

## Recommendation for Alex Afdhal

If not for a serious medical problem of my partner Hans we would not have had the very special experience to travel around with Alex and join him on a jungle trip in Kalimantan. How did this happen?

Well in May 2009 while I Marijke (Hans' partner) was in Holland, Hans was sailing in Indonesian waters along the coast of Borneo. On his way to Pontianak, he got a painful and bad knee infection with high fever and wasn't able to walk anymore. He knew he had to see a doctor as soon as possible. After his arrival he found Alex' name in the Lonely Planet and contacted him to get his advice on a good doctor/hospital.

Alex came to his rescue immediately and together they went to see a doctor and had X-rays taken. The next day Hans went to hospital for an anti-biotic treatment and an operation. During the days in hospital Alex was very helpful and took care of Hans like a brother. He cheered him up when he felt frustrated and was able to help communicating with the nurses, none of whom spoke any English.

After 10 days in hospital Hans was well enough to go back to the boat, which was anchored off the Kartika Hotel in the Kapuas river with Rory the other crew on board. For the trip to Kuching Alex joined them on the boat and they had a great time together and became close friends.

For my holiday in Borneo with Hans we went back to Kalimantan to make a jungle trip with Alex as he organises these trips already for many years as a tourist guide. To me this was a very special occasion to experience nature and people in a non-touristic way.

On the 13th of July we met Alex somewhere down the road from Kuching to Pontianak and he took us to a longhouse in Pahuman where we were welcomed as guests by the friendly and hospitable people of the longhouse. We learned about their way of life, which means hard work in the fields or on the rubber plantation and living a simple, but very sociable life!



Before our jungle trekking we stayed one night in Sukudana at the chief's house with his family. Thanks to Alex, who knows the family very well, we felt privileged to meet the people living here. The neighbour, an older man who climbed a palm tree to gather sugar water from the top of the tree, the chief, his wife, other neighbours that were curious to see us and the wonderful children. We brought some English study books and the children had lots of fun speaking English with 'teachers' Hans and Marijke.

At night Alex prepared a nice meal on the terrace, surrounded by family and neighbours of the chief.



The next three days we spent in the jungle, accompanied by two porters, young and nice guys from the village, who were happy to go with us.



The overwhelming greenery and variety of trees, with sometimes impressive giants, the special plants and 'booby-traps', the orangutan nests in the trees, a glimpse and the 'whoosh' of the horn bills, the dazzling sound of thousands of crickets at night, sleeping in the jungle, gibbon cries in the morning, the heat, the sweat, the clear cool jungle streams (the most delicious water to drink), the wonderful pool and waterfall made our jungle

dreams come true!

Alex made us feel very special and privileged to experience this all; his cheerfulness and big smile, his tireless energy, the way he took care of us and organized everything; whether it was his wonderful cooking or organizing transport on the way, his knowledge about nature, culture and politics, his engagement with people, his support to improve life conditions to village people and create awareness among the young generation and above all his humour and laughter!



Thank you very much Alex!!

We are very happy to have met you and to experience the nature and people of Kalimantan!

All the best to you and your family and we hope to meet again!

Marijke Verdonk