

Taman Negara Tropical Rainforest - Malaysia



Taman Negara is located in the middle of the Malaysian Peninsula. Malaysia is located in SE Asia and its capital city is Kuala Lumpur. Taman Negara is believed to be the World's tropical rainforest. This Rainforest is 4343 km² big. The altitude ranges from 60m to 2187m at the summit of Gunung Tahan Mountain. The average annual rainfall in this area is about 2200mm and the type of rainfall in this region is always convectional as there is high amount of heat and the land gets heated up very quickly at day its 26°C and at night up to 22°C, also makes the area very uninhabitable with 90 % humidity. The rainforest is distributed among three states: Pahang, Kelantan and Terengganu.

Taman Negara has 14000 species of plants, 200 mammals and 340 types of trees can be found in a mere hectare of this lush rainforest. It remains as the home of a large variety of wildlife including the sambar, barking deer, tapir, tigers, elephant, gaurs, leopards, sun bear, monkeys, wild boars and the Sumatran rhinoceros but monkeys are most commonly seen.

Malaysia still has large areas of rainforest, but some estimates suggest that it could reduce to 25% coverage by 2020. Deforestation in Malaysia has been caused by a number of things including:

- Clear felling to plant rubber plantations
- Population growth and urbanization
- Clear felling to plant palm oil

- Industrial and recreational developments e.g. factories and golf courses
- To sell timber for furniture

There are many negative impacts of the human interference in rainforests and is harmful and certain possible impacts of it are:

- Building New **Roads** Divide Up Parts Of The Rainforest And Can Cut Off Connections Between Different *Biotic* And *Abiotic* Systems.
- **Land Clearance** For Farming, Transportation And Mining Can Lead To **Deforestation**. Hardwood Trees Take Many Years To Grow So Can Be Difficult To Replace.

DEFORESTATION

- **Flooding & Landslides:** Flash floods become more common after deforestation because there is less interception and less root uptake and transpiration. As such rainwater reaches the ground quick, saturating it and causing surface run-off and potential flooding. By removing trees and vegetation, you are making the soil less stable. Combine this with saturated ground and the likelihood of floods increases.
- **Reduced Photosynthesis and Rainfall:** As more and more trees are removed the rate of photosynthesis reduces, releasing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and contributing to the greenhouse effect. Reduction in local rainfall because less water is intercepted and transpired from vegetation into the atmosphere reducing the formation of clouds and rainfall.
- **Breaking of nutrient cycle:** The top soil of rainforests is very thin and receives the majority of its nutrients from rotting flora and fauna. By removing trees you also remove animals and therefore the source of the soils nutrients. With increased erosion the top soil (humus) layer is quickly washed away.
- **Loss of native homes:** By clearing rainforests you are obviously destroying the homes of indigenous groups. But also moving close to indigenous groups can spread disease and alter local culture and traditions.

Most of Malaysia's early deforestation was clear felling (the total removal of all trees) which is by far the most damaging basically removing an entire ecosystem. However, the Malaysian government has increasingly understood the importance of rainforests and has tried to protect. Some of the methods that they have used include:

- ✓ Selective cutting: This is where only certain trees or groups of trees are cut down leaving the majority of the ecosystem intact.
- ✓ Reducing the use of heavy damaging equipment and limiting the number of access tracks.
- ✓ Increasing the number of National Parks and protected land.
- ✓ Experimenting with helilogging to reduce impact on the rest of the forest
- ✓ Increasing ecotourism which gives the forest economic value
- ✓ Trying more urban forestry e.g. planting trees along roads
- ✓ Encouraging villages to grow traditional local crops and become more self-sufficient

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