

ARS Tour of Sabah and Mount Kinabalu, May-June 2018

The ARS is seeking Expressions of Interest from ARS Members to participate in an eight day (nine night) tour of Sabah, Borneo. The itinerary has been prepared by ARS Member, Dale Schubert, who has previously visited the highlights of our Sabah Tour.

Sabah and Mount Kinabalu

The Malaysian state of Sabah in northern Borneo is a hotspot for vireya *Rhododendron* diversity, from the minute *R. ericoides* to the statuesque *R. lowii*. The ARS is seeking Expressions of Interest from Members for an 8 day/9 night tour to three mountains of Sabah. The 2018 tour will be scheduled to coincide with the expected flowering of most species (May - June). In addition to *Rhododendron*, you will experience wonderful local cuisine and you may be lucky enough to see some iconic Bornean wildlife or even *Rafflesia* – the world's largest flower.

Proposed Itinerary

Arrive at Kota Kinabalu (KK) transfer to hotel and gather for lunch/dinner. Spend night in KK.

Mt Kinabalu (Day 1 and 2):

After an early departure from our accommodation in KK we travel to Mt Kinabalu Park Head Quarters. Rising to 4,101m Mt Kinabalu is the highest mountain in Borneo, providing every variety of habitat for thousands of plant species, from lowland dipterocarp forest to stunted vegetation at 3,300m. Climbing Mt Kinabalu allows the opportunity of sighting many of the 26 *Rhododendron* species recorded from this World Heritage Listed site. After meeting our guides we begin our ascent at 450m and spend the day slowly ascending the mountain. There are many opportunities to rest and explore the vegetation along the summit trail.

We will arrange to spend two nights upon the mountain, where we will traverse between two of the three guesthouses. An early morning ascent to the summit for a spectacular sunrise is a priority for most visitors.

Mt Kinabalu to Poring Hot Springs (Day 3):

After descending Mt Kinabalu we travel for a late lunch to the town of Ranau. Along the way we may be fortunate enough to chance upon the world's largest flower *Rafflesia pricei*. *Rafflesia* flowers only last several days, so sighting them is a chance event only!

From Ranau we descent to spend the night at Poring Hot Springs, a close-by resort. Originally established by the Japanese during the WWII occupation, the thermal springs offer the opportunity to observe low altitude flora/fauna while rejuvenating tired muscles between mountains.

Poring to Mamut (Day 4)

From Poring Hot Springs we travel on to the former Mamut copper mine site. The site has been reclaimed by at least 11 species of *Rhododendron* and many spectacular pitcher plants. Unlike the undisturbed forest on Mt Kinabalu, all rhododendrons at this site are growing terrestrially and can be easily observed. Species recorded from this site include *R. javanicum* v *brookianum*, *R. orbiculatum*, *R. suaveolens*, *R. stapfianum*, *R. praevertisum*, *R. crassifolium*, *R. polyanthemum* and *R. verticillatum*. This site offers simply unforgettable evening sunsets across Mt Trus Madi/Mt Mentapok and sunrise views of Mt Kinabalu. We will spend a night in basic accommodation at Mamut.

Mamut - Trus Madi (Day 5 & 6):

Far less travelled is Borneo's second highest mountain Trus Madi. Rising to 2,642m, Trus Madi is a naturalist's delight. Draped in spectacular mossy forest the mid montane forest is punctuated by a plethora of *Rhododendron*, orchids and two of Borneo's most spectacular pitcher plants, easily observed along the upper trails. The summit presents majestic views across Sabah, punctuated by Mt Kinabalu. One night will be spent in basic accommodation on the mountain.

Trus Madi - Mt Alab (Day 7):

After our descent from Trus Madi we will travel to Mt Alab, where we will search the numerous trails for *Rhododendron*, including the rarely observed *R. lambianum*. Night will be spent in accommodation on Mt Alab before departing for Kota Kinabalu.

Kota Kinabalu (Day 8):

Our final night will be spent in KK, allowing a relaxed late departure from Mt Alab. We will enjoy a final group dinner on the waterfront and return to Australia the following day.

Tour Details

Cost: The tour will be at each participant's cost. Costing is yet to be finalized and will be subject to change which may be required or expressed by the group. A deposit will be required to confirm your place on the tour.

Group size: The tour is for a minimum of 5 and maximum of 8 people. We must receive deposits from a minimum of five participants before confirmation that the tour will proceed.

Flights: Participants will be responsible for making your own flight arrangements to and from Kota Kinabalu (capital city of Sabah).

Accommodation in Sabah: All accommodation during the tour will be pre-booked on your behalf. All accommodation bookings will be for shared rooms unless you request your own room. Participants should note that accommodation on Mt Trus Madi and at Mamut is shared and rather basic. Accommodation on Kinabalu is likely to be dormitory style.

To ensure participants meet at and depart from the same location, a night's accommodation upon our arrival and return to KK will be included in the quoted price. Should you wish to

extend your stay in Borneo, you will need to book your own accommodation prior to, or upon completion of the tour.

Guides & Porters: An experienced local guide will accompany us for the entire tour. Guides generally do not carry clients' packs, although porters for Mt Kinabalu and Mt Trus Madi can be arranged for an additional fee.

Transport: All transportation from accommodation in KK will be provided within the package quoted. Airport transfers are not included.

Meals: All meals will be provided during the tour. Meals in KK are not included. Please note that meals on both mountains will be cooked by our guides. Meals between destinations are generally sourced from local vendors. Should you have any special dietary requirements, please advise well in advance.

Fitness level: The combination of gradient and altitude make climbing Mount Kinabalu challenging for many trekkers. Porters will be available for hire, however participants must be able to hike for several hours carrying their own daypacks.

Insurance: All participants will be responsible for providing their own travel and personal insurance.

Equipment list: A suggested list will be provided to those who submit an expression of interest.

Further Information

To book a spot of the tour, or for further information, please contact Dale Schubert on blackbean@iprimus.com.au