

CONSERVATION: SEPILOK ORANG-UTAN REHABILITATION MALAYSIA

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

COLOURFUL AND EXOTIC, MALAYSIA STRETCHES FROM THE PENINSULAR TO THE ISLAND OF BORNEO ... A WEALTH OF CHOICE!

Split between the Peninsular and the island of Borneo, Malaysia offers a wealth of choice and is an ideal starting point for a trip to South East Asia. From the gleaming sky scrapers of Kuala Lumpur to the rainforests and wildlife of Sabah and Sarawak - there is so much to see and do!

All of our projects are based in Sabah, located in the north east of Malaysian Borneo and surrounded by both the South China and Sulu Sea.

Sabah itself is home to lush tropical rainforests, wonderful sandy beaches, the breathtaking Mount Kinabalu, and a biodiversity of Marine and Wildlife like no other. This includes Borneo's Native and most famous resident – the Orang-Utan! Sabah is one of the last places on earth that you can see these remarkable creatures in their natural habitat.

"I would advise anyone and everyone to go to Borneo, Malaysia!"
Elena Cook



THE SEPILOK ORANG-UTAN REHABILITATION CENTRE

This project is based in two locations; At Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre and at the Nature Interpretation Centre of the Shangri La's Rasa Ria Resort. You will be based at both locations during your placement but the majority of your time will be spent at Sepilok Centre.

Please note that this project is a two-month project only, and that there are fixed start dates. This is a very popular project and gets filled very quickly, so we advise that you reserve your place as soon as possible. If the project is full during the period you want, we can put you on a waiting list in case there are any cancellations.

SEPILOK CENTRE:

The Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre is situated on the east coast of Sabah, 23 km from Sandakan (the famous Sepilok Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre). The Centre is run by the Sabah Wildlife Department. A 20-minute drive from Sandakan brings you to Kabili-Sepilok Forest, an enormous area of virgin rainforest. The wealth of indigenous and rare plants, animals and birds that have found sanctuary here must be seen to be believed.

The Wildlife Reserve contains the Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Centre. Here, more than 4500 hectares of jungle has been designated for these gentle, shy and charming creatures.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SEPILOK CENTRE:

In brief, the Rehabilitation Centre rescues abandoned, injured or orphaned Orang-Utans, as well as liberating animals from captivity. Owing an Orang-Utan as a pet is strictly forbidden, but this doesn't stop some people penning them up and mistreating them. The Rehabilitation Centre also rescues these animals, which are usually disease-ridden and sometimes injured as well.

Once it has rescued an animal, it treats its injuries and nurses it back to full fitness and health. Often the animals, particularly any orphaned babies, have to be taught how to fend for themselves and survive in the Wild. Once it's been taught how to climb and forage for food, it is usually released into the surrounding forest. For a while the animals often come back to the Centre to get 'free meals' until such time as it is totally at home in the forest. When the Rangers deem the time is right, they recapture the animal, sedate it and then relocate it deep into the wild.

Rehabilitation programmes are ultimately aimed at returning former captive animals to the wild, in a way which enhances protection of the species as a whole and not just the welfare of individual animals. The centre has been open since 1964 and has successfully rehabilitated over 100 Orang-Utans.

Staff are very serious about their work and will expect you to demonstrate the same commitment. It costs over £1000 to rehabilitate an Orang-Utan for one year and the process can take between seven and nine years to complete.

While Orang-Utan rehabilitation is still the primary goal at Sepilok, present aims also include:

- Public education on conservation,
- Research and assistance to other endangered species such as captive breeding of the rare and endangered rhinoceros.

STAFF: This centre is under the supervision of approximately 24 staff, including a Wildlife Officer who is also officer-in-charge of the centre, a veterinary doctor, wildlife rangers and general workers.

FACILITIES: The centre has a reception centre, information centre and video centre for tourists, offices for wildlife staff, an animal clinic, quarantine area and enclosures for various animals such as the rhinoceros.

NATURE INTERPRETATION CENTRE:

The Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort is situated approximately one hours drive north of Sabah's capital, Kota Kinabalu. The nature reserve, encompassing 64 acres, was established in 1996 in collaboration with the Sabah Wildlife Department, aimed primarily at nature conservation and orang-utan rehabilitation, with research, study and education of secondary importance. The Nature Interpretation Centre is set in the grounds of the Shangri La resort, a 5* hotel catering for luxury holidays in Sabah.

YOUR WORK RESPONSIBILITIES: SEPILOK

Specific duties may vary depending on what is required at the time. During your placement at Sepilok it is likely that you will;

- 1) Learn about Orang-Utan Husbandry Management by working in both the Indoor and Outdoor Nursery.
- 2) Learn about Orang-Utan Paediatric and Veterinary Care.
- 3) Conduct a Field Survey on the Orang-Utan population in Sepilok reserve.
- 4) Conduct a Nocturnal Animal survey.
- 5) Conduct an extended Orang-Utan and Nocturnal Animal Survey in areas deeper into the forest reserve.

1) Orang-Utan husbandry:

The Indoor Nursery

This area looks after the infants, from just a few months to around four years old. It consists of three outdoor cages, one for each age group. The babies stay in the sleeping area. About five staff work in the Indoor nursery.

Possible duties include;

- Transfer of the Infant Orang-Utan from the Sleeping cages to the playing cages.



- Cleaning the Sleeping area
- Preparation of food for the infants (peeling bananas, making formula milk)
- Feeding the babies bottled formula drink
- Distributing bananas to the infant Orang-Utans
- Caring for the sick infants
- Transferring Orang-Utans back to the Sleeping cages
- Cleaning the Indoor nursery area

The Outdoor Nursery

This area is home to the Juveniles, generally aged between five and eight years old. These Orang-Utans are fed at the nursery and on the tourist platform. Their food is taken to different platforms to ensure that they learn to search for their food. This ensures the Orang-Utan do not become reliant on food being at a particular platform each day. There are two members of staff in the Outdoor nursery. Possible duties include;

- Collecting the bananas from the storeroom and taking them via wheelbarrow to the nursery.
- Sweeping leaves from surrounding paths and clearing nursery area.
- Feeding Bananas to orang-utans at the outdoor nursery.
- Assisting the rangers by carrying bananas to the tourist platform (done twice daily)
- Completing an observation sheet on Orang-Utans who attended the feeding platform (done twice daily).

When working in this area there is plenty of time for observation of the orang-utans in their natural surroundings.

2) Orang-Utan Paediatric and Veterinary care: Here you will be required to assist the veterinarian in the treatment of sick Orang-Utans. You will help assess the daily health status of any sick Orang-Utan's as well as recording data on the treatments given.

3) Field Survey within Sepilok Reserve: With the assistance of a ranger, you will be required to undertake an observation of the Orang-Utan population within the 4500 Hectare reserve. You will receive a lecture on the methodology of observation and data recording prior to the commencement of the task.

You will be required to count and record the number of individual Orang-Utan sightings as well as the number of nests throughout the Sepilok forest area. Similar duties will also be carried out for individual platforms where you will be required to note the number of Orang-Utans, sex ratios, and where possible, identify individual Orang-Utans from their ID number or name.

You may also take part in a small mammal survey, looking at the small mammal population throughout the reserve to gain a general picture of the eco system that the reserve is supporting.

4) Nocturnal Animal Survey: Volunteers will take part in a Nocturnal Animal Survey along pre-determined transects within the reserve. This is a night walk that is carried out over two nights. You will be required to observe and collect data on nocturnal animals within the reserve through direct sightings. This is an opportunity to observe animals and birds that you may not otherwise see in the daylight.

5) Extended Orang-Utan and Nocturnal Survey: Volunteers will also undertake an extended Orang-Utan survey (in the daylight hours) and a Nocturnal Orang-Utan survey in areas further into the Sepilok forest reserve. Rangers will conduct basic jungle survival skills.

The groups, which incorporate the activities above, may also include activities such as enrichment, play and climbing exercise with the Orang-Utans. The tasks that you are asked to do, no matter how small, will help to improve the day to day life for these Orang-Utans - you will gain great satisfaction knowing that you have contributed to this. Your help is needed in all areas, and duties could range from feeding the babies milk to helping the rangers conduct surveys in the jungle.

As you can see from the above outline, work will be both hands on and conservation based and you will be required to work hard during your placement. At times you will be supervised by staff at the centre, at other times you will be required to



work independently. Work will be done on a rotational basis, with different groups of volunteers working within each of the different departments, split between Sepilok and the Nature Interpretation Centre.

YOUR WORK RESPONSIBILITIES: RASA RIA

The Nature Reserve at the Rasa Ria has its very own Orang-Utan Rehabilitation Programme. This is the only one of its kind on the west coast of the state of Sabah, with Sepilok Rehabilitation Centre in Sandakan on the East Coast of the state being the main Orang-Utan rehabilitation centre in the country.

The Nature Reserve offers a tantalising glimpse into Borneo's secondary forests, enriched with environmental treasures and nature at its best. This concept, the first of its kind in Sabah, is definitive of the resort's commitment and contribution towards sustainable environmental conservation amidst expansive tourism development in the state and country. It gives visitors the opportunity to learn about Orang-Utan's and the issues affecting their survival.

Work at the Nature Interpretation Centre is split into 4 main areas:

- **Nature Co-ordinator:** The Nature Co-ordinators are responsible for taking bookings, greeting guests, selling tickets and souvenirs and conducting briefings.
- **Animal Curators:** The Animal Curators are responsible for the care of all the animals in the reserve.
- **Field Rangers:** The Field Rangers escort tourists on the numerous trails in the forest. This is a chance for the guests to learn about the various flora and fauna in the nature reserve.
- **Gardeners:** The gardeners are responsible for the care and upkeep of the forest garden.

During your two month project you will spend 9 days working at the Nature Interpretation Centre within the Shangri La Resort, where you'll work in each of the areas above, apart from in the role of 'nature co-ordinator'. Transport to and from the Nature Interpretation Centre (located near Kota Kinabalu) is provided.



WORKING HOURS:

Working hours at both Sepilok and the Rasa Ria may vary – you need to be flexible and adaptable in your work.

ACCOMMODATION:

Accommodation at Sepilok will be in the nearby **Sepilok Rest House**. This is a privately run Bed and Breakfast which comprises basic but clean facilities. The **Sepilok Rest House** is located at the entrance to the Orang-Utan centre and just a few minutes walk from here takes you to the edge of the tropical virgin rainforest and a wide expanse of lush jungle.

Volunteers are required to share rooms (usually two or three to a room) and food will be provided at the rest house. The owner (Mr Chong) and his staff are very friendly and will ensure that you are made to feel at home!

During your time spent at the Nature Interpretation Centre you will stay in accommodation in the nearby town of Tuaran, around 15 minutes away from the Rasa Ria by bicycle. The Rasa Ria is a 5* hotel, set between forested hills and a long sweep of a 3 km long, untouched, pristine beach, washed by the South China Sea.

Malaysia has lovely weather all year round with lots of sunshine and you will have some time during your free days to explore the local region and visit some of the tourist attractions.

ARRIVAL: YOUR INDUCTION INTO THE COUNTRY

When you arrive you will be met at the airport by our Malaysia Manager and you will spend several days in Kota Kinabalu prior to leaving for your placement. This time will be a familiarisation period so that you can learn about the country and its culture, as well as useful information like how to use the phones, transport system etc. During this time you will also receive an Induction with the Sabah Wildlife Department.



The schedule for your first week is planned as follows;

FRIDAY: Depart UK

SATURDAY: Arrive Kota Kinabalu

SUNDAY: Induction with Travellers Organiser, Mr Albert Aseh. You will be briefed on general information about Malaysia.

MONDAY: Commence project with the Sabah Wildlife Department. Here you will be given an induction to, and training on, local customs and teamwork.

TUESDAY: Training will continue. In the evening there will be a Welcome Dinner for all volunteers commencing projects with Sabah Wildlife Department.

WEDNESDAY: You will go to the airport in time to catch the flight from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan. From Sandakan you will be transferred to your placement at Sepilok and will have time to settle into your accommodation.

THURSDAY: You will be taken on a tour of Sandakan and will have a chance to familiarise yourself with the local area.

FRIDAY: You will be taken around Sepilok Orang-Utan centre. Here you will be given some in-house training and introduced to key personnel.

SATURDAY: Your induction at Sepilok will continue. At the end of this you will have a BBQ dinner with the Staff at Sepilok.

SUNDAY: Free Day, work at Sepilok will commence the following day.

This is a provisional structure and may be subject to change. However it should give you a good idea of the activities planned for your first week.

Our projects in Malaysia (particularly the Orang-Utan centre) are very popular and you are sure to have a wonderful time during your stay in Sabah, but you need to reserve your place early if you want to be sure of availability.

NOTES ABOUT THE ORANG UTAN PROJECT

- 1) All projects are for a fixed period of two months and departures are every two months or thereabouts.
- 2) All volunteers must arrive in time for the induction with Travellers Organiser (dates will be specified by Travellers). Unfortunately late arrivals cannot be accepted onto the project.
- 3) Prices include food, accommodation, transport to and from the airport and internal return flight to Sandakan. Prices do not include International airfares.
- 4) The following are planned to take place during your placement at Sepilok, but are subject to confirmation and individual elements may change:
 - Welcome and Farewell Dinners
 - An Excursion to Guamatong Cave including guided tour and overnight stay
 - Sandakan Tour around places of local interest.
 - Batu Puteh homestay programme (involving an overnight stay in a rural village).
 - A Travellers T- Shirt (to be worn for work)
 - Adoption of your own Orang-Utan for one year, including photos and a certificate. Details of the Orang-Utan that has been adopted for you will be sent to you prior to your departure.

VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK: SEPILOK ORANG-UTAN CENTRE

The following is an account from an ex volunteer. She did not experience some of the activities that you may be involved with, such as trekking into the jungle or conducting field surveys. Her work was mainly hands on and the duties described under "typical day" are mainly for work within the indoor nursery.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE

NAME: Janice Wallace

AGE: 28

NATIONALITY: British

Experience Wanted

To experience living in a different country and culture and to know that I have helped to re-introduce these animals back into their natural environment.

Experience Gained

This project allowed me to be involved in the early stages of rehabilitating orphaned Orang-Utans. I learnt how to handle them, teach them to climb ropes, small trees and encourage them to go into bushes to build nests. From the direct contact I had with them I was able to identify individuals by either their markings or from their behaviour. To work this close to Orang-Utans is an experience in itself, as you would only get this close to one in a zoo which is far from their natural habitat.

This whole project has given me the chance to work with many different people some of whom were from a different culture. I learned to live and work with other volunteers and made some very good friends. By being in



Malaysia I was able to pick up basic Malay language, learn about their country and culture, visit many places and try out local cuisine.

General comments on the Sepilok programme

The programme run for volunteers at Sepilok is very well managed. On initially arriving at the centre you are shown video footage of the work carried out at Sepilok and the various stages of rehabilitation. You work alongside members of staff who have been involved at the centre for many years and have a lot of knowledge. The work is very hard but very rewarding and time just flies by. They are very trusting people and give you quite a lot of responsibility as well as various opportunities to visit some of the outdoor platforms. The volunteer programme allows regular staff to be freed from smaller jobs and concentrate more on working with the Orang-Utans.

The best thing about my Trip Overall

Outside of my placement the best thing about my overall trip was being able to enjoy and explore Sabah. Sabah has so many things to offer such as climbing Mount Kinabalu, observing wildlife along Sungai Kinabatangan and whether I was diving or just snorkeling there was so much marine life to see. My best moment would have to be when Laura and I reached the summit of Mount Kinabalu in time to watch the sun rise.

The best thing about my placement at Sepilok

The best thing about Sepilok was being able to work so close to the Orang-Utans and know that at the same time you are helping them prepare for their eventual release into forest life. A particularly memorable time was when we managed to get our first Orang-Utan to climb the rope and make it all the way to the other end and down the tree. It was so rewarding to see.

What I learnt from this experience

I learnt that the main threat to Orang-Utans is from human activity, in the form of destruction of their habitat for logging and conversion of forests to Palm oil plantations and farmlands. Poaching of Orang-Utans and forest fires has also been a major threat. All the above coupled with their slow reproduction rates makes the Orang-Utan a highly endangered species. I wasn't aware till I worked at Sepilok that Palm oil was used in so many everyday products such as shampoos, soaps, cooking oil and cosmetics. While there is a high demand for such oil more forests will be destroyed which directly effects the Orang-Utan.

It takes the centre approximately 5 years to rehabilitate an Orang-Utan to forest life. All their basic skills have to be taught to them by staff since they do not have a mother to learn from. They spend a couple of years at the nursery and then begin to progress to various outdoor platforms in the jungle until they are able to stay in the forest on their own. At the time of my placement there were 33 orphaned Orang-Utans, 7 were due to be taken to the first outdoor platform where they would learn new skills. My time at Sepilok has taught me how important the work they carry out is and the need for conserving the Orang-Utan and its rainforest.

Would you recommend this placement to anyone else?

I would highly recommend a placement at Sepilok. The opportunities there are amazing and Sabah itself is a beautiful place with lots to see and do. Not only will you gain experience with working with the Orang-Utans, you get to meet so many people and immerse yourself into the Malaysian culture.

What type of person would this placement suit?

The type of person that would be suited to this project would have to be an animal/nature lover or like being involved in conservation work. They would also need to be adaptable to a different way of life, work ethics and flexible in working routines. The project is very physically demanding so they would need to be prepared to get stuck in, get dirty and not be too squeamish.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO MALAYSIA

The majority of tourists visit peninsular Malaysia, but a trip to Sabah, over on the island of Borneo will be truly unforgettable. Sabah itself is home to lush tropical rainforests, wonderful sandy beaches, the breathtaking Mount Kinabalu, and a biodiversity of Marine and Wildlife like no other.

Malaysian Borneo is free from some of the hassles that can be encountered in other parts of Asia. Its laid back charm and elegant beauty make any stay in this colourful and exotic country worthwhile.



Currency: Malaysian Ringgit (RM)

- Big Mac costs about £1
- Can of Coke – 20p
- Reasonably good Malaysian meal - £2
- SUGGESTED POCKET MONEY - £160 per month (approx)

Malaysia's position in the tropics means that it is both hot and humid all year round. There is no bad time to visit – the monsoon season is between October and January, but at this time the short but heavy downpours can prove to be a welcome relief!

The rest of the year sees endless days of sunshine with temperatures averaging 28 – 32 Degrees Celsius.

THE NEXT STEP

If you would like to join us on one of our exciting projects then please fill in either an online application form at our website (www.travellersworldwide.com) or one that is attached to our brochure. Once you have booked and confirmed your place we will send you detailed pack information regarding your placement and country.



I do hope you join us and please do call or email if you have any questions at all about this or any of our other projects – 01903 502595 or email info@travellersworldwide.com

If you would like to know more about Travellers in general, or about any of our other projects we run in over 18 countries worldwide, please visit our website at www.travellersworldwide.com

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