



MALAYSIA: BORNEO – SABAH CLASSIC TOUR

TOUR-SPECIFIC INFORMATION



Storm's Stork is an attractive and rare bird that can be found in Borneo (photo Liew Weng Keong). We will be looking for this bird while birding along the Kinabatangan River in Sabah.

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

TOUR OUTLINE

A great tour taking in several of *the* best birding sites in Borneo, including the Danum Valley. This Sabah tour starts in Kota Kinabalu and ends in Lahad Datu. Sabah is home to wonderful endemic birds and impressive wildlife and on this tour we will look for as much as we can, including the likes of **Bornean Ground Cuckoo**, **Bornean Bristlehead**, **Whitehead's Trogon**, **Fruithunter**, **Bornean Green Magpie**, **Blue-headed Pitta**, **Black-crowned Pitta**, and so much more, including top mammals like **Bornean Orangutan** and **Proboscis Monkey**. This premium tour includes better accommodation (including the amazing Borneo Rainforest Lodge) and runs with a nice small group, giving you a much better birding experience than you would get on a large group tour.

DAILY ACTIVITIES, PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS, AND TOUR PACE

This Borneo birdwatching tour requires reasonable physical fitness but is not considered too physically demanding (though humidity in the lowlands can increase tiredness). We will spend time birding on easy to moderate trails at a range of elevations and will experience hot and humid conditions in the lowlands and cooler temperatures in the mountains. We will usually have early morning birding sessions with a break during the middle of the day back at our accommodation to escape the heat of the day (less of an issue at higher elevations), with further birding sessions in the afternoon. Occasionally we will undertake some night walks/drives/boat rides to look for nocturnal wildlife. On some days we will have long drives (of between three and six hours) to get between birding areas. This is a birding-focused tour that does offer some photo opportunities, though these are secondary to the actual birding element of the tour, i.e., seeing the many endemic species and subspecies of the region as well as other regional specialties, will be considered priority.

TRANSPORTATION

The tour starts in Kota Kinabalu and ends in Lahad Datu. You will need to book a flight for the end of the tour from Lahad Datu to Kota Kinabalu/Kuala Lumpur (this flight is not included in the tour cost). For more information see the "Domestic Flights" section. We will use airconditioned vehicles on this tour. Roads are generally good and paved, with the exception of the road to Borneo Rainforest Lodge which is unpaved and a bit rough (it is an old logging road). Some roads, particularly in the mountains may be windy in places. We will use motorized boats for birding along the Kinabatangan River as this allows us great access to the forest.

DOMESTIC FLIGHTS

The tour itself doesn't require any domestic flights, however the tour ends in Lahad Datu and so you will likely require a domestic flight to either Kota Kinabalu or Kuala Lumpur to connect with your international departure. The cost of this flight is not included in the tour price. If you will be

joining our Sarawak – Restricted Range Endemics birding tour you will need to fly to Kota Kinabalu as that's where that tour will commence from. If you need help booking this tour, please let us know as we may be able to book the flights for you and add the cost to your tour balance, payable no later than two months prior to departure.

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 that will be required after the tour). A medium, soft-sided, and robust duffle bag is likely to work best for packing in the tour vehicles. We recommend a daypack is used to keep items that you wish to use daily when in the vehicle or when birding in the field/from the boat.

SAFETY

Your safety is our paramount concern on this, and all of our tours, hence the detailed information contained within this tour-specific information and the Malaysia general information. Our tour takes us to a remote part of Sabah. There has been safety and security issues along the coast of eastern Sabah, between Kudat and Tawu, including (but not limited to) Lankaya, Mabul, Pom Pom, Kapalai, Litigan, Sipadan, and Matakang – however we do not go to any of these islands on the tour. These issues are linked to terrorists from southern Philippines and most incidents appear to be maritime related, though additional care should be taken in the towns of Sandakan and Lahad Datu. We monitor the situation continuously with our local guides who live in the area.

Trips and falls when on trails, tracks/roads, and getting into or out of the vehicles or boats are all possibilities on this tour and care should be taken at all times please. Sturdy walking shoes or hiking 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 Sabah, but please consult your doctor or local travel clinic for specific advice. We will be spending time birding in lowland forests, riverine forest, and mangroves over the dawn and dusk periods, where we will come into contact with mosquitoes. Insect repellent with a high DEET concentration can be useful for keeping mosquitoes away and reducing the chance of getting bites. DEET insect spray can also keep chiggers and leeches away (as can citronella). 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

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. In the mountains it is cooler than the lowland temperatures

and we can expect average daytime highs of around 84 °F (29 °C) and average nighttime lows of 63 °F (17 °C) but it may drop to below 59 °F (15 °C), occasionally.

The sun is strong at this time of year 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 (see the “What to Bring: Clothing and Other Items” section below).

ACCOMMODATION

The accommodation on this tour is of a good standard with electricity throughout. Most of the accommodation has air conditioning (those in the mountains don't really need it). Accommodation without air conditioning, such as in Danum Valley, should have fans instead.

ELECTRICITY

All locations we visit on the tour should have a regular power supply, unless there are unexpected power cuts etc.

COMMUNICATIONS

There is phone signal across most of Sabah and many of the accommodations will have Wi-Fi. You may want to purchase a local SIM card on arrival in Malaysia or use your own provider on a roaming package (be aware of charges). You can usually purchase a travel SIM from the airport from either Digi.com or Maxis, both are reasonably good at our tour destinations except for the Danum Valley, where only Maxis works. There is no Wi-Fi at our accommodation along the Kinabatangan River, but everywhere else should have Wi-Fi, though it may be unreliable in some places, such as Danum Valley.

FOOD AND MEALS

There are various food choices on this tour, most food is of a Chinese style, with local Malaysian food typical and with some western menu options in some places. Vegetarian food can be arranged but please let us know of any dietary requirements ahead of the tour. Most meals are based around chicken or fish with rice and noodles, and mixed vegetables, tempeh, and tofu. Fresh fruit will be available. 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 have access to ATMs in Kota Kinabalu and at other towns we pass through during the tour, such as Sandakan and Lahad Datu. But it is usually best to withdraw cash from the airport.

WHAT TO BRING: CLOTHING AND OTHER ITEMS

The following is a list of useful items to bring on this Sabah birding 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 trails or anywhere else.
2. Torch (flashlight) and/or headlamp, and spare batteries – we will have some nighttime bird/wildlife watching during the tour and so a torch and/or headlamp is 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.
3. High concentration DEET insect repellent (note citronella also works well with leeches).
4. Salt sachets can be effective in getting leeches off you.
5. Leech socks – essential kit on this tour.
6. A small personal first aid kit. See the suggested items from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [here](#). There are pharmacies in some of the towns we pass through, but we will only have limited access to these.
7. Footwear is a matter of personal preference but sturdy shoes as a minimum are required, and hiking boots are probably best.
8. Quick-drying clothes are the best for this tour and a good selection of clothing layers are also recommended for time at higher elevations where temperatures will be lower than in the lowlands (see the “Weather/Climate” section for further information on likely temperatures during the tour).
9. Rain jacket (and small umbrella) and a coat/fleece for our time in the mountains.
10. A dry bag to keep valuable documents in such as passports, cell phones, wallets etc., as well as cameras if it rains.



A stunning male Crested Fireback (photo Liew Weng Keong).