



**MALAYSIA: BORNEO – SARAWAK RESTRICTED RANGE  
ENDEMIC**

**TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION**



*Bornean Banded Pitta* is stunning bird that can be found in Sarawak (photo Liew Weng Keong).

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT MALAYSIA (INCLUDING BORNEO) CAN BE READ HERE**

### **TOUR OUTLINE**

Sarawak is not to be missed, it offers the best chance in the world of finding **Dulit Frogmouth**, **Bornean Frogmouth**, and **Black Oriole**, as well as great birds like **Blue-banded Pitta**, **Bornean Banded Pitta**, **Hose's Broadbill**, **Bulwer's Pheasant**, and **Rail-babbler**. This tour starts and ends in Kota Kinabalu (in neighboring Sabah) and visits Klias wetland, the Paya Maga highlands, and Ba'kelalan. This tour runs with a nice small group with a minimum of four and a maximum of just six, giving everyone a much better birding experience than you would get on a large group tour.

### **DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE**

This is a more remote tour than our other Bornean (Sabah) birding tour, with high avian rewards. It requires reasonable physical fitness and a sense of adventure. We will be staying in basic accommodation (homestays and camping) mainly with shared facilities, will have long hikes of three to five hours on muddy and possibly slippery trails most days, and will travel about in 4x4 vehicles on rough roads (there will be long drives in 4x4 vehicles to get between birding locations). Expect some night birding too, probably with early starts and late finishes, so all in all, we will be having long days in the field with little rest time. We are likely to experience a range of temperatures as we cover different elevations on the tour from lowlands to highlands.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

We will be using 4x4 vehicles to get around on this tour. Roads are generally rough and not very good, with the going being quite slow at times, resulting in long travel times.

We will take a domestic flight back to Kota Kinabalu at the end of the tour.

### **DOMESTIC FLIGHTS**

A domestic flight between Ba'kelalan and Lawas is included in the tour cost, but note that at the time of writing (February 2022) that flight may not be currently operating – due to Covid. So, if the flight is not operational, we may have to reorder the route of the tour and use 4x4 vehicles a little more to get around the wider region.

The domestic flight is likely to have a hold luggage weight limit of 44 pounds (20 kilograms) and a hand luggage allowance of 15 pounds (7 kilograms). Any overweight baggage will likely incur costs and will be the responsibility of the individual. Excess baggage costs will most likely need to be paid in cash to the airline at the airport.

### **LUGGAGE**

Please pack as lightly as possible for this tour (noting the expected weight allowance of the

domestic flight). A medium, soft-sided, and robust duffle bag is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles. A small daypack will be required for when we go out hiking during the day, to keep a personal supply of food and water for the day as well as other essential items such as rain gear, insect repellent, etc.

## SAFETY

Your safety is our paramount concern on this, and all of our tours, so we are trying to provide you with as much information as possible within this tour-specific information and the Malaysia general information. Our tour takes us to a remote part of Sarawak.

The most likely issues on this tour are trips and falls when on trails, tracks/roads, and getting into or out of the 4x4 vehicles and so extra care should be taken at all times. Sturdy walking shoes, hiking boots or even rubber boots (wellington boots) are recommended for this tour. A hiking pole or walking stick is compulsory if you are at all unsure on your feet.

There is a low risk of malaria on Sarawak, but please consult your doctor or local travel clinic for specific advice. We will be spending time birding in areas where mosquitos occur. Insect repellent with a high DEET concentration can be useful for keeping them away and reducing the chance of mosquito bites. DEET or citronella insect spray can also keep chiggers and leeches away. Chiggers can lead to Scrub (Bush) Typhus and can be incredibly irritating. Leeches do not spread diseases, but they are rather unnerving and can cause blood loss and are particularly evident in Borneo. “Leech socks” are a useful piece of kit.

## WEATHER/CLIMATE

In the mountains it is cooler than the lowlands and we can expect average daytime temperature highs of around 84 °F (29 °C) and average nighttime lows of 63 °F (17 °C) but the temperature may drop to below 59 °F (15 °C) occasionally. Note we will be in basic accommodation so you might feel the cold a bit more than if you were in a typical western-style building.

While in the lowlands we can expect average daytime highs of around 88 °F (31 °C) and average nighttime lows of 72 °F (22 °C). There is often thick cloud cover here, resulting in hot and humid, rather oppressive conditions.

Be aware that the sun is strong here and care should be taken to remain hydrated and use sun protection. Rain is possible at any time at any location so rain gear and an umbrella will be essential. A dry bag is also recommended for protecting optics, electrical equipment/cameras, and important documents. For more information on packing lists, see the “What to Bring: Clothing and Other Items” section below.

## ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation on this tour is of a very basic standard and we will stay in homestays and camp in tents (within buildings) and these will have shared very basic bathroom facilities and toilets. The water pressure will be low for showering with limited hot water – most likely hot water at the homestay will be on request with hot water mixed into a pail of cold water for showering. You will need to bring a travel towel. There should be fans available at the homestay.

## ELECTRICITY

Power cuts are frequent and some of the places we stay run on diesel generators. It would be advisable to bring a power bank for charging small personal items like smart phones etc.

## COMMUNICATIONS

There is limited phone signal where we will be birding in Sarawak and there will not be any Wi-Fi along the tour route. You can purchase a local travel SIM card on arrival at the airport (Maxis SIM is probably the best for this tour). Alternatively, you can use your own provider on a roaming package, but please be aware there will likely be charges for this.

## FOOD AND MEALS

Food is basic and of local Malaysian style. Vegetarian food can be arranged but please let us know of any dietary requirements ahead of the tour. Due to the lack of refrigeration, dairy products are not common. We suggest you bring your favorite snacks or protein bars to supplement your diet.

## MONEY

We will only have access to ATMs in Kota Kinabalu on this tour. You shouldn't require too much spare cash on this tour, but it is usually best to withdraw some cash when at the airport.

## WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

The following is a list of useful items to bring on this Sarawak birdwatching tour and should be read in conjunction with the Malaysia general information document, which suggests lots of other important items to bring on the tour.

1. Hiking pole or walking stick to help on the tracks and trails. **A walking stick is compulsory for anyone who is unsteady walking**, as we feel this is a safety issue; we don't want anyone slipping on the forest trails or anywhere else.
2. Torch (flashlight) and/or headlamp, and spare batteries – we will have some nighttime bird/wildlife watching during the tour so a torch and/or headlamp will be required for that. Additionally, we will likely be setting off into the forest for our morning birding sessions when it is still dark, so this is essential kit. A torch is also useful for when walking around our accommodation at night which may have no power/lights overnight.
3. A travel towel (suitable size to be used after showering).
4. A day pack for carrying your personal supply of food and water when out on the trails and for other essential gear when out birding, such as umbrella, waterproofs etc.
5. High concentration DEET or citronella insect repellent.
6. Salt sachets can be effective for removing leeches if you get one on you.
7. Leech socks – essential kit on this tour.
8. A small personal first aid kit. See the suggested items from the Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#). We will not have access to pharmacies on this tour due to the remote location of where we will be going.

9. Footwear is a matter of personal preference but sturdy shoes as a minimum are required, and hiking boots or rubber boots (wellington boots) are probably best, with something a bit more comfortable maybe for time spent in vehicles.
10. Quick-drying clothes are the best for this tour and a good selection of clothing layers are also recommended for time at the higher elevations (and overnights in basic accommodation) where temperatures will be lower than in the lowlands (see the “Weather/Climate” section for further information on likely temperatures during the tour).
11. Rain jacket (and a small umbrella) and a coat/fleece for the time in the mountains.
12. A dry bag to keep valuable documents in such as passports, cell phones, wallets etc., as well as cameras if it rains.
13. Power bank – useful for charging items.



The endemic *Fruihunter* is always a top target in Borneo (photo Liew Weng Keong).