

Life on the BRUNEI RIVER

Brunei Darussalam is one of the most ancient sovereign nations in Southeast Asia and the monarchy's early history can be found in centuries-old chronicles of Chinese, Arab and Spanish explorers. The Brunei River played a critical part in Brunei's history and heritage as a bustling and important maritime trade route in the 14th to 16th century, where merchant ships from China and Europe would berth at, thanks to the protection of the Brunei Bay from high winds during the monsoon seasons. With flourishing trade and a powerful presence in the region, it was an era of prosperity and expansion led by the fifth Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Bolkiah and widely regarded as the Brunei Empire's Golden Age.

Foreign merchants came in search of Brunei's bountiful resources from the jungles and the sea. They brought gold, silver, silk, beads, lacquer and ceramic wares to trade for exotic commodities such as spices, sandalwood, rattan, sago, agar wood and especially camphor, which was highly prized. Life was centred in Kampong Ayer; the vast water village built on stilts was the main settlement in those days, and stood in the Brunei river for over 600 years with the houses passed down from one generation to the next. Although most families have moved out to the mainland or new resettlement villages along the river, some have chosen to remain in their ancestral homes. Today, there is still a significant number of locals living on this well preserved settlement and it is still the largest water village in the world.

To cruise along the Brunei River is to journey into Brunei's glorious maritime past and catch a glimpse of the days when this grand river welcomed ships safely to the centre of the Brunei Empire. Sail along the Brunei River and discover places of historical interest and cultural importance, and fascinating legends that have been retold for generations.

18. KAMPONG AYER CULTURAL & TOURISM GALLERY JT07

This gallery showcases the traditions and arts of the Kampong Ayer, full of antiques and handicrafts associated with the livelihoods and culture of life on the water village. There is a handy souvenir shop and the outdoor observation tower gives visitors a view of the community and daily activities.



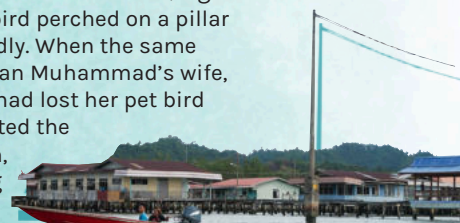
19. KAMPONG AYER JT07

Experience the largest water village in the world with numerous sub villages spread over the Brunei river's banks. These stilt houses are homes to generations of families and though many have moved to houses on land, about 10,000 people still reside here, balancing the old and the new. The village is self-contained with its own schools, fire and police station as well as convenience shops.



20. KAMPUNG BURUNG PINGAI AYER JT09

Originally named Kampung Ulu-Ulu as it was situated at the hulu (beginning) of the Brunei River, legend has it that a villager found a white bird perched on a pillar calling 'pingai' repeatedly. When the same villager heard that Sultan Muhammad's wife, a princess from Johor, had lost her pet bird named Si Pingai, he gifted the white bird to the Sultan, and thus, the kampung was renamed.



21. ISTANA NURUL IMAN JT09

Istana Nurul Iman, which translates to 'Palace of the Light of Faith', is the residence of His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei and the royal family. It is the largest residential palace in the world with over 1700 rooms, and also serves as the seat of government. The best view of this magnificent palace is from the river.



1. DERMAGA DIRAJA JETTY JT08

The Royal Wharf was once the Royal Customs and Excise building. It played a pivotal role in Brunei's history as the primary gateway to the country, a commercial hub that transformed the capital into a bustling centre of commerce where international merchants brought silks, precious metals and textiles to trade.



2. BRUNEI HANDICRAFT & ART CENTRE JT08

This is a centre for the preservation of traditional Bruneian handicrafts and arts such as weaving, wood carving and silver-smithing. It's an important establishment where young Bruneians are trained to preserve these skills. Visitors can buy the finished products and a variety of other handmade souvenirs.



3. RAJA ISTERI PENGIRAN ANAK HAJAH SALEHA BRIDGE JT05

Brunei's first cable-stayed bridge connects the capital to the village of Kampong Sungai Kebun. It spans 750 metres across the Brunei River with a single tower that rises to 157 metres high. Named after Her Majesty the Raja Isteri of Brunei, it was opened in 2017 with a great celebration marked by spectacular fireworks and a float procession.



22. JONG BATU JT09

This rock outcrop a popular attraction resembles a sinking ship with the bow sticking out of the water, attributed to a famous legend-the story of a cursed sea captain, Nakhoda Manis, where a storm capsized his ship and turned it into a rock as a punishment for being unfilial to his mother after he found success and wealth.



23. MAKAM DI LUBA JT09

Pulau Luba (Luba Island) separates the Brunei and Damuan Rivers and holds the mausoleum of Sultan Husain Kamaluddin, the 16th Sultan of Brunei. He introduced Brunei's first currency, the pitis, and was the only monarch to rule the country twice. It's said he enjoyed fishing with locals along the river bank, particularly where it runs upstream to Pulau Luba.



24. TAMAN MAHKOTA JUBLI EMAS JT09

This 30-acre riverfront park in the city centre sits across from Kampong Ayer and next to the iconic Sultan Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, landscaped with local and exotic flora. Officiated by His Majesty the Sultan of Brunei, the park commemorates 50 years of His Majesty's reign. It's a popular spot for exercise, walkabouts and picnics, especially in the evening when spectacular sunsets fill the skies.



4. PULAU AMBUK JT04

This island was where a battalion of soldiers led by Pengiran Bendahara Sakam trained to fight against the Spanish army during the Castilian War. This island was also the place where a civil war broke out between Sultan Abdul Hakkul Mubin and Pengiran Bendahara Mahyuddin in the year 1662.



5. BRUNEI MUSEUM

Overlooking the Brunei River, the museum was opened in 1972 by the late Queen Elizabeth II. It's the best place to learn about Brunei's history with extensive exhibits on archaeology, ethnography, natural history, Islamic art and the development of Brunei's oil and gas industry. (Temporarily closed)



6. THE TOMBS OF SULTAN BOLKIAH AND SULTAN SHARIF ALI

The mausoleum of Sultan Bolkiah, the fifth Sultan of Brunei, lays here within the Kota Batu Archeological Park. He ruled from 1485 to 1524 during which the Brunei Empire covered Borneo island and expanded to Seludong, which is now modern-day Manila in the Philippines. Nearby is the site of Sultan Sharif Ali's tomb, the third Sultan and the first ruler to build a mosque in Brunei.



7. PULAU TARINDAK

Terindak island is a man-made island about 240sq metres in area. The island is thought to be built around the 15th or 16th century based on the Chinese and Siamese ceramics found on the island and the surrounding vicinity. It was also an important site during Sultan Sharif Ali's reign, when he built a fortress to protect the state from enemy attacks.



25. OMAR 'ALI SAIFUDDIEN MOSQUE JT10

This iconic landmark is named after the 28th Sultan of Brunei, the father of the current Sultan. Completed in 1958, this mosque still glistens in the sun with its gold leaf-covered domes, marble walls and minarets. There is a replica of a 16th century royal barge in the lagoon.



26. YAYASAN SULTAN HAJI HASSANAL BOLKIAH COMPLEX JT09

This sprawling shopping and dining complex has architecture meant to reflect Kampong Ayer. The open courtyard in the middle hosts daily night markets. Together with the Omar 'Ali Saifuddin Mosque and the Taman Mahkota Jubli Emas park just across the road, these are unmissable stops on the city walking tour.



27. BRUNEI ENERGY HUB DERMAGA DIRAJA JT08

Built in the 1950s, this was formerly the Royal Customs and Excise Building and served as a wharf for commercial activities. Today, it is an interactive oil and gas museum where visitors can learn about the history and importance of the energy industry to the country.



8. BRUNEI DARUSSALAM MARITIME MUSEUM

Located next to the Malay Technology Museum, the exhibits within the three galleries show Brunei's role as an important trade stop in ancient times. There are various artefacts, mostly porcelain, from a Chinese shipwreck found in 1997, as well as objects discovered in an archaeological site at Kota Batu, which was the centre of trade from the 14th to the 17th centuries. (Temporarily closed)



9. MALAY TECHNOLOGY MUSEUM

Discover the traditional technology employed in the livelihoods of the Kampong Ayer villagers and land settlers. The exhibits and dioramas show what life in Kampong Ayer was like, and the cottage industries villagers engaged in. Amongst exhibits of late 19th to mid-20th century traditional houses there are also ethnic houses of the Dusun, Kedayan, Murut and Penan tribes.



10. QUEEN ELIZABETH II JETTY

When Queen Elizabeth first visited Brunei on 29th February in 1972, her ship HMS Britannia berthed at Muara. She and her entourage cruised up the river on a vessel to this specially build jetty at Kampong Data Ghandi and landed here. The jetty was so named to commemorate her historical royal visit. These days, the jetty is the landing spot for MV Sentosa, a leisure craft that takes guests on a cruise along the Brunei river.



11. SULTAN HAJI OMAR 'ALI SAIFUDDIEN BRIDGE

This 30-kilometre long architectural beauty is the longest bridge in Southeast Asia. Nicknamed the Temburong bridge, it crosses the Brunei Bay linking mainland Brunei with the semi-enclave of Temburong district, reducing travel time to 30 minutes by car where it formerly required a 45-minute boat ride across the bay or 2 hours overland, passing through Limbang, Sarawak and 4 immigration checkpoints along the way.



12. PULAU CHERMIN

Sultan Abdul Hakkul Mubin-the 13th Sultan of Brunei who came to power after assassinating Sultan Haji Muhammad Ali, the father-in-law of Pengiran Bendahara Mahyuddin-had his temporary palace on this island after riots erupted on the mainland. When the Sultan fled to Pulau Chermin, Pengiran Mahyuddin seized the throne and for sometime, the Sultanate was governed by two rulers. In 1662, civil war started between these two factions and Sultan Abdul Hakkul Mubin was eventually defeated in 1673.



13. KAMPONG SUNGAI BUNGA

This modern resettlement on the water is named 'river flower' in the Malay language thanks to folklore that some villagers reported that river having a fragrance of jasmine flowers. Although the source of the smell was a mystery, the locals believed this to come from spirits that dwell in the area.

14. PULAU BERAMBANG

This island is a protected wildlife sanctuary home to indigenous wildlife, birds and mangrove forests and proboscis monkeys. A former coal mine entrance from the 1900's can still be seen halfway up Batu Bujang Pahang hill. In 1920, a small amount of crude oil was discovered on the island. The mausoleum of the ninth Sultan of Brunei, Sultan Muhammad Hassan, is also located here.



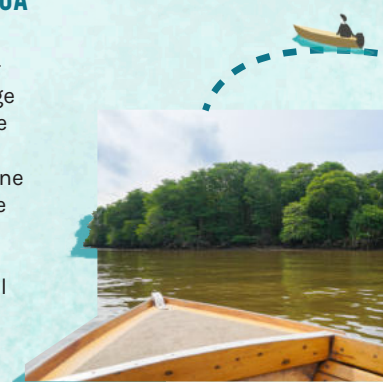
15. BATU GASING AWANG SEMAUN

This rock formation that resembles an upside-down gasing or spinning top, is named after a great warrior Awang Semaun. According to local folklore, Awang Semaun was playing gasing with his nephew in the Temburong district. His spinning top struck his nephew's so hard that it flew to the Brunei River, landed upside-down on the banks of Pulau Berambang where it spun until it transformed into a rock.



16. LUMUT LUNTING

According to the famous poem 'Syair Awang Semaun', there was a cockfight between two roosters: Mutiara, a rooster belonging to Awang Sinuai, the nephew of the first ruler of Brunei, and Asmara, the opponent owned by the King of the Majapahit empire. After Mutiara defeated Asmara, the Majapahit king was incensed and cursed Mutiara who fell into the river and turned into a rock, transforming into the island Lumut Lunting.



17. PULAU SIBUNGUR

This uninhabited islet covered with mangrove forests is a sanctuary for coastal birds and animals, and proboscis monkeys are in abundance here. It's said that the islet could have been named after a type of wood found there, or in reference to invisible beings that dwell on the islet.

CRUISING DO'S & DONT'S:

1 Please don't feed any animals you see especially crocodiles, or call out to any of them as they'll get frightened and become wary of passing boats.



2

Do protect yourself from the sun. Use sun protection lotion and clothing or a hat that can be secured.

3

Do keep your life vests on and limbs inside the boat at all times to prevent accidents.



Cameras and phones should stay inside the boat. Do not litter the river! Find the nearest bin and dispose of items there.



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EMERGENCY CONTACTS

Police 993
Fire Department 995
Medical/Emergency Services 991
Directory enquiries 113
Darussalam Hotline 123



BRUNEI HERITAGE RIVER CRUISE

BRUNEI
ABODE OF PEACE

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Heritage River Trail Map



Disclaimer: Map is not drawn to scale

JETTIES:			
JT04	JETI SUNGAI LAMPAI	JT08	JETI DERMAGA DIRAJA
JT05	JETI BUBUNGAN 12	JT08-A	JETI DERMAGA DIRAJA
JT06	JETI MAULANA	JT09	JETI YAYASAN
JT07	JETI LURONG SIKUNA	JT10	JETI DARUSSALAM