



Borneo
Nature
Foundation



SEBANGAU VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME 2019



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WHAT IS BORNEO NATURE FOUNDATION?

Borneo Nature Foundation (BNF) is a not-for-profit conservation and research organisation. We were established in 1999 to study, protect and restore some of the most important tropical rainforests in Borneo, to safeguard the biodiversity found there and the important cultural values the forest has for indigenous people. We work in three primary landscapes which cover the three main bio-geographical regions of Kalimantan and work with a number of universities and government partners to implement successful conservation projects.

Our longest running programme is in the Sebangau Forest, a 600,000 hectare area of tropical peat-swamp forest that is one of the most critical ecosystems in Borneo. BNF's scientists were the first to realise its importance for orangutan conservation, carrying out population surveys here which identified the largest lowland Bornean orangutan population in the world. This brought the region to the forefront of orangutan conservation efforts and led to the award of National Park status in 2004.

BNF has worked in Sebangau ever since, supporting and empowering community-led initiatives including anti-logging patrols and fire-fighting teams, and as a direct result of these efforts illegal logging was stopped here over a decade ago and we continue to protect the site against encroachment and hunting. BNF uses scientific research undertaken by our highly-skilled field research teams as the basis for protecting and managing forests. We monitor the distribution, population status, behaviour and ecology of Borneo's two flagship ape species – the Critically Endangered Bornean orangutan (*Pongo pygmaeus*) and the white-bearded gibbon (*Hylobates albibarbis*). This wide-ranging biodiversity and forest research is used to make the case for conservation and demonstrate the harmful impact of logging, land conversion and forest fires. techniques of reforestation and peatland restoration. Volunteers have supported BNF across all these activities since 2001 and continue to make a difference in supporting BNF's ongoing conservation efforts.



WHY VOLUNTEER WITH US?

We need fit, enthusiastic individuals to join our 2019 Volunteer Programme, who will thrive in a jungle setting with basic camp facilities. In return, we offer a challenging, yet rewarding experience, which will help to ensure conservation work is carried out to secure a future for the last remaining forests in Borneo. As a volunteer, you will have the opportunity to develop new skills as you learn about field research techniques and contribute to BNF's conservation and educational activities.

In order to participate in our Volunteer Programme: Volunteers do not need to have prior experience in the field, just a willingness to help and a sincere interest in wildlife and forest conservation, sharing BNF's passion for the work that we do. You must be 18 years of age or above. This is a physically demanding Programme in a humid, equatorial environment, but a great opportunity for active individuals who want to get their hands dirty while helping save the rainforest!





"Volunteer
most challen
had. I would



Working with the Borneo Nature Foundation was one of the best, exciting, educational and inspirational experiences I've ever had. I would do it again in a heartbeat. Amazing people, incredible wildlife and unforgettable memories!"

Jess Callaghan-Evans, 2016 Volunteer



A blue boat is shown from a low angle, moving across a calm body of water. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, and the sun is setting, creating a warm, golden glow. The text "WHERE WILL YOU BE BASED?" is overlaid in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The boat's wake is visible in the foreground, and the water reflects the sky and clouds.

**WHERE WILL
YOU BE BASED?**



The Sebangau Forest covers almost 600,000 hectares of peat-swamp habitat, the largest single area of lowland rainforest remaining in Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo. We work together with the University of Palangka Raya and the Sebangau National Park authority to undertake our projects and advise on habitat and species management.

Peat-swamp forests are remarkably diverse and home to over 30% of the remaining population of wild orangutans in Borneo. Peat forms here under waterlogged conditions through the incomplete breakdown of organic matter – dead leaves, branches, fallen trees – which has built up over many thousands of years to create a thick

peat layer up to 18m deep in places. Standing atop the peat is a rich tropical rainforest, with a huge diversity of plant life, including large timber trees, such as ramin and swamp meranti, a wide variety of pitcher plants and sustainable commercial species, such as rattan and rubber trees.

Our base camp is located just inside the forest-edge, which is approximately one hour, by car, boat and - uniquely - small train, from the provincial capital of Palangka Raya. Facilities in camp are basic but comfortable, including accommodation in purpose-built dormitory huts, washing and toilet facilities, office, kitchen, drinking water and cooks.





WHAT WILL YOU EXPERIENCE?

During the first week of the Programme, volunteers will be introduced to the Sebangau Forest and receive an orientation on all BNF's research and conservation activities, which includes orangutan nest surveys, camera trap surveys, butterfly and dragonfly ecological monitoring and peat-swamp habitat restoration techniques. For the following weeks, volunteers will assist with various conservation and education projects, which will vary subject to weather conditions and necessity.

These may include:

- Learn about BNF's long- and short-term biodiversity monitoring studies, including determining primate density and mapping forest cover
- Support long-term conservation activities, such as seedling replanting or rebuilding the nursery in camp
- Get involved in our environmental education activities, such as teaching local children about biodiversity and conservation or building a forest classroom for future rainforest field trips
- Join expeditions to remote campsites to monitor habitat and biodiversity changes over time to better inform our conservation initiatives
- Assist tasks that are essential to keeping the research site in good working order, such as tagging our research transects or painting camp

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE



Indonesia is situated on the equator, and therefore has a tropical climate consisting of a wet and dry season. In Borneo, the wet season is usually October to April, and the dry season May to September. The dry season is usually (but not exclusively) a little hotter than the wet season, and obviously not as wet. Both the wet season and the dry season can last longer than expected. Sudden downpours and tropical storms are to be expected. As Sebangau is a peat-swamp forest, it is very different to a dryland rainforest. It can be extremely wet, and during the wet season it is flooded – the standing water can be waist deep in many places.

Hummocks, tree roots and hidden holes mean that walking can be extremely hard work. Falling over is something of a rite of passage. On top of this the humidity and temperatures are very high. Typical daytime shade temperatures are 32°C at base camp or in the towns and 27°C in the jungle.

In the late evenings the temperature can drop in the forest (by up to 7°C), so it can feel quite cool compared to town.

To move around the forest some sections have single plank boardwalks, which may be slippery or broken in places. The rest of the time is spent walking through the forest itself, which can be very muddy or wet. This makes it a rewarding, yet challenging environment. It is essential that you are physically and mentally fit and able to cope in such terrain.

Hazards and risks in the forest range from mosquitoes and slippery tree stilt roots through to poisonous snakes, spiders and scorpions. When you begin the programme, you will have an induction to the forest and hazard awareness training. All of our inductions will be carried out in English so you must have a good working knowledge of the English language for health and safety purposes.