INTRODUCTION

Tunku Abdul Rahman Park is a State Marine Park gazetted to protect the islands and its surrounding marine environment, including the coral reefs, marine life, the fauna and flora. This park is lying from 3km to 8km off Kota Kinabalu which comprises of 5 islands. They are Gaya Island, Manukan Island, Mamutik Island, Sapi Island and Sulug Island. During the British rule in 1882, a trading settlement was set up in Gaya Island by British North Borneo Chartered Company. This company later shifted to the mainland Kota Kinabalu. After 92 years, finally in 1974, Gaya Island and the whole of Pulau Sapi was gazetted as the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park, named after the first Prime Minister of Malaysia.

This gazetted place covers an area of 8,900 acres (3,635 hectares). In 1979, it was increased to 12,185 acres (4,929 hectares) with the inclusion of the other 3 nearby islands such as Manukan Island, Mamutik Island and Sulug Island. All these islands can be visited all year round. Humidity remains quite high throughout the year. Temperatures are normally between 23.8 - 29.4 degrees Celsius. The islands are basically made up of sandstones and sedimentary rocks.

CLIMATE

The islands can be visited all year round, but care should be taken between May to October when storms can materialise in a matter of minutes. The average annual rainfall is 2500mm. The temperature is between 25—32 degree celsius.

GEOLOGY

The islands were built up from sedimentary rocks laid down beneath the sea 200 million years ago. The valleys and ridges created by subsequent upheavals formed the islands which were cut from the main island.

FAUNA AND FLORA

According to some experts, about a million years ago during the Ice Age, major changes in the sea level causes portions of the mainland being cut off by the sea, thus forming the islands we see today. Most of these islands forming cliffs, caves, honeycombs and deep crevasses along the shore are actually formation of sandstones. In all the 5 islands, all types of flora and fauna can be found here.

Along the shoreline, you can see a lot of beautiful shoreline vegetation such as Pandanus Dubius and Podocarpus Polystachyus. The tallest of them all are the Kerungis with narrow crowns of large dark green leaves, and their wing fruits that litter the trails.

The most common animals that you can find here are rats, squirrels, monkeys, pied hornbills, monitor lizards and various types of snakes. The hard to find and rarely seen are bearded pigs and scaly pangolins commonly known as Anteaters to Asian.

The tallest trees are “Kerung—Dipterocarpus grandiflorus” in few places, the primitive Cycads, living fossils that look like a cross between a tree fern and a palm, and which have remained unchanged for millions of years, grow in grooves behind the beach or cling to the rocky cliffs, carrying burdens of epiphytic ferns and orchids.

MARINE LIFE

Coral reefs fringe all the islands and are exposed during low tide. The best reefs are around Manukan, Mamutik and Sulug islands. Excellent reef patches are found between Pulau Sapi and Pulau Gaya. These living organisms are carnivorous animals feeding on plankton floating in the sea.

The different species form coral of different shapes and are named accordingly - stag horn, mushroom, cabbage, brain and so on. They come in a variety of colours and shades - yellow, green, blue and purple. Coral reefs are home to many kinds of fish, molluscs, the giant clam, scorpion shell, sea cucumber, feather starfish, cowry shell, black and brilliant blue sea urchins.

The coral fish include the butterfly, parrot, clown, dragon, soldier - in all their brilliant colours. Bigger fish, like the red carp, grouper, baracuda and catfish, and occasionally shark, can also be found in the deeper waters.

MANUKAN ISLAND

This 51 acres boomerang shaped island is the second largest of the Tunku Abdul Rahman Park. Manukan has good stretches of beaches on the southern coastline. The best stretch is on the island. Ideal for snorkeling, diving and swimming. 20 unit chalets, a clubhouse, restaurant, souvenir and diving centres and recreational facilities, such as a swimming pool, football field, squash and tennis courts, and infrastructure support water, electricity, desalination plant, sewerage system, and even a solar powered public telephone are provided.

MAMUTIK ISLAND

Its 15 acres make it the smallest of the 5 islands of the Park. Rich coral life surrounds the islands. It has a jetty, a 3 bedroom resthouse for rent and staff quarters for Rangers stationed there. Facilities include changing rooms, toilets, picnic shelters, tables and barbecue pits. Fresh water and electricity are available.
SULUG ISLAND

Farthest away and relatively undeveloped is the 20-acre Sulug Island. The shoreline is mostly rocky. It is popular with foreign visitors who prefer the quiet and abandoned atmosphere. Good reef patches lie on the southern end. Changing rooms and toilets, picnic shelters and tables are provided. Supply of fresh water is available.

GAYA ISLAND

Gaya island is the largest island of the Park. It derived its name from the Bajau word "Gayo" which means big. Several ridges, rising more than 600 feet and peaking at 1,000 feet, from the backbone of the 3,665 acres Pulau Gaya. It has 16 miles of shoreline with beaches ranging from fine white sandy to pebbly, and mudflats, mangrove and sandstone cliffs. The major beach area in Police Beach, a quarter mile of fine white sand sloping gently into the bay making it ideal for swimming in usually crystal clear water. The coral reefs along the entire coast of the island are in excellent condition.

SAPI ISLAND

A small island of 25 acres, Sapi Island has one of the nicest beaches in the Park - its clean white sand and crystal clear water and coral reefs fringing the shoreline makes it ideal for swimming, snorkelling and diving. Day use facilities include a jetty, picnic shelters, barbecue pits, tables, changing rooms and toilets. Camping is allowed, with the permission of the Park Manager.

ACCOMMODATION and FACILITIES

Visitors who wish to stay overnight at the chalet can make their bookings through local tour operators.

Convenient restaurant and canteens are available on the islands for the visitors.

LAW AND REGULATION

Notice boards are posted prominently on all the islands, and visitors are advised to read these notices before proceeding with their individual pursuits.

When you are there, there are certain do's and don'ts (rules and regulations) that you need to observe and follow. Examples are:-

1. Observe the rule and regulations of the Park.
2. Keep the place clean during your stay and when leaving the Park.
3. Contact Park Rangers on duty for assistance and information.
4. Do not hunt or carry firearms, poison, spear guns and dangerous weapons within the park.
5. Do not harm or disturb any plants or animals whether dead or alive.
6. Do not pick, cut or collect plants, insects, corals, shells and any other material dead or alive.
7. Do not vandalise/write names on rocks, trees or shelters.
8. Do not Bring pets into the Park, etc.

MANAGEMENT OF THE PARK

The Park area has been zoned into several zones for allowable and controlled recreational activities.

MARINE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION

Sabah Parks has setup a Marine Research and Education Unit and allocated staffs to undertake research on marine environment. Facilities such as office, multimedia room, and exhibition were built to support the unit's activities.

LIFEGUARD

Trained and qualified lifeguards are placed daily at the strategic location along the beaches to monitor the tourist safety.

GETTING THERE

There are daily boat services to the islands from Kota Kinabalu main central jetty at the Jesselton Point. Departures are at 9.00, 10.00, and 11.00 in the morning, and pick-ups are in the afternoon at 1.30, 2.30, and 3.30pm.