

Lonely Planet review for Lamin Dana

The main attraction is Kampung Tellian, a quaint kampung laced with waterways and plank walks along the river. In Kampung Tellian, you'll find Lamin Dana, a superb cultural enterprise and living museum in a semitraditional Melanau house overlooking a river.

Among the activities here are traditional massage by the village midwife, river tours to a sago farm and old-style sago bakehouse, and tastings of Melanau delicacies such as *umai* (raw fish marinated in lime and onions), smoked fish and sago shoots. Cultural shows can also be arranged. Contact the centre in advance if you intend to visit, and bear in mind that during Chinese New Year, the fourth week of December and the Kaul Festival, accommodation is usually full.

To reach Lamin Dana from Mukah, take a Tellian bus (80 sen) and tell the conductor where you want to go. Lamin Dana can also arrange longboat transport to and from the water village - an enjoyable way to reach the town centre. Walking takes about 45 minutes.

The rooms at the cultural centre in Kampung Tellian are simply furnished and the toilets and showers are clean. A Melanau-style breakfast is included in the price. The house has only nine rooms (eight standard and one family), so booking is a good idea, especially if you want to take part in activities. Lamin Dana can arrange private transport to/from Mukah.

Lamin Dana a place where the young could learn traditional music, dance and craft. Melanau community built tall houses to keep safe from pirates, headhunters and wild animals. It has developed into a centre that keeps Melanau culture and identity alive.

Lamin Dana is located along Telian River. The river is the cradle of the Melanau culture and civilisation in Mukah and has a 1,000-year-old history. The Telian River weaves between the traditional homes, inter-linking one area with another. The connecting waterway is the main mode of transport here.

Along this river, you can see the hunder over years old Melanau coffins because they did not bury their dead. Instead, they put the bodies in wooden coffins in the shape of boats. The coffins were placed on wooden platforms on poles raised about 2m from the ground.

Key Tips

Walking around Mukah is very safe because no one disturbs you and at night, it is relaxing to sit around in the open-air coffee shops sipping drinks, eating umai and watching the Melanau community go by.

How to get there

By road.

Getting to Mukah means a bumpy, three-hour drive from Sibü because the roads are really in a deplorable condition.

By flight.

Malaysia Airlines have daily flights to Mukah operated using twin-otter plane from Kuching.

By boat.

Express boat also available from Kuching and Sibü.

An option for overnight stays in Mukah is a newly constructed Melanau longhouse, Lamin Dana (or 'traditional house' in ancient Melanau dialect). This, the first longhouse to be built in 200 years on the river bank in Sungai Tellian, is on the site of one which burned down 100 years ago.

As well as being an imaginative tourist project, Lamin Dana represents an effort to preserve or re-create a culture which is on the brink of disappearing forever. A stay at Lamin Dana offers the opportunity to experience Mukah culture from traditional dance (including dance lessons!), Melanau cuisine, games, massage, eco and village tours.

Mukah

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Mukah, [Malaysia](#), is a coastal town which serves as the administrative center of the *Mukah District* (2,536 square kilometers) in [Mukah Division](#), [Sarawak](#). It is located on the [South China Sea](#), about 3.5 hours by road from the town of [Sibü](#). The district population (year 2000 census) was 47,900, and was overwhelmingly ethnic [Melanau](#).

Mukah is an ancient trading and fishing port, situated at the mouth of the Mukah River adjacent to the South China Sea. Historically, the town was an outpost of the Sultanate of Brunei. It became part of Sarawak in 1861. It is now the centre of Melanau culture, and the "Pesta Kaul" festival, celebrated by the local fishermen in April

to appease the spirits of the sea, is one of the major events of the Melanau calendar. Just beyond the center of town is the *Lamin Dana Water Village*, which contains a *Melanau Cultural Center*.

The Mukah hinterland was traditionally a major sago producing area. Of late however, most of the predominantly peat swamp areas that dominate the hinterland have been developed into oil palm plantations.

~ Mukah Kaul Festival ~

Festival Date: 23 APR ~ 01 MAY 2011

The Melanau community festival or Kaul appeases the spirits of the sea, land, forests and farm celebrates the end of the rainy season and the start of the fishing season in late March or April.



The Melanau are a seafaring and sago-growing people who live on the coast of [Sarawak](#) between the mouth of the Rajang River and Bintulu.

The origins of Kaul go back centuries to the time when the Melanau were animists. Today most of them are Catholics or Muslims and often adherents of the two religions in the same family live in the same house, But they still celebrate Kaul with gusto. The old animist religion may not be practiced these days but the legends live on.



The festival is celebrated on different days in the many Melanau settlements along the coast. The *Tibou*, the death defying 20-foot high swing, is one of the highlights of Kaul. Here youths dive from a high bamboo scaffolding and catch a swinging liana rope as it reaches the height of its arc. First one, then two and eventually eight young men hanging in a clump from the giant swing as it soars above the beach. Kaul is about more than giant swings. It's a colourful festival with a flotilla of highly decorated boats, beach games and lots of delicious Melanau food. Traditionally, during the monsoon, the river mouths were closed.

Villages would be *palei* or taboo for days before Kaul. No one was allowed to leave or enter,

and people underwent purification ceremonies during Kaul.

At the start of Kaul, the highly decorated fishing boats move down river carrying these *seraheng*, a flat round basket raised on a bamboo pole. It is placed on a riverbank while the *Bapa Kaul* or leader of the ceremony invokes the spirits and pours water over the offerings. In the past the sick and elderly would gather by the 'seraheng' so that the water poured on the offerings would fall on them and wash away all evil. Today the ceremony is of social rather than religious significance.



After the ceremony there are games on the beach, displays of Melanau martial arts, dancing and eating. The festivities do not stop with sunset, they just move to the Melanau houses built on rivers and streams where there are cultural performances and non stop feasting.

The attractive native dwellings give the fishing villages near Mukah, the air of a bamboo Venice and their hospitality is legendary.

Visitors to Kaul soon find why Melanau cuisine is famed throughout [Sarawak](#). The versatile sago has become their staple food. Guests palates are surprised at the many delicious ways sago can be prepared and with the addition of seafood, visitors enjoy the appetising variety of tasty treats.

Mukah, located in Central Sarawak is slowly emerging into an important coastal town with a bright future. Its population are mainly Melanau where they are know as the sago-eating tribe. Kuching city on the other hand is located at the Western tip of Sarawak. There are many ways to go to Mukah and one can go to Mukah either by car, plane from or by boat from Sibu. It takes over 5 hours to reach Mukah from Sibu.

The local Melanaus in Mukah, Sarawak recently celebrated the Kaul Festival (Pesta Kaul). It was a myriad of events with more than 10,000 people attending it. This festival is unique to the Melanaus is held every year around the month of March to April. Kaul Festival is a thanksgiving festival to appease the spirits of the farms, forests, land and sea. The Melanaus would express their gratitude to the spirits for keeping them safe through the monsoon season. They are also expressing their desire for an abundance of fishes caught on their fishing journeys.

The main highlights in the event is the "tibau", a traditional giant swing 20 feet high. Young people would daringly dive down to catch a swinging rope. This is obviously not for the faint hearted. Graceful dancers also performed at the event with their traditional alu-alu dance. Sri Ritma won the first prize with rm2,000 prize money. Other activities included martial arts demonstrations and parade by local community leaders. It is at this event that you get to witness the many facets of the Melanau community.

The most famous dish from Mukah would be the umai dish, which is a raw fish delicacy prepared out of raw fish and consumed in the form of salad. Several different types of raw fishes are used for preparing Umai. You can either have it plain, sliced fish with spicy chili

sauce or raw fish mixed with lime juice, sliced onions, chilies, sugar and salt. The other popular dish would be the sago pellet.

Come visit Mukah and learn about culture and their uniqueness.

Sandy K, a local sarawakian wants to introduce Sarawak to the whole world. Though legally trained, her first love has always been in writing, traveling, internet and entrepreneurship. She wants to use her expertise to help expose the mystical beauty of her homeland to the world at large with the power of internet media. For more information about Sarawak, do visit

KAUL FESTIVAL OF MUKAH

The majority race of Mukah is *Melanau*. **Kaul** is a traditional festival celebrated by Melanau in the third week of April, annually. In the past, it was a ceremony to appease the spirits of the sea & land. Today, most of the Malanau people have converted to either Muslim or Christian. Kaul became a social-cultural gathering for Melanau.

Melanau People

The Melanaus, believed by many to be the oldest settlers in Sarawak, make up about nearly 6% of Sarawak total population and are geographically concentrated in the central coastal region, between the Rajang and Baram rivers.

A majority of them are either Christians or Muslims. In their heartland of Mukah better known as the 'Cradle of Melanau civilisation', the Melanaus have abandoned living in their traditional tall houses and now favour coastal *kampung*-style villages, having adopted a Malay lifestyle.

The Melanaus were once seafaring people and were known to be *sagofarmers* as well as adept boat builders and fishermen. Although the Melanaus speak their own dialect, the language is not too far different from that spoken by the Sarawakian Malays. The Melanau people are well known for their massive longhouses, some of which can reach up to 40 feet high.

These diverse people, related by their use of dialects of the same language group. Majority of them are Muslims but some are Christian or practice their traditional religion. The Melanaus used to practice a custom of flattening the head by applying a wooden device to the forehead of infants.



Pesta Kaul Logo



Tibow - a traditional giant swing sometimes 20-feet high, from which youths would dive down to catch a swinging rope.





The Tibow, the death defying 20-foot high swing, here youths dive from a high bamboo scaffolding and catch a swinging one rope as it reaches the height of its arc.



seraheng



Melanau Traditional dances



women in traditional Melanau costume



The tools to make sago pellets. (famous food from Mukah)



The famous dish from Mukah - u-mai(fresh raw fish) & the sago pellets (lower part of this picture)



decorated fishing boats move down river carrying the "seraheng"



Terendak is a trademark of Melanau culture

Kaul Festival @ Pesta Kaul

The best-known festival celebrated by the Melanau is the **Kaul Festival (Pesta Kaul)**. Originating from the animistic beliefs traditionally held by the Melanau, the Pesta Kaul is held annually, usually in March or early April, as a purification and thanks giving to appease the spirits of the sea, land, forests and farm.

This festival is celebrated by the Melanau people living in the coastal settlements in Mukah, Sarawak (Borneo Island). Through the festival, the Melanau people offer their thanks to the spirits for keeping them safe through the monsoon season, and ask for a good bounty on their fishing trips.

Today, however, the Pesta Kaul is celebrated more as a cultural festival, rather than a religious one. One of the highlights of this festival is the **Tibow**, a traditional giant swing sometimes 20-feet high, from which youths would dive down to catch a swinging rope.

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Villages would be *palei* or taboo for days before Kaul. No one was allowed to leave or enter, and people underwent purification ceremonies during Kaul. The highly decorated fishing boats move down river carrying the *seraheng*, a flat round basket raised on a bamboo pole. It is placed on a riverbank while the *Bapa Kaul* or leader of the ceremony invokes the spirits and pours water over the offerings. In the past the sick and elderly would gather by the 'seraheng' so that the water poured on the offerings would fall on them and wash away all evil. Today the ceremony is of social rather than religious significance.

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versatile sago has become their staple food. Guests palates are surprised at the many delicious ways sago can be prepared and with the addition of seafood, visitors enjoy the appetizing variety of tasty treats.

The festival would not be complete without its boat racing. These boat races range from dugout boats to 40-horsepower motorised boats. For the men who participate, money isn't everything. They prize recognition and esteem far more than banknotes.

Kaul is also the right time to sample some of the Melanau delicacies. With their ancestors being fishermen, it comes as no surprise that most of their food involves fish. Umai, spicy raw fish salad marinated in lime is the Melanau signature dish. Visitors can also experience ikan salai, smoked fish which smoulders your taste buds with its tangy, smoked, yet succulent, silky flavours.

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TERENDAK

One of the most popular souvenirs among visitors today is the conical-shaped terendak hat originated from the Melanaus. Melanau women are skilled at weaving them from sago palm strips and wild sang leaves, using rattan strips as binding. Intricate designs give the terendak a beauty that never goes out of style.