

Back to Nature Courses: Golf East Malaysia (Borneo)



■ Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club.

In the July issue we introduced readers to golf in the central region of Malaysia, in Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Selangor, an area combining urban sprawl, old-world charm and tropical rainforests.

This month we shift the focus to East Malaysia, which lies in the island of Borneo.

East Malaysia is where nature and adventure come alive, sweeping visitors away to a mesmerising, intriguing world. Borneo comprises two states, Sabah and Sarawak, as well as Labuan, a federal territory.

The region is characterised by vast expanses of rainforest, mist-capped mountains and majestic UNESCO World Heritage sites. Featuring untouched wilderness, innumerable varieties of plants flourishing together with a wide range of birds and animals, East Malaysia is home to countless ethnic groups, practicing age-old customs and fascinating rituals. It is also a region offering world class golf clubs and resorts that deliver first class service, with wonderfully designed and meticulously maintained golf courses.

Plan your visit to Malaysia and visit some of these magnificent must-visit golf courses in East Malaysia (Borneo).



■ Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai.

SABAH

Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai (Kota Kinabalu)

About a half-hour's drive from Kota Kinabalu City, lies the Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai.

Set against the backdrop of a 130-million-year-old tropical Borneo rainforest along its eastern edges and the South China Sea to the west, the par 72 layout was designed by Golfplan's Ronald Fream and David Dale.

The Nexus Golf Resort was reader-voted 'Best Golf Resort' and 'Best Golf Course in East Malaysia' in a Golf Magazine poll, with the course also a former host venue for the Malaysian Amateur Open Golf Championship.

The Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai course starts from the jungle foothills, the undulating fairways crossing a series of small lakes, waterways, and hillocks, with golfers requiring both strength and strategy to navigate numerous dogleg holes, meandering streams, bunkers and mounds to create well-protected greens. At times, strong ocean trade winds might cool the golfer down, while adding to the challenge. The course also affords breathtaking views of Karambunai Beach, the South China Sea and Mount Kinabalu.

The 27-holes are made up of the Lake, Heritage and Garden courses, featuring holes combining nature with challenging fairways, greens and strategically placed bunkers. The Sutera Harbour signature hole is the 14th, a 330-metre par-four on the Garden Course, with sandy waste areas and the ocean coming precariously close to the undulating green. The course also offers a 41-bay, two-tiered undercover driving range overlooking a beautiful lake, with lessons available for golf members and guests at the Golf Academy Borneo.

Sutera Harbour Golf Club is also part of the spectacular 384-acre Sutera Harbour Resort, which comprises a spectacular array of resort facilities, from a choice of luxurious 5-star hotels, 104-berth marina and exhilarating recreational services like the luxury voyage aboard the Puteri Sutura.

Five teeing locations on each hole to accommodate all golfers, Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai offers a friendly yet challenging option to suit all levels.

The adjacent Nexus Golf Resort Karambunai features luxurious rooms, some amidst a garden with views of the golf course, others with panoramic beachfront views, while also offering a range of recreational activities including a spa & wellness facility, water sports, a mangrove sunset cruise, lawn bowling, as well as a number of dining options.

Sutera Harbour Golf & Country Club (Kota Kinabalu)

Overlooking the tranquil South China Sea, with views of tropical islands and the majestic Mount Kinabalu, is the Sutera Harbour Golf Club, a 27-hole 6316-meter championship golf course designed by Graham Marsh in Kota Kinabalu.

One of the most complete golfing and relaxation experiences in Sabah Malaysia, golfers enjoy a full-service playing experience and the facilities of a five-star resort, with Dalit Bay featuring an extensive clubhouse with a restaurant, driving range, putting green, chipping and bunker practice areas, changing rooms and one of the better-stocked pro shops in Kota Kinabalu.

The Spa at the Dalit Bay Golf and Country Club offers a selection of treatments that showcase the diverse Sabah culture, inspired by the origins of the legendary Shangri-La, while members and guests can embark on a culinary journey from traditional Malay flavours to Japanese cuisine, modern grill, and oriental delicacies at the wide range of eclectic dining outlets.



■ Kelab Golf Sarawak.

Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club (Kota Kinabalu)

Designed by Ted Parslow, the Dalit Bay Golf & Country Club's championship golf course is located within the 400 acres of the famous and luxurious Shangri-La Rasa Ria Resort.

Approximately 30 kilometres (40 minutes by car) from the city of Kota Kinabalu, Dalit Bay provides an excellent playing experience in a beautiful and natural landscape. The course is bordered by the Tambalang and Menagkabong Rivers, the surrounding area mainly forested jungle and mangrove swamps.

The course curves through rivers, native rainforest, and wetlands, painstakingly developed from mangrove swamps. As you play Dalit Bay, catch a glimpse of the pristine Pantai Dalit Beach, with spectacular views of Mount Kinabalu, the highest peak in Malaysia.

Dalit Bay is packed with risk-reward holes, with water coming into play, providing a considerable challenge to more accomplished golfers who opt for the back tees, however multiple tee options and generous fairways also make Dalit Bay ideal for those new to the game.

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SARAWAK

Damai Golf & Country Club, (Kuching)

Right at the foothill of Mount Santubong, in the heart of Damai tourist enclave, is the Damai Golf & Country Club, Kuching, an international class resort facing the South China Sea.

The First Arnold Palmer designed golf course in Malaysia, the Damai Golf & Country Club is an international standard championship, par-72 layout, that features a Mountain and Ocean nine.

The two nine holes of the Damai Golf & Country Club are remarkably different, with the setting truly spectacular, bordering the foothill of Mount Santubong and hugging the beaches, rocky outcrops and mangrove forests of the South China Sea. It is a course which can cater for golfers of different calibres.

While those wanting to enjoy more of Damai, check in to Damai Beach Resort, a five-minute drive from Damai Golf & Country Club.

Kelab Golf Sarawak (Kuching)

The closest golf course to the centre of Kuching City, Kelab Golf Sarawak (Sarawak Golf Club) is the only 36-hole golf course in the Sarawak region.

The club consists of the south facing Matang/Santubong 18 (the 'old course'), and in the northern direction Siol/Demak 18 (the 'new course'), which opened in 1989, with the two courses built on flat terrain, the layouts making use of numerous water hazards.

In the opinion of many, the 'old course' may be the better of the two, playing a little longer, with faster greens.

The 6,394 metre, par-72 Matang/Santubong championship course is named after Sarawak's well-known geographical landmarks that can be spotted from the golf course – Santubong and Matang mountain ranges. The 'old course' is designed to test a player's ball-striking accuracy and course management skills, providing a significant challenge to both high

handicappers and scratch players alike.

Our memorable holes include the overwater par-three, the third hole which is guarded by a lake between the front side of the green and bunkers protecting the narrow putting surface both front and back. The fourth hole is a 435-yard par-four dogleg to the right where water comes into play on the right, OB on the left, before a second shot over water is then necessary, to a green guarded on the left by another greenside lake.

Miri Golf Club (Miri)

One of the oldest golf courses in Malaysia, the Miri Golf Club only a 15-minute drive from Miri Airport or 25-minutes from the city centre.

The Miri Golf Club is located among the rustic surroundings of a Malay village, on top of a picturesque sandbar between the Miri River and the South China Sea.

The 18-hole golf course lies on flat land bordering beautiful white sandy beaches. The early course designers successfully added strategic water hazards and bunkers to make up for the seemingly flat and 'easy' terrain.



■ Labuan International Golf Club.

The first six holes of the existing course were constructed in 1924 by Sarawak Oilfield Limited, the forerunner of Sarawak Shell.

The signature par-three 12th hole presents a birdie chance at only 150 yards, however with water guarding a tiny green, it can be a challenge to golfers of all levels.

Miri Golf Club is a full-featured sports club with a well-stocked clubhouse, pro-shop and practice facilities, and is available and open to both expat and visiting golfers.

LABUAN

Labuan International Golf Club

The Labuan International Golf Club is a Parslow & Winter-designed course nestled within a 200-acre site on the south west coast of Labuan Island in East Malaysia.

First opened for play in 2013, the course was constructed to serve the guests of nearby hotels and other residential developments in the fast-growing Oil & Gas Industry and Offshore Finance sectors on Labuan island.

There's little time to get warmed up at Labuan International before confronted by the toughest two holes on the front nine, a pair of left doglegged par fives in the 501-metre second, and the 490-metre third.

The 18-hole course plays to a par of 72, measuring almost 6,200 metres from the back tee, and with an interesting design, it promises to provide various challenges to both the low to high handicapper.

A simple and yet functional clubhouse features all the basic amenities to rejuvenate after a day of golf, other facilities including a 16-bay driving range, practice greens and practice bunker, with Labuan International Golf Club striving to deliver a memorable golfing experience.

Visit Malaysia - For More Information

For travel and holiday ideas and opportunities, visit the Tourism Malaysia website at www.malaysia.travel/

For packages or more golfing information, go to www.malaysiagolfholiday.com



EXPLORE BORNEO

TAKE a day away from the course and enjoy the many offerings, in East Malaysia (Borneo)

Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

Kota Kinabalu is a blend of both old and new, featuring a bustling resort waterfront, complete with marina, a host of trendy bars and restaurants.

South of the city are the islands of Tunku Abdul Rahman Marine Park and beautiful beaches, reefs and sea sports.

Check out the Mari Mari Cultural Village, the Gaya Street Sunday Market or for a sensational sunset visit the Tanjung Aru Beach.

The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Kinabalu Park and Sabah's iconic mountain, Mount Kinabalu, can be reached in two hours from the city centre.

Kuching, Sarawak

This vibrant city is situated along the distinctly brown Sarawak River. It boasts lively night markets and stunning landmarks, making it a unique and captivating destination.

Home to several indigenous people and ethnic groups, experience the ins and outs of the daily lives of the locals' with a visit to the Sarawak Cultural Village and the seafood delicacies at the Topspot Food Court.

Miri, Sarawak

Miri is a thriving city that is vibrant and modern.

Visit nearby attractions like Tanjung Lobang on Brighton Beach, a popular food centre and an ideal spot for watching the sunset or Cocos Cabana to experience weekly markets, buskers and cultural activities. Outside of the city centre, if you have a few days to spare golfing, the UNESCO Gunung Mulu National Park is a must for those who seek adventure caving.

Labuan

A thriving duty-free port, Labuan is dubbed 'The Pearl of Borneo'. We recommend the tax-free shopping, visiting the Labuan Museum, Layang Layangan Beach, the Labuan Marine Museum and Labuan War Cemetery.

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