

# Global Geotourism Perspectives

8

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## **Geotourism in Malaysia: Mount Kinabalu, Sabah**

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# 8

## Geotourism in Malaysia: Mount Kinabalu, Sabah

Felix Tongkul

### Introduction

Geotourism is a type of tourism with a primary focus on experiencing the earth's geological heritage resources in such a way that fosters geoscientific, environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation, and is locally beneficial. As a result of its long and complex geological evolution (c.500 million years old) Malaysia has diverse rock types, minerals, soils, geological structures and landforms; some rarely found in other parts of the world. The diverse geological heritage provides an excellent base to promote geotourism in Malaysia. Geotourism development depends on the existence of good tourism products. However, in Malaysia the utilization of geological features as tourism products is yet to be fully realized (Tongkul, 2006).

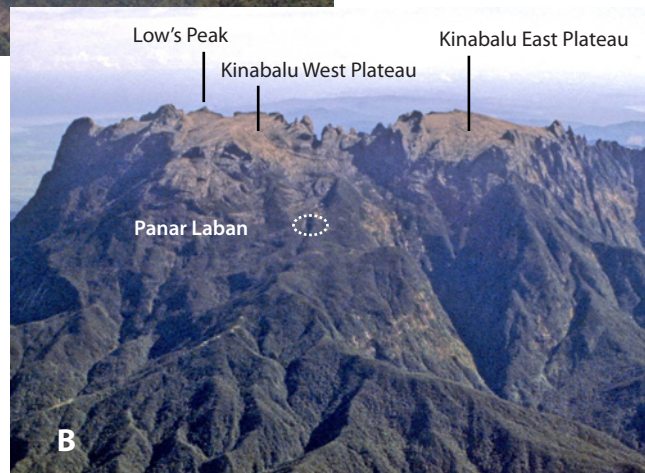
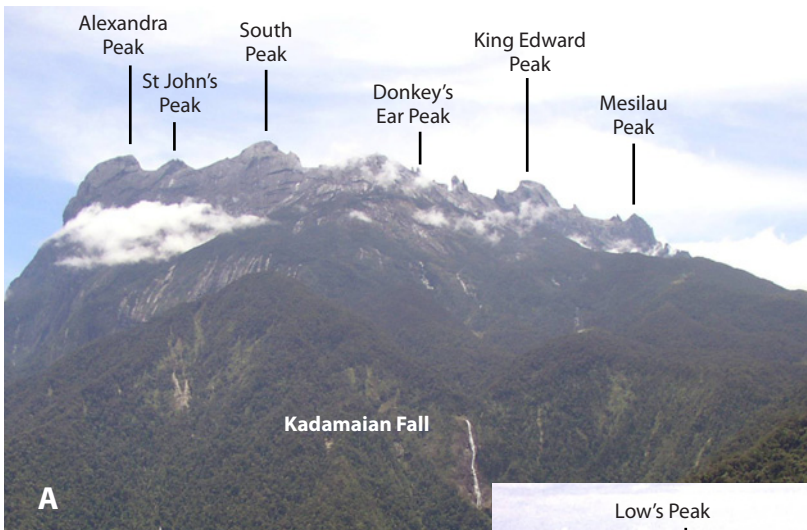
Geotourism is a new niche market that the Malaysian Government is keen to develop. The establishment of the Langkawi Geopark in 2008, the first in Malaysia, shows the Government's commitment towards the long-term development of geotourism. Apart from Langkawi, several other sites, such as Mount Kinabalu in Sabah, Mount Mulu and Kuching Delta in Sarawak have been proposed to be geoparks in Malaysia. The geological community in Malaysia recently embarked on systematic research and development of potential geological heritage sites for tourism. One of the sites explored for its potential tourism products is Mount Kinabalu, located within Kinabalu Park, Sabah's World Heritage Site, in the district of Ranau in Sabah (Figure 8.1).

### Morphological features of Mount Kinabalu

Mount Kinabalu, the highest peak in Southeast Asia, is made up of igneous rocks, which are relatively hard compared to sedimentary rock. It overlooks the rest of the mountains in Sabah's Crocker Range, towering above Mount Trusmadi (2649 m) and Mount Tambuyukon (2579 m), which lie to the south and north, respectively. Its base, at about 1500 m above sea level, covers an area

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**Figure 8.1:** Location of Mount Kinabalu. Standing at 1450 m it dominates the geology and horizon of Sabah



**Figure 8.2:** (A) Morphological features of Mount Kinabalu seen from the southwest showing some of the prominent peaks at the summit. Kadamaian waterfall seen in the foreground. (B) Mount Kinabalu seen from the south showing the summit plateau and V-shaped valley (Photo from Hall *et al.*, 2009)

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