Nature and photography tour to Borneo: in the footsteps of the clouded leopard

16 days | 05 Nov 2026 - 20 Nov 2026

Nature

Nature group tours

Photography

Photography group tours

Birds in every color of the rainbow, mysterious snakes, giant cicadas, pygmy elephants, sun bears, monkeys and the elusive clouded leopard. The photographs from this nature journey to Borneo look as if they came straight out of National Geographic. Its extraordinary biodiversity makes this destination a truly unparalleled natural paradise. STARLING takes you there to experience it all from the front row. Nocturnal safaris and jungle walks, boat trips through the mangroves or immersive explorations in the sultry tropical rainforest: we turn it into an unforgettable nature adventure! Are your bags already packed?

→ FOR AN IDEAL ROOMING ARRANGEMENT, THE LAST TWO AVAILABLE PLACES ARE INTENDED FOR A FEMALE PARTICIPANT WILLING TO SHARE A ROOM WITH ANOTHER FEMALE PARTICIPANT OR SOMEONE WHO PREFERS A SINGLE ROOM. IF THIS DOES NOT MATCH YOUR PROFILE, PLEASE CONTACT US BEFORE REGISTERING.

STARLING is proud to present this exceptional photography and nature journey to Borneo. We explore the unique flora and fauna of the Bornean jungle. Colorful birds and remarkable mammals take center stage, but the plants, amphibians and insects are equally fascinating. Be sure to bring your binoculars and macro lens. Deep within a remote rainforest region of Borneo, we set out in search of the clouded leopard, an exciting quest that is guaranteed to be unforgettable.

Majestic Mount Kinabalu

Our first destination is Mount Kinabalu. This iconic mountain not only offers pleasantly cool temperatures, but also gives us the chance to encounter a number of spectacular bird species. The famous whitehead's trio (whitehead's broadbill, whitehead's spiderhunter and whitehead's trogon) will hopefully be among them. We search for these and many other species of the cloud forest. At night, we embark on our first careful spotlighting session, where we will encounter our first mammals.

Into the mists of the tropical rainforest

During the second part of this nature journey to Borneo, we explore the stunning tropical forest of Deramakot. This nature reserve, covering more than 55,000 hectares, is an absolute biodiversity hotspot. It is also one of the most important habitats for five globally threatened mammals: the orangutan, Bornean pygmy elephant, banteng, proboscis monkey and the clouded leopard. It is here that we search for this elusive cat, guided by experienced local experts.

Wildlife in the spotlight

To increase our chances, we head out on dedicated spotlight excursions. During these outings, powerful lamps briefly illuminate the hidden world of nocturnal wildlife. The spotlight drives last around three hours, usually ending just before midnight. Without exception, they yield an abundance of remarkable sightings.

Regular highlights during these excursions include the civet cat, leopard cat, western tarsier and flying squirrel. We also frequently encounter the remarkable Bornean colugo, Bornean pygmy elephant, sambar deer and island palm civet. Other fascinating mammals such as moonrat, long tailed porcupine, large flying fox, Bornean yellow muntjac and diademed roundleaf bat are all possible.



© Billy Heman

An Overnight Stop in Sepilok

Sepilok is the perfect place to unwind during this nature journey. A well known destination among nature lovers, it offers an authentic Borneo atmosphere. A beautiful canopy walk high through the rainforest and walks along the forest trails in the morning and evening lead to remarkable sightings. Eagles, flying squirrels, orangutans, hornbills, snakes and pittas all cross our path.



© Billy Heman

The Kinabatangan River Valley

After Sepilok, we travel to the Kinabatangan River, the prime location for spotting proboscis monkeys. From the comfort of a boat, we search for these remarkable animals while also keeping an eye out for langurs and macaques. During evening spotlight excursions, we encounter fascinating owl species such as the barred eagle owl, large frogmouth, buffy fish owl and oriental bay owl. And of course, the presence of saltwater crocodiles does not go unnoticed.

Morning excursions along the Kinabatangan focus primarily on birdlife. We look out for species such as storm's stork, black and red broadbills, grey headed fish eagle and various kingfishers. We also visit the Gomantong Caves to witness millions of bats emerging at dusk. For more than half an hour, a continuous stream of wrinkle lipped bats pours out of the forest, while birds of prey attempt, sometimes successfully, to hunt them. A truly spectacular natural experience!

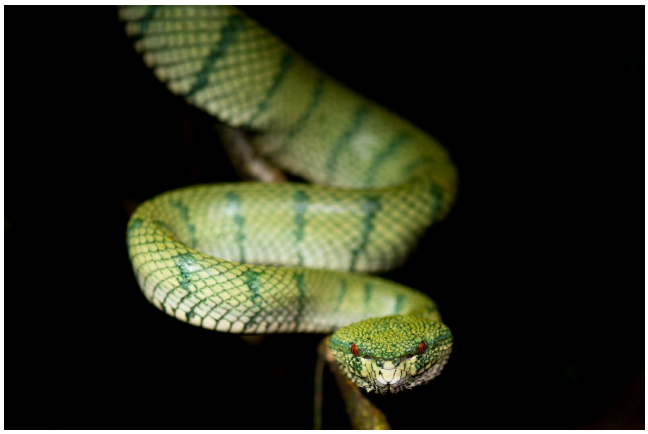


© Billy Herman

World Class in Danum Valley

After Kinabatangan, we cannot miss a true classic: the world renowned Danum Valley. This area consists of pristine primary lowland tropical rainforest, home to an exceptionally rich diversity of flora and fauna. Since 1998, it has been designated as a forest reserve and protected national heritage site.

Among its inhabitants are the leopard cat, Malayan civet, bearded pig, Prevost's squirrel, diademed roundleaf bat and the uniquewesterntarsier. In the canopy and skies above, we look out for wren babblers, trogons, crested jays, short toed coucal, Bornean bristlehead and rufous piculet. A nocturnal walk offers insight into the amphibians and spiders that inhabit this rainforest valley, including the spectacular file eared tree frog, Wagler's pit viper and the impressive tarantula.



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Wat maakt deze natuurreis naar Borneo zo bijzonder?

- Je wordt begeleid door een ervaren STARLING-gids én een lokale gids, die je zo veel mogelijk bijzondere vogels, planten en dieren laten zien.
- Het programma is heel gevarieerd: van *canopywalks* over boottochten tot nachtelijke wandelingen en safari's, alles is mogelijk!
- We houden rekening met de interesses van de groep en bouwen dus een aanzienlijke mate van flexibiliteit in.
- We ondernemen een spannende zoektocht naar de moeilijk te vinden Borneose nevelpanter. Niks is gegarandeerd, maar in het verleden kwam dit mooie dier wel degelijk terecht op de waarnemingenlijst van STARLING-reizigers!

Maak kennis met je reisbegeleider

Even before he could walk, Jan Kelchtermans was already captivated by nature. This unstoppable passion for everything that flies, crawls, grows and blooms led him, years ago, to start guiding, eager to share the wonders of the natural world with as many people as possible. With his boundless enthusiasm and extensive experience, Jan ensures his travelers enjoy an unforgettable journey.

During this trip, Jan is accompanied by a local guide who adds that extra touch: stronger connections with the local community, support in unexpected situations and, of course, a wealth of experience to help make this journey a true success.

Is this nature tour to Borneo something for you?

- You have a deep love for nature and a special passion for the tropics.
- You are eager to discover the natural wonders of Borneo, preferably from the front row with expert guides and truly immersive nature experiences.
- You have a good level of fitness and are comfortable in warm, humid conditions.

Itinerary & Locations

The tour schedule is flexible and dependent on the weather, local conditions and observations.

05/11
Airport of choice - Kota Kinabalu

We depart from our airport of your choice and arrive in Kota Kinabalu the following day.

Flights are not included in the tour price.

06/11
Arrival Kota Kinabalu - Transfer to Mount Kinabalu

Upon arrival, we transfer immediately to the majestic Mount Kinabalu. Here, we spend several days in the cloud forest, searching for birds and mammals.

07/11
Mount Kinabalu - Transfer to Deramakot

We spend a full day exploring the surroundings of the majestic Mount Kinabalu. The rare Whitehead's trio (Whitehead's broadbill, trogon and spiderhunter) takes center stage, alongside a wide variety of other remarkable bird species. For those who wish, we continue our search for wildlife during optional nighttime spotlighting sessions.

We then travel onward to the tropical forests of Deramakot.

08/11 - 10/11
Deramakot

Three full days to explore Deramakot. We search for birds and mammals and, with a bit of luck, we may even encounter a Bornean clouded leopard!

11/11
Deramakot - Sepilok

We transfer to Sepilok, where we take some time to relax. In the evening, we enjoy a short walk in our first tropical rainforest. There is so much to see here, so we make sure to take it all in!

12/11
Sepilok

A full day in Sepilok. We enjoy the beautiful rainforest, the boardwalk and all the wonders this small but delightful reserve has to offer!

13/11
Sepilok - Kinabatang

Transfer from Danum to Kinabatangan. In the afternoon, we head straight onto the river in search of proboscis monkeys, Storm's stork and, of course, orangutans!

14/11 - 15/11
Kinabatang

In search of all that lives in Kinabatangan. This is the place for proboscis monkeys, but pygmy elephants, flat headed cats, kingfishers, broadbills and even the Bornean ground cuckoo are all possible sightings!

16/11
Transfer Kinabatang - Lahad Datu - Danum

We leave the river behind and head towards Danum Valley!

17/11 - 18/11
Danum Valley

Danum Valley is one of Borneo's most renowned destinations and world famous among nature enthusiasts. We stay here for three nights, giving us two full days to explore. We enjoy guided walks and night excursions.

19/11
Transfer Danum - Lahad Datu/Tawau - flight home

We leave Danum and travel home from Tawau. We depart on 19/11 and arrive back home on 20/11.

20/11
Arrival home

Practical

Accommodation, transport and flights

Accommodation

We stay in guesthouses, a scientific research center and national park accommodation, all offering a comfortable standard. No luxury lodges, but well maintained and pleasant places to stay.

Transport

For this trip, focused on birds, mammals and the wider flora and fauna, comfortable transport is provided. Safari vehicles and boat excursions are included in the tour price.

The walking excursions are easy to moderately challenging due to the tropical climate. During the hottest part of the day, we take a general siesta when needed, before heading out again in the late afternoon. At those times, you can often choose between a walk or a drive.

The trip ranges from easy to moderately demanding, depending on the temperature and your personal level of rest, which you can manage yourself. The tropical climate plays an important role in the daily schedule. Activities mainly take place early in the morning and in the late afternoon and evening. Around midday, there is almost always time to rest or enjoy a siesta.

Flights

International flights are not included in the price. Once the departure is guaranteed, each participant will receive a flight proposal from us. It is also possible to book your flights independently. Prices typically range between 800 and 1200 euros, depending on the connections and the time of booking.

Climate and clothing

In November, temperatures range between 23 and 31 degrees Celsius. Nice and warm! Another certainty is rain. However, the tropical heat often makes it a challenge to choose between rain gear or simply getting wet. That is why a small umbrella is an incredibly useful item. It allows you to dress lightly while still staying dry.

Light clothing suited for tropical conditions is recommended: shorts, T shirts, zip off clothing, sunscreen and insect repellent, and swimwear. For night safaris, warmer clothing is advisable. Waterproof footwear, and possibly boots, is essential.

A small daypack is important, and rain protection for your daypack is also recommended.

Binoculars and a headlamp are very useful, and a strong personal flashlight can make spotlight excursions more enjoyable and allow you to see even more for yourself.

Price

5495 euro (Price per person)

Included

- all boat tours
- all drinking water
- all excursions and entrance tickets for parks
- all meals
- all nights
- all transport at site
- enthousiast guiding by STARLING tour guide(s)
- insurance guarantee fund
- specialized local guides

Excluded

- alcoholic beverages and soda
- extra nights
- international flights and airport taxes
- national flights and airport taxes
- personal expenses
- tips for local collaborators (horeca, hotel,...)
- travel insurance and cancellation insurance (available for purchase through us)
- visa fees (if applicable)