

PRESS RELEASE

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VM2026 HUNT & EXPLORE MEDIA RACE 2026 HIGHLIGHTS SANDAKAN AS A TOURISM DESTINATION, DRIVING VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

SANDAKAN – Tourism Malaysia today, through its Sabah office successfully hosted the Visit Malaysia 2026 Hunt & Explore Media Race 2026 to showcase Sandakan's diverse eco-tourism, cultural, and heritage attractions across media and digital channels.

Aimed at positioning Sandakan as a premier destination on Sabah's east coast, the programme encouraged participants to explore and experience its unique attractions while sharing their journey with the mass audiences. The programme recorded a total of 121 participants from 31 teams, representing media, influencer and open categories.

Witnessed by Mr. Khairul Amir Anuar, Deputy Director of Tourism Malaysia Sabah, the race flag-off ceremony was officiated by YB Datuk Jafry Haji Ariffin, the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Environment Sabah at 7.30 a.m. before the participants headed off to their journey in Sandakan.

Throughout the day, participants faced various challenges such as interactive photo hunts, scavenger hunts and race tasks, designed to showcase key ecological and historic landmarks. The route covered key destinations across wildlife, nature, heritage, culture and local experiences, including the Bornean Sun Bear Conservation Centre (BSBCC), Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre (SORC), Rainforest Discovery Centre (RDC), Masjid Jamek Sandakan, One Hundred Steps, Agnes Keith House, St. Michael & All Angels Church, Puh Jih Shih Temple, Sandakan Market and San De Gan Café.

After the race concluded at 5.00 p.m., the programme wrapped up with a Gala Dinner and Prize Giving Ceremony at Tropicana Hall, Elopura Hotel, with the theme "Hunter", bringing together participants, organisers and invited guests to rejoice after a long day.

The active involvement of media representatives and content creators served as a key driver for the event, generating extensive editorial coverage, photography, and video content across digital platforms. Participant feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many highlighting the value of experiencing Sabah's unique attractions firsthand. Initiatives of this nature communicate a stronger message to international markets, providing a strong foundation as Malaysia ramps up promotional initiatives to sustain arrival growth through 2027.



Through strategic media engagement like this, Tourism Malaysia aims to continuously highlight Sandakan's rich biodiversity, iconic wildlife sanctuaries, including the Bornean Sun Bear as well as other unique heritage sites. Mirroring the VM2026 Sun Bear mascots, Wira and Manja, these authentic eco-tourism experiences spotlight Sabah's wildlife appeal to attract key international markets throughout the campaign.

Held in conjunction with the Visit Malaysia 2026–2027 campaign, the programme is hoped to contribute to the campaign's target of 47 million international visitor arrivals by attracting them to explore Sandakan's tourism potential on the east coast of Sabah. From January to August 2026, Malaysia welcomed 28.8 million international visitor arrivals, an increase of 1.8 per cent compared to 28.2 million in the same period last year, demonstrating the country's steady performance as a top-of-mind destination.

For further details, kindly refer to media kit :

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1W_K2ogGrpod6Q-zzMc_ztEdY_pWvedC0?usp=drive_link

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About Tourism Malaysia

Malaysia Tourism Promotion Board, also known as Tourism Malaysia, is an agency under the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture Malaysia (MOTAC). It focuses on promoting Malaysia as a preferred tourism destination and has, since its establishment, played a significant role in strengthening the country's presence and competitiveness in the global tourism landscape.

Visit Malaysia 2026-2027 (VM2026-2027) underscores Malaysia's commitment to sustainable tourism development, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs). The campaign aims to showcase the nation's diverse natural attractions, rich cultural heritage, and vibrant tourism offerings, while driving inclusive growth and long-term value for local communities and industry stakeholders.

For more information, visit Tourism Malaysia's website www.tourism.gov.my and social media accounts on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [YouTube](#), and [TikTok](#).

For enquiries, please contact:

Khairul Amir Anuar
Deputy Director
Tourism Malaysia Sabah
khairulamir@tourism.gov.my
Tel: +6088-211732

Norshariza Mohd Saad
Deputy Director
Corporate Communications Division
norshariza@tourism.gov.my
Tel: +603 8891 8775

