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Things to do while in Sabah

By ANNA VIVIENNE

Sabah is welcoming visitors from all over the world during this Visit Malaysia Year 2007. Frontliners are smiling their brightest and friendliest during this time. Everybody is just in the 'host' mode. Tour guides and tour operators are on the alert for mass arrival of tourists. Coordinators are busy scheduling and rescheduling tours for tourists.

However, not every guest wants the services of a tour guide or operator, nor do they want schedules that keep them confined to regimented itineraries. So what can they do while they are in Sabah one might ask...

Personally I would advise them to explore and enjoy Sabah to the fullest. For those who simply love exploring islands and basking in the sun, go to the turtle Island. Here you can relax by day, sunbathing and snorkelling.

At night you will wait with the rest of the guests for turtles come and lay their eggs. This may involve a lot of waiting around as they can not guarantee what time the first turtle will arrive at night.

The Island is protected so only a certain number of people can stay in any one night. This ensures that you are not jostled and shoved by crowds. You are not encouraged to go for lonely walks and 'commune with the night' either.

As for the turtle watch, when the first turtle comes and lays her eggs, all the tourists are called out to watch it. The turtle then lays her 60 to 70 eggs absolutely without privacy.

Once the turtle lay her eggs, it will stamp in the sand to cover them but they (the eggs) are dug up and put into a nursery, in the name of conservation.

If you are lucky, you get to release hatchlings back into the sea. For water rafters, who love to challenge nature and feel their adrenalin pumping, challenge Padas river.

Dare to raft down in three to six feet drop, pushed by gushing torrents of water. You will feel the exhilaration of looking at fate in the face.

After that you can drive back to the State Capital leisurely. The countryside views are like a balm to exhaustion.

In Kota Kinabalu go shop for handicrafts. There are tons of interesting things to buy here, especially if you want to present them to relatives and friends back home. There are. Rattan products, chandelier made of seashells, wooden vase, bamboo wind chime, batek, and tons of T-shirts printed with flora and fauna of Sabah.

Handicrafts stalls can be found in shopping complexes like Wawasan Plaza, KK Plaza, Wisma Merdeka and Centre Point. The Handicraft Centre formerly known as UNCHR Market is also a very good place to go.

If you want to experience the local tamu and it happens to be Saturday, Putatan township just 15 minutes drive away is a good place to go. It is a small tamu, but you will be able to purchase several interesting edibles that are eaten by the local community. Fr instance there is the Tuhau or wild ginger which smells suspiciously like squashed bed bugs. It is pounded with chilli and salt and eaten with a dash of edible vinegar.

The other local food item that is coveted by locals is the preserved fish or nonsom sada'. It is packaged in plastic containers.

As for sea produce, you will see various types of cockles, shells and edible snails being sold there.

Rattan products like baskets, containers and 'trays' are also available for sale in the tamu. If you like to visit other tamus, you can visit Tamparuli on Wednesday, Tuaran on Sundays and Donggongan

See pages I and III

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27.01.2007

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