INTRODUCTION

Miri is Sarawak's second largest city and the gateway to the state's fascinating northeast region. A rapidly expanding business and commercial centre and the home of Sarawak's oil industry, Miri is located in Northeast Sarawak close to the Brunei border. In recent years Miri has become a major tourism gateway and the jumping-off point for some of Sarawak's world-famous National Parks, including Niah Caves, Gunung Mulu, Loagan Bunut and Lambir Hills. Other interesting possibilities include the remote Bario Highlands and the mighty Baram River, as well as a number of excellent offshore dive locations.

Miri's original population was primarily Melanau, but since the development of the oil industry people have flocked here from all over the state, and Miri's 300,000 inhabitants reflects Sarawak's diverse ethnic mix-up. Chinese, Ibans, Malays, Melanaus, Bisayas, Orang Ulus (mostly Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit and Lun Bawang), Bidayuhs, Indians and Eurasians all make their home here, along with West Malaysians and a sizeable expatriate community.

The city is fast becoming an important tourism destination in its own right, in line with its official designation; “Miri - Resort City”. The city has an excellent range of hotels in all price categories and a wide selection of food outlets.

A Brief History

The history of Miri is also the history of Sarawak's oil industry. The area had long been known for black oil that seeped from the ground, as noted by the Resident of Baram, Claude Champion de Crespigny, in 1882. One of de Crespigny's successors, Dr Charles Hose, persuaded the Anglo Saxon Petroleum Company, a British subsidiary of Shell, to conduct exploratory drilling in the area, and on August 10 1910, the first oil was struck on a hill overlooking the small fishing village of Miri, at a depth of 123 metres. The well, subsequently christened the “Grand Old Lady”, continued to produce oil until 1972.

With the discovery of commercial quantities of oil, Miri was rapidly transformed from a sleepy fishing village to a booming oil town. By the mid 1920s it had become the administrative centre of the Baram region, and continued to thrive until the onset of World War 2. Shell staff did their best to sabotage the Miri oilfield, to prevent the invading Japanese forces from making use of it, but resourceful Japanese engineers soon had the field back to pre-war production levels.

During the late 1950s, the onshore oilfield began to dry up. Prospecting in remote peat swamp forest yielded poor results, so exploration moved offshore with the development of mobile exploration rigs. By the early 1970s offshore production had reached 95,000 barrels a day, but the onshore field was now in terminal decline, and was closed down on 1st October 1972. At
the same time, the support and administration facilities were moved to Lutong, just north of the town.

The move offshore coincided with a boom in Sarawak’s timber industry, and Miri became a major timber processing and transhipment hub, so the economy of the town continued to grow throughout the 1970s and 80s. The tourism sector also began to take off, fuelled initially by weekend visitors from nearby Brunei. Miri continued to prosper throughout the 1990s, and in recognition of its booming population and crucial contributions to Sarawak’s economy, was granted City status on 13th May 2005.

Attractions – Around Town

All attractions are within easy walking distance of the city centre unless otherwise indicated.

Miri Old Town is a narrow warren of streets crammed with tiny shops selling a huge variety of goods, from Chinese funeral supplies to hi-tech electronics, as well as some of the most traditional and original coffee shops in town. The Old Town is gradually being renovated, street-by-street, but the architectural style and layout is being carefully preserved.

Tamu Muhibbah, opposite the central bus station, is a colourful native market where you’ll find a range of exotic fruits and vegetables, handicrafts and produce from upriver areas, including fragrant Bario rice. Good photo opportunities.

Taman Selera, on Brighton Beach, is a popular food centre, noted especially for its fresh seafood, and an ideal spot for watching the sunset. The beach here is popular with joggers and Tai Chi exponents. Two small piers are popular with anglers, and offer excellent views of Miri and the surrounding area. Oil Well No. 1, known as the “grand old lady,” is situated on top of Canada hill. The well has an important place in Miri’s history, as it was here that oil was first struck by Sarawak Shell in 1910. Nowadays the site also houses a well designed and interesting Petroleum Museum (open daily, 9 am – 5 pm, admission free), which traces the history and technological development of the oil and gas industries in Malaysia. Take a taxi.

The Miri Handicraft Centre on Jln Brooke is a fascinating showcase of the ethnic arts and crafts of northern Sarawak. Stalls are run by the individual producers, and craftspeople can often be viewed at work here. Items on sale include Penan mats and basketry, Orang Ulu beadwork and woodcarvings, and a variety of textiles from around the state. Cultural performances are occasionally held at weekends. Open 9 am – 6 pm daily.

The Saberkas Weekend Market (Saberkas Commercial Centre, Pujut – Lutong road) has a huge variety of Chinese. According to local legend, work started in the temple in 1913, in order to give thanks to the deity for helping to end a mysterious epidemic.

Miri City Fan (Jln Merpati/Jln Kipas) is an award-winning urban park complex comprising a variety of theme gardens, including a Botanical Garden and an Islamic Garden. It is also home to Miri City Library, a Public Swimming Pool, and a large Amphitheatre where concerts are frequently held. The City Fan is popular with locals for strolling, jogging or just chilling out.

Canada Hill, the Petroleum Museum & Oil Well No. 1. Canada Hill, a limestone ridge overlooking the city, offers excellent views of Miri and the surrounding area. Oil Well No. 1, known as the “grand old lady,” is situated on top of Canada hill. The well has an important place in Miri’s history, as it was here that oil was first struck by Sarawak Shell in 1910. Nowadays the site also houses a well designed and interesting Petroleum Museum (open daily, 9 am – 5 pm, admission free), which traces the history and technological development of the oil and gas industries in Malaysia. Take a taxi.

The Saberkas Weekend Market (Saberkas Commercial Centre, Pujut – Lutong road) has a huge variety of
goods on sale, from everyday household items to local handicrafts and jungle produce, as well as dozens of tempting food stalls. Runs from Friday evening until Sunday midday. Take a taxi.

The San Ching Tian temple (Jin Krook 9) is the largest Taoist temple in Southeast Asia. The superb red roof, elegant lotus design motif and the delightful wind chimes make this a very impressive and atmospheric place to visit. Take a taxi.

The Sikh Temple on Jln Kubu (10 mins walk from city centre) is one of only two in Sarawak. It is attractively located in the shade of a 100-year-old angsana tree.

Taman Awam Miri is a huge family park with children’s playground, botanical garden, soft adventure activities and jogging trails. The park is dotted with stone carvings and sculpture, overlooked by a towering wooden walkway leading to an observation platform. Open daily, entrance is free. Located 3km from City Centre, take a taxi.

Taman Bulatan is a large urban park sandwiched between two major roads. It is a popular jogging spot and also features a children’s boating lake.

**Attractions - Out of Town**

Amateur geologists will be fascinated by the Airport Road Outcrop, a raised outcrop of layered laterite and other soft rocks that clearly illustrate how the surrounding land was formed and how Miri rose from the sea over the last 10-15 million years. Just get your taxi driver to make a brief stop on the way to or from the airport.

The Miri Crocodile Farm at Kuala Baram, 24km from Miri, is home to more than 1,000 estuarine crocodiles and false gharials, and also features a snake house and a small zoo. The farm is fully CITES registered. Open daily 9 am to 6 pm. Enquire for feeding times, Tel: 604108. Taxi or Kuala Baram bus.

The Luak Bay Esplanade, 11km south of town, has an attractive white sand beach, making it a popular spot for picnics and barbecues, and probably the best spot in Miri to enjoy the spectacular tropical sunsets. Taxi or Miri Bus Nos. 11 and 13.

Hawaii Beach is located at Kampung Bakam, a 15 minute drive from Miri. The entrance is in the village next to the bus stop, and a wooden footbridge leads to the palm-fringed beach. Picnic and barbecue facilities can be provided for a small charge. Taxi or Miri Bus No. 13.

Just south of Kampung Bakam, Tuscan Beach and Cliffs is a series of relatively narrow white sand beaches broken by rock outcrops and backed by a mixture of sandstone and limestone cliffs for its entire 11 km length. The cliffs rise to a height of 45m in places. The views from the top of the cliffs are spectacular, especially at sunset. No direct beach access - walk from Bakam Beach or Bungai Beach. The cliff top can be accessed on foot from the coastal road.

Further down the coast towards Bekunu are a number of attractive casuarina-fringed beaches - Bungai Beach, Sibuti Beach and Pelaiu Beach - that are ideal for picnicking. They are around an hour’s drive if you have your own transport, or take Miri Bus No. 13.

A great way to discover the Bekunu area is the Kedayan Homestay, which involves 28 fishing and farming families forming the three ethnic Kedayan villages of Kampung Pelaiu, Kampung Bungai and Kampung Jambu. Activities include deep sea fishing and diving. Tel: 019-8247826 (Haji Abdul Ghani bin Kamit), www.go2homestay.com/homestay-kedayan.

Kampung Kuala Sibuti is a Melanau fishing village about 85 km from Miri which boasts probably the best beach in Northern Sarawak, running for 2.5 km from the mouth of Sungai Sibuti to the mouth of Sungai Niah. Past Sungai Niah, a further 32 km of continuous beach, broken only by small streams, runs as far as Kuala Suai. Village homestay available, Tel: 495097. Villagers can arrange crocodile spotting and four/five watching trips. 1½ hrs drive, or Miri Bus No. 13 and hitch hike from the junction (easy).

**Diving**

Miri is fast becoming a popular dive destination, due to an abundance of pristine patch reefs that make up the Miri-Sibuti Reef Marine Park, lying at depths from 7 to 30 metres with average visibility ranging from 10 to 30 metres. Hard and soft corals cover the entire reefs, with abundant groupers, sea-whips, anemones, sponges and crinoids. Angel fish, butterfly fish, fusiliers, groupers, stingrays, trigger fish, parrot fish, wraase are among the numerous reef species that can be seen and over 40 species of nudibranch have been recorded. There are also some interesting wreck dives.

The best time to dive is from March to August, but diving is available all year round. The Dive Sites listed below are just a short boat ride from the city (times given in brackets). All descriptions are courtesy of CoCo Dive.

**Eve’s Garden** (15 min): A shallow reef of just 7 - 12 metres carpeted with soft corals such as leather corals, elephant’s ear and dead man’s fingers. Giant anemones and clown fishes inhabit the reef, along with schooling yellowtail fusiliers and angel fishes.

**Anemone Garden** (30 min): One of the most interesting reefs with a depth range of 10 to 16 metres, with hard and soft corals, anemones and their symbiotic clown fishes, bubble corals, anchor corals, colourful dendronephthya soft corals, feather stars, giant clams, nudibranchs and schooling yellowtails.

**Sea Fan Garden** (30 min): This unique 16 metre deep reef provides an excellent environment for an amazing variety of gorgonian sea fans, sea whips and schooling batfish.

**Tukau Drop-Off** (50 min): An exciting drop-off reef (20 – 60 metres) with a vertical wall. Schooling jacks, barracudas, napoleon Wrasses, yellowtail fusiliers and large groupers are always present, and sharks and trumpet fish are occasionally seen.

**Grouper Patch** (1 hr): Giant groupers inhabit this reef of 15 – 18 metres depth. Spiny lobsters are also present together with yellowtail fusiliers and other schooling fishes.

**Santak Point** (45 min): The average visibility here is 30 metres or more. Large gorgonian fans of 2 meters in size are just a short boat ride from the city (times given in brackets) - that are ideal for picnicking. They are around an hour’s drive if you have your own transport, or take Miri Bus No. 13.

**Atago Maru Wreck** (15 min): A WWII Japanese wreck just off Lutong. The 100 metre ship sits upright with the top deck just 10 metres below the surface. Most of the hull and anemones, clown fishes and a large moray eel has made its home here and travelly, jacks and barracudas are frequently seen.

**Batu Belais Reef** (30 min): A picturesque reef covered with gorgonian trees and sea fans. Batfishes are common among the long swaying sea whips - a photographer’s heaven.

**Sunday Reef** (35 min): Large hard corals make up this richly inhabited 11 – 16 metre deep reef, populated with abundant groupers, crown fishes and nudibranchs.

**Sri Gadong Wreck** (1 hr 10 min): A small 30 metre cargo ship sits on an 18 metre sand bottom. The whole wreck is teeming with life; jacks, yellow grunts, batfish and barracudas circle the wreck while giant groupers swim in and out of the cargo holds.

**Dive Operators**

**CoCo Dive**
Lot 2117, Block 9, Miri - Pujut Road, Tel: 417053, www.cocodive.com.my.

**Red Monkey Divers**
Unit 1, Kelab Gymkana Miri, Jln Dato Abang Indeh, Tel: 014-6998296, www.redmonkeydivers.com

**Accommodation**

Accommodation ranges from budget hostels to luxury international and boutique hotels. The premises listed below are located in the central area and within easy walking distance of major tourist attractions and the central business district, unless otherwise stated. Star ratings are shown where applicable, but many hotels do not apply for rating.

The following is a selection of the more established properties - you may find more on tripadvisor.com and similar websites. Room rates are shown in bands as follows. Many properties have rooms in more than one band.

**Band A**: RM Under RM 50
**Band B**: RM 50 - 149
**Band C**: RM 150 - 299
**Band D**: RM 300 plus

**International Class Hotels**

**Imperial Hotel**, Jln Pos (located adjacent to Imperial Shopping Mall), Tel: 431133, Fax: 431122, Email: enquiries@imperialhotel.com.my. www.imperialhotel.com.my. 118 rooms and 144 serviced apartments. Band C-D. Outlets include Imperial Restaurant (east-meets-west fine dining), Palm Terrace Café (al fresco poolside restaurant), Club Celebrities (nightspot), X-Trim Fitness Centre. Features include swimming pool, non-smoking floor, business centre, rooms & facilities for disabled guests, extensive conference & banquet facilities.

**Imperial Palace Hotel**, Lot 1120, Block 7, Jn Sehati, Tel: 437799. Fax: 437333. Email: enquiries@imperialpalacehotel.com.my, www.imperialpalacehotel.com.my. 307 rooms. Band C-D. Located in the bustling Pelita Commercial Centre, convenient for restaurants and nightlife. Includes Merawan Restaurant (all-day dining) and X-Trim Fitness Centre. Features include swimming pool, non-smoking floor, business centre, rooms & facilities for disabled guests, extensive conference & banquet facilities. Shopping centre adjacent.

**Meritz Hotel**, Bintang Megamall, Jalan Miri-Pujut, Tel: 417888, Fax: 418666, Email: info@meritzhotel.com, www.meritzhotel.com. 190 rooms. Band C-D. Centrally located adjacent to Miri’s largest shopping mall. Outlets
include M-Bar (lounge lobby), Reflection (fun pub with KTV & outdoor lounge), Grand Old Lady Restaurant (all day dining), Sky Garden (al-fresco dining). M Signature Revolving Restaurant & Bar. Features including swimming pool, day spa, fitness centre, non-smoking floor, business centre, rooms & facilities for disabled guests, extensive conference & banquet facilities.


Miri Marriott Resort & Spa (*5), Jln Mengenong Datuk Ong Lawai (facing Brighton Beach), Tel: 421211, www.marriott.com/mymxc. Band D.

Parkcity Every Thing Inn, Jln Jengenmong Datuk Ong Lawai (facing Brighton Beach), Tel: 42040, www.everythinggroup.com. Band B-C.

Business Class Hotels

Dynasty Hotel (*3), Lot 683, Block 9, Jln Pujut-Lutong, Tel: 421111, www.dynastyhotelmiri.com.my. Band B-C.


Budget Hotels

Apollo Hotel, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 415236. Band B. Blueberry Inn, Persimmya Commercial Centre, Tel: 421175. Budget location near to Curtin University and Kuala Baram.

Boulevard Inn, Jln Boulevard, Boulevard Commercial Centre, Tel: 426336. Band B.

Brooke Inn, Jln Brooke, Tel: 421261. Band B.

Cempaka Inn, Jln Hokkien, Tel: 430809. Band B.

City Inn, Lot 568, Jln Lee Tek, Tel: 430577. Band A-B.

Classy Inn, Lot 709-10, Jln Masjid, Tel: 425533. Band B.

Cosy Inn, Lot 545-7, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 411112. Band B.

De Central Inn, Jln Jengenong Datuk Ong Lawai (facing Brighton Beach), Tel: 420288, www.deverythinggroup.com. Band B-C.

Eating Out

Miri’s multi-ethnic population means visitors are assured of a wide variety of Malaysian and international cuisines. Numerous hundreds of dining outlets, so only a small selection can be listed here. Visitors planning to stay more than a few days should check the local press and get dining tips from locals.

Chinese

Chinese coffee-shops are dotted all over town, with food stalls serving a variety of local noodle dishes. Most also serve economical mixed rice dishes at lunchtimes.

2020 Café, 557558 Pella Commercial Centre. Wide selection of dim sum in the mornings and fast food, rice and noodle dishes lunchtime. 6 am - 2.30 pm.

Didi Cafe, 948 Jln Perry (near Imperial Hotel). Popular coffee shop with stalls selling laksa, kolo mee, claypot noodles and chicken rice. 6 am - 4.30 pm.

Grand Palace Hotel. Extensive Cantonese menu, dim sum served from 8 am to 2 pm dinner 6 pm to 10 pm.

Han Palace Restaurant, Jln Pool Chang, offers a wide range of sweet and not-so-sweet creations. 11 am - 11 pm.

Jing Wood Café, 612 Pellea Commercial Centre. Very popular for its fried oyster kway teow. 7.30 am to 1.30 am.

Kok Chee Restaurant, Park Building next to Park Hotel. Tel: 433814. Gourmet Chinese cuisine, booking advisable at weekends. 9 am - 12 pm.

Michael Steamboat, next to Boulevard Shopping Mall. Steamboat and BBQ buffet dinner. Eat as much as you want for RM 20 per person.

Miri City Food Court, 2563 South Piasau, Jalan Bulatan Miri. Stalls with a selection of Chinese, Malay and Indian food. Good beef noodles and dim sum. 6 am to 11 pm.

Open Air Market, Jln Brooke. Centre of Miri Old Town, with famous local dishes whose recipes have been passed on for generations. Look out for the curry rice and fried kway teow. Sells out fast so go in the morning to avoid disappointment. Non-halal.

New Kook Kee Café (at Metro Hotel), Jln North Yu Seng. Chinese coffee shop selling kolo mee and good beef noodles.

Pelta Hia Mi Food Centre, 553-554 Pella Commercial Centre. Busy 24-hour coffee shop popular with night owls place due to cheap beer and live football on TV.

QQ Restaurant, 539 Pella Commercial Centre. This coffee shop boasts some of the best roasted duck in town. 7 am - 10.30pm.

Sky Garden, 17th Floor, Meritz Hotel, offers afle frasemo steamboat with spectacular views. 3.30 pm - midnight.

Yong Seng Café, 542 Pella Commercial Centre. One of the best kolo mee stalls in town and a popular hangout for supper. 7 am - 4.30 am.

WTZ Cafe, Ground Floor, Lot 584, Jln North Yu Seng. This busy cafe serves just about every type of Chinese noodle dish there is. 6.30 am - 5 pm.

Coffee, Tea & Snack Bars

Miri is home to all the leading coffee bar franchises. The Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf is on the Outdoor Ground Floor, Bintang Megamall. San Francisco Coffee can be found at Mi Square Shopping Complex and Starbucks has outlets at Miri Airport and Bintang Megamall.

Desserts

Ground Floor, Petala Commercial Centre. Homemade ice-cream, teas and pastries. 11 am - midnight.

Secret Recipe, 349-350 Pella Commercial Centre. Local branch of Malaysia’s popular cake & fusion franchise. 9 am - 9 pm.

ZenQ Desserts, Ground Floor, Boulevard Shopping Centre. A wide range of sweet and not-so-sweet creations. 11 am - 11 pm.

Fast Food & Franchise Outlets

Pizza Hut & McDonalds are in Bintang Megamall, together with Kung Perry Roasters and Sushi King.

KFC has branches dotted around town including Bintang Megamall, Jln Bendahara, Imperial Mall and Boulevard Hyper Market. Local chain Sugar Bun has branches at...
the Imperial Mall, Bintang Megamall, Wisma Pelita and Boulevard Hyper Market. Marrybrown, another Malaysian franchise, is at Bintang Megamall and Miri Airport.

Indian

Banana Leaf Restaurant & Krishna Fish Head Curry, Lot 1396, Jln Kubu. Spicy South Indian banana leaf meals. 11am - 10pm.

Bilal Islamic Restaurant, Taman Jade Manis (near Mega Hotel). An old Miri favourite, serving a variety of curries plus biryani rice and Indian bread dishes such as murttabak, roti canai and thesai. 7 am - 9 pm.

Khan's Islamic Restaurant, Jln Maju. Run by same family as Bilal, same comments apply.

Restoran Al-Auna, Lot 947, Jln Penny (near Imperial Hotel) and Lot 549, Pelita Commercial Centre. Breakfast favourites such as thosai, roti canai, murttabak, plus biryani rice, curries and noodles served all day 6 am - 9 pm.

Taj Restaurant, 113 Utongg Bazar. North Indian tandoori dishes and South Indian curries. Well worth the taxi fare. 10 am - 10 pm

Indigenous (Kelabit)

Summit Café, Centre Point Commercial Centre. A warm, friendly restaurant offering traditional ethnic food, especially genuine Kelabit dishes from the highlands of Bario. Recommendations include Nuba Loya (Bario rice in isip leaves) and Labo Senutuk (pounded and seasoned wild boar meat). 7 am - 3 pm. Closed Sundays.

Japanese

Niko, Lot 2407, Piasau Business Park, Jln Bulatan. Extensive menu of Japanese dishes (including excellent sushi). 12 - 2.30 pm, 6 - 10.30 pm.

Shiki, Ground Floor, Boulevard Commercial Centre. Reasonably priced Japanese cuisine. 11 am - 10.30 pm.

Korean

New Seoul, Jln Brightown. Known for its huge portions. 10 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 11 pm. Closed Sunday lunchtime.

Malay

Bulatan Cafe. Lot 234, Taman Jade Manis (near Mega Hotel). Mixed rice buffet of curries and vegetables. 7 am - midnight.

CafeNika, Lot 437, Jln Bendahara. Roti canai, rojak, fried rice and noodles plus mixed rice. 5.30 am - midnight.

Closed Sun.

Gerai Wawasan Food Stalls, Jln China. Conveniently located in the centre of town, this busy food court has a range of stalls selling Malay hawker favourites.

Irhythm Bistro, Lot 427, Jln Bendahara. Large Malay corner café serving mixed rice, laksa, noodles and soups. 7 am - 4 pm.

Madi's, Jln Merpati. Popular Malay restaurant serving a wide range of dishes, including roti canai, noodles, mixed rice, satay as well as simple western dishes. Lunch buffet 8 am - midnight.

Nagalar Nasi Lemak, Jalan Merpati, next to Standard Chartered Bank. The nasi lemak here is so popular the whole restaurant is dedicated to this special dish. The crispy chicken and spicy sambal are the icing on the cake. Mid-morning - 3 pm.

Nur Zanah & Catering, Lot 429, Jln Bendahara. Mixed rice, nasi lemak, curries, tom yum soup and more. 6 am - 5 pm.

Ras Segar, Lot 324 Jln Cressandra (off Jln Bendahara). Mixed rice and nasi lemak. 7 am - 9 pm (7 pm weekends).


SEDC Food Centre, near Tua Pek Kong Chinese temple, Jln Oleander. Malay stalls selling mixed rice, noodles, soups, curry dishes, etc.

Surabaya Restaurant, Lot 288 Jln Bendahara. Chicken rice, mixed rice, Malay soup and noodle dishes. 9 am - 9 pm.


Seafood

Apollo Seafood, 4 Jln Yu Seng Selatan. A popular old Miri favourite, Apollo has been serving value-for-money seafood for as long as most of its patrons can remember. Open daily, 6pm - late.

Dragon Seafood Restaurant, 531 Bakam Road. On the edge of town facing the sea. Definitely worth the taxi fare. 11 am - 11 pm.

Marina Bay Seafood, Marina Park. Sprawling seafood restaurant with tempting Italian and Chinese seafood menus. 11.30 am - 2 pm, 5.30 pm - 10 pm.

Maxim Restaurant, Lot 1062, Bintang Jaya Commercial Centre, Jln Miri-Pujut. Long established Miri favourite selling a wide selection of seafood and the best curly fish head in town. 11 am - 11 pm.

New Tanjung Seafood, Brighton Road. Popular air-con seafood restaurant located near the Mariott, 5pm-10pm.

Seaworld Seafood Centre, Jln Yu Seng Utara. Tasty and economical fish noodle dishes served during the day, and somewhat pricier fresh live seafood straight from the display tanks in the evenings. 9 am - 2 am daily.

Taman Selera, Brighton Beach. This popular hawker centre has a variety of Chinese stalls serving fresh seafood - as well as Malay stalls offering satay, rice and noodle dishes - to be eaten to the sound of waves breaking on the nearby beach. 4pm - 11 pm (although most stalls open between 5 and 6 pm).

Tanjung Seafood, Lot 3, Brighton Rd, opposite Mariott Hotel. Popular and friendly seafood restaurant set in and around an old wooden house. Steamed red snapper is the house speciality. 6pm - 11 pm.

Tanjung Pakk Hock Lin Seafood, Lot 720 & 721, Jln Brightone. Next to New Tanjung, with a similar menu and ambience.

Yi Hai Hai Seafood, 892-893 Miri Waterfront Commercial Centre. Choose from a selection of live seafood in aquarium displays. Reasonable prices and relaxing river views. House specialty is Assam Fish. Also serves great crab. 3pm - 12.30 am.

Thai

Siamese Secrets, Lot 513, Ground Floor, Jln Merbau. Popular, central city centre serving Thai dishes, including pasta & pizza. Western, Malaysian and Mexican dishes. 12 pm - 3 pm & 6 pm - 4 am.

Vegetarian

CGS Vegetarian Cafe, Lot 2922, Jln Bulan Sabin. Popular, vegan-friendly Chinese restaurant - you may have to wait for a table at peak times. 11 am - 10 pm.

Convenient Vegetarian (Con-V), Lot 518, Ground floor, Pelita Commercial Centre. Serves both western and Chinese vegetarian food. 11 am - 9 pm.

Tzu Xin Yuan, Lot 779, Jln Bintang Jaya Utama. Chinese cuisine. Italian, Chinese and Thai food plus pasta & pizza. 6.30 am - 4 pm.

Veg King, Lot 1399 Jln Kubu. Chinese & Malay dishes, vegan-friendly, with juice bar. 7 am - 9 pm.

Western/International

Al Fresco - see Entertainment listing.

Barcelona, Lot 1190, Jln Yu Seng Utara. Tapas bar with a good selection of Spanish wines. Try the freshly-made burritos from the stalls outside. 4 pm - 1 am.

Beach Republic, Jln Bakam, Luak Bay. This lively resort complex is popular for its DIY burgers and barbecues. Also serves local favourites. 10 am - midnight. Take a taxi to Miri Bus 11 or 13.

Cafe Bavaria, 1150, Ground Floor, Jalan Bendahara. Cosy corner cafe serving, authentic German dishes and other western retirees. House specialties are Mitternacht Schnitzel and Fish Normandy. 11 am - 1 am.

Cafe Miri Bar & Bistro, Lot 2120, Jln Bulan Sabin, Taman Yakin. Open air bar-cum-restaurant serving western food at reasonable prices. 3 pm - 11 pm, closed Tues.

Dave's Deli, Ground Floor, Imperial Mall. Western style deli in an upscale setting. 9am - 11pm.

Piccolo Fratini, Lot 1399, Centrepoint Blvd, Phase 2, Jln Bakam Road. A popular old Miri favourite, Piccolo Fratini serves great crab. 3pm - 12.30 am.

Entertainment

Entertainment

Pubs and Bars

The residents of Miri like to enjoy themselves, the city has a justified reputation as a party town, especially at weekends, and there is no shortage of entertainment outlets. There are a few pubs, bars and karaoke lounges in the city centre, but the most happening nightlife takes place in and around the Pelita Commercial Centre, a short taxi ride from the city centre hotels. Here you'll find a few pubs ideal for a chat with friends and a cluster of lively bars and clubs where Miri's party crowd hangs out. For cheap beer, head for the coffee shops which offer special '3-can' deals.

Hazard Bistro, Canada Hill, next to Petroleum Museum. It is anувen law that if you want to make new friends over a beer or many, you go where the local Hash House Harriers hang out, which is how this place got its name, after the local Hazard Hash. Perched on top of Canada Hill, Hazard has the best view of any spot in Miri. Get here early for spectacular sunsets, a great selection of affordable beers, tasty barbecues and excellent company. 4 pm - 1 am.

Al Fresco, Unity Centre, Pelita Commercial Centre. This pavement café bar serves western food and pasta dishes, but is also a popular drinking spot thanks to giant TV screens showing live football, 2 pm - 2 am.

Atmosphere, Lot 1120, Jalan Sehati, Miri Square Shopping Complex. This outdoor bistro makes for a breezy place to hang out. 2 giant TV screens cater to the football crowd. 8 am - 1 pm, 5 pm - 1.30 am.

Balcony, Upper Floor, Unity Centre, Pelita Commercial Centre. Pub with dancefloor that attracts the younger party crowd. Open 8am - 12am, even the shark in the huge aquarium above the bar dances. 6 pm - 2am.

Chaplins, 339, Ground Floor, Pelita Commercial Centre. Small, friendly pub popular among Miri's expat community. 5 pm - 2 am.

Cheerie Berries, Unity Centre, Pelita Commercial Centre. Popular for its live bands and R&B playlist. 2 giant TV screens and a pool table. 5 pm - 2am.

Club Celebrities, Imperial Palace Hotel. Miri's biggest and swankiest dance club, with cutting-edge sound &
lights as well as top DJs and live bands. Go with friends or with good company as well as the dance floor and pool tables attract the younger crowd while the balcony and sofa areas provide quieter areas to hang out from 4pm to 2am. Wheels, Waterfront Commercial Centre. Music café providing quieter areas to hang out. 4pm - 2am.

Yakin. The dance floor and pool tables attract the younger crowd while the balcony and sofa areas provide quieter areas to hang out from 4pm to 2am. Lellang, Long Seridan, Marudi and Mukah.

For other occasional live bands. 4 pm - 2.30 am.

TRAVEL & TOUR CONNECTIONS


Road: Miri has road links with all major towns in Sarawak and Brunei.

Boat: Express boats for Marudi and Long Lama depart from the wharf near the ASEAN Bridge at Kuala Baram. See Marudi section for details.

Bus: Local Services depart from the bus station next to the Visitor’s Information Centre. Long Distance Services depart from the Long Distance Bus Terminal at Pujut Corner. At peak holiday periods it is advisable to book long distance bus tickets in advance.

Airport: Miri Bus No. 28 First bus 5.35 am, last bus 6.40 pm.

Bakam (for beaches): Miri Bus No. 13

Batu Niah: See section on Niah Caves National Park.

Bintulu (RM25) – Sibu (RM45) – Sarawak (RM56) - Sri Aman (RM72) – Kuching (RM90): Frequent services from long distance bus terminal. Brunei: PHLS Express, daily at 8.15 am and 3.45 pm (RM40).

Kuala Baram (for Crocodile Farm and Express Boats to Marudi): Miri Bus No. 3 or 1A. Lambir Hills: See section on Lambir Hills National Park.

Limbang: Bintang Jaya Express, daily at 1.30pm (RM38)

Long Distance Bus Terminal: Miri Bus No. 33

To Mukah: 4x daily (also to Dalat) from long distance bus terminal (RM52).

To Pontianak (Indonesia): 4x daily from long distance bus terminal (RM96).

To Taman Selera and Marriot and Everly Hotels: Miri Bus Nos. 11 & 13


Kong Teck Car Rental, 1A-1B Jln Krokop, Tel: 434722. Mega Services Rent A Car. 3 Lorong 1, Sungai Krokop. Tel: 427436.

FT Car Rental, Miri Airport Counter, Tel: 614772. Casbume Car Rental, Miri Airport Counter, Tel: 612799.


Tour Operators: Beware of unlicensed tour operators or individuals offering tours, as they and their vehicles will not be properly insured.

Brighton Tour & Travel, 15 Level 2 Soon Hup Tower, Jln Maju. Tel: 433113, 019-8846186 (24 hrs), Fax: 439113, Email: brightontt@gmail.com, www.brightontt.com. Well established company with a full range of travel, transportation, vehicle rental and reservation services.


Happy Trails Borneo Tours Sdn Bhd, Lot 1081, 1st Floor, Jln Merpati, Tel: 433511, Email: info@happytrailsborneo.com.

KKM Travel & Tours, Lot 236, Taman Jade Manis, Tel: 417899, www.kkmtraveltours.com.


Minda Travel, 1338, Ground Floor, Jalan Sri Dagang Road, Tel: 414433, www.mindastravel.com.my.


Sayu Travel & Tours, 1st Floor, No. 8, Bangunan Sim Peng Lim, Jalan Merbau, Tel: 426100, Email: sayumiri@streamyx.com


Tropical Adventure Travel & Tours, No 12, Ground Floor, Soon Hup Tower, Jln Merbau, Tel: 419337, www.borneotropicaladventures.com.
**Miri** has a wide variety of shops, stores and street markets, selling everything from daily necessities to designer goods and Sarawak handicrafts. The Old Town area and Jalan Yu Seng are particularly good for bargain hunting.

**Shopping Malls**

Bintang Megamall (City Centre, off Jln Merbau) offers over 140 shops and food outlets, plus a bowling alley, a food court, a cineplex and an indoor archery range.

Boulevard Shopping Complex, Jln Miri-Pujut, has over 80 retail outlets, a hypermarket, department store, rooftop food court, children’s playground and video arcade.

The Imperial Mall (part of the Imperial Hotel complex on Jln Yu Seng Utara/Jln Pos) has over 120 retail outlets and restaurants spread over four floors.

Miri Plaza (Pelta Commercial Centre, next to Grand Palace Hotel) features the Servay supermarket and department store and a good selection of small clothing outlets.

**Handicrafts**

Borneo Arts, Lot 548, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, has an excellent selection of local handicrafts.

Miri Heritage Centre (Jln Brooke, see Attractions) offers some of the best selection of local handicrafts.

**Markets**

See Attractions section.

**SPORTS & RECREATION**

**Angling:** The Miri Anglers Club organises deep-sea fishing trips and the annual Miri International Deep Sea Fishing Tournament. Tel: 661676 (Simon Wee), E-mail: mirianglersclub@gmail.com.

**Archery:** An indoor archery range is located in Bintang Megamall (see Shopping).

**Bowling:** A 24-lane bowling centre is located in Bintang Megamall.

**Diving:** See separate Diving section, page 72.

**Fitness Centres:** Well-equipped fitness centres are located in all major hotels. There are X-Trim Fitness Centres at the Imperial and Horizon Palace Hotels.

**Golf:** Miri has a choice of two excellent courses; the 18-hole Miri Golf Club course (whose former pros include Vijay Singh) has an idyllic location between the Miri River and the South China Sea. Green fees (non-members) RM 52.50 (9-holes, weekdays) to RM 147 (18 holes, weekends), Tel: 416787, www.mirigolfclub-sarawak.com. The Eastwood Valley Golf and Country Club offers a par-72 18-hole course in an attractive forest setting 10 minutes drive from the city centre. Tel: 421010, www.eastwoodvalley.com.

**Hash House Harriers:** The Miri Hash (Tel: 656979) and the Hazard Hash (Tel: 019-4558582) both organise regular runs in the surrounding countryside, followed by "on-ons" at some of the city’s many pubs.

**Mountain Biking:** There are many challenging bike trails around Miri. Contact the Miri Mountain Bike Club (Tel: 423589) for information.

**Sailing:** The new Miri Marina offers state-of-the-art berthing facilities for yachts up to 115ft (100m). Contact Capt. Ariffin for details, Tel: 019-3998570 www.mirimarina.com. The Piasau Boat Club, home of the Sarawak Sailing Association, offers dinghy sailing, as well as comprehensive sports facilities. Tel: 655313, www.piasauboatclub.com.

**Swimming:** The Public Swimming Pool is located in the Miri City Fan recreation area (see Attractions).

**Banks & Money Changers:** The following is a list of centrally-located banks and money changers. Banks charge a service fee for changing travellers’ cheques whilst money changers only deal with cash transactions.

**Banks**

CIMB Bank, 1st Floor, Imperial Mall, Jln Merpati.

Hong Leong Bank, Lot 1090, Jln Merpati.

HSBC Bank, Lot 1268, Miri Commercial Centre, Jln Melayu.

MayBank, Wisma Yong Long, Pelta Commercial Centre.

OCBC Bank, Lot 1375, Miri Commercial Centre, Jln Kubu.

Public Bank, 28 China Street.

RHB Bank, Lot 362 Jln Nakshota Gambir.

Standard Chartered Bank, 1383, Jln Kubu, Centre Point II.

**Money Changers**

Asia Gangsa, Ground Floor, Imperial Mall.

Chin Guan, 1 High Street (in back lane)

Brillworth Trading, Lot 277 Taman Jade Manis.

Instant Produce, 7 Jln Raja.

PK Tho & Sons, 21 High Street.

ST Sim, Lot 1156 Waterfront Commercial Centre.

Teck Soon, Lot 355 Jln Brooke (in Khung Chung General Store).

**Doctors and Dentists:** Some hotels have doctors on call, while others will be happy to recommend doctors and dentists. Visitors may use the outpatient department at the Miri Hospital (Jln Lopeng, Tel: 420033). There are also two private hospitals, the ColumbiaAsia Medical Centre (Jln Maigold, Tel: 665262) and the Miri City Medical Centre (Jln Hokkien, Tel: 426622).

**Pharmacies:** Pharmacies are dotted all over town and are open 7 days a week, usually from 9.00 am to 6.00 or 7.00 pm. Staff almost always speak good English and are able to advise on minor health problems.

**Post Office:** The Central Post Office is on Jln Kingsway. There is also a Post Office in the Boulevard Shopping Complex (see Shopping).

**Places of Worship:** For other religions and denominations please check the local press or enquire at the Visitor’s Information Centre.

**Miri Mosque, Jln. Merpati**

**Chinese Temples, Jln. China & Jln Krokop 9 (see Attractions)**

**St. Columb’s Church (Anglican), Jln. Kubu.**

**St. Joseph’s Cathedral (RC), Jln. Angsana, off Miri-Pujut Rd.**

**SIB (Evangelical Church of Borneos), Lot 67, Lrg. 2, Krokop.**

**Sikh Temple, Jln Kubu.**

**Useful Telephone Numbers**

**Central Police Station, Jalan Raja, Tel: 433677**

**Emergency (Police/Ambulance), Tel: 999 (Tel: 112 from mobile phone)**

**Fire & Rescue, Tel: 994 (Tel: 112 from mobile phone)**

**Immigration, Jln Gartak, Tel: 432209**

**Miri Taxi Association (24 hr) Tel: 432277**

**Miri Resident’s Office, Jln Raja, Tel: 433202**

**BINTULU**

Note: The area code for all telephone numbers in Bintulu and its surroundings, unless otherwise stated, is 086 from outside the area and +6086 from overseas. All addresses are 97000 Bintulu unless otherwise stated.

**Introduction**

Originally a sleepy Melanau fishing village, Bintulu is nowadays Sarawak’s main industrial town and principal deep-water port, servicing the oil, gas and timber industries. The town is located at the mouth of the Kemena River and has a population of approximately 180,000, made up primarily of Iban, Chinese, Malays and Melanau, with a smattering of Bisayas, Kadayans, Bidayuhs, Orang Ulu and a large expatriate contingent.

**Attractions**

For the visitor, Bintulu’s main tourist attraction is Similajau National Park, a narrow strip of forest fronted by golden sand beaches (see National Parks chapter). Other attractions & town features are listed below.

**Places of Interest**

- Bako National Park
- Semenggoh Orang Utan
- Iban Long House
- Gunung Tamarau, Rafflesia
- Kuching Waterfall
- Wildlife Cruise

**When you need to combine work and pleasure, we’re your kind of hotel.**

When you need to combine work and pleasure, we’re your kind of hotel.

**Useful Telephone Numbers**

- 7.11pm. Staff almost always speak good English and are able to advise on minor health problems.

- **Post Office:** The Central Post Office is on Jln Kingsway. There is also a Post Office in the Boulevard Shopping Complex (see Shopping).

- **Places of Worship:** For other religions and denominations please check the local press or enquire at the Visitor’s Information Centre.

- **Miri Mosque, Jln. Merpati**

- **Chinese Temples, Jln. China & Jln Krokop 9 (see Attractions)**

- **St. Columb’s Church (Anglican), Jln. Kubu.**

- **St. Joseph’s Cathedral (RC), Jln. Angsana, off Miri-Pujut Rd.**

- **SIB (Evangelical Church of Borneos), Lot 67, Lrg. 2, Krokop.**

- **Sikh Temple, Jln Kubu.**

**Useful Telephone Numbers**

**Central Police Station, Jalan Raja, Tel: 433677**

**Emergency (Police/Ambulance), Tel: 999 (Tel: 112 from mobile phone)**

**Fire & Rescue, Tel: 994 (Tel: 112 from mobile phone)**

**Immigration, Jln Gartak, Tel: 432209**

**Miri Taxi Association (24 hr) Tel: 432277**

**Miri Resident’s Office, Jln Raja, Tel: 433202**

**BINTULU**

Note: The area code for all telephone numbers in Bintulu and its surroundings, unless otherwise stated, is 086 from outside the area and +6086 from overseas. All addresses are 97000 Bintulu unless otherwise stated.

**Introduction**

Originally a sleepy Melanau fishing village, Bintulu is nowadays Sarawak’s main industrial town and principal deep-water port, servicing the oil, gas and timber industries. The town is located at the mouth of the Kemena River and has a population of approximately 180,000, made up primarily of Iban, Chinese, Malays and Melanau, with a smattering of Bisayas, Kadayans, Bidayuhs, Orang Ulu and a large expatriate contingent.

**Attractions**

For the visitor, Bintulu’s main tourist attraction is Similajau National Park, a narrow strip of forest fronted by golden sand beaches (see National Parks chapter). Other attractions & town features are listed below.

**Places of Interest**

- Bako National Park
- Semenggoh Orang Utan
- Iban Long House
- Gunung Tamarau, Rafflesia
- Kuching Waterfall
- Wildlife Cruise

**When you need to combine work and pleasure, we’re your kind of hotel.**

When you need to combine work and pleasure, we’re your kind of hotel.
Pasar Tamu & Pasar Utama are two markets located near each other along the riverfront selling a range of local produce. The cone-shaped roofs symbolize the traditional Melanau headgear, the terendak. The top floor of the Pasar Utama has stalls selling local hawkers' food favourites.

The Night Market (Pasar Malam), off Jln Abang Galau, is a good place to stroll around and try snacks, grilled meats and fish, and delicious local cakes.

The Council Negeri Memorial in the town centre commemorates Sarawak's first State Legislative Council Negeri Memorial.

Tanjung Batu Beach is a local picnic and recreational spot located approximately 3 km from the town centre. Take a taxi or bus No. 9.

Taman Tumbina is a mini-zoo and botanical park located near Tanjung Batu. It features a walk-in hornbill aviary, a walk-in butterfly garden, and exotic animals including flamingos, tigers, crocodiles and pythons. www.tumbina.com.my. 8 am - 6 pm daily, adult RM 2, child (under 12) RM 0.50. Local bus No. 9.

Kudirong Tower, a small observation tower located at Tanjung Kidurong on the outskirts of town offers views of Bintulu's oil and gas facilities and structures. It's best to go shortly after dark when the flame-offs from the refineries and processing facilities make an awe-inspiring sight.

The following is a selection of the more established properties - you may find more on tripadvisor.com and similar websites.

**ACCOMMODATION**

**International/ Business Class Hotels**


Li Hua Hotel (*3*), Lot 36, Berjaya Commercial Centre, Jln Sultan Iskandar, Tel: 335000, www.lihua.com.my. Band B-C.

New World Suites (*3*), Parkcity Commerce Square, Lot 3971, Jln Tun Ahmad Yid, Tel: 331122, www.newworldsuites.net. Band C-D.

Kemen plaza Hotel (*3*), 116 Taman Sri Dagang, Jln Abang Galau. Tel: 335111. Email: kemenaplazahotel@yahoo.com. Band C.

**Eating Out**

**Chinese**

Chinese coffee shops are found all around the town centre and sell a range of noodle dishes, chicken rice, mixed rice and other local hawkers food.

Apple Restaurant, No 78-79, Parkcity Commerce Square. Halal. Popular restaurant serving Malaysian & Chinese dishes. Bookings advisable on weekends. Tel: 333777. 10 am - 2 pm and 5 pm - 10 pm.

Riverfront Café, Riverfront Inn, 24-hr café serving Chinese, Malay & western dishes. Excellent laksia stall.

Pineapple Restaurant, 14-15 Parkcity Commerce Square. Good selection of Cantonese dishes & seafood. 11 am - 10pm.

**Indian**

Abida Café, 159 Taman Sri Dagang, Jln Masjid. South Indian Muslim food including nasi biriyani, curries, thosai, chapati. 6 am to midnight.

JF Banana Leaf, 318 Parkcity Commerce Square. South Indian banana leaf curries, rotis and murutabak. 9 am - 9 pm.

**International**

JD's Fine Foods, 4195 Parkcity Commerce Square. Pork, pasta, sausages & pizzas. 11 am - 1 am.

Marco Polo Restaurant & Grill, Lot 114-116 BDA-Shaihda Commercial Centre. Halal. 10 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 11 pm.

M&B's Restaurant. Parkcity Everly Hotel. International and Malaysian cuisine. Open kitchen, live music during dinner. 6 am - midnight

**Korean**

Korea House, 551, 13 Jln Tanjung Kidurong. Also stocks a selection of Korean groceries. Noon - 2 pm, 6 pm - 10 pm.

**Malaysia**

Jalan Somerville is probably the best place to head for as it has a cluster of outlets open from early morning until late at night.

An-Nur Café, 39 Jln Somerville. 6.30 am - 10 pm.

Famous Mama Café, 10 Jln Somerville. Nasi Kandar is the specialty here. 6.30 am - midnight.

Jing Cheng Café, 9 Jln Somerville. Range of Malay stalls selling satay, mee jawa, mixed rice and roti canai. 7 am - 5 pm.

Puti Café, 28 Jln Somerville. Roti canai, nasi lemak, nasi campur and fried rice and noodle dishes. 5 am - 6 pm.

Rom Café, 2 New Commercial Centre, Jln Abang Galau. 7.30 am - 5 pm.

**Serviced Apartments**

CPU Suites, Jln Tanjung Kidurong. Predominantly Malay but also serves Thai, Indonesian & Chinese, mostly seafood dishes. 6 pm - midnight.

Seribu Bintang Restaurant, Jln Kampung Baru. Predominantly Malay but also serves Thai, Indonesian & Chinese, mostly seafood dishes. 6 pm - midnight.

Shalimar Restaurant, 22 Jln Somerville. Malay food plus some Pakistani dishes such tahndoori chicken and fish and good naan bread. 7 am - 11 pm.

**Seafood**

Chiem's Restoran Nelayan, Jln Kampung Baru. Spicy Malay seafood - pick your own dinner from the tanks. 5 pm - 11 pm

Espanade Restaurant, Bintulu Esplanade. Chinese seafood in a pleasant waterfront location. 6 pm - 11 pm.

Happy Valley Seafood, 273 Parkcity Commerce Square. Affordable Chinese seafood. 12 noon - midnight.

**Vegetarian**

JF Banana Leaf - see Indian.

Sun Xiang Yuan, Jln Tun Ahmad Zaidi. Chinese dishes, vegan-friendly. 7 am - 2 pm, 6 pm - 9 pm.

**Entertainment**

Avoid the darker karaoke lounges and all dandngut bars if karaoke and paying for 'ladies drinks' is not your thing. The places listed below are all visitor-friendly with no hidden extras:

D'Codes, 7861 Assyakirin Commerce Square. Beer, giant burgers and live sport on TV. 3 pm - 2 am.

Eternity, Jln Ahmad Zaidi. Popular dance club with DJs & live bands. 6 pm - 2 am.

Ezy Plus, 282 Parkcity Commerce Square. A pleasant corner bar with reasonably priced drinks. 5 pm - 2 am.

Star Music Café, 310 Parkcity Commerce Square. Bargain beers & cocktails. 6 pm - 2 am.

Waves Pub, Parkcity Everly Hotel. This popular hangout is the longest-running pub in town. Live bands Mon - Sat. 5 pm - 2 am

2H Music Lounge, 319 Parkcity Commerce Square. Karaoke for the older crowd. 5 pm - 2 am

**Golf**

Bintulu Golf Club, Jln Tanjung Kidurong. Tel: 252001. www.kelabogolfbintulu.com. 18 hole course set on hilly terrain adjacent to the coast. Weekday green fees, RM 52.50 (9 holes), RM 105 (18 holes). Weekend green fees RM 78.75 (9 holes), RM 157.50 (18 holes).

**Travel Connections**

Air: Bintulu airport is 27 km from the town centre. Air Asia and Malaysian Airlines (MAS) both fly to Kuching (1x daily) and Kuala Lumpur (2x daily). MASwings fly to Kuching (3x daily), Miri (2x daily), Sibu (2x daily) and Koat Kinabalu (2x daily). See Miri Travel Connections for airline contact details. The taxi fare from the airport to town (30 min) is RM 35. No airport bus service.

Bus: The Long Distance Bus Station is 5 km from the town centre at Medan Jaya. As Bintulu is on the main Pan Borneo Highway, long distance destinations are the same as for Miri. Use bus No. 29 or take a taxi (RM 15).

The Town Centre Bus Station is on Jln Abang Galau, next to the taxi and minivan stand.

Road: Bintulu is connected by road to all major towns in Sarawak.

Car Rental: Kong Teck Car Rental, No. 12, Bangunan Baru Terminal Bas, Jln Tus Hussein. Tel: 312106
Marudi is situated on the northern bank of the Baram roughly 80 km from Miri. It is a busy bazaar town whose traders supply most of Sarawak’s northern interior, so you are likely to bump into members of dozens of different ethnic groups here. The town’s main attraction is Fort Hose, a Brooke-era wooden fort named for Marudi’s most famous administrator, the naturalist, ethnographer and pioneer photographer Charles Hose. The fort is nowadays a museum, featuring some of Hose’s remarkable ethnographic photographs, as well as local textiles, handicrafts and ceremonial items. To get there, walk uphill along Jln From the Main Bazaar (10 min). The nearby Taman Tasik (lake park) offers excellent river views from the hilltop. The best time to visit is during the popular Baram Regatta, held on the first weekend of October every year, but book your accommodation first.

Accommodation
Alisan Hotel, 63-65 Queen Square, Tel: 755911. Band B.
Baram Hotel, 7 Queen Square, Tel: 756008 Band B.
Grand Hotel, 92 Lorong Lima, Tel: 755711. Band B.
Ka Lee Inn, 3 Queen Square, Tel: 755897/755098
Marudi Hotel, 3 Queen Square, Tel: 755141. Band B.
Mayland Hotel, 347 Marudi Bazaar, Tel: 755106. Band B.
Mount Mulu Hotel, 89-90 Jln Kampung Cina, Tel: 756671. Band B.
Queen Inn, 34 Jln Lim Chin Kiat, Tel 755330. Band B
Victoria Hotel, 961 Marudi Bazaar, Tel: 756067. Band B.

An interesting alternative to Marudi’s hotels is the homestay in Kampung Narum, a Malay village on the edge of town, Contact Marudi District Office, Tel: 755211, www.marudido.sarawak.gov.my.

Eating Out
Marudi has a fair selection of Chinese coffee shops serving noodle and rice dishes (the town is famous for all meals. A small shop nearby sells basic essentials, including cold beer and the powerful local rice wine, borok. Check with the Visitor Information Centre in Miri for contact details.

Travel Connections - Air: Fly from Miri (2x weekly) or Marudi (1x weekly) to Long Akah (see Miri Travel Connections) and take the local boat to Long San (10 mins, RM 10). Road: The 4WD service from Miri passes along old logging roads (RM 90, 4 hrs). Check with the Visitor’s Information Centre in Miri for the latest schedules. From Long San it is possible to charter a 4WD vehicle (RM 300, 4 hrs) to the remote Kenyah homelands at Lio Matoh, starting point for the trek to Baro in the Kelabit Highlands (see Kelabit Highlands chapter)

LONG BEDIAN
Long Bedian is one of those rare longhouses that is not gradually losing members through migration to the cities. Instead, it is thriving to such an extent that it has even been visited by the King and Queen of Malaysia. Keen to showcase theirs success to others, the Kayan people of Long Bedian have set up a community tourism programme with riverbank chalets and a lodge attached to the longhouse. They offer an authentic upriver experience, setting up an extensive network of jungle trails and providing treks and boat trips to picturesque waterfalls and other idyllic locations.

Accommodation - The Tenyok Rimba Resort, about 30 mins drive from the longhouse, offers one and two room chalets with electricity, running water and cooking facilities at RM 80 and RM 160 respectively. The Tapun Homestay accommodates visitors in the longhouse lodge or with individual families. Village shops sell all basic necessities for self caterers, or meals can be arranged. Contact Jok Eng Jok (Tel: 013-8305962), Ding Laung Jok (Tel: 012-8556118) or Ulu Wan (Tel: 019-4838311) for reservations.

Travel Connections - Boat: Take an express boat from Marudi to Long Lama (RM 25, 4hrs), then a local 4WD charter from Long Lama to Long Bedian (RM 140 per vehicle, 1 hr). Road: The Long Bedian community offers a direct 4WD charter service from Miri via old logging roads (RM 480 per vehicle, 4 hrs). Contact Mr Wan Jok (Tel: 019-8454510) or Mr Lagang (Tel: 013-8013200) for 4WD charter reservations.

BARIO
Bario is the gateway to the Kelabit highlands, thanks to its airport and a small network of paved roads leading so much of the near-by villages. The main attraction at Bario is the old longhouse, Bario Asal, whose ancient timbers are darkened by the constant smoke of generations of cooking fires. Most accommodation is found in and around Bario, and it is the main starting point for treks through the area.

Bakalan
Bakalan (formerly Ba’Kelalan) is the most important of the Lun Bawang settlements in the northern highlands. The village is famous for its apples and organic vegetables, and for the local musicians and their ‘bamboo bands’. The village is connected to Lawas and Miri by air, and it is also possible to travel to Lawas via an old logging road.

TREKS AND TRAILS
One of the great attractions of the Kelabit Highlands is trekking from longhouse to longhouse through dense rainforest and past sparkling green padi fields. These treks begin from a few hours to a few weeks in duration, and vary from a gentle stroll to a tough jungle hike, using log bridges to cross fast-flowing rivers. Some of the treks involve a short excursion into Kalimantan, Indonesia.

The Kelabit Highlands is a series of beautiful mountain valleys lying slightly over 1000m above sea level and flanked by jungle-covered peaks rising to more than 2,400m. The climate is probably the most pleasant in Borneo, although it can become quite chilly in the evenings. The Kelabit, after whom the area is named, and the neighbouring and closely related Lun Bawang, are Borneo’s only wet rice farmers, and their well tended padi fields bring order to the rugged landscape, and produce the fragrant and much sought-after Baro rice. Both groups are branches of the Orang Ulu, and live in large longhouses widely dispersed throughout the area. They are friendly, hospitable people and enjoy receiving visitors.

The Kelabit Highlands is a series of beautiful mountain valleys lying slightly over 1000m above sea level and flanked by jungle-covered peaks rising to more than 2,400m. The climate is probably the most pleasant in Borneo, although it can become quite chilly in the evenings. The Kelabit, after whom the area is named, and the neighbouring and closely related Lun Bawang, are Borneo’s only wet rice farmers, and their well tended padi fields bring order to the rugged landscape, and produce the fragrant and much sought-after Baro rice. Both groups are branches of the Orang Ulu, and live in large longhouses widely dispersed throughout the area. They are friendly, hospitable people and enjoy receiving visitors.

The Kelabit Highlands is a series of beautiful mountain valleys lying slightly over 1000m above sea level and flanked by jungle-covered peaks rising to more than 2,400m. The climate is probably the most pleasant in Borneo, although it can become quite chilly in the evenings. The Kelabit, after whom the area is named, and the neighbouring and closely related Lun Bawang, are Borneo’s only wet rice farmers, and their well tended padi fields bring order to the rugged landscape, and produce the fragrant and much sought-after Baro rice. Both groups are branches of the Orang Ulu, and live in large longhouses widely dispersed throughout the area. They are friendly, hospitable people and enjoy receiving visitors.
Guides

Experienced guides are essential for all of these treks. Expect to pay RM 100 per day, plus an additional RM 80 per day for porters if you don’t want to carry everything yourself. The Kelabit Highlands guides are fiercely proud of their reputation and ensure that only the very best are allowed to guide visitors. However, this means that guides usually need to be booked in advance. Most guides are usually attached to one of the guesthouses so should be booked at the same time as your room. If you require specialist skills, such as mountaineering or birdwatching guides, please make this clear when you book.

Accommodation – Bario and Around: Detailed information and for most guest houses in the area is available at community websites www.ebario.com (Bario area only) and thehomestayborneo.blogspot.com (also includes Bakalan), which both accept bookings. Expect to pay between RM60 and RM100 per room including all meals. Please note that cellphone coverage is erratic and landline numbers are those of associates in Miri, so email (via the community satellite link) is usually more reliable and direct.

Bario Asal Longhouse, Bario, Tel: 085 791 065, Email: paranmak@yahoo.com. Homestay in the original Bario longhouse, complete with motherly Kelabit matrons.

Batu Ritung Homestay, Pa Langun, Tel: 019-8052119, Email: baturitunglodge@yahoo.com. Located in a scenic village 4 hrs walk or 1 hr by boat from Bario.

De Plateau Lodge, Jin Pa Umur, Bario, E-mail: deplateau@gmail.com. 3 km east of Bario on the ‘road’ to Pa Umur. Owner Douglas Bala is a birding specialist.

Gem’s Lodge, Pa Umur, Bario, E-mail: gems_lodge@yahoo.com. Delightful riverside setting 6km southeast of Bario (transport provided from airport). Possibly the finest home cooking in NE Sarawak.

JK View Lodge, Bario, E-mail: rose_sabot@hotmail.com. 500m from village near new shophouses. Junglebluesdream Art Gallery & Homestay, Ulung Palang Longhouse (3 km from airport), Tel: 019 8849892, junglebluesdream.weebly.com.

Labang’s Longhouse, Bario, contact via www.ebario.com. Longhouse-style lodge 3km east of Bario village.

Leminan Lodge, Bario, Tel: 019-4822034 Email via www.ebario.com. Charming rustic lodge with great views next to the Penan settlement.

Mado Homestay, Pa Langun (see Batu Ritung, above), Tel: 019-8549700.

MUSTPaha Lodge, Old Airstrip, Bario (20 mins walk from airport), Tel: 013-5664866, Email: hari_hdh@hotmail.com. Only Muslim lodge in the highlands, serving Halal food.

Nancy & Harris Homestay, Old Airstrip, Bario, Tel: 013-8508580, Email: nancyharris@yahoo.com. Quiet riverside location onworking farm.

Ngimat Ayu House, Bario (10 mins drive fromairport), Tel: 013-8406187, Email: engimat_scott@yahoo.com. Well-appointed lodge on a hilltop near Bario village.

Tarawae’s, Jin Bario, Tel: 019 4381777, E-mail: j.tarawe@bario.net. Bario’s original lodge, just a short walk from the airport. Owner John Tarawe is a renowned authority on pitcher plants.


Balang Sigar Homestay, Kampung Buduk Nur. Small family homestay above village grocery store.


Jilansang Homestay, Kampung Buduk Nur. Conveniently located only 300m from airport.

Sakai Daway Homestay, Long Langai (30 mins walk form airport). Family homestay surrounded by paddy fields.

Tadam Asi Homestay, Homestay in large modern family house.

Yudan Meru Homestay, Kampung Buduk Nur. Elegant hilltop house offering great views.

Travel Connections - Bario: Unless you are trekking from Bakalan, Long Lellang or Lio Matoh, Bario is only accessible by air. MASWings operates regular DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprop flights to and from Miri (2x daily) and Marudi (4x weekly) – see National Parks, Gunung Mulu. The building Tamu or wet market is on the waterfront in the centre of town, while the informal ‘bawah payung’ (‘under the umbrella’) market sets up at weekends outside the shophouses across the road, selling all manner of cheap goods.

A round Limbang

Borneo Touch Ecotour, the only local operator, offers a choice of interesting trips around Limbang. Possibilities include proboscis monkey and crocodile spotting boat tours amongst the mangroves, the bizarre 80cm high mud volcanoes at Kampung Merital, 35km from town, day and overnight trips to nearby Iban longhouses, mountain bike trips to Gunung Buda, visits to the idyllic Mentawai Ranger Station at the northern border of Gunung Mulu National Park, and trekking to Mulu via the historic Headhunters Trail (see National Parks, Gunung Mulu). Call the ever-helpful Mr Lim Chong Teah on 013-8443861, www.walk2mulu.com. Visitors requiring further information on Limbang and its surroundings should feel free to call Mr Chua Eng Hin, a knowledgeable and enthusiastic local citizen who acts as Limbang’s one-man tourism promotion and information service, Tel: 019-8145355, E-mail: chuaeb@streamyx.com.

Accommodation

All addresses are 98700 Limbang, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +608 from overseas and 088 within Malaysia.

Centre Point Hotel, Lot 1587-8, Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 213699. Band A-B

Hota Inn, Lot 1463, Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 212773 Band A-B

Jia Lun Hotel, Lot 1116, Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 215060 Band B

Mariner Inn, Lot 1371-3, Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 212922. Band B

Messa Inn, Lot 787-8, Jin Bank. Tel: 213351. Band B

Metro Hotel, Lot 781-2, Jin Bangkita. Tel: 211133. Band B

Muhibbah Inn, Lot 790-2, Jin Bank. Tel: 212482. Band A-B

Prime Hotel, Lot 112, Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 213833. Band B

Purnama Hotel (3*), Jin Buangsiol. The best location in town. Get a river view room if you can. Tel: 216700, www.purnamalimbang.com. Band B-C

Royal Park Hotel, Lot 1089-90 Jin Buangsiol. Tel: 212155. Band B

Eating Out

For a small town, Limbang has a remarkably wide choice of dining possibilities. The following are just a small selection.

Chinese: Dozens of Chinese hawkers stalls set up every evening around the three rows of old wooden shophouses in the town centre, offering economical noodle and rice dishes and local specialities. More Chinese hawkers stalls from early morning to late afternoon on the first floor of the Tamu (wet market) building. More demanding diners will find a good selection of Chinese seafood restaurants; amongst the most popular are Waterfront Seafood

SARAWAK’S FAR NORTH – LIMBANG & LAWAS

LIMBANG

The small market and port town of Limbang is situated on the narrow tongue of land that divides Brunei in two. It has an idyllic location stretched out along the eastern bank of the Sungai Limbang. A bustling Malay water-village directly across river simply adds to the charm. Limbang is a popular weekend destination for Bruneians, but is otherwise seldom visited.

Nearby Attractions

Many of Limbang’s attractions are spread out around the town, and it is well worth booking a short tour (see Around Limbang, below) or chartering a taxi for an hour or two. Bukt Mas (gold hill) is a 210m high jungle-clad limestone outcrop which dominates the town. The summit offers excellent views of nearby Brunei and is accessible via a steep road leading off Jin Pandaran, or by foot via a long staircase leading from the Lake Garden at the eastern end of the town. There is a small Buddhist shrine halfway up the summit road.

There are some well kept Malay and Chinese kampungs (traditional villages) along Jin Pandaran which offer excellent photo opportunities. Further along the road towards the Brunei Ferry are a number of Kadayan kampungs where delicious fresh swamp clam are offered for sale. If you buy some, most seafood restaurants in town will be happy to cook them for you.

Back in town, the Esplanade is a popular place for strolling in the evening (it is used as a car park until 4pm) with a memorial of the Limbang Rebellion as its focal point. The wooden Limbang Museum, with a modest collection of archaeological finds and ethnic artifacts. Downriver is an attractive Chinese Temple across from the Purnama Hotel. There is also a public library (4th floor of Limbang District Council building, adjoining Purnama Hotel) with a reference collection of books on the Limbang region. The bustling Tamu or wet market is on the waterfront in the centre of town, while the informal ‘bawah payung’ (‘under the umbrella’) market sets up at weekends

Visitors requiring further information on Limbang and its surroundings should feel free to call Mr Chua Eng Hin, a knowledgeable and enthusiastic local citizen who acts as Limbang’s one-man tourism promotion and information service, Tel: 019-8145355, E-mail: chuaeb@streamyx.com.
and King’s Seafood (both facing the riverfront on Jln Buangsiol opposite the Customs Department building), and Maggie Cafe (open late to 2 am) on the riverside to the north of town. The town is full of traditional Chinese coffee shops serving drinks and simple breakfast and lunch dishes – for sheer atmosphere none of them beats the tiny and very friendly Ah Mee Cafe in an old wooden building on Jln Merdeka.

Malay: A selection of Muslim food stalls operate from early evening to around midnight near the waterfront off Jln Buangsiol, and more Malay stalls can be found on the first floor of the Tamu (water market). Good Malay restaurants include the busy and popular Sarimah Curry House, uphills from the clock tower on Jln Rickett, Adnan Restaurant next to the airport road roundabout near RHB Bank, Mesra opposite the bus station and SeleraMuhibbah on Jln Bank.

Western: Fast food lovers will find KFC and Sugar Bun outlets in Limbang Plaza, the shopping centre adjoining the Purnama Hotel, while the ever-popular Maggie Cafe (see Chinese, above) serves simple western dishes such as steaks and fish and chips.

Useful Information

Internet Access: Media Cybercafe, 2nd Floor, Limbang Plaza, Butler St.

Swimming Pool: The public swimming pool is on Jln Panduran, about 20 mins walk or a short taxi ride from the town centre.

Healthcare: The Limbang Hospital is on Jln Panduran about 10 mins drive from town. There are a few private clinics in the town itself.

Money Changers: Thanks to the weekend trade from clinics in the town itself. There are a few private

Panduran, about 20 mins walk or a short taxi ride from Swimming Pool Plaza.

Eating Out

Chinese: The town abounds with traditional coffee shops serving noodle and rice dishes for breakfast and lunch. For dinner, the Soon Seng restaurant in Jln Pangun is a good choice, as is the bustling Good Corner Seafood behind the Ngui Kee department store.

Malay: There is a good choice of Muslim food stalls upstairs at the Central Market. Restoran Haji Latifah (corner of Jln Pantai), the nearby Restoran Hj Narudin and Al Amin behind the Shangsan Hotel offer good lunch buffets.

Western: The Sugar Bun outlet on Jln Pantai offers burgers and fries. Good coffee, cakes and snacks are available at the Itamun Cake House, also on Jln Pantai. The Gaya Cafe at the Hotel Seri Malaysia is the best bet for international cuisine.

Travel Connections

Air: MASWings operates regular ATR72 turboprop flights to Miri (3x daily) see Miri Travel Connections for full details.

Bus: There is a daily bus service to Operates to Miri at 9 am from the bus terminal (4 hrs, RM 38, www.ba.my). It does not pick up or drop off passengers in Brunei. There is no bus service between Temburong (Brunei) and Limbang. However regular buses travel as far as the Panduruan Ferry, but it is necessary to cross the border on foot and take a taxi onwards to Temburong.

Boat: There are express boat services to the island of Labuan (7.30 and 8.00 am, jetty on the Esplanade, wharf, 2 hrs, RM 30) and Lawas (8.00 am, jetty off Jln Buangsiol opposite Royal Park Hotel, 3hrs, RM 30). The speedboat service to Bandar Sri Begawan in Brunei (2x daily, 30 min, RM 25) departs from the Customs wharf. Access via the Customs Department building next to the Tamu (water market). Boats leave when full, so get there early. Alternatively, to charter a speedboat to Brunei, call Mr Chiew (019-8066055) or Mr Lai (013-8249551).

Taxis: The taxi stand is on the waterfront opposite the Customs Department building (Tel 213781). Most trips around town are RM 7-10, and the airport is RM 20.

Lawas is an interesting little town 10 minutes drive from Miri with lots to see. There are several places to stay in Lawas. The town is full of traditional Malay water villages – for sheer atmosphere none of them beats the tiny and very friendly Ah Mee Cafe in an old wooden building on Jln Merdeka.

Malay: A selection of Muslim food stalls operate from early evening to around midnight near the waterfront off Jln Buangsiol, and more Malay stalls can be found on the first floor of the Tamu (water market). Good Malay restaurants include the busy and popular Sarimah Curry House, uphills from the clock tower on Jln Rickett, Adnan Restaurant next to the airport road roundabout near RHB Bank, Mesra opposite the bus station and SeleraMuhibbah on Jln Bank.

Western: Fast food lovers will find KFC and Sugar Bun outlets in Limbang Plaza, the shopping centre adjoining the Purnama Hotel, while the ever-popular Maggie Cafe (see Chinese, above) serves simple western dishes such as steaks and fish and chips.

Useful Information

Internet Access: Media Cybercafe, 2nd Floor, Limbang Plaza, Butler St.

Swimming Pool: The public swimming pool is on Jln Panduran, about 20 mins walk or a short taxi ride from the town centre.

Healthcare: The Limbang Hospital is on Jln Panduran about 10 mins drive from town. There are a few private clinics in the town itself.

Money Changers: Thanks to the weekend trade from Brunei, money changers are located on every street corner and shopping centre.

Travel Connections

Air: MASWings operates regular ATR72 turboprop flights to Miri (3x daily) see Miri Travel Connections for full details.

Bus: There is a daily bus service to Operates to Miri at 9 am from the bus terminal (4 hrs, RM 38, www.ba.my). It does not pick up or drop off passengers in Brunei. There is no bus service between Temburong (Brunei) and Limbang. However regular buses travel as far as the Panduruan Ferry, but it is necessary to cross the border on foot and take a taxi onwards to Temburong.

Boat: There are express boat services to the island of Labuan (7.30 and 8.00 am, jetty on the Esplanade, wharf, 2 hrs, RM 30) and Lawas (8.00 am, jetty off Jln Buangsiol opposite Royal Park Hotel, 3hrs, RM 30). The speedboat service to Bandar Sri Begawan in Brunei (2x daily, 30 min, RM 25) departs from the Customs wharf. Access via the Customs Department building next to the Tamu (water market). Boats leave when full, so get there early. Alternatively, to charter a speedboat to Brunei, call Mr Chiew (019-8066055) or Mr Lai (013-8249551).

Taxis: The taxi stand is on the waterfront opposite the Customs Department building (Tel 213781). Most trips around town are RM 7-10, and the airport is RM 20.

Lawas is an interesting little town 10 minutes drive from Miri with lots to see. There are several places to stay in Lawas. The town is full of traditional Malay water villages – for sheer atmosphere none of them beats the tiny and very friendly Ah Mee Cafe in an old wooden building on Jln Merdeka.

Malay: A selection of Muslim food stalls operate from early evening to around midnight near the waterfront off Jln Buangsiol, and more Malay stalls can be found on the first floor of the Tamu (water market). Good Malay restaurants include the busy and popular Sarimah Curry House, uphills from the clock tower on Jln Rickett, Adnan Restaurant next to the airport road roundabout near RHB Bank, Mesra opposite the bus station and SeleraMuhibbah on Jln Bank.

Western: Fast food lovers will find KFC and Sugar Bun outlets in Limbang Plaza, the shopping centre adjoining the Purnama Hotel, while the ever-popular Maggie Cafe (see Chinese, above) serves simple western dishes such as steaks and fish and chips.

Useful Information

Internet Access: Media Cybercafe, 2nd Floor, Limbang Plaza, Butler St.

Swimming Pool: The public swimming pool is on Jln Panduran, about 20 mins walk or a short taxi ride from the town centre.

Healthcare: The Limbang Hospital is on Jln Panduran about 10 mins drive from town. There are a few private clinics in the town itself.

Money Changers: Thanks to the weekend trade from Brunei, money changers are located on every street corner and shopping centre.

Travel Connections

Air: MASWings operates regular ATR72 turboprop flights to Miri (3x daily) see Miri Travel Connections for full details.

Bus: There is a daily bus service to Operates to Miri at 9 am from the bus terminal (4 hrs, RM 38, www.ba.my). It does not pick up or drop off passengers in Brunei. There is no bus service between Temburong (Brunei) and Limbang. However regular buses travel as far as the Panduruan Ferry, but it is necessary to cross the border on foot and take a taxi onwards to Temburong.

Boat: There are express boat services to the island of Labuan (7.30 and 8.00 am, jetty on the Esplanade, wharf, 2 hrs, RM 30) and Lawas (8.00 am, jetty off Jln Buangsiol opposite Royal Park Hotel, 3hrs, RM 30). The speedboat service to Bandar Sri Begawan in Brunei (2x daily, 30 min, RM 25) departs from the Customs wharf. Access via the Customs Department building next to the Tamu (water market). Boats leave when full, so get there early. Alternatively, to charter a speedboat to Brunei, call Mr Chiew (019-8066055) or Mr Lai (013-8249551).

Taxis: The taxi stand is on the waterfront opposite the Customs Department building (Tel 213781). Most trips around town are RM 7-10, and the airport is RM 20.
slopes of Gunung Api. The park’s forest ecosystems include peatswamp, heath, mixed dipterocarp, moss forest and montane forest – home to thousands of species of ferns, fungi, mosses and flowering plants, including 170 species of orchid and 10 species of pitcher plants, an impressive variety of mammals, birds (including 8 species of hornbill), frogs, fish and insects. Mulu’s wildlife is often heard but not seen, but visitors are almost certain to encounter bats, swiftlets, cave dwelling insects, snakes, lizards, tree frogs and an abundance of beautiful butterflies.

Park Headquarters

Upon arrival visitors must register at the park office (Tel: 792300) and pay the park entrance fees (RM 30, valid for 5 days visitor. Guides and boats can also be booked here. A short walk from the Park Office is the main accommodation building, which also offers a canteen, a small shop selling souvenirs and basic essentials, and an interesting and well designed Information Centre.

Park Guides

Visitors may not enter any of the caves or the Mulu Canopy Skywalk without a Park Guide. For most trails, including the Mulu Summit climb, the Pinnacles trail and the Headhunter’s trail, a Park Guide is also mandatory. Bookings and payment of fees can be made at the park office. If you require a Park Guide you need to book the day before. During peak period, such a cellar, guide or popular activities such as the Pinnacles trail may be fully booked weeks in advance.

Visiting the Show Caves

Note: Visitors may only visit the show caves at fixed times, and only when accompanied by a park guide, in order to minimize human impact on the delicate rock formations and cave ecosystems. A flashlight, sturdy non-slip shoes, rainwear and insect repellent are essential, and a hat can be useful to protect from dripping bat guano. Flash photography and the use of tripods and monopods are strictly forbidden, as are smoking (except in designated areas) and littering.

Wind and Clearwater Caves (half-day, mornings)

Meet the Park Guide at the Wind Cave entrance (09.45) along the Moonmilk Cave Trail (1 hr) or take a longboat along the Melinau and Clearwater Rivers (RM 30 return). The best way to see the world’s largest known bat colony comprising several million bats from 12 different species, and their droppings and remains have created a thriving and complex ecosystem on the cave floor. The billions of invertebrates include species of luminous centipede, and cave racer snakes and pythons can occasionally be seen. The huge cave passage was formed by an ancient river that carved the spectacular scalloped walls and left a network of fascinating rock formations; at one point it is possible to see a remarkably lifelike profile of Abraham Lincoln outlined at the cave entrance.

The entrance to the Wind Cave is situated above an ancient Berawan burial site. Inside, cool breezes can be felt at narrow parts of the cave, and there is a spectacular chasm caused by a catastrophic rock collapse to the left of the walkway. Further into the cave is a circular walkway leading through the King’s Room; this chamber contains one of the finest collections of calcite stalagmite (upward growing) and stalactite (downward growing) formations known to science. The formations are carefully lit to bring out their bizarre and dramatic appearance.

From the Wind Cave, a short walk along the river leads to the Deer Cave. Formed by an underground river which emerges near the cave mouth, it is Southeast Asia’s longest cave passage at over 108km. From the river, 200 steps lead to the cave mouth, which has some superb dripping stalactites and stalagmites. The next day without visiting the caves of bizarre one-leaved plants (Monophylle pendula and M. glauca). Inside the cave entrance are strange spike-like formations formed by bacterial action, all facing towards the cave entrance. As the bacteria are dependent on sunlight, the formations become smaller and more delicate further into the cave.

At the end of the walkway a bridge leads across the subterranean river, where visitors can clearly see how the cave was sculpted by the force of rushing water. A skylight formed by a roof collapse and a great vault formed by a flimsy bubble which has collapsed, are amongst the other unusual features of the cave system. There is an excellent swimming area at the cave entrance, with changing and picnic facilities. Most visitors stop here for a picnic lunch and a relaxing swim.

The Turtle Cave is an alternative exit route from the Clearwater Cave. Visitors are led into the subterranean blackness of the underground river, clambering over sharp rocks and swimming with the river current to emerge into a crystal clear pool. A waterproof flashlight and sturdy shoes are essential. Must be booked in advance.

Deer and Langs Caves

[half day, afternoons]

Guided tours leave the Park HQ daily at 2 and 2.30 pm (RM 20). A 3-km wooden walkway passes through peat swamp, alluvial flats and limestone outcrops before reaching the Deer Cave, which at 120 metres high and 100 metres wide is the world’s largest discovered cave entrance. The best way to see the largest known bat colony comprising several million bats from 12 different species, and their droppings and remains have created a thriving and complex ecosystem on the cave floor. The billions of invertebrates include species of luminous centipede, and cave racer snakes and pythons can occasionally be seen. The huge cave passage was formed by an ancient river that carved the spectacular scalloped walls and left a network of fascinating rock formations; at one point it is possible to see a remarkably lifelike profile of Abraham Lincoln outlined at the cave entrance.

The nearby Langs Cave is altogether smaller and more intimate, with elegant roof shaws and cave curtains, dramatic stalagmites and stalactiles, and unusual rim stone pools on the cave floor. From the entry, visitors usually walk over to the Bat Observatory, to view the mass exodus as millions of bats emerge from the vast entrance of the cave to forage in the rainforest between 5.50 and 6.30 pm. This is a unique and memorable display, as the huge flocks of bats fly in rapidly shifting spiral formations to confuse predators. Occasionally the bats fail to emerge, and visitors who wish to return the next day without visiting the caves may do so provided they notify the park HQ first. The walk back along the steadily darkening plankwalk is enhanced by the sounds of frogs and cicadas and the sight of hundreds of fireflies amongst the trees.

Visitors may opt for the Garden of Eden tour package (RM105 inclusive of all four show caves, longboat and lunch). For 30 metres below the rear entrance of the Deer Cave, climbing down to the underground river and wading and scrambling to the glowing pool of light and water at the far end of the cave. Intrepid visitors will enjoy spectacular scenery, and can swim in a secluded mountain pool. Prior booking is essential.

Adventure Caving: This is a great way of getting to know Mulu’s subterranean world, involves wading, swimming, climbing down to the underground river and wading and scrambling to the glowing pool of light and water at the far end of the cave. Intrepid visitors will enjoy spectacular scenery, and can swim in a secluded mountain pool. Prior booking is essential.

The guided Clearwater - Wind Cave tour (10-15 hrs) to view the world’s largest cave chamber. Full details are available at www.mulupark.com.

Walks, Treks, Trails and Climbs: The 480 metre Mulu Canopy Skywalk is the longest tree-based walkway in the world. The complex ecosystem of the forest canopy provides a unique opportunity to view a variety of birds, insects and plants that cannot be seen from the ground. Guided tours (RM 35, approx 2 hrs) leave the Park HQ daily.

The 30 metre Tree Top Tower and bird hide, 10 mins from the Park HQ, provides the opportunity to observe canopy birds swooping through the branches. During fruiting season there is a chance to see hornbills or macaques feeding on the fruits of the fig trees that surround the hide. No charge but a refundable RM 50 key deposit is required. Bird watchers can arrange private use of the tower for dawn (5-8am) and dusk (5-8pm), enquire at the office for fees and reservations.

The Medicine Plant Trail (1 hr, RM 10) is a guided tour of the plants used by the indigenous people to survive in the rainforest, whether for food, medicine, or to make everyday implements. It also includes the opportunity to try some of the edible plants.

The guided Night Shift (1hr, RM 10) winds its way through 7 different types of vegetation and offers the opportunity to see many different Mulu plant species, including pitcher plants, as well as species only visible at night, such as fire-flies and fluorescent fungi.

The 4.5 hr Paku Waterfall Trail is a self-guided walk that passes through peatswamp forest to a small waterfall on the banks of the Paku River, an ideal spot for a picnic lunch and a refreshing swim.

The all-day Camp 1 Trail (RM 105) continues past Paku Waterfall and passes near a spectacular ‘strangling fig’ before proceeding through pristine rainforest to one of the camps used during the 1977 Royal Geographic Society Expedition. If you wish to stay overnight in the rainforest, a basic forest hut provides shelter.

The Long Langsat tour (RM 125) is a longboat trip down the Sungai Melinau and up the Sungai Tutoh to the small Long Langsat stream, where crystal clear waters cascade down a narrow valley between steep slopes. On the way back you can visit the Penan community at Long Iman and learn about their way of life.

The 3-day/2-night Pinnacles Trail (RM 325, max 6 persons) leads to the remarkable limestone pinnacles near the peak of Gunung Api (1732m). The first day involves a 3-4 hour boat journey to Long Berar, followed...
by a pleasant 4 hour jungle trek to reach Camp 5 for the overnight stay. The ascent begins the following day. Although the incline is steep, Gunung Mulu’s steep slopes make it feel a lot longer. It takes about 4 hours to reach the Pinnacles where the fantastic views make it all worthwhile.

The Summit Trek to the top of Gunung Mulu (2,370m) is for the fit and adventurous. It’s usually done as a four day/3 night out and back trek (from RM 385). However the summit can only be reached 2 days later due to safety concerns. There are a number of wooden huts along the trail (Camps 1, 2, 3 & 4). The choice of overnight locations depends on the length of your trek, and the schedule you arrange with the park guides. Details can be obtained at the Park HQ.

The Headhunters’ Trail follows the route of Kayan headhunting parties who dragged their war boats through the rainforest to raid the inhabitants of the Limbang river system. A boat journey to Camp 5 is followed by an 11.3 km trek through a very remote rainforest area, with a good possibility of wildlife encounters. Trekkers then take another boat for an overnight stay at an Iban longhouse, followed by a further 1¾ hr boat ride to Medemat to catch the van for Limbang. The trek can also be done in reverse, starting at Limbang. Either way, it offers a fascinating route into or out of Mulu National Park.

Accommodation

The Park Headquarters offers air conditioned Garden Bungalows and Longhouse Rooms (Band C) and a fan-cooled Dormitory (Band A). For reservations and enquiries contact Borsarmu Park Management, Tel: 792300, www.mulupark.com.


D’Cave Homestay, 10 mins from park, Tel: 012-8729752, Email: beckhamjunior46@yahoo.com. Band A-B. Run by the park’s very knowledgable security chief and numerous cats.

Royal Mulu Resort, Sungai Melinau, 10 mins from park. Tel: 970388, www.royalmuluresort.com. Band C-D. International class resort on the banks of the Melinau River. As the time of writing it is undergoing renovation with the park guides. Details can be obtained at the Park HQ.

Eating Out

Cafe Mulu, Park HQ. Variety of reasonably priced meals and snacks. 7.30 am to 9.00 pm

D’Cave Homestay offers home cooked local dinner to non-residents - phone in advance.

Wildflower Restaurant, Mulu Rainforest Resort. Asian, Western and local cuisine with live dance performances every evening. 6.30 am - 10.30 pm

Sweetwater Restarant, across river from the Park HQ offers simple rice and noodle dishes and can prepare multi-course traditional dinners to order. They also have cheap beer and excellent borak (rice wine). 11 am - 11 pm.

Travel Connections

Air: MASWings operates ATR72 Turboprops to Mulu from Miri and Kota Kinabalu – see Mulu Travel Connections for full details.

Boat: It is possible to arrive by boat from Marudi but this may involve waiting around for enough passengers and could end up costing a lot more than planned. Boats leave Marudi for Long Terawan (RM 25, 4 hrs) when there are enough passengers. From Long Terawan to Mulu you will need to charter a boat (best arranged in Marudi) – RM 300 or RM 70 per person for larger groups. For charters, Tel: 755025 (Amitho Travel, Marudi).

On Foot: It is possible to trek to Mulu by taking the Headhunters Trail (see above) in reverse, starting from Limbang town. See Limbang chapter for details.

Introduction

Niah National Park provides some interesting and informative sights. The area was a major centre of human settlement as early as 40,000 years ago, and features one of the world’s largest cave entrances, Palaeolithic and Neolithic burial sites, and iron-age cave paintings. The surrounding area is covered in dense primary rain forest and is home to many species of plants and wildlife. Even today, the caves remain important for local communities, with birds nest and guano collection providing valuable employment and income. Niah Caves is a very pleasant place to spend a few days, although most of the major attractions are accessible to the day visitor. The park was nominated for UNESCO World Heritage Status in 2010 and is currently awaiting approval.

Historical Background

In 1958 a team led by Sarawak Museum curator Tom Harrison unearthed a human skull estimated to be 40,000 years old. The scientific community remained sceptical of Harrison’s claims, but as dating techniques improved, Harrison was eventually proved right. Further excavations have shown a continued human presence over tens of thousands of years, from Palaeolithic times until relatively as 14,000 AD. The nearby Painted Cave houses wall-paintings depicting the boat journey of the dead into the afterlife, along with remnants of ‘death-ships’ on the cave floor - boat-shaped coffins containing the remains of the deceased, and grave goods for use in the afterlife, such as ceramics, ornaments and glass beads. The death-ships have been dated from 1 AD to 780 AD, although local Penan folk tell of the use of death-ships burial as late as the 19th century.

Visiting the Park

Niah National Park is located on the Sungai Niah, about 3 km from the small town of Batu Niah, 110 km south-west of Miri. The park has a visitor centre, archaeology museum and good accommodation, and is very easy to get around, thanks to an extensive network of plankwalks. A flashlight and good walking shoes are absolutely essential - the caves are unlit, and the plankwalk can become slippery from the constant dripping of water and bat guano from the ceiling of the cave. A wide-brimmed hat is desirable, for obvious reasons.

The Great Cave is situated at the end of a 3.5 km plankwalk which cuts through dense primary rainforest, passing close to giant tapang trees, padosan plants, exquisite orchids and tree fungi. Colourful birds, squirrels, lizards, butterflies and unusual insects and invertebrates are commonly seen, as well as occasional monkeys, flying lizards and hornbills.

The cave complex starts at the Trader’s Cave, an extended rock overhang where birds nest and guano traders used to conduct their business. A little further along is the West Mouth of the Great Cave; over 60m high and 250m wide, it is one of the world’s most spectacular cave entrances. To the left of the cave mouth, archaeological excavations are clearly visible. The view from the cave mouth out over the surrounding jungle is quite unique; the jagged stalactites, overhangs and dangling creepers of the cave mouth provide a dramatic photo opportunity.

Inside the cave chamber, guano (bat and bird manure) collectors work by the dim light of paraffin lamps, collecting the guano from the cave floor for sale as fertiliser. Bamboo poles, and ladders made from ironwood (belian), are evidence of the birds nest collectors, local people who have practised this dangerous occupation for generations. The half million swiftlets living in the cave make their nests purely from their own salivary secretions, and these valuable nests (over US$1,000 per kg for the best quality) are used to produce birds nest soup, highly regarded in Chinese cuisine. Note: visitors cannot be sure of seeing birds nest collectors in action, as harvesting is a seasonal activity, and is subject to temporary bans to protect swiftlet populations.

At the back of the Great Cave is a large chamber - the Padang - where shafts of sunlight stream down from large holes in the cave roof to illuminate the bizarre rock formations in the Burnt Cave (Lubang Hangus) - another excellent spot for taking photos. After the Padang comes a totally dark passage - Gan Kira (Moon Cave) - where a flashlight is essential to find your way and to admire the remarkable rock shapes and weathering effects.

From Gan Kira (Moon Cave), the plankwalk emerges into daylight and a short trail leads through the forest to the Painted Cave, site of the famous Niah cave paintings and ‘death-ships’. The contents of the death-ships have been transferred to the Sarawak Museum, but the cave paintings and some of the empty death-ships can still be viewed on the wall behind the fenced-off burial site.

The paintings are difficult to see until your eyes become accustomed to the light. Executed in red hematite, they cover a long narrow area (approx. 30m) at the back of the cave wall. The spread-eagled human figures probably represent warriors and hunters, the animals of the surrounding forest, and - most importantly - longingly offering the soul of the deceased on the dangerous journey to the land of the dead. Thus the cave offers a clear insight into the development of the traditional religions of Borneo.

Visitors leaving the Great Cave around sunset will see two great black clouds intermingling - the nightly ‘changing of the guard’ as hundreds of thousands of swiftlets return to their nests, whilst an approximately equal number of bats fly out to forage in the forest. A variety of luminous fungi can be clearly seen from the plankwalk at night.

Trekks and Trails: The Bukit Kasat Trail (green and white markings, 45 min.) leads to the summit of Bukit Kasat and passes through beautiful primary rainforest before moving into Kerangas forest at the foot of the hill. The trail is steep but the view at the top is worth it, offering a sweeping panorama of the rainforest canopy. The Madu Trail (red and white markings, 1 hr.) follows the
banks of the Sungai Subis, passing through alluvial and peat swamp forest to the foot of Bukit Kasat. There are plenty of wild orchids, bizarre mushrooms and giant pandanus plants along the way.

The Park Headquarters

Upon arrival visitors are required to register at the Park HQ (Tel: 737454). There is an information centre where video films about Niah are shown nightly (upon request), as well as an excellent Archaeology Museum (just across the river) and a cafeteria serving a range of local and western food and drinks.

Accommodation

Accommodation consists of Type 4, 5 and 6 Forest Lodges (RM 238, RM 159 & RM 79.50) a Hostel (RM 42.50 per 4-bed room or RM 15.90 per bed) and a Campsite (RM 5). Contact the National Parks Booking Offices in Miri or Kuching to make reservations. If you need to stay in Batu Niah (to catch an early bus, for example), there are a range of lodging houses and small hotels. Batu Niah is a bustling little township and is well provided with coffee shops and restaurants.

Travel Connections

Niah is within easy reach of both Miri (109 km) and Bintulu (131 km). There is no public bus from either Miri or Bintulu directly to Batu Niah or the park HQ. From Miri Pujut Bus Terminal or Bintulu Long-Distance Bus Terminal, take an express bus to Batu Niah. The park HQ is about 3 km from Batu Niah. Chartered taxis and tour buses will take you there straight. Alternatively, a motorised longboat from Batu Niah to the Park HQ brings you through delightful jungle scenery. A taxi from Batu Niah is a good idea if it is raining. The Park HQ is also a pleasant 45 minute stroll along the river bank.

LAMBIR HILLS NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Lambir Hills National Park is probably the world’s most complex and diverse forest ecosystem. Its 6,952 hectares of lowland dipterocarp and heath forests rise to a height of 450m and produce the greatest known level of plant biodiversity on the planet. This provides a home for 237 different species of birds, flying squirrels, wild pigs, gibbons, many different types of monkey, various species of deer, and untold insects and other invertebrates, as well as dozens of international research scientists who are permanently stationed in the park. Lambir also offers fascinating trekking trails leading to sparkling waterfalls and bathing pools scattered about the rainforest, all within 40 minutes drive of downtown Miri.

Treks and Trails

Most of Lambir’s trails are interconnected, so it is easy to do quite a few in a day. The Latak Waterfall Trail is the shortest, easiest and most popular - if you are looking for peace and solitude, come on a weekday. The trail (white markings, 30 min) follows the course of a clear, fast-flowing stream past two very pretty small waterfalls to a large forest pool surrounded on three sides by steep rock walls and fed by the 25-metre Latak waterfall. Changing rooms, toilets and picnic areas are provided and the pool is safe for swimming, but non-swimmers and small children should take care, as it is deep in parts. The Pantu-Bukit Pantu and Pantu Waterfall Trails are all branches of the same trail system. Shortly before the Latak Waterfall, the Pantu Trail (white markings, 1 hr) branches off to the left up a series of steep steps past an abandoned tree tower, then downwards through dense forest to the Nibong waterfall, an idea place to cool off. A few hundred metres further along are the Bukit Pantu Trail on the right (yellow, white markings, 1½ hrs) offering superb views, and the Pantu Waterfall Trail on the left (red/yellow markings, 1 hr).

Beyond the Pantu Waterfall Trail the terrain gradually rises, passing through rugged, dense forest filled with the sounds of Lambir’s wildlife. After 4 km, the trail forks, the right fork leading to the summit of Bukit Lambir. The Summit Trail (red/blue markings, 3½ hrs) is hard work for the not-so-fit, but the abundant wild orchids and the superb view from the summit (456m) make it worthwhile, and trekkers can cool off in the pool below the Dinding waterfall on the way down. Lambir also offers a variety of tougher trails for serious trekkers; for further information, please consult the park wardens.

Accommodation at the Park Headquarters (Tel: 085-77410) consists of Type 5 and 6 Forest Lodges (RM 159 & RM 79.50) and a camp site (RM 5.25 per person). Please contact the National Parks Booking Office in Miri or Kuching to make reservations.

An interesting and comfortable alternative is the nearby Borneo Tropical Rainforest Resort, which also has more dining options. See Miri accommodation listings.

Travel Connections

Lambir is only 32 km from Miri. Syarikat Bas Suria and Syarikat Bas Baram have frequent bus services to Batu Niah, Bakong and Bekenu, all of which stop directly opposite the park HQ. The journey time is 30-40 mins. If you prefer a guided tour (approx. RM 50 each way), arrange a pick-up time for the return journey. The last bus back to Miri leaves at 1730 hrs. Note: The bus marked ‘Lambir’ does not go to the National Park.

LOAGAN BUNUT NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Loagan Bunut features a unique ecosystem based on Sarawak’s largest natural lake (65 ha). The shallow lake usually drains completely when the water in the nearby Tinjar river is low (normally February and late May or early June/July). As the water level subsides, huge flocks of wading birds gorge themselves on fish and other aquatic creatures trapped in the mud. When the lake is dry, plants sprout from the mud and are eaten by insect larvae. When the rains come and the lake fills up, returning fish feed on the larvae, breed in the lake, and the whole cycle starts again.

The surrounding terrain features a variety of forest types, ranging from mixed peatswamp forest with huge stilt-rooted trees at the water’s edge, to towering Alam forest with a canopy height of over 60 m, and helps to make Loagan Bunut a birdwatcher’s paradise. Permanent residents include egrets, swallows, malkohas, stork-billed kingfishers, magpies, robins, doves, bulbuls, racket-tailed drongos, pied hornbills and kites, while darters, egrets, herons, bittens, storks and broadbills arrive during the dry spells to feed on the trapped fish. Other animals found in the park include barking deer, bearded pigs, sambar deer, long-tail macaques, black banded langurs, lesser mouse deer, small-tooth palm civets, giant squirrels, provost squirrels, Bornean gibbons, many species of frogs and small lizards, dog-headed water snakes and a variety of tree snakes. Estuarine crocodiles are occasionally sighted.

Activities

During dry spells it is possible to stroll across the dried-up lake bed, but visitors must be accompanied by a local guide for safety reasons. More permanent trails include the Hydrology Trail (2km) which provides a close-up view of the peatswamp ecosystem. The 260m Tapang Trail showcases the towering tapang tree (Koompassia excelsia), the world’s third tallest tree, whose heavy, dense wood is claimed to be the best for making blowpipes. The Belian Trail (720m) features the belian tree (Eusideroxylon zwageri), also known as Borneo ironwood) which produces one of the world’s hardest, and most valuable timbers.

Boat trips can be arranged at the Park Headquarters. Early morning is the best time to appreciate the mist-shrouded scenery, midday is best for viewing wading birds feeding on trapped fish, and late afternoon offers superb sunsets and more bird watching possibilities. The boatmen usually drive the narrow boats right into the forest, amongst huge stilted tree roots where monkeys and squirrels can often be seen. A boat trip will usually include a visit to the fascinating Selambau scoop nets, and during fish migrations visitors can watch the fishermen at work and buy freshly caught fish. The boatmen will also point out an ancient Berawan burial platform, or Klining, supported above the lake by sturdily belian pillars.

The boats are operated by local Berawan fishermen who have a great deal of local knowledge and usually speak acceptable English. The charter rate is RM 60.00 per boat per hour for up to 4 passengers, with an additional RM 15.00 per hour for every extra passenger.

Accommodation: The Forest Hostel at the Park HQ (Tel: 085-779410) has 4 rooms with 7 double-decker bunk beds each (RM 15.75 per person). There is a small canteen serving simple cooked meals, snacks and drinks. A generator supplies electricity during the evenings. Contact the National Parks Booking office in Miri or Kuching for reservations.

Mutiara Homestay, Tel: 013-5781396, Email: mutiarahomestay@live.co.uk. Operated by a local Berawan family, offers 9 twin-bed rooms plus a 15-person dormitory sleeping 60 (RM 15.75 per person). There is a small canteen serving simple cooked meals, snacks and drinks. A generator supplies electricity during the evenings. Contact the National Parks Booking office in Miri or Kuching for reservations.

Travel Connections: Loagan Bunut is approximately 120 km or 3 hours by road from Miri. Travel agents in Miri operate tours to the park. Independent travelers can take public transport (bus or 4wd) to Long Lapok, about 15 km from the Park Headquarters. The coffee shops near the bus stop can arrange onward transport to the park. Mutiara Homestay can arrange transport from Lapok Bridge. Check with the National Parks Booking Office in Miri for the latest timetables and fares.
SIMILAJAU NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Similajau National Park showcases the unique geographical features of the Sarawak coastline north of Bintulu - a chain of golden sandy beaches, punctuated by small rocky headlands and jungle streams, and bordered by dense green forest. The 8,996 hectare park is at its best during the dry season (approximately February to October) when the emerald green waters are crystal clear and ideal for swimming. The park is very popular with locals at weekends. If you want to avoid the crowds, visit during the week when you are likely to have the park all to yourself.

Natural Attractions

Similajau's littoral fringe, kerangas (or heath forest) and mixed dipterocarp forest provide a variety of diverse habitats for a wide range of fascinating species. In amongst its pitcher plants, mangroves and giant dipterocarp trees, Similajau is home to 24 species of mammals, including long-tailed macaques, gibbons, banded langurs, shrews, mouse deer, barking deer, squirrels, wild boar, porcupine, and civet cats. It is also a birdwatcher’s paradise, with 185 species of birds having been recorded within the park's boundaries.

Similajau is also home to two crocodile species. The estuarine or saltwater crocodile (crocodylus porosus) lives near the river mouths of the larger rivers in the park and feeds on small mammals, lizards, turtles, fish and water birds. It has also been known to attack humans at other locations in Sarawak and in Australia. There are no known cases of crocodiles attacking visitors at Similajau, but to be on the safe side visitors are advised to take note of the crocodile warning signs. Please do not attempt to wade across the larger streams in the park, but use the bridges instead.

Prehistoric-looking horseshoe crabs can often be found on the beaches or in the shallows, and green turtles frequently come ashore to lay their eggs at Golden Beach and the two Turtle Beaches closer to the park HQ. There are also occasional landings by hawksbill and leatherback turtles. All marine turtles are Totally Protected Animals in Sarawak and anyone found tampering with a nest is liable to a heavy fine and/or a jail sentence. Other marine visitors include five species of dolphin that are occasionally seen, usually between March and September - the Irrawaddy dolphin, the bottlenose dolphin, the Indo-pacific humpback dolphin, the finless porpoise dolphin and the pantropical spotted dolphin.

Treks & Trails

The main trekking trail (red markings) follows the coastline of the park; from the park HQ you first cross the Sungei Likau suspension bridge to reach the plankwalk over the mangroves, from where you have two choices - to follow the plankwalk to the start of the trail proper, or take a short on the left at the very beginning of the plankwalk; a wooden ladder leads down to a secondary trail which joins the main trail near the junction for the Viewpoint Trail. This leads to a shelter with picnic tables looking back to the beach and park HQ. From shortly after the viewpoint turn-off, the main trail hugs the coastline and passes numerous small bays and beaches, eventually (1½ - 2 hrs) reaching three idyllic beaches - two turtle beaches each set in beautiful bays, and the aptly named Golden Beach with its long, unbroken stretch of sand.

A good way to get the most out of Similajau is to hire a boat and be dropped off at Golden Beach and then trek back to the HQ (or vice versa). Boats can be hired for half day and full day coastal and river tours, or for crocodile spotting tours at night. Enquire at the park HQ for details.

Upon arrival visitors are required to register at the Park HQ (Tel: 086-391284). Next to the registration counter there is a good information centre. The Park HQ also has a canteen which serves drinks, snacks, lunch and evening meals.

Accommodation consists of Types 4, 5 and 6 Forest Lodges (RM 238, RM 159 & RM 79.50) a Hostel (RM 42.50 per 4-bed room or RM 15.90 per bed) and a Campsite (RM 5.25). For accommodation bookings contact the National Parks booking office in Miri. Early booking is advised if you are visiting at weekends, public holidays or school holidays. Barbecue pits are provided for visitors wishing to prepare their own meals.

Travel Connections: Similajau is approximately 30 km northeast of Bintulu town. There is no public bus service to the park. The taxi fare from Bintulu town is RM 50 each way - arrange a time with the driver to pick you up. Alternatively you may charter a fast boat from Bintulu Wharf (rates negotiable), a somewhat more expensive but enjoyable option.
DIARY OF EVENTS

The following are just a small sample of the many fascinating events Sarawak has to offer. Check out www.sarawaktourism.com for additional events as they are announced.

Note: All dates are provisional and none have been officially confirmed at the time of writing. Please confirm before making your travel arrangements.

Chinese New Year - Venue: Chinese homes and temples throughout Sarawak - Date: 31st January & 1st February. Join Sarawak's Chinese community for open house celebrations, temple processions and lion dances to welcome the Year of the Horse.

Gawai Dayak - Venue: Iban & Bidayuh homes and longhouses throughout Sarawak - Date: 1st & 2nd June. The highlight of the year for the Iban and Bidayuh communities, with many other groups also celebrating. The perfect time to visit a longhouse and try the rice wine.

Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadhan) - Venue: Muslim homes throughout Sarawak - Date: 28th & 29th July. Muslims all over Sarawak hold open house to celebrate the end of the fasting month, with some welcoming guests all month long. Don’t miss the spicy beef rendang.


Borneo Jazz - Venue: Parkcity Everly Hotel, Miri - Date: 9th & 10th May. Contact Sarawak Tourism Board, www.jazzborneo.com

The perfect time to visit a longhouse and try the rice wine.


Borneo Cultural Festival - Venue: Sibu Town Square - Date: 15th - 24th August - Contact Sibu Municipal Council, www.smc.gov.my. Borneo culture ancient and modern, especially music and the performing arts, is offered for your enjoyment at this extravagant 10-day festival which also includes a popular food fair.

Wesak Day - Venue: Buddhist homes and temples throughout Sarawak - Date: 13th May. Visit temples and enjoy candlelight processions with dragon and lion dances as Sarawak’s Buddhist community celebrate the worldly life of the Buddha.

Kapit Regatta - Venue: Sarawak River, Kuching Waterfront - Date: 5th - 7th September - Contact www.sarawakregatta.com. Dating from 1872, this is the biggest and best river regatta in Southeast Asia. There's even a category for tourists.

Borneo World Music Expo - Venue: Kuching (various locations) - Date: 16th - 18th June, Contact STB (www.sarawaktourism.com) Asia's first world music expo, attracting musicians and music industry professionals from around the globe. Plenty of side activities and music showcases make this fitting prelude for the Rainforest World Music Festival.

Rainforest World Music Festival - Venue: Sarawak Cultural Village, Santubong, Kuching - Date: 20th - 22nd June - Contact Sarawak Tourism Board, www.rwmf.net. Held annually since 1998, Asia’s very first world music festival is still the most exciting musical event in the region and the winner of a host of music industry awards.

The perfect time to visit a longhouse and try the rice wine.


Borneo Cultural Festival - Venue: Sibu Town Square - Date: 15th - 24th August - Contact Sibu Municipal Council, www.smc.gov.my. Borneo culture ancient and modern, especially music and the performing arts, is offered for your enjoyment at this extravagant 10-day festival which also includes a popular food fair.


Borneo Jazz - Venue: Parkcity Everly Hotel, Miri - Date: 9th & 10th May. Contact Sarawak Tourism Board, www.jazzborneo.com

The perfect time to visit a longhouse and try the rice wine.


Pesta Babulang (Bisaya Festival) - Venue: Limbang Division - Date: 1st weekend of June (P) - Contact Limbang Resident’s Office, www.limbangrdo.sarawak.gov.my. A 3-day festival held by the Bisaya Community, including buffalo racing, cooking competitions and a traditional costume beauty pageant.
Borneo’s most challenging extreme sport event, as an international line-up of base jumpers attempt soft landings from Sarawak’s tallest building.

**Multi-Cultural Mooncake Festival**
- Venue: Carpenter St & Main Bazaar, Kuching - Date: Mid-September (P)
- Contact Sarawak Tourism Board.
In typically Sarawak fashion, the Chinese community extend their mid-autumn festival and festivities to all races with a 4-day street party in Old Kuching.

**Borneo International Kite Festival**
- Watch and learn how the professionals build and fly their kites at this major international kite festival.

**Asia Music Festival**
- The first music festival in the region to combine Asian traditional, contemporary, rock and pop performers together at a single venue.

**Baram Regatta**
- First held in 1899 as an alternative to headhunting, this is one of Sarawak’s oldest and most historic regattas.

**Baleh Kapit Raft Safari**
- Sarawak’s original adventure race, as competing teams raft down the mighty Baleh River to Kapit. New participants always welcome.

**Pesta Benak (Tidal Bore Festival)**
- A festival to celebrate the Lupar’s famous tidal bore. Activities include surfing and wave-riding competitions, water sports and nightly entertainment.

**STAYING LONGER IN SARAWAK**
Visitors wishing to remain in Sarawak for more than a few weeks have plenty of options to choose from. Most nationalities will be granted a 90-day stay on arrival and this can easily be extended a further 90 days on application to the Immigration Department, more than adequate for making the State your winter or summer retreat. If you want to settle here permanently or wish to come and go as you like, the **Malaysia My Second Home** programme (MM2H) provides a long-term multiple entry visa with other advantages, including duty-free car import privileges. Further details on MM2H Sarawak are available from the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak, www.mot.sarawak.cov.my. If you are interested in the MM2H Sarawak programme but prefer some assistance in scouting property, arranging sponsorship and doing the paperwork, contact one of the licensed MM2H agents. Mr Sivanesan of Blueport Agency (www.blueport.com) knows the state extremely well as he is a researcher and co-author of this guide.

There are no restrictions on foreigners renting property for the short or long term and very few restrictions on buying houses, apartments and investment properties, providing these are over RM 300,000 (US$ 100,000 approx.). Some far-sighted developers are beginning to target properties for MM2H participants, such as the **Naim Group**, which offers suitable properties in Kuching, Bintulu and Miri. If you are looking to buy an existing property, make sure it is properly conveyed by a local solicitor. If you are interested in a new property, choose a developer with a strong record of timely completion and make sure they are a licensed member of the **Sarawak Housing & Real Estate Developer Association** (www.sheda.org.my).
Rub shoulders with an “Orang Utan” and discover a variety of rich abundant wildlife. Sarawak’s rainforest are some of the most diverse and protected ecosystems in the world today. Catch a plethora of unique animals in their natural habits, and you’ll understand why this place is a haven for animal lovers. Come live the adventure.
There's no limit to what you can study at
Suntravel's Jungle University

To learn everything you ever wanted to know about the Borneo rainforest, simply contact us

www.suntravelborneo.com

SUNTRAVEL SDN BHD
Lot 18, Ground Floor, Wisma Phoenix, Jalan Song Thian Chek, 93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Tel: (+60) 82 422 023 / 412 072 Fax: (+60) 82 429 375
Email: sun@suntravelborneo.com