

Imagine being in the north of tropical Borneo and awakening to a refreshingly cool morning where the only sound is the gentle singing of birds. You're snug and warm, a quilt over you to keep out the chill. Then the smell of bread rolls cooking for breakfast is too good to ignore, so you get out of bed and prepare for your day at Magic Mountain Country Home.

Peter Achleitner and his wife, Lily, create their own type of magic at their home, located on the Pinosuk Plateau (around 1,750 metres) on the border of Kinabalu Park, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Their comfortable country home has been built in a large patch of forest between two fairways of the Mount Kinabalu Golf Course

"I'm an Austrian," says Peter, "My parents were farmers in the mountains, so naturally I love this unspoiled and unique part of Sabah — and I love the freshness we enjoy at this altitude."

Both Peter and Lily (who grew up on a farm near Kudat in the north of Sabah) share a passion for organic gardening, for baking bread and making their own sausages and bacon. They decided to open their home to a small number of guests, offering gourmet dinners, comfortable rooms furnished with artifacts that Peter has collected over the years, and a sumptuous breakfast which is enjoyed on the covered verandah. Guests who know Indonesia will recognise many of the artifacts and antiques in the Magic Mountain Country Home. Framed maps, a gold-threaded marriage sarong from Sumatra, a magnificent wooden chest with brass fittings from Madura, east of Java, are typical of the decorations in the guest rooms and main sitting room.

Magic Mountain Country Home appeals mainly to mature visitors, according to Peter. They love to relax on the verandah, watch the birds, read or just taking it easy. The more energetic might go for a stroll, while golfers are able to play on the dramatic golf course. Visitors can go to Mesilau and visit the Sabah Parks Information Centre, then go on a guided tour of the magnificent pitcher plants that cover a hillside not far from the restaurant and accommodation of Mesilau Nature Resort.

A short walk to the road leading up to Mesilau will take visitors to a superb spot to gaze at the many crags that crown Mount Kinabalu's summit (the mountain usually attracts cloud or mist by mid-morning, so it's best to go before 7.30 am). The manicured greens of the golf course and non-native pines contrast with the untouched montane forest of Kinabalu Park adjoining the course. Seen from an eastern perspective, the power of this stunning mountain is undeniable.

Peter and Lily enjoy playing host to visitors and will do everything to make them happy. Realising that different guests have different preferences,



Making Magic on the Mountain

By Wendy Hutton

Peter or Lily are always asking what they'd like to do and eat. Maybe they want to learn how to bake bread. Or perhaps take a tour of Lily's growing collection of native orchids, which have been gathered from the branches of fallen trees. Perhaps guests would like to visit the nearby village or *kampung*. If they want to see a movie, there's a large collection of DVDs to entertain them.

They might want to learn how to cook Lily's *Manok Lihing*, a local favourite made with chicken, ginger, plenty of home-made rice wine and seasonings. Lily will tell you how she makes it, and may then offer you a bottle of her mother's home-made rice wine when you express an interest in trying to cook it at home. "I don't cook from a recipe book, it's all here" she says, pointing to her head. "I know what should be done after many years of watching my mother."

Lily makes all the local and other Asian dishes, which are greatly appreciated, and Peter (who does use recipe books) enthusiastically bakes bread and cakes, cooks all the Western food; makes his own sausages, salamis, bacon and pancetta. Their website even has photographs of some of the dishes he can prepare, and checks whether guests have any dietary preferences or constraints at the time of confirming their reservation.

The visitor quickly realises he being welcomed into a private home, where his hosts do everything to please them. "For us, Magic Mountain is our home, not a business. We've decided to pursue a certain lifestyle, and we invite our guests to share it." No wonder most visitors arrive as guests and depart as friends.

Magic Mountain Country Home is located at Mount Kinabalu Golf Club, Pinosuk Plateau, Kudasang. For further enquires, call +60 19 8214338, e-mail info@sabahbb.com or visit www.sabahbb.com.



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Bilit Rainforest Lodge

Bilit Rainforest Lodge is situated on the banks of the Kinabatangan River, 126km from Sandakan town. The Lodge was built from local hard-wood material and designed to blend into the surroundings giving a unique natural ambience. Besides the building, the Bilit Rainforest Lodge also serves as a flora & fauna attraction along the Kinabatangan River and Forest Reserve Surrounding. The Kinabatangan River (560km) is the longest river in Sabah. Its floodplain, one of the last remaining wetlands in Southeast Asia is a mosaic of various habitat types found in a Riverine Forest.

Lodge Facilities

- 12 Semi-detached and 6 Detached Chalets with Queen Size Beds
- All Rooms are Equipped with Air-conditioning and Private Bathroom with Hot & Cold Shower
- Restaurant with Bar
- Internet Facilities and Wi-Fi Access
- Souvenir Corner

Daily Activities

- Guided Jungle Trekking
- Jetty Fishing
- River Cruises Along the Kinabatangan River
- Lodge Programs






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