 65 metres back into the island. A labyrinth of tunnels and chambers contain many skeletal remains of turtles that sadly, became disorientated at night and drowned while trying to find their way out. Exposed to air during the last ice age when sea levels were lower, Stalactites and Stalagmites formed and still exist in the far reaches of the cavern. Schools of fusiliers gather at the opening of the cavern and dart in to hide from marauding trevally.



Sipadan Water Village

Sipadan Water Village is built entirely over water, on the reef that surrounds Mabul Island. Reflecting local Bajau architectural design the village is supported on stilts positioned at certain points to minimise any damage to the reef. The 45 timber chalets and the resort's facilities are all connected to the sandy beaches of the mainland by walk ways.

Sipadan Water Village



Accommodation: There is four standards of chalet accommodation. Standard and Junior Chalets contain either a double bed, twin beds or up to 3 single beds and have a private bathroom with a shower.

Deluxe Chalets have a king size bed and bathroom with bathtub and shower. Grand Deluxe Chalets have 2 queen size beds and private bathroom with a Jacuzzi. The spacious chalets have sliding doors that open onto a

Standard chalet



private deck furnished with sun chairs and offering spectacular views out over the reef. All chalets have private bathroom facilities with hot and cold water, ceiling fans, a hairdryer, tea and coffee making facilities and mini bar. All meals are inclusive of your stay at the Village.

Resort Facilities include; return airport transfers, 24 hour personalised service, babysitting services, resort medical services, a fully serviced Dive Centre, foreign currency exchange, a resort mini-mart, travel and tour desk. The Village Restaurant's daily buffets feature a variety of Asian and Continental cuisines. An open-air bar and a lounge area provides breathtaking sea views with piped music and videos for guests' entertainment.

Borneo Divers Mabul Resort

Poolside - Borneo Divers Mabul Resort



Mabul Island is located off Semporna, just a 15 minute boat ride away from Sipadan Island. The small, coconut-palm covered tropical island is surrounded by sandy beaches with a small fishing village and two resorts. Perched on the corner of a 200 hectare reef, and right on the edge of the Continental Shelf, the sea bed surrounding the reef slopes out to a depth of 25-30metres. Mabul is considered to be one of the world's best "muck diving" sites and a macro haven for its diversity of tiny exotic marine life.

Bungalow accommodation



Inside bungalow

Accommodation: Borneo Divers Mabul Resort is situated along a stretch of white sandy beach front on Mabul Island. Accommodation is in comfortably furnished, fan cooled or air-conditioned bungalows. Each bungalow contains a double or twin beds, an ensuite bathroom and offers views of the beach. The resort has its own jetty, a swimming pool, restaurant and bar. Guests have a choice of dining pool side, on the jetty or have a beach BBQ.

Borneo Divers founded in 1984, was Borneo's first, professional dive operation. From their headquarters in Kota Kinabalu, Borneo Divers service the areas of Mabul, Sipadan, the east coast of Sabah, Labuan and Mamutik.



Sunset at Mabul

Diving Mabul:

Although Mabul is within close proximity to Sipadan, the sea scape and the diving is completely different. Mabul is renowned for being one of the best "muck-diving" sites in the world. There is an almost endless list of small, exotic marine life critters residing around this wonder island. All diving is in clear and calm shallow waters with an average depth of only 10 metres.



Photos: Kevin



The numerous types of cephalopods include; cuttlefish, blue ringed octopus, mimic octopus and bobtail squids. Crustaceans include boxer crabs, sea stars and harlequin shrimp. Giant painted and clown frogfish are plentiful. Moray eels and many types of snake eels, along with almost the entire scorpion fish family also inhabit the area. Different types of gobies to be found are the spike-fin, black sail-fin as well as the metallic shrimp goby. A huge assortment of nudibranchs and many other interesting critters can be easily spotted on this magical macro tour.

Popular Dive Sites:

Crocodile Avenue is a flat sandy area from 5-20 metres. Seahorses, crocodile fish, garden eels, pipefish, humpback, parrotfish, cuttlefish, nudibranchs and lots of crabs can be found here.

Lobster Wall is a collection of small caverns in the wall providing homes for hydroids, nudibranchs, anemones and shrimps. This is a great location for night diving.



Sipadan Island from Mabul

Kapalai Water Village



Kapalai Resort

Kapalai Island is actually a sand bar situated between the islands of Mabul and Sipadan. The sand bar sits on top of an extensive stretch of reef, known as Ligitan Reefs, bordering the deep and vast Celebes Sea.



Chalets - Kapalai Resort

Accommodation:
Kapalai Water Village Resort. With no immediate land in sight, this resort offers a truly unique style of accommodation. The resort consists of 45 timber chalets perched on sturdy stilts along the shallow sandbanks. Each fan-cooled chalet has a private bathroom, bar fridge and balcony. Walkways connect the individual chalets to the central dining area, a large open sundeck, a game's room, gift shop and dive centre. Accommodation is inclusive of all meals during your stay.



Inside chalet

Diving Kapalai:

Like the nearby island of Mabul, Kapalai also offers fantastic small critter diving. The Ligitan Reefs offer a safe haven for many of the juvenile species, far removed from the threat of dangerous reef predators found at Sipadan. The sandy bottom and sparse coral heads host an array of small and very colourful subjects. Rare species such as mandarin fish, dragonets, fire gobies, giant frogfish, wasp or leaf fish, ribbon eels, harlequin ghost pipefish are seen on a regular basis.



Photo: Kevin

Popular Dive Sites:

Mandarin Valley is a gentle slope down to 20 metres. This site was named after one of the small coloured dragonet found here. Other residents to be seen here are stonefish, frogfish, crocodile fish, pipefish as well as nudibranchs.

Spotted Ray Channel runs a depth from 5 to 20 metres, where you can cruise along a sandy channel beside the reef.

Commonly seen creatures on this dive include ribbon eels, stonefish, ghost pipefish and lavender coloured frogfish.



Photo: Kevin

Sandakan

Sandakan is located on the north-eastern coast of Sabah and is the state's second largest city. The bustling port-side town facing the Sulu Sea, was the former capital of British North Borneo and was almost totally destroyed during World War II. Today, Sandakan is well known as the gateway to Sabah's most prolific natural treasures and wildlife, such as the Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary, Gomantong Caves, Turtle Islands Park and the Lower Kinabatangan River.

Overlooking Sandakan



Other places of interest in the region include churches, temples and war memorials.

St Michaels and all Angels Church - a beautiful granite church built in 1897 is world heritage listed.

Puu Jih Shih Temple - a fiery red and gold temple overlooking the town centre.

Sam Sing Temple - the oldest building in Sandakan, which was built in 1887.

The Sandakan Memorial Park - houses an **Australian Memorial**, and is dedicated to some 2,700 Australian prisoners of war (POWs), along with many others who died at the War Camp or who perished on the infamous "Death Marches of Borneo". The Memorial has been erected at what was the site of the War Camp in Taman Rimba, close to the city of Sandakan.



Sandakan's nature and wildlife sights include:

The Gomantong Caves are home to about one million bats and swiftlets and where the bizarre edible birds' nests are harvested. The birdlife around the caves include kingfishers, crested serpent eagles, Asian fairy bluebirds and leaf birds. The area is also rich in butterfly life.

Libaran Turtle Island is a one-hour boat ride from Sandakan. The tropical mangrove vegetation houses numerous wildlife species such as monkeys, squirrels, bearded pigs, sea eagles, hornbills and green herons.

Selingan Turtle Island is a turtle breeding Marine Park. At night the huge, green turtles lumber ashore, dig a hole and lay about 100 eggs. The eggs are collected and transferred by rangers to a hatchery for an incubation period of 50-60 days. The new hatchlings then make their own way to the sea.

Kinabatangan River is lined by tropical mangroves and is home to the greatest concentration of wildlife in Borneo. Numerous species may be viewed on a boat trip, including orang utans, macques, red and silver leaf monkeys, pygmy elephants, hornbills and the unique proboscis monkey, found only in Borneo.

Exploring Kinabatangan River



Proboscis monkeys

Photo: Kevin

Sepilok

Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre is located just 40 minutes from Sandakan. Established in 1964, it is the largest and longest running rehabilitation centre in the world. More than 4,500 hectares of



Swinging time at Rehabilitation Centre

virgin jungle has been set aside as a forest reserve for these magnificent creatures. The majority of orang utans at the sanctuary have been orphaned or abandoned by their mothers at logging sites

or rescued from illegal hunting or captivity. Visitors to the centre are able to get up close to observe the 'man of the forest' in their natural environment.

A special viewing platform has been erected to watch and photograph these orang utans as they come in for their daily rations of milk and bananas. The touching of these charming creatures is discouraged, so as to prevent any spread of human diseases to them. Many orang utans have become so fond of the company of humans that they refuse to return to the wild.



Viewing platform

Sepilok Nature Resort offers spacious, air conditioned, timber chalets overlooking the lake or jungle. Each chalet has an ensuite bathroom with hot and cold water, a shower and bathtub. You might even wake to find an orang-utan or pigtail macaques on your veranda. Meals and beverages are served in a central building area of covered terraces. There is a comfortable lounge area and souvenir shop. For the naturalist, there are guided, lowland jungle treks available, where you can discover different species of birds under the canopies of various trees, or view the orchid gardens where over 150 orchid species have been identified.



Chalet - Sepilok Nature Resort

Lankayan



Lankayan

Diving Lankayan:

Lankayan is well renowned for its fantastic variety of macro marine life. However, the recent protection laws from local fishermen, has seen a gradual return of many larger creatures to the surrounding reefs. Among them are the leopard shark, marbled stingray, giant grouper, schools of bumphead parrot fish, yellowtail barracuda as well as scads. And since Sabah's Turtle Sanctuary, Pulau Seligan, is nearby which means the occasional green or hawksbill turtle may also be encountered.



Some Popular Dive Sites:

Lankayan Wreck is only eight minutes away by boat from the jetty and sits at a depth of up to 23 metres. The wreck plays host to a number of species including the harlequin ghost pipefish, painted frogfish, sea horses and small glassfish and even the giant grouper, marbled stingrays and seasonal whale sharks.

Jawfish Lair has recently been declared a National Marine Park. Colourful hard coral varieties such as the staghorn, bush, maze and lobed pore coral are fused together to create a home for critters like cuttlefish, frogfish and scorpion fish.

Jetty Wreck is located right in front of the resort's jetty and is a great location for night diving. The depth of it runs between 15-20 metres.

Lankayan Island is located in the Sulu Sea, a 95 minute boat ride from Sandakan, on the north-east coast of Sabah. This small, beautiful and remote island is surrounded by white, sandy beaches and swaying casuarinas pines and where the most stunning sunsets are witnessed. This island paradise is unpopulated and has only one dive resort. **The Lankayan Island Dive Resort**, built in 1997 offers simple, yet elegant beach front chalets. Made from all local timbers and materials, the chalets are spacious and have a private bathroom, verandah, and tea and coffee making facilities. The main central building where the meals and beverages are served has a large open-air terrace overlooking the ocean. The common area has a lounge and TV area as well as a small shop that stocks films, batteries and basic toiletry products.

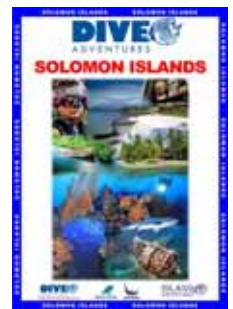


Chalet - Lankayan Island Dive Resort



Inside chalet

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