

Borneo

Primates of the Ancient Forest

May 7 to 21, 2026



Orangutans
© Glenn Ciegler

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Experience the wonders of Borneo, an island filled with ancient rainforests, thriving ecosystems, and rare wildlife like orangutans and pygmy elephants. Start your adventure at a renowned orangutan sanctuary, where you'll watch these gentle giants feed, play, and interact up close. Take in breathtaking views atop the rainforest canopy and watch exotic birds weaving gracefully through lush foliage. Cruise along the iconic Kinabatangan River to spot pygmy elephants bathing on the banks and monkeys leaping between branches. Embark on thrilling jungle walks and game drives to uncover the diverse wildlife of Borneo, from proboscis monkeys to Bornean gibbons. Uncover Borneo's treasures: unparalleled adventures, serene natural beauty, and encounters with extraordinary wildlife.

WHY CHOOSE THIS EXPEDITION?

- **Pristine Ecosystems:** Explore Borneo's ancient rainforests and teeming rivers, home to rare wildlife and untouched natural beauty.
- **Unforgettable Wildlife Encounters:**

- Witness iconic species like orangutans, pygmy elephants, Bornean gibbons, and proboscis monkeys in their natural habitats.
- Marvel at the smallest bears in the world at the Bornean Sun Bear Centre.
- **Immersive Experiences:** Glide along the Kinabatangan River on sunrise, dusk, and nocturnal cruises for close-up views of incredible wildlife.
- **Natural Spectacles:** Watch millions of bats embark on their evening exodus from the Gomantong Caves—a true natural spectacle.
- **Sustainable Comfort:** Stay in eco-lodges that combine comfort with a deep commitment to preserving Borneo’s unique ecosystems.

LEADER: Charlie Ryan.

DAYS: 15, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$11,800 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for one-way flight from Lahad Datu to Kota Kinabalu), singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 5.

TRANSPORTATION: Travel in open-air trucks that allow for wildlife viewing along the way. The river safaris are in private boats that are stable and wide, which are great for photography.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
May 7–8	Travel to Sandakan, Sabah, Borneo.		
May 9	Welcome to Borneo. Arrive in Sandakan and enjoy a welcome dinner.	Sepilok Nature Resort, Kabili-Sepilok Forest Reserve	D
May 10	Explore Sepilok Nature Reserve. Explore this incredible virgin rainforest Reserve. Visit the Orangutan Sanctuary and also spot free-roaming orangutans.		B, L, D
May 11–13	Kinabatangan Adventure. Spend two full days of birding, jungle walks, and river safaris through the Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary. Visit the Bornean Sun Bear Centre. Explore nearby Gomantong Caves and watch the bat exodus cloud the sky.	Hornbill Lodge, near Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary	B, L, D
May 14–15	Tabin Wildlife Reserve. Head to the Tabin Wildlife Reserve with afternoon and nighttime exploration and game drives. Hike to a mud volcano for stunning views of the surrounding forest.	Tabin Wildlife Resort, Tabin Wildlife Reserve	B, L, D
May 16–18	Danum Valley Wilderness. Travel to Danum Valley and contemplate the undisturbed rainforest and its pristine, diverse ecosystems.	Borneo Rainforest Lodge, Danum Valley Conservation Area	B, L, D
May 19	Final Trek and Kota Kinabalu. Trek to search for wildlife on your final morning in Danum before flying to Kota Kinabalu.	Hyatt Centric, Kota Kinabalu	B, L, D

May 20	Extension or Departure. Continue on our Mount Kinabalu extension or fly home.	B
May 21	Arrive home.	

ENHANCE YOUR TRIP

- Continue your journey on our [Mount Kinabalu](#) extension from May 20 to 23, 2026. Experience the rich tropical lowland, the hill rainforest, and the tropical mountain forest in Kinabalu National Park. As you explore the diverse and beautiful scenery, you will have the opportunity to see a sampling of 326 bird species, including 18 Bornean endemics.

LEADER



Charlie Ryan

After signing up for a volunteer program in Indonesia in 2008, Charlie was re-routed to Sabah, Borneo where he helped set up community initiative programs for the Abai village. He has resided in Sabah ever since. Charlie guides for the National Geographic Adventure groups in Borneo and helps train nature guides, providing them with first-hand knowledge and experience. He is also an avid photographer, which compliments his passion for wildlife, culture, and travel.

DETAILED ITINERARY

May 7–8 ~ Travel to Sandakan, Sabah, Borneo

Depart for Malaysian Borneo.

May 9 ~ Arrive in Borneo

Arrive in Sandakan, Sabah, Borneo. Our local agent will transfer you from the airport to the hotel, which is located in a forest not far from the city. Once settled in, your leader will give you a briefing, followed by a welcome dinner. After dinner, you can head out for an optional night walk in the forest to search for nocturnal wildlife. We can arrange divergent airport transfers and extra nights if you want to arrive earlier.

May 10 ~ Sepilok Forest Reserve

Explore the Sepilok Forest Reserve and its surroundings. Take an early morning canopy walk searching for birds and mammals unique to this region. Visit the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre and witness these gentle primates feed and interact in the rainforest. Enjoy day and night treks through the forest to observe wildlife including a canopy walk at dusk to witness giant red flying squirrels emerging from their nests and “flying” up to 500ft between trees.



Blue-eared Kingfisher
© Grace Chen

May 11–13 ~ Kinabatangan River and Wildlife Sanctuary

Take an optional dawn birdwatching walk near the lodge followed by a behind-the-scenes tour of the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre with its founder.

Continue to the Kinabatangan River, home to one of Borneo's highest concentrations of wildlife. After settling into your lodge, go on a dusk cruise in search of orangutans, hornbills, slow lorises, western tarsiers, civets, proboscis monkeys, and more.

Spend two more days in this magical location. Set out on an early morning river cruise through the panoramic hues of sunrise to explore this region's natural beauty and rich wildlife diversity. Trek through the jungle to search for wildlife. Learn from an orangutan expert. Embark on a short boat ride and transfer to the famous Gomantong Caves to spend an afternoon exploring. At dusk, see a mind-boggling bat exodus, where over one million bats emerge from the cave to feed. Cruise at night in search of nocturnal wildlife on the riverbanks.



Clouded Leopard
© Charlie Ryan

May 14–15 ~ Tabin Wildlife Reserve

Drive to one of the most biodiverse regions of Borneo, the Tabin Wildlife Reserve, which boasts an impressive 220 bird species as well as the wild banteng cattle and 10 primate species. Explore the reserve in 4x4 off-road vehicles hoping to find leopard cats, marbled cats, flying squirrels, and binturong bearcats in their natural habitats. Participate in a morning trek to the mud volcano, where salt-enriched mud bubbles up and attracts many different animals. Climb an observation tower and soak in the stunning views of the surrounding forest canopies. Meet the executive director of the Borneo Rhino Alliance who will teach you about current Sumatran rhino conservation efforts. Join nightly game drives to find nocturnal wildlife.

May 16–18 ~ Danum Valley

Travel to Danum Valley, known for its 400 square miles of virtually undisturbed primary rain forest. Spend your time exploring the local nature trails on your own or with a guide. Stretch your legs with a moderately challenging hike to a nearby waterfall or go on a canopy walk in the treetops surrounding the lodge. With more than 275 recorded species, birdlife is especially diverse. Find rare mammal species such as orangutans, pygmy elephants, clouded leopards, endemic Bornean gibbon, and endemic maroon langur. Go on a guided night walk to experience the forest when it is vibrant with wildlife.

May 19 ~ Kota Kinabalu

Spend the morning trekking to search for wildlife on your final morning in Danum. Return to Lahad Datu (a 2.5-hour drive on dirt track) for your flight to Kota Kinabalu (a 50-minute flight). Once checked into your hotel, enjoy a dinner altogether to celebrate the incredible journey through the jungle.



Orangutan
© Grace Chen

May 20 ~ Join our [Mount Kinabalu](#) extension or fly home

Continue on our [Mount Kinabalu](#) extension, or relax this morning before your flights home.

May 21 ~ Arrive home

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$11,800
Single Supplement	\$2,505

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare (except for one-way flight from Lahad Datu to Kota Kinabalu), singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

If you are a single traveler and would like a roommate, we will try to find someone for you, but if we cannot find someone, we may charge you a single supplement. Single rooms cost extra and are subject to availability.

Payment Schedule

Payment	Due Date	Amount per Person
Deposit	Due now to reserve your space	\$500
Final	November 25, 2025	Remaining Balance

Payments are due based on the schedule above. All reservations require a deposit to confirm reservation of your space.

Cancellations

Until the Final Payment due date, deposits are refundable except for a cancellation fee of \$150 per person, which can be applied toward another trip if reserved within six months of the canceled trip's departure date. Cancellations are non-transferable. No refunds are given after the Final Payment due date.

Included

- Carbon offsets for the duration of this trip.
- All leaders, transport, camera fees, park entry fees, and permits for all activities unless described as optional.
- One-way flight from Lahad Datu to Kota Kinabalu.
- Transfers from Sandakan Airport to Sepilok Nature Resort on May 9 and to Kota Kinabalu Airport on May 20.
- Accommodations for the nights of May 9 through May 19.
- Meals from dinner on May 9 through breakfast on May 20.
- Non-alcoholic bottled beverages throughout the trip.
- Snacks during travel between locations.
- Incidental tipping (porters, boatmen, drivers, hotel staff, etc.).
- Lectures from an orangutan expert and from the executive director of the Borneo Rhino Alliance.

- Private access to Sun Bear Centre.
- *Mammals of Borneo* book.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to/from this trip.
- All airfare (except flights listed as included), airport and departure taxes, and excess baggage fees. Airfare is approximately \$1,200 to \$2,400 from the US to Sabah, Borneo, and back to US from Kota Kinabalu, depending on origin.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Divergent airport transfers (arranged by us) and extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$400 total per participant.
- Emergency evacuation insurance and trip cancellation [insurance](#).
- Items of a personal nature such as laundry, telephone calls, medical costs or hospitalization, room service, alcoholic beverages, items not on the regular menu, etc. If you have special dietary needs, please indicate them on your Reservation Form.

SIGN UP

Please contact us first to check availability, reserve your space, and obtain a Reservation Form. To confirm your reservation, we require a deposit and signed form from each participant.

Cheesemans' Ecology Safaris
 Email: info@cheesemans.com
 Website: www.cheesemans.com
 WhatsApp: (408) 741-5330
 Phone: (800) 527-5330 or (408) 741-5330

OTHER DETAILS

Climate

Temperatures vary greatly. The lower altitudes are often hot, while the forests and higher altitudes can be surprisingly cool. In May, the average daytime temperature in Borneo is in the mid 80s°F (28°C), with highs in the low 90s°F (33°C); the evenings get down into the mid 70s°F (24°C). There is very high humidity in the lowlands, and it will feel much warmer. Temperatures in the forest and at higher altitudes are only slightly cooler, averaging 60 to 80°F (16 to 26°C). Although May is considered the dry season, rain is still possible.

Fitness Level

Most wildlife viewing is done from vehicles, boats, and on foot. Walks to search for wildlife are generally 2-3 hours long and along relatively flat trails, gravel roads, and single-track trails that are undulating. You have the option to split into smaller groups based on desired level of exercise. In Sepilok, Tabin, and Danum, the heat and humidity can make a 3 to 5km walk feel like double the distance. Drinking water is imperative. Please contact us if you have any health concerns that may make this trip challenging.

Transportation

Travel in open-air trucks that allow for wildlife viewing along the way. The river safaris are in private boats that are stable and wide, which are great for photography.

Flights

Detailed logistical information is included in the Trip Planning Materials we will send you.

Flights you book

- Arrive in Sandakan, Malaysia (SDK) by 3:00pm on May 9.
- Depart from Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia (BKI) after 12:00am on May 20. **If you are continuing on our [Mount Kinabalu Extension](#)**, see the *Flights* section in its itinerary for departure information.

Flights we book

- The one-way flight from Lahad Datu to Kota Kinabalu is included in the trip cost.

Terms and Conditions

Read our current [Terms and Conditions](#).

Conservation

Our company ethos has always regarded conservation as inseparable from responsible tourism. We struggle with the dilemma that traveling worldwide expends climate-changing carbon. However, we wholeheartedly believe that traveling with us will cultivate your passion for conserving our beautiful world while stimulating each destination's local economy. We encourage you to explore the various ways in which Cheesemans' operates within this context:

- **Ecotourism and Conservation for Borneo.**
- **Cheesemans' Trips are Carbon Neutral.**
- **Offsetting your Travel to/from our Trip:** We ask you to pledge to offset the carbon emissions for your travel to and from our trips. Use this [tool](#) to calculate your emissions and purchase your carbon offset today through Sustainable Travel International or your favorite carbon offsetting organization.