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A SHORT WALK THROUGH SARAWAK

- The Sarawak Cultural Village Revealed -



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Photos by
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Published By



In Association With



Sarawak Cultural Village
Sara Resorts Sdn Bhd

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Design & Layout by:

C & D Design Advertising Sdn Bhd

Printed by:

The Sarawak Press Sdn Bhd, Kuching.

ISBN No.:

983-99431-0-3

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APB951475
NASKHAH PEMELIHARAAN
PERPUSTAKAAN NEGARA MALAYSIA

25 JUN 1999

APB 951475
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644
1999



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INTRODUCTION

Since its opening in 1991, the Sarawak Cultural Village has become one of Malaysia's best-known and most-loved visitor attractions, and an important showcase for Sarawak's cultures and traditions. It has won a host of awards, both as an attraction and as a centre for the performing arts. Over 70,000 visitors a year pass through its imposing wooden gates to enjoy the 'Sarawak Experience.'

The Sarawak Cultural Village is often referred to as a 'living museum,' but this is only half the story. The Cultural Village is a living, thriving community, a 'village-within-a-village,' where many of the staff and performers live, work, marry and bring up families, devoting their lives to maintaining and preserving the culture and traditions of their beloved Sarawak.

The basis of the village is the house - remarkably accurate re-creations of the types of houses used by Sarawak's main ethnic groups. The longhouses are inhabited by the Iban, the Bidayuh and the Orang Ulu. More conventional yet equally fascinating homes are dwelt in by the Malays and the Chinese. The magnificent tall-house is home to the Melanau, and the nomadic people do not live in houses at all. Irrespective of their lifestyle, you will visit all of these homes and meet the people who live there on your short walk through Sarawak.

You will still notice as you pass through the village that - unlike other museums - none of the exhibits are labelled. This is not an oversight; it is a reflection of Sarawak's rich oral heritage. Sarawak's indigenous people had no need for the written word. Instead every community had its bards, singers and storytellers who memorised the tribe's history from their elders, and passed it down from word to word to an enthralled audience during long, dark tropical nights in the longhouse.

The Cultural Village also has its bards; storytellers who describe their culture and traditions to you as you experience them, hands-on, in authentically reconstructed traditional buildings. Yet no matter how skilled these storytellers are, they can only tell you so much, and they can only answer the questions that you ask them. After you leave a longhouse you may wonder what that strange-looking contraption was for, or on the plane home you may question why one tribe's way of life differed from another's. This is why we produced this book; not to replace the storytellers, but to complement what they tell you.

Site, clockwise from left: The Orang Ulu Longhouse, seen from the lake. The Melanau Rumah Tinggi (House). Bamboo bridge leading to Bidayuh Baruk. Malay woman wearing songket shawl and batik headscarf. Playing the sape on the Orang Ulu longhouse verandah.

