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CHECKS

SABAH'S JUNGLES

Travelers can hang with orang-utans, search for silver leaf monkeys and watch giant sea turtles lay their eggs in Sabah, Malaysia. Outdoor lovers are offered a seven-day wildlife safari by Student Flights, which features jungle encounters in the rainforests and islands of Borneo and a climb to its highest peak, Mt Kinabalu.

The trip includes two days observing the animal world at Kinabatangan Wildlife Sanctuary, takes an excursion to Selingan Turtle Island and visits to Sepik Orang utan Sanctuary. Prices start from \$1215 each, twin share. This includes six nights' accommodation, all meals, transport on tour including the domestic flight to Kota Kinabalu, entrance fees and sightseeing.

The adventure begins and ends in Kota Kinabalu. International airfares to Sabah are extra. There are several trips available throughout the year. Details: Student Flights stores or 1800 069 063.

CHERRY BLOSSOM

With Japan's cherry blossom season in full swing until the end of next month, Rail Plus passes for the entire country or specific regions offer affordable travel.

The main Japan Rail Pass has aerial days, 34-day and 21-day options and offers ordinary class and superior green class. A 14-day pass is \$537 for adults, \$269 for children (6 to 11 years) for an ordinary pass while the green pass is \$729 and \$365, respectively. Details: Travel agents, www.railplus.com.au or call 1300 555 003.

INSIDE PARLIAMENT

British Tours in London is offering tours of the Houses of Parliament. The exclusive tours offer a rare opportunity for an insider's view of one of the world's most historic parliaments. The tour can be taken on its own or as an optional extra during a personal day tour of London. Visitors follow in the Queen's footsteps, taken during the State Opening of Parliament, see the Robing Chamber, the Royal

Gallery, the Prince's Chamber and the Chamber of the House of Lords. Passing through the Peers' Lobby, Central Hall and the Commons Lobby, they enter the House of Commons, where the country's 659 Members of Parliament meet. The tours cost \$300 for up to six people or \$246 when taken as part of a private London tour with British Tours. They take about 90 minutes. A full day tour of London costs from \$172 a person based on six people and includes an expert tour guide, private car, and collection and return to any central London location. Details: www.parliamenttours.com or call + 44 (0) 207 734 8734.

NINGALOO BLUE

Ningaloo Reef is the only place in Australia where visitors can swim with a whale shark and Ningaloo Blue Charters is said to record some of the most reliable sightings in the world. Outside whale shark season, the team runs fishing charters and private charters for fishing, diving, snorkelling or a tailored mixture. The Ningaloo Blue team is becoming known for its professional and passionate approach to every aspect of the business, refusing to settle for anything less than "the experience of a lifetime" for every guest on every trip.

Ningaloo Blue has been named national winner of the inaugural Publicity Ship Hidden Jewel Awards, which aim to discover tourism operators offering a quality service who remain relatively unknown and are poised for growth. Details: www.ningalooblue.com.au