



# **PRESS RELEASE**

## **RE-DISCOVERING SABAH**

### **March 2023**

**Date: March 7, 2023**

#### **SABAH TOURISM BOARD REBRANDS TO 'FEEL SABAH, NORTH BORNEO'**

BERLIN: There could not be a better travel marketplace platform than the ITB Berlin 2023 (Internationale Tourismus-Borse Berlin) for Sabah Tourism Board (STB) to launch Sabah's new destination rebranding - 'Feel Sabah, North Borneo'.

STB is under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Environment.

'Feel Sabah' promotion was developed by STB while the idea of incorporating 'North Borneo' was mooted by Minister Datuk Christina Liew who led a 10-member delegation to this global event.

Launching this rebranding exercise at the world's largest tourism trade fair at the Messe Berlin in Germany on Tuesday, Minister Datuk Christina Liew said it was most apt to adopt this promotional theme for sentimental and historical reasons.

She stressed that we want the international community to know that Sabah is located in the northern part of Borneo Island in the hope of fascinating and wooing more European tourists, among others.

"The name 'North Borneo' (now Sabah) sounds exotic and evokes nostalgic feelings of yearning for this destination. It is also of historical significance as the state was then known as 'North Borneo' prior to gaining our Independence in 1963.

"People in many parts of the world (reportedly) haven't heard about Sabah, despite decades of promoting this Land Below The Wind to the outside world, let alone know about our diverse natural attractions and iconic wildlife.

"However, we are aware that at the mention of Borneo or North Borneo, it rings a bell. Europeans in particular associate Sabah with Borneo. Hence, we are determined to rebrand this tourist destination with 'Feel Sabah, North Borneo' to create a new identity in the travel marketplace," Liew said after the launch.

Sabah is home to spectacular natural wonders such as Mount Kinabalu, Maliau Basin and Tip of Borneo, she added.

The delegation comprised Assistant Minister cum STB Chairman Datuk Joniston Bangkuai, the Ministry's Permanent Secretary Datuk Mohd Yusrie Abdullah, STB Chief Executive Officer Noredah Othman as well as ministry and STB officials.

With the recent resumption of international direct flights, cruise tourism and optimism about mounting regular or chartered flights from new destinations, Liew said Sabah targets 2.2 million arrivals for 2023 and will work towards attaining 2.5 million arrivals. "If we succeed in hitting the 2.5 million mark, this would indicate an increase by 45.35pc compared with 1.72 million arrivals in 2022."

According to her, Sabah's top feeder markets in the past (based on 2019 data) had represented a good mix from Taiwan, China, Brunei, Singapore and South Korea. "For Europe specifically, our top inbound tourism markets are from Germany, France, Netherlands and Italy."

The Minister added that plans are afoot to explore prospects of luring tourists from new tourism markets in America, Australia, Japan and India via tourism roadshows by STB.

Borneo Eco Tours, Borneo Nature Tours, Borneo Trails, Rustic Borneo, Sepilok Tropical Wildlife Adventure and Tabin Wildlife Reserve from Sabah are participating in ITB Berlin 2023, rated as the world's leading travel trade show.

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## **LET'S RE-DISCOVER SABAH**

Sitting atop the world's third-largest island of Borneo, Sabah is a destination of timeless beauty where experiences await to take travellers on an authentic, memorable journey through its vibrant culture and natural wonders. Its unique blend of modern and rustic charms ensures there is always something to suit everyone's needs, for first-time visitors or returning guests.

Whether it's a simple promenade along the beach, a stroll through the countryside, a cruise down the river, a mountain exploration, or a plunge into the crystal-clear ocean water, Sabah is an absolute gem in the heart of Southeast Asia, waiting to be discovered and revisited. Given its diverse landscape, which includes tropical rainforests, beaches, and mountainous regions, the second largest Malaysian state has become a popular getaway in recent years.

### **SABAH'S BLUES**

With more than 300 islands, Sabah has the highest concentration of small islands in Malaysia overlooking the South China Sea, Sulu Sea, and the Celebes Sea. Positioned away from the hustle and bustle of the city, visitors can enjoy a moment of seclusion on the tropical islands and indulge in a myriad of activities while on vacation.

From the Pulau Tiga's volcanic mud bath to Pulau Dinawan's beach glamping, to Pulau Mantanani's crystal-clear waters, to Kudat's surfing experience, and Pulau Bohey Dulang's panoramic view of the Celebes Sea, there is always an idyllic island and beach to explore along the west and east coasts. Wherever you go in Sabah, you will also be treated to a spectacular sunset view that is sure to create a positive impression.

## **SABAH'S CULTURE**

There's no better way to immerse yourself in a new culture than by attending one of Sabah's many annual festivals. The state is known for its diverse population, with the Kadazan Dusun being the largest indigenous group, followed by the Bajaus and the Muruts.

Kaamatan, or Harvest Festival, is the most important event in the Kadazan Dusun community's calendar. It is held throughout the month of May to express gratitude for a good harvest. The celebration usually features traditional rituals to appease the paddy spirit, offering outsiders a glimpse into the ancient religion.

The Tamu Besar, which takes place in October or November in the Kota Belud district, allows visitors to see Bajau horsemen dressed in vibrant traditional clothing in action. Visit the interior for the annual Kalimantan Festival in March to learn about Murut's craftsmanship or participate in the Semporna's unique water festival 'Regetta Lepa' in April to experience the Bajau Laut or Sea Gypsies' traditions.

## **SABAH'S NATURE & ADVENTURE**

A significant aspect of Sabah's tourism is in the countryside, where extreme and laidback activities await visitors. Nature enthusiasts can enjoy forest bathing and lung-cleansing trips in the rural areas surrounded by lush greenery and serene river. Enjoy the sweat as you explore off the beaten trails that lead to hidden gorges and spectacular waterfalls, such as the Taralamas River Canyon in Ranau, the Merabung River in Lahad Datu, and the Sinipung Hill in far-flung Long Pasia, to name a few. For outdoor leisure activities, camping in Kiulu, Kadamaian, and highland Ranau will guarantee visitors a spectacular view of the iconic Mount Kinabalu – the tallest peak in Malaysia and Borneo.

## **SABAH'S WILDLIFE**

For the most part, this Land Below the Wind is a sanctuary for endangered and protected wildlife endemic to Borneo. It is home to one of the oldest rainforests in the world, dating back to 130 million years and 688 bird species.

To observe wildlife in its natural habitat, take a trip to Sandakan and embark on a river cruise along the Kinabatangan River for an unforgettable once-in-a-lifetime wildlife viewing experience. You may see Borneo pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, orangutans, sun bears, hornbills, crocodiles, and even Irrawaddy dolphins.

Sabah's commitment to conservation is one of its most valuable assets, making it an excellent example of educational tourism. Most of the established and world-renowned conservation centres, such as the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre, the world's only Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre, Tabin Wildlife Reserve, Danum Valley Conservation Centre, Imbak Canyon and Maliau Basin, are located in the Heart of Borneo.

## **SABAH'S SEAS**

There is just as much to see underwater in Sabah as there is on the surface, which is a unique experience in itself. From the west to east coasts, Sabah waters have been the sites of numerous encounters with majestic marine creatures of various sizes. Its abundant marine biodiversity has enticed divers from all over the world to visit and experience Sabah's underwater splendours.

Divers have been treated to sightings of killer whales or Orca, hammerhead sharks, and thresher sharks in waters off Sipadan and Layang-Layang islands. Additionally, the Sabah

Ocean is home to endangered dugongs, which have been spotted off Pulau Tiga and Mantanani Island. Whale sharks are also known to appear close to Kota Kinabalu city in the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park islands.

Looking for the best muck diving spot in Sabah? Semporna is unquestionably the place to be, as it serves as the entryway to Mabul and Bum-Bum islands, which are teeming with exotic little marine critters and minuscule species that have never been seen before.

## **MORE TO SABAH**

Sabah Tourism Board began amplifying its [Community Based Tourism](#) to add more cultural immersion into its travel options and indirectly, this has allowed the local community to be more involved in this thriving industry and to continue to preserve and share their culture with others.

In terms of growth for MICE and Business Events, the [Sabah International Convention Centre](#) opened in February 2020 and is able to cater to 5,000 delegates per event. This adds to the already matured hotel facilities that continue to also host related events.

Welcome to Sabah, and this year, return to feel and re-discover our destination. Allow Sabah to treat you to a fun-filled and memorable travel experience.



## RESOURCES:

**General Website** : [sabahtourism.com](http://sabahtourism.com)  
**Corporate Website** : [tourism.sabah.gov.my](http://tourism.sabah.gov.my)  
**Statistics** : [sabahtourism.com/statistics](http://sabahtourism.com/statistics)  
**Travel Standard** : [sabahtourism.com/alert/](http://sabahtourism.com/alert/)  
**Operating Procedures**  
**Social Media** : <https://linktr.ee/sabahtourism>

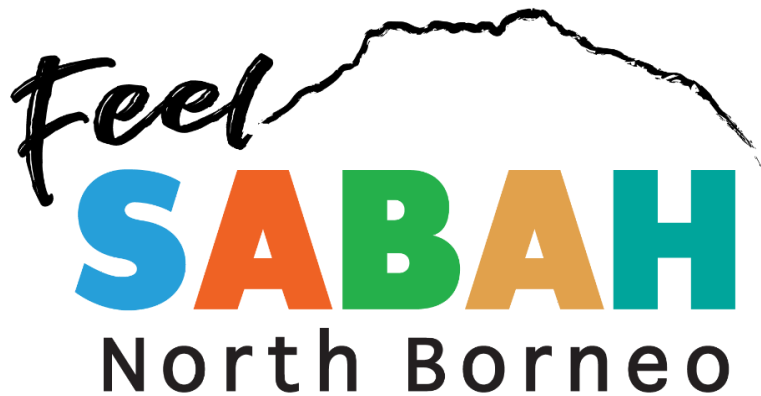
## Other Links

[Brochures](#)

[Calendar of Sabah Events](#)

## FEEL SABAH LOGOS

Destination Theme and Logo: Feel Sabah, North Borneo.



SABAH

C - 074 M - 026 Y - 004 K - 000

This colour represents the clear blue skies, fresh air and islands.

C - 005 M - 076 Y - 095 K - 000

This colour represents the Sabah's warm and friendly people.

C - 078 M - 005 Y - 098 K - 000

This colour represents the nature.

C - 014 M - 039 Y - 080 K - 001

This colour represents the wildlife.

C - 078 M - 015 Y - 046 K - 001

This colour represents the Sabah's underwater biodiversity.