SARASA DESTINATION CATALOGUE

Adventure Nature Culture

Food

Festivals & Events Lifestyle

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SARAW

Located on the north-western shore of the Island of Borneo is Sarawak, the largest region of Malaysia. A beautiful land coloured in peace and tradition, Sarawak is a prime destination for travel nomads seeking untouched culture, exhilarating adventure and breath-taking nature.

Whether it is sharing in the lifestyle of one of the many indigenous communities' longhouses, exploring gigantic caves in the heart of the Bornean rainforest, or shooting down river rapids, visitors will leave Sarawak having enjoyed a host of memorable experiences.

As a part of Malaysia, Sarawak is a peaceful and safe place for travel, suited for large groups or single travellers alike. With thick jungles a few steps from luxurious resorts and modern amenities, it is the perfect location for a wide range of experiences. As these two worlds collide, the people of Sarawak meet in the middle, with a mixture of modern savvy and proudly-kept traditions, wild nature lining organised infrastructure and old-fashioned hospitality mixed with connectivity.

Revealing a side of Asia unlike anywhere else, Sarawak offers an alternative for those seeking humble authenticity far from the tourist-trap clichés, whether their visit to Sarawak is a complement to a trip to Peninsular Malaysia and neighbouring countries, or a journey of discovery all on its own.

KUCHING

SERIAN DIVISION

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Bau

Miri-Sibuti Reef A Marudi Sibuti 🗸 **o**7 BINTULU Mulu Beluru **MUKAH** SIBU Sebauh Sg. Asap Tatau Matu 👩 Pulau Bru Belaga Daro Selangau SARIKEI DIVISION Song **Bukit Mabong** Kabong Damai Kanowit Santubong Pusa Sebuyau BETONG Siburan KAPIT Lubok Antu

LIMBANG

MIRI DIVISION

Lawas

Nanga Medamit

Ba Kelalan

Bario

SRI AMAN

SAMARAHAN

Sematan

Lundu

SARAWAK AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

While tourism players shift the way they operate, it is also vital that travellers take on a more responsible mindset.

Sarawak's tourism players adapt eco-friendly practices in their tourism products, such as encouraging bicycle-rides in rural areas or enjoy bird-watching in Sarawak's lush rainforests. We promote community-based tourism, encourage consumption of local food, and highlight local handicrafts and arts.

Such community-based tourism can be found in areas such as Nanga Sumpa in Batang Ai where travellers can gain an insight into the lifestyle of the various tribes of Sarawak who have lived in the remote areas for generations. These efforts can generate economy for its residents, especially those from lowerincome groups. Sarawak's biggest and renowned orangutan rehabilitation centre, Semenggoh Wildlife Centre which is only 20km from Kuching City, is a sanctuary for the conservation of the orangutans in their natural habitat.

Iconic festivals such as the Rainforest World Music Festival further demonstrate Sarawak's dedication to Sustainable Development Goals and Responsible Tourism as it embraces sustainability causes and advocates sustainability through its greening initiatives.

Besides creating a more authentic travel experience, these practices also help locals create a better life for themselves.

All in all, responsible tourism must no longer be a niche part of tourism but the new norm for every part of our sector. That means an opportunity to build back better and create an industry that is more resilient.

Find out more on RT at https://sarawakresponsibletourism.com











WELCOME TO OUR CAPITAL

EXPLORE KUCHING BY BIKE & BOAT

A tour of Kuching is one of the 'must-dos' on any visitor's list. While the city is fascinating enough when experienced by bus and on foot, a bicycle tour brings you a little bit closer to the pace of life on the old city streets. Better still, combine a bicycle tour with a river cruise to explore every aspect of this historic riverine capital.

MAIN ATTRACTIONS IN KUCHING CITY

The Kuching Waterfront is perhaps the most popular meeting place in the city. It is an almost 900m long esplanade that is beautifully landscaped and dotted with wooden benches, food stalls, restaurants and entertainment facilities. It also offers excellent views of iconic buildings and places of interest like the Astana, Fort Margherita, the State Assembly Building, and the Malay kampungs which line the north bank of the river. At night, the new Darul Hana Musical Fountain lights up for a spectacular water, music and light show.

Running parallel to the Waterfront is the Main Bazaar, the oldest street in the city and the heart of old Kuching. Marvel at the superb examples of Chinese shophouse architecture and explore Kuching's highest concentration of antique, handicraft and souvenir shops. Don't forget to stop by the old-fashioned coffee shops with panelled walls and marble-topped tables in between your bargaining sessions!

With a similar mixture of small traders, coffee shops and food stalls is Jalan Carpenter. Parallel to the Main Bazaar, this area oozes charm and character and also has a good selection of pubs and bistros. Off Leboh China (Upper China St.), you will find perfectly preserved 19th century Chinese houses.









MUSEUMS, GALLERIES IN KUCHING

- For a glimpse and educational understanding of Sarawak's rich history, visit one of its many museums and galleries. Unless otherwise stated, museums in Kuching are open daily from 9 am to 4.45 pm on weekdays, 10 am to 4 pm on weekends, and closed on major public holidays. They are also generally free to enter unless otherwise indicated.
- The Borneo Cultures Museum is a must-visit once you step foot in Kuching. Opened in March 2022, it is currently the largest museum in Malaysia and the second largest in Southeast Asia. The Museum is a state-of-the-art repository boasting five levels of galleries and exhibition space, with more than 1,000 artifacts representing Sarawak's amazing and diverse culture.
- The Sarawak Museum has the best ethnographic collections in Southeast Asia.
- The Islamic Museum presents a clear picture of the rich historical heritage and special culture of the Muslim community in Sarawak and throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago. It also traces connections with the development of Islam in the rest of the world.
- Chinese History Museum traces the history of the Chinese Community in Sarawak from its early trade routes, and pioneers to its involvement in modern, multi-racial Sarawak.
- Brooke Gallery is a collection of memorabilia from the Brooke Era, as well as tracing the history of Sarawak from the 19th century onward.
- Textile Museum showcases Sarawak's fascinating traditional textiles, namely the Iban pua kumbu and Malay kain songket.
- Tanoti House is a collective of Sarawakian women weavers of the Sarawakian songket.
- Sarawak Craft Council's Handicraft Centre has interesting handicraft displays and a resource centre with a library and videos.
- Borneo House Museum is an interactive, hands-on collection of oversized displays depicting everyday life, history and nature in Sarawak.
- HAUS KCH is a community arts centre that hosts a wide variety of community-based cultural events, performances and exhibitions (www.facebook.com/hauskch)
- Galleria at Wesberly House displays some of Sarawak's best known and emerging artists.
- Cat Museum is the world's first museum devoted to all things feline.
- Timber Museum is for anyone that has an interest in forestry, traditional wood items, forest products and the development of the timber industry.





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GUNONG MULU NATIONAL PARK

Gunong Mulu National Park is Sarawak's largest national park (544 sq km), and also Malaysia's first Unesco World Heritage Site Area, awarded in 2000. It is famous for its limestone cave systems, including the world's largest natural chamber, the world's largest cave passage and the longest cave in Southeast Asia. The park's main attractions are the four show caves, the bat observatory, the rainforest canopy skywalk, adventure caving in some of Mulu's less accessible caves and the challenging Mulu Summit climb.

Most people are content to visit the stunning show caves and the bat observatory but enjoy the very best of Mulu, adventurous visitors should also tackle the spectacular Pinnacles and the historic Headhunter's Trail through remote rainforest scenery.





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GETTING THERE



Gunong Mulu is served by rural air service provider, Maswings. There are daily flights between Miri and Mulu and three weekly flights from Kuching and Kota Kinabalu.



- Get an early morning taxi from Miri to Kuala Baram
- 2. Take the lunchtime express boat between KB to Marudi
- 3. At Marudi, take a smaller boat to Long Terawan
- At Long Terawan hire a small boat to the park

It is also possible to hike into Mulu via the "Headhunter's Trail" from Limbang by trekking down through Camp 5 and then onto Mulu Park headquarters.









DIVING IN SARAWAK

Miri-Sibuti Coral Reefs National Park in Northeast Sarawak is fast emerging as a premier diving destination due to the abundance of pristine patch reefs and average visibility of 10 to 30 metres. Hard and soft corals cover the reefs, with abundant gorgonians, sea-whips, anemones, sponges and crinoids. Angelfish, butterflyfish, fusiliers, groupers, stingrays, triggerfish, parrot fish, and wrasses are among the numerous reef species that can be seen.

The diversity and accessibility of corals and other marine life on the reefs is amongst the best in the region, with a phenomenal population of over 100 nudibranch species. There are also two safe and relatively easy wreck dives. Whale sharks are also frequently seen in open water.

Around 40 dive sites are available, all within easy reach of the City of Miri, so diving is easy and convenient, with plenty of time to enjoy the city and its surroundings as well. With Miri's long history as a centre for commercial divers working oil exploration and production, divers can be sure of the highest professional standards of safety, training, guiding and equipment, as well as specialist dive medical facilities located directly in the city.

Kuching also offers a number of interesting dive possibilities. These include reef diving around the islands of the Talang Satang National Park and wreck diving on World War II historical wrecks in the deeper waters off Santubong.







CAVING IN SOUTHWEST SARAWAK

The rugged terrain of Southwest Sarawak conceals an underground wonderland of spectacular limestone caves which are far less visited than those of Niah and Mulu National Parks. As well as stunning rock formations, you can see ancient cave paintings and enjoy superb jungle scenery along the way.

Many caves are suitable for beginners and do not require a high level of fitness. Options range from one-day caving adventures to longer expeditions that combine caving, climbing, 4x4 treks, jungle walks and visits to remote Bidayuh villages. Beginner, intermediate and advanced level activities are offered and equipment and protective clothing are supplied.

Caving packages can also be tailor-made for educational and incentive groups. Special cave photography tours are also available.



BIRDING

BIRDING IN SARAWAK

Sarawak is a bird-watching paradise. Its 22 Important Bird Areas are home to at least 600 of the 680-plus birds recorded in Borneo, including over 50 endemic species.

The avian experiences range from halfday birding trips that can be added on to a family holiday, to serious ornithological expeditions in search of undiscovered species. View 10% of the world's entire population of Chinese Egrets just a 30 minute drive from Kuching, or trek deep into the rainforest highlands of Paya Maga to spot the elusive Black Oriole.

EASY BIRDING DESTINATIONS

These locations are accessible, have good accommodations and facilities nearby and are also suitable for casual birders.

Bako Buntal Bay - estuary & mangrove forest - over 40 species of shorebird, including the Chinese Egret, Chinese Crested Tern and Christmas Island Frigatebird. *30 mins from Kuching.*

Bako National Park - 7 distinct rainforest ecosystems in one small area - more than 150 forest species including the Pin-necked Pigeon, Grey-rumped Treeswift, Common Flameback, Asian Fairy-Bluebird, Blackwinged Flycatcher-Shrike and Mangrove Blue-Flycatcher. 1 hour from Kuching.

Borneo Highlands - highland forest - over 200 species, including the Pygmy White-Eye, Chestnut-crested Yuhina, Blyth's Hawk-Eagle and various Hornbills. 11/2 hours from Kuching.

Gunong Mulu National Park - lowland and highland forest - over 250 species, including



the red-bearded Bee-Eater, Garnet Pitta, Rufous Bellied Eagle, all 8 Hornbills found in Borneo and many endemics. Canopy Walkway and 30m Observation Tower. 45 minutes flight from Miri.

Kubah National Park - lowland forest around 100 species, including the Bornean Blue-Flycatcher, Rufous-collared Kingfisher, Rusty-breasted Cuckoo, Chestnut-naped Forktail and the stunning Blue-banded Pitta. 45 minutes from Kuching.

Lambir Hills National Park - lowland forest - around 240 species, including the Olive-backed Woodpecker, Orange-bellied Flowerpecker, Red-eyed Bulbul, Great Argus Pheasant and the delightful Fluffybacked Tit-Babbler. 40 minutes from Miri.

Similajau National Park - lowland forest, cliffs & beach - over 180 species, including Bornean Wren Babbler, Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker, Wallace's Hawk Eagle, Short-toed Coucal, Buffy Fish-Owl, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Diard's and Scarlet-rumped Trogons. 40 minutes from Bintulu.







CHALLENGING BIRDING DESTINATIONS

These destinations are not so easy to access, offer fewer visitor facilities and require serious trekking.

Kelabit Highlands - highland and montane forest - over 300 species, many endemic, including the Black-sided Flowerpecker, Blue-banded Pitta, Bornean Stubtail, Bornean Whistler, Chestnut-crested Yuhina, Crimson-Headed Partridge, Dulit Frogmouth and Whitehead's Broadbill. 45 minutes flight from Miri.

Paya Maga Highlands - highland & montane forest - only recently discovered - no census as yet but many fascinating endemics including Black Oriole, Mountain Serpent Eagle, Bornean Frogmouth, Whitehead's Spiderhunter, Black-throated Wren Babbler, Bornean Bulbul, Bornean Leafbird, Bornean Barbet, Mountain Barbet, Pygmy Ibon, Bornean Flowerpecker, Bornean Treepie, and Chestnut-hooded Laughingthrush. 6 hours from Lawas, including 3-4 hour trek.





IN SEARCH OF WILD ORANGUTANS

The area in and around Batang Ai National Park in Sarawak has one of the highest population densities of wild orangutans in the world. It is just upriver from Batang Ai Hydro Lake, and offers good possibilities of seeing wild orangutans. Awardwinning local operator Borneo Adventure work together with Iban communities in the Ulu Ai to offer a variety of treks around the fringes of the park, where the chances of seeing wild orangutans are highest (although no guarantees are offered) and evidence of their presence, such as old and fresh nests, are almost always encountered. Trekkers must be reasonably fit, and are required to play their part in conservation by recording sightings and nests on portable GPS devices.





KAYAKING AND RAFTING AT SEMADANG, PADAWAN

Explore the secrets of Sarawak's Semadang, a tourist location well known for its kayaking and bamboo rafting adventures. Semadang may not be the first location that comes to mind when we think of tourist stops in Sarawak, but this scenic site certainly has many exciting adventures and experiences to offer. Located approximately an hour and a half from Kuching City, Semadang sits at the fringe of Jalan Puncak Borneo, tucked away in the Padawan district. Adrenaline junkies will have a field day here as Semadang takes pride in being the epicentre of some exciting water activities such as kayaking and rafting.

KAYAKING

One of the most popular activities here is kayaking. Visitors will start their kayaking adventure from the take-off point which is 100 meters away from the junction of Sungai Abang. The river is calm and paddling through the water is a breeze during the dry season, but it is not advisable to partake in any aquatic activities during the monsoon season due to the dangerous nature of the swift currents. What sets this place apart from other ecotourism destinations is its crystal clear and shallow rivers. This ensures that the kayaking activity is safe for both newbies and experienced adventurers. The tranquil, green jungle also serves as a breathtaking backdrop as you encounter the different species of birds, butterflies, and monkeys that call Semadang home.

BAMBOO RAFTING

For a truly authentic Sarawakian experience, do give bamboo rafting a shot. These flat bamboo rafts can be quite challenging to manoeuvre but your guide will be on hand to assist you. This unique adventure will provide you with treasured memories.







BAKO NATIONAL PARK

Though Bako National Park is one of Sarawak's smallest parks, it is one of the most interesting and diverse, thanks to 7 distinct plant ecosystems in an area smaller than Manhattan Island. Bako is most famous for its iconic primate species, the bizarre Proboscis Monkey, found only in Borneo, and the shy yet charming Silvery Langur. Yet with its abundant wildlife, variety of plants, rock formations and secluded beaches, Bako has much more to offer the visitor.

The park has 17 well-maintained trails, allowing visitors to experience almost all the different types of vegetation found in Borneo. Commonly seen wildlife species include the aforementioned Proboscis Monkey and Silvery Langur, as well as Bornean Bearded Pigs, Long-tailed Macaques, Colugos or Flying Lemurs, White-bellied Sea Eagles and a whole host more. In fact, wildlife encounters are almost guaranteed. Best of all, Bako is less than an hour from Kuching, including an enjoyable longboat ride across the bay.









GETTING THERE



A bus ride from Kuching to Bako Market takes about 45-60 minutes. A minivan can be chartered for around RM30, and seats 5-7 people. They can reach Bako Terminal in half the time of the public bus, stationed near the Open Air Market, depart when there are enough passengers.

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When you arrive at the Bako Jetty Terminal you have to register, pay your entrance and boat ticket. The 20-minutes boat ride will lead you to the National Park.

DAMAI BEACH & THE SANTUBONG PENINSULA

Damai Beach is Sarawak's most popular beach resort area and the perfect base for discovering Southwest Sarawak. Located on the Santubong Peninsula, where Mount Santubong rises majestically from the sea, Damai offers attractions for guests of all ages; sleepy fishing villages, unspoilt jungle, superb seafood restaurants, an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course, a world-famous "living museum", and a choice of beach resort hotels, ecolodges and guests houses.

Possible tours and excursions include jungle treks to the summit of Mount Santubong, Irrawaddy dolphin watching tours, river cruises and wildlife watching tours, and bird watching at Buntal - one of Malaysia's most important sites for migratory birds. Visible offshore are two small islands - Pulau Satang Besar and Pulau Satang Kecil - which are part of Talang-Satang National Park, an important sea turtle conservation zone.

Sarawak also offers a number of more rustic beach destinations for adventurous travellers. Sampadi, Lundu and Sematan, along the coast west of Kuching, have excellent white sand beaches with accommodations in small chalet resorts and villages homestays. Both Bintulu and Miri in Northern Sarawak offer fine city beaches, and there is a good selection of beaches running south from Miri with basic lodge or homestay accommodation available. Some of the most secluded beaches are located in Sarawak's National Parks, especially Bako, Tanjung Datu and Similajau.







KUCHING WETLANDS NATIONAL PARK

Located just 15 km from Kuching and 5 km from Damai Beach, Kuching Wetlands National Park is Sarawak's only RAMSAR Site, a wetland of international importance. The area has long attracted nature enthusiasts with its fascinating ecosystem and excellent wildlife viewing opportunities amidst the mangrove environment.

It is also home to one of Sarawak's three populations of rare and elusive Irrawaddy Dolphins, and offers the perfect opportunity to view these shy creatures in their natural habitat.

The park is also an important spawning and nursery ground for fish and prawn species and contains a wide diversity of wildlife; Proboscis Monkeys, Longtailed Macaques, Silvery Langurs, Monitor Lizards, Estuarine Crocodiles, Kingfishers, White-bellied Sea Eagles and many shore birds, including the rare Lesser Adjutant Stork.







SEA TURTLE CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES

Sarawak is home to all five sea turtle species - the Green Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle, Olive Ridley Turtle, Leatherback Turtle and Loggerhead Turtle. All of these species are critically endangered worldwide and therefore the Sarawak Government has set up a network of coastal and marine national parks dedicated to their conservation.

The best coastal sites to view nesting turtles are Similajau National Park near Bintulu and Tanjung Datu National Park on the southwestern tip of Sarawak. However, the largest number of turtle landings, mostly of green turtles, take place on the islands of Talang-Satang National Park, just a short boat journey from Kuching.

The largest of these islands, Pulau Satang Besar, is open to visitors and local tour operators offer day and overnight trips, including a visit to the turtle hatchery. Satang Besar offers excellent snorkelling - free swimming sea turtles are often seen around the reefs just offshore from the island's superb beach.

Talang-Talang Besar, is usually closed to visitors. However, Sarawak Forestry, custodian of Sarawak national parks and wildlife, offers a superb opportunity for hands-on involvement in turtle conservation through its Sea Turtle Adoption Programme, where visitors spend 4 days working with professional conservationists, learning about turtles and taking part in conservation activities including beach patrols to locate turtle landings; monitoring of nesting; tagging and measuring turtles; transferring eggs to the hatchery; releasing hatchlings and data recording.

Contact .

Sarawak Forestry (https://sarawakforestry.com/) for Sea Turtle Adoption Programme. Sarawak Forestry will refer enquirers to approved tour operators for ground handling & logistics.











ORANGUTAN CONSERVATION PROGRAMMES

Sarawak has two important centres for orangutan conservation which are open to visitors and located within easy reach of Kuching.

Semenggoh Wildlife Centre: For over 30 years, Semenggoh's staff trained young orangutans, who had been orphaned or rescued from captivity, how to survive in the wild. The success of this programme has left the surrounding area with a thriving population of healthy orangutans, who are now breeding in the wild, so the rehabilitation programme has been transferred to Matang Wildlife Centre (see below). Semenggoh is now used as an orangutan study centre, but is still a lifelong home for its successful graduates, semi-wild orangutans and their offspring. They spend most of their time roaming the forest but frequently come back to the Centre for a free meal and can be viewed at feeding times.

Matang Wildlife Centre: Part of Kubah National Park, now runs the orangutan training programme, where orphaned orangutans are taught how to survive in the wild. The best time to see the orangutans is at feeding times. The centre also includes spacious enclosures housing sambar deer, crocodiles, sun bears, civets and bear cats, and three large aviaries featuring hornbills, eagles, kites, storks and a host of other birds native to Sarawak. Amenities include an information centre and comfortable accommodation.





SPECIALIST NATURE TOURS

Sarawak's amazing biodiversity means that nature and wildlife are high on every visitor's agenda. To protect this valuable resource, Sarawak has more totally protected areas (national parks, nature reserves and wildlife sanctuaries) than the rest of Malaysia combined, in terms of both number of million (over 30) and total land area (around one million hectares). Fortunately, a number of operators offer tailor-made specialist tours for dedicated nature lovers of all descriptions. The following are just a few examples.

Frogs and Amphibians: Sarawak boasts over 100 amphibian species, including Microhyla malang, the pea-sized frog, found only in Kubah National Park, where it rears its microscopic young in the bowl of a dwarf pitcher plant. Other fascinating amphibians include the Giant River Toad, which grows up to 30cm in length, the Mulu Flying Frog and the unique Lungless Frog. Cat City Holidays and CPH Travel Agencies offer 1-3 day frogging tours to Kubah National Park and Borneo Highlands as well as longer tailor-made expeditions. There's even a Borneo Frog Race held annually in April at Kubah National Park.

Pitcher Plants: Sarawak has probably the world's greatest variety of carnivorous nepenthes (pitcher plants) of any region on earth. Borneo Touch Ecotour offers a 2D/1N pitcher plant trek from northerly Limbang that reveals at least 13 of Sarawak's 25 or more nepenthes species. They can also arrange longer tours covering more species and extending into the remote Kelabit Highlands, as can Borneo Adventure.

Nature & Wildlife Photography: Professional and amateur nature photographers are spoilt for choice in Sarawak, with an estimated 12,000 animal and 15,000 plant species just waiting to be snapped. Amansar Travel (https://amansar.com/) and Borneo Adventure (https://borneoadventure.com/) offer custom nature photography tours guided by some of the region's leading nature photographers.

Orchids: Sarawak is home to over 1,000 orchid species, and orchid-hunting in Sarawak was made famous by author Eric Hansen in two remarkable books; Stranger in the Forest and Orchid Fever. Hansen has worked closely with Borneo Adventure in the past, and they can offer custom tours and expeditions to view rare orchid species in their natural habitat, as well as visits to local orchid growers.

Insect & Other Invertebrates: This is where the numbers start to get truly astronomical. Sarawak boasts around 4,000 species of invertebrates, including the spectacular Rajah Brooke's Birdwing insects. Amateur and professional entomologists should contact Borneo Adventure for further details.

Rafflesias: Four species of the world's largest flower are found in Sarawak. The easiest place to view them is Gunung Gading National Park near Lundu in Southwest Sarawak. Call the park hotline (Tel: +60 82735144) to check if flowers are about to bloom. Most local tour operators can arrange day trips and overnight visits.

Irrawaddy Dolphin Watching: See Kuching Wetlands National Park.







HOMESTAYS IN SARAWAK

Sarawak, Land of the Hornbills, is home to 34 ethnic groups. With 45 different dialects, each group has their own unique stories, beliefs, traditions and cultures. To learn and experience the different cultures, lifestyles and unique varieties of foods and festivals, one would have to live or stay with the local people.

Through the homestays program, tourist stay with host families of homestay operators that have been registered with Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC), live the daily lifestyle of the community and participate in community-based tourism activities such as folk sports, cultural events, festivals, learning dance, cooking, forest walks and etc.

The main concept is to emphasize more on experiential tourism and community-based tourism. To date, Sarawak has currently 48 registered homestay clusters of the various ethnic groups operating homestays in the state.

Explore the cozy homestays and be charmed and amazed by their cultures!







THE IBAN HEARTLAND

The Iban (formerly known as Sea Dayaks) are Sarawak's largest ethnic group. Former headhunters, they were once widely feared but their traditional hospitality is legendary, and visitors are guaranteed a good time. An Iban longhouse is a long row 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 covered verandah, or ruai.

Longhouses are busy, modern farming communities, so traditional costumes are usually only worn for special festivals like Gawai Dayak (the Iban harvest festivals, see page 43) and weddings. To see traditional rituals, customs and dances, it is best to travel with an organised tour group.

Most Iban longhouse that accept guests are on the Lemanak and Batang Ai river systems. Visits usually involve at least one overnight stop and a longboat trip on the river, but some longhouse safaris can last for a week or more. Guests can stay in the longhouse overnight, or if they prefer some privacy, some longhouses have hostels or lodges nearby.



THE MELANAU HEARTLAND

The Melanau, who make up 6% of Sarawak's population, inhabit the coastal region of Central Sarawak and are mainly fisherman and sago growers. They formerly lived in massive "tall houses" as protection against pirates, but nowadays build individual wooden houses in charming water villages.

The majority of Melanau are Muslim, with a significant number of Christians, and a small minority who practise the traditional religion, Liko ("people of the river"). An interesting Liko practice is the use of wooden effigies, called berbayah and berayun, for healing rituals. The Melanau are noted for religious tolerance, with Muslims, Christians and like adherents living happily side-by-side.

The Melanau Heartland, centred on the town of Mukah, is off the beaten tourist track. Yet it offers enchanting river journeys, bustling fishing harbours, and ancient water villages where visitors can see traditional boat builders at work and trains of sago logs being towed along the narrow rivers. Add in colourful Chinese temples, elegant mosques and churches, superb seafood and vibrant and colourful culture and you have one of Sarawak's most fascinating destinations.

TRADITIONAL RITUALS AND RITES OF PASSAGE

The tribal communities of Sarawak are renowned for welcoming guests to participate in their own cultures and rituals. The rites of passage that mark different life stages are varied and fascinating, and taking part in them is frequently a life-affirming experience.

There are many different rituals and rites of passage that can be experienced in Sarawak. A child can undergo a naming ceremony in Iban or Orang Ulu style, and gain adoptive foster parents for life. A young man can celebrate his coming-of-age with a ceremonial tattoo. Health and wealth can be sought from the gods through a shamanistic ritual, and well-heeled man can celebrate a prosperous retirement by hosting a hornbill feast. The possibilities are almost endless for people seeking to add meaning and substance to the various stages of their lives.







EXOTIC TRADITIONAL WEDDINGS

Weddings in exotic settings are becoming increasingly popular, and Sarawak offers some wonderful wedding venues. The Sarawak Cultural Village (see page 33) frequently hosts wedding ceremonies in traditional Iban, Bidayuh, Malay or Orang Ulu style, and Old Kuching is the perfect setting for a White Rajah era wedding complete with Victorian costumes straight out of the Raj.

However, the most exotic and unforgettable choice is an authentic tribal wedding in a real upriver longhouse, with the host community joining in. As you tie the knot, the whole community will ask the spirits for good fortune and health in your future life together. Once married according to adat (customary law), you have the whole of Sarawak to choose from for a blissful honeymoon.











ANNAH RAIS

The Bidayuh make up about 8% of Sarawak's population and were formerly known as Land Dayaks. They are gracious hosts and Annah Rais village is the perfect place to discover Bidayuh culture and learn about their fascinating way of life.

Annah Rais Longhouse Homestay is located 60km from Kuching City. Visitors can take in the breath-taking beauty of the rainforest and the Padawan Mountain range during the easy one-hour drive from the city. There are more than 80 doors, or families, that live in the longhouse, which stands 10 feet above the ground and is built from Ironwood (belian) and mature bamboo (apek). Some parts of the longhouse are still part of the original structure, so visitors can see how longhouses were constructed without nails in the past. There are approximately 1,500 people living in the longhouse, and they are all related to each other.







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CULTURE

REMEMBRANCE & MEMORIAL TOURS

Although not a major area of conflict during WWII, Sarawak has some notable war graves and memorials of great interest to surviving families and descendants of fallen, as well as anyone with an interest in the Japanese Occupation. A number of older graves and memorials, dating from the Brooke Era to as far back as the Brunei Empire, appeal to both amateur and professional historians and archeologists.







THE KELABIT HIGHLANDS

The Kelabit Highlands are often referred to as Sarawak's Shangri-La. This area of remote mountain valleys, located at an altitude of around 1,000 to 1,200 metres, enjoys a climate of eternal spring and showcases the vibrant cultures (and warm hospitality) of the Kelabit and Lun Bawang tribes.

Bario – With an airport and a small network of paved roads, this is the gateway to the Kelabit highlands. Its main attraction however is the old longhouse, Bario Asal, whose ancient timbers are darkened by the constant smoke of generations of cooking fires.

Ba'kelalan – The most important of the Lun Bawang settlements in the northern highlands. The village is famous for its apples and organic vegetables, and the local musicians and their 'bamboo bands'. The village is connected to Lawas and Miri by air, and also via an old logging road.

The best way to discover this enchanting place is by trekking from longhouse to longhouse through dense rainforest and past sparkling green padi fields, bordered by the mountains of the Maligan Range. These treks last from a few hours to a few weeks in duration, and vary from a gentle stroll to a challenging expedition, trekking through dense jungle, crossing streams on bamboo bridges, and viewing ancient Kelabit megaliths and rock carvings along the way.

GAME





CULTURE SARAWAK CULTURAL VILLAGE

One of Malaysia's best-known and most iconic cultural attractions, Sarawak Cultural Village is a unique awardwinning living museum offering an exciting and informative introduction to local cultures and lifestyles. Nine authentic replica buildings represent every major ethnic group in Sarawak; Bidayuh, Iban and Orang Ulu longhouses, a Penan jungle settlement, a Melanau tall-house, a Malay town house, a Chinese farmhouse and pagoda. Each is staffed with members of their respective ethnic groups, in traditional costume, carrying out traditional activities. Every house has a "storyteller" who is an expert in describing and interpreting traditional cultures and lifestyles.

After touring the village, visitors can enjoy a multi-cultural dance performance in the village's own theatre, or even take dance, music and craft lessons. There is also a good ethnic restaurant and handicrafts shop on-site. Other attractions and amenities include: a Sculpture Garden; the Rainforest Music House, with traditional instruments and interactive music workshops; and the Dewan Lagenda (Hall of Legends), a creative space complete with dance studio, library, information centre, costume gallery, lecture hall and creativity room.

The Cultural Village can host theme dinners and parties, corporate events, seminars and product launches, and even traditional weddings, in authentic Iban, Bidayuh, Malay or Orang Ulu style. For guests wishing to stay longer, there is also a popular village-stay programme with accommodation in the traditional houses.












FOOD

DINING IN SARAWAK

In Sarawak, food is something we take very seriously indeed. In fact eating out is something of a local passion; at the last count there were more than a thousand food outlets in Kuching alone. As well as typical Malaysian and Western fare, there is a whole kaleidoscope of local delicacies waiting to be enjoyed, thanks to our rich multicultural heritage.

Local Specialities

We take great pride in our signature dishes: Sarawak Laksa, a fragrant and spicy soup of vermicelli noodles, prawns and beansprouts; kolo mee, a wonderful oily mix of noodles with minced pork or chicken; midin and paku, two varieties of crispy fried jungle ferns; manok pansoh, chicken steamed in bamboo longhouse style; umai, the spicy Melanau raw fish salad; and even sago worms (raw or stir fried)! Previously these dishes were only available in local homes, but in recent years a variety of fine dining restaurants have sprung up focusing in the villages and longhouses to savour these dishes in their natural settings.

Malaysian Food

We also enjoy classic Malaysian dishes, whether Malay, Chinese or Indian, such as fish head curry, banana leaf rice, nasi lemak and char kway teow, as well as superb fish and seafood, fresh from the South China Sea. Even the smallest towns in Sarawak can offer all of these culinary delights, cooked to perfection.

Western & International

In Sarawak's major towns and cities, diners can choose from 5-star hotel outlets and hundreds of speciality restaurants, offering fine cuisine from dozens of countries. What is not so international, however, is the price - Sarawak offers some of the best-value fine dining in Southeast Asia. If you get a little homesick for your favourite western fast-food,



international franchise outlets can be found all over the state.

Hawker Stalls

Some of the best places to eat local food are coffee shop and food centre hawker stalls, each with their own signature dishes. Prices are rock bottom affordable and ingredients are always freshly prepared. For many breakfast and lunchtime venues, it is best to come early before they sell out.

Festive Dining

Religious and ethnic festivals are a great way to discover Sarawak cuisine, thanks to our wonderful "open house" tradition. Visit an Iban longhouse during Gawai Dayak to enjoy delicious jungle produce accompanied by tuak (rice wine), drop by at Malay kampung during Hari Raya for rendang (spicy dry curry) and Sarawak kek lapis (Sarawak layer cakes), or experience rich and sweetly flavoured mooncakes during the Chinese midautumn festival.



















Sarawakians are different to other Malaysians. We don't greet people with "How are you?" - we always ask "Have you eaten?" which is a measure of the importance of good food in our society. With its widely diverse ethnic cuisines and culinary influences from all over Europe and Asia, Sarawak is a gourmet's paradise.

It is very easy to discover Sarawak's culinary delights for yourself, whether you are visiting with a tour group or travelling independently. However, the best way to gain an insight into Sarawak's amazing food culture is to spend a few days with a local chef on a gourmet cook's tour, sampling the best that Borneo has to offer and learning how to cook these amazing dishes by yourself.

Local tour operators can create almost any kind of gastronomic tour, focusing on Sarawak's spectacular seafood, the Foochow culinary tradition of Sibu, or even DIY jungle survival cooking. Probably the easiest introduction to local cuisine is a cook's tour of Kuching and its surroundings, allowing you to experience incredible variety in just a few days.









BORNEO CULTURAL FESTIVAL

The Borneo Cultural Festival is held every July or August in Sibu Town Square, the largest urban outdoor venue in Malaysia, and is a week-long celebration of food, music and dance - and even a funfair - celebrating the diverse cultures of Borneo.

The highlight of the festival is three nights of free cultural performances by local and international ethnic artists. There are also exhibitions of art, handicraft, photography and calligraphy, making this a great way to learn about Sarawak's traditional arts and cultures. The attendant Food Festival is a gourmet's delight.

As most activities take place in the evening, this is the perfect opportunity to spend the daytime exploring old Sibu town as well as the rivers and rainforests of Central Sarawak.







FESTIVALS & EVENTS RAINFOREST WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF), first held in 1997, has grown into one of the best music festival in Asia, with an average attendance of over 20,000. A 3-day event celebrating the diversity of world music, it is held annually at the Sarawak Cultural Village, Kuching. It features unique daytime music workshops, cultural displays, a craft bazaar, food stalls, and headlining performances.

Organised entirely by the Sarawak Tourism Board and local and international volunteers, the festival features a wide range of performances, from traditional music to world fusion and contemporary world music. Performers include prominent artists from Sarawak, other areas of Malaysia, and from all around the world.

Over 350 local and international acts have performed here, including Black Umfolosi from Zimbabwe, Peatbog Faeries from Scotland, Kanda Bongo Man from DR Congo, To Vaka from New Zealand, Silverio Pessoa from Brazil, Tarika from Madagascar, Joey Ayala from the Philippines, and Huun Huur Tu from Tuva, Russia, to mention just a few. The festival won the PATA Gold Award in 2006, The Aseanta Excellence Award in 2009, and has been cited as one of the World's Top 25 International Festivals by Songlines world music magazine for six years in a row (2010-2015).







FESTIVALS & EVENTS BORNEO JAZZ

Borneo Jazz festival is organised by the Sarawak Tourism Board and held in Miri, Sarawak's second-largest city. Since its inception in 2005, Borneo Jazz has attracted a strong international line up of musicians, with an emphasis on mainstream jazz and also featuring blues, funk and fusion music. World-class artists performing at the festival have included Maria Muldaur, John Hammond, Jump4Joy, Hazmat Modine, Schalk Joubert and the New Cool Collective. The festival is an annual event held in Miri.





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MIRI COUNTRY MUSIC FEST



MIRI

Introduced in 2013, the Miri Country Music Fest is the only country music festival in the region and boasts continuous success, with attendees growing yearly.

The two-day event lasts all day from noon till late in the night, with music workshops, line dance sessions, a bazaar and an evening music concert. The day's program begins in the afternoon, opening with the bazaar selling country and cultural memorabilia as well as a variety of food. The music workshops then take place, followed by the equally interactive line dancing session. In the evening, the music concert takes center stage with country musicians from around the globe.



GAWAI DAYAK FESTIVAL

Gawai Dayak is a festival celebrated on the 1st and 2nd of June every year by the Dayak communities of Sarawak. More than just a demonstration of indigenous culture for tourists, Gawai Dayak is celebrated with genuine joy and enthusiasm in every village and longhouse, with urban Dayaks returning home for the festivities. Weddings take place, singing and toasts fill the air, and families are reunited with one another. In the great Malaysian open house tradition, visitors are most welcome.

The festival begins on the evening of May 31st with traditional music and ritual to keep the spirit of greed from ruining the festivities. The festival head or Tua Gawai then sacrifices a chicken to show thanks for a good harvest, followed by dinner and an informal party with much dancing, singing, and drinking, The party continues in the same vein for the next two days, or even longer if the rice wine stocks hold out. If you are an enthusiastic partygoer, this is the very best time to visit Sarawak.



SARAWAK REGATTA

The Sarawak Regatta is one of the oldest sporting events in Malaysia, inaugurated by Rajah Sir Charles Brooke in 1872 as a diversion from inter-tribal conflicts. It takes place on the Sarawak River in Kuching, usually in late August or September, and is the social and sporting highlight of the year.

In the early days, longboats and war canoes raced one another, but nowadays there are categories for dragon boats, modern rowing craft and even power boats, water skiers and jet skis. The regatta is very popular and well-attended; spectators should come early to get a good vantage point on the Kuching Waterfront or the Malay kampungs on the north bank of the river.

There is a 'Tourist Race' for visitors who are not afraid to get their feet wet, where guests can try their hand at longboat paddling, assisted by a few 'ringers' from the local boating fraternity. Serious rowing or watersports clubs and associations are welcome to enter any of the categories as fullyfledged competitors.









TIDAL BORE FESTIVAL

Sri Aman, at the mouth of the Batang Lupar, is famous for its daily Benak (tidal bore), which nearly deprived world literature of one of its finest authors -W. Somerset Maugham who almost drowned during the benak, and describes this near-death experience in his short story "The Yellow Streak". During spring tides the bore surges at up to 18 km/h, producing a wave crest 2-3 metres high, which has attracted some of the world's leading bore-riders.

The town celebrates an annual Tidal Bore Festival (Pesta Benak) complete with bore-riding, surfboard races, longboat races, watersports, traditional sports, nightly live entertainment and even hot air balloon rides. Sri Aman is about 3 hours drive from both Kuching and Sibu. Accommodation is available in budget hotels and local longhouse homestays.

SHOPPING IN SARAWAK

Sarawak is a shopper's paradise with a huge variety of unusual and interesting handicrafts, antiques and artefacts. Modern shoppers are equally well served with good quality malls, department stores, supermarkets and vibrant traditional markets.

Souvenirs and Antiques

The picturesque waterfront street of Main Bazaar houses most of Kuching's antiques and handicrafts shops - dark, cluttered spaces that look like Dickens' The Old Curiosity Shop meets Conrad's Heart of Darkness. This is antique shopping at its finest, with superb bargains to be had. Outside Kuching, Jalan Bendahara and Jalan Yu Seng in Miri and Jalan Blacksmith in Sibu are good places to look, as well as the towns of Kapit and Marudi.

Confectionery Gifts

Popular confectionery gifts or food souvenirs include birds' nests, which are very affordable here, Sarawak pepper, said to be the world's finest, and the much loved kek lapis (Sarawak layer cakes).

Books Etc.

Books on Borneo history, arts, crafts and society are available in bookstores, along with traditional music.

Shopping Malls

Sarawak's upmarket malls offer genuine international designer wear alongside tech and IT products such as smartphones, personal computers and more.

Local Markets

Every town and village in Sarawak has a market, where all manner of goods are offered for sale in a wonderfully noisy and bustling atmosphere. Those that should not be missed are the Kubah Ria Market in Kuching, the Central and Night Markets in Sibu, the Town Market in Serian and the Pasar Tani (farmers' market) and Pasar Tamu Muhibbah in Miri.

Sarawak Handicraft

Sarawak is truly committed to preserving and promoting its rich heritage of crafts. Not only do these crafts represent the unique identity of the Sarawakian people, but they also offer a crucial source of livelihood for local craftsmen while simultaneously boosting the region's cultural tourism.

To promote and ensure the preservation of this cultural heritage, organisations such as the Centre for Technology Excellence Sarawak (CENTEXS), as well as establishments like the Sarawak Craft Council (SCC), the Songket & Keringkam Gallery, and the Heritage Central Gallery have been set up. SCC is a government platform established to help commercialise and market the handicrafts of Sarawak. Also, Juma'ani Pavilion in Petra Jaya showcases a captivating array of woven crafts transferomed into exquisite, fashionable modern wear fusing the rich and unique cultural heritage of Sarawak.

Meanwhile, the esteemed Borneo Cultures Museum in Kuching plays a critical role in showcasing a diverse range of traditional crafts, from textiles to ceramics and jewellery, providing visitors with a unique opportunity to learn about Sarawak's cultural heritage and to appreciate the incredible artistry of local craftpeople.





















HEALTH TOURISM

HEALTH TOURISM IN SARAWAK

Sarawak's geographical location has an advantage in further growing its healthcare demand. Stretching some 800 kilometres along the northwest coast of Borneo and interconnected with Kalimantan, Indonesia, and other neighbourhood countries such as Brunei and the Philippines, healthcare travellers can easily access Malaysia Healthcare's member hospitals via various modes of transports from land, air, to ferry.

The decision to have healthcare treatment in Malaysia is an easy one. Choosing where to have that treatment is not quite so easy, given the wide choice of hospitals and locations. If you want your patient experience and your visitor experience to be equally unique and as enjoyable as possible, you might just want to choose Sarawak.

Sarawak, in northwest Borneo, is the largest state in Malaysia and also the most ethnically and culturally diverse. It has more national parks and wildlife reserves than the rest of Malaysia combined and an amazing variety of unique plant and animal life. It is home to almost 30 different ethnic groups, each with its own distinct culture and traditions, and hospitality to visitors is a way of life.





SARAWAK'S KEY ADVANTAGES

Ease of Access:

Sarawak has excellent international links, mainly via frequent flights to Kuala Lumpur as well as direct air connection to Singapore.

Personal Care:

Sarawak's private hospitals are relatively small by international standards. That means that you will generally be treated by the same care team throughout your stay, under the direction of your chosen specialist consultant.

Ease of Communication:

Sarawak is well known for the high standard of English spoken in everyday use, so just imagine how well our highly-trained healthcare professionals are able to communicate with their international patients.

Halal Certification:

Every hospital in Malaysia is required to maintain strict halal standards in every aspect of its operations.

No Hidden Costs:

All charges are regulated under the Healthcare Facilities and Services Act 1998 and the Private Healthcare Facilities and Services Regulations 2006.

Low Cost of Accommodation:

Sarawak has some of the most competitive hotel prices in the region and hotel categories to suit every budget. You can even opt for a village homestay if your condition allows it. This is important to remember if you are planning a longer stay or family members are accompanying you.

Warm Tropical Climate:

Our warm weather can significantly aid recovery time and your sense of overall well-being after medical or surgical procedures.

Personal Safety:

Sarawak has a low crime rate, and violent crime is very rare indeed. This is important to consider if you will be using a walking aid or are otherwise incapacitated yet still want to see the sights.

Friendly, Hospitable People:

Sarawakians are warm and welcoming to visitors, and will always make an extra effort to make medical and healthcare tourists feel at home.

Unique Travel Experience:

Sarawak offers the very best of Borneo in a single destination. There is plenty for your family members to do while you are receiving treatment or rehabilitation. Can you imagine a better place to spend your time recovering?









GOLFING IN SARAWAK

Sarawak has some of the most scenic and challenging golf courses in Malaysia. An energetic player can tee-off above the clouds in the early morning, savour a fresh seafood lunch, then enjoy the sunset lunch, then enjoy the sunset view from a seaside links course in the afternoon.

The championship standard courses include **Kelab Golf Sarawak, Damai Golf & Country Club** and **Samarahan Country Club**, all within easy reach of Kuching in the southwest; and **Miri Golf Club** and **Eastwood Valley Golf Club** in Miri in the northeast. With 18-hole courses also at Sibu and Bintulu, it's possible to play the state from top to bottom in just a week.

Ardent golfers with non-golfing family members should note that all of Sarawak's courses are located close to fascinating natural and cultural attractions.



ENTERTAINMENT & NIGHTLIFE

Sarawak's food and drink scene is a delightful mix of flavors and cultures, making it a great destination for culinary exploration. Whether you're sampling the local street food, dining in traditional eateries, or enjoying upscale restaurants and cafes, you'll find a wide range of options to satisfy your taste buds from morning to night.

Kuching, Sibu, Miri and Bintulu offer entertainment and nightlife possibilities to suit almost all tastes, from quiet corner pubs to elegant cocktail bars, or live music venues.

Beverage prices are remarkably affordable compared to the rest of Malaysia, and drinks on offer range from artisanal tuak (rice wine) and locally-brewed beers to imported beers, fine wines, malt whiskies, exotic cocktails and mocktails.

Apart from the prices, what visitors always enjoy the most is that the locals are so open and welcoming - you can happily wander into most bars in Sarawak and leave an hour or two later having made some wonderful new friends.





SPA & WELLNESS

Sarawak is so famous for its culture, nature and adventure activities that it is often overlooked as a spa and wellness destination. However, with so many different ethnic groups preserving and practicing their traditional healing activities, the state is a paradise for relaxation and recuperation.

Major hotels and resorts in Sarawak offer day spa facilities, many to a very high standard, but even more fascinating healers of various types. In the cities, Chinese reflexologists, herbalists and traditional masseurs abound, along with masseurs and therapists who practice various modern styles and disciplines.

Out in the countryside, you can experience traditional Malay or Bidayuh massage complete with rainforest herbs and ointments, soak in hot springs in the middle of the jungle, have bad spirits cast out by experienced shamans, or even be ritually healed by the wooden sickness figures of the Melanau.





TOURIST INFORMATION

The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) offers a range of services to provide visitors' and the travel industry with up-to-date travel information about Sarawak. The Visitors' Information Centre in Kuching, Miri and Sibu stock a wide range of guidebooks, maps, brochures and leaflets. The helpful staff can provide information about travel enquiries and local events.

VISITORS' INFORMATION CENTRE KUCHING

Sarawak Tourism Complex (Old Court House), 93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia

Tel Fax Email Opening Mon - Fri Saturday, Sunday, & Public Holidays	: +6082 410 944 : +082 256 301 : vic-kuching@sarawaktourism.com : 9am to 6pm : 9am to 3pm

VISITORS' INFORMATION CENTRE MIRI

Lot 452, Jalan Melayu, 98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia

90000 Milli, Salawak, Malaysia				
Tel	: +6085 434 180 / 181			
Fax	: +6085 434 179			
Email	: vic-miri@sarawaktourism.com			
Opening Mon - Fri	: 9am to 6pm			
Saturday, Sunday,	: 9am to 3pm			
& Public Holidays				

VISITORS' INFORMATION CENTRE SIBU

Sublot 3A 3B & 4A 4B, Sibu Heritage Centre, Jalan Central, 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia

Tel	:	+084 340 980
Fax	:	+084 341 280
Email	:	vic-sibu@sarawaktourism.com
Opening Mon - Fri	:	9am to 6pm
Saturday	:	9am to 3pm
& Public Holidays		
Closed on Sunday		

STB's Kuching Head Office provides comprehensive media and travel industry liaison services, up-to-date information on tourism policy and planning in Sarawak, and replies to written or email enquiries.

SARAWAK TOURISM BOARD

Level 4, Plaza Aurora, Jalan McDougall, 93000 Kuching, Sarawak Email: stb@sarawaktourism.com Tel: +6082 42 3600 Fax: +6082 416700

Online Information Detailed travel information for Sarawak is available from STB's online portals:



https://www.sarawaktourism.com/





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