

SIBU & Central Sarawak Visitor's Guide


SARAWAK TOURISM BOARD
www.sarawaktourism.com



Sarawak Tourism Board
Level 4, Plaza Aurora, Jalan McDougall,
93000 Kuching, Sarawak
Tel: +6 082 - 423600 Fax: +6 082-416700
Email: stb@sarawaktourism.com

Sarawak
More to Discover



Sarawak

Sarawak is the largest state in Malaysia, stretching some 800 km along the northwest coast of Borneo, the world's third largest island. A beautiful land coloured by peace, tradition and unmatched biodiversity, it is a prime destination for discerning travellers seeking vibrant culture, exhilarating adventure and breath-taking nature.

You can share in the lifestyle of an upriver longhouse, follow in the footsteps of a dynasty of White Rajahs, explore gigantic caves in the heart of the Borneo rainforest, or paddle through jungle streams in search of elusive wild orangutans, to mention just a few possibilities. Whatever your choice, you will leave Sarawak with memories to last a lifetime.

Whether you stay in a luxurious resort, an award winning boutique hotel, a heritage homestay or a simple jungle camp, you will be cared for with genuine warmth and sincerity. The people of Sarawak are equally at home in the past and the present, taking the same pride in their traditions of hospitality as they do in their modern infrastructure and seamless connectivity.

Revealing a side of Asia unlike anywhere else, Sarawak is a place for people seeking authentic and engaging experiences rather than tourist-trap clichés. And most importantly, it's a safe, peaceful and friendly place to visit, for large groups and solo travellers alike. Make Sarawak your next destination, as the highlight of your visit to Southeast Asia, or as a journey of discovery all on its own.



TOURIST INFORMATION

The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) offers a range of services to provide visitors and the travel industry with up-to-date travel information about Sarawak. The Visitors' Information Centres in Kuching, Miri and Sibu stock a wide range of guidebooks, maps, brochures and leaflets. The helpful staff can also assist with detailed travel enquiries.

Kuching Visitors' Information Centre

Sarawak Tourism Complex
(Old Court House),
93100 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.
Email: vic-kuching@sarawaktourism.com
Tel: +6082 410 944
Fax: +6082 256 301
Open Mon-Sun: 9am to 6pm

Miri Visitors' Information Centre

Lot 452, Jalan Melayu,
98000 Miri, Sarawak, Malaysia
Email: vic-miri@sarawaktourism.com
Tel.: +6085 434 180 / 181
Fax: +6085 434 179
Open Mon-Fri: 8am – 5pm
Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays 9am – 3pm

Sibu Visitors' Information Centre

Sublot 3a & 3b, Sibu Heritage Centre, Jalan Central,
96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia
Email: vic-sibu@sarawaktourism.com
Tel: +6084 340 980
Fax: +6084 341 280
Open Mon-Fri: 8am – 5pm
Saturday & Public Holidays: 9am – 3pm
Closed on Sundays

STB's Kuching Head Office provides comprehensive media and travel industry liaison services, up-to-date information on tourism policy and planning in Sarawak, and replies to written or email enquiries.

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Tel: +6082 423600 Fax: +6082 416700

Online Information

Detailed travel information for Sarawak is available from STB's online outlets:

www.sarawaktourism.com
www.facebook.com/visitsarawak
www.instagram.com/sarawaktravel
www.twitter.com/SarawakTravel
www.youtube.com/user/sarawaktourismbcm
[www.weibo.com/sarawaktourism \(华语\)](http://www.weibo.com/sarawaktourism)
www.pinterest.com/sarawaktravel

SIBU & CENTRAL

SARAWAK

SIBU

INTRODUCTION

Sibu is the largest port and commercial centre in the Rejang Basin and the gateway to Central Sarawak. Located at the confluence of the Rejang and Igan Rivers, approximately 130 km from the South China Sea, Sibu is a thriving modern town with a vibrant centre and a bustling, crowded waterfront.

To visitors, Sibu feels more down-to-earth than relaxed Kuching. There is still something of the pioneer style about the town, and its people are direct, plain-speaking and assertively friendly. Of course, their smiles may be partly due to the belief that Sibu has more millionaires per capita than any other city in Borneo.

The mighty Rejang, almost a mile (1,600 km) wide, is the dominant feature of the town, and a room with a river view is highly recommended for vibrant impressions of waterfront life. The river is a source of constant activity, with ocean-going vessels manoeuvring delicately between speeding express boats, battered river launches and tiny sampans. Rejang sunsets can be truly spectacular.

Sibu is not only fascinating in its own right; with its excellent road, air and river transport links it is also the ideal jumping-off point for exploring the whole Rejang Basin, from the coastal town of Mukah to the furthest reaches of the Upper Rejang, over 600km upriver.

People

The residents of Sibu are predominantly Foochow Chinese, originating from the Fuzhou region of southern China, and the town is often referred to as New Fuzhou. However, Sibu's ethnic mix is as varied as anywhere else in Borneo, with smaller proportions of other Chinese dialect groups - as well as Malays, Melanaus, Ibans and Orang Ulu - making the town their home.

History

Until the beginning of 19th century, Sibu was a sleepy trading settlement in the lower Rejang area, named for the rambutan fruits (*buah sibau* in the Iban language) that grew locally. The only significant population was a Melanau village at nearby Kampung Nangka. Sibu's transformation began in 1901 with the arrival of Foochow settlers from southern China, led by the Reverend Wong Nai Siong. Rev. Wong, a Methodist missionary sought to find a safe haven for his followers, who were subject to religious persecution in China. He petitioned Charles Brooke, the 2nd Rajah of Sarawak, who offered land in the Lower Rejang to develop Sarawak's agriculture. The first batch of 72 pioneers arrived in 1901, and by 1903 over 1,000 Christian Foochows had made their homes in Sibu. They were later followed by sizeable groups of Henghuas and Cantonese during the 1st World War period.

The early Chinese settlers planned to cultivate rice, but found that the soil was unsuitable for profitable rice farming and turned their attention to pepper, rubber and gambier (a sticky resin formerly used in place of rubber). Despite famine, fever, floods and other hardships, the early settlers eventually made their new home a success. They were capably led by the determined Rev. Wong, ably assisted by the Hoovers, an American missionary couple who played a major role in the development of Methodism in Sarawak.

By the mid-1920s Sibu had the appearance of a fully fledged town. However disaster struck in 1928, when a major fire destroyed almost all of Sibu's predominantly wooden buildings. The hardy settlers simply picked up their tools and built the town all over again, but Sibu was once more devastated, this time by Allied bombing, during the WWII Japanese Occupation. Hundreds of local people were killed, not only by the bombing but also by savage Japanese repression of the local Chinese community, who were firm supporters of Chinese independence.

Sibu's recovery began in the early 1950s, with the advent of mechanised logging. The town became the principal centre for the timber industry in Sarawak, and huge fortunes were made. From the 1960s to the late 1980s Sibu boomed along with

the timber trade, and downstream industries such as sawmilling, plywood manufacturing and even shipbuilding were established. From the early 1990s onwards, the timber industry in Sibu began a gradual decline as more sustainable logging practices were introduced and timber quotas imposed. However the town continued to grow thanks to its strategic importance as the major port and commercial centre for the entire Rejang Basin.

ATTRACTIOnS



Sibu's Town Centre is very compact and easily covered on foot. The narrow crowded streets are crammed with shops selling everything from native handicrafts to designer fashions, and there seems to be an old fashioned coffee shop on almost every corner. The following attractions are all within easy walking distance of the town centre and all major hotels.

Sibu Central Market, on Jln Channel opposite the Express Boat Passenger Terminal, is the largest and most interesting daily market in Sarawak. By combining the former wet market and the native Lembangan market in clean and hygienic new surroundings, Sibu Municipal Council has created a visual feast for visitors. Highlights are the Iban ladies selling exotic fruits, jungle produce and handicrafts, and the Chinese poultry sellers who offer live chickens and ducks neatly wrapped in tubes fashioned from old newspapers.

The Rejang Esplanade is an attractively landscaped promenade stretching from the Express Boat Terminal to the wood Hotel, and includes the Hii's Association Playground. Courting couples, anglers, al-fresco diners and sightseers flock here every evening to enjoy the riverfront scenery and view the Swan Statue, the emblem of Sibu.

The vibrant Night Market (Jln Market, between Jln Lintang and Jln Bengkel) sets up every afternoon around 5 pm and operates until 10 pm or later. The stalls offer household goods, footwear, fashion items, and of course food. Cakes, steamed buns, satay, pastries, dumplings and many other kinds of local delicacies are on sale here, with shoppers happily snacking as they wander from stall to stall.

Sibu Town Square, at 32 acres, is the largest urban square in Malaysia. Attractively landscaped, it is regularly used for concerts and cultural activities.



Still the tallest building in Sarawak (for the time being), the 28-storey Wisma Sanyan is located next to the square. It dominates the Sibu skyline and houses the town's largest retail shopping mall.

Sibu Gateway is located on Jln Kampung Nyabor and includes illuminated fountains, an open air stage, and Lin's Garden, which features the second of Sibu's two swan statues, guarded by the 12 signs of the Chinese Zodiac.

The 100-year old Tua Pek Kong Temple (Jln Temple) is the oldest and best preserved Chinese temple in Sibu.

The adjacent 7-storey Goddess of Mercy Pagoda was added in 1987, and is said to be one of the most

perfectly proportioned pagodas outside Mainland China. Visitors are welcome to climb its many steps to enjoy spectacular views of the Rejang and the Sibu Waterfront, especially at sunset.

The floating supermarkets that service the village and longhouse communities along the Rejang and its tributaries berth opposite the Tua Pek Kong Temple on Jln Temple. Their colourful paintwork, with advertising sponsors' logos, provides an attractive and unusual photo opportunity.

Traditional Malay *Kampungs* (villages) can be found within easy walking distance at Jln Kampung Datu. They combine an interesting mix of architectural styles, from modern brick and concrete to traditional wood and attap, and the villagers are very welcoming, often inviting visitors into their homes. The *kampungs* also offer attractive photo opportunities, as many of the waterside houses are built on stilts above the river.

Sibu Cultural Heritage Museum on Jln Central houses a fine collection of antiques, artefacts and photos, cultural exhibits on the various ethnic groups of the Rejang, and displays tracing the history of Chinese migration to the Rejang Basin. Open Tue - Sun 9 am - 5 pm. Admission free.



The Lau King Howe Hospital Memorial Museum in Jln Pulau was the principal hospital for the entire Rejang Basin until the opening of Sibu General Hospital in 1994. Named for its main benefactor, a local philanthropist, it has been converted into a museum tracing the history of medical care in Sarawak. Open Tue - Sun 9 am - 5 pm.

The elegant and modern Masland Methodist Church in Hoover Square, Jalan Pulau, is the direct descendant of the church founded by American missionary Rev. James Hoover, the father of Sarawak Methodism, in 1905.

The equally modern and imposing Sibu Mosque (Masjid an-Nur) in Jalan Masjid features a gilded dome and freestanding minaret, as well as the Sarawak Heroes Mausoleum, where the remains of executed anti-cession freedom-fighters Rosli Dhobi, Morshidi Sidek, Awang Ramli Amit Mohd Deli and Bujang Suntong are interred.

EVENTS

Borneo Cultural Festival



The Borneo Cultural Festival is usually held in July every year, and is a week-long extravaganza of cultural performances from all of Sarawak's main ethnic groups, as well as invited performers from Sabah and Kalimantan (Indonesia). The festival is held at Sibu Town Square and also features the Borneo Traditional Food Fair, with home-cooked traditional delicacies from throughout Sarawak. Admission is free. Contact the Sarawak Tourism Board for further information or download brochures from the Sibu Municipal Council at www.smc.gov.my.

Sibu Street Art Festival showcases the town's mural paintings whose subjects vary from famous foods of Sibu to the everyday life of the people. Local and international artists add to the collection of outdoor artworks every May.

Sibu International Dance Festival is a week-long celebration of traditional and modern dance performance and education from around the world.

Held at various locations in Sibu during early August.

Full details at the festival website, sidfestival.com.



Sibu International Base Jump is one of the top base jumping events in the region, held in late September to create a circuit with the KL Tower International Base Jump. Jumpers leap from the state's tallest building, the 126-metre high Wisma Sanyan.



AROUND SIBU

Bawang Assan Homestay historically an Iban settlement of 8 longhouses dating from the 18th Century, about 40 minutes from Sibu by boat or road. It is particularly appealing to visitors for two reasons; firstly the longhouses range from the very traditional to the quite modern, so visitors can get a good idea of how longhouses have evolved to keep pace with the times; and secondly, many of the residents can speak excellent English and are superb interpreters of their culture.

15 families from the 8 longhouses are delighted to welcome visitors, offering day trips and overnight stays, with visitors accompanying the locals in their daily activities, such as padi planting and fishing. Contact Mr Marathy Gindau, Tel: 0138381054 Mr Tuah Chad, Tel: 013 8327923, Mr Alfred Ngelambung, Tel: 019 8193579 or Ms Susana Panyau, Tel: 013 5611045, for transportation guided tours and overnight stays. Another longhouse registered under the homestay programme is Rumah Penghulu Philip Kayak at Durin, approximately 1 hour from Sibu. Tel: 019 8555063 (Mr Philip Kadom).



Bukit Aup Jubilee Park. 24-acre cluster of low hills with a lookout tower offering views of the surrounding plantations, longhouses and the Igan River. The tower, located on the park's highest peak (59m), is often visited by local Ibans bringing offerings to a benevolent spirit, the *Naga Bari*, which is believed to help people in need. There are picnic huts, a canteen, a suspension bridge over a small lake which is good for photo opportunities, and jogging and walking trails. Open daily at 8 am - 6 pm. Admission free. Take a taxi (15 min) or local bus.

The Sungai Merah Heritage Walk visits the site of the earliest Chinese settlements in Sibu, Sungai Merah (Red River), an old bazaar about 10 minutes by road from the town centre. The pleasant walking trail along the river front leads through a quaintly landscaped park to the Wong Nai Siong Memorial Garden, erected in honour of the town's principal founder and featuring a bronze statue of the missionary leader. The walk concludes with the

James Hoover Memorial Park, commemorating the renowned Methodist missionary and educator who worked with Sibu's pioneering Foochow immigrants from 1903 to the 1930s. If you start the walk in the late afternoon you can also take in the brightly-lit Sungai Merah LED Night Market. Take a taxi or Sungai Merah Bus.

The traditional potteries around Sibu produce excellent quality wares in classic Teochew Chinese style, albeit with strong local influences. Visitors are welcome to watch the potters at work at Toh Brothers Pottery, 8½ Mile Jln Oya, Tel: 0198790518 and Sibu Earthenware & Factory Sdn. Bhd., 18 Lrg. Teng Kung Sui, 96000 Sibu, Sarawak. (Contact:



213633). Take a taxi or contact a local tour operator.

Yu Lung San Tien En Si Temple Complex. Km 26, Jalan Sibu-Bintulu. Also known as the Jade Dragon Temple, this sprawling new temple complex, the largest in Southeast Asia, features four main "dians" or devotional halls. Its mission is to bring together devotees of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism to worship together. Its distinctive and detailed architecture make it a photographer's paradise. Take a taxi. Bintulu-bound buses also stop here.

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation ranges from budget hotels to luxury international hotels. The premises listed below are located in the central area and within easy walking distance of tourist attractions.

All addresses are 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Kingwood Hotel (4*), 12 Lorong Lanang 4, Tel: 335888, kingwoodsibu.book.direct.

Premier Hotel (3*), Sarawak House Complex, Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 323222, premierh.com.my.

RH Hotel (4*), Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 365888, www.rhhotels.com.my.

Tanahmas Hotel (3*), Lot 277, Block 5, Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 333188, www.tanahmas.com.my.

Paramount Hotel (3*), 3 Lorong 9A, Jln Kampung Datu, Tel: 331122, paramounthotelsibu.com.

DeHouse Hotel (3*), No 24 Jalan Lau King Howe, Tel: 251577, facebook.com/DeHouseHotelSibu

Permai Hotel (1*), 9-13, Jalan Ulu Oya, Lorong 11, Tel: 339163, www.permaihotelsibu.com.my.

Win Hotel, 1st Floor No. 60, Lorong Law King Howe 1, Tel: 255757; www.winhotels.com.my.

Hi-Inn, 1st Floor, Emplam Lane, Tel: 339828, hi-innsibu.com.

GBU Hotel, No. 135, Lorong Pedada 10, Tel: 353135; facebook.com/gbuhotel

Comfort Inn, No. 14, Lorong Pahlawan 6, Tel: 011 16800030

Grand Wonderful Hotel, Jalan Pipit, Tel: 256611

Centre Inn, Jing Hwa Building, Off Jln Central, Tel: 320222.

Garden Hotel (1*), 1 Jln Huo Ping, Tel: 317888. www.gardenhotelsibu.com.my

Hotel Bahagia (1*), 21 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 331131 hotelbahagia.blogspot.com.

Kawan Hotel (2*), 6 Jln Chengal, Tel: 315888 Fax: 327888.

Lehdo Inn, 21 Jln Tukang Besi, Tel: 331894. [www.lehdo.com.my](http://lehdo.com.my)

Li Hua Hotel Sibu Town (2*) (wharf terminal), Long Bridge Commercial Centre, Tel: 324000, [www.lihuahotel.com.my](http://lihuahotel.com.my). Excellent river views.

Li Hua Hotel Sibu Bus Terminal (2*), Li Hua Commercial Centre, Jalan Diong Kik, Off Jalan Pahlawan, Tel: 218338. Website as above.

Li Hua Hotel Unicity (2*), Jalan Wawasan, Sungai Merah Tel: 253333. Website as above.

Mansion Inn (1*), 48 Jln Tuanku Osman, Tel: 338922. Medan Hotel, Lorong Pahlawan 7 (next to Bus Terminal), Tel: 216162.

Orchid Hotel (2*), 9 Jln Persiaran Brooke, Tel: 331999.

Perdana Inn, 24 Jln Mission, Tel: 327007.

Regent Hotel, 2A-2C Lorong Foochow, Tel: 316188.

River Park Hotel, 51-53 Jln Maju, Tel: 316688.

Victoria Inn, 80 Jln Market, Tel: 320099.

Zuhra Hotel, 103 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 310711.

Budget Hotels & Lodging Houses

Capitol 98 Hotel, 19 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 336444.

Century Inn, 11 Jln Central, Tel: 339772.

City Inn, 23 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 333311.

Dung Fang Hotel, 37 Jln Maju, Tel: 340778.

Eden Inn, Wisma Catholic, 1 Jln Lanang, Tel: 337277.

Gold Star Hotel, 6 Jln Lintang, Tel: 320400.

Hoover Lodging House, 34 Jln Tan Sri, Tel: 334490.

Holiday Hotel, 14 Jln Tan Sri, Tel: 317440.

Hotel Malaysia, 8 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 332299.

Hotel Ria, 21 Jln Channel, Tel: 326622.

Mandyrin Hotel, 181Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 339177.

Miramar Hotel, 47 Jln Channel, Tel: 338008.

New Hai Ping Hotel, 13 Jln Maju, Tel: 334905.

New Hong Kong Hotel, 23 Jln Channel, Tel: 319488.

New World Hotel, 1-3 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 310311.

Phoenix Hotel, 1&3 Jln Kai Peng, Tel: 313877.

Plaza Inn, 16-18 Jln Morschidi Sidek, Tel: 341218.

Rejang Hotel, 40 Jln Tukang Besi, Tel: 315590.

River View Hotel, 65 Jln Mission, Tel: 337766.

Royal Inn, 58-60 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 336644.

Sarawak Hotel, 34 Jln Lintang, Tel: 333445.

Ban Hin Inn 12 Jln Pulau, Tel: 349875.

Siong Lai Hotel, 2 Jln Pulau, Tel: 345384.

Sunway Inn, 11-13 Jln Bengkel, Tel: 344611.

Tiong Yiing Hotel, 33 Jln Channel, Tel: 320916.

Today Hotel, 40 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 336499.

Travellers' Hotel, 9 Jln Bengkel, Tel: 311813.

Villa Hotel, 2-4 Jln Central, Tel: 337833.

Wen Ya Hotel, 39 Lebuh Tinggi, Tel: 321288.

EATING OUT

Sibu is a paradise for gourmets, particularly cost-conscious ones. It has some of the best value food in all of Malaysia, especially fresh river fish and prawns and top quality seafood. A wide variety of restaurants and coffee shops offer the visitor considerable choice of different Malaysian and international cuisines, so only a small selection can be listed here. But remember it's the local dishes that make eating out in Sibu so memorable and economical.

Sibu Specialities

Kam pua mee is Sibu's signature dish, thin noodles tossed in pork lard and served with slices of roasted pork or minced pork balls, served either with or without a thin broth and accompanied with chilli sauce and soya sauce. Served in coffee shops all over town. Halal Kam Pua Mee is available at Malay food outlets such as Star Cineplex's Muslim Food Stalls and YS Café.



Mee sua (longevity noodles), another Foochow favourite, is a rich herbal soup containing fine vermicelli noodles and large chunks of boiled chicken. Found in coffee shops all over town.

Komphia is Sibu's answer to the bagel. Roasted tandoori style, these fresh bread rolls are served in a variety of ways.

Prawn noodles (*mee udang*) is the town's most popular seafood dish. Huge river prawns, sliced down the middle, are served in a steaming bowl of spicy seafood stock with thick Foochow noodles.

Fresh *dabai*, delicious savoury fruits resembling olives in appearance, and to some extent in taste, are usually sold by Iban ladies at the Central Market. These need to be briefly dunked in hot water to soften them before serving - a hotel room kettle will do nicely. A wide variety of other tropical fruits are also available at the Central Market, including exquisite pineapples from Sarakei and unique green oranges from Bintangor.

Coffee Shops

Coffee-shops are found on just about every street corner, and serve thick Borneo coffee sweetened with condensed milk, as well as a huge range of other drinks. Food offered usually includes local noodle dishes, chicken rice, and mixed rice or *nasi campur*.

Food Centres

These are the most popular eating places. There is always a wide selection of value-for-money stalls and you can select food from as many as you like.



Sibu Central Market, 1st floor. Over 30 mostly Chinese stalls serving almost every kind of local dish imaginable, mostly from 6 am to lunchtime, but some are open in the evening.

Jln Market Food Stalls, near Premier Hotel. Variety of Chinese stalls, plus Malay stalls offering curries, *mee jawa* (spicy noodles in a thick sauce) and *roti canai*.

Kampung Bandung Food Court & Taman Selera MUC, Jln Jasmin, take a taxi. Offers a variety of Malay seafood including the popular *ikan panggang masak belacan* (fish barbequed with prawn paste), *satay* and many others.

Pusat Mara, Sibu Plaza building, Jln Mission, opp. AmBank. Malay and Melanau food stalls offering popular breakfast dishes, then later freshly cooked *nasi campur* and home made *umai* (7 am - 9 pm.)

Taman Selera Harmoni, off Jln Awang Ramli Amit (take a taxi). Open air food court with dozens of Malay stalls offering a selection of local delicacies. One stall serves delicious *sup power* (beef tendon soup) and the *cendol* (a popular Malaysian dessert) is the best in town. Open 5 pm - late.

Medan Selera Tanahmas, Jalan Pekan Sibu, Sarawak, offers a variety of Malaysian dishes.

Chinese & Seafood

Sibu has plenty of upmarket Chinese restaurants, serving a blend of Foochow, Cantonese and Shanghainese cuisine.

Hai Bing Seafood, 31 Jln Maju, opp. Rejang Esplanade, has a good selection of reasonably priced local seafood, dishes and friendly, efficient service.

Esplanade Seafood, Rejang Esplanade, has a good selection of local seafood and a variety of simple western dishes.

Kheng Hock Café, 49 Jln Maju, facing Rejang Esplanade. This popular and very friendly café serves local noodle dishes and steamed buns and dumplings in the morning, tasty barbecued pork and duck for lunch and superbly cooked seafood (especially the *soon hock fish*) in the evenings, all at very moderate prices.

Min Kong Café, Jln Bank, is famous for its delicious prawn noodles (RM20), and also serves other local specialities. Open daily, lunchtimes and evenings.

New Capital Restaurant, opp. Premier Hotel. Not to be confused with the more upmarket New Capitol, serves tender Hainanese chicken rice all day long.

Sri Meranti, 1 Jln Hardin, is a halal Chinese Muslim seafood outlet. Their steamed *tapah* fish is perfectly cooked and the fish head curry is famous throughout town. Evenings only.

Other Chinese Restaurants:

Fisherman Restaurant, No 4 Jalan Chew Geok Lin, near to Tua Pek Kong Temple.

Taman Selera Muhibah, Taman Seduan 8, off Jalan Pedada.

Hong Fu Seafood, Lorong Wong King Huo 3.

Good Happiness, Loonng Pahlawan 7A4

Joystar Garden, 2A Jalan Igan, Sungai Merah

Chuang Yang, Off Jalan Lanang Barat next to Rejang Bridge.

Other Asian Cuisine (Japanese/Korean/Thai/Indonesian)

Cabe Ijo (Indonesian), 71-73, Lorong Kuda 2, off Jalan Kampung Nangka.

Sushi Tie, Jln Pedada, behind Rejang Medical Centre and level 5, Wisma Sanyan. A very reasonably priced Japanese eatery with a good selection of authentic dishes.

Sushi King, branches at Star Mega Mall and Sibu Town Square Phase 2.

Dakemari Korean BBQ, 8, Jalan Chew Geok Lin.

Omaya Restaurant (Korean), No 38 Lorong Sena 8, Jalan Pahlawan.

Sakhon Thai Restaurant, 67-69 Lorong Kuda 2, off Jalan Kampung Nangka.

Malay

Malay food stalls can be found in many Chinese coffee shops, serving halal food with their own crockery and cutlery. See also Taman Selera Harmoni, Pusat Mara, Kampung Bandung Food Court & Taman Selera MUC and other listings in Food Centres, below.

Kasturi, 18 Jln Tunku Osman, is Sibu's leading Malay/Melanau restaurant, serving spicy curries and Malay style seafood, as well as Melanau dishes such as *tebaloi* crackers and *umai*.

Payung Cafe, No.20F Lanang Road (behind Kingwood Hotel), serves a variety of local, Indonesian, Malay and Nyonya dishes.

Islamic Nyonya Kafe, 141 Jln Kampung Nyabor, serves a variety of tasty Malay food and is justly famous for the largest *roti canai* in the Rejang Basin.

Western

Fastfood Outlets

McDonalds, KFC, Sugar Bun Premium, Starbucks Outlet, Pizza Hut and Chickilicious are all represented in Sibu, and can be found in the major shopping malls. Sugar Bun also has an outlet on Jln Pedada with an attached gelateria (ice cream parlour). Malaysian fusion and cake franchise Secret Recipe is at Lorong Pahlawan 9. For more upmarket western dining, the best bet is to choose from the coffee houses in Sibu's leading hotels or the outlets listed below.

Ark Café, Rejang Esplanade, has a fine river front location and serves a variety of western, local and Thai dishes. Evenings only.

BreadSense, 20 Jalan Morshidi Sidek. Busy bakery serving baguettes, sandwiches and light meals. Daytime and early evening.

Café Café, 10 Jalan Chew Geok Lin (near pagoda), serves an interesting mix of western and Nyonya dishes.

ENTERTAINMENT

As this guidebook has been produced with tourists in mind, we have not included places that concentrate on lavish business entertainment or where female visitors would feel uncomfortable. Socialising in Sibu is also done in restaurants and coffee shops.

Green Lounge, RH Hotel. Plush music lounge with quality livebands.

K-Pop Karaoke, Tanahmas Hotel. Upmarket cocktail lounge with open karaoke and private karaoke rooms.

Kaban Lama, Persiaran Brooke. Friendly Iban karaoke bar with occasional live music.

Little Roadhouse, 4 Jln Causeway. Friendly upstairs pub with a pleasant balcony area for observing the street life below. Also serves inexpensive steaks and other local and western dishes.

MC Karaoke Pub, 20 Jln Sanyan, is where the local darts fanatics hang out. Prepare to make friends and lose heavily.

Pelangi, Jln Wong Nai Siong, above Sarawak Hotel. Scruffy but cheap and friendly Iban karaoke pub, where tone deaf singers and karaoke novices will feel welcome.

The Queen, Jln Tukang Besi. This exotic cocktail lounge attracts a friendly and diverse clientele.

Sangkai Temuai, Jln Tukang Besi. Upmarket Iban karaoke transforms into bouncing dance club after midnight.

Cineplex

King's Trioplex, Sarawak House Complex, includes a traditional widescreen large cinema. Tel: 321166.

SHOPPING

Sibu is an excellent place to buy Borneo arts, crafts and curios. Particular items to look out for are Iban *pua kumbu* (hand-woven rugs), wooden hornbill carvings used in rituals, silver jewellery, Orang Ulu beadwork and woodcarving, and Penan blowpipes and mats. Handicrafts shops may be found in the

city area, includes Sibu Central Market, Sibu Night Market, Sibu Heritage Handicraft, Sibujaya Night Market, Fatin Handicraft, Borneo Handicraft and Achai Souvenir & Handicrafts Trading Co. Visitors travelling by road should check out the Durin Handicraft Shop, a one-stop handicraft centre for the Central Region, 35 km from town a few minutes from the Durin Bridge exit.

For general shopping, the main shops in town are located at the lower floor of Wisma Sanyan and the Sarawak House Complex on Jln Kampung Nyabor. The best bookstore is probably Premier Bookstore in Wisma Sanyan. Budget fashions and household goods can be found at the Night Market and in dozens of small shops around town. More malls can be found outside the old town centre, that is Delta Mall (Jln Pedada), Medan Mall (Jln WongKing Huo) and Star Megamall (Jln Tuanku Abdul Rahman).

SPORTS & RECREATION

All major hotels have fitness centres. There are public swimming pools at Jln Delta and Bukit Lima Sports Complex (take a taxi). Jogging trails can be found at the Sungai Merah Heritage Walk, Bukit Aup Jubilee Park and Kutien Garden in Bukit Lima Forest Park (take a taxi).

Hotels, travel agents and fishing tackle shops can arrange fishing trips, either fishing for Borneo masheer (*empurau*) on the Rejang and its tributaries or deep sea game fishing (esp. marlin) off the coast near Mukah.

If your idea of fun is running through humid jungle, getting covered in mud, sweat, bites and scratches (and recovering over a few drinks afterwards), the Sibu Hash House Harriers would love to hear from you. Excellent way to make new friends! The Sibu Hash runs every Sunday at 4pm. Contact Mr Ham at Kheng Hock Café (Tel: +6084-320294) or Mdm. Annie Law (+60198790032).

The 18 hole, par 72 Sibu Golf Club is open to non-members on weekdays. Visitors must have an affiliation with a recognised club and/or a verifiable handicap. Contact Kelab Golf Sibu, Mile 10%, Oya Road, 96008 Sibu. Tel: 084228119 /email kelabgolfsibu@gmail.com

Sibu Superbowl is located at 1 Lorong 2, Jln Perpati, off Jln Wong King Huo, Tel: 333111.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Banks & Money Changers: The following is a list of centrally located banks and money changers. Banks open Mon-Fri 9.30 am-3.30 pm. AmBank, Jln Tunku Osman & next to Tanahmas Hotel. CIMB Bank, 10 Lorong Kampung Datu 5. Hong Leong Bank, 133-137 Jln Kampung Nyabor. HSBC Bank, Bangunan Grand Merdin, 131 Jln Kampung Nyabor. Maybank, 35-39 Jln Kampung Nyabor. Public Bank, 3 Jln Central. RHB Bank, 31 Jln Tuanku Osman. Standard Chartered Bank, 25 Jln Tukang Besi. Yewon Money Changer, 8 Jln Tukang Besi.

Doctors, Dentists & Hospitals: There are a number of clinics around the centre of town. A cash deposit, insurance card or credit card will be required for in-patient treatment.

Sibu Hospital is at 51/2 Mile, Jln Ulu Oya (take a taxi), Tel 343333.

Sibu's two private hospitals, Rejang Medical Centre, No. 23-35 Jalan Pedada, Tel: 323333; and Sibu Specialist Medical Centre (KPJ), No. 52A-G, Brooke Drive, Tel: 329900 are both modern, well equipped and centrally located.

The main post office is at the corner of Jln Kampung Nyabor and Jln Wong Nai Siong. Open Mon-Sat, 8 am - 6 pm. Most hotels offer Internet access, and many restaurants and pubs have Wifi for customers. Charges may apply.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Police/Ambulance - 999 from landline, 112 from mobile device.

Fire & Rescue Service (Bomba) - 994 from landline, 112 from mobile device

Transportation

Sibu Airport (Information Counter) 307770

Malaysia Airlines (MAS) 1 300 88 3000

MAS Wings 307888

Air Asia 1 600 85 8888

Taxi Service 320773

Express Boat (Wharf Terminal) 010 5239775

Express Buses

Biaramas 344999

Bintang Jaya 339178

Sungai Merah 333 331

Eva Express 6999604

MTC Express 324818

Borneo Amalgamated Transport 012 8873611

Syarikat Bas Baram 313100

Government Offices

Sarawak River Board 339936 / 216311

Sibu Municipal Council 310808

Immigration Office 333243

Visa, Pass & Permits 334406 (UTC)

General Post Office 315343)



Most travellers begin their journey in Sibu, using express boats to travel upriver to Kapit or other small towns along the way. These unique torpedo shaped craft thunder upriver acquire remarkable speeds of 30 knots (55km/h) or more. From the window you can see the wide variety of traffic on river - from small dugout canoes to barges weighing hundreds of tons - as well as dozens of modern and traditional longhouses, surrounded by spectacular jungle scenery.

A road from Kanowit to Kapit, crossing 3 major rivers (Sungai Kanowit, Sungai Katibas and Sungai Yong) is expected to be completed by the end of 2019.

PEOPLE OF THE REJANG

Chinese people of various dialect groups (mostly Foochow and Hokkien) are found in all the towns and riverine settlements of the Rejang. However once you leave the major towns, the bulk of the Rejang's population are indigenous.



The lower Rejang (Sibu to Kapit) and its tributaries are Iban territory. The Iban, formerly known as Sea Dayaks are famous for their head-hunting past, their massive ironwood longhouses, their ornate

UP THE REJANG RIVER

The Rejang, Malaysia's longest river at over 530km, is a unique travel experience. The river and its tributaries are lined by hundreds of villages and wooden longhouses, home to a kaleidoscope of ethnic groups, each with their own distinct culture. A journey up the Rejang introduces the visitor a different side of Sarawak - a glimpse of raw Borneo, of a rugged landscape and a river that is constantly alive with boats and people. For adventurous travellers, this is what Borneo is all about.

body tattooing, their wonderful weaving skills, and of course their potent rice wine, *tuak*, which is always offered to visitors.

Above Kapit and the Pelagus Rapids, the people are mostly *Orang Ulu* (literally "upriver people"), the collective name for a number of smaller groups including the *Kayan*, *Kenyah*, *Kajang*, *Lahanan*, *Ukit* and *Punan*. Also former-head-hunters, they live in even more imposing longhouses than the *Iban*. However, their arts and crafts are very different; they are famous for woodcarving and beadwork, spectacular *kelirieng* or totem poles, and the music of a haunting, mandolin-like instrument - the *sape*. Tattooing and body ornamentation are prominent; older *orang ulu* ladies can be recognised by the brass rings hanging from their extended earlobes, and from the dense black tattoos on their arms and legs, although the practice is sadly disappearing amongst the younger generation.

Further upriver, visitors may occasionally encounter small groups of nomadic *Penan*, hunter-gatherers and occasional farmers who live deep in the heart of the forest, moving their temporary settlements according to the seasonal availability of food and the forest products that they trade with the longhouse dwellers.

The sheer variety of different communities makes the Rejang a real cultural kaleidoscope. Its people take great pride on their arts, traditions and culture, and are very happy to receive visitors; it is never a question of which longhouse to visit, but how many.

KANOWIT

First stop on the Rejang, only an hour from Sibu, is the small riverside town of Kanowit. This is the furthest point on the Rejang accessible by road (from Durin), and makes a good alternative jumping-off point for visitors who want to spend an extra hour in bed before catching the express boat upriver. The town centre is formed by three streets of 1930's Chinese shophouses near the waterfront. The main landmark is Fort Emma, a 19th Century Brooke Era wooden fort was built by the Brooke Raj in 1851 at the town centre. It was later relocated to a slope of a hill fronting the confluence of The Rejang and the Kanowit rivers in 1859. Named after the older sister of Rajah Sir Charles Brooke, the fort

was used to monitor the activities of the Dayaks. The Kanowit Warriors Monument (Tugu Pahlawan Daerah Kanowit) located at Fort Emma Square is dedicated to those who sacrificed their lives during the Communist Insurgency of the 1970's.

Kanowit is virtually untouristed, so don't expect any flashy seafood restaurants; the best cooking is done in Chinese coffee shops, so just stick your head into the kitchen and ask what they've got. For adventurous travellers, these coffee shops are also fertile ground for making friends and getting an invitation to one of the longhouses on the nearby Ngemah and Julau rivers.

The town gets its name from the Kanowit people, a sub-group of the Melanau, who have been gradually absorbed by other ethnic groups. The last surviving Kanowit community live at Kampung Bedil, 10 minutes by boat from the jetty by the Shell Station. *Bedil* means cannon, due to a cannon presented by Rajah Sir James Brooke which can still be seen in the village.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96700 Kanowit, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Harbour View Hotel, 63 Jln Kubu, Tel: 753188. Kanowit Hotel, 85 Jln Kubu, Tel: 752155. Band.

There is a homestay programme at the nearby Rumah Benjamin Angki longhouse (Trang Lodge) located 4KM from kanowit town. Contact the *Tuai Rumah* (headman), Tel: 013-8823076 / 0198781498 Email ben_8845@yahoo.com. For further details, contact Kanowit District Office, Tel: 752939 or kanowit District Council Tel: 752093. www.kanowitdc.sarawak.gov.my.

Nearby longhouses also joined the homestay programme and successfully welcome both foreign and local visitors is RH Sg. Durin.

SONG

The small town of Song, just over 2 hours from Sibu by express boat, is the jumping off point for visiting Iban longhouses on the crystal clear Katibas

and Bangkit rivers. Both rivers also offer excellent fishing for adventurous anglers.

From Nanga Selibut, opposite Song town, local guides offer treks to Sa'antu Waterfall, Rarong Waterfall and *Pendam Jipun*, the site of a battle between local Iban warriors and the Japanese army during the Second World War.

Please note that many of the traditional wooden longhouses in the area are being replaced by modern concrete structures, so check with the Song District Office for the latest situation, Tel: 777221 or check with a local tour operator.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96850 Song, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Capital Hotel, 8 Song Bazaar, Tel: 777264. Katibas Inn, 7 Song Bazaar, Tel: 777323. Mesra Inn, 31 Song Shoplot, Tel: 7777777. Sukaramai Inn, 44-45 Song New Town, Tel: 777686 Email: teo_su_ing@hotmail.com.

KAPIT

The bustling upriver town of Kapit (pop. 15,000) is the jumping-off point for the Middle and Upper Rejang and Baleh Rivers and the best place to organise a visit to one of the Iban longhouses of the Lower Rejang. Despite its small size, Kapit is the commercial and administrative centre of the Kapit Division (a vast hinterland comprising the Kapit, Song, Bukit Mabong and Belaga Districts of almost 39,000 sq km with a population of around 150,000), so there is always plenty to see and do.



Attractions

Fort Sylvia is a 19th Century fort whose whitewashed walls and ironwood shingled roof are home to a mini-museum and handicrafts centre managed by the Tun Jugah Foundation. It houses a fine collection of ethnic arts and handicrafts, heirloom jars, brass cannons and historical documents, and a collection devoted to the life of the late Tun Jugah ak Barieng, Paramount Chief of the Rejang Iban and one of Sarawak's foremost independence leaders. Open Tue - Sun 10 am - 12 noon and 2 pm - 4 pm.

The Civic Centre Museum next to the Lake Garden has an interesting set of exhibits on the ethnic groups of the Rejang Basin, as well as some fine watercolours of riverside towns and villages, and a relief map showing all the longhouses in the area. Open Tue - Sun 8 am - 5 pm. Tel: 796003

Events

The Baleh-Kapit Raft Safari is a two-day downriver raft race held annually. Apart from the attractive prizes, participants can also sample the warmth and hospitality of Sarawak's longhouses as they journey along the river. Foreign participants are particularly welcome and are guaranteed VIP treatment. For further details contact the Resident's Office or visit their website (see below).

Accommodation

Greenland Inn, Lot 463-464 Jln Teo Chow Beng, Tel: 796388.

Hotel Meligai, Lot 334 Jln Airport, Tel: 796611/0178066477 www.meligaihotel.com. Restaurant, and conference facilities.

New Rejang Inn, Lot 104 Jln Teo Chow Beng, Tel: 796600 Email: viscreation@yahoo.com.

Ark Hill Inn, Jln Penghulu Gerinang, Tel: 796168.

Dragon Inn, 467 Jln Teo Chow Beng, Tel: 797435.

Dung Fang Hotel, Lot 510, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 797799.

Fully Inn, 105, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 797366.

Hiap Chiong Hotel, 33, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 796314.

Kapit River View Inn, 10 Jln Tan Sit Leong, Tel: 796405.

Orchard Inn, 64 Jln Airport, Tel: 796325.

Well Inn, 40 Jln Court, Tel: 706009.

Eating Out

For a small town, Kapit has a great selection of eating places. Local river fish are a popular delicacy, especially the hugely expensive *empurau* (Borneo masheer), although more economical fish such as *tapah* and *soon hock* are almost as tasty, as are the huge Rejang river prawns.

Notable eateries include Orchard Restaurant (64 Jln Tlong Ung Hong, 9 am - 11 pm, Chong Seng Restaurant (Jln Airport opp. Meligai Hotel, Tekam Cafe (adjacent to Meligai Hotel), Ah Kau Restaurant (Jln Berjaya), and Hock Bing Seafood (off Jln Temenggong Jugah past Chinese temple). The closest Kapit gets to atmospheric fine dining is De Cottage at Panggau Danau (the lily pond on Jln Penghulu Nyangau) and Xin Yue Restaurant, 944/5 Chelsea height, Jalan Selirik. The Ung Tong Bakery on Jln Airport is good for sandwiches, buns and continental breakfast.

Coffee shops are located all over town, serving local variations on standard Sibu and Kuching noodle dishes, as well as economy rice (at lunchtimes).

Muslim food can be found at Malay stalls in many coffee shops, as well as Malindo Café in Harmony Mall, Binggas Café in Jln Temenggong Jinggut, and the wide variety of food stalls at Taman Selera Empurau food court (5 pm - late). One dish unique to Kapit is deep-fried *roti canai*, served at the Malay stall on the 1st floor of the Gelanggang Kenyalang building.

Entertainment

Nightlife in Kapit is focused around coffee shops and karaoke pubs. Many of the karaoke outlets are dedicated to entertaining an all-male clientele, but locals will know which are more family-oriented and where female guests will feel comfortable.

Shopping & Essentials

The main shopping centre is Kapit Square, where visitors can find the post office, essential supplies, pharmacies and medical clinics. There are also a number of banks with ATMs located around town. The lively Teresang Market (wet market) on Jln Temenggong Jugah has a colourful selection of stalls selling all kinds of exotic jungle produce. For handicrafts, try the market stalls, as well as Sula Perengka and Lai Lai Handicraft on the 1st floor of the nearby Gelanggang Kenyalang market and Rozy Stationery (2nd floor, MARA building). The Kapit Resident's Office has a comprehensive database of local craftspeople - email for a copy. If you would like a traditional Iban tattoo, check out Robert's Tattoo Art, 1st floor Gelanggang Kenyalang (disposable needles are used). There are several cybercafés in town - cellular phone connections are either slow or voice only.

Longhouses near Kapit Town

For day visitors, the most conveniently located longhouses are traditional wooden longhouses, approximately 15 km from town. Visitors are also welcome to stay overnight with local families. Hotel counter workers usually suggest Sungai Sut and Sungai Amang area for day trip. Some local vans leave regularly and are an option to experience a longhouse trip, or you can contact any hotel receptions local tour operator or residence Office for inquiry.

Further afield, there are longhouses on the main Rejang River, as well as the Baleh and the Mujong and their tributaries. A homestay programme at Rumah Lulut on the Sungai Tisa involves both traditional and modern longhouses. Rumah Garie on the Sungai Kain is famous for its *pua kumbu*, traditional Iban woven textiles, and has even been accredited with the Japanese 'G-mark' for good design. Rumah George involves a boat ride through the notorious Pelagus Rapids. Rumah Penghulu Jampi on the Baleh is the birthplace of the legendary Iban warrior turned statesman, Temenggong Koh. Rumah Bangkong on the Mujong is a very traditional longhouse that is just starting to attract visitors.

All of the above require an overnight stay, usually with a host family. Alice Chua Travel, Jln Airport, can

make the necessary arrangements, Tel: 789788/019 8593126 Email: atta_kpt@yahoo.com. Longer trips requiring a lot of planning include Long Singut, a very remote Kenyah (Orang Ulu) longhouse on the Baleh, and expeditions to the remote peak of Batu Tiban, described in Redmond O'Hanlon's book *Into The Heart of Borneo*. A good overnight trek is to Bukit Mabong (496 m), part of the Hose Mountain range, visiting the scenic Mambong Waterfall along the way. The Kapit Resident's office keeps a register of licensed nature guides and an up-to-date list of longhouses that accept visitors - email for details.

Bukit Mabong, Tunoh, Part of Hose mountain range (1625 feet / 496 metre). Trekking to Panchor Mabong with 3 huts rest stop (Roughly 3 hours through forest reserve). Panchor Gegugrung short walk from Longhouse. Take a van from Kapit town to nanga mujong boat jetty (across Rejang River) then continue 3 hours (47KM) to tunoh, Bukit Mabong and stay in longhouse at the feet of Bukit Mabong.

The Pelagus Rapids: Until the introduction of powerful modern engines, and generous amounts of dynamite used by British Army engineers in the 1960s, only the most courageous or foolhardy boatmen would brave the mighty Pelagus Rapids. The rapids divide the Rejang into lower and upper sections, and previously passengers would disembark, proceed on foot through the forest, and join another boat at the other side. Nowadays express boats and speedboats with reinforced hulls glide through the rapids with ease, but it is still a heart-stopping experience for the first-time visitor.

The Kapit Resident's Office is on Level 9 of the State Government Complex on Jalan Bleteh. Tel: 796230. www.kapit.sarawak.gov.my. Open 8 am - 5 pm Mon - Fri, closed Friday lunchtimes from 11.30 am to 2.15 pm. Take a van from Teresang Market. The helpful staff can provide detailed visitor information.

Permits for Onward Travel: Foreign visitors require a permit from the Resident's Office for all destinations upriver from Kapit (Rejang or Baleh rivers). The permit is issued immediately, is free of charge and is valid from one to two weeks. Visitors to the Baleh area should be accompanied by guides.

BELAGA

The Upper Rejang, beyond Pelagus, is home to the Orang Ulu or "Upriver People". The riverine settlement of Belaga is the last major trading post on the Rejang, and a good base for arranging visits to the Kayan and Kenyah longhouses situated further upriver. Due to the remote and rugged terrain, visitors travelling beyond Belaga are advised to inform the Belaga District Office, Tel: 461315, www.belagado.sarawak.gov.my.



Licenced tourist guides Mr. Daniel Levoh (Tel: 013 8486351/461186. Email: daniellevoh@hotmail.com) and Mr. Kenneth Jarit Awing (Tel: 0135662925 Email: meetborneotouch@gmail.com) will help you to organise adventure trips around Belaga, Sungai Asap, Bakun and other upriver areas.

Bakun Hydro Dam and Reservoir: This huge hydropower project has created a hydro reservoir as large as Singapore. Some local families have built floating houses on the lake from which they are operating homestays.

The Belanum Floating House-Stay, Mr Luhat Tugau, Tel: 017-8535394, offers four 4-bed rooms on a *jelutong* (floating house) on the lake. The river nearby has a swimming hole with a natural massage effect. Boat trips can be arranged to various parts of the lake as well as fishing trips for highly prized fish like such as *empurau* and *semah*. Access is via Sungai Asap.



Homestay Uma Belor (see below) also offers floating house visits with lake cruises, trekking, and visits to Belanum and Besungei waterfalls. Contact Mr Lemali Peh Nyerong at 019 8166802 / 011 25052071 / 014 3998645

Lusong Laku, Wong Pejik Waterfall is the biggest waterfall on the Rejang River, located near the Lusong Laku Penan Community Resettlement Access is by boat from Bakun Jetty to Long Jakar (45 minutes) or on foot (9.5km) using an old timber road. Contact local homestay operators for details.

Sungai Asap is the main resettlement area for the various Orang Ulu communities displaced by the Bakun hydropower project. One of the 15 modern longhouses here, Uma Belor, offers homestay accommodation. Visitors can experience farming activities, learn to cook local food, see how the local 'burak' rice wine is made, and of course sample it. Other attractions include exquisite Kayan handicrafts - their colourful beads, woodcarvings, paintings and fascinating burial houses - as well as the chance to hear a sape recital by a master musician. Contact Mr Luhat Tugau, Tel: 017-8535394 , Email: liashra@yahoo.com, or the Sungai Asap Sub-District Office, Tel: 013-8303383. The hosts can arrange transport from Belaga or Bintulu. Uma Bawang, another Kayan longhouse, has chalet accommodation for visitors. Contact Uma Maren (longhouse chief) Mr Duren, Tel: 0128501912.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96900 Belaga, Sarawak, Malaysia. Belaga's telephone dialling code is +6086 from overseas and 086 within Malaysia.

Belaga Hotel, 14 Belaga Bazaar, Tel: 461244.

Sing Soon Hing Hotel, 15 Belaga Bazaar, Tel: 461257.

Sing Soon Huat Hotel, 26-27 New Belaga Bazaar, Tel 461307.

Note: During the dry season (July - September), express boats may not be able to reach Belaga and access is only by road (from Bintulu). Please contact Sarawak Rivers Board, Tel: 1 800 88 5777 or 084 797485 / 796271 (Kapit)

THE MELANAU HEARTLAND

The Melanau number around 140,000, and make up roughly 6% of Sarawak's total population. They inhabit the coastal region from the Rejang Estuary to the town of Bintulu and are traditionally fishermen and sago growers. They formerly lived in massive "tall houses" as protection against pirates (a fine replica can be seen at Sarawak Cultural Village near Kuching), but nowadays, they live in *kampungs* (villages) of individual wooden houses similar to those of the Malays.



The majority of Melanau are Muslims, with a significant number of Christians, and a small minority still practise the traditional religion of *Liko*, meaning "people of the river". An interesting *Liko* practice is the use of wooden effigies, called *berbayah* and *berayun*, for healing rituals. Although the Melanau have been influenced by the Malays, they are very proud of their distinct culture, and are noted for their religious tolerance, with Muslims, Christians and *Liko* adherents living happily side-by-side.

MUKAH

The bustling town of Mukah is the administrative centre for the whole Mukah Division, a coastal region covering almost 7,000 sq km with a population of over 120,000. The population is primarily Melanau (55%) and Iban (35%) with small numbers of Chinese, Malays, Bidayuhs and others. Mukah and its surrounding *kampungs* (villages) are the historic centre of Melanau culture and the location of the exuberant Kaul Festival (see Events). The town played an important role in Sarawak's history, as the Brooke Rajahs and the Brunei Sultans competed with one another to control the valuable sago trade in the 19th Century. An old smokestack in the centre of town is one of the few surviving relics of this period.

Sights to see in Mukah include the bustling fishing harbour in the old town; the ancient water village at Kampung Tellian (3km from town - bus or taxi), where visitors can see traditional boat builders at work and trains of sago logs being towed along the narrow rivers; the vibrant cultural centre at Lamin Dana (see below); and the colourful Tua Pek Kong Temple. On a more modern note, the Divisional Mosque and the Civic Centre in Mukah's new town centre both feature multi-coloured conical roofs which are modelled on the *terendak*, a sun hat made of sago palm leaves which is the principal icon of Melanau culture. Mukah is accessible by road or air. See Travel Connections for full details.



Lamin Dana is a delightful combination of visitor's lodge and cultural centre, built in the style of a traditional Melanau tall house and hidden amongst the wooden houses of Kampung Tellian beside a small river. It also provides authentic Melanau meals, and offers activities such as boat trips, mangrove tours and bicycle rental. Contact Diana Rose, Tel: 019 8495962, or local tour operators.

Events

The wild and exuberant Kaul Festival, which gives thanks to the sea spirits, is still held annually at Mukah beach, on the second weekend of April. The main focus is the *tibau* or giant swing, with local youngsters risking their necks as they gyrate wildly above the sand. Contact the Sarawak Tourism Board or the Mukah Resident's Office for full details.

Food and Drink

Mukah's signature dish is *umai*, a spicy salad of raw marinated fish with shallots, lime juice and chillies. It was invented by Melanau fishermen who were reluctant to cook aboard their fishing boats because of the risk of fire. Other local favourites - not for

the squeamish - include sago worms (actually sago-trunk-dwelling beetle larvae), and *lameh*, caterpillars that have recently spun their chrysalis. The last two dishes are hard to find in restaurants, but can be obtained at the town market and are often served in Melanau homes.

Both the Old Town and the New Town are crammed with Chinese coffee shops and Malay restaurants serving a variety of popular Malaysian dishes, and a number also offer freshly grilled fish wrapped in banana leaves and coated with *sambal belacan* (shrimp paste relish). More up-market outlets include the air-conditioned JS Seafood and the Riverside Seafood Restaurant, both located near to the Tua Pek Kong Temple. For authentic Melanau food, including superb *umai*, visitors should head for Nibong House, on Jalan Orang Kaya Setia Raja opposite the Civic Centre.

DALAT

The small riverside town of Dalat makes an interesting half-day outing from Mukah, or a stopover if you are travelling by speedboat to or from Sibu. Taman Poket Dalat, the small landscaped park beside the Oya river, has as its centrepiece the finest Melanau *kelidieng* (sacrificial burial pole) still in existence. The *kelidieng* or *jerunei*, a hollow *belian* (Borneo ironwood) tree trunk decorated with ornate carvings, was used in ancient rituals to ward off disasters. Should the community be threatened, a young maiden was placed inside the pole and given only drinking water until she finally passed away. This sacrifice would appease malicious or angry spirits and thus avoid disaster. Interestingly, the cross in the altar of nearby St Bernard's RC Church is also made in the form of a *kelidieng*, to give Christ's sacrifice a Melanau cultural context.

Just across from the church is one of the Melanau Heartland's rare treats. Relax Corner is a multi-cultural open-air café and watering hole where local Christians and Muslims sip their beer or coffee (according to faith) and exchange friendly banter with occasional visitors in a delightful riverside setting until surprisingly late. Amongst the new shophouses across the road from the riverfront are a number of Chinese coffee shops, as well as Taku Café, a Melanau restaurant serving traditional dishes.

Between the few blocks of shophouses is a small clump of *nunok* trees, which are believed to be the homes of animist spirits. Upon closer inspection you can see a number of traditional animist, Buddhist and Taoist altars next to the trees.

The Dalat speedboat service is easily the most interesting way to reach the Melanau Heartland from Sibu. After about an hour on the wide and stately Batang Igan, the speedboat slows its engines and cruises through the narrow, tree-lined Sungai Kut, stopping at picturesque water villages along the way before emerging at Dalat.

OYA

15km downriver from Dalat is the tiny township of Oya, comprising a row of old wooden shophouses, a market, a picturesque fishing harbour, a decent beach and two Melanau villages. Take a van from Mukah or Dalat. One of these villages, Kampung Senau, has a very well run Homestay Programme, where visitors can enjoy traditional Melanau life and take part in traditional activities such as fishing and sago gathering, as well as boat trips and treks into the peat swamp forest. Contact the Fishermen's Association Contact, Tuan Haji Zam Bin Haji Nor Mukah, Tel: 0138297684/0138099617 /871416.



Melanau Longhouse

The last remaining Melanau longhouse, which still retains its traditional structure, is located at Kampung Sok in the isolated Matu area. Visits can be arranged by the Mukah Resident's Office, Tel: 872596.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96400 Mukah, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Dalat Inn, Lot 502 Dalat New Township, 96300 Dalat (30km from Mukah). Tel: 864482.

Hotel Sarina, Lot 46 Jln Orang Kaya Setia Raja, Tel: 872655.

Hotel Sri Umpang, 29 Jln Lintang, Tel: 872416.

King Ing Hotel, 1-2 Jln Boyan, Tel: 871400.

Kingwood Hotel Mukah (3*), Medan Setia Raja, 15 mins walk from old town. Tel: 874996.

Kingwood Resort Mukah (3*), Lot 96 Block 17, Mukah Land District, Tel: 873888. Located on beachfront 15 mins drive from Mukah.

Mandarin Inn, 30-32 Jln Lintang, Tel: 872688.

Pantai Harmoni Beach Resort, Km 4, Jln Mukah-Oya, Tel: 871010/ 011-3692 4849 (chalets).

Qintai Inn, 50 Jln Oya, Tel: 872872.

Sago Inn, Lot 485, Dalat New Township, 96300 Dalat (30 km from Mukah), Tel 863779.

Sea View Hotel, 1 Main Bazaar, Tel: 871226.

Weiming Hotel, 19 Main Bazaar, Tel: 872276.

Li Hua, Phase 2, Shoplot 22, Green Road, Tel: 874 888.

Eng Soon Lee Inn Lot 124 Jln Pasar Baru Tel:084-832682.

Metro Inn Tanjung Manis Tel: 084-613212.

DOWNRIVER FROM SIBU

SARIKEI

Sarikei, 62 km by road from Sibu (via the Lanang Bridge), is a bustling riverside town and a major transit point on the Pan-Borneo highway. However Sarikei's real claim to fame is its importance as an agricultural centre; more than 80% of Sarawak's pepper production comes from Sarikei Division, and the area is justly famous for its sweet, succulent pineapples, which thrive in the slightly acidic soil here.

Attractions

While the Pineapple Statue next to the express boat wharf pays tribute to the town's most famous export, visitors can see, taste and buy the real thing at the nearby fruit and vegetable market. This is located next to a small but colourful fish market, where chefs and restaurateurs from Sibu make early morning pilgrimages to take their pick of the fresh catch. The small esplanade fronting the Nyelong River is a pleasant place to watch the local boat traffic. On the way out of town towards Sibu, the attractive Residency Building can be seen to the right of the road. The nearby Sebangkoi Forest Park has some nice forest trails leading to a small waterfall.



Rumah Nyuka is an imposing and well-preserved 45-door Iban longhouse constructed entirely from Belian wood, located about an hour's drive south of Sarikei. The 300-plus inhabitants run a homestay programme which includes farm visits as well as optional treks to nearby jungle waterfalls. Contact Mr Akun Ikau, Tel: 011 14036566, Mr Meramat, Tel: 01125091327, email: eggathh8107@gmail.com.

Kampung Sungai Buloh in Pakan, about an hour from Sarikei on the Julau road, is the starting point for the 45-minute trek up Bukit Sibau to visit the tomb of Rentap (Lumbong rentap), the greatest of the Iban independence leaders, who opposed White Rajah rule from 1853 until his death in 1870. Or From Nanga Wak, Pakan takes 16 KM by road. Please call Mr. Luyan Ak Bansang, a descendant of Rentap, to arrange for your visit, Tel: 019 4683873.

Further along the Julau road, Julau itself offers the historic wooden Fort Brooke at Nanga Meluan and a number of fascinating Iban longhouses, including the ornately decorated Rumah Juna Sawing, Rumah Ngumbang (famous for its handicrafts) and Rumah Seli with its nearby waterfall.

At Homestay Rumah Margretta, the first homestay in the Julau area, 5 km from Julau town, visitors can experience the Iban way of life through boat cruises, handicraft making, night walks and everyday activities in and around the longhouse. Tel: 013-8465365 / 013 8369921, Email: keranganbuloh@gmail.com.

Local tour operators run tours to Sarikei and its agricultural attractions, including dragon fruit orchards, pineapple farms, pepper gardens and orange orchards and trips to the Rejang Songket Factory at Kampung Rejang, to see songket weavers in action, as well as the smoked prawn (*sesar unjur*) processing industry at Kampung Belawai.

Events

The Sarikei Pineapple and Fruit Festival has been held annually during the last week of November since 2003. As well as shopping for pineapples and other tropical fruits, visitors can enjoy trade shows, dance performances and live entertainment. Full details from the Resident's Office, www.sarikei.gov.my, Tel: 651963 / 654371 / 651104

Accommodation

All addresses are 96100 Sarikei, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

808 Lodge, 16D Lorong Tun Razak, Tel: 655808.

Dragon Inn (2*), 60 Jln Masjid Lama, Tel: 651799.

Family Inn 2013, Jalan Masjid Lama Tel: 659699.

Furama Hotel, 41-42 Jln Haji Karim, Tel: 655999.

Leh Hua Hotel, 10 Jln Tun Abdul Razak, Tel: 655000.

Oriental Evermore, Lorong 2, Bandar Sarikei, Tel: 644111.

Oriental Hotel, 48 Jln Repok, Tel: 655559.

Payang Puri Hotel, 1-2 Jln Merdeka, Tel: 651216.

Rejang Hotel, 1 Jln Berjaya, Tel: 652693.

Sarikei Garden Hotel, 13C Jln Barrack, Tel: 656886.

Sarikei Hotel, 11 Jln Wharf, Tel: 651122.

Southern Hotel, 54 Jln Repok, Tel: 651167.

Tanjung Manis Hotel, 24 Jln Repok, Tel: 651188.

Wawasan Inn, 69-72 Jln Masjid Lama, Tel: 653199.

Eating Out

Sarikei's Chinese coffee shops and Malay restaurants serve simple noodle dishes and tasty snacks. More demanding diners can try the excellent seafood and venison offered by Hung Kiew Kee Restaurant, Golden Happiness Restaurant (both on Jln Masjid Lama) and Oriental Restaurant (Oriental Hotel, halal). Fast food fans will find KFC and Sugar Bun on Jln Masjid Lama.

BINTANGOR

This small market town, 43 km by road from Sibu via the Lanang Bridge, is famous for its unusual green oranges; although the peel is deep green, the sweet flesh inside is orange coloured and fully ripe. The town can be covered on foot in about an hour, taking in the colourful fruit and vegetable market and the Bintangor orange statue. The coffee shops

in town are renowned for their excellent *rojak*, a spicy Malaysian salad of fruits and vegetables.

The nearby Tulai River is a good area for birdwatching (egrets, kingfisher, eagles, woodpeckers and Pacific swallows) during the day and crocodile and firefly spotting in the evening. Contact local nature guide Mr Rody, Tel: 014 5789469 / 011 31955706

Accommodation

All addresses are 96500 Bintangor, Sarawak, Malaysia. The telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

Hotel Ming Kiong, Wisma Cheong Siew, Lot 20 Jln Kelupu, Tel: 692888.

Orleans Inn, 25-26 Jln Wharf, Tel: 692235.

TRAVEL CONNECTIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, all addresses are 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia. The telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

AIR - Malaysia: MAS connects Sibu with Kuala Lumpur (2x daily) and Kuching (3x daily). Advance booking fares are available.

Air Asia operates regular flights between Sibu and Kuching (3x daily), Kuala Lumpur KLIA2 (6x daily) and Johor Bharu (1x daily).

MASwings operates ATR72 turboprop services connecting Sibu to Kuching (4x daily), Miri (3x daily), Bintulu (1x daily) and Kota Kinabalu (7x daily), as well as 19-seat DHC-6 Twin Otter turboprops from Mukah to Kuching (3x daily) and Miri (1x daily). Connections to other destinations are via Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, Miri, Johor Bharu or Kota Kinabalu.

Sibu Airport Information. Tel: 307770.

Air Asia. Ground Floor, Main Terminal Building, Sibu Airport, contact via call centre: 03-87754000, www.airasia.com.

Malaysian Airlines (MAS) & MASwings. Ground Floor, Main Terminal Building, Sibu Airport, and contact via call centre, Tel: 1-300 883000 or direct, Tel: 326861, www.malaysiaairlines.com.

ROAD: The Trans-Borneo highway (Pan Borneo) connects Sibu to all major cities in Sarawak. Sibu to Kuching takes about 6 hours by car, Bintulu about 3 hours, Miri about 4 hours and Mukah about 3 hours.

BUS SERVICES: Local bus services operate from the bus station opposite the Express Wharf and serve destinations throughout the town and its surroundings. Long distance buses depart from the Sibu Bus Terminal on Jln Pahlawan.

Bintang Jaya (Bintulu, Kuching, Miri), Tel: 339178.

Borneo Amalgamated Transport (Bintulu, Kuching, Sarakei, Sri Aman, Kanowit, Miri) Tel: 654308 / 012 8803611 / 012 8873611.

Bus Asia / Biaramas Express (Bintulu, Kuching, Sarakei, Miri, Pontianak) Tel: 344999, latest bus schedules at www.busasia.com.

Eva Express (Kuching, Bintulu, Miri, Mukah), Tel: 014 6999605.

Freesia Express (Bintulu, Miri, Sarakei, Kuching) Tel: 331595.

Lanang Road Bus Co and Rejang Transport (Kuching, Bintulu, Miri, Kanowit, Sarakei, Bintangor, Mukah, Balingian plus local services) Tel: 332696 / 312527 / 016 8865973.

Miri Transportation Co / MTC (Bintulu, Miri, Kuching) Tel: 324818.

Sungei Merah Bus Co (Sibu town local services) Tel: 330759 / 335564 / 333331 / 314999

Suria Bus Express (From Mukah to Bintulu & Miri) Tel: 872682.

Syarikat Bas Baram (Bintulu, Baram, Miri, Kuching) Tel: 313100.

Vital Focus Transportation operates PB Bus Express, and Borneo Highway Express (Bintulu, Miri, Sarakei, Kuching) Tel: 013 8392450 / 013 8390416

Bintangor. Most local buses to Sarakei stop in Bintangor.

Sibu Airport. No direct bus service. Local bus to Sibu Jaya will drop you at the airport junction (10 mins walk).

Sibu Bus Terminal. Take a taxi or local transit bus from the Express Wharf Bus Station, 15 minutes journey.

EXPRESS BOATS: Tickets are sold in the Passenger Terminal at the Sibu Express Wharf. It's advisable to get there an hour before departure, except at peak holiday periods when you may have to book a day in advance.

Belaga. 9.30 am from Kapit. Services may not operate during the dry season (July-Sept or please check current weather condition with terminal staff counter). 5 hrs journey from Kapit. Foreign visitors require a permit from the Kapit Resident Office to travel beyond Kapit, so it is advisable to stay overnight in Kapit.

Dalat. Smaller speedboats depart from the jetty at the junction of Jln Khoo Peng Loong and Jln Temple. Roughly every 1½ hrs from 7.00 am to 2.30 pm. 1st boat back from Dalat 6.30 am, last boat 12.30 pm. Boats depart as soon as they are full so get there at least 30 mins early. 2 hrs.

Daro. 2-hourly from 7.30 am - 3.30 pm. 2 ½ hrs.

Kapit. A variety of operators run frequent services from 5.45 am to 3.00 pm, several stop at Kanowit, Song and the occasional longhouse along the way. Contact the Sarawak Rivers Board for up-to date schedules, Tel: 339936, 1 800 88 5777, about 3 hrs.

Kuching. Express Bahagia, departs daily at 11.30 am, stopping at Sarakei and Tanjung Manis. RM55, 6 hrs. Tel: 319228 Fax: 336199.

TAXIS: Airport to Sibu town is RM 45, buy a coupon at the taxi stand. Within town, taxis can always be found outside the big hotels, or contact the taxi station, Tel: 320773 / 311286 / 335787. E-hailing services including Grab also operate in and around Sibu.

CAR HIRE: Be wary of unlicensed operators, as they will not be fully insured – look for the Hire & Drive Permit fixed to the windscreens. At peak periods it is advisable to book a car in advance. The following operators are fully licensed - contact the Visitors' Information Centre, Sibu, for other licensed operators.

EPTA Car Rental, Tel: 016 8523777 / 016 8903777.

FT Travel Service, Tel: 013 8370048

Golden Car Rental & Tour, Tel: 016 8883359 / 014 9663359.

Kong Teck Car Rental, Sibu Airport Arrival hall, Tel: 307767 / 012 8189767 / 012 8053787 www.kongteck.com.my.

Orange Car Rental, Tel: 016 4460110 / 016 4480110 / 340101

Team Leisure Travel, Lot 1169-1170, Jalan Oya Lama Tel: 344577 / 019 8193357 / 019 8173357 / 013 8023357, www.teamleisure.com.my.

Trackway Car Rental, Tel: 019 8583737 / 0198 262838

TOURIST INFORMATION



Visitors' Information Centre Sibu

Sibu Heritage Centre, Sublot 3A & 3B, Jalan Central, 96000 Sibu.

Tel: 084-340980 Fax: 084-341280

Email: vic-sibu@sarawaktourism.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 0800 hrs – 1700 hrs. Saturday and Public Holidays 0900 hrs – 1500 hrs. Closed on Sunday.

TOUR OPERATORS:

Equitorial Tours & Travel, Ground Floor, Wisma Equitorial, 11 Raminway, Tel: 331599, Email: equatorial@asia.com.

Great Holiday Travel, 23, 1st Floor, Pusat Pedada, Jalan Pedada, Tel: 348196, www.ghtborneo.com.

Greatown Travel Sdn Bhd, No. 6, 1st Floor, Lrg Chew Siik Hiong 1A, Tel: 219243, Email: gotoborneo@gmail.com, www.greatowntravel.com.

Metropolitan Travel Services, 72-74 Jln Market, Tel: 313155, Email: mtssbw8@streamyx.com.

Sazhong Trading & Travel Service, 4 Jln Central, Tel: 336017, sazhong.yolasite.com. Specialist in upriver trips to traditional longhouses.

Sentiasa Travel Services, 2A, Jln Persiaran Brooke, Tel: 317666, Email: setravel@tm.net.my.

Team Leisure Travel - see Car Hire, above

**** Important Remarks: Please be reminded that all stated fees / timetables / scheduled time operations are subject to change WITH or WITHOUT prior notice from operators. Please do not hesitate to get the latest updates from the Visitors' Information Centre ****