

## **NATURAL HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND CAVES**

Join us for a journey through the Kuching countryside in the company of acknowledged experts in the fields of natural history, archaeology and the local caves.

Visit two unspoiled locations where biodiversity, for which Borneo is famous, is well and alive. Today, a specialist, drawn from our panel of practicing biologists and ecologists and cave experts, will accompany you.

### **DAY 1 NATURAL HISTORY (L,D)**

08:30 Depart Kuching. Arrive at The Hidden Valley.

We enter the entrance of the “Hidden Valley”, the entrance situated on a hill slope, by climbing a flight of notched wooden stairs. The landscape is the product of age-old geological processes. Inside the valley, you will find small farms interspersed with pristine forests. Be impressed by the range of birds and insects amidst the jungle flora. Activity will be some light walking before breaking for a late picnic lunch.

15:30 After lunch proceed to our overnight destination passing through small and isolated Bidayuh villages. Along the way, call in at Anah Rais, the oldest and largest Bidayuh longhouse in Sarawak.

18:00 Arrive at The Farmhouse at Kampung Ta’ee.

Its owner, a prominent community leader, recently refurbished the farmhouse to a high standard. Dinner, Bidayuh style, is served early evening followed by a briefing from our resident archaeologist who will lead the activities the following day.

20:30 After the briefing, take a short drive to a stream running on a bed of igneous rock. Take in an hour of “night walk” before returning to the Farmhouse to rest up for the adventures the next day.

### **DAY 2: ARCHAEOLOGY (B,L)**

In 1957, the unearthing of the Niah skull put Sarawak firmly on the archaeological map for it established, in this region, the existence of humans some forty thousand years ago. What is not known is that most of the groundwork that led up to the Niah discovery was done in the Kuching area. The first cave on our program is one of the caves that is receiving renewed attention.

07:30 Breakfast. Depart The Farmhouse for a short drive to Kampung Bantang.

09:00 Gua Sireh The entrance of this cave leads to more than three kilometers of passages and chambers; archaeologically speaking, this is the best under-

stood of the many caves in the Kuching area. Human remains dating to 20,000 years ago have been found and the cave is still used up to today. Tom Harrison, the famous curator of the Sarawak Museum during the colonial days, established the first dig in 1957 before starting work at Niah. The most recent excavation was conducted in 1987 by one of our experts. Evidence of burials, cave paintings, artifacts, pottery and animal remains have been unearthed and discovered here and you can see some of the assemblage.

12:00 From Gua Sireh to Gua Tupak.

Journey for about an hour to Bau where lunch will be had at one of the local “coffee shops”, before continuing to the village of Jambusan.

14:00 Gua Tupak.

In the 1870’s, A H Everett was appointed by a committee including Darwin and Wallace to search for evidence of the missing link in the caves in Gunung Batu. This was the first ‘modern day’ excavation in Sarawak in that Everett recorded the stratification of his samples. His trenches (and subsequent work by Harrison and others) can still be clearly seen. Everett’s assemblage is currently in the Natural History Museum in London. The present Earl of Cranbrook, a keen archaeologist, revisited this cave recently and dates the finds back to the Upper Holocene period (about 10,000 years).

17:00 We depart Gua Tapak for Kuching in the late afternoon for a journey of just under an hour.

**PHYSICAL DIFFICULTY:**

On the routes as described there are steep paths and steps to climb but no free climbing or ropes involved. Average fitness levels and agility are required.

**INCLUDED:**

- Caving Equipment: Headlamps, helmets.
- Protective clothing: Trousers, gloves, rubber boots, socks, pack.
- First Aid: We carry a full first aid kit
- Meals as indicated, water throughout

**NOT INCLUDED:**

- Alcoholic beverages
- snacks
- gratuities

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