



TOUR INFORMATION FOR PENINSULA MALAYSIA

These notes are designed to help you prepare for your tour. Please read carefully.

ENTERING MALAYSIA: All citizens will need a passport which is valid for six months beyond the intended length of stay. A visa is not required. Citizens of other nations should contact their nearest Malaysian Consulate for entry requirements. **While aboard your flight visitors to Malaysia might receive a Malaysian Disembarkation Card to complete and present to Malaysian Immigration upon arrival; it is important that you keep this card on your person throughout the tour.**

Proof of a Yellow Fever vaccination must be shown only if you are coming directly from an endemic zone. For more information on the latest entry procedures and requirements, please contact the Malaysian Embassy in London (Tel: 0207 919 0251), or visit their website: http://mw.kln.gov.my/web/gbr_london/home)

It is always a good idea to take a photocopy of your passport and air ticket with you when travelling abroad. They can prove invaluable in helping you get replacements if your originals are lost or stolen. Obviously, you should keep the photocopies in a separate bag to the originals.

CURRENCY: The local currency is the ringgit (MYR). As the tour price includes all travel, hotel and main meal costs, you need only bring enough money to cover items of a personal nature. Travellers' cheques can be exchanged at the airport and major hotels. American Express and major credit cards are widely accepted in leading hotels, restaurants and department stores in Kuala Lumpur. Credit cards are now accepted at Taman Negara for drinks and incidentals. Credit cards are not accepted for T-shirts at Taman Negara.

LANGUAGE: Although "Bahasa Malaysia" is the official language, English is spoken by a large proportion of Malaysians and is widely used in almost all private sectors such as banks, hotels, airlines etc.

CLIMATE: At Frasers Hill the daytime temperature ranges from about 70°F (mid-day) to the mid-50s F at night; while in the lowlands it reaches about 90°F. Night time temperatures will be correspondingly higher, as well. The humidity is quite high, averaging about 80% year round, which may make it seem hotter. Rainfall can be expected at any time in brief, heavy downpours. Total annual rainfall averages between 200 and 260cm (between 77-100 inches), the wet season typically runs from October to March, while the "not so wet" season is from April to September. There is always the chance of rain on any given day at any given time in Malaysia.

ALTITUDE: The maximum elevation we will bird at is approximately 4000ft/1200m at the Frasers Hill; our accommodation there is at approximately 3200ft/1000m. Our time at Taman Negara is at much lower elevation in the foothills with an elevation of about 980-1600ft/300-500m.

PACE OF THE TOUR: The average distance covered during our days in the field is a bit more than a mile per "birding period." Our pace is very slow, of course, but on some days we might walk up to two and a half miles. Since there is a lull in the bird activity in the middle of the afternoon, midday breaks are usually scheduled. The mornings will not be too early as sunrise isn't until 07.00, departures from the hotel will mostly be around this time. We will generally take breakfast at or before dawn. Our proximity to the equator means the days are 12 hours long year-round so dawn and dusk are around 07.00/19.00 respectively. Evening or early morning owling is offered where possible for those who want to participate.

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Most of our birding will be on foot, away from the vehicles or along quiet roads (in which case the vehicle will usually be nearby). In order to find the more skulking birds such as pittas, partridges, babblers and so on we will also be birding on narrow forest trails at times. These trails are not paved and may be slippery or "rooty." Where possible we will be walking on a downhill trend but of course the trails undulate so some uphill walking is required. You may find a hiking pole to be useful. Susan will inform the group of trail conditions ahead of time so that anyone who wishes to opt out has that opportunity.

HEALTH: It is essential that you contact your own doctor to obtain the latest information on the regions you are visiting. Please contact your doctor well in advance of your tour's departure as some medication must be initiated weeks before the period of possible exposure.

It is recommended that you are up-to-date on routine vaccinations.

There are no immunisation requirements for entry into Malaysia. However, Malaria preventatives are recommended as are up-to-date inoculations against Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG) and for typhoid. Typhoid vaccination is particularly important because of the presence of *S. typhi* strains resistant to multiple antibiotics in this region.

A malaria preventative is strongly recommended. Useful information on all aspects of malaria, including how to reduce your chances of being bitten can be found at the website <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/malaria/prevention>

A Yellow Fever inoculation is applicable to those who come from infected countries or those who have recently been to an infected country.

Although minor intestinal problems do occur in the tropics, Malaysia is remarkably free of these complaints. Malaysians are very particular about their drinking water and drinking water in a restaurant or cafe will have already been treated (usually with UV light). Fluid-replacement drinks and other electrolyte –replacement drinks in powder form may be worth bringing as they replace the vital salts and minerals lost during a bout of diarrhea.

As it may be inconvenient, or impossible, to replenish supplies during the tour, please ensure that you take adequate personal medication with you.

Malaysia is remarkably free of intestinal complaints. Malaysians are very particular about their drinking water and drinking water in a restaurant or cafe will have already been treated (usually with UV). Electrolyte-replacement drinks in powder form are worth bringing as they replace the vital salts and minerals lost during a bout of traveler's diarrhoea.

It is likely that we will find mosquitoes in some forest areas. We recommend using insect repellents with a high concentration of DEET. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the DEET repellent on optical equipment as DEET dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses.

Leeches can be found in Malaysia at any time, particularly after rain, but they are easily repelled by a strong all-purpose repellent, with at least 30% active ingredient such as DEET. The widely-used technique is to make a pair of 'leech socks'. These are made from material such as densely woven cotton and come above the ankles onto the calf. These leech socks should have a drawstring at the top to hold them in place.

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These can also be sprayed with DEET repellent and this should guarantee that the little beasts will not get through to bare skin! Leech socks are available for purchase from the Oriental Bird Club (see below).

It may be difficult to obtain any special medication during the tour, so bring all you are likely to need.

Anyone highly sensitive to insect bites should consult a doctor and bring an antihistamine.

For further information on health advice refer to the Medical Advisory Services for Travellers Abroad website www.masta-travel-health.com

ACCOMMODATION: The Lodge in Taman Negara is an upmarket wildlife lodge with air-conditioned rooms with private facilities and hot/cold water showers.

The accommodation at Frasers Hill is a comfortable, western style hotel also with private facilities.

Our hotel in Kuala Lumpur is a typical large western style hotel.

LAUNDRY SERVICE: Laundry service (in by 09.00, returned by 19.00) is available at all places (but the drying may be dependent on the weather conditions at some of the lodges).

ELECTRICITY: 220V AC 50Hz. An international travel plug is useful and can be bought in most airport departure lounges. You may find the following website helpful: <http://www.power-plugs-sockets.com>.

FOOD: The food in Malaysia is generally delicious and varied with a combination of Chinese, Western and local Malaysian dishes. At the lodges the evening meals are in the form of buffets. The food in this part of the world has a reputation for being spicy but in Malaysian cuisine, chili or "sambal" (similar in some ways to salsa) is usually added to the meal at the table and is thus optional.

Our tours are all-inclusive and no refunds can be issued for any tour meals participants choose to miss. While we will try to do all we can to accommodate the requirements of all participants, please note that we cannot guarantee all causes of food allergies can be avoided at every destination. Many restaurants offer set menus and are unable to accommodate all special requests within a group. Thus, participants with significant food allergies or special dietary needs should bring appropriate foods with them for those times when their needs can, regrettably, not be accommodated. Our tours are carefully scheduled to insure the best possible birding experience and although the leaders will do all they can to make sure the group eats at a reasonable time, sometimes early or late lunches and/or evening meals cannot be avoided. Any participants who need to eat at specific times may need to bring supplemental food with them.

DRINKS: Bottled water will be available in the field (we'll keep a box full on the bus). At meals either bottled or filtered water will be available.

INTERNET AND MOBILE PHONE ACCESS: In the hotels in the main towns free Wi-Fi is generally available. Most require a password, which we'll receive on check-in.

Mobile phones can be useful while on tour but keep in mind that many countries operate on a different cellular technology. Your phone may be incompatible with the local system, so please check with your local carrier. Fortunately, with the advent of smartphones, it is easy to download applications such as Skype or Google Voice, which can make calling home free or very inexpensive.

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Another option is to replace the data ("SIM") card in your phone in-country. The SIM cards, including data can be very cheap. If you wish to use this option you will need to check that your smart phone has a SIM card slot.

CLOTHING: This is a rather conservative country, so it is not considered acceptable for men to go shirtless. Neat casual clothing for mealtimes. Bright clothing can scare forest birds, so you need to wear clothing with subdued colours. The following items are basic:

Lightweight, sturdy walking shoes	Sandals or light shoes
Short and long-sleeved shirts	Lightweight, loose-fitting trousers
Sweater	Long socks

Knee-high rubber (Wellington) boots (these are **optional** and may or may not be useful depending on the amount of recent rain; be aware that Borneo is a hot, humid place and wearing boots may predispose you to overheating.)

MISCELLANEOUS ITEMS: Please bring the following:

Alarm clock	Insect repellent
Notebook and pencil	Sun hat
Small torch with spare batteries	Sun screen
Water bottle/canteen	Wrist watch
Rucksack/small day pack	Plastic cup (for picnic lunches)
Ear plugs (if you are a light sleeper)	Personal medication
Pocket knife with bottle opener	

Waterproof poncho or collapsible umbrella – important

Optional: Telescope & tripod (recommended if you have them), spare binoculars and spare spectacles (in case of loss or damage), compass, field guide.

Note: The most effective insect repellents are those containing at least 35% of the active ingredient diethyltoluamide (DEET). The higher the percentage, the greater the effectiveness. However, care must be taken to avoid getting the repellent on to optical equipment as it dissolves rubber and plastic and can damage coated lenses. A reasonably effective alternative, which isn't corrosive, is Mosi-guard, produced by MASTA, and we recommend this. It is available in most high street chemist (including those at the airport). Camping supply stores sell a product containing permethrin 0.5%, which must be applied directly to clothing in advance of wearing and allowed to dry. This non-staining, odourless chemical is non-toxic to humans and protective on clothing through several launderings. Please make sure you never to spray insect repellent inside the vehicle or when you are standing close to other participants – it may drift on to their optical equipment.

LEADER'S EQUIPMENT:

Telescope	Basic first aid kit
Field library	Laser pointer
Spotlight	

Note: The leader's telescope is not to be used for digiscoping. Please do not handle the leader's telescope and tripod without prior permission.

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LUGGAGE: Our Final Information document, which will be sent to you approximately three weeks before departure, will give details about baggage weight and size restrictions imposed by the airline used for this tour.

If possible, please bring your luggage in soft-sided bags or cases (rather than large hard 'Samsonite'-type suitcases) as these pack more easily into our vehicles during the tour. Please note that on many tours there are no porters to carry your luggage so please ensure that **no bag is so heavy that you are unable to lift and carry it yourself**. As a general rule, in addition to using your luggage labels, it is a good idea to fix identification to the *inside* of each piece of luggage.

PHOTOGRAPHY: Scenery and memory shots will be plentiful and simple to obtain. Memory cards may be difficult to obtain and will certainly be more expensive than at home so you should bring with you all that you expect to need. Camera equipment should be packed in moisture and dust-proof bags as a precaution. If you wish to 'digiscope' please ensure that you bring your own telescope.

There will be plenty of opportunities to take photos of birds, mammals and scenery and the leaders will do all they can to accommodate anyone wishing to take photographs. However if you are a serious photographer please bear in mind that this is first and foremost a birdwatching tour. Please do not allow your photographic desires to conflict with other participants' birdwatching activities.

TRANSPORT: Land travel will be in an air-conditioned 10 seater minibus. While in Taman Negara we may take one or two short trips by long boat. These boats are usually open and offer excellent wildlife viewing opportunities.

SMOKING: Smoking and vaping is not allowed in the vehicles or when the group is gathered for meals, checklists etc. If you are sharing a room with a non-smoker, please do not smoke in the room. If you smoke in the field, we ask that you do so well away and downwind from the group if possible.

TRAVEL INSURANCE: Travel insurance is essential and we insist that you take out suitable cover as soon as your tour is booked. If you are bringing expensive optical equipment or other valuable items, please make sure they are also adequately insured on your home contents policy, as most travel insurance policies do not cover very expensive individual items. You may wish to consult your insurance broker regarding coverage. Please also ensure that your policy covers you in the event of a medical emergency, cancellation of a trip or severe delays. Medical costs abroad can often be extremely expensive. Please note that Sunbird is not liable for any medical or repatriation costs resulting from injury or illness during a tour or for covering any costs resulting from a flight delay such as extra hotel accommodation.

If you wish, insurance can be arranged by Helen Fisher, Bullerwell Independent Insurance Brokers, 13 Goldington Road, Bedford, MK40 3JY. Tel: 01234-866964. Please contact Helen for a quote and she will send the schedule directly to you.

TIPPING: All tour-based tips are included in the tour price. These include tips to local guides, drivers, hotel porters, and waiters and waitresses when we have group meals together in restaurants. You only need to pay tips for personal services such as room service or drinks from the bar.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY: There is a plethora of excellent books pertaining to the natural history of Malaysia. It is possible to find references, of a quality to rival any in the world, to flora (trees, orchids, nepenthes, Rafflesia, etc), invertebrates (dragonflies, phasmids, butterflies, moths, etc), herps, birds, mammals and general guides and coffee table books.

Field Guides

Robson, Craig. 2015. *Birds South East Asia*. Helm Field Guides, London. This is the fully updated and revised field guide that will be used during the tour. It describes and illustrates all the bird species of Southeast Asia.

Other References

Kirton, L.G. 2018. *Butterflies of Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand*. 2nd Edition. John Beaufoy Publishing, Malaysia. Concise photographic guide.

Myers, Susan. 2016. *Wildlife of Southeast Asia*. Princeton Pocket Guides. Written by your tour leader, this is a photographic guide to the wildlife of Southeast Asia, including Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. There are more than 500 color photographs with accessible species accounts which highlight key identification features, status, and distribution and a brief introduction discussing wildlife locations and practical travel know-how.

ORIENTAL BIRD CLUB: The Oriental Bird Club publications (Forktail and their bulletin, Birding Asia) regularly include information about Myanmar. For anyone with more than a passing interest in Asian birds, joining the OBC is highly recommended. Their publications to date have been outstanding. Please support this charity which aims to raise money to support conservation projects, encourages an interest in the conservation of birds, and liaises with and promotes the work of existing societies within the region. You will find their contact details and further information about the Club at www.orientalbirdclub.org

FINAL INFORMATION: Final information with instructions for meeting the group, hotel addresses etc., and your air tickets will be sent out about three weeks before the start of the tour. Other news will be communicated as necessary. If you have any questions, please contact us.