



A guide to:

Family Volunteering In Borneo



Family Volunteering In Borneo

Focus: Orangutans & Elephants
Location: Borneo

Start Date: Set Dates - Please Enquire
Arrival & Starting Point: Sandakan

In today's modern world, it is becoming an increasingly popular idea for families to familiarise their children with new cultures early on in life: whether introducing a new language into the home or indulging in a range of foreign delicacies, many families are keen to provide their little ones with a broader understanding of the world. But while episodes of Dora The Explorer go some way to opening your child's eyes to language and adventure, you may want to go one step further in their educational experience – and this is where our Family Volunteering in Borneo project comes in!

Introduce your family to the beauty and vibrancy of Borneo by visiting the Lower Kinabatangan Floodplain Forest, one of the most vital conservation areas in Malaysian Borneo. This project lies within the WWF's protected 'Corridor of Life', a region of tremendous importance in sustaining its wildlife populations. However, behind the area's staggering beauty there lies a sad history, and a lesson to be taught to all young minds should we want to see change in the future.

Deforestation has tragically taken its toll on Borneo's rainforests, with palm oil plantations and logging activities tearing down habitats and taking animal lives in their wake. For the animals who do survive the initial onslaught of deforestation, they are soon left vulnerable due to a lack of forest to call their home. As well as being without a suitable environment in which to thrive, a lack of rainforest also leaves these defenceless animals open to the possibility of being poached. By working together with local communities, past volunteers have worked hard to revive the rainforest, planting thousands of saplings per year and breathing life back into the area. In fact, the very trees planted by our own volunteers have since become home to Borneo's wildlife, with the visibility of both orangutans and pygmy elephants improving over time. It is hoped that with perseverance, the rainforests will continue to grow and prosper, providing our children and nature's wildlife with a future to look forward to.



As volunteers, you and your family will become guests of the charming 'Orang Sungai' ('People of the River'), sharing their homes and learning their way of life. This rural, indigenous community has a population of only 1000, yet they are always willing to welcome visitors with open arms. In return for their hospitality, you will assist in educating the locals on the importance of conservation and implementing more sustainable ways of living in a way which will be mutually beneficial to both the people and the animals in the area.

The main focus of this project involves the monitoring of wildlife species along the Kinabatangan River, and your family will embark on river cruises and rainforest treks in search of wild orangutans, pygmy elephants and more. With gibbons, hornbills, and other species frequently spotted in the area, the 'Corridor of Life' is indeed a biodiverse haven, and your time spent volunteering will help to encourage more animals to return here in the years to come.



Reforestation

During the project, your family will pay a visit to a sapling maintenance site, where you will help to plant and maintain young trees, cutting away any undergrowth and allowing new life to grow in areas which had previously been destroyed. While this activity can be tiring, it can also be educational and enjoyable, as your guide will teach you all about nature and what it takes to sustain it. From learning about an animal's favourite fruit to planting the very trees which bear those fruits, this is a great way for your family to make a difference to Bornean conservation efforts!

Boat Trips

You will embark on numerous river boat cruises during this project, keeping your eyes peeled for any sign of life up in the canopies or even down in the water itself. At some point, you may even drift past an area of previously-reforested land, where it is hoped that you might even spot a pygmy elephant...or thirty! Any movement from within the trees or on the riverbanks could signal that a fantastic wildlife sighting is about to take place, and your expert guide will be on hand to provide you with valuable information on all that you see. Proboscis monkeys, birds and even orangutans can be seen from this unique vantage point, so be sure to bring your camera along!





Trekking

As well as observing wildlife from a boat, you will also embark on a trek through the rainforest. Take this opportunity to study the endemic flora and fauna pointed out to you by your knowledgeable guide and discover how the forest has provided the local villagers with shelter, medicine and food for generations. This is a fantastic opportunity to expose your little ones to a different way of life as they explore these brand-new surroundings in wonderment.

Spending Time With The 'Orang Sungai'

You and your family will spend time with the local community, as you'll live alongside them on the riverbank. In exchange for them opening up their homes, you will spend time getting to know 'the people of the river' by learning about their daily lives and family structures, whilst also exchanging anecdotes about your own backgrounds. This can be especially rewarding for your children and for the younger members of the community, as they'll learn about other walks of life whilst building on their confidence!



Work With The Local School Children



While your time with the Orang Sungai can be a learning experience for your family, a visit to a local school can prove to be a proactive part of the project! You will follow a framework given to you by a facilitator in order to educate the bright young minds who attend your lessons. This is yet another opportunity for your children to build on their confidence as they help to lead the class, which in turn will earn them respect amongst their peers. Of course, your family aren't only expected to talk to the class: you'll be encouraged to mix in with the children as you actively partake in practical elements of the lesson, such as looking for countries on a globe and answering any questions that any individual students may have. (Please note that this is not a guaranteed part of the project and is dependent on the school calendar.)

Visit To Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre

During the project, you will witness both wild and rehabilitated orangutans, gaining an understanding of the processes of releasing them back into the wild. Towards the end of your stay, you will pay a visit to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, home to orangutans which may be in the earlier stages of their rehabilitation, or in need of care for the rest of their lives. This visit will emphasise the necessity for projects like this one, leaving a lasting impression on all volunteers. While you are in Sepilok, you will also pay a visit to the Rainforest Discovery Centre and the Bornean Sun Bear Sanctuary, where you will learn more about Borneo's fantastic wildlife species.



Itinerary

Below is an example itinerary of what your family can expect during your Bornean jungle experience, though please note that this is just a guide and your actual itinerary may be subject to change. One thing is for sure: this is bound to be an exciting experience for adventurers of all ages, with river cruises, wildlife sightings and even a trek through the marvellous Malaysian rainforest rounding out your week!

Over the course of your 7-day itinerary, you will be accompanied by an expert guide who will safely lead your family through forests and across rivers, so rest assured that you'll be in good hands. You'll also have the opportunity to meet members of the local community along the way, from the families at the homestay to the helmsman of the riverboat. This is a community-led project from start to finish, so if you or your children have any pressing questions, who better to speak to than the locals themselves!

Day 1

After arriving into Sandakan Airport, your family will be met by a friendly driver and transferred to your first night's accommodation. Your transfer vehicle is designated only to members of this project, so if there is another family taking part at the same time as you, they may also be collected. As the transfer takes around 45 minutes, you can either use this time to catch up on a little sleep or listen to your driver as he chats about the local area and its wildlife.

Once at your accommodation, you will be given time to settle in before enjoying a welcome dinner. You'll want to rest well tonight - you have a busy week ahead!

Day 2

Enjoy a brief lie-in before packing up your things and embarking on a two-hour journey to the tiny village of Sukau, your home for the next few days. En-route, your guide will tell you more about the aims of the project, answering any questions that you may have.

Once you have arrived at your accommodation, you'll have a couple of hours to unwind before taking part in your afternoon activity: a river cruise! This will be your family's first opportunity to spot birds, monkeys and even crocodiles - this is an equally exciting and nerve-wracking experience for children and parents alike!

Day 3

The sun rises early in the jungle and sets early in the evening too, so in order to make the most of your day, it's important that you're up and ready by around 5:30am! After breakfast, you'll climb aboard a small boat and cruise to a sapling maintenance site, where you'll each be taught how to safely use a machete - kids included. Once everybody is ready, you'll begin cutting back the undergrowth to allow any saplings planted previously to breathe and grow. This activity takes around 2-3 hours, after which you'll return to your accommodation for lunch. Later in the day, you'll embark on another river cruise in the hopes of spotting wildlife.

Day 4

Another early morning awaits as you set out for one more day at the sapling maintenance site, though this time you'll be planting your own trees! This is a tremendously rewarding part of the project, and an educational one too - did you know that a 3-month-old sapling can be as tall as a 10-year-old child? What's more, the saplings you'll be planting are likely to have been bought from the local community and are often selected for the fruits that they bear, meaning your efforts will help to feed a jungle full of animals for many years to come. Later on, you'll join a local family for a meal in their home, and may even be treated to a traditional dance!

Itinerary

Day 5

Today, your family will head out on a trek through the magnificent rainforest. The trek only lasts an hour or so, but be sure that everybody has packed a pair of comfortable shoes! Your guide will talk you through the flora and fauna that you see whilst walking through the forest, from the tiniest of insects through to the most imposing of trees. Later, you'll take part in another river cruise - be sure to bring your camera along, as you never know what wildlife you'll see along the way! You'll drift past ancestral migration paths which are often utilised by pygmy elephants, and if you're lucky enough to spot them, the moment will stay with you forever.

Day 6

It's sadly time for your family to depart Sukau, but fear not - more animal encounters await as you head back to Sepilok! Here, you'll pay a visit to the Rainforest Discovery Centre, the Bornean Sun Bear Sanctuary, and the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre. It is here where your family will have the chance to observe rehabilitated, semi-wild orangutans during their feeding times: a breathtaking experience indeed, but also an important one as you are immediately reminded of why conservation efforts are so important. After you have visited all three sites, you will be transferred to your final night's accommodation in Sandakan.

Day 7

After a fantastic week, the time has come for your family to head back home. You will be transferred to Sandakan Airport in time to board your flight or to continue with your independent travel plans, leaving Borneo behind but taking a head full of knowledge with you. This experience is sure to remain with you for many years to come, from the memories you've gained to the friends that you've made, but this doesn't have to be the end - this project may have just been the beginning of your family's wild adventures! Who knows what experiences await you on your next holiday?

Did you know that you can take part in river cruises at night, too? This is an exciting additional activity which might be offered to you during your time on the project, so if you'd like to take part, be sure to bring along some extra money (an hour-long cruise costs around 150MYR). This is a phenomenal way to take in the sounds of the rainforest at night, and may also offer the chance to spot some nocturnal animals!



Accommodation

Over the course of the project, your family will become fully immersed in the jungle way of life – and this extends to your living arrangements! Three different accommodations will become your home throughout your time in Borneo, beginning with a stay in a traditional longhouse.

Night 1 - Sepilok



Your first night of the project will be spent in Sepilok, a small town famous for its orangutan rehabilitation centre (which you'll visit on your final day!). Here, you'll stay the night in a dormitory-style room alongside your family, though depending on how large your group is, you may also share with other guests. There are a number of bunk beds, while mosquito nets and fans hang overhead, and downstairs you will have access to shared bathroom facilities. Your accommodation is set on high grounds overlooking the rainforest, offering a fantastic view of your tranquil surroundings and allowing you to ease into rainforest life.

Night 2-5 - Sukau



The majority of your time on this project will be spent in a comfortable yet basic B&B situated in the middle of Sukau village, and within a short walk of the jetty. Each room at the B&B can accommodate up to three people and also offers access to an en-suite bathroom complete with a western toilet and hot water showers. Depending on the size of your family, you may be allocated more than one room, with the youngest child staying with a parent. Older children or teenagers may be given their own room. The B&B also has a common area which overlooks the river, and is a lovely place to enjoy your breakfast!

Night 6 - Sandakan



For your final night, you and your family will stay in a comfortable hotel in the bayside town of Sandakan. Each air conditioned room comes with its own en-suite bathroom complete with toilets and showers. Free Wi-Fi is also available throughout the hotel. There are 2 restaurants onsite if you wish to dine in, though the centre of town is only a short walk away. Here, you'll find a number of small restaurants and food stalls, and there's also a number of shops if you'd like to pick up a souvenir or two before heading home.

Food & Drink

All meals are included in the price of the project, with most lunches and dinners taking place at a local homestay! This provides an opportunity not only for your children to broaden their palette by trying new dishes, but also gives the whole family the chance to sit and chat to your hosts. Breakfast, on the other hand, is self-catered at your accommodation.

Malaysia is famous for its diverse cuisine: not only will you find Malay, Indian, Chinese and Middle Eastern dishes on the menu, but you may also get to try a delectable fusion of them all! If you are dining out, you may also find that there are Western options available, though during your time at the homestay we would encourage that your children try out the tasty dishes cooked up for them by the villagers. Noodles and rice, limited vegetables and a portion of meat or fish are typical parts of your evening meal, and the spiciness of your food can be adjusted accordingly (in case of sensitive taste buds!).

Please note that you will need to bring along extra money for additional items, such as fruit juice or snacks. Additionally, there are water tanks at each of your accommodations, and you are encouraged to bring a large water bottle along with you to avoid plastic waste throughout your trip.



What's Included

- Accommodation
- All meals (including a welcome dinner in Sepilok)
- All transfers
- Meet and greet upon arrival at Sandakan Airport
- Visit to Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre
- Entrance fees to the Rainforest Discovery Centre
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Soft drinks and extra snacks



Volunteer Reviews

Glover Family

"Feeling that we had made a positive although small contribution to a very important cause. The kids loved the work, especially using the machete and I think they will remember this fondly."



Cripps Family

"Our favourite moment was seeing all the monkeys, there were so many - amazing!"



Nixon Family

"This was truly a trip of a lifetime. Not only did we learn so much about the rainforest, we got to see first hand (and fairly close!) it's unique inhabitants."



What Next?

Becoming volunteers on the Family Volunteering in Boreno project is simple, and you can help make a difference to orangutan and wildlife conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195 pp. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.

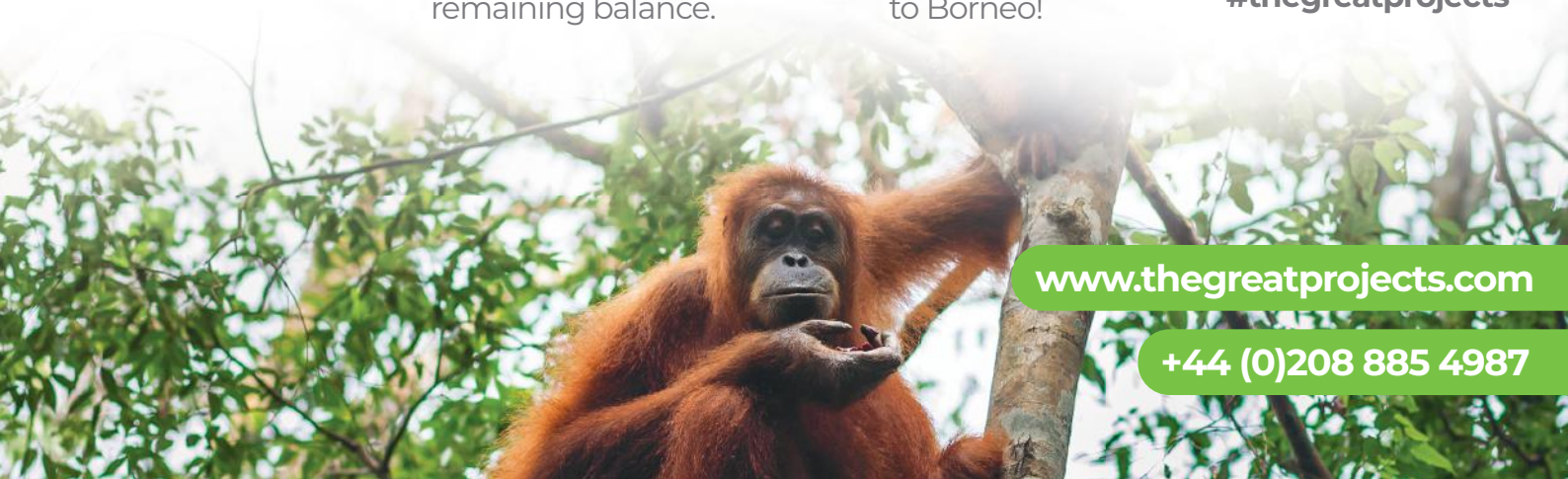


Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Borneo!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

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