

SIBU & CENTRAL SARAWAK

visitors' guide



SARAWAK TOURISM BOARD

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This guide focuses on Sibu and the surrounding area. In order to provide as much local detail as possible, we have not included information on immigration requirements, exchange rates, climate, etc. These details are readily available from popular guidebooks.

INTRODUCTION

Sibu is the largest port and commercial centre in the Rejang Basin and the gateway to Central Sarawak. Located at the confluence of the Rejang and Igan Rivers, approximately 130 km from the South China Sea, Sibu is a thriving modern town with a vibrant centre and a bustling, crowded waterfront.



To visitors, Sibu feels more down-to-earth than relaxed Kuching. There is still something of the pioneer style about the town, and its people are direct, plain-speaking and assertively friendly. Of course, their smiles may be partly due to the belief that Sibu has more millionaires per capita than any other city in Borneo.

The mighty Rejang, almost a mile (1600km) wide, is the dominant feature of the town, and a room with a river view is highly recommended for vibrant impressions of waterfront life. The river is a source of constant activity, with large ocean-going vessels manoeuvring delicately between speeding express boats, battered river launches and tiny sampans, and Rejang sunsets can be truly spectacular.

Sibu is not only a fascinating town in its own right; with its excellent road, air and river transport links it is also the ideal jumping-off point for exploring the whole Rejang Basin, from the coastal town of Mukah to the furthest reaches of the Upper Rejang, over 600km upriver.

People

The residents of Sibu are predominantly Foochow Chinese, originating from the Fuzhou region of southern China, and the town is often referred to as New Fuzhou. However Sibu's ethnic mix is as varied as anywhere else in Borneo, with smaller proportions of other Chinese dialect groups - as well as Malays, Melanau, Ibans and Orang Ulu - making the town their home.

History

Until the beginning 19th century, Sibu was a sleepy trading settlement in the lower Rejang area, named for the rambutan fruits (*buah sibau* in the Iban language) that grew locally. The only significant population was a Melanau village at nearby Kampung Nangka. Sibu's transformation began in 1901 with the arrival of Foochow settlers from southern China, led by the Reverend Wong Nai Siong. Rev. Wong was a Methodist missionary who sought to find a safe haven for his followers, who were subject to religious persecution in China. Rev. Wong petitioned Charles Brooke, the second White Rajah of Sarawak, who gladly offered land in the Lower Rejang area in order to develop Sarawak's agriculture. The first batch of 72 pioneers arrived in 1901, and by 1903 over 1,000 Christian Foochow had made their homes in Sibu. They were later followed by sizeable groups of Henghuas and Cantonese during the 1st World War period.

The early Chinese settlers planned to cultivate rice, but soon found that the soil was unsuitable for profitable rice farming and turned their attention to pepper, rubber and gambier (a sticky resin formerly used in place of rubber). Despite famine, fever, floods and other hardships, the early settlers struggled to make their new home a success. They were capably led by the determined Rev. Wong, who was ably assisted by the Hoovers, an American missionary couple who played a major role in the development of Methodism in Sarawak.

By the mid-1920s Sibu began to have the appearance of a fully fledged town. However disaster struck in 1928, when a major fire destroyed almost all of Sibu's predominantly wooden buildings. The hardy settlers simply picked up their tools and built the town all over again, but Sibu was once more severely damaged by Allied bombing during the Japanese Occupation from 1941 to 1945. During the Second World War, hundreds of local people were killed, not only by the bombing but also by savage Japanese repression of the local Chinese community, who were firm supporters of Chinese independence and the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek.

Sibu's recovery began in the early 1950s, with the advent of the mechanised logging. The town became the principal centre for the timber industry in Sarawak, and huge fortunes were made by enterprising loggers. From the 1960s to the late 1980s Sibu boomed along with the timber trade, and downstream industries such as sawmilling, plywood manufacturing and even shipbuilding were established.

From the early 1990s onwards, the timber industry in Sibu began a gradual decline as more sustainable logging practices were introduced and timber quotas imposed. However the town continued to grow thanks to its strategic importance as the major port and commercial centre for the entire Rejang Basin.

ATTRACTIONS

Town Centre

Sibu's town centre is very compact and easily covered on foot. The narrow crowded streets are crammed with shops selling everything from native handicrafts to designer fashions, and there seems to be an old fashioned coffee shop on almost every corner. The following attractions are all within easy walking distance of the town centre and all major hotels..

Sibu Central Market



Sibu's recently refurbished Central Market, on Jln Channel opposite the Express Boat Passenger Terminal, is the largest and most interesting in Sarawak. By combining the former wet market and the native Lembangan market in clean and hygienic new surroundings, the Sibu Municipal Council has created a visual feast for visitors.

Highlights are the Iban ladies selling exotic fruits, jungle produce and handicrafts, and the Chinese poultry sellers who offer their live chickens and ducks neatly wrapped up in tubes fashioned from old newspapers.

Rejang Esplanade

The Rejang Esplanade is an attractively landscaped waterfront promenade that stretches from the Express Boat Passenger Terminal to the Kingwood Hotel, and includes the **Hii's Association Playground**. Courting couples, anglers, al-fresco diners and sightseers flock here every evening to enjoy the riverfront scenery and view the **Swan Statue**, the emblem of Sibü.

Night Market

The vibrant Night Market (Jln Market, between Jln Lintang and Jln Bengkel) sets up every afternoon around 5 pm and operates until 10 pm or sometimes later. The stalls offer all manner of household goods, footwear, fashion items, and of course food. Cakes, steamed buns, satay, pastries, dumplings and many other kinds of local delicacies are on sale here, with shoppers happily snacking as they wander from stall to stall.



Sibü Town Square

At 32 acres, the attractively landscaped Sibü Town Square is the largest urban square in Malaysia. It is regularly used for concerts and cultural activities, especially at weekends, and is also the venue for the annual Borneo Cultural Festival (see below).

Borneo Cultural Festival

The Borneo Cultural Festival is usually held in July every year, and is a week-long extravaganza of cultural performances from all of Sarawak's main ethnic groups, as well as invited performers from Sabah and Kalimantan (Indonesia). The festival is held at Sibü Town Square and also features the Borneo Traditional Food Fair, with home-cooked traditional delicacies from throughout Sarawak. Admission is free. Contact the Sarawak Tourism Board for further information or download brochures from the Sibü Municipal Council at www.smc.gov.my.



Wisma Sanyan

The tallest building in Sarawak, the 28-storey Wisma Sanyan is located next to Sibü Town Square. It dominates the Sibü skyline and houses the town's largest retail shopping mall.

Sibu Gateway

This symbolic 'gateway' to the town of Sibu is located on Jln Kampung Nyabor and includes illuminated fountains, an open air stage, and **Lin's Garden**, which features the second of Sibu's two swan statues, guarded by the 12 signs of the Chinese Zodiac.

Civic Centre Heritage Mini-Museum

The Civic Centre Heritage Mini-Museum (Jln Tun Abang Haji Openg - take a taxi or see Travel Connections) houses a fine collection of antiques, artefacts and photos, cultural exhibits on the various ethnic groups of the Rejang, and displays tracing the history of Chinese migration to the Rejang Basin. Open Tuesday-Sunday 10.30 am - 5.30 pm. Admission free.



Tua Pek Kong Temple & Goddess of Mercy Pagoda

The 100-year old Tua Pek Kong Temple (Jln Temple) is the oldest and best preserved Chinese temple in Sibu. Visitors should take the opportunity to meet the friendly temple caretaker, Mr Tan Tack Chiang, who speaks excellent English, has an encyclopaedic knowledge of Taoism, and is always delighted to tell visitors all about the temple and its history.

The adjacent 7-storey Goddess of Mercy (Kuan Yin) Pagoda was added in 1987, and is said to be one of the most perfectly proportioned pagodas outside Mainland China. Visitors are

welcome to climb its many steps to enjoy spectacular views of the Rejang and the Sibu Waterfront, especially at sunset.

Floating Supermarkets

The floating supermarkets that service the village and longhouse communities along the Rejang and its tributaries berth opposite the Tua Pek Kong Temple on Jln Temple. Their colourful paintwork, with advertising sponsors' logos, provides an attractive and unusual photo opportunity.

Malay Kampung

Traditional Malay *kampungs* (villages) can be found within easy walking distance at Jln Kampung Datu. They combine an interesting mix of architectural styles, from modern brick and concrete to traditional wood and attap, and the villagers are very welcoming, often inviting visitors into their homes. The *kampungs* also offer an attractive photo opportunity when viewed from the river, as many of the waterside houses are built on stilts above the river.

AROUND SIBU

Bawang Assan Iban Longhouses



Bawang Assan is an Iban settlement of 8 longhouses dating from the 18th Century, about 40 minutes from Sibu by boat or road. It is particularly appealing to visitors for two reasons; firstly the longhouses range from the very traditional to the quite modern, so visitors can get a good idea of how longhouses have evolved to keep pace with the times; and secondly, many of the older inhabitants can speak excellent English and are therefore superb interpreters of their culture.

The most traditional longhouse here is the century-old Rumah Austin Ngalai. The son of the *Tuai Rumah* (headman), Andy Austin, is happy to accompany visitors. He can be contacted via the Visitors' Information Centre, Sibu. Andy's mother has a superb collection of Iban jewellery, costumes and textiles, which she will happily describe to visitors in fluent English. The longhouse also offers overnight stays, with visitors accompanying the locals in their daily activities, such as padi planting and fishing.



To get to Bawang Assan, take a taxi (RM50), a van from outside the Central Market (every 2 hours, RM 2) or an express boat (every 2 hours from the Kapit Wharf, RM 2.50) or let Andy arrange transport. Alternatively, Frankie Ting at *Sazhong Trading* (see Travel Connections - Tour Operators) can arrange guided tours. Frankie also arranges upriver trips to traditional longhouses in the Ngemah area, including a fascinating trek along a former Communist escape trail. For these longer trips, at least one week's advance notice is required.



Bukit Aup Jubilee Park



Winner of the 1998 National Landscaping Competition for Public Parks, Bukit Aup is a 24-acre (10ha) cluster of low hills with a lookout tower offering views of the surrounding plantations, longhouses and the Igan River. The tower, located on the park's highest peak (59m), is often visited by local Ibans bringing

offerings to a benevolent spirit, the *Naga Bari*, which is believed to help people in need. There are picnic huts, a canteen, a suspension bridge over a small lake which is good for photo opportunities, and jogging and walking trails. Open daily 8 am - 6 pm. Admission free. Take a taxi (15 min) or see Travel Connections for bus information.

Sungai Merah Heritage Walk

The site of the earliest Chinese settlements in Sibü, Sungai Merah (Red River) is an old bazaar about 10 minutes by road from the town centre. The area has recently been restored and landscaped, with a pleasant walking trail along the river front (the water really is red, changing occasionally to yellow!) which leads through a quaintly landscaped park to the **Wong Nai Siong Memorial Garden** (see pic), erected in honour of the town's principal founder and featuring a bronze statue of the missionary leader. Take a taxi or see Travel Connections for bus information.



Traditional Potteries



There are a number of potteries around Sibü which produce excellent quality wares in traditional Teochew Chinese styles, albeit with strong local influences. Visitors are welcome to come and watch the potters at work. The potteries are mostly located along Jln Ulu Oya, between 7 and 12 km from town. Take a taxi or see or see Travel Connections for tour operator information.

Shipyards

Sibü has a thriving shipbuilding industry, specialising in small to medium sized vessels such as express boats and marine tugs. A number of the shipyards welcome visitors, but only by prior appointment. Contact the Visitor's Information Centre in Sibü to make arrangements.

ACCOMMODATION

Sibu's accommodation ranges from budget hostels to international class hotels. The premises listed below are located in the central area within easy walking distance of major attractions, the express boat terminal and the central business district. Rates shown range from cheapest single to most expensive double, and are inclusive of 10% government tax and 5% service charge except where indicated (+ +). Suites are indicated with (s). All addresses are 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia. Telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

International Class Hotels

Kingwood Hotel, 12, Lorong Lanang 4, Tel: 335888 Fax: 334599 Email: kingwood@tm.net.my. Room rate RM165-240+ +, RM360-1000+ + (s) Sibu's 1st 4-star hotel. 168 rooms, rooftop swimming pool, coffee shop, Chinese restaurant, music lounge, full banquet & conference facilities, fitness centre, excellent river views from riverside rooms.

Everly Hotel, Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 365888 Fax: 365999. www.vhhotels.com. Enquire for room rate. 226 rooms, swimming pool, coffee shop, music lounge, full banquet & conference facilities, fitness centre. Sibu's newest 4-star hotel.

Premier Hotel, Sarawak House Complex, Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 323222 Fax: 323399 Email: reservation@premierh.com.my. www.premierh.com.my. Room rate RM170-235+ +, RM270-870+ + (s). 189 rooms, restaurant, music lounge, karaoke rooms, wi-fi internet, 24-hr business centre, full banquet & conference facilities, adjacent shopping mall & cineplex.

Tanahmas Hotel, Lot 277, Block 5, Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 333188 Fax: 333288 Email: enquires@tanahmas.com.my. www.tanahmas.com.my. Room rate RM175-220+ +, RM365-1000+ + (S). 120 rooms, swimming pool, music lounge, karaoke lounge, restaurant, full banquet & conference facilities.

Medium Class Hotels (RM50-150)

Some hotels in the Budget Hotels section (see below) also have rooms belonging in this category. All rooms have air conditioning, TV and telephone.

Centre Inn, Jing Hwa Building, Off Jln Central, Tel: 320222 Fax: 320496. Room rate RM60-90.

Garden Hotel, 1 Jln Hoe Ping, Tel: 317888 Fax: 330999. Room rate RM70-97. Restaurant, music lounge, conference facilities.

Hotel Bahagia, 21 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 331131 Fax: 320536. Room rate RM50-80.

Kawan Hotel, 6 Jln Chengal, Tel: 315888 Fax: 327888. Room rate RM75-90.

Li Hua Hotel, 18 Lorong 2, Jln Lanang. Tel: 324000 Fax: 326272. Room rate RM60-90. Restaurant/lounge, conference facilities, excellent river views from upper floors.

Orchid Hotel, 9 Jln Persiaran Brooke, Tel: 331999 Fax: 331888. Room rate RM63-123. Restaurant/lounge, conference facilities.

Paramount Hotel, 3 Lorong 9A, Jln Kampung Datu, Tel 331122 Fax: 338111 Email: paramounthtlrdm@myjaring.net. Room rate RM 110-130, RM170 (s). Restaurant, conference facilities.

Perdana Inn, 24 Jln Mission, Tel:327007 Fax: 323300. Room rate RM50-70, RM100(s).

Regent Hotel, 2A-2C Lorong Foochow, Tel: 316188 Fax: 316192. Room rate RM55-70.

River Park Hotel, 51-53 Jln Maju, Tel: 316688 Fax: 316689. Room rate RM55-85.
Victoria Inn, 80 Jln Market, Tel: 320099 Fax: 320055. Room rate RM50-85, RM140 (s).
Zuhra Hotel, 103 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 310711 Fax: 320712 Email: htlzuhra@yahoo.com.my. Room rate RM65-106. Sibü's only 100% Muslim-owned and run hotel. Restaurant, 2 conference rooms.

Budget Hotels & Hostels

Sibü's budget hotels offer excellent value. All rooms have air conditioning and attached bathroom (except where indicated), and many have TV and phone. The following premises have been visited by the authors and checked for acceptable standards.

Capitol Hotel 98, 19 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 336444 Fax: 344524. Room rate RM45-55.
Century Inn, 11 Jln Central, Tel: 339772. Room rate RM30-50.
City Inn, 23 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 333311. Room rate RM30-50.
Dung Fang Hotel, 37 Jln Maju, Tel/Fax: 340778. Room rate RM48-68.
Eden Inn, Wisma Catholic, 1 Jln Lanang, Tel: 337277 Fax: 313225. Room rate RM40.
Gold Star Hotel, 6 Jln Lintang, Tel: 320400. Room rate RM32-35.
Hoover Lodging House, 34 Jln Tan Sri, Tel: 334490. Room rate RM 15-25 (fan), RM30-40.
Holiday Hotel, 14 Jln Tan Sri, Tel: 317440. Room rate RM15-25 (fan), RM35.
Hotel Malaysia, 8 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 332299. Room rate RM 40.
Hotel Ria, 21 Jln Channel, Tel: 326622. Room rate RM40-50.
Mandyrin Hotel, 181-187 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 339177 Fax: 333425. Room rate RM20 (fan), RM40-80.
Me Hung Hotel, 17 Jln Maju, Tel: 013-8075449. Room rate RM30-40.
Methodist Guest House, Hoover House, 22 Jln Pulau. Tel: 330405. Room rate RM20-30. Reservations essential at peak periods.
Miramar Hotel, 47 Jln Channel, Tel: 338008. Room rate RM25-40.
New Hai Ping Hotel, 13 Jln Maju, Tel: 334905. Room rate RM30-35.
New Hong Kong Hotel, 23 Jln Channel, Tel: 319488 Fax: 321611. Room rate RM30-35.
New World Hotel, 1-3 Jln Wong Nai Siong, Tel: 310311 Fax: 313567. Room rate RM35-60, RM100 (s).
Phoenix Hotel, 1&3 Jln Kai Peng, Tel: 313877 Fax: 320932. Room rate RM40-65.
Plaza Inn, 16-18 Jln Morshidi Sidek, Tel: 341218. Room rate RM40-60.
Rejang Hotel, 40 Jln Tukang Besi, Tel: 016-8050959. Room rate RM25-35.
River View Hotel, 65 Jln Mission, Tel: 337766 Fax: 330073. Room rate RM30-50.
Royal Inn, 58-60 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 336644 Fax: 333008. Room rate RM48-52.
Sarawak Hotel, 34 Jln Lintang, Tel: 333445/320258 Fax: 320536. Room rate RM30-70.
Sentosa Inn, 12 Jln Pulau (entrance in Jln Tukang Besi), Tel: 349875 Fax: 320536. Room rate RM30-40.
Siong Lai Hotel, 2 Jln Pulau, Tel: 345384. Room rate RM25-40.
Star Hostel, 11 Jln Channel (entrance in side alley), Tel: 315713. Room rate RM18 (fan), RM28-30.
Sunway Inn, 11-13 Jln Bengkel, Tel: 344611 Fax: 321611. Room rate RM45-65.
Tiong Yüing Hotel, 33 Jln Channel, Tel: 320916/313152 Fax: 326112. Room rate RM30-35.
Today Hotel, 40 Jln Kampung Nyabor, Tel: 336499. Room rate RM32-65.
Travellers' Hotel, 9 Jln Bengkel, Tel: 311813/311677. Room rate RM35-40.
Villa Hotel, 2-4 Jln Central, Tel: 337833. Room rate RM35-80.
Wen Ya Hotel, 39 Lebu Tinggi, Tel: 321288 Fax: 339669. Room rate RM45-65.

EATING OUT

Sibu is a paradise for gourmets, particularly cost-conscious ones. It has some of the best value food in all of Malaysia, especially fresh river fish and prawns and top quality seafood. A wide variety of restaurants and coffee shops offer the visitor considerable choice of different Malaysian and international cuisines, so only a small selection can be listed here. But remember it's the local dishes that make eating out in Sibu so memorable and economical.

Sibu Specialities

Kam pua mee is Sibu's signature dish, thin noodles tossed in pork lard and served with slices of roasted pork or minced pork balls, served either with or without a thin broth and accompanied with chilli sauce and soya sauce. **Mee sua** (longevity noodles), another Foochow favourite, is a rich herbal soup containing fine vermicelli noodles and large chunks of boiled chicken. Both can be found in coffee shops all over town.



Konpia is Sibu's answer to the bagel. Roasted tandoori style, these fresh bread rolls are served in a variety of ways. One of the most popular konpia outlets, **Mr & Mrs Yeo's Stall**, Lorong Tiong Hua 26 (15 mins walk from town centre or take a taxi) serve them in a rich pork broth with slices of stewed pork - be prepared to wait for a table, mornings only.

Prawn noodles (*mee udang*) is the town's most popular seafood dish. Huge river prawns, sliced down the middle, are served in a steaming bowl of spicy seafood stock with thick Foochow noodles. The most famous is served by **Min Kong Cafe** (see below), although **Sin Chun Hua Cafe** (next to Visitor's Information Centre) is also very good. A delicious variation on this theme, tom yam prawn noodles, can be found at **Kheng Hock Cafe** (see below).

Fresh **dabai**, delicious savoury fruits resembling olives in appearance, and to some extent in taste, are usually sold by Iban ladies at the Central Market. These need to be briefly dunked in hot water to soften them before serving - a hotel room kettle will do nicely. A wide variety of other **tropical fruits** are also available at the market, including exquisite pineapples from Sarikei and unique green oranges from Bintangor.



Coffee Shops

Coffee-shops found on just about every street corner, and serve thick Borneo coffee sweetened with condensed milk, as well as a huge range of other drinks. Food offered usually includes local noodle dishes, chicken rice, and *economy rice*, *mixed rice*, *fast food* or *nasi campur*. These are four different names for the same dish - a plate of rice with portions of meat, fish, curry and vegetables selected from the delicacies on display. Cheap (RM3-5), delicious and very filling.

Food Centres

These are the most popular eating places amongst locals. There is always a wide selection of value-for-money stalls and you can select food from as many as you like.

Sibu Central Market, 1st floor. Over 30 mostly Chinese stalls serving almost every kind of local dish imaginable, mostly from 6 am to lunchtime, but some are open in the evening.

Express Boat Passenger Terminal (Swan Rainforest Cafe), 1st floor. Similar set up to the Central Market but with more Malay (i.e. Muslim) food stalls.

Jln Market Food Stalls, near Premier Hotel. Variety of Chinese stalls, plus Malay stalls offering curries, *mee jawa* (spicy noodles in a thick sauce) and *roti canai*.

Kampung Bandung Food Court & Taman Selera MUC, Jln Jasmin, take a taxi. Offers a variety of Malay seafood including the popular *ikan panggang masak belacan* (fish barbequed with prawn paste), *satay* and many others.

Pusat Mara, Sibu Plaza building, Jln Mission, opp. AmBank. About a dozen Malay and Melanau food stalls offering popular breakfast dishes, then later freshly cooked *nasi campur* and occasionally home made *umai* (see Melanau Heartland section). 7 am - 9 pm.

Swan Food Centre, Jln Temple next to Sibu Trade & Exhibition Centre. Mostly Chinese stalls with excellent chicken rice and roasted pork.

Taman Selera Harmoni, off Jln Awang Ramli Amit (take a taxi). Open air food court with dozens of halal Malay stalls offering a selection of local delicacies. One stall serves delicious *sup power* (beef tendon soup) and the *cendol* (a popular Malaysian dessert) is the best in town. Open 5 pm - late.

Chinese & Seafood

Sibu has plenty of **upmarket Chinese restaurants**, serving a blend of Foochow, Cantonese and Shanghaiese cuisine. Notable ones include **Ming Ziang Restaurant** (Kingwood Hotel), **Golden Palace Restaurant** (Tanahmas Hotel), **Gold Hope Restaurant** (Sarawak House), **Blue Splendor Restaurant** (Level 5 Wisma Sanyan), **Golden Happiness Restaurant** (Jln Chengal), **Yi Pin Lou Restaurant** (20-32 Mission Road), **New Capitol Restaurant** (46 Jln Kampung Nyabor) and **Bei Jin Restaurant** (155-159 Jln Kampung Nyabor).



David Bak Kut Teh, 3 Jln Central, serves generous portions of *bak kut teh*, stewed pork ribs with vegetables and special herbs cooked in a claypot, as well as a good selection of noodle dishes, from morning to early evening.

Esplanade Seafood (Rejang Esplanade) has a fine open air location and a good selection of local seafood, including excellent steamed river prawns, as well as venison and stir fried *midin* (jungle fern). They also serve a variety of simple western dishes. Open evenings only.

Hai Bing Seafood (31 Jln Maju, opp. Rejang Esplanade) has a good selection of reasonably priced local seafood, venison and chicken dishes, air-con and outdoor dining areas, and friendly, efficient service.

Kheng Hock Cafe (49 Jln Maju facing the Rejang Esplanade) is the perfect all-day dining location. This popular and very friendly cafe serves local noodle dishes and steamed buns and dumplings in the morning, tasty barbecued pork and duck for lunch and afternoon snacking, and superbly cooked seafood (especially the *soon hock* fish) in the evenings, all at very moderate prices.

Min Kong Cafe (Jln Bank) is famous for its delicious prawn noodles (RM15), and also serves other local specialities. Open daily, lunchtimes and evenings.

New Capital Restaurant (opp. Premier Hotel). Not to be confused with the more upmarket New Capitol, serves tender Hainanese chicken rice all day long.

Restaurant Bahagia (Jln Wong Nai Siong next to Bahagia Hotel) serves robust local meat, fish and vegetable dishes lunchtimes and evenings (the claypot beef is particularly good) and is open 24-hrs for noodles, fried rice and other light meals.

Sri Meranti (1 Jln Hardin) is a Chinese Muslim seafood outlet offering both air-conditioned and alfresco dining. Their steamed *tapab* fish is perfectly cooked and the fish head curry is famous throughout town. Open evenings only.

Japanese

Akira Sushi (4th Floor Wisma Sanyan), conveyor-belt style sushi bar with moderate prices to match.

Nippon Ichi (Jln Queensway opp. SESCO counter), popular and cosy restaurant offering *tatami* style dining (kneeling or lounging from low cushions).

Sushi Tie (Jln Pedada, behind Rejang Medical Centre), a very reasonable priced Japanese eatery with a good selection of authentic dishes.

Malay

Malay food stalls can be found in many Chinese coffee shops, serving halal food with their own crockery and cutlery. See also **Taman Selera Harmoni**, **Pusat Mara**, **Kampung Bandung Food Court** & **Taman Selera MUC** and other listings in Food Centres, above.

Kasturi (18 Jln Tunku Osman) is Sibu's leading Malay/Melanau restaurant, serving spicy curries and Malay style seafood, as well Melanau dishes such as *tebaloi* crackers and *umai* (see Melanau Heartland section).

Western

McDonalds, **KFC** and local chain **Sugar Bun** are all represented in Sibu, and can be found in the major shopping malls. Sugar Bun also has an outlet on Jln Pedada with an attached **gelateria** (ice cream parlour). **Esplanade Seafood** (see above) also offers a selection of western dishes, as does the **Little Roadhouse** (see Nightlife, below) For more upmarket western dining, the best bet is to choose from the coffee houses in **Sibu's leading hotels**.

Vietnamese

Adem (Jln Deshon, take a taxi), popular and casual restaurant with excellent beef noodles (*pho*) and authentic Vietnamese coffee.

ENTERTAINMENT

As this guidebook has been produced with tourists in mind, we have not included places that concentrate on lavish business entertainment or where female visitors would feel uncomfortable. Socialising in Sibu is also done in restaurants and coffee shops. Normal pubs usually charge around RM 8 for a beer and close around 1-2 am. Live music lounges and plush karaoke lounges are usually RM 10 upwards, and are open later. Most places have "happy hours," with discounts or 2-for-1 offers. The listings below are only a selection - the inquisitive will make their own discoveries.



Pubs & Bars

Bamboo House (Premier Hotel). Large hotel lounge with live bands, games room and private karaoke rooms.

Blowpipe Lounge (Tanahmas Hotel). Plush music lounge with quality live bands.

Club Emas (Tanahmas Hotel). Upmarket cocktail lounge with open karaoke and private karaoke rooms. Huge selection of songs.

Little Roadhouse (4 Jln Causeway). Friendly upstairs pub with a pleasant balcony area for observing the street life below. Also serves a selection of inexpensive local and western dishes.

Pelangi (Jln Wong Nai Siong, above Sarawak Hotel). Scruffy but cheap and very friendly Iban karaoke pub, where tone deaf singers and karaoke novices will feel welcome.

Riviera Lounge (Kingwood Hotel). Large and comfortable hotel lounge with good live bands and private karaoke rooms.

Rush (Lorong Lanang 2, opp. Li Hua Hotel). Small, darkly lit bar whose DJ's exotic music taste varies from hardcore and jungle to 1950s jazz.

The Village (20 Jln Causeway). Old fashioned corner pub featuring photos of old Sibu and a mostly English-speaking crowd of regulars. The friendly owner is very knowledgeable about the town's history.

Warehouse (5 Jln Tukang Besi, entrance at back of small coffee shop). Large and very friendly pub with a slightly older crowd. Pool table, huge bar, and mostly 70s to 90s music with a few top 40 numbers.

Cineplexes

King Theaters, 2nd Floor, Premier Shopping Complex.

Star Cineplex, 6 Jln Ramin, Tel: 334552.

SHOPPING

Sibu is an excellent place to buy **Borneo arts, crafts and curios**.

Particular items to look out for are Iban *pua kumbu* (hand-woven rugs), wooden hornbill carvings used in rituals, and silver jewellery, Orang Ulu beadwork and woodcarving, and Penan blowpipes and mats. The best places to get a good bargain are the **Sibu Central Market** stalls, where you are



usually buying direct from the producer, the **Night Market**, **Chop Kian Huat**, 8 Jln Tukang Besi (entrance on Jln Market, Tel/Fax: 333353), which has a good selection of Iban silver jewellery, and **Chai Chiang Store**, 5 Jln Central. Visitors travelling by road should check out the **Durin Handicraft Shop**, a one-stop handicraft centre for the Central Region, 35 km from town just after the Durin Ferry and a few minutes from the Durin Bridge exit. **Note:** Australian and New Zealand authorities insist that wood and bone handicrafts are fumigated upon arrival.

For more **general shopping**, the main malls in town are in the lower floors of **Wisma Sanyan**, and the **Sarawak House Complex** on Jln Kampung Nyabor. Good **photo processing** shops are found all over town, while the best bookstore is probably **Premier Bookstore** in Wiama Sanyan. Budget fashions and household goods can be found at the **Night Market**, and in dozens of small shops around town.

Malaysia is a major world producer and exporter of **pepper**, producing around 25,000 tonnes annually, of which 98% is grown in Sarawak. This valuable cash crop provides an important source of income for over 60,000 rural families. Visitors should not miss the chance to visit a pepper garden. High-quality Sarawak pepper in various forms and packagings is widely available in Sibu.

SPORTS & RECREATION

All major hotels have **fitness centres**. There are **public swimming pools** at **Jln Delta** and **Bukit Lima Sports Complex** (take a taxi). Good **jogging trails** can be found at the **Sungai Merah Heritage Walk**, **Bukit Aup Jubilee Park** and **Kutien Garden in Bukit Lima Forest Park** (take a taxi)

Hotels, travel agents and fishing tackle shops can arrange **fishing** trips, either fishing for Borneo masher (*empurau*) on the Rejang and its tributaries or deep sea game fishing off the coast near Mukah.

If your idea of fun is running through humid jungle, getting covered in mud, sweat, bites and scratches (and recovering over a few drinks afterwards), the **Sibu Hash House Harriers** would love to hear from you. An excellent way to make new friends, the Sibu Hash runs every Sunday at 4pm. Contact Mr Ham at Kheng Hock Cafe (Tel: 324391) or Mr Sham at Air Asia (Tel: 016-8590764).

The 18 hole, par 72 **Sibu Golf Club** is open to non-members on weekdays. Visitors must have an affiliation with a recognised club and/or a verifiable handicap. Contact Kelab Golf Sibu, Mile 10¹/₂, Oya Road, P.O Box 1226, 96008 Sibu. Tel: 339890 Email: sgclub@myjaring.net

Sibu Superbowl is located at 1 Lorong 2, Jln Perpati, off Jln Wong King Huo, Tel: 333111.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Banks & Money Changers: The following is a list of centrally located banks and money changers. Banks open Mon-Fri 9.30 am-3.30 pm.

AmBank, Jln Tunku Osman & next to Tanahmas Hotel.

Bumiputra Commerce Bank, 10 Lorong Kampung Datu 5.

EON Bank, 10-18 Jln Mission.

Hong Leong Bank, 133-137 Jln Kampung Nyabor.

HSBC Bank, Bangunan Grand Merdin, 131 Jln Kampung Nyabor.

Maybank, 35-39 Jln Kampung Nyabor.

Public Bank, 3 Jln Central.

RHB Bank, 31 Jln Tuanku Osman.

Standard Chartered Bank, 25 Jln Tukang Besi.

Yewon Money Changer, 8 Jln Tukang Besi.

Doctors, Dentists & Hospitals: There are a number of clinics around the centre of town. Consultation and simple medication is usually around RM 20-30. Hu's Dental Surgery (1B Jln Persiaran Brooke, Tel: 332226) and Ling Wang Hong Dental Surgery (13 Jln Bengkel, Tel: 325482) are conveniently located for visitors. **Sibu Hospital** is at 5¹/₂ Mile, Jln Ulu Oya (take a taxi), Tel: 276666) A cash deposit, insurance card or credit card will be required for in-patient treatment. Sibu's two private hospitals, **Rejang Medical Centre** (29 Jln Pedada, Tel: 330733) and **Sibu Specialist Medical Centre** (52A-52F Jln Persiaran Brooke) are both modern, well equipped and centrally located.

Laundry and Dry Cleaning: Mr Dobi, 5 Jln Bindang, Tel: 324820 for collection/delivery.

Post Office and Telephone Facilities: The main post office is at the corner of Jln Kampung Nyabor and Jln Wong Nai Siong. Open Mon-Sat, 8 am - 6 pm. From outside the Sibu area, the dialling code is 084. Malaysia's country prefix is 60. The overseas call prefix is 00.

Internet Access

Cyber Cafe: Forever Link, 4th Floor Wisma Sanyan.

Wireless Internet: Free connections can be found at the Tanahmas Hotel and the Sugar Bun restaurants at Pedada Road and opposite the Tanahmas Hotel.

Useful Telephone Numbers

Central Police Station (Jln Kampung Nyabor Opp. Sarawak House)	322222
Police Emergency Service	999
Fire	994
Immigration , Federal Complex, Jln Awang Ramli Amit	336991

Tourism Information Centres see inside back cover.

UP THE REJANG RIVER

The Rejang, Malaysia's longest river at over 530km, is a unique travel experience. The river and its tributaries are lined by thousands of villages wooden longhouses, home to a cultural kaleidoscope of ethnic groups, each with their own distinct culture. A journey up the Rejang introduces the visitor a different side of Sarawak - a glimpse of raw Borneo, of a rugged landscape and a river that is constantly alive with boats and people. For adventurous travellers, this is what Borneo is all about.

Most travellers begin their journey in Sibu, using **express boats** (see **Travel Connections**) to travel upriver to Kapit or other small towns along the way. These unique torpedo-shaped craft thunder upriver at quite remarkable speeds of 30 knots (55km/h) or more. From the window



you can see the wide variety of traffic on river - from small dugout canoes to barges weighing hundreds of tons - as well as dozens of modern and traditional longhouses, surrounded by spectacular jungle scenery.

PEOPLE OF THE REJANG

Chinese belonging to various dialect groups (mostly Foochow and Hokkien) are found in all the towns and riverine settlements of the Rejang. However once you leave the major towns, the bulk of the Rejang's population are indigenous.

The lower Rejang (Sibu to Kapit) and its tributaries are **Iban territory**. The Iban, formerly known as *Sea Dayaks*, are famous for their head-hunting past, their massive ironwood longhouses, their ornate body tattooing, their wonderful weaving skills, and of course their potent rice wine, *tuak*, which is always offered to visitors.

Above Kapit and the Pelagus Rapids, the people are mostly **Orang Ulu** (literally "upriver people"), the collective name for a number of smaller groups including the **Kayan, Kenyah, Kajang, Lahanan, Ukit** and **Punan**. Also former-head-hunters, they live in even more imposing longhouses than the Iban. However their arts and crafts are very different; they are famous for woodcarving and beadwork, spectacular *keliring* or totem poles, and the music of a haunting, mandolin-like instrument - the *sape*. Tattooing and body ornamentation are prominent; older orang ulu ladies can be recognised by the brass rings hanging from their extended earlobes, and from the dense black tattoos on their arms and legs, although the practice is sadly disappearing amongst the younger generation.

Further upriver, visitors may occasionally encounter small groups of **nomadic Penan**, hunter-gatherers and occasional farmers who live deep in the heart of the forest, moving their temporary settlements according to the seasonal availability of food and the forest products that they trade with the longhouse dwellers.

The sheer variety of different communities makes the Rejang a real cultural kaleidoscope. Its people take great pride on their arts, traditions and culture, and are very happy to receive visitors; it is never a question of which longhouse to visit, but how many.



REJANG RIVER

HOTELS (city centre only) 1

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Capitol Hotel 98□ | 17 Mandyrin Hotel |
| 2 Centre Inn | 18 Me Hung Hotel |
| 3 Century Inn | 19 Methodist Guest House |
| 4 City Inn | 20 Miramar Hotel |
| 5 Dung Fang Hotel | 21 New Hai Ping Hotel |
| 6 Eden Inn | 22 New Hong Kong Hotel |
| 7 Garden Hotel | 23 New World Hotel |
| 8 Gold Star Hotel | 24 Orchid Hotel |
| 9 Hoover Lodging House | 25 Paramount Hotel |
| 10 Holiday Hotel | 26 Park City Everly Hotel |
| 11 Hotel Bahagia | 27 Perdana Inn |
| 12 Hotel Malaysia | 28 Phoenix Hotel |
| 13 Hotel Ria | 29 Plaza Inn |
| 14 Kawan Hotel | 30 Premier Hotel |
| 15 Kingwood Hotel | 31 Regent Hotel |
| 16 Li Hua Hotel | 32 Rejang Hotel |



- 33 River Park Hotel
- 34 River View Hotel
- 35 Royal Inn
- 36 Sarawak Hotel
- 37 Sentosa Inn
- 38 Siong Lai Hotel
- 39 Star Hostel
- 40 Sunway Inn

- 41 Tanahmas Hotel
- 42 Tiong Yieing Hotel
- 43 Today Hotel
- 44 Travellers' Hotel
- 45 Victoria Inn
- 46 Villa Hotel
- 47 Wen Ya Hotel
- 48 Zuhra Hotel

INFORMATION



Police Station



Malaysian Airlines (MAS)



Town Centre Bus Station



Taxi



Visitors' Information Centre



Toilets



Medical Centre



CENTRAL SARAWAK AREA MAP

South
China
Sea

VISITING LONGHOUSES

A longhouse is basically a terraced street of separate dwellings covered by one roof, under the authority of a headman, or *tuai rumah*. Each family lives in its separate apartment, or *bilik*, and communal activities take place outside on the verandah, or *ruai*. This is also where male visitors spend the night. Female visitors will be invited to stay inside the *bilik* with the family.

Most longhouses are busy, modern farming communities, and people wear practical clothes like jeans and T-shirts when they are at work. Traditional costumes and head-dresses are usually only worn for special festivals like Gawai Dayak (the Dayak harvest festival, 1st & 2nd of June), and weddings. If you want to see traditional rituals, customs and dances, then unless you are very lucky it is best to go with a guide or organised tour group. Visitors are very welcome at most longhouses, but only if they are expected or have an invitation from a resident. A list of longhouse dos and don'ts is available on the Kapit Resident's Office website (see Kapit).



KANOWIT

First stop on the Rejang, only an hour from Sibu, is the small riverside town of Kanowit. This is the furthest point on the Rejang currently accessible by road (from Durin), as well as by express boat, and makes a good alternative jumping-off point for visitors who want to spend an extra hour in bed before catching the express boat upriver. The town centre is formed by three streets of 1930's Chinese shophouses near the waterfront. The main landmark is **Fort Emma**, a 19th Century Brooke Era wooden fort.

Kanowit is virtually untouristed, so don't expect any flashy seafood restaurants; the best cooking is done in Chinese coffee shops, so just stick your head into the kitchen and ask what they've got. For adventurous travellers, these coffee shops are also fertile ground for making friends and getting an invitation to one of the longhouses on the nearby Ngemah and Julau rivers. There is also a **homestay programme** at the nearby Rumah Benjamin Angki longhouse. Contact the Kanowit District Office for further details, Tel: 752963 Email: kdcict@tm.net.my. www.kanowitdc.sarawak.gov.my.



Accommodation

All addresses are 96700 Kapit, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Harbour View Hotel, 63 Jln Kubu, Tel: 753188/753199 Fax: 753177. Room rate RM45-60.

Kanowit Hotel, 85 Jln Kubu, Tel: 752155 Fax: 752202. Room rate RM40-50.

SONG

The small town of Song, just over 2 hours from Sibu by express boat, is the jumping off point for visiting Iban longhouses on the **Katibas** and **Bangkit** rivers. The Katibas is served by twice-daily express boats (times vary), and it is normally possible to get an invite to visit a longhouse from one of your fellow passengers. Alternatively, the *Capitol Hotel* can usually arrange a guide. Please note that many of the traditional wooden longhouses in the area are being replaced by modern concrete structures, so check with the Song District Office for the latest situation, Tel: 777221.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96850 Song, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Capital Hotel, 8 Song Bazaar, Tel: 777264. Room rate RM25 (fan), RM45.

Katibas Inn, 7 Song Bazaar, Tel: 777323 Fax: 777223. Room rate RM40-50.

Mesra Inn, 31 Song Shoplot, Tel/Fax: 7777777 Room rate RM40.

Sukaramai Inn, 44-45 Song New Town, Tel: 777686 Fax: 777688 Email: teo_su_ing@hotmail.com. Room rate RM40-77.

KAPIT

The bustling upriver town of Kapit (pop. 8,000) is the jumping-off point for the Middle and Upper Rejang and Baleh Rivers and the best place to organise a visit to one of the Iban longhouses of the Lower Rejang. Despite its small size, Kapit is the commercial and administrative centre of the Kapit Division (a vast hinterland comprising the Kapit, Song and Belaga Districts of almost 39,000 sq km with a population of around 150,000), so there is always plenty to see and do.



Attractions



Fort Sylvia is a 19th Century fort whose whitewashed walls and ironwood shingled roof are home to a mini-museum and handicrafts centre managed by the by Tun Jugah Foundation. It houses a fine collection of ethnic arts and handicrafts, heirloom jars, brass cannons and historical documents,

and a collection devoted to the life of the late Tun Jugah ak Barieng, *Temenggong* (supreme chieftan) of the Rejang Iban and one of Sarawak's foremost independence leaders. Open Mon-Fri 9.30 am - 4 pm.

The **Civic Centre Museum** next to the Lake Garden has an interesting set of exhibits on the ethnic groups of the Rejang Basin, as well as some fine watercolours of riverside towns and villages, and a relief map showing all the longhouses in the area. Open Mon-Fri 9 am - 4.15 pm (closed lunchtimes).

Events

The **Baleh-Kapit Raft Safari** is a two-day downriver raft race held the 3rd week of April every year. Apart from the attractive prizes, participants can also sample the warmth and hospitality of Sarawak's longhouses as they journey along the river. Foreign participants are particularly welcome and are guaranteed VIP treatment. For further details contact the Resident's Office or visit their website.



Gawai Dayak, the Dayak harvest festival, falls on June 1 and 2 and is marked by both the Iban and the Bidayuh with boisterous merrymaking. This is an ideal time for visiting longhouses to share the cuisine, dances and traditions and legendary hospitality of the Iban.

The **Kapit Fest**, held every May, is a prelude to the Gawai Dayak celebrations, with a fun fair, traditional sports competitions, a cultural parade and a beauty contest. The **Kapit Regatta**, featuring longboat and power boat races, is the highlight of the event. Contact the Resident's Office for further details.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96800 Kapit, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Resort Hotels

The Regency Pelagus Resort, Pelagus, Sungai Rejang, P.O. Box. 176, 96807 Kapit, Tel: 799051 Fax: 799050. www.theregencyhotel.com.my/pelagus. This 40-room resort is designed in classic Iban wooden Longhouse style to blend with its natural surroundings. Rooms offer private balcony with forest or river view, mosquito proofing, hot water, ceiling fan and attached bathroom. Deluxe Rooms also include air conditioning. Coffee shop, swimming pool and in-house nature guide. Room rates (full board): RM200-220 + +. Transfers (Sibu Airport to Resort return, including speedboat transfer from Kapit) RM170 + +.



Medium Class Hotels

Greenland Inn, Lot 463-464 Jln Teo Chow Beng, Tel: 796388 Fax: 797989. Room rate RM69-95, RM145 (s).

Hotel Meligai, Lot 334 Jln Airport, Tel: 796611 Fax: 798103 Email: meligai@tm.met.my. Room rate RM 69-140, RM 247 (s). Restaurant, music lounge, conference facilities.

New Rejang Inn, Lot 104 Jln Teo Chow Beng, Tel/Fax: 796600. Room rate RM55-65.

Budget Hotels

Ark Hill Inn, Jln Penghulu Gerinang, Tel: 796168 Fax: 797168. Room rate RM35-70.

Dung Fang Hotel, Lot 510, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 797799 Fax: 797779. Room rate RM35-80 (family room).

Fully Inn, 105, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 797366 Fax: 377366/377. Room rate RM35-50.

Hiap Chiong Hotel, 33, Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 796314 Fax: 799585. Room rate RM41-63.

Rejang Hotel, 28 Jln Temenggong Jugah, Tel: 796709. Room rate RM20 (fan), RM40.

Eating Out

For a small town, Kapit has a great selection of eating places. Local river fish are a popular delicacy, especially the hugely expensive *empurau* (Borneo masheer), although more economical fish such as *tapah* and *soon hock* are almost as tasty, as are the huge Rejang river prawns. Good air conditioned restaurants include *Orchard Restaurant* (64 Jln Tlong Ung Hong, 9 am - 11 pm, excellent local pork dishes), *Jade Garden* (Jln Airport opp. Meligai Hotel, Chinese cuisine, lunchtimes and evenings) and *Madam Ma's Kitchen* (adjacent to Meligai Hotel, halal Chinese cuisine, evenings only). **Local seafood** can be found at *Ab Kau Restaurant* (Jln Berjaya), and *Hock Bing Seafood* (off Jln Temenggong Jugah past Chinese temple).

Coffee shops are located all over town, serving local variations on standard Sibu and Kuching noodle dishes, as well as economy rice (at lunchtimes). **Muslim food** can be found at Malay stalls in many coffee shops, as well as *Malindo Cafe* in Harmony Mall, *Binggas Cafe* in Jln Temenggong Jinggut, and the wide variety of food stalls at *Taman Selera Empurau* food court (5 pm - late). One dish unique to Kapit is deep-fried *roti canai*, which can be found at the Malay stall on the 1st floor of the *Gelanggang Kenyalang* building.

Entertainment

Nightlife in Kapit is focused around coffee shops and dozens of karaoke pubs. Many of these outlets are dedicated to entertaining an all-male clientele, but locals will know which are more family oriented and welcome female guests. Failing this, the long-running *Double Happiness Pub* on Jln Airport is a model of noisy upriver respectability.

Shopping & Essentials

The main shopping centre is **Kapit Square**, where visitors can find the post office, essential supplies, pharmacies and medical clinics, as well as excellent photo processing at *Hoover Colour Photo Centre*. There are also a number of banks with ATMs located around town. The lively **Teresang Market** (wet market) on Jln Temenggong Jugah has a colourful selection of stalls selling all kinds of exotic jungle produce. For **handicrafts**, try the market stalls, as well as *Sula Perengka* (1st floor of the nearby *Gelanggang Kenyalang* building) and *Rozy Stationery* (2nd floor, MARA building). The Kapit Resident's Office has a comprehensive **database of local craftspeople** on its website. If you would like a traditional **Iban tattoo**, check out *Robert's Tattoo Art*, 1st floor *Gelanggang Kenyalang* (disposable needles are used). Kapit's Internet connections are generally slow and unreliable - if you are desperate to check your e-mail, try *King Sky Cybercafe* in Jln Temenggong Jinggut. The only **cellular phone coverage** in Kapit is offered by Celcom (013 & 019 prefixes).

Longhouses Near Kapit Town

For day visitors, the most conveniently located longhouse is **Rumah Bundong** (formerly Rumah Seligi - longhouses are named after the current headman or *tuai rumah*), a traditional wooden longhouse 10 km from town. Visitors are also welcome to stay overnight with local families (RM30, meals extra), and the longhouse is well known for its tattoo artists. Vans leave half hourly from Jln Airport, no introduction is required.



Further afield, there are longhouses on the main Rejang River, as well as the Baleh and the Mujong and their tributaries. A homestay programme at **Rumah Lulut** on the Sungai Tisa involves both traditional and modern longhouses. **Rumah Garie** on the Sungai Kain is famous for its 'pua kumbu', traditional Iban woven textiles, and has even been accredited with the Japanese 'G-mark' for good design. **Rumah George** involves a boat ride through the notorious Pelagus Rapids, or can be visited as a day trip by guests of the nearby the Regency Pelagus Resort. **Rumah Penghulu Jampi** on the Baleh is the

birthplace of the legendary Iban warrior turned statesman Temenggong Koh. **Rumah Bangkong** on the Mujong is a very traditional longhouse that is just starting to attract visitors.

All of the above require an overnight stay, usually with a host family. There are no tour operators in Kapit but there are a number of **licensed nature guides** who can make the necessary arrangements. The best contact is probably Joshua Muda Guna (Tel: 019-4676004 Fax: 799600 Email: joshuamuda@hotmail.com) who can organise visits to any of the above. Generally an overnight visit including longboat trip will cost around RM320 per person. Joshua also arranges longer trips to **Long Singut**, a very remote Kenyah (Orang Ulu) longhouse on the Baleh (7d/6n, RM1,600), deep jungle tours, and expeditions to the remote peak of **Batu Tiban** (12-14 days, must be physically fit), described in Redmond O'Hanlon's book *Into The Heart of Borneo*. The Kapit Resident's office keeps a register of licensed nature guides (with contact details) an up-to-date list of longhouses that accept visitors.

The Pelagus Rapids

Until the introduction of powerful modern engines, and generous amounts of dynamite used by British Army engineers in the 1960s, only the most courageous or foolhardy boatmen would brave the mighty Pelagus Rapids. The rapids divide the Rejang into lower and upper sections, and previously passengers would disembark at the rapids, proceed on foot through the forest, and join another boat at the other side. Nowadays express boats and speedboats with reinforced hulls glide through the rapids with ease, but it is still a heart-stopping experience for the first-time visitor.

Kapit Resident's Office

The Kapit Resident's Office is located on the 1st floor of the State Government Building, next to the Lake Garden near the Methodist Church, Tel: 796963/796445 Fax: 796932 Email: webmaster@kapitro.sarawak.gov.my <http://www.kapitro.sarawak.gov.my>. Open 8am - 5 pm Mon-Fri, closed lunchtimes. The helpful staff can provide detailed visitor information in printed form and via their website. They also issue **permits** for upriver travel beyond Kapit. **Note:** The Resident's Office will be moving to a new **out-of-town** location sometime in 2007. Take a van from Jln Airport.

Permits for Onward Travel

Foreign visitors require a permit from the Resident's Office for all destinations upriver from Kapit (Rejang or Baleh rivers) except the Pelagus Resort. The permit is issued immediately, is free of charge and is valid from one to two weeks. Visitors to the Baleh area should be accompanied by guides.

BELAGA

The Upper Rejang, beyond Pelagus, is home to the Orang Ulu or "Upriver People". The riverine settlement of Belaga is the last major trading post on the Rejang, and a good base for arranging visits to the **Kayan** and **Kenyah** longhouses situated further upriver. Due to the remote and rugged



terrain, visitors travelling beyond Belaga are advised to inform the Belaga District Office about their travel plans. Contact details for **licensed nature guides** in Belaga are available from the Kapit Resident's Office or Belaga District Office, Tel: 086-461315.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96900 Belaga, Sarawak, Malaysia. Note: Belaga's telephone dialling code is +6086 from overseas and 086 within Malaysia.

Bee Lian Inn, 11 Belaga Bazaar, Tel: 013-8371127 Fax: 461541. Room rate RM30 (fan, shared bath), RM40.

Belaga Hotel, 14 Belaga Bazaar, Tel: 461244. Room rate RM25 (fan, shared bath), RM30.

Sing Soon Hing Hotel, 15 Belaga Bazaar, Tel: 461257 Fax: 461343. Room rate RM30 (shared bath).

Sing Soon Huat Hotel, 26-27 New Belaga Bazaar, Tel 461307 Fax: 461346. Room rate RM45.

Note: During the dry season (July - September), express boats may not be able to reach Belaga. The other means of access are by air or road (from Bintulu). However foreign visitors wishing to travel via Bintulu must report themselves at the Bintulu Resident's Office and the Belaga District Office for the official record. Contact the Kapit Resident's Office for further details, Tel: 084-796445.

THE MELANAU HEARTLAND

THE MELANAU



The Melanau number around 130,000, and make up roughly 6% of Sarawak's total population. They inhabit the coastal region from the Rejang Estuary to the town of Bintulu and are traditionally fishermen and sago growers. They formerly lived in massive "tall houses" as protection

against pirates (a fine replica can be seen at Sarawak Cultural Village near Kuching), but nowadays live in *kampungs* (villages) in individual wooden houses similar to those of the Malays.

The majority of Melanau are Muslim, with a significant number of Christians, and a small minority still practise the traditional religion of *Liko*, meaning "people of the river". An interesting *Liko* practice is the use of wooden effigies, called *berbayah* and *berayun*, for healing rituals. Although the Melanau have been influenced by the Malays, they are very proud of their distinct culture, and are noted for their religious tolerance, with Muslims, Christians and *Liko* adherents living happily side-by-side.

MUKAH

The bustling town of Mukah is the administrative centre for the whole Mukah Division, a coastal region covering almost 7,000 sq km with a population of over 110,000. The population is primarily Melanau (55%) and Iban (35%) with small numbers of Chinese, Malays, Bidayuhs and others. Mukah and its surrounding *kampungs* (villages) are the historic centre of Melanau culture. The town played an important role in Sarawak's history, as the Brooke Rajahs and the Brunei Sultans competed with one another to control the valuable sago trade in the 19th Century. An **old smokestack** in the centre of town is one of the few surviving relics of this period.



Sights to see in Mukah include the bustling **fishing harbour** in the old town; the ancient water village at **Kampung Tellian** (3km from town - RM0.40 by bus or take a taxi), where visitors can see **traditional boat builders** at work; the vibrant cultural centre at **Lamin Dana** (see below); and the colourful Tua Pek Kong Temple. On a more modern note, the **Town Mosque** and the new **Civic Centre** both feature multi-coloured conical roofs which are modelled on the *terendak*, a sun hat made of sago palm leaves which is the principal icon of Melanau culture. Mukah is accessible by road or air. See the **Travel Connections** section for full details.

The Kaul Festival

The wild and exuberant *Kaul* festival, which gives thanks to the sea spirits, is still held annually at Mukah beach, on the second weekend of April. The main focus is the *tibou* or giant swing, with local youngsters risking their necks as they gyrate wildly above the sand. Contact the Sarawak Tourism Board or the Mukah Resident's Office for full details.



Lamin Dana



Lamin Dana is a combination visitor's lodge and cultural centre, hidden amongst the wooden houses of Kampung Tellian and delightfully situated beside a small river. The lodge not only offers accommodation; it is also the centre of an ongoing cultural revival, training local people in traditional arts and crafts

and providing useful extra income for dozens of village families. Lamin Dana is built in the style of a traditional Melanau tall house, using only authentic materials. It also provides authentic Melanau meals, and offers activities such as boat trips, mangrove tours and bicycle rental. The 10 standard rooms (2 beds) are RM75 and the four family rooms (a double and two singles) are RM 150. Tel: 871543 Email: info@lamindana.com . www.lamindana.com.

Village Homestay

For visitors who wish to enjoy everyday village life and take part in daily activities, the Malaysian Fisheries Development Board (LKIM) has set up a homestay project in nearby Kampung Senau, Oya. Contact the Visitors' Information Centre in Sibul or LKIM (Tel: 871416) for further details.

Food and Drink

Mukah's signature dish is **umai**, a spicy salad of raw marinated fish with shallots, lime juice and chillies. It was invented by Melanau fishermen who were reluctant to cook aboard their fishing boats because of the risk of fire. Other local favourites - not for the squeamish - include **sago worms** (actually sago-trunk-dwelling beetle larvae), and **lameh**, caterpillars that have recently spun their chrysalis. The last two dishes are hard to find in restaurants, but can be obtained at the town market and are often served in Melanau homes.



Both the Old Town and the New Town are crammed with **Chinese coffee shops** and **Malay restaurants** serving a variety of popular Malaysian dishes, and a number also offer freshly grilled fish wrapped in banana leaves and coated with *sambal belacan* (shrimp paste relish). More up-market outlets include the air-conditioned **JS Seafood** and the **River View Restaurant**, both located near to the Tua Pek Kong Temple. For western food with a selection of quality wines, the best option is a 15-minute taxi ride to the new **Kingwood Resort**. However, for authentic Melanau food, including superb *umai*, visitors should head for **Nibong House**, on Jalan Orang Kaya Setia Raja opposite the Civic Centre.

Melanau Longhouse

The last remaining Melanau longhouse, which still retains its traditional structure, is located at Kampung Sok in the Matu area. Visits can be arranged by the Mukah Resident's Office, Tel: 872596.

DALAT

The small Melanau township of Dalat makes an interesting half-day outing from Mukah, or a stopover if you are travelling by speedboat to or from Sibul. Outside the district office, directly opposite the speedboat wharf and the Chinese temple, is one of the finest **Melanau *kelidieng*** (sacrificial burial pole) still in existence.



The *kelidieng*, a hollow *belian* (borneo ironwood) tree trunk decorated with ornate carvings, was used in ancient rituals to ward off disasters. Should the community be threatened, a young maiden was placed inside the pole and given only drinking water until she finally passed away. This sacrifice would appease malicious or angry spirits and thus avoid disaster. Interestingly, the cross in the altar of nearby St Bernard's RC church (500 m walk upriver, visitors welcome) is also made in the form of a *kelidieng*, to give the concept of Christ's sacrifice a Melanau cultural context.

Amongst the new shophouses across the road from the riverfront are a number of Chinese coffee shops, as well as *Taku Cafe*, a Melanau restaurant serving traditional dishes (see Mukah). Between the few blocks of shophouses is a small clump of *nunok* trees, which are believed to be the homes of animist spirits. Upon closer inspection you can see a number of traditional animist, Buddhist and Taoist altars next to the trees.

Although Dalat is not generally an overnight destination, the newly formed **Institute of Melanau-Dalat Language and Culture** (Institut Uba Jegem Adat Melanau Dalat) can arrange informal **homestays** amongst the surrounding villages, where visitors can enjoy traditional Melanau life and take part in traditional activities such as fishing and sago gathering, as well as boat trips and treks into the peat swamp forest and visits to sago factories. Until the institute is fully up and running, it can be contacted via the Redemptorist Community, St. Bernard's Church, Dalat, Tel/Fax: 864212.

The **Dalat speedboat service** is easily the most interesting way to reach the Melanau Heartland from Sibu. After about an hour on the wide and stately Batang Igan, the speedboat slows its engines and cruises through the narrow, tree-lined **Sungai Kut** (Kut Canal), stopping at picturesque water villages along the way before emerging into the Sungai Oya (Oya River) at Dalat. Passengers are seated in two rows facing one another, so it's almost impossible not to make new friends along the way. From Dalat, the first speedboat leaves for Sibu at 6.30 am and the last at 12.30 pm. For Sibu departures see Travel Connections. Onward connections to Mukah are by bus (RM2.80, bus station behind Hiap Leong Mini Market) or the waiting taxis (RM30) and vans (RM6).



ACCOMMODATION

All addresses are 96400 Mukah, Sarawak, Malaysia. Note: A number of new hotels in Mukah are under construction or awaiting licences. Please contact the Visitor's Information Centre in Sibu for updates.

International Class Hotels

Kingwood Resort Mukah, Lot 96 Block 17, Mukah Land District, Tel: 873888 Fax: 872288. Room rate RM175-240++ , suites to RM1200++ . 99 rooms, swimming pool, restaurant, banquet & conference facilities. Located on beachfront about 15 mins drive from Mukah town.

Medium Class Hotels

Hotel Sarina, Lot 46 Jln Orang Kaya Setia Raja, Tel: 872655 Fax: 872658. Room rate RM80-140.

Hotel Sri Umpang, 29 Jln Lintang, Tel: 872416 Fax: 319079. Room rate RM80-120.

King Ing Hotel, 1-2 Jln Boyan, Tel: 871400 Fax: 871429. Room rate RM80-140.

Mandyrin Hotel, 30-32 Jln Lintang, Tel: 872688 Fax: 872430. Room rate RM70-140.

Mukah Kaul Beach Resort, Km 4, Jln Mukah-Oya, Tel: 871700 Fax: 872700. Room rate RM80-100 (chalets). Attached restaurant.

Pantai Harmoni Beach Resort, Km 4, Jln Mukah-Oya, Tel: 871010. Room rate RM70-100. Attached restaurant.

Qintai Inn, 50 Jln Oya, Tel/Fax: 872872. Room rate RM80-100.

Weiming Hotel, 19 Main Bazaar, Tel: 872278 Fax: 872345. Room rate RM70-100.

Sago Inn, Lot 485, New Dalat Town Centre, 96300 Dalat, no Tel or Fax. Room rate RM50-60.

Culture-Based Accommodation

Dalat Homestays , see Dalat section.

Kampung Senau, Oya, Homestay Programme, see Mukah section.

Lamin Dana, Boutique Lodge & Cultural Centre, see Mukah section.

DOWNRIVER FROM SIBU

SARIKEI

Sarikei, 122km by road from Sibu, is a bustling riverside town and a major transit point on the Pan-Borneo highway. However Sarikei's real claim to fame is its importance as an agricultural centre; more than 80% of **Sarawak's pepper production**

comes from Sarikei Division, and the area is justly famous for its **sweet, succulent pineapples**, which thrive in the slightly acidic soil here.



Attractions

Around Town



While the **Pineapple Statue** next to the express boat wharf pays tribute to the town's most famous export, visitors can see, taste and buy the real thing at the nearby **fruit and vegetable market**. This is located next to a small but colourful **fish market**, where chefs and restaurateurs from Sibu make early morning pilgrimages to take their pick of the fresh catch. The small **esplanade** fronting the Nyelong River is a pleasant place to watch the local boat traffic. On the way out of town towards Sibu, the attractive **Residency Building** can be seen to the right of the road.



Sarikei is believed to be the best place in Sarawak to buy the herbal ingredients for **pak cheng (8 treasures) soup**, said to be excellent for blood circulation and restoring energy, particularly for

women who have given birth. Most Chinese herbalists and sundry shops stock it at around RM4 per packet.

Sebangkoi Deer Farm

About 20 minutes drive from Sibu, the Sebangkoi deer farm produces not only venison, but also deer horn for the Chinese medicine trade, which can be worth as much as RM1,000 per kg. Visitors are welcome by appointment; call Mr Ting Sing Fee, Tel: 654573.

Sarikei Tours

Mr Ling How Kang runs tours (from Sibu) to Sarikei and its agricultural attractions, including Sebangkoi Deer Farm, Sebangkoi Forest Park, dragon fruit orchards, pineapple farms, pepper gardens and orange orchards. He can also arrange trips to the **Rejang Songket Factory** at **Kampung Rejang**, to see *songket* weavers in action, as well as the **smoked prawn** (*sesar unjur*) **processing industry** at **Kampung Belawai**. Contact him at Greatown Travel Sdn Bhd, 58 Jln Repok, Tel:655233 Fax: 655211 Email: gttsrk@streamyx.com.

Accommodation

All addresses are 96100 Sarikei, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Dragon Inn, 60 Jln Masjid Lama, Tel: 651799 Fax: 651798. Room rate RM63-120, RM180 (s). Coffee shop.

Oriental Hotel, 48 Jln Repok, Tel: 655559/651208 Fax: 651209. Room rate RM60-120. Halal Chinese restaurant.

Payang Puri Hotel, 1-2 Jln Merdeka, Tel: 084-651216 Fax: 084-652358 Email: ericlnd@yahoo.com. Room rate RM40-50.

Southern Hotel, 54 Jln Repok, Tel: 651167. Room rate RM 18 (fan, shared bath), RM30-40.

Wawasan Inn, 69-72, Jalan Masjid Lama, Tel: 653199 Fax: 651157. Room rate RM63-140.

Eating Out

Like any town in Sarawak, Sarikei has its fair share of Chinese coffee shops and Malay restaurants serving simple noodle dishes and tasty snacks. More demanding diners can try the excellent seafood and venison offered by *Hung Kiew Kee Restaurant*, *Golden Happiness Restaurant* (both on Jln Masjid Lama) and *Oriental Restaurant* (Oriental Hotel, halal). Fast food fans will find *KFC* and *Sugar Bun* on Jln Masjid Lama.

BINTANGOR

This small market town, 105km by road from Sibu, is famous for its unusual green oranges - although the peel is deep green, the sweet flesh inside is orange coloured and fully ripe. The town can be covered on foot in about an hour, taking in the colourful **fruit and vegetable market** and the **Bintangor orange statue**. The coffee shops in town are renowned for their excellent *rojak*, a spicy Malaysian salad of fruits and vegetables.

Accommodation

Hotel Ming Kiong, Wisma Cheong Siew, Lot 20 Kelupu Road, 96507 Bintangor, Tel: 692888 Fax: 692695. Room rate RM80.

TRAVEL CONNECTIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, all addresses are 96000 Sibu, Sarawak, Malaysia; telephone dialling code is +6084 from overseas and 084 within Malaysia.

AIR - Malaysia: MAS flights connects Sibu with Kuala Lumpur (RM 475, 2x daily) and Kuching (RM174, 2x daily). Advance booking fares are available. Malaysia's budget airline, **Air Asia** operates regular flights between Sibu and Kuching, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Bharu. Prices vary depending on how far in advance you book - check out www.airasia.com for the latest prices and any special deals. **Fly Asian Express (FAX)** operates Fokker 50 turboprop services connecting Sibu to Miri, Bintulu and Kota Kinabalu, as well as Twin Otter turboprops from Kuching to Mukah. Again, prices vary depending on how far in advance you book - check out www.flyasianxpress.com for the latest prices and any special deals. **Hornbill Skyways** operates daily Dornier turboprop flights to Mukah from Kuching (RM85, via Tanjung Manis) and Miri (RM55, direct). Connections to other destinations are via Kuching, Kuala Lumpur, Miri, Johor Bharu or Kota Kinabalu.

Airport Information. Tel: 307770.

Air Asia. 1st Floor, Main Terminal Building, Sibu Airport, Tel: 307808 Fax: 307801 Call Centre: 03-87754000. Online booking & enquiries: www.airasia.com.

Fly Asian Express (FAX) Air Asia handles FAX sales in Sibu and throughout Malaysia (see above). Online booking & enquiries: www.flyasianexpress.com.

Hornbill Skyways, Kuching International Airport, Tel 082-455737 Fax: 082-455710.

Malaysian Airlines System (MAS) - No, 61 Jalan Tuanku Osman, Tel: 321055. Call centre Tel: 1 300 88 3000. Online booking & enquiries: www.malaysiaairlines.com.

ROAD: The Trans-Borneo highway connects Sibu to all major cities in Sarawak. Sibu to Kuching takes about 5 hours by car, Bintulu about 2 hours, Miri about 4 hours and Mukah about 3 hours. Roads in and around Sibu are generally good.

BUS SERVICES: Local bus services operate from the bus station opposite the Express Wharf and serve destinations throughout the town and its surroundings. Long distance buses depart from the **Sibu New Bus Terminal** on Jln Pahlawan.

Biaramas Express (Buses to Bintulu, Kuching, Sarikei, Miri, Pontianak) Tel: 313139, 311323, latest bus schedules at www.biaramas.com.

Borneo Amalgamated Transport (Bintulu, Kuching, Sarikei, Sri Aman, Kanowit, Miri) Tel: 334521.

Lanang Road Bus Co and **Rejang Transport** (Kuching, Bintulu, Miri, Kanowit, Sarikei, Bintangor, Mukah, Balingian plus local services) Tel: 314527, 335917.

Miri Transportation (Bintulu, Miri, Kuching) Tel: 324818.

Sungei Merah Bus Co (Sibu town local services) Tel: 330759, 335564.

Suria Bus Express (From Mukah to Bintulu & Miri) Tel: 872682.

Syarikat Bas Baram (Bintulu, Baram, Miri, Kuching) Tel: 313100.

Tai Hua Bus (From Mukah to Oya & Dalat) Tel: 871230/872682.

TransBorneo Resources (Kuching, Mukah, Oya, Dalat, Sarikei, Bintulu, Miri. Also from Mukah & Dalat direct to Bintulu & Miri) Tel: 082-452271.

Vital Focus Transportation operates **PB Bus Express**, **Suria Bus Express**, **Borneo Highway Express** (Bintulu, Miri, Sarikei, Kuching) Tel: 322450, 313254.

Please phone the bus companies for latest schedules. Alternatively, e-mail the Visitor's Information Centre in Sibu for up-to-date bus schedules and prices, or drop by for a printout of the same.

Airport. No bus service at the time of writing. If you are travelling light, take a Lanang Road bus to Kanowit or Sibu Jaya and ask to be dropped at the airport junction (10 mins walk). Roughly every hour from 5.15 am to 5 pm. RM2.50.

Bintangor. Most local buses to Sarikei stop in Bintangor, RM4.

Bintulu. See operators above. Frequent services with first bus departing 7 am, last bus 12.30 am. RM20.

Bukit Aup Jubilee Park. Teku Bus Nos. 2 & 3. RM2.20

Civic Centre (Museum). Sungai Merah Bus Nos. 1A & 4. Approx half-hourly during opening hours. RM0.80.

Dalat. Trans Borneo Resources, phone for schedule. RM17.

Kanowit. Lanang Rd Bus No. 3 Roughly every hour from 5.15 am to 5 pm. RM4

Miri. See operators above. Frequent services with first bus departing 7 am, last bus 12.30 am. RM40.

Mukah. Trans Borneo Resources, Lanang Road Bus Co, phone for schedule. RM15.30.

Pontianak (Indonesia). Biaramas Express, 10 am, 01.45 pm, 9.30 pm, 11.30 pm 12:00 am. RM85.

Sarikei. See operators above. Frequent services with first bus departing 5.15 am, last bus 12.30 am. RM8.

Sibu New Bus Terminal. From the Express Wharf Bus Station, Lanang Rd Bus No. 21 or Sungai Merah Bus Nos. 12 & 17. Every 45 mins from 6.30 am to 5.30 pm. RM0.80.

Sungai Merah Bazaar (for heritage walk). Sungai Merah Bus No. 1A. RM0.80

Wong Nai Siong Memorial Park. Sungai Merah Bus No. 1A. RM0.80

EXPRESS BOATS: Tickets are sold in the Passenger Terminal at the Express Wharf It's advisable to get there 30 mins before departure, except at peak holiday periods when you may have to book a day in advance.

Belaga. Daily at 6.15 am (9.30 am from Kapit). Services may not operate during the dry season (July-Sept). 8 hrs. RM35-40. Foreign visitors require a permit from the Kapit Resident's Office to travel beyond Kapit, so will need to stay overnight in Kapit.

Dalat. Smaller speedboats depart from the jetty at the junction of Jln Khoo Peng Loong and Jln Temple. Roughly every 1½ hrs from 7.00 am to 2.30 pm. Boats depart as soon as they are full so get there at least 30 mins early. 2 hrs. RM20.

Daro. 2-hourly from 7.30 am to 9.30 pm. 2½ hrs. RM20

Kapit. A variety of operators run frequent services from 6.15 am to 3 pm, most of which stop at Kanowit, Song and the occasional longhouse along the way. Contact the Sarawak Rivers Board for up-to date schedules, Tel: 339936 (24 hrs). About 3 hrs. RM20 (1st class RM25).

Kanowit. See Kapit. 40 mins. RM6

Kuching. Express Bahagia, departs daily at 11.30 am, stopping at Sarikei and Tanjung Manis. RM 40, 5 hrs. Tel: 319228 Fax: 336199. RM40 (1st class RM45).

Sarikei. See Kuching. 1 hr. RM8.

Song. See Kapit. 2½ hrs. RM 17 (1st Class RM22)

RIVER CRUISES: Hockbee Rejang River Travel Service (Tel: 313281 019-8168200 Fax: 343281) operates a 15-25-seater Laser 2000 motor yacht with live-aboard facilities. Deep-sea and river fishing charters, sightseeing tours and extended river cruises.

TAXIS: Airport to town is RM 28 - buy a coupon at the taxi stand. Town to airport is RM26. Taxis do not use meters but most trips within town are between RM6 and RM12. Taxis can always be found outside the big hotels and at the taxi stands opposite the Express Wharf and on Jalan Lintang. Alternatively, call the taxi station, Tel: 320773, 335787 or 313384. Official 1-way long distance fares are: Mukah (RM200), Bawang Assan (RM50), Sarikei (RM100), Kanowit (RM50) and Bintangor (RM90).

CAR HIRE: Be wary of unlicensed operators, as they will not be fully insured - look for the Hire & Drive Permit fixed to the windscreen. At peak periods it is advisable to book a car in advance. Contact the Visitors' Information Centre, Sibu, for details.

TOUR OPERATORS: Licensed tour operators offer a wide choice of tours . Their prices are very competitive, especially if you are in a group, are often better value than organising the trip yourself, and you also have the benefit of a knowledgeable local guide. Beware of unlicensed operators or individuals offering tours, as they and their vehicles will not be properly insured. The main inbound operators are:

Metropolitan Travel Services, 72-74 Jln Market, Tel: 313155 Fax: 345486 Email: mtssbw8@streamyx.com.

Sazhong Trading & Travel Service, 4 Jln Central, Tel: 336017/334422 Fax: 338031 Email: sazhong@tm.net.my.

Sentiasa Travel Services, 2A, Jln Persiaran Brooke, Tel: 317666 Fax: 330055 Email: setravel@tm.net.my

TOURIST INFORMATION



The Sarawak Tourism Board (STB) offers a range of services to provide visitors and the travel industry with up-to-date travel information about Sarawak. STB's visitors' information centres in Kuching, Sibü and Miri stock a wide range of guidebooks, maps, brochures and leaflets. The helpful staff can also assist with detailed travel enquires and national park accommodation bookings.

Sibü Visitors' Information Centre

32 Jln Tukang Besi, 96000 Sibü.

Tel: 084-340980 Fax: 084-341280 Email: vic-sibü@sarawaktourism.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 0800 hrs - 1700 hrs. Closed Sat, Sun and Public Holidays.

Please Note: The Sibü Visitors' Information Centre will be relocating sometime in early 2007. Please contact us for the new address.

Kuching Visitors' Information Centre

Sarawak Tourism Complex, Jln Tun Abang Haji Adruce, 93000 Kuching.

Tel: 082-410944/410942 Fax: 082-256301 Email: vic-kuching@sarawaktourism.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 0800 hrs - 1800 hrs, Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays 0900 hrs - 1500 hrs.

The Kuching centre also houses the **Kuching National Park and Wildlife Booking Office** (Tel: 082-248088, Fax: 082-248087) where you can obtain visitor permits and book accommodation for national parks near Kuching, namely Bako, Gunung Gading, Kubah and Matang Wildlife Centre.

Miri Visitors' Information Centre

Lot 31, Jln Melayu, 98000 Miri.

Tel: 085-434181, Fax: 085-434179 Email: vic-miri@sarawaktourism.com

Opening hours: Monday-Friday 0800 hrs - 1800 hrs, Saturday, Sunday & Public Holidays 0900 hrs - 1500 hrs.

The Miri centre also houses the **Miri National Park and Wildlife Booking Office** where you can obtain visitor permits and book accommodation for national parks near Miri, namely Niah Caves, Gunung Mulu, Simalajau and Lambir Hills.

STB's Kuching Head Office provides comprehensive media and travel industry liaison services, up-to-date information on tourism policy and planning in Sarawak, and replies to written or email enquiries.

Sarawak Tourism Board

P.O. Box 2950, 93758 Kuching, Sarawak, Malaysia.

Tel: 082-423600 Fax: 082-416700

Email: stb@sarawaktourism.com

www.sarawaktourism.com

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