

Borneo Orchid Expedition

Malaysian Borneo

An intrepid adventure to explore Borneo's key orchid hotspots, diverse wildlife and scenery.

The island of Borneo is one of the world's great centres for orchid diversity. Concentrated on Borneo, there are at least 1700 species of orchids, many of which are found nowhere else on earth.

This expedition focuses on visiting four locations to explore Borneo's amazing diversity of orchids; the Bako National Park (home to lowland heathforest orchids), Mount Kinabalu (for highland and ultrahighland orchids), Mulu National Park & Mount Api (for lowland rainforest, limestone growing and highland orchids) and Mount Trus Madi (for spectacular mossy cloud forests dripping with highland orchids).

Although orchids are central to this expedition, the itinerary is balanced with many of Borneo's other wildlife highlights, including a plethora of carnivorous pitcher plants, proboscis monkeys, vast caves, canoe trips through lowland rainforest and (with luck) open *Rafflesia* and *Amorphophallus* blooms.

Optional pre- or post-expedition add-ons that can be arranged include visits to offshore islands to observe **turtle hatching (4 days extra)** or an **intrepid rainforest expedition to climb Mount Murud (5 days extra)** in the highlands of central Borneo to see a wide diversity of highland orchids, pitcher plants, bird life, and remote villages.

COST: £2,000 per person for **16 days / 15 nights** (all inclusive from start point to end point).

START POINT: Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo.

END POINT: Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysian Borneo.

EXPEDITION LEADER: Stewart McPherson (experienced field naturalist and Borneo expert).

DATES: Subject to demand, two expeditions will run in **2014:** July 11th – July 26th **and** July 28th – August 12th, and two expeditions will run in **2015:** July 12th – July 27th **and** July 30th – August 14th.

Email sales@redfernnaturalhistory.com for more information and to make bookings.



BORNEO ORCHID EXPEDITION ITINERARY

Day 1: We meet in Kuching, Sarawak, Borneo. We recommend that you fly to Kuala Lumpur or Singapore, then take a low cost AirAsia flight from either city onwards to Kuching, arriving by 8.00 am, or the previous day. At 10.00 am, we travel by small boat into the South China Sea, landing at the Bako National Park to explore trails through lowland heathforest, home to *Bulbophyllum* and *Dendrobium*, ant plants (*Dischidia*) and the carnivorous pitcher plants (*Nepenthes albomarginata*, *N. gracilis* and *N. rafflesiana*). Along mangrove boardwalks, we look for proboscis monkeys. We sleep in a hotel and dine in a local restaurant.

Day 2: We catch an early morning flight to Kota Kinabalu. Visit the De Villa Orchid Farm at Kundasang, and then the beautiful Kinabalu Park botanic gardens, home to hundreds of orchids, including *Paphiopedilum rothschildianum* and *P. lowii*, often in bloom. We sleep in a hotel and dine in a local restaurant.

Day 3: We climb up Mt. Kinabalu, ascending through pristine cloud forest, filled with countless orchids (*Bulbophyllum*, *Calanthe*, *Coelogyne*, *Cryptostylis*, *Cymbidium*, *Dendrobium*, *Habenaria*, *Liparis*, *Phaius* and *Stigmatodactylus*), tree ferns, mossy, stunted bonsai trees, as well as the carnivorous plants *Nepenthes villosa* and *N. tentaculata*. We overnight near the tree-line in a wooden chalet called Laban Rata with heating, beds and hot meals.

Day 4: We ascend to the summit of Mt. Kinabalu, exploring the incredible, exposed, granite plateau summit area, and look for ultrahighland orchid species. We take in the spectacular views across the Bornean rainforests below. We sleep again at Laban Rata with heating, beds and hot meals.

Day 5: We descend down Mount Kinabalu, following the quieter Mesilau trail, passing through lush, riverine cloudforest, home to highland orchids and carnivorous pitcher plants. We sleep in beautiful alpine chalets at Mesilau and dine in a local restaurant.

Day 6: We walk the Rajah Trail at Mesilau to explore the highland orchid gardens (looking for *Paphiopedilum hookeri*), and the biggest carnivorous plant of all, *Nepenthes rajah*, which has been known to trap prey as large as rats. We then transfer into vehicles and visit the Mamut Mine and/or Marai Parai spur to explore ultramafic orchid habitats, and visit a *Rafflesia* reserve at Poring Hot Springs to see a giant *Rafflesia* bloom in flower. We travel back to Kota Kinabalu and sleep in a hotel and dine in a local restaurant.

Day 7: We fly to Gunung Mulu National Park and, on arrival, explore the rainforest trails for lowland rainforest orchids. We explore the vast caves of Mulu by following an extensive boardwalk into the Deer Cave to explore grottos, and watch tens of thousands of birds emerge from the cave like smoke at sunset. We sleep in single-sex dorms and have dinner in a restaurant (optional upgrade to resort accommodation possible).

Day 8: We undertake a day trek to see the rare *Paphiopedilum sanderianum* growing on a spectacular, mossy cliff. We sleep in single-sex dorms and have dinner in a restaurant (optional upgrade to resort accommodation possible).

Day 9: We transfer into canoes to journey upstream to Mt. Api camp, stopping at a traditional village half way up stream to experience Sarawak culture, and buy traditional craftwork. The canoes stop at a riverside trail, and we trek for one and a half hours through the rainforest to reach camp, looking out for gigantic *Amorphophallus* flowers and lowland orchids. We sleep at the camp in stretcher hammocks and have hot food.

Day 10: After an early start, we trek up Mt. Api (a steep climb of 1.8 km) to reach the summit of the mountain to enjoy spectacular views of the towering, blade-like, limestone pinnacles. On the trail up Mt. Api, we find extensive populations of orchids (especially *Bulbophyllum* and other epiphytes) and the carnivorous pitcher plant *Nepenthes faizaliana*. Back at camp, there is the option of visiting a nearby population of the fanged pitcher plant (*N. bicalcarata*), its habitat is also home to heathforest orchids. We sleep at the camp in stretcher hammocks and have hot food.

Day 11: After a relaxed start, we return to the canoes and travel back downstream to the Mulu Park headquarters, looking again for giant *Amorphophallus* flowers along the way. We sleep in dorms and have a restaurant dinner, relaxing in tropical gardens (optional upgrade to resort accommodation possible).

Day 12: We fly from Mulu National Park back to Kota Kinabalu, and have a rest day, exploring the charming waterfront markets of the old-town. We sleep in a hotel and dine in a local restaurant.

Day 13: We transfer into mini-vans and travel to Tambunan, to begin the ascent up Mt Trus Madi. We sleep in tents, and have hot, cooked food.

Day 14: We spend a day on the summit of Mt. Trus Madi, exploring some of Borneo's most beautiful mossy cloud-forest, totally festooned with orchids (particularly miniature epiphytes of the genera *Dendrobium*, *Dendrochilum* and *Bulbophyllum*, but also terrestrials of the genus *Corybas*), and home to the carnivorous pitcher plants *Nepenthes lowii*, *N. tentaculata* and *N. macrophylla*. We sleep in tents, and have hot, cooked food.

Day 15: We descend Mt. Trus Madi, returning back to the lowlands. We visit a reserve to see the diminutive, but beautiful, white-spotted *Rafflesia pricei*, sleeping for a final night in Borneo in tree houses in the rainforest.

Day 16: We transfer into mini-vans and return to Kota Kinabalu in time for departing afternoon and evening flights.

Highlights of the **Borneo Orchid Expedition**

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