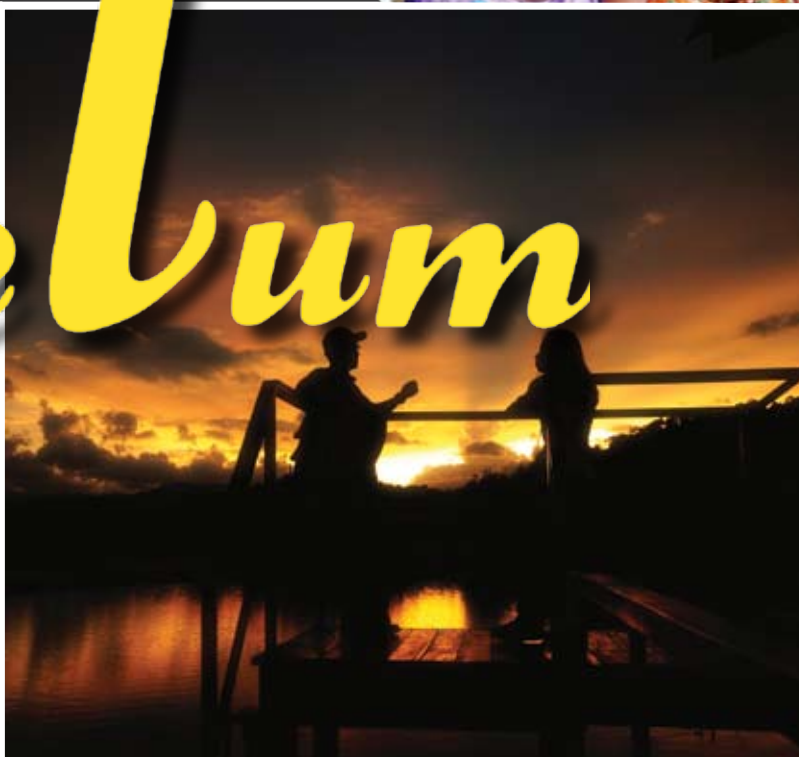


Royal Belum

Named after the noise emitted from the "stick grasshopper" (*belalang ranting*) and estimated at more than 130 million years old, Belum is said to be the oldest tropical rainforest in the world, older even than the Amazon.

Located in Gerik, in the northern most corner of Perak, and a part of the larger Belum-Temenggor Forest reserve encompassing 117,500 hectares of jungle, it was declared as the Royal Belum State Park by HRH Sultan of Perak Sultan Azlan Shah on July 31, 2003. Fondly known as Royal Belum, it is indeed a prized national treasure.

Royal Belum or the Upper Belum area, which requires a permit from the Perak State Parks Corporation to enter, is reserved more for conservation and research purposes. However, eco-tourism is promoted here, albeit in a controlled manner.



Foreword

We are just two months away from Visit Malaysia Year 2014 (VMY2014). The year ahead will be one of the most challenging, as we try to meet our goals. But it will, without doubt, be an exciting time.

The public may be wondering how well-prepared we are for VMY2014. At the state-level, since two months ago, we have established a Secretariat for Tourism and Culture, made up of representatives from both Federal and state government agencies, local authorities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in tourism in Perak.

Under this Secretariat, where the main committee is under the Tourism Ministry, there are a few portfolios, including Promotion, Events and Projects. A second meeting will be held in due time, where we will be hearing the different points of view from our members.

The main objectives of this Secretariat are to coordinate the state's tourism industry players, to identify, promote and market our various tourism products, to audit these products regularly to ensure that they continue to be relevant and that standards are maintained.

Of course, these are just some of the issues that we need to take care of. Perak enjoyed a successful Visit Perak Year 2012. As for VMY2014, although we are maintaining our target of 5 million tourist arrivals, we are working doubly hard to break our record of 5.8 million visitors last year.

In this issue of Perak Tourism Newsletter we are featuring the Royal Belum. This untouched tropical rainforest which is over 130 million years old is just one of Perak's top tourism products of international repute.

We hope that with this guide, your visit to the Royal Belum will be most productive.



Nolee Ashilin Radzi

State Executive Councillor for Tourism, Health and Culture



Applying for a permit

As mentioned, everyone who enters Royal Belum is required to obtain a permit from the state park authority, which costs RM10 for Malaysians and RM20 for foreigners. Other charges may apply.

Malaysians need to provide their name and MyKad number, while foreigners provide their name and passport number instead. A permit can be applied directly from the office of the Perak State Parks Corporation in Gerik or over the internet at their website: www.royalbelum.my.

Those who take up a tour package from a licensed tour operator or nature guide will have this handled for them. Permits require 24 hours to be processed. Therefore, visitors are advised to apply for a permit in advance.

Getting there

Driving from Ipoh, take the North-South Expressway, exiting from Kuala Kangsar. From there, get on the trunk road to Gerik and continue north-east until you reach Pulau Banding. The jetty here (**GPS Coordinates: N 05° 33.110' E 101° 20.834'**) is the gateway to Royal Belum. This trip from Ipoh to Pulau Banding jetty takes approximately 3 hours.

Accommodation

The state park authority manages four camp sites, namely Sg. Tiang, Sg. Kenarung, Sg. Papan and Sg. Kejar Camp Site. Accommodating some 25 to 80 people per camp, basic amenities are provided at these camps. Do bring provisions to cook your own meals.

Generally, Royal Belum is free from the usual distractions such as television, telephone and internet. So, be prepared for a real retreat.

A speedboat ride from Pulau Banding jetty to these camp sites, across Temenggor Lake, takes approximately 20 to 40 minutes.

Those who prefer to stay off-camp may do so at RM2 per person, to be paid to the state park authority. Camping equipment is not provided.

Houseboats

Like a “floating hotel” and equipped with modern amenities, including a karaoke room, a houseboat can accommodate up to 20 people at any one time. Houseboat-living has been popular here only some four years ago. The houseboat cruises around Temenggor Lake, stopping at various spots for guests to participate in local activities, particularly fishing.

Rental for 24 hours of a houseboat goes from RM1800, depending on its amenities and level of comfort. Currently, there are about ten houseboats for rent.



Indigenous community

The indigenous people that call Royal Belum home are from the Jahai tribe, the main sub-ethnic group of the Negrito. There are three villages here with a total population of approximately 800 people; Sg. Tiang, Sg. Kejar and the most advanced village, Aman Damai.

For a small fee, visitors to Kg. Aman Damai get to enjoy a slew of aboriginal activities like blow-piping and dart-making. They can also watch or even participate in the tribal dance, se-wang. Shopping is also possible here, as there is a stall that sells local herbs.

Get thrown back in time at Kg. Aman Damai, though visitors are expected to contribute at least RM1 per person to the village fund.



Hornbill watching

Bird-watching is a popular activity here and the bird to watch is the hornbill. There are a total of 57 hornbill species in the world, with 25 found in Asia. Royal Belum is only one of two places in Malaysia where ten species of hornbills, two more than in Borneo, can be found. The two most sought-after species are the Plain-pouched and Great Hornbill, one of the world's largest hornbill species.

The peak season for hornbill-watching is from July to September.



The lush forest of Royal Belum is home to more than 3000 species of flowering plants, including the world's largest flower, the Rafflesia. It's no secret that one of the main reasons visitors come to Royal Belum is to check out this parasitic flower. Three species are found here; Kerrii, Cantleyi and Azlanii.

As it takes nine months for a Rafflesia to fully bloom and the flower lasts only five to seven days, depending on the amount of rainfall, it takes a lot of luck for tourists to see one in full bloom. The largest recorded Rafflesia found here is the Kerrii, with a diameter of 90cm.

Some trees and plants have been labelled but a good nature guide will point out the ferns, plants, fungi, insects and other life forms that are only found here.



Fishing

Royal Belum's Lake Temenggor is a paradise for anglers because of the famous snake-head (*ikan toman*). Officially, there are a total of 30 fish species here.

The "catch and release" policy is practised here.

Four species of fish, namely *sebarau*, *kelah*, *tengas* and *temoleh*, are prohibited from being taken out of Royal Belum.

Each angler is only allowed to take three fish out of this protected area. All boats leaving Royal Belum will be inspected at the state park control post.



Trekking

Covering a total land area of 117,500 hectares, Royal Belum is paradise to adventurous trekkers, any time of the day.

One may trek along the Perak River or deep into the woods for that rather elusive Rafflesia flower, but a guide or ranger is required for safety reasons.

Trekkers know that both day and night trekking bring different experiences, as nocturnal animals become active only when night falls. Lucky trekkers may even spot an animal or two. The seladang, Sumatran rhinoceros, elephant and Malayan tiger are just some of the larger mammals found in Royal Belum.



Sg. Kooi Waterfall

While there are quite a few waterfalls in Royal Belum, the Sg. Kooi waterfall stands out among them. From a height of 50m, the gushing water does not cascade but showers down. Hence, it is also known as the "shower waterfall".

Lately, there have been operators conducting waterfall abseiling here, which is fast becoming a popular adventure sport. This, however, is not for the faint-hearted.





Sg. Ruok Fish Sanctuary

This fish sanctuary in Sg. Ruok is one of the top visited places in Royal Belum. The fisheries department and the state parks authority are breeding various species of freshwater fish here, especially kelah and tengas to preserve and promote aqua-tourism. Therefore, fishing along this stretch of the river is strictly prohibited. The waterfall here is also top on the list for picnickers, who take the opportunity to feed and also swim with the fishes.



Salt licks are mineral springs or grounds that contain sodium and other essential nutrients such as zinc, magnesium and calcium, where wild animals, particularly herbivorous mammals, come to obtain minerals their body requires and to aid the digestion of food. Consider a salt lick a pharmacy for animals to get their dose of supplements. There are 12 natural salt lick areas in Royal Belum, but only a couple of them are open to visitors, so as not to contaminate them. One that visitors can get up close to is Sira Papan, just a short trek from Sg. Papan Camp Site.

Natural Salt Licks



Contact

For further information on Royal Belum, contact Perak State Parks Corporation information centre at tel: **+605-791 7858**. Office hours are Mondays to Fridays from **8am - 5pm**, with lunch break from **1pm to 2pm**, except for Fridays from **12.45pm - 2.40pm**.

Those who prefer the convenience of a guided tour can also contact the above number for suitable licensed nature guides or operators.



This publication is wholly-financed by the Perak State Government via Tourism Perak Management Bhd. in collaboration with Perak Tourism Association. Editorial Board:

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Published by Ipoh Echo Sdn. Bhd. A-G-1, No. 1, Persiaran Greentown 2, Greentown Business Centre, 30450 Ipoh.

Printed by Conway Industries Sdn. Bhd. Plot 78, Lebuhraya Kampong Jawa, 11900 Bayan Baru, Pulau Pinang.

TOURISM CALENDAR

November 2013

22-23 Nov – Cleanliness campaign on health, tourism and quality of life at Pulau Pangkor.
28-31 Dis – Perak Tourism Fiesta at Ipoh
For further information, contact: **05-208 3600** (ask for Tourism Perak).