

# BORNEO

with

# ENCOUNTER OVERLAND

**PONTIANAK  
to SAMARINDA**

**25 days  
Approx 800 miles  
(1,300kms)**

**INDONESIA  
(KALIMANTAN)**

## **ITINERARY GUIDELINE (approximate)**

### **PONTIANAK-SAMARINDA**

Day 1: Arrive & in Pontianak on west coast of Borneo.

Day 2: Drive Pontianak-Sintang (approx 9 hrs) through palm olive plantations & across the equator to Kapuas river.

Day 3: In Sintang. Climb Mount Kelam (3,000ft/900m) if weather is dry. Spectacular views of the Melawi & Kapuas river valleys (approx 8 hrs).

Days 4 & 5: Slow boat up river through Iban tribal territories to Putussibau (24-36 hrs).

Day 6: Rest in Putussibau-interesting upriver town of 7,000, founded by Dutch in 1895 to try and curb headhunting.

Day 7: Up narrowing Kapuas river by motorised longboat to Nanaga Lapung or Long Bungan (1 day).

Day 8: Smaller longboats through rapids & the closing forest canopy to Tanjung Lokang (approx 3 hrs).

Days 9 & 10: In Tanjung Lokang-small riverside village of soft-spoken Bukat Dyaks. Time to relax along riverbank & walk in surrounding forests & clearings.



Days 11–17: On foot with guides over the saddle of the Muller Range, central divide between the Kapuas & Mahakam river systems. Approx 6 hrs walking per day, with one day at rest in middle of trek. Sleep in clearings or by streams in the 'pondoks' we construct each night—bivouac shelters of bamboo, rattan & waterproof awnings. Arrive Long Apari or Nanabuan on Day 17.

Day 18: (Day in hand to cover delays, or at rest in Long Apari, settlement of the Aoheng Dyaks & uppermost navigation point on the Mahakam river).

Day 19: Small longboats downstream to Tiong Ohang (approx 2 hrs).

Day 20: In Tiong Ohang, centre of the Aoheng. Longhouses & traditional village built on both sides of the river.

Day 21: Motorised longboats to Long Bagun (approx 8 hrs), dramatic scenery change from primary to secondary jungle, limestone cliffs & waterfalls. Powerful rapids in second half of journey.

Day 22: Chartered river-boat down Mahakam. Kenyah longhouses at Rukun Damai. Data Bilang decorated rice barns, farmlands to Melak (approx 16 hrs, boat sails through night, sleep on board).

Day 23: By jeep from Melak to Kersik Luwai Orchid Reserve (4 hrs). Continue downriver to ironwood built town of Muara Muntai (approx 10 hrs, boat sails through night, sleep on board).

Day 24: Muara Muntai, leave main river for the shallow lakes & swamps of Mahakam river plain. Stilt houses of Jantur fishing village, birds and wildlife of Lake Jempang to longhouse villages of Tanjung Isuy & Mancong (approx 6 hrs). Across Lake Semayang (freshwater dolphin) & the river basin to Tenggarong (approx 12 hrs, boat sails through night, sleep on board).

Day 25: Arrive Tenggarong. Mulawarman museum on site of the old palace of the Sultan of Kutai. Chartered minibus to Samarinda (approx 1 hr). Evening arrival, end arrangements.

#### PLEASE NOTE:

The above is intended as a guide only and to indicate a typical itinerary and its highlights. While our intention is to adhere to this, it should be understood that the constraints of weather, widely varying river levels and remote jungle travel can alter our exact route, its activities and timings. For example: High river levels on the Kapuas immediately after heavy rain can make the rapids too severe to float, forcing us to pull boats & carry equipment round them, and delaying our timings. Conversely, low river levels on the Mahakam can prevent the larger river-boats from reaching upstream to Long Bagun, forcing us to continue by motorised longboats to wherever river levels allow the navigation of the larger vessels. Low water here also means the use of shallow draft longboats into the lake & swamps of Jempang & Tanjung Isuy. River levels & the weather, along with just about everything else in backcountry Borneo, can be fascinatingly random!

#### HIGHLIGHTS & ROUTE

Pontianak lies on the junction of the Kapuas & Landak rivers, a few kilometres from the South China Sea, with the coastal mangrove swamps to one side and the 5,400 sq km Kapuas Delta to the other. Founded by the 18th century Arab pirate Abdul al Gadri, the city's population is now a mix of Malay, Chinese & Dyak. The Mesjid Jami mosque & Sultan's Palace, Chinese Taoist temples, Bugis Schooner Dock & the Fish market are all worth the time to visit on our day here. By chartered bus via the coast at Seipinyuh then inland through palm olive plantations, criss-crossing the equator to Sanggau and Sintang—river town of the middle Kapuas. Mount Kelam (Dark Mountain) is a huge limestone outcrop reaching 3,000ft/900m above the surrounding plain. Walking up through slippery lowland forest trails we reach the first of two 30 metre exposed rock inclines (the second has a rattan/bamboo guide rope), leading to a series of ladders & decaying planks bolted to the rock face. There are spectacular views from the summit over the Melawi & Kapuas river valleys. N.B.—The 8 hour ascent and descent can only safely be done in dry weather and will not be attempted in the wet. By slow passenger ferry boat up the Kapuas to Putussibau, overnight through tribal territory of the Iban—once the most enthusiastic of headhunters. The boat makes frequent stops at settlements along the banks, and we sleep & eat on deck with the inter-village passengers.

(The ferry boat service is erratic, and if none are available we make the upriver journey by fast chartered boat, taking 8 hrs to Putussibau). Putussibau, population 7,000, was established in 1895 as a Dutch outpost to help curb headhunting and establish a colonial presence in West Borneo. The timber industry is the leading contributor to the area's economy along with raw rubber, salted fish, pepper & cacao. In the late 1980s a short gold rush saw the arrival of hundreds of small time operators & entrepreneurs. The houses and paths of the town are built entirely of wood. Next by longboat (motorised canoe) upstream to Nanaga Lapung,



stopping at the Taman Dyak village of Long Sa Hula with its communal long-house. The women of Sa Hula sport tattoos and long stretched earlobes adorned with heavy rings.

The first European to reach this region was Major George Muller of the Dutch Colonial Service. On his return from the Mahakam headwaters in 1826 his party was ambushed on orders from the Sultan of Kutai, and he lost his head to the Ibans. Nanaga Lapung is a small village of modern stilt houses, complete with electricity & a large satellite dish! We usually stay on the floor of the chief's house. The river narrows from here and the larger longboats cannot negotiate the rapids. We continue in smaller (approx 5 person) longboats to Long Bungan—a wealthy village trading in

swift's nests, gold & diamonds. (These birds nests are collected from the surrounding limestone caves, bringing the seller US\$350 per kilo—five times that amount by the time they reach the coast). Upstream to Tanjung Lokang the rapids are fast and often, for some 12 hours after heavy rain, too dangerous to negotiate by boat. We may have to carry our supplies and drag the boats around the worst rapids.

The forest canopy closes in as we near Tanjung Lokang, the highest upstream village accessible by our boats. As guests of the chief (Kepala Desa), we usually spend two days in this pleasant village of soft-spoken Bukat Dyaks. They are taller and stronger than the lowland coastal peoples, elders are accorded the greatest of respect, and little is needed of the outside world. Time to relax, and

walk the surrounding forest trails & clearings. For the next 7-8 days we trek with Dyak guides across the watershed of the central divide—a low saddle in the jungle & forests of the Muller range. For the first two days we walk past huge limestone outcrops dotted with bat caves, through Ladang clearings (old slash & burn rice fields) mixed with jungle, wading through rivers and balancing across logs. We pass several small villages used as temporary shelters by bird nest gatherers far from home. Then clambering trails through virgin forest, across rivers and slippery rocks. From a fork in the Bungan river it is a day's hike across the divide into

the eastern Mahakam river system. A lone carved tree and a strange, mixed set of offerings marks the pass into east Kalimantan where the spirits of the Kapuas & Mahakam meet. It is said that anyone passing here should leave an offering so that no supernatural problems occur en route.

A steep descent follows, to the Mahakam river near Long Apari. We normally walk for about 6 hours each day, stopping around 3pm in a clearing or by a stream to make camp. First thing to do is dry the feet and change footwear (fungal infections need to be avoided at all costs in this climate), then build 'pondoks'—sleeping shelters of bamboo & rattan covered by our waterproof tarpaulins. Then firewood gathering, a good meal and time to wander the always different surroundings of our night stops. As long as weather and our progress allow, we take a day off from walking, to rest in the jungles immediately beyond the divide. Rivers here are teeming with fish, and a netted hammock skirted with small stones makes an excellent net. Village longboats take us downstream from Long Apari to Tiong Ohang—central village of the Aoheng Dyaks. The settlement occupies both banks, there are some fine longhouses, signs of shops again, and a small losman hotel. By longboats again towards Long Bungan. The scenery changes dramatically from primary to secondary jungle. Sheer limestone cliffs and lush tropical vegetation dotted with waterfalls replace the all embracing forest canopy of the previous days. This is where the Mahakam forces itself between the barriers of Mount Payang and Mount Batuayan, breaking out of the highlands to the wide flat plains & the sea—an exciting 8 hour ride through large and powerful rapids. If the river is high enough for the 25 metre riverboats to reach Long Bagun we charter one of these vessels as our travelling home for the next few days downriver to Tenggarong. (If the water level is low we continue downstream by faster longboat, staying at losman guest houses in riverside villages until we reach a point where the larger vessels can navigate). To the dragon-god decorated Kenyah longhouses of Rukun Dumai, & Data Bilang. Here the progressive Kenyah have adopted and developed new irrigation & rice growing techniques. The two huge communal rice barns are brightly decorated in traditional & spiritual motifs.

At Melak we charter local jeeps to drive to the Kersik Luwai Orchid Reserve where some 112 species of the flower have been catalogued, including the famous 'black' variety. Back on the river again, to Mura Muntai where the whole town is built from ironwood. Houses, jetties, walkways & roads are all made from the 'wood-that-does-not-float'. To Jantur on the edge of Lake Jempang. Colourful houses are built on stilts, the streets are waterways, fishing nets are spread to catch the giant river shrimp. Through the swamps & shallow lakes

of the Mahakam drainage area to Tanjung Isay & Mancong longhouses (Dyak handicrafts & markets), & the wildlife of Lake Semayang (heron & kingfisher, proboscis monkeys & the Irawaddy (freshwater) dolphin. (If lake levels are low we have to leave our riverboat to travel the lakes & swamps by motorised canoe).

River journey's end is at Tenggarong, the palace site of the Sultan of Kutai. Now a museum, it is a fascinating insight into the brilliance and luxury of the Sultan's lifestyle and court. There are furnishings, carpets, porcelain & chandeliers from all corners of the world. It is a short chartered bus ride to Samarinda—prosperous timber-port & city of 250,000 facing the Straits of Makasar on the Sulawesi sea.

### **GROUP SIZE & STAFF**

12 max including EO leader. Plus local guides Mt Kelam & trek across Muller divide, longboat & riverboat crews.

### **PHYSICAL DEMANDS**

This is a very challenging expedition, the hardest of any EO project, and requires all members to be in good physical condition. It is not without its dangers (fast water & slippery jungle trails) and the chances of rapid evacuation in an emergency are as remote as the countryside we cross. Facilities are minimal on the foot crossing of the Muller divide. All personal gear, communal equipment and food needs to be carried by ourselves, which means 33—40lbs/15—18kgs on your back. Walking times are only about 6 hours a day, but the heat, humidity & terrain are tiring. Large amounts of water are required to avoid dehydration. While hiking we cook for ourselves over camp fires where wood is available and not too wet, or over a small portable stove. Food on the trek is limited to the weight and size we all carry and is largely dehydrated but wholesome and full of essential carbohydrates.

And if it still sounds like fun to you, you're just who we're looking for!

### **INCLUDED IN PROJECT COST**

All road & river transport in Borneo, lightweight bivouac equipment & supplies, meals & food supplies, hotels in Pontianak & Sintang, overnight village accommodation charges en route, entrance fees & activities as outlined from morning of Day 1 to evening of Day 25. There are no kitties or similar en route payment funds.

### **PROJECT COST DOES NOT COVER**

Flights to/from home and Borneo, transfers to/from airports & airport taxes, accommodation in Pontianak/Samarinda

before Day 1 and on Day 25. Vaccinations, visas, personal insurance, laundry, snacks, drinks, personal clothing/equipment & items of a personal nature. Some individual entry fees (minimal cost).

### **EQUIPMENT SUPPLIED**

Lightweight jungle bivouac rainsheets, mosquito nets, lightweight cooking equipment & utensils, food & first aid kit.

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO BRING:**

A sturdy comfortable rucksack of 45—50 litres capacity with good shoulder & hip support/cross chest fastenings, lightweight rain poncho, 1 litre water bottle, 2 pairs lightweight jungle/trekking boots, lightweight sleeping mat. Personal clothing (cotton), personal medicines & toiletries etc. Apart from the first seven items you probably already have most of what is needed which is mainly lightweight (and preferably old) clothes. A complete Suggested Clothing List is included in our pre-departure information.

### **TRANSPORT**

Chartered mini buses Pontianak—Sintang & Tenggarong—Samarinda, public river ferry-boat or large motorised longboat Sintang—Putussibau, motorised longboats (canoes) Putussibau—Tanjung Lokang on upper Kapuas, & Long Apari to Long Bagun (or upper limit of river boat passage) on Mahakam, chartered covered-deck river boat (approx 25m) to Tenggarong. Jeeps Melak to Kersik Luwai Orchid reserve, on foot up Mt Kelam (8 hrs) and across Muller divide (usually 7-8 days).

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Traveller's hotels on multi share basis in Pontianak & Sintang (3 nights total), on deck river ferry Sintang—Putussibau (1 night), basic local hotel/lodge Putussibau (usually 2 nights), then floors of village meeting huts/guest huts (approx 7 nights), self-built 'pondok' bivouacs on trek across Muller divide (approx 6 nights), basic losman lodges in upper Mahakam (approx 2 nights), on deck & on board chartered river boat Long Bagun—Tenggarong (approx 3 nights).

### **MEALS, COOKING & FOOD**

Meals in local restaurants/hotel restaurants Pontianak—Putussibau. Otherwise our own self cooked meals in villages & on riverboats (fresh vegetables, fruit, fish & meat whenever available), & camp cooked meals on Muller divide trek (dehydrated & canned goods, rice & pasta, soup, cereal, tea & coffee). Very occasionally, in towns like Pontianak & Putussibau, where a day is spent in individual sightseeing or activities, lunch only will sometimes be at your own expense. The cost of these occasional lunches is minimal.

PASSPORTS & VISAS

You will need a passport that is valid for not less than 6 months after the end of the project, and which contains not less than 2 blank pages. All nationalities require a tourist visa to enter Indonesia and these are obtained free of charge at the airport of entry into Indonesia (e.g. Jakarta or Bali).

INSURANCE & MEDICAL

Everyone must have individual personal travel insurance. Various policies are available, but they must include a minimum of £20,000 or US\$30,000 for medical, hospital and additional expenses including emergency repatriation.

No vaccinations are required for Indonesia & Borneo but a few are strongly recommended. Their up to date details are given in our pre-departure information. You will also need to obtain a small supply of malaria tablets. The most effective types for this area, as recommended by the UK Tropical Disease authorities are also detailed in our pre-departure information.

PERSONAL SPENDING MONEY

There is not much to spend your money on in the interior of Borneo! But to cover personal day to day expenditure on either side & in the towns—i.e. drinks, snacks, laundry & a few souvenirs in the lower Mahakam. Otherwise EO has no hidden expenses, funds or kitties to surprise your spending money in Borneo. There are few “souvenirs” to be found though some interesting Dyak handicrafts can be found at Mancong—traditional vegetable fibre cloth, weavings, beadwork & dress.

ARRIVING AT START OF THE PROJECT

There will be a pre-departure meeting at our hotel in Pontianak at 8.00 am on the morning of Day 1. We strongly suggest that you arrive in Indonesia, if not Borneo, a couple of days earlier to allow yourself time to rest after your inter-continental flights & to acclimatise to the heat and humidity.

CLIMATE

Hot days, warm nights. Wet & humid all year.

| TROPICAL JUNGLE   |      | JAN | FEB | MAR | APR | MAY | JUN | JUL | AUG | SEP | OCT | NOV | DEC |
|-------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CELSIUS           | High | 29  | 30  | 30  | 29  | 29  | 29  | 28  | 29  | 29  | 29  | 29  | 29  |
| Daily Average     | Low  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  | 23  |
| FAHRENHEIT        | High | 85  | 86  | 86  | 85  | 85  | 84  | 83  | 84  | 84  | 85  | 85  | 85  |
| Daily Average     | Low  | 73  | 73  | 73  | 73  | 74  | 74  | 73  | 74  | 74  | 74  | 73  | 73  |
| Relative Humidity |      | 74% | 72% | 72% | 74% | 76% | 75% | 75% | 72% | 70% | 71% | 73% | 70% |
| Rainfall in mm    |      | 201 | 175 | 231 | 208 | 231 | 193 | 180 | 163 | 140 | 132 | 168 | 206 |

LEAVING AT END OF PROJECT

Arrangements end in Samarinda on the evening of Day 25. No onward flight connections should be arranged for this same day, any flight out could be taken on the following day.

COMBINATIONS & CONNECTING PROJECTS

‘Borneo’ is neither part of, nor a section of, any other EO project.

INTERESTING READING

Into the Heart of Borneo (Redmond O’Hanlon), A Stranger in the Forest (Eric Hansen).

VISITING CAMP LEAKEY & ORANGUTAN REHABILITATION CENTRE

Tanjung Puting National Park is on the south coast of Borneo, a 300,000 hectare park unique in its ecological diversity of wetlands, lowland swamp forest, hardwood rain forest & mature tropical heath. Nowhere else on earth can you see so many orangutans in their natural settings. The park is also home to numerous proboscis monkeys, crab-eating macques, crocodiles, giant monitor lizards, salt water dolphins on Kumai Bay, & over 200 tropical bird species. A 6 day return trip from Samarinda at the end of the Borneo project can be arranged locally. The cost is high (approx US\$520 including flights, ground transport & transfers, entry fees & permits, and allowing for your accommodation & meals)—but you may never have the chance again! This is not an EO organised or “optional” trip, but your EO leader can help you make arrangements from Samarinda along the following timings:—

Day 1: (The day after end of “Borneo” project). By taxi Samarinda—Balikpapan (approx 3 hrs). Hotel.

Day 2: Fly to Banjarmasin (90 minutes). Hotel.

Day 3: Early flight to Pangkalapun (light aircraft at low altitude, great views of jungles & rivers). Taxi to town & pick up National Park permits. 20 minutes drive to Kumai, speed

AGENT’S STAMP

boat (2 hrs) or slow boat (4 hrs) across Kumai Bay to Rimba Lodge.

Day 4: By boat to Camp Leakey (1-3 hrs depending on boat). Some 50 orangutans, from very young to full grown dominant males, live around the rehabilitation centre. Rescued from captivity they are taught here how to live wild before their re-introduction to the Borneo forests. Return Rimba Lodge.

Day 5: Return Pangkalapun & light aircraft flight to Pontianak. Hotel.

Day 6: Your onward flight connections home (usually via Jakarta).

You can pay for the flights in Samarinda/Balikpapan and the other costs as you go.

OTHER COSTS/EXPENSES

Return international flights .....  
(including domestic connections  
to/from Borneo)

Vaccinations .....

Insurance .....

Personal equipment purchase .....

Personal spending money .....

TOTAL\_\_\_\_\_