

# Borneo

## Bristleheads & Orang-utans

2022 Thursday 30th June - Thursday 14th July (15 days)  
Small group tour with Colin Bushell & Lee Kok Chung



The stunning Blue-headed Pitta is one of the amazing birds we hope to find on our holiday to Borneo © Lee Kok Chung

**Limosa's birdwatching tour to Borneo** focuses on the magnificent rainforests of Sabah, in northern Borneo which are among the oldest and richest on earth and home to a fabulous array of birds. Up to 40 weird and wonderful endemics are possible on our tour including the likes of Bornean Bristlehead, Fruithunter and Whitehead's Trogon, plus we should see a fantastic range of hornbills, broadbills, pittas and other exotic Southeast Asian species. Our Borneo birding tour ranges from the tropical montane forests of Mount Kinabalu to the pristine lowland rainforests of Danum Valley. As well as great birding, we hope to also encounter some of Borneo's equally extraordinary mammals including Orangutan, Proboscis Monkey and Pygmy Elephant!

### Highlights

- Borneo's ancient rainforests, the richest in all Asia
- An astonishing diversity of birdlife including up to 40 spectacular Bornean endemics
- Bornean Bristlehead, Whitehead's Broadbill, Everett's Thrush, Whitehead's Spiderhunter
- A plethora of hornbills, pittas, bee-eaters, barbets, kingfishers, babblers, bulbuls and flowerpeckers...
- Visiting Kinabalu National Park, Sepilok, Kinabatangan River and Danum Valley
- Orangutan, Proboscis Monkey and Bornean Gibbon are among possible mammals
- The Sepilok Canopy Walkway for unique treetop encounters
- Boat trips on the Kinabatangan River seeking Storm's Stork and Bornean Pygmy Elephant
- Small group tour led by Limosa's Colin Bushell and our ace Malaysian specialist Lee Kok Chung



Whitehead's Broadbill, Mt Kinabalu © Gary Elton, Limosa

## What's Included?

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert English-speaking Malaysian bird guide
- 12 nights accommodation in Borneo, staying at comfortable hotels and forest lodges
- All main meals with drinking water provided during the day
- Surface transportation by minibus and boat
- All excursions, entry fees, tour-based tips (local guides, drivers, boatmen etc) and taxes



We stand a good chance of seeing wild Orangutans during our tour © Lee Kok Chung

## Outline Itinerary

### Days 1-2

Fly to Kuala Lumpur and then onwards to Kota Kinabalu, arriving there on Day 2. Night Kota Kinabalu

### Days 3-6

We travel through the Crocker Mountains to superb Kinabalu National Park for a four-night stay including a day trip to Poring Hot Springs. Kinabalu National Park (4 nights)

### Day 7

East to Sepilok Reserve with its Canopy Walkway. Night Sepilok

### Days 8-9

Leaving Sepilok, we visit the amazing Gomantong Caves (breeding grounds for swiftlets whose nests are used in birds nest soup) on our way to Kinabatangan River. Kinabatangan (2 nights)

### Day 10

Morning cruise at Kinabatangan and transfer to Danum Valley. Borneo Rainforest Lodge (4 nights)

### Days 11-13

Danum Valley Conservation Area

### Day 14

Depart from Danum Valley. Fly to Kota Kinabalu and then onwards to Kuala Lumpur with overnight connection to the UK.

### Day 15

Arrival back in the UK.

## Tour Overview

Borneo is the world's third largest island, with an avifauna that is among the richest on earth. Its amazing birdlife parallels that of the bountiful Malay Peninsula but also includes numerous species that simply do not occur there including more than 40 spectacular Bornean endemics. For sheer diversity, the ancient rainforests of Southeast Asia are unsurpassed, containing more tree species than Amazonia along with a fantastic range of birds: from hornbills, barbets and minivets to kingfishers, broadbills and trogons.

This remarkable tour will carry you from the tropical montane forests of Mount Kinabalu (Southeast Asia's highest peak) via the world famous Sepilok Reserve, Gomantong Caves and the Kinabatangan River, to the pristine lowland rainforests of the Danum Valley. Along the way we should encounter the majority of Borneo's weird and wonderful endemic birds and see some of its extraordinary endemic mammals including Bornean Orangutan, Bornean Gibbon and the peculiar Proboscis Monkey.

Our tour begins in Borneo's Crocker Range, at the Rafflesia Forest Reserve. Named after the world's largest flower, for which the reserve is rightly famous, a visit here gives access to a range of mid-elevation specialities such as Bornean and Mountain Barbets, Bornean Bulbul and Bornean Leafbird, which can be difficult to find elsewhere.

We travel on for a four-night stay at Kinabalu National Park, a World Heritage Site protecting Asia's highest mountain, Mt Kinabalu (4095m, 13,435 feet). Elusive and sought-after endemic birds here include Fruithunter, Crimson-headed Partridge and the fabulous trio of Whitehead's Trogon, Whitehead's Broadbill and Whitehead's

Spiderhunter. The Park is also home to more than 700 species of orchid and 600 different ferns, many of which are found nowhere else on earth.

Perhaps most intriguing amongst the plants are the park's eight species of *Nepenthes* pitcher plants, with their intricate traps for insects.

During our stay in the National Park, we will enjoy a day trip to the lower slopes of Kinabalu and Poring Hot Springs, an area with a strikingly different avifauna. Possibilities include a bewilderment of barbets and bulbuls, as well as Fulvous-chested Jungle Flycatcher, Red-bearded Bee-eater and Grey-headed Babbler.

Leaving Kinabalu, we head east to the Sepilok Reserve and Gomantong cave (where four species of tiny swiftlets nest on the cave walls), before moving to the Kinabatangan River. The bizarre-looking Proboscis Monkey, rare Storm's Stork, up to eight species of hornbill, Hooded Pitta, the tiny endemic White-fronted Falconet and the seldom seen Bornean Ground-Cuckoo are among a long list of possible highlights. Bornean Pygmy Elephants and wild Orangutans can also be found amongst the trees fringing the river.

To complete a fabulous adventure, we travel south for a four-night stay at the excellent Borneo Rainforest Lodge, set deep within primary rainforest above a bend on the Danum River. The Danum Valley Conservation Area safeguards one of the world's oldest and richest lowland rainforests and boasts a huge list of species. Gigantic trees, some of which tower more than 80 metres above our heads, create the tallest canopy of any rainforest on earth, and the prospect of looking for five-star residents such as Great Argus (largest of all the pheasants), the spectacular Rhinoceros Hornbill, four



Blue-banded Pitta © Lee Kok Chung

species of endemic pittas and the furtive Bornean Wren-babbler can't fail to excite!

Danum is probably the best place in the world to encounter a wild Orangutan and whilst there are no guarantees, our last three tours have all been lucky! Other mammals we could see include Bornean Gibbon and the shy Bornean Pygmy Elephant, while a spot of night birding might reward us with Buffy Fish Owl or Brown Wood Owl and nocturnal mammals to watch for include Bornean Loris, several flying squirrels and perhaps that tiny primate, the Western Tarsier.

Our 2022 tour will be led by our highly rated English-speaking Malaysian bird expert, Lee Kok Chung. Lee led this tour for us in July 2017, 2018 and 2019 as well as guiding our 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 tours to the Malay Peninsula.

Working alongside him is Limosa guide Colin Bushell who guides many of our holidays to Asia. We warmly invite you to join us in Borneo for a bird and wildlife experience not to be missed!

## Daily Itinerary

### Days 1- 2

#### FLY UK TO KOTA KINABALU

Our birdwatching tour to Borneo begins with a flight to Kuala Lumpur, where we arrive the following day. An onward connection takes us to Kota Kinabalu, in the state of Sabah (northern Borneo). Here we will be welcomed by our Malaysian bird guide, 'Mr Lee', and transfer to our hotel. *Night Kota Kinabalu*

### Days 3 - 6

#### CROCKER MOUNTAINS, KINABALU NATIONAL PARK & PORING HOT SPRINGS

Leaving Kota Kinabalu early with a packed breakfast, we drive to the Rafflesia Forest Reserve, in the Crocker Mountains. Named after the dramatic *Rafflesia keithi*, a parasitic plant that produces the world's largest flower (up to 1 metre across) the reserve is situated at a lower elevation than the nearby Mount Kinabalu massif and is home to a number of birds we may not encounter elsewhere. Specialities include Crimson-headed Partridge, Bornean and Mountain Barbets, Bornean Bulbul and



Well worth getting up early for... Crimson-headed Partridge over breakfast on our first morning in Borneo! © Gary Elton

Bornean Leafbird. With Blyth's Hawk Eagle, the brilliantly green Whitehead's Broadbill, Pygmy White-eye and both Bornean and Whitehead's Spiderhunters also possible, the early start is definitely worth the effort!

From here, we swing northeast to magnificent Kinabalu National Park, where we stay for four nights. At 4,095m (13,435ft), Mount Kinabalu is Southeast Asia's highest peak. This spectacular park is also a World Heritage Site, the first in Malaysia, and boasts a huge range of endemic plant and animal species. With increasing altitude, lush lowland rainforests give way to forests of montane oaks, rhododendrons and conifers, culminating in the alpine meadow plants and stunted bushes of the summit zone. Kinabalu's splendid isolation has led to the evolution of a fabulous array of endemic species which, together with the variety of habitats, has blessed Kinabalu with perhaps the richest floral diversity of any area of its size in the world.

Throughout our stay at Kinabalu, we are based in an excellent location to sample something of Borneo's endemic birdlife. Mountain Serpent Eagles soar overhead and mixed feeding flocks rove the forest edge, bringing Hair-crested and Ashy Drongos, Bornean Treepie, Chestnut-hooded and Sunda Laughingthrushes, the flirtatious White-throated Fantail and throngs of Chestnut-crested Yuhinas and Black-capped White-eyes. Despite its bright red belly and crown, the endemic Whitehead's Trogon can easily pass unnoticed as it sits quietly beneath the woodland canopy, which also harbours Golden-naped and Mountain Barbets, Crimson-winged Woodpecker, Fruithunter, Bornean Stubtail, Mountain Leaf and Yellow-breasted Warblers, Black-and-crimson Oriole, Mountain Blackeye and the emerald green Bornean Green



Whitehead's Trogon, Mt. Kinabalu © Gary Elton, Limosa

Magpie. Among more than ten species of squirrel in the park, we may see Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel and the endemic Kinabalu Squirrel.

On one day we plan to drive to Poring Hot Springs, which lies at a lower altitude near the foot of the mountain and enjoys a markedly different avifauna. As elsewhere on this remarkable island, the range of possible birds is amazing! Maroon and Rufous Woodpeckers, Moustached and White-necked Babblers, Everett's White-eye, Bornean Spiderhunter and Orange-bellied Flowerpecker are among a host of lowland rainforest treats in store. *Four nights Kinabalu National Park*

### Day 7

#### SEPILOK: ORANGUTAN SANCTUARY

We leave Kinabalu today and travel to Sepilok, on Borneo's northeast coast. It is a four-hour drive but the rewards are great as Sepilok is rightly famous for

a hugely successful Orangutan rehabilitation project and protects a sizeable chunk of tall secondary forest. The area is also superb for birds and exploring the trails here we might well encounter shy forest jewels such as the endemic Black-crowned Pitta, Rufous-collared and Oriental Dwarf Kingfishers and the gorgeous Diard's Trogon. Sepilok's Canopy Walkway is a great spot to look for the peculiar Bornean Bristlehead and treetop views of hornbills, while mammalian highlights could well include Orangutans and flying squirrels. *Night Sepilok*

### Days 8 - 9

#### SEPILOK, GOMANTANG CAVES AND KINABATANGAN RIVER

We will enjoy some further morning birding at Sepilok and the chance to pick up new species before arcing inland to visit Gomantong Caves.

Gomantong is famous for the huge numbers of tiny swiftlets and their edible nests and four species of look-alike swiftlet breed in the caves:



Proboscis Monkey is unique to Borneo © Gary Elton, Limosa

Edible-nest, Black-nest, Mossy-nest and Plume-toed, which are most reliably distinguished from one another by the differing structure of their nests! The caves are also home to a large colony of Wrinkle-lipped Bats.

From Gomantong, we continue to our next lodge, on the banks of the serene Kinabatangan River, where we stay for two nights. The Kinabatangan is the longest river in Sabah and is said to boast the greatest concentration of wildlife in the whole of Borneo. The main channel is lined with forest on fertile alluvial terraces and behind these are extensive, low-lying forested swamps, which are usually waterlogged and flooded. Within these swamps, scattered hills and lakes dot the otherworldly landscape.

We spend the whole of the next day in this superb area, exploring the river and creeks by boat. We shall be making a special effort to find the elusive Bornean Ground-Cuckoo, one of the island's most mysterious and seldom-seen endemic birds. Cruising along the river and its tributaries, we may observe canopy dwelling species such as the incomparable Rhinoceros Hornbill; indeed, all eight of Borneo's hornbill species are possible here.

From the boat, we also have good chances to spot the rare Storm's Stork along with a variety of forest raptors, Hooded Pitta, the remarkable Black-and-red Broadbill (which builds its nests like a hanging basket above the water) and a host of other fantastic species.

Riverside mammals to watch for include the bizarre Proboscis Monkey, yet another species unique to Borneo, which can sometimes be seen feeding in the mangrove forests adjacent to the river. These placid vegetarians live in groups of up to twenty or more and always sleep next to water amongst the mangroves.



Rhinoceros Hornbills is one of eight species we could potentially see on this tour © Lee Kok Chung

The elusive Bornean Pygmy Elephant and Orangutan are present too, and we should see the aptly named Muggier Crocodile lurking on the banks.

The lower reaches of the Kinabatangan are outstanding for birds, with Oriental Darter and a host of herons, egrets, kingfishers and vividly coloured bee-eaters to enjoy.

Overhead, we will scan the skies for soaring Grey-headed and Lesser Fish Eagles, and in the evenings will keep an eye open for Buffy Fish Owl and Large Frogmouth. *Two nights at a lodge in an idyllic setting on the banks of the Kinabatangan River*

#### Day 10

#### KINABATANGAN RIVER & TRANSFER TO DANUM VALLEY

After a morning cruise along the Kinabatangan River and lunch, we head south towards Lahad Datu. From there we swing west, travelling inland to reach the heart of the fabulous Danum Valley Conservation Area.

Our base for four nights is the splendid Borneo Rainforest Lodge, established to show that tourism can help to protect this truly magnificent area, with its excellent forest trails and great wealth of birds and wildlife. *Night Borneo Rainforest Lodge*

#### Days 11 - 13

#### DANUM VALLEY CONSERVATION AREA

The pristine rainforests of the Danum Valley are exceedingly rich in birds, home to everything from pittas, barbets and minivets to kingfishers, broadbills and trogons. Our luxurious lodge is located in superb primary rainforest and excellent birding begins right outside the door! An extensive trail system gives access to some of the region's more elusive forest dwellers, while the incredible canopy walkway offers a unique insight into the lives of creatures that would otherwise remain hidden in the treetops.

Danum is probably the best area to look for some of Borneo's trickier species with no fewer than six species of pitta occurring here. We will also hope to

encounter the shy Great Argus, the world's largest pheasant, with its distinctive 'kwa-wau' call that can be heard over a kilometre away!

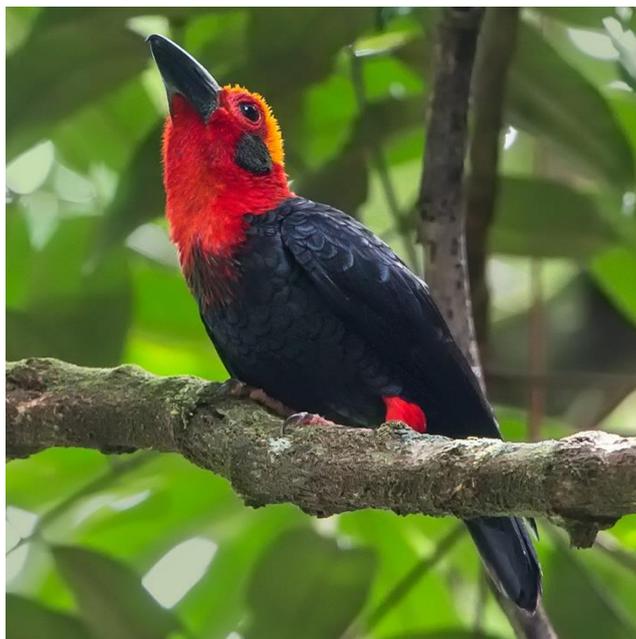
Among a raft of sought-after Bornean endemics, we will have further chances to look for the elusive Bornean Bristlehead, White-crowned Shama, Bornean Wren-babbler, Bornean Blue Flycatcher and Yellow-rumped Flowerpecker.

More widespread SE Asian species to watch for include Oriental Honey Buzzard, Blue-crowned Hanging Parrot, Raffles's and Red-billed Malkohas, Red-bearded Bee-eater, Scarlet-rumped and Red-naped Trogons, Banded, Green and Black-and-yellow Broadbills, Fiery Minivet, Asian Fairy Bluebird, Greater Racket-tailed Drongo, Black-throated and Striped Wren Babblers, Fluffy-backed Tit-babbler, Spectacled Spiderhunter and both Yellow-breasted and Yellow-vented Flowerpeckers. The list of possible species here is long and our days at Danum are sure to be filled with great birding!

Danum is also outstanding for mammals and possible highlights could include Orangutan, Bornean Gibbon and, with luck, Bornean Pygmy Elephant as well as Red Giant Flying Squirrel and the Bornean Bearded Pig... Who could resist looking for those!

Nocturnal forays may be rewarded with sightings of Barred Eagle Owl, Buffy Fish Owl or Brown Wood Owl, as well as a multitude of mammals. These could include up to five species of civet, several species of flying squirrel, Bornean Loris and Leopard Cat. If we are really lucky, we might even encounter the tiny Western Tarsier.

Set deep within primary rainforest above a bend on the Danum River, we will spend four nights at the Rainforest Lodge. Birds are abundant in the lodge's garden alongside a host of exciting butterflies including several species of magnificent birdwing. *Nights at Borneo Rainforest Lodge*



The bizarre Bornean Bristlehead © Lee Kok Chung

#### Day 14

#### DANUM VALLEY, FLY LAHAD DATU-KOTAKINABALU-KUALA LUMPUR-UK

After breakfast, we bid a reluctant farewell to the Danum Valley and drive to the coast at Lahad Datu. Here we catch a domestic flight back to Kota Kinabalu, where we break for lunch and (time permitting) a spot of local birding before a late afternoon check-in for our flight from Kota Kinabalu back to Kuala Lumpur and then an onward overnight connection to the UK.

#### Day 15

#### ARRIVAL IN UK

Arrival back in the UK, where our birdwatching tour to Borneo concludes.

## Trip Information

**Group Size** 10 participants & 2 leaders

**What To Expect** A 15-day birding tour to Borneo, visiting the bird-rich rainforest state of Sabah, in the north of this immense island which is the third largest in the world.

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

This is primarily a birding tour but also one with excellent all-round wildlife interest, including some fine endemic mammals and an array of exotic butterflies.

**Birds** 250-290 species

**Mammals** 20-30 species

**Accommodation** 12 nights accommodation in Borneo, staying in good hotels and lodges throughout. Our final lodge set in the remote Danum Valley is excellent, offering superb food and lovely rooms amidst the forest. All rooms have private facilities and all except those at Danum have air conditioning.

Wifi is available at most lodges (not at Kinabatangan) but mostly only in and around the lobby areas, although reception can be poor and unreliable especially at Danum.

**Meals** All main meals (and with drinking water provided during the day) are included in the tour price, usually commencing with breakfast in Borneo on Day 3 (*occasionally dinner on Day 2, according to flight schedules*) and concluding with lunch in Kota Kinabalu on Day 14. The occasional breakfast will be a picnic.

**Walking** Easy to moderate walks at a gentle pace along quiet roads and forest trails (some hill and forest trails can be steep and/or muddy underfoot at times, but our progress along them is always unhurried). Some mornings we may be on our feet for up to five hours, so you might find a walking stick seat handy. Comfortable, robust and waterproof walking shoes or lightweight boots with sturdy corrugated soles for grip are recommended for this tour.



Whitehead's Spiderhunter is a localised Bornean endemic which can be found at Mt Kinabalu © Lee Kok Chung

**Weather** Borneo has a tropical climate. It is likely to be mostly hot, dry and sunny (typically 24-31C) but overcast conditions and/or rainfall are likely at any time of the year, although it tends to rain most afternoons.

As one would expect in the tropics, it is often humid, especially in the lowlands and around the coast. Generally cooler and more pleasant early and late in the day, also at elevation on Mt. Kinabalu.

**Ground Transport** Air-conditioned minibus.

**Boat Trips** Our tour price includes boat trips on the Kinabatangan River during our stay there.

**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 a dedicated agent at 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.

This will also give you the opportunity to travel from a regional airport if you prefer.

**Insects** Mosquitoes are present throughout the tropics and you must check the current malarial risk and recommended precautions with your doctor in good time prior to travel. You should not need to bring a mosquito net on this tour as the rooms are either netted and/or equipped with air-conditioning and/or provided with an electric 'mosi-coil' burner.

*Leeches:* expect to encounter leeches in Asian rainforests. Although harmless, their presence can sometimes be distracting so we suggest bringing some insect repellent and applying this to your footwear and lower leg area as this can be effective in keeping them away but the effect is, of course, quickly lost if boots become wet or muddied. As a result, we recommend you bring a pair of 'leech socks', which will prevent leeches reaching the skin on your feet and lower legs. These are available in the UK from various outlets including the Oriental Bird Club ([www.orientalbirdclub.org](http://www.orientalbirdclub.org)).

**Photos** Some good photographic opportunities but generally difficult in the forested areas due to the terrain and low light levels.

## Tour Cost

### 2022 (15 days):

Land only cost: £5395

Single supplement: £1250

Deposit: £500

### Cost includes

- Limosa Tour Leader
- Expert English-speaking Malaysian bird guide
- 12 nights accommodation in Borneo
- All main meals (with drinking water provided)
- All surface transport in Borneo (inc boat rides)
- All excursions, entry fees, permits, tour-based tips (inc. drivers, boatmen, guides) and taxes
- Limosa checklist of birds

### Cost excludes

Flights, insurance, drinks, airport meals/snacks and other items of a personal nature. Camera fees in the national parks (although these are 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 July 2017, 2018 and 2019 tours to Borneo, as well as our February 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 tours to the Malay Peninsula.

## What You Say...

*"A well-designed itinerary, executed superbly by the two guides (excellent birding knowledge, friendly personas) in superb quality rainforests."*

**RC, Borneo 2019 tour**

## 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.***

