

A Transboundary Mobility Program that Captures the Quintessence of Borneo

- When an Island Becomes a Shared Classroom -

PONTIANAK, INDONESIA | 14–18 JULY 2026 | UNIMAS × UNTAN



Two universities, one island – and a horizon wider than either campus

If Borneo has a governing instinct, it is to ignore neat lines on a map. The island's rivers, vernacular forms, weather patterns and cultural rhythms all have a habit of spilling across jurisdictions. So, in its own modest and meaningful way, 15 architecture students and 2 lecturers from the Faculty of Built Environment (FBE), UNIMAS embarked on a journey to Universitas Tanjungpura (UNTAN) in Pontianak, Kalimantan from 14th to 18th of July 2026. The mission? Simple. To strengthen academic ties. What's more enduring was to redefine what counts as a shared classroom.

The academic heart of the visit lies in UNTAN's lecture and workshop series. Led by Dr Atta Idrawani bin Zaini and Ar IDr Mervyn Wong Hsin Jyi, the UNIMAS delegation moved between presentations, discussions and exchanges with Indonesian lecturers and students. Topics on the programme ranged from the identity of the Melanau tall house to Malaysian building construction and design practice. Student project presentations brought a test of theory against youthful ambition.

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Where ideas cross borders before their authors do



A handshake, a shared purpose, a bridge between minds

Such encounters can be deceptively valuable. Architectural education can make students fluent in drawings yet less practised in explaining why their choices matter. Talking to peers trained under a different system forces a useful discipline: defend an idea without assuming everyone shares the same references. Lively conversations also covered research, campus life and community engagement – subjects on which neighbouring universities can be surprisingly different.

Then the city took over. The architectural tour included Radakng House, the Caping Village area, Kadriyah Palace, Sultan Syarif Abdurrahman Mosque and Khatulistiwa Park. Together they offered a compact survey of West Kalimantan: vernacular forms, royal history, religious space and the curiosity of the equator. The programme also set aside time for urban appraisal and sketching.



Old timber, new eyes: heritage becomes a living lesson



Tradition wears its history – and sometimes a grin

Inevitably, there were mundane obstacles. Matching the two universities' academic calendars required coordination, and all challenges were ironed out with support from both sides. The students, meanwhile, gained greater confidence, adaptability and appreciation of cultural differences – modest outcomes, perhaps, but exactly the kind on which lasting academic partnerships depend.

03 / WHEN AN ISLAND BECOMES A SHARED CLASSROOM

Five days cannot make an architect. But they can sharpen an architect's eye. For UNIMAS and UNTAN, the success of this small exchange lies in a larger proposition: Borneo itself, which forms a common fabric – layered, humid, syncretic and expansive. A shared architectural heritage is not just something to be unravelled. It is a reason to keep studying – and building – together.

Postcards from Pontianak

Glimpses of a journey remembered less by its timetable than by the people who shared it.



Beside Pontianak's river, friendship finds its own current



At the equator, the world feels wonderfully close



The itinerary may end, the laughter has other plans



A passing moment, framed for a lifetime

"Some journeys are measured in miles. Others, in the memories they created."