

EAST INDONESIA TOURS & TRAVEL

explore east Indonesia with the expert!

BEST OF MAHAKAM RIVER + SOUTH & NORTH SULAWESI 21 DAYS



DAY 01: AMSTERDAM – SINGAPORE – BALIKPAPAN

Depart Amsterdam's schipol with Singapore Airlines for Singapore. You will arrive the next day. Change your plane into silk Air and flight to Balikpapan, the Capital of East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia.

DAY 02: BALIKPAPAN – SAMBOJA LESTARI PROJECT

Upon arrival at Balikpapan Sepinggang Airport with Silk Air from Singapore, 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 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.



Samboja Lodge

DAY 03: SAMBOJA LESTARI PROJECT

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 04: SAMBOJA LESTARI – START OF THE MAHAKAM RIVER CRUISE

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 6 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.



Samboja Lodge

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.



The Dayak Baby Carrier

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.

**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.*

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Mahakam Houseboat



Village life, Mahakam River



Village life, Mahakam River



Dayak Woman, Upper Mahakam



Village life, Mahakam River



Village life, Mahakam River



Paotere Anchorage, Makassar

DAY 05: MUARA MUNTAI – MANCONG – TANJUNG ISUY

In the morning you will arrive in the town 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 lifeless. 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 wildlife like birds and the proboscis monkey with their funny nose. In Mancong you will visit a nice renovated and decorated longhouse. In the afternoon you will travel down streams by canoe to the village of Tanjung Isuy. 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 06 & 07: LONG IRAM – DATAH BILANG – RUKUN DAMAI

During two days 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. Both Datah Bilang and Rukun Damai are villages that belong to the Dayak Kenyah-tribes. You will reach them by local motorized canoe and will possibly spend one night at a local house. You will experience and observe the life of Dayak people and have a look at their longhouses or communal houses.

DAY 08: TERING – EHENG – OMBUASA – MELAK – TENGGARONG

You will be cruising down streams, back in the direction of Samarinda. You will leave the boat at the village of Tering and will visit an old longhouse of Eheng by car. You will witness a traditional dance performance. Afterwards you continue to the Ombau Asa waterfall and have a swim in a refreshing pool at the base of the waterfall. In Melak you will board the houseboat again and continuing traveling towards Tenggarong.

DAY 09: TENGGARONG – LOA JANAN – BALIKPAPAN

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 and check-in at your three star hotel Grand Tiga Mustika.

DAY 10: BALIKPAPAN – MAKASSAR

After breakfast, transfer to Balikpapan Sepinggang Airport and flight to Makassar, the capital of South – Sulawesi province. Upon arrival in Makassar, transfer to Hotel The Banua. Afternoon city tour around the city visiting Fort Rotterdam, Clara Bund Seashell collection and enjoy magnificent sunset from Paotere anchorage.

11: MAKASSAR – KARTS – PARE PARE

After breakfast, we will drive to Pute Village in the karts mountain area. We will make 2 hours hike in this beautiful nature, visiting cave with prehistoric paintings (date back to 3000 BC) such as red hand painting and several painting of animals. You can also observe the way the local people life while we stop at their houses for refreshment. Continue to Pare Pare, a small town half way to Toraja Land.

DAY 12: PARE PARE – TORAJA

After Breakfast proceed to Toraja Land, the land that still preserve the old traditions the way hundreds of year ago. We will stop at a coffee shop with a spectacular view over Buntu Kabobong (Erotic Mountain). Lunch at the local restaurant in Toraja then check – in at our Hotel.

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Karts, South Sulawesi

DAY 13, 14 & 15: TORAJA TOUR

During your three days stay in Toraja, we will take you to whatever events available in the region. We will visit Lemo (Grave in the rock cliff), Londa (grave in the cave), Kete Kesu (traditional houses & rice barns with hanging coffin behind the complex) and many other places. Funeral ceremony is also a very interesting event. The Torajan make a big "party" for the beloved one and sacrifices a lot of buffaloes & pigs to accompany the spirit to Puya, the spirit land.

One of the days in Toraja, we will go on a full day hiking to the country side where you will visit several Tongkonan (Traditional Torajan House) in a path that rarely seen by other tourists. We will have lunch at a restaurant up in the mountain with magnificent views down the valley.



Karts, Prehistoric painting

DAY 16: TORAJA – SENKANG

After breakfast, we will proceed to Sengkang, the center of Bugis district. The Journey via the eastern coast of Sulawesi and you could see Gulf of Bone sea sometimes. Lunch at the local Restaurant in Sengkang and then Check – in at Hotel Apada. After rest for a while, we will make small sight seeing tour visiting Lempangan village, the village of silk weaver. In this village all adult women working in a home industry of silk weavings. You can watch how the local woman makes complicated pattern on their weavings.

Around 04:00 PM we will proceed into the river bank of Lake Tempe. We will hire local fisherman motorized canoe and we will visit the fisherman floating village in the middle of the lake. You will have coffee or tea with fried banana at one of the floating house while observing the way of life of the villagers. By sunset we will proceed back to Sengkang and on the way you will enjoy spectacular colour of sunset. Lake Tempe is also rich with birds and you can see them well by sunset.



Toraja Village

DAY 17: SENKANG – BANTIMURUNG WATERFALL – MANADO

After breakfast proceed to Airport of Makassar to fly to Manado. You will pass several Bugis villages on the way and one National Park. You will stop at Bantimurung waterfall and you can enjoy swimming or just cooling off by the river of the waterfall. If you are a butterfly lovers, then you will love this area too since it is really rich with butterfly varieties. Proceed to the Airport of Makassar for you afternoon flight to Manado. Upon arrival at Sam Ratulangi airport of Manado, transfer in to Hotel Minahasa.



Toraja Village

DAY 18,19 & 20: BUNAKEN ISLAND

After breakfast we will proceed to Bunaken Island, an island that perhaps the best protected coral reefs in Indonesia. We will have a private boat that will take us to a different snorkeling spots in this area. Our boat crews know all different snorkeling site and they can take you to see wild Dolphin in a certain area. For the people who want to take PADI dive course, then in these 3 days you can take your lesson in many of the dive school in Bunaken.

DAY 21: BUNAKEN – SINGAPORE – AMSTERDAM

After breakfast, proceed to the pier of Manado with our private boat. Drive to the airport and check – in at Silk Air counter for flight to Singapore.
End of the Tour Program