

For more information:

Tr Manggat Meringgai

+60 19 834 7159

Melyen Manggat

+60 11 1060 9926

rumahmanggat@gmail.com

www.facebook.com/rumah.manggat

www.instagram.com/rumah.manggat

Forest Department Sarawak

webmaster@forestry.sarawak.gov.my

+60 82 495111

WWF-Malaysia Sarawak Programme (Kuching Office)

wwf.org.my

+60 82 247420

Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Programme (Kuching Branch)

wcsmalaysia@wcs.org

+60 82 239795

Borneo Adventure

info@borneoadventure.com

+60 82 245175

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**WELCOME TO
ULU SUNGAI MENYANG
BATANG AI, SARAWAK**



**HOME OF THE
MAGNIFICENT ORANG-UTANS**

**A conservation initiative made possible through the
commitment of Rumah Manggat community.**



Supported by:
Federal Ministry
for the Environment, Nature Conservation
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based on a decision of the German Bundestag

RUMAH MANGGAT, a quaint Iban longhouse, is located about 250 km from Kuching, Sarawak state's capital city. To reach the longhouse, one has to travel from Kuching to Lubok Antu district which takes four hours by road. Then, navigate from Batang Ai Dam jetty across the man-made lake towards upriver of Menyang Tais on a longboat for 30 minutes. Upon arrival on the village's jetty, enjoy a 20-minute walk under the lush secondary forests to reach the longhouse.



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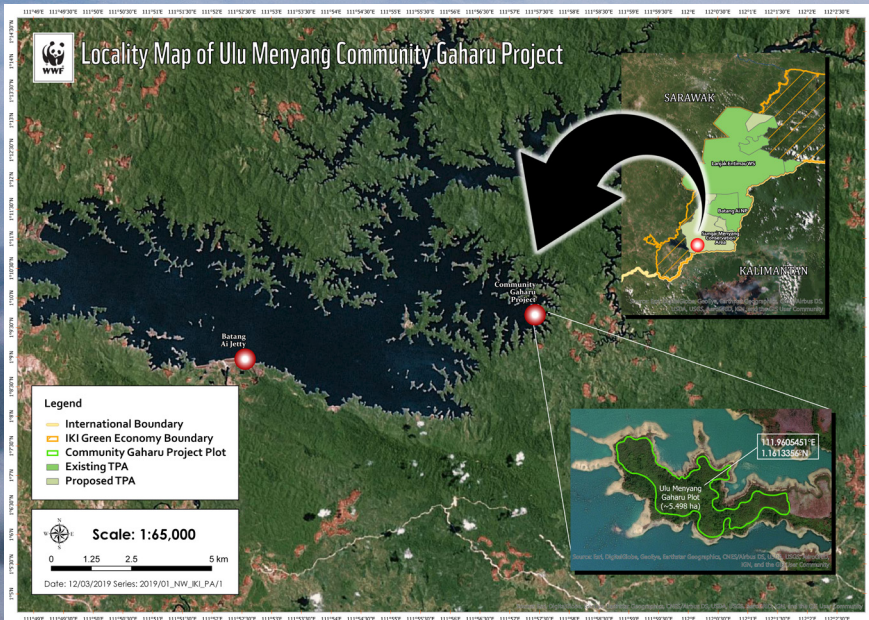
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About Rumah Manggat:

- Named after the current village chief, Manggat Meringai.
- Completed in 1993.
- Made up from Borneo's ironwood, *Eusideroxylon zwageri*.
- Located along two rivers, Sungai Menyang and Sungai Taih. Sungai Menyang is the main river, while the latter is a tributary.
- Both rivers are inundated by Batang Ai Dam.



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Currently, 30 villagers, mainly the elderly, live in this longhouse. They still practice traditional lifestyle with farming as their main source of income. The main crop is hill paddy followed by rubber, pepper and some cash crops.

The longhouse is surrounded by secondary and primary rainforests which form a part of the proposed Ulu Sungai Menyang Conservation Area – making it an ideal home for over 1,000 orang-utans.

Traditional customs in relation to orang-utans:

To this day, folks in Rumah Manggat maintain their traditional culture and some taboos.

Culturally connected to orang-utans, they believe humans are the descendants of orang-utans and will be reincarnated as one when they die. The villagers also believe that orang-utans taught their ancestors on how to give birth and post-natal care.

ECOTOURISM activities in Rumah Manggat started back in 2008 with support from an inbound tour company, Borneo Adventure. Both parties have a long standing community partnership to develop the area as one of the preferred ecotourism destinations in Batang Ai Dam.

In 2010, Wildlife Conservation Society Malaysia Programme (WCS) started some work covering orang-utan nest count, education and awareness, and joint patrol with communities.

Three years down the road, Forest Department Sarawak (FDS) led an expedition and discovered thousands of orang-utan nests in an area covering 14,000 hectares in Ulu Sungai Menyang.

To better protect the area for orang-utans, FDS introduced a community farming project – planting *gaharu* or agarwood (*Aquilaria microcarpa*) – as a means to restore degraded land and create buffer zones between the great ape's habitat and longhouse's farm land. A total of 3,000 *gaharu* trees were successfully planted under the Ulu Sungai Menyang Orang-utan Strategic Action Plan.



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WWF-MALAYSIA joined hands with the longhouse community and FDS in the *gaharu* project in 2017. An additional 11,000 gaharu seedlings were planted on 5.5 hectares of degraded land.

The project has created other economic spin off through a volunteer-tourism programme. FDS brought in volunteers to help with planting and maintaining the *gaharu* farm i.e. weeding, fertilizing and removing pests manually. Besides enjoying nature at its best, volunteers get the chance to experience the Iban warm hospitality and learn their customs during their short stay.

In recent years, FDS also helped to improve basic infrastructure to the longhouse. Sarawak Energy Berhad, the state's main provider of electricity, also installed solar panels so that longhouse folks can enjoy clean power supply.



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Why *gaharu*:

- A native species to Sarawak.
- *Gaharu* leaves are harvested to produce high-grade tea, and generate side income for the community.
- Reforest degraded land and helps keep orang-utan habitat intact.
- Pressure is taken off from converting the land for large-scale agriculture.
- Community and orang-utan continue to coexist in harmony.