



A guide to the:

Samboja Lestari Orangutan Volunteer Project



The Samboja Lestari Orangutan Volunteer Project

Focus: Orangutans
Location: Borneo

Start Dates: Set Dates - Please Enquire
Arrival & Starting Point: Balikpapan

Situated in an area of restored tropical rainforest, the Samboja Lestari Orangutan Volunteer Project exists to rehabilitate and release a number of injured, orphaned or abandoned orangutans. The project's roots stem back to 2001, when the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF) began purchasing land around East Kalimantan in an effort to combat severe deforestation in the region. However, the loss of forest via logging, drought and forest fires also led to the displacement of hundreds of orangutans, amongst other wildlife species, and it is with this knowledge that BOSF set out to create the safe haven that we know today as Samboja Lestari.

Since the project's inception, the forests around Samboja have become home to 1200 species of tree, 137 species of bird, and nine different species of primate. Of course, the project's main aim is to protect the endangered orangutan, rehabilitating and releasing as many of these great apes back into the wild as possible. Every year since 2012, the project has been able to return a number of orangutans to their endemic home, and this is as a result of the hard work done by the team at the sanctuary itself. However, despite the sanctuary's successes, they still require help from volunteers – and this is where you come in!



By taking part on the Samboja Lestari Orangutan Volunteer Project, you will help the sanctuary team to continue their care for these great apes by assisting them in a range of activities. One of the main and most exciting activities here is enrichment: with the 112 orangutans living at Samboja Lestari, it's important that each individual is encouraged to develop their natural behaviours, and this is something which is made possible via the means of activities which stimulate their senses. You will help to create exciting new enrichment items for the orangutans, perhaps even having the opportunity to distribute your creations to the apes before observing their behaviours. Elsewhere, you'll assist with the construction and maintenance of both the orangutan and sun bear enclosures, ensuring that the animals at Samboja Lestari are as happy and comfortable as they can be during their time here. Your help in a range of activities will support the sanctuary team in their mission to rehabilitate as many orangutans as possible, with the ultimate goal to see them return to their natural rainforest homes. This is an incredibly rewarding way to volunteer, and an experience which will remain with you for many years to come.

Enrichment

Enrichment is an important part of an orangutan's rehabilitation and is also one of the most memorable activities you will take part in during your time on this project. There are various forms of enrichment, the first being to encourage the behaviours that the animals would require in the wild. One example can this can be found when drilling holes into pieces of wood and filling them with porridge: while the orangutans will not find porridge in the wild, they will certainly enjoy the challenge of fishing it out of the holes, using 'tools' (such as sticks) in order to achieve their goal. The use of tools is a skill the orangutans can take with them into the wild, and an activity such as this will help to aid their dexterity.

Unfortunately, there are a number of orangutans at the sanctuary which cannot be released into the wild, but as a volunteer you can help to make their lives at Samboja as stimulating as possible. Sometimes, a fruit-filled ice block is all it takes to occupy the orangutans for a little while – rather than rushing to eat their snack, the orangutans will engage their senses as they enjoy the touch and taste of the ice block as it melts.

In the past, volunteers have come up with some truly creative enrichment ideas, such as watermelons carved with spooky faces and filled with tasty treats for Halloween. This activity is often a favourite part of the project – especially when the volunteers get to hand the items out to the orangutans themselves – so if you arrive with any enrichment ideas of your own, don't be afraid to put them forward!



Observation

Once the orangutans have received their enrichment items, you will have the opportunity to watch them enjoying your creations as part of an observation activity! This is an exciting part of the project, as well as an important one, as these observations will allow you to collect vital behavioural information from these great apes. You will join a member of the project team on a circuit around the islands, taking care to monitor the orangutans' health and general well-being from the safety of your boat. This is also a fantastic opportunity to take some photos of the orangutans from up close, so don't forget to bring your camera along!



Husbandry

One way to ensure the smooth running of this project is to help out on a range of husbandry activities, such as cleaning the orangutan enclosures and the fruit store, where food for the orangutans and sun bears is prepared. You will also assist with leaf collection, gathering suitable foliage from the jungle for the orangutans to use when building their nests.



Construction & Maintenance

Due to the nature of this project, there are always construction and maintenance activities taking place. From repairing orangutan platforms to painting buildings, small-to-moderate tasks take place throughout the week, though larger activities may occasionally take place too. An example of this can be found in the construction of a gabion wall: while the project is home to a number of orangutan islands, they can suffer from erosion, and it is important that all islands are usable as to accommodate the demands of an ever-growing sanctuary. In order to make one of the islands habitable again, volunteers helped to construct a wall which would prevent any orangutans from escaping. Similarly, previous volunteers have contributed to the construction of a holding enclosure for sick orangutans, meaning that any unwell apes could receive the vital round-the-clock care that they need. No matter how big or small an activity, your assistance here will contribute to the safe running of this fantastic project.



Working With Sun Bears

While a large focus of this project is on the orangutans, you will also help to improve the lives of the 72 sun bears that call Samboja home. Activities include enclosure maintenance and building new structures for these active bears to make use of, though you will also take part in their enrichment! This is one of the most rewarding activities that you can take part in, as the items you create will help to teach the sun bears how to work for their food. From hiding food parcels around the site to filling bamboo tubes with peanut butter or honey, this is a great opportunity for the bears to exercise their foraging and physical abilities.



A Canopy Walk

Yet another popular element of the volunteer experience is the canopy walk! You will head up to one of the rainforest's highest points, keeping your eyes peeled for a variety of jungle flora and fauna – including singing gibbons! This is a wonderful way to witness the diversity of the Bornean rainforest, leaving you with brilliant memories which will stay with you long after you return home.



Activities



River Cruise

An afternoon of pure relaxation is spent on the Black River. You'll board a boat and travel along the winding river in search of the endangered proboscis monkey, which is most famous for its oversized nose. On your journey, you will pass through a fishing village to see how the local people live, before travelling out to sea to watch the sunset.

A Trip To The Night Market

During your stay, you will have the chance to pay a visit to a night market, where you will take in the sights and sounds of the local area. You'll even have the opportunity to enjoy some delicious Indonesian cuisine, as there is a wide variety of food available for you to try! The chicken satay sticks are a firm favourite with meat eaters, but with plenty of options on offer, you'll be spoilt for choice.



Itinerary

Below is an example of a two-week itinerary on this project. Please note that your daily activities may be subject to change as they are dependent on weather conditions and the project's requirements.

Day 1

After arriving into Balikpapan Airport, you will be met by a project representative and transferred to the lodge at Samboja Lestari. Here, you will meet the other volunteers and receive a briefing of the project, and may even catch a quick glimpse of the orangutans before dinner!

Day 2

After breakfast, you will be given a tour of the orangutan and sun bear facilities at Samboja, and will also climb the fire tower for an amazing view of the project area. In the evening, you will enjoy dinner with your group before learning more about the project's history.

Day 3

This is your first project day, and you will take part in a variety of activities ranging from enrichment creation to food preparation for both the orangutans and the sun bears.

Day 4

Today's activities will revolve around the sun bears, as you will spend time cleaning their enclosures, creating enrichment and preparing food for these wonderful animals. Later in the afternoon, you may even try your hand at a construction activity!

Day 5

Your group will spend a little time away from the project site today as you head into the city. Whilst exploring Balikpapan, you may wish to visit the craft market, try some local foods, or go shopping at the mall. You will also enjoy a nice lunch alongside your group and the volunteer coordinators!

Day 6

Your morning will be spent making stimulating enrichment items for the orangutans, whilst later in the afternoon you may have the opportunity to hand your new creations to the animals themselves! Later on, you will head to the night market with your group.

Day 7

This morning you'll help with any current construction projects, such as building platforms on the orangutan islands. Then, in the afternoon, you will create enrichment for the orangutans in an area which overlooks the islands, offering a fantastic view of the apes.

Day 8

Have a little lie-in and a relaxed morning off, before heading out onto the Black River in the afternoon. This fantastic boat trip may even allow you to catch sight of the iconic proboscis monkey in the wild, so be sure to bring your camera along!

Day 9

Today you will focus on the orangutans, spending your time thinking up creative enrichment ideas for these clever apes and gathering branches for nest making. You will also take part in a construction activity if the project requires it.

Itinerary

Day 10

You'll begin your day by either working on enrichment for the orangutans, or helping out on another construction activity. Later on, you'll embark on a canopy walk in the rainforest, heading high up amongst the trees in search of singing gibbons, as well as other exciting jungle flora and fauna!

Days 11-12

Your final two days at the project will be spent working with the orangutans, as you continue creating enrichment items for them. If you haven't yet had the opportunity, you may also head out on a boat to hand enrichment and food items to the orangutans. On your final evening, you'll enjoy a farewell meal with your group and the project coordinators.

Day 13

If you're here for two weeks, this will sadly be your departure day and you'll be taken back to the airport. Those staying for longer will continue with their day-to-day activities.

While the activities carried out on this project are certainly rewarding, they can also be hard work. Additionally, the rainforest is a hot and humid environment, and it is for these reasons that a moderate level of fitness is recommended for this project. There are no specific skills or prior experience necessary for taking part; all we ask is that you arrive with a commitment to the project's aims and are willing to work as part of a team. Above all, you must have a passion for wildlife conservation!



Accommodation

During your time on the project, you will stay in a twin-share room at the Samboja Ecolodge. The lodge has been constructed in a sustainable manner, with all interior and exterior walls built out of recycled materials. You will share your room with a member of the same sex, unless you are volunteering alongside your friend/family member or as a couple, in which case you will be accommodated together. Each room comes equipped with air conditioning and mosquito nets, and you will have access to an en-suite bathroom with warm showers and a western-style toilet.



Food & Drink

Whilst on the project, you will be provided with three meals per day, each served in a buffet style. Breakfast is a combination of Indonesian and Western foods, with a variety of cereals, eggs and rice/noodle dishes provided alongside fruit and fresh juice. Lunch and dinner typically consist of rice with chicken, seafood or beef with vegetables and sometimes noodles. There are also alternatives for vegetarians and vegans, such as a tofu dish. If you have any dietary requirements, please let us know before you join the project so facilitators can buy the appropriate ingredients.



What's Included

- Accommodation
- Transfers
- Three meals per day
- Tea, coffee and drinking water at the lodge
- English-speaking coordinator
- A boat trip along the Black River
- A canopy walk through the treetops
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Travel insurance
- Visas

Volunteer Reviews

Sarah

"I loved everything! If I had to pick one moment it would be looking into an orangutans eyes and being overwhelmed by the wisdom he seemed to have."



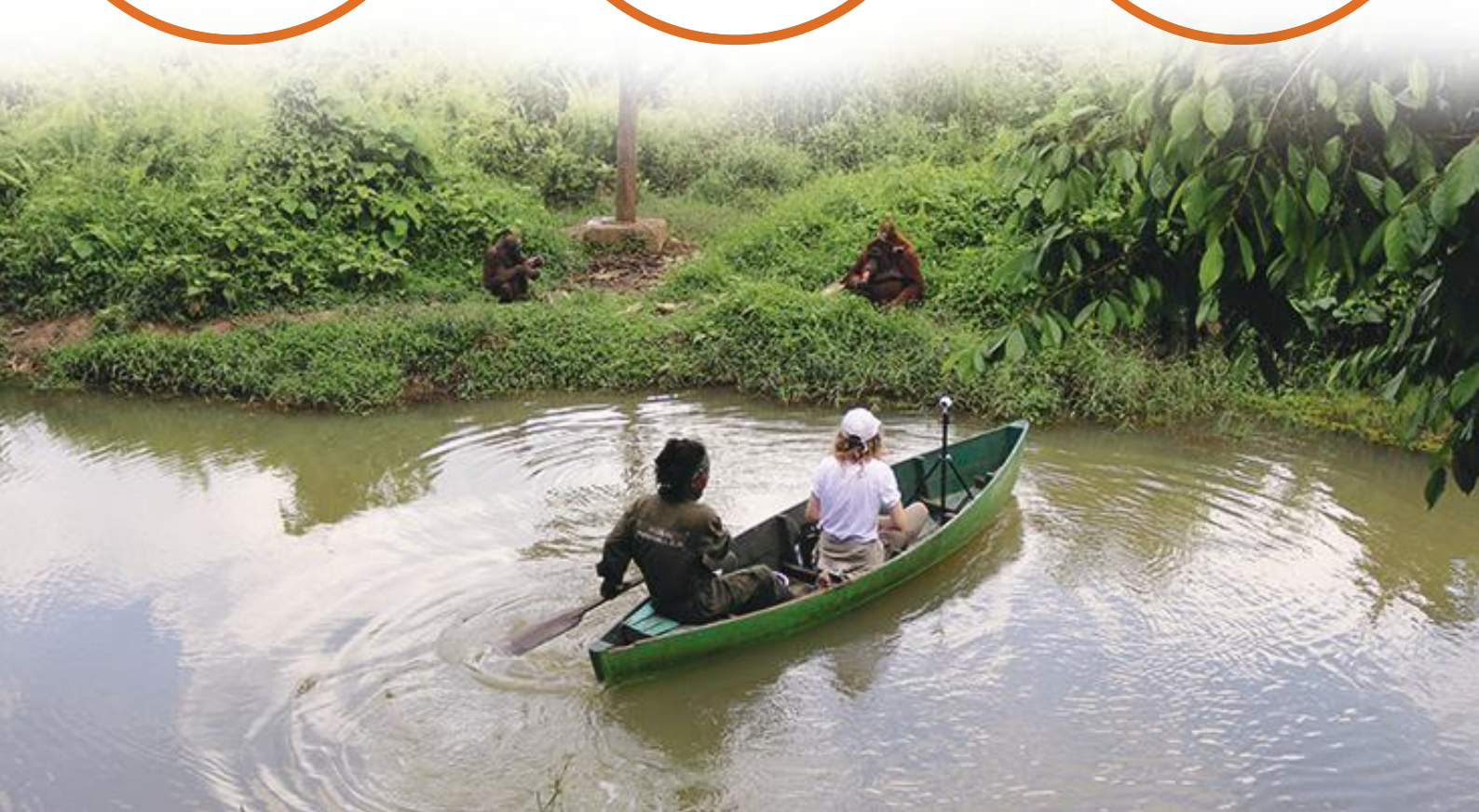
Simon

"The entire experience surpassed expectation and I don't think I could have asked for a better project coordinator."



Amy

"The whole experience was brilliant and I would definitely do another Great Project in the future!"





What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on the Samboja Lestari Orangutan Volunteer Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to orangutan 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. 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!

#thegreatprojects

www.thegreatprojects.com

+44 (0)208 885 4987

