



# ESCAPE INTO THE WILD

FROM BORNEO TO YALA, EXTRAORDINARY  
DESTINATIONS AWAIT WILDLIFE ENTHUSIASTS.  
**BY SMITHA SADANANDAN**

# BORNEO

INTRIGUING  
ATTRACTION

They are elusive. They are highly agile. They are unarguably the 'nosy-iest' and perhaps, the most bizarre monkeys in the world. Found only in the tropical rainforests, swamps and mangroves of Borneo, the Proboscis monkey (known as bekantan in Malay) is easily distinguished by its floppy, pendulous nose that hangs over its mouth. The males use their rather 'nosy' looks to woo females. Their comical

look is accentuated by the pot-belly, making even the male monkeys look strangely and perpetually pregnant.

The sight of predators such as crocodiles, clouded leopards and eagles results in the cacophony of the forest being sliced by alarm calls from vigilant Proboscis males. After all, no monkey would want to end up on a croc's menu!

The less than 7,000 Proboscis monkeys in the wild are dependent on habitats adjoining the rivers and mangrove swamps. So, the best time of the day to observe the Proboscis monkey is during early mornings. If you would like to watch them scout for fruits

and seeds at dusk, you could also opt for a night cruise. Take a guided jungle walk to experience the rustic beauty of the river basin or another option is to hob aboard a boat cruise down the Kinabatangan River and watch the monkey mayhem as they feast on leaves of mangrove and pedada trees, leaping and scampering through the forest.

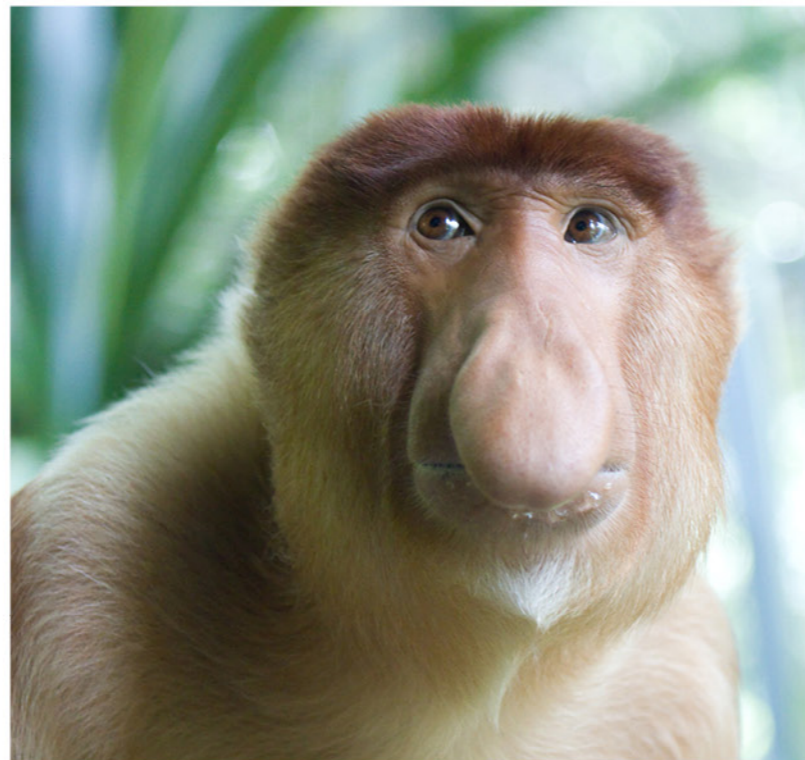
The Proboscis monkey isn't the only attraction here in Borneo; you can also catch glimpses of the giant squirrel, hairy-nosed otter, long-tailed macaque, Borneo gibbon, noisy hornbills etc. During the monsoons, incessant rain fills the Kinabatangan River, causing it to swell and overflow the banks. The water surges into the lower reaches forming floodplains and oxbow lakes that teem with flora and fauna. The forests are also a birdwatcher's haven.

Also, if you are ready for an extreme adventure, trek through the dense forests, and chances are that you might come face to face with the few remaining Sumatran rhinos. Now, that sure is a big enough reason to head to Borneo's forests.

#### REASON TO GO:

The Proboscis monkeys are imperiled by logging operations and hunting. They figure as an endangered species in the Red List of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

01°N, 114°E



#### FRAMES' TIP:

The charming Sukau Rainforest Lodge nestles on the banks of the Kinabatangan River and is located on the east coast of Sabah. If you're a true-blue adventurer, stay here to soak in the wilderness. Considered the top ecotourism lodge in Malaysia, it is only a short canoe-ride away from the swampy home of the Proboscis monkey. The lodge is an ideal base to embark on an adventure into the dense forest and take in its remarkable natural sights. The nearly three-hour cruise, offered by the lodge, is a great way to spot several animals and birds. You can also see the Proboscis monkeys at the Bako National Park (accessible only by boat), Labuk Bay Proboscis Monkey Sanctuary, and the forests alongside the Kinabatangan River. The Gomantong Forest Reserve area, where the Gomantong caves are located, is also worth a visit in Sabah.

W: [sukau.com](http://sukau.com), [sukaurainforestlodge.com](http://sukaurainforestlodge.com)

1.28°N, 32.39°E



# UGANDA

RARE SIGHT

They are shy. Generally calm, gentle and not aggressive, unless disturbed or threatened. Half of the mountain gorillas live in Congo and Rwanda and the other half in Uganda's Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. In this organised world, life is synchronised with a set time for feeding, travelling and resting. The individual members adhere to these rules. These massive apes have an interesting social structure too.

Uganda, often described as the 'Pearl of Africa' is a small, but stunning country. Its majestic scenery, awe-inspiring wildlife combined with its warm natured people, is what makes Uganda a sought-after wildlife destination.

They roam in groups of up to 30 gorillas in communities called troops. These are led by an older adult male, often called a silverback, in reference to the swathe of silver hair that runs through their dark black fur. Mountain gorillas are very protective and when challenged, the alpha male displays sheer raw physical power, charging aggressively, pounding

his chest, and punctuating the stillness of the forest with rumbling roars that echo through the depths. The silverback may stand upright, throw branches, twigs etc. around and hoot to frighten anyone who he thinks is a threat to the troop. But after years of habituation, these giants are steadily getting used to humans. Many of the expert guides, especially those involved in tracking habituated gorillas, have enough hands-on experience to walk you through the etiquette involved in meeting a giant silverback.

The Bwindi Impenetrable Forest is a theatrical landscape burgeoning with volcanoes, jagged valleys, waterfalls, lakes and dramatic mountain ranges. Birdwatchers congregate here to see the more than 350 species in the forest. Over 200 species of butterflies also thrive here. Giant forest hog, bush buck antelopes and other primates, including the red-tailed and blue monkey, black and white colobus, baboons and chimpanzee, are other star attractions of the forest.

On the visit, post a briefing session on the do's and don'ts in the park, rangers lead trackers on the safari. As they near gorilla territory, rangers hoot to announce their arrival to the troops. Often, you may come across a gorilla troop within minutes of walking into the forest but at times, it could be a hard slog tracking them down. It is an opportunity afforded only to a select few, as just eight visitors are allowed in on a day. Now, you wouldn't want to miss that, would you?



#### REASON TO GO:

Uganda, often described as the 'Pearl of Africa,' is known for having the highest concentration of primates on Earth, and is home to half the world's remaining mountain gorillas. The Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, a must-visit for wildlife enthusiasts, is a UNESCO World Heritage site nestled in the southwest corner of Uganda.

#### FRAMES' TIP:

If gorilla tracking is what brings you to the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, then choose the luxurious Sanctuary Gorilla Forest Camp. It is the perfect base for this unique experience, and it offers three-night safaris as well. Owing to its location, the camp is often visited by gorilla families. While the infant gorillas may come scampering to you out of sheer curiosity, the adults keep a watchful eye from a distance. Gorilla Tracking Permits must be purchased well in advance and are valid for a day. You can also interact with the local Batwa Pygmies and learn more about their life and culture here.

While in Uganda, you can see the Murchison Falls and the Kibale Forest and also visit its other national parks like Kibale, Kidepo Valley, Lake Mburo or the Queen Elizabeth National Park.

W: [sanctuaryretreats.com](http://sanctuaryretreats.com)



# NOVEL EXPERIENCE JACKSON HOLE

There is a lot you can do in the midst of the river, valley, forest, and the enveloping mountains. Though Jackson Hole in Wyoming, US, is more popular as a winter resort region, summer is in fact its real high season. The air is clean and fresh; the valley green and gorgeous. Wildflowers bloom and turn the valley into a beautiful, multi-hued canvas. Deep in the mountains and valleys of Jackson Hole, spring, summer and fall are times of movement and migration.

Jackson Hole is home to over 300 spectacular species of birds and animals. It is a playground for animals like the elk, mule, deer, bison, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and the moose. In spring, opportunities abound for tourists to witness these animals with their young as the calving season begins in late May and continues through mid-June.

Exploring the valley in the company of an experienced guide is one of the best options available to learn about the interesting array of wildlife in the area, and to get a closer view of wolves and bears that roam freely in the area. Horse-riding excursions along the

many trails here are a novel way to experience the wild and untampered side of Jackson Hole. You could also explore the area on a bicycle, as several miles of cycle trails intersperse the valley floors. For those who like to walk, there are wonderful hiking opportunities that abound in the area. An expedition to Jackson Hole through either of these means can prove to be a rewarding experience with sightings of big game such as the moose, elk and bison.

Interested in fishing? Fly fishermen look no further than the Snake River, which abounds in the local cutthroat trout. Watersports enthusiasts could head to the river, a prime spot for activities such as whitewater rafting, canoeing and kayaking. Jackson Hole could be used as a base to explore other national parks, including the Yellowstone National Park – the oldest in the US. This is one place where you can see bison bulls shaking the earth as they engage in mighty duels. Hooked yet?

#### REASON TO GO:

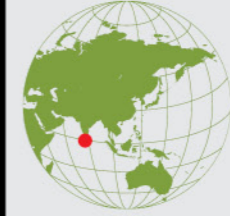
Jackson Hole is home to numerous wild animals. Birds, including bald eagles, mountain bluebirds, trumpeter swans and the sand hill cranes beckon birdwatchers to the Hole. Come autumn, the rugged terrain with aspen and cottons are garbed in a riot of colours – a sight to behold.



#### FRAMES' TIP:

Perched on the edge of East Gros Ventre Butte, Amangani (meaning peaceful home) offers panoramic views of peaks, the Snake River Range and the seasonal changes that sweep the valley below. It is also within easy access of the Greater Yellowstone area and its two national parks. From May through October, Amangani offers three seasonal experiences – the Wolf and Bear Expedition, Adventures in the Wild and the Fly Fishing Adventure. These four-night adventures include a four-hour expedition through the pristine valley and a picnic breakfast or lunch during the journey. Amangani's Adventures in the Wild is an ideal way to explore the flora and fauna of Jackson Hole and can be tailored to suit individual interests. While at Jackson Hole, visit the local rodeo and watch the acts – bull riding, barrel jumping and calf roping.

W: [amangani.com](http://amangani.com)



# YALA

 **ENTHRALLING  
NEIGHBOURS**

It is a master of stealth and a skilled climber. Graceful and strong, it is also one of the most elusive members of the big cat family. It is smaller than the lion and tiger, nevertheless compensates with its agility and speed. It lurks silently among the trees. The only giveaway to its resting place on a branch: the twitching tail. When in the mood to hunt, it blends into the tall grass, waiting to claim an unsuspecting prey. Tawny, covered with rosettes – made up of circles of black spots – the coat helps camouflage the predator effectively in the grassland. An expert nocturnal hunter, this big cat's predatory skills are nothing short of an art form. All of this makes the leopard a prize sighting on a safari. Visitors have long been drawn to the fierce felines that boldly roam about the Yala National Park on Sri Lanka's south-eastern coast. A key reason why leopards can be spotted easily in Sri Lanka's wilderness is perhaps because the island nation has the highest leopard density per square kilometre – these felines have the wild almost all to themselves. Healthy populations of elephants, wild boars, deer and macaques abound in the forest along with over 200 species of birds. Wildlife tourists have the option of visiting Bundala, Kumana or Uda Walawa national parks, in addition to Yala.

#### REASON TO GO:

Besides leopards, Yala is also home to a healthy population of elephants, wild boars, buffaloes and crocodiles. It is nearly a paradise for wildlife lovers.

#### FRAMES' TIP:

Explore the rich colours of this fascinating natural reserve and stay at the Chaaya Wild Yala resort, which is located in the buffer zone on the edge of the park. The views from its observation deck are stunning. A full day-long jeep safari in to the park is the best way to watch these majestic animals prowl their territory. Early mornings and dusk, however, are the best times for a wild encounter. Alternatively, you could also split the safari into morning and afternoon drives. The mini night safari offered by the resort along the forest roads outside the national park is also a great way of observing the nocturnal activities in the animal kingdom. 📸

W: [chaayawildresort.com](http://chaayawildresort.com)

