



A guide to the:

Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary



Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary

Focus: Orangutans

Location: Indonesian Borneo

Start Date: Set Start Dates - Please Enquire

Arrival & Starting Point: Palangkaraya

Founded in 1999, the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary has offered a lifeline to hundreds of orangutans found displaced or orphaned around Central Kalimantan. Over the years, the sanctuary, founded by the Borneo Orangutan Survival Foundation (BOSF), has gone from strength to strength: from its humble beginnings of caring for just a dozen orangutans to one of the largest primate rescue projects in the world. The Great Projects are honoured to be a part of its story, welcoming the first volunteer group through the sanctuary doors in 2018.

Today, Nyaru Menteng is home to over 280 orangutans and exists with the primary aim of rehabilitating those who have fallen victim to tragedies such as deforestation and the illegal pet trade. The sanctuary began releasing orangutans back in 2012, and so far, has helped over 500 orangutans find freedom once more – but with the increased urgency to offer help to Bornean wildlife, the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary is reaching out to others for assistance.



Mass deforestation has seen much of Borneo's rainforests destroyed in favour of agricultural development. This eradication of land leaves orangutans vulnerable, with a lack of food and shelter forcing them to stray into unsafe areas such as palm oil plantations, where they are often killed or captured by humans. While these risks affect all orangutans, the youngest apes suffer the most, as without a mother, they are stripped of the vital skills they would learn in their early years. Without these foundations, orangutans are deprived of a future in the wild. It is up to the sanctuary team, with the support of volunteers, to provide young orangutans with the best possible care to help them progress through each stage of rehabilitation.

The Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary covers several areas of protected land and is home to orangutans at various phases of rehabilitation. The project is surrounded by verdant rainforests and provides the animals and the volunteers with a sense of authentic jungle life. When you're not taking part in vital orangutan conservation efforts, you'll have the opportunity to see Borneo's biodiverse surrounds on the hilltop trek or river cruises. Elsewhere, you'll have the chance to get a taste of the local culture by heading to a traditional night market.

The sanctuary has already established itself as a powerhouse of conservation, and you can become a part of its story by joining this volunteer experience!

Enrichment



Enrichment is at the heart of this project, and as a volunteer, you'll play a key role in crafting and distributing various enrichment items for over 280 orangutans that live in the sanctuary! Enrichment promotes the development of natural behaviours, like foraging and nest-building, which are crucial for their survival in the wild. Besides supporting their future independence, the enrichment items made by volunteers also enhance the orangutans' mental health and well-being. Many of them have experienced a great deal of trauma before arriving at the sanctuary, so mental stimulation is essential to keep them happy and engaged. You might be making puzzle toys, like leaf packages filled with treats, gathering materials for nest-building, preparing fruit-flavoured ice lollies or making hammocks for them to relax in!

Observe Orangutans at Baby Playground

If you're a fan of the popular TV series *Orangutan Jungle School*, you're in for a special experience when you spend a few peaceful moments one afternoon watching the baby orangutans return from a busy day at school. From a safe distance, you'll observe them winding down after a day filled with learning and play on their playground - perhaps the very same playground you've helped work on earlier in the week. This heartwarming experience offers a glimpse into their early rehabilitation and the remarkable bonds they share with their surrogate mothers.



Orangutan Observation

Perhaps the most rewarding part of your volunteer experience will be boating around the orangutan islands, where you'll witness these incredible apes in their final stages of rehabilitation. Most of the 70 orangutans living on the islands began their journey at forest school and, having progressed through various stages, are now closer to their release day if they continue to thrive. With knowledgeable technicians as your guides, you will embark on two river cruises: the first offers the chance to observe the orangutans and learn about the highly successful rehabilitation process of BOSF, while the second allows for a closer encounter as you observe the orangutans deeper in the jungle. The technicians can identify every orangutan, so you'll have a unique opportunity to learn more about your favourite characters and whether their release is on the horizon. Don't forget your camera - the photo opportunities are endless!



Construction & Maintenance

While on the project, you may play a role in construction and repair projects, working to improve the facilities for the orangutans. This work could include creating platforms and play equipment for the orangutan playground. With plans underway to develop a new island for orangutans that cannot be released, upcoming construction projects will involve building feeding areas and observation points. Whatever you help to build or fix, your contribution keeps the orangutans happy, healthy and safe!



Reforestation & Tree Care

As a volunteer, you may be involved in reforestation efforts to address the main threat facing orangutans today – their depleting natural habitat. From reforesting areas of land which have been degraded over time or taking part in big reforestation projects such as planting trees on new orangutan islands, you could be instrumental in restoring habitat that will benefit generations of orangutans for years to come, whether wild or rescued. Alongside planting trees, you will help care for previously planted saplings, nurturing them by watering, weeding and mulching them, all with the aim that these trees will grow strong and one day host a nest built by an orangutan.



Veterinary Clinic Tour

A visit to the veterinary clinic at the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary offers an exceptional opportunity for volunteers to learn from one of the leading experts in the field, Dr Arga, well-known for his appearances on *Orangutan Jungle School*. During this tour, Dr Arga will share in-depth knowledge about BOSF operations, the diseases commonly affecting orangutans, and the critical threats to their survival. You'll also learn about the ongoing care and rehabilitation efforts of these remarkable primates. For those with a favourite orangutan, this experience includes a rare opportunity to delve into their medical records alongside the very expert who oversees their care!



Hilltop Trek

Bukit Tangkiling is the perfect vantage point for those wishing to observe the local landscape from above. On your ascent, you'll encounter old Dayak buildings and shrines, learning about their history as your guide shares their knowledge. While the tribes no longer live in the area, today's locals still have their own unique traditions, especially when it comes to religion and burials – take the time to learn about them as you embark on this 30-minute trek.



Night Market

One evening, you'll venture into a traditional night market, the perfect place to fully immerse yourself in local authentic, everyday life. With few tourists in sight, you'll have the rare chance to interact with locals, explore lively stalls brimming with goods, and taste unique regional delicacies such as the notorious durian fruit. This market, where residents gather to shop for their daily essentials and groceries, offers an intimate and genuine window into the culture and lifestyle of Indonesian Borneo.

Coconut Cafe

A visit to Kedai Itah and its sustainable permaculture farm awaits. Affectionately known as the coconut café by volunteers, you'll head over to pick up coconut husks to create enrichment items for the orangutans. While here, you'll tour the onsite farm and indulge in unique delights at the café, like stingless bee honey, coconut brownies, and butterfly pea flower tea. Take the opportunity to unwind with these eco-friendly treats while enjoying the café's lively music scene. As a social enterprise that supports local farmers, schools, and the community, this is the perfect place to spend a wholesome afternoon.



Itinerary

Orangutans are very susceptible to human illness and disease, so to ensure their safety, all volunteers must undergo a 5-day quarantine period. During this time, you will have access to limited areas of the centre, with restrictions being lifted after the quarantine period is over. Fear not, your first five days on the project will be spent completing an array of exciting activities, which you can learn about in the itinerary below! Please note, that the following itinerary is just a guide and may be subject to change during your stay. All activities are dependent on weather conditions and the requirements of the project at the time.

Day 1

You will fly into Palangkaraya Airport, where you will be met by a project representative and transferred to the sanctuary (approximately a 40-minute drive). You'll have some time to settle in before the volunteer coordinator gives you a full orientation of the project and what to expect for the weeks ahead.

Day 2

Start your day with a hearty breakfast before embarking on an unforgettable river cruise around the orangutan islands. Here, you'll witness orangutans in the final stages of rehabilitation, preparing for their return to the wild. After lunch, dive into your first hands-on enrichment activity, creating something special for the great apes!

Day 3

This morning, you'll engage in an enrichment activity, which could involve creating ice lollies or drilling holes in coconut husks and filling them with a pumpkin mixture. After lunch, you'll gather materials for the orangutans to use in nest building or assist with small construction projects on the islands, contributing to a more stimulating and enriching habitat for the orangutans.

Day 4

In the morning, you'll focus on preparing food or creating enrichment activities for the orangutans. After lunch, you'll head to Bukit Tangkiling, where you'll enjoy a hilltop trek, taking in scenic views while learning about the area's local history and culture.

Day 5

Today, you'll head into Palangkaraya to shop for supplies for both the volunteers and the orangutans. Afterwards, you'll enjoy a social lunch in town and a visit to a traditional craft market. It's a great opportunity to pick up anything you need and perhaps contribute items from the orangutans' wish list. Once done, you'll return to the volunteer house to relax before gathering for dinner with your group.

Day 6

With the quarantine now over, you'll have full access to the remaining orangutan facilities. Today is all about enrichment - you'll spend the day creating a variety of enrichment items and later help distribute them to the orangutans, watching how they interact with your creations. In the afternoon, you'll gather nesting materials and observe the orangutans as they build their nests for the night!

Itinerary

Day 7

This morning, you'll meet some of the unreleasable orangutans, sadly affected by injury or illness, and focus on creating enrichment items like bamboo, coconut, and ice block treats for those in need. In the afternoon, you'll either continue a construction project or gather more nesting materials for the orangutans. This evening, you'll visit the local night market, where you'll get a real taste of Indonesian culture... and food!

Day 8

This morning is a chance to enjoy a well-deserved rest, before taking a leisurely trip to the Coconut Café to collect coconut husks for future orangutan enrichment. While there, you'll also tour the on-site permaculture and sustainable farm. It's the perfect opportunity to unwind with sustainable snacks, drinks, and live music!

Day 9

This morning, you'll either focus on creating more enrichment activities for the orangutans or dive into a construction and maintenance task - such as building a feeding platform on the newly constructed orangutan islands or repairing the baby orangutans' playground. After a relaxing lunch break, you'll assist in crafting fun enrichment items or gather nesting materials.

Day 10

This morning, you'll engage in essential reforestation efforts, helping to restore areas in need by planting new saplings. You'll also care for previously planted trees by watering, mulching, and weeding them. After lunch, you might assist in gathering nesting materials or crafting hammocks for the orangutans to rest in or swing from!

Day 11

This morning, you'll provide the orangutans with water enrichment. Later, tour the vet clinic with the esteemed Dr Arga, offering a unique chance to learn more about your favourite orangutans. In the afternoon, you'll either continue with enrichment or finish your construction project, followed by an unforgettable experience - watching the young orangutans return from jungle school to play in the baby playground!

Day 12

Today, you'll embark on a boat tour around the orangutan islands, offering a magical chance to get up close and observe the orangutans at the feeding platforms. It's the perfect way to reflect on your experience and see the results of your hard work. In the afternoon, you'll have one final opportunity to work alongside the orangutans before wrapping up the day with a celebratory farewell dinner.

Day 13

Unfortunately, your final day at the project has arrived. Enjoy a leisurely morning before packing your belongings and saying goodbye to the project staff, new friends, and, of course, the orangutans! You'll then head to the airport for your flight home or to begin the next leg of your journey.

Accommodation

Volunteers will be staying in an authentic longhouse situated in the jungle surroundings of the sanctuary grounds. Rooms are based on a twin-share same sex basis with one double room available for couples (please note, this is on a first-come, first-serve basis) and each room comes complete with bed linen, a fan, and mosquito nets. All rooms have their own en-suite bathroom, fitted with a western toilet, sink and mirror. In the longhouse, there is a kitchen and communal area free for all volunteers to use, with Wi-Fi also available, but please bear in mind the signal may be intermittent! There is a free, regular cleaning service if you wish for your room to be tended to and there are also laundry services available, though these come at a small fee.



Food & Drink

Three meals per day, along with drinking water will be provided during your time on the project. Lunch and dinner will be prepared for you every day and will consist of traditional Indonesian food, such as rice, noodles, and fried vegetables. Breakfast, however, is prepared by volunteers, but the food, such as cereal, yoghurt, bread for toast and eggs is supplied. Vegetarians and vegans can be catered for but please let us know of any dietary requirements in advance so the appropriate food can be purchased. Snacks are not currently available at the sanctuary but can be purchased from the local shop which is approximately a 15-minute walk from your accommodation.

Beer is permitted and can be purchased at the sanctuary, though it may only be consumed at the volunteer accommodation.



What's Included

- Three meals per day
- Accommodation
- Airport transfers
- River cruise
- Hilltop trek
- Visit to the night market
- English-speaking project coordinator
- A donation to the project

Not Included

- Flights
- Vaccinations
- Visas
- Travel insurance
- Snacks
- Alcohol and soft drinks

Volunteer Reviews

Philip

"What impressed me most is the ambitious scale of the work, with so many orangutans to attend to in the nursery, forest school and pre-release islands."



Natasha

"The entire trip was such an enriching and rewarding experience, the memories of which I will cherish forever."



Nicki

"My favourite moment was when the young orangies came back after Jungle School and we were able to watch them playing on the jungle gym we had made for them - it was magical to see; a dream come true."





What Next?

Becoming a volunteer at the Nyaru Menteng Orangutan Sanctuary is simple, and you can help make a difference to orangutan conservation efforts in just a few simple steps...



Visit the website to select your start date and how long you would like to volunteer for.



Secure your place online by paying a deposit of £195. You'll have up to 60 days before your start date to pay your remaining balance.



Prepare for your trip and ask your dedicated travel expert any questions before packing your bags and heading off to Borneo!



Finally, have an incredible time and don't forget to send in or tag us in your photos!

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