SARAWAK TOURISM BOARD



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Sarawak - A geographic overview



Sarawak, situated on the island of Borneo in Southeast Asia, stands as one of Malaysia's 13 states and is celebrated for its cultural diversity, abundant biodiversity, and stunning landscapes.

Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia. Its colourful history, vibrant culture and traditions, spectacular natural beauty and fascinating wildlife make the state a captivating land of adventure. Huge rainforests provide a suitable habitat for countless jungle animals and rare plant species. Of the 550 bird species, the hornbill is best known as the heraldic animal of Sarawak. Among other things, the hornbill can be admired in Bako National Park. The rainforest is about an hour drive from the capital Kuching and a true paradise for nature lovers and adventurers. Beautiful Gunung Mulu National Park (UNESCO World Heritage Site) is home to one of the largest cave systems in the world, the largest cave passage in the world and one of the largest subterranean chambers in the world. In the caves of the Niah National Park, in addition to 1,200-year-old rock drawings, a human skull was found during archaeological excavations, the age of which could be dated at 39,000 to 45,000 years.

Culturally, Sarawak is also very interesting: Many indigenous groups, who mostly live and work as farmers or fishermen in the coastal regions, are at home in Sarawak. The Iban form the largest population group in the state. Traditionally, they live in longhouses that house the entire village community. Such longhouses as well as

handicrafts, dance and music performances of different tribes can be admired at Sarawak Cultural Village.

As the capital of Sarawak, Kuching is a city rich in history, character, and warmth. Home to approximately 680,000 people, the city exudes a quiet pride — not through grand displays, but in the everyday charm of its streets, waterfronts, and friendly locals. Visitors are welcomed with genuine hospitality and encouraged to explore the city as it truly is: relaxed, authentic, and full of surprises.

To truly experience Kuching, step beyond the confines of a tour bus. Wander its vibrant streets, cycle through heritage neighbourhoods, or hop on a traditional sampan along the Sarawak River. The best way to connect with this remarkable city is to get out, explore, and be part of its everyday rhythm.

Facts and figures - Sarawak at a glance

Size	Sarawak extends approximately 800 kilometres along Borneo's northwest coast, encompassing a vast area of 124,449.51 square kilometres. Sarawak makes up 37.5% of Malaysia's total land area
Capital	Kuching City
Population	2,539,800
People	Sarawak has a highly diverse population, encompassing numerous races and 27 ethnic groups, with over 40 sub-ethnic groups, each with its own unique language, culture, and way of life. The major ethnic groups of Sarawak are: Iban, Chinese, Malay, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, Melanau
Language	Bahasa Malaysia (Malay) is the national language. However, the Sarawak Malays speak a dialect that would be incomprehensible to most other Malays from the rest of the country. Due to the colonial past, however, the English language plays a special role. It serves as the language of business and is the second language for most Malaysians.
Religion	While Islam holds the status of Malaysia's official religion, Sarawak, renowned for its ethnic diversity, stands as a notably tolerant region. Within its borders, one can find adherents of various faiths, including Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Taoists, and Hindus. Prior to the introduction of other religions, animism played a significant role in shaping Dayak culture; however, it now represents only a minority belief system. The dominant religion in Sarawak is Christianity (42% divided between Catholics, Protestants, Methodists, Evangelists and Baptists).
Politics	Malaysia (including Sarawak) has a parliamentary democracy and a constitutional monarchy. The head of government is the prime minister. The country has a bicameral legislative system.
Climate	Sarawak experiences an equatorial climate characterized by relatively consistent temperatures throughout the year, typically ranging from 23°C in the early morning to 32°C during the day. In the highland regions like Bario, daytime temperatures hover

between 16°C and 25°C, occasionally dropping to as low as 11°C at night. The northeast monsoon, which typically occurs from November to February, brings heavy rainfall, while the southwest monsoon from June to October is generally milder. Annual rainfall levels vary between 3,300 millimetres and 4,600 millimetres, depending on the specific location. Humidity remains consistently high in the lowlands, ranging from 80 percent to 90 percent.

Currency

The currency of Malaysia is the Malaysian ringgit, abbreviated as RM or MYR. As of October 2026, RM1 is worth approximately €0.22, while €1 is equivalent to approximately RM4.57. Exchange rates fluctuate, so these figures should be used as a guide only.

The import and export of foreign currency into Malaysia is generally permitted. Travellers carrying cash and bearer negotiable instruments exceeding the equivalent of US$10,000 must declare them to the relevant authorities. The import or export of Malaysian ringgit exceeding the equivalent of US$10,000 requires prior written permission from Bank Negara Malaysia.

Cash can be exchanged at all commercial banks, in large hotels and at registered money changers. The latter can be found almost everywhere in the country, are usually open longer and usually offer more favourable exchange rates than banks and hotels.

Time zone

Central European Time + 7 hours (Central European Summer Time + 6 hours)

Telecommunic-ation

Malaysia's international dialling code is +60. Usually, hotels and resort in the country provide WIFI.

Entry regulations

EU citizens travelling to Malaysia for tourism generally require a passport valid for at least six months from the date of arrival. Many EU nationals can enter Malaysia visa-free for stays of up to 90 days, although the permitted length of stay depends on nationality and is determined by Malaysian immigration authorities. Travellers must complete the Malaysia Digital Arrival Card (MDAC) before arrival, unless exempt. Longer stays may require the appropriate visa or pass and should be

arranged through the Malaysian immigration authorities before travelling.

Passport and immigration checks are also carried out when travelling between Peninsular Malaysia and East Malaysia (Sabah and Sarawak) on Malaysian Borneo. Travellers should carry their passports for these journeys.

Vaccination requirements

Vaccinations are not required for entry into Malaysia and are only necessary if the traveller comes from an infectious area. Malaria prophylaxis is usually not required, as the coastal areas of the Malaysian peninsula and the offshore islands are malaria-free. It is only recommended for longer stays in one of the deep jungle areas in Sabah on Borneo.

Travel

The primary gateway to Sarawak is Kuching, located approximately 1 hour and 30 minutes away from Kuala Lumpur and Kota Kinabalu. Kuching is also conveniently accessible through direct international flights from various destinations, including Indonesia (Pontianak, Bali, and Jakarta), Bandar Seri Begawan in Brunei, Macau, and Singapore, with several weekly flights available. Over 40 international airlines fly to Malaysia, while the national carrier, Malaysia Airlines, has a global network spanning six continents. The main point of entry to Malaysia by sea is Port Klang, about 50 kilometres from Kuala Lumpur. Malaysia is also accessible by rail and road from Singapore and Thailand.

Transportation

Malaysia has excellent domestic air connections served by Malaysia Airlines as well as airlines such as AirAsia and Firefly. The well-developed and efficient public transport system is served by buses, cabs and trains.

Accommodations

Malaysia features a wide range of accommodations, including inter- national star hotels, boutique hotels, beach resorts, chalets, youth hostels and timeshare apartments.

UNESCO World Heritage Sites	Sarawak is home to World Heritage Site, Gunung Mulu National Park. It is renowned for its breathtaking mountain peaks and caverns, among them the expansive Deer Cave, home to a vast population of bats. This cave eventually opens up to reveal the Garden of Eden, a secluded valley with a stunning waterfall, surrounded by towering limestone cliffs.

Heritage and Culture of Sarawak

Sarawak: A Tapestry of Heritage and Culture

Nestled on the northwest coast of the island of Borneo, Sarawak is a treasure trove of heritage and culture. Often referred to as the "Land of the Hornbills," Sarawak is celebrated for its rich tapestry of traditions, architecture, and historical landmarks that reflect the influence of diverse ethnic groups. Let's explore the vibrant heritage and culture of Sarawak beyond its captivating capital, Kuching.

Ethnic Diversity: A Colourful Mosaic

Sarawak is home to a multitude of indigenous communities, each with its unique customs, languages, and traditions. The Iban, Bidayuh, Orang Ulu, and Melanau, to name a few, coexist in harmony, contributing to the cultural fabric of the state. From traditional longhouses nestled in the heart of the rainforest to vibrant tribal celebrations, visitors can immerse themselves in the rich heritage of these indigenous peoples.

Iban Longhouses: Traditional Living

The Iban community, renowned for their headhunting past, today showcases their unique lifestyle through traditional longhouses. These communal dwellings provide a glimpse into the Iban's way of life, where families live under one roof and share in the collective responsibilities of farming, weaving, and storytelling. A visit to one of these longhouses offers a profound cultural experience.

Songket Weaving: A Fine Craft

Sarawak is celebrated for its intricate songket weaving, a traditional textile art form that's a source of pride for the Malay and Melanau communities. The fabric is intricately woven with gold or silver threads, often used in ceremonial clothing. To observe the skill and precision required in creating these masterpieces, one can visit local artisans or even partake in workshops.

Melanau Mukah Masks: Mystical Expressions

The coastal town of Mukah is home to the Melanau community and their ancient Mukah masks. These intricately carved wooden masks are integral to the Mukah Mukah festival, symbolizing ancestral spirits and providing protection for the community. They represent a captivating blend of art and mysticism.

Rainforest World Music Festival: A Global Melting Pot

The Rainforest World Music Festival, held annually in Kuching, is a captivating celebration of music, featuring artists from Sarawak, Malaysia, and around the world. It's a unique opportunity to experience the fusion of contemporary and traditional sounds, creating a harmony of diverse musical cultures against the backdrop of the Sarawak rainforest.

Sarawak Cuisine: A Culinary Odyssey

No exploration of Sarawak's heritage is complete without indulging in its unique cuisine. From the fiery flavours of Sarawak Laksa, a local noodle soup, to the tantalizing taste of Manok Pansuh, a traditional dish cooked in bamboo tubes, Sarawak's culinary diversity is a testament to the fusion of indigenous flavours and foreign influences.

Gawai Dayak: Harvest Festival Extravaganza

Gawai Dayak is a significant festival celebrated by the indigenous Dayak community, marking the end of the rice harvest season. This grand celebration is filled with traditional music, dance, and ceremonial rituals, providing visitors with a chance to engage in the spiritual and festive aspects of Dayak culture.

Pepper Plantations: A Spice of Life

Sarawak is the largest pepper producer in Malaysia, and a visit to pepper plantations provides insights into the history and cultivation of this versatile spice. The high-quality Sarawak pepper is sought after globally and is integral to the state's economy and heritage.

Bario Highlands: A Cultural Retreat

The remote Bario Highlands are home to the Kelabit and Lun Bawang communities, who have preserved their traditions for generations. Visitors to this peaceful highland retreat can partake in rice farming, jungle trekking, and enjoy the warm hospitality of the locals.

Sarawak's heritage and culture are a tapestry woven from the threads of its indigenous communities, historical landmarks, and vibrant festivals. Exploring Sarawak's rich cultural diversity is a journey that immerses travellers in the stories, traditions, and flavours of this enchanting region. Whether you're strolling through the bustling streets of Kuching or venturing into the heart of the rainforest, the spirit of Sarawak's heritage and culture will leave an indelible mark on your soul.

Latest News & Updates

Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF)

Sarawak's internationally renowned Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2027. Held at Sarawak Cultural Village, the festival brings together international musicians, indigenous performers and cultural experiences against a spectacular rainforest backdrop, with its 30th edition taking place on 25–27 June 2027 under the theme “Legacy, Revolution Inspired”.

Eco-Friendly and Responsible Tourism

Sustainability remains central to Sarawak’s tourism initiatives. Among the latest responsible travel packages, the *Borneo Green Bike Tour* offers travellers a low-impact way to experience Sarawak’s natural beauty, promoting responsible exploration and environmental awareness.

The Borneo Green Bike Tour offers an engaging and immersive opportunity to visit iconic landmarks in Kuching, utilising electric motor bikes for a scenic and sustainable journey. By promoting eco-friendly travel, the tour aligns with Malaysia's ongoing commitment to sustainability and supports the country's broader ecotourism goals.

As part of the National Ecotourism Plan (2016-2025), Malaysia is prioritising nature-based and sustainable tourism initiatives that contribute to local conservation efforts and economic growth. The Borneo Green Bike Tour is a step forward in this direction, encouraging responsible travel practices and helping to preserve the environment while providing travellers with a deeper connection to the culture and landscapes of Sarawak.

This tour represents a perfect blend of sustainability and exploration, offering an exciting and educational way to experience Kuching while reducing the carbon footprint of tourism.

Digital Innovation

In an era of evolving travel expectations, Sarawak Tourism Board is enhancing visitor engagement through cutting-edge digital innovation, setting a pioneering standard as the first DMO in the Asia-Pacific region to integrate AI-driven campaigns into its marketing strategy. This forward-thinking approach, achieved in partnership with Clicktripz - one of the world’s largest travel-focused ad networks - gives Sarawak exclusive access to a global audience of 100 million travel shoppers per month. By implementing advanced digital solutions, the Board aims to create seamless, enriched

travel experiences that also promote sustainable practices. Leveraging AI technology, Sarawak not only reaches potential visitors more effectively but also provides real-time information that encourages responsible travel behaviours, supporting both the environment and local communities.

Adventure and Sporting Tourism

Sarawak's dedication to adventure tourism takes centre stage in May 2025 with the debut of the XTERRA International Adventure Triathlon Series, held in Sarawak for the first time. This renowned triathlon series strengthens Sarawak's position as a premier sports tourism destination, aligning with its commitment to sustainable, low-impact exploration. Hosting XTERRA allows athletes and adventure enthusiasts to experience Sarawak's unique landscapes in ways that promote both environmental stewardship and community engagement.

Empowering Sustainable Tourism through Community Engagement

Sarawak is committed to enhancing its community-based tourism offerings by expanding the availability of homestays and eco-host accommodations. These initiatives enable travellers to fully immerse themselves in local cultures while actively contributing to sustainable tourism practices. By fostering meaningful connections between visitors and local communities, Sarawak not only promotes environmental stewardship but also supports the economic well-being of its residents.

Developments

Sarawak, Malaysia, is experiencing significant developments across various sectors. These developments reflect Sarawak's commitment to infrastructure enhancement, energy sector growth, and effective disaster management, contributing to its overall progress and resilience.

Sarawak Delta Geopark Becomes Malaysia's Sixth National Geopark:

In June 2023, the Sarawak Delta Geopark (SDG) achieved the esteemed status of being Malaysia's sixth national geopark, as part of the National Geopark Development Programme. Encompassing an extensive 3,122 square kilometres, this geopark is situated in the southern region of Sarawak. It stands out for its distinctive geological formations, featuring 28 remarkable geosites, rich biological diversity across 12 biosites, and a vibrant cultural heritage represented by 14 cultural sites.

This recognition serves as a testament to the dedicated efforts put forth by the Sarawak government and local authorities. Their commitment to preserving nature and responsibly managing areas of significant national value underscores their dedication to enhancing the socio-economic well-being of the local communities residing within and around the National Geopark. This positive impact is achieved through their active involvement in various activities and geopark development programmes.

Geopark visitors can witness exceptional and captivating geological and historical formations, spanning from carbon to resin. Moreover, they can explore the remarkable biodiversity featuring endemic species found in Borneo, such as orangutans, proboscis monkeys, and the enchanting fairy rock gecko. Beyond nature, the geopark also showcases Sarawak's diverse and culturally rich heritage through its architecture, musical instruments, cuisine, and numerous other facets.

Accommodation

Choose from a variety of accommodation options, including eco-lodges, rainforest treehouses, and luxury resorts that cater to adventure travellers. Notable choices include the Mulu Marriott Resort, Batang Ai Longhouse Resort, and Semenggoh Nature Reserve Lodge.

Sarawak beckons adventure enthusiasts to embark on thrilling expeditions and unforgettable experiences in one of Southeast Asia's most captivating destinations.

Eco Resorts:

1. **Utan Rainforest Lodge**
   Website: Utan Rainforest Lodge
   An exclusive eco-lodge set deep in Batang Ai National Park, accessible only by boat. It offers sustainable, small-scale accommodation with guided jungle treks, orangutan-spotting, and cultural experiences with the Iban community.

2. **Sepilok Nature Lodge**
   Website: Sepilok Nature Lodge
   Located near the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, this lodge offers eco-friendly chalets surrounded by tropical gardens and rainforest trails. Guests can visit orangutans, sun bears, and explore the rich biodiversity of Borneo.

3. **Permai Rainforest Resort**
   Website: Permai Rainforest Resort
   A secluded eco-resort nestled in the rainforest at the foot of Mount Santubong, just a short walk from Damai Beach. It features treehouse chalets, jungle cabins, and nature-based activities such as kayaking, jungle trekking, and wildlife spotting.

4. **Batu Bungan Rainforest Lodge**
   Website: Batu Bungan Rainforest Lodge
   Located near Gunung Mulu National Park, this eco-lodge provides an authentic rainforest experience with traditional longhouse-style accommodation. Guests can explore the famous Mulu Caves, canopy walks, and diverse jungle wildlife.

5. **Limbang Eco Village**
   Website: Limbang Eco Village
   A community-run eco-lodge set in Sarawak's remote rainforest, offering an authentic indigenous experience. Guests can stay in traditional wooden lodges, enjoy river cruises, guided treks, and cultural activities with the local Lun Bawang community.

Hotels:

1. **Sheraton Kuching Hotel**
   Website: Sheraton Kuching Hotel
   Located in Kuching's Chinatown, this hotel features 378 guest rooms and 38 suites, offering modern amenities and multiple dining options.

2. **Fairfield by Marriott Bintulu Paragon**
   Website: Fairfield by Marriott Bintulu Paragon
   Situated in Bintulu, this hotel offers comfortable accommodations with modern amenities, catering to both business and leisure travellers.

3. **Pullman Miri Waterfront**
   Website: Pullman Miri Waterfront
   Overlooking the Miri River, this hotel provides upscale accommodations with a range of facilities, including dining and recreational options.

4. **Hilton Kuching**
   Website: Hilton Kuching
   Located along the Sarawak River, this hotel offers modern rooms and suites with river or city views, along with various dining venues.

5. **Imperial Hotel Kuching**
   Website: Imperial Hotel Kuching
   Connected to a shopping mall, this hotel provides spacious rooms and suites, catering to both business and leisure travellers.

6. **The Waterfront Hotel Kuching**
   Website: The Waterfront Hotel Kuching
   Situated in the heart of Kuching, this hotel offers contemporary accommodations with easy access to local attractions.

Ecotourism and Sustainability

Sarawak, the crown jewel of Malaysian Borneo, is celebrated for its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and a steadfast commitment to ecotourism and sustainability. The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) has been a vanguard in showcasing the harmonious coexistence of these elements, actively contributing to global sustainability goals. In conjunction with the Borneo Jazz Festival (Miri) and the Rainforest World Music Festival (Kuching), the board has undertaken transformative initiatives to amplify the conservation and ecological values of Sarawak's rich flora and fauna.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Integration:

STB's commitment to responsible tourism aligns with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

Eco-Focused Initiatives:

STB's eco-focused initiatives encompass a wide spectrum of endeavours aimed at nurturing sustainable practices and fostering environmental responsibility. These initiatives include:

- Sustainable Procurement: Ensuring the acquisition of eco-friendly products and services
- Waste Management Strategy: Implementing an efficient waste management system that minimizes environmental impact
- Comprehensive Waste Management: Initiating responsible waste management programs in collaboration with local hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, and communities, in order to address food waste management and promote local economic vitality.
- Food Composting: Reducing food waste by redirecting organic materials to compost bins, benefitting local farmers and worm farms.
- Carbon Emission Reduction: Employing shuttle buses to minimize the carbon footprint associated with transportation to the festival grounds
- Material Upcycling: Creative recycling projects, such as transforming previous years' advertising banners into eco-friendly tote bags for festival gifts and souvenirs.
- Moop (Matter out of Place) Patrol: A dedicated effort to ensure festival sites remain clean and waste-free, promoting collaboration between festival attendees and volunteers.

Responsible Tourism (RT) Agenda:

STB's Responsible Tourism agenda dovetails with the Visit Sarawak Campaign's focus on Experiential and Responsible Tourism. RT centres around the 3Es: Environment, Empowerment, and Economic Viability and requires a collective effort from operators, hoteliers, governments, local communities, and tourists to make tourism more sustainable.

- Minimising Negative Impacts: Responsible tourism seeks to minimize negative social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with tourism activities.
- Economic Benefits for Locals: It strives to generate greater economic benefits for local communities while enhancing their well-being.
- Improving Working Conditions: Responsible tourism improves working conditions in the tourism industry and involves local people in decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.
- Conservation of Heritage: It makes positive contributions to the conservation of natural and cultural heritage while embracing diversity.
- Enhancing Tourist Experiences: Responsible tourism provides tourists with more enjoyable experiences through meaningful connections with local people and a deeper understanding of local cultural, social, and environmental issues.
- Accessibility: It ensures accessibility for physically challenged individuals, making tourism more inclusive.
- Cultural Sensitivity and Respect: Responsible tourism encourages respect between tourists and hosts, fostering local pride and confidence.

Sarawak Tourism Board's commitment to ecotourism and sustainability encompasses every facet of its operations, reflecting a comprehensive approach that embraces responsible tourism. From waste management and carbon reduction to innovative recycling and upcycling, STB's vision for a greener and more sustainable Sarawak invites both visitors and local communities to participate in a more responsible and enriching tourism experience. Visitors are encouraged to explore Sarawak's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and responsible tourism initiatives, creating a harmonious and sustainable future for this captivating destination.

Adventure Tourism

Sarawak, the largest state in Malaysia, is a paradise for adventure enthusiasts. Nestled in the heart of Borneo, it offers a diverse and unspoiled natural landscape that caters to a wide range of outdoor activities. From lush rainforests and towering mountains to pristine rivers and unique wildlife, Sarawak is a playground for adventure seekers.

Sarawak's Unique Adventure Attractions:

- Breath-taking Biodiversity: Sarawak is a biodiversity hotspot, home to rare and endemic species such as the orangutan, proboscis monkey, and hornbill. The vast rainforests and national parks provide opportunities for wildlife encounters.

- World-Class Caving: The Mulu Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage site, boast some of the largest cave chambers on Earth. The Sarawak Chamber, Deer Cave, and Clearwater Cave are just a few of the highlights awaiting caving enthusiasts.

- White-Water Rafting: The state's rugged terrain and powerful rivers, including the Sungai Sarawak and Sungai Rejang, offer thrilling white-water rafting experiences.

- Jungle Trekking: Trek through ancient rainforests, explore diverse ecosystems, and marvel at the rich flora and fauna in national parks like Bako, Gunung Gading, and Kubah.

- Diving and Snorkelling: Discover the underwater wonders of the South China Sea, with crystal-clear waters teeming with marine life and vibrant coral reefs.

Adventure Activities for Thrill-Seekers:

Cave Exploration in Mulu National Park: Explore the mesmerizing underground world of Sarawak's caves. The Mulu mountains hide within them some of the world's most impressive subterranean systems, shaped over millions of years. Sarawak Tourism Board (STB), in partnership with MASwings and Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa, offers cave exploration experiences, including visits to the Cave of the Winds and Clearwater Cave.

Explore the Deep Dark of Mulu:

Few places in Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo, can match the magnificence of Gunung Mulu National Park. This tropical rainforest locale, approximately 100 kilometres from Miri, is a world of wonder, boasting some of the largest, longest, and most fascinating cave systems on the planet. It meets all criteria needed for UNESCO's World Heritage Site status, including earth's history, geological features, ecological processes, superlative natural phenomena, and biodiversity.

On the surface, the park showcases a 544 square kilometre expanse, named after Gunung Mulu, with a mountainous landscape that leaves visitors awestruck. But as you venture deeper, you'll uncover sights few have ever seen before. Roaring waterfalls, winding rivers, dense canopies, and captivating wildlife await, making this a true escape from civilization.

Cave Exploration in Mulu National Park:

Underneath the surface lies a completely different world. The Mulu mountains house some of the world's most impressive subterranean systems, shaped over millions of years. Here's a glimpse of our recent exploration of a fraction of these caves, hosted by Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) in partnership with MASwings and Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa.

Journey into the Deep:

A 30-minute boat ride from Mulu Marriott took us to the starting point of our adventure into the Cave of the Winds, the first of two show caves we explored. As we ascended winding limestone steps, we marvelled at the lush surrounding jungle, gradually making our way to the cave's entrance.

Torchlights in hand, we ventured along a wooden path leading deeper into the Cave of the Winds. As we moved through the cave, the subterranean world revealed itself—stalactites hung from the ceiling, stalagmites emerged from the guano-covered ground, and some formed columns, notably at the King's Chamber.

Moving through the dark passages, we observed evidence of the cave's formation by a now-vanished subterranean river. What remained was an underground landscape of unparalleled fascination.

Art by Water:

Each of Mulu's caves is unique. Clearwater Cave, with a length of over 200 kilometres, features a clear river that has created "works of art" over millions of years. To reach the mouth of Clearwater Cave, we climbed 200 steps, a challenge that proved easier than expected.

Inside the cave, its massive size became apparent. The river had carved intricate patterns into the limestone rocks, showcasing nature's artistry. Standing on a bridge over the flowing river within the cave passage was a breath-taking experience, capturing the beauty within the dark hollows of Clearwater Cave.

Experience Mulu:

Now that travel is possible again, we highly recommend a trip to Mulu to explore its amazing caves and climbs. Mulu Airport is accessible via MASwings flights from Miri, Kuching, or Kota Kinabalu. For luxury and nature lovers, Mulu Marriott Resort & Spa offers an ideal stay amid a pristine tropical jungle.

Adventure Itineraries:

- 3-Day Jungle Trekker's Delight: Experience the best of Sarawak's rainforests with a jungle trek in Bako National Park, cave exploration in Mulu, and a relaxing river cruise.

- 5-Day Cultural and Natural Immersion: Combine cultural encounters with indigenous communities, wildlife safaris, and a caving expedition in Gunung Gading National Park.

- 7-Day Ultimate Borneo Adventure: Unite all the elements of Sarawak's adventure offerings, including cave exploration, white-water rafting, mountain climbing, jungle trekking, and cultural experiences.

Sustainable Adventure Tourism:

Sarawak is committed to sustainable adventure tourism, ensuring the preservation of its unique natural and cultural heritage. Local communities actively participate in ecotourism initiatives, and the Sarawak government places a strong emphasis on conservation and responsible travel.

What to do in Sarawak?

Gastronomy

Sarawak's gastronomy is a vibrant blend of indigenous traditions and cultural influences. Indigenous communities like the Dayak and Iban contribute unique dishes such as "Midin" and "Manok Pansuh," featuring wild ferns and bamboo-cooked chicken, respectively. The state's proximity to the South China Sea ensures fresh seafood, showcased in dishes like "Sarawak Laksa" and "Umai," a zesty raw fish salad.

In addition to these indigenous flavours, Sarawak features Chinese and Malay culinary influences. Kuching's Chinatown offers iconic dishes like "Kolo Mee" and "Kampua Mee," while Malay cuisine includes spicy delights like "Nasi Ayam Penyet." Sarawak's gastronomy is a diverse, flavourful journey through a melting pot of cultures and ingredients, making it a must-visit destination for food lovers.

Sarawak's national dish, "Sarawak Laksa," is a culinary masterpiece that embodies the state's rich and diverse food culture. This aromatic and spicy noodle soup is renowned for its tantalizing combination of flavours, featuring a creamy and fragrant coconut-based broth infused with a symphony of local spices, lemongrass, and chili paste. What makes Sarawak Laksa truly exceptional is the generous use of fresh seafood, including prawns, fish, and sometimes even squid, reflecting the state's coastal location. Served with a mound of vermicelli rice noodles and garnished with ingredients like bean sprouts, shredded chicken, and lime, this dish is an explosion of taste sensations in every mouthful. It's a must-try for any food lover visiting Sarawak, offering a delightful journey into the heart of the state's culinary heritage.

Hawker Stalls - When it comes to savouring the finest in local cuisine, the go-to spots are the hawker stalls found at coffee shops and food centres, each boasting its own unique signature dishes. These culinary gems offer budget-friendly prices while ensuring that the ingredients are consistently freshly prepared. For those planning to visit during breakfast or lunch hours, arriving early is advisable to secure your pick before they run out.

Festive Dining - Sarawak's vibrant food culture comes alive during religious and ethnic festivals, where our cherished "open house" tradition invites you to partake in the culinary treasures of our land. Venture to an Iban longhouse during Gawai Dayak, where you can relish the exquisite flavours of jungle delicacies paired with tuak, a traditional rice wine. Pay a visit to a Malay kampung during Hari Raya, where rendang (a spicy dry curry) and Sarawak kek lapis (Sarawak layer cakes) await your taste buds. Or indulge in the rich and sweet notes of mooncakes during the Chinese mid-autumn festival, offering a delightful glimpse into our diverse culinary heritage.

Nature Experiences

Gunong Mulu National Park

Gunong Mulu National Park, the largest in Sarawak, is Malaysia's first UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2000, known for its vast limestone caves, including the world's largest chamber and Southeast Asia's longest cave. Visitors can explore four captivating show caves, a bat observatory, a rainforest canopy walk and embark on adventurous caving experiences. For the ultimate adventure, there's the challenging Pinnacles climb and the historic Headhunter's Trail through pristine rainforests.

At the Geopark, you'll encounter fascinating geological formations, unique biodiversity including orangutans and proboscis monkeys, and an array of cultural elements that represent Sarawak's rich heritage, from architecture to culinary traditions.

Bako National Park

Despite being one of Sarawak's smallest parks, Bako National Park stands out as one of the most captivating and diverse due to its seven distinct plant ecosystems, all packed into an area smaller than Manhattan Island. While Bako is renowned for its iconic primate species, including the unique Proboscis Monkey exclusive to Borneo, and the endearing Silvery Langur, it offers much more to visitors. The park boasts 17 well-maintained trails that allow visitors to explore nearly all the different vegetation types found in Borneo. Among the commonly sighted wildlife species are the Proboscis Monkey, Silvery Langur, Bornean Bearded Pigs, Long-tailed Macaques, Colugos or Flying Lemurs, White-bellied Sea Eagles, and a host of others. Remarkably, wildlife encounters are almost guaranteed, and all of this natural wonder is less than an hour away from Kuching, including a delightful longboat ride across the bay.

Niah National Park

Niah National Park, located in Miri and spanning 139 hectares, is celebrated for its rich biodiversity, archaeological significance, and breathtaking limestone formations. It is most renowned for the ancient skeletal remains found in the Niah Caves, dating back an astounding 65,000 years, marking the oldest recorded human settlement in Southeast Asia.

Niah's Great Cave is a mesmerizing chamber adorned with striking stalactites and stalagmites and serves as a habitat for millions of swiftlets, whose nests are highly sought after for their culinary and medicinal value. The Painted Cave, on the other hand, boasts prehistoric wall paintings that offer a glimpse into the lives of ancient inhabitants dating back thousands of years. With its captivating caves, vibrant rainforests, and insights into ancient civilizations, Niah National Park is a must-visit, especially for archaeology enthusiasts worldwide.

In early October 2023, an assessment team from the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) conducted a comprehensive five-day evaluation to determine Niah National Park's eligibility for UNESCO World Heritage Site status. The findings will be presented to the World Heritage Committee for review and a final decision, which will be announced at a later date.

Caving in Southwest Sarawak

The rugged landscape of Southwest Sarawak hides a subterranean wonderland of magnificent limestone caves, which receive significantly fewer visitors compared to those in Niah and Mulu National Parks. Beyond the breathtaking rock formations, these caves also reveal ancient cave paintings and offer stunning jungle vistas throughout the journey. Many of these caves are well-suited for beginners and do not demand a high level of physical fitness. There's a variety of options available, ranging from single-day caving expeditions to more extended journeys that incorporate caving, rock climbing, 4x4 excursions, forest hikes, and visits to remote Bidayuh villages. Activities cater to individuals at beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, and all necessary equipment and protective attire are provided.

Birding in Sarawak

Sarawak is a haven for bird enthusiasts, boasting 22 Important Bird Areas, where you can find more than 600 of the 680-plus bird species recorded in Borneo, including a remarkable 50 endemic species. Whether you're looking for a casual half-day birding adventure to complement a family vacation or embarking on a dedicated ornithological expedition in search of undiscovered avian treasures, Sarawak offers diverse experiences. Just a 30-minute drive from Kuching, you can witness a significant portion of the world's Chinese Egret population, or venture deep into the rainforest highlands of Paya Maga for a chance to spot the elusive Black Oriole.

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, Black- winged 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. 1½ 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 Fluffy-backed 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.

In Search of Wild Orangutans

The region encompassing Batang Ai National Park in Sarawak boasts one of the world's highest concentrations of wild orangutans. Situated just upriver from Batang Ai Hydro Lake, it provides excellent opportunities for observing these remarkable creatures in their natural habitat. Collaborating with local operator Borneo Adventure, the Iban communities in Ulu Ai offer a range of treks along the park's periphery, where the likelihood of encountering wild orangutans is greatest (though no guarantees can be made), and signs of their presence, such as both aged and fresh nests, are almost invariably encountered. Trekkers should possess a reasonable level of fitness and are encouraged to contribute to conservation efforts by documenting sightings and nest locations using portable GPS devices.

Diving and beaches

Diving in Sarawak

The Miri-Sibuti Coral Reefs National Park in Northeast Sarawak is rapidly gaining recognition as a top-tier diving destination, thanks to its wealth of pristine patch reefs boasting excellent visibility ranging from 10 to 30 meters. These reefs are adorned with a rich tapestry of hard and soft corals, along with a profusion of gorgonians, sea-whips, anemones, sponges, and crinoids. The underwater world here teems with an array of reef species, including angelfish, butterflyfish, fusiliers, groupers, stingrays, triggerfish, parrot fish, and wrasses.

This marine wonderland boasts outstanding biodiversity and accessibility, ranking among the best in the region, featuring an impressive population of over 100 nudibranch species. Additionally, two relatively safe wreck dive sites are available, and encounters with majestic whale sharks in open waters are a common occurrence.

With approximately 40 dive sites situated in close proximity to the City of Miri, diving is both hassle-free and convenient, affording ample time to explore the city and its surroundings. Miri's extensive history as a hub for commercial divers involved in oil exploration and production ensures that divers can expect the highest standards of safety, training, guidance, and equipment, along with specialized dive medical facilities located right within the city.

In addition to Miri, Kuching also presents captivating diving opportunities, encompassing reef dives around the islands of the Talang Satang National Park and the exploration of World War II historical wrecks in the deeper waters off Santubong.

Damai Beach and The Santunbong Peninsula

Damai Beach stands as Sarawak's premier beach resort area and serves as an ideal launching point for exploring the wonders of Southwest Sarawak. Nestled on the Santubong Peninsula, with the commanding presence of Mount Santubong looming over the sea, Damai boasts a diverse range of attractions suitable for guests of all ages. These include serene fishing villages, untouched jungles, exquisite seafood restaurants, an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course, a world-renowned "living museum," and a variety of beachfront resort hotels, eco-friendly lodges, and guesthouses.

For those seeking unforgettable experiences, there are numerous tours and excursions to embark upon. These adventures encompass jungle treks leading to the summit of Mount Santubong, captivating Irrawaddy dolphin watching tours, scenic river cruises with wildlife sightings, and birdwatching expeditions at Buntal, one of Malaysia's primary hubs for migratory birds. In the horizon, you'll spot two small islands – Pulau Satang Besar and Pulau Satang Kecil – integral parts of the Talang-Satang National Park, a vital sanctuary for sea turtle conservation.

Sarawak also offers several more rustic beach destinations that beckon adventurous travellers. Sampadi, Lundu, and Sematan, along the western coastline of Kuching, feature pristine white sand beaches and accommodations in cozy chalet resorts and

charming village homestays. Up north, Bintulu and Miri offer city beaches that captivate with their beauty, and further south from Miri, you'll discover a fine selection of beaches, complete with modest lodges and homestay options. The most secluded coastal gems can be found within Sarawak's National Parks, notably Bako, Tanjung Datu, and Similajau, promising tranquillity and a deep connection with nature.

Pure culture: festivals and events in Sarawak

Malaysia's rich cultural diversity fosters a vast array of traditions, rituals, and celebrations. Throughout the year, travellers have the opportunity to engage in vibrant festivals and events, immersing themselves in the multifaceted culture of this multi-ethnic nation.

The Malaysian event calendar kicks off with the eagerly anticipated **Chinese New Year** in January. This significant celebration, observed by Chinese communities worldwide, heralds the commencement of the new lunar calendar year, emphasizing the importance of family bonds. Festive preparations typically commence a month in advance, involving the acquisition of decorations, new attire, and special foods. Spring cleaning is a customary prelude, and households are adorned with paper scrolls bearing heartfelt wishes.

Rainforest World Music Festival - 30th Anniversary in 2027 Sarawak's internationally acclaimed Rainforest World Music Festival will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2027. Held against the spectacular rainforest backdrop of Sarawak Cultural Village, the festival brings together international musicians, indigenous performers and cultural experiences, making the anniversary a major highlight of Sarawak's 2027 events calendar.

Jazz Festival- The Sarawak Tourism Board orchestrates the Borneo Jazz Festival, an event staged in Miri, the second-largest city in Sarawak. Since its inception in 2005, Borneo Jazz has consistently drawn a formidable international roster of musicians, with a primary focus on mainstream jazz while also incorporating elements of blues, funk, and fusion music. Notable artists gracing the festival's stage have included luminaries like Maria Muldaur, John Hammond, Jump4Joy, Hazmat Modine, Schalk Joubert, and the New Cool Collective. This festival is an annual affair that unfolds in Miri. Borneo Jazz Festival usually takes place in July. For more information: https://jazzborneo.com/

Gawai Dayak Festival, observed annually on June 1st and 2nd, is a cherished festival among the Dayak communities of Sarawak. It goes far beyond being a mere display of indigenous culture for tourists; it is a heartfelt celebration that resonates in every village and longhouse. Urban Dayaks make their way back home to partake in the festivities, creating a backdrop of joy and genuine enthusiasm. During this time, weddings are solemnized, melodious songs fill the air, toasts are raised, and families reunite with warmth. In the spirit of the grand Malaysian open house tradition, visitors are warmly embraced. The festival commences on the evening of May 31st with traditional music and rituals aimed at warding off the negative influences of greed, ensuring the merriment remains untainted. The festival leader, known as Tua Gawai, offers a chicken as a token of gratitude for a bountiful harvest. This ritual is followed by a communal dinner and an informal gathering marked by spirited dancing, singing, and revelry. This festive spirit carries on for the subsequent two days, and perhaps even longer, as long as the rice wine supply remains abundant. For those who relish exuberant celebrations, Gawai Dayak stands out as the prime occasion to experience the vibrant essence of Sarawak. For more information: https://sarawaktourism.com/blog/gawai-dayak-festival

At the end of an exciting year, Malaysia's Christian community celebrates **Christmas** and on **New Year's Eve** impressive fireworks take place!

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