

A guide to:

The Great Orangutan Project



The Great Orangutan Project

Focus: Orangutans
Location: Borneo

Start Date: Set Dates (Please Enquire)
Arrival & Starting Point: Kuching

After beginning life as our flagship project, The Great Orangutan Project has evolved from humble beginnings to the award-winning conservation programme that it is today. Situated at the western edge of Kubah National Park, the project takes place at one of Borneo's prized orangutan rehabilitation centres: Matang Wildlife Centre. The centre has earned world recognition as a result of its remarkable rehabilitation efforts, but without the dedication of its staff and volunteers helping to keep the centre alive, the orangutans resident here would simply have nowhere to go.

The Great Orangutan Project began over 10 years ago in response to a number of threats facing the rainforest and its inhabitants. Mass deforestation, mining and forest fires had caused Borneo's orangutans, among other species, to not only lose their homes but to also become exposed to the risk of hunting and the pet trade. The notion of an orangutan losing its home, its mother or its freedom is an absolute tragedy, but the team at Matang Wildlife Centre are determined to set things right.



The main aim of the centre is to rehabilitate and release as many animals as possible and to also provide a safe home for those that unfortunately cannot return to the wild. In partnership with the Sarawak Forestry Corporation, the centre also aims to reverse the negative impact left by humans on the rainforest, ultimately resulting in a better future for the rainforest and its inhabitants.

As a volunteer, you will assist the centre in reaching its goals by working on a wide variety of tasks and helping the programme to run as smoothly as possible. From constructing new enclosures for incoming animals to aiding enrichment and husbandry efforts, you'll find that The Great Orangutan Project is one of both variety and serious importance. In addition to understanding your own impact on conservation efforts, you're sure to find this project meaningful and enjoyable – watching an orangutan decide how best to tackle the puzzle you've created for them, for example, will not only provide you with lifelong memories, but will equip these great apes with skills that they would need in the wild. If you've ever dreamt of making a difference to wildlife conservation efforts, look no further than this volunteer project.

Activities

Enrichment

Enrichment is one of the most important activities that you will take part in whilst on this project, as it not only helps to provide a better quality of life for the animals at the sanctuary, but may also help them progress through their rehabilitation. Examples of enrichment include puzzle feeders, bubble wands and even leaves and wood.

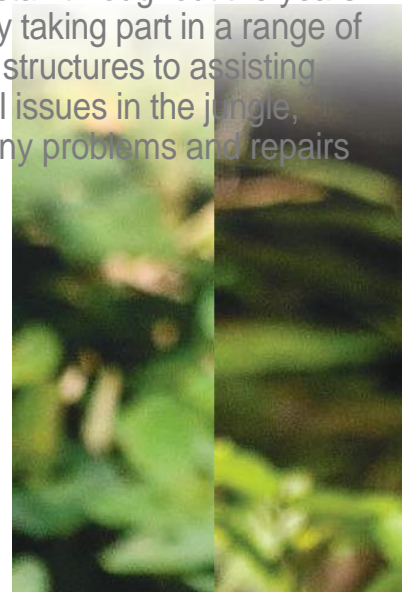
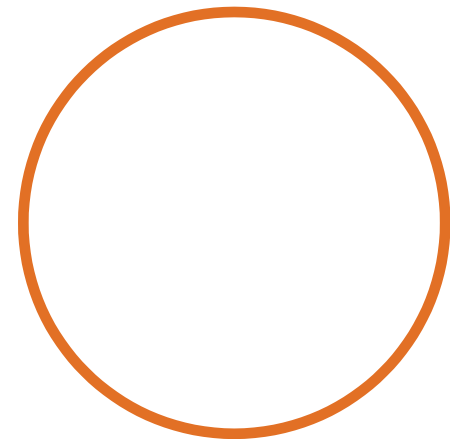
Whether an animal has the capacity to be released into the wild or not, enrichment is an incredibly valuable element of stress relief and stimulation. Each activity is designed to make sure that the orangutans remain happy and entertained, and the project team are always looking for new and creative enrichment ideas, so feel free to put your suggestions forward!

Husbandry

In addition to enrichment, husbandry is another activity which can vastly improve the quality of life for the animals at the centre. Food preparation and distribution are both important elements of this activity, while the cleaning of the animals' enclosures help to maintain their living standards. The project team have implemented a husbandry schedule which ensures that all volunteers work equally on this activity, so be prepared to roll your sleeves up and get involved!

Maintenance

Various structures, buildings and enclosures may become damaged over a period of time, either due to the climate in the rainforest or as a result of being used by various animals and members of staff throughout the years. You will help to maintain standards at Matang by taking part in a range of activities, from repainting and varnishing certain structures to assisting with gardening. Rust, rot and termites are all real issues in the jungle, therefore your assistance in keeping on top of any problems and repairs can certainly be a big help.



Activities



Construction

As this is an active wildlife centre, there is always construction work to be done – after all, structures cannot survive forever after being pulled about and climbed upon by numerous orangutans! In previous years, volunteers have helped to construct numerous boardwalks, bridges, aviaries, and feeding platforms for the animals to enjoy, as well as ranger stations in the national park for members of staff to use. Without the manpower provided by volunteers, the centre may not have the capacity to take in and rehabilitate as many animals as they do, making this a crucial activity indeed.

Semenggoh Visit

Whilst on the project, you will have the opportunity to visit Semenggoh Wildlife Centre. It is here where semi-wild orangutans are free to roam large areas of protected forest, but can still come down to designated feeding platforms twice a day in order to be fed by the centre's staff. You will visit Semenggoh during one of these feeding sessions in the hope of seeing the animals up close! After spending a little time at Semenggoh, you will stop off at the Lundu Beach Resort for a chance to relax on the beach and enjoy a cold beer.



Free Time

You will receive two consecutive days off each week; this will generally be Saturday and Sunday, but it does depend on the day you arrive at the project. You can use this time to relax, explore the surrounding area (including Kubah National Park and Damai Beach), or venture further afield to the Sarawak Cultural Village or Bako National Park, where you might just spot the third-largest troop of proboscis monkeys in the world!



Itinerary

The following is an example of a two-week itinerary; however, it is also possible to join this project for one or four weeks. Please note that one-week durations are only available on select dates.

Day 1

After arriving into Kuching Airport, you will be met by a project representative and transferred to a local guesthouse, your home for the night. You will enjoy a welcome dinner in the evening, followed by an orientation with the project facilitator and your fellow volunteers.

Day 2

At 10.30am your group will take a private transfer to the world-renowned Matang Wildlife Centre, stopping off for lunch on the way. You will take a little time to settle in to your new accommodation before meeting with the rest of your group for a full tour of the centre. This will be your first chance to see the animals at Matang - including the orangutans and sun bears!

Days 3-13

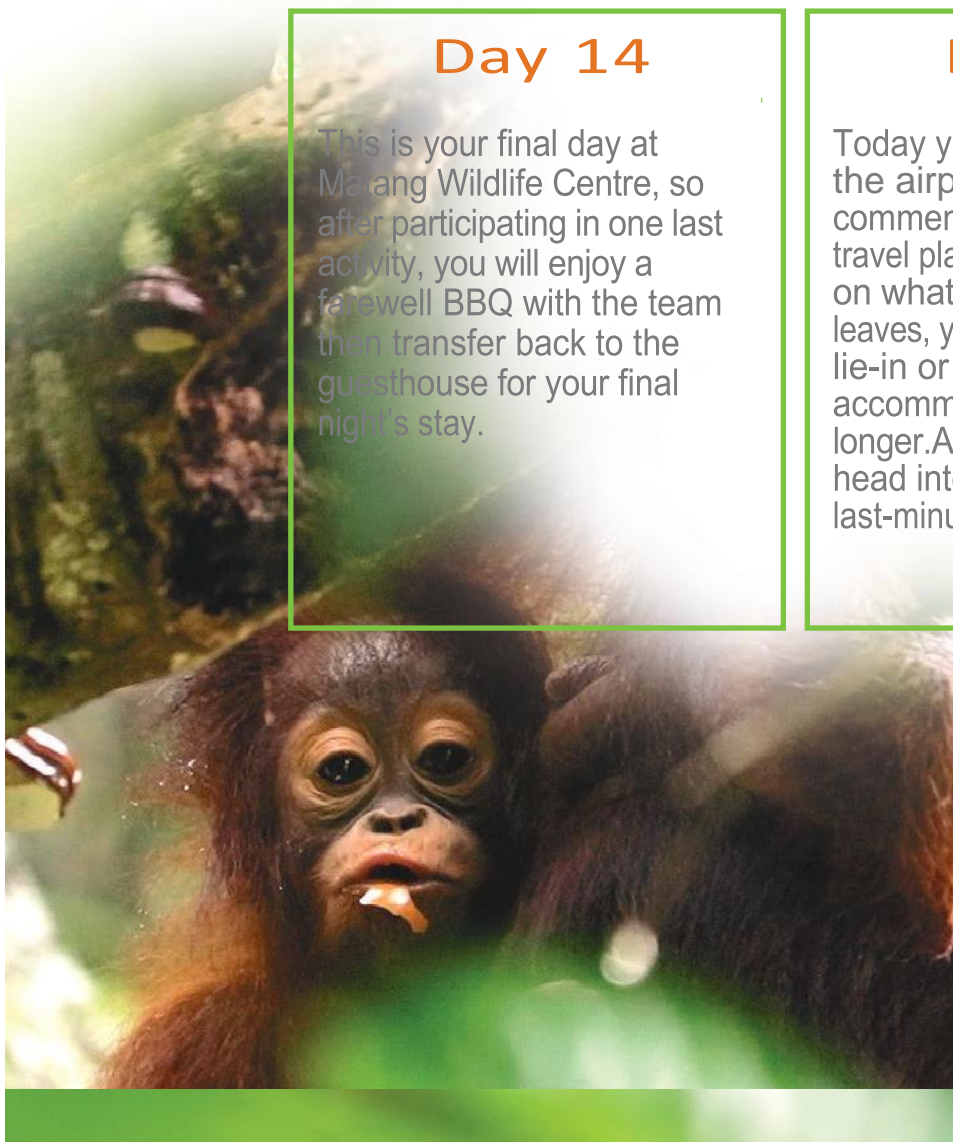
These are your project days, and throughout this time you will take part in a range of activities. The working day will begin at 8:15am and finish at 5:00pm, with a two-hour lunch break at around midday. You will also receive two consecutive days off, at which point you may wish to explore more of what Borneo has to offer or simply unwind at the project site.

Day 14

This is your final day at Matang Wildlife Centre, so after participating in one last activity, you will enjoy a farewell BBQ with the team then transfer back to the guesthouse for your final night's stay.

Day 15

Today you will return back to the airport in order to commence your onward travel plans, though depending on what time your flight leaves, you may wish to have a lie-in or relax at your accommodation for a little longer. Alternatively, you could head into Kuching for some last-minute sightseeing!



Accommodation

The first and final night of this project is spent at a hotel in Kuching. Here, rooms are offered on a twin-share, same-sex basis and you will have access to an en-suite bathroom complete with a western-style toilet and hot shower.

Whilst at Matang, you will stay in the heart of the wildlife centre, where a rustic jungle chalet will become your home for the remainder of your stay. There are two or three twin bedrooms per chalet, with each room being shared on a same-sex basis and coming equipped with a fan. Elsewhere, you will find a kitchen, communal living space, bathroom and veranda area. The bathrooms have western-style toilets, and though showers run cold, this can be a welcome respite after a day spent working hard in the humidity of the rainforest! The buildings themselves are the original structures which have stood since the centre's construction more than 20 years ago, offering a rustic but authentic Bornean experience.



Food & Drink

With the exception of your first night, where a meal is provided at the guesthouse, your time on this project will be a self-catered experience, with basic kitchen appliances (such as a gas hob, fridge freezer, kettle and toaster) being provided in your accommodation. As part of your project fee, you will receive a food allowance of RM100 per week to spend on food and drink items during the weekly trip to the local supermarket. This is particularly beneficial for vegetarians, vegans and those with dietary requirements.

During your free time, you can also travel to Kuching and try some of the local cuisine, but please be aware this will be at your own cost.



What's Included Not Included

- Accommodation
- Food allowance
- Arrival airport transfer
- Admission to Semenggoh Wildlife Centre
- Full orientation and support
- A donation to the project

- Flights
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Departure airport transfer

Volunteer Reviews

Sinead

"I have already booked again for next year and I can't wait to go back!"



Mark

"The animals, the people, the full experience was so incredible. Coming home was such a difficult thing to do!"



Katy

"I'll never forget watching Sandi, the mischievous orangutan, stealing the hose and cleaning herself!"





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