

Malaysia

The Malay Peninsula

2022

13-25 February (13 days)

Small group tour with Colin Bushell & Lee Kok Chung



Green Broadbill is one of the stunning birds we will hope to find at Taman Negara © Lee Kok Chung

Malaysia Birding Tours with Limosa Holidays

Our birding tour to the Malay Peninsula offers a superb introduction to the amazing birdlife of Southeast Asia. Taking in three of the country's top birding sites, we begin at Shah Alam and the coastal mangroves of Kuala Selangor before moving into the tropical montane forests that surround the old colonial hill stations of Fraser's Hill and Bukit Tinggi. Another highlight of our Malaysia birdwatching tour is a four-night stay amidst the pristine jungles of Taman Negara National Park, a vast tract of lowland rainforest and a treasure house of hornbills, trogons, broadbills and pittas.

Highlights

- Join us for some of the finest tropical birding in all Asia.
- It is the start of the breeding season in Malaysia and also a good time of year for migrants.
- The coast for Hooded and Blue-winged Pittas, Buffy Fish Owl, Mangrove Blue Flycatcher.
- 3 nights birding in the tropical highland forests at famous Fraser's Hill.
- Fire-tufted Barbet, Blue Nuthatch, Malayan Laughingthrush, Malayan Whistling Thrush.
- A night at Bukit Tinggi seeking Mountain Peacock-pheasant and Ferruginous Partridge.
- Four nights amid the bird-rich lowland rainforests of Taman Negara National Park.
- A wealth of pheasants, pittas, woodpeckers, trogons, broadbills and hornbills.
- Expertly led by Limosa's Colin Bushell and Malaysian bird guide Lee Kok Chung.

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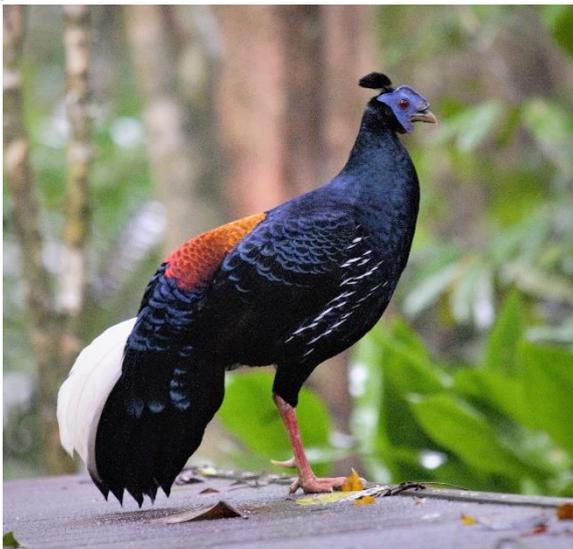
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Black-and-yellow Broadbill © Lee Kok Chung

What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert English-speaking Malaysian bird tourguide
- 10 nights accommodation in Malaysia, at comfortable tourist hotels and chalet lodges
- All main meals - with drinking water provided during the day
- Minibus transport, switching to travel by boats at Taman Negara
- All excursions, entry fees, tour-based tips (local guides, driver, boatmen etc) and taxes



Crested Fireback © Lee Kok Chung

Outline Itinerary

Days 1-2

We fly to Kuala Lumpur (arrival afternoon day two) followed by a short transfer to our first hotel. Night Shah Alam

Day 3

Early start at botanical gardens. Late afternoon coastal birding at Kuala Selangor. Night Kuala Selangor

Day 4

After a morning at the coast, we travel inland to Fraser's Hill (3 nights)

Days 5-6

The montane forests of Fraser's Hill

Day 7

Morning at Fraser's Hill, then drive to Bukit Tinggi. Night Bukit Tinggi

Day 8

Early morning at Bukit Tinggi for Mountain Peacock-pheasant. Late morning we head to the lowland rainforests of Taman Negara National Park. Taman Negara (4 nights)

Days 9-11

Taman Negara National Park

Day 12

Final morning at Taman Negara and return to Kuala Lumpur. Fly to UK

Day 13

Morning arrival in UK

Tour Overview

The tropical forests of the Malay Peninsula shelter one of the most exotic faunas on Earth: equatorial treasure houses that resound to the unfamiliar cries of pheasants, barbets and pittas, and the whooping of gibbons. Add an astonishing array of other birds and wildlife, good accommodations and the Malay Peninsula's generally excellent tourist infrastructure and there can be few more alluring birdwatching destinations.

Our birding starts with a visit to the botanical gardens at Shah Alam which are home to some special winter migrants including the exquisite Hooded and Blue-winged Pittas. We have had superb views of both species here on our recent tours!

Not far away, the coastal mudflats and mangroves at Kuala Selangor provide a gentle introduction to some of the commoner Southeast Asian birds. This bird-rich area is also home to several localised species, including Buffy Fish Owl, Mangrove Whistler and Mangrove Blue Flycatcher.

As the coastal humidity begins to rise, we will escape inland to the cooler hill-forests of Fraser's Hill, one of Malaysia's attractive old 'hill stations'. Here we will search for some of the region's most enticing birds from shy endemics like Malayan Laughingthrush and Malayan Whistling Thrush to upland specialities such as Mountain Scops Owl, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Mountain Bulbul, Blue Nuthatch, Red-bearded Bee-eater and Fire-tufted Barbet.

Introduced to our itinerary for the first time in 2019, we will again enjoy an early morning at Bukit Tinggi, where we have a great chance of seeing the sought-after Mountain Peacock-pheasant and the richly coloured Ferruginous Partridge. This is currently the best site to see these two species anywhere and, with patience and a little luck, we will hopefully get super views!

Crowning it all, our tour concludes with a four-night stay at the heart of one of Southeast Asia's finest national parks: Taman Negara. Set within a vast tract of pristine lowland rainforest, our splendid lodgings give us access to a network of forest trails and waterways, which offer a wealth of fabulous bird and wildlife experiences.

Although shy and elusive, it is at Taman Negara that we can hope to see the gorgeous Crested Fireback. The Great Argus is another thrilling pheasant possibility and, as we search for them both, many more of Malaysia's forest jewels will hopefully come our way: Malayan Banded and Garnet Pittas perhaps, Raffles's Malkoha, plus upto four species of trogon, five kinds of broadbill and seven huge and impressive hornbills!

From time to time, a surge of excited calls signals the approach of a 'bird wave' and we will suddenly find ourselves surrounded by a frenzy of avian activity. With luck, we might even encounter the peculiar Rail-babbler, while a host of shy forest mammals and exotic butterflies, among them the spectacular Rajah Brooke's Birdwing, contrive to distract us. At the end of each day, we can relax in the comfort of our air-conditioned rooms, with welcoming showers and a delicious evening meal to look forward to.



Garnet Pitta is one of the amazing species we will hope to find at Taman Negara © Lee Kok Chung

Lee Kok Chung is our local expert in Malaysia, a highly talented and very experienced tour leader, who has led this tour for us since its return in 2016. His eyesight and hearing are astounding, as is his knowledge of good local restaurants and you will also find he is good fun, too! 'Mr Lee' leads all of our tours to Malaysia and Borneo in conjunction with Limosa's own expert guide **Colin Bushell**.

Daily Itinerary

Days 1- 2

FLY TO KUALA LUMPUR

Our birdwatching tour to the Malay Peninsula begins with an overnight flight to Kuala Lumpur, where we arrive on the afternoon of day two.

Our local guide Mr Lee and drivers will be waiting to meet us and we make a short journey north to our hotel at Shah Alam for dinner and an overnight stay. *Night Shah Alam*

Day 3

SHAH ALAM & KUALA SELANGOR

At the nearby botanical gardens at Shah Alam, we will have a gentle introduction to some of the more widespread species, however, our 'target bird' here is the fine Hooded Pitta which winters in the gardens. If we are fortunate, we might also find a Blue-winged Pitta having been successful on recent trips. In local parks, we have a chance of seeing the noble Barred Eagle Owl and any of these fantastic birds would ensure our birding gets off to a flying start!

After lunch, we head northwest for about an hour to reach the coast at Kuala Selangor, where after checking in at our hotel and perhaps a brief siesta, we will visit local rice fields that host hundreds of egrets and swarms of swiftlets.

For those with energy and enthusiasm to spare, we will offer an optional short outing after dinner in the hopes of finding Buffy Fish Owl or Large-tailed Nightjar. *Night Kuala Selangor*

Day 4

KUALA SELANGOR TO FRASER'S HILL

The heat and humidity build rapidly on the Malaysian coast so we will want to make the most of the cool hours of the early morning for a return visit to Kuala Selangor. With its extensive mangroves and brackish swamps, this pleasant coastal wetland is home to a very different range of birds and mammals to those we are likely to see elsewhere. Our first Pink-necked Green Pigeons, Coppersmith Barbets, Blue-tailed Bee-eaters and Asian Glossy Starlings should await us at the Kuala Selangor Nature Park which is a splendid mangrove reserve at the mouth of the Selangor River. The large and imposing Buffy Fish Owl also occurs in the area but we will have to get there early!

Brahminy Kites and White-bellied Sea Eagles often soar in the skies above the fishing village, where an excellent boardwalk leads out through the mangroves. From this, we have chances of seeing several specialist mangrove species, including Chestnut-bellied Malkoha, the lovely Mangrove Blue Flycatcher and the more sombre Mangrove Whistler, along with Black-capped and Stork-billed Kingfishers, Common Flameback, Laced Woodpecker and Brown-throated Sunbird. Smooth-coated Otters and Long-tailed Macaques, as well as the much scarcer Silvered Leaf Monkey, can also sometimes be seen. If our visit coincides with low tide, there may be waders on the mud along with gesturing Fiddler Crabs and several kinds of mudskipper.

After a lovely lunch near the banks of the river, we will make a quick check of the local mudflats (hoping that the tide is not too far out) looking for waders such as Lesser and Greater Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpiper and Red-necked Stint.

Leaving the coast, our journey takes us northeast past Selangor Dam, where we stop to look for Rufous-bellied Swallow. By late afternoon, we should be climbing up into the Genting Highlands to arrive at one of Malaysia's best-loved birding spots, Fraser's Hill, for the start of a three-night stay. *Night Fraser's Hill*

Days 5 - 6 FRASER'S HILL

Fraser's Hill is a former colonial hill station, established by the British to escape the stifling heat of Malaysia's coastal lowlands. Set amidst the Peninsula's cooler montane forest and with magnificent views into the surrounding hills, it is a delightful location in which to seek out a wealth of bird species that are restricted to Malaysia's central highlands.

Lured into the forest by the 'Siren songs' of Siamangs and White-handed Gibbons, the range of species to be found here is indeed impressive! We will bird at a leisurely pace along roads and forest trails at elevations between c.820-1320 metres (2700-4300ft). Especially at the higher levels, birds tend to remain active throughout the day and our time should be filled with such treats as Dark Hawk-cuckoo, Collared Owlet, Fire-tufted and Black-browed Barbets, Greater Yellow-nape, Long-tailed Broadbill, Black-and-crimson Oriole, Common Green Magpie, Golden Babbler, Chestnut-capped and Malayan Laughingthrushes, Silver-eared Mesia, Blyth's and Black-eared Shrike-babblers, Chestnut-crowned and Yellow-bellied Warblers, Little Pied and Rufous-browed Flycatchers, and the energetic Streaked Spiderhunter... With luck, and an early start, we might also come across Malayan Whistling Thrush, a scarce and retiring endemic.

From the extensive network of forest trails, we have chances of finding the elusive Malaysian Partridge, Rusty-naped Pitta, Yellow-vented Pigeon and Blue Nuthatch. All forest birding requires a combination of skill, patience and luck, but with Mr Lee's local knowledge and amazing hearing, our chances of success are greatly increased. One evening we will head out hoping to see Brown Wood Owl, Grey Nightjar and perhaps a Mountain Scops Owl calling, although actually getting to see one is rather of these is more of a challenge! *Nights Fraser's Hill*

Day 7

FRASER'S HILL TO BUKIT TINGGI

We will spend a final morning at Fraser's Hill, picking off some of the few remaining new birds. 'Feeding stations' are often frequented by Rufous-browed and Mugimaki Flycatchers and Large Niltavas with the males brilliant in their cobalt-blue plumage.

Understated Buff-breasted Babblers sneak out from the vegetation but Streaked and Pygmy Wren-babblers are rather more loathed to do so.

After lunch, we return to the hotel and load up for the two-hour drive to another hilltop resort - Bukit Tinggi. This will be our base for one night in readiness for an early morning start tomorrow near the Japanese Garden. *Night Bukit Tinggi*

Day 8

BUKIT TINGGI TO TAMAN NEGARA

Rising early, we will have a quick snack and drive to an area near the Japanese Garden, then walk out to a viewing area in readiness for two ‘five-star’ birds. Over the past few years, birders visiting Bukit Tinggi have been able to see the highly sought-after Mountain Peacock-pheasant and richly coloured Ferruginous Partridge. Whilst both are normally very elusive and hardly ever seen, here they often come to a feeding area here and show off their splendour! We have a good chance of seeing both before returning for a late breakfast and our drive to Taman Negara.



Mountain Peacock-pheasant, photographed on our February 2019 visit to Bukit Tinggi © tour participant Jo Latham

We head first towards Krau Forest Reserve and nearby wetlands. The sedge-fringed lakes may hold Yellow Bittern and the surrounding trees offer us the opportunity for the huge-billed Golden-whiskered Barbet and Oriental Pied Hornbill. In the forest, we also have our first chance of Garnet and Malayan Banded Pittas, plus many bulbuls and Whiskered Treeswifts.

We will aim to arrive at Kuala Tahan, headquarters of the Taman Negara National Park, in the late afternoon and in good time to settle into our comfortable air-conditioned chalets at Taman Negara Mutiara Resort, which will be our base for the next four nights. *Night Taman Negara*

Days 9 - 11

TAMAN NEGARA NATIONAL PARK

Each day we will set off to explore the excellent system of forest trails close to our lodgings, or take short boat rides out along the Sungei Tahan. If we can locate a fruiting tree, we will find this welcome as the short-lived food supply draws innumerable frugivores including pigeons, hornbills, barbets and bulbuls. While many of the park’s birds and mammals can be difficult to observe in the depths of the forest, our extended stay at Taman Negara allows ample time to try for them. Whatever we see, the birding here is always exciting and over the coming days we are in for a real treat!

Walking within Taman Negara’s immense, timeless forests is a humbling experience. Largely unchanged for millions of years, the forest giants which tower up to 50 metres above our heads dominate this environment. Birds are everywhere in the forest, but often occur at surprisingly low densities or rove in mixed feeding flocks, so we may go some time before actually seeing one!

As we gradually become accustomed to birding within the forest however we will start to realise that there is always something to watch from the endless processions of termites to a plethora of beautiful butterflies. We should also come across a fascinating range of mammals, among them perhaps Dusky Leaf Monkey, Greater Treeshrew and the beautiful Prevost's Squirrel. Taman Negara is home to many of Malaysia's larger mammals too but the likes of Asian Elephant, Tiger and Malayan Tapir are retiring and only rarely observed.

Despite the many distractions, birds will always be uppermost in our minds. Lesser Fish Eagle, Black-thighed Falconet, Thick-billed Green Pigeon, Mountain Imperial Pigeon, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot, Plaintive Cuckoo, Square-tailed Drongo-cuckoo, Raffles's, Black-bellied and Red-billed Malkohas, Malaysian Eared Nightjar, Silver-rumped Spinetail, Brown-backed Needletail and the lovely Blue-banded Kingfisher are amongst the many species we could see. As Red-throated and Golden-whiskered Barbets 'chok' monotonously away from the lofty forest canopy, there are also more than fifteen different woodpeckers to look for including the huge Great Slaty as well as White-bellied, Crimson-winged and the amazing Orange-backed. Then there are all those fabulous broadbills to enjoy: Black-and-yellow, Black-and-red, Banded and Green.

Spectacular pheasants are well represented at Taman Negara. We should hear the loud resonant calls of Great Argus on a daily basis but despite this bird's enormous size, actually seeing one is remarkably difficult! Exquisite Crested Firebacks are usually a little easier, with small parties emerging to feed on the trails in the early mornings.

Trogon invariably feature high on everyone's list of personal favourites, as a sudden burst of vivid colour betrays the presence of Scarlet-rumped, Diard's or Red-naped. Above them, parties of hornbills crash through the upper branches in search of fruiting figs; Black, Rhinoceros, Helmeted and White-crowned Hornbills are among eight species present at Taman Negara.

This is one of the best places to hear the loud and beautiful song of the Straw-headed Bulbul, sadly now a rare riverine species which is seriously threatened by the cage-bird trade.

Down on the shady forest floor, handsome Garnet and Malayan Banded Pittas are among several of these jewel-like terrestrial species to watch for during our stay, although these are invariably tricky to find. Dressed in more subtle shades, Taman Negara's babblers include Abbott's and Chestnut-winged, Fluffy-backed and Pin-striped Tit-Babblers. And we haven't even started on the plethora of sunbirds, bulbuls and other small birds that await us, while an evening's 'owling' adds the prospect of Brown Hawk Owl, along with Gould's and Blyth's Frogmouths. *Three nights Taman Negara*

Day 12

KUALA LUMPUR, FLY TO UK

We will enjoy a final morning of birding at Taman Negara before leaving this wonderful National Park and travelling back to Kuala Lumpur.

After enjoying an evening meal at a local restaurant, we return to the airport, say farewell to Mr Lee and board our late evening flight home.

Day 13

ARRIVAL UK

Morning arrival in the UK, where our birding tour to the Malay Peninsula concludes.

Trip Information

Group Size 10 participants & 2 leaders

What To Expect A 13 day, small group birdwatching tour to the Malay Peninsula visiting three top sites: coastal Kuala Selangor, the highland forests at Fraser's Hill /Bukit Tinggi and the pristine tropical rainforests of Taman Negara National Park.

As with all wildlife tours to the tropics, be prepared for early starts, getting out in the field at daybreak, typically followed by a siesta during the hottest and least 'birdy' part of the day before venturing out again mid-late afternoon.

This is primarily a birding tour but with good all-round wildlife interest, including several primates and an array of butterflies.

Birds 275-325 species

Mammals 10-20 species

Accommodation 10 nights accommodation in Malaysia staying in good tourist hotels at Shah Alam, Kuala Selangor, Fraser's Hill and Bukit Tinggi, and in comfortable air-conditioned chalets at Taman Negara. All rooms with private facilities.

Meals All main meals (and drinking water provided during the day) are included in the tour price, commencing with dinner in Malaysia on Day 2 and concluding with a sit-down evening meal on Day 12 prior to the flight home.

Meals at Shah Alam, Kuala Selangor and Fraser's Hill will usually be taken at local restaurants; meals at Taman Negara will be taken at the hotel. The food on this tour is delicious, both for meat-eaters and vegetarians alike!

Walking Walks are taken at a gentle pace, mostly along quiet roadsides and forest trails. At Taman Negara these are on slightly raised boardwalks, with stepped sections in places. One forest trail is accessed by a steep path that can be muddy underfoot. Some mornings we may be on our feet for up to five hours, so you might find a walking stick seat handy. At Taman Negara, some of our birding is by boat along forested waterways.

Comfortable shoes or walking boots with corrugated soles for grip are recommended.

Weather Tropical climate. Although hot and humid (28-35°C/ 82-95F) in the lowlands, for much of the time we will be in the shade of the forest. Generally cooler and more pleasant early and late in the day, and in the highlands at Fraser's Hill (15-25C/59-77F), falling to below 10C/50F at night). February/March is the 'dry season' but rainfall can and does occur year round in the rainforest, particularly during the afternoons at Fraser's Hill.



Rufous-collared Kingfisher is one of the species we hope to see at Taman Negara © Lee Kok Chung

Flights Due to the pandemic, it is proving extremely difficult to predict future flight prices and schedules, especially when a trip is scheduled for beyond the period when flights can be booked. As a result, we have taken the decision to price our holidays as excluding all international flights.

To keep the process as simple as possible for our clients, however, we are now working closely with an agent from Travel Counsellors who will be able to advise you on which flights we are recommending for each holiday and he will be able to book these for you.

Ground Transport By air-conditioned minibus. At Taman Negara National Park (where there are no roads) we travel by boat and on foot.

Insects As one would expect, *mosquitoes* are present in the coastal mangroves (bring repellent and cover up with long sleeves and trousers) but urban and coastal areas of Malaysia are declared free from malaria.

Leeches: expect to encounter leeches in the forests at Krau and Taman Negara. Although harmless, their presence can sometimes be distracting! Insect repellent applied to your footwear and lower leg area can be effective in keeping them at bay but the effect is of course quickly lost if boots become wet or muddied. We recommend that you bring with you a pair of 'leech socks' which will prevent leeches reaching the skin on your feet and lower legs. Leech socks are available from various specialist suppliers in the UK, such as the Oriental Bird Club.

Tour Cost

2022 (13 days):

Land only cost: £3695

Deposit: £500

Single Supp: £750

Cost includes:

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert English-speaking Malaysian bird guide
- 10 nights accommodation in Malaysia
- All main meals (with drinking water provided)
- Minibus transport
- Travel by boat within Taman Negara NP
- All excursions, entry fees, permits, tour-based tips (inc. local drivers and guides) and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds

Cost excludes:

International flights, Insurance, airport meals/snacks, drinks & items of a personal nature. Camera fees at Taman Negara (although the cost is minimal).

About Your Guides

Colin Bushell: Colin is a principal Limosa guide who lives near Spurn in East Yorkshire. Colin works as both a professional bird tour guide and freelance ornithologist for ecological consultancies.

His first forays into overseas birding were to Majorca, Austria, Greece and Morocco, before the draw of the tropics became irresistible and since then Colin has travelled widely in Africa, Central and South America and throughout Asia amassing many years of tour leading experience.

Lee Kok Chung 'Mr Lee' is our resident English-speaking wildlife expert in Malaysia and a very experienced bird tour guide. His eyesight and hearing are astounding and you will find he is good fun too! Lee co-led our 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2020 tours to the Malay Peninsula as well as our 2017, 2018 and 2019 trips to Borneo.

What You Say...

"Lee has astounding ability to locate birds. Brian is an excellent tour leader: funny, engaging, caring and endlessly patient. The pair looked after us supremely well."

NW, Malay Peninsula tour



Buffy Fish Owl is one of the species we will hope to find in the early days of our trip © Lee Kok Chung

How To Enquire

Due to the considerable uncertainty created by the pandemic, Limosa Holidays are not currently accepting bookings for any trips, however, you are welcome to contact us either by email or phone to register your interest in any of our holidays.

Whilst some tour companies may be willing to take a deposit from you and say a trip is a "confirmed departure", our approach is going to be to wait a little longer as we consider this both honest and realistic.

Once we are confident that the trip can run, we will be in touch to confirm your place and ask for a deposit.

We do encourage you to register your interest as we are expecting considerable demand, once the consensus is that it is safe to travel again.

Any Questions

Please do not hesitate to contact us by email or phone. Our office is generally open from 09:30-17:30 but you are welcome to contact us outside these times too. We are happy to take calls in the evening and at weekends but if no one is available the call will go to our answerphone.

Thank you for your interest in our tours. We do hope that you will be able to join us once the pandemic is over and we look forward to hearing from you.