PULAU BANYAK
ACEH, SUMATRA, INDONESIA
No. 2 (July 2009)

- Turtles
- Islands
- Jungles
- Kayaking
- Surfing

FREE
OUR WEBSITES

In www.acehturtleconservation.org you find all the information you need about the turtle conservation program of Yayasan Pulau Banyak. How to become a member, how to become a volunteer and how to support.

In www.sumatraecotourism.com you can find all the information you need about Pulau Banyak, Pulau Weh, Pulau Aceh, Tangkahan, and Tongging. More places are coming. We up-date when needed. The latest issues of the bulletins, PULAU BANYAK and WEH can be downloaded as pdf-files. See our information about environmental issues in Pulau Banyak, about history and tales, an English-Indonesian-Aceh-Gayo-Karo dictionary, and info on “how to behave”.

There are many reasons to make regular visits to our websites.

PULAU BANYAK

is produced by CV Penerbit Balohan Haloban on behalf of Yaysan Pulau Banyak. This issue is sponsored by AECID (Agencia Española de Cooperacion Internacional para el Desarrollo). It is a part of efforts to develop eco-tourism in Pulau Banyak.

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Environmental education training. A program by YPB and Natura Education.
Welcome to Pulau Banyak

Pulau Banyak is like a dream come through; uninhabited coral islands, fantastic beaches, snorkeling, turtles, kayaking, jungle trekking, pristine jungles, surfing, and such a laid-back atmosphere that you will forget time.

The concept of time hardly exists in Pulau Banyak; wonderful when you are at the beach, but frustrating when waiting for the boat. Pulau Banyak is not a very big tourist destination and still very Indonesian. The locals appreciate tourists showing respect for their way of life. For example “decent” dressing in the villages, but out on the islands and the beaches, nobody cares. Eco-tourism is now being developed in Pulau Banyak, i.e. sustainable tourism that try to avoid impacts on nature and local traditions and also involve the locals in the economic development.

Pulau Banyak consists of 30-40 islands. The locals say 99, but they count big islands several times. Approximately 7,000 people live here. The main village is Desa P. Balai, on the island of Pulau Balai. From there you can reach all your dream islands.
Pulau Palambak Besar is the forth biggest island in Pulau Banyak. It takes a few hours to walk around it. It has white sand beaches almost all the way. In the middle of the island is a swamp forest and a few small hills. There are a few huts where caretakers of the palm tree orchards live. This island was in the 90ies the most popular island amongst back packers. There are no bungalows left from that time. Instead there are two new places; PAP and a not yet open place owned by the regency government. There are a fair number of birds on Palambak, for example Great-billed Heron, Pacific Reef Egret, White-bellied Fish-eagle, Brahminy Kite, Common Ringed Plover, Pink-necked Green Pigeon and Pied Imperial Pigeon. To the east is Pulau Palambak Kecil, nice for a day trip. Outside the northeastern point are some nice sand banks growing bigger for every year.
**Pulau Tailana** is one of the more well known islands amongst visitors to Pulau Banyak. It is relatively small, but has better snorkeling than most other islands. There are many other islands in its vicinity, for example **Pulau Balong**, **Pulau Matahari**, and **Pulau Ragu-Ragu**. Three bungalows have been built here. The two bungalow islands, Pulau Tailana and Pulau Palambak Besar, have different characteristics and both are well worth a try. If you have time, try both.

There are too many islands to mention all. Most of them are really nice and **camping** is ideal for the adventurous who don’t want to share an island with other foreigners. Just going around in a boat is highly recommended. The scenery is fantastic and Turtles and Mantarays are often sighted. The area between west of Sikandang is the home of the rare Dugong (a kind of Sea cow). Islands worth mentioning are **Balong**, **Tambarat**, **Biawak**, **Pabisi**, **Lambodong**, **Panjang**, **Ragu-Ragu**, **Sikandang**, and **Asok**. The islands along the east coast of Tuangku are covered by mangroves and are mosquito ridden.

Other interesting places for you to visit: The stalagmite and stalactite cave at **Tambego** south of Ujung Sialit. **Ujung Lolok** is in the southernmost area of Pulau Tuangku. It is separated from Pulau Tuangku by a very narrow passage which looks like a river. The water is even brackish as freshwater mixes with seawater in the passage. Because of this a special kind of edible shellfish is living here. Ujung Lolok has become popular for its surfing and has a newly-built surf camp.

A small motorized canoe, a big diesel powered fishing boat, or a speed boats; you choose. Going by kayak is maybe the most exciting. (See the “How to See the Islands” and the “Kayaking sections”). For island hopping, contact one of the guide groups, in P. Balai: **The Adventurers Group**, and in Haloban: **Tiusa Long Beach**

The sun is strong and the reflections from the sea makes it worse. Use hat, sun glasses, and sun lotion. Fish is always easy to find; either buy from a fisherman or fish yourself.

**Snorkeling**
Pulau Banyak is very beautiful, has intact forests and much to offer. However, the coral reefs are in a bad state. Reasons for this are several, bomb fishing, poison fishing, Nias earthquake in March 2005, coral excavation and so forth. Situation has however improved a bit the last few years. Bomb fishing has stopped and poison fishing is getting less common. Coral excavation still goes on, but after protests major projects now use stone and sand from the mainland. Locals still use corals, but they have not much of a choice. Every Village will soon have their own protected area to look after. This is a program from Seacology, USA. The local fisheries authority has also established community watch groups.

In several areas new corals are growing up, a good sign that the situation is changing to the better. One day Pulau Banyak will be just as amazing under water as it is above water; like it was 20 years ago! Here are a few spots you can check out; north of western point of Palambak Besar, west of Palambak Kecil, north of Ranggit Kecil, south and east of Lambodong, west of Asok, north of Ragu-Ragu, between Haloban and P. Tailana not so far from Tailana, east of Tailana, and east of Madangkati.
KAYAKING

World famous kayakers say: “Pulau Banyak is the best”. Nothing beats it if you like sea kayaking. Paddling amongst the palm tree islands is amazing enough. Just roll off the canoe when you want to cool down, to swim, or to snorkel. Camping on deserted islands and drinking fresh coconuts. In Pulau Banyak you can also paddle along bizarre rock formations and up small rivers into the jungle. There are even a few waves ideal to do some kayak surfing.

Kayaks are available for half day or one day rental if you prefer going alone. However, it is recommended to take a tour with a guide showing you the nice places, fixing camp and food. Several alternatives are available, both in Balai and in Haloban. There are tours for the absolute beginners, experienced paddlers and for the fanatic long distance kayaker. Ask to see the tour menus. Rental is app. Rp. 150,000 per day. A tour is app. 300-350,000 per day, incl. Guide, food, water and tent & sleeping mat.

Kayaking is a new attraction in Pulau Banyak. Yayasan Pulau Banyak (YPB) has purchased Sit-on-top kayaks suitable for Pulau Banyak. Half of them were donated by Kayakasia in Singapore. The paddles were donated by specialist paddle producer Mergner Paddel of Germany. Sumatra Savages help train the kayak guides. Two community groups have been formed:

- Napoleon Kayaking Club on P. Balai. Ph: 0852 6025 6171 (Sapriadi) or 0813 9726 8269 (Muhammad Syah)
- Acropora Kayaking in Haloban, ph: 081370300347 (Suryadi) and 081362598804 (Wazirman). Until they have their own address, contact them through the YPB offices in Balai or Haloban.

ISLAND HOPPING

There are lots of boats available for charter for as many days as you like. You are taken around, given food and looked after by the boat crew. Two community guide groups have been established in July 2009. Contact them directly or ask at the offices of YPB in Balai or Haloban.

- The Adventurers Group in P. Balai: Ian (Uyung), ph: +62812 6494 2884
  Chalid, ph: +62813 7738 9208.
  Eddie Suari, ph: +62812 6913 7976

- Tiusa Long Beach in Haloban. Mr. Sahmil, ph: +62813 7099 7963.
Pulau Tuangku is with its 11,500 hectares the biggest island. Most of this island is covered by virgin low land coastal jungle. Only a few have seen the interior of this island. For an adventurous jungle lover this island offers unique possibilities. There are many kinds of birds and snakes, even crocodiles, wild boars, monkeys, squirrels and mouse deer. A sub-specie of the Hill Myna, called *Beo Nias*, is common on Pulau Tuangku and Pulau Bangkaru.

Haloban is the most suitable starting point for treks into the jungle. A walk along the north coast to the west and down south along the beaches can for example be recommended. A nice day trek is up to the summit of Gunung Tiusa, 313m above sea level. Enjoy a great view over the archipelago. One possible route is to walk from Haloban to Teluk Dalam were the original Haloban once were located. Walk further and up the Asantola River as far as possible. Continue over the land to the west to the beautiful beach Pasir Panjang. There is a bat cave behind the beach. Walk along the beach to Teluk Limo where it is possible for a boat to pick you up, if preferred.

Contact the YPB supported community group *Green Tuangku* in Haloban. Ph: 081260416669 (Irmansah) and 081265609854 (Dahrinsah). Price per day is app. 200-250,000 per day depending on length. Price includes park permit, food, water, tent & sleeping mat.

The north and east coast have mangrove forest. Before tsunami they were intact and extremely tall. Big areas died during tsunami, but it seems that they are coming back. There are several small rivers on the east and north coasts. The west coast has several great jungle fringed beaches with nice waves. In the inland there are some hills and several caves. This gives the opportunity to combine jungle trekking in daytime and spending the nights on beaches.
Pulau Bangkaru, the second biggest island in Pulau Banyak, is a magic island. Untouched jungles, pristine beaches and the amazing turtles. The only people living on this big island are the turtle guards and a few international volunteers.

Every night, all year round, Green Turtles lay eggs on the Amandangan beach. Between November and March there are also Leatherback turtles.

The only way to see the turtles on Pulau Bangkaru is through YPB (Yayasan Pulau Banyak). The reasons for this are to avoid disturbing the conservation, data collection and monitoring work, but still accommodate the turtle beach as a tourist attraction. Also to avoid exploitation by less serious organizers and to help finance the conservation activities. YPB has an agreement with the authority responsible for all national parks and protected areas (BKSDA Aceh).

Visits are restricted in numbers and length, but nobody will need to leave Bangkaru without seeing turtles. A new base camp is soon ready, and also basic facilities for tourists.

To go there, ask at the YPB offices in P. Balai and Haloban, or at your accommodation.

When going there you arrive at in front of the base camp; the speed boat surfing in through the waves. After dinner you will be able to visit the turtle beach, following the specially trained turtle guides. We have to walk through the jungle in the darkness for 30 minutes.

You will never forget the starlit beach, the sound of the breaking waves, the dark rocks rising tall and the sound of the jungle behind. You will see how a turtle lays egg and how the monitoring and research is done through tagging and measuring. If you stay until the early morning hours you can see turtle hatchlings head for the sea.

The rest of the time on Bangkaru is best spent either on the gorgeous beaches and seeing all the small natural wonders.

Yayasan Pulau Banyak (YPB) is the official name of the organization dedicated to the conservation work in Pulau Banyak. As a result of lobbying, the Ministry of Forestry gave Pulau Banyak in 1996 the status as a “Taman Wisata Alam” (kind of Nature Park). A small logging operation was stopped and the forests of Pulau Banyak have since been relatively safe.

Eventually the turtle egg poaching was stopped and with minimal funds the turtle beach was guarded. In 2001 YPB were forced to close down the activities on Pulau Bangkaru. Lack of funds for the turtle conservation and worsening political situation made any work impossible.

Yayasan Pulau Banyak is also fighting against poison and bomb fishing and illegal trawlers. A few illegal logging attempts were stopped and bird poachers were caught and birds set free. Socio-economic, cultural and awareness programs have increased local support for the turtle conservation.
In November 2007, the egg poachers were ousted once again and the turtle guards reinstalled. The funding is now better and the scientific depth and the quality on data collected are on a much higher level. The turtle project on Bangkaru is the only one in Sumatra.

Pancake, Fried Rice, and Omelette; all ala Bangkaru. Our cook can do much with little!
Napoleon Kayaking Club in front of the Mosque in Teluk Nibung

Kayak surfing!

Acropora Kayaking outside Haloban.
Schoolkids on excursion, P. Lambodong

Just one of many islands!
Weddings and circumcision-ceremonies are colorful and interesting to see. Traditional dances have their origin mainly in the Minangkabau culture (West Sumatra), but are specific for Pulau Banyak. A very special dance is “Lansir Madam”, an odd remnant from the Dutch colonial times. In the village of Ujung Sialit traditions have their origin in Nias.

**Desa P. Balai and P. Baguk** are both located on the small island of Pulau Balai. It is the administrative and commercial center for Pulau Banyak and the main entry point for visitors. Almost 3.000 people live here. The local language is Jamee. These two villages were very heavily damaged by Tsunami in 2004 and the earthquake 3 months later. The island sank
more or less one meter. Many houses along the waterfront stand now in water.

The accommodations on Pulau Balai are rather nice and food is good, especially the fish. It is close to several other nice islands easy to reach, for example Baguk, Panjang, and Tapus-Tapus.

More than 1,000 people live in Desa Teluk Nibung on the island Ujung Batu. Teluk Nibung has a very beautiful Mosque in old style. There are interesting rock formations on the northern end of this island. They are best seen from a boat.

Desa Ujung Sialit on Pulau Tuangku has app. 600 inhabitants. They are all of Nias descent and arrived in the first half of the last century. It has the only church in Pulau Banyak. They are Christians and speak Nias language. Nearby is the nice Pulau Pabisri.

Desa Suka Makmur is a new village with less than 500 inhabitants, also from Nias, but Muslim. A boardwalk leads through the mangroves into the village.

Desa Haloban and Desa Asantola was the administrative center of Pulau Banyak before the Japanese occupation. More than 1,000 people live in these two villages grown together. They have their own language, Bahasa Haloban, which unfortunately is less and less used by the villagers. Parts of Haloban were destroyed by earthquake and tsunami. Haloban has no nice beaches by itself, but many of the best islands of Pulau Banyak are north of it. Behind is the virgin jungle of Pulau Tuangku. From here one can do a jungle trek, for example also climb the 313m high mountain Gunung Tiusa.

Surfing is good in Pulau Banyak. Until now most surfers visit and stay in Pulau Banyak with a ship, so called live-on-board. Most of them come exclusively for the surfing. Links to a few of them can be found in www.sumatraecotourism.com Yayasan Pulau Banyak, a few surf operators and the local government are trying to develop a system that makes visits easier, involves the local community and avoid impacts on the protected areas in Pulau Banyak.

An alternative for surfers is to charter a local boat in P. Balai and arrange the surfing themselves, either camping or sleeping on the boat. That would probably be cheaper, more adventurous, and less comfortable. It would also transfer needed knowhow to the local community and to increase awareness about sustainable tourism.

The two major areas where surfer boats visit are the southern points of Pulau Tuangku and Pulau Bangkaru, Ujung Lolok and Ujung Lakita respectively. Pulau Tuangku is by the surf operators called the Treasure Island and Pulau Bangkaru is called the Turtle Island. Note that Pulau Bangkaru is protected. The sea west of Pulau Bangkaru is a mating area for turtles. Propellers can injure turtles.
**HOW TO GO THERE**

**MEDAN – SINGKIL**

**By road:** There are no big busses on this route, but many minibuses (called L300) and cars taking passengers (called Kijang). The minibuses are a bit cheaper, Rp. 90.000, but uncomfortable and crowded. The extra money to go in a “Kijang”, Rp. 110.000, is well worth it. The trip takes 8-10 hrs. They pick up and leave you at your hotel. Just call and book. A charter is Rp. 700.000. A few of the companies:

- **Himpak, L300:**


**By air:** The flights between Medan – Singkil – Banda Aceh – Singkil – Medan have started again. Every Saturday and Monday. **Medan – Singkil:** 07.00, Rp. 160.000. **Singkil – Banda Aceh:** 08.00, Rp. 260.000

**SINGKIL – PULAU BANYAK**

The only way to go to Pulau Banyak is by sea and Singkil is the departure point. If you also plan to visit Simeulue, it can be good to know that there is a ferry twice a week between Singkil and the main town on Simeulue, Sinabang. One can fly between Medan and Simeulue.

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<th>Singkil – P. Balai</th>
<th>P. Balai – Singkil</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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| **Local boat**   | Monday, Thursday, Saturday | Sunday, Wednesday, Friday | Rp. 30.000, 4,5 hrs  
Depart in morning, rubber time       |
| **Speed boat**   | Charter            | Any time           | Rp. 800.000 – 1,200.000.  
1,5 -2 hrs.                                    |
| **Car Ferry**    | Tuesdays 08.30     | Wednesdays 10.00   | Rp. 16-25.000, dep. On class. 4 hrs        |

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<th>Sinabang – Singkil</th>
<th>Singkil – Sinabang</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td><strong>Car Ferry</strong></td>
<td>Wednesday 18.30</td>
<td>Saturdays 18.30</td>
<td>Rp. 28-68.000. Arrives early morning.</td>
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**Note:** In P. Balai, the Car ferry uses the public harbor, not the ferry harbor. In Singkil the ferry leaves from the **Pulo Sarok** harbor. The local boats leave from the bridge in the old part of the Singkil, called **Bengkolan**, or beyond the bridge directly at the main river, called **Kilangan**. Speed boats from Pulau Banyak prefer to land at a bridge near Pulo Sarok, called **Jembatan Tinggi**.

If you charter a speed boat it is normally cheaper to charter a boat from Pulau Banyak. The following persons can help:

- **Aidil:** +62813 6255 4936
- **Kardi:** +62813 7043 3004
- **Tachsis:** +62852 9733 9994
HOW TO SEE THE ISLANDS

There are no regular or public boats within Pulau Banyak. If you go to any of the beach accommodation, they will arrange for transportation. To Palambak Besar it is, for example Rp. 50,000 one way in traditional canoe (2 hrs).

Most common is to charter a canoe, speed boat or big boat. The slowest, less expensive and most traditional is the canoe driven by a small inboard motor. Speed boats are more convenient though. Below follows a list of price examples for your orientation. They are price indications for charter of a 5 hp canoe and a 25 horse-power speed boat from P. Balai to several destinations. A big wooden boat can cost anything, depending on availability and fish season.

Prices also fluctuate with number of passengers and weight of goods. The prices are for round trip, but they cannot wait too long. Just ask around, for example in your

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<tr>
<th>From</th>
<th>To (return trip)</th>
<th>Approximate price in Rp.</th>
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<tr>
<td>P. Balai</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Singkil</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ujung Sialit</td>
<td>250,000 / 2 hrs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Haloban</td>
<td>250-300,000 / 3 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>P. Palambak Besar</td>
<td>200,000 / 2 hrs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. Sikandang</td>
<td>250,000 / 2 hrs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>P. Tailana</td>
<td>250-300,000 / 3 hrs</td>
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PRACTICALITIES

Bring at least two copies of your passport. There is no money changer in Pulau Banyak and Singkil. There is a post office in Desa P. Balai. There are health centers in P. Balai, Haloban and Ujung Sialit. Most islands have mosquitoes, some many and others not at all. Malaria is present. Use prophylactics and insect repellent. The villages of P. Balai, P. Baguk, and Teluk Nibung has electricity for 24 hrs. Haloban and Asantola between 17.00 and 08.00. Ujung Sialit and Suka Makmur from 18.00 until app. midnight. Mobile phone can be used in the eastern and central parts of the archipelago, i.e. in all villages and in many islands. As most of the food supplies are imported from Sibolga and Singkil, shortages of certain products can occur. The sun can be very strong and the reflections from the sea makes it so much more powerful. Use good sun lotion or sun block. A hat or cap and sun glasses are always useful in Pulau Banyak. There are snorkeling equipment available, but not yet too many.
ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD

All the bungalows that made Pulau Banyak famous in the 1990ies are all gone. New losmen and bungalows have appeared again after martial law and tsunami. There are accommodations in the villages of P. Balai and Haloban. Small basic eco-resorts have opened on Pulau Palambak Besar and Pulau Tailana. These two places can be recommended if you want to stay in a beach bungalow. The regency government is since several years in the process of opening a place on Palambak Besar. Another alternative is to do island hopping and go camping with a chartered boat or canoe. Maybe the best alternative is to take a kayaking tour.

The local diet consists of fish and rice. Vegetables and fruit are normally imported from the mainland. Alcohol is only sold on the black market. The beach accommodations have their own restaurants, but one should be aware that not all kinds of vegetables and fruit are always available. To go to these accommodations, ask their agents in P. Balai. To Palambak Besar it cost Rp. 50.000 one way in traditional canoe (1,5 hrs) or app. 300.000 one way with speedboat (30 minutes).

P. Balai and Haloban are the only villages with formal restaurants. In other villages food can be arrange by locals if ordered in advance. The shops are still basic. What you need to bring yourself is sun lotion, clothes, and books if you like to read.

WHERE TO STAY ON PULAU PALAMBAK BESAR

Pondok Alam Palambak (PAP), Pulau Palambak Besar. Ph: 085276503937 and 081263322839 (Mr. Maskur). Three bungalows with attached bathrooms. Rp. 85.000 per night.

Pondok Pemda Pulau Palambak Besar. Built by the regency government. It is not yet open, but could happen.

WHERE TO STAY ON PULAU TAILANA

Pondok Tailana on Pulau Tailana. Ph: 085296718219 (Mr. Mawan). Three bungalows without attached bathroom. Rp. 50.000. Contact them before going.

WHERE TO EAT AND SLEEP IN HALOBAN

What we here call Haloban is actually two villages grown together; Haloban and Asantola. There is no restaurant or food stall in Haloban, but the only losmen, Sederhana Aleng Moon, serve food. Many consider they have the best food in Pulau Banyak. There are a few coffee shops though, for example Flamboyan near the boat landing. They can serve you instant noodles if needed.

WHERE TO EAT IN P. BALAI

Warung Pahrel, Jl. Makmur. Coffee, pancakes, fried rice, etc. Info in English. Lei Kombih and Putri, the two accommodations, also serve food. See below. Heldi’s Warung is the coffee shop to discuss local politics and get the latest news. Fried rice and noodles are available and in morning also “lontong”. A Yani’s on Jl. Surya is a pleasant alternative for fried and white rice and juice. Open 08.00-23.00. Further away on Jl. Surya, near the SMA-school is Warung Neri. Also nice. At the public harbor are several coffee and food stalls. Many of them compete with their loud music. Can be very lively when the ferry arrives or when there are trawlers from Sibolga in the harbor. Try Warung Selamat Datang just on the narrow beach. They serve some food, cakes, pancakes and bananas.

WHERE TO SLEEP IN P. BALAI

Putri, Jl. Iskandar Muda 43. Ph: +62813 9737 6499. 14 rooms, fan or aircon, with or without attached bathroom; Rp. 60-150.000. Restaurant. Lei Kombih, Jl. Iskandar Muda 1, Ph: 085296895929 (Mr. Sukri). 10 rooms w. fan, no attached bathroom; Rp. 30-50.000. Restaurant. Nanda, Jl. Makmur. Ph: +62813 9768 5036, or +62812 6921 0196. 6 rooms. With fan Rp. 50.000. With Aircon and attached bathroom Rp. 80-120.000.
Join! The Elephant Jungle Patrol

Visit our website: www.elephantjunglepatrol.com

The Pulau Banyak Collection

T-shirts, caps and sarongs with Pulau Banyak motifs are on sale in losmens and some coffee shops. The Yayasan Pulau Banyak t-shirt cost a bit more, but profits goes towards the turtle conservation.

PULAU WEH (SABANG) and PULAU ACEH

The Diving Destination with Atmosphere

Look out for the WEH Bulletin
Tambego Cave

Kayaking up a river
Pulau Banyak
The Islands you have dreamt about
www.sumatraecotourism.com

MORE ABOUT THE TURTLES IN:
www.acehturtleconservation.org