

## Green World

Navigation : [Main](#) > [Green World](#) > [ [Under the Kinabatangan Canopy](#) ]

### Additional Links

#### [Mountain Profiles Page](#)

Move the slider to view a profile of the world's mountains and their relative height.

#### [TK Khong's Waterfall Site](#)

TK Khong's site on the many waterfalls in Malaysia is one of the best resources around if you are one for finding nature's wonders.

#### [Waterfalls of Malaysia Site](#)

A collaborative effort by waterfall enthusiasts.



by *Eric and Veronica*

### Under the Kinabatangan Canopy

The Island of [Borneo](#) hides one of the oldest rainforests in world and it conceals a rich and diverse flora and fauna. The island is vast, and this time around, we decided to visit but a small piece of this wondrous environment.

Upriver on the great Kinabatangan lies a small getaway called [Uncle Tan's Wildlife Camp](#). It is located in the lower flood plains of the [Kinabatangan River](#), and features an ever changing environment dependent on the life giving seasonal flood waters.

To get there, one has to fly to the small town of [Sandakan](#), located on the eastern shores of the Malaysian state of Sabah, Northeastern tip of Borneo Island. Air Asia, the discount airline has 2 daily flights to this location from Kuala Lumpur International Airport. You can check the [Air Asia](#) site for schedules and prices. All bookings and purchases can be done through the internet.

The cab fare from Sandakan Airport to the city center will cost about RM20.00. In which case, we stayed the night at [Sandakan Hotel](#) which lies right smack in the center of town. However, there is not much to do in the city and much of the tourist attractions tend to focus on the indigenous wildlife. We took a look at the [Puu Jih Shih Buddhist Temple](#), which features a nice view of the entire Sandakan Waterfront, and a temple of intricate carvings and ornate wall decorations.

We did have dinner at the much talked about Ocean King seafood restaurant in Sandakan. It is a seafood restaurant nestled on stilts on top of a much visited beach front in the city. From the city center, a cab ride there would cost RM25.00. We were not exactly impressed with the food, and felt it quite bland compared to the seafood fare served in Kuala Lumpur. I would not argue about the ingredients being fresh though, but it is the taste I would not stand behind.

While you are in Sandakan, and before you start your trip to Uncle Tan's Camp, you can visit some of the wildlife sanctuaries located around Sandakan. Not too far are the Sepilok Forest Reserve and Orangutan Sanctuary, Labuk [Proboscis Monkey](#) (Nasalis Larvatus) Sanctuary and the Turtle Islands Marine Reserve. You can get more information at the [Sabah Tourism Website](#), or at [Borneo Travel Guide](#).

One of the most visited and closest to the town center is the Sepilok [Orangutan](#) (*Pongo Pygmaeus*) Sanctuary for an entry fee of RM30.00 per person. The biggest draw to the center is the Orangutan feeding that takes place in the morning. Please do not miss this feeding period of 10.00am and 2.30pm, as you will be able to take a close look at one of the largest primates in the world. But do not be disappointed though, the center mostly features adolescent primates, so do not expect the large males that get featured in the many advertisement posters and statues that you see throughout the city. Beside the Orangutans, the resident Pig-Tailed Macaques (*Macaca Nemestrina*) also seek to entertain at the same feeding time. The cab ride from the city center costs us RM30.00, and the easiest way is to get a cab outside a hotel.

It can be arranged with the staff at Uncle Tan's to pick you up from the Sepilok Sanctuary, which is what we had done so that we can make a quick visit to see Orangutans before the main part of our trip to Sandakan, Sabah. They can also pick you up from the airport of any of the other hotels around Sandakan.

The whole Uncle Tan experience begins at their operations center in Gum Gum, just a 20 minute drive from the Sepilok Sanctuary. There you will be given a briefing of what is in store for you at the wildlife camp, and also lunch before the first part of your journey, which is by road. Besides filling your tummy, take this opportunity to gear up on some essentials that you may have forgotten from the small mini-marts that are just stores away from the operations center. This is almost your last chance in civilization, as at the camp, there is only basic food and refreshments. There are no refrigeration units at the camp, so my little troop took this opportunity to savor our last cold drinks before the start of the trip.

Once on the road, it's another hour and a half to two hours by van to a point of the river where the trip by boat begins! This is the fun part of the trip, and the itinerary of the camp tour will consist of several more of these trips. On the river, you will get a chance to spot many of the larger wildlife in the flood plains such as the Proboscis Monkeys and the Crocodiles that inhabit this stretch of river. The guides of Uncle Tan were excellent at spotting the wildlife and at explaining about them.

The only gripe we had was the long waiting between our check in at their operations center in Gum Gum, until the actual river boat trip to the camp.

All the information about your potential experiences and the [itinerary](#) while you are Uncle Tan's Camp is on their site. Try to go for all the trips they had planned, and even get around to making your own treks along the many trails that had been marked out for your hiking experience. The area is abound with wildlife, and you will not be disappointed what you can spot with a sharp eye and a patient resolve.

But as the camp's web site clearly stated, this is a jungle camp and that all the amenities are in the most basic. The huts where you are placed can sleep a maximum for 6 persons. It is an elevated hut, away from potential mild flooding and the soft soil underneath. The roof is made from zinc plates, so that it can get quite hot at midday, when the sun's rays escape through the heavy foliage provided by the trees around the camp site. There are no windows and a proper door, but all openings for ventilation are wire meshed to protect your belongings from the more agile and creative neighbors ([Macaques](#) and Giant Squirrels). The electricity is only turned on a certain times, on at dusk and off at dawn, so it is best to remember to charge your electronics at that period. There is a power socket in the room and just one bulb to light your surroundings. So, for more targeted activities, your head lamps will come in of great use.

The camp also features a communal bathroom, and you will have to do what you need with the use of a bucket and a water scoop. Lighting at the bath area is also dim, again, perfect use for your personal lighting. The water comes from the oxbow lake, and clarity in the water is something you will not get. In fact, it is has a yellow tinge with a scent of diluted vegetation matter. If there is anything you should not forget is your torchlight or better yet, a head lamp. Keep it with you at all times at night, as even the generator will cease when it needs a refill of diesel, plunging the whole camp into darkness.

We had come this time at the height of the dry period; hence the camp and the area surrounding it are quite dry. But it being the flood plains, the condition of the area surrounding the camp site is soft and muddy. Our suggestion is to keep your trail runners at home and bring out your high-cut backcountry boots! Alternatively, there are also supplies of rubber boots for you to rent, as it is, one of the night treks will take you right into the thick of the mud! Pay attention to the [item list](#) from Uncle Tan's site, or alternatively, you can look at Eric's pack list.

Our group had also taken this opportunity to sleep out in the open away from the actual huts or the campsite. We had setup our expedition hammocks right next to the oxbow lake and had shared the area with the 3 resident Bearded Pigs (*Sus Barbatus*), a raiding party of Long Tailed Macaques and Proboscis Monkeys nesting in for the night. Quite a noisy racket, it being almost full moon, the raiding party was making a racket tearing up the camp kitchen and on the zinc roofs of the huts. The pigs were without doubt curious about our encampments and make frequent visits to check us out.

Jeremy had great time fishing in the oxbow lake, the bait fish were plenty and easily caught with a container and crackers! However, it was May that was the lucky one walking away with more of the fish! But Jeremy will tell you that he was really after the great big Haruan in the lake. Well something did come, and it bit his lure, hook and line right off.

The whole experience was wonderful, and that we will probably come back during the rains or during the elephant season for a different experience. It is the unpredictability of the place, and its rawness in nature that will continue to captivate visitors to Uncle Tan's Camp. Once you are back in Sandakan, why not give New Century Restaurant at Jalan Buli Sim-Sim, Taman Grandview a try (the cab will know where it is).

We had gone there as friend who is a local there had recommended it. After days of basic food at the camp, we really needed a good feeding! The food was delicious and also highly affordable. And with this meal, ended our trip to Sandakan, and it is off to the airport for our flight back to Kuala Lumpur.

If you would like to share some experiences and even photos, please feel free to send them to us at [adventure-x-change](mailto:xcew@adventure-x-change.com). Mail us at [xcew@adventure-x-change.com](mailto:xcew@adventure-x-change.com)

### Photo View



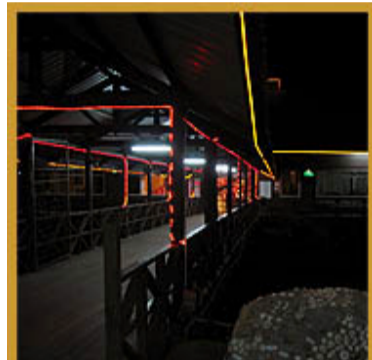
The view of Sabah from Air Asia flight.



The pristine jungles below us.



Arrival at Sandakan Airport.



Ocean King Seafood Restaurant in Sandakan.



The buffet spread at Sandakan Hotel.



Jeremy at the Sepilok Sanctuary main office.



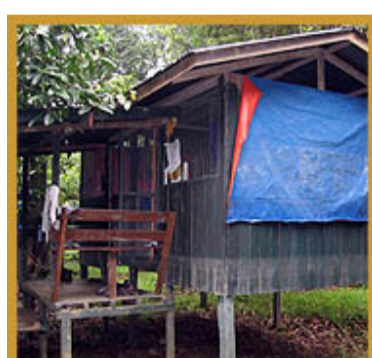
Lunch at Uncle Tan's Operations Center in Gum Gum.



On the road to the river.



The Kinabatangan river boat ride to the camp.



Our camp hut at Uncle Tan's.



View from Puu Jih Shih Temple, Sandakan.

### Photo Album

For more **photos** from this trip at the photo album, Click this [link](#) here.

### Resources

 **PDF version of this page**  
KKB\_page.pdf (628 KB)