



A guide to: *The Great Orangutan
& Pygmy Elephant Project*



The Great Orangutan & Pygmy Elephant Project

Focus: Orangutans & Elephants

Location: Borneo

Start Date: 21st of Every Month

Arrival & Starting Point: Sandakan

As one of our most 'wild' projects, The Great Orangutan and Pygmy Elephant Project encompasses the awe-inspiring diversity and dynamism of Borneo's phenomenal wildlife. Situated in the Lower Kinabatangan Floodplain, this project promises a true jungle experience, from the beauty of the rainforest to the urgency of its preservation.

The project lies within the WWF's protected 'Corridor of Life', a region of tremendous importance in sustaining Borneo's threatened wildlife populations. 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 sparse habitat also leaves the animals open to the possibility of being poached. It is for these reasons that conservation projects are so necessary.

With the support of the project's own fantastic team, 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 volunteers have since become home to Borneo's wildlife, with the visibility of both orangutans and pygmy elephants improving over time. With perseverance, it is hoped that these growing rainforests will allow the region's wildlife to prosper.



As a volunteer, you will spend time with the charming 'Orang Sungai' ('People of the River') as you become guests in their homes. 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 help to educate them on importance of conservation and the value of implementing more sustainable ways of living in a way which will be mutually beneficial to both the community and their native wildlife.

The main focus of this project is to reforest the damaged areas of rainforest in the region, and the fruits of the project's labour are evident in the return of animals to the area. In addition to helping to plant more trees, you will spend time monitoring the wildlife species spotted along the Kinabatangan River, embarking on river cruises and a rainforest trek in search of wild orangutans, pygmy elephants and more. With gibbons, hornbills, and other species found 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.

Habitat Restoration

Issues such as logging and deforestation have negatively impacted Borneo's rainforests over the years, and the area where the project is based is sadly no exception. Reforestation is crucial if the region's wildlife species are to survive and, as such, a large part of your time volunteering will be spent aiding habitat restoration activities such as tree planting, seedling generation and sapling maintenance, to name but a few. Your ability to contribute to these efforts is likely to be one of the most rewarding aspects of the project, as without your help, it would be difficult for the project to achieve its goal of recreating a healthy environment in which the local wildlife is able to thrive. Roll up your sleeves and get involved!



Wildlife Population Observation

As the project's main focus revolves around reforesting land in order to allow wildlife species to return to the region, it is important that the effects of these efforts are well-documented. You will therefore take part in wildlife observation activities by taking a small boat out onto the river, keeping your eyes open for wildlife species roaming across the river banks and recording data as you go. By helping to track the numbers and patterns of orangutans and pygmy elephants, you will help the project team to not only understand their successes, but plan for future habitat restoration efforts too. You won't want to forget your camera, as you're sure to get some great pictures!



Jungle Trekking

Take the opportunity to embark on a jungle trek, heading through the Bornean rainforest in search of its impressive flora and fauna. During the trek, the project coordinator will teach you more about the importance of the rainforest and what it traditionally offers its inhabitants, from food and shelter to medicine and other means of survival. This is an excellent way to put yourself in the shoes of the Orang Sungai and the members of the local community that lived here before them!



Spending Time With The 'Orang Sungai'

Giving back to the local community is an important aspect of this project, and in exchange for the Orang Sungai opening up their homes to you and your group, you will spend some time educating them on the importance of conservation. Help to teach them about sustainable ways of living, the value of their local wildlife, and the ways in which their environment can be an asset in terms of economic motivation. During the project, you will also have plenty of opportunity to learn from the Orang Sungai too, as they chat to you about their daily lives, their family structures, and their stories of years gone by.



Work With The Local School Children

As well as spending time with members of the community in Sukau village, you may also have the opportunity to work with the local school children, teaching them about the importance of conservation in their home environment and instilling a more sustainable, conscious mindset – after all, these children are the future of the local community, and are therefore the custodians of the region's rainforests!



Visit To Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre

During your time at Sukau village, you may have the opportunity to witness wild orangutans as they travel through reforested areas and across the riverbank, but a visit to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre at the end of your trip may provide you with a greater sense of understanding of why projects like this one must exist. The centre is home to a number of captive orangutans: some may reside there for the rest of their lives, whilst others may be in the earlier stages of their rehabilitation, with the hope of someday returning to the wild. You will have the opportunity to learn more about the rehabilitation process, and an emphasis on the importance of these efforts, alongside habitat restoration, is sure to leave a lasting impression on all volunteers.

After watching the morning feeding session at the centre, you will pay a visit to the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre and the Rainforest Discovery Centre, before returning to Sepilok to witness the afternoon orangutan feeding session. This is an excellent opportunity to see the apes up close, so be sure to bring your camera along!



Itinerary

Day 1

After arriving into Sandakan Airport, you will be transferred to your first night's accommodation. Upon arrival, take some time to get to know your fellow volunteers before having a short orientation over your welcome dinner. At the end of the night, head to your room and rest up - tomorrow will be a busy day!

Day 2

Today you will head to Sukau village, your home for the next 9 nights. Enjoy some breakfast before transferring by road to your new accommodation, a B&B run by members of the local community. After a health and safety briefing, the rest of the day can be spent as you wish. Why not explore the area and meet some of the villagers?

Days 3-10

These are your project days, and you will take part in a number of activities such as habitat restoration and the education of the local school children. You will also have the opportunity to head into the jungle and onto the river in search of animals returning to the area as a result of the project's reforestation efforts.

Day 11

Today you will transfer back to Sandakan, stopping in at the Rainforest Discovery Centre and the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre on the way. Afterwards, you will visit the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre to watch the feeding session. After a busy day, you'll be transferred to your accommodation.

Day 12

Today is your final day, which unfortunately means it is time for you to head home! You will be transferred to Sandakan Airport in time for your flight; alternatively, you may wish to commence your independent travel plans.



Accommodation

Throughout your time on the project, you will stay in three different accommodations, with the majority of your time being spent in a locally-run B&B in the small village of Sukau. You will share all accommodations with at least one other volunteer, though if you would prefer to stay in a single room for the duration of your trip (with the exception of your first night in Sepilok), this can be arranged for an additional fee. Please note that single rooms are subject to availability, and that all accommodations listed below are subject to change.

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 mixed-gender, dormitory-style room. 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.

Nights 2-10 - 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. Rooms are on a same-sex, twin-share basis, though if you are volunteering as a couple, you will be accommodated together. Each room offers access to an en-suite bathroom complete with a western toilet and hot water showers. The B&B also has a common area which overlooks the river, and is a lovely place to enjoy your breakfast!

Night 11 - Sandakan



For your final night, you will stay in a comfortable hotel in the bayside town of Sandakan. Rooms will be shared with a member of the same sex, unless you are volunteering as a couple. 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. The centre of town is only a short walk away and here, you'll find a number of bars, 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

Three meals a day are included in the price of the project, whilst staying in Sukau village, your breakfast will be served at your accommodation and you will visit the homes of the local villagers for lunch and dinner. Here, the villagers will prepare traditional Malaysian-style meals for you and your group, and you may find this to be the perfect setting in which to learn more about their culture, daily lives and traditions! Meals typically consist of noodles or rice, vegetables, chicken and fish, however, those with dietary requirements can be catered for. We kindly ask that you let us know of any requirements in advance so that we can ensure that appropriate food items are purchased for you.

Although tea, coffee and water are provided, you may wish to bring extra money for fruit juice, soft drinks or snacks. Please note that alcohol is strictly not permitted on this project.

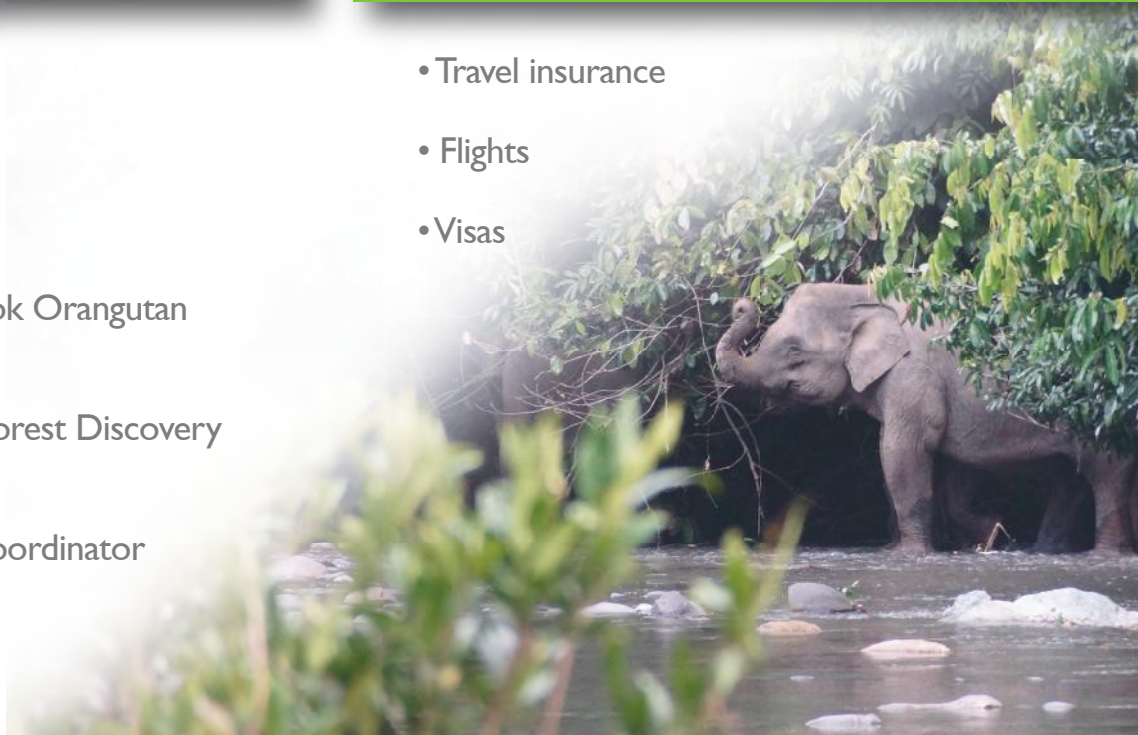


What's Included

- Airport transfers
- Accommodation
- Three meals per day
- Entrance fees to the Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre
- Entrance fees to the Rainforest Discovery Centre
- English-speaking project coordinator
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Travel insurance
- Flights
- Visas



Volunteer Reviews

Emma

"My favourite part was of course seeing orangutans, birds, snakes and pygmy elephants in their natural environment! Such a rewarding experience."



Margaret

"There were so many highlights - actually making a difference by planting new saplings in the rainforest, spotting wildlife...amazing."



Amanda

"The entire adventure will stay with me forever - it was incredible feeling that I was, even in a small way, contributing to saving the incredible orangutan."



What Next?

Becoming a volunteer on The Great Orangutan and Pygmy Elephant Project is simple, and you can help make a difference to 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. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.

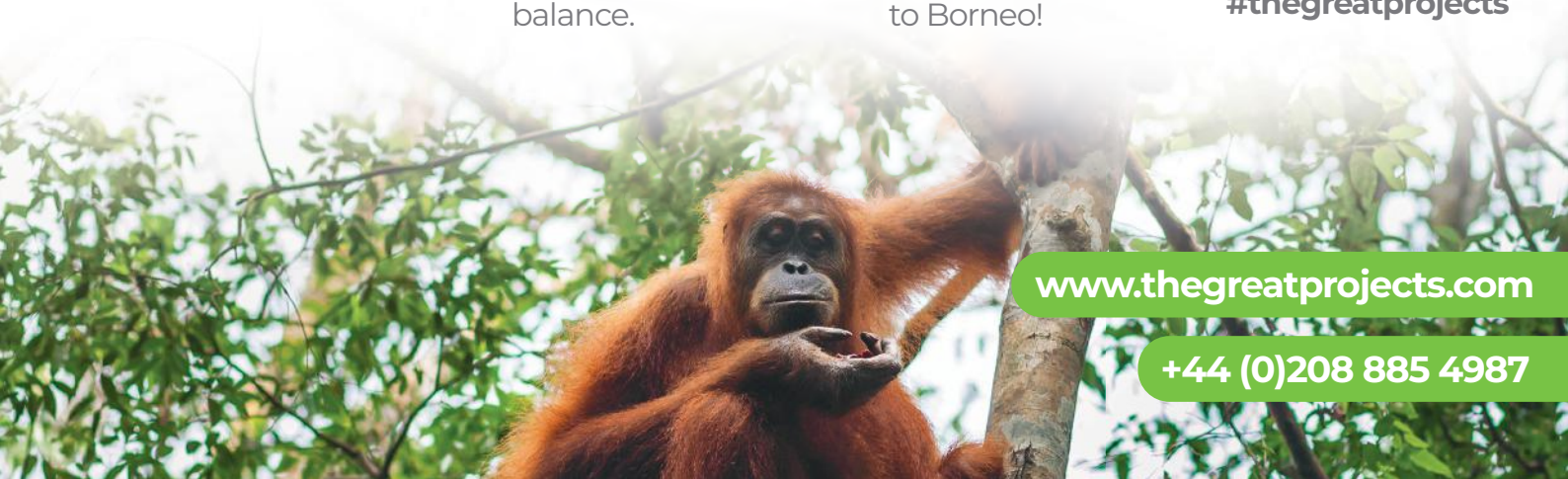


Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Borneo!



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