

Mount Kinabalu in Malaysia



Rising amidst billowing clouds and blue skies and watching over the scenic Borneo jungle and South China Sea, Mount Kinabalu is Malaysia's Kilimanjaro. This climber-friendly mountain is a vastly underrated gem in the dream destination for eco-tourism – Sabah. Chase your adventures across one of the oldest rainforests, reflect and refresh with sweeping views of the world below, wake up to the chirping of the feathered residents, and scale the mist-shrouded peaks of Mount Kinabalu. Despite nature's whims, this vertical playground offers customized itineraries from soft adventures to extreme sports for any age and fitness level.

History

Formed within the last 10 to 35 million years, Mount Kinabalu is regarded as a sacred resting place for the souls of ancestors of Kadazan-Dusun people. Its name known to locals, 'Aki Nabalun', means the "revered abode of the dead." Hugh Low, a British naturalist, made the first documented ascent in 1851. Kinabalu National Park was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2000.

Things to Do around Mount Kinabalu

Climbing – With a relatively easier ascent, the mountain can be scaled by any average Joe looking for the thrill without the kill. However, other peaks along the massif require rock climbing skills. There are two major starting points for the climb: the Timpohon Gate (near the park headquarters) and Mesilau Nature Resort with the latter being slightly higher in elevation. Both climbing routes meet just before Laban Rata. A usual itinerary allocates two days to climb the highest point – Low's Peak. Mesilau Trail and Kinabalu Summit Trail are the favorite paths among backpackers. For a boost of adrenaline, try the highest via Ferrata in the world – a system of rails, cables and bridges used for mountaineering.

Outdoor Thrills – Whiz across the Kiulu River by zip-lining adventure tours or treat your sores and aches in mineral-rich waters of Poring Hot Springs. At dawn, venture out to the Rasa Ria Nature Reserve to witness life in the treetops. Here, trek through the rainforest to learn about the behavior of orangutans and go birding in the canopy tours. Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort features indulgent treatments and scheduled sports like fishing, windsurfing, para-sailing, and jet-skiing.

Wildlife – This diverse biome is the Mecca for nature lovers with around 6,000 species of plants, 100 species of mammals, and 326 species of birds. The park has four climate zones ranging from lowland forests to alpine meadows. Take a guided walk to spot an endemic land-snail and stumble upon the world's biggest flower – Rafflesia.

Shopping – A Sunday market is held at Gaya Street in the central business district of Kota Kinabalu. Experience the

local culture and shop for anything like batik sarongs, footwear, souvenirs, and herbs.

Nearby Attractions

Kundasang War Memorial, Timpohon Gate, Kinabalu National Park, Crocker Range Park, and Atkinson Clock Tower.

Location

This non-volcanic mountain is located in the easternmost state of Sabah on the island of Borneo in Malaysia. It is about two-hour drive from the state capital – Kota Kinabalu.

Mount Kinabalu Map

How to Reach?

By Air – Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI) is served by regular flights to and from Hong Kong, Singapore, Philippines, and other southeast Asian countries.

By Road – Regular bus services and vans are used for major public transport in the region. Rent a car or join a sightseeing bus from Kota Kinabalu which lies two hours west of the mountain.

Best Time to Visit

While climbing weather is best from January to April, the Mount Kinabalu National Park can be visited any time of the year.

Facts about Mount Kinabalu

At 4,096 meters, it is the highest mountain in Malay Archipelago and Southeast Asia as well. The mountain is still rising at a rate of 5 millimeters per year.

Established in 1964, Kinabalu National Park covers an area of 291 square miles. Sabah region is often called the "Land Below The Wind."

Things to Remember

Make reservations for climbing in advance as 135 climbers a day are permitted.

According to the national park regulations, visitors must be accompanied by a qualified guide.

Reservations for accommodation and climbing guides can be made through a private company – Sutera Sanctuary Lodges.

Pack warm clothing and windproof gear for uncertain weather on the mountain.

Get your climbing permits and insurance from Mount Kinabalu Climb Booking Centre.

Camping outside approved lodgings is not allowed on the mountain.

Accommodations

Budget accommodations in the form of chalets and lodges are available on the climbing routes. Rock Hostel, Grace Hostel, The Hill Lodge, Peak Lodge, and Nepenthes Lodge are equipped with modern amenities. Kinabalu Pine Resort and Hotel Residence Resort are recommended for mid-range travelers. For luxurious stay, choose from Shangri-La's Rasa Ria Resort & Spa, Tanjung Aru Resort & Spa, and The Pacific Sutera Hotel.

Restaurants

Sheng Rou Mian, Bak Kut Teh, Roti Kahwin, and Pork Dumplings are the must-have traditional food in Kota Kinabalu. While Suang Tain Restaurant, Gayang Restaurant, and The Catch are known for fresh seafood, Little Italy serves authentic pastas, El Centro and Chilli Vanilla plate up delicious Spanish cuisine.

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