



**ASSESSING ECOTOURISM NATURAL ATTRACTIONS, FACILITIES AND
ACTIVITIES IN BAKO NATIONAL PARK**

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Park**

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in the world (Newsome *et al.*, 2002). According to Mathieson and Wall (1982), tourism is the temporary movement of people to destinations outside their normal home and workplace, the activities undertaken during the stay and the facilities created to cater for their needs. Along with its phenomenal growth and size, tourism is also responsible for extensive impacts on economy, environment, and impact on society and on cultural sites (Newsome *et al.*, 2002).

Tourism sector in Malaysia has been recognized by the government as a major source of revenue and act as catalyst for the country's economic renaissance. According to Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Dr. Ng Yen Yen, in year 2011, the tourist arrivals increased to 24.7 million compared to 24.6 million in 2010 while receipts increased by RM1.8 billion to RM58.3 billion compared to RM56.5 billion for the previous year (Ho, 2012).

According to World Economic Forum, the Global Competitive Index ranks Malaysia as number 24 out of 137 countries, in the Travel and Tourism competitive index. Furthermore, Transparency International ranks Malaysia as number 47 out of 180 countries in corruption perception index and the World Bank ranks Malaysia as 24 out of 178 countries in its 2008 ease of doing business index (Global Competitive Report, 2008). Malaysia has also been

ranked ninth in the United Nations World Tourism Organisation's (UNWTO) list of 10 most visited countries in 2010 (Chelliah, 2012). Realizing the potential, the Government, through various initiatives under the Government Transformation Programmes (GTP) encourages the Tourism Ministry to actively promote the tourism and ecotourism activity in Malaysia (Ho, 2012).

Acknowledging the fact that tourism was a growing industry, the Malaysia Tourism Policy was formulated in 1992. The policy identifies ecotourism as one form of tourism to be expanded and sustained. This was mainly due to the fact that ecotourism was recognized to grow faster than any other form of tourism (Daud, 2000).

Ecotourism is defined as a form of tourism and its primary goals are to foster sustainable use through resource conservation, cultural revival and economic development (Newsome *et al.*, 2002). Ecotourism is also defined as the travel to relatively undisturbed areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring and enjoying the scenery and its wildlife, as well as any existing cultural manifestations found in these areas (Ceballos-Lascurain, 1998). There are five key principles that are fundamental to ecotourism. They are that ecotourism is nature based, ecologically sustainable, environmentally educative, locally beneficial and generates tourist satisfaction. The first three characteristics are thought to be essential for a product to be considered as ecotourism, while the last two characteristics are viewed as being desirable for all forms of tourism (Dowling, 1996).

Ecotourism is one of the tourism areas that the government focuses on. It has been mentioned since the 7th Malaysia Plan. In the 9th Malaysia Plan which emphasises promotion of a large number of tourism themes from Meeting, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) over health and education to sports alongside ecotourism (Economic Planning Unit, 2006). It is intentionally known that Malaysia is a country rich with many natural attractions, particularly sandy beaches, enchanting islands, diverse flora and fauna, tropical forest retreats and magnificent mountains that make Malaysia as one of the top ecotourism destinations (Daud, 2000).

WWF Malaysia estimates that Malaysia gains RM655 million per year from ecotourism from RM25.8 billion per year from tourism in 2002 (Adzrool, 2006). Table 1.1 shows the tourist arrivals in Malaysia from 1998 to 2010 including the receipts from tourism and ecotourism industry while Table 1.2 shows tourist arrivals by several countries in Malaysia from January to December, 2009 and 2010.

Table 1.1 Tourist arrivals in Malaysia from 1998 to 2010

YEAR	ARRIVALS	RECEIPTS (RM)
2010	24.6 million	56.5 billion
2009	23.6 million	53.4 billion
2008	22.0 million	49.6 billion
2007	20.9 million	46.1 billion
2006	17.4 million	36.3 billion
2005	16.4 million	32.0 billion
2004	15.7 million	29.7 billion
2003	10.5 million	21.3 billion
2002	13.2 million	25.8 billion
2001	12.7 million	24.2 billion
2000	10.2 million	17.3 billion
1999	7.9 million	12.3 billion
1998	5.5 million	8.6 billion

Source : Tourism Malaysia, 2010

Table 1.2 Tourist Arrivals by several countries in Malaysia from January to December 2009 and 2010

Country of residence	January to December		
	2010	2009	Growth %
Singapore	13.04 million	12.73 million	2.4
Thailand	1.46 million	1.45 million	0.6
Indonesia	2.51 million	2.41 million	4.2
Brunei	1.12 million	1.06 million	5.9
Philippines	0.48 million	0.44 million	8.8
Vietnam	0.16 million	0.15 million	6.4
Others	0.78 million	0.76 million	2.4
Grand Total	19.55 million	19 million	30.7

Source : Research Division, Tourism Malaysia with the Cooperation of Immigration Department, Malaysia

It is estimated that 7-10% of all tourists to Malaysian be viewed as ecotourists with a higher percentage in Sabah and Sarawak (Marker *et.al*, 2008). With growth of ecotourism market for Malaysia, East Malaysia which comprises of Sabah and Sarawak seem particularly well suited to gain from this trend. East Malaysia is a prime ecotourism destination, given its tropical climate, spectacular landscapes and interesting wildlife attractions. Since 1990s, East Malaysia has begun actively promoting itself as destination which would appeal to those tourists interested in nature, adventure and different cultures (Markwell, 1995).

Sarawak tourism industry grew rapidly by the efforts undertaken by the Sarawak Tourism Board which was established in 1994 (Immigration Department of Sarawak, 2012). This development can be seen from the increasing number of visitors to Sarawak from year 2002 to 2012 as in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Tourist Arrivals in Sarawak from 2002 to 2012

Year	Total Foreigners	Total Malaysians	Grand Total
2012	0.42 million	0.23 million	0.65 million
2011	2.34 million	1.45 million	3.79 million
2010	1.90 million	1.37 million	3.27 million
2009	0.31 million	0.16 million	0.47 million
2008	0.27 million	0.33 million	0.60 million
2007	0.32 million	0.30 million	0.62 million
2006	0.22 million	0.27 million	0.49 million
2005	0.26 million	0.32 million	0.58 million
2004	0.24 million	0.24 million	0.48 million
2003	0.19 million	0.17 million	0.36 million
2002	0.21 million	0.19 million	0.40 million
Total	6.68 million	7.06 million	11.71 million

Source : Immigration Department of Sarawak, 2012

The statistics show the tourist arrivals gradually increase every year especially on 2011 with grand total of foreigners and Malaysians are 3.79 million. This situation might be related to the implementation of the first Rolling Plan of the 10th Malaysia Plan, which the federal government through the Ministry of Tourism Malaysia has allocated RM37.1 million for the implementation of 50 approved tourism projects in Sarawak for year 2011 and 2012 (New Street Times, 2012). Although still new, the ecotourism sector has seen positive changes as result of development of potential ecotourism areas. However, the Sarawak Tourism Board expects to welcome 4 million travelers in 2012 (Tourism Malaysia, 2010).

Attractions play a central role in any tourist experience and also an important factor that influences the number of tourist's visits to the host country. A considerable proportion of East Malaysia's tourist attractions are focused on natural areas such as national parks and similar reserves and it is these attractions which provide the experience sought after by ecotourists. As one of the potential income earner, tourism attracts great interest among policy makers to ensure continuous economic growth in a state or country. According to the report issued by

the Ministry of Tourism Sarawak, a questionnaire survey conducted in 1998 to 17,790 visitors found that the main attractions for visitors to Sarawak are the Sarawak Museum, Sarawak Cultural Village and National Parks including Bako, Niah and Mulu (Ministry of Culture, Arts & Tourism, 1998).

National parks are totally protected areas aimed to preserve the animal and plants in a natural state and are intended to be open to the public for recreational use (Bennet & Gombek, 1986). National parks, due to the fact that they provide habitat to countless species of plants and animals, are attracting increasing number of nature-oriented ecotourists (Fennel and Smale, 1992). According to Hall (1994), national parks are established for the purpose of preservation, hence allowing and encouraging access for education, recreation and tourism purposes. Backhaus (2003) mentioned that tourists who appreciate natural environment do interested visiting areas which covered with rainforest or a total jungle. They would be interested if the rainforests are protected and if the areas carry the label of conservation, forest reserve or national park.

Main objectives of having national parks are for the conservation of nature and forest as well as the enjoyment of today's generations and future generations. Furthermore, the habitat of species consists of wildlife and flora and fauna is well preserved through sustaining these national parks. It is due to the world is rapidly changing into modern and dynamic world; where by its people are less expose to conserve the environment. (Dayang Affizzah & Siti Baizurah, 2006). In order to develop ecotourism, national park needs to be linked to the ecotourist by the marketing component including attractions and services that a particular

destination has to offer. Services can be improved including facilities provided, activities based on nature and adventure and services within the locality ((Dayang Affizzah & Siti Baizurah, 2006).

1.2 Problem Statement

Stiff competitions among host countries for ecotourism market see continuous efforts to enhance and develop new ecotourism products. As we can see, it is rather obvious, that many countries, including Malaysia gauge the success of ecotourism sector on the number of arrivals and the estimated income generated from the sector. The challenges involved in ecotourism product include identifying and promoting opportunities for diversity and the special attractions of a region's natural areas in a way which is ecologically sustainable. It also embraces redressing any lack of knowledge about ecotourism market demand and visitor motivations, expectations and needs, as well as assembling and delivering product information to meet the needs of potential visitors (Middleton & Hawkins, 1998).

Ecotourism is one of the most dynamic sectors that have the potential to be developed in Sarawak. Although it is still new, many places have been developed for ecotourism including in the development of the National Parks. One of the major factors that contribute to the increasing of visitor's number in particular national park is attractions. As Ryel and Grasse (1991) recognized that attracting ecotourists is dependent upon biodiversity, cultural history and unique geography of areas as well as the infrastructure available to support ecotourism development. In Sarawak, the national parks are supposed to offer visitors excellent

introduction to its rainforest with abundant of wildlife and contain almost every type of vegetation found in Borneo. All its sheer range of attractions and activities has made the national park one of the most popular destinations in Sarawak (Sarawak Forestry, 2006).

Main purpose of having national parks is for the conservation of nature and sustaining the habitat of wildlife. In order to attract the visitors, the government needs to identify attractions to build more facilities and established it in the national parks. The attractions, facilities and activities provided can bring the positive influence on the awareness of conserving the national park. By adding such attractions, facilities and activities in national parks can provide better impression among visitors. The satisfaction among visitor can potentially build better awareness and willingness among visitors to conserve the national park. To build such awareness there must need entire society to participate and not only to focus to build awareness among visitors but also to get the passion and commitment towards nature and people's perception of using and experiencing the nature.

Conceptually, attractions, facilities and activities are considered as the major factors in increasing visitor's number and influence visitors' perceptions on destinations. Thus, this study is to determine the types of attractions including all the natural attractions, activities and facilities desired for ecotourism destinations such as Bako National Park.

1.3 Objectives

- a) To determine the natural attractions, facilities and activities in Bako National Park.
- b) To assess public perception on the importance and the quality of the existing attractions, facilities and activities in the Bako National Park.
- c) To provide recommendations about alternative strategy on managing potential attractions, facilities and activities for ecotourism.

1.4 Rational of the study

Rational of this study is to assess the public opinion of visitors, staff and tourist guides about existing natural attractions, facilities and activities in Bako National Park. Bako National Park may not have an instantly recognizable attraction but there can be very few places in the world that pack so much natural beauty into such a limited area. All its sheer range of attractions and activities has made Bako National Park one of the most popular parks in Sarawak. Success in promotion is also one of the factors that resulted in increased tourists arrivals in Bako National Park. The flow of tourists visiting Bako National Park contributed continuous revenue to Sarawak's economy since it was gazette to public on 1957.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Ecotourism

In the early reference to ecotourism, Laarman and Durst (1987) defined it as a nature tourism in which the traveler is drawn to a destination's natural history. Visit combines education, recreation, and often adventure. Another definition of ecotourism is purposely travel to natural areas to understand the culture and natural history of the environment, taking care not to alter the integrity of the ecosystem, while producing economic opportunities that make the conservation of natural resources beneficial to local people (McCormick, 1994). Since its inception, ecotourism has been defined in many different ways, ranging from the general and ambiguous to the specific and prescriptive. All the definitions illustrate the absence of any consensus on the precise meaning of ecotourism (Weaver, 2008).

However, Blamey (1997) is notable for distilling three core criteria of ecotourism that recur in other definitions that are dominant nature-based element in the attractions, an educational component and a requirement of sustainability. Ecotourism is a sub-component of the field of sustainable tourism. Thus according to Chesworth (1995), ecotourism has six characteristics. First, ecotourism involves relatively undisturbed natural areas and archeological sites. Second, it focuses in learning and quality of experience, third, it economically benefits the local communities, fourth, ecotourists seek to view rare species, fifth, spectacular landscapes and unusual and exotic. Last, ecotourists do not deplete resources but even sustain the

environment or help undo damage to the environment and ecotourists appreciate and respect local culture, traditions, etc.

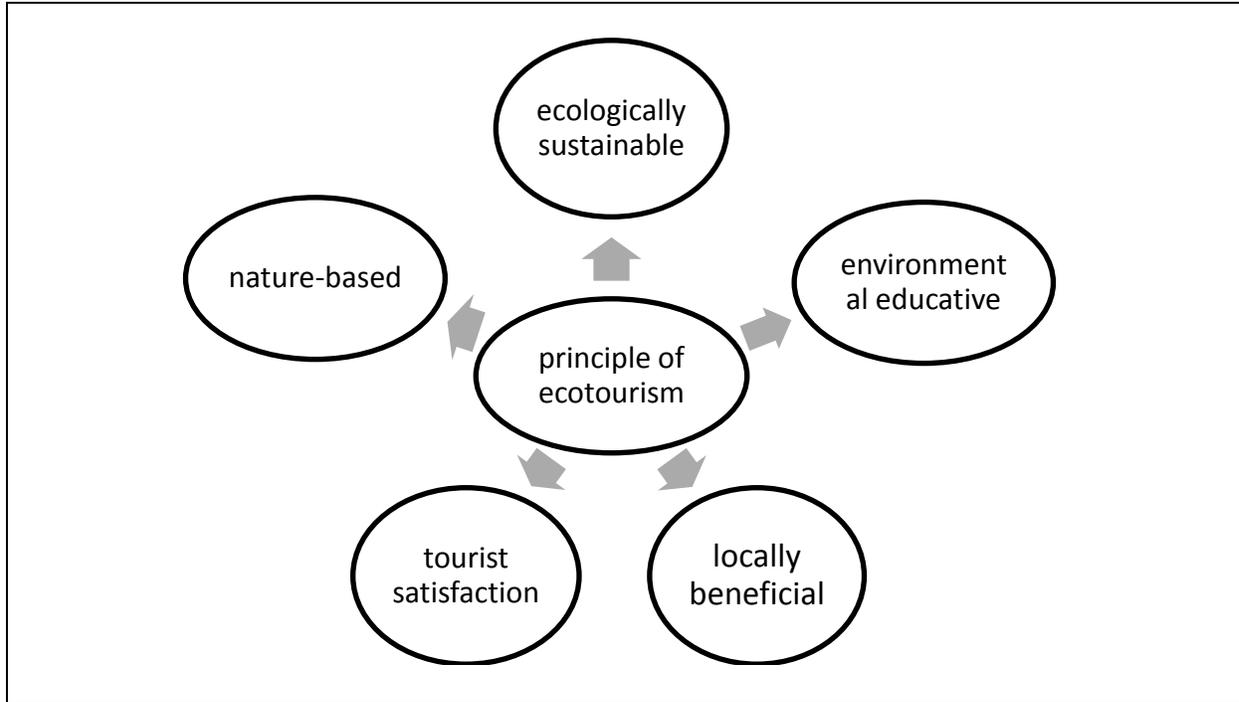


Figure 2.1 The principle of ecotourism (Dowling, 1996)

Figure 2.1 above shows the five core principles which lead to the importance of ecotourism. Ecotourism is based on the natural environment with a focus on its biological, physical and cultural features. Ecotourism occurs in, and depends on a natural setting and may include cultural elements where they occur in a natural setting. Through ecotourism, it increases the awareness and understanding of an area's natural and cultural systems and the subsequent involvement of visitors (Page & Dowling, 2002).

Hence, ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism undertaken in a natural setting ranging from resource preservation to resource conservation. The scale of such ecotourism activities implies that relatively few tourists will be allowed to visit the site and consequently supporting facilities can be kept to a minimum (Mowforth & Munt, 1998).

Educative characteristic of ecotourism is a key element that distinguishes it from other forms of nature-based tourism. Environmental education and interpretation are important tools in creating an enjoyable and meaningful ecotourism experience. Interpretation is the art of helping people to learn and it is a central tenet to ecotourism (Weiler & Davis, 1993). Ecotourism education can influence tourist, community and industry behaviour and assist in the longer-term sustainability of tourist activity in natural areas (Crabtree, 2000).

Involvement of local communities not only benefits local community and the environment but also improves the quality of the tourist experience. Local communities can become involved in ecotourism operations, and in the provision of knowledge, service, facilities and products. Ecotourism can also generate income for resource conservation management in addition to social and cultural benefits (Page & Dowling, 2002).

According to Dowling (1997), satisfaction of visitors with the ecotourism experience is essential to the long-term viability of the ecotourism industry. Indeed this incorporates elements of the concept of the visitor experience and it is also necessary to recognize the importance of visitor safety in regard to political stability.

Function of ecotourism is focus on sustainability and at the same time as a travel experience, first and foremost, that helps travelers come to a better understanding of unique natural and cultural environments. They also focus on helping travelers develop better instincts on how to travel and how to contribute toward environmental conservation, cultural survival and other important sustainable development issues (Wood, 2002).

Key ecotourism destinations are visiting the Totally Protected Areas (TPA) or other natural undisturbed natural areas. Ecotourists have always been strongly related to national park which is one of the TPA. TPA is defined as an area to protect and maintain the biological diversity and natural and associated cultural resource and provide a foundation for educational, spiritual and recreational that is compatible with the environmental (Mill & Morrison, 1984).

There are several ecotourism characteristics that can contribute to, and enhance the general attractiveness of a tourist area. The characteristics such as (Wood, 2002):

- Natural features conserved within a protected landscape
- Low density development, where natural areas are abundant and the built landscape does not dominate.
- Evidence that tourism is not harming natural systems such as waterways, coastal areas, wetlands and wildlife areas.
- Clean and basic public facilities for tourists and locals to share.
- A lot of designed recreational activity that are designed to protect resources.

2.2 Ecotourism Attractions

According to Gunn (1985), attractions are physical site settings for self experiences and are central to the tourism including ecotourism. As Mac Cannell (1976) stated that an attraction comprises a relationship between three components including tourist, sight or place to be viewed and marker or image which makes the site significant. Thus, attraction in its widest context would include not only the historic sites, amusement parks, and spectacular scenery, which are normally associated with the word, but also the services and facilities which cater to the everyday needs of tourists (Backhaus, 2003).

A considerable proportion of tourist's attractions are natural areas such as national parks and similar reserves and it is these attractions which provide the experiences sought after by ecotourists. According to Khomkris (1965), one of the principal of national park is for managing national parks including preserving and maintaining the ecosystem integrity, biodiversity, and scenic beauty for use by the present and future generations without compromising them. Ecotourism attraction plays a central role in any tourist experience. They provide the settings and stimuli for the varied recreational activities tourists participate in, as well as functioning as important social and cultural symbols (Markwell, 1995).

Without attractions tourism could not exist and there would be little need for specific transportation facilities, tourist services, and marketing strategies. When thousands of visitors are regularly attracted to an area, then accommodation, catering, entertainment, and retail outlets will follow. All such services are therefore ultimately dependent upon the existing attractions (Ferraro, 1978).

In a recent survey of ecotourists to Costa Rica, derived from the form used in the Canadian Tourism Attitude and Motivation Study conducted by Statistics Canada in 1983, the result shown the expectation, motivations and benefits of tourist in their destinations. With respect to the attractions include wilderness areas, national parks, rural areas and mountains, Canadian ecotourists appear to place these importance when making their travel decision. In contrast, the general Canadian population placed significantly greater importance on attractions such as indoor sports, amusement and theme parks, and gambling (Fennell and Smale, 1992).

Table 2.1 Canadian tourists' expectation and motivation in their destination

Motivations	Rank
Wilderness and undisturbed nature	1
Learn about nature	2
Photography of landscape/wildlife	3
Tropical forests	4
Birds	5
Trees and wild flowers	6
Mammals	7
Lakes and stream	8
National and provincial parks	9
See maximum in time available	10
Being physically active	11
Oceanside	12
mountains	13
Rural areas	14
Meet people with similar interest	15

Source: Eagles and Cascagnette, 1995

Table 2.1 shows Canadian ecotourists are most interested in environment features. These brief overviews explain that they seek the types of attractions and benefit that result in satisfying experiences for visitors to their destinations.

2.3 Ecotourism Infrastructure, Facilities and Services

As the backbone of the development of any economy, the provision of infrastructure is a prerequisite towards attaining economic growth and improving the country's productive capacity. The anticipated growth of the economy is expected to exert more pressure on infrastructure support facilities. There are two major objectives for the infrastructure sector in the long term that is (UNESCAP, 1996):

- To provide adequate, convenient, fast and safe facilities and competitively priced services to meet the primary needs of the population and;
- To provide support facilities for the productive sectors and act as catalyst of the development on desired areas.

Facilities means all publicly owned or leased property, grounds, parking lots, roadways, venues, bike paths, parks and park-related buildings, facilities and improvements and any tourism facilities when they are in use as recreational or community center facilities. Ecotourism services mean the performance of work or duties by offering services to the tourists in response to the needs or demand (Collins, 1991).

Park and protected areas require facilities and services to accommodate use by visitors, park staff and others. Type of services and facilities needed in the park include the information, transport, accommodation, food, safety and recreation. Facilities in parks and protected areas are designed to fulfill basic functions.

Facilities enhance a site's ability to provide recreation opportunities. A natural or cultural site often has limited ability to handle recreational visits. These facilities increase a site's ability to handle visitation (Paul & Stephen, 1949). According to Paul and Stephen (1949), the functions of facilities and infrastructure are listed below:

- a) Enhance recreation opportunities
- b) Increase capacity for tourism
- c) Support visitor safety
- d) Decrease maintenance costs
- e) Be fiscally responsible
- f) Protect and maintain ecological integrity
- g) Support for cultural integrity
- h) Maintain the health of air, water and soils

All facilities should be guided by the values related to the park which include the historic and natural values underlying the park's creation, the values of the park staff and the park visitors currently involved. Thus from the review, the appropriate facilities and services in places such as national parks should be considered to ensure the safety and satisfaction of visitors.

2.4 Ecotourism Activities

Ecotourism activities refer to the recreational activities involving natural environment. The activities of natural-based tourism are divided into three categories; activities depend on nature such as bird watching, activities enhances by nature such as camping and activities

where the natural setting is incidental such as swimming (Valentine, 1992). The other three forms of that can be included in ecotourism activities are;

- Kinetic experiences were the non-mechanically powered activities or also known as adventure activities such as hiking, diving and swimming
- Situational based experiences involve the strong association with the unique destination
- A relief or aesthetic experience includes observation of natural phenomena such as wildlife watching.

The importance of ecotourism activities are to attract tourists to visit the undisturbed areas by helping to preserve natural areas through a portion of tourists tour cost and spending into the local economy of destination countries. As for examples, paying for park admissions, engaging local guides, staying at local hotels, and using transportation services (Beletsky, 2005). On top of that, ecotourism activities are important to introduce the natural attractions in the host country to the ecotourists.

Moreover, according to Dearden (1995), human and wildlife interaction have interrelation in terms of consumptive use to non-consumptive use. The non-consumptive use activities are those in which the organism is not affected by human interaction such as bird-watching, wildlife watching, trekking, natural photography and scenic viewing. On the opposite site, the consumptive use activities impose certain purposefully intended impacts on the organism such

as forms of hunting and fishing and also those related to observation and scientific purposes such as in national parks.

To conclude all, the emphasis of ecotourism activities is focus on educational purpose and recreation activities and on the enhancement of knowledge through non-consumptive usage of the natural resources. Besides, all the activities are assessed on either it enhance and protect the environment or not. Lawrence *et al.* (1997) assisted that the major strength of ecotourism is that its weakness arises between protection and profit aims. The natural-based component ecotourism is based on physical, biological and cultural features for both in protected and non-protected environments in terms of sustainability and conservation (Ziffer, 1989).

CHAPTER 3

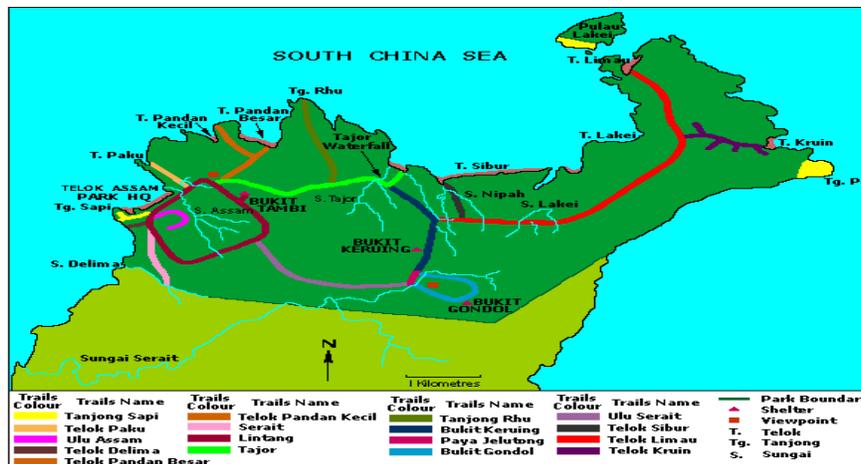
MATERIALS AND METHOD

3.1 Study Area



Source : Google Map (2012)

Figure 3.1 Location of Bako National Park from Kuching City



Source : Sarawak Forestry (2006)

Figure 3.2 Types of trails in Bako National Park