

Geotourism on Borneo

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Summary

The petroleum industry in Malaysia began with the 1910-discovery of the Miri Field in NW Borneo. Geotourism in the area flourished in the early 2000's, with the opening of a petroleum museum, signs being placed at local outcrops, and articles & books being published (Wannier et al., 2011).

Outside these spotlights, Borneo has a lot more geotourism to offer. From the delta-dominated deposits around Miri (Sarawak), past the marvelous Mulu caves, across Labuan Island, and into the diversity of Kota Kinabalu (Sabah), Borneo is a warm, welcoming region for genuine culture, great cuisine, and exciting geology that never ceases to amaze.

(1) Miri, Sarawak

Miri is a bustling town on the shores of the South China Sea, a town that flourished around the oil field where it all began (Sorkhabi, 2010). There are many sights to take in, including:

- Miri's inaugural oil well – a historical site and national monument.
- Unique outcrops that continue to serve regional field development and global geoscience.
- Vestiges of the old field layout, including abandoned wells and artificial terraces.

Interesting tidbit: the hill that shapes the oil field is also known as 'Canada Hill'; there are several anecdotes as to how it got this name ([Link 1](#)).

(2) Mulu Park, Sarawak

Isolated in the middle of the tropical rainforest, Mulu Park is a World Heritage Site ([Link 2](#)). The park is known for its stunning caves and micro-environments to flora and fauna. This gem in the remote wilderness can only be reached by flight and longboat.

(3) Labuan Island

This island serves as an offshore financial center, and as the offshore support hub to the region. From a tourism perspective, it is somewhat off the beaten path. Onshore, the quarry at Kampung Bebuloh is a great place to examine a deepwater turbidite reservoir-seal-pair.

(4) Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

A regional hub and multi-cultural society located in a structurally complex and actively deforming region. One can go from 4 km surface elevation to 4 km water depth within a span of 100km. With ongoing construction projects – including the pan-Borneo Highway – many new outcrops arise.

Yet, the true beauty here is the majestic *Gunung* Kinabalu, another World Heritage Site ([Link 3](#)). This granitic pluton of Late Miocene age reaches 4095m elevation; earthquakes in this region are common. Climbing Mt Kinabalu is on the bucket list of many travelers to Sabah.

Once completed the multi-day hike, what better place to relax than on Pulau Tiga, an island that featured in the inaugural season of Survivor (2000), located just offshore with emerald beaches, mud volcanoes and a rich marine life for snorkeling and diving opportunities ([Link 4](#)).

The Pitch:

'Borneo is yours to discover !'

Acknowledgement:

To Phil Benham, whose passion for geology and sharing his knowledge comes to shine at the outcrops.

About the author:

I have had the pleasure to work and live in Malaysia for 6 years. I have been to many outcrops on NW Borneo, designing and delivering fieldtrips in the process. Many of these outcrop continue to serve as analogues to the prospects and fields offshore.

References:

Link 1: Canada Hill, Miri: <https://www.miriresortcity.com/content/canada-hill>

Link 2: Mulu Park world heritage site: <https://mulupark.com/>

Link 3: Mount Kinabalu climbing adventure: <https://www.mountkinabalu.com/>

Link 4: Pulau Tiga: <https://borneoadventure.com/destinations/pulau-tiga/>

Sorkhabi (2010) Miri 1910, in GEOExPro online: <https://geoexpro.com/miri-1910/>

Wannier, M., Lesslar, P., Lee, C., Raven, H., Sorkhabi, R., Ibrahim, A., (2011), Geological Excursions around Miri, Sarawak, Ecomedia Software, Miri, 279 p