

THE LOCALS' VERSION DUMMIES GUIDE TO TRAVEL IN KOTA KINABALU, SABAH

Covering:

Culture! (Cos QoL = culture!)

Mountains (yes THAT mountain!)

Seas (yes THAT diving site!)

Sunset (Top 10 in the world!)

Food (because that is what Asians do all day!)

Drinking (because it's ISQOLS!)

*A collaborative production by the local ISQOLS
Organising Committee*

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Recommended website to check to do list in Sabah: <https://sabahtourism.com/things-to-do/>

Recommended website to refer for diving in Sabah: <https://sabahtourism.com/activity/diving/>

PART 1: LOCAL CULTURAL DESTINATIONS IN KOTA KINABALU CITY

Nicholas (Sci Comm)

The Internet will tell you to go to all sorts of places – these are the places that are tried and tested that we will recommend you to go for. Anything else is probably somewhat touristy but still worth the trip.

Gaya Street Sunday Market

Sundays (obviously) – 6am to circa 2pm

With buskers, traditional crafts being sold, plants and all manner of interesting flora and fauna, and a few stalls selling locally carved knives, bamboo and rattan paraphernalia, Gaya Street Market has it all. Hobnob with locals on Gaya Street, the main pedestrianized shopping walkway in the city centre, and enjoy a cuppa coffee at the little shops that dot the street.

Alternatively: Tamu Donggonggon (Donggongon Market) runs on Thursday morning from 6am to 3pm as well, and is definitely slightly more authentic than the city centre version, but you are supposed to be at the conference on Thursday...

Mari Mari Cultural Village

Open from 9am-5pm everyday

10km from town – around USD 5-6 on ride sharing

Mari Mari Cultural Village is a living museum located in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia. It is designed to preserve and showcase the traditional cultures and lifestyles of various indigenous groups of Sabah.

1. **Location:** Mari Mari Cultural Village is situated amidst the lush greenery of the countryside, about 25 minutes away from Kota Kinabalu city center, making it easily accessible for tourists.
2. **Cultural Diversity:** The village offers visitors a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage of Sabah by featuring the traditional houses, customs, and practices

of five major indigenous ethnic groups: the Kadazan-Dusun, Rungus, Lundayeh, Bajau, and Murut.

3. **Authenticity:** The village is designed to provide an authentic experience of indigenous life, with each traditional house representing a different ethnic group. Visitors can explore these houses, which are built using traditional materials and techniques, and learn about the unique customs, rituals, and daily activities of each community.
4. **Activities:** Visitors to Mari Mari Cultural Village can participate in a variety of activities that offer hands-on experiences of indigenous culture. These activities may include traditional cooking demonstrations, bamboo cooking, blowpipe and spear throwing, fire-starting using traditional methods, cultural performances such as traditional dances and music, and handicraft making.
5. **Guided Tours:** Guided tours are available at the village, led by knowledgeable guides who provide insights into the cultural significance of the various customs and practices. They also offer explanations about the traditional beliefs, spiritual practices, and social structures of the indigenous communities.
6. **Cultural Performances:** One of the highlights of visiting Mari Mari Cultural Village is the opportunity to witness live cultural performances showcasing traditional dances, music, and rituals of the different ethnic groups. These performances often involve colorful costumes, rhythmic music, and energetic dances that reflect the cultural identity and heritage of each community.
7. **Culinary Delights:** Visitors can also savor traditional indigenous cuisine at the village, which may include dishes such as hinava (a Kadazan-Dusun raw fish salad), bambangan (fermented wild mango), and other local delicacies prepared using traditional cooking methods and ingredients.

Sabah State Museum

5 km from city centre

At most USD 2-3 on ride sharing

It is a bit dated, but the entry prices are reasonable and most of it can be enjoyed without going in. Top of the list is the museum's outdoors Heritage Village. This is by far the standout feature, presenting reconstructed traditional houses of various indigenous groups, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the architectural styles and cultural practices of Sabah's diverse ethnic communities. This includes the longhouses which can house 100 families (a comparatively tiny mockup is available here...) Moreover, the museum's Natural History Gallery offers a fascinating

exploration of Sabah's biodiversity, with exhibits on flora and fauna, including impressive taxidermy displays of the region's iconic wildlife. Additionally, Sabah's archaeological past is visible at the Archaeology and Ethnography Gallery, which houses artifacts and exhibits documenting the region's prehistoric and historical periods, offering valuable insights into Sabah's ancient civilizations and cultural evolution. There is also a genuine steam engine outside from the North Borneo Railway!

Sabah Art Gallery

Within 1 km distance from Sabah State Museum

Situated within long-ish walking distance from the Sabah State Museum, the Sabah Art Gallery showcases contemporary and traditional artworks by local and international artists. It provides a platform for artists to exhibit their works and offers visitors a glimpse into Sabah's thriving art scene. There is also a fabulous little park called Taman Rimba next to it, where you will see the entire elderly population of Kota Kinabalu doing Tai Chi and morning exercises there....Definitely worth a trip just to see real people doing real things.

Monsopiad Cultural Village

12 km from city centre

Roughly USD 4-5 on ride share

Located about 30 minutes from Kota Kinabalu, Monsopiad Cultural Village provides a unique opportunity to learn about the customs and traditions of the Kadazandusun people. Visitors can explore traditional houses, witness cultural performances, and visit the House of Skulls, which showcases the headhunting history of the Kadazandusun tribe. Yes you read that right - there are around 30 skulls collected by the family that owns the place, don't say we didn't warn you.

PART 2: NIGHT LIFE IN KOTA KINABALU SABAH

Thong Vie Cheong (Promotion)

Even among the Malaysians, we would consider Sabah a unique place. It has a cultural diversity so wide that even the word “melting pot” is an understatement. Here, drinking is an art, and for those who wish for a good time after the sun sets beyond the western horizon of this vibrant city of Kota Kinabalu, you are in for a treat.

“Drinking is our culture, an art, and tradition,” says a local to the author. The ethnic groups mastered the art of brewing their own traditional drinks, and ways to have fun with their family and friends. They welcome anyone from around the world to join in the fun, as long as you can keep up.

Here are a few suggestions for where you can experience the unique night-life of Kota Kinabalu, in different ways of your own preferences.

1. Ways of the casual Pub and Bars

We start of the list with the most common way of drinking in Kota Kinabalu- by hanging out in Pubs and Bars. Walk around the busy streets and you would have noticed quite a few around you. However, there are a few places the editors would like to recommend where the bars and pubs concentrated, so that you can take your pick while strolling around the area.

The Waterfront is a good place to start. Located along the coast of Kota Kinabalu City, it is built with the leisure of allowing the customers to enjoy a clear view of the sun set while having their drinks in their hands in mind. This area is full with bars, pubs, and restaurants, attracting locals and tourists alike. Spending a night here will not feel lonely. As the night ventures into the late hours, the scenery becomes more alive when others will be singing and dancing to the music, either from a speaker or live performance.

Souled Out in Imago shopping mall has the best combination of a classy vibe, lively atmosphere, nice food, and convenience of a venue. They even have live band performances at weekends. Do your shopping at the busiest shopping mall in the city, stop by to get a few professionally prepared drinks (Shots if you like), enjoy the music, then you may go back wobbling to the homestay suites which may be located just above you or around the area. Convenience is king when we want to have a great time without worry, right?

Plaza 333 and Lintas Plaza are places known by the locals, hidden away from the busy town and most tourists. Full of local cuisines and variety of bars, they are a

must-know for those who wish to experience the real Kota Kinabalu nightlife. Pick a pub, order a set of beers, finish or not finish them (you get to keep the beers anyways), feel the vibe, sing a few songs if they have karaoke, switch to another pub if you don't like it. Be mindful though, most usually don't need to look for another and just stay till the night ends.

Websites:

<https://www.kkwaterfront.com.my/>

<https://www.facebook.com/plaza333kobusakcommercialcentre/>

<https://www.soulsociety.com.my/souled-out/kota-kinabalu>

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Lintas-Plaza-100057279916658/>

2. Ways of the Clubbing and disco

There are a few places with nice night clubs, but compared to busier cities like Kuala Lumpur, Kota Kinabalu is still slightly lacking behind. Still we offer nice music with grooves guaranteed to tickle your dancing muscles by DJs from around the region, a dance floor to show off your moves and drinks which create attention from tables near you when served. If you are looking for those, Night Clubs such as BED in Waterfront (previously Infinity), Nyx in Jesselton both are good options. Be sure to call and book your tables early as they “sell out like hot cakes” during the weekends!!

Website;

<https://www.kkwaterfront.com.my/>

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Nyx-Kota-Kinabalu-100088483806340/>

3. Ways of the Locals

Lorong Dewan in the city is another interesting place to be at night. Grab a bite at Mamasita's to fill your belly with Tacos that goes well with a giant Margarita, then go on to try the bars which has drinks specially mixed with the locally brewed wine “Lihing”. Biru-biru Café offers drinks that added a bit of “local touch”, such as Lychee with Lihing, as well as some other house specialty options. Little Sulap is a more interesting place where you can try their local wine in various ways, local ethnic food which wiggles your taste buds, and for the brave and bold, a few Butod (Sago Worms).

Websites:

<https://www.instagram.com/birubirucafe/?hl=en>

<https://www.facebook.com/hey littlesulap/>

4. Ways of the Asian Restaurant

Anywhere a restaurant with an alcoholic beverage logo on their street sign serves beer. Editors regard this the most convenient and cheapest way to drink- the Asian method. We don't need music, we don't need ambient lights, we don't need a huge bill when we finish, we just need good company and of course- a drink. Top that up with a nice local hawker style food – Local seafood, Fish sauce fried mihoon, salted egg bitter gourd or anything your taste buds find interesting. If you are a true “Asian drinker” go Jin-Jin Foods in Lintas Plaza, East Coast Food Court, Damai or Luyang area, and sit down in any restaurants with a beer logo on their street sign.

Jin Jin food private rooms with karaoke equipment as well for those who require some privacy. Just make sure you make a call for a reservation. Bring your best friends and have a great time.

Websites:

<https://www.facebook.com/RestaurantSeafoodJinJinLintas/>

<https://www.facebook.com/EastCoastFoodCourt/>

Lastly, editors remind everyone to drink responsibly. Enjoy the night in ways that may change your perception of this unique place.

PART 3: VISIT MOUNT KINABALU PARK

Nurul Izza (Logistics team)

Mount Kinabalu National Park is a world heritage site. At its centre is Mount Kinabalu which, at 4095 metres, is Malaysia's highest mountain by some distance. This is easily the top of any list of things to do in Kota Kinabalu, and it is what virtually every visitor to Kota Kinabalu asks about. You'll be pleased to know it can be done as a day trip if time does not permit, but please do try to at least allocate one night to it.

HOW TO GET TO MOUNT KINABALU FROM KOTA KINABALU

There are buses that travel to Mount Kinabalu that leave from the north bus terminal in Kota Kinabalu but the bus terminal is a taxi ride away from the centre of the city. The buses go to the town of Ranau, which is 20 km further than Mount Kinabalu but they stop at the park and will drop you off anywhere on route.

The drive from Kota Kinabalu to Kinabalu Park takes about 2 hours. This obviously depends on traffic and how fast your driver drives.

THINGS TO DO AROUND MOUNT KINABALU NATIONAL PARK SABAH

Poring Spring & Waterfalls

Wondering what to do in Kinabalu Park, if you don't hike? Relax at the pool or hot water tube! The hot spring is on the other side of Ranau city, where you will have to drive around one hour from Mount Kinabalu Park reception. In the Poring Spring recreation park there is a hot spring but the water is extremely hot so to enjoy it, you need to mix it with cold water. There are several sink holes with hot and cold taps, where people pour fresh water and have a private bath. Moreover, there is one bath tube for many people with a hot water and one swimming pool with cold water.

Poring Spring Park is popular for locals, so especially on weekends, you will see plenty of them having a bath and picnic there. There are showers and toilets as well and few picnic spots. Best bet is to either go on Mon/Tues pre conference, or just schedule it in for the weekdays post conference. Saturday and Sundays it will be chock a block with people by 9am.

Website : <https://www.sabahparks.org.my/kinabalu-park/poring>

Continue walking passing the pooring spring and you will reach another attraction of the park such as Canopy Walk and botanical Garden. The trail continues to the Kipungit Waterfall with a chill water to dip in and natural massage under the fall. It takes around 20 minutes to reach waterfall from the hot spring.

If you are up for walking more, you will see a Bat Cave walking 20 min walk farther. Under unique rock formation there is a cave with hundreds of bats sleeping. You can gaze down to see them, but try to be quiet and don't disturb the bats. The path continuous to the Langanan Waterfall, which is 2 more hours hike in the forest. The waterfall is as high as 120 m. Be aware, however that you can start trekking max until 1 pm, as you will need few hours to be back before the sunset.

Sabah Tea Plantation

The plantation is roughly 15 km (around 30 mins more) from the Hot Springs, and if you are already in the hood, is worth a trip. The view from the plantation is charming, and it's possible to walk around the fields free of charge. Coming early in the morning, you may be lucky to see the Mount Kinabalu at its full glance. There is restaurant where you can sip a tea with the view or have a meal. I saw that there are some guided tours to enter the factory and see the tea production, but I just had a glimpse through the windows and walked around the green fields.

Website: <https://sabahtourism.com/destination/sabah-tea-garden>

Luanti Fish SPA

Luanti Fish Spa is a natural spa located in the heart of the Sabah countryside, about an hour's drive from Kota Kinabalu. This spa is unique because it uses a special type of fish called 'Ikan Pelian' or Malaysian Mahseer that comes from the family of Cyprinidae. These fish are known for their ability to nibble away at dead skin cells, leaving the feet feeling soft and refreshed.

Website: <https://kundasang.my/tagal-luanti-fish-spa-ranau/>

PART 4: SCUBA DIVING & SNORKELING IN SABAH

Petrina (Food and Pre Conference Excursion)

The second question everyone asks after “How do you get to the mountain” is “How do you get into a diving suit”. You will be pleased to know that Kota Kinabalu (and Sabah in general) is a major diving hotspot, and there is a building in town called WISMA SABAH that is essentially filled from top to toe with dive agencies. Petrina here has spared you the trouble of being scammed by slick operators and recommended a few for you to try.

Unfortunately the “famous” dive sites that you see in national Geographic magazine or on Discovery Channel are actually in Semporna, which is kind of 1 hour away on the other end of Sabah. If you could only do one thing, this would be the one – but please be reminded that you need to spend at least 24 hours decompressing on land before boarding a flight so PLEASE do not do this on your last day in Sabah!

LOCATIONS AROUND SABAH

1) SEMPORNA, TAWAU

How to go there?

The fastest and most convenient way to get to Semporna is by taking a flight. However, there is no direct flight to Semporna from any location. You will have to fly to Tawau, which is the nearest airport to Semporna. Tawau is about 90 kilometers or an hour drive away from Semporna.

How to get here?



FLIGHT to TAWAU

Tawau has frequent daily direct domestic flights within Malaysia. Kota Kinabalu, Sandakan, Kuala Lumpur, Johor Bahru.

TAXI from TAWAU AIRPORT

1 hour 45 mins, RM120 per taxi each way

BUS

Depart to/from **Semporna** bus station to the following destinations:
Kota Kinabalu (12 h), **Sandakan** (7 h) **Lahad Datu** (4 h),
Tawau Town NOT the airport (3 hours)
Tickets can be purchased at the bus station.

**Taxi price from Tawau Airport to Semporna may varies from RM150-200/one way depending on vehicle type

Local Airport Transfer transportation options:

- a) https://www.facebook.com/tawausempornatransport/?locale=ms_MY
- b) <https://project-vacation.com/product/tawau-airport-semporna-airport-transfer/>
- c) Or by simply asking at the local agent counter at the airport

I. SIPADAN ISLAND –World Class Diving Site (Required 2-3 months minimum advance booking)
Advance Diving License is required (PADI ADVANCED)

Recommended local travel agents for bookings:

- a) <https://www.scuba-junkie.com/diving-with-scuba-junkie/>
- b) <https://www.facebook.com/UCbackpackers/> -> Uncle Chang’s Sipadan Mabul Dive Lodge (Budget & Backpackers) – Highly recommended by Nicholas too from personal experience
- c) <https://borneodivers.com.my/>

II. MABUL AND KAPALAI ISLAND

World-class dive location. 1 hour by speedboat from Semporna. This island is a diver’s village as it has many accommodation options to choose from. Ideal for all divers, (snorkelers too!) and a great location for photographers to capture scenic island images. Spot an astonishing array of small animals. Mabul has the biggest artificial fish sanctuary in Asia and is close to Sipadan Island.

- a) Seaventures Dive Rig offers a unique, world-class diving experience from the heart of Coral Triangle, Borneo, Malaysia. The resort is a decommissioned oil rig right in the middle of Celeb sea, facing the island to Mabul and a stone’s throw away from the famous Sipadan: <https://seaventuresdive.com/>
- b) Sipadan-Mabul Resort for water bungalows accommodation, technical diving, and snorkeling: <http://www.sipadanmabulresort.com/en/>
- c) Borneo Divers Mabul Resort: <https://borneodivers.com.my/>
- d) Accommodation & Diving in Kapalai Island (luxury): <https://www.facebook.com/SipadanKapalaiDiveResort/>, <https://www.mabul.com/kapalai/>

III. MATAKING ISLAND – Best for snorkeling (luxury)

Mataking Reef Resorts,

Just 45 minutes by speedboat from Semporna. Built on a secluded private island in the vast Celebes Sea named Mataking Island, Mataking Reef Resort will fulfill your fantasy of tropical paradise luxury. Boasting a total of 63 lodgings divided in 6 main categories, the accommodation will serve as an ultimate holiday haven for travelers. Have a laid back lazy day at the lavish, international-standard room and in-house facilities, or take a spare time and have a fantastic opportunity to explore vast marine realm beneath the crystal clear Ocean surrounding our vicinity.

Some of the most renowned diving sites including the aptly named Garden of Eden which houses plethora of colorful reefs and anemones, to the one-of-a-kind ‘Underwater Post Office’, which will give you the chance to post your own letters using special waterproof bags and a rubber

stamp. Explore their magnificent ‘house reef’ and shipwreck. A great combo of macro and pelagic marine life. Walk the “Moses Walk” sandbar connecting Mataking Besar to Mataking Kecil.

Stay & activities: <https://www.mataking.com/special-package/>

IV. TUN SAKARAN MARINE PARKS

A cluster of 8 islands spread over 100 km of healthy coral reefs. They are Sabangkat, Tetagan, Maiga, Sibuan, Mantabuan, Gaya and the scenic Bohey Dulang –a recommended trail for a jungle trekking trip to the hilltop for an amazing photo-op. The islands are about 30 minutes away from Semporna by speedboat. Two of their central islands and lagoon are part of an extinct volcano.

Recommended local travel agents for bookings:

- a) <https://www.sabahtravel.com/tour/mataking-and-timba-timba-snorkeling-day-trip>
- b) <https://sunbeartt.com/collections/sempona-tours>
- c) <https://www.kkday.com/en-my/city/sabah--tawau-and-sempona>

2) KOTA BELUD & MANTANANI ISLAND

- I. BIGFIN DIVERS (Recommended) – about 1 hour 15 minutes from Kota Kinabalu by car.

Bigfin Beach Resort is located on a beautiful sandy beach in **Mengkabar bay**, directly

How to get there?

Taxi from Kota Kinabalu (recommended!)

RM150 - Private Taxi / RM120-170 **Grab** (book via app)

Mini van bus from Kota Kinabalu

Padang Merdeka Terminal KK to Kota Belud (RM10, 2 hours, bus departs when full), then taxi to Mengkabar Village (RM50, 20mins)

Boat/Taxi from Mantanani Island

Boat transfer from Mantanani to Rampayan Laut, Taxi to Bigfin Divers meet point, (RM80, 40 mins)

Private Transport / Rental Cars

Follow Google Map for directions to Bigfin meet point, Dragon Pearl Beach, Kampung Mengkabar
Parking available at Dragon pearl (RM10)

opposite **Pulau Pandan Island**. We are nestled in the surrounding jungle with a stunning backdrop of **Mount Kinabalu** in the distance. remote Pantai Merakit beach opposite Pulau Pandan Island in Mengkabar Bay. We are approximately 60km north of the city Kota Kinabalu on a stretch of undeveloped coastline nearby Mantanani Island.

Simple accommodation and scheduled on solar and generator powered. Provides non-diving activities too such as kayaking & standup paddle board, snorkeling & beach hopping as well as Jungle Night Walk.

Since they have no road access our place is **only accessible by boat** from a small village called **Kampung Mengkabar**.

How to contact them: <https://www.bigfindivers.com/>

- II. MANTANANI ISLAND DIVE by JSK Mantanani

Embark on an exploration of captivating wreck sites, which are the habitat for a diverse range of marine creatures, and immerse yourself in the thriving local underwater biodiversity with JSK Mantanani Island Resorts.

How to contact them: <https://www.jskmantananiresorts.my/islandDive.php>

How to get there: To be arranged directly with the company

- III. SUTERA@MANTANANI ISLAND RESORT & SPA - ACCOMODATION

Explore wreck sites, home to menagerie of marine creatures and a biodiversity local underwater world with Travel Box Sabah only at Sutera@Mantanani Island Resort & Spa.

How to contact them: <https://www.travelboxsabah.com/>

How to get there: Usually inclusive with hotel accommodation

3) KOTA KINABALU (NEAREST)

This is if you are genuinely on some kind of whirlwind schedule, but please be reminded that you will still need to spend the obligatory one day decompressing at the end on shore before flying back to your very, very cold country!

I. TUNKU ABDUL RAHMAN MARINE PARK

Comprises 5 islands: Gaya,Sapi,Manukan,Mamutik,Sulug. Just 15 minutes by boat from Kota Kinabalu city center, via Jesselton Point Jetty. Ideal for day trips, snorkeling, dive training and novice divers. Experience sandy 'muck' diving to colorful coral reefs. Special sightings? Whale Sharks between January to April. Great for water sport activities and jungle trekking too.

Both beginners and experienced divers will enjoy the dive sites within the park. TARP is also great for underwater photographers, providing lots of macro subjects in relatively shallow calm water. Dive sites are predominantly sloping coral reef and sand from 2m to 25m depth. There are also mangrove areas providing protection for juvenile fish. We have a small fishing boat wreck located between 12m-22m which is home to a variety of critters and offers a great intro to wreck diving, especially for those completing a PADI Advanced Course.

In TARP, visibility ranges from 4m (at its worse) to 30m (at its best) we generally experience the best "Viz" from late April through to October. During whale shark season the viz is usually at its worse due to the amount of nutrients in the water. If we experience heavy rainfall the river run-offs will also reduce the visibility underwater. But generally, we experience 8m – 15m most days.

Accommodation:

- I. Bunga Raya Island Resort (Beach Front and Forest Chalets) -Recommended stays for its long private beach, has private dive centre for water activities.
www.bungarayaresort.com
- II. Gayana Eco Resort (Water bungalows)-Recommended stays for having your personal balcony with seaview, has private dive centre for water activities.
www.gayana-eco-resort.com
- III. Gaya Island Resort (YTL) (Forest Chalets)- Luxury Island Stay
<http://www.gayaislandresort.com>
- IV. Manukan Island Resort
<https://suterasanctuarylodges.com.my/manukan-island/>

Local Dive School & Centres:

- I. Adventure Dive Down Below: <https://divedownbelow.com/padi-5-star-idc-dive-centre/scuba-courses-sabah/discover-scuba-diving/> (Jetty at Sutera Harbour Marina & Country Club)
- II. Scuba Junkie Kota Kinabalu: <https://www.scubajunkiekk.com/>
- III. Seatango: <https://www.seatango.com/>

PART 5: SEAFOOD

April (Secretariat)

In Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, one of the top seafood restaurants highly recommended by locals and tourists alike is the Welcome Seafood Restaurant. It's well-known for its vast selection of fresh seafood, including crab, prawns, lobster, and oyster dishes. The restaurant boasts a 4.0 rating from over 1,500 reviews on Tripadvisor, highlighting its quality and popularity. Visitors appreciate its variety of live seafood and generally reasonable prices, with praise for dishes like steamed fish and homemade tofu. However, some have noted that the largest crabs available were only about 500g, and there were comments about the presence of flies in the indoor seating area, which detracted from the overall dining experience for some. Despite these minor points, the overall consensus remains highly positive, with many pointing out the restaurant's good value for money and its status as a local favorite

Another notable mention is Fatt Kee Seafood Restaurant, celebrated for its traditional Chinese seafood cuisine and unique twists on dishes with their signature Tomato and Tom Yam soups. Suang Tain Seafood Restaurant also receives high marks for its speedy service and popular seafood selections, including fresh crab and prawn dishes. For those seeking a unique dining atmosphere, Kampung Nelayan Floating Seafood Restaurant offers an ala-carte seafood dining experience on a lake, complete with cultural performances

Each of these restaurants brings its own unique flavor to the table, making Kota Kinabalu a must-visit destination for seafood lovers. Whether you're after a bustling, popular spot like Welcome Seafood Restaurant or the unique lakeside ambiance of Kampung Nelayan, you're sure to find something to satisfy your seafood cravings.

PART 6: THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SUNSET IN THE WORLD

Nor Anggeriani (Finance)

Sunsets in Kota Kinabalu

The sun will set about 6:20 PM (+/- 5 Minutes). The beauty of the sunset in KK is that it offers a different backdrop before, during and after sunset.

I would highly suggest that you spend your time as suggested below to enjoy every bit of the sun is set.

- **Pre-sunset:** 5:30 PM – 6:00 PM (Yellow-ish sky above the horizon)
- **Sunset:** 6:00 PM – 6:20 PM (Glorious sunset)
- **Post sunset** 6:20 PM – 6:45 PM (Afterglow – a broad arch of whitish, reddish or pinkish sunlight in the sky)

Tips: If it's raining or cloudy before 3 PM, don't waste your time. The sun gets covered by thick clouds.

Where can I watch sunset in Kota Kinabalu?

Tanjung Aru Beach

Located just about 6KM from the city, Tanjung Aru beach with a long strip of sand & food stalls is probably the most popular(crowded) place to watch the sunset.

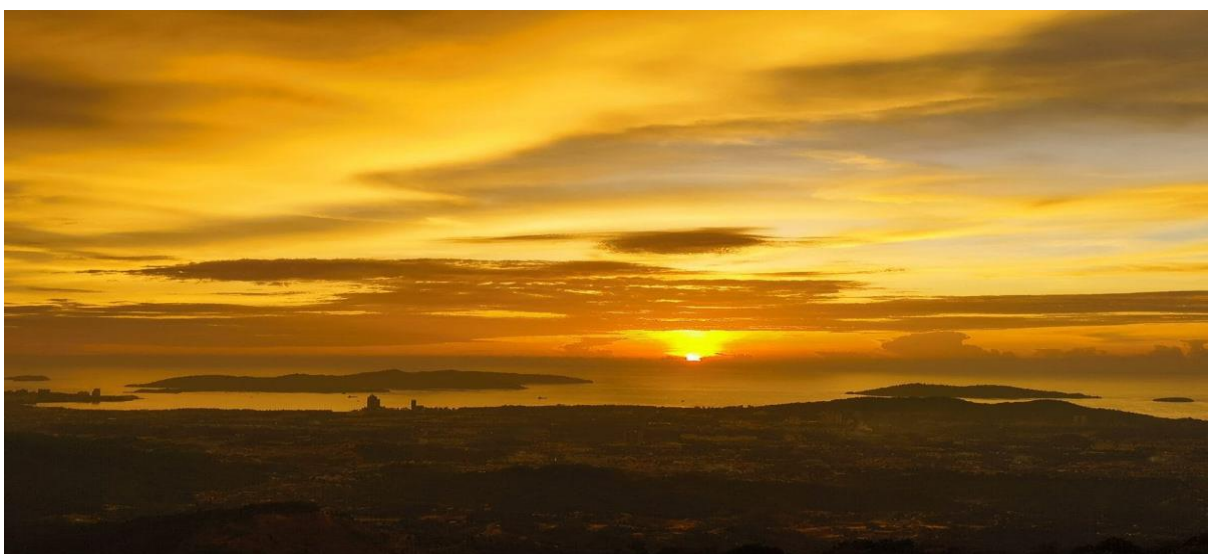


Sunset at Tanjung Aru Beach (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/qnpcnz7v6e1DPvya9>)

Kokol Hill

Located about 25 KM away from Kota Kinabalu, Kokol hill is one of the best places in KK that I would recommend you visit. It has a scenic 10 km ride up to the hill, cold temperature, small winding roads and villages around the hill's foot.

You can view Mount Kinabalu (06:00-08:00), KK City and the sea from this hill. There is a few resorts, tourist spots, camp area, cafes etc to fulfil your needs.



KK City View from Kokol Hill (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Yk87bPQRhsFrhC6PA>)

Karambunai Beach

If you prefer fewer tourists (or maybe no tourists at all), Karambunai beach is the perfect spot for you.

It has long shore, about 2 KM and it's so calm you just want to go for a brisk walk, jog etc.



Sunset at Karambunai Beach (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/J3hpbxBDhHELipBd7>)

KK Waterfront

KK Waterfront is a place to enjoy the view of the sunset over the open sea, with a strip of nightlife establishments/bars. It is also a popular spot to watch the sunsets in Kota Kinabalu, and the prices here are expensive. However, you can access this place by walking as it is close to many hotels in Kota Kinabalu.



Sunset at KK Waterfront (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/WGocrjbEpHbnRKNc7>)

Kota Kinabalu City Mosque

The Kota Kinabalu City Mosque, also known as the Floating Mosque, provides a picturesque backdrop for sunset views.



Sunset at KK City Mosque (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/V95tMhLqwju5994U8>)

Signal Hill Observatory Platform

Other options include Signal Hill Observatory Platform, which offers panoramic views of the city and the surrounding islands



Sunset at Signal Hill Observatory Platform

<https://maps.app.goo.gl/Snc3uBeRFLBvZoLM9>

Rooftop at Le Meridien

Rooftop bars in the city center, such as Rooftop at Le Meridien Kota Kinabalu will provide excellent vantage points to enjoy the sunset over the cityscape.



Sunset at Rooftop at Le Meridien (<https://maps.app.goo.gl/zEmk8DQwmsoPoSr4A>)

PART 7: SOME OTHER INTERESTING MISCELLANEOUS STUFF YOU WON'T SEE IN THE TOURISM GUIDES

Nicholas (Scientific Committee)

To be completed this weekend

1. White water rafting down the Padas River

Roughly 100km from Kota Kinabalu is a Grade 4 river called Padas River where you can fairly easily sign up for white water rafting packages. They will bring you on a tour bus in the early morning, with the last leg being on a local train that has been running since the 19th century, running on a cliff overlooking the fast moving Padas River gorge. Once you are there, be prepared for 1 hour of sheer joy (or terror depending on how you see things) over 9 km of rapids! At the end of it is a decent lunch followed by a sleep on the bus back.

<https://www.downbelowadventures.com/product/padas-white-water-rafting/>

2. Take the North Borneo Steam Railway

The North Borneo Steam Railway has to be seen to be believed – it is operated by Sutera Harbour Resort and runs on the same tracks as the normal railway (the same one you will take if you are travelling to Padas white water rafting!). It offers tourists a nostalgic journey back in time through the picturesque countryside of Sabah's west coast. The railway utilizes vintage British colonial-era steam locomotives and carriages, which have been restored to their former glory.

The journey typically starts from Tanjung Aru Railway Station in Kota Kinabalu and travels through scenic landscapes, including rice paddies, villages, and mangrove swamps. Along the way, passengers can enjoy traditional refreshments and cultural performances, making it a unique and immersive experience of Sabah's colonial history and natural beauty.

3. See fireflies at Klias

This is roughly 100 km from Kota Kinabalu and can be done as a late afternoon departure, just in time for the 6pm sunset, and the subsequent trip back. The highlight of visiting Klias for firefly watching is typically a river cruise along the Klias River. The fireflies inhabit the mangrove trees along the riverbanks. During the cruise, usually in the evening or at night, you'll have the opportunity to see the mesmerizing display of fireflies lighting up the mangroves.

Observe Fireflies: Once the river cruise reaches the area where the fireflies are most abundant, you'll have the chance to observe these magical insects in their natural habitat. The synchronized flashing of the fireflies creates a breathtaking sight, especially against the backdrop of the dark mangrove forest.

<https://www.onlyinborneotour.com/tour/river-cruising-firefly-tour/>

4. Orang Utan Sanctuary, Sepilok (bit far)

Quite unfortunately, the fabled orang utans of Sabah are not in Kota Kinabalu, but in a specialised sanctuary called Sepilok which is on the other coast of Sabah, in the town called Sandakan. This is because Sandakan is nearer to the natural forest habitats of the orang utans.

To get to Sepilok from Kota Kinabalu, travelers typically have several options. The most common and convenient way is to take a flight from Kota Kinabalu International Airport (BKI) to Sandakan Airport (SDK), which is the closest airport to Sepilok. Several airlines operate daily flights between these two cities, with a flight duration of approximately 1 hour – there is the national airline Malaysia Airlines, and AirAsia the budget airline which is usually fractionally cheaper but is more rough and ready with eservice.

From Sandakan Airport, you are still 30 km away from Sepilok unfortunately, so visitors can either hire a taxi or arrange for transportation through their accommodation to reach Sepilok, which is about a 30-minute drive away. You do NOT have to stay overnight in Sandakan to do Sepilok – the first flight leaves Kota Kinabalu at roughly 7am for an 8am start, and the last flight leaves around 4pm for a 5pm departure in Kota Kinabalu. Nevertheless for comfort and to not rush, it is worth

it staying at the Sepilok Rainforest Lodge right outside the orang utan sanctuary; the accommodation in this lodge is of superlative quality and is easily the best in all Sandakan.

Alternatively, travelers can also take a long-distance bus from Kota Kinabalu to Sandakan, which takes approximately 7-8 hours – the bus actually goes past Sepilok half an hour before arrival so if you are the adventurous bus type you can obviously request to be let off at Sepilok for sure. Taxi fares from Sandakan Airport to Sepilok may vary, but they are usually around \$20 to \$30 USD.

<https://borneosepilok.com/>

5. See the Rafflesia at Tambunan (bit far also)

The Rafflesia is the largest and stinkiest flower in the world – and honestly it is a sight to behold, as it does not bloom all year round but is a saprophyte so it only blooms for 3 days at most at random intervals. However, there is a Rafflesia information centre in Tambunan, 90 km away from Kota Kinabalu on a mountain (around 1.5 hours drive away).

You will literally need to play it by ear to see the Rafflesia – it will cost roughly RM 30 for a seat in a 4 person shared taxi. Naturally you could charter the entire shared taxi which will amount to about USD 30.

<https://sabahtourism.com/destination/rafflesia-information-centre/>