

National park

Sarawak has one of the best national park networks in Southeast Asia, offering nature lovers a unique opportunity to explore the Borneo rainforest, see rare wildlife and enjoy spectacular natural attractions. Although the network of parks is dedicated to conserving Sarawak's natural environment, most of them have facilities such as chalets, rest houses & canteens, allowing visitors to enjoy Sarawak's protected areas. Most parks also offer a choice of jungle treks on clearly marked trails. These range from short forest walks to full day jungle hikes. The following is a brief summary of Sarawak's national parks. For further details of the natural attractions and visitors facilities of particular parks, please contact the Sarawak Tourism Board.

Bako (Accessible from Kuching): The oldest national park in Sarawak, Bako is



The Rafflesia has a bloom one me

park rangers guide visitors through the forest to the site of the bloom. Gunung Gading's rugged terrain also offers crystal clear jungle streams and waterfalls, and some challenging mountain treks.

Kubah (Accessible from Kuching): Kubah National Park covers a range of



Interesting rock formations

undoubtedly the best place in Sarawak for viewing wildlife. Long-tailed macaques, silver-leaf monkeys, monitor lizards and bearded pigs are all commonly seen. Bako is also home of the rare and unusual proboscis monkey.

Featuring seven completely distinct tropical ecosystems, the park offers an excellent introduction to the Borneo rainforest; and a network of trekking trails allows the visitor to get the most out of this forest environment. Other attractions include secluded beaches and interesting rock formations. The combination of abundant wildlife, rainforest wonders and easy access from Kuching make Bako a must on any nature lover's itinerary.

Gunung Gading (Accessible from Kuching): Gunung Gading National Park is a beautiful expanse of mountainous rainforest only two hours from Kuching. The park is an important conservation zone for the spectacular Rafflesia, the largest flower in the world. A plank-walk allows visitors to walk around an area of forest where Rafflesia are commonly found. If a plant is flowering deep in the rainforest,

limestone hills less than an hour from Kuching. The park offers trekking trails through dense rainforest, jungle streams and waterfalls, and panoramic views of the surrounding countryside and the coast of Southwest Sarawak. The forest consists mainly of mixed dipterocarp with some area of scrub. Kubah is also rich in palms and orchids and a palmarium trail allow visitors to view a wide variety of the park's palm species.

Tanjung Datu (Accessible from Kuching): Tanjung Datu is located on the remote southwestern tip of Sarawak. It is Sarawak's smallest national park and consists of a protected strip of forest that runs to the shore as well as some of Sarawak's most beautiful beaches. This ecologically important strip of coastline contains a number of turtle beaches. Offshore there are small coral reefs, a rarity in Sarawak waters. Further inland the hilly terrain is mostly covered with mixed dipterocarp forest, interspersed with small fast flowing clear streams.

Batang Ai (Accessible from Kuching Or Sibu):

parks of Sarawak



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Batang Ai National Park is located at the perimeter of the vast Lanjak Entimau wildlife sanctuary, a major Malaysian-Indonesian conservation project. Batang Ai is an important sanctuary for wild orang-utans, gibbons and hornbills. An interesting feature of the park is the way in which local Iban longhouse communities have been involved in conservation management.

Matang Wildlife Centre: A part of Kubah National Park, Matang Wildlife Centre is Sarawak's main centre for wildlife conservation and rehabilitation. It is a halfway house for wild animals that have been rescued from captivity, and a training centre for young orang-utans who are gradually reintroduced to their natural rainforest environment and taught to survive in the wild.

Loagan Bunut (Accessible From Miri): Loagan Bunut is Sarawak's largest natural lake. Its area expands and contracts according to the amount of rainfall, forming a unique and ever-changing ecosystem. The grasslands, swamps and reed-beds of this wetland park are a bird-watcher's paradise. Visitors can also

important archaeological site and one of the cradles of civilization in Southeast Asia; human remains found here have been dated as over 40,000 years old. Visitors can see birds nest collectors at innumerable plant and tree species it features gibbons, tarsiers, bearded pigs, flying lizards, deer and 157 different types of bird. The park offers excellent trekking trails, a canopy viewing tower and delightful jungle pools and waterfalls, just 30 minutes away from Miri.

Gunung Mulu (Accessible from Miri):

Gunung Mulu is Sarawak's largest national park and the site of one of the world's greatest cave systems. It features the world's largest cave passage, the largest natural chamber, the longest cave in Southeast Asia and fascinating underground ecosystems.

Mulu's bio-diversity is as impressive as its world-famous caves. For example, the park contain 8 different forest types, thousands of species of ferns, fungi and flowering plants, 75 species of mammal and 262 species of birds. The four show caves at Mulu can be easily visited as day trips from the park headquarters. More adventurous visitors can choose from a range of nature-based activities including adventure caving, rock climbing, mountain biking and jungle trekking. Guided treks include the climb to view of Pinnacles, a spectacular limestone rock formation, and the Headhunters' Trail from Mulu to Limbang.

Similajau (Accessible from Bintulu): Similajau is an unspoiled strip of coastal rainforest just a short drive from Bintulu. The park offers superb golden sand beaches criss-crossed with small rivers and



Bridge through the park

visit Berawan villages and long-houses and see local fishermen practicing their traditional fishing methods. Loagan Bunut is accessible by road from Miri.

Niah (Accessible From Bintulu Or Miri): This park includes Niah Cave and the surrounding rainforest. It is an

creeks, 185 species of birds and some unusual reptiles. These include the green turtle, which lays its eggs on the beaches here, and the estuarine crocodile. The park offers a range of activities, the most popular of which are jungle trekking, bird-watching and coastal cruises. ■