

# Destination Indonesia

The numbers astound even as they boggle: 17,000 islands (or is it 20,000?), 8000 inhabited (or is it 11,000?), 300 languages spoken (or is it 400?); the list goes on.

The world's fourth most populace country – 240 million and counting – is a sultry kaleidoscope that runs along the equator for 5000km. It may well be the last great adventure on Earth. From the western tip of Sumatra to the eastern edge of Papua is a nation that defies homogenisation. A land of so many cultures, peoples, animals, customs, plants, features, artworks and foods that it is like 100 countries melded into one (or is it 200?).

And we're talking differences that aren't just about an accent or a preference for goat over pork, we are talking about people who are as radically different from each other as if they came from different continents. No man may be an island but here every island is a unique blend of the men, women and children who live upon it. Over time deep and rich cultures have evolved, from the mysteries of the spiritual Balinese to the utterly non-Western belief system of the Asmat people of Papua.

Venturing through the islands of Indonesia you'll see a land as diverse and unusual as those living upon it. Look at Sulawesi on a map, say what you think, and you'll save yourself the cost of an ink blot test at a shrink. Or view Sumatra from the air and be humbled by a legion of nearly 100 volcanoes marching off into the distance, several capable of blowing at any time.

Dramatic sights are the norm. There's the sublime: an orangutan lounging in a tree; the artful: a Balinese dancer executing precise moves that make a robot seem loose-limbed; the idyllic: a deserted stretch of blinding white sand on Sumbawa set off by azure water and virescent jungled hills; the astonishing: the mobs in a cool and glitzy Jakarta mall on a Sunday; the humbling: a woman bent double with a load of firewood on Sumatra; the solemn: the quiet magnificence of Borobudur.

As diverse as Indonesia is, perhaps what's so remarkable about the place is how often it is the same. Sure there may be those 300 spoken languages (or was it 400?) but virtually everybody can speak one language: Bahasa Indonesia, a tongue that helps unify this sprawling, chaotic collection of peoples with a past that's had more drama than a picnic on Krakatau in say, 1883. Destructive colonialism, revolution, mass slaughter, ethnic warfare, dictatorship and more have been part of daily life in Indonesia in just the past 100 years. That's one of the reasons why the national elections of 2009 are so remarkable: they were unremarkable.

More than a dozen parties waged high-energy campaigns. Rallies throughout the myriad islands were passionate and vibrant. Yet what happened in the end? President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono's incumbent Democratic Party won. In the midst of global economic chaos (time for another Krakatau allusion), Indonesians chose to go with the status quo. This is a remarkable development for a nation where the looting of a single KFC by protestors with a, er, beef, is portrayed in the West as a complete breakdown of civil order.

But it wasn't that long ago, barely a decade, when there was blood in the streets from Lombok to the Maluku as religious and political factions settled scores and simply ran amok. Having a boring election is balm for a nation with such recent bad memories. And it is balm for anyone worried that the world's largest Muslim nation (numerous large religious minorities aside) could somehow come under the influence of radical groups dedicated to

## FAST FACTS

Population: 240 million

Median age: 26.7 years

GDP per capita: US\$2150

Number of islands:  
17,000–20,000

Number of mobile phones  
in use: 30 million

Population density Java:  
1000 per sq km

Population density Papua:  
under seven per sq km

Identified species of  
flowering plants: 28,000  
and rising

Number of endangered  
mammals: 147

reversing the so far relatively successful Indonesian experiment in modest secularism. Although memories of bombings earlier in the decade in Bali and Jakarta had faded significantly, the 2009 Jakarta hotel bombings, which killed nine, reminded all that Indonesia will continue to have security challenges.

Yet look again at the boring election. The optimistically named Prosperous Justice Party (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera; PKS) which campaigned with a goal of bringing Islamic Shariah law to Indonesia received 8% of the vote after it and poll watchers had predicted a share of as much as 15%.

It was a heartening moment for those who believe Indonesia must continue to be a nation of all its people, no matter which of the 300 (or 400?) languages they prefer. Yet one election does not make anyone think there are not scores of challenges ahead. Just ask a yoga instructor on Bali. A quasi-governmental body, the Ulema Council, has issued a ban on the seemingly innocuous and uncontroversial practice of stress management on the grounds that the ancient Hindu elements of yoga are incompatible with the Muslim faith.

This only added to fears stoked by the passage in 2008 of a so-called anti-pornography law that potentially made many traditional forms of behaviour across the archipelago illegal – from wearing penis gourds on Papua, to the modest gyrations of traditional Javanese dancers (to say nothing of the brazenly topless on Bali's beaches). With recent memories of religious and ethnic violence still sharp in many places, anything that could stoke new divisions is anathema to many. Thus the general relief after the 'boring' 2009 elections.

In contrast, however, is the excitement expressed across Indonesia at the results of a different election, this one far way in the US. You'd have to find yourself a pretty remote rock in the Bandas to *maybe* find an Indonesian who couldn't tell you that President Barack Obama moved to Jakarta in 1967 with his mother and step-father and attended primary school there for four years (see p100). The president's memories in interviews may seem to focus on his love of *bakso* (meatball) soup but for locals he might as well have lived in the country his entire life. You simply cannot underestimate the pride felt over the ascent of 'one of theirs'. Certainly it means there will be a honeymoon in relations between the world's number three and number four most-populated countries. (On a side note: Obama's election coincided with a massive surge in popularity of American-style reality TV shows.)

Indonesia with its 17,000 islands (or was it 20,000?) is also, unfortunately, challenged by concerns that make political worries pale. Modern life in a place that hadn't changed in previous eons has come at a huge cost. Pollution, illegal land use, deforestation, rampant corruption (it places at 125 on Transparency International's corruption perceptions index; neighbours Malaysia and Singapore are at 47 and four respectively) and poverty (US\$50 a month is big wages here) imperil the very fabric of the nation. Plus there's the ever-present possibility of natural disaster, as seen by the 2004 tsunami and the 2006 Yogya and 2009 Sumatra earthquakes.

Yet, visiting this ever-intriguing, ever-intoxicating land you'll see these problems, but more often you'll see the promise. And more often you'll live the promise of the last great adventure on Earth. Sitting in the open door of a train whizzing across Java, idling away time on deck on a ferry bound for Kalimantan, hanging on to the back of a scooter on Flores or simply trekking through wilderness you're sure no one has seen before, you'll enjoy endless exploration of the infinite diversity of Indonesia's 17,000 islands (or was it...).

# Getting Started

Indonesia is big, cheap, rough and effortless. It's everything to everyone, a choose-your-own-adventure travel destination. With little more than a passport, sunscreen and a day's notice, urban-fatigue victims arrive dazed at Denpasar to recover in comfortable Balinese resorts. With a bit of planning and preparation, explorers can put packs to their backs and lose themselves for two months – needing just time, energy and a keen sense of adventure as companions.

## WHEN TO GO

Straddling the equator, Indonesia tends to have a fairly even climate year-round. Rather than four seasons, Indonesia has two – wet and dry – and there are no extremes of winter and summer.

In most parts of Indonesia, the wet season falls between October and April (low season), and the dry season between May and September (high season). Rain tends to come in sudden tropical downpours, but it can also rain nonstop for days. In some parts of the country, such as Bali, the difference between the seasons is modest – the dry season just seems to be slightly hotter and slightly drier than the wet season. In other areas, such as Nusa Tenggara, the differences are very pronounced, with droughts in the dry season and floods in the wet.

Though travel in the wet season is not usually a major problem in most parts of Indonesia, mud-clogged back roads can be a deterrent (or landslides on Java). The December to February rains can make travel more difficult in Nusa Tenggara, Kalimantan and Papua. The rains shift in Sumatra, peaking from October to January in the north, and from January to February in the south. In contrast, parts of the Moluccas literally shine in January.

In most cases, experiencing an Indonesian festival is reason enough to head to a destination; but read the coverage in this book, as some events may make travel difficult. Check for local holidays (p832), when public transport can be clogged and some businesses close. Also, Indonesia's burgeoning middle class likes to travel and they seem to *all* hit the roads – and skies – when there is a major holiday.

It's also good to be aware of holidays elsewhere if visiting Bali. School holidays and Christmas bring hordes of fun-seekers from Australia, for example, booking up rooms by the thousands. Europeans travel in July and August to a swath of islands, but usually not in numbers to make for anything more than enjoyable sunset drinking companions.

## COSTS & MONEY

Costs vary depending on where you go, but Indonesia remains one of the best-value travel destinations in Asia. Hotels, food and transport are all inexpensive in US dollar terms.

Accommodation is usually the greatest expense of Indonesian travel, followed by special activities like tours, treks, dives and the like. But three square warung (simple eatery) meals can cost you as little as US\$3 (about 10,000Rp or less per meal), but even if you dine in decent local restaurants, you still won't spend much more than US\$10 per day (around 30,000Rp per meal) on food. Simply put, the more you live like a local, the less you will spend.

If you confine yourself to Sumatra, Java and Nusa Tenggara, a shoestring traveller can spend as little as US\$20 per day. A midrange budget starts at

See Climate Charts (p826) for more information.

about US\$50 per day, which will get you an air-conditioned hotel room, an occasional tour and car hire. Midrange accommodation is more expensive in Balinese resorts, so budget for at least US\$70 per day there. Top-end travellers will end up spending anything above US\$100 a day, although there are few places on earth where that amount can get such good value. See p817 for details on the price categories used in this book.

Travellers' centres with lots of competition, such as Danau Toba, Yogyakarta and Bali, can be superb value for accommodation and food. The latter in particular can be amazing value. A superb grilled seafood meal with drinks in a lovely spot might cost as much as US\$10. Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara are good budget options.

Elsewhere, budget accommodation can be limited and prices are higher because competition is less fierce. Accommodation prices in Maluku and Papua can be twice as high as in tourist towns, and transport costs on Kalimantan are relatively high.

Transport expenses also increase once you get into the outer provinces. In Bali, Sumatra, Java and Nusa Tenggara there's very little need to take to the air, but in Papua you often have no choice but to fly. Flying is more expensive than other forms of transport, though still cheap in dollar terms as new budget airlines are offering stiff competition. Petrol prices are volatile – only recently have they begun to mirror world prices – bus fares remain cheap. See p847 for details on getting around.

## TRAVELLING RESPONSIBLY

The best way to responsibly visit Indonesia is to try to be as least-invasive as possible. Resources are often scarce and serving travellers can have a huge impact on local ecology through water use, refuse etc. Travelling green is of

### HOW MUCH?

Snorkel hire 20,000-50,000Rp

Bike hire 15,000-30,000Rp

Iklat (hand-dyed cloth) 500,000Rp plus

Cruise to see orangutans 150,000Rp

Economy passage on a ferry from Java to Kalimantan 165,000Rp

First-class passage, same boat: 500,000Rp

See also Lonely Planet Index, inside front cover

### DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT...

- checking the visa situation (p839) – it's constantly changing and constantly frustrating
- an emergency stash of cash for remote or isolated areas (in Rupiah after you're in Indonesia)
- a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen – the Indonesian sun is relentless
- sturdy boots and sandals
- locks for your luggage – it's better to be safe than sorry (p828)
- an empty bag to haul your shopping home
- an effective set of earplugs for the mosque and traffic wake-up calls
- a snorkel and mask for areas outside of tourist centres
- a torch (flashlight)
- dental floss, tampons and shaving cream – they're harder to come by than your average toiletries
- waterproof jacket – it's the tropics, it rains...a lot
- antimalarial tablets if going rural and DEET repellent (see p859)
- sleeping bag if trekking
- extra memory card for the camera
- photos of loved ones – even pets – at home, they're amazing ice breakers
- a mental note to purchase a sarong once you're in Indonesia – it's a fashion statement, blanket, beach mat, top sheet, mattress cover, towel and shade from the pounding sun.

course easier than it sounds, especially in a country where environmental awareness is still nascent at best, but consider the following tips:

- Watch your use of water – demand often outstrips supply. Take up your hotel on its offer to save lots of water, by not washing your sheets and towels every day. Don't stay at a place with a pool, especially if the ocean is next door.
- Don't hit the bottle – those bottles are convenient but they add up. The zillions of such bottles tossed away each year are a major blight. Still, you're wise not to refill from the tap, so what do you do? Ask your hotel or eatery if you can refill from their huge containers of drinking water if they have them. Look for bottle refilling stations.
- Conserve power – sure you want to save your own energy on a sweltering afternoon, but using air-con strains an already overloaded system. Open the windows at night for often cooler breezes. Turn off the air-con (if you have it) when you go out.
- Don't drive yourself crazy – the traffic is already bad, why add another vehicle to it? Can you take a bus or bemo instead of a chartered or rental car? Would a hike or bicycle trip somewhere be more enjoyable than a road journey to an overvisited tourist spot? You can hire a bike for US\$3 per day or less.
- Slow down – if you have the time, enjoy a ferry, don't fly. The train on Java is a democratic experience.
- Don't feed the animals – insist on tour guides not relying on feeding local wildlife such as orangutans to ensure sightings on treks.
- Eat local – warungs have food sourced locally and their food is usually the freshest.
- Trek responsibly – see p821
- Dive responsibly – see p820

For organisations that have more information on the local environment and may be able to use your help in protecting it, see p840. See also this book's GreenDex (p904) for attractions, tours and accommodation choices selected by the authors because they meet our criteria for sustainable tourism.

## TRAVEL LITERATURE

Wrapping your head around Indonesian culture can be a daunting task, as the country's history, economics, politics and culture have been widely interpreted and documented by a host of writers. Literature about Java and Bali is relatively common, but anything about the other islands can be hard to find. However we list favourite books at the start of each chapter. The following will all help you get in the mood before your trip:

Lyall Watson's *Gifts of Unknown Things* observes the symbiotic relationship of a community and its environment on an unnamed Indonesian island. The value of the natural world features highly in the book, and fans describe it as life affirming.

Tim Flannery's *Throwim Way Leg* is a must for Papuan inspiration. The author recounts his scientific expeditions to the province, where he discovered new species in Indiana Jones-style adventures. And it's all true!

The pages explode (!) in Simon Winchester's highly readable *Krakatoa – The Day the World Exploded*, which melds history, geology and politics, all centred on the 1883 eruption of Krakatau – the world's biggest bang.

*In Search of Moby Dick*, by Tim Severin, is an engagingly written search for the globe's last whale-hunters that includes an extended stay in the remote whaling village of Lamalera, Nusa Tenggara.

*Indonesia: People and Histories* by Jean Gelman Taylor is passionately written and throws new light on Indonesian history by telling it from both Indonesian and outsiders' perspectives, covering the lives of ordinary folk as well as rulers.

*The Year of Living Dangerously* by Christopher J Koch is the harrowing tale of a journalist in Sukarno's Indonesia of 1965. Many have seen the movie with a young Mel Gibson and Linda Hunt. The book is more harrowing.

## TOP 10



### ADVENTURES

Indonesia has as many adventures as islands but here are some great ones.

- 1 Sampling the deserted islands, volcanoes and jungle of untouristed Maluku (p724), the original Spice Islands.
- 2 Taking in the mummies, markets and culture of Papua's Baliem Valley (p801).
- 3 Snorkelling the remarkably clear and shallow dive spots of the Banda Islands (p756).
- 4 Braving the elements, sun bears and jungle in Kalimantan's Kayan Mentarang National Park (p594) or Apokayan Highlands (p650).
- 5 Surfing the legendary Desert Point (p487) in southwest Lombok.
- 6 Tramping through coffee plantations and waterfalls around Bali's Munduk (p354).
- 7 Marvelling at the 6km-wide crater lake and summit views of Lombok's Gunung Rinjani (p506).
- 8 Spotting orangutans, gibbons, macaques and kingfishers in Tanjung Puting National Park (p614).
- 9 Getting a bird's-eye view of Sumatra's smoking guns, Gunung Sinabung (p386) and Gunung Sibayak (p385).
- 10 Discovering pristine wilderness and beaches in Java's remote Ujung Kulon National Park (p133).

### FESTIVALS

Indonesians have myriad festivals, religious and otherwise; that are worth a journey.

- 1 Nyale Fishing Festival (February or March; p513) – hundreds flock to catch a glimpse of Lombok's first *nyale* (wormlike fish) at this huge fishing festival.
- 2 Pasola (February or March; p589) – ritual warfare marks Nusa Tenggara's harvest festival.
- 3 Waisak (May; p174) – Buddha's birth and enlightenment are celebrated by thousands of monks and pilgrims in Borobudur.
- 4 Festival Teluk Kendari (Kendari Bay Festival; April; p719) – partying and dragon-boat races in Sulawesi's Kendari.
- 5 Yoga Arts Festival (June to July; p183) – a month-long smorgasbord of shows and exhibitions in Java's cultural capital.
- 6 Bali Arts Festival (June to July; p296) – A celebration of Bali's sublime dance, music and crafts.
- 7 Tana Toraja funeral festival (July to September; p677) – Toraja people from all over Indonesia return to Sulawesi to celebrate these annual funeral rituals.
- 8 *Bidar* race (August; p831) – dozens of vivid *bidar* (canoes) race in Sumatra's Palembang.
- 9 Baliem Valley Festival (August; p811) – a rich celebration of the Baliem Valley's diverse indigenous cultures.
- 10 Ubud Writers & Readers Festival (October; p314) – an internationally acclaimed writers' festival.

If you think travel's rugged now, delve into Helen and Frank Schreider's *Drums of Tonkin*, which documents their 1963 journey from Sumatra to Timor in an amphibious jeep: landslides, gun-toting soldiers and sea voyages galore.

*The Invisible Palace* by Jose Manuel Tesoro tells the true story of a journalist's murder in Yogyakarta during the twilight of the Suharto regime. It details the intricate webs within Indonesian society linking Islam, traditional beliefs, family, government and thuggery.

## INTERNET RESOURCES

The following sites are all good for giving you a feel for current events in Indonesia; some go further and explore the ever-evolving culture of the country.

**Antara** ([www.antara.co.id/en](http://www.antara.co.id/en)) This is the site for the official Indonesian news agency; it has a searchable database.

**Inside Indonesia** ([www.insideindonesia.org](http://www.insideindonesia.org)) Excellent website with news and thoughtful features.

**Indonesia Traveling** ([www.indonesiatraveling.com](http://www.indonesiatraveling.com)) Fantastic site with detailed information about Indonesia's parks, nature reserves and the critters you might encounter. Also has links to charter sailing boats and much more.

**Jakarta Globe** ([www.thejakartaglobe.com](http://www.thejakartaglobe.com)) The top-notch new national English-language newspaper.

**Jakarta Post** ([www.thejakartapost.com](http://www.thejakartapost.com)) Indonesia's original English-language daily; good cultural coverage.

**LonelyPlanet.com** ([www.lonelyplanet.com](http://www.lonelyplanet.com)) Share knowledge and experiences with other travellers about islands that have been Lonely Planet favourites from the start.

# Itineraries

## CLASSIC ROUTES

**BEACHES, BARS, BODIES & BLISS** **Two to Three Weeks/Bali to the Gilis**  
 Start in Bali, where you can acclimatise in the resorts, clubs and shops of **Kuta** (p269). Dose up on sun at the beach, then feast on fabulous food and sling back cocktails in **Seminyak's** (p279) trendy haunts.

Head north to immerse yourself in the 'other' Bali – the culture, temples and rich history of **Ubud** (p306). Visit the Unesco-nominated **Gunung Kawi** (p323), an ancient site worthy of Indiana Jones, and the nearby craft villages. Take a cooking course or learn batik, woodcarving or silversmithing. Once you've exhausted your yen for culture, escape to the misty mountains for treks to waterfalls amid coffee plantations in and around **Munduk** (p354).

Next on the agenda is Lombok; from Bali's beachy port town of **Padangbai** (p331) take a ferry to **Lembar** (p487), Lombok's launching pad. Potter through the rice fields and Hindu temples around **Mataram** (p486), then head to **Senggigi** (p488) for indulgent resorts, fine beaches and uninterrupted R&R.

From Senggigi take a ferry to the deservedly celebrated **Gili Islands** (p492), where seamless beaches, translucent water and vivid reefs beg for snorkel-clad swimmers. Or if you're on a short timeframe, just fast ferry to the Gilis direct from Padangbai.

**Bali and Lombok are the heart of Indonesia's tourist industry. This well-trodden 160km-long path starts in Kuta, snakes north through Bali to Ubud and skips over to Lombok before ending in the Gili Islands.**





## THE JAVA JAUNT

### Three Weeks to Two Months/Jakarta to Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park

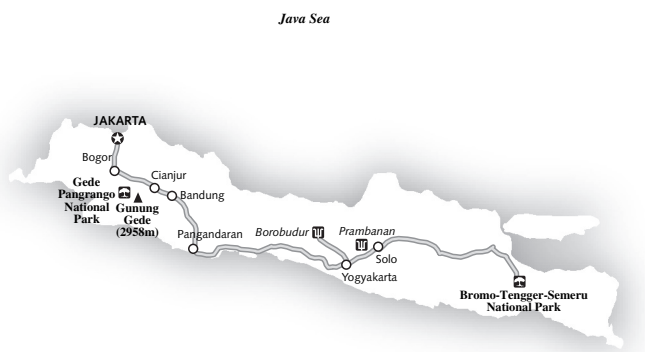
Start your journey in **Jakarta** (p96) and wrap your senses around the dizzying smells, sounds, sights and people of Indonesia's teeming capital. Linger long enough to binge on Bintang beer and shopping, then head to **Bogor** (p134) to lose yourself in the sublime Kebun Raya botanic gardens.

From Bogor set a course east through Java's centre, traversing tea plantations and dramatic scenery to pass through the famed rice centre of **Cianjur** (p142). Visit **Gede Pangrango National Park** (p142) and take a day to reach the summit of Gunung Gede for jaw-dropping views. Continue your journey for a stint in the urban jungle of **Bandung** (p143). Siate yearnings for the modern world in this city's hotels and restaurants, then make a quick exit from the chaos.

It's time to hit the coast, ditch the boots for a while and camp out in some well-earned calm – and that's where **Pangandaran** (p155), Java's premier beach resort, comes in. The national park, wide shorelines and a coastal party buzz dominate the visual and social landscapes here, and the accommodation is kind to all budgets.

After you've worshipped the sun for a week or so, pack the bags and head to **Yogyakarta** (p176), Java's cultural capital. Dabble in batik, amble through the *kraton* (walled city palace) and part with your rupiah at the vibrant markets. A day trip to majestic **Borobudur** (p171) is a must. From Yogyakarta make your way to the laid-back city of **Solo** (p198), via the enigmatic temples of **Prambanan** (p194). Finish your Java expedition with a visit to the awesome **Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park** (p245), spending your last night on the lip of Tengger crater.

Positively churning with life, Java has the lion's share of Indonesia's population, and a wealth of culture and landscapes to match. This 800km route takes in its highlights, beginning in the teeming capital Jakarta and ending in the awe-inspiring peaks of Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park.



INDIAN OCEAN

## INDONESIA'S ISLAND CORE **One Month/Lombok To Bali the Long Way**

Start on **Lombok** (p478), which has good air connections to the rest of Indonesia and Singapore. Head out to the **Gili Islands** (p492), three perfect droplets of white sand speckled with palm trees and surrounded by coral reefs teeming with marine life. Base yourself on **Gili Trawangan** (p498) where there's a great travellers' scene to hear tales from others and get inspired at fabled beach bars. Follow in the wake of generations of travellers on a boat from Lombok to **Flores** (p540), but choose carefully as standards vary. You'll see beautiful coastline along Sumbawa, stop for some snorkelling in **Pulau Satonda** (p522) and take a dragon-spotting hike on **Komodo** (p529). Take some time in the agreeable port town of **Labuanbajo** (p534) and head off-shore for some diving. From here you'll need to fly to Makassar on Sulawesi, this may require connecting *someplace*. In **Makassar** (p659), pause amid the pandemonium for excellent seafood and fun nightlife. But don't overdo it, as you want to be fully alive for the elaborate funeral ceremonies in **Tana Toraja** (p672), an eight-hour bus trip from Makassar. From here, another long bus ride (13 hours) takes you to the transport hub of **Poso** (p689) on Sulawesi, where you may wish to break your journey at the tidy lakeside town of **Tentena** (p687). A five-hour bus ride from Poso gets you to **Ampaña** (p695) where you take a ferry to your reward: the amazing, beautiful and beguiling **Togean Islands** (p696). Spend your days island- and hammock-hopping between iconic beaches. Tearing yourself away, take a boat to **Gorontalo** (p697) and from there bus it to **Manado** (p704) where you can get a flight connection to **Bali** (p258) and spend the rest of your time chasing bliss.



Beaches, underwater beauty, nasty lizards, transformative culture and more await you on a classic 4000km journey that begins in the mellow climes of Lombok, takes you through Komodo and a bit of Flores, and then on to Sulawesi for funeral ceremonies and yet more beaches before ending in Bali.

## ROADS LESS TRAVELLED

**This 3000km adventure concentrates on the underexplored east and the Moluccas. It takes in Papua's sublime Danau Sentani and the beguiling Baliem Valley before heading to the diving wonderland of the Raja Ampat Islands. Maluku's Pulau Ambon and Banda Islands provide a change of scene before the route heads south to West Timor and Flores.**

### THE GREAT EAST

Papua is the launching pad for this route, which can be done in 30 days with judicious use of flights. Start at the transport hub of **Jayapura** (p789). But you'll only be there long enough to charter a boat to visit the magnificent **Danau Sentani** (p794), a 96.5-sq-km lake with 19 islands perfect for inland island-hopping.

Back on dry land, take to the air to get to the beautiful **Baliem Valley** (p801), rich in culture and trek-worthy mountain scenery. The valley is home to the Dani people, an ethnic group who have eschewed most modern things and live a traditional life. Next it's back to Jayapura for a flight to **Sorong** (p780), a base for trips out to the **Raja Ampat Islands** (p782) – a paradise for divers and snorkelers with Indonesia's most abundant and varied marine life. It's also good for birdwatchers and sublime tropical-island scenery. From Sorong you have your choice of transport: fly and this itinerary definitely can be done in a month, or take Pelni (a line of passenger ships), but make certain you have a 60-day visa, or Pelni it to Kota Ambon on Maluku's **Pulau Ambon** (p742). Dose up on urban comfort and culture, then take a ferry (often frustrating) or plane to the crystalline seas, multicoloured reefs and empty beaches of the **Banda Islands** (p756).

After indulging in sun and isolation, either fly to **Kupang** (p567) in West Timor or enjoy a Pelni march, connecting through Makassar. If heading to Kupang, visit villages in the surrounding areas, then jump over to **Rote** (p575) for relaxed coastal vibes. For a perfect ending, make your way to **Flores** (p532), a rugged volcanic island with fishing villages, thriving culture and dramatic terrain.



## POSTCARDS COME TO LIFE **Six to Eight Weeks/Kalimantan to Sulawesi**

Unassuming **Pangkalan Bun** (p611) is the entry point to this excursion – it's the launching pad for trips into glorious **Tanjung Puting National Park** (p614), one of Indonesia's best orangutan haunts. Scan the canopy for their amber bodies from the top of a houseboat as it ambles down the beautiful Sungai Kumai, then fly back to reality in colourful **Banjarmasin** (p623). Dabble in Kalimantan's most beguiling city – brave a 5am call for the animated floating markets, then cruise the canals and meet the locals at dusk.

From Banjarmasin, travel overland to **Samarinda** (p637) and make an expedition along **Sungai Mahakam** (p642). Several days upstream will land you in the river's western reaches, which are peppered with semitraditional Dayak villages and preserved forests.

From Samarinda catch the weekly Pelni ferry to **Makassar** (p659) to marvel at colonial Dutch architecture and gorge on some of Indonesia's best seafood. Chart a course due north for vast and mesmerising **Tana Toraja** (p672), home to Sulawesi's most fascinating indigenous culture. Then spot spritely tarsiers and discover ancient megaliths at **Lore Lindu National Park** (p690).

Continue north and settle in central Sulawesi for hiking around Indonesia's third largest lake, **Danau Poso** (p689). From here escape the 'mainland' and plant yourself on the blissful **Togean Islands** (p696). Finally, head all the way north and escape life entirely by snorkelling or diving along unbelievably rich coral drop-offs – some of Asia's best – at chilled-out **Pulau Bunaken** (p710).

**Some of Indonesia's best-known but least-visited sights highlight this 2700-odd-km route that takes in the orangutans of magical Tanjung Puting National Park and the Dayak people of Kalimantan's interior, before skipping over to Sulawesi for Toraja funeral ceremonies, river rapids, mountain treks, beaches and underwater amazement.**



## TAILORED TRIPS

### BEGUILING BEASTIES

Indonesia's natural world is so vast and diverse that scientists seem to discover new species at the drop of a hat.

High on the list of must-sees are the enigmatic orangutans, best viewed at Sumatra's Bukit Lawang (p378) and Kalimantan's **Tanjung Puting National Park** (p614) and **Kutai National Park** (p641). This last conservation area is also populated by gibbons, macaques, proboscis monkeys, sun bears, clouded leopards and a whole host more. In east Kalimantan the wetlands around **Muara Pahu** (p644) are home to the pint-sized Irrawaddy dolphin.

Papua is the perennial flavour of the zoologist month: expeditions into the remote **Foja Mountains** (see p776) regularly uncover teeming communities of unknown frogs, birds, marsupials and more; the best way to reach them is by booking a tour (p779). You can catch a glimpse of Australianesque fauna in **Wasur National Park** (p814), or you can try spotting the rare bird of paradise in the islands around **Pulau Biak** (p796).

In Nusa Tenggara you'll encounter the gargantuan Komodo dragon, which dwells in the depths of **Komodo** (p528).

For butterflies bigger than your hand and exquisite birdlife, head to Sulawesi's **Lore Lindu National Park** (p690). The island is also home to **Tangkoko-Batuangas Dua Saudara Nature Reserve** (p716), which is both accessible and rich in birdlife and other fauna.



### SURF'S UP

With a dizzying array of coastlines and beaches, Indonesia is a surfing mecca. The most obvious and easiest place to catch a wave is Bali, where **Ulu Watu** (p291) on the west coast serves up three left-handers. Nearby, **Bingin** (p290) is the next best thing, and **Nusa Lembongan** (p301) has reached legendary status on the circuit. **Kuta** and **Legian** (p269) lured avid surfers long before the beaches were discovered by the crowds, and the waves remain a constant.

The hardy test their mettle at Lombok's **Desert Point** (p487) and then skip over to Sumbawa to catch the feisty tubes near **Maluk** (p518). Experienced surfers flock to the challenging breaks at **Lakey Peak** (p523). The surf capital of Sumba is **Baing** (p584).

Sumatra also has a few treats up its coastal sleeves, the most famous of which is **Pulau Nias** (p395). Also on Sumatra, the sublime **Mentawai Islands** (p425) are gaining popularity for their year-round swells, and a number of surf charters are beginning to sail here.

Then there's Java, with the world-class **G-Land** (p254) inside Alas Purwo National Park, and superlative reef breaks near **Pelabuhan Ratu** (p139). Beginners can find their balance on the friendly surf at **Batu Karas** (p160).



## UNDERWATER ODYSSEYS

With more than 17,000 islands under its archipelago belt, Indonesia boggles the minds of divers and snorkellers with a feast of underwater adventures.

Maluku's **Banda Islands** (p756) are encircled by dense coral gardens, cascading drop-offs and superb marine life. Best of all, they're so remote you may score this underwater vista all to yourself.

Oversized fish, sleepy sea fans and gaping canyons lounge beneath the ocean's surface near Sumatra's **Pulau Weh** (p409). The pick of the destinations here are the 20 dive sites around **Long Angen** (p412), the stomping ground for majestic manta rays, lion fish and morays.

Sulawesi's spectacular **Pulau Bunaken** (p710) simmers with more than 300 species of fish and coral types. Countless drop-offs, caves and valleys provide ample viewing for days of diving, and turtles, rays, sharks and dolphins are common visitors.

Off Papua, the **Raja Ampat Islands** (p782) have divers in raptures for their sheer numbers and variety of fish, and the huge reef systems with hundreds of hard and soft corals.

Off Kalimantan's northeast corner, **Pulau Derawan** (p648) is the best base for the Sangalaki Archipelago, as indicated by the turtles who nest here regularly and the schools of tuna who shimmy offshore.

In Nusa Tenggara, a diverse range of marine life simmers underwater in the **Gili Islands** (p497), and around **Komodo** and **Labuanbajo** (see p531).



## GUNUNG BAGGING

Indonesia's undulating landscapes encompass enough peaks and troughs to keep even marathon trekkers happy.

There's good walking to be found around Sumatra's **Gunung Sinabung** (p386) and **Gunung Sibayak** (p385), but serious explorers can brave the jungle beasts in the interior of **Gunung Leuser National Park** (p417).

Java's Unesco World Heritage-listed **Ujung Kulon National Park** (p133) is a remote outpost of untouched wilderness, and a three-day hike through the park reveals pristine forest and diverse wildlife. At the island's southeast tip, the **Ijen Plateau** (p250) is peppered with volcanic cones and offers a spectacular day trek to a sulphur lake.

The cascading rice fields around Sulawesi's **Tana Toraja** (p672) give way to excellent highland trekking, with soaring summits and cool-water swimming pools. Treks last anywhere from several hours to several days – highlights include the 2150m-high **Gunung Sesean** (p681). You can also mingle with the wildlife on treks in **Lore Lindu National Park** (p690).

Intrepid hikers should head to Papua's sublime **Baliem Valley** (p801). But for a real challenge, they should consider **Carstenz Pyramid** (Puncak Jaya; p776), at 5030m, it's the highest peak not just in Indonesia but in all Oceania. For this expedition you'll need experienced guides (p779).

Kalimantan's interior also provides excellent opportunities for hikers with time and experience, particularly around **Loksado** (p630) in Pegunungan Meratus (Meratus Mountains) and in the **Apokayan Highlands** (p650).



# On the Road

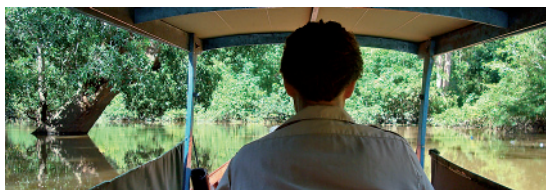


## **RYAN VER BERKMOES** Coordinating Author

I'd been following coursing streams of water across Bali's impossibly green rice fields all day in search of new little places to stay. I was thinking just how serene it was when I saw this sign and thought 'Aha! I can just stay for good and start a new clean career.'



**CELESTE BRASH** No don't worry, I didn't take a bite. Forest rat is sold raw to prepare yourself. The Tomohon market (p714) is a showcase of all sorts of local critters getting butchered. It was one of the goriest places I've ever been – not for the faint-hearted.



**MUHAMMAD COHEN** Jungle cruising doesn't get much better than on Sungai Ohong (p644), travelling between the longhouses at Tanjung Isuy and Mancong in a motor canoe.



**MARK ELLIOTT** Skin-cripping sunshine turned to cascading rain as I juddered 'home' to Saumlaki (p769). But by the time I'd changed, and patted dry my passport, the clouds were swirling away, replaced by one of the most symphonic tropical sunsets I'd ever seen.

**TRENT HOLDEN** Here's me in Banda Aceh in front of a fishing boat swept several kilometres onto the roof of a villager's house. The monument (p406) stands as a stark reminder of the sheer ferocity of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami that destroyed the region. The good news is that the city has been rebuilt as good as ever.



**JOHN NOBLE** No idea who this ugly but amiable character in a Balinese garden was. But I liked his mossy texture and daily fresh flowers. Note to the Lion Air passenger at Ambon who stole the book under my arm: I'll get you one day.

**ADAM SKOLNICK** After a four-hour delay, this Pelnii cruiser finally pulled into Lewoleba's (p558) gritty harbour after 2am. At which time I, the boat's lone *bule* (foreigner), collapsed for a few hours sleep and woke up to shafts of sunlight in my eyes and these guys hovering over me, guarding my belongings. God bless the good people of way-out Indonesia.



**IAIN STEWART** I'm outside Surabaya's 15th-century Mesjid Ampel (p222), one of Indonesia's holiest mosques and location of *wali songo* Sunan Ampel's tomb. To approach this monument you have to pass through the labyrinthine lanes of the city's Arab Quarter, past hundreds of stalls selling Islamic souvenirs to pilgrims – like the skull cap I'm wearing.

**STEVE WATERS** The scenery's looking a lot better than I am after spending two hours on the back of a moped getting to the sublime Harau Valley (p437). The effort is worth it, because it's a truly magical place. Gibbons are howling away in the forest, and large blue butterflies dance in the grass by the roadside. But I really need a drink.





# The Authors



## RYAN VER BERKMOES

**Coordinating Author, Bali**

Ryan Ver Berkmoes first visited Bali in 1993. On his visits since he has explored almost every corner of the island – along with side trips to Lombok, and Nusas Lembongan and Penida. Just when he thinks Bali holds no more surprises, he, for example, ducks behind Pura Batukau. Better yet, he simply never tires of the place. Four visits in two years shows that; sometimes his Bali social calendar is busier than anywhere. Off-island, Ryan lives in Portland, Oregon, and writes about Bali and more at [ryanverberkmoes.com](http://ryanverberkmoes.com).



## CELESTE BRASH

**Sulawesi**

Celeste first visited Indonesia in 1995 to find out if it lived up to everything she'd learned in her Southeast Asian studies courses at the University of California. It did and more, knocking her off her feet with earthquakes, volcanoes and long, bad bus rides. All this action made her other travels pale in comparison and she's since spent many months exploring the country from North Sumatra to Bali and up through Sulawesi. When in Indonesia nowadays she has to carry a map to explain the location of her home, French Polynesia, to all those questioning locals.



## MUHAMMAD COHEN

**Kalimantan**

Native New Yorker Muhammad Cohen first visited Indonesia in 1994 to meet an ex-neighbour from his days as a diplomat in Africa. Cohen's first mouthful of nasi goreng (fried rice) told him he wanted to explore further. From his base in Hong Kong, he's been frequenting Indonesia for more than a dozen years, picking up the language and a taste for *ikan bakar lalapan* (grilled fish served with sambal and aromatic leaves). Beyond his Lonely Planet credits, Cohen is the author of *Hong Kong on Air* ([www.hongkongonair.com](http://www.hongkongonair.com)), a novel about the 1997 handover, television news, love, betrayal, global economic crisis and cheap lingerie.

### LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

Why is our travel information the best in the world? It's simple: our authors are passionate, dedicated travellers. They don't take freebies in exchange for positive coverage so you can be sure the advice you're given is impartial. They travel widely to all the popular spots, and off the beaten track. They don't research using just the internet or phone. They discover new places not included in any other guidebook. They personally visit thousands of hotels, restaurants, palaces, trails, galleries, temples and more. They speak with dozens of locals every day to make sure you get the kind of insider knowledge only a local could tell you. They take pride in getting all the details right, and in telling it how it is. Think you can do it? Find out how at [lonelyplanet.com](http://lonelyplanet.com).



## MARK ELLIOTT

**Maluku**

Since his first trip in 1987, Mark has visited virtually every corner of Indonesia, with trips ranging from relaxing holidays in blissful Bali to leech-infested upriver treks with Kalimantan Dayaks. He's jammed the harmonica in end-of-Ramadan festivities aboard a Pelni liner, survived an appallingly storm-battered sea crossing in a Bugis fishing boat and escaped from a Solo hotel hours before it was burnt down by anti-Suharto rioters. Mark remains fascinated by Indonesia's smorgasbord of cultures and considers the Maluku Spice Islands to be among the greatest undiscovered travel gems in Asia.



## TRENT HOLDEN

**Sumatra**

Trent's first visit to Indonesia was as a wide-eyed teenager in the 1990s. It was his first independent trip overseas, and marked the beginning of an obsession with travelling in Asia. While he's in awe of the volcanoes, exotic jungles and ridiculously beautiful beaches, it's the friendly locals and their great sense of humour that really clinches it as one of his favourite destinations. Trent was born and bred in Melbourne, where he also works as an editor for Lonely Planet. He loves listening to the Ramones and reading Charles Bukowski. Trent also cowrote *Nepal 8*.



## GUYAN MITRA

**Sumatra**

As a keen young history student who read all about a colonial-era land of 'untamed natural wealth, beauty and savages', Guyan made Sumatra a definite stop on his postgraduate travels. He has since returned to Indonesia many times in different guises: surfer, diver, beach bum, volunteer and, over more recent years, travel writer. When not larking about in the jungles of Asia, Guyan can be found in west London, where he maintains a career writing travel features for the *Sunday Times*, *Esquire* and many inflight magazines.



## JOHN NOBLE

**Papua**

John has rated Indonesia his favourite country to travel in ever since his first visit in the middle of the Suharto dictatorship, when he wrote surveys of the country's coal industry for the *Financial Times International Coal Report* and the *Jakarta Post*. Since then he has spent nearly a year in Indonesia, visiting all the main regions except (so far) Kalimantan. He loves Indonesia's ever-charming people, its languages, its gamelan, its Balinese dance, its Asmat carving, its dragons and birds of paradise, its spectacular landscapes and translucent seas, its unbelievable variety of cultures, boats and land transport, and above all the fact that every different island is a whole different world.



## ADAM SKOLNICK

### Nusa Tenggara

Adam Skolnick became travel obsessed while working as an environmental activist in the mid-1990s. A freelance journalist, he writes about travel, culture, health, sports and the environment for Lonely Planet, *Men's Health*, *Outside*, *Travel & Leisure* and *Spa*. He has coauthored six previous Lonely Planet guidebooks: *Southeast Asia on a Shoestring 14*, *East Timor 2*, *Mexico 11*, *The Carolinas*, *Georgia & the South Trips 1*, *Bali & Lombok 12* and *Nicaragua 2*. He's also the author of *Phuket Encounter 1*. To get around Nusa Tenggara he took eight buses, 18 boats and ferries, 11 planes, and hired or hitched 19 cars and 15 motorbikes. You can read more of his work at [www.adamskolnick.com](http://www.adamskolnick.com).



## IAIN STEWART

### Java

Iain Stewart first travelled through Java in 1992 during a two-year, not-so-grand tour between India and Honduras. He's returned to Indonesia many times since, and has explored most parts of the archipelago: scuba diving in Sulawesi, hiking through rainforest in Sumatra and encountering wildlife in the clubs of Bali and Jakarta (in the interests of research, of course). Iain's written several dozen guidebooks over the years to destinations as diverse as Ibiza and Vietnam, but Java's combination of spectacular scenery, fiery food, refinement and informality means that it's never too soon for a return trip.



## STEVE WATERS

### Sumatra

*Crocodile Vampires* was the movie screening on the boat from Batam to Dumai back in 1996, when Steve was investigating the Sumatran back door. His love of trekking took him across Sumatra Barat until his camera finally succumbed to the Mentawai mud. Thirteen years later he's still in mud as he climbed Gunung Kerinci, reprising his original journey. Drawn to wild lonely places, he'd rather be waiting for a lift on the Mongolian steppe, climbing a volcano in Kamchatka or bushwalking in southwest Tasmania than sitting at his desk in Melbourne keeping Lonely Planet's databases online. Steve's a regular contributor to *Wild* magazine.

## CONTRIBUTING AUTHOR

**Dr Trish Batchelor** wrote the health chapter. Trish is a general practitioner and travel-medicine specialist who works at the CIWEC Clinic in Kathmandu, Nepal, as well as being a medical advisor to the Travel Doctor New Zealand clinics. Trish teaches travel medicine through the University of Otago, and is interested in underwater and high-altitude medicine, and in the impact of tourism on host countries. She has travelled extensively through Southeast and East Asia and particularly loves high-altitude trekking in the Himalayas.

# Behind the Scenes

## THIS BOOK

The 1st edition of *Indonesia*, way back in 1986, was the collective work of Alan Samalgaski, Ginny Bruce and Mary Covernton. And cramming this immense, sprawling jewel of an archipelago into one action-packed volume has kept us busy ever since... In subsequent editions we've had 23 different authors travelling the country in search of adventure, enlightenment and ferry timetables.

The previous 8th edition was the work of coordinating author Justine Vaisutis along with a team of authors: Patrick Witton, Neal Bedford, Ryan Ver Berkmoes, China Williams, Iain Stewart, Nick Ray, Mark Elliott and Wendy Yanagihara. Indonesia expert journalist and author John Martinkus wrote the Indonesia's Separatist Conflicts box in the History chapter. Dr Trish Batchelor wrote the Health chapter.

For this 9th edition Ryan Ver Berkmoes took the helm as coordinating author. His crack team of authors included Celeste Brash, Muhammad Cohen, Mark Elliott, Trent Holden, Guyan Mitra, John Noble, Adam Skolnick, Iain Stewart and Steve Waters.

This guidebook was commissioned in Lonely Planet's Melbourne office, and produced by the following:

**Commissioning Editors** Judith Bamber, Tashi Wheeler

**Coordinating Editors** Laura Gibb, Trent Holden, Kate Whitfield

**Coordinating Cartographer** Andras Bogdanovits

**Coordinating Layout Designer** Frank Deim

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## THE LONELY PLANET STORY

Fresh from an epic journey across Europe, Asia and Australia in 1972, Tony and Maureen Wheeler sat at their kitchen table stapling together notes. The first Lonely Planet guidebook, *Across Asia on the Cheap*, was born.

Travellers snapped up the guides. Inspired by their success, the Wheelers began publishing books to Southeast Asia, India and beyond. Demand was prodigious, and the Wheelers expanded the business rapidly to keep up. Over the years, Lonely Planet extended its coverage to every country and into the virtual world via lonelyplanet.com and the Thorn Tree message board.

As Lonely Planet became a globally loved brand, Tony and Maureen received several offers for the company. But it wasn't until 2007 that they found a partner whom they trusted to remain true to the company's principles of travelling widely, treading lightly and giving sustainably. In October of that year, BBC Worldwide acquired a 75% share in the company, pledging to uphold Lonely Planet's commitment to independent travel, trustworthy advice and editorial independence.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with over 500 staff members and 300 authors. Tony and Maureen are still actively involved with Lonely Planet. They're travelling more often than ever, and they're devoting their spare time to charitable projects. And the company is still driven by the philosophy of *Across Asia on the Cheap*: 'All you've got to do is decide to go and the hardest part is over. So go!'

Milton Turner, Nicoline Dolman, Jack Daniels, Oka Wati and many more.

At Lonely Planet, thanks to the entire publishing and production teams for guidance, understanding and the ability to fix a lot of bad syntax. And huge thanks to an amazingly talented and dedicated team of coauthors: Adam, Celeste, Guyan, Iain, John and Mark are simply the best.

Finally, there's Annah, who always gives me a welcome 'merp' and Erin Corrigan, who discovered Bali for herself and proved that paradise begins at home.

### CELESTE BRASH

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### MUHAMMAD COHEN

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### TRENT HOLDEN

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### JOHN NOBLE

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### IAIN STEWART

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### STEVE WATERS

Many thanks to all the people who made my job easier, including Subandi Keluarga in Kerinci, Kemun for the volcano, Yuli and Scuzz for boats

## SEND US YOUR FEEDBACK

We love to hear from travellers – your comments keep us on our toes and help make our books better. Our well-travelled team reads every word on what you loved or loathed about this book. Although we cannot reply individually to postal submissions, we always guarantee that your feedback goes straight to the appropriate authors, in time for the next edition. Each person who sends us information is thanked in the next edition and the most useful submissions are rewarded with a free book.

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## OUR READERS

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**A** Barry Acott, Michel Adine, John Ahern, Laura Ambrey, Justin Andrews, Graham Ashford **B** Ralph Balmer, Julie Barber, Chris Barnes, Ruth Bath, Kees Berkelaar, Bibiana Brauchle, Bas En Christel Breuker - Van Hout, Iman Brinkman, Menno Brons, Steve Buss, David Byrne **C** Agi Cakradirana, Hugo Adrian Camacho, Candice Carr Kelman, Perry Cas, James Chen, Jess Choy, Claudia Christl, Andrew Cooper, Oliver Craven, Andrej Curda **D** Patrick Daan, Pieter De Hart, Niels De Pous, David De Rango, Cathy Degaytan, Mark Degaytan, Merel Dekker, Kenny Dick, James Dimond, John Donoghue, Sally Drinkhouse, Anderson Duane, Yvonne Duijst **E** Paul Eaton, Anita En Gede, Martin Engeset, Ville Etelapaa, Pete Evans **F** Stan Ford, Marianne Fortuin **G** Jonathan Gamble, Claire Garabedian, Winke Goede, Leika Gooneratne, Brendan Griffin, Yuri Gupta **H** Ben Haberfield, Sari Handayani, Roy Hans, Jochem & Bianca Havermans, Theresa Heller, Oliver Henrich, Mirjam Hermans, Aldi Heyl, Kirsten Hietkamp, Bettie Holaday, Tom Holzinger, Raoul Hoovers, Michael Huffman, Hannes Hutzelmeyer, John Huxley **J** Harriet Jackson, Xana Jones, Mirari Judio **K** Hanne Kabel, Karsiyah Karsiyah, Karsiyah Karsiyah, Ancelikh Kaspinen, Darcy Killeen, Thomas Klueter, Suzan Kohlik, Alex Korn, Janneke Kraan,

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Digital Wisdom, Inc.

# Natural Indonesia

A close-up photograph of a blue tiger butterfly (Greta oto) perched on a yellow and red flower. The butterfly's wings are dark brown with vibrant blue stripes and spots. Its body is black with white spots. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

Blue tiger butterfly,  
Bukit Lawang (p378),  
Sumatra

KARL LEHMANN

**From volcanoes to orangutans, from dense jungle to coral reefs, Indonesia is a riot of action, colour and beauty. Travelling the islands is like a treasure hunt: the infinite diversity of nature across the archipelago will astound. It may have the world's fourth-largest populace, but Indonesia is also home to a fabulous variety of flora and fauna.**

## ANIMALS

Indonesia's wildlife is as diverse as everything else about the archipelago. Great apes, tigers, elephants and monkeys – lots of monkeys – plus one mean lizard are just some of the more-notable critters you may encounter. And then there are the thousands of species that you've never seen on a nature special or in a zoo. Case in point: the one-horned Javan rhinoceros, one of the world's most critically endangered mammals, whose last refuge in Indonesia is the Ujung Kulon National Park (p133). Add in life underwater, and the biodiversity here is astonishing. See p74 for full details.

### Orangutans

Exemplifying a placid lifestyle that appeals to many a human slacker, Indonesia's orangutans are an iconic part of the nation's image. The world's largest arboreal mammal, they once swung through the forest canopy throughout all of Southeast Asia, but are now found only in Sumatra and Borneo. Researchers fear that the few that do remain will not survive the continued loss of habitat to logging and agriculture.

Deeply fascinating to view, orangutans have an important role in drawing people

## top five PLACES TO SEE ORANGUTANS

Although Sumatra is famous for orangutans, don't underestimate Kalimantan.

**Sumatra – Bukit Lawang** (p378) Home to over 5000 orangutans, Bukit Lawang is one of the world's top spots for viewing these great apes.

**Kalimantan – Betung Kerihun National Park** (p605) Hugging the border with Malaysia, here you can venture up wild rivers to find orangutans.

**Kalimantan – Danau Sentarum National Park** (p605) Spot crocodiles, monkeys and our ginger-haired relatives in the marshes of this national park.

**Kalimantan – Tanjung Puting National Park** (p614) Our favourite place to spot orangutans in their natural habitat. This gem offers the world's easiest adventure travel.

**Kalimantan – Kutai National Park** (p641) Offering the chance to see truly wild orangutans, here you'll find 200,000 hectares of diverse ecosystems. Treks encounter some of Indonesia's most unusual fauna.

Orangutan in Tanjung Puting National Park (p614)

ANDREW BROWN/ILL







No prizes for guessing who the star attractions are at Komodo National Park (p528), Komodo

KARL LEHMANN

into the Indonesian wilds. Travellers exposed to the exotic beauty of these lands often return home ready to fight for its salvation. For more on orangutans, see p379 and p381.

At the other end of the scale, the Sangkulirang Mountains in East Kalimantan are home to easily the least disturbed orangutans on the planet: the 2000 here were only discovered in 2008. This is very remote country; Sangkulirang (Map p633) is the closest town, while Kutai National Park (p641) is to the south.

### **Komodo Dragons**

Tales of beasts with huge claws, menacing teeth and evil yellow forked tongues floated around the islands of Nusa Tenggara for centuries until only about 100 years ago, when the first Westerners brought one out of its namesake island home near Flores.

And as menacing as these 2.5m-long lizards look, their disposition is worse. Scores of humans have perished after being attacked, and the Komodos regularly stalk and eat small deer. One researcher compared the sound of a Komodo pounding across the ground in pursuit to that of a machine gun. Only in 2009 was one of the lizard's deadly secrets revealed: venom in its bite that sends the victim into shock and prevents blood from clotting. Yikes!

For more on Komodos, see p530.



Swim with turtles at Pulau Menjangan (p347), Bali  
TIM ROCK

## Birds

Astrapias, sicklebills, riflebirds and manucodes are just some of the exotic and beautifully feathered creatures you'll see in the skies of Indonesia. On Papua alone, there isn't just one type of bird called 'bird of paradise', but 30 (see p788). For many birdwatchers, the dream of a lifetime is to witness a pair of these birds perform their spectacular mating dance.

Birdwatching is popular in many of the national parks; guides will always be ready to point out birds, although they may not know much more about them than you.

Periplus's illustrated guidebook *Birding Indonesia* makes a good companion. On Kalimantan, Tangkoko-Batuangas Dua Saudara Nature Reserve (p716) has regular birdwatching tours. On Bali, you can go on guided walks looking for birds in and around Ubud (p313).

Papua easily wins the birdwatching crown, however. Its range of birds includes migrating species from Australia and as far as Siberia. See the boxed text, p788, for an idea of the myriad bird-spotting opportunities.

## Life Underwater

Indonesia's incredible range of life on land is easily matched beneath the waves. The waters around Komodo, Sulawesi, the east coast of Papua, and even some spots in Java and Bali are home to a kaleidoscopic array of corals, reef dwellers and pelagics.

Huge sunfish, up to 2.5m in length and twice as high, are a much-treasured sight for divers. These enigmatic fish can usually be found feeding on jellyfish and plankton in the balmy waters around many of Indonesia's islands large and small. Manta rays are also found in abundance. Even above the waves you're likely to see porpoises or other sea mammals.

For recommendations of the best dive sites, see p820.

# top five

## PLACES FOR WATCHING WILDLIFE

**Bali – Pulau Menjangan** (p347) Famous for a dozen superb dive sites that can be reached on a day trip from anywhere on the island.

**Nusa Tenggara – Komodo National Park** (p529) The legendary Komodo dragon reigns supreme.

**Papua – Danau Habbema** (p811) Cuscus, birds of paradise and maybe tree kangaroos are found near this isolated lake.

**Sulawesi – Lore Lindu National Park** (p690) Tarsiers, birds of paradise, monkeys and more are found in this protected area.

**Sumatra – Gunung Leuser National Park** (p417) Famous for orangutans, but also home to monkeys, elephants and tigers.

## PLANTS

Simply wandering a deserted back lane in Bali, a cathedral of bamboo arching over the road, will be enough to convince you of Indonesia's botanical magic.

Whether cultivated or wild, frangipani trees are alive with fragrant blooms, many ready to drop into your hand. Head off on a trek and be prepared for a profusion of orchids (2500 different species at last count), flowers, vines and magnificent brooding banyan trees. You can expect a riot of bougainvillea, lotus blossoms, hibiscus and a kaleidoscope of other blooms across the archipelago. Impossibly complex heliconias hang from vines in all their multifaceted crimson, orange and golden glory. In forested areas, teak, clove, rattan and a plethora of palms are among the trees providing welcome shade from the equatorial sun.

Amid all of the luxuriant flora are many edible plants. Passionfruit is common as are bananas. Look for coffee plantations, especially in the hills of Bali near Munduk (p354). On the Maluku – the original Spice Islands – you can still catch the scent of vanilla. Throughout Indonesia, markets abound with oodles of tropical fruits and citrus.

But it wouldn't be Indonesia without some real characters. Consider *Rafflesia arnoldii*, the world's largest flower, and the *Amorphophallus titanum*, the world's tallest flower. Both can be found on Sumatra and parts of Kalimantan and Java. In fact, the former may well be the world's stinkiest flower (p436).

See the world's largest (and stinkiest) flower, the *Rafflesia arnoldii*, in West Sumatra (p436)

KARL LEHMANN





Stand in awe beneath Indonesia's second-largest volcano, the classic Gunung Rinjani (p506), Lombok

JAMES LYON

## GUNUNG API – FIRE MOUNTAINS

If you're keen to ascend spectacular peaks, watch the sun rise through the haze of steaming craters and peer into the earth's bubbling core, you've come to the right place. Indonesia is *the* destination for volcano enthusiasts. This is thanks to the fact that it lies on a significant segment of the Pacific 'Ring of Fire', where two large crustal plates (the Indian Ocean and western Pacific) are forced under the massive Eurasian plate, where they melt at approximately 100km beneath the surface. Some of the magma rises and erupts to form the string of volcanic islands across Indonesia. Its volcanoes do erupt, sometimes with shocking consequences (see Krakatau, p123). With tectonic activity comes devastating earthquakes and tsunamis, such as those of Boxing Day 2004, off Java in July 2006 and Sumatra in 2009.

## TOP VOLCANOES

### Java

- **Gunung Bromo** (p245) Journey to Bromo, a sacred and eerie peak surrounded by the desolate Sea of Sands.
- **Gunung Merapi** (p192) Tackle the lush, jungle-covered slopes of Merapi, an almost perfectly conical volcano dominating the cultural heartland of Java.
- **Gunung Krakatau** (p123) Take a boat trip to see the remnants, and new beginnings, of one of the world's A-list volcanoes.
- **Kawah Ijen** (p250) Spend the night at a peaceful coffee plantation before climbing this volcano to view its remarkable turquoise sulphur lake.

### Bali

- **Gunung Agung** (p330) Take one of the numerous routes up and down Bali's tallest and most sacred mountain; include seldom-visited temples in your journey.

### Sumatra

- **Gunung Sibayak** (p385) Enjoy an easy and rewarding day hike, just outside Berastagi – a few hours' bus ride from Medan.
- **Gunung Merapi** (p411) Climb Sumatra's most restless volcano in the middle of the night for a sunrise view from the top.
- **Gunung Kerinci** (p442) Brave this challenging ascent up into the heavens on Sumatra's highest peak.

### Nusa Tenggara

- **Gunung Rinjani** (p506) Join pilgrims at the summit of this sacred peak, which has a huge crater lake overlooked by the active cone of Gunung Baru.
- **Kelimutu** (p548) Wonder at the ethereal scenery atop this volcano, with its three differently coloured crater lakes and lunar landscape.
- **Wawo Muda** (p544) Climb the summit of this cone, which only emerged in 2001, and view several small lakes of a rusty red hue.

### Maluku

- **Gunung Api Gamalama** (p734) Catch the view from Ternate of lovely Tidore and its string of offshore volcanoes.
- **Gunung Api** (p761) Scramble up this volcano in the Banda Islands to experience the awesome sunrise views.



Visit the steaming Gunung Semeru (p248), one of Indonesia's most active volcanos, Java



Life is a beach at the Togean Islands (p696)

GREG ELMS

## NATIONAL PARKS

Most of Indonesia's national parks are very isolated, but the extra effort required to get to them is more than rewarded by the country's magnificent wilderness. Visitor facilities are minimal at best, but at many of the parks you'll find locals who are enthusiastic about *their* park and ready to guide you to its hidden gems. For further information, see p75.

Tents, sleeping bags and other gear are often available in most major towns. Many parks have an entrance gate, where you register and pay a minimal fee, and hire a guide. If there is no entrance gate, you should first visit the nearest Perlindungan Hutan dan Konservasi Alam (PHKA) office to check conditions and report your intended route. The Ministry of Forestry, which runs the parks, has a useful website: [www.dephut.go.id](http://www.dephut.go.id).

## top five BEAUTY SPOTS

Jaw-dropping beauty can be found across Indonesia, often when you least expect it. Here's five of our favourites (culled from a long list):

**Gunung Bromo** (p245) It may not be Java's tallest volcano, but it's easily its most magnificent. From its summit you can see two other volcanoes (one in various stages of activity), all set in the vast caldera of yet another volcano.

**Pulau Weh** (p409) An idyllic tropical island off Sumatra that has superb diving in its azure waters.

**Togean Islands** (p696) An adventure to reach, but more than repay the effort with rings of perfect beaches, dense jade-green forests and a perfect low-key vibe.

**Banda Islands** (p756) On the verge of being descended upon by the tourist mobs, but like cookies in a jar to a kid, the Banda Islands remain tantalisingly out of reach. The 10 islands spiral and twist around each other, agleam with white, deserted sands.

**Danau Sentani** (p794) A lake near the coast of Papua that's dotted along the shore with timeless fishing villages built on stilts over the reflecting waters. At sunset (and sunrise) the water glows with every colour in the rainbow.

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