

BORNEO JOURNEYING THROUGH EDEN

BY LINDA CARTLIDGE

BORNEO EVOKES DARK AND FOREBODING IMAGES in the mind of a traveller at just the very mention of her name. Dense primal rainforests, ancient forgotten species, remote jungle tribes and mysterious isolated beaches and islands – it all sounds beyond reach and reality. But it does all exist and, with the help of some established local knowledge can become accessible, resulting in a cruising adventure that will turn even the most jaded travellers into wide-eyed Borneo aficionados!

Millions of years ago a single volcano erupted from the sea. Over time smaller eruptions and earthquakes formed the island of Borneo – the third largest island in the world. Today three countries share the island: Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei with Sabah, Malaysia



emerging as a highly popular superyacht destination of stunning journeys along some of the world's most beautiful coasts rimmed by white sandy beaches, incredible diving sites and uninhabited islands. Coupled with this is the adventuresome attraction of a rugged and lush landscape of steep mountains and remote river valleys.

Tropical rainforests with some of the richest biodiversity on earth are the location for river trips through a present-day Eden bursting with a variety of rare plants and wildlife. For those seeking new adventures, it's not just the cruising but the travel to and within the different areas of Sabah, Borneo that makes the journey so interesting. To sample what mystical Borneo has to offer, the following itinerary designed by Asia Pacific Superyachts (APS) Borneo awards glimpses of the fascinating discoveries and adventures to be experienced in Sabah.

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In fact, the trip itinerary example (following pages) along the western coast of the Malaysian State of Sabah (either in part or whole) has been adopted and experienced by superyachts such as the sailing yachts Eos, Gygnus Montanus, Naos and Yanneke Too and motor yachts Mayan Queen IV, Double Haven, Northern Sun, Braveheart, Andiamo, CV-9 and Karima. Delighted with the Sabah journey, the Captain of Andiamo commented,

'Borneo Cruising – all the fantastic cruising experiences of Asia, with great facilities and none of the hassles.'

EXPLORING THE WESTERN COAST OF BORNEO

This APS Borneo itinerary starts at Kota Kinabalu on the West coast and ends far South of Semporna / Tawau at the East coast of Sabah (Borneo). Among the islands to visit is a volcanic island



rated as one of the five top diving sites in the world, rising 600 feet from the seabed – Sirapan Island.

Day 1 Depart berthing location at Sutera Harbour Marina, Kota Kinabalu. Spend a pleasant half-day cruising to a calm anchorage at sheltered island bays within Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park. The islands of Sulug, Manukan, and Mamutik & Gaya provide a beautiful sunset experience.

Day 2 Depart at day-break and travel approx 50 miles up the north east coastline to Mantanani Island and enjoy fine white sandy beaches coupled with good snorkelling, diving and shoreline exploring. Also visit a traditional remote village. The location provides a secure sheltered anchorage overnight.

Day 3 Depart at sunrise to travel up northeast again into Tun Mustapha Marine Park, to Balambangan, Banggi & Maliangan Island. Balambangan and Maliangan offer a variety of shore-based activities such as snorkelling, kayaking and viewing seasonal turtles beaching. Banggi island is inhabited by a few native tribes still living in traditional ways (possible 4WD land exploration but must be set-up/approved in advance). A sheltered bay with a scenic saltwater mangrove spread across the bay between the straits separating the two islands. This is ideal as an overnight stop-over anchorage.



LEFT:
MANUKAN ISLAND

BELOW:
INCREDIBLE DIVING
IS AVAILABLE

OPPOSITE TOP:
TROPICAL RAIN
FOREST IN BORNEO

OPPOSITE BOTTOM:
AN AERIAL VIEW
OF SABAH



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Day 4 Depart at dawn and travel approx 85 miles southeast to Lankayan Island, passing a marked channel through the reef and shoal area. Game fishing is a great activity along this passage as marine livestock is still in abundance. Lankayan is a privately owned resort island with turtle conservation and protection efforts. The leather-back turtle species is sighted frequently, beaching as they lay their eggs. Night turtle watch activities are a must and can be pre-arranged along with interesting diving and underwater exploration. It is Best to anchor overnight on the west side of the island during a stop-over.

Day 5 Depart at first light and travel 25 miles south along the coastline to Salingan or 'Turtle Island' which is another turtle conservation and protection sanctuary. Snorkelling along the shoreline is a rewarding experience before departing late afternoon to Sandakan, travelling south for a further 35 miles. Anchor late evening at the port designated area near to Sandakan Yacht Club where it is possible to utilise the club jetty facilities (when pre-arranged with Club management). With five direct inward and outward flights to Kota Kinabalu daily, it is a strategic town for guests arriving and departing and a perfect mid-trip turnover point.

Day 6 Here we can arrange an exciting land excursion for a private visit to Sepilok Orang Utan Sanctuary. This

infant nursery and rehabilitation center with its viewing of these rare primates is a truly unforgettable experience. The Borneo Sun Bear Research Centre provides a rare opportunity to view this near-extinct bear species. The bears were rescued from a conflict area and are now being rehabilitated and released back into the wildlife reserve. Also visit a traditional English teahouse for a tea-break at the top of a hill overlooking Sandakan Town and the waterfront – a relic in itself of bygone colonial days.

Day 7/8 several options are available:

Option 1 – Depart Sandakan via Air (helicopter) or Land (4WD vehicle) to the Borneo Rain Forest Lodge at Lahad Datu to experience a million-year old rain forest atmosphere. Break up the trip with a three day/two night stay at this exclusive six-Star jungle resort. From the Lodge choose from lazy lunches, long hikes and exotic bird watching to wilderness picnics in the Danum Valley Rainforest Reserve. The yacht will have already departed for Lahad Datu port (165 miles south) to pick up guests, arriving on Day 9 at noon.

Option 2 – Depart early am and cruise south for 30 miles to the Mumiang river mouth, a branch of the

famous Kinabatangan River. There is good anchorage at the inner river for any boat with less than 4.5 m draft. From this point travel 40 miles upstream to explore and experience the vast landscapes and village life along the river shoreline. There are opportunities to branch off the Kinabatangan River to enjoy the vast wildlife in the dense surrounding rainforest. Stay overnight at one of the comfortable jungle lodge resorts along the river bank to enjoy night wildlife sightings in a tender. Depart in the afternoon for overnight navigation to Lahad Datu (120 miles south).

Day 9 Arrival at Lahad Datu for Guest Pick Up if Option 1 was taken on Day 7 and travel 80 miles south to Semporna. If Option 2 was taken, the pre-dawn departure is followed by a full day-sail along the scenic route covering the 200 miles down south to Semporna.

Day 10 Arrival at Semporna and into Tun Sakaran Marine Park, which consists of Mantabuan, Gaya, Sibuan, Boheydulang, Tetagan and other smaller islands. Explore these during the day with a mix of land and water activities. Anchor overnight at East side of Bum Bum Island if weather conditions are calm or on the East side of Larapan Island for shelter from bad weather.

OPPOSITE TOP:
A STUNNING
BORNEO SUNSET

OPPOSITE BOTTOM:
RESCUED BABY
ORANGUTANS

ABSOLUTE



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BELOW:
MOUNT KINABALU

Day 11 – Depart at dawn and cruise south 25 miles to Mabul Island to an anchorage at the southeast side of the island. From here indulge in the underwater world of the famous Sipadan, Mabul & Kapalai islands. Part of the Tun Sakaran Marine Park, these ideal diving sites are known as the ‘Golden Triangle of Borneo’.

History was made in 2011 as the 51 m Feadship motor yacht Double Haven’s CAT tender entered the protected island of Sipadan. The historic visit was arranged by APS Borneo GM, Alvin Teh, who obtained special permission from the local authorities for the superyacht’s custom build CAT tender to go into Sipadan Island. It was the first time any foreign flag vessel owner was given special diving permits for dive activities in the history of Sabah, Malaysia. Jacques Cousteau said in his film Borneo: The Ghost of the Sea Turtle (1987): ‘I have seen other places like Sipadan 45 years ago, but now no more. Now we have found an untouched piece of art’. Arising 600 metres from a seabed in an ocean of pure blue, Sipadan Island’s famed wall diving site at the Celebes Sea is filled with incredible and abundant and diverse species of turtle, fish, sharks and coral in crystal clear waters.

Day 14 Preparation for international connecting departure flights from Semporna can be arranged and, alternately; Semporna is only an hour by comfortable land transfer to Tawau Airport with flights to Kota Kinabalu and internationally onwards from there.

NOTE: all cruising, national parks entry, anchorage and special dive permits must be applied for 30 days in advance before an itinerary can be adopted on any foreign visiting yachts cruising in Borneo (Sabah) waters. Recommended best cruising for this area is between March and October.

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