Full Detailed Itinerary - Malaysia: Birding the Peninsula

Day 1: Kuala Lumpur

You will be met at the airport and transferred to our hotel in Kuala Lumpur for the night.

Day 2: Kuala Selangor Nature Reserve

We will depart Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, very early to make it to the coastal plain of Kuala Selangor for dawn. The early start will be worthwhile though, as the mixture of mangroves, coastal scrub, and pools though are sure to add a suite of birds found nowhere else on the tour. Our morning targets in the mangroves shall include Mangrove Blue Flycatcher, Mangrove Whistler, and Golden-bellied Gerygone; while other species that may only feature on this day could include Brahminy Kite, Collared Kingfisher, Pink-necked Green-Pigeon, Blue-throated Bee-eater, Brown-capped Woodpecker, Greater and Common Flamebacks, Common Iora (a likely new family for many), and White-bellied Sea-Eagle. In the afternoon, we shall drive east into the hills and the former British hill station of Fraser's Hill, one of the most revered birding sites in all of Asia. Three nights will be spent within the pleasant surrounds of Fraser's Hill, where the well-manicured gardens and native forest hold plentiful hill forest species. Even after our late arrival, it is likely we will bump into some of the more conspicuous inhabitants around town before dark, like Streaked Spiderhunter, Black-throated Sunbird, Chestnut-capped Laughingthrush, Long-tailed Sibia and the spectacular Silver-eared Mesia.

Days 3-4: Fraser's Hill and The Gap

With two full days in this enchanting birding location, we can explore both the top of the hill and the lower elevations around the base of the hill, known as The Gap. While the hill is by no means high (just over 1500m/4900ft. at its very highest point), the forests at the bottom and top vary distinctly in character, with species like Bamboo Woodpecker, Black-thighed Falconet, and Orange-breasted Trogon, for example, only occurring around The Gap. Up on the top, mixed flocks are a major feature of birding life, and these can contain such varied species as Red-headed Trogon, Greater and Lesser Yellownape, Green-billed Malkoha, Orange-bellied Leafbird, Lesser Racket-tailed Drongo, Black-eared Shrike-Babbler, Golden Babbler, and Blue Nuthatch in the mix. Merely walking the forest-lined roads at dawn can be a great birding strategy, as some normally shy interior forest species emerge at the edge and can be seen feeding along the roads; this can apply to Large Niltava and the handsome Rufous-browed Flycatcher. The rasping, near constant calls of the stunning Fire-tufted Barbet are a regular sound at Fraser's, as is the "dripping tap" song of the Little Cuckoo-Dove, the deep hoots of the Mountain Imperial-Pigeon, and the monotonous calls of the Black-browed Barbet; during our few days here we are sure to run into some, or all, of these. The hill is crisscrossed by trails, which give access to shyer interior forest birds like Pygmy Cupwing (a possible new family for some), Lesser Shortwing, and Streaked Wren-Babbler. Some of the scarcer species found in this location include Red-bearded Bee-eater, Green Magpie, Collared Owlet, Silver-breasted and Long-tailed Broadbills, Sultan Tit, Mountain Leaf-Warbler, Malayan and Black Laughingthrushes, and the endemic Malaysian Whistling-Thrush. Overhead we'll be on the lookout for aerial birds like the common Glossy Swiftlet, an ever-present; or the impressive Blyth's Hawk-Eagle or Black Eagle; and, at the lower levels, the graceful Gray-rumped or Whiskered Treeswifts, likely new families for first time visitors to Asia, or even the Rufous-bellied Swallow, a Malaysian endemic. While we are birding in the lovely climate on the hilltop (a

regular weekend retreat for modern Malaysian from the heat of Kuala Lumpur, and formerly for the British gentry during colonial times), we may also run into some of the mammals in the area, like a large black gibbon, the Siamang, or one of the regular troops of Banded Leaf-Monkeys that roam the hillsides. On one of these nights we may linger near The Gap at dusk to watch the emergence of Malaysian Eared-Nightjars, which hawk insects over the treetops at dusk.

Day 5: Fraser's Hill to Taman Negara

On this day we will swap one of Southeast Asia's top birding locales for another, of a very different kind. After a final period in the morning birding the hillforests around Fraser's Hill we will set off for Taman Negara, Malaysia's premier national park. Arriving in the afternoon, we shall check in to our comfortable resort on the edge of the forest and pick up our first birds right around the resort, many of which, will depend on what flowering and fruiting shrubs are present at the time. However, some of the exciting possibilities include the scarce Straw-headed Bulbul (along with an assortment of other bulbuls, including Red-eyed, Stripe-throated and Yellow-vented); Black-thighed Falconet, Blue-crowned Hanging-Parrot, Dark-necked Tailorbird, Jungle Myna, Gray-breasted Spiderhunter, and Brown-throated Sunbird.

Days 6 – 7: Taman Negara

While this is a popular park, by taking a short boat ride, we will quickly leave the crowded trails behind and visit some of the less-visited ones, where not only are we likely to be alone, we will also be in the best areas of the park for birding, with achingly beautiful species like Green, Banded, and Black-and-yellow Broadbills, Malayan Banded and Garnet Pittas, and Red-naped, Scarlet-rumped and Diard's Trogons all possible, along with hordes of babblers and bulbuls. One of the trails we will visit is also dotted with mature, giant Dipterocarp trees, which can be great for woodpeckers; and can produce Great Slaty, Banded, Checker-throated, Maroon, and Rufous Woodpeckers have all been recorded in this area! Our time will be split between walking forest trails, and checking for fruiting trees in the resort, which can attract birds like Gold-whiskered and Red-throated Barbets, Asian Fairy-Bluebird, and Asian Pied-Hornbill. The species list for Taman Negara exceeds 300 species, and so the varied and rich possibilities are entoxicating; we could find birds like Crested Fireback, Stork-billed, Banded and Rufous-collared Kingfishers, Crested Jay, Tickell's and Malaysian Blue Flycatchers, Black-billed and Raffle's Malkohas, and Black-and-red Broadbill. We may also find mammals around Taman Negara too, with possibilities including the spectacular Giant Squirrel, Malay Civet, and both Asia's smalles deer (the tiny Lesser Mouse-Deer), and Asia's largest (the hulking Sambar). The area is also rich in nightbirds, and so there will be optional nightwalks for birds like Sunda Scops-Owl, Gould's and Large Frogmouths.

Day 8: Taman Negara to Kuala Lumpur for DEPARTURE/START BORNEO TOUR

As many flights leave from KL in the evening; after some final birding in Taman Negara we shall return to Malaysia's capital, either for international departures or to fly on to join our exciting Borneo tour, for a swathe of Bornean endemic birds (it boasts more than 40 only found there), and the best mammal viewing in southeast Asia.

Email: info@tropicalbirding.com