

Mount Kinabalu Extension

A Birdwatcher's Paradise

May 20 to 23, 2026



Indigo Flycatcher
© Charlie Ryan

SAFARI OVERVIEW

Extend your **Borneo wildlife adventure** with a birdwatching and nature expedition to Mount Kinabalu, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Southeast Asia's most biodiverse regions. Rising to 4,095 meters (13,435 feet), **Mount Kinabalu** is home to over 5,000 plant species, 326 bird species, and 100 mammal species, including 18 endemic species found nowhere else on Earth. Trek through lowland rainforests, montane woodlands, and sub-alpine zones, experiencing stunning landscapes shaped by ancient tectonic forces. Stay in cozy hillside lodges, explore the park's scenic trails, and enjoy expert-led birding walks in search of rare and endemic birds such as the **Whitehead's Trogon**, **Bornean Treepie**, and **Everett's Thrush**.

WHY CHOOSE THIS EXTENSION?

- **UNESCO World Heritage Site:** Visit Mount Kinabalu, a globally recognized landmark celebrated for its stunning biodiversity and cultural significance.
- **Incredible Biodiversity:** Encounter a wide range of habitats, from lush tropical rainforests to sub-alpine scrub, home to over 5,000 plant species and 18 endemic species.

- **Birdwatcher's Paradise:** With over 326 bird species, including many endemics, Mount Kinabalu offers unmatched birding opportunities.
- **Guided Exploration:** Trek well-maintained trails with expert guides, gaining insight into the region's unique ecology and geology.
- **Spectacular Landscapes:** Enjoy breathtaking views of Southeast Asia's highest mountain, shaped by tectonic forces and cloaked in verdant rainforests.

TRIP OPTION: This is a post-trip extension to our [Borneo](#) trip from May 7 to 21, 2026.

LEADER: Charlie Ryan.

DAYS: Adds 3 days to the main trip to total 15 days, including estimated travel time.

GROUP SIZE: 8.

COST: \$2,000 per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See the *Costs* section on page 4.

ACCOMMODATIONS: Stay in cozy, hillside bungalows along Kinabalu Park with easy access to walking trails, the botanical gardens, and a restaurant/café. The rooms are basic and small, but comfortable, with an en-suite bathroom and hot running water.

Date	Description	Accommodation	Meals
May 20	Birding in Kinabalu National Park. Travel from Kota Kinabalu to Kinabalu National Park, stopping for scenic viewpoints along the way. Begin afternoon birdwatching in the montane forests.	Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park	B, L, D
May 21	Full-Day Exploration of Kinabalu National Park. Trek through diverse forest zones, spotting endemic bird species and learning about the region's geology and ecology.	Hill Lodge, Kinabalu National Park	B, L, D
May 22	Depart for Home. Spend one last morning birding and walking through the park. Return to Kota Kinabalu for flights homeward.		B, L
May 23	Arrive home.		

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 20 ~ Explore Kinabalu National Park

Depart from Kota Kinabalu, embarking on a scenic drive through Borneo's mountainous interior en route to **Kinabalu National Park**. Along the way, stop at panoramic viewpoints overlooking the Crocker Range, taking in the misty peaks and lush valleys. Arrive at the Hill Lodge in Kinabalu Park, your base for exploring this **UNESCO-listed biodiversity hotspot**.

In the afternoon, begin your first guided birdwatching walk, traversing montane forest trails in search of some of Borneo's most sought-after birds. Keep an eye out for **Mountain Leaf Warblers**, **Bornean Treepies**, and **Indigo Flycatchers**, as well as the elusive **Whitehead's Trogon** and **Kinabalu Serpent Eagle**. As the sun sets, return to the lodge for a relaxing evening surrounded by the sounds of the rainforest.

May 21 ~ Full-Day Exploration of Kinabalu National Park

Spend the entire day exploring Kinabalu National Park's rich biodiversity, hiking through a variety of altitudinal forest zones. Start the morning with high-elevation birding, where you'll have the chance to spot rare montane species such as the **Mountain Blackbird**, **Everett's Thrush**, and **Bornean Whistler**. The park's forests are also home to exotic orchids, carnivorous pitcher plants, and unique moss-covered trees, making every step an opportunity for discovery.



Whiteheads Trogon
© Charlie Ryan

After lunch, continue trekking along well-maintained trails, stopping at botanical gardens and observation decks to admire the towering granite peaks of Mount Kinabalu. In the late afternoon, enjoy another birdwatching session, searching for **Whitehead's Spiderhunter**, the **Bornean Forktail**, and the **striking Red-breasted Partridge**. Return to the lodge for a farewell dinner, reflecting on the day's incredible wildlife encounters.

May 22 ~ Fly home

Enjoy a final morning of birdwatching, with the opportunity to spot early rising species such as the **Fruithunter** and **Whitehead's Broadbill**. After breakfast, begin your journey back to Kota Kinabalu, stopping for scenic breaks and photography opportunities along the way. Upon arrival, transfer to Kota Kinabalu International Airport for your flight home or continue with your Borneo adventure.

May 23 ~ Arrive home

Arrive home with unforgettable memories of Mount Kinabalu's pristine landscapes, diverse wildlife, and spectacular birdlife.

COSTS (ALL COSTS ARE IN US DOLLARS)

Cost

Type	Cost per Person
Trip Cost, double occupancy	\$2,000
Single Supplement	\$290

Costs are per person, double occupancy, not including airfare, singles extra. See *Included* and *Not Included* sections for more details.

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

Payment Schedule

Payment is due with [Borneo's](#) final payment.

Cancellations

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.
- Accommodations for the nights of May 20 through May 21.
- Meals from breakfast on May 20 through lunch on May 22.
- Transfers to Kota Kinabalu Airport on May 22.
- Non-alcoholic bottled beverages throughout the trip.
- Snacks during travel between locations.
- Trip Planning Materials – information about flights, packing, entry and departure requirements, airport transfers, gratuities, etc.

Not Included

- Carbon offsets for your flights to and from this trip.
- Passport and visa fees.
- Divergent airport transfers (arranged by us) and extra hotel nights.
- Gratuities – tipping is always discretionary. However, we suggest budgeting about \$250 total per participant for this extension.
- 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

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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

Morning and afternoon treks will last about three hours, walking slowly while searching for birds. The walking is easy and mostly on paved roads, but some parts of the road have inclines.

Accommodations

Stay in cozy, hillside bungalows along Kinabalu Park with easy access to walking trails, the botanical gardens, and a restaurant/café. The rooms are basic and small, but comfortable, with an ensuite bathroom and hot running water. If you are concerned about the standard of accommodations being below your expectations, please ask us before booking.

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 4:00pm on May 22.

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. You can purchase offsets with most airlines (Delta includes them automatically), use our handy [carbon calculator](#) and donate to Sustainable Travel International, or contribute to your favorite offsetting organization.