

# For a wild time!

If you and your friends are animal lovers and are open to travelling for a good cause, why not consider one of these volunteering holidays that let you get up close with fascinating wildlife? by ELISABETH LEE

## TURTLE RESCUE

The **Perhentian Islands** along the east coast of Malaysia are as close to an earthly paradise as you can get, with white beaches fringed by clear, turquoise waters that are home to a diverse array of marine life. The islands are also a turtle paradise, with Hawksbill, Leatherback, Olive Ridley and Green turtles all calling the Perhentian Islands home. Yet, due to destruction of their habitat and overfishing, nesting numbers have been on the decline, and currently only about one in 10,000 hatchlings survive to adulthood.

Help stop the decline in turtle populations by participating in **Bubbles Dive Resort's Turtle and Reef Conservation Project**. With programmes that range between three days to four weeks, volunteers can work on their tans while they help release hatchlings back into the sea, replant corals and collect data for marine research projects. Relax at the end of the day with a cold beverage and enjoy the warm fuzzy feeling of having made a difference.

### BUBBLES DIVE RESORT

The 3D2N Intro To Conservation package starts at RM540 (about S\$215) per person, including meals and accommodation. Longer packages start at RM1,360 per person, including accommodation and some meals. [www.bubblesdc.com](http://www.bubblesdc.com)



## BE BEAR AWARE

If you love to get close to big furry creatures, consider spending a week or two at a bear rescue shelter in **Phnom Penh, Cambodia**. Bears in Southeast Asia are under threat from poachers, as their gallbladders are used in Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Non-profit organisation **Personal Overseas Development** provides volunteers with opportunities to work with a bear rescue shelter in Phnom Penh that cares for more than 150 rescued bears, including endangered Malayan Sun Bears and Asiatic Black Bears. Volunteers help feed bears and maintain the enclosures.

### PERSONAL OVERSEAS DEVELOPMENT

A two-week volunteer programme costs US\$940 (about S\$1,150) per person and includes land transfers, training, accommodation, transport and two meals a day. [www.podvolunteer.org](http://www.podvolunteer.org)



## SEPILOK ORANG UTAN REHABILITATION CENTRE

Packages start at RM155 (about S\$62) per person for a half-day tour; the 3D2N tour package costs RM1,780 for two people including accommodation and most meals. [www.stwadventure.com](http://www.stwadventure.com)

## HELP THE ORPHAN ORANGUTANS

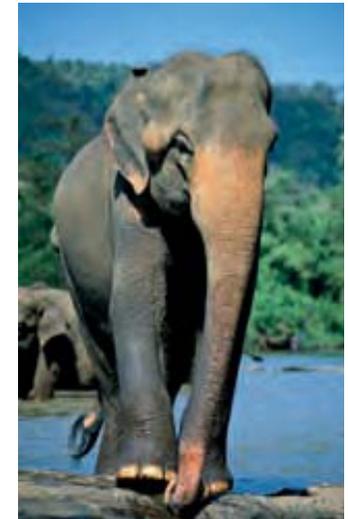
**Sandakan in Sabah, East Malaysia** is home to the world-famous **Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre**, set amid 4,300 hectares of lush protected rainforest. Administered by the Wildlife Department of Sabah, the centre not only cares for orphaned baby orangutans, but also funds research and conservation activities in the area. There are plenty of options here for 'voluntourists' — those who volunteer and tour at the same

time. Sepilok Tropical Wildlife Adventure works together with the Sepilok Jungle Resort to organise a 3D2N tour that takes you to the Sepilok Orang Utan Rehabilitation Centre and also includes treks and cave expeditions. If you have less time, you can opt for the half-day tour to the rehabilitation centre where you can feed the orangutans.

## GET ECOLOGICAL WITH ELEPHANTS

As Sri Lanka continues to develop and undergo urban expansion, the natural habitats of its indigenous animals are increasingly coming under threat. Animal welfare and wildlife conservation organisation **The Great Projects** seeks to promote sustainable rural development while developing strategies to help conserve the populations of elephants, leopards and other wildlife in the central provinces of Sri Lanka.

Volunteering with The Great Elephant Project provides a great opportunity to interact and observe elephants in their natural habitat at the **Wasgamuwa National Park in central Sri Lanka**. You will also get to experience the country's rich natural landscape, from tropical rainforests to dry grasslands, while contributing to research and conservation in a meaningful way.



### THE GREAT PROJECTS

A two-week volunteer programme costs US\$2,185 (about S\$2,672) per person and includes land transfers, accommodation and meals. [www.thegreatprojects.com](http://www.thegreatprojects.com)