



Tree planting in Abai



Seeing Borneo Pygmy Elephants in the wild is a truly unforgettable experience

sustainable development. As much as we benefit from the industry, so should the local residents and this is our way of giving back," she said. In fact, most of the fresh seafood served at the lodge is supplied by the villagers, who also enjoy a variety of job opportunities thanks to tourism boom in the area. S.I Tours even has a scholarship fund for deserving students from Kg. Abai to pursue their studies. Their sincere efforts to help the local community are truly commendable.

Our next night would be spent on another side of the Kinabatangan river, the Kinabatangan Riverside Lodge. The boat ride took approximately one hour from Abai and upon arrival, we asked the pertinent question of the day: "Are there any elephants here?" Junior smiled at our child-like enthusiasm and said we'd have to wait and see. Our afternoon cruise along the river proved fruitful. We spotted plenty of proboscis monkeys, who quickly scurried and disappeared at the sight of our boats. We had also seen a beautiful python, a civet and a total of 5 of the 8 hornbill species found in the area, including the largest of its kind, the Rhinoceros hornbill to which Junior said we were "Very lucky indeed. Don't get me wrong, we were excited at all the wildlife we had come across so far...But we had not given up on our gentle grey giants. And so our boat, along with many others, glided its way along the mocha-coloured waters of Kinabatangan when suddenly there was a commotion on one of the riverbanks. That's when I saw it. A large grey head, flapping ears and...A trunk! The Borneo Pygmy Elephant was just 20 feet away. Not one, not two but a whole herd of elephants emerged from the thick of the jungle to feed. Cameras snapped away, eyes fixated and mouth agape – everyone reveled in the moment. This was truly the highlight of my trip as the sighting of the Borneo Pygmy Elephant in the wild – the smallest of its kind- is extremely rare. Even the rain that pummeled us as we made our way back to the lodge did not dampen our spirits and the dinner conversation was made up of excited chatter on the elephant sighting. It was a trip of a lifetime and no matter how many times I visit the Kinabatangan river, it never fails to awe and inspire.

For more information on cruising the Kinabatangan, contact S.I Tours at tel. no 089-673 502 / 673 503 / 673 508, fax 089-673788 or e-mail [sitours@tm.net.my](mailto:sitours@tm.net.my) / [info@sitoursborneo.com](mailto:info@sitoursborneo.com). Visit the website at [www.sitoursborneo.com](http://www.sitoursborneo.com)



The jungle night-walk: In search of nocturnal creatures



Abai Jungle Lodge