



TROPICAL BIOLOGY ASSOCIATION

# **BORNEO COURSE GUIDE 2019**

## **TBA Contact Details:**

Tropical Biology Association

The David Attenborough Building  
Pembroke Street  
Cambridge, CB2 3QZ,  
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 1223 336619

E-mail: [courses@tropical-biology.org](mailto:courses@tropical-biology.org)

Tropical Biology Association

c/o Nature Kenya  
PO Box 44486  
00100-Nairobi,  
Kenya

Tel. +254 (0) 20 3537568

Email: [courses-africa@tropical-biology.org](mailto:courses-africa@tropical-biology.org)

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# 1. Your Course

Congratulations on getting a place on a TBA field course! Your course co-ordinator is [Dr Kevin Wallace](#). You will also be joined by core tutors from leading international universities and a variety of local experts.

These courses are specifically designed so that we spend as much time in the field as possible, with the following aims:

- To increase your understanding of the conservation and ecological issues specific to tropical regions.
- To provide you with skills essential to conducting field research in the tropics.
- To encourage networking amongst participants, tutors and the wider TBA network.
- To inspire and support you in conducting your own independent research, and an ongoing career in conservation.

In order to maximise our time in the field our timetables are flexible, but typically you should expect to spend most daylight hours out in the field, with lectures and seminars in the evening. The courses are intensive, and we work a seven day week so that we can get the most out of the experiences on offer to us. The more you put into a course the more you will get out of it, so come along with an open mind and plenty of enthusiasm!

## 2. Course Costs & Logistics

### Participants from Southeast Asia

Full or partial scholarships are available to most of the successful SE Asian applicants. Scholarships contribute to the costs of international travel to and from your home country, transport to and from the field site, accommodation, subsistence and course fees. There are only a limited number of these scholarships available and each application will be assessed on an individual basis.

If your application is successful, you will be notified by mid-March, informing you if the scholarship will cover **(1) course fees and flights** – the scholarship covers everything, **(2) all of the course fees** – you are required to book and pay for your flight, **(3) part of the course fees** – you are required to book and pay for your flight and make a contribution to the course fees.

### All Other Participants

You pay a heavily subsidised course fee of £1200, or £900 for participants from member institutions (click [here](#) for a list of current members). Participants from European institutions may apply for a BES scholarship of approximately £300 towards their costs. If you are successful the award will be subtracted from your final balance of the TBA course fees.

You are responsible for booking and payment of your travel to and from the course and travel insurance which **MUST COVER REPATRIATION COSTS TO YOUR HOME COUNTRY** in the (extremely unlikely!) event of a medical emergency. When booking flights please ensure that you land with time to get to the [rendezvous](#), and that your return flight is the day after the course ends or later.

## 3. Arriving for your course

### Passports

To make our lives as easy as possible during the course it is really useful for us to have a copy of your passports. This is not only useful if your passport gets lost (hopefully not!). If you could send me (kw464@cam.ac.uk) a scan or photograph of your passport, we will keep this safe just in case it is necessary. We'll also use your passport numbers to organise an official document that will get us through any checkpoints.

Just a reminder to check the entry requirements from your home country. As a general rule your passport should:

- 1) be valid for a minimum period of 6 months from the date of entry.
- 2) have two blank pages available.

### Flights & Connections

Please note that it is your responsibility to ensure that you arrive in plenty of time for your flights and connections. Please check your flight times carefully, ensuring that you are reading the times correctly (e.g. is it a 24 hour clock?). If you are unsure please contact the [Cambridge office](#) for help. Connections and boarding are often not announced, and can be confusing. Please be waiting at your gate at least an hour before departure even if the flight is showing as delayed or not boarding yet.

If your flight changes or is delayed please let Kevin Wallace know on +44 (0) 797 0405 978 immediately (you can also use WhatsApp or Facebook Messenger). We will reply to let you know that we have received the message.

### Your luggage

On occasions, items of luggage are delayed in transit. It can take several days for the luggage to reach us, so please ensure that you pack any essentials (spare clothes, small toiletries, medicines) that you will need for the first three days of the course in your hand luggage. Please also place a small padlock on all luggage items to reduce the risk of interference. If your luggage does not arrive at the airport please take the following steps:

Report it missing to the luggage office/airline at the airport.

**Get a receipt** from the luggage office/airline **with a reference number** and their **contact phone number**.

If the luggage office/airline estimate that the luggage will arrive **before the course start date**, arrange for it to be sent to the [rendezvous](#).

If the luggage office/airline estimate that the luggage will arrive **after the course start date**, arrange for it to be sent to the [Field Station](#).

## Visas & Immigration

It is essential that ALL PARTICIPANTS check the visa requirements for their country and apply if necessary for a visa with the relevant embassy at least two months before the course. See rendezvous information for further details on visas.

On all visa applications and entry cards please state that you are a “**TOURIST**”, and use the field station address and contact person details from the [rendezvous](#) section of this document. Please note that you will need to make the length of your stay very clear to immigration officials upon arrival. Your visa and immigration stamp must cover the whole period that you will remain in the country.

Please do not mention Business, Study or Research as these will require different types of visa and will bring complications – so please do not mention these words!!!

To mitigate visa complications all courses are 28 days long. You can arrive the day before and depart the day after. Most countries can be issued with at least a 30-day visa.

The [immigration department of Malaysia has quite a good website](#).

SE Asian participants: Most of you will not require a visa as we will be staying for less than 30 days - However, there is an exception for **Myanmar** please check with your Malaysian/Borneo Embassy as you may need to get your visa in advance of arrival.

Rest of the World participants: Most EU and Australasian countries do not require a Visa and you should be allowed permission to stay for up to 3 months.

If in any doubt please check with your Malaysian/Borneo Embassy.

## Travelling to the rendezvous

We endeavour to have a TBA representative meet all the flights, assuming you are not arriving significantly in advance of the course. **Please look for the TBA sign**. If you are not met, do not worry, just take a taxi to the rendezvous point instead.

We will also have a WhatsApp group that helps us follow where you are and assist with any complications that you might encounter en route. The airport has free WiFi so you should be able to get in touch with me if needed.

If you are entering the country by road or train, or arriving significantly in advance of the course then you will need to take a bus or taxi to the rendezvous point. Please only use recognised means of public transport, and do not accept assistance from private individuals.

**A really useful app for cheap and reliable taxis is - [GRAB](#)** - the Malaysian version of Uber. I've used it quite a bit and it works well once you are in Malaysia... really useful if you are arriving earlier or staying a bit longer.

**We travel to the field site the next morning after the rendezvous. Please note that if you miss the rendezvous you will have to make your own way to the field site, and as there is often no public transport to the field sites this is rather tricky, so we strongly advise that you make sure that you arrive in plenty of time!**

## Money

As a general rule we advise that you carry the money that you will require in cash. If possible bring Euros, US dollars or Pounds sterling and change it to local currency upon arrival). There are no facilities to change travellers' cheques during the course, and it is unwise to rely on debit/credit cards as very few places accept them. Always exchange money at recognised exchange bureaus, not on the black market. If you arrive by airplane, it is easiest to exchange your currency at the airport. It is easy to change currency back in the same way before leaving. Malaysian ringgit is available in most countries at either banks or foreign exchange shops.

You will need money for the following purposes: (1) Any meals bought before the course rendezvous or after the course ends. In addition there will be a couple of free afternoons where you are able to explore the local area, and you will need to buy your own lunch/dinner. (2) We provide plenty of free drinking water at the field station, and during all meals. However, you may need to occasionally purchase water at other times, eg, on excursions and during travel. (3) Any souvenirs that you wish to purchase. (4) Drinks, such as sodas or beers, from the field station bar or during excursions. (5) Laundry. (6) The local field station staff work very hard to look after us during our stay, and participants often wish to leave a small tip to thank them for their efforts. (7) Any minor medical expenses incurred.

## Safety

Whilst travelling, as you would anywhere else, please take care of your possessions. Avoid carrying valuables when in the cities, avoid travel after dark (or use taxis - do not walk), and watch out for pickpockets. The TBA cannot take responsibility for the loss of any possessions during the course, and you should consider taking out insurance on any valuable items.

## Etiquette

We promote equality, celebrate diversity and embrace the culture of the country we will be travelling to. Because of this please come with an open mind free of any gender, race, class or any type of bias or preconception.

The Danum valley studies centre have a very established South East Asian Rainforest Research Partnership ([SEARRP](#)). This website gives a good background to the Danum Valley. In particular I would like you to read their [culture and etiquette section](#), which outlines the expectations of SEARRP for people at the Danum Valley research centre.

## 4. The field centre

We will be staying within the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Sabah, Borneo Malaysia.

The Danum Valley Studies Centre covers an extensive area - it has a dining area, conference hall/lecture theatre, library and laboratory as well as the accommodation, showers and toilets a football pitch and a badminton area. There is a small shop on site where you can purchase snacks and a few toiletry items and T-shirts.

Electricity is provided by generator from 07h00 to 23h00. Drinkable water is provided at the dining and dormitory areas and you are not recommended to drink the tap water.

The centre is surrounded by pristine rainforest which has an excellent trail system allowing easy access into the forest. The biodiversity is incredible, a huge number of dipterocarp species to a variety of gingers and a relatively high chance of seeing mammals - from mouse deer to orangutan and the elusive nocturnal slow loris as well as some amazing birdlife from flower-peckers to hornbills and of course so many species of frogs... and leeches, plenty of terrestrial leeches – fear not, we will provide anti-leech socks 😊

**All the necessary safety information will be given upon your arrival.**

October is just after the peak tourist season for Borneo. The days will be a mix of sunshine in rain – usually in that order, we try to get most of the fieldwork done by mid-afternoon as that's when it usually rains, and chances are we will get caught in a few heavy downpours – come prepared to get wet. Temperatures may reach 30°C and humidity will be 100% most days.

### Accommodation

If you book accommodation at the Rendezvous location, **please mention that you are a TBA participant.** We have a good relation with these hotels and they will give you a priority over other 'normal' reservations.

Accommodation will be in either the male or female bunk bed dormitory. There are showers and toilet facilities close by. These are very large dorms and other visitors may also be staying here so please be respectful.

Bedding is provided, so a sleeping bag is not necessary, but please bring one if you prefer. Laundry facilities are available. And further details will be sent as to how this will work – there will probably be a small charge. Although there are facilities for handwashing.

You will have breakfast, lunch and dinner. All meals during the course are provided and eaten communally. Given enough warning, we can cope with most dietary requirements.

Free filtered/treated drinking water is available throughout the day. It is also possible to buy sodas (MYR 5) and beer (MYR 10) at the field station bar.

### Power Supply

The Danum Field Centre has electricity from 07h00 to 23h00

240V, 50Hz power supply with 3 pin type G plugs (UK style).



This photo is not to scale!

## Communications

Mobile phone and internet communications can be very variable and unreliable and although there is WiFi at the field station it is very difficult to connect and can be very slow so prepare for an internet free course. To avoid worrying friends and relatives back home we suggest that you do not promise to contact anyone whilst you are away.

It can be expensive to using international roaming in Borneo. If you want to purchase a local SIM card when you arrive, we will recommend either **Maxis** or **Celcom** for the best reception at the study site. **You should buy the SIM card at Kota Kinabalu**, the city we rendezvous in. Topping up your phone with credit is easy enough from the field station, but you will not be able to buy a SIM card there.

## 5. Transport

You should be aware that road and vehicle conditions may not be of a standard that you are used to. Seat belts are often absent or do not work, breakdowns are common, and journeys can take a long time. Try to see it all as part of the experience and a good opportunity to bond with your course mates!

## 6. Health information

### Malaria

The risk of getting malaria is high throughout Southeast Asia. Even if you live in an area where malaria is endemic and believe that you are resistant, the malaria at the field site is likely to be of a different strain. Malaria is a serious disease and must be avoided. There is chloroquine-resistant malaria in many regions. Seek medical advice prior to travel regarding prophylaxis.

Mosquito nets are NOT provided, however there are really not many mosquitos in this area or season and the dormitory rooms are relatively mosquito-proof. In the evenings wear long sleeves, long trousers, socks and insect repellent to reduce the risk of being bitten.

The '[Green Book](#)' from the UK, National Health Service has the latest information on vaccines and vaccination procedures, for vaccine preventable infectious diseases in the UK. It has some useful information.

[Fit for Travel](#): Health information for people travelling abroad from the UK but there should be info here that is useful to you all.

[NaTHNaC](#): Has the broad aim of Protecting the Health of British Travellers. They seek to improve the quality of travel health advice given by GP practices, travel clinics, pharmacies and other healthcare providers, and provide up-to-date and reliable information for the traveller, travel industry and national government.

## **Food and water hygiene**

Stick to bottled water or the filtered/treated water provided to you on the course.

Danum valley will cater 3 meals per day. These will consist of breakfast – cereals, toast, noodles, bread, chicken nuggets and/or sausage. Lunch and dinner - rice, chicken, fish, prawn, or beef and veggies. Vegetarian and vegan diets are easily arranged and other dietary preferences/restrictions will be catered for to the best of their ability.

## **7. What you will be doing**

The courses take place almost entirely at the Field Station and the immediate area – mostly within walking distance. The only time we will be away from the Field Station is for the short mid-course excursion.

### **Workshops**

These sessions are based on you learning some of the fauna and flora in the local area.

### **Field exercises**

These are structured sessions that challenge you to answer a question by collecting data, analysing it and presenting this back to your group. Each exercise will be led by the core teaching staff.

### **Excursion**

A mid-course break offers a chance to relax and a change of scenery. Depending on the location, there is normally an outing based around a local conservation organisation. There is also normally some time to shop for souvenirs and replenish your store of snacks and drinks.

### **Projects**

The latter part of the course is devoted to project work. In groups, you will devise a research question, collect data and analyse it. This will be written up in the form of a scientific paper. You will also present this as a PowerPoint on the morning of the final course day.

### **Lectures**

Each core teacher will give at least two lectures (or maybe a discussion topic) based around their research and tropical conservation.

### **Guest speakers**

We will be joined throughout the course by academics and professionals from national institutions. They will give lectures on their research and might also run a workshop or exercise.

### **Conservation in my Country**

We would like **you** to prepare a 10 minute, informal oral presentation. This can take any form you chose, you can use PowerPoint, bring handouts or other resources if you like. We will also have a flip chart available if needed.

During your 10 minute session we would like you to highlight some of the conservation issues in your home country AND give an example of a conservation SUCCESS story. Feel free to approach this in a creative way – you only have 10 minutes so you cannot cover everything! You could highlight a BIG conservation issue that you are interested in or maybe a smaller local project or something related to your research.

This will be followed by 10 minutes of friendly questions and discussion from your fellow course participants and staff.

It's a great way to start learning about the differences and quite often similarities of conservation across the globe. These sessions will be dotted throughout the course where **YOU** will be telling us about conservation in **YOUR** country. Thanks and looking forward to learning a lot from you guys!

## Laptops

To bring or not to bring...? ...that is the question

This is completely up to you. Training as a field biologist - it will become an indispensable piece of kit for you especially if you want to stay on-top of that data entry! Most of our field exercises during the course will require data entry, statistical analysis, writing-up and PowerPoint presentation. I don't know any researcher that goes out into the field without a laptop? So - I would encourage it.... Your laptop, you can use it when you want and you are used to it. Neither TBA nor the research centre will have any desktop or laptops available for you to use.

Having said that, bringing your own laptop it is completely **at your own risk** and it will be your responsibility to look after it. If you are unable to bring one, don't panic, you will be working in groups most of the time, and we will ensure that each group has access to a laptop.

## R & RStudio

One of the best and most widely used freely accessible stats software right now is '[CRAN R](#)' (link below) and personally I use [RStudio](#) to make it a bit more user friendly. During the course we will be considering methodologies, collecting data and then ...yes ...analysing it to create some awesome results.

WiFi access is available but can be intermittent and slow. Ideally you will need to pre-load any software you wish to use. If you are bringing your own laptop – I would advise you download and install R and RStudio. I shall share a list closer to the time detailing software packages to pre-install that have been suggested to me from the teaching staff.

## Packed-lunches

Bring a plastic/Tupperware box for take-away lunch – feel free to put your name on it as well as any specific dietary requirements. Maybe we won't need it but if we have an all-day activity the field station will pack a lunch for you. They normally pack it in styrofoam throw-away (unrecyclable) boxes.

## Footwear

Many Danum researchers don't wear hiking boots but rather basic sneakers, or, in fact mud running shoes (like Solomon Speedcross). It may sound odd, but many researchers feel that these are the best in the Malaysian forests. It gets very slippery in and after rain (There is potential in Danum for a fair bit of rain...), so a good 'profile' or 'grip' on the sole is crucial. Heavy boots get heavier when wet and won't dry well. **My advice is to buy a couple of a pair of [Adidas Kampung](#) shoes when you arrive in Kota Kinabalu** – they are only a few dollars and the most popular choice for Malaysian researchers, one pair might last the whole month if you are lucky 😊.

## 8. Course Checklist

**Please print off this checklist and use it to make sure that keep on track with preparation for your course!**

### By 1<sup>st</sup> March :

Click [here](#) to submit your course application

### By 15<sup>th</sup> March :

You will have heard from us about whether you have received a place on a TBA course.

### By 31<sup>st</sup> March :

- Ensure you have approval from your employer/institutions to attend your TBA course.
- Click [here](#) to accept or decline your place on the TBA course, and provide us with some medical and contact information.
- Click [here](#) to email the course co-ordinator attaching a scan of all relevant pages of your passport (photo page, passport information page - i.e., passport number, validity dates, place of issue). Please also attach a recent photo (head shot) of you that will enable us to recognise you when meeting you at the airport.



## All Other Participants

- Pay your final fee balance to TBA, via cheque to the TBA Cambridge office payable to “Tropical Biology Association”, or via bank transfer as per the deposit above.
- Click [here](#) to tell us your flight and insurance details.
- Make sure you know what your travel insurance covers/does not cover.
- Check your flight times carefully (is it a 24 clock?). [Contact us](#) if you are unsure.
- Accommodation is booked by the TBA for you from the rendezvous night to the last night of the course inclusive. If you will be arriving earlier or leaving later, you should book your own accommodation, and we strongly suggest that you use the rendezvous hotel for this.

## What to bring with you

### Travel documents

- Passport
- Visa (if applicable)
- Yellow fever certificate (if applicable)
- Currency/money

### Clothes

Please consider the following points when packing:

Long sleeves and trousers are essential for fieldwork. This is because there are, potentially, lots of leeches. I recommend light / airy clothes (as temperatures will fluctuate around 28°C and it can reach 90-100% humidity) that can be tucked in (anti-leech precaution). **Leech socks will be provided in Danum.**

There is a good chance of rain on most days, so clothing that can be easily dried is good.

Camouflage wear is NOT considered acceptable; however, brightly coloured & white clothing will make you highly conspicuous to wildlife and so should be avoided. We are likely to receive some rainfall at the field site and it can become very muddy.

Light-weight, easily dryable walking boots – such as Adidas Kampang.

Waterproof coats, trousers and a warm sweater as it can get cold after a rain shower and in the mornings.

Local cultural sensitivities – Please read the [Culture & Etiquette section](#) of the SEARRP website. Especially as a "smart casual" look will be required if there is contact with Malaysian teachers/officials.

### Other items - essential

- Malaria prophylactics
- Personal medications
- A basic first aid kit (e.g., antihistamines, plasters, antibacterial cream, painkillers, antidiarrheal medications)
- Toiletries: Toothbrush (always use bottled/potable water for brushing teeth), soap, shampoo, deodorant, towel, etc.
- Small hiking backpack for use in the field and overnight stays during excursions. **This should be either waterproof or have a waterproof cover.**
- Waterproof clothing – jacket and trousers
- Note books, pen and pencil – water-proof is better
- Sun hat, sunglasses and sun cream
- Binoculars – it really is a good investment if you do not have any 😊
- Torch or head torch plus spare bulbs and spare batteries/battery charger
- Insect repellent
- Hand washing soap/detergent – biodegradable if possible

### Other items - recommended

- 2 x paper photocopies of your passport – You are required to give one if you purchase a local sim card and useful if you lose your passport!
- Laptop with appropriate plug-adaptor if required – useful for data entry and the write-up phase. Although we do have TBA laptops on site for your use. Highly recommend bringing your own laptop (with all the recommended R packages downloaded) as this makes project work much more efficient
- Camera, memory card(s) and charger with appropriate plug-adaptor if required
- Penknife
- Swimwear – there will be a chance to swim in the Segama river at the site
- Instead of bringing walking boots there is an option to buy [Adidas Kampung](#) shoes upon arrival in KK or at the Danum field site shop

- A few pairs of light weight/loose fitting trousers and shorts that you can wear during the evenings to keep cool and comfortable
- A GPS app on your phone is useful

Bring a travel journal/notebook within which you can keep a daily record of your experiences/thoughts/things you've learnt/species you've seen and people you've met; you'll want to remember as much as you can about this inspiring experience

Bring travel wash/wash powder as you may need to hand wash clothes at times for convenience, however there are two washing machines on site for your use.

There is a shop at Danum Valley where you can buy T-shirts, sweets and treats.

**NB: All equipment and items that you bring are at your own risk. Security is good at the locations we stay and visit but please be aware and vigilant.**

## 9. Places and contact details

Rendezvous: 18h00 on 1<sup>st</sup> October – we suggest you arrive by midday at the latest

Hostel: Halo Hotel, Lot 70, Lorong Berjaya 1, Bandaran Berjaya, 88000 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

Lee Li Chee (Owner): Phone: +60 88 263 718

WhatsApp: +60 122 350 288

Facebook: [Halo Hostel](#)

Email: [halohostel@yahoo.com.my](mailto:halohostel@yahoo.com.my)

Field station: [Danum Valley Field Centre](#)

Danum Valley Conservation Area,  
PO Box 60282, 91112 Lahad Datu, Sabah, Malaysia

General Inquiries: Adrian Karolus

Email: [adrian@searrp.org](mailto:adrian@searrp.org)

Danum office number: +60 88-274 251

Adrian's mobile: +60 148 655 922

Flights home: 29<sup>th</sup> October or later

Course website: [TBA Borneo field course](#)