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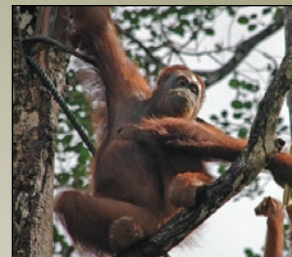
Korea Sparkling and Certified Asia Specialist program details.

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Oasis Hong Kong Airlines is planning environmentally responsible expansion.

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Borneo remains an exotic destination with tracts of real wilderness.

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Signature adds escorted tours

Signature Vacations has produced its first Escorted Tours brochure covering a wide range of vacation options in the Americas, Latin America and in Europe.

Among the choices are: a Yucatan Explorer in Mexico grand tour or a short adventure tour in Costa Rica, a Cuba Highlights tour, or a Jammin in Jamaica tour.

In Cuba, the eight-day tour begins in Havana and moves to the Vinales Valley, Trinidad and Cienfuegos.

Moving across the Atlantic, Signature also offers an eight-day northern Portugal tour, eight days in southern and central Ireland, or

a 10-day circle Ireland tour, a seven-day Scotland tour, or a 13-day Scotland/Ireland combination tour.



Signature's new brochure also details a 15-day, four-island Hawaii itinerary and a 15-day Alaska program that includes a seven-day NCL cruise from Seattle to Skagway return, plus a six-day coach tour to San Francisco.

Signature Vacations is also offering a 15-day National Parks of the Golden West tour, comprised of a coach journey roundtrip from Salt Lake City that visits Mammoth Lakes, Las Vegas, Reno and Bryce Canyon, among other sites.





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Air Canada Vacations will continue with its Vancouver-Cancun service year-round, in addition to its year-round service from YVR to Puerto Vallarta.

New Airbus

Air Transat has taken delivery of an additional Airbus A310-300 aircraft, bringing the number of wide-body jets in its fleet to 17. Together with Transat Holidays and its European partners, the airline will be offering this summer a total of 63 direct city-pair routes between Canada and Europe – more than any other airline – and carrying travelers to 28 different destinations in 11 countries. The aircraft will assist in boosting service this winter to sun destinations from Regina and Winnipeg. In addition, beginning in May, Air Transat will increase the seat pitch on all A310s to an average of 30 inches from a current average of 30.

WE WROTE THE BOOK ON GREAT CANADIAN VACATIONS.

Look for our new Experience Canada brochure.

- Choose from 27 great Canadian destinations.
- Uniquely Canadian experiences like city breaks, self-drive itineraries and rail tours.
- Spa, golf and festival packages.



Triple the Fun!

- 1 ▶ **Double Sun Dollars** on all bookings that include Northwest Airlines tickets! (Departures up to Jun 30/08)
- 2 ▶ You are entered to **WIN 2 tickets to Amsterdam** with any Northwest Airlines tickets purchased!
- 3 ▶ **March 14 ONLY**, earn a **\$25 Sears Gift Card** for every Northwest Airlines ticket bought that day!

Valid for bookings made March 1 – 15/08

Check out www.funsunagent.com for full contest details!

Feb 26/08 | FSV | A5100



Borneo: adventure and wilderness

By Marc Sissons

Borneo! The name conjures images of fearsome headhunters, impenetrable jungles, and wartime death marches. Yet there's much more to this, the world's third largest island, than its intimidating reputation suggests, as I discovered on a recent media trip with Malaysian Tourism.

Borneo offers some of the last tracts of pristine wilderness on Earth. It also offers close encounters with endangered orangutans and rhinos, rugged mountain adventures, watersports, and plenty of luxurious resorts, spas and golf (including night golf). In fact, there's so much to do that choosing what not to include may be the hardest part of pre-trip planning.

Getting to Borneo is relatively easy from Western Canada. After enjoying Oasis Hong Kong Airlines' enhanced business class services en route to Hong Kong, I caught a three-hour Malaysian Airlines' flight direct to Kota Kinabalu, capital of Sabah, the state that, along with neighboring Sarawak, forms the Malaysian part of Borneo.

(Located in the South China Sea, Borneo is the third largest island in the world, and is divided between Indonesia, Malaysia and Brunei. Indonesia's region of Borneo is called Kalimantan, while Malaysia's region of Borneo is called East Malaysia or Malaysian Borneo. The independent nation of Brunei occupies the remainder of the island. Courtesy Wikipedia)

Kota Kinabalu is most famous for its stunning backdrop – Kinabalu Park, Malaysia's first World Heritage Site. Capped by Mount Kinabalu, which at 4,095 meters is the highest mountain in Malaysia, the park features an astonishing variety of flora and fauna ranging over four climate zones.

Reaching the summit of Mt. Kinabalu is a challenging two-day

hike that requires no mountaineering equipment. Anyone in good physical condition stands a fair chance of reaching the top in time to catch a spectacular sunrise from the roof of Borneo.

While in KK, as the locals call it, I also snorkeled among the coral reefs of Tunku Abdul Rahman National Park, a cluster of five small islands just 15 minutes offshore, and attended Sabah's annual Christmas Open House (Borneo has a large Christian population). Everyone from dignitaries and foreign guests to local villagers was invited to this festive celebration. Choirs sang carols, numerous Santas posed for photos, and thousands of participants were treated to traditional ethnic cuisine.

Perhaps Borneo's best-known animal symbol is the orangutan, a Malay word that means "person of the forest". Known for their intelligence, seemingly ungainly long arms and reddish-brown hair, these engaging and endangered apes are found only in the rainforests of Borneo and the Indonesian island of Sumatra.

I first had the opportunity to encounter these remarkable creatures in the jungles surrounding the Batang Ai Hilton resort in

Sarawak. Accessible only by boat, this luxury retreat built in the traditional 'longhouse' style of the indigenous Iban people offers five-star accommodations in one of Sarawak's largest wildlife reserves. While staying there, I also had an opportunity to visit a nearby Iban tribe, known direct descendants of headhunters.

At Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre, the world's largest orangutan sanctuary located on the east coast of Sabah, a dozen orangutans emerged from the forest to feast on piles of fruit distributed by the staff.

While the older apes ate their fill, playful youngsters showed off their acrobatic skills, clearly enjoying the attention of tourists. Gentle and shy by nature, orangutans in captivity have grown fond of human company. Not too surprising, since the apes share over 96% of human genes.

According to Sandra Ngoh-Fonseka of Tourism Malaysia in Vancouver, more and more Canadians are vacationing in Malaysia (38,568 from Jan-Nov, 2007 – a 33.8% increase over the previous year).

She says that's because Malaysia offers great value for the dollar, and is a destination that delivers unique cultural experiences and a variety of ecological treasures.

I couldn't agree more. With its enormous biodiversity, fascinating indigenous cultures and opportunities to see some of the world's exotic and endangered creatures in their natural habitats, Malaysian Borneo delivers much more than you can imagine.

For more information on Malaysian Borneo, including a list of tour operators, contact the Vancouver office of the Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board at 604-689-8899.



The famous orangutans of Borneo enjoy performing for visitors.

Silk Holidays is offering a 13-night vacation in Phuket, Thailand, with air from Vancouver with Cathay Pacific, airport transfers and 13 nights accommodation with breakfast, from \$1599 plus tax.. Call 888-800-7455.

Jade Tours offers an enticing selection of tours in its Smiles of Asia program, including a 13-day Montage of Indochina tour. It includes visits to Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand, with flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap and on to Bangkok and Angkor Wat. Jade also has programs in China, Borneo, Myanmar and India.

Eco tourism comes to Vancouver

The Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism Conference will be held in Vancouver Oct 27 to 29.

It will be hosted by the BC Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts, the BC Sustainable Tourism Collective and the Council of Tourism Associations of BC.

It is designed to provide opportunities for business leaders, travel and tourism professionals and community members to

gain knowledge of the latest trends in ecotourism and sustainable tourism, and learn practical skills.

It will be held at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, and will also include pre-conference trips to Whistler and Victoria.

Visit www.ecotourismconference.org or email sponsorship@ecotourism.org or call 202-347-9203 x 422.