

Sarawak Visitor's Guide

Miri



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MIRI & NORTHEAST SARAWAK

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 make-up. Chinese, Ibans, Malays, Melanau, Bisayas, Orang Ulu (mostly Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit and Lun Bawang), Bidayus, 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.

Combine this with vibrant night-life, bustling native markets, a number of popular beaches nearby and even a top class marina, and Miri makes an ideal base for exploring the National Parks, the offshore reefs and the other natural and cultural attractions of Northeast Sarawak. It is also a great place to relax for a few days after the rigours of jungle trekking.

MIRI

Note: The area code for all telephone numbers in Miri and its surroundings, unless otherwise stated, is 085 from outside the area and +6085 from overseas. Where no postcode is given, all addresses are 98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia.

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 transshipment 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 Marina's** unique **seahorse lighthouse** (the seahorse is the city emblem of Miri). Near to Everly and Marriott hotels, taxi or bus from city centre.

The Fish Market, on Jln Bendahara next to the Chinese temple, is where the local catch is landed early every morning. An enormous variety of fresh fish and seafood is sold here, and some of the fishmongers' displays are minor works of art.

Next to the fish market is the **Tua Pek Kong temple**, dedicated to the deity most beloved by overseas



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.

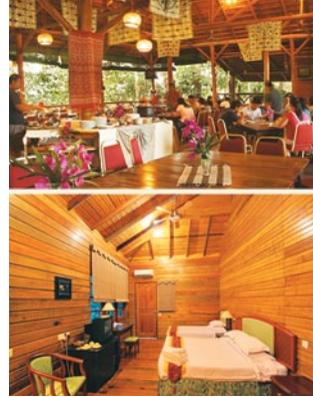


Canada Hill, the Petroleum Museum & Oil Well No. 1. Canada Hill, a limestone ridge overlooking the city, offers excellent views of Miri and the surrounding area. Oil Well No. 1, known as the "grand old lady," is situated on top of Canada hill. The well has an important place in Miri's history, as it 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 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



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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 (Jln Krokop 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 angsa 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, **Tusan 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 clifftop can be accessed on foot from the coastal road.

Further down the coast towards Bekenu are a number of attractive casuarina-fringed beaches - **Bungai Beach**, **Sibuti Beach** and **Peliau 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 Bekenu area is the **Kedayan Homestay**, which involves 28 fishing and farming families from the three ethnic Kedayan villages of Kampung Peliau, Kampung Bungai and Kampung Jambu.



Activities available 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 **firefly 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 gorgonians, sea-whips, anemones, sponges and crinoids. Angel fish, butterfly fish, fusiliers, groupers, stingrays, trigger fish, parrot fish, wrasses 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 meters, with hard and soft corals, anemones and their symbiotic clown fishes, bubble corals, anchor corals, colourful dendronephthya soft corals, feather stars, giant clams, nudibranches 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 - 40 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 meters or more. Large gorgonian fans of 2 meters in size are all over the top of the reef at 21 meters. The reef edge drops to 35 meters.

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 is covered with cave corals. 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 seafans. 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 anemones, clown fishes and nudibranches.

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 Gymkhana 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, E-mail: 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, Jln Sehati, Tel: 437799 Fax: 437733. 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* (lobby lounge), *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 include swimming pool, day spa, fitness centre, non-smoking floor, business centre, rooms & facilities for disabled guests, extensive conference & banquet facilities.

Grand Palace Hotel (4*), Pelita Commercial Centre, Jln Miri-Pujut, Tel: 428888, www.grandpalacehotel.com.my. Band C-D.

Mega Hotel (4*), Jln Merbau, Tel: 432432, www.megahotel.com.my. Band C-D.

Miri Marriott Resort & Spa (5*), Jln Temenggong Datuk Oyong Lawai (facing Brighton Beach), Tel: 421121, www.marriott.com/myymc. Band D.

Parkcity Everly Hotel (4*), Jln Temenggong Datuk Oyong Lawai (facing Brighton Beach), Tel: 440288, www.everlygroup.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.

Eastwood Valley Golf & Country Club (3*), Jln Miri By-Pass, Tel: 421010, www.eastwoodvalley.com. Band C-D. Chalet-style suburban golf resort.

Budget Hotels

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

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

Brooke Inn, 14 Jln Brooke, Tel: 412881. Band B

Cempaka Inn, Lot 226, Jln Hokkien, Tel: 438099. Band B.

City Inn, Lot 568, Jln Lee Tak, Tel: 435077. Band A-B

Classy Inn, Lot 709-10, Jln Masjid, Tel: 412533. Band B.

Cosy Inn, Lot 545-7, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 415522. Band B

Crown Prince Inn, Lot 358, Taman Jade Manis, Tel: 436822. Band B.

De Central Inn, 14 Jln Yu Seng Utara, Tel: 424168, Email: decentralmiri@hotmail.com. Band B.

Dragon Inn, Lot 355, Jln Masjid, Tel: 422266, Email: dragon.inn12@gmail.com. Band B.

Fairland Inn, 21 Jln Raja, Tel: 413981. Band B.

Fortune Inn, Lot 756, Jln Merpati, Tel: 423669. Band B.

Garden Inn, Lot 290B Jln Teochew, Tel: 421839. Band B.

Genial Inn, 381B Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 410966. Band B.

Gloria Hotel, 27, Jln Brooke, PO Box 1283, 98008 Miri. Tel: 416699. Band B.

Harbour View Inn, Lot 124, Jln Bendahara, Tel: 412177. Band B.

Hotel Nur, Miri Waterfront, Jalan Permaisuri, Tel: 420420, Email: reservation.hotelnur@gmail.com. Band B.

King Hua Air Cond Inn, Lot 311, Taman Jade Manis, Tel: 412512. Band B.

Kingwood Inn, Lot 826, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 415888 Band B.

Ku's Inn, 3 Jln Sylvia, Tel: 413733. Band A-B

M Boutique Inn, 1056 Bintang Jaya Commercial Centre, Tel: 418299, Email: mboutiqueinn@gmail.com. Band B.

Metro Inn, Lot 762, Jln Merpati, Tel: 411663. Band B.

Million Inn, 6 Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 415077. Band B.

Miri Hotel (1*), 47 Jln Brooke, Tel: 421212. Band B.

Muhibbah Inn, Lot 548, Jln Yu Seng Selatan, Tel: 412003. Band B.

Pacific Orient Hotel (2*), 49 Jln Brooke, Tel: 413333, www.pacificorienthotel.com. Band B.

Palace Inn, Lot 192, Jln Kwangtong, Tel: 421999. Band B

Park Hotel (2*), Jln Raja, Tel: 414555, www.parkhotelmiri.com. Band B.

Raja Inn, Lot 246, Jln Setia Raja, Tel: 422422. Band B.

Rasa Sayang Inn, 566 Jln Lee Tak, Tel: 413880. Band B.

Richmond Inn, Lot 243, Jln Setia Raja, Tel: 413289. Band B.

River Inn, Lot 652, Jln Nakhoda Gampar, Tel: 415507. Band B.

Silverwood Inn, 20A Jln Bendahara, Tel: 420577. Band B.

Somerset Hotel (2*), 12 Jln Kwangtong, Tel: 422777, E-mail: somerhot@streamyx.com. Band B.

Today Inn, Lot 571, Jln Lee Tak, Tel: 414000. Band B.

Tropical Inn, Lot 852, Jln Teochew, Tel: 411376. Band B.

Venice Inn, Block 9, Waterfront Commercial Centre, Tel: 433200, Email: veniceinnmiri@hotmail.com. Band B.

Visa Inn, Lot 571, Jln Lee Tak, Tel: 411376. Band B.

Walk Inn, Lot 1819 Jln Merbau, Tel: 012-9945678, Email: walkinnmiri@gmail.com. Band B

Guest Houses, Lodges, Retreats and Homestays (and anything that doesn't fit elsewhere)

Borneo Tropical Rainforest Resort, Km 36 Miri-Bintulu Road, Sibutu Land District, 98000 Miri. Tel: 407198 (Resort) 613888 (Miri Office), Fax: 613808, E-mail: info@borneorainforestresort.com, www.borneorainforestresort.com. Band B-D. This delightful agro and nature resort is situated adjacent to Lambir National Park. 30 well-appointed rooms and 18 luxurious chalets set on or around a small lake, as well as a budget hostel block. Wide range of nature activities and challenging team building programmes. Two restaurants, as well as extensive, fully-equipped conference and meeting facilities.

Apple Lodge, Lot 343-344, Jln Miri-Pujut, Tel: 419696. Band A-B.

Coco House, Lot 2117, Block 9, Jln Miri-Pujut, Tel: 417051, www.cocohouse.com.my. Band A-B.

Dillenia Guesthouse, Lot 846, Jln Sida, Tel: 434204,

E-mail: dillenia.guesthouse@gmail.com. Band A-B.

Highlands Lodge, Lot 839 Jln Merpati, Tel: 422327, www.highlandsmiri.com. Band A-B.

Miri Trail Guesthouse, Sublot 10634, Airport Commercial Centre, Tel: 017-8503666, Email: miritrail@yahoo.com. Band A-B.

Miri Waterfront Homestay, Lot 1158, Waterfront Commercial Centre, Tel: 019-8659686, miriwaterfronthomestay.blogspot.com. Band B.

Minda Guesthouse, Lot 637, Jln Yu Seng Utara, Tel: 411422, www.mindaguesthouse.com. Band A-B.

My Homestay, Lot 1091, Jln Merpati, Tel: 429091, staymyhomestay.blogspot.com. Band A-B

Siang Bing Homestay, Lot 281 Beautiful Jade Centre, Tel: 417524. Band A-B.

Treetops Jungle Lodge, 210 Kampung Siwa Jaya, Bakam, Tel: 011-12591692, www.treetopsborneo.com. Rustic homestay on coastal road south of Miri. Band B.

Serviced Apartments

Imperial Hotel - see International Class Hotels.

Jinhold Apartment Hotel, Lot 2160 Jln Bulatan Park, Tel: 660555, www.jinholdapartment.com. Band C-D.

Mcity Suites, Lot 2645, Piasau Business Park, Jln Bulatan Park, Tel: 665777, www.mcitysuites.my. Band C-D.

Merdeka Suites Hotel, Lot 6920, Jln Miri-Bintulu, Tel: 432181, Email: mshotel@streamyx.com. Band B-C.

EATING OUT

Miri's multi-ethnic population means visitors are assured of a wide variety of Malaysian and international cuisine. Miri has literally 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, 557/558 Pelita 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.

Dynasty Restaurant, Dynasty Hotel. Gourmet Chinese restaurant (non halal). 11 am - 2.30 pm, 6 pm - 10 pm.

Good Taste Bak Kut Teh, Jln Krokop-Miri. Serves some of the best *bak kut teh* (herbal pork rib soup) in town. 8 am - mid-afternoon.

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

Imperial Restaurant, Imperial Hotel. Consistently well-reviewed Chinese & fusion restaurant with an extensive wine list. Take a jacket for the generous air conditioning. 11 am - midnight.

Jing Wood Café, 612 Pelita Commercial Centre. Very popular for its fried oyster *kway teow*. 7.30 am to 1 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 head. 5pm - 10pm.

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 11pm.

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 Kuok Kee Cafe (at Metro Hotel), Jln North Yu Seng. Chinese coffee shop selling *kolo mee* and good beef noodles.

Pelita Hai Ma Food Centre, 553-554 Pelita Commercial Centre. Busy 24-hour coffee shop popular with night-owls place due to cheap beer and live football on TV.

QQ Restaurant, 539 Pelita 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 al fresco steamboat with spectacular views. 3.30 pm - midnight.

Yong Seng Café, 542 Pelita 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 & Tea Leaf** is on the Outdoor Ground Floor, Bintang Megamall. **San Francisco Coffee** can be found at Miri Square Shopping Complex and **Starbucks** has outlets at Miri Airport and Bintang Megamall.

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

Secret Recipe, 349-350 Pelita 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 **Kenny Rogers 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 *murtabak*, *roti canai* and *thosai*. 7 am – 9 pm.

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

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

Taj Restaurant, 113 Lutong Bazaar. 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 Laya* (Bario rice in *isip* leaves) and *Labo Senutuk* (pounded and seasoned wild boar meat). 7 am - 3 pm. Closed Sundays.

Japanese

Nikko, 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 Brighton. 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 vegetable dishes. 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 centre has a range of stalls selling Malay hawker favourites.

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

Madli'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.

Nagaliar 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 yam 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).

Restoran Serai Wangi, Lot 641, Jln Yu Seng Utara. Buffet of mixed rice dishes. Open 7 am - midnight.

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.

Taman Seroja Food Stalls, Jln Brooke (Opp. Miri Hotel). Good range of Malay food including mixed rice, *laksa* and noodles. Daytime & evenings.

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 seafront 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 curry and fish head in town. 11 am - 11 pm.

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

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).

Tanjong Seafood, Lot 1, Brighton Rd, opposite Marriott 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 Pak Hock Lin Seafood. Lot 720 & 721, Jln Brighton. Next to New Tanjung, with a similar menu and ambience.

Yi Hah 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 city centre restaurant serving Malaysianised Thai food plus pasta & pizza, Western, Malaysian and Mexican dishes. 12 pm - 3 pm & 6 pm - 4 am.

Vegetarian

CGS Vegetarian Cafe, Lot 2922, Jln Bulan Sabit. 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 vegetarian cuisine. 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 or Miri Bus 11 or 13.

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

Café Miri Bar & Bistro, Lot 2120, Jln Bulan Sabit, 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 serving pies, roast chicken, coffees and desserts. 10 am - 10 pm.

Fratini's Restaurant, Block 5, Boulevard Commercial Centre. Popular restaurant serving a range of pizza and pasta dishes. Kids can make their own pizzas - an added attraction for families. 10 am - 11 pm.

M Signature Revolving Restaurant, Meritz Hotel. There is no better place in town to enjoy dinner with a superlative view. The near 2-hour rotation time is perfect for a relaxing meal. 11 am - 2 pm, 6 pm - 10 pm.

Ming Café, Jln Yu Seng Selatan opp. Mega Hotel. Very popular and busy corner café and bar with budget western dishes, as well as Chinese, Indian and Malay stalls. Huge selection of beers. Open 12noon until late.

Piccolo Fratini, Lot 1399, Centrepoint Blvd, Phase 2, Jln Kabu. Tel: 430255. Located in the town centre, same menu and successful formula as Fratini's.

Seahorse Bistro, Taman Piasau Indah. Serves a wide selection of continental and local dishes, from fresh barbeques to fried finger foods. Quite a distance from town area, so take a taxi. 5 pm - 1 am. Halal.

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 an unwritten law in Malaysia 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 cum 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. Packed at weekends - 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 and buy your beer by the barrel. 4 pm - 2.30 am.
Island, Block 7, Unity Centre, Pelita Commercial Centre. Relaxed hangout with a selection of over a hundred cocktails. You won't run out of choices. 4pm - 2am.

Ming Cafe - see Eating Out - Western.

Reflections, Meritz Hotel. Stylish lounge bar with live music nightly as well as private KTV rooms. 3 pm - 1 am.

The Other Office, Lot 349 Pelita Commercial Centre. A favourite amongst expatriates and locals for cheap beer and pleasant company, 3.30pm - 2am.

SOHO Irish Bar & Bistro, 29-4A Jln Yu Seng Utara. Serves the best draught Guinness in town. 4 pm - 2 am.

Siam Thai Bar, Lot 2212, 1st Floor, Krokop 5, Taman Yakin. The dance floor and pool tables attract the younger crowd whilst the balcony and sofa areas provide quieter areas to hang out. 4pm - 2am.

Wheels, Waterfront Commercial Centre. Music café serving western food and playing pop and R&B. Occasional live bands. 4 pm - 1 am.

Cinemas

Star Cineplex, Merdeka Shopping Mall, Tel: 417610.
GSC, Bintang Megamall, Tel: 03-78068888. Features 3D screens. Check local press for movie listings.

The Performing Arts

Traditional music and dance performances are often staged in the leading hotels, outdoors at Miri City Fan, public parks and at the Civic Centre (off Jln Gartak). Check local press for details. The popular **Borneo Jazz Festival** is held at the Parkcity Everly Hotel in early May every year - see Events listing on page 98.



TRAVEL & TOUR CONNECTIONS

Any fares quoted in this guide are for one-way and do not include taxes and surcharges (where applicable).

Air: Regular **Malaysia Airlines (MAS)** flights connect Miri with Kuching (4x daily), and Kuala Lumpur (5x daily), with onward connections to over 80 destinations worldwide. **Air Asia**, operates frequent flights to Miri from Kuala Lumpur LCCT (4x daily), Kuching (2x daily), Johor Bahru (1x daily), Kota Kinabalu (1x daily) and Singapore (5x weekly). **Malindo Air** also flies daily from Kuala Lumpur. **MASWings** operates frequent ATR-72 turboprop flights to Bintulu, Sibul, Kuching, Labuan, Limbang and Mulu, as well as a **Rural Air Service**, operating DHC-6 Twin Otters (baggage allowance 10kg max - excess baggage is not available) to Bakalalan,

Bario, Lawas, Limbang, Long Akah, Long Banga, Long Lellang, Long Seridan, Marudi and Mukah.

Air Asia. 1st Floor, Main Terminal Building, Miri Airport. Also at Pelita Commercial Centre next to Grand Palace Hotel. Call centre: 03-76512222. www.airasia.com.

Malaysia Airlines & MASWings. Lot 10635, Airport Commercial Centre. Tel: 423500. Call centre 1300 883000. www.malaysiaairlines.com.

Malindo Air: No Miri office. Tel: 03-78415388, www.malindoair.com

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 6.40pm.

Bakam (for beaches): Miri Bus No. 13

Batu Niah: See section on Niah Caves National Park.

Bintulu (RM25) – Sibul (RM45) – Sarikei (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. 1 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

Taxis: Airport to town is RM22. The main taxi stand is off Jln. China in the centre of town. Miri taxis do not use meters so it is best to agree the fare first. Short distances around town are RM7-10. Taxis can be booked by phoning 432277. A call out fee is levied. To charter a taxi for 1 hour costs RM35-40.

Car Hire: This is a great way to explore in and around Miri. At peak periods, make sure to book in advance.

Avis Rent-A-Car, Lot 616, Jln Permaisuri. Tel: 430222.
Brighton Tour & Travel, 15 Level 2 Soon Hup Tower, Jln Maju. Tel: 433113, 019-8846186 (24 hrs), Email:

brightontt@gmail.com, www.brightontt.com. Also offers chauffeur service.

Golden System Car Rental, Miri Airport Counter. Tel: 013-8085559, www.goldencr.com.my.

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.

Casbumi Car Rental, Miri Airport Counter, Tel: 612799.

Sime Darby Rent A Car. Miri Airport Counter. Tel: 614740, www.simedarbycarrental.com.

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 tour, transportation, vehicle rental and reservation services.

Inter-Continental Travel Centre Sdn Bhd, 669, Ground Floor, Jln Tritonia, off Jln Permaisuri. Tel: 432007 Fax: 439113 Email: miri@intercont.com.my, www.intercont.

com.my. Experienced operator with a wide variety of family-oriented tours. Branches in Bintulu & Kuching.

Borneo Jungle Safari, Lot 1396, 1st Floor, Centre Point Commercial Centre II, Jln Kubu, Tel: 422595, www.borneojunglesafari.com.

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.kkmtravelintours.com.

Majestic Leisure & Tours, Lot 1084, 1st Floor, Jln Merpati, Tel: 427751, www.borneotravelnetwork.com.

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

Planet Borneo Tours, Lot 273, Brighton Centre, Jalan Temenggong Datuk Oyong Lawai, Tel: 415582, www.planetborneotours.com.

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

Transworld Travel Services, 2.04 2nd Floor, Wisma Pelita Tunku, Tel: 422227, www.twtmiri.com.my.

Tropical Adventure Tours & Travel, No 12, Ground Floor, Soon Hup Tower, Jln Merbau, Tel: 419337, www.borneotropicaladventures.com.

Working Hour :
4 pm - 1 am (everyday including public holidays)
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hazardbistro>
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SHOPPING

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 (Pelita 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 a wide range of authentic local handicrafts direct from the producers.

Tiang Heng & Sons, 51 Jln. Bendahara, sells handicrafts, antiques and curios along with a full range of fishing nets and equipment.

Markets

See Attractions section.

SPORTS & RECREATION

Angling: The Miri Anglers Club organises **deep sea game 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 Imperial 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: 019-8558582) 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.piasaubaclub.com.

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

USEFUL INFORMATION

Banks & Money Changers: The following is 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 Lung, Pelita Commercial Centre.

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

Public Bank, 28 China Street.

RHB Bank, Lot 362 Jln Nakhoda Gampar.

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)

Brilworth 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 outpatients 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. Columba's Church (Anglican), Jln. Kubu.

St. Joseph's Cathedral (RC), Jln. Angsana, off Miri-Pujut Rd. **SIB** (Evangelical Church of Borneo), 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 Ibans, Chinese, Malays and Melanau, with a smattering of Bisayas, Kedayans, Bidayus, Orang Ulus 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.



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Place of interest:

- Bako National Park
- Semenggong Orang Utan
- Iban Long House
- Gunung Gading Rafflesia
- Malu Caves
- Wildlife Cruise

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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 hawker 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 Assembly meeting, which was held in Bintulu on 8th September 1867.



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.

Kidurong 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.

ACCOMMODATION

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

International/Business Class Hotels

Parkcity Everly Hotel (4*), Jalan Tun Razak. Tel: 318888. Fax: 318899. www.bintulu.theeverlyhotel.com. Band C-D. Outlets include *Luconia Bay Café*, *M&D's Restaurant* (local and international cuisine) and *Waves Pub* (popular live music venue). Amenities include laundry and dry cleaning, business centre, baby sitting service, children's playground, fitness centre, swimming pool, hotel shop, executive lounge, extensive conference & banqueting facilities.

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 Zaidi, Tel: 331122, www.newworldsuites.net. Band C-D.

Kemena Plaza Hotel (3*), 116 Taman Sri Dagang, Jln

Abang Galau. Tel: 335111. Email: kemenaplazahotel@yahoo.com. Band C.

Serviced Apartments

Imperial Suites, Lot 3218, Jln Tanjung Batu, Tel: 330399, www.imperialsuites.com.my. Band C-D.

Jinhold Apartment Hotel, Lot 7920, Jln Tanjung Batu, Tel: 318333, www.jinholdapartment.com. Band C-D

Budget Hotels

Hoover Hotel, 92 Jln Keppel. Tel: 337166. Band B.

Kapitan Inn, Lot 3407, Parkcity Commercial Square, Tel: 332777. Band B.

Kemena Hotel (2*), Lot 176, Assyakirin Commerce Square, Tel: 319222, Email: kemenahotel@yahoo.com. Band B.

Kintown Inn, 93, Jln Keppel. Tel: 333666. Band B.

Parkcity Garden Inn, Lot 4197, Parkcity Commerce Square, Tel: 319666, www.parkcitygardeninn.com. Band B.

Regent Hotel (2*), Lot 166, Kemena Commercial Complex, Jln Tanjung Batu, Tel: 335511. Band B-C.

Riverfront Inn (1*), 256 Taman Sri Dagang. Tel: 333111. Band B.

Sea View Inn, 254 Jln Masjid, Taman Sri Dagang. Tel: 339118. Band A-B.

Sunlight Inn, 7 Jln Pedada, Tel: 332577. Band B.

Tune Hotel, 203 Assyakirin Commerce Square, Tel: 03-79625888 (call centre). www.tunehotels.com. Band A-C.

360 Inn, Lot 405, Parkcity Commerce Square, Tel: 335260, Email: 360innbtu@gmail.com. Band B.

900 Boutique Hotel, Lot 900, Fortune Park, Jln Tanjung Batu, Tel: 315527, www.900boutiquehotel.com.

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 hawker food.

Apple Restaurant, No 78-79, Parkcity Commerce Square. Halal. Popular restaurant serving Malaysian & Chinese dishes. Bookings advisable on weekends. Tel: 333377. 10 am - 2 pm and 5 pm - 10 pm.

Riverfront Café, Riverfront Inn. 24-hr café serving Chinese, Malay & western dishes. Excellent laksa 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 biryani*, curries, *thosai*, *chapati*. 6 am to midnight.

JF Banana Leaf, 318 Parkcity Commerce Square. South Indian banana leaf curries, rotis and murtabak. 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-Shaida Commercial Centre. Halal. 10 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 11 pm.

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

Korean

Korea House, SS1, 13 Jln Tanjung Kidurong. Also stocks a selection of Korean groceries. Noon - 2 pm, 6 pm - 10 pm.

Malay

Jalan Sommerville 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 Sommerville. 6.30 am - 10 pm.

Famous Mama Café, 10 Jln Sommerville. *Nasi Kandar* is the speciality here. 6.30 am - midnight.

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

Puteri Café, 28 Jln Sommerville. 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.

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

Sri Impian, Lot 108, Taman Sri Dagang. 8 am - 6 pm.

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

Seafood

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

Esplanade 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.

Su 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 **dangdut 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, Medan Raya, Jln Bunga Raya. 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 Commercial Square. Karaoke for the older crowd. 5 pm - 2 am

Golf

Bintulu Golf Club, Jln Tanjong Kidurong. Tel: 252001. www.kelabgolfbintulu.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 Tun Hussein Onn. Tel: 312106

UP THE BARAM RIVER

The Batang Baram, Malaysia's (and Sarawak's) second longest river, drains much of the northern region, and is home to many of the Orang Ulu tribes, including the Kayan, the Kenyah, the Berawan, their numerous sub-groups and the shy and semi-nomadic Penan. Much of the Baram region is poorly accessible, but there are some fascinating sights in the region, including the famous **Gunung Mulu National Park** and the lesser-known **Loagan Bunut National Park** (see National Parks chapter). Other attractions accessible to visitors include the small riverside town of **Marudi**, the bustling Kenyah community at **Long San**, and the delightful Kayan longhouse community of **Long Bedian**.

MARUDI

Note: Telephone dialling code is +6085 from overseas and 085 within Malaysia. All addresses are 98058 Marudi, Sarawak, Malaysia.

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 Fort 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 its char kway teow), while the **Boon Kee** restaurant (Jln Newshop) is popular for sumptuous dinners. **Malay food** is available from the stalls at the **Pasar Rakyat food centre**. **Restoran Kopaselera** on Jln Cinema serves economical **Indian Muslim** dishes.

Travel Connections

Air: **MASwings** operates DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprop flights to Miri (2-3x daily) and Bario (1x daily). Less frequent flights (1-2x weekly) serve the remote communities of Long Akah, Long Banga, Long Lellang

and Long Seridan. See Miri Travel Connections for contact details.

Boat: Downriver express boats leave approximately hourly for Kuala Baram (near Miri) from 7.30am (RM 25). There is a daily service to Long Terawan (RM 25, 4hrs) where longboats may be chartered to Mulu National Park (weather permitting).

Road: Marudi is also accessible from Miri by 4WD along an old logging road. Vehicles depart from the central bus station. Check with the Visitor's Information Centre in Miri for details.

Permits: A permit is necessary to travel upriver beyond Marudi. This is available free of charge from the District Office on Jln Kubu Hose.

LONG SAN

The sprawling Kenyah community of Long San is the last major settlement on the Baram River. Long San is something of a surprise to those who expect a sleepy riverside village rather than a mini-boom-town. However it's still the principal home of **traditional Kenyah art, crafts, music and dance**, and visitors are sure to have a fascinating time.



The region around Long San is a complex ethnic mix, and visitors can take in the Kayan longhouse of **Long Mekaba**, famous for its traditional musicians who are expert in playing the lute-like *sape*, as well as the abandoned Brooke-era fort at **Long Akah**, and even visit **nomadic Panan groups** when they are in the area. These activities generally cost about RM 150 per person per day for 4 persons, due to the vehicles, boats and fuel costs involved, and can be arranged at the Long San Guesthouse (see below).

Accommodation: The **Long San Guesthouse** offers comfortable fan-cooled rooms in an attractive wooden building close to the river. RM 80 per person including all meals. A small shop nearby sells basic essentials, including cold beer and the powerful local rice wine, *borak*. 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, 4½ 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 longhouse at **Lio Matoh**, starting point for the trek to Bario 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 their 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 Laing Jok (Tel: 012-8556118) or Ulau 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.

THE KELABIT HIGHLANDS



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 Bario 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.

Bario

Bario is the gateway to the Kelabit highlands, thanks to its airport and a small network of paved roads leading so some of the nearby 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.



Bakalalan

Bakalalan (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 last 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 **Bario Loop** is one of the most popular trails. This 5-day trek covers some of the most beautiful countryside in all of Borneo, and involves overnight stops in the longhouse communities of Long Dano, Pa Dilih, Ramudu and Pa Berang, trekking through dense jungle, crossing streams on bamboo bridges, and viewing ancient and not-so-ancient Kelabit megaliths and rock carvings along the way.

A variety of other treks include week long trails to **Long Lellang** or **Lio Matoh** longhouses on the Upper Baram (with overnight stops in the rainforest), for boat or air connections downriver, trails leading north to Indonesia, and a pleasant 2-3 day trek to **Bakalalan** from Bario (or vice versa). It is also possible to climb **Gunung Murud** (2,424m, reasonable going) or **Batu Lawi** (2,043m, very tough), but these are both serious expeditions and guides and porters will need to be hired in Bario or Bakalalan. For Batu Lawi, mountaineering equipment and experience is also necessary.

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 Bakalalan), 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.

Bariew Backpackers Lodge, Jln Bario, E-mail: Tel: 085 791038, Email: bariewlodge@yahoo.com. Near the shops past the old airstrip – ask for Reddish's place.

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

Batu Ritung Homestay, Pa Lungun, 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, Jln 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 1km 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 Lungun (see Batu Ritung, above), Tel: 019-8549700.

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

Nancy & Harris Homestay, Old Airstrip, Bario, Tel: 013-8505850, Email: nancyharris@yahoo.com. Quiet riverside location overlooking Bario.

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

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

Accommodation – Bakalalan: Unless otherwise indicated, contact Bakalalan homestays via thehomestayborneo.blogspot.com.

Apple Lodge, Kampung Buduk Nur (5 mins walk from airport), Tel: 013-2865656, www.borneojunglesafari.com. Longest running lodge in the area, complete with apple orchard.

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

Home Sweet Homestay, Kampung Buduk Nur. Located in centre of village. Motorcycle rental available.

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

Sakai Daway Homestay, Long Langai (30 mins walk from 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 Bakalalan, 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 Miri Travel Connections for full details. It is essential to book as far ahead as possible to be sure of connections to and from Bario.

Travel Connections – Bakalalan

Air: **MASWings** operates daily DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprop flights to and from Miri via Lawas. see Miri Travel Connections for full details.

Road: A daily 4WD service operates between Lawas Bus Station and Bakalalan along old logging roads (6hrs, RM 70). Check with the Visitor's Information Centre in Miri for the latest schedule. In Bakalalan, book at Home Sweet Homestay.

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. **Bukit 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 Jln Pandaruan, 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 Jln Pandaruan which offer excellent photo opportunities. Further along the road towards the Brunei Ferry are a number of **Kedayan kampungs** where delicious fresh swamp clams 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**,

200 metres upriver, has 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

outside the shophouses across the road, selling all manner of cheap goods.

Around 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 Meritam, 35km from town, day and overnight trips to nearby **Iban longhouses**, mountain bike trips to **Gunung Buda**, visits to the idyllic **Mentawi 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: chualbg@streamyx.com.

Accommodation

All addresses are 98700 Limbang, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6085 from overseas and 085 within Malaysia.

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

Hota Inn, Lot 1453, Jln Buangsiol. Tel: 212733. Band A-B

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

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

Mesra Inn, Lot 787-8, Jln Bank. Tel: 213351. Band B.

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

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

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

Purnama Hotel (3*), Jln 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 Jln 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 hawker 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 hawker stalls operate 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**

and **King's Seafood** (both facing the riverfront on Jln Buangsiol opposite the Customs Department building), and **Maggie Café** (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 Café** 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** (wet market). Good Malay restaurants include the busy and popular **Sarimah Curry House**, uphill from the clock tower on Jln Rickett, Adnan Restaurant next to the airport road roundabout near RHB Bank, **Mesra** opposite the bus station and **Selera Muhibbah** 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 Café** (see Chinese, above) serves simple western dishes such as steaks and fish and chips.

Entertainment

Much of Limbang's nightlife is geared up to catering to thrill-seeking male visitors from Brunei. If you don't want to pay for 'ladies drinks' then stick to the regular coffee shops or the **Purnama Hotel Lounge**, which usually features decent live bands and affordable drink prices.

Useful Information

Internet Access: Media Cybercafé, 2nd Floor, Limbang Plaza.

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: A daily express bus service 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 (wet 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

Lawas is a bustling little border town sandwiched between the Temburong district of Brunei and the neighbouring Malaysian state of Sabah on the Lawas River (Sungai Lawas). The only significant attractions in town are the large and spotlessly clean **Central Market** (Pasar Raya), which offers a great selection of tropical fruits and vegetables, an attractive **Chinese Temple** on Jln Bunga Teratai, and an **old Mosque** on the banks of the Sungai Limbang about 400m east of town. If you are here on a Saturday, check out the **Tamu Lawas** (weekend market) for jungle produce and handicrafts.

The few visitors who come to Lawas are usually stopping over on their way to Sabah or Bakalalan. There are some **hot springs** with resort accommodation at **Merarap**, about 70 km from town along an old logging road (see Accommodation, below), some **Malay water villages** (Kg Awat Awat and Kg Punang) and a **pleasant beach at Punang** (7 km, minibus from bus station, RM 4).

Sarawak's newest **Birding Destination** at **Paya Maga** in the Trusan Highlands offers the exceptionally rare **Black Oriole**, as well as many other rare endemic species. Access is via a 3-4 hr trek, overnighting in a jungle camp or local village. Contact Suntravel, www.suntravelborneo.com, for details.

Accommodation

All addresses are 98750 Lawas, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6085 from overseas and 085 within Malaysia.

Eastern Hotel, Lot 317, Jln Trusan, Tel: 285980. Band B.
Gaya Inn, Lot 363-364, Jln. Punang, Tel: 285855. Band B.
Hotel Federal, Lot 252, Jln Masjid Baru, Tel: 285341 Band B.
Hotel Perdana, Lot 365, Jln Punang, Tel: 285888. Band B.
Hotel Seri Malaysia, Jln Gaya, Tel: 283200, www.serimalaysia.com.my. Band B-C. In a different class to other local options.

Mega Inn, Lot 153, Jln Muhibbah, Tel: 283888. Band B.

Merarap Hot Spring Lodge, 2 hrs from Lawas, Tel: 012-8792218, www.meraraphot.spring.com. Band B-C. Return transport RM 300, shared by guests travelling together.

Mexion Hotel, Lot 406, Jln Pantai, Tel: 284699. Band B.
Million Hotel, Lot 157, Jln Muhibbah, Tel: 285020. Band B.
Sakura Inn, Lot 375, Jln Datuk Pengiran Hj Matussin, Tel: 285054. Band B
Shangsan Hotel, Lot 235-236, Jln Trusan. Tel: 285522. Band B.
Soon Seng Hotel, Lot 346, Jln Punang, Tel: 283338. Band B.

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 Punang is a good choice, as is the bustling **Good Corner Seafood** behind the Ngiu Kee department store.

Malay: There is a good choice of **Muslim food stalls** upstairs at the **Central Market**. **Restoran Hajjah 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 **Intan Cake House**, also on Jln Pantai. The **Gaya Café** at the Hotel Seri Malaysia is the best bet for international cuisine.

Entertainment

There are quite a few bars and karaoke lounges in town, all of which feature hostesses anxious to consume 'ladies drinks'. Drinkers not looking for female company are advised to keep to the coffee shops.

Travel Connections

Air: **MASWings** operates regular DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprop flights to Miri (4-6x daily), Bakalalan (1x daily) and Kota Kinabalu (4x weekly) see Miri Travel Connections for full details.

Bus: There are 2x daily bus connections to Beaufort (2 hrs, RM 15 and Kota Kinabalu (5 hrs, RM 30) in Sabah. A passport is required to cross the Sarawk/Sabah border.

Boat: There is a daily express boat service to Limbang (8 am, 2½ hrs, RM 30), a 5x weekly service to Labuan (8 am, 2 hrs RM 30), and a daily service to Bandar Sri Begawan (Brunei) (7.30am, 2 hrs, RM 30, returns at 1.30pm).

Taxis: The taxi stand is next to the bus station. Airport taxi fare is probably the lowest in Malaysia at RM 6.

NATIONAL PARKS

Northern Sarawak's national parks feature a wide range of natural habitats and contain some of the region's leading visitor attractions. The national parks listed below are all open to visitors and offer accommodation, reasonable ease of access, and useful visitor facilities including well marked trekking trails. Four other National Parks - **Gunung Buda**, **Bukit Tiban**, **Usun Apau** and **Pulong Tau** - are either not yet open to visitors, or do not yet have visitor facilities. However, trekkers using the Headhunters Trail from Gunung Mulu to Limbang town will pass through parts of Gunung Buda, and a number of the Kelabit Highlands trails pass through parts of Pulong Tau. For future developments, check with Sarawak Forestry at www.sarawakforestry.com.

Entry Fees & Other Charges: See page 19. As a World Heritage Site, Gunung Mulu National Park has its own schedule of fees - see below.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, telephone dialling code is +6085 from overseas and 085 within Malaysia.

GUNUNG MULU NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Gunung Mulu is Sarawak's largest national park (544 sq km), and also Malaysia's first **World Heritage Area**, a status it was awarded in 2000. It is most famous for its limestone cave systems, including the **world's largest natural chamber** (the Sarawak Chamber), the **world's largest cave passage** (Deer Cave) and the **longest cave in Southeast Asia** (Clearwater Cave). The park's main attractions are the four **show caves**, all readily accessible by wooden walkways and paths. Other fascinating sights and activities include; a **bat observatory**; a **rainforest canopy skywalk**; **adventure caving** trips to some of Mulu's less accessible caves; the challenging **Mulu Summit climb**, the spectacular **Pinnacles trail**, and the historic **Headhunter's trail** through remote rainforest scenery.

Situated 100 km from the coast, the park is dominated by three mountains - Gunung Mulu (2,376m), Gunung Api (1,750m) and Gunung Benarat (1,585m). Gunung Mulu is sandstone, whilst Gunung Api and Gunung Benarat are formed from limestone and therefore have different geographical features. The summit of Gunung Mulu is covered by moss forests and stunted montane vegetation, whilst razor-sharp limestone pinnacles, some as high as 50 metres, are found on the upper



slopes of Gunung Api. The park's forest ecosystems include peatswamp, heath, mixed dipterocarp, moss forest and montane vegetation – 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 season, guides for 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 or 10.30, booking required, RM 20 per person). Walk

along the Moonmilk Cave Trail (1 hr) or take a longboat along the Melinau and Clearwater Rivers (RM 30 return). The boats usually make a short stop at the **Batu Bungan Penan Settlement**, where Penan women operate a small craft market (closed Sundays) offering a wide selection of superb handicrafts, including rattan mats, baskets, woodcarvings, jewellery and musical instruments.

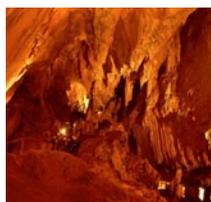
The entrance to the **Wind Cave** is situated above an ancient Berawan burial site. Inside, cool breezes can be felt at narrow parts of the cave, and there is a spectacular chasm caused by a catastrophic roof collapse to the left of the walkway. Further into the cave is a circular walkway leading through 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 **Clearwater 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 two species of bizarre one-leaved plants (*Monophyllae 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 floor collapse (in the adjacent **Lady Cave**) 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 passage. The cave is home to 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 a unique 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 number 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 rock shawls and cave curtains, dramatic stalagmites and stalactites, and unusual rim stone pools on the cave floor. From the cave exit, 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), proceeding 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 caves, and involves wading, swimming, climbing, crawling with your face to the floor and getting covered in dirt. The Park HQ provides qualified guides, caving helmets and headlamps. The caves are graded in order of ability. The **Lagangs Cave** trip (3 hrs) is suitable for beginners and family groups as it does not involve climbing. The intermediate **Racer Cave** trip (3 hrs) offers the chance to view remarkable cave dwelling snakes and invertebrates, and requires a reasonable level of fitness and upper body strength. The **Clearwater - Wind Cave Connection** trip (6-8 hrs) with its exceptionally beautiful river section requires advanced caving skills, as does the **Sarawak Chamber** trip (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 as 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 Geographical 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 Lansat 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 trail is only 2.5 km, Gunung Api'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 super-fit can opt for 3 day, or even 2 day treks. 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 1½ hr boat ride to Medamit 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 Borsarmulu Park Management, Tel: 792300, www.mulupark.com.

Benarat Inn, opposite Royal Mulu Resort, www.muluhotels.com. Band C1

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

Mulu River Lodge, opposite park entrance, Tel: 014-8877665, Email: muluriverlodge@gmail.com. Band A-B.

Royal Mulu Resort, Sungai Melinau, 10 mins from park. Tel: 790388, 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 before takeover by the Marriott group and offers partial facilities. Call for status.

Eating Out

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

D'Cave Homestay offer 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 Restaurant, 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 Miri 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 (Amiho 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.

NIAH NATIONAL PARK

Introduction

Niah National Park provides some interesting and impressive 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 Harrisson unearthed a human skull estimated to be 40,000 years old. The scientific community remained sceptical of Harrisson's claims, but as dating techniques improved, Harrisson was eventually proved right. Further excavations have shown a continued human presence over tens of thousands of years, from Palaeolithic times until as recently as 1400 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 folklore tells of the use of death-ship burials 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, *padanus* 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 strip (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 - longboats carrying the souls 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.

Treks and Trails: The **Bukit Kasut Trail** (green and white markings, 45 min.) leads to the summit of Bukit Kasut 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 Kasut. 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 straight there. 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 (red/white markings, 20 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: 491030) 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 take a taxi (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 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.

Fishermen from the local Berawan tribe have developed a unique method only found at Loagan Bunut, known as *Selambau*. They use huge scoop nets mounted on large rafts to catch migrating fish, which are kept alive in submerged bamboo cages until they can be transported to market.

The surrounding terrain features a variety of forest types, ranging from mixed peat swamp 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 eagles, swallows, malkohas, stork-billed kingfishers, magpies, robins, doves, bulbuls, racket-tailed drongos, pied hornbills and kites, while darters, egrets, herons, bitterns, storks and broadbill arrive during 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 peat swamp ecosystem. The 260m **Tapang Trail** showcases the towering tapang tree (*Koompasia 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 *Klirieng*, supported above the lake by sturdy *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 with sleeping mats. Self catering (Band A-B) or full board.

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 meet and transport their guests 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. Similajau's other crocodile species is the harmless false gharial (*Tomistoma schlegelii*), which feeds exclusively on fish. Crocodiles are more easily spotted at night, and the Park HQ can arrange crocodile spotting boat trips for visitors.

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.



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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.

Pesta Kaul (Melanau Festival) - Venue: Mukah - Date: To be confirmed (April). Contact Mukah Resident's Office, www.mukahro.sarawak.gov.my. The annual spiritual cleansing ceremony of the Melanau people, with plenty of sideshows and cultural performances. Try your hand at the traditional games, including the giant swing or tibau.

World Harvest Festival - Venue: Sarawak Cultural Village - Date: 3rd - 5th May. Contact www.scv.com.my. Held to commemorate the unique Gawai Dayak festival (see below). Highlights include ethnic food festival, ironman competition, ethnic beauty pageant and outdoor theatre presentation of a local legend.

Borneo Jazz - Venue: Parkcity Everly Hotel, Miri - Date: 9th & 10th May. Contact Sarawak Tourism Board, www.jazzborneo.com. Now in its 9th year, Borneo Jazz Attracts top performers from around the world, making it one of the top jazz festivals in the region.

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 Fest, Venue: Around Kapit - Date: Late May, Contact Kapit Resident's Office, www.kapitro.sarawak.gov.my. A prelude to Gawai Dayak, with fun fair, traditional sports, a cultural parade and a traditional beauty contest. The **Kapit Regatta**, featuring longboat and power boat races, is the highlight.

Gawai Dayak (Dayak Harvest Festival) - 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.

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 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 a 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.

Kuching Festival - Venue: Throughout Kuching - Date: Most of July and early August. Contact Kuching South City Council, www.mbks.gov.my. A month-long festival of music, drama, arts, exhibitions and food, glorious food.

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*.

Sibu International Dance Festival - Venue: Various locations in Sibu - Date: Early August - Contact Sibu Municipal Council, www.smc.gov.my. A showcase of traditional and modern dance performance and education from around the world.

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.

Sarawak 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.

Sibu Base Jump - Venue: Wisma Sanyan/Sibu Town Square - Date: Mid September - Contact Sibu Municipal Council, www.smc.gov.my.



Organised By



Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia, Borneo



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 - Venue: Bintulu - Date: 2nd - 5th October - Contact Bintulu Development Authority, www.borneokite.com. Watch and learn how the professionals build and fly their kites at this major international kite festival.

Asia Music Festival: Venue: Eastwood Valley Golf & Country Club, Miri - Date: 3rd - 4th October. Contact Sarawak Tourism Board, www.asiamusicfestival.net. The first music festival in the region to combine Asian traditional, contemporary, rock and pop performers together at a single venue.

Baram Regatta - Venue: Batang Baram, Marudi - Date: 3rd - 5th October - Contact Marudi District Office, www.marudido.sarawak.gov.my. First held in 1899 as an alternative to headhunting, this is one of Sarawak's oldest and most historic regattas.

Baleh Kapit Raft Safari - Venue: Batang Baleh, Kapit Division - Date: 3rd - 5th October. Contact Kapit Resident's Office, www.kapitro.sarawak.gov.my. Sarawak's original adventure race, as competing teams raft down the mighty Baleh River to Kapit. New participants always welcome.

Christmas - Venue: Countless homes and churches throughout Sarawak - Date: 25th December. Enjoy open house with Sarawak's multi-denominational Christian community. This is an excellent time to visit rural villages and longhouses.

Pesta Benak (Tidal Bore Festival) - Venue: Batang Kupar, Sri Aman - Date: To be confirmed - Contact Sri Aman Resident's Office, www.sriamanro.sarawak.gov.my. 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.gov.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).



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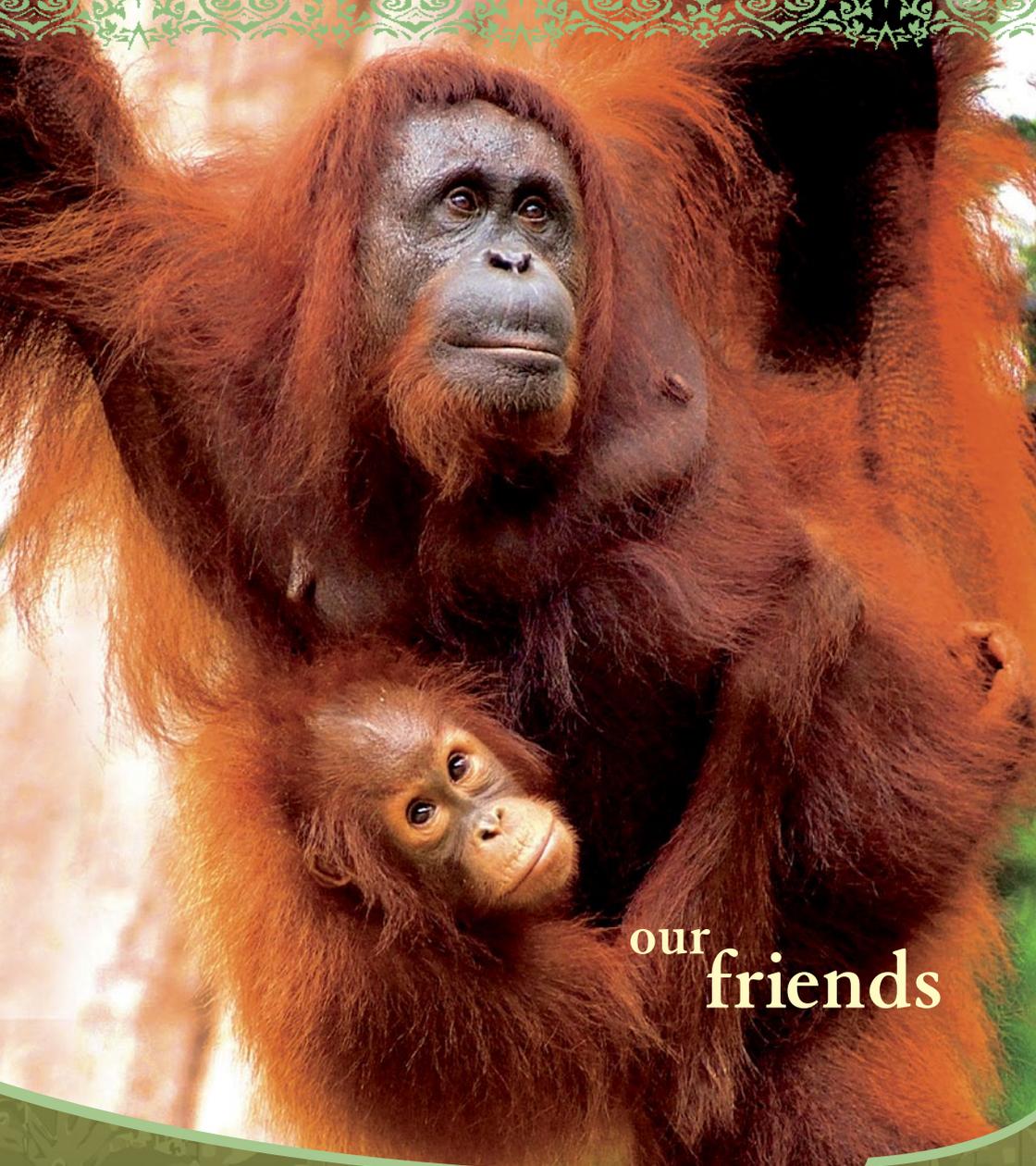
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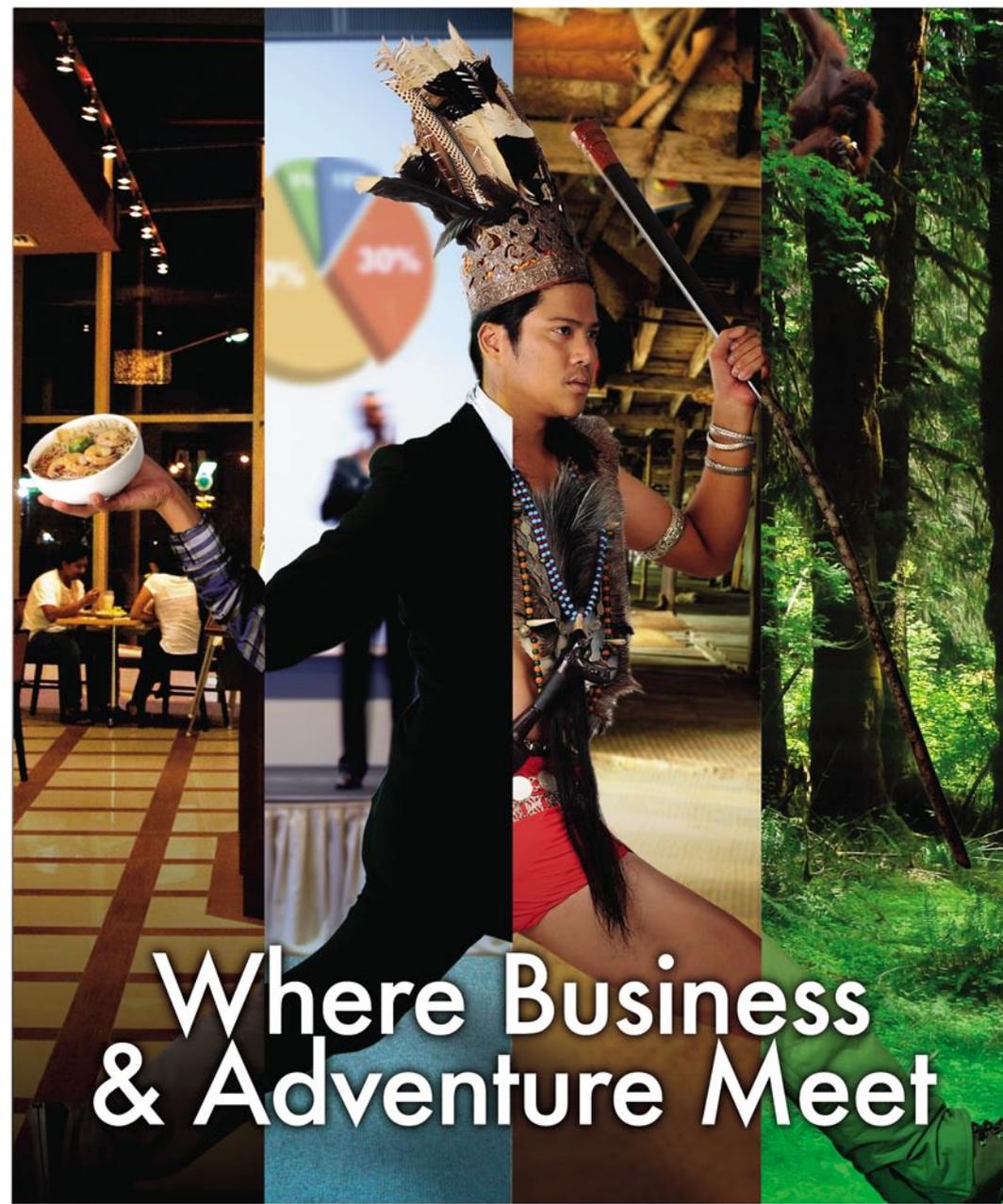


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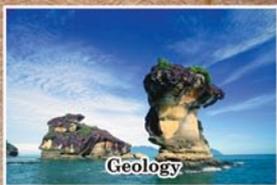
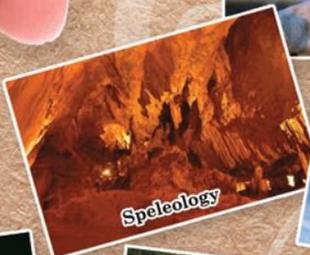
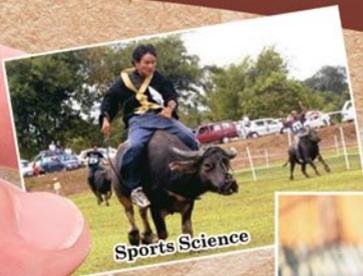


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