

31 HIDDEN STORIES. ONE CITY.

Your discovery begins here.

#FIND31KK



A Social Community Experiment By
HELOLOKAL

WHAT'S THIS PROJECT ABOUT?

31 Stories Hidden in Plain Sight

There is a different way to experience a city.

Not through brochures.

Not through tour buses.

But through curiosity, movement, and the small details that we often overlook.

This project was born from a simple question:

What if exploring Kota Kinabalu could feel like a game — one that anyone can play for free?

So, we explored to experiment the idea and created 31 mini pop art pieces, each carefully placed across the city — some easy to spot, others hidden in unexpected corners. Together, they form a trail of stories waiting to be discovered by locals and travellers alike.

This is not a paid attraction. There are no tickets, no schedules, no rules.

Just a simple invitation: Walk, look closer, rediscover the city and share the story/joy on your social media.

WHY WE DID THIS?

We believe tourism should:

- Benefit local spaces and small businesses
- Encourage people to slow down and explore
- Create meaningful, shareable moments

Through this initiative, we hope to:

- Bring foot traffic into different parts of the city
- Spark curiosity among younger audiences
- Turn everyday places into points of interest

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ABOUT THE 31 ITEMS

So what's the significance behind these 31 items?

They represent a blend of the past, the present, and moments of reflection—together shaping what Sabah is today.

At first glance, they may seem like a collection of random favourites, bits of information, and fun facts. But each one carries a story.

For curious locals, they spark a sense of familiarity and nostalgia.

For travellers, they offer a glimpse into the spirit of Sabah and its people—though, of course, Sabah is far more than what can be captured here.

More than anything, this is an invitation: to explore, to discover, and simply to enjoy the journey.

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The Reality Behind It

This project was started with own resources. BUT, the time taken to conceptualise, design and deploy is priceless.

Every piece you discover represents effort, belief, and a hope that small ideas can create BIG positive impact.

We also subtly added PSA in between to remind people to do good to the wildlives, animals.

What Do We Hope to Achieve?

We don't just want people to "find all 31".

We hope this becomes:

- A shared experience across communities
- A platform to highlight local stories
- A starting point for something bigger in Sabah
- More opportunities for local businesses

Sometimes, all it takes is one small discovery to see a city differently.

"Not everything is meant to be obvious."

"Look closer."

"You're closer than you think."

THE 31 STORIES

1. SABAH'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER
2. THE SKILLED BAJAU HORSEMEN
3. SABAH'S STRAY CATS & DOGS (PLEASE BE KIND)
4. THE FRIENDLY BAJAU SAMAH
5. THE HOSPITABLE KADAZANDUSUNS
6. THE MURUT LONG TAIL BOAT
7. KOTA BELUD TUDUNG DUANG
8. TONGOD'S DUSUN KALABUAN WOMEN PADDY FARMERS
9. THE SABAH TEA
10. SABAH FISH MARKET SELLER
11. SABAH'S DUSUN PADDY FARMERS
12. SABAH'S FAVOURITE TUARAN MEE
13. LINOPOT RICE SET
14. GAYA STREET TRADER
15. THE AMBUYAT SET
16. DONGGONGON TAMU SELLER
17. THE GAYA STREET FOOD SELLERS
18. BORENOS SABAH'S OWNED FAST FOOD
19. GONGS, KULINTANGAN AND SOMPOTON
20. RICE WINE "LIHING" IN TAJAU
21. PROTECT WILDLIFE: SABAH ELEPHANTS AND PROSBOSCIS MONKEY, ETC
22. TENOM COFFEE
23. FAMOUS LAKSA YEE FUNG
24. SABAH'S UNITY IN DIVERSITY
25. THE WELCOMING DUSUN RUNGUS
26. SABAH'S TIMELESS BEEF NOODLE, NGIU CHAP
27. SABAH LOCAL CONTENT CREATORS
28. THE TIKAM TIKAM GAME
29. SABAH LOCAL PRODUCTS/BRANDS
30. SABAH SOTONG KETUK LEGEND
31. HELOLOKAL (GAME OVER!)

THE 31 STORIES

1. SABAH'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER (DAILY EXPRESS)

Long before news travelled at the speed of a swipe, Sabah's stories were inked onto paper – carefully printed, folded, and passed from hand to hand. In kopitiams and quiet corners, people gathered not just to read, but to connect. Headlines sparked conversations. Columns carried voices that mattered. These newspapers weren't just information – they were a reflection of a growing Sabah, documenting its struggles, its hopes, and its everyday life. Today, even as the world moves faster, these pages remind us of a time when stories were meant to be held, shared, and remembered.

2. THE SKILLED BAJAU HORSE MAN

In Kota Belud, the rhythm of hooves tells a story of heritage and pride. The Bajau horsemen are not simply riders – they are performers, guardians of tradition, and symbols of identity. During festivals, they move with elegance and control, their horses responding as if they were one. This connection is built over years, passed down through generations. It is a quiet mastery, shaped by discipline and respect. Watching them, you don't just see skill – you witness a living tradition that continues to carry Sabah's cultural spirit forward.

3. SABAH'S STRAY CATS & DOGS (PLEASE BE KIND)

They are part of the city's rhythm – unnoticed by many, yet always present. Stray cats and dogs wander the streets of Kota Kinabalu, finding shelter where they can, surviving day by day. Some were once pets, others born into this life. Their stories are rarely told, but they exist in every quiet glance and cautious step. Kindness towards them is not a grand act – it is found in small gestures. A little food, a gentle approach, a moment of care. Because how we treat the most vulnerable among us says everything about who we are.

THE 31 STORIES

4. THE FRIENDLY BAJAU SAMAH

The Bajau Samah are a subgroup of the Bajau people in Sabah, primarily living on land along the west coast and in inland areas. Unlike the Bajau Laut—often known as sea nomads—the Bajau Samah are settled communities with strong ties to agriculture, fishing, and horse culture. They are well known for their horsemanship, especially in areas like Kota Belud, where they are sometimes referred to as the “Cowboys of the East.” Culturally, they have a more land-based lifestyle, established villages, and distinct dialects, customs, and traditions that set them apart from their seafaring relatives.

5. THE HOSPITABLE KADAZANDUSUN

Step into a Kadazandusun home, and you will quickly understand what hospitality truly means. It is not about formality, but sincerity. Guests are welcomed with warmth, food is shared generously, and stories flow easily. Rooted deeply in agricultural traditions, their lives are closely tied to the land — and to one another. Celebrations like Kaamatan are not just festivals, but expressions of gratitude, culture, and community. In their presence, you are not just visiting — you are included.

6. THE MURUT LONG TAIL BOAT

Along Sabah’s rivers, the Murut long tail boat moves with quiet purpose. Long, narrow, and steady, it has carried people, goods, and stories for generations. These rivers were once the main highways, connecting villages and families across distances that would otherwise feel vast. Every journey on these waters is a reminder of how communities adapted, survived, and thrived with nature as their guide. The boat is more than transport — it is a symbol of resilience and connection.

THE 31 STORIES

7. KOTA BELUD TUDUNG DUANG

The Tudung Duang is instantly recognisable – wide, elegant, and deeply rooted in Bajau culture. Traditionally worn by women in Kota Belud, it offers both function and identity, shielding from the sun while reflecting heritage. But beyond its practicality, it represents pride. Each piece carries craftsmanship, tradition, and a quiet dignity. In a modern world, it stands as a reminder that culture can still be worn, seen, and celebrated. Today, its being used to cover food or as decorations.

8. TONGOD'S DUSUN KALABUAN WOMEN PADDY FARMERS

In Tongod, the work begins early. Under the sun, women bend over the fields, planting and tending to rice with patience and strength. These are not just farmers – they are the backbone of their communities. Their hands carry knowledge passed down through generations, their efforts ensuring that families are fed and traditions are preserved. There is dignity in this labour, even if it often goes unseen. In every grain of rice, there is a story of resilience.

9. THE SABAH TEA

Nestled in the cool highlands, Sabah Tea plantations stretch across rolling hills, where the air feels different – lighter, calmer. Here, time slows. The process of growing, harvesting, and preparing tea is one of patience and care. Each cup tells a story of the land, the climate, and the people behind it. It is not just a drink, but an experience – one that invites you to pause, breathe, and appreciate the quieter side of Sabah.

10. SABAH FISH MARKET SELLER

Before most of the city wakes, the fish market is already alive. Sellers call out, buyers move quickly, and the scent of the sea fills the air. This is where the ocean meets the people. Behind every stall is a story of early mornings, hard work, and daily survival. These sellers are the bridge between fishermen and families, ensuring fresh food reaches every table. It is a rhythm repeated every day, forming an essential part of Sabah's food culture.

THE 31 STORIES

11.SABAH'S DUSUN PADDY FARMERS

Rice farming among the Dusun is not just about agriculture – it is deeply spiritual and cultural. Rituals, beliefs, and traditions are woven into every stage, from planting to harvest. The land is respected, and the process is guided by knowledge passed down through generations. This connection creates a sense of balance – between people, nature, and sustenance. In every harvest, there is gratitude.

12.SABAH'S FAVORITE TUARAN MEE

Golden, slightly smoky, and unmistakably local – Tuaran Mee is more than a dish. It is comfort. Often cooked over charcoal, its flavour carries a distinct richness that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Families gather around it, conversations happen over it, and memories are built with it. Simple ingredients, prepared with care – sometimes, that's all it takes to create something unforgettable.

13.LINOPOT RICE SET

Wrapped neatly in leaves, Linopot is a meal that reflects simplicity and tradition for the KadazanDusuns. The act of wrapping rice and side dishes together is practical, yet deeply cultural. It speaks of a time when food was prepared with intention, designed to be carried and shared. Today, Linopot remains a symbol of heritage – a reminder that even the simplest meals can carry deep meaning.

14.GAYA STREET TRADER

Gaya Street is more than a place – it is an experience. Traders line the street with goods that range from handmade crafts to everyday items. Each stall represents effort, livelihood, and resilience. Behind every product is a person, a family, a story. Walking through, you don't just browse – you witness the heartbeat of small businesses that keep the local economy alive.

THE 31 STORIES

15. THE AMBUYAT SET

Ambuyat is another staple dish made from Sagu palm starch. Known for its gooey, sticky and bland taste. It is not just eaten – it is shared. It requires a specific way to enjoy, often accompanied by a variety of side dishes and sauces. The experience is communal, bringing people together around the table. It is a reminder that food is not only about taste, but connection.

16. DONGGONGON TAMU SELLER

At the tamu, everything feels alive. Farmers, artisans, and traders gather to sell what they have grown or made on specific days. Fresh vegetables, handmade goods, and local delicacies fill the space. It is not just a market – it is a weekly tradition, a meeting point for communities. Here, the connection between land and people is visible in every transaction.

17. GAYA STREET FOOD SELLER

As the sun sets, a different energy takes over. The smell of grilled food fills the air, lights flicker on, and people gather. Gaya Street becomes a place of flavour, laughter, and movement. These food sellers are part of the city's nightlife identity, offering not just meals, but experiences.

18. BORENOS - SABAH'S OWN FAST FOOD

In a world dominated by global brands, Borenos stands proudly as a homegrown success. Built on local taste and identity, it represents the ability of Sabah to create, not just consume. It is more than fast food – it is a symbol of what local ambition can achieve.

THE 31 STORIES

19. GONGS, KULINTANGAN & SOMPOTON

Before modern instruments, there were these. The deep resonance of gongs, the rhythmic patterns of kulintangan, and the unique sound of the sompoton form the musical soul of Sabah. These instruments are not just played – they are felt. They bring communities together, marking celebrations, rituals, and identity.

20. RICE WINE “LIHING” IN TAJAU

Stored in traditional clay jars known as tajau, Lihing is more than a drink. It is part of celebration, ceremony, and community. The process of making it requires patience and knowledge. When shared, it carries meaning – a symbol of unity, respect, and tradition.

21. PLEASE PROTECT WILDLIFE (PSA)

Sabah is one of the few places where wildlife still roams freely – from pygmy elephants to proboscis monkeys. These creatures are part of the land's identity, yet they face growing threats. Protecting them is not just about conservation – it is about preserving what makes Sabah unique. Their survival is tied to our responsibility.

THE 31 STORIES

22.THE TENOM COFFEE

Strong, bold, and deeply rooted in Sabah's history, Tenom coffee carries a legacy of craftsmanship. Roasted with care and brewed with pride, it reflects the character of the people who produce it. In those days before the machines were built to process, processing the beans are laborous. It is not just a beverage – it is a taste of place.

23.THE FAMOUS LAKSA YEE FUNG

Some places become institutions without trying. Yee Fung Laksa is one of them. Known across generations, it has become a must-visit for both locals and visitors. The flavour remains consistent, comforting, and familiar – proof that authenticity never goes out of style.

24.SABAH'S UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Sabah is home to many ethnicities, languages, and beliefs. Yet what stands out is not the differences – but how naturally they coexist. Diversity here is not a concept, but a lived reality. It is seen in daily life, in friendships, and in shared spaces.

25.THE WELCOMING DUSUN RUNGUS

The Rungus community is known for its deep connection to tradition and simplicity. Their longhouses, crafts, and way of life reflect harmony with nature. Visitors are welcomed with sincerity, offering a glimpse into a lifestyle that values balance over excess.

26.SABAH TIMELESS BEEF NOODLE "NGIU CHAP"

Rich, hearty, and deeply satisfying – Ngiu Chap is a heartwarming dish that reflects Sabah's multicultural influences. Every bowl is carefully prepared, combining textures and flavours that create unforgettable comfort in every bite.

THE 31 STORIES

27.SABAH LOCAL CONTENT CREATORS

A new generation is telling Sabah's story. Through videos, photos, and creativity, local creators are capturing moments that might otherwise go unnoticed. They are shaping how the world sees Sabah – one post at a time.

28.THE "TIKAM TIKAM" GAME

Simple, unpredictable, and exciting – Tikam Tikam is a game from the yesteryears that has brought small joys to many. It reminds us that happiness and joy doesn't always need to be complicated.

29.SABAH LOCAL PRODUCTS & BRANDS

Behind every local product is a dream – often built with limited resources but strong determination. Supporting homegrown local brands means supporting people, families, and communities striving to grow.

30.SOTONG KETUK LEGEND

The rhythmic sound of knocking squid echoes through certain streets at night. It's more than just a snack – it's a sensory memory for many. The taste, the sound, the smell of burning charcoal and grilled squid evokes the moment – all unmistakably Sabah.

31. HELOLOKAL - GAME OVER!

Well done! You made it.

You came looking for clues. But what you found was something more – stories, people, culture, and connection.

This journey was never just about finding 31 pieces. It was about rediscovering Sabah – on foot.



WELL DONE. YOU HAVE
SUCCEEDED IN THE #FIND31KK
EXPLORATION.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING.



WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO
EXPLORE FURTHER. NEVER KNOW
WHAT'S POSSIBLE. FROM THIS
EXPERIMENT.