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Under the spell of islands

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There are many beautiful islands off the coast of Sabah that make idyllic getaways and they're just a short boat ride away



Snorkelling and diving are popular activities at Mataking Island

SOME people prefer the rugged terrain of Sabah's many rainforests, while others rise to the challenge of Mount Kinabalu. Sabah's allures are aplenty, but if you really want to fall in love with her, an island escape will have you craving for more.

The combination of soft sand under your feet, the tropical heat on your skin and blue green waters of the sea is nothing short of romantic. Sabah is home to many island escapes, some renowned for their diving sites while others are perfect for doing

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nothing at all. Whatever your choice, the perfect pulau (island) awaits you. Don't forget the sunblock!

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, the nearest group of islands to Kota Kinabalu, is made up of five islands – Manukan, Mamutik, Gaya, Sapi and Sulug.

Manukan, Mamutik and Sapi are popular picks, famous for water sports. Sapi and Sulug are ideal for sunbathing and a lazy day out while Gaya's charm lies in its resort. Even better, these islands are a mere 20 minutes away from Kota Kinabalu.

Mabul Island

Semporna is the gateway to some of the best dive spots and breathtaking beaches in the region. For avid divers, Mabul should be on your list (right next to Sipadan). Great for muck diving, it is one of the best macro dive sites in the world. A seasoned scuba diver from the US once said: "It's like being in an aquarium!" Mabul also has some of the best island resorts. For non-divers, there's a fantastic floating spa with a glorious view of the sea!

Kapalai Island

Ironically, Kapalai isn't quite an island. This floating marvel (also off the coast of Semporna) is made up of stunning water bungalows connected by an extensive wooden boardwalk. The water is so clear that visitors can spend hours mesmerised by the marine life below, from beautiful lionfish to graceful squid. Visit www.sipadan-kapalai.com

Mataking Island

Mataking is located furthest from the coast of Sabah, but the one-hour journey by speedboat is worth every minute. At the Mataking Dive Resort, you'll be treated like royalty. Mataking has great dive spots too and so totally romantic. Imagine taking long walks with a loved one along the sandbank at low tide or the breeze caressing your face as you enjoy a cocktail at the bar. Visit www.mataking.com

Lankayan Island

Sandakan may be famous for its wildlife and historical sites, but if you care to venture further off the coast, Lankayan promises a pleasant surprise. The first thing you'll notice is the soft white sand and sparkling waters. Apart from diving, Lankayan is great for sunset swims, afternoon siestas in a hammock outside your cabin or admiring black-tip baby sharks that swim right up to the shore. Visit <http://www.lankayan-island.com/>

For more information, log on to
www.sabahtourism.com or check with your local
dive operators.



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