# [Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/orang-utan/" \o "Orang-utan):

**Orang-utan Classification and**[**Evolution**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/evolution/)  
The Orang-utan is one of the largest primates in the world and is the only member of the Great Ape [family](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-family) that is found outside of [Africa](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/africa/). There are three [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of Orang-utan found in the steamy jungles on the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) Borneo and Sumatra which are the [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/), the [Sumatran Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/) and the [Tapanuli Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tapanuli-orang-utan/). The [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/) is more numerous and widespread than its cousins on Sumatra with three distinct sub-species of [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/) found in differing geographic regions on the [island](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/). Orang-utans are one of the closest living relatives to modern [Humans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) and we in fact share 96.4% of our DNA with these forest dwelling apes. The three [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) are actually so similar in both [behaviour](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/behaviour/) and appearance that their name *Orang Hutan* in their native Malaysian communities, literally means "Person of the Forest". All three [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) of Orang-utan are today severely affected by [Human](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) activity in their native [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) and are listed by the IUCN on their Red List as Critically Endangered.  
  
**Orang-utan**[**Anatomy**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/anatomy/)**and Appearance**  
The Orang-utan is a large arboreal [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) which means that it spends the majority of its life high in the trees and therefore have evolved some very special adaptations to make living in the forest easier. As the Orang-utan is simply too heavy to leap like a [monkey](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/monkey/), they use their long arms to swing on the tree branches until they can get close enough to grab onto the next one. The hands and feet of the Orang-utan are both equally effective at grasping onto branches and their [opposable](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-opposable) thumbs also make their nimble [digits](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-digit) very dexterous. The [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/) tends to be slightly larger in [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size) than the [Sumatran Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/), which is more lightly coloured along with having a longer beard than its cousin. [Tapanuli Orang-utans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tapanuli-orang-utan/) are similar in appearance to the [Sumatran Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/) but have frizzier hair, smaller heads and flatter faces. Male Orang-utans develop fleshy cheek pads as they mature but these are much more pronounced on the faces of male [Bornean Orang-utans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/), and all three [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) also have a throat pouch that is used to make deep calls that echo through the forest.  
  
**Orang-utan Distribution and**[**Habitat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat)  
Although Orang-utans would have once been found on a number of the forested, tropical [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/)in [Indonesia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/indonesia/), today they are confined to just two which are the [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) of Borneo and Sumatra. Their tree-dwelling [lifestyle](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifestyle) means that Orang-utans prefer dense tropical forests in the lowlands where there is an ample and varied supply of food. Along with also being found in hillside forests, in valleys and around peat-swamps, there are a number of isolated populations on both [islands](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) that are found in the high [mountain](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/mountains/) jungles at much higher altitudes. The [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/) is found in three remaining [locations](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-location) on Borneo but the [Sumatran Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/) now only inhabits the very northern tip of Sumatra, with the majority of wild individuals being found in just one province. The [Tapanuli Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tapanuli-orang-utan/) is found in a remote region in northwestern Sumatra with the entire population found in an area just 1,000 sqaure kilometres. All three [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) however are severely [threatened](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/threatened/) by the drastic decline of their [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/) which have been deforested for timber or cleared for agriculture.  
  
**Orang-utan [Behaviour](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/behaviour/) and**[**Lifestyle**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifestyle)  
There are two big differences between Orang-utans and other Great Apes which are the fact that they are solitary and that they spend almost all of their lives high in the trees. The large [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size) of the Orang-utan means that it moves very slowly through the forest but often because they spend so much of their time foraging for and eating fruits in the surrounding trees. They make nests to sleep in at night high in the canopy by folding branches over and padding them out with leaves to ensure a comfortable night. Although they do have their own patches of forest, Orang-utans are not particularly territorial and will even tolerate feeding together around trees that have an abundance of ripened fruits (Sumatran Orang-utans seem to be more sociable than Bornean Orang-utans). Male Orang-utans though will make their presence known by producing loud long-calls using their throat pouches to both intimidate rival males and to attract a female to mate with.  
  
**Orang-utan**[**Reproduction**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-reproduction)**and Life Cycles**  
After a [gestation period](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-gestation-period) that lasts for around nine months, the female Orang-utan gives birth to a single infant in a special nest built high in the trees. Young Orang-utans cling onto their mother's hair to stay secure whilst she is moving through the trees in search of food and are not fully weaned until they are three years old. However, Orang-utans will remain with their mother until they often seven or eight years old as she teaches them the skills they need to survive in the forest. This includes both learning about what plants to eat and where they can be found and also involves them being taught how to use tools such as sticks and leaves to make life easier. The Orang-utan is one of the most slow-developing [mammals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-mammal) on the planet that cannot breed itself until it is between 12 and 15 years old. Females tend to have a maximum of three [offspring](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/" \l "jump-offspring)during their life which means that in areas where populations have been affected by hunting or [habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat) loss, they take a very long time to recover.  
  
**Orang-utan**[**Diet**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/diet/)**and**[**Prey**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey)  
The Orang-utan is an omnivorous [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) that although does eat a mixture of both plant and [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) matter, the majority of their [diet](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/diet/) is comprised of numerous [types](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-types) of fruit. Their large [size](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/" \l "jump-size)and [frugivorous](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-frugivorous) nature means that Orang-utans must spend most of their day eating, which is possibly the reason why they have evolved to being semi-solitary [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal). Despite the fact that Orang-utans do move throughout large [home ranges](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-home-range), they have their own patch of forest nonetheless that tends to contain the perfect amount of food to sustain that individual (or a mother with young). Orang-utans eat both ripe and unripe fruits including mangoes, lychees, durian and figs which grow in abundance in some places and are where a number of individuals may meet up to feed. When there is a good fresh water source the Orang-utan collects it in its cupped hands then drinks it as it falls, but they don't need to drink too much as they get the majority of the moisture that they need from their food.  
  
**Orang-utan**[**Predators**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators)**and Threats**  
Historically, Orang-utans on both Borneo and Sumatra would have been [threatened](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/threatened/) by a number of large, ground-dwelling [carnivores](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-carnivore) which is possibly why they have evolved to lead an almost completely arboreal life. Large felines such as [Tigers](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tiger/) and [Clouded Leopards](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/clouded-leopard/) are the primary [predators](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators) of the Orang-utan, along with [Crocodiles](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/crocodile/) and the occasional large Asian [Black Bear](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/black-bear/). However, due to drastic deforestation in both [Malaysia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/malaysia/) and [Indonesia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/indonesia/) the population numbers of the Orang-utan's [predators](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators) have fallen drastically with some being even more [endangered](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/) today than the Orang-utans themselves. [Humans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) are by far the [biggest threat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-biggest-threat) to the remaining Orang-utan populations as they have not only destroyed much of their unique forest homeland but also hunt and capture the young that are then sold into the exotic pet trade.  
  
**Orang-utan Interesting Facts and Features**  
The Orang-utan is a very distinctive [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) in the tropical Indonesian forests with its bright, red and orange hair leading to it also being known as the Red Ape. The Orang-utan is not only the largest tree-dwelling [animal](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) in the world, but it is also one of the most intelligent. In [order](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order) to make the most of the seasonal changes in the tropical [rainforest](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/rainforest/), Orang-utans are known to make a mental map of where the different fruit trees are and when they will bare their ripened fruits. Like a number of other Great Apes, Orang-utans are also known to use tools to facilitate their lives in their jungle, often using sticks and branches to collect honey from bee hives or extract [ants](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/ant/) and [termites](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/termite/) from inside hollow trees. Although the exact tool skill -set seems to depend on individual populations they are really quite remarkable, with some Orang-utans actually known to use large leaves as an umbrella to keep the worst of the rain off, and also put smaller leaves on the soft pads of their hands and feet to protect them in thorny vegetation.  
  
**Orang-utan Relationship with**[**Humans**](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/)  
Since the arrival of modern [Humans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/human/) in the Indonesian Archipelago roughly 40,000 years ago, Orang-utan numbers throughout south-east [Asia](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/location/asia/) have been declining. Once also found on the [island](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/islands/) of Java, Orang-utans are [extinct](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/extinct/) throughout much of their natural range today due to both hunting and [habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat) loss. Originally hunted for their meat, things became more sinister in the 1800s when Orang-utans were in higher demand from zoos around the world and infants were captured to be sold to them. Things were only made worse with the boom in the trade of exotic pets, with mother Orang-utans often being killed trying to prevent their young from being captured by people. The [biggest threat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-biggest-threat) to Orang-utans though is [habitat](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat) loss in the form of deforestation for the often illegal logging of tropical timbers, and the land clearance for the ever increasing [palm oil](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/palm-oil/) industry.  
  
**Orang-utan**[**Conservation Status**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-conservation-status)**and Life Today**  
Today, all three Orang-utan [species](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-species) are listed by the IUCN as [animals](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-animal) that are severely under threat in their [natural environments](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-natural-environment) with the [Bornean Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/), the [Sumatran Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/) and the [Tapanuli Orang-utan](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tapanuli-orang-utan/) listed as [Critically Endangered](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/critically-endangered/). With up to 15,000 [Bornean Orang-utans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/bornean-orang-utan/), 5,000 [Sumatran Orang-utans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/sumatran-orang-utan/) and just 800 [Tapanuli Orang-utans](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/tapanuli-orang-utan/) thought to remain in the diminishing [rainforests](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/rainforest/), the situation is only getting worse and despite their legal protection, an estimated 5,000 Orang-utans are killed every year. A number of rehabilitation and reintroduction projects exist on both Borneo and Sumatra some of which have shown success. A population of young that were confiscated from the illegal pet trade have been introduced into one of Sumatra's national parks which have been known to be successfully breeding, with the population now totalling 70 members. If nothing continues to be done though about their dwindling [habitats](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/habitats/), it been estimated that Orang-utans will be [extinct](https://a-z-animals.com/animals/endangered/extinct/) from the wild within the next 10 years.

# Orang-utan Facts:

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| [**Kingdom**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-kingdom)**:** | Animalia |
| [**Phylum**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-phylum)**:** | Chordata |
| [**Class**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-class)**:** | Mammalia |
| [**Order**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-order)**:** | Primates |
| [**Family**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-family)**:** | Hominidae |
| [**Genus**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-genus)**:** | Pongo |
| [**Scientific Name**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-scientific-name)**:** | Pongo pygmaeus, Pongo abelii, Pongo tapanuliensis |
| [**Common Name**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-common-name)**:** | Orang-utan |
| [**Other Name(s)**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-other-names)**:** | Red Ape, Forest Person |
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| [**Group**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-group)**:** | Mammal |
| [**Number Of Species**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-number-of-species)**:** | 3 |
| [**Location**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-location)**:** | Borneo and Sumatra |
| [**Habitat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-habitat)**:** | Lowland tropical forest |
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| [**Colour**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-colour)**:** | Red, Orange, Grey, Brown, Black |
| [**Skin Type**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-skin-type)**:** | Hair |
| [**Size (H)**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-size)**:** | 1.25m - 1.5m (4ft - 5ft) |
| [**Weight**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-weight)**:** | 30kg - 90kg (66lbs - 200lbs) |
| [**Top Speed**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-top-speed)**:** | 6kph (2.7mph) |
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| [**Diet**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-diet)**:** | Omnivore |
| [**Prey**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-prey)**:** | Fruits, Bark, Insects |
| [**Predators**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-predators)**:** | Human, Tiger, Clouded Leopard |
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| [**Lifestyle**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifestyle)**:** | Diurnal |
| [**Group Behaviour**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-group-behaviour)**:** | Solitary |
|  | |
| [**Lifespan**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-lifespan)**:** | 30 - 40 years |
| [**Age Of Sexual Maturity**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-age-of-sexual-maturity)**:** | 12 - 15 years |
| [**Gestation Period**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-gestation-period)**:** | 9 months |
| [**Average Litter Size**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-average-litter-size)**:** | 1 |
| [**Name Of Young**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-name-of-young)**:** | Infant |
| [**Age Of Weaning**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-weaning)**:** | 3 years |
|  | |
| [**Conservation Status**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-conservation-status)**:** | Critically Endangered |
| [**Estimated Population Size**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-estimated-population-size)**:** | 20,000 |
| [**Biggest Threat**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-biggest-threat)**:** | Hunting and Habitat Loss |
|  | |
| [**Most Distinctive Feature**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-distinctive-features)**:** | Red hair and longer arms than legs |
| [**Fun Fact**](https://a-z-animals.com/reference/glossary/#jump-fun-fact)**:** | An estimated 5,000 are killed every year! |