

KUCHING

& Southwest Sarawak
Visitor's Guide



SARAWAK TOURISM BOARD
www.sarawaktourism.com



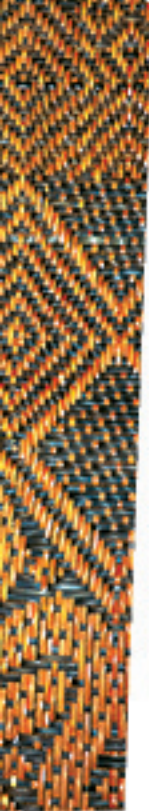
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Sarawak
More to Discover



Sarawak

Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia, stretching some 800 km along the northwest coast of Borneo, the world's third largest island. A beautiful land coloured by peace, tradition and unmatched biodiversity, it is a prime destination for discerning travellers seeking vibrant culture, exhilarating adventure and breath-taking nature.

You can share in the lifestyle of an upriver longhouse, follow in the footsteps of a dynasty of White Rajahs, explore gigantic caves in the heart of the Borneo rainforest, or paddle through jungle streams in search of elusive wild orangutans, to mention just a few possibilities. Whatever your choice, you will leave Sarawak with memories to last a lifetime.

Whether you stay in a luxurious resort, an award winning boutique hotel, a heritage homestay or a simple jungle camp, you will be cared for with genuine warmth and sincerity. The people of Sarawak are equally at home in the past and the present, taking the same pride in their traditions of hospitality as they do in their modern infrastructure and seamless connectivity.

Revealing a side of Asia unlike anywhere else, Sarawak is a place for people seeking authentic and engaging experiences rather than tourist-trap clichés. And most importantly, it's a safe, peaceful and friendly place to visit, for large groups and solo travellers alike. Make Sarawak your next destination, as the highlight of your visit to Southeast Asia, or as a journey of discovery all on its own.



CONTENTS

Tourist Information	3
Introduction	5
City Attractions	9
Damai & Santubong	19
Around Kuching & South West Sarawak	26
Visiting Villages & Longhouses	32
National Parks & Nature Reserves	35
• Bako National Park	
• Batang Ai National Park	
• Gunung Gading National Park	
• Kubah NP & Matang Wildlife Centre	
• Kuching Wetlands National Park	
• Maludam National Park	
• Semenggoh Wildlife Centre	
• Talang-Satang National Park	
• Tanjung Datu National Park	
Travel & Tour Connections	49
Meetings, Incentives, Conferences & Exhibitions	58
Accommodation	59
Eating Out	67
Entertainment	81
Shopping	83
Sports & Recreation	86
Useful Information	88

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Listings in this guide are not charged for and are based on what information our authors and researchers consider useful to visitors. Please note that it is not physically possible to list every single outlet in a guide of this size.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) offers a range of services to provide visitors and the travel industry with up-to-date travel information about Sarawak. The Visitors' Information Centres in Kuching, Miri and Sibiu stock a wide range of guidebooks, maps, brochures and leaflets. The helpful staff can also assist with detailed travel enquires.

Kuching Visitors' Information Centre

Sarawak Tourism Complex
(Old Court House),
93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Email: vic-kuching@sarawaktourism.com
Tel: +6082 410 944
Fax: +6082 256 301
Open Mon-Sun: 9am to 6pm

Miri Visitors' Information Centre

Lot 452, Jalan Melayu,
98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia
Email: vic-miri@sarawaktourism.com
Tel.: +6085 434 180 / 181
Fax: +6085 434 179
Open Mon-Fri: 8am – 5pm
Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays 9am – 3pm

Sibu Visitors' Information Centre

Sublot 3a & 3b, Sibu Heritage Centre, Jalan Central,
96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia
Email: vic-sibu@sarawaktourism.com
Tel: +6084 340 980
Fax: +6084 341 280
Open Mon-Fri: 8am – 5pm
Saturday & Public Holidays: 9am – 3pm
Closed on Sundays

STB's Kuching Head Office provides comprehensive media and travel industry liaison services, up-to-date information on tourism policy and planning in Sarawak, and replies to written or email enquiries.

Email: stb@sarawaktourism.com

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Online Information

Detailed travel information for Sarawak is available from STB's online outlets:

www.sarawaktourism.com

www.facebook.com/visitsarawak

www.instagram.com/sarawaktravel

www.twitter.com/SarawakTravel

www.youtube.com/user/sarawaktourismbcm

www.weibo.com/sarawaktourism (华语)

www.pinterest.com/sarawaktravel

KUCHING & SOUTHWEST SARAWAK

Note: The area code for all landline telephone numbers in Kuching and Southwest Sarawak, unless otherwise stated, is 082 from outside the Kuching Area or from cellular phones and +6082 from overseas.

INTRODUCTION

First Impressions

Kuching, the capital of Sarawak, is simply unique. No other city in Malaysia has such a romantic and unlikely history, nor displays its charms with such an easy grace. The residents of Kuching (pop. 680,000 approx.) take great pride in their fascinating city, which is reflected in their attitude to visitors. Kuching welcome visitors warmly, but it does not put on an act for them. Instead it goes about its own business in a relaxed manner that hasn't changed over two centuries. It is impossible to really enjoy Kuching from the air-conditioned comfort of a tour bus. To make the most of your visit you must put on your walking (or cycling) shoes, take to the streets (and the water), and join in.

Like all towns and cities in Borneo, the focal point of Kuching and the reason for its existence is the river. Hiring a sampan to meander slowly up and down the Sarawak River is the best way to get your first impression of Kuching. From the river you will see picturesque Malay villages, a golden-domed mosque, a Victorian fort, a whole street of 19th century Chinese shophouses, an imposing wooden-roofed palace and the striking umbrella-shaped roof of the State Assembly Building, all set against a background of distant mountains.

Kuching's city centre is well preserved and very compact; virtually everything that is worth seeing can be reached on foot or by sampan. The narrow, bustling streets are crammed with shops selling all manner of goods, from the mundane to the exotic. There are ornate Chinese temples, many fine examples of colonial-style architecture, a beautiful waterfront and some interesting museums,

including the historic Sarawak Museum. There is an excellent range of accommodation, from luxury via boutique to budget, good restaurants, and nightlife to suit most tastes and pockets. You can try local delicacies such as deer meat, Sarawak laksa and jungle fern, drink a glass or two of *tuak* (local rice wine), or feast on a vast array of seafood dishes.

Kuching has an unusual name - the word means "cat" in Malay. There are various stories as to how this name came about, but it is unlikely that it has anything to do with cats. The two more likely explanations are that it derives from the Chinese word *kochin*, meaning "harbour," or that it is named after the *mata kuching* or "cat's eye" fruit, a close relative of the lychee that grows widely here.

Sarawak is a unique and enjoyable destination, and Kuching is the ideal base from which to go exploring. The nearby national parks include the famous Bako, home of the rare proboscis monkey, Gunung Gading, where giant *rafflesia* flowers bloom, Kuching Wetlands, which protects a fascinating mangrove ecosystem, Kubah, with its rare palms and orchids, and Semenggoh and Matang Wildlife Centres with their resident orangutans. Literally hundreds of Iban and Bidayuh longhouses are within easy travelling distance. Damai, on the nearby Santubong Peninsula is Sarawak's main resort area, and many travel agents offer "two-centre" packages allowing you to explore Kuching, go on a longhouse trip, visit Bako and the rainforest and then relax on the beach after the rigours of jungle trekking. See the Damai and Santubong section for details.

Kuching is also the ideal base for visiting longhouses. Local travel agents have a variety of tours, ranging from half-day trips to nearby Bidayuh longhouses, to week-long safaris to Iban longhouses on the Skrang, Lemanak and Batang Ai river systems.

The People

Kuching is a cosmopolitan city, and this is reflected in the faces on the streets. Whilst the population is predominantly Chinese, Malay, Bidayuh (formerly known as Land Dayak) and Iban (Sea Dayak), Kuching is home to people from virtually all of Sarawak's ethnic groups. You are sure to encounter Melanau from the central coastal areas and Orang Ulu (literally "upriver people"), the collective name

given to the smaller indigenous societies, including Kayan, Kenyah, Kelabit, Berawan, Lun Bawang, Penan, etc., as well as a sprinkling of Indians and Eurasians. All are thoroughly modern Malaysians nowadays, but many rural people still live in village or longhouse communities.



History - The White Rajahs

Kuching's history is also Sarawak's - the kind of adventure story that would be unbelievable if it were not true. Local bookshops are crammed with volumes, old and new describing the reign of the White Rajahs in great detail. What follows is a brief summary.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Sarawak was a typical Malay principality, under the control of the Sultan of Brunei. Apart from occasional piracy on the coast and headhunting in the interior, Sarawak was peaceful. All of this changed when the Sultan of Brunei appointed a hugely unpopular Governor. The Malays and Bidayuhs of the Sarawak River revolted in 1836 and declared independence. An ugly guerrilla war ensued, which continued until 1839, when James Brooke, a young, wealthy Englishman arrived on the scene in his well-armed yacht, the *Royalist*.

Brooke set himself up as a freelance adventurer and the Sultan's uncle immediately asked him to help put down the rebellion. The spears and muskets of the rebels were no match for the *Royalist's* cannon.

As a reward, the grateful Sultan made Brooke the Rajah of Sarawak in 1841. Brooke was not content to rule over a small riverside town, and set out to pacify his new kingdom, with the help of the British Navy. By the time of his death in 1868, Sarawak was a relatively peaceful territory covering the area between Tanjung Datu (now the Malaysian - Indonesian border) and Kuching.

James Brooke's nephew Charles, who succeeded him, was no adventurer like his uncle, but an excellent administrator and politician. He set up a proper system of government, gradually expanding his area of control until it formed the present-day Sarawak. His legacy is everywhere in Kuching. It was he who built the Astana, Fort Margherita, the Courthouse, the Sarawak Museum and many other fine buildings. Charles Brooke died in 1917, and was succeeded by his son, Charles Vyner Brooke, who built on his father's achievements and improved the general administration of the state. In 1941 he set up a State Council to oversee the passing of new laws, bringing the first stirrings of democracy to Sarawak. The rule of the State Council was short-lived, as the Japanese invaded at the end of the same year.

When the Japanese surrendered in September 1945, Sarawak came under Australian military administration. Vyner Brooke felt the state would be better off as a Crown Colony and ceded it to Britain. This move was very unpopular and resulted in the assassination of the Governor, Duncan Stewart, in 1949. Order was eventually restored and the colonial administration concentrated on preparing Sarawak for independence. On 22nd July 1963, Sarawak gained independence, then shortly afterwards joined with Malaya, Sabah and Singapore (subsequently expelled in 1965) to form the new nation of Malaysia on September 16th 1963.

City Government

Many publications cite Kuching as having two city councils. This is not strictly true, as Kuching is administered by three local governments. The Commission of the City of Kuching North (DBKU) covers all areas of the city north of the Sarawak River, including the Santubong and Bako Peninsulas, as well as the western part of the central business district. Kuching South City Council (MBKS)

administers the eastern part of the Central Business District and the urbanised heart of the city. Many of the southern and eastern suburbs fall under the remit of the Padawan Municipal Council (MPP).



CITY ATTRACTIONS

Old Kuching is easy to discover by yourself. However, most local tour operators offer affordable half-day guided tours of the city, either by bus or on foot. Some even offer guided bicycle tours - see tour operator listings on page 54 - 58 for contact details.

Orientation: This guide is aimed primarily at tourists. Therefore when we refer to walking or taxi distances from the city centre, we mean the historic centre, i.e. Main Bazaar and the Kuching Waterfront

Along the River



Kuching Waterfront, a major restoration and land reclamation project, has become the most popular meeting place in the city - an almost 900 m long esplanade, beautifully landscaped and dotted with wooden benches, food stalls, restaurants and entertainment facilities. Many older buildings have been preserved and incorporated into the design, including the Chinese History Museum, the Sarawak Steamship Building and the Square

Tower. Modern additions include a restored Chinese pavilion, an open-air theatre and some fine contemporary sculptures. During the daytime, the Waterfront offers excellent views of the Astana, Fort Margherita, the State Assembly Building and the Malay *kampungs* which line the north bank of the river, but at night-time it really comes alive; it seems like half of Kuching is out meeting friends, watching a show, or just taking the air.

For the best view of the Kuching Waterfront and the city centre, stroll along the Boardwalk on the north bank of the river that links the State Assembly Building with Kampung Boyan and Fort Margherita.

At night, the waterfront is lit up by the new Darul Hana Musical Fountain, which erupts from the Sarawak River in front of the State Assembly Building. Its spectacular water, music and light show lasts for 15 ever-changing minutes and showtimes are 8:30 pm and 10 pm, with an extra 9:30 pm show at weekends. The fountain is best viewed directly from the waterfront or from the Darul Hana Bridge (see Contemporary Architecture, below).

Main Bazaar, running parallel to the Waterfront, is the oldest street in the city and the heart of old Kuching. It has some superb examples of Chinese shophouse architecture, many of which have been occupied by the same family for generations. These families still pursue traditional occupations such as tin-smithing, carpentry and petty trading. Kuching's highest concentration of antique, handicraft and souvenir shops are to be found here, and shoppers can rest between bargaining sessions in old-fashioned coffee shops with panelled walls and marble-topped tables.

Jalan Carpenter, which extends into Jalan Ewe Hai, runs parallel to Main Bazaar and has a similar mixture of small traders, coffee shops and food stalls, as well as a good selection of pubs and bistros. The whole area oozes charm and character. Off Leboh China (Upper China St.) there is a row of perfectly preserved 19th century Chinese houses.

Contemporary Architecture

Dominating the north bank of the Sarawak River is the Sarawak State Assembly Building or *Dewan Undangan Negeri Sarawak* with its remarkable

umbrella-shaped roof. Completed in 2009, it is the seat of the State Parliament and is only open to visitors by appointment. Call the Public Relations Unit, Tel: 440355/445434.



The State Assembly Building is now connected to the Kuching Waterfront and the Old City Centre via the new Darul Hana Bridge. This S-shaped pedestrian suspension bridge and its two viewing decks offer excellent panoramic views of the Sarawak River, the city centre and the Darul Hana musical fountain.

The futuristic Civic Centre Tower in Jalan Taman Budaya offers the best all-round views of Kuching and the surrounding area. The city and its hinterland, Mount Serapi, Mount Santubong and even the mountains of Kalimantan are visible on a clear day. Open daily 9 am - 5 pm, entrance to viewing platform is RM3. The adjacent Sultan Iskandar Planetarium presents a selection of full-dome astronomy movies daily. RM2 per showing. Open 9 am - 4 pm Mon - Fri, 9 am - 1 pm weekends. Call for shows and timings, Tel: 251275. Closed public holidays.

The Kuching South City Hall on Jalan Padungan is one of the city's best-known landmarks, and houses a fascinating Pictorial Gallery of photos and artifacts tracing the history of Kuching (gallery open Mon-Fri 8.30 am - 5 pm). The Kuching North City Hall with its huge Sarawak flag dominates the Petra Jaya skyline, offering great views of the city, and is home to the world's first Cat Museum.

Mosques, Temples & Churches



The Kuching Mosque, previously the State Mosque, is best seen from the river. It was built in 1968 on the site of an older wooden mosque and is enclosed by an old and delightfully tranquil Muslim cemetery that is well worth a visit in its own right. Its gilded cupolas make it one of the city's most striking landmarks, particularly at sunset.

The State Mosque, built in 1990 across the Sarawak River at Petra Jaya, is the largest religious building in Sarawak. Its striking design features a single cupola and Italian marble interior detailing.

Tucked away in a narrow alleyway between Jalan Gambier and Jalan India, the Masjid India is the oldest intact mosque in Sarawak. Built by Sarawak's Indian Muslim community in 1837, it features a huge drum, or *bedok*, which accompanies the call to prayer.

Note: Visitors to mosques are requested to dress respectfully and remove their shoes. Non-Muslims may not enter during prayer times.

The ornately decorated Tua Pek Kong Temple is located on Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman, opposite the Waterfront, and is the oldest Chinese temple in Kuching. It is believed to date from 1843, although official records only recognise its existence since 1876.

The Shang Ti Temple in Jalan Carpenter was built by Teochew Chinese in 1863. Dedicated to the deity Hiang Thian Siang Ti, it also has a shrine to a child-god said to have saved Kuching from a great fire in 1884. Dating from the same era is the Fung Shan (or Phoenix Mountain) Temple in Wayang Street. This recently restored Hokkien Chinese temple is dedicated to the deity Guang Ze Tian Wang, highly revered as a protector of the poor and the sick.

Just south of the city centre on Jalan Tabuan (15 mins walk) is the Lim Fah San Monastery, one of the city's major landmarks thanks to its giant statue of Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy.

St Thomas' Cathedral, on Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg facing Padang Merdeka, was built in 1956 on the site of its predecessor, the first church in Sarawak. It is the seat of the Anglican Diocese of Kuching, which covers Sarawak and Brunei.

St Joseph's Cathedral, just a little further along Jalan

Tun Abang Haji Openg, is notable for its remarkable roof built entirely from *belian* (Borneo ironwood). Consecrated in 1969, it is the seat of the Catholic Archdiocese of Kuching.

The Sri Srinivasagar Kalliamman Hindu Temple on Jalan Ban Hock is tranquil most of the week, but comes alive with the chanting of *Bhajans* (Hindu devotional songs) on Friday evenings, as does the larger and more modern Sri Maha Mariamman Temple on Jalan Tun Ahmad Zaidi Aduce (3 km from centre). Visitors are welcome at both temples.

The gilded domes of Kuching's only Sikh temple, the imposing Gurdwara Sahib in Jalan Masjid, complement those of the neighbouring Kuching Mosque (see above), providing excellent photo opportunities. Visitors are welcome to enjoy a free vegetarian lunch every Sunday.

Historic Buildings and the Brooke Legacy

The Astana, the imposing palace on the north bank of the river opposite the Waterfront, was built in 1870 by Charles Brooke as a bridal gift to his wife, Margaret. It is nowadays the official residence of the Governor of Sarawak, and only open to visitors during the Governor's Hari Raya Open Day (June 26 & 27 2017, June 15 & 16 2018) - check local media for details).

Fort Margherita was built in 1879 to guard Kuching's river approaches from pirates. Named after Charles Brooke's wife, Rane Margaret, it is an extremely interesting building. Recently renovated and turned into the Brooke Gallery (see Museums, Galleries), it houses a wide range of memorabilia of the Brooke Era. Sampans go to the Fort from various Waterfront jetties and it is a short walk from the northern end of the Darul Hana Bridge. You may only enter the fort if you pay the entrance fee for the Brooke Gallery.



The Square Tower on the Waterfront was built in 1879 as a fortress, but fortunately never fired a shot in anger, unlike its wooden predecessor which was burnt down in the 1857 gold miners' rebellion. It is now occupied by Magenta, a popular fine-dining restaurant. The Sarawak Steamship Building, also on the Waterfront, was built in 1930, and was previously the offices and warehouse of the Sarawak Steamship Company. It is nowadays home to the Kuching Waterfront Bazaar, with stalls selling souvenirs, handicrafts and foodstuffs.

The Court House Complex (junction of Main Bazaar and Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg, facing the Waterfront) was built in 1871 as the seat of Sarawak's government, and was used for this purpose as late as 1973. It is a superb collection of buildings, with magnificent belian (ironwood) roofs and beautiful detailing inside and out, reflecting local art forms. The colonial-baroque Clock Tower was added in 1883 and the Charles Brooke Memorial in 1924.

The Court House Complex has been transformed into a "lifestyle and art space" which is now operated by the local Food Journal group (see restaurant listings for individual outlets). If you are interested in booking the complex for an event, call the management office, Tel: 550720

The complex also includes The Pavilion Building - a piece of old New Orleans transplanted to Kuching. It was completed in 1909 and used for many years as a hospital. It has now been transformed into Sarawak's Textile Museum. The complex is completed by the Round Tower, originally planned as a fort (1886), then used as a dispensary, and nowadays the headquarters of the Sarawak Craft Council. Following restoration of the original buildings and redevelopment, this important heritage site reopened in 2003.

The Main Post Office on Jln Tun Haji Openg is another good example of Kuching's cosmopolitan architectural mix. Built in 1931, it appears to belong to the early 19th century with its neo-classical style and Corinthian columns.

Museums, Galleries, Etc.

Note: Unless otherwise stated, museums are open daily from 9 am to 4.45 pm weekdays, 10 am to 4

pm weekends, and closed on major public holidays. Unless otherwise indicated, admission is free.

The Sarawak Museum on Jln Tun Abang Haji Openg, has one of the best ethnographic collections in Southeast Asia. The Old Building, opened in 1891, is designed in the style of a Normandy town-house. It formerly housed an exceptional ethnographic collection and a section on the work of Alfred Russel Wallace. However, the Ethnographic Museum is closed until mid-2020 for conservation work before relocating to the new Sarawak Museum Campus, a major exhibition and research centre currently under construction across the footbridge. The adjacent Art Museum houses works of art pertaining to Sarawak, as well as exhibitions by local artists, while the Natural History Museum by the site entrance expands on the collection housed in the Old Building. The Museum grounds also contain the Botanical Gardens and the Heroes' Memorial, a wonderfully non-partisan shrine dedicated to all victims of all wars, everywhere.

The Islamic Museum is located on Jln P. Ramlee in the Maderasah Melayu Building (1930). It presents a clear picture of the rich historical heritage and special culture of the Muslim community in Sarawak and throughout the Malay-Indonesian archipelago, and traces connections with the development of Islam in the rest of the World. The museum consists of 7 galleries set around a central courtyard garden, each with a different theme.

The Chinese History Museum, on the Waterfront opposite the Tua Pek Kong temple, traces the history of the Chinese community in Sarawak. Exhibits include early trade routes, migration from China, geographical distribution, early pioneers, traditional trading activities, formation of trade and community associations, political history, and the involvement of the Chinese community in modern, multi-racial Sarawak.

The Brooke Gallery occupies historic Fort Margherita and showcases a collection of memorabilia from the Brooke Era, as well as tracing the history of Sarawak from the 19th century onward. Run by the Brooke Trust (www.brooketrust.org), entrance is RM20 for foreigners, RM10 for Malaysians and RM5 for concessions. Open daily 9 am – 4.45 pm.

The Textile Museum, housed in the Pavilion Building opposite the Main Post Office on Jln Tun Haji Abang Openg, showcases Sarawak's fascinating traditional textiles, most notably the Iban *pua kumbu* and Malay *kain songket*.

Textile buffs interested in a more hands-on experience should not miss the Datin Amar Margaret Linggi Memorial Gallery, 4th Floor, Tun Jugah Tower, Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman. Run by the Tun Jugah Foundation, it houses a superb collection of Iban *pua kumbu* textiles, as well as exquisite Iban silverware and jewellery. You can also watch the weavers at work, or even learn the craft yourself (if you have a year or two to spare). Visitors are welcome, but should make an appointment. www.tunjugahfoundation.org.my, Tel: 239672. Open Mon - Fri 9 - 12 am, 2 - 4 pm.

Tanoti House on Jalan Tabuan (1st right after the Inland Revenue Academy) is a collective of Sarawakian women weavers dedicated to producing and promoting hand-crafted Sarawakian *songket* textiles. Visitors are welcome but please call first, Tel: 019 2810098 (Jacqueline), tanotcrafts.com.

Another good place to see authentic Sarawak handicrafts is the Sarawak Craft Council's Handicraft Centre in the Round Tower (see Court House Complex). The centre has interesting handicraft displays, and a resource centre with a library and handicraft videos. Tel: 425652. Open Mon-Fri 8.30 am - 12.30 pm (11.30 pm Fri) and 2 pm - 5 pm, weekends and public holidays 8.30 am - 12.00.

The Borneo House Museum is an interactive, hands-on collection of oversized displays depicting everyday life, history and nature in Sarawak. Perfect for selfie-lovers and a good place to entertain children on a rainy afternoon. Jalan Batu 6-7, Jalan Penrissen (12 km from City Centre, CPL Bus B2), Tel: 622968. Open daily 9 am - 6 pm. Entrance is RM29 for foreigners, RM25 for children & concessions, RM10 less for Malaysians.

HAUS KCH, 216, Jalan Capital Garden (3 km from city centre – taxi or CPL bus B2) is a community arts centre located in a former Police Station that hosts a wide variety of community based cultural events, performances and exhibitions. Contact via www.facebook.com/hauskch.

Galleria at Wesberly House on Rubber Road West displays some of Sarawak's best known, including Melton Kias, Sylvester Jussem, Raphael Scott Ahbeng, Magdalene Tai and Tan Wei Kheng, as well as emerging artists. Well worth a visit. Short taxi ride from city centre or Bus No K5, K7, K15, K21, K21B or K71 to Jln Satok (ask driver for Green Rd stop). Mon-Fri 9 am - 5 pm. Tel: 426197.

The World's first Cat Museum, devoted to all things feline, is in Petra Jaya in the Kuching City North City Hall. Cat lovers will find a range of exhibits, photos, feline art and cat souvenirs. Tel: 446688. Open daily 9 am to 5 pm (closed public holidays). Admission free, camera fee RM3, video fee RM5. CPL bus No K5 or K15.

The Timber Museum is situated in the Wisma Sumber Alam building in Petra Jaya. Anyone with an interest in forestry, traditional wood items, forest products and the development of the timber industry should head here. Tel: 443477. Mon-Fri 8.30 am - 5 pm. Take a taxi.

The Sarawak State Library, an elegant modern building in Petra Jaya, has extensive collections and databases on almost everything you could want to know about Sarawak. Tel: 442000. Open Mon. 2 pm - 9 pm, Tue-Sat 10 am - 9 pm, closed most public holidays. The library enforces a strict dress code – smart casual is the order of the day. Take a taxi.

Orchid lovers should make a beeline for the DBKU Orchid Garden located between the New State Assembly Building and the Astana. This 15.4 acre garden houses over 75,000 plants belonging to 82 genera, including Sarawak's state flower, the Normah Orchid (*Phalaenopsis bellina*), the Lady's Slipper (*Paphiopedilum sanderianum*), *Coelogyne pandurata* - the green and black flowered orchid, and *Bulbophyllum beccarii* - the flower with the stinking smell. Open Tuesday-Sunday 9.30 am - 6 pm, admission free. Access by sampan or the Darul Hana Bridge from the Waterfront.

Streetlife

The Satok Weekend Market, which actually starts on Saturday afternoon, has now moved from Jalan Satok to new purpose-built premises just across the river. It is still renowned for the Bidayuh ladies

who set up shop here selling fruit and vegetables, and there are also many good Chinese and Malay stalls. Goods on offer include handicrafts, forest produce (including delicious wild honey), pets of all descriptions, orchid plants, live fish, and a whole range of local snacks and delicacies. The market is a must for weekend visitors, as it is very colourful and teeming with shoppers. The best time to go is Saturday night or early Sunday morning. Bus No K5, K7, K15, K21, K21B or K71.



Jalan Padungan is lined with Chinese shophouses, mostly built in the 1920's and 30's during the rubber boom. Some are very elegantly decorated, and a walk round the back of the buildings can reveal fascinating architectural details. The area has some excellent coffee shops, pubs and restaurants, more handicraft shops and some unusual specialist retailers including an entire block of fruit and flower sellers. The Great Cat of Kuching, a monumental kitsch statue, is situated at the junction of Jln Padungan and Jln Central.



Jalan India is a covered pedestrian area lined with shops selling all kinds of goods, particularly textiles, watches, bags and gold jewellery. Mid-way down Jln India is a narrow passageway that passes by the entrance of the Indian Mosque and leads to Jln Gambier, home of Kuching's Indian spice traders and Chinese hardware merchants.

The Malay Kampung (villages) along the riverside next to Fort Margherita have some beautiful examples of traditional and modern Malay architecture and the residents are very pleased to see visitors. Many families here have developed a thriving cottage industry selling *kek lapis* (Sarawak layer cake) from their homes and are generous with free samples. There are some more superb Malay houses south of the river around Jln Datuk Ajibah Abol, past the Kuching Mosque. Both these areas are particularly noteworthy as they are self-contained, intact traditional communities existing within a modern city.

Street Art

Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic is best known for his street paintings in Penang, but he has also graced Kuching with his 3-dimensional interactive murals. You can find his delightful *Barrel of Monkeys* (8 baby orangutans in a wheelbarrow) on Jalan Power (turn left at the end of India St), along with a young orangutan swinging from a gutter.

Not to be outdone, a group of 6 young Malaysian artists have created three striking street murals, sponsored by Petronas. *The Leopard* is located on Carpenter Street, opposite the Drunk Monkey bar. *Hornbill*, *Hibiscus*, *Harmony* is on the corner of Main Bazaar and Wayang Street, next to the pedestrian crossing. *Children* is located at Wayang Street, across from the Fung Shan Temple.

DAMAI AND SANTUBONG



The Santubong Peninsula is located at the West Mouth of the Sarawak River. At its northern tip, Mount Santubong (810 m) rises majestically from the sea. The area has been settled since ancient

times, and was once a major trading centre. The Peninsula, particularly Damai, is a popular beach resort area and a good base for discovering the charms of Southwest Sarawak. All manner of attractions are here; sleepy fishing villages, primary rainforest, superb seafood restaurants, an Arnold Palmer-designed golf course, a "living museum", and a choice of beach resort hotels and guest houses. On a clear day, Santubong offers spectacular sunsets, as the sun sinks slowly into the sea framed by rolling hills on one side and scattered islands on the other.

Tours and excursions can be made from the various hotels at Damai or from Kuching, and include jungle treks to the summit of Mount Santubong (recently gazetted as a National Park), Irrawaddy dolphin watching tours, river cruises and wildlife watching tours, and bird watching at Buntal - one of Malaysia's most important sites for migratory birds. Just offshore are two small islands - Pulau Satang Besar and Pulau Satang Kecil, part of the Talang-Satang National Park. Satang Besar is one of Sarawak's three "Turtle Islands" and an important conservation zone for green turtles which come ashore to lay eggs.

Transport: Santubong Village is roughly 31 km from Kuching. The Damai Beach area is 35 km. If you are staying more than a day or two, a rental car, motorcycle or bicycle is highly recommended. For transport details see Travel Connections listings.

Tour Options & Day Trips

Sarawak Cultural Village, Damai Beach (turn right at roundabout): "See Sarawak in Half a Day" is the claim made by Sarawak Cultural Village, a unique award-winning living museum offering an excellent introduction to local cultures and lifestyles. On a sprawling 17-acre site just a short walk from the nearby resort hotels, there are replica buildings representing every major ethnic group in Sarawak; Bidayuh, Iban and Orang Ulu longhouses, a Penan jungle settlement, a Melanau tall-house, a Malay town house with adjacent top-spinning court, a Chinese farmhouse and a Chinese pagoda. All the buildings are staffed with members of the various ethnic groups, in traditional costume, carrying out traditional activities. Each building has a "storyteller" who is expert in describing and

interpreting traditional cultures and lifestyles. Staff will happily pose with you for photos.

After touring the village, you can enjoy a multi-cultural dance performance in the village's own theatre, or maybe take dance and music lessons for only RM10 per hour. There is also a good restaurant and a handicrafts shop on-site. The Cultural Village can also host theme dinners and parties (check with your hotel), and you can even get married here, in traditional Iban, Bidayuh, Malay or Orang Ulu style! Admission is RM50 (Children age 6-12, RM25.00, below 6 free). Local tour operators also offer half-day and full-day tours from Kuching, including lunch and transport to and from your hotel, at very affordable prices. Open 9 am - 5 pm daily. Dance performances at 11.30 am and 4.00 pm. Tel: 846411/846108, Fax: 846988, Email: enquiry@scv.com.my, www.scv.com.my.

River Cruises: See Kuching Wetlands National Park.



Irrawaddy Dolphin Watching: The Santubong area is one of the best places in Sarawak to see the rare Irrawaddy dolphin, which inhabits the Santubong, Salak and Buntal river estuaries. On rare occasions finless porpoises and Indo-pacific humpback dolphins also are sighted. The Irrawaddy is a relatively shy dolphin - it's usually hard to see so a good guide-cum-spotter is essential. CPH Travel pioneered dolphin watching tours in Sarawak and run regular dolphin-spotting trips. Best from April to October, but also possible at other times if water conditions are right. Contact CPH at Tel: 243708. www.cphtravel.com.my.

Jungle Trekking: There are a number of jungle trekking and walking trails at Damai. The

'Santubong Jungle Trek' (blue trail markings) is a circular trail situated close to the hotels. The 2 km long trail takes 1-2 hours and begins at a 'Starter Hut' on the Santubong-Kuching Road. Pick up a trail map from hotel recreation counters. Damai Rainforest Resort also maintains a trail behind its activity centre. By far the toughest trek is the Mount Santubong Summit Trek (red trail markings) which takes 4-7 hours (up and down) depending on fitness and the route taken. Two trails lead to the summit. The 'Main Trail' starts near the resort hotels whilst a 'Short Cut' trail starts a few hundred metres past the derelict Damai Lookout Point on the Kuching-Santubong road. Whatever route you opt for it is essential to wear good hiking shoes and take plenty of drinking water. You can trek to the summit by yourself or go with a guide. Check with hotel recreation counters.

Malay Villages: There are a few interesting coastal villages (*kampungs*) in the Santubong Peninsula. The most accessible from Damai is Kampung Santubong, a well-kept Malay beach-side village at the foot of Mount Santubong. Pasir Panjang and Pasir Pandak are two kampungs which are surrounded by small rolling hills, coconut groves and durian orchards. Both have good beaches which can get busy at weekends. Pasir Panjang also offers the D'Cove Family Park, with food stalls, rest areas, children's playground and children's pool. Although Santubong is within walking distance (4 km) from Damai beach, the other villages require transport.

Buntal, a colourful Malay fishing village located off the Kuching-Santubong road 25 km from Kuching, is famous for the seafood restaurants perched on wooden stilts which line the shore. Less well known is that the surrounding sand flats, mangroves, rivers and nearshore waters provide a rich habitat for wildlife. Buntal is an important wintering ground for migratory bird species and the best site in the Santubong Peninsula for bird watching. The whole Bako-Buntal Bay is listed as an 'Important Bird Area' by Birdlife International. The best time for bird watching is from October to March, when large numbers of migratory birds can be seen including plovers, terns, egrets, sandpipers and godwits plus some rare migrants. Resident birds include the white-bellied sea eagle, brahminy kite and collared kingfisher. The mangroves near Buntal support

silver-leaf monkeys, long-tailed macaques, monitor lizards, otters, crocodiles and a diversity of birdlife. Buntal Boat Cruise offers a range of mangrove and wildlife cruises - contact Ehwan Ibrahim at 846977 or 019-8785088.

Historical Sites

Just after the 6km marker on Kuching-Damai road (viewed from Damai) is a narrow gravel lane leading downhill past two wooden houses to a prehistoric human figure carved on a rock, known as the Batu Gambar. 3 km further along the road, next to the turnoff to Kampung Santubong, is the tomb of Sultan Tengah ibnu Sultan Muhammad Hassan, the first and only Sultan of Sarawak, who ruled briefly during the mid-17th Century.

Santubong is also the place where naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace did much of his groundbreaking research on natural selection in the 1850s and plans are under way to create a Wallace Centre on the site of his old cottage.

Sports & Activities



Damai Golf Course: Jln Sultan Tengah, Santubong. Tel: 846088, Fax: 846044. Email: dgcc@po.jaring.my. www.damaigolf.com. Arnold Palmer designed course featuring a Mountain Nine that sprawls over the foothills of Mount Santubong, and an Ocean Nine which hugs the coastline and the mangrove forests. According to Palmer, it's a "must-play course for those who love golf." Green fees RM100 (Mon-Fri) RM160 (weekends and public holidays). Caddies RM50. Buggies (mandatory at weekends) RM60.

Watersports: Damai Beach Resort and Damai Puri Resort & Spa offer a range of watersports

including jet skiing, kayaking, sailing in catamarans, water skiing and windsurfing. Both hotels can also arrange coastal excursion trips and snorkelling and beachcombing trips. Further details and prices are available from hotel recreation counters or the Damai Beach boathouse. Permai Rainforest Resort rents sea kayaks and can arrange guided kayaking trips and coastal cruises.

Accommodation



Please note that for legal reasons we do not list any properties selling exclusively via Airbnb.

BB Bunkers, Teluk Penyu, Santubong. Tel: 846835, bbbunkers.com. Band B-C. Basic pod-type backpacker hostel located in Damai Central complex, near to the beach and Sarawak Cultural Village.

Cove 55, Telok Nipah, Jalan Sultan Tengah, Santubong. Tel: 846068, Email: contact@cove55.co, www.cove55.com. Band D. Sumptuously appointed boutique resort & retreat with 8 rooms and 2 suites, all with large private balcony, as well as 2 private chalets. Captivating views of Mt Santubong and the Bako Peninsula.

Damai Beach Resort (4*), Teluk Bandung, Santubong. Tel: 846999, Fax: 846777, Email: general@damaibeachresort.com, www.damaibeachresort.com. 224 ethnically designed rooms & suites. Band D. The resort offers a private beach, wide range of leisure activities, 2 swimming pools, 5 function rooms, extensive conference facilities and 3 restaurants.

Damai Puri Resort & Spa (4*), Teluk Penyu, Santubong (turn right at roundabout). Luxury beach resort & spa. Tel: 846900, www.damaipuriresort.com.

com. Band D. 207 rooms & suites, extensive conference facilities, 4 restaurants, in-house Spa Village closed for renovation at time of writing.

Nanga Damai, Jalan Sultan Tengah, Santubong. Tel: 019-8871017, Email: nangadamai@gmail.com, www.nangadamai.com. Band BC. 4 double rooms in house, 2-roomed wooden cottage in garden, 4-bunk dorm room, pool, yoga studio. Well-appointed, family-run B&B set in a tropical garden overlooking the South China Sea. 20 mins walk to Damai beach. Not suitable for small children or the elderly & infirm, family dogs are kept.

Nanga Shanti, Off Jalan Sultan Tengah, Santubong. Tel: 011 25177108, Email: nangashanti@gmail.com, nangashanti.weebly.com. Remote and secluded beachside jungle retreat facing Bako National Park. 4 longhouse rooms, safari tents, attap bungalow Shared bathroom. Band C-D. Only accessible by boat from Buntal village (30 mins, RM50 return per person). Open April-September only.

Permai Rainforest Resort, Pantai Damai, Santubong. Tel: 846487/90, www.permairainforest.com. 31 Air-con tree houses, cabins and camp site. Band D (camp site Band A). Nature retreat focusing on recreational and team building activities. 4 conference rooms, restaurant, extensive training facilities, birdwatching tower and private beach.



Village House by Singgahsana. Tel: 846166, Email: info@villagehouse.com.my, www.villagehouse.com.my. Band B-D. Located in Santubong Village, approx. 100 m from the beach. Traditional Malay-style stilted rooms set around tropical gardens and swimming pool. 10 rooms, 2 suites and 2 dorms, restaurant, bar. Does not accept children under 12.

There are also village homestays available at Kampung Santubong and Kampung Buntal.

Eating Out

The resort hotels have a choice of restaurants, with menus ranging from spicy Malay curries and Chinese seafood to Continental cuisine and Western fast food. (See accommodation listings for full details.) The Damai Central beachfront development opposite the Cultural Village has a popular food court serving local dishes, as well as the Escobar bar and grill (which turns into a thumping dance club after 9 pm). Perhaps the best place to eat in the Damai/Santubong area is Buntal village, which has a host of excellent seafood restaurants overlooking the estuary. Also, Sarimah Enterprise café and bakery, 211 Kampung Buntal, sells some of Sarawak's finest *kek lapis* (layer cake). There are a few more seafood restaurants dotted along the Kuching-Santubong road. Hotels can arrange transport.

AROUND KUCHING & SOUTHWEST SARAWAK

Kuching's Hinterland

The Sri Maha Mariamman Temple on Mount Matang is the oldest Hindu temple in Sarawak and the only one in the world constructed from *belian* (Borneo ironwood). It was built in the late 19th Century by Tamil plantation workers but fell into disuse after 1912. It has recently been fully restored and was reconsecrated in June 2011. The 45-minute walk up the mountain is rewarded with stunning views. Best time to go is just before midday, when prayers are conducted (usually daily, guaranteed at weekends). Km 12 Jalan Matang - CPL Bus K21 or K21B, taxi or *bas sewa*.



Jong's Crocodile Farm and mini-zoo is located 29 km from Kuching, just off the Serian road. Open daily from 9 am to 5 pm. Feeding times 11 am and 3

pm. RM22 (adult), RM11 (child). Take CPL bus K3 to Siburan (ask driver for farm entrance), then 10 mins walk. Tel: 863570.

Padawan Pitcher Plant and Orchid Garden showcases lowland pitcher plants and orchids from around Borneo. Open from 9 am to 4pm, Tuesdays to Sundays. Entrance fee: RM6 (Malaysians RM3). Located on the way to Semenggoh at Kota Padawan, 10th Mile Penrissen Road. When you reach the Bazaar, follow the signposts. Tel: 615566 for further details.

Bau: A 19th century gold rush put Bau on the map. Small-scale mining continues, but nowadays Bau is a market town and administrative centre, about 60 km from Kuching. There are some interesting caves around Bau. The Wind Cave – a collection of small passageways - is a popular local picnic spot. The Fairy Cave is larger and more impressive - there is a small Chinese shrine in the main chamber and varied vegetation at the entrance. A flashlight is essential to explore the rock formations within. Travel agents can arrange trips, or there are frequent buses to Bau. From the town, take a taxi or hitch-hike (usually quite easy).

If you are in Sarawak during June, it is well worth travelling to the Bau area to witness Gawai Padi (or Gawai Sawa'a), the culmination of a remarkable shamanistic ritual where the Bidayuh community give thanks to the Rice Goddess for an abundant harvest. Each village has its own ritual, complete with shamen, priestesses, trance dancers, musicians, and of course an all-night street party. Contact the Visitor Information Centre for further details.



Serikin Bazaar is a busy weekend market held at the border village of Serikin, 40 km from Kuching, where Indonesian traders come to sell their wares. This is a good place to buy cheap textiles, clothing, fresh fruits, jungle produce and handicrafts. Many Kuching tour operators offer day trips for shoppers.

Siniawan is an old Chinese bazaar on the Upper Sarawak River, 22 km from Kuching. Quiet on weekdays, it comes alive from Friday to Sunday thanks to the lively Siniawan Night Market, with dozens of stalls serving a wide range of local, predominantly Chinese dishes. Families from Kuching flock here for the food and the atmosphere. Take a taxi or check with local tour operators.

Borneo Highlands Resort & Hornbill Golf & Jungle Club, Jalan Borneo Heights. This hill resort is situated at the Sarawak-Kalimantan border, at an altitude of 600 to 1,000 metres, and features an 18-hole golf course and a Clubhouse & Jungle Spa with 30 rooms (Band D). Tel: 577930. www.borneohighlands.com.my. Taxi or *bas sewa*.

Matang Family Park: A popular recreation and picnic spot situated at the foothills of Mount Serapi about 25 km from Kuching. There are picnic areas, a children's playground, jungle tracks and a crystal-clear mountain stream ideal for swimming. Entrance fee RM3 (adult), RM2 (teenagers) and RM1 (child). Taxi or *bas sewa*.

The Southwest Coast

The fishing village of Muara Tebas off Jalan Bako is noted for an attractive beach (not safe for swimming due to fast-rising tides), some good seafood restaurants, and the Ching San Yen Temple, a large and beautifully decorated Chinese temple on a hilltop above the village where pilgrims enjoy the stunning sea views and pay homage to Ma Cho, Goddess of the Seas. Taxi or *bas sewa*.

Sempadi offers a fine 10km stretch of palm fringed beach with views of Sarawak's Turtle Islands. It is largely underdeveloped except for a few Malay fishing villages and is the ideal spot for a day of beachcombing. Taxi or *bas sewa* - 60-90 mins depending on ferry times.

Lundu is a sleepy seaside town comprising a few rows of shophouses, a small market, and some attractive *kampong* houses, inhabited by very friendly residents. It is a good base for exploring Gunung Gading National Park and there are some attractive beaches nearby, including Siar and Pandan.

Lundu Accommodation: There are a few small beach resort operators around Lundu that cater principally to team-building groups, company retreats, etc. Read local reviews on Google.

Union Yes Retreat at Siar Beach. Tel: 453027, www.sbeu.org.my. Band C-D. 60 rooms, suites and hostels for up to 200 guests. Beachside restaurant, bar, conference facilities, team-building activities, 3 pools.

Lundu Gading Hotel. Lot 174, Lundu Town District. Tel: 735199, Band B.

Sematan is a picturesque fishing port located about 110 km from Kuching and the gateway to Tanjung Datu National Park. The long beach north of the town is a popular weekend getaway for residents of Kuching. Due to the low sloping sand you have to walk out some distance if you want to swim. There are several chalet developments at Sematan beach, of which the best value is probably Sematan Palm Beach Resort. Band C-D, incl. breakfast & dinner. Tel 712388, spbresort.com. The Nomad Sematan Resort (Band C-D) is a low-rise resort apartment complex a few minutes walk from Sematan Bazaar. Tel: 711808, contact via spbresort.com.

Telok Melano is a picturesque Malay fishing village situated at the western tip of Sarawak, about an hour's boat ride from Sematan. The village's homestay programme offers visitors the chance to experience village life and enjoy the many natural attractions of the area. Activities include snorkelling, diving, fishing, jungle trekking and trips to nearby Tanjung Datu National Park. Contact local tour operators for details.

Into The Heart Of Borneo

Serian: A small market town about 1 hour from Kuching. Tour groups heading for the Skrang, Lemanak and Batang Ai areas often stop here. The main attraction is an excellent farmers' market selling all manner of fruit, vegetables and forest produce, and a thriving fish market. If you are lucky you will also see sago worms, a favourite local delicacy, offered for sale. The Serian District Council has a number of chalets at nearby Ranchan Pools, a local beauty spot. Chalets RM80-120, Dormitory RM150 (10 beds). Tel: 876681.



Lachau is a bustling roadside bazaar, 140 km from Kuching, where just about every truck driver, tour group and express bus stops for lunch. You can hardly avoid it if you are heading north. In addition to some thriving cafés, there is a lively market selling handicrafts and jungle produce.

The town of Sri Aman, 180 km from Kuching, is famous for its *benak* or tidal bore, which almost ended the life and literary career of W. Somerset Maugham, as described in his short story *The Yellow Streak*. The bore occurs daily and is best viewed from the new Tidal Bore Observatory on the waterfront. The town celebrates an annual Tidal Bore Festival (Pesta Benak).

The 19th Century Tze Yin Khor Temple on the bank of the Batang Lupar is Sri Aman's oldest Chinese temple, and is unique for having a green roof instead of the traditional red. The temple is built on a "live crab" feng shui site and the roof colour has been chosen to avoid "cooking" the crab. Other places of interest include Rumah Sri Aman, the former British Residency where the treaty ending the Communist Insurrection was signed in 1973 (view by appointment only, Tel: 083 322011) and Fort Alice on Jln Astana, a Brooke-Era wooden fort built in 1864 and recently restored to its former glory as the fascinating Sri Aman Heritage Museum.

Sri Aman Accommodation:

Aiman Batang Ai Resort and Retreat, on Batang Ai Hydro Lake near Lubok Antu, 90 mins from Sri Aman. Access via resort ferry. Tel: 083-584388, aimanbatangai.com. Kuching office Tel: 082 412100 Band D. Longhouse-style layout overlooking the lake, full resort facilities, adventure and recreational activities, including longhouse visits.

Hoover Hotel, 139 Jalan Club, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 321985. Band B.

Hotel Alishan, 4 Jalan Council, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 327502. Band B.

Hotel Crystal Inn, 8 & 9 Blok B, Jalan Club, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 327502. Band B.

Mega Inn, 570, Jalan Hospital, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 326998. Band B.

Regent Inn, Lot 1856-1858, Jalan Sabu, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 325857, Email: regent_inn@yahoo.com. Band B.

Seri Simanggang Hotel, Jalan Foochow, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 322699, www.serisimangganghotel.com. 158 rooms & suites, Band C-D. Sri Aman's first 3-star hotel.

Theatre Inn, Lot 106, Block 2 Jalan Club, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 323122. Band B.

Taiwan Hotel, 123 Jln Majlis, 95000 Sri Aman, Tel: 083 322493. Band A-B.

Lubok Antu, 30km from the main highway, is a small settlement which acts as the gateway to the Batang Ai Hydro Lake, the longhouses of the Upper Ai river system and Batang Ai National Park. Visitors can charter longboats at the Lubok Antu Jetty to visit the lakeside and upriver longhouses, but this can prove more expensive than joining an organised tour. The District Office is worth a quick visit as it is situated in Fort Arundell, a converted Brooke Era fort.

The town of Betong, 240 km from Kuching, is notable for Fort Lily, one of the earliest of the Brooke-era wooden forts, unfortunately not open to the public. Betong is an excellent place to hang around for a day or two if you are hoping to get an invitation to an Iban longhouse (see below).

Betong Accommodation:

Betong Plaza Hotel, 35 Betong Bazaar, 95700 Betong, Tel: 083 472898. Band B.

Kok Thai Hotel, 470 Jln Datuk Basil Temenggong, 95700 Betong, Tel: 083 472246. Band A-B.

Medan Hotel, New Township, 95700 Betong, Tel: 083 471919 Email: mhbetong@mymedan.com. Band B. Long walk from old town centre.

Regent Inn, 17 Betong Bazaar, 95700 Betong, Tel: 083 472539. Band A-B.

VISITING VILLAGES & LONGHOUSES

Bidayuh villages and longhouses can be found within easy reach of Kuching and can usually be visited as a day trip, although there are a few that also offer accommodation (see listings). Iban Longhouses are usually found in the Skrang, Lemanak and Batang Ai areas and in the Rejang and Baram river basins. Orang Ulu longhouses are also located in the Rejang and Baram river systems and in the northern highlands, and are accessed via Sibu and Miri.

Bidayuh Villages & Longhouses



Kampung Annah Rais, Jalan Borneo Heights, 40km from Kuching. A traditional bamboo longhouse enclosed by a modern village. Don't miss the *barok* (skull house) with its ancient brass cannon and smoked human skulls, or the unique mural by Lithuanian artist Ernest Zacharevic. Natural hot springs nearby. Homestay available. Open daily, 8 am - 6 pm, entrance RM5. Taxi or *bas sewa*. Local tour operators also run trips.

Kampung Benuk, Jalan Borneo Heights, 34km from Kuching. A Bidayuh village with an old bamboo longhouse complete with *barok* (skull house) and a mini-museum. Homestay available. Open daily from 9.30 am to 5 pm. Taxi or *bas sewa*. Local tour operators also run trips.

Kampung Semban, Jalan Bengoh, 40 km from Kuching. A 4-5 hr trek uphill past delightful waterfalls brings you to Sarawak's famous 'village in the clouds'. This remote kampung is noted for its traditional unspoilt lifestyle as well as the elderly ladies who still wear their traditional brass arm and leg rings. Check with local tour operators.

Iban Longhouses



It is almost a crime to come to Sarawak without visiting an Iban longhouse. Iban hospitality is legendary, and visitors are guaranteed a good time. A longhouse is basically a terraced street of separate dwellings covered by one roof, under the authority of a headman, or *tuai rumah*. Each family lives in its separate apartment, or *bilik*, and communal activities take place outside on the covered verandah, or *ruai*.

Most longhouses are busy, modern farming communities, and people wear practical clothes like jeans and T-shirts when they are at work. Traditional costumes and head-dresses are usually only worn for special festivals like *gawai dayak* (the Iban harvest festival, 1st June), *gawai antu* (the ancestor festival, very rare) and weddings. If you want to see traditional rituals, customs and dances, then it is best to go with an organised tour group.

Tour groups are usually greeted with a glass of *tuak* (rice wine) and a welcome dance. They are then shown around and treated to various cultural performances, including dancing and drumming. You will usually be invited to attempt the *ngajat* dance. Do not try to refuse as guests are expected to contribute to the entertainment. If you know any dances, folk songs or poems from your own country, you will make some lifelong friends, no matter how badly you perform. Normally you will be able to stay in the longhouse overnight, but if you prefer some privacy, many tour operators have their own guest houses near the longhouse.

Most Iban longhouses that accept guests are on the Lemanak and Batang Ai river systems. Visits usually involve at least one overnight stop and a longboat trip on the river, but some longhouse safaris can last for a week or more. The Visitors' Information Centre

in Kuching has a list of approved tour operators. If you want to arrange a personal invitation, your best bet is to spend a couple of days in one of the busier market towns such as Sri Aman or Betong and make friends in the local coffee shops.

Borneo Adventure work together with the local Iban community to operate an award-winning lodge at Nanga Sumpa and a jungle camp at Lubok Kasai in Ulu Ai, upriver from the Batang Ai Hydro Lake. These lodges allow visitors to experience both the traditional Iban culture and the rainforest ecosystem. They are also the jumping off points for Borneo Adventure's treks in search of wild orangutans (see Batang Ai National Park). Tel: 245175, www.borneoadventure.com.

Suntravel take community participation a step further by arranging authentic Iban weddings and baby-naming ceremonies, conducted by tribal elders. These are not simply costume photo shoots with the locals but full rituals according to local *adat* (customary law) and concluding with a feast for the entire longhouse. Tel: 422023, www.suntravelborneo.com.

NATIONAL PARKS & NATURE RESERVES

Entry Fees & Other Charges: Visitors to all national parks in Sarawak must pay an entry fee upon arrival, shown below. More detailed information on park fees can be found at www.sarawakforestry.com/entrance-fees.

National Parks: Adult RM20, Disabled Adult RM10, Child 7-17 yrs RM7, Child 6 yrs & under free. 50% discount for residents of Sarawak.

Wildlife Centres - Semenggoh & Matang: Adult RM10, Disabled Adult RM5, Child 7-17 yrs RM7, Child 6 yrs & under free. 50% discount for residents of Sarawak.

Nature Reserves - Wind & Fairy Caves (Bau): Adult RM5, Disabled Adult RM3, Child 7-17 yrs RM2, Child 6 yrs & under free. Residents of Sarawak RM1, concessions free.

Commercial Filming & Photography Permit: RM1,000. Advance notification required. Please contact Sarawak Forestry's corporate affairs department, Tel: 610088, www.sarawakforestry.com.

Accommodation Bookings: The National Park and Wildlife Booking Office is located at Sama Jaya Nature Reserve, Jalan Setia Jaya, 6 km from the city centre (Tel: 248088) and handles accommodation bookings for all national parks and wildlife centres. If you are pressed for time, it is easy and convenient to book online at ebooking.sarawak.gov.my. Campsites do not include tents - please bring your own.

Bako National Park



A National Park since 1957, Bako offers the perfect introduction to Sarawak's forests and wildlife.

The park covers the northern tip of the Muara Tebas peninsula, an area of 27 sq km. Despite its seemingly small size, Bako contains a wide range of vegetation - swamp forest, scrub-like *padang* vegetation, mangrove forest, dipterocarp forest, delicate cliff vegetation and more. In fact, at Bako, it is possible to see almost every type of vegetation found in Borneo. Bako also contains a rich variety of wildlife and a coastline covered with small bays, coves and beaches.

The park's well-marked trails offer interesting walks ranging from short strolls to serious full-day hikes, and visitors are almost guaranteed to see wildlife. Long-tailed macaque monkeys and silver leaf monkeys are ever present, wild boar are often found rummaging around the park HQ, squirrels and monitor lizards are also common. There is every chance of seeing the rare and unusual proboscis monkeys on trails such as *Telok Paku* and *Telok Delima*, particularly early morning or late afternoon. You are more likely to see wildlife if you keep quiet and listen carefully - you'll probably hear the crash of vegetation before you are able to locate a proboscis monkey high up in the forest canopy.

Bako's plant life is both beautiful, and readily accessible. All the trails have a great variety of vegetation, from mighty 80-metre dipterocarps to dense mangrove forest. Carnivorous pitcher plants are found on the *Lintang* trail. Bako also has some good white sand beaches that provide perfect resting spots in between jungle treks. *Telok Pandan Kecil* is perhaps Bako's best beach, but all of the beaches are bordered by limestone and sandstone cliffs, and the action of the sea has left some remarkable rock formations, such as the famous Sea Stack.

If you visit *Telok Assam* beach near the park HQ, you will see hundreds of swifts hovering around their nests at the rocks at the far end of the beach. Don't leave the beach after the sun disappears behind Mount Santubong. Wait another 20 minutes as the sky's colours often change dramatically, providing a colourful backdrop to the mountain.

Trail Closure: Bako's long distance trails are occasionally closed to trekkers for conservation reasons so that an area is left undisturbed for a fixed period of time. Please check with the National

Parks & Wildlife booking office if you wish to know which particular trails are closed.

Accommodation: Be careful of the monkeys - they are compulsive thieves. Bako is very popular, especially at weekends, so it is advisable to book accommodation well in advance. Accommodation consists of Types 4, 5 and 6 Forest Lodges (RM50 to RM150 per 2-3 bed room, RM75 to RM225 per 4-6 bed house) a Hostel (RM40 per 4-bed room or RM15 per bed) and a Campsite (RM5, tent not provided).

The Park HQ: Upon arrival visitors must register at the Park HQ. There is an information centre, canteen and shop at the Park HQ. The information centre shows films and slide shows on Bako's wildlife, and has full details of all the trails and what to look out for. The canteen serves a range of hot and cold drinks, snacks and light meals (fried rice, noodles etc.).

Getting There: Take a taxi (RM40) or *bas sewa* to Kampung Bako, a picturesque fishing village. From there you have to charter a boat at the National Park Terminal. The return fare is RM94 per boat (up to 5 people) to the Park HQ. There will be an additional boat fee if you wish to visit the Sea Stack or Bako's remoter beaches. The boat ride is an adventure in itself, with the skilled and experienced boatmen riding the surf at high speed, to the delight of most visitors. For many people, this is where Borneo really begins! If you have to wait at Kampung Bako for a bus, or for the tide to rise, there is a good seafood restaurant near the old jetty that also serves snacks and drinks.

Batang Ai National Park



Batang Ai National Park is part of the region's largest trans-national protected area. The 24 sq km park

adjoins the Lanjak-Entimau Wildlife Sanctuary in Malaysia and the Bentuang-Karimun National Park in Indonesia, forming a 10,000 sq km sanctuary for over 1,000 orangutans as well as other endangered species.

The park is only 15 km upriver from Batang Ai Hydro Lake, and offers good possibilities of seeing wild orang-utans for visitors who are prepared to spend some time trekking in the area. The park does not offer any visitor accommodation or canteen facilities so it is best explored via organised treks hosted by local Iban communities.

A highlight of Batang Ai is the renowned Red Ape Trail, where the chances of seeing wild orang-utans are highest, although no guarantees are offered. However, evidence of their presence, such as old and fresh nests, are almost always encountered. Trekkers must be reasonably fit, and are required to play their part in conservation by recording sightings and nest locations on portable GPS devices. Contact Borneo Adventure, Tel: 245175, www.borneoadventure.com.

Gunung Gading National Park



Gunung Gading is home to the world's largest flower, the *rafflesia*, which can grow up to one metre in diameter. When in bloom the flower gives

off a nasty smell which attracts flies and other insects. The *rafflesia* has no specific season, taking nine months to mature and flowering for only 4 or 5 days before dying.

Gunung Gading was only opened to the public in mid-1994, after extensive environmental impact studies. Previously it was used solely as a conservation zone for the *rafflesia*. The emphasis is still on conservation, and Sarawak Forestry have taken measures to allow visitors to view flowering *rafflesia* without damaging young buds and other plants. There is a plankwalk close to where the *rafflesia*s are commonly found, and if a plant is flowering deeper in the forest, the park rangers should be able to take you on a guided walk to the site. Please take care; the small brown buds that you see on the forest floor may be *rafflesia*, so tread carefully and follow the park ranger's instructions. Guiding fees are RM40 per hour (per group).

Owing to the *rafflesia*'s rarity and brief flowering period, timing (and luck) are important. The park staff usually know when a plant is about to bloom. Visitors can check with the park HQ (Tel: 735144) or the National Parks and Wildlife Booking Office in Kuching (Tel: 248088). Although flowers generally bloom throughout the year, November, December and January are the peak flowering season as the frequency of blooms is high.

The *rafflesia* may be Gunung Gading's main attraction, but the park is well worth visiting anyway with some enjoyable walks and a challenging jungle trek. *The Waterfall* trail offers the shortest walk, winding its way up through the forest past a series of waterfalls. It takes about one hour to reach the last one, Waterfall No. 7. You'll need to be fit for the other trek, the *Gunung Gading Summit* trail (3-4 hours, one way) as it involves some serious hill walking. You must complete the trail the same day, as overnight stays in the forest are not permitted. From the summit you can take a side trek to *Batu Bakubu*, which was a former communist camp during the insurgency. Further information can be obtained from the Park HQ.

Accommodation: The HQ is fairly small and consists of an information centre, toilet blocks and accommodation facilities. There are two Type 5 Forest Lodges (RM150, 6 beds), a hostel (RM40 per room, RM15 per bed) and a campsite (RM5, tent

not provided). There is no canteen at the park HQ. Overnight visitors can head into nearby Lundu for food or bring their own provisions.

Getting There: Gunung Gading is 5 minutes drive from the small town of Lundu in Southwest Sarawak. Kuching tour operators can arrange tours. Independent travellers should take CPL Bus K26 from Kuching Sentral to Lundu. From there, take a taxi or white *bas sewa* to the park HQ.

Kubah National Park & Matang Wildlife Centre



Kubah National Park is an easy and enjoyable day trip from Kuching. Situated on a small sandstone plateau, this small park (2,230 ha.) boasts crystal clear streams and a host of small waterfalls and bathing pools. Kubah is mostly covered by mixed dipterocarp forest, but it also has one of the widest selections of palms and orchids in Borneo. The varied wildlife includes bearded pig, mouse deer, black hornbill and many species of amphibians and reptiles. However, Kubah's wildlife tends to stay deep in the forest so it is not really a park for "wildlife encounters". Kubah's appeal lies in its rainforest scenery, its waterfalls, streams and bathing pools and the 93 species of palm found within its boundaries.

The park has six jungle trails and a path leading to the summit of Gunung Serapi (5-6 hours return trip). Wooden shelters are located along the various trails. The *Main Trail* passes through dipterocarp forest and links the various trails of the park. The *Palmetum* is the park's showcase trail, passing through an area rich in palms. The *Selang Trail* leads to a view point about 45 minutes walk from

the HQ. After about 30 minutes you come to a very steep section where ropes are provided to help with the climb. At the end of the trail is a raised wooden platform complete with a bench chair and some superb views of Matang and the Santubong peninsula. The *Waterfall Trail* is the most popular trail, passing through mixed dipterocarp forest with plankwalks that cross streams and swampy land. From the HQ, it takes about 1 hr 30 mins to reach the waterfall.

The *Rayu Trail* leads from the park HQ to the Matang Wildlife Centre (see below) and takes about 3-4 hours (one way). Mid-way along the trail you'll find some rainforest giants, and pass numerous Bintangor trees (currently the subject of Aids research). At the end of the trail you enter a swampy section (watch out for leeches) before coming to a crystal clear stream and the riverside picnic areas at the Wildlife Centre. You can also start both the *Waterfall* and *Rayu* trails just past the 900 ft point on the Mount Serapi path. The trek to the waterfall takes about 45 minutes and begins with a steep descent on a wooden staircase down the forested slopes. The new *Belian Trail* is about 1 hour's easy walking and as well as huge *Belian* (Borneo ironwood) trees, there is a wide variety of other plant life. Colourful forest birds including the maroon woodpecker, white rumped shama, chestnut-naped forktail, and rufous-collared kingfisher are often heard and seen, and giant squirrels are frequently spotted jumping from tree to tree.



Matang Wildlife Centre, part of Kubah National Park, houses endangered wildlife in large enclosed areas of rainforest or spacious cages. The main attraction is the orangutan training programme, where young orangutans, who were either orphaned or rescued from captivity, are taught

how to survive in the wild. The best time to see the orangutans is at feeding time (see below). As well as orangutans, the centre includes spacious enclosures housing sambar deer, crocodiles, sun bears, civets and bear cats, and three large aviaries featuring hornbills, eagles, kites, storks and a host of other birds native to Sarawak.

There is an information centre, accommodation, some pleasant riverside picnic spots and a small canteen just a short walk from the car park, as well as two jungle trails (not including the trails connecting from Kubah). The *Pitcher Trail*, which follows a circular path through the forest, takes approximately two hours and trekkers should not have too much difficulty spotting the various species of pitcher plants that litter the forest floor at the sides of the trail. The *Sungai Buluh Trail* leads to two secluded waterfalls and takes 2-hours (one way).

Animal Feeding Times

Morning 9.00 – 10.00 am

Afternoons 3.00 – 4.00 pm

Animal enclosure opening hours

9.30 – 11.20 am

2.00 – 3.30 pm

Helping Sarawak's Orangutans: Sarawak Forestry run two programmes to enable businesses, organisations and the general public to assist in orang-utan conservation. The Orangutan Adoption programme allows participants to adopt and sponsor orang-utans at Matang and Semenggoh Wildlife Centres; adoption packages range from RM200 to RM100,000. The Heart 2 Heart With Orangutan programme allows groups of between 4 and 20 people to spend a day working with the orangutans and learning about orangutan conservation. Fees start at RM350 per person. Visit orangutan.sarawakforestry.com for further details. UK-based volunteer tourism specialists, The Great Traveller offer 2 & 4-week volunteering holidays at Matang from around RM6,000 ex Kuching. Visit www.orangutanproject.com for more information.

Accommodation: Kubah Park HQ, Type 4 & 5 Forest Lodges (RM225, RM150), a Hostel (RM40 per 4-bed room or RM15 per bed) and a Campsite (RM5, tent not provided).

Matang Wildlife Centre, Type 5 Forest Lodges (RM150), a Hostel (RM40 per 4-bed room or RM15 per bed) and a Campsite (RM5, tent not provided).

Getting There: Kubah is only 21 km from Kuching, whilst Matang Wildlife Centre is 35 km. There is no regular bus service to either. Take a taxi or *bas sewa*. Local tour operators run day trips to both.

Kuching Wetlands National Park

Located just 15 km from Kuching and approximately 5 km from Damai Beach, the Kuching Wetlands National Park covers an area of 6,610 hectares on the estuarine reaches of the Sibu Laut and Salak rivers. The park mostly comprises a saline mangrove system that includes an extensive network of marine waterways and tidal creeks interconnecting the two major rivers that form the boundaries of the park. Small patches of heath forest are found in the interior of the park.

The park is an important spawning and nursery ground for fish and prawn species and contains a wide diversity of wildlife, including proboscis monkeys, long tailed macaque monkeys, silver leaf monkeys, monitor lizards, estuarine crocodiles and a range of birdlife, including kingfishers, white-bellied sea eagles and shore birds, including the rare lesser adjutant stork.

Gazetted as a national park in July 2002, the site is one of the last remnants of the formerly extensive Sarawak Mangrove Forest Reserve, which previously covered approximately 17,000 hectares and was first protected in 1924. In November 2005 the park was designated a Ramsar Site, a wetland of international importance.

The area has long attracted nature enthusiasts owing to its fascinating ecosystem and excellent wildlife viewing opportunities. Kuching Wetlands offers an excellent introduction to the mangrove environment, and a chance to see a range of wildlife and spend some time soaking up the sights and sounds of one of the most interesting stretches of coastline in the whole of Sarawak.

River Cruises: A number of tour operators offer coastal and river cruises in and around the park. These cruises follow the main waterways of the park with most trips taking up half a day. Tours

usually meander up the Salak River before entering the smaller rivers and creeks in the park. Some tours stop at the Malay fishing village on Salak Island, which lies just outside the park's boundary.



Santubong Wildlife Cruise: This award-winning tour is run by CPH Travel and is one of the best wildlife watching tours in Sarawak. The tour departs from the Santubong Boat Club between 4 and 5 pm (depending on tide and weather) and returns around 7.30 pm. You head first to the Santubong and Salak river estuaries (just outside the park boundary) to search for Irrawaddy dolphins. Small groups of dolphins often feed at these river mouths and occasionally enter the Salak River itself. After searching for dolphins, your boat then enters the park proper, navigating the smaller river channels. Along the way you'll get a chance to experience the mangroves and go in search of the park's wildlife, including proboscis monkeys. As darkness descends the boat makes its way to sites where fireflies and crocodiles are commonly seen. Flashlights are used to locate the 'eye shine' from the crocodiles. Bookings are essential - Tel: 243708, www.cphtravel.com.my.

Getting There: The park is only accessible by boat. Contact hotel recreation counters or tour operators for details.

Maludam National Park

Maludam National Park Covers an area of 432 square kilometres and is the second largest National Park in Sarawak. It is located on the Maludam Peninsula between the Lupar and Saribas rivers and encompasses the largest single patch of peat swamp forest remaining in Sarawak and Brunei. It has the only viable population of Red Banded Langurs (*Presbytis chrysomelas cruciger*) remaining

in the world today. It is also home to sizeable populations of proboscis monkeys and silver leaf monkeys, as well as many fascinating bird species.

Maludam is not officially open to visitors and has no visitor facilities. However, it may be visited by boat from Kampung Maludam, with guests overnighting in the village homestay. Contact Borneo Transverse, Tel: 082-257882, www.borneotransverse.com.my, or Greatown Travel, 084-219243, www.greatown.com.

Semenggoh Wildlife Centre



For over 30 years, Semenggoh's staff have trained young orangutans, who had been orphaned or rescued from captivity, how to survive in the wild. The success of this programme has left the surrounding forest reserve with a thriving population of healthy adolescent and young adult orangutans, who are now breeding in the wild. The rehabilitation programme has therefore been transferred to Matang Wildlife Centre, but Semenggoh is still home to its successful graduates, semi-wild orangutans and their offspring. They spend most of their time roaming the forest but frequently come back to the Centre for a free meal. However, if it is the fruiting season in the

forest, some or even all of them may not come to feed and a visit to Matang Wildlife Centre may be more rewarding. Check with the National Parks Booking Office, Tel: 248088, for frequency of recent sightings.

Opening hours are 8 am to 12 pm and 2 pm to 4.45 pm, but visitors are only allowed into the feeding areas during feeding times - 9 to 10 am, 3 to 4 pm approx. Tour operators arrange trips here, often combined with other local attractions. Otherwise take a taxi or CPL bus K6, which stops outside the gate (RM4 one-way). Only the 7.20 am and 1 pm bus services from Jln Masjid will arrive in time for feeding, last bus back around 4.20pm. It's a 20-minute walk from the main entrance to the feeding area; enterprising locals sometimes offer shuttle services for RM1 each way.

Talang-Satang National Park



Sarawak's first marine protected area, Talang-Satang National Park covers an area of 19,414 hectares. The park was gazetted in 1999 to enhance marine turtle conservation in Sarawak. Marine turtles face many threats including entanglement in fishing nets, habitat destruction, water pollution, boat strikes, predation of eggs and hatchlings, poaching for eggs, meat or shells, and ingestion of marine debris such as plastic bags.

The park encompasses the coastline and waters surrounding four islands; Pulau Talang-Talang Besar and Pulau Talang-Talang Kecil (located off Sematan), and Pulau Satang Besar and Pulau Satang Kecil (located off Santubong). These small islands are surrounded by patches of shallow coral reef which provide shelter and resting grounds for sea turtles that come ashore to lay their eggs. Three of the islands in the park - Talang Talang Besar,

Talang Talang Kecil and Satang Besar - are known as Sarawak's "Turtle Islands."

Adult female turtles return to the beach where they were born to lay their eggs, often travelling thousands of kilometres. Whilst four species of marine turtles nest in Sarawak, the Green Turtle accounts for 90% of turtle landings. The park's islands account for 95% of all recorded turtle landings in Sarawak, a clear indicator of their importance for marine turtle conservation.

The Talang-Satang National Park also includes the Pulau Tukong Ara-Banun Wildlife Sanctuary, two small islets located close to the Satang Islands. Pulau Tokong Ara, the larger of the two rocky outcrops, is home to breeding colonies of bridled terns and black-naped terns. Black coloured pacific reef egrets are also frequently sighted on the rock. Tokong Ara is best seen as part of a wider coastal tour of the Santubong area.

Pulau Satang Besar: Pulau Satang Besar, the largest of the park's islands, is open to visitors and accessible by boat from Santubong or Damai Beach. Standard national park fees apply and tickets can be purchased on the island. There is a small information centre near the beach and visitors can also view the turtle hatchery. The beach on Satang is one of the best in Sarawak and it is possible to snorkel on the nearby reef if there is good visibility. Visitors can stay overnight on Satang Island in privately owned basic chalets. CPH Travel (Tel: 243708, www.cphtravel.com.my) run overnight trips that can be combined with their other boat tours.

Pulau Talang Besar: Turtles take priority over tourists at Pulau Talang Besar so access to the island is restricted to researchers and national park staff. However, you can visit the island as a volunteer on Sarawak Forestry's Sea Turtle Adoption Programme. This allows volunteers to spend 4 days learning more about turtles and taking part in a range of activities including: beach patrols to locate turtle landings; monitoring of nesting activities; tagging and measuring turtles; transferring eggs to the hatchery; releasing hatchlings and data recording. The volunteer programme is open from May to September. Contact local tour operators or visit seaturtle.sarawakforest.com for details and costs.

Tanjung Datu National Park

Tanjung Datu, at the southwestern tip of Sarawak, is the smallest and most secluded of Sarawak's national parks and possibly the most beautiful. The beaches really are undisturbed, the corals offshore are untouched and the forest trails are virtually untrodden. The waters of Tanjung Datu are perfect for swimming, snorkelling and scuba diving, and dolphins are frequently seen. Note: diving or surfing shoes must be worn to protect against venomous stonefish and cone shells.



The 14 sq km park is essentially a ridge of rugged mixed dipterocarp forest which reaches almost to the water's edge in some places, and this close proximity of rainforest and coral reef - the two most diverse natural communities on our planet - make Tanjung Datu a very important reservoir of biodiversity. Seven of the eight hornbill species in Sarawak can be spotted at Tanjung Datu, as well as Bornean gibbons, pig-tailed and long-tailed macaque monkeys, silver-leaf monkeys, bearded pigs, sambar deer, civet cats and green turtles.

The park has four trekking trails. *Telok Melano Trail:* From the nearby fishing village of Telok Melano (the main access point for the park) this 90-minute trail passes along the coastline, through picturesque bays, to emerge at Telok Upas, a white sandy beach with patches of hard corals just off shore which are ideal for snorkelling. A further 10 minutes brings you to the Park HQ. Return to Telok Melano by the same route, or arrange pickup by boat from the beach.

Pasir Antu Laut Trail: This 2-hour loop trail starts at the Park HQ, and passes parallel to the beach and through foreshore vegetation, to Tanjung Antu Laut, a picturesque beach where a clear freshwater streams flow around big polished granite boulders

into the ocean. It then turns inland, returning through mixed dipterocarp forest to the park HQ.

Viewpoint Trail: This short (20 minutes), steep trail leads to the Viewing Point at Tanjung Labuan Gadong, an 80m high cliff-top, which offers superb views of the entire shoreline of the park. Dolphins may frequently be seen swimming in the brilliant blue water, and on a clear day you can see the islands of Pulau Talang Besar and Pulau Talang Kecil, part of the Talang-Satang National Park, some 18km away.

Belian Trail: This 2km, 90-minute trail is steep and hard work, but the effort is worth it as it leads through mixed dipterocarp forest to the highest point in the park, the peak of Gunung Melano, 542 metres above sea level. From Gunung Melano there are spectacular views of both the Malaysian and Indonesian coasts of Cape Datu, as the international border is only 200m away. Along the way there are plenty of opportunities to view Tanjung Datu's rich plant and animal life.

Accommodation: Forest hostel (4 bedrooms each with 2 single beds), forest huts and a camp site. There is no canteen so visitors should bring food and drink with them. Visitors can also stay in Telok Melano, a traditional Malay fishing village that operates a Homestay Programme where guests stay with local families. Check with local tour operators or the National Parks Booking Office for further details.

Getting there: Access is only possible by boat from Sematan (1 hr) and only during the dry season (April-October) because of sea conditions. To manage impacts, Tanjung Datu may only be visited in small groups through an approved tour operator.

TRAVEL CONNECTIONS

AIR: Frequent daily Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flights connect Kuching with Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Miri, Sibul, Bintulu, Labuan, Penang and Singapore. Air Asia operates frequent flights to Kuching from Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Shenzhen (China), Pontianak (Indonesia), Johor Bahru, Kota Kinabalu, Penang, Miri, Bintulu and Sibul. Malindo Air flies 3-4x daily from Kuala Lumpur. Scoot flies daily from Singapore. Connections to other destinations are via Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu, or Singapore.

MAS Wings operates ATR72 turboprops to Mulu National Park and major towns throughout East Malaysia, as well as a Rural Air Service, flying 19-seat DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprops to over 20 rural destinations from Miri in northeast Sarawak.

Hornbill Skyways offer helicopter and fixed-wing charter services from their own hangar.

Kuching Airport Information: Tel: 457373/454242.

Air Asia: Ground Floor, Sarawak Plaza, Jalan Tuanku Abdul Rahman, Tel: 283222, Call Centre: 03-76512222, www.airasia.com.

Hornbill Skyways: North Pan Hangar, Kuching International Airport, PO Box 1387, 93728 Kuching, Tel 455737, www.hornbillskyways.com.

Malaysian Airlines (MAS) and MAS Wings: Level 2, Kuching International Airport, Call Centre: 1-300-88-3000, +603 7843 3000 (from outside Malaysia), www.malaysiaairlines.com.

Malindo Air: 15A Level 2 Kuching International Airport. Call Centre: 03-78415388, www.malindoair.com

Scoot: Call Centre: 03-26308976 (Malaysia), +65 3157 6434 (Singapore), www.flyscoot.com.

ROAD: The Trans-Borneo highway connects Kuching to all major cities in Sarawak. It is currently being upgraded so journey times may soon improve. Roads in and around Kuching are generally good.

Please Note: Sarawak's Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Transportation is working on a new public transport master plan for Kuching. Therefore, all bus timetables may be subject to change during the life of this guide

LOCAL BUSES: Local City Public Link (CPL) buses depart from the Saujana Car Park (K5, K7, K13, K15, K21, K 21B, K71) or Jalan Masjid (K1, K2, K3, K6, K8, K10A, K11, K17, K18, B2). White minibuses (*bas sewa*) serve many suburban and rural locations around Kuching. They generally operate from 6 am to 6 pm and depart from behind the Saujana Car Park and the Open Air Market. No fixed schedule - minibuses leave when they are full.

Airport. There is no bus service between Kuching Airport and the city centre or the Regional Bus Terminal at Kuching Sentral. It is roughly 30 mins walk to Kuching Sentral from the airport.

Bau. CPL Bus B2, hourly from 6am to 5 pm, 1 hr, RM5.

Damai, Santubong & Sarawak Cultural Village. A shuttle bus runs 4x daily from Damai to Hotel Grand Margherita and stops at the Damai resort hotels and Sarawak Cultural Village. 1-way fare RM12 (adults), RM6 (children), takes approx. 45 mins. From Damai, 9.15 am, 1.15, 3.15 & 5.15 pm. From Kuching, 10.15 am, 2.15, 4.15 & 6.15 pm. Reservations often necessary. Tel: 846999. White minibuses (*bas sewa*) serve Buntal, Pasir Panjang, Pasir Pandak and Santubong villages.

Serian. CPL bus. K3. RM5.00, approx. 1½ hr. Every half hour. First bus (from Kuching) 6.30 am, last bus 5.30 pm. See also long distance.

National Parks & Nature Reserves - see listings

LONG DISTANCE BUSES: All services depart from the Regional Bus Terminal at Kuching Sentral, Kota Sentosa (CPL bus K10A, K13, B2 from city centre). The most convenient place in the town centre to buy tickets for most Sarawak destinations is Bus Asia's office at the corner of Jln Abell and Jln Chan Chin Ann (Tel: 411111). You can also book online at busasia.my. Other bus companies all have ticket counters at Kuching Sentral - phone numbers shown below. The Visitor Information Centre has a display board with the latest bus schedules and prices. Fares shown are for standard air-con buses - de-luxe services are usually 15-20% more. Journey times are approximate.

Bus Ticket Counters

Baram (BAR), Tel: 531 168

Biaramas (BIA), Tel: 531 199

Bintang Jaya (BIN), Tel: 531 133

Borneo Amalgamated (BOR), Tel: 531 312

City Public Link (CPL), Tel: 531 133

EVA, Tel: 531 155

Freesia (FRE), Tel: 013-825 8009

MTC, Tel: 531 161

SJS, Tel: 531 122

STC, Tel: 012-898 3055

Vital Focus (VFO), Tel: 531333

Betong - 2x daily, 8.15 am and 1 pm, 4½ hrs, RM30, STC.

Bintulu - 35x daily from 7.30am to 10 pm, 10 hrs, RM70, BAR, BIA, BIN, BOR, EVA, FRE, MTC, VFO.

Lundu - CPL bus K26. Buses at 7.30 am, 10 am, 1.30 pm, 4 pm, 90 min, RM10. Last return bus 5 pm.

Miri - 43x daily from 6.30 am to 10.30 pm, 13 hrs, RM80, BAR, BIA, BIN, EVA, FRE, MTC, VFO.

Mukah - 5x daily from 10 am to 10.30 pm, 9 hrs. RM65, BIA, BIN, EVA, VFO.

Pontianak (Indonesia) - 11x daily from 7 am to 11.30 am, 9 hrs, RM90, BIN, DAM, EVA, SJS, VFO.

Sarikei - 35x daily from 7.30 am to 10.15 pm. 5½ hrs. RM40, BAR, BIA, BIN, BOR, FRE, MTC.

Sematan - CPL bus K26. Buses at 7.30 am, 10 am, 1.30 pm, 4 pm, 2 hrs, RM15. Last return bus 4.30 pm.

Serian - 39x daily from 7 am to 10.30 pm, 1 hr, RM10, BAR, BIA, BIN, EVA, MTC, STC.

Sibu - 41x daily from 7.30 am to 10.30 pm, 6 hrs, RM50, BAR, BIA, BIN, BOR, EVA, FRE, MTC, VFO.

Sri Aman - 34x daily from 7.30 am 10.30 pm, 3½ hrs, RM25, BAR, BIA, BIN, BOR, CPL, EVA, MTC, STC.

EXPRESS BOATS (Kuching to Sibu, stops at Sarikei, Tanjung Manis): Probably the most interesting form of long-distance travel. Even poor sailors are unlikely to feel queasy between April and October, but the boat can roll a little during the wet season. The Express Bahagia service departs daily at 8.30 am from the Express Boat Wharf in Pending (take a taxi). RM45, 5 hrs to Sibu, calling at Sarikei and Tanjung Manis. Tickets are sold at the jetty. It's advisable to get there 30 mins before departure.

SAMPANS (known locally as *Tambang*s): To get across river take one of the small ferries that connect the riverside kampungs to the town. Place the fare (50 *sen*) on the seat as you leave. Hiring a

sampan (RM25-30 per hour) is a great way to see the river and the waterfront villages. From the river you'll have great views of the city, get in close to the villages and get some good photos of river life.

RIVER CRUISES: CPH Travel (Tel: 243708) offer morning river cruises (9 am) and sunset cruises (5pm) in high-powered pontoon boats. RM40 (adult), RM20 (child). Cruises last approx. 2-2½ hours and offer a unique introduction to Kuching and life on the Sarawak River. Harbour Cruises (Tel: 240366) offer 1½ hr afternoon (3.15 pm, Sat & Sun only) and sunset (5.30 pm daily) cruises on a large double-decker boat, which is also available for charter.

TAXIS: Airport to town is RM26, Airport to Damai is RM70 - buy a coupon at the taxi stand at the airport. City to Damai is RM50. Most Kuching taxis do not use meters so agree the fare first for other destinations. Taxis can always be found outside the big hotels and at the taxi stand where Jln Gambier meets Leboh Jawa. Alternatively, call 343343, 342255 or 348898 for 24-Hour Radio Taxi service (RM1 surcharge). Short distances around town are RM12-20.

All fares are +50% between midnight and 6 am. Licensed ride hailing service GrabCar is an economic alternative - download the app (just type "grab") from the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.

CAR RENTAL: This is a great way to explore in and around Kuching. Be wary of unlicensed operators, as they will not be fully insured - look for the Hire & Drive Permit fixed to the windscreen. It is advisable to book in advance. The following companies offer fully licensed rental cars: AMI Car Rental, Cat City Holidays, Epta Car Rental, Flexi Car Rental, Golden System Car Rental, Golden Time Travel, Kuching Holidays, Pronto Car Rental, Mayflower, RG Car Hire. See tour operator listing for contact details.

MOTORCYCLE & BICYCLE RENTAL: Motorcycles (100-150cc) are available from 3Bikes Rental (Tel: 016-8609389, borneorental.blogspot.com) and Ah Hui Motor (29 Jln Tabuan, Tel: 230508). Bicycles can be rented from Paradesa Cycling Tours (1 Jalan Wayang, Tel: 230799) and Singgahsana Lodge (see accommodation listings). Some tour operators and resorts also have bicycles for rent. Motorcyclists are required to wear a helmet by law, and cyclists

are strongly advised to do so. Some unscrupulous operators offer 4-wheeled surrey bikes for rent. They are not only illegal but also uninsured and downright dangerous to their occupants and others. Please avoid.

TOUR OPERATORS: Kuching has many licensed tour operators offering a wide choice of tours and excursions (see list below). Their prices are very competitive, often better value than organising the trip yourself, and you also have the benefit of a knowledgeable local guide. Beware of unlicensed tour operators or individuals offering tours, as they (and their vehicles) will not be properly insured. All addresses are 93000 Kuching unless otherwise stated.

Adventure Alternative Borneo Sdn Bhd,
37 Jln Tabuan. Tel: 248000.
www.adventurealternativeborneo.com.

Amansar Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, 1st Floor, Lot 286,
Rubber Road, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 241200, Email:
info@amansar.com, www.amansar.com. Focuses
on educational tours, conservation projects and
volunteer tourism.

AMI Car Rental Sdn Bhd, GL 11, Ground Floor,
Terminal Building, Kuching International Airport,
93722 Kuching. Tel: 579679, www.amicarrental.com.

Amogha Tours and Travel Sdn Bhd, Cp 201, Batu
Kawah New Township, Jln Batu Kawa, 93250
Kuching. Tel: 463984, www.amoghatourstravel.com.

Aspen Holidays, Blk A Queens Court, Jln Wan Alwi,
93350 Kuching. Tel: 459494, www.aspenholidays.com.my.

Authentic Borneo Tours Sdn Bhd, 1st Floor, 19-B,
Lot 498 Al-Idrus Commercial Centre, Jalan Kulas,
93400 Kuching. Tel: 240430, authenticborneo.com.

Bestway Tours & Travel Sdn Bhd, 1st Floor, Lot
13766, SI74, Jalan Matang, Metrocity. Blk 1, 4th Mile,
93050 Kuching. Tel: 511167, bestwaykuchingtour.blogspot.my.

Blessed Holidays Sdn Bhd, No. 865, Tabuan Jaya
Shopping Centre, 93350 Kuching. Tel: 360650,
22.com.my/blessedholidays.

Borneo Adventure Sdn Bhd, 55 Main Bazaar.
Tel: 245175, www.borneoadventure.com.
Multiple award-winning operator renowned for
sustainable community partnerships and orangutan
conservation.

Borneo Experiences by Singgahsana Lodge
Adventures Sdn Bhd, 96 Main Bazaar. Tel: 429239,
www.borneoexperiences.com. Focuses on
sustainable and responsible 'off-the beaten track'
tourism.

Borneo Exploration Tours & Travel Sdn Bhd, 76 Jln
Wayang. Tel: 252137, www.borneoexplorer.com.my.

Borneo Fairyland Travel & Tour Sdn Bhd, Lot 1020
Sublot 1, 1st floor, Block 46, KCLD, Jalan Penrissen,
7th Mile Bazaar, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 626869,
borneofairyland.tripod.com.

Borneo Tours Sdn Bhd, Lot 153, Jln Ban Hock. Tel:
246422, www.borneotours.com.my.

Borneo Transverse Tours & Travel Sdn Bhd, No 15,
Jln Green Hill. Tel: 257882, www.borneotransverse.com.my. Popular, well established and very
experienced tour operator. German-speaking
guides available.

Cat City Holidays Sdn Bhd, Suite 29, Kueh Hock Kui
Commercial Centre, Jalan Tun Ahmad Zaidi Aduce,
93150 Kuching. Tel: 414200, www.catcityholidays.com.

CPH Travel Agencies (Sarawak) Sdn Bhd, No 70,
Jln Padungan. Tel: 419291/243708, www.cphtravel.com.my. Sarawak's pioneering tour operator has a
strong focus on nature tourism and a fleet of boats
for dolphin watching and river cruising.

Diethelm Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, 2nd Floor,
Lot 257 Jln Chan Chin Ann, 93100 Kuching.
Tel: 412778, www.diethelmtravel.com. Locally-
managed subsidiary of the multinational Diethelm
Group. German-speaking guides available.

Ecogreen Holidays Sdn Bhd, 3147, Jalan Tun Ahmad
Zaidi Aduce, Hock Kui Commercial Centre, 93050
Kuching. Tel: 425281, ecogreen-holidays.com.

Epta Car Rental & Tours Sdn Bhd, Lot 11520, 1st
Floor, Jalan Tun Jugah, 93350 Kuching. Tel: 593773,
eptatravel.com.my.

Flexi Car Rental Sdn Bhd, Lot 7050, 2nd Floor, Jalan Sekama, 93300, Kuching. Tel: 335282, www.flexicarrental.com.

Golden System Car Rental Sdn Bhd, 58-1B 1st Floor, Block G, Pearl Commercial Centre, Jalan Tun Razak, 93450 Kuching. Tel: 333609, www.gocar.com.my.

Golden Time Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd (car rental), Jalan Lapangan Terbang, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 530531, goldentimetraveltours.wordpress.com.

Great Leap Tours Sdn Bhd, 2nd Floor, RH Plaza Blk 16, Jalan Lapangan Terbang, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 457181, www.greatleap.com.my.

Insar Tours & Travel Sdn Bhd, Lot 2598, 2nd Floor Wisma Sandhu, Green Road, 93150 Kuching. Tel: 248112, www.insar.com. Experienced operator, focusing on nature, educational and community tourism. Japanese-speaking guides available.

Inter-Borneo Tours Sdn Bhd, 91 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 233193, www.inter-borneo.com.

Inter-Continental Travel Centre Sdn Bhd, Lot 572-3, Section 10, Jalan Nanas, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 256155 Fax: 422518, www.intercont.com.my.

Interworld Travel Service Sdn Bhd, No 1 Temple St. Tel: 252344, interworldtravel.org.

K.L. Tours & Transport Sdn Bhd, No 37, 1st Floor. Jalan Wayang, 93100 Kuching Tel: 250860.

Kuching Holidays & Car Rental Sdn Bhd, Counter No.6, Kuching International Airport, 93772 Kuching. Tel: 463318, www.kuchingholidays.com.

Matahari Tours Sdn Bhd, Lot 70 Sect 10, Lorong 6, Rubber Road, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 246333, www.mataharitours.com.

Mayflower Acme Tour Sdn Bhd (car rental), No 254, 1st Floor, Jln Padungan. Tel: 410110 www.mayflowercarrental.com.my.

Ming-Ming Travel Services Sdn Bhd, Lot 173, Ground Floor, Jalan Chan Chin Ann, 93100 Kuching. Tel: 419953, www.mingmingtravel.com.

Natol Holidays Sdn Bhd, Lot 2820, Third Mile Commercial Centre, 93200, Kuching. Tel: 421500, natolholidays.com.

Ooo Haa Tours & Travel Sdn Bhd, 1st Floor, 40 Main Bazaar (use Bishopsgate entrance). Tel: 012-5269719, Fax: 235106, www.gomalaysiatour.com.

P R Onto Car Rental Sdn Bhd, 98, 1st Floor, Jln Padungan. Tel: 237889, prontocarrental.com.

Pandan Goldcoast Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, 2nd Floor, Sublot 6, Lots 659-660, Jalan Lapangan Terbang Baru, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 461271, pandanholiday.com.

Paradesa Borneo, c/o One Wayang Tours Sdn Bhd, 1 Wayang Street, 93000 Kuching, Tel: 238801, paradesaborneo.com. Cycling & kayaking tours.

Pelancongan Merdeka Sdn Bhd, Sub-Lot 562-563, Lot 70 Section 10, KTLD Lorong Rubber No 6, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 235235, pelanconganmerdeka.com.

Pin Sing Travel & Tours (S) Sdn Bhd, Ground Floor, Lot 228, Section 63, Jalan Ang Cheng Ho, 93100 Kuching. Tel: 429999, www.pinsingtravel.com.

Puncak Borneo Travel and Tours Sdn Bhd, No 213, 2nd Floor, Lot 1335, Prince Commercial Centre, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 611443, facebook.com/puncakborneotours.

RG Car Hire & Services Sdn Bhd, G19, Ground Floor Arrival Hall, Kuching International Airport, 93722 Kuching. Tel: 570075, www.rgcarhiretour.com.my.

Samasa Tour & Travel Sdn Bhd, 358 Rubber Road, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 258888, www.samasa.travel.

Semadang Borneo Adventure Sdn Bhd, Kampung Semadang, Jalan Puncak Borneo, Km 24, 94700 Kuching. Tel: 013 8042118, www.semadangkayak.com. Kayak & rafting tours.

Sitt Travel Sdn Bhd, Lot 348, Section 10, Jalan Rubber, 93400 Kuching. Tel: 416131, www.sitt.com.my.

Starwing Holidays Sdn Bhd, No.67, 1st Floor, Lot 38, Jalan Sekama, 93300 Kuching. Tel: 331219, facebook.com/sarawak.starwingholidays.

Straits Central Travel & Tour Agencies Sdn Bhd, No 123, Lot 41, Jln Tabuan. Tel: 241271, kuchingtravelagency.com.

Suntravel Sdn Bhd, 18 Ground Floor, Wisma Phoneix, Jln Song Thian Cheok, 93100 Kuching.

Tel: 422023, www.suntravelborneo.com. All-woman team, best known for their authentic Iban longhouse wedding and baby-naming ceremonies.

Telang Usan Travel & Tours (S) Sdn Bhd, Telang Usan Hotel, Persiaran Ban Hock Tel: 236945/6, www.telangusan.com. French-speaking staff and guides available.

The Rucksack, c/o Borneo Trek & Kayak Adventure Sdn Bhd, Lot 8962, Jln Sekama, 93300 Kuching. Tel: 013-8048338, www.rainforestkayaking.com. Adventure kayaking specialists.

The Sarawak Steamship Co. Bhd, 52 Main Bazaar. Tel: 243366, www.sarawaksteamship.com

Unicatay Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, No. 106, Jalan Simpang Tiga, 93300 Kuching. Tel: 411879, facebook.com/unicataytravel.

Wah Tung Travel Service Sdn Bhd, 7K Ban Hock Road, 93100 Kuching. Tel: 248888, www.wahtung.travel.

Wan Zakaria Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, Lot 1F/E, Rumah Kedai Bandar Baru Kota Samarahan 94300 Kota Samarahan. Tel: 019 8382272, wanzakariatravel.wordpress.com.

MEETINGS, INCENTIVES, CONFERENCES & EXHIBITIONS

Sarawak is an emerging MICE destination, with a wide array of unique products and attractions, that already has a solid track record in attracting world-class events. The state is determined to develop this market sector to the highest international standards.

Sarawak Convention Bureau (SCB), Kuching Head Office, Level 3, Plaza Aurora, Lot 20, Section 30, Jalan McDougall, 93000 Kuching. Tel: 242516, www.sarawakcb.com.

SCB Kuala Lumpur Office, Menara Shell, Level 19, Jalan Tun Sambanthan, KL Sentral, 50470 Kuala Lumpur. Tel: 03-27185632.

Sarawak's innovative and multiple award-winning Convention Bureau should be the first point of contact for conference organisers and incentive planners. SCB offers a comprehensive range of

support services including convention bidding, product development, venue & vendor selection, delegate boosting, marketing and promotion. They can arrange generous financial support for organising and promoting suitable events. Their unique 'Tribal Wisdom' speaker programme can also add a fascinating local dimension to any gathering.

Borneo Convention Centre Kuching, The Isthmus, Sejingkat, 93050 Kuching. Tel: 392888 Toll-Free: 1-800-88-BCCK (2225), www.bcck.com.my. The first purpose-built convention centre on the island of Borneo, located on an isthmus fronting the Sarawak river with convenient links to the city centre and airport. BCCK has a state-of-the-art design with a flexible capacity for events of up to 5,000 guests, as well as almost 3,800 sq metres of highly customizable conference space. Since its launch in 2009 it has already attracted hundreds of successful events. BCCK's Raintree Restaurant is one of Kuching's top fine dining outlets (see page 72).

Kuching's major hotels also offer a wide range of convention and meeting facilities, whilst resorts and lodges are the bases for secluded beach, jungle and mountain retreats. Local destination management companies offer unusual incentive products such as rainforest adventures, volunteer camps, kayaking expeditions, and golfing in the clouds, to mention just a few.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation ranges from budget hostels to luxury international and boutique hotels. It is impossible to cover every accommodation outlet in this guide so we focus on premises within easy walking distance of major tourist attractions, unless otherwise stated. Plenty of other options can be found via online booking websites.

Room rates are shown in bands as follows. Many properties have rooms in more than one band.

Band A : Under RM50
Band B : RM50 - 149
Band C : RM150 - 299
Band D : RM300 plus

Tourism Tax: Since 1 September 2017 the Malaysian Government has imposed a Tourism Tax of RM10

per room per night on all non-Malaysian visitors staying in any accommodation with 5 rooms or more. This tax is imposed and collected at check-out. If you are staying in a shared room (e.g. a dorm), the operator may have an arrangement to share the charge between occupants, but please check before booking. Most homestay operators are not required to collect tourism tax, but please check before booking.

Where no postcode is given, all addresses are 93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia. Out-of-town hotels and resorts are listed in the Santubong and Damai and Around Kuching sections. National Park accommodation is described in the National Parks section.



International Class Hotels

Hotel Grand Margherita Kuching, Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kuching. Tel: 423111, www.grandmargherita.com. 288 rooms. Band C-D. Situated directly on the riverbank overlooking Fort Margherita and Malay villages.

Hilton Kuching, Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman (facing Waterfront, entrance in Jln Borneo), Tel: 248200, www.hilton.com. Band D. Excellent views of Kuching Waterfront and surrounding city.

Imperial Hotel Kuching, Jalan Datuk Tawi Sli, 93250 Kuching (10-minute drive from tourism district). Tel: 588999, www.imperialhotelkuching.com.my. 339 rooms, Band C-D.

Merdeka Palace Hotel & Suites, Jln Tun Abang Haji Openg, 93000 Kuching (facing Padang Merdeka). Tel: 258000, www.merdekapalace.com. Band C-D

Pullman Kuching, Jln Mathies. Tel: 222888, Email: H6332@accor.com. www.pullmankuching.com. 389 rooms. Band D. Commanding hilltop location with good views of the city.

Riverside Majestic Kuching, Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman. Tel: 247777, www.riversidemajestic.com. 513 rooms (241 in the Puteri Wing, 272 in the new premium Astana Wing). Band C-D. Excellent views of Kuching Waterfront and surrounding city.

UCSI Hotel Kuching, Lot 2864 Block 7, Muara Tebas Land District, 93050 Kuching. Tel: 596 612, Email: infokch@ucsihotels.com, www.ucsihotels.com. Located on Kuching Isthmus, 5km from city centre adjacent to Borneo Convention Centre Kuching. 209 Rooms. Band C-D.

The Waterfront Kuching, 68 Jalan Tun Abang Haji Openg, 93000 Kuching, Tel: 227227, www.thewaterfrontkuching.com. 208 rooms. Band C-D. Kuching's newest hotel, located above the Plaza Merdeka Mall.

Boutique Hotels

Basaga Holiday Residences, 69-70 Jalan Tabuan (20 mins walk from centre). Tel: 416069, www.basaga.com. Boutique resort based around a 1920s mansion. Band B-C.

Batik Boutique Hotel. 38 Jln Padungan, Tel: 422845. batikboutiquehotel.com. 16 rooms & suites. Band C. Winner of Malaysian Institute of Architects award (interior design).

Cove 55, see Damai & Santubong, page 19.

The Marian Boutique Lodging House, 25 & 27 Wayang Street, Tel: 252777, themarian.com.my. The former Anglican Guest House and St Mary's School boarding house, painstakingly restored to an elegant 40-room boutique guest house.

The Ranee Boutique Suites. 6 & 7 Main Bazaar. Tel: 258833, theranee.com. 24 rooms & suites. Band D. A lovingly rebuilt 19th Century shophouse with waterfront location. Does not accept children under 12.

Business Class Hotels

Abell Hotel, 22 Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman. Tel: 239449, www.abellhotel.com. Band B-C. Non-smoking.

Century Kuching Hotel, Jalan Lapangan Terbang Baru, 93350 Kuching. Tel: 280888, www.centuryhotelgroup.com. Located 7 km from city centre, 5 mins from airport. 417 rooms, Band C-D.

Dormani Hotel, Lot 68, Jln Datuk Ajibah Abol, 93400 Kuching (near Kuching Mosque). Tel: 241111, www.dormanihotel.com. Band B-C.

Harbour View Hotel, Lorong Temple, 93000 Kuching. Tel: 274666, www.harbourview.com.my. 245 rooms. Band C. Located next to Tua Pek Kong Temple.

Hotel Grand Continental, Lot 42, Section 46, Jln Ban Hock. Tel: 230399, www.ghihotels.com.my. 192 rooms. Band C. Situated in central business district, 7-8 mins walk to Waterfront.

Imperial Riverbank Hotel, Riverbank Tower, Jalan Tunku Abdul Rahman. Tel: 230033, www.imperial.com.my/imperial-riverbank. 108 rooms. Band B-C. Directly on Kuching Waterfront, rooms face city centre.

Kingwood Inn, Lot 618, Section 62, Jln Padungan (short taxi ride from centre). Tel: 330888, www.kuchinghotels.net. Band B-C.

Kuching Park Hotel, Lot 606, Jln Padungan (short taxi ride from centre). Tel: 239888. www.kuchingparkhotel.com.my. Band B-C.

Lime Tree Hotel, 317 Abell Road. Tel: 414600. www.limetreehotel.com.my. Band C. Non-smoking.

Lot 10 Boutique Hotel, Jalan Central Timur, Tel: 232228, www.lot10hotel.com. Band B-C.

M Hotel, Hock Lee Centre, Jln Datuk Abang Abdul Rahim, 93450 Kuching (short taxi ride from centre). Tel: 484888, mhotels.my. 260 rooms and apartments. Band B-D.

Meritin Hotel, 317 Jln Padungan, Tel: 550800, www.meritinhotel.com. Band B-C

Regal Court Hotel, Jln Tun Ahmad Zaidi Aduce, 93400 Kuching (in Satok business district). Tel: 412211. www.regalcourthotel.com.my. Band B-C.

Serviced Apartments

Ariva Gateway Kuching, 9 Jln Bukit Mata. Tel: 250958, www.stayariva.com. 72 deluxe apartments. Band C-D.

Citadines Uplands Kuching, 55 Jln Simpang Tiga, 93350 Kuching. Tel: 281888, www.citadines.com. 215 luxury apartments. Band C-D.

Wesberly Apartments, Lot 2812, Block 195, Rubber Road West, 94000 Kuching, Tel: 246197, wesberlygalleria.com.my. 6 suites (shared kitchen) and 8 self-contained apartments. Band B-D.

See also Merdeka Palace (Luxury Hotels), M Hotel (Business Hotels) and Chonglin Plaza (Budget Hotels).

Budget Hotels

Borneo Hotel, 30 C-F Jln Tabuan. Tel: 244122. Band B-C.

Chonglin Plaza Hotel & Suites, 107 Green Road, 93150 Kuching (short taxi ride from centre). Tel: 256999, www.chonglinplaza.com.my. Band B-C.

Chung Hin Hotel, 74 Jln Padungan. Tel: 411678. Band A-B.

City Inn, 275-276 Jln Abell. Tel: 414866. Band A-B.

CT2 Hotel, 47 Jln Ban Hock. Tel: 258288. Band B.

Dorset Boutique Hotel, 175A-C, Jalan Sekama, 93300 Kuching (short taxi ride from centre). Tel: 347799, www.dorsetboutiquehotel.com. Band B.

Furama Hotel, 4 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 413561. Band B.

Goodwood Inn, 16-17 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 244862. Band B.

Grand Supreme Hotel, Lot 395 Jln Ban Hock. Tel: 255155, www.grandsupreme.my. Band B.

Green Mountain Lodging House, 1 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 416320. Band B.

GW Furama Apartment, 20 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 234237. Band A-B

Hua Kuok Inn, Jln Ban Hock. Tel: 429788, www.huakuokinn.com. Band B-C.

Kapit Hotel, 59, Jln Padungan. Tel: 244179, Band A-B.

Kemena View Hotel, Jln Song Thian Cheok. Tel: 415 999, www.kemenahotelgroup.com. Band B.

Liwah Hotel, Jln Song Thian Cheok. Tel: 429222, Band B.

Nova Hotel, 306-309 Jln Abell, Tel: 236000, www.novakuchinghotel.com. 42 rooms, Band B.

Orchid Inn, 2 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 411417. Band A-B.

Mandarin Lodging House, 3 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 418269. Band B.

Padungan Hotel, 115 Jalan Padungan, Tel: 257766, www.padunganhotel.com. Band B-C.

Place2Stay: This local chain has six (6!) hotels in the City centre, and six more elsewhere in Kuching. Locations include Jln Green Hill, Jln McDougall, Jln Abell, Jln Borneo and Jln Song Thian Cheok. Full details at www.place2stay.com.my. Band B-C.

River View Inn, 22-23 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 412561. Band B.

Tai Pan Hotel, 93 Jln Padungan. Tel: 417363. Band A-B.

Telang Usan Hotel, Persiaran Ban Hock. Tel: 415588, www.telangusan.com. 66 rooms. Band B.

Tune Hotel, Taman Sri Sarawak, Jln Borneo. Tel: 03-79625888 (call centre). www.tunehotels.com. Band A-C. Budget chain operating airline style booking system.

360 Xpress, Wisma Phoenix, Jln Song Thian Cheok. Tel: 236060, www.360xpress.com.my. Band B.

48 Room-For-Rent, 13 Jln Green Hil. Tel: 231431. Band B.

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

New lodges, guest houses and homestays are popping up (and disappearing) like mushrooms in Kuching. We simply don't have space to list them all. The following is a selection of the more established outlets - you can find more on tripadvisor.com and similar websites. Please note that many outlets don't handle their own reservations but work through online booking engines.



Annah Rais Longhouse Homestay, Jln Borneo Heights, 94200 Padawan. Homestay in a historic Bidayuh village. www.longhouseadventure.com. Band C-D (including meals).

B & B Inn, 30 Jln Tabuan. Tel: 237366. Band A (dorm) & B.

Batu Bata, 8 Jln Carpenter. Tel: 239075. Band A (dorm) & B.

Beds Guesthouse, 229 Jln Padungan. Tel: 424229, www.bedsguesthouse.com. Band A (dorm) & B.

Berambih Lodge, 134 Jln Ewe Hai. Tel: 238589, www.budgetlodgekuching.com. Band A.

Borneo Seahare, 187, Jln Song Thian Cheok. Tel: 237945. Band A-B.

DIY Dorm, 64 Jln Carpenter. Tel: 232859. Band A (dorm beds only).

The Fairview, 6 Jln Taman Budaya (nr Sarawak Museum). Tel: 240017, www.thefairview.com.my. Homestay in charming heritage house. Band B.

The Kebun, Jalan Kubah-Matang, 93050 Kuching. Tel: 014 5775666, www.thekebun.com. Farmstay in Matang with self-drive car included. Band C-D (full board).

Kuching Waterfront Lodge, 15 Main Bazaar. Tel: 231111, www.kuchingwaterfrontlodge.com. Band A (dorm), B-C.

Kurakura, Kg. Semadang, Jln Borneo Heights, 93250 Kuching. Tel: 012 8920051, www.kurakura.asia. Bidayuh rainforest homestay. Band C-D (full board).

Marco Polo Travellers, 234 Jln Padungan. Tel: 019-8191914, marcopolokuching.com. Band A (dorm) and B.

My Place Lodge, 32 Jln Padungan. Tel: 012 2643082, myplacelodge.blogspot.my. Band A-B.

My Sarawak Travel Café, 94 Jln Carpenter. Tel: 256729. Band A (dorm) & B.

Nadin Homestay, No. 312, Kampung Siol Kandis, 93050 Kuching. Tel 445085, www.nadinhomestay.com. Malay kampung homestay near city centre, Band B.

Nanga Damai, see Damai & Santubong

Nomad Borneo, 3 Jln Green Hill. Tel: 237831, www.lenomadehostel.com. Band A (dorm) & B.

Rom Orchid Garden, 33A, Lorong 5, Jln Siol Kandis, 93050 Kuching. Tel: 447001, www.romhomestay.com. Malay kampung homestay near city centre, Band B.

Saloma's Villagestay, Kg. Sadir, 94200 Siburan. Tel: 016-8682525, salomavillagestay.org. Bidayuh village & jungle homestay. Band C (full board).

Singgahsana Lodge, No 1 Temple St. (corner of Main Bazaar), Tel: 429277, Email: info@singgahsana.com. www.singgahsana.com. Band A (dorm), Band B-C.

Traveller Homestay, 240 Jln Padungan, Tel: 414093. Band A (dorm), Band B.

Threehouse B&B, 51 Upper China St, Tel: 423499, www.threehousebnb.com. Band A-B.

Village House, see Damai & Santubong page 19.

There are a number of government-organised **Village Homestay Programmes** that offer visitors the opportunity to stay with local communities and enjoy local attractions. Guests stay with their host

family and can participate in daily village activities. For further information check with the Visitor Information Centre in Kuching.

EATING OUT

Kuching has a great deal to offer the adventurous gourmet. As well as typical Malaysian and Western fare, there is a whole range of local delicacies worth trying - see *Sarawak Specialities*. At the last count there were over a thousand food outlets in Kuching. As we can barely scratch the surface in this guide, we have generally focused on popular, well known and centrally located outlets that have been operating for at least a year. We strongly recommend that visitors who have time to get out and about in Kuching's suburbs and make their own dining discoveries. Local food bloggers are very active and Google should reveal some good recommendations.



Coffee Shops

Coffee-shops with their attendant food-stalls are dotted all over town. Some of the most interesting and traditional ones are found around Jln Carpenter, Main Bazaar, Jln Ban Hock and Jln Padungan, The coffee shops on Lebu Temple are conveniently located near the budget hotels on Jln Green Hill, and serve a wide selection of dishes, including good roasted chicken rice (Green Hill Café). At lunchtimes, many coffee shops serve *economy rice*, *mixed rice*, *fast food* or *nasi campur*.

These are four different names for the same dish - a plate of rice with portions of meat, fish, curry and vegetables selected from the delicacies on display. Cheap (RM4-8), delicious and very filling.

Food Centres

These are the most popular eating places amongst locals. There is always a wide selection of value-for-money stalls and you can select food from as many as you like. If you are not familiar with a dish, just be adventurous and try it. Nine times out of ten you will be delighted.

Kubah Ria, river front location next to Satok Weekend Market. Over 40 Malay and Chinese stalls serving local specialities. Highlights include the excellent satay. 10 am to 10 pm.

Lau Ya Keng Chinese Food Centre, Jln Carpenter (opposite temple). A wide range of Chinese food stalls. Excellent fish balls and pork satay (afternoons only), fish and prawn soup and Sarawak Laksa from late morning until late evening.

Open Air Market, (near Electra House) Jln Market. Oddly named, as the whole area is covered. A selection of Chinese and Malay food stalls. Some reasonably priced seafood and noodle stalls operate late into the evening. Famous for beef noodles, rice porridge and fresh soya bean milk.

Song Kheng Hai Hawker Centre, Jln Song Kheng Hai. Tucked away behind Jln Padungan next to the rugby field, this is an old-style hawker centre serving local noodle dishes, tasty desserts and afternoon snacks. Closed Mondays.

Top Spot Food Court, Jln Bukit Mata Kuching. See Seafood listings page 78.

Most shopping malls feature good food courts, notably Plaza Merdeka (level 3), The Spring, Tun Jugah (2nd floor) and Vivacity (3rd floor).

Chinese

Kuching has a huge selection of Chinese food outlets, from simple noodle stalls to full-blown banqueting palaces. Many of them feature regular food promotions - see local press for details. More Chinese restaurants are listed under Seafood.

Aladin Café, 37 Jln Ewe Hai (Carpenter St). Arguably the best chicken rice in Kuching (steamed, fried or roasted). Open daily from 6 pm, but sells out fast so come early.

Heritage, Lorong 1 Jln Song Thian Cheok (behind Hong Leong Bank). Cantonese/Szechuan restaurant renowned for suckling pig and rainbow prawns. Reservation advised, Tel: 252627.



Juat Siang Café, 34 Carpenter St. Good beef noodle soup. Daytime only.

Kim Joo Café, 94 Carpenter St. Pork noodles, *kolo mee* and *pau* (steamed buns) that are so famous the owner has his face printed on the wrapper. 6.30 am – 2 pm.

Life Café, 162 Jalan Padungan, Tel: 521398, lifecafe.my. 11 am – 10 pm (closed Tuesdays). Inexpensive Chinese and fusion food plus wide range of coffees and teas.

Lok Thian, 317 Jln Padungan (take a taxi), Tel: 331310. Traditional Cantonese & Szechuan banquet fare. Also runs the Joyous Shanghai (Shanghainese), Ten-Ichi (Japanese) and Bangkok (Thai) restaurants in the same building. Guests can cross-order from the various kitchens. Booking advised. 11 am – 2 pm, 6 pm – 10 pm.

Meisan in the Grand Margherita Hotel offers high quality Halal-certified Szechuan cuisine.

Munch Café, 179 Jln Song Thian Cheok. Great sandwiches, cakes and desserts, but its authentic Chinese noodle and dumpling dishes are what attract the locals. 6.45 am – 3 pm.

Noodle Descendants, 188 Jln Padungan. Famous for their pork noodle dishes and pork offal soup. Open daily 7.30 am – 3 pm. Expect a queue.

Nu Er Hong at Pullman Kuching. Students of Chinese cooking will love watching the chefs at work in the glass-fronted kitchen.

River Palace, Riverside Majestic Hotel. Halal-certified Cantonese banquet fare and dim sum.

Ting Noodle House, 117N Ban Hock Road. This lunchtime favourite serves spicy Taiwanese beef noodles.



Coffee Bars

Coffee bars are dotted all over town, especially in Kuching's ever-growing collection of shopping malls. These are some of the (mostly) centrally located ones. Most keep mall hours.

Bing, 84 Padungan Road and Hills Shopping Centre, Jln Mata Kuching. Serves a range of coffees, teas and light snacks.

Black Bean, 87 Jln Ewe Hai. This tiny and popular café is noted for its coffee made from locally-grown *liberica* and *robusta* beans.

Earthlings Coffee Workshop, City One Mall, Vivacity Mall. Local company operated by obsessive coffee fanatics, which shows in the quality.

Indah Café, 38 Upper China St, Tel: 012-5006535. Bustling café and art gallery, also offers cooking school and two large family rooms to rent. 8 am – 5 pm

Kai Joo Café, 29 Lorong Khai Joo. Indoor & outdoor setting in a beautifully restored old shophouse. Very affordable.

KopiCut Barber & Café, 49 Wayang St, Tel: 017 8048710. Start your evening with a coffee, a cut-throat razor shave and a hipster haircut. 5 pm – 1 am.

The Seattle Coffee & Tea Co, Merdeka Palace Hotel. Local branch of this famous chain.

Starbucks Coffee Co. Branches at Plaza Merdeka, Kuching International Airport, The Spring mall, Vivacity mall.

Continental / Western

All major hotels serve continental cuisine, usually in their coffee houses. Diners have a choice of a la carte or all-you-can-eat buffets. Look out for food promotions advertised in the local press. Some coffee shops and food centres have stalls selling Western food. Continental or American Breakfast is normally served in hotel restaurants, but most Chinese coffee shops will serve eggs with toast and jam or honey if you ask for them.

Balkanico Pizza, 106 Jln Abell (Big Bottle Bar), Tel: 016 8612855. One of the city's best pizzas makers, and definitely the best value. Late afternoon to mid evening, call to confirm.

Beccari's Ristorante, Merdeka Palace Hotel. Authentic (pork-free) dishes from all over Italy, 12 noon - 11 pm daily.

Bla Bla Bla, Tabuan Road. Tel: 233944. Balinese décor and an exotic mix of Chinese and fusion dishes. 6 pm - 11.30 pm. Closed Tuesdays.

The Carvery at Abell Hotel offers a 'churrascaria-style' meat barbecue buffet for lunch and dinner (RM55), plus à la carte dishes. Tel: 239449, www.carvery.com.my.

Commons, Old Court House, Tel:417601. Coffee, cakes, western grills and fusion dishes. 9am – midnight.

Feast & Furious, 224 Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman, Tel: 016 2620916. Popular & affordable western diner with a motorsports theme. 7.30 am – 10.30 pm.

The Granary, 23 Jln Wayang, www.thegrnary.my. Grills, pasta and pizza with a local touch, cocktail bar, live music most evenings. Pork served. 5 pm - midnight Tue-Sun.

The Junk, 80 Wayang St, Tel: 259450. A Kuching landmark, the Junk features rustic Chinese ambience and Italian influenced cooking. 6pm - 12.30 am.

Magenta, Square Tower, Kuching Waterfront, Tel: 237878. Modern western & fusion cuisine in heritage surroundings. 5 pm – midnight. Booking advised.

MK Classico Caffè, 31 Jln Tabuan, Tel: 414797. Essentially a coffee bar, but has a good selection of affordable grills and pasta dishes. 5 pm – 2 am.

Mr Jiu Jiu, Old Court House, Tel: 417601. Western & fusion fine dining in one of Kuching's oldest buildings. 5 pm – midnight. Booking advised.

Raintree Restaurant, Borneo Conference & Convention Centre. Tel: 392988. Highly rated French & Japanese-inspired cuisine. 11 am - 10 pm daily.

Razzmatazz, Block 11 Jln Canna, Tel: 361244, razzmatazz.kuching.cc. Worth the taxi ride for excellent Swiss cooking and stunning desserts by an award-winning chocolatier. Pork served. 4 pm - 11 pm.

Steakhouse, Kuching Hilton, Tel: 223888. Kuching's longest-running fine dining restaurant. Consistent quality and reliability and a great wine list. 6 pm – 10.30 pm.

Tom's, 82 Padungan Road. Famous for excellent steaks and cakes. 11.30 am – 10 pm Mon-Sat. Booking advisable, Tel: 247672.



Zinc, 38 Jln Tabuan, Tel: 016 5766647. Casual dining restaurant & wine bar emphasising French and Spanish cuisine and top-class ingredients. Pork served. 5 pm – 11 pm Tue-Sun.

21 Bistro, 64 Jln Padungan. Grills, pasta dishes and live acoustic music are the hallmarks of this bistro, popular with an older crowd. Food served 6 - 11 pm.

More Western restaurants, including themed outlets and franchises, can be found elsewhere in Kuching, particularly the Jalan Song area around Brighton Square and I-COM Square, off Jalan Pending. Google local food blogs for what's hot at the moment.

Fast Food & Franchise Outlets

The golden arches of McDonalds are at Plaza Merdeka and Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman (opp. Sarawak Plaza). Pizza Hut is also at Plaza Merdeka and Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman. KFC has branches in Plaza Merdeka, Sarawak Plaza and Riverside Shopping Centre. Local chain Sugar Bun is located in the Riverside Shopping Centre and Hills Mall, Sushi King is also at Hills, while Sarawak's first Burger King has recently opened in Plaza Merdeka. Fans of Nando's will have to travel to The Spring or Vivacity malls. Malaysian cake and fusion food outlet Secret Recipe is at Plaza Merdeka and Jln Song Thian Cheok. See also Coffee Bars.

Food Trucks

Although Kuching has no shortage of eating places, food trucks have recently become a major dining attraction in the city, serving both local and international dishes. They appear to come and go at random - Google and Facebook should reveal who's cooking what, where and when.

Indian

Buhari Café, 157F Jln Satok. An old Kuching favourite, famed for its chicken and mutton *biryani*.

Curry House, Lorong 3A, Jln Rubber. Good range of curries and other mixed rice dishes.

LL Banana Leaf, 7G Lorong 1, Jln Rubber. Tel: 239404. Authentic South Indian banana leaf meals. The spicy fried fish is a local favourite. Also serves *dosai* & *murtabak*. 7.30 am - 9 pm.

Lyn's Tandoori, 7 Jalan Song Thian Cheok. Tel: 234934. Mostly North Indian dishes. 10 am – 10 pm.

Indonesian

Bumbu Cabe, B128-B129, I-COM Square, Jln Pending (take a taxi), Tel: 266966. Sundanese cuisine from West Java. 11.30 am – 9.30 pm.

Bumbu Minang, City One Mall (take a taxi), Tel: 019 8161617. Same operator as above but serving Minangkabau cuisine from Sumatra. 11.30 am – 9.30 pm.

Riung Kuring, Jln Dagok (behind RHB Jln Kulas). Tel: 016-8503888. Family-run restaurant servicing authentic Sundanese and Minangkabau dishes. The Padang-style beef rib is superb. 11am - 3 pm, 6 pm - 11 pm daily.

Japanese

i.Zakaya, Tower B2, I-COM Square, Jln Pending (take a taxi), Tel: 266855. Affordable lunches, banquet dinners and a very well-stocked bar. 11.30 am - 2.30 pm, 5pm - 11 pm.

Minoru, Lot 493-G, Jln Rubber. Tel: 251021. 11.30 am - 2.30 pm, 6-10.30 pm. Consistently good service and extensive menu.

Sakae Sushi, Plaza Merdeka Mall. Sushi, sashimi & cakes.

Sanga, 164 Jln Chan Chin Ann. Tel: 250433. Japanese & Korean specialities. 11 am - 10 pm.

Sushi King, Hills Shopping Centre & The Spring. Fresh sushi from the conveyor, other dishes cooked to order.

Ten-Ichi – see Lok Thian in Chinese section.

Korean

Seoul Garden, Blk 10, 3rd Mile Commercial Centre (take a taxi). Tel: 013 8009447. Specializes in Korean BBQ & steamboat. 10 am - 2.30 pm, 5 pm - 10 pm.

Goong, 17 Premier 101 Shopping Centre (take a taxi), Tel: 571004. Casual & family-oriented restaurant, with Korean grocery store attached. 11.30 am - midnight.

The Kimbap, 16 Brighton Square, Jln Song (take a taxi), Tel: 016 8771232. Specializes in *kimbap* (or *gimbap*) seaweed rolls and crispy Korean fried chicken. 10.30 am - 2.30 pm, 5 pm - 9 pm.

Koreana, 7 Premier 101 Shopping Centre (take a taxi), Tel: 575072. Fine dining outlet popular with Korean expats. 10 am - 2 pm, 5 pm - 10 pm.

Late Night Eats

Most restaurants in Kuching close at or before 10

pm. Fortunately the late night eateries in the city centre seem to congregate together in certain locations. All are open until at least 2 am unless otherwise stated. Around Main Bazaar, the burger stall outside Singgahsana Lodge does great home-made burgers and the Old Bazaar Café serves western and local dishes (last food order 12.30). Lok Lok on Jln Ban Hock, opposite the Tabuan Roundabout serves skewers of *lok-lok*, noodles and Malay dishes. The city end of Jalan Padungan offers grilled and roasted chicken dishes at RJ Ayam Bakar (Jln Abell), spicy Malaysian rice and noodle dishes at Planet Sambal (60 Jln Padungan, open 24 hours), and Chinese noodle dishes at the Kapit Hotel Coffee Shop (open 24 hours). At the other end of Jalan Padungan is Homecook Padungan, a bustling late night coffee shop known for its Sarawak *laksa*. West of the city centre, Kopi O Corner (see Sarawak Specialities) is open 24 hours and the Satok Road Food Stalls serve a variety of popular Malay hawker dishes until 3 am. You can find plenty of other late night eating possibilities in food centres throughout Kuching - taxi drivers and local foodies will be happy to advise.

Malay

Malay food served in Sarawak is generally not quite as spicy as that served in Peninsular Malaysia. As well as specifically Malay restaurants, most food courts and many coffee shops have Malay food stalls.

Rumah Hijau, 24 Jln Rubber, Tel: 016-5891947. Known for *ayam penyet*, *ayam percik* and *laksa Penang*. Good range of cakes and desserts too. Open 9 am - 11 pm.

Jubilee Restaurant, Jln India. Serves a range of Malay curries and vegetable dishes and good *roti canai*.

Kubah Ria (see food centre listings) offers the widest variety of Malay food in town.

Melanau Café, 3 Jln Green Hill. Good selection of Malay and Melanau dishes. Tasty *nasi campur* buffet available all day long. 8 am - 10 pm.

My Village Barok, 7 Jln Brooke (take a sampan across the river), Tel: 016 8707021. Touristy theme restaurant serving traditional Malay and other Sarawak dishes. 4.30 pm - 11.30 pm.

Pak Somet Ayam Penyet, Jln Chan Chin Ann. Famed for its *ayam penyet* (literally, pulled chicken) and other Malay staples. 10 am - 1 am.

RJ Ayam Bakar, 291 Jln Abell. Tasty grilled chicken and Malay-style oxtail soup are the highlights. Popular place to hang out. 11 am - 2.30 am.

Malaysian

These are typically Malaysian but do not represent any particular ethnic cuisine.

Aroma Café, Jln Tabuan (opp. Borneo Hotel). The only Bidayuh restaurant in town serves traditional *kampung* food for buffet lunch and a la carte dishes until 10 pm.

Borneo Delight, Corner of Wayang St & Carpenter St. family run café with a good selection of budget-priced local dishes, including excellent Sarawak *laksa*. Daily 9 am – 10 pm.

Lok-Lok, 7D Jln Ban Hock. Serves *lok-lok* (tid-bits on skewers cooked steambot-style), *nasi lemak*, *laksa*, *ayam penyet* and noodle dishes from 6 pm until late. Closed Sundays.

Old Bazaar Café, Leboh Wayang. Chinese theatre transformed into a coffee shop. Good selection of Malaysian dishes, 4pm - 12.30 pm. Perfect for people-watching.

SCR, Jln Song Thian Cheok, branches throughout town. Generous portions of chicken rice and other local dishes. 10 am - 9 pm.

Winnie's Café, 11 Main Bazaar, Tel: 016 8959998. Unique range of local and regional dishes - huge portions served bento-style. 7 am - 7 pm (later by arrangement).

Philippine

Pinoy Fiesta Ihaw Ihaw, 143 Jln Padungan, Tel: 012-888 0639. Filipino home cooking with the emphasis on pork. 5 pm – 11 pm.

Sarawak Specialities

Sarawak *laksa* - a spicy noodle dish laced with beansprouts, shredded chicken and prawns in rich

coconut gravy - is the Great Borneo Breakfast. The late food and travel broadcaster Anthony Bourdain rated it as one of the world's top 10 hawker dishes! *Laksa* can be found in many coffee shops and everyone in Kuching has their favourite stall - two of the best in the city centre are Chong Choon (Mr Bourdain's favourite, Jln Abell, behind Digi Concept Store), and Choon Hui (Jln Ban Hock). Both are sold out by 11 am. Further afield, the Golden Arches café at 3rd Mile Roundabout, Madam Tang's at Jln Petanak and Mom's *Laksa* at Jln Astana all have a devoted following. Tinot *Laksa* serves their much-loved breakfast in a *kampung* garden setting on Jln Patingan, Mon-Sat 6.30 - 10 am.



Kolo mee, egg noodles served with minced beef, pork or chicken or thinly-sliced char siew (barbequed pork) is Kuching's other signature noodle dish. Try it at Min Joo (Jln Carpenter), and dozens of other spots around town. The best bet for pork-free *kolo mee* is Mohammad Lim's stall at Ting Café, Taman Sri Sarawak (opposite Hilton).

Umei, a spicy salad of raw marinated fish, limes and shallots, is the traditional dish of the Melanau people, and is often served at hotel buffets or Malay food stalls. Local vegetables include two delicious types of crispy jungle fern, *midin* and *paku*. *Manok pansoh* (chicken cooked in bamboo) is a great Iban delicacy, as is *babi panggang* (grilled 3-layer pork belly).



The Dyak, corner of Jln Mendu & Jln Simpang Tiga. Pioneering Iban restaurant focusing exclusively on Dayak cuisine. 6-10 pm, booking advised. Tel: 234068.

Kopi O Corner, Bangunan MARA, Jln Satok. This busy coffee shop serves tasty halal versions of almost every local delicacy. 6 am – 1 am.

Lepau, Persiaran Ban Hock (behind Grand Supreme Hotel), Tel: 242160. Orang-Ulu owned restaurant, serving traditional upriver Borneo cuisine with a nice tribal ambience. Pork free. 11 am – 2 pm, 5.30 pm – 11 pm.

Maria Kek Lapis, 4 Bishopsgate. Famous for her kek-lapis (Sarawak layer cake, 42 varieties!) and local drinks and desserts. 8 am – 6 pm.

Tribal Stove, Taman Sri Sarawak (opp. Hilton), Tel: 234873. Authentic (although pork-free) Kelabit food from the Bario Highlands. 11.30 am – 10 pm.

Yang Guan Café, Jln Ban Hock (behind Unichem Pharmacy). Excellent kolo mee and pork noodles of every description, as well as various Foochow noodle dishes and *kompia* (minced pork bagels) from Sibuan. 6 am – 1:30 pm.

Seafood

Kuching has superb seafood. The steamed *pomfret* and *manchong* fish are unmissable. *Assam* prawns, *sambal* prawns and slipper lobster are other local favourites. One dish that you are unlikely to find elsewhere is *ambal* (bamboo clam), which is usually cooked as a mild dry curry or steamed in Chinese wine. Unusual appearance (looks like a worm in a bamboo shell!) - but tastes superb. Kuchingites eat early, so come before 6.30 pm or after 9 pm to be sure of a table. None of the restaurants listed below serve pork.

See Good, off Ban Hock Road, opposite Hua Kuok Inn. Tel: 251397. Cooking style is robust rather than fussy, with strong-flavoured sauces and lots of herbs. Good selection of affordable wines. 12 midday - 10.30 pm.

Top Spot Food Court, Jln Bukit Mata. The widest choice of seafood outlets in all of Borneo. Set on the breezy top floor of a car park, over a dozen al-fresco

restaurants offer local seafood in all its forms. Fresh fish are displayed for you to take your pick. 12 am - 11 pm daily. All stalls open 6pm -10 pm.

Batu Lintang Food Centre, tucked away behind junction of Jln Batu Lintang & Jln Rock. The stalls here serve Kuching's cheapest seafood. Evenings only. Be prepared to wait for a table.

Buntal Seafood Village - see Damai & Santubong.

Open-Air Market - see Food Centre listings.

Padungan Bay, Jln Petanak, Tel: 016-8880320. Good selection of dishes. The bitter melon omelette is unusual and delicious. 6 - 10 pm.

Pending Seafood Centre, Jln Simen Raya. A wide range of stalls selling seafood and local specialities. Take a taxi.

Rock Road Seafood, 2nd Mile, Jln Rock, Tel: 241575. Popular outlet where you select your dinner from the tanks lining the walls. Take a taxi. Booking advisable.

Steamboat

A local favourite - an all-you-can-eat seafood buffet which you cook yourself in a gas-heated stewing pot, with a barbecue plate attached for grilling marinated beef, lamb and chicken. If you have never tried before, the staff will show you how it's done. Very Malaysian, excellent value and great fun.

Annur BBQ Steamboat, Persiaran Ban Hock (Tel: 019 8867900) is the only Muslim steamboat in the area. Always busy so come early or late to get a table. Closed Mondays.

D11 Steamboat (behind Hornbill's Corner) is also very popular. Pork-free. Open daily.

Coca at the Riverside Majestic Hotel specialises in spicy Thai-style steamboat. See Thai listings below.

Thai

Bangkok – see Lok Thian in Chinese section.

Cha Bo, 26-27 Jln Tabuan, Tel: 233001. A wide range of Thai dishes in stylish surroundings. 6 pm – 11 pm daily.

Coca Restaurant, Riverside Majestic Hotel. Tel: 232133. Open 11.30 am -10.30 pm. À la carte or buffet, with the Thai-style steamboat the popular house speciality.

Mango Tree, Jln Crookshank, Tel: 235353. Malaysia's first branch of the Thai franchise. 11.30 am – 2 pm, 6 pm – 10 pm.

Nirawan 9, 47 Jln Tabuan (opposite roundabout), Tel: 012-888 9909. Indoor and al-fresco dining, 11.20 am – 2 pm, 6 pm – 9.30 pm.

Vegetarian

If you are a strict vegetarian, make sure you say so when ordering vegetable dishes in non-vegetarian outlets - dried prawns, *belacan* (shrimp paste), shredded chicken, etc., are often used in vegetable dishes. Most cook-to-order restaurants can prepare vegetarian dishes on request.

Indah Café (see Coffee Bars) serves meat but also has vegetarian and vegan menus.

Popular Vegetarian, 151 Jln Datuk Abang Abdul Rahim 5 A (behind Hock Lee Centre), Tel: 019 8887164. Vegan-friendly Cantonese vegetarian fine dining. 9 am – 2 pm, 5 pm – 9 pm.

LL Banana Leaf serves value-for-money vegetarian banana-leaf rice. see Indian section.

Lyn's Thandoori, vegetarian & vegan options, see Indian section.

Sikh Temple, Jln Masjid. Join Kuching's friendly Sikh community for a free vegetarian lunch every Sunday. 11 am until the food is finished.

Zhen Xiang Zhai, 141 Jln Padungan, Tel: 010 9769383. Vegetarian stir-fries and lunch buffet. Even carnivores praise the vegetarian Sarawak laksa. 6 am – 3 pm.

Zhun San Yen Vegetarian, Lot 165, Jln Chan Chin Ann. Tel: 230068. Popular self-service vegetarian buffet. 7.30 am - 2.30 pm, 5 pm-8.30 pm.

Vietnamese

Saigon Fusion, 17 Bishopsgate, 019 8891139. Tasty Pho, Viet-Malay fusion dishes and Vietnamese coffee. 11am - 2pm, 6pm - 10pm.

ENTERTAINMENT

Kuching has entertainment and nightlife to suit most tastes. As this guidebook has been produced with tourists in mind, we have not included places that concentrate on lavish business entertainment or where female visitors would feel uncomfortable. Socialising in Kuching is also done in restaurants and coffee shops. Basic pubs usually charge around RM10-12 for a locally produced beer, considerably more for German, Belgian & Japanese imports. Live music pubs, hotel bars, plush karaoke lounges and trendier bars are usually more expensive. Most places have "happy hours," with discounts or 2-for-1 offers. Unless otherwise stated, outlets are open daily from around 5 pm to 1 am. The listings below are only a small selection - the inquisitive will make their own discoveries.

Bars & Pubs

Bear Garden (formerly Tiger Garden), Jln Wayang. Cheap drinks and vegan food. 4 pm – 1.30 am.

Big Bottle, 106 Jln Abell. A unique self-service bar with a huge range of beers at low prices. Live music most evenings. Tasty pizzas and bar snacks. 12 noon – 1 am.

Borneo Rednecks, 65-66 Jln Padungan. Large & popular country-themed bar with live music. 5 pm – late.

The Club, Riverside Majestic Hotel. Cosy pub & cocktail lounge with live music. Good happy hour deals.

Culture Club, Jln Bukit Mata Kuching. Live music every night from top Malaysian cover bands. 6 pm – 2 am.

Drunk Monkey, 68 Jln Carpenter. Lively hangout that becomes a party bar at weekends. Good selection of drinks and large outdoor seating area. 2 pm – 2 am.

Five Foot Way, Corner of Jln Padungan/Jln Song Thian Cheok. Compact corner bar decorated with the owner's paintings. Cheap beer and tasty pub food. 4 pm – 2 am.

The Granary, 23 Jln Wayang. See Continental / Western food listings.

Havana, 22 Jln Tabuan. A watering hole on weekdays, party bar at weekends.

The Junk Bar, 80 Jln Wayang. As the restaurant winds down the bar fills up. Kuching's Wannabe Central. 10 pm – 2 am.

Lucky Charlotte, Old Court House, Tel: 417601. Popular live music venue. Call to find out who's playing and when.

Magazzino, 99 Jln Green Hill. Loud party bar playing mostly EDM. Occasional live bands and DJs. 4 pm – 2 am.

Monkee Bar, Padungan Arcade, Jln Song Thian Cheok. Lively pub with cheap beers, popular with visitors.

Motown, 119 Jln Tabuan, Friendly open Karaoke bar, popular with locals and travelers. 5 pm – 2 am.

Rejang Lobby Lounge, Grand Margherita. Cosy lounge bar, popular with the happy hour crowd. Bartender mixes a near-perfect martini.

Ruai Bar, 282, Yun Phin Building, off Jln Padungan (2 mins walk from Cat Statue). Iban family-run pub proudly proclaiming itself "the world's worst bar". In-house barber shop. Loud & lively from 11 pm. 6 pm - late.

Sanjuro Café & Art Space, 175 Jln Padungan, 016-8600256. The fact that it's alcohol free doesn't detract in the least from this lively café offering live entertainment (local musicians, poets, rappers, stand-ups) most evenings. 10 am – midnight daily.

Senso, Kuching Hilton. Comfortable up-scale lounge bar with live bands daily. 5 pm – 1 am.

Shack, 33 Jln Carpenter. Cheap beer, local musicians, Dayak and Filipino food with the emphasis on pork. 5.30 pm – 2 am.

Shore, 50 Jln Abell. Cocktail lounge cum sports bar with a great selection of beer and whiskies. Happy hour from 4 pm.

Speak Eazy, 61 Jln Ewe Hai (Carpenter St). Known for its uniquely flavoured rice wines and alternative music. No smoking rule is strictly enforced indoors. 5 pm – 2 am.

Terminal One, 341 Jln Padungan Utara. Live bands from the Philippines and loud local DJs. 4 pm – 2 am.

Walk Star Bistro, 22 Jln Carpenter. Friendly, laid back bar playing mostly classic rock. Welcoming crowd of local professionals. 3.30 pm – 2 am.

Wayang Bar, 86A Jln Tabuan. Streetside bar with live music. Packed at weekends. 6 pm – 2 am, closed Tuesdays.

The Third Mile area is teeming with Karaoke lounges, whose names seem to change on a weekly basis. This is the only area in Sarawak where customers order beers by the case. There are also a few more up-market theme bars in the Jalan Song area, especially around Brighton Square. Take a taxi.

Cinemas

All screenings and times can be found at www.cinema.com.my.

LFS Riverside Cineplex, Riverside Complex, next to Riverside Majestic Hotel. Tel: 246199.

MBO Cineplex, 2nd Floor, Spring Shopping Mall, Jln Tabuan. Tel: 421203.

GSC Cineplex, 3rd Floor, City One Mall, Jln Song. Tel: 03 7806 8888 (call centre).

TGV Cineplex, VivaCity Mall, Jln Wan Alwi. Tel: 1300 222848 (call centre).

SHOPPING

Kuching is an excellent place to buy Borneo arts, crafts and curios. Particular items to look out for are Iban *pua kumbu* and Malay *songket* (hand-woven textiles), Iban hornbill carvings (used in rituals) and silver jewellery, Bidayuh baskets, Orang Ulu beadwork and woodcarvings, and Penan blowpipes and mats. Most of the antique and curio shops are scattered along Main Bazaar and Carpenter Street, with a few in the Padungan area. Whilst a few are laid out like elegant galleries, most are crammed full with every possible variety of Sarawakian bric-a-brac, and items from Brunei, Kalimantan and Sabah.

Well-established outlets on Main Bazaar include Native Arts, Nelson's Gallery, Rainforest, Sarawak House, Atelier Gallery and Arts of Asia, all offering quality antiques and handicrafts at reasonable prices.

Prices of handicrafts are not always fixed so you may have to bargain. If you have the time it's best to shop around and get a rough idea before buying. Certain antiques require an export permit from the Sarawak Museum. The more established shops can assist with this and with shipping arrangements (if required). Most art and craft shops close on Sundays. Note: Australian and New Zealand authorities insist that wood and bone handicrafts are fumigated upon arrival.

The Museum Shop & Café (temporarily relocated to 96 Main Bazaar) has a good selection of unusual arts, crafts and souvenir items, as well as official Sarawak Museum merchandise.

Tanoti House offers fine *songket* textiles and craft items.

Sarawak Handicraft Centre, Round Tower, Sarawak Tourism Complex. Tel: 425652, Fax: 445311. www.sarawakhandicraft.com. Indoor showroom plus outdoor stalls featuring Sarawak handicrafts.

Pepper: Malaysia is a major producer and exporter of pepper, producing around 25,000 tonnes annually, of which 98% is grown in Sarawak. This valuable cash crop provides an important source of income for over 60,000 rural families. Visitors travelling outside Kuching should not miss the chance to visit a pepper garden. High-quality Sarawak pepper and pepper-based products are widely available in Kuching. More information from the Malaysian Pepper Board, www.mpb.gov.my.



Pottery: Kuching is well known for its unique, locally-influenced Chinese pottery. Most potteries

are located out of town on Jln Penrissen. Visitors are welcome to watch the potters at work. Just take a bus (CPL K3 or K6) or taxi and ask for the potteries. Many antique and souvenir shops stock their wares.

Bird's Nests: For centuries Sarawak has exported top quality bird's nests to China. Today, a number of retailers in Kuching specialise in the sale and export of these exotic delicacies. Prices are significantly cheaper than elsewhere (e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore or West Malaysia) and the quality is excellent.

Film, Processing & Camera Repairs: Film processing and digital printing laboratories are found all over town. Kingdom Photography (Jln Green Hill) is centrally located and consistently produces good quality prints. For camera repairs, Empress Studios (1B Jln India) are fast, reliable and reasonably priced. For good prices on digital video tape head to Top Photo (Jln Abell).

Bookshops: For books on Sarawak and Borneo try Mohamad Yahia & Sons (Basement, Sarawak Plaza & Grand Margherita Hotel - they also have some good maps), Benzamine Bookshop (Jln Carpenter), Star Company (30 Main Bazaar) and the Museum Shop & Café, which also has editions of the *Sarawak Museum Journal*. For general books, novels etc., try Popular Books (Tun Jugah Centre), Times Books (Riverside Complex) or MPH (Plaza Merdeka, The Spring).

Traditional Music: CD's of traditional music from Sarawak can be found at the Museum Shop & Café, many handicraft shops on Main Bazaar and the shop at the Sarawak Cultural Village.

Computers & IT: If you need any computer or smartphone equipment, software, accessories or repairs, the places to head for are Wisma Saberka (Jln Tun Abang Haji Openg, CPL Bus K8 or K10-A) or One TJ Shopping Mall (Jln Setia Raja, CPL Bus K8).

Wine & Spirits: Most supermarkets stock a limited selection of wines and spirits. The most convenient for visitors are Ting & Ting Supermarket on Jln Tabuan and Everrise Supermarket in Plaza Merdeka. A larger selection can be found at Wine & Liquor, Block 16, Jln Tun Jugah, Tel: 577088 (take a taxi), whose affable owner enjoys treating customers to free samples.

Malls & Shopping Centres

Plaza Merdeka, 88 Jln Pearl (facing the Main Post Office), is the most conveniently located mall for general shopping. The smaller city centre malls include Riverside Shopping Centre (next to Riverside Majestic Hotel), Sarawak Plaza (next to Grand Margherita Hotel), Hills (Jln Bukit Mata) and Tun Jugah (across the road from Sarawak Plaza). Other good places for bargain hunting are Electra House (next to the Covered Market), Wisma Hopoh (Jln P, Ramlee - good for shoes and eyewear) and Wisma Satok (Jln Satok). The India Street pedestrian area and nearby Jln Gambier are good for textiles, kitchenware and hardware.

The largest shopping malls are all further away from the old city centre: Aeon Kuching Central on Jalan Tun Ahmad Zaidi Adruce, The Spring on Jln Simpang Tiga, Boulevard on Jln Datuk Tawi Sli, Vivacity on Jln Wan Alwi and City One on Jln Song.



SPORTS & RECREATION

All the 4 & 5-star hotels have fitness centres with pools tennis courts. Serious tennis players should contact the Sarawak Lawn Tennis Association (Tel: 427118), who operate a tournament-grade complex on Jln Crookshank near the city centre. There is a public swimming pool on Jln Padungan just past the Kuching City South Council office complex. Reservoir Park is a popular local jogging spot. Riverside Superbowl (Tel: 428806, 10 am - midnight) is a 24-lane bowling centre situated in the Riverside Complex. Damai Beach is the best area for watersports (jet-skiing, windsurfing, water-skiing) - see Damai and Santubong section for details.

If you are into sport fishing, Kuching is the ideal base, with excellent catches reported both from the South China Sea and Sarawak's many rivers. Check with Anglers' Tackle (Lorong 27 Jln Satok, Tel: 233430) for venues, etc.

Golfers have a choice of courses. The 36-hole Kelab Golf Sarawak at Petra Jaya is strictly members only. Tel: 440966 for reciprocal membership details. The 18-hole Samarahan Country Club is the newest course in the Kuching area, and many say it's the best. Check for reciprocal membership details at www.samarahanc.com. The quaintly named Prison Golf Club on Jln Penrissen has 9 holes, green fees RM40/60, caddies RM6, Tel: 617209. The Arnold Palmer designed Damai Golf Course at Santubong is described in the Damai and Santubong section (see page 23). For golfers wishing to avoid the tropical heat, the 18-hole Hornbill Golf & Jungle Club at Borneo Highlands Resort, 70 km from Kuching, is located at over 1,000 metres altitude. Tel: 019-8280790, www.borneohighlands.com.my.

Kayaking and Rafting enthusiasts are bound to enjoy Sarawak's jungle streams while paddling through stunning upcountry scenery. Contact local tour operators for details.

A number of local operators offer adventure caving and rock climbing trips (and combinations of both) in the Bau and Serian areas. These include one-day caving or climbing adventures and longer expeditions that combine caving, climbing, 4x4 treks, jungle walks and visits to Bidayuh villages. Beginner, intermediate and advanced level activities are offered and equipment is supplied. Many of the trips are suitable for beginners. Contact Borneo Adventure, Borneo Experiences or CPH travel.

Sarawak is essentially a pioneer territory when it comes to Mountain Biking. However, a few local riders have discovered some great trails just outside Kuching and further afield. If you want to link up with local riders, contact the Kuching Bike Hash (see below) or WG Cycles, 36A, Ban Hock Road. Tel: 238239.

Kuching City Hash: If your idea of fun is running through humid jungle, getting covered in mud, sweat, bites and scratches (and enjoying a few drinks afterwards with your new friends), the Kuching Chapter of the Hash House Harriers would love to hear from you. Harriers (Men Only) Tue 5.30 pm, Harriettes (Ladies Only) Wed 5.30 pm, City Hash (Mixed) Sat 4.30 pm. Contact Polycarp Teo Sebom (Tel: 019 8871017) or Jennifer Yap (Tel: 411694). Cyclists should contact the Kuching Bike Hash (weekend rides only) via Facebook.

Scuba Diving: Although Kuching is not yet developed as a diving destination (unlike Miri in Northeast Sarawak, gateway to the Luconia Shoals), there are a number of interesting dive sites within easy access of Kuching. For further details contact CPH Travel (Tel: 243708, www.cphtravel.com.my), Kuching Scuba Centre (Tel: 485335, www.kuchingscuba.com) or Premier Dive & Scuba (Tel: 012-8892336, www.wetwolfdive.com).

USEFUL INFORMATION

Banks & Money Changers

The following is a list of centrally located banks and money changers that handle both travellers cheques (service fee charged) and cash. Most banks open Mon-Fri 9.30 am - 4 pm.

Alfa Millions Money Changer, Lower Ground Floor, Plaza Merdeka Mall. Alliance Bank, 178 Jln Chan Chin Ann. Ambank, Lower Ground Floor, Plaza Merdeka Mall. CIMB Bank, Wisma Bukit Mata Kuching & Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman. Everrise Money Changer. Lot 199, Jln Padungan. Tel: 429354. Hong Leong Bank, 122 Jln Song Thian Cheok. Hong Xi Enterprise, Ground Floor, Tun Jugah. HSBC Bank, Bangunan Binamas, off Padungan Road (near Cat Statue). Majid & Sons Money Changer, 45 Jln India. Mon-Sat 9 am - 7.30 pm Sun 9 am - 3 pm. Maybank, Jln Song Thian Cheok, corner of Jln Bukit Mata Kuching. Mohamad Yahia & Sons, LGF3, Sarawak Plaza. 10 am - 9 pm (closed Friday lunchtime). OUB Bank, 1 Jln Tun Haji Openg (corner of Main Bazaar). Public Bank, 102 - 110 Jln Song Thian Cheok (behind Everrise). Standard Chartered Bank, Wisma Bukit Mata Kuching, Jln Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Healthcare

Doctors, Dentists & Hospitals: The Clinic on Main Bazaar (opp. Chinese History Museum) is excellent, well equipped, and very experienced in dealing with tourists' ailments. There are a number of other good clinics around town. Consultation and simple medication is usually around RM30-60. Names are not given for legal reasons. There are many good dentists in town, and their charges for both emergency and cosmetic work are low by global standards.

Sarawak General Hospital, Jln Ong Kee Hui (Tel: 276666, CPL Bus K6, K8, K10A, K17, K18), has a first rate

Accident and Emergency department - foreign visitors are charged RM50 for consultation. A cash deposit, insurance card or credit card will be required for in-patient treatment - prices are low by international standards.

Kuching's private hospitals are staffed by specialists and have a good reputation both locally and internationally. They include Normah Medical Centre, across river on Jln Tun Datuk Patinggi (Tel: 440055, CPL Bus K5), Timberland Medical Centre at 3rd Mile Commercial Centre (Tel: 234991, CPL Bus K3, K6, K10A, K18, B2), Borneo Medical Centre on Jln Tun Jugah (no bus route, Tel: 507333), and Kuching Specialist Hospital at Jln Setia Raja, Stutong (Tel: 365777, CPL Bus K8). Chiropractic clinics include Ohana Spinal Care (Jln Setia Raja opp. OneTJ technology centre, Tel: 016 8825627) and Spine & Joint Asia (S3 Curve, Jln Simpang Tiga, Tel: 242955). If you prefer a traditional approach there are Chinese Physicians and Traditional Massage Centres located all over town. Prices of prescription eyewear (both glasses and contact lenses) are a fraction of those charged in many other countries, whilst the practitioners are of international standard.

Pharmacies: We have only listed pharmacies that are well-stocked, helpful and always have a pharmacist in attendance. The best bet in the city centre is UMH Pharmacy, Jln Song Thian Cheok (opp. Maybank, Mon - Sat 9 am to 6 pm). If UMH are closed, JOY Pharmacy, Central Park Pharmacy and Ee Syn Pharmacy are located in the same row of shops at 3rd Mile (a.k.a. Central Park) Commercial Centre and take turns to remain open until 11 pm daily. CPL Bus K3, K6, K10A, K18, B2.

Places of Worship

The Department of Islamic Affairs can provide contact details for mosques and prayer times throughout the state. Tel. 429811. Christian churches conduct services in a number of local languages. Phone for details.

Anglican, St. Thomas's Cathedral, Jln McDougall. Tel: 240187. Baha'i Centre, 1 Nanas Garden, Nanas Road. Tel: 252009. Borneo Evangelical Church (SIB) Lorong 8, Jln Laksamana Cheng Ho, Tel: 425212. Buddhist, Sarawak Buddhist Association, Jln Tun Razak. Tel: 366786. First Baptist Church, Jln Kampung Sungai Tapang (nr Airport). Tel: 014-2645848. Hindu, Sri Maha

Mariamman Temple, 11/2 Mile, Jln Rock, Tel: 257855, 240227. Sri Srinivasagar Kaliaman Temple, Jln Ban Hock. Kuching Mosque, Jln Masjid. Methodist, Trinity Methodist Church, 57 Jln Ellis. Tel: 411044. Roman Catholic, St. Joseph's Cathedral, Jln Tun Abang Hj. Openg. Tel: 423424. Seventh Day Adventist Church, 3rd Mile, Rock Road/Batu Kawa. Tel: 242340. Sikh Temple, Jln Masjid. Tel: 412850 State Mosque, Jln Bako, Petra Jaya.

Post Office and Telephone Facilities: The main post office is on Jln Tun Haji Openg. Open Mon - Sat 8 am-6 pm, Sun 10 am - 1 pm. From outside the Kuching area, the dialling code is 082. Malaysia's country prefix is 60. To avoid expensive roaming charges, prepaid (or pay-as-you-go) SIM cards for cellular phones are on sale almost everywhere - IC or passport required.

Internet Access: Most hotels and guest houses offer Internet access, and many restaurants and pubs have Wifi for customers. Charges may apply.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Tourist Police Unit (Kuching Waterfront, 8am-midnight) 250522

Central Police Station (Opp. Padang Merdeka) 241222

Police (Emergency Only) 999

Fire & Rescue 994

Immigration, UTC Building, Jln Padungan, 8.30 am – 9 pm, including weekends. 245661

Brunei Consulate, 42 Jln Ellis. 417616

Chinese Consulate, Jln Ong Tiang Swee. 240344

Chinese Consulate Visa Centre, 2nd Floor Wisma Naim, Jln Rock. 259885

Indonesian Consulate, 21 Jln Stutong. 460734

TRAVEL NOTE