



EAST INDONESIA TOURS & TRAVEL

Explore Indonesia with the expert!

MAHAKAM RIVER + ORANGUTAN OF SAMBOJA 7 DAYS / 6 NIGHTS

DAY 01: BALIKPAPAN – SAMBOJA LESTARI PROJECT (L,D)

Upon arrival at Balikpapan Sepinggang Airport, You will be picked-up at the airport and transferred in around 1 hour to your comfortable lodge at Samboja Lestari. Samboja Lestari comprises an area of 2000 ha which used to be all tropical rainforest. Due to illegal logging, shifting cultivation and the drought and fires caused by El Nino most of this forest was destroyed. The Bos Foundation (Balikpapan Orangutan Survival Foundation) concerned with both the natural habitat as well as with its inhabitants, bought this area and planted it with all sorts of indigenous tree species, flowers and fruiting trees. The Samboja Lestari project has the mission to recreate the rainforests that once stood in this area thereby creating a natural habitat for the orangutan and other wildlife. The project has also created many jobs for the people of Samboja village and neighboring villages.

Just recently Samboja has opened its doors for visitors, a beautiful built Lodge that can accommodate up to 50 people. There are several nature trails that allow you the chance to spot some of the animals that have returned to this regenerating forest: many bird species, snakes, small mammals (deer, pigs) and several wild primates (gibbons, 2 species of macaques, proboscis and red leaf monkey's). The area is also the home of the world's largest sun bear project as well as of an extensive orangutan rehabilitation center. Visitors are encouraged to assist the local staff in their daily activities.

Around 80% of all income will be generated to the use of projects in Sambajo Lestari.

DAY 02: SAMBOJA LESTARI PROJECT (B,L,D)

Follow the nature trails in search of wildlife, learn about native plant species and about regeneration of tropical forest, have a look at the orangutan rehabilitation center or observe the behaviour of the sun bears. There are local guides available.

DAY 03: SAMBOJA LESTARI – START OF THE MAHAKAM RIVER CRUISE (B,L,D)

Early start and you will be driven in around 2 hours to the small town of Loa Janan on the banks of the Mahakam river. Here you will board your houseboat that will function as your hotel and restaurant during 5 days. The boat consists of two floors: below is a closed space surrounded by windows that can be all opened and is used for eating and relaxing. There is a small open deck on which chairs are placed. Upstairs is a large air-conditioned room (around 13 m x 3,5 m) that can hold around 12-13 people. Comfortable mattresses are placed on the floor and not on beds because the ceiling is, in accordance with typical Kalimantan riverboats quite low around 1,80 meter. There is a western toilet and shower on this floor and an Indonesian style toilet on the lower floor.

The Mahakam river is one of the longest rivers in Kalimantan. It finds its way through the lands of several Dayak-tribes, known for their mystical practices, their silent stalking through the deepest darkest jungle, their longhouses and their appearance with long earlobes and heavily tattooed wrist and ankles. Although quite modern these days, still a lot of the old mystic can be traced and some of the older men and women still keep their long earlobes and their tattoos. The smaller children are still carried in sometimes beautiful decorated typical baby carriers to the fields and forests.

Near its estuary the Mahakam is quite broad but it gets smaller and smaller the more inland you travel. The first part of the river, near Samarinda and Tenggarong, is the main highway. Relatively small tug boats pull enormous barges full of coal and wood down river to Samarinda, and there is a lot of boat traffic with passengers traveling down and up streams. Once you are 'out of town', the scenery changes and becomes more rural. Small villages with lots of activity taking place at the riverbank, including people fishing in canoes, women beating clothes on river stones and once in a while a floating toilet that passes the boat.

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**The feasibility of the Mahakam program described here depends on the water level of the Mahakam. It could be possible that you spend 1 or 2 nights in a small village instead of on board. It is also possible that several sights can not be reached. Travel times also very much depend on the rate of flow of the Mahakam river.*

DAY 04: MUARA MUNTAI – MANCONG – TANJUNG ISUY – MUARA MUNTAI (B,L,D)

In the morning you will arrive in the town of Muara of Muara Muntai. This is one of the many towns built on the river with the 'main road' full of boats of all shapes and sizes zipping up and down transporting people as well as animals, produce, wood, engines and virtually anything that can fit on a boat. A large part is built on stilts and the smaller roads are made of wood. Together with your guide you explore this typical river village. Shortly after Muara Muntai you will get in a small motorized canoe with loud engines and cross the Jempang Lake. This lake is one of the biggest lakes in the Mahakam area, which supports around 32 bigger and smaller lakes. Its size very much depends on the water level of the Mahakam. The bigger lakes and wetlands are the home of the rare and threatened Irrawady dolphin.

You will find the first part of the Jempang lake stark and quite lifelessness. But in no time, you will enter a totally new environment of green lush everglade-type wetlands. Entering the Ohong Creek you will find yourself surrounded by much higher and dense vegetation and will have the opportunity to spot some wild-life like birds and the proboscis monkey with their funny nose. In Mancong you will visit a nice renovated and decorated longhouse. You will be greeted by the villagers (Dayak Benuaq tribe) with a dance performance. Afterwards you will continue to the houseboat for your diner and overnight

DAY 05: MUARA MUNTAI – IRRAWADY DOLPHIN PROJECT – MELAK (B,L,D)

You will be cruising further upstream. Not far from Muara Muntai you will enter the Bolongan-river. Here the Irrawady dolphin is monitored every day by a foundation and is your chance quite reasonable to see one of these unique freshwater dolphins. Afterwards you return to the Mahakam, which will get narrower and village life from both banks is well visible. You will pass and stop at typical Dayak villages. You will still cruising upstream of this mighty river.

DAY 06: MELAK – DAYAK TOUR – TENGGARONG (B,L,D)

After breakfast, full day tour using local transport. You will visit an old longhouse of Eheng, observing their daily lives. Afterwards you continue to the Ombau Asa waterfall and have a swim in a refreshing pool at the base of the waterfall then continue to a national park where you have the chance to spot the rare black orchid flower in its natural place. In Melak you will board the houseboat again and continuing traveling towards Tenggarong.

DAY 07: TENGGARONG – LOA JANAN – BALIKPAPAN - NEXT DESTINATION(B,L)

In the morning you will arrive at Tenggarong, the centre of the former powerful Kutai-sultanate. You will visit the Mulawarman museum and have a look at the impressive collection of heirlooms, ceramics, Dayak art's and culture items. Tenggarong is the place where your Mahakam-trip will come to an end. You will be transferred by car to Balikpapan airport where you will fly to your next destination. End of the tour program.