



PANDAW RIVER CRUISES  
BORNEO  
JULY 2009 INAUGURATION





# The RV Orient Pandaw: Expedition Cruises on the Rajang River

Borneo, the second largest island in the world after Greenland, has one of the most diverse eco systems on the planet, its primary rainforest home to a vast number of species of flora and fauna.



Now part of Eastern Malaysia, Sarawak was ruled for exactly one hundred years by the Brooke family, known as the Raja Brookes, and only joined the British Empire after the war, gaining independence in 1966.

The Rajang River, at 640km is the longest river in Malaysia, flows across Borneo from Sarawak into Indonesian Kalimantan. Though well known to many from Redmon O'Hanlon's classic *Into the Heart of Borneo*, there is very little tourism here due to the river's remoteness and lack of facilities. The scenery is magnificent – a total jungle experience with the rainforest tumbling into the fast flowing river.



The Rajang is navigable on a ship of Pandaw's size for at least 250km until the Pelagus Rapids, and further on its main tributary the Baleh River. The river is peopled with the Iban, headhunters till the 1950s, whose unique long house culture survives well to this day, blending well animist tradition with modernity.

There is much to do and see upriver, whether just gazing at the amazing scenery or visiting long houses traditional and modern. In these river towns we can explore the architectural vestiges of the Brooke Raj. Jungle treks, for all levels, are a must as are long boat trips to the Pelagus rapids. Wildlife is in abundance and crocodiles, monitor lizards and the hornbill (national bird of Sarawak) common sights.



Downriver, the prosperous Chinese city of Sibuh with its old shop houses, markets and friendly inhabitants, is a calm reflection of an old China that probably no longer exists in mainland China. Sibuh with its rich surrounding farmlands and tropical climate is an important agricultural area. This is the world's biggest producer of pepper and at Sareiki we will visit pepper farms, fruit plantations that boast seven kilogram pineapples and a host of other exotic fruits. The sea port of Thanjung Manis is a centre of traditional songkat textile production and we will visit weaving workshops.



The most delightful city in South-East Asia, Kuching offers a glimpse of what Singapore or Bangkok must have been like half a century ago. Laid back, yet full of hip cafes and bars, the traditional Chinese shop houses as yet untrammelled by greedy developers. The serene Sarawak River flows through the city centre, flanked by gorgeous Brooke Raj palaces, courts and a glistening white fort that marks the first White Raja's landing.

## ITINERARY – Into the Heart of Borneo

### DAY ONE – SIBU

Board ship in the bustling city port set close to the local markets and temples. Free time to explore the town on foot with its attractive streets of old Chinese shop houses, redolent of Malacca or Penang but without the tourists. Sibu is a big port with sea going ships coming up and off loading. From here the fast express boats depart for the interior.

### DAY TWO – KANOWIT

Cast off at dawn and proceed up the mighty Rajang. Morning stop to visit rattan workshops. Here the river is still wide and full of shipping. At the river station of Kanowit we visit the Brooke Raj Fort Emma, of wooden construction and amazingly surviving intact after 150 years. Explore deeper inland by long boat up the Kanowit River and voluntary jungle trek back to the Pandaw moored at Kanowit.

### DAY THREE – KAPIT

The upriver capital has an even more interesting Brooke Raj fort called Fort Sylvia with the adjacent tattoo museum showing traditional Iban designs and techniques. We make further explorations to visit an original Iban longhouse, a rare sight as most have been rebuilt in a modern style.

### DAY FOUR – THE BALEH RIVER

Just above Kapit we turn up the main tributary of the Rajang, the Batang Baleh navigable for a Pandaw for another day's sail. Along the river we see a number of logging camps and fine new long houses. Logging is strictly controlled by the Sarawak government, who have a strict replanting programme. We will visit a logging camp and stop overnight at Nagamujong village with its long house, school, clinic and church. We will also see loading points for coal coming from mines deep in the jungle.

### DAY FIVE – PELAGUS RAPIDS

Return down the Baleh to rejoin the Rajang and proceed another 40km towards the Pelagus Rapids. This section of the river is incredibly beautiful with thousands of islands, reefs and shoals. Navigation here can be difficult depending on water levels and it may be necessary to transfer to long boats to continue our journey. At Pelagus we make a short trek to the Pelagus Resort Hotel for afternoon tea and stupendous views of the rapids.

### DAY SIX – PELAGUS AND BEYOND

Further opportunity to trek in and around the Pelagus Resort in this primary rain forest so rich in fauna and flora. After lunch return downstream past Kapit.

### DAY SEVEN – SONG

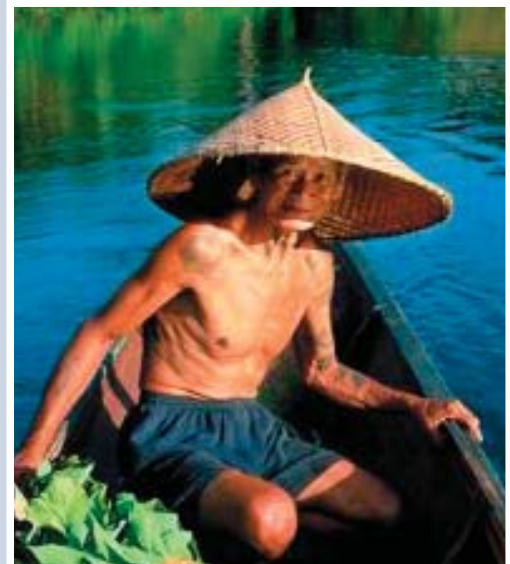
Song is a small river station between Kanowit and Kapit and we stop here to make a boat trip up the Katibas river to visit long houses and the opportunity to trek part of the way back to Song. Continue downstream through evening.

### DAY EIGHT – SARIKEI AND THANJUNG MANIS

We now enter the Rajang delta area with its rich agricultural life. At Sarikei we visit a deer farm and pepper plantations. On the coast Thanjung Manis is the main seaport and gateway to the Rajang. Though a modern city it is not without interest. A short drive away, village workshops specialise in songkat weaving. Return upstream stopping over night at Bintangor.

### DAY NINE – SIBU

Dock in Sibu early morning and disembark for onward flights.



## RV ORIENT PANDAW

This brand new five star ship will launch in Saigon in September 2008 in the traditional colonial-style unique to all Pandaw ships. There are 30 luxury staterooms finished in hardwood panelling with brass marine fittings. All open onto a promenade deck, each with private outside seating. Staterooms are large at 168sq feet, air-conditioned and with en-suite shower rooms, mini safe, mini bar, DVD on demand, room service and wifi. A spacious single sitting dining room offers fusion cuisine in an informal atmosphere, but smart casual at night. There is a cocktail bar on the observation deck and lounge area with lecture theatre on lower deck. Ship amenities include a spa and fitness area. For plan and more details go to [www.pandaw.com](http://www.pandaw.com)

## COSTS PER PERSON FOR 8 NIGHT/ 9 DAY CRUISE IN USD

From USD 2,250 for a main deck cabin sharing. Cabins 301 and 302 have inter-connecting door and may be booked together to form a suite with private sitting room or to form two adjoining rooms for a family. Includes all meals, shore excursions and Sibul airport transfers.

## SCHEDULE

Three cruises of eight night duration a month from July 2009 – departing on the 1st, 10th and 20th of each month. Exact dates on [www.pandaw.com](http://www.pandaw.com)

## PRE OR POST CRUISE EXTENSION

One or two nights in Kuching – we recommend Hilton or Crowne Plaza – for city walkabout, visits to the enchanting Sarawak Museum and delightful Brooke Raj public buildings including across the river by ferry the Astana and Fort and on the city side along the river Law Courts and Post Office which are real architectural gems. Essential is a wander down Carpenter street with its old Chinese shop-houses. Just outside town visit the Orangutan sanctuary and the Bako National Park one hour away.

## CLIMATE – WHEN TO GO?

Temperatures have little seasonal variation with daytime averages 23C to 32C (70F to 87F). Rainfall is year round, with higher levels September to February monthly average 400mm (16 inches) and lesser level March – August, monthly average 250mm (12 inches). The Rajang is a year round destination.

## HEALTH

At time of writing, the areas we will visit are not listed as malarial areas by Sarawak government. Passengers are required to check with their doctor as to current travel advice.

## SECURITY

In Sibul and the Rajang there is virtually no crime. Foreign travellers are warmly welcomed and women travellers treated with respect.

## FLIGHT CONNECTIONS

Sibul – domestic flights to Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu  
Kuching – domestic flights to most Malaysian destinations and international flights to Brunei, Singapore and Indonesia

[www.pandaw.com](http://www.pandaw.com)

