

Indonesia

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Bali** – believing the hype, for Bali has it all: dynamic clubbing, stellar surf and exquisite Hindu culture (p209)
- **Gunung Bromo** – experiencing the supernatural beauty of East Java’s vast cone-studded caldera at sunrise (p207)
- **Central Java** – ascending the ancient Buddhist stupa of Borobudur (p197), before trawling the batik markets of bustling Yogyakarta (p196)
- **Orang-utans** – paying primate-to-primate respects to the ‘man of the jungle’, unique to Borneo (p309) and Sumatra (p262)
- **Togean Islands** – diving the pristine walls and coral canyons beneath seas of dimpled glass in remote Central Sulawesi (p320)
- **Off the beaten track** – hiking along raging rivers and scaling exposed ridges to reach interior Papua’s remote tribal villages in the Baliem Valley (p331)

FAST FACTS

- **Budget** US\$15 to US\$25 a day
- **Capital** Jakarta
- **Costs** cheap room US\$5 to US\$8, two-hour bus ride US\$2, large beer US\$1.50
- **Country code** ☎ 62
- **Languages** Bahasa Indonesia and over 300 indigenous languages
- **Money** US\$1 = 9362Rp (Indonesian rupiah)
- **Phrases** *salam* (hello), *sampai jumpa* (goodbye), *terima kasih* (thanks), *maaf* (sorry)
- **Population** 255 million
- **Time** Indonesia has three time zones, between seven and nine hours ahead of GMT
- **Visas** 30 days for most nationalities

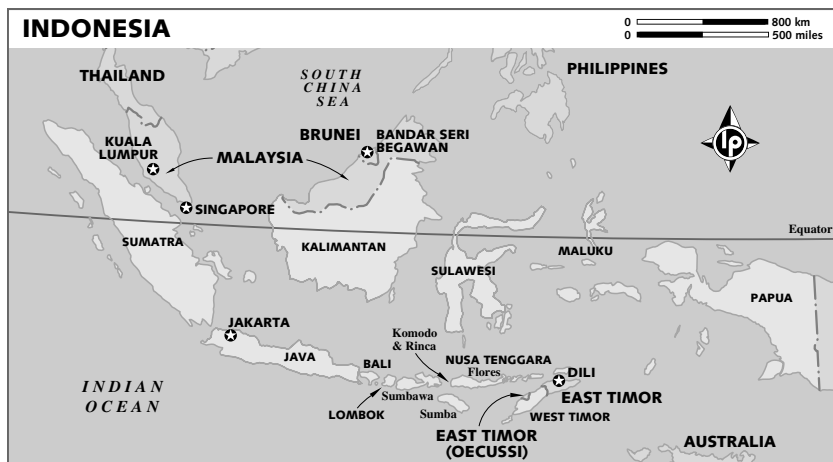


TRAVEL HINTS

Kaki lima (mobile food stalls) offer the cheapest grub. And learn some local lingo – Bahasa Indonesia is easy to pick up.

OVERLAND ROUTES

The Entikong border links Kalimantan with Sarawak (Malaysia) and West and East Timor connect at Motoain.



Bestriding the equator and bridging the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Indonesia is a vast, dazzling tropical archipelago of over 13,000 islands that stretches between Malaysia and Australia. The nation's natural diversity is simply staggering, taking in snowcapped peaks in Papua, sandalwood forests in Sumba, primary jungle in Borneo and shimmering rice paddies in Bali and Java. Indonesian coral reefs are among the world's richest, harbouring four times more species than those in the Caribbean, while the surf scene here is world class by any definition.

Right now, following a succession of natural and human-provoked disasters, there are far fewer travellers in Indonesia compared to other parts of Southeast Asia. But the nation's reputation as an unsafe and religiously intolerant nation is unjustified – personal safety is far less of a concern compared with most countries in Europe or the Americas, and most Indonesians are incredibly hospitable.

More a continent than a country, Indonesia is the largest, most culturally diverse and perhaps most challenging nation in Southeast Asia to explore. So if you've come in search of dragons in Komodo, orang-utans in Kalimantan, a volcano to climb or just the perfect beach, Indonesia is the place to live that dream.

CURRENT EVENTS

Indonesia must be one of the most disaster-prone nations on earth, and its inhabitants have suffered an appallingly bad run of luck in recent years. The most devastating tragedy of all was the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami that ravaged Aceh and killed around 168,000 people in northern Sumatra. Three months later Pulau Nias suffered an earthquake. Then in 2006, another quake rocked Yogyakarta, killing 6800 people (and damaging the Prambanan temples), and Java's main beach resort of Pangandaran was engulfed by another tsunami. Combine this with a series of ferry sinkings and aeroplane crashes that exposed the decrepit state of Indonesia's transport network and it doesn't paint a pretty picture.

Politically, however, Indonesia has benefited from a period of stability and economic progress. Peace talks between Acehese Free Aceh Movement (GAM) rebels and the Indonesian government led to a suspension of hostilities and peaceful elections for the governorship in December 2006. Conflicts rumble on in parts of the nation (particularly in central Sulawesi and Papua), however, and a proposed 'decency' law (see p339) has inflamed religious tensions. But all in all Indonesia has enjoyed a period of relative calm under President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and with the next election set for 2009 things look good for another peaceful handover of power, proof the nation's embryonic democracy is beginning to mature steadily.

HISTORY Beginnings

Until the last few years it was widely believed that the first humanoids (*Homo erectus*) lived in Central Java around 500,000 years ago, having reached Indonesia across land bridges from Africa, before either dying off or being wiped out by the arrival of *Homo sapiens*.

But the discovery in 2003 of the remains of a tiny islander, dubbed the 'hobbit' (see boxed text, p289), seems to indicate that *Homo erectus* survived much longer than was previously thought, and that previously accepted timelines of Indonesia's evolutionary history need to be re-examined (though many scientists continue to challenge the hobbit theory).

Most Indonesians are descendants of Malay people who began migrating around 4000 BC from Cambodia, Vietnam and southern China. They steadily developed small kingdoms and by 700 BC these settlers had developed skilful rice-farming techniques.

Hinduism & Buddhism

The growing prosperity of these early kingdoms soon caught the attention of Indian and Chinese merchants, and along with silks and spices came the dawn of Hinduism and Buddhism in Indonesia.

These religions quickly gained a foothold in the archipelago and soon became central to the great kingdoms of the 1st millennium AD. The Buddhist Srivijaya empire held sway over the Malay Peninsula and southern Sumatra, extracting wealth from its dominion over the strategic Straits of Melaka, while the Hindu Mataram and Buddhist Sailendra kingdoms dominated Central Java, raising their grandiose monuments, Borobudur and Prambanan, over the fertile farmland that brought them their prosperity.

Indeed, when Mataram slipped into mysterious decline around the 10th century AD, it was fast replaced with an even more powerful Hindu kingdom. Founded in 1294, the Majapahit empire made extensive territorial gains under its ruler, Hayam Wuruk, and prime minister, Gajah Mada, and while claims that they controlled much of Sulawesi, Sumatra and Borneo now seem fanciful, most of Java, Madura and Bali certainly fell within their realm.

But things would soon change. Despite the Majapahit empire's massive power and influence, greater fault lines were opening up

DID YOU KNOW?

- The name 'Indonesia' is derived from *Indus* (Latin for 'India') and *nesos* (Greek for 'island').
- Indonesia has 129 active volcanoes.
- The Indonesian coastline is 54,716km long.
- Maluku (population 2 million) has over 130 languages.

across Indonesia, and Hinduism's golden age was swiftly drawing to a close.

Rise of Islam

With the arrival of Islam came the power, the reason and the will to oppose the hegemony of the Majapahits, and satellite kingdoms soon took up arms against the Hindu kings. In the 15th century the Majapahits fled to Bali, where Hindu culture continues to flourish, leaving Java to the increasingly powerful Islamic sultanates. Meanwhile, the influential trading kingdoms of Melaka (on the Malay Peninsula) and Makassar (in southern Sulawesi) were also embracing Islam, sowing the seeds that would later make modern Indonesia the most populous Muslim nation on earth.

European Expansion

Melaka fell to the Portuguese in 1511 and European eyes were soon settling on the archipelago's riches, prompting two centuries of unrest as the Portuguese, Spanish, Dutch and British wrestled for control. By 1700 the Dutch held most of the trump cards, with the Dutch East India Company (VOC) controlling the region's lucrative spice trade and becoming the world's first multinational company (see p154). Following the VOC's bankruptcy, however, the British governed Java under Sir Stamford Raffles (see p180) between 1811 and 1816, only to relinquish control again to the Dutch after the end of the Napoleonic wars, who then held control of Indonesia until its independence 129 years later.

It was not, however, a trouble-free tenancy and the Dutch had to face numerous rebellions: Javan Prince Diponegoro's five-year guerrilla war was finally put down in 1830, costing the lives of 8000 Dutch troops.

DUTCH EAST INDIA COMPANY (VOC)

Dominating Asian trade routes for two centuries, the Dutch East India Company (VOC) was the world's first multinational corporation, monopolising the spice trade from Asia to Europe. Set up in 1602, it primarily traded pepper, nutmeg, cinnamon and sugar, and its profitability and clout was such that it minted its own currency.

By the late 17th century the VOC had established a city, Batavia, as its capital in the region, had 50,000 employees and owned over 150 merchant ships and 40 warships. It also had a private army of 10,000 soldiers, outposts from Japan to southern Africa, and was the first company to pay stock dividends (which averaged an annual 18% over 200 years).

But this trading behemoth struggled in the 18th century, ultimately collapsing in 1800, being unable to compete financially with the Caribbean and Latin America, which became more productive sugar-production centres.

Road to Independence

By the beginning of the 20th century, the Dutch had brought most of the archipelago under their control, but the revolutionary tradition of Diponegoro was never truly quashed, bubbling beneath the surface of Dutch rule and finding a voice in the young Soekarno. The debate was sidelined as the Japanese swept through Indonesia during WWII, but with their departure came the opportunity for Soekarno to declare Indonesian independence, which he did from his Jakarta home on 17 August 1945.

The Dutch, however, were unwilling to relinquish their hold over Indonesia and – supported by the British, who had entered Indonesia to accept the Japanese surrender – moved quickly to reassert their authority over the country. Resistance was stiff and for four bitter years the Indonesian resistance fought a guerrilla war. But American and UN opposition to the reimposition of colonialism and the mounting casualty toll eventually forced the Dutch to pack it in, and the Indonesian flag – the *sang merah putih* (red and white) – was finally hoisted over Jakarta's Istana Merdeka (Freedom Palace) on 27 December 1949.

Depression, Disunity & Dictatorship

Unity in war quickly became division in peace, as religious fundamentalists and nationalist separatists challenged the fledgling central government. But after almost a decade of political impasse and economic depression, Soekarno made his move, declaring Guided Democracy (a euphemism for dictatorship) with army backing and leading Indonesia into nearly four decades of authoritarian rule.

Despite moves towards the one-party state, Indonesia's three-million-strong Communist Party (Partai Komunis Indonesia; PKI) was the biggest in the world by 1965 and Soekarno had long realised the importance of winning its backing. But as the PKI's influence in government grew, so did tensions with the armed forces. Things came to a head on the night of 30 September 1965, when elements of the palace guard launched an attempted coup. Quickly put down by General Soeharto, the coup was blamed – perhaps unfairly – on the PKI and became the pretext for an army-led purge that left as many as 500,000 communist sympathisers dead. Strong evidence later emerged that both the US (implacably opposed to communism) and the UK (seeking to protect its interests in Malaysia) aided and abetted Soeharto's purge by drawing up hit lists of communist agitators. By 1968 Soeharto had ousted Soekarno and was installed as president.

Soeharto brought unity through repression, annexing Irian Jaya (Papua) in 1969, and reacting to insurgency with an iron fist. In 1975, Portuguese Timor was invaded, leading to tens of thousands of deaths, and separatist ambitions in Aceh and Papua were also met with a ferocious military response. But despite endemic corruption, the 1980s and 1990s were Indonesia's boom years, with meteoric economic growth and a starburst of opulent building ventures transforming the face of the capital.

Soeharto's Fall

As Asia's economy went into freefall during the closing years of the 1990s, Soeharto's house of cards began to tumble. Indonesia went bankrupt overnight and the country

found an obvious scapegoat in the cronyism and corruption endemic in the dictator's regime. Protests erupted across Indonesia in 1998 and the May riots in Jakarta left thousands, many of them Chinese, dead. After three decades of dictatorial rule, Soeharto resigned on 21 May 1998.

Passions cooled when Vice President BJ Habibie took power on a reform ticket, but ambitious promises were slow to materialise, and in November of the same year riots again rocked many Indonesian cities. Promises of forthcoming elections succeeded in closing the floodgates, but separatist groups took advantage of the weakened central government and violence erupted in Maluku, Irian Jaya, East Timor and Aceh. East Timor won its independence after a referendum in August 1999, but only after Indonesian-backed militias had destroyed its infrastructure and left thousands dead.

Democracy & Reform

Against this unsettled backdrop, the June 1999 legislative elections passed surprisingly smoothly, leaving Megawati Soekarnoputri (Soekarno's daughter) and her reformist Indonesian Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P) as the largest party with 33% of the vote. But months later the separate presidential election was narrowly won by Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), whose efforts to undo corruption met with stiff resistance. Megawati was eventually sworn in as president in 2001, but her term proved a disappointment for many Indonesians, as corrupt infrastructures were left in place, the military's power remained intact and poverty levels remained high. Nevertheless Indonesia gained from a period of economic stability and healthy growth, though much of this was at the expense of the environment through vast logging and mining concessions.

Megawati lost the 2004 presidential elections to Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (or 'SBY'), an ex-army officer who served in East Timor but who also has a master's degree in business management from Western University in the United States. Dubbed the 'thinking general', his successes have included cracking down on Islamic militants, pumping more money into education and health, and introducing basic social security payments. SBY's term has been rocked by a series of disasters, beginning with the 2004 tsunami

and continuing through 2006 and 2007 with an alarming number of transport disasters as planes fell from the sky and ferries went down with hundreds of casualties.

Economically, Indonesia has remained relatively healthy, however, with growth averaging around 5% to 6% a year. SBY has a reputation as a prudent leader, cutting the nation's huge fuel subsidies in 2005 (which forced very unpopular fuel price rises) and even paying back an International Monetary Fund (IMF) loan four years early. A decade after the fall of Soeharto, the consensus is that Indonesia is establishing itself as a workable democracy, but a nation confronted with myriad development issues. Corruption, the destruction of the environment, poverty, fundamentalism and taxation reform are just a selection of some of these huge challenges.

THE CULTURE The National Psyche

Soekarno, often referred to as the founder of Indonesia, must have pondered long and hard when faced with the task of welding together a nation from tens of millions of Javanese (with millennia of elaborate cultural traditions), longhouse-dwelling tribal Dayaks, Sumabinese animists and the Saudi-devout Muslims of Aceh. His solution, founded on five principles of nationhood known as the Pancasila, maintained that loyalty to the state should supersede ethnic and religious divisions, and this philosophy remains crucial to understanding what makes Indonesia tick today.

Alongside commitments to democracy and humanity, the Pancasila also enshrined the principle that all citizens must have an official state religion and that it should be 'based in the belief in one and only God'. This has meant that Indonesia's many practitioners of indigenous religions, particularly remote tribal communities, have been pressurised to adopt a state-sanctioned religion – usually Islam or Christianity. The Balinese also had to tweak their belief system, so that a supreme deity could emerge from a pantheon of gods, and Hinduism could be declared an officially recognised faith.

In recent years Indonesia's unique syncretic Islamic culture, which borrowed heavily from Hindu and animist traditions, has become much more conservative and orthodox, due to increased influence and contact with

the wider Islamic world. Geopolitical factors (such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan) and the arrival of Saudi-sponsored mullahs have also helped radicalise many, creating tensions with those Indonesians who practise other faiths. Yusman Roy, an imam who quotes from the Quran in Bahasa Indonesia (not Arabic), has been jailed for doing so, and a proposed 'decency' law (see p339) threatens to outlaw the wearing of swimsuits on the beach (as well as Papuan penis-gourd wearers).

The old Javanese saying '*bhinneka tunggal ika*' (they are many; they are one) is said to be Indonesia's national dictum, but with a population of over 250 million, 742 languages and 17,000 islands it's not surprising that many from the outer islands resent Java, where power is centralised. Separatist groups in Aceh, Papua and East Timor fought guerrilla wars against Jakarta for decades, with East Timor gaining independence in 2001. Indonesia is loosely bound together by a single flag and single language (Bahasa Indonesia) but in some ways can be compared to the EU – a richly diverse confederacy of peoples.

Lifestyle

The world's most populous Muslim nation is no hard-line Islamic state. Indonesians have traditionally practised a very loose-fitting, relaxed form of Islam and though there's no desire to imitate the West, most see no conflict in catching a Hollywood movie in an American-style shopping mall after prayers at the mosque. The country is becoming more cosmopolitan, as internet usage soars and chat rooms proliferate, and Indonesian hip-hop, indie, ska and reggae acts emerge. Millions of Indonesians now work overseas – mainly in the Gulf, Hong Kong and Malaysia – bringing back extraneous influences to their villages when they return. A boom in low-cost air travel has enabled a generation of Indonesians to travel internally and overseas conveniently and cheaply for the first time, while personal mobility is much easier today – it's possible to buy a motorbike on hire purchase with as little as a 500,000Rp deposit.

But not everyone has the cash or time for overseas jaunts and there remains a yawning gulf between the haves and the have-nots. Indonesia is much poorer than many of its Asian neighbours, with almost 50% surviving on US\$2 a day, and in many rural areas

opportunities are few and far between. Under-employment is a serious issue and educational standards, despite recent improvements and extra governmental cash, are way behind countries like Malaysia or Thailand, restricting overseas investment.

Population

Indonesia's population is the fourth-biggest in the world, with over 255 million people. Over half this number live on the island of Java, one of the most crowded places on earth with a population density of 940 people per square kilometre. But while Java (and Bali and Lombok) teem with people, large parts of the archipelago are very sparsely populated, particularly Papua (under 10 per square kilometre) and Kalimantan.

Birth rates have fallen considerably in recent years (from an average of 3.4 children per woman in 1987 to 2.4 today) thanks to successful family planning campaigns and increasing prosperity levels.

The majority of Indonesia's hundred or so ethnic groups are made up of the Javanese (42%) and their neighbours from West Java, the Sundanese (15%). Other large groups include the Madurese (3.3%), coastal Malays (3.4%) and Batak (3%).

RELIGION

If Indonesia has a soundtrack, it is the muezzin's call to prayer. Wake up to it once and it won't come as a surprise that Indonesia is the largest Islamic nation on earth, with over 220 million Muslims (88% of the total population).

But while Islam has a near-monopoly on religious life, many of the country's most impressive historical monuments, such as the temples of Borobudur and Prambanan, hark back to when Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms dominated Java. These religions maintain important communities, with Hinduism (2% of the population) continuing to flourish in Bali while Buddhists (1%) are scattered through the country. Christians make up nearly 9% of the nation, forming the majority in Papua, several islands of Nusa Tenggara and Maluku, and in parts of Sumatra. But animist traditions survive below the surface in many rural areas.

Although nominally a secular state, religious organisations (the conservative Nahdlatul Ulama has over 40 million members)

still wield considerable clout in the corridors of power.

ARTS Dance

Indonesia has a rich heritage of traditional dances. In Yogyakarta there's the Ramayana ballet, a spectacular dance drama; Lombok has a mask dance called the *kayak sando* and war dances; Maluku's *lenso* is a handkerchief dance; while Bali has a multitude of elaborate dances including the *barong*, *kecak*, *topeng*, *legong* and *baris*.

Literature

Pramoedya Ananta Toer, a Javanese author, is perhaps Indonesia's best-known novelist. His famous quartet of historical realist novels set in the colonial era comprises *This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps* and *House of Glass*.

Mochtar Lubis is another well-known Indonesian writer. His most famous novel, *Twilight in Jakarta*, is a scathing attack on corruption and the plight of the poor in Jakarta in the 1950s.

Ayu Utami's *Saman* ushered in a new era of modern Indonesian writing dubbed *sastra wangi* ('fragrant literature') with her taboo-breaking tale of sex, politics and religion. *The Invisible Palace* by José Manuel

Tesoro recounts the murder of a journalist in Yogyakarta, plotting the intersections of hierarchy, Islam, animism and corruption in government and Javanese culture.

Music

There's much more to the Indonesian music scene than the saccharine sweet pop and *dangdut* (Indonesian dance music with strong Arabic and Hindi influences) that dominates most airwaves. Alongside a vibrant punk scene (see p158), led by bands such as Bali's Superman is Dead and Yoyya's Blackboots, there's social invective from hip-hoppers Homicide and Iwa K, while House and techno DJs like Romy (see boxed text, below) play to thousands in Jakartan clubs and around Asia.

The best-known traditional Indonesian music is *gamelan*: both Java and Bali have orchestras composed mainly of percussion instruments including drums, gongs and *angklung* (shake-drums), along with flutes and xylophones.

Theatre

Javanese *wayang* (puppet) plays have their origins in the Hindu epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. There are different forms of *wayang*: *wayang kulit* uses leather shadow puppets, while *wayang golek* uses wooden puppets.

CLUB INDONESIA

Forget Bangkok (or even New York), Jakarta's clubbing scene has to be one of the world's most decadent. Centred in the Kota district, home to five vast temples of trance, one club here (Stadium, capacity 4000; p175) opens on Thursday and doesn't shut till Monday morning. Clubbers get mashed-up for hours, some losing days in dark-as-sin techno clubs, where the spirit of Acid House is definitely still alive and kicking.

One of those responsible for developing the scene was DJ Romy, who spent three years in London in the early 1990s, where he collected vinyl and began DJ-ing, later returning to Java to get the party started.

By 1993 Indonesians began organising warehouse parties in Jakarta and Bali, and by 1994 the first pirate stations devoted to dance music began broadcasting. Today the scene is massive, with all genres – electro, minimal, techno, tribal, progressive and House – represented.

Many young Indonesians do not drink alcohol and, perhaps consequently, ecstasy is a big part of Indonesia's club scene. It became the drug of choice for Indonesia's wealthy elite in the mid-1990s, and its popularity now transcends all social classes.

Indonesia is not only a dance-drug consumer nation but also – as Dedi Permana, a senior police commissioner, acknowledged – 'the world's biggest ecstasy producer'. One illegal factory busted in November 2005 in Serang, Banten had a production capacity of one million ecstasy pills per week.

For more on Indonesian club culture consult www.indodj.com. For the risks associated with recreational drug use in Indonesia, see p915.

INDO PUNK

Just as British bands like the Stones raided the USA for their blues-influenced tunes in the '60s, Indonesian groups have absorbed American and British musical movements, added an indigenous dimension and created a vibrant new scene. Indonesian hip-hop, reggae and metal are all healthy, but today's teenagers have really identified with punk and new wave, and bands like the Ramones are massive in Indonesia, their T-shirts, stickers and garage-band style all pervasive.

Superman is Dead are one of the biggest acts, their raw social commentary and antiestablishment stance selling tens of thousands of legitimate CDs and perhaps millions of pirated copies. Their name refers to the fall of Soeharto, and SiD fills stadiums with fans who know every word of every song, the venue a maelstrom of slam-dancing mosh pits, crowdsurfing and pogoing kids. Drummer Jerinx is a superstar in Indonesia.

ENVIRONMENT

Indonesia has lost more tropical forest than anywhere else in the world bar Brazil in the last few decades. That said, some incredible national parks and pristine landscapes remain virtually untouched, mainly in remote areas away from the main centres of population.

For more information on Indonesia's environment, visit the **Indonesian Forum for the Environment** (WALHI; www.eng.walhi.or.id).

The Land

At 1.92 million sq km, Indonesia is an island colossus, incorporating 10% of the world's forest cover and 11,508 uninhabited islands (6000 more have human populations). From the low-lying coastal areas, the country rises through no fewer than 129 active volcanoes – more than any country in the world – to the snow-covered summit of Puncak Jaya (4884m), in Papua. Despite the incredible diversity of its landscapes, it is worth remembering that Indonesia is predominantly water; Indonesians refer to the country as Tanah Air Kita (literally 'Our Earth and Water'). The main islands are Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo; 539,460 sq km), Sumatra (473,606 sq km), Papua (Indonesian New Guinea; 421,981 sq km), Sulawesi (202,000 sq km) and Java (132,107 sq km).

Wildlife

In his classic study *The Malay Archipelago*, British naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace divided Indonesia into two zones. To the west of the so-called Wallace Line (which runs between Kalimantan and Sulawesi and south through the straits between Bali and Lombok) flora and fauna resemble those of the rest of Asia, while the

species and environments to the east become increasingly like those of Australia. Scientists have since fine-tuned Wallace's findings, but while western Indonesia is known for its (increasingly rare) orang-utan, rhinos, tigers and spectacular *Rafflesia* flowers, eastern Indonesia boasts the Komodo dragon and marsupials including Papuan tree kangaroos.

National Parks

There are officially 50 *taman nasional* (national parks) in Indonesia. Most are in remote areas, and only have basic visitor facilities, but they are remarkable in their ecological diversity and wildlife. Some of the finest include Tanjung Puting in Kalimantan (p309) for proboscis monkeys and wetland birds, and Komodo with its dragons and astonishing coral reefs.

Environmental Issues

Start with the pressures of poverty, chuck in the impact of unchecked greed and corruption and finish off with a desperate paucity of resources and it's not surprising that Indonesia's recent environmental record is so woeful. Environmental education has started very late in Indonesia, and already much of the nation's natural resources have been, and continue to be, ravaged and inadequately protected – in 2004 a law was passed allowing mining in protected areas.

Illegal logging remains commonplace despite a 2001 law banning the export of timber, and deforestation rates are some of the worst on the planet. An area the size of Switzerland goes up in a (mega) puff of smoke every year, as slash 'n' burn farming and forest fires choke neighbouring countries in acrid smoke. In 1998 the Indonesian environment minister, Juwono Sudarsono, likened Kalimantan to

DO YOUR BIT

- Refill your water bottle from the large water dispensers provided in some hotels and restaurants.
- Refuse plastic bags from shopkeepers.
- Show locals that you're getting rid off litter responsibly.
- Trekkers should take all disposable waste away with them.
- Souvenirs made from animals, such as tortoiseshell trinkets and framed butterflies, coral jewellery and sea shells, should be left well alone.
- Dive responsibly; see p912.

the American Wild West because of governmental inaction tackling illegal logging and forest fires. Forest loss often triggers floods and landslides, washing away topsoil and devastating farmland.

A booming urban population is also contributing to Indonesia's pollution crisis. Only a fraction of Jakarta's population is connected to a sewer system, leading to epidemics of water-borne diseases like typhoid. Chronic air pollution caused by an explosion in vehicle numbers (particularly motorbikes, which are not fitted with catalytic converters) affects all city dwellers, which the World Bank estimates costs Jakarta US\$400 million a year. Respiratory health issues, directly linked to air quality, are the sixth leading cause of death in Indonesia (after accidents, diarrhoea, cardiovascular disease, tuberculosis and measles).

INDONESIAN SUPERLATIVES

Biggest archipelago Covering an area of 1.92 million sq km, Indonesia's 17,508 islands make up the world's largest archipelago.

Biggest lizard The Komodo dragon (*Varanus komodoensis*) is the biggest lizard in the world. The largest authenticated specimen was a gift from the Sultan of Bima to a US scientist and measured 3.1m.

Largest flower The world's biggest flower, *Rafflesia arnoldi*, often blooms in the thick Sumatran forests near Bukit-tinggi between August and November.

Longest snake The reticulated python, native to Indonesia, is the world's longest snake. A specimen killed in Sulawesi in 1912 measured 9.85m.

Most diverse Kalimantan is one of the most biologically diverse places on earth, with twice as many plant species as the whole of Africa.

Most populous Java has the largest population of any island in the world, with an estimated 140 million inhabitants.

Industrialisation is unregulated, WALHI estimating that 2.2 million tonnes of toxic water are dumped into the rivers of West Java each year. Coastal pollution is worsening – as much as 86% of Indonesia's reef area is thought to be at medium or high risk of destruction.

Government initiatives are frequently drawn up to deal with the issues, but are rarely enforced. However, in the last few years, three ex-governors of provinces in Sumatra and East Kalimantan have been given prison sentences for granting illegal logging concessions (Aceh's Abdullah Puteh getting 10 years).

But while many Indonesians continue to live on the breadline, the environment is likely to remain a secondary concern.

TRANSPORT

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Jakarta and Denpasar in Bali are the two main hubs, but there are also useful international connections to Medan, Palembang and Padang in Sumatra; Solo, Bandung and Surabaya in Java; Manado (Sulawesi), Balikpapan (Kalimantan) and Mataram (Lombok).

The following are some major international airlines; phone numbers beginning with ☎ 021 are Jakarta numbers, while phone numbers beginning with ☎ 0361 are for Bali.

Air Asia (code AK; ☎ 0804 133 3333; www.airasia.com) The region's biggest budget, web-based airline.

Air New Zealand (code NZ; ☎ 0361-756170; www.airnewzealand.com)

DEPARTURE TAX

Airport tax for international departures is 100,000Rp and for domestic flights the tax varies with the airport, from 10,000Rp to 25,000Rp.

Cathay Pacific (code CX; ☎ 021-515 1747, 0361-753942; www.cathaypacific.com)

Continental Airlines (code CO; ☎ 021-3193 4417, 0361-768358; www.continental.com)

Eva Air (code BR; ☎ 0361-759773; www.evaair.com.tw)

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 0361-751011, ext 5228; www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Malaysia Airlines (code MH; ☎ 021-522 9685, 0361-764995; www.malaysiaairlines.com)

Qantas (code QF; ☎ 021-230 0655, 0361-288511; www.qantas.com)

Singapore Airlines (code SQ; ☎ 021-5790 3747, 0361-768388; www.singaporeairlines.com)

Thai Airways International (THAI, code TG; ☎ 021-230 2552, 0361-288511; www.thaiairways.com)

MALAYSIA

Kuala Lumpur has good connections with Jakarta and Denpasar. Air Asia often has the best prices (from US\$40 one way) and also serves other cities in Indonesia including Bandung, Solo and Palembang; or try Malaysia Airlines. Batavia Air operates the short hop between Pontianak and Kuching in Borneo. Garuda Indonesia has several alternative routes including KL to Surabaya.

SINGAPORE

Apart from the numerous links to/from Jakarta and Denpasar, SilkAir flies to Solo, Palembang, Medan, Surabaya, Mataram, Balikpapan and Manado. Garuda links Singapore with Manado, Medan and Surabaya.

OTHER DESTINATIONS

All other Southeast Asian capitals are easily reached from Jakarta or Denpasar. Merpati offers a link between Dili and Denpasar.

Sea MALAYSIA

Most sea connections are between Malaysia and Sumatra. The comfortable, high-speed ferries between Penang (Malaysia) and Belawan (near Medan, Sumatra) are one of the most popular ways to reach Indonesia. There are also ferry connections between Dumai

(Sumatra) and Melaka (Malaysia); Pulau Bintan (Sumatra) and Johor Bahru (Malaysia); and Pulau Batam (Sumatra) and Kuala Tungkal (Malaysia).

For east-coast Kalimantan, fast ferries connect Tarakan and Tawau (Malaysia), and speedboats depart frequently from Tarakan to Nunukan and from Nunukan to Tawau; see p304 for full details.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Boats leave daily (weather permitting) from Hamadi port near Jayapura to Vanimo in Papua New Guinea; charters are also possible (350,000Rp per person). A visa is required if travelling into Indonesia.

SINGAPORE

Ferries link Singapore with Pulau Batam (S\$18) and Pulau Bintan (S\$25), both in Sumatra.

GETTING AROUND Air

About a dozen airlines fly internally within Indonesia, some flying to just a handful of destinations on ancient prop planes; others, including Air Asia, use modern Boeing and Airbus aircraft.

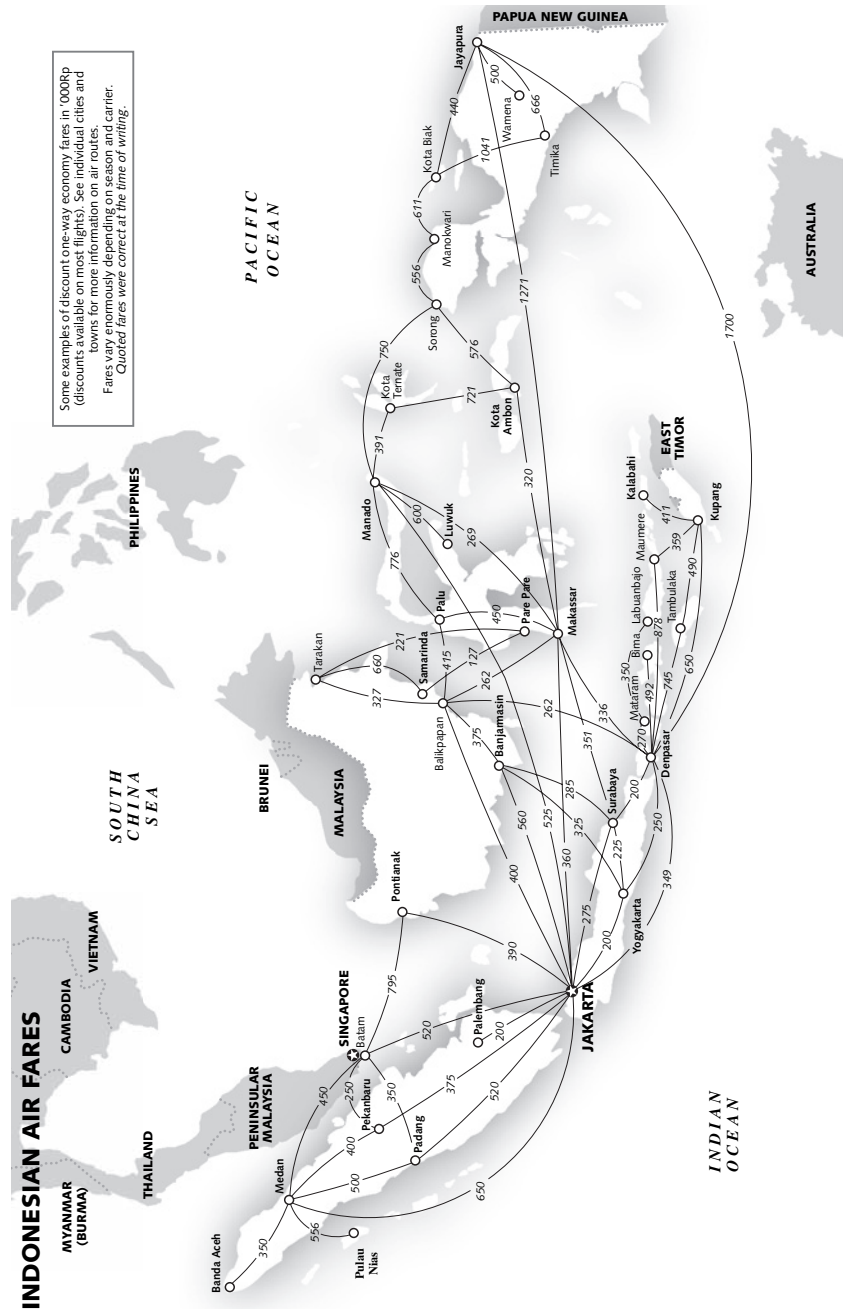
Many Indonesian airlines have a history of operating with poor safety standards, and maintenance levels are not what they should be. The airlines with the best reputations are Air Asia, Merpati, TransNusa and the national carrier Garuda (though this airline has had accidents in the last few years). Adam Air has a particularly poor safety record and had several of its aircraft grounded by the government in 2006 after a series of accidents.

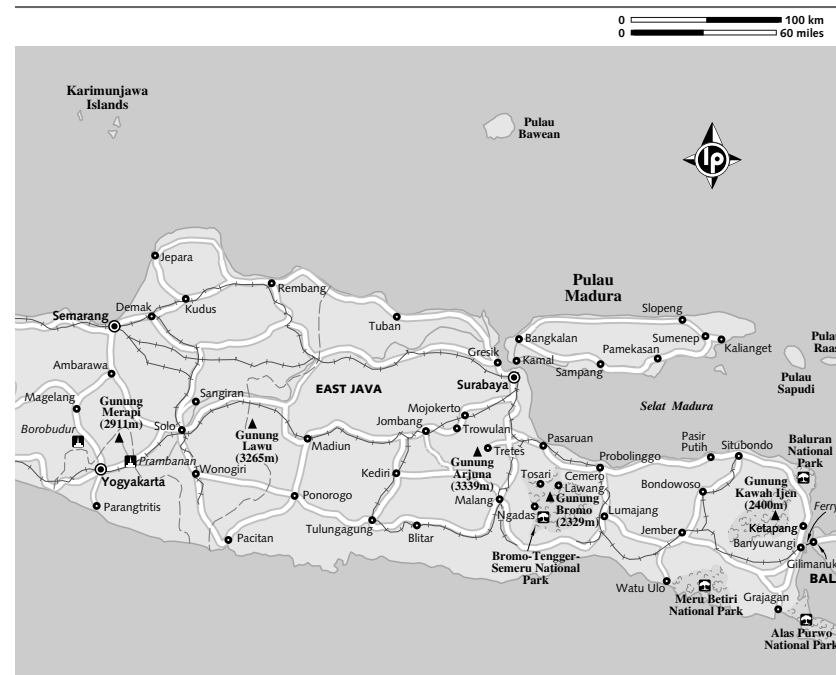
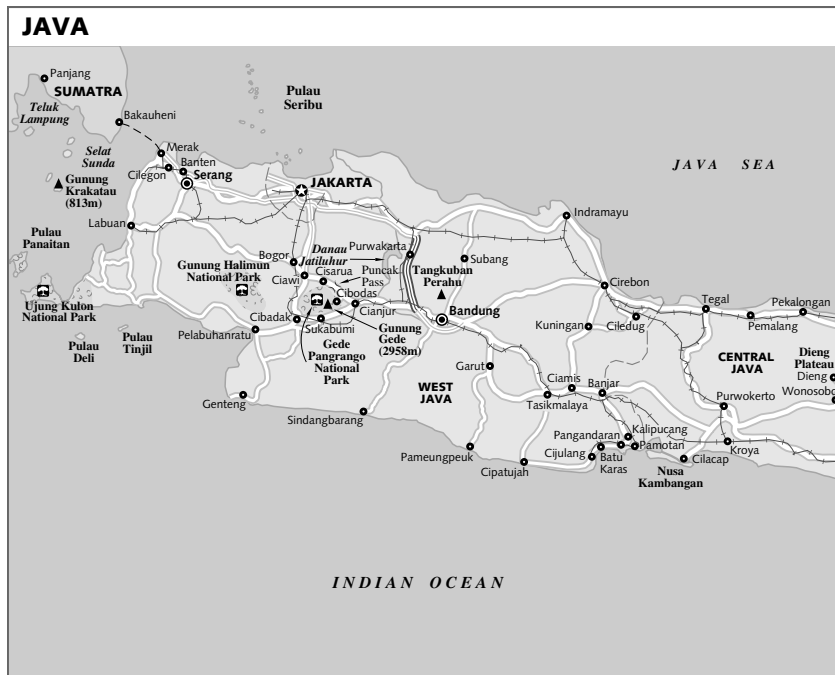
Flight prices have fallen on the most popular routes in recent years. As many carriers now operate on low-cost airline price schemes, it really pays to book early – a ticket from Jakarta to Denpasar can be as little as 349,000Rp including all taxes.

Note that many of the smaller Indonesian airlines' websites don't function for weeks on end, so be prepared to have to purchase tickets on arrival for many routes. Delays and cancellations are very common, particularly in remote areas, so build plenty of flexibility into your travel plans.

For contact details of the main domestic airlines see p176 and p211.

Some examples of discount one-way economy fares in '000Rp (discounts available on most flights). See individual cities and towns for more information on air routes. Fares vary enormously depending on season and carrier. Quoted fares were correct at the time of writing.





JAVA

The heart of the Indonesian nation, the island of Java is a mixed bag. On the one hand, it is the archipelago's swaggering, gloating bully boy, wielding its financial and political muscle to shape a de facto Javanese empire. Home to more than 50% of Indonesians, Java is an island of megacities and *macet* (gridlock), simultaneously flaunting the lion's share of the country's wealth and buckling under the pressures of overpopulation and pollution. To visit this Java, you will need a face mask and a thick pair of rose-tinted spectacles.

Yet a culturally fascinating, far less boisterous island exists within easy reach of the cities. This is the Java of breathtaking natural beauty, where volcanoes, cloaked in duvets of bottle-green forest, puff above the spectacular monuments of the island's Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim heydays. Here, you can explore *kraton* (walled palaces), temples and wild spaces and all you'll need is a camera and a sense of adventure.

For many Indonesians, their country quite simply begins and ends here and you'll feel the nation's pulse beating on every street. Java is also home to the nation's finest universities and most of the nation's foremost thinkers, activists and educators, so it's the ideal place for the inquisitive to really discover what makes Indonesia tick.

History

Some academics argue that the human habitation of Java stretches back as far as 1.7 million years, when Java man roamed the banks of Sungai Bengawan Solo (Bengawan Solo River) in Central Java.

The island's exceptional fertility allowed the development of an intensive *sawah* (wet-rice) agriculture, which in turn required close cooperation between villages. Out of village alliances, kingdoms developed, most notably the Mataram rulers and Sailendra dynasties that built Borobudur (probably around AD 780) and the Hindu Prambanan complex (c AD 856).

By 1350 a great Majapahit kingdom had emerged, controlling Java, Madura and Bali

under the leader Hayam Wuruk. By the 15th and 16th centuries, Islamic principalities were emerging, the greatest centred in Mataram, and holding sway over central and eastern Java. Intense regional rivalries hindered Javanese efforts to confront the invading Dutch, and most of the island had fallen to the colonists by the end of the 18th century – although principalities in Solo and Yogyakarta survived until the foundation of the Indonesian republic.

After independence, Java became the centre of the new Indonesia. And that has led to resentment; to a large extent the rebellions of the Sumatrans, Minahasans and Ambonese in the 1950s and 1960s were reactions to Javanese domination of the new country. Furthermore, the abortive communist coup of 1965 started in Jakarta, and some of its most dramatic and disastrous events took place in Java as thousands of communist sympathisers were massacred. During Soeharto's rule, Java benefited as it became the most industrialised part of the nation, its businesses dominating the economy and concentrating wealth in the

island (although this remained largely in the hands of a privileged few who had close links to the president).

Java continues to be the powerhouse of Indonesia, receiving the lion's share of foreign investment. Bali excepted, it's the most cosmopolitan corner of the nation. Each major city has glitzy malls that rival anything in the West, full of latte-sipping students and nightclubs where DJs spin cutting-edge electronica to designer-clad dancers.

But across the tracks in the poor backstreets another Java exists, where radical Islam thrives and youths taught in *madrassah* (Islamic schools) vent their fury at Western imperialism in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some have taken it far further than street protests, exporting a twisted vision of jihad to fight Christians in Sulawesi and bomb Bali and Jakarta. These extremists don't enjoy widespread support in Java, and opposition to their terrorist agenda has strengthened in the last few years, as many of their intended targets have killed many more Indonesians than Westerners.

Dangers & Annoyances

Java is not generally a dangerous or hassle-prone destination. Take extra care in Jakarta (see p169) against petty theft, as you would in any large city. It's best to avoid any large religious or political rallies, which occasionally become violent. Thugs calling themselves 'Defenders of Islam' have been known to smash up perceived dens of iniquity like bars and clubs from time to time; this is particularly true during Ramadan.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Jakarta is the main hub, with connections to destinations across the archipelago. Surabaya is the second most important hub, while Solo and Bandung also have international connections to Kuala Lumpur on Air Asia.

BOAT

Java is a major hub for shipping services. Jakarta (see p176) and Surabaya (see p206) are the main ports for Pelnis ships; check www.pelni.co.id for more information.

Ferries (7000Rp, one hour) shuttle between Gilimanuk in western Bali and Ketapang in Java every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day.

Between Merak in Java and Bakauheni at the southern tip of Sumatra, ferries (13,000Rp, two hours) operate every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day.

Getting Around

AIR

As more budget airlines open their doors, flying around Java is becoming an increasingly attractive proposition. Jakarta and Surabaya are Java's main airports, but Yogyakarta, Solo, Bandung and Semarang are also serviced by flights.

BUS

Bus travel is often slow and nerve-racking; night buses are a little faster. Trains are usually better for the long hauls, but bus departures are usually more frequent.

Public buses, 'cooled' by a flow of sooty air from an open window, are very frequent but they also stop for passengers every five minutes. Better air-con buses also run the major routes and are well worth paying the extra 25% or so they cost.

Small minibuses run the shortest routes. *Travel* (door-to-door air-con minibuses) also

operate on the major runs. Many hotels can arrange pick-ups.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Dream up a way of getting around, and you will find it somewhere on the streets of Java; *ojek* (motorcycle taxis) are very widely available. *Dokar* – brightly coloured, horse-drawn carts, awash with jingling bells and psych-edelic motifs – are a highlight.

TRAIN

Trains are usually quicker, more comfortable and more convenient than buses for getting between the main centres.

Ekonomi trains are dirt-cheap, slow, crowded and often run late. Seats can be booked on the better *ekonomi plus* services. For a little extra, express trains with *bisnis* (business) and *eksekutif* (executive) sections are better and seating is guaranteed. For air-con and more comfort, go for the top-of-the-range *argo* (luxury) trains, though don't expect anything luxurious – cracked windows and semiswept aisles are the norm, but a meal is always included.

For basic *ekonomi* trains, tickets go on sale an hour before departure. *Bisnis* and *eksekutif* trains can be booked weeks ahead, and the main stations have efficient, computerised booking offices for *eksekutif* trains.

Try to book at least a day in advance, or several days beforehand for travel on public holidays and long weekends.

For details of times and prices, check out www.infoka.kereta-api.com.

JAKARTA

☎ 021 / pop 8.9 million

America can keep its big apple; Indonesia's capital was never going to be an easy fruit to swallow. Dubbed the 'Big Durian', Jakarta is a chaotic landscape of freeways, skyscrapers, slums and traffic jams built on a plain that floods (often to biblical proportions) every wet season (see boxed text, opposite). A vast waiting lounge for those queuing up for their share of Indonesia's financial stir-fry, this is a fast-paced city of function rather than form; somewhere for the rich to forge political alliances and for the rest to escape a humdrum life hunched over a rice paddy. Tourists, as a result, are at a premium.

But just like the big fruit itself, Jakarta rewards those who are prepared to hold

WATERWORLD

In February 2007 Jakarta experienced the worst floods in living memory as around 60% of the city was left under water, and in parts of Cawang, East Jakarta, levels reached 6m. Around 450,000 people were displaced from their homes and 85 lost their lives. Entire slum areas built along river banks were washed away.

The reasons for the annual deluge are complex, but what's certain is that environmental malpractices and unchecked construction are key factors. Much of Greater Jakarta (population around 14 million) has been built over a floodplain – the city is crossed by 13 rivers – and designated green belt. Of the 218 lakes in the Jakarta area present in 1990, only a quarter remained by 2007; many filled in and built over by apartment complexes and shopping malls. The city authorities reckon Jakarta should have two million absorption wells, yet it actually has less than 19,000.

A masterplan for a flood-prevention network of drainage canals and sluice gates that was drawn up during the Dutch era (when the city's population was a million or so) is still only half-built, and will take decades to complete.

So if you're visiting Jakarta in the wet season, pack your raincoat and rubber boots.

their noses and dig in. Pull back the concrete curtain and Indonesia's capital contains elements from the four corners of the archipelago – Batak taxi drivers, musicians from Maluku, religious radicals from Solo and gangsters from Flores – with all the cultural traits and culinary treats that a nation of 250 million has to offer. From the steamy streets of Chinatown, through the swanky expat suburbs, to the city's decadent nightclubs, Jakarta is unique, stuffed with all the excesses, contradictions and wonders of Indonesian life.

Lacking a coherent centre, Jakarta is a tough city to explore. The old city around Kota offers a clutch of museums and sights, however, as does the area around Freedom Sq, which is capped with Soekarno's suspiciously phallic national monument. But sometimes it is best just to accept Jakarta for what it is, and explore the restaurants, bars, clubs and shopping malls that the city does best.

Orientation

Metropolitan Jakarta sprawls 28km from the docks to the southern suburbs. Soekarno's national monument (Monas) in Lapangan Merdeka (Freedom Sq) is an excellent central landmark. North of the monument is the older part of Jakarta, which includes Chinatown, the former Dutch area of Kota and the old port of Sunda Kelapa. Tanjung Priok, the main harbour, is several kilometres further east. The sprawling modern suburbs of Jakarta are south of the monument.

Jl Thamrin is the main north–south street of the new city and has Jakarta's big hotels and

banks. A couple of blocks east along Jl Kebon Sirih Raya is Jl Jaksa, the cheap accommodation centre of Jakarta.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

Periplus (Map p168; ☎ 718 7070; Level 3, Plaza Senayan, Jl Asia Afrika; ☎ 9am–7pm) Has a wide range of English-language titles, including Lonely Planet guidebooks and Periplus maps.

QB World Books (Map p168; ☎ 718 0818; Jl Kemang Raya 17) Sells English-language literature and magazines.

CULTURAL CENTRES

Australian Cultural Centre (Map p168; ☎ 2550 5555; Australian Embassy, Jl Rasuna Said Kav C15-16)

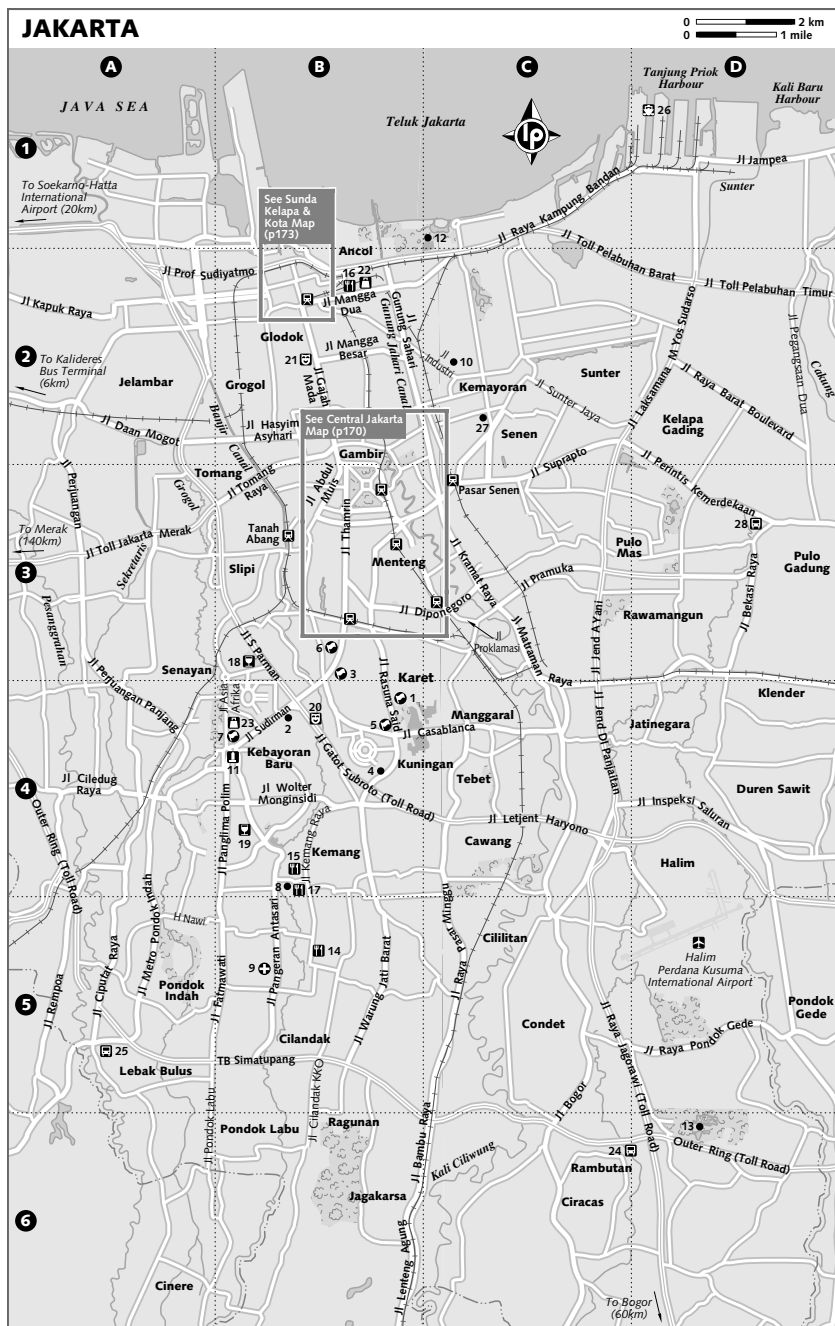
British Council (Map p168; ☎ 252 4115; www.britishcouncil.org/indonesia.htm; S Widjojo Centre, Jl Sudirman 71)

GETTING INTO TOWN

Soekarno-Hatta International Airport is 35km northwest of the city. It's about an hour away via a toll road (up to two hours during rush hour).

There's a Damri bus service (15,000Rp) every 30 minutes from 3am to 7pm between the airport and Gambir train station.

Alternatively, a metered taxi costs about 130,000Rp, including the airport service charge and toll-road charges. These should be organised through the official booths in the arrival terminal; avoid the freelance drivers outside for safety reasons.



Erasmus Huis (Map p168; ☎ 524 1069; www.erasmushuis.or.id; Jl Rasuna Said Kav 5-3) This Dutch centre has classical music and jazz performances and screens films.

EMERGENCY

- Fire** (☎ 113)
- Police** (☎ 110)
- Medical help** (☎ 118, 119)
- Tourist police** (Map p172; ☎ 566000; Jl Wahid Hasyim)

INTERNET ACCESS

Access typically costs 5000Rp to 10,000Rp per hour in Jakarta.
Virtual Net (Map p172; Jl Jaksa 33; ☎ 8am-10pm)

INFORMATION

Australian Cultural Centre.....	(see 1)
Australian Embassy.....	1 B4
British Council.....	2 B4
Canadian Embassy.....	3 B3
Dutch Embassy.....	(see 4)
Erasmus Huis.....	4 B4
Malaysian Embassy.....	5 B4
New Zealand Embassy.....	6 B3
Papua New Guinean Embassy.....	7 B4
Perplus.....	(see 23)
QB World Books.....	8 B4
Singaporean Embassy.....	(see 4)
SOS Medika.....	9 B5

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Jakarta Fair Grounds.....	10 C2
Pizza Man Statue.....	11 B4
Purna Bhakti Pertiwi Museum.....	(see 13)
Taman Impian Jaya Ancol.....	12 C1
Taman Mini Indonesia Indah.....	13 D6

EATING

Izzi Pizza.....	14 B5
Kemang Food Festival.....	15 B4
Pasar Pagi.....	16 B2
Place.....	17 B4

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Buglis.....	18 B3
My Bar.....	19 B4
Top Gun.....	(see 19)

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Embassy.....	(see 18)
Retro.....	20 B4
Stadium.....	21 B2

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Pasar Pagi Mangga Dua.....	22 B2
Pasar Seni.....	(see 12)
Plaza Senayan.....	23 B4

TRANSPORT

Kampung Rambutan Bus Terminal.....	24 C6
Lebak Bulus Bus Terminal.....	25 A5
Pelni Passenger Terminal.....	26 D1
Pelni Ticket Office.....	27 C2
Pulo Gadung Bus Terminal.....	28 D3

INTERNET RESOURCES

Jakarta.go.id (www.jakarta.go.id) The Jakarta City Government's website.
Jakweb.com (www.jakweb.com) Has a useful diary of cultural events.
Living in Indonesia (www.expat.or.id) Includes a comprehensive guide to Jakarta.

MEDIA

The daily *Jakarta Post* (www.thejakartapost.com; 5000Rp) newspaper offers good balanced coverage of the city's news stories. The glossy *Jakarta Kini* (www.jakartajavakini.com; 20,000Rp) has features, reviews and entertainment listings, while *The Beat* deals mainly with bars and clubs.

MEDICAL SERVICES

SOS Medika (Map p168; ☎ 750 6001; Jl Puri Sakti 10, Kemang; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

Hundreds of banks and ATMs are spread across town, including the following:
Bank Mandiri (Map p172; Jl Wahid Hasyim)
BII (Map p170; Plaza Indonesia, Jl Thamrin) Also has an ATM.
BNI (Map p172; Jl Kebon Sirih Raya)

POST

Main post office (Map p170; Jl Gedung Kesenian 1; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat)

TELEPHONE

Wartel Bhumi Bhakti (Map p172; Jl Wahid Hasyim; ☎ 10am-10pm)

TOURIST INFORMATION

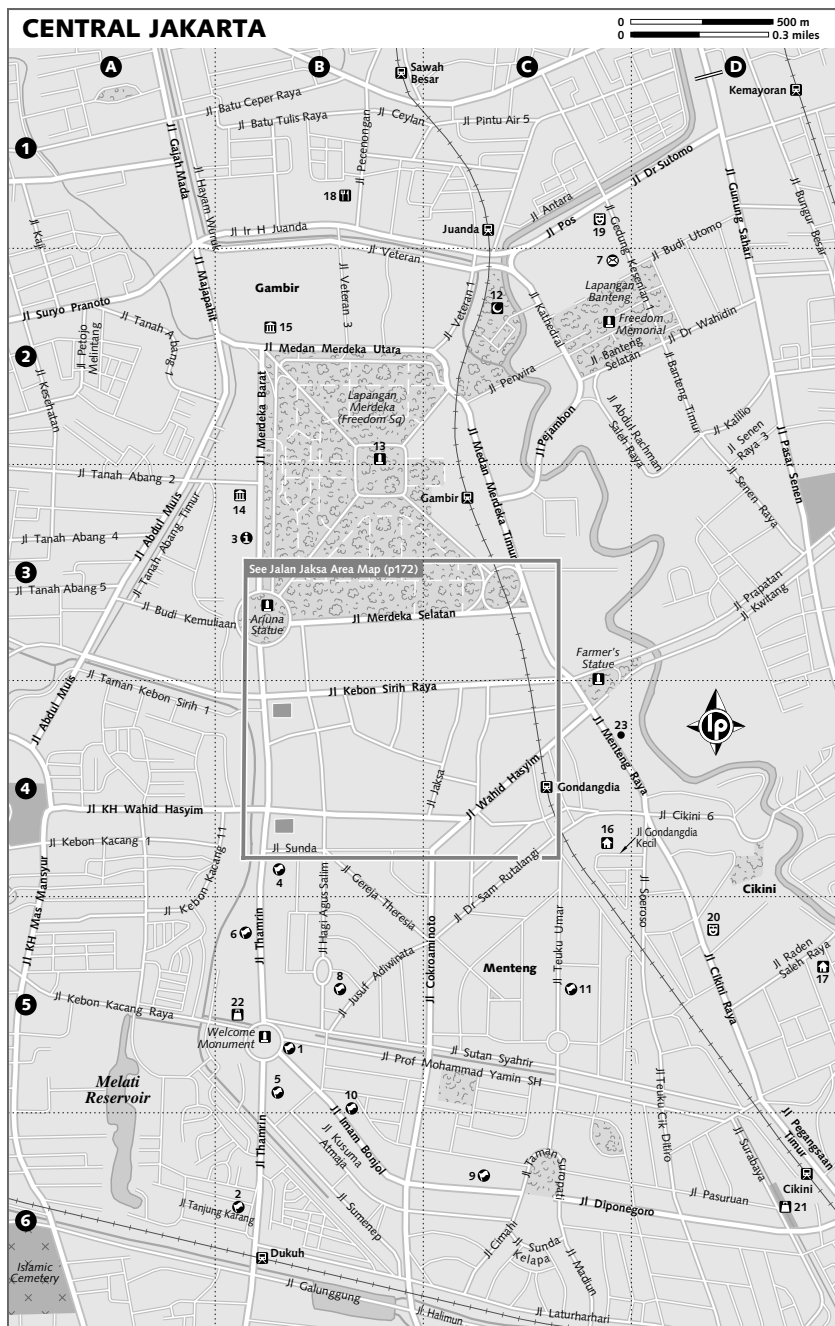
Jakarta Visitor Information (Map p172; ☎ 315 4094; www.jakarta.go.id; Jakarta Theatre Bldg, Jl Wahid Hasyim 9; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 2pm Sat) Offers plenty of leaflets and an excellent colour map that shows the city's busway routes. There's also a desk at the airport. Both branches have English-speaking staff.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

24-Hour Tickets (Map p172; ☎ 3192 3173; Jl Haji Agus Salim 57A)
Robertur (Map p172; ☎ 314 2926; Jl Jaksa 20B)

Dangers & Annoyances

Considering its size and the scale of poverty here, Jakarta is generally a safe city and security incidents are extremely rare. That said, you should be careful late at night in Glodok



INFORMATION	
BII Bank.....	(see 22)
British Embassy.....	1 B5
Brunei Embassy.....	2 B6
Directorate General of Tourism.....	3 B3
French Embassy.....	4 B4
German Embassy.....	5 B5
Japanese Embassy.....	6 B5
Main Post Office.....	7 C2
Myanmar Embassy.....	8 B5
Philippines Embassy.....	9 C6
Thai Embassy.....	10 B5
Vietnamese Embassy.....	11 C5
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Mesjid Istiqlal.....	12 C2
National History Museum.....	(see 13)
National Monument (Monas).....	13 B2
National Museum.....	14 B3
Presidential Palace.....	15 B2
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Night Warung.....	18 B1
ENTERTAINMENT	
Gedung Kesenian Jakarta.....	19 C1
Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM).....	20 D5
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Flea Market.....	21 D6
Plaza Indonesia.....	22 B5
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Menara Buana Surya.....	23 C4

By far the finest way to relive the colonial experience is to take a drink in the magnificent Café Batavia (p175) and then explore Kota's quirkier sights on foot. The old Portuguese cannon **Si Jagur** (Mr Fertility; Map p173; Taman Fatahillah) was believed to be a cure for barrenness because of its suggestive clenched fist, and women sat astride it in the hope of bearing children.

Nearby, **Gereja Sion** (Map p173; Jl Pangeran Jayakarta 1; ☀ dawn-dusk) is the oldest remaining church in Jakarta. It was built in 1695 for the 'black Portuguese' brought to Batavia as slaves and given their freedom if they joined the Dutch Reformed Church.

More fine Dutch architecture lines the grotty Kali Besar canal, including the **Toko Merah** (Map p173; Jl Kali Besar Barat), formerly the home of Governor General van Imhoff. Further north, the last remaining Dutch draw-bridge, the **Chicken Market Bridge** (Map p173), spans the canal.

The area's museums and their dusty exhibits are decidedly disappointing. Check out the **Wayang Museum** (Map p173; ☎ 692 9560; Jl Pintu Besar Utara 27; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 12.30pm Sat) for its shadow puppet performances (Sundays at 10am). At the **Jakarta History Museum** (Map p173; ☎ 692 9101; Taman Fatahillah 2; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Tue-Fri & Sun, to 12.30pm Sat), there's little but colonial bric-a-brac; the fine old (1710) City Hall building, which houses the museum, is the real star.

To the south of Kota, **Glodok** (Map p173) is a run-down Chinese district of traditional markets and infamous nightclubs that suffered very badly in the 1998 riots. These days most Jakartans favour air-conditioned shopping malls, but a stroll through Glodok's steamy, scruffy lanes past spitting street kitchens will provide plenty of colour for the day's blog entry. Avoid dark side streets at night in this zone.

SUNDA KELAPA

Among the hubbub, floating debris and oil slicks, the old Dutch **port** (Map p173; admission 1000Rp) is still used by magnificent Buginese *pinisi* (fishing boats), their cargo unloaded by teams of porters walking along wobbly gang-planks. It's a 1km walk from Taman Fatahillah, or take one of the area's unique push-bike taxis known as *ojek sepeda* (2500Rp).

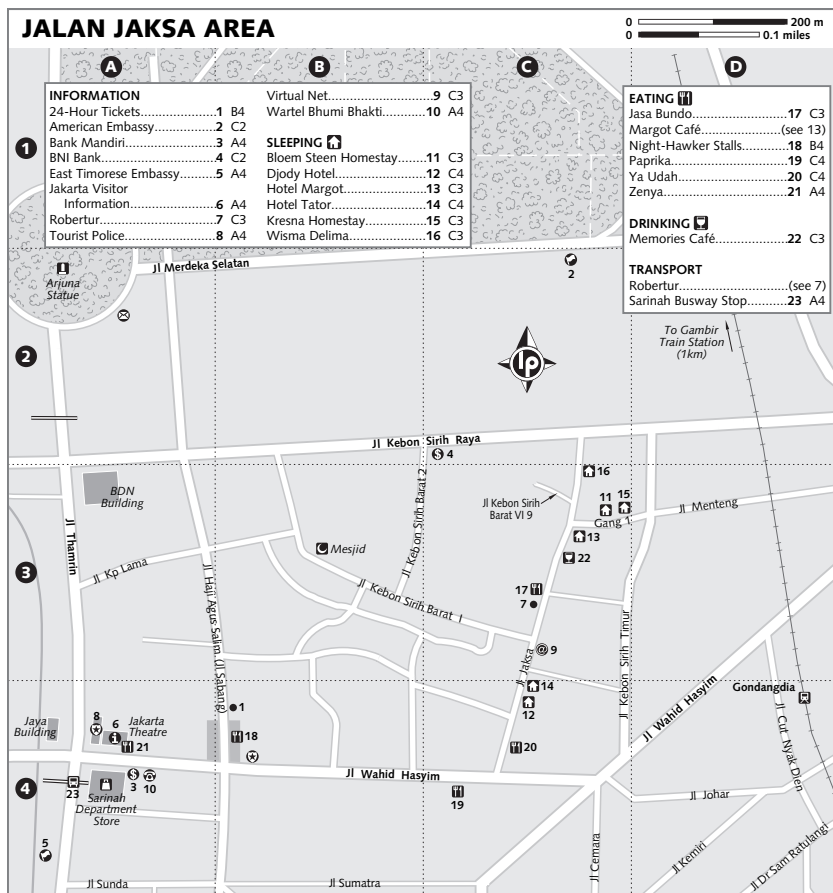
Close by are the early-morning **Pasar Ikan** (Fish Market; Map p173; Jl Pasar Ikan; ☎ 6am-2pm) and

and Kota, and only use reputable taxi companies (p178) – muggings do occasionally occur. Keep your eyes open on buses and trains, which are a favourite haunt of pick-pockets. It's wise to steer clear of political and religious demonstrations, which may draw anti-Western militants.

Dengue fever outbreaks occur in the wet season, so come armed with mosquito repellent. See p938 for more on dengue fever.

Sights & Activities KOTA

Jakarta's crumbling historic heart is Kota, home to the remnants of the Dutch capital of Batavia. **Taman Fatahillah** (Map p173), the old town square, features cracked cobblestones and lonely postcard vendors as well as some fine colonial buildings and some ho-hum museums. From Jl Jaksa take the train (2000Rp) to Kota station from Gondangdia station; or, by bus, a northbound Koridor 1 service from the Sarinah busway on Jl Thamrin.



Museum Bahari (Maritime Museum; Map p173; ☎ 669 3409; Jl Pasar Ikan 1; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 9am-1.30pm Sun-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat), located in one of the old Dutch East India Company warehouses (1645), which exhibits some fine photographs, and sailing boats from across Indonesia.

LAPANGAN MERDEKA

Soekarno attempted to tame Jakarta by giving it a central space, **Lapangan Merdeka** (Freedom Sq; Map p170), and topping it with a gigantic monument to his machismo, the **National Monument** (Monas; Map p170; ☎ 384 0451; admission 6000Rp; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 7pm Sat & Sun). The towering, 132m-high column, capped with a gilded flame, has been ungraciously dubbed 'Soekarno's last erection'; whiz up the shaft

for a shot of the city. The **National History Museum** (Map p170; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-7pm Sat & Sun), in the base, tells the story of Indonesia's independence struggle in 48 dramatic, overstated dioramas. Admission is included in the Monas entry fee.

Many of Soekarno's triumphalist monuments have acquired derogatory nicknames over the years: the guy at Kebayoran roundabout holding the flaming dish is now '**Pizza Man**' (Map p168).

INDONESIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM

A 15-minute walk from Jl Jaksa, the **National Museum** (Map p170; ☎ 386 8171; Jl Merdeka Barat 12; admission 750Rp; ☎ 8.30am-2.30pm Tue-Thu & Sun, to 11.30am Fri, to 1.30pm Sat) is something of an oddity in

Jakarta, being a museum that is genuinely worth visiting. There are excellent displays of Han ceramics and ancient Hindu statuary, magnificent *kris* (traditional dagger) handles studded with rubies, and a huge relief map on which you can pick out all those volcanoes you plan to climb. The museum is also known as Gedung Gajah (Elephant House) on account of the bronze elephant outside, donated by the king of Thailand in 1871.

The **Indonesian Heritage Society** (☎ 572 5870) conducts free tours of the museum in English every Tuesday and Thursday at 9.30am.

TAMAN MINI INDONESIA INDAH

A vast theme park built to celebrate the nation, **Taman Mini Indonesia Indah** (Map p168;

☎ 545 4545; www.jakweb.com/tmii; TMII Pintu 1; admission 6000Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm) includes traditional houses from (most) Indonesian provinces set around a lagoon (boats are available to hire), an IMAX theatre and a bird park. There's also an assortment of museums, including an insect house full of alarming-looking specimens, and, best of all, the air-conditioned **Purna Bhakti Pertiwi Museum** (☎ 8am-5pm), which houses the stupendously opulent (and downright gaudy) gifts given to Soeharto, including a 5m ship carved entirely from jade.

To get here take the Koridor 7 bus from Kampung Melayu to Kampung Rambutan bus station and then hop on a T15 metro-mini; it's about an hour from central Jakarta.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

Taman Impian Jaya Ancol (Map p168; ☎ 640 6777; www.ancol.co.id; admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 10am-10pm) is a huge waterfront amusement complex with an oceanarium, art market and an Indonesian-style Disneyland (entrance an additional 70,000Rp). To get there, take a 64 or 65 bus (1500Rp) from Kota station.

To the north of Lapangan Merdeka you can stroll past the gleaming white **Presidential Palace** (Map p170; Jl Medan Merdeka Utara) – beware of the jumpy armed guards. To the north-east is the vast **Mesjid Istiqlal** (Map p170; Jl Veteran 1; ☎ dawn-dusk), one of the grandest mosques in Southeast Asia.

Festivals & Events

Java Jazz Festival (www.javajazzfestival.com) If you are here in March, keep an eye out for this festival.

Jakarta Anniversary On 22 June. Marks the establishment of the city by Gunungjati back in 1527, and is celebrated with fireworks and the Jakarta Fair. The latter is held at the Jakarta Fair Grounds (Map p168), northeast of the city centre in Kemayoran, from late June until mid-July.

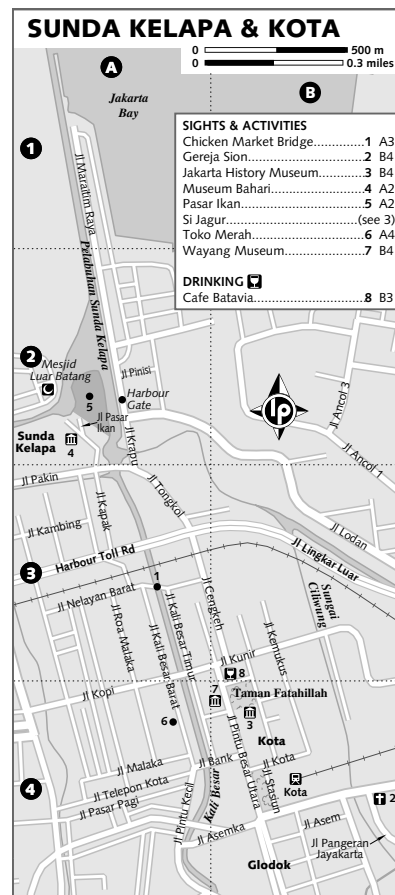
Jl Jaksa Street Fair Features Betawi dance, theatre and music, as well as popular modern performances. It is held for one week in August.

Independence Day Held on 17 August. The parades in Jakarta are the biggest in the country.

Sleeping

JL JAKSA AREA

Jakarta's budget hotel enclave is no Khao San Rd, but there are plenty of cheap beds (and beers) on offer. There's a cosmopolitan atmosphere, as the area is also a popular place for Jakarta's young intelligentsia and artistic types to socialise. Jaksa is a short stroll from



the main drag, Jl Thamrin, and also close to Gambir train station.

Wisma Delima (Map p172; ☎ 3190 4157; Jl Jaksa 5; dm/s/d with shared mandi 20,000/40,000/50,000Rp) Ancient family-run place with cell-like rooms (with mossie nets and fans) but extremely cheap and it's not dodgy – just read the rules above reception.

Bloem Steen Homestay (Map p172; ☎ 3192 5389; Gang I 173; s/d with shared mandi 25,000/40,000Rp) On a quiet lane, this place has ubersparse rooms with ancient mattresses (but clean sheets). There's a tiny garden out front.

Kresna Homestay (Map p172; ☎ 3192 5403; Gang I 175; d with shared/private mandi 40,000/50,000Rp) Dark, brooding and a little tumbledown, Kresna is barely big enough to swing a durian in, never mind a cat. Still it's secure and benefits from a quiet location, and the owners are helpful.

Djody Hotel (Map p172; ☎ 390 5976; Jl Jaska 27; r15,000-135,000Rp; 🍷) Get past the Jaksa minimalist (read bare and striplight-lit) lobby and this place has equally plain but clean, tiled rooms that are fair value. There's a safety-deposit box at reception.

Hotel Tator (Map p172; ☎ 3192 3941; Jl Jaska 37; r75,000-120,000Rp; 🍷) Cleanliness standards are high here, where the 21 plain, orderly rooms come with bleach-fresh aromas and there's a front patio where you can munch your breakfast.

Hotel Margot (Map p172; ☎ 391 3830; Jl Jaska 15; r170,000Rp; 🍷) Just off the main drag, this hotel's 34 rooms are not as grand as the imposing entrance would suggest, but they do all come with hot-water bathrooms, wardrobes and reliable air-conditioning. Those upstairs are slightly bigger.

CIKINI AREA

The Cikini area is east of Jl Jaksa, and has a few good, but pricier, guesthouses. Both offer an inclusive breakfast.

Yannie International Guesthouse (Map p170; ☎ 314 0012; Jl Raden Saleh Raya 35; s/d 125,000/140,000Rp; 🍷) Cut from similar cloth as the Gondia International Guesthouse, Yannie has well-kept rooms with hot-water bathrooms. There is no sign, just a 'Y' out front.

Gondia International Guesthouse (Map p170; ☎ 390 9221; www.geocities.com/gondia_hotel; Jl Gondangdia Kecil 22; d from 160,000Rp; 🍷) Pleasantly old-fashioned suburban place with cosy, neat rooms that have hot-water bathrooms, phones and reading lights. There's a small garden area here too.

Eating

JL JAKSA AREA

Jl Jaksa's fine for no-nonsense, inexpensive Indonesian and Western grub, though many local dishes are toned down a notch to suit tourist tastes. For something more authentic, head to the night-hawker stalls grouped around the southern end of Jl Hagi Agus Salim (also known as Jl Sabang), which is famous for its street food (including satay).

Jasa Bundo (Map p172; ☎ 390 5607; Jl Jaksa 20A; mains 12,000Rp; 🍷) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Agreeable, inexpensive *masakan Padang* (Padang restaurant) where all the usual Sumatran favourites are present, correct and piled up on the counter.

Margot Café (Map p172; ☎ 391 3830; Jl Jaska 15; mains 15,000Rp; 🍷) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Classic Jaksa hang-out with bamboo walls, wood floors, soap operas on the TV, and cheap local and Western faves.

Zenya (Map p172; ☎ 315 9232; Jakarta Theatre Bldg, Jl Wahid Hasyim 9; sushi from 15,000Rp, set meals 50,000Rp; 🍷) lunch & dinner) A pukka Japanese place next to the tourist office, with tatami tables, a sushi bar and a highly authentic menu. There's even a no-smoking area.

Ya Udah (Map p172; ☎ 314 4121; Jl Jaska 49; mains 20,000-41,000Rp; 🍷) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Efficient run, spick-and-span place with great breakfasts and Western dishes like Swiss rosti. Daily specials include choices like butterfish with mustard greens sauce.

Paprika (Map p172; ☎ 314 4113; Jl Wahid Hasyim; mains 40,000Rp; 🍷) lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) Hip, classy restaurant-cum-lounge bar – it even starred in the Indonesian film *Arisan!* – with fusion cuisine, modish surrounds and slick service.

OTHER AREAS

The upmarket suburb of Kemang, popular with expats, has plenty of stylish bars, clubs and restaurants, and also a couple of food courts where you can chow down on the cheap, before clubbing till dawn.

Place (Map p168; Jl Kemang Raya; 🍷) dinner) Highly sociable 'food bazaar' with myriad stalls, serving up everything from Indo regulars, *teppanyaki*-style steaks to Italian-style ice cream.

Kemang Food Festival (Map p168; Jl Kemang Raya; 🍷) lunch & dinner) Opposite the Place, this alternative food court has dozens of stands, whipping up *roti canai* (Indian-style flaky flat bread), *martabak* (Indonesian pancakes) and Chinese and Western choices. Stays open till 5am during Ramadan.

Pasar Pagi (Map p168; Jl Mangga Dua; 🍷) dinner) Another wonderful food bazaar, this one is located next to the Mangga Dua mall. Half of the stalls serve up Indonesian and halal cuisine, the other foodie zone concentrates on Asian food. It's a great place to pick 'n' mix dishes and socialise with locals, and is open until midnight.

Izzi Pizza (Map p168; ☎ 719 2020; Jl Kemang Raya 93A; mains 30,000Rp; 🍷) lunch & dinner) Peddling the kind of pizza that could get Mamma getting sticks and reaching for her passport, getting hooked on Izzi Pizza is, quite literally, easy peasy.

Street food can be picked up at the **night warung** (Map p170; Jl Pecenongan), about 1km north of the National Monument.

Drinking

Jakarta nights are (or can be if you have the stamina and funds) some of the most hedonistic in Asia. From expat pubs to gorgeous lounge bars with cocktail lists set at (near) London or New York prices, and far more beautiful people, Jakarta has it all. The bar zone on Jl Falatehan near Blok M (6km southwest of Jl Jaksa) is a good all-round bet, with everything from European-style pubs where you can shoot pool and sip wine to raucous bar-clubs with heaving dance floors.

Subscribe to the nightlife newsletter at www.bartele.com for the insider's view.

Bugils (Map p168; ☎ 574 7650; www.bugils.com; Taman Ria Senayan, Jl Jenderal Gatot Subroto; 🍷) 11am-late) Jakarta's prime expat watering hole, a friendly, sociable, pub-style place in the *Cheers* mould that's ideal for a pint and a game of pool. The Dutch owner and author, Bartele (see p335), is a mine of information about his adopted city.

our pick **Cafe Batavia** (Map p173; ☎ 691 5531; Jl Pintu Besar Utara 14; 🍷) 24hr) This refined bar-restaurant, dating from 1805, is a Kota landmark. Revel in the quintessential colonial surrounds – teak floors, giant baroque mirrors, Deco sofas and a sweeping bar with cow-hide detailing – as you sip your cocktail (from 57,000Rp) or beer (from 27,000Rp). Mains are available from 50,000Rp. Bizarrely, the place is often achingly empty, making it a wonderfully relaxing escape from the hectic pace of life outside.

Memories Café (Map p172; ☎ 392 8839; Jl Jaska 17; 🍷) 24hr) A backpacking institution, with street-side bar stools and a very social vibe. There's also a small bookstore, internet access and (so so) tucker (mains 20,000Rp).

My Bar (Map p168; ☎ 720 4731; Jl Falatehan 1-16, Blok M, Kebayoran Baru; 🍷) 6pm-late) This place must be Jakarta's self-appointed decency brigade's worst nightmare: an East-meets-West maelstrom of local office and bar girls, leering Western guys and pounding Euro dance and *dangdut* music. It's not quite as sleazy as it sounds. There are about a dozen other places on the Falatehan strip.

Top Gun (Map p168; ☎ 720 4731; Jl Falatehan 1-11, Blok M, Kebayoran Baru; 🍷) 5pm-late) Rivalling My Bar, this large bar-club is a bit more tacky but does showcase live bands most nights at 10pm.

Clubbing

Jakarta has a quite extraordinary clubbing scene, with several trance venues centred in Glodok and Kota catering to thousands (see boxed text, p157). In the south of the city the scene revolves around a richer crowd, with less hands-in-the-air action, and plenty of lounge and funky House music. Most places don't get going until 11pm, and rarely close before 4am. All of the following spots have cover charges of 30,000Rp to 60,000Rp, depending on the night.

Embassy (Map p168; ☎ 574 2047; Taman Ria, East Bldg 704, Senayan) Upmarket club where Jakarta's rich and beautiful gather to groove.

Retro (Map p168; ☎ 5296 2828; Jl Gatot Subroto Kav 2-3) In the Crown Plaza Hotel, this slick number with spectacular sound and visuals draws a young, hip and largely clean-cut crowd at the weekends.

Stadium (Map p168; ☎ 626 3323; www.stadiumjakarta.com; Jl Hayum Waruk 111 FF-JJ) Jakarta's – Asia's? – most hardcore clubbing experience, with a capacity of 4000, which opens on a Thursday and doesn't close until Monday morning. It's darker than a bat cave inside, with an atmosphere that's somewhere between spiritual and apocalyptic. Expect fearsome trance and tribal sounds. DJs including Sasha and Steve Lawler have manned the decks, but the local turntablists are talented and know how to move the crowd. Be warned that alcohol is not the drug of choice here, access is via two tiny lifts, and care should be taken outside as this is not Jakarta's safest area.

Entertainment

Check the entertainment pages of the *Jakarta Post*, *Djakarta!* or *Jakarta Kini* for the latest listings.

Taman Ismail Marzuki (TIM; Map p170; ☎ 3193 7325; tamanismailmarzuki@yahoo.com; Jl Cikini Raya 73) Not far from Jl Jaksa, Jakarta's premier cultural centre stages everything from Balinese dance to poetry readings. Prices start at 30,000Rp.

Gedung Kesenian Jakarta (Map p170; ☎ 380 8283; Jl Gedung Kesenian 1) Hosts traditional dance and drama, as well as European classical music.

The various cultural centres, particularly Erasmus Huis (p169), also hold regular events. For Javan puppet shows, check out the Wayang Museum (p171).

Shopping

Given the climate, it not surprising that Jakartans love their air-conditioned malls – there are over a hundred in the metropolitan area. Electronic goods are particularly good value.

Plaza Indonesia (Map p170; Jl Thamrin; ☎ 9am–9pm) Upmarket mall with dozens of designer stores.

Pasar Pagi Mangga Dua (Map p168; Jl Mangga Dua; ☎ 9am–7pm) Very cheap clothes, accessories and shoes and has a great food court (see p175). Across the road is the Mangga Dua Mall for computers and electronics.

Plaza Senayan (Map p168; Jl Asia Afrika; ☎ 9am–9pm) One of Jakarta's glossiest malls, with a fine bookstore and a Body Shop.

For arts and crafts, also check out **Pasar Seni** (Art Market; Map p168; Jl Raya Kampung Bandan; ☎ 10am–10pm), at Taman Impian Jaya Ancol (p173), and Jakarta's famous **flea market** (Map p170; Jl Surabaya; ☎ 9am–6pm).

Getting There & Away

Jakarta is the main travel hub for Indonesia, with flights and ships to destinations all over the archipelago. Buses depart for cities across Java, and Bali and Sumatra, while trains are an excellent way to get across Java.

AIR

Soekarno-Hatta International Airport is 35km northwest of the city; see boxed text, p167 for transport options.

Domestic airlines serving Jakarta include the following:

Adam Air (code KI; ☎ 550 7505, 690 9999; www.adamair.co.id)

Air Asia (code AK; ☎ 0804 133 3333; www.airasia.com)

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 0807 142 7832; www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Lion Air (code JT; ☎ 632 6039; www.lionair.co.id)

Merpati Nusantara Airlines (code MZ; ☎ 654 8888; www.merpati.co.id)

For typical prices see Map p161.

For international flights, check Air Asia or the travel agencies on Jl Jaksa. See p159 for international airlines serving Jakarta.

BOAT

The **Pelni ticket office** (Map p168; ☎ 421 2893; www.pelni.co.id; Jl Angkasa 18; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri, to Sat) is 13km northeast of the city centre in Kemayoran. Tickets (plus commission) can be bought through Pelni agents including **Menara Buana Surya** (Map p170; ☎ 314 2464; Jl Menteng Raya 29), in the Tedja Buana building, 500m east of Jl Jaksa. Routes and sample fares can be found on the boat transport map (p163).

Pelni ships all arrive at and depart from Pelabuhan Satu (Dock 1) at Tanjung Priok (Map p168), 13km northeast of the city centre. Koridor 10 Transjakarta buses should start serving the terminal by the time you read this or you can take bus 10 from Jl Agus Salim, located 300m west of Jl Jaksa (allow at least an hour). The bus terminal is at the old Tanjung Priok train station, from where it is a 1km walk to the dock, or 4000Rp by *ojek*. A taxi to/from Jl Jaksa will cost around 50,000Rp.

BUS

So many buses leave Jakarta's bus stations that you can usually just front up at the station and join the chaos, though it pays to book ahead. Travel agencies on Jl Jaksa sell tickets and usually include transport to the terminal, which saves a lot of hassle, though they'll charge a commission for this. Jakarta has four main bus stations, all well out of the city centre. There are buses that will take you to each station from the city centre; see the following text and the boxed text, p178.

Kalideres (off Map p168; ☎ 541 4996) is 15km northwest of the city centre and has frequent buses to destinations west of Jakarta, such as Merak (14,000Rp, three hours). Take a Koridor 3 Transjakarta bus to get here.

Kampung Rambutan (Map p168; ☎ 840 0062) is 18km south of the city and primarily handles buses to destinations south and southeast of Jakarta, such as Bogor (from 9000Rp, 45 minutes) and Cianjur (17,000Rp, 2½ hours). Koridor 7 Transjakarta buses serve this terminal.

Pulo Gadung (Map p168; ☎ 489 3742), 12km east of the centre, serves central and eastern Java, Sumatra and Bali. Most buses to Sumatra leave between 10am and 3pm, including Palembang (from 140,000Rp, 12 hours) and Bukittinggi (from 190,000Rp, 20 to 36 hours). Heading east you'll find direct buses to Bandung via the Cipularang toll road (from 40,000Rp, three hours), Yogyakarta (from 90,000Rp, 12 hours) and even Denpasar (300,000Rp, 26 hours). Koridor 4 or 2 Transjakarta buses will get you to this terminal.

Lebak Bulu (Map p168) is 16km southwest of the city and also handles some deluxe buses to Yogyakarta, Surabaya and Bali. Most departures are in the late afternoon or evening.

MINIBUS

Door-to-door *travel* minibuses are not a good way to leave Jakarta, as it can take hours to pick up or drop off passengers in the traffic jams. Jl Jaksa travel agencies, like **Robertur** (Map p172; ☎ 314 2926; Jl Jaksa 20B; ☎ 24hr), can book direct minibuses to Bandung (70,000Rp, three hours), Pangandaran (160,000Rp, 10 hours) and Yogyakarta (195,000Rp, 12 hours).

TRAIN

Jakarta's four main train stations are quite central, making the trains the easiest way out of the city. The most convenient and important is **Gambir** (☎ 386 2361), on the eastern side of Lapangan Merdeka, a 15-minute walk from Jl Jaksa. Gambir handles express trains to Bogor, Bandung, Yogyakarta, Solo, Semarang and Surabaya. Some Gambir trains also stop at **Kota** (☎ 692 9083), the train station in the old city area in the north. **Pasar Senen** (☎ 421 0164), to the east, has mostly *ekonomi* trains to eastern destinations. **Tanah Abang** (☎ 314 9872) has trains west to Merak.

Smaller, but useful if you are staying in Jl Jaksa, is Gondangdia, 500m east of most of the area's guesthouses. From here, there are trains to Bogor and Kota.

For long hauls, the express trains (*bisnis* and *eksekutif*) are far preferable to the *ekonomi* trains and can be booked in advance at the air-con booking offices at the northern end of Gambir train station.

From Gambir, taxis cost a minimum of 18,000Rp from the taxi booking desk. A cheaper alternative is to go out the front to the main road and hail down a *bajaj*, which will cost 10,000Rp to Jl Jaksa after bargaining.

For train times and prices, visit www.in-foka.kereta-api.com. Note that some trains have a 10,000Rp surplus for weekend travel.

Bandung

Nine *Parahyangan* trains depart Gambir daily for Bandung (*bisnis/eksekutif* 45,000/65,000Rp, three hours) and there are also seven *Argo Gede* trains (*eksekutif* 75,000Rp, 2¾ hours).

Bogor

Ekonomi trains to Bogor (3500Rp, 1½ hours) leave Gambir and Gondangdia every 20 minutes or so from 5am to 7pm. Much better express trains leave Gambir hourly from 6.30am to 6pm (*bisnis* 10,000Rp, one hour).

Surabaya

Express trains include the *Bima* (*eksekutif* 190,000Rp, 14½ hours), departing Gambir at 5pm, and the luxurious *Argo Bromo Angrek* (*eksekutif* 200,000Rp, 10 hours), which departs from Gambir at 9.30am and 9.30pm. The *Gumarang* also travels between Gambir and Surabaya (*bisnis/eksekutif* 120,000/220,000Rp, 11½ hours), leaving at 5.50pm.

The cheapest train service taking the north-coast route is the *ekonomi Kertajaya* (52,000Rp, 15½ hours), which leaves Pasar Senen at 4.45pm.

Yogyakarta & Solo

Luxurious trains include the *Argo Lawu* (210,000Rp, eight hours), departing from Gambir at 8pm, and the *Argo Dwipangga* (180,000Rp, nine hours), departing at 8am. These trains cost the same to either destination; for Solo add an extra hour.

Cheaper services to Yogyakarta are the *Fajar Utama Yogya* (*bisnis* 100,000Rp, 8½ hours), departing from Pasar Senen at 6.20am, and the *Senja Utama Yogya* (*bisnis* 100,000Rp, 9¾ hours), departing Pasar Senen at 7.30pm. The *Senja Utama Solo* goes to Solo (*bisnis* 100,000Rp, 10 hours) from Pasar Senen at 8.25pm and also stops in Yogyakarta.

Getting Around BUS

For details of Jakarta's excellent new Transjakarta busway network, see the boxed text, p178. Otherwise, standard buses cost 2000Rp, *patas* (express) buses cost 2000Rp to 2500Rp. *Mikrolet* and other minibuses also operate in some areas (1000Rp to 2500Rp).

JAKARTA ON THE MOVE

Jakarta's bus system has been revolutionised in recent years and the city now has a network of clean air-conditioned buses called Transjakarta that run on designated busways (lanes that are closed to all other traffic). Journey times have been slashed, and they now represent by far the quickest way to get around the city.

Most busways have been constructed in the centre of existing highways, and stations have been positioned (roughly) at kilometre intervals. Access is via elevated walkways and each station has a shelter. At the time of research, seven busway lines (called *koridor*) were up and running, with a total of 15 due to be operational by 2010, forming a network extending from Tanjung Priok south to Kampung Rambutan.

Tickets cost 3500Rp, payable before you board, which covers you to any destination in the network (regardless of how many *koridor* you use). Buses (5am-10pm) are well maintained and not too crowded as conductors (usually) ensure that maximum passenger numbers are not exceeded.

The busway system has been a great success, but as most middle- and upper-class Jakartans remain as addicted as ever to their cars, the city's famous *macet* (traffic jams) look set to continue for a good few years yet. Efforts to reduce congestion have failed miserably (one initiative that ruled that all rush-hour vehicles using toll roads must have a minimum of three passengers only succeeded in creating an army of riders-for-hire, nicknamed *joki*). But as things stand, busway users can snigger as they speed past kilometres of traffic-snarled cars.

Work began on a monorail system in 2004, and though financial problems mean that it probably won't be completed for a few years yet, some infrastructure is in place. Eventually, two lines (a total of 27km) should connect the main business districts with Kampung Melayu in the south. Plans for an underground metro exist too, and some preparatory work actually started on the project in 2005, but it's currently dead in the water due to a lack of funds.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

A short ride on a *bajaj* costs about 8000Rp, but they are not allowed along main roads, including Jl Thamrin.

TAXI

Metered taxis cost 5000Rp for the first kilometre and 250Rp for each subsequent 100m. Make sure the *argo* (meter) is used.

Bluebird cabs (☎ 794 1234; www.bluebirdgroup.com) can be booked ahead and have the best reputation; do **not** risk travelling with the less reputable firms.

Typical taxi fares from Jl Thamrin: to Kota (20,000Rp) or Blok M (30,000Rp). Any toll road charges are extra and are paid by the passengers.

BOGOR

☎ 0251 / pop 801,000

Known throughout Java as *kota hujan* (city of rain), Bogor became a home from home for Sir Stamford Raffles (see p180) during the British interregnum, a respite for those mad dogs and Englishmen that preferred *not* to go out in the midday sun. These days, this once quiet town is practically becoming a suburb of Jakarta, with the traffic and hubbub

to match. But while Bogor itself clogs up with bemo and mopeds, the real oasis remains untouched. Planted at the very hub of the city, with *macet* to north, south, east and west, the town's world-class botanical gardens remain – in the words of one upstanding British visitor – 'a jolly fine day out'.

Information

There are *wartel* (telecommunications stalls) across town, and Bogor has plenty of banks, many with ATMs.

Bank Central Asia (BCA; Jl Ir H Juanda 28) Has an ATM and changes money.

Post office (Jl Ir H Juanda; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 081 111 0347; Jl Ir H Juanda 10; ☎ 8am-4pm) Tours of the region can also be organised here.

Wartel Paledang (Jl Paledang; per hr 8000Rp; ☎ 8am-9pm) Offers internet, and phone services at fair rates.

Sights

A veritable 'green lung' in the heart of the city, Bogor's botanical gardens, the **Kebun Raya** (☎ 322187; www.bogor.indo.net.id/kri; Jl Otto Iskandardinata; admission 5500Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm) are simply outstanding. British governor Sir Stamford

Raffles first laid out a garden, but this was later expanded by Dutch botanists, including Johannes Teysmann, who planted and developed the garden over a 50-year period in the 19th century. Today the garden is an important research centre, and scientists based here are investigating new medical and agricultural uses for its many rare specimens. President Bush even dropped by here in 2006 when his scheduled trip to Jakarta was diverted to Bogor.

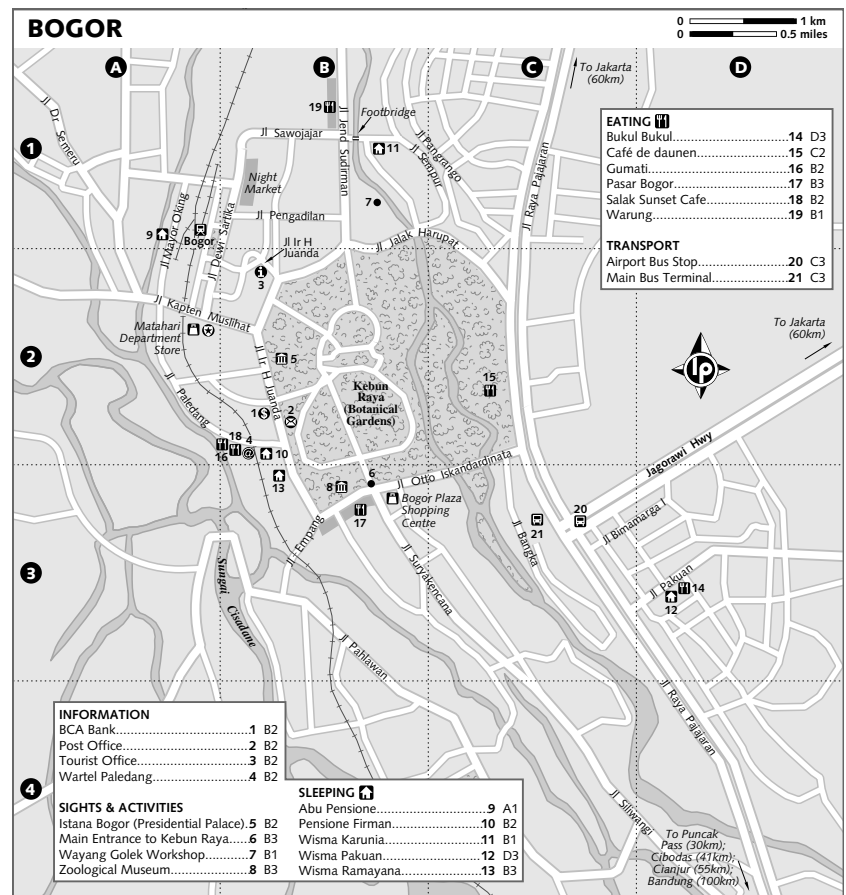
Things can get hectic on Sundays, but during the week this is one of West Java's true oases (apart from the odd mosquito – bring some repellent). Highlights include the incredible collections of palms, the bizarre pandan trees with their 'spider leg' roots and the

orchid house (2000Rp extra). There's a fine, if pricey, café-restaurant in the grounds (Café de daunen, p180).

The **Istana Bogor** (Presidential Palace), built by the Dutch and much favoured by Soekarno (Soeharto ignored it), stands beside the gardens, and deer graze on its lawns. Visits are by organised tour only; the tourist office may be able to squeeze you into one.

Near the garden entrance, the **Zoological Museum** (Jl Otto Iskandardinata; admission 1000Rp; ☎ 8am-4pm Sat-Thu, to noon Fri) has a curious collection of mouldy stuffed animals, including a skeleton of a blue whale, 30cm stick insects and a pouch-sized Flores rat.

If you are interested in seeing a Javanese craftsman at work, Pak Dase makes quality



RAFFLES

British botanist, antislavery campaigner and founder of Singapore, Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles had a deep love of Java. Born on a ship off the coast of Jamaica, he learnt Malay while working in Penang and became governor of Java in 1811, when he founded the Bogor gardens during the British interim.

An enlightened governor, he opposed the opium trade, banned slavery in Java and introduced a degree of self-government. Raffles organised many expeditions across Indonesia, rediscovering Borobudur, and, during another trip, encountered the world's largest flower, *Rafflesia*, which takes his name. Later he wrote the well-received *History of Java*.

After three of his four children died in a six-month period in 1821–22, Raffles concentrated on his love of natural sciences, becoming the first president of the Zoological Society of London, and founding London zoo. Raffles' progressive ideals were in stark contrast to his family background (his father was a slave trader), and when he died at 45 his local parish vicar refused to grant a church burial because of his antislavery principles.

Dozens of educational establishments bear his name today including the Raffles Museum of Biodiversity Research in Singapore.

wooden puppets at his **wayang golek workshop** (Lebak Kanton RT 02/VI; ☎ 8am–6pm) among the labyrinthine passages on the west side of the river near Jl Jend Sudirman.

Sleeping

Bogor has some good family-run places; most include a basic breakfast in the room price.

Pensione Firman (☎ 323246; Jl Paledang 48; r with shared/private mandi 60,000/70,000Rp) Ramshackle place with a multitude of little fan-cooled rooms scattered around the corridors of a rambling house. Despite the appearance it's actually quite well set up for travellers, with friendly service and cheap grub available.

Wisma Ramayana (☎ 320364; Jl Ir H Juanda 54; r 70,000Rp) Rooms look out over a small garden at this friendly and well-located place, though Bogor's climate means that a few are showing some signs of damp.

Abu Pensione (☎ 322893; Jl Mayor Oking 15; d 75,000–140,000Rp; ☎) A perennial backpackers' favourite, just a stone's throw from the train station, with a choice of clean, tidy rooms plus good information and service.

Wisma Pakuan (☎ 319430; Jl Pakuan 12; r 130,000–185,000Rp; ☎) Very handy for the bus terminal, this grand-looking guesthouse has huge rooms with hot-water bathrooms and TV that are in good shape. Those facing busy Jl Pakuan suffer a degree of traffic noise, so ask for one facing the rear garden.

Or try **Wisma Karunia** (☎ 323411; Jl Sempur 33-5; d with shared/private mandi 35,000/45,000Rp), which is family run and quiet, but a hike from the centre.

Eating & Drinking

Ourpick Gumati (Jl Paledang 28; www.cafegumati.com; mains 12,500–39,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) If you're only here for a day, this destination restaurant-cum-gallery is *the* place to head for. It boasts wonderful vistas over Bogor's red-tiled rooftops to Mount Salak from its two huge terraces – there's even a pool downstairs. Tuck into Indonesian tapas-style snacks or feast from the main menu, but there's no booze.

Salak Sunset Café (☎ 329765; Jl Paledang 38; mains from 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Enjoyable little place kitted out in tropical shack-style décor. Enjoys fine river views, and has an Indonesian and Western menu as well as cold Bintang.

Bukul Bukul (☎ 384905; Jl Pakuan 14; mains 15,000–20,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Very stylish new place with modern furniture, and the Zen-like garden makes a great setting for a meal. The surrounds belie the prices here, which are fairly humble considering the effort that's gone into the design. No alcohol is served, but there's a mocktail list, or you're welcome to BYO for no charge.

Café de daunen (☎ 350023; mains 20,000–46,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Inside the botanical gardens, perched on a grassy bank overlooking the water-lily ponds, this place has the best location in town. The menu's international, with *lumpia* (spring rolls), salads, pasta and, perhaps with a nod to Raffles' heritage, fish and chips.

Cheap *warung* (food stalls) appear at night along Jl Dewi Sartika and Jl Jend Sudirman. During the day you'll find plenty of *warung*

and good fruit at Pasar Bogor, the market close to the main Kebun Raya gates.

Getting There & Away

BUS

Buses to Jakarta depart every 15 minutes from the main bus terminal on Jl Raya Pajajaran (normal/air-con 9000/12,000Rp, 45 minutes) to the Kampung Rambutan station via the toll road. Some services also go directly to Jakarta's Pulo Gadung bus station and Tanjung Priok harbour.

There are buses to Bandung (26,000/38,000Rp, 3½ hours) via Cianjur (12,000/18,000Rp, two hours) every 20 minutes. On weekends, buses are not allowed to go via the scenic Puncak Pass (below) and have to travel via Sukabumi (add an extra hour to your journey time, and 5000Rp). **Rama Travel** (☎ 653672) offers air-con, door-to-door minibuses to Bandung (60,000Rp, 3½ hours) and Yogyakarta (140,000Rp, 11 hours), and will collect you from your hotel.

Damri buses head direct to Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta airport (30,000Rp, 1½ hours) hourly from 4am to 6pm. They leave from Jl Bimamarga 1, near the end of the Jagorawi Hwy toll road.

TRAIN

Trains are the best way to reach the Jl Jaksia area of Jakarta. Frequent *ekonomi* trains leave for Gambir or Gondangdia stations roughly every 20 minutes until 7pm (3500Rp, 1½ hours). Better *Pakuan* express services to Gambir (10,000Rp, one hour) leave less frequently until 6pm.

Getting Around

Angkot (2000Rp) make slow circuits of the gardens, taking in most central locations en route.

CIBODAS & CIANJUR

☎ 0263 / pop Cibodas 18,000, Cianjur 151,000 Leaving Bogor you pass through the **Puncak Pass**, a once-lovely highland area destroyed by a rampant resort sprawl of motels, weekend homes and factory-shopping outlets. But continuing east of here you'll travel through some of Java's finest highland scenery: a bewitching landscape of plunging valleys, tea plantations and cool, misty mornings.

Cibodas, 4km off the main road, is home to the stunning **Kebun Raya Botanical Gardens**

(☎ 512233; admission 4000Rp; ☎ 8am–5pm), an incredible collection of over 5000 plants and trees from over 1000 species set in impossibly lush grounds of alpine forest, waterfalls and grasslands. First established in 1830 by botanist Teysmann, the Dutch tried to cultivate quinine here (its bark is used in malaria medication), though the climate proved better in East Java. Cibodas' gardens were listed by Unesco as a World Heritage Reserve in 1977. Highlights include the cacti greenhouse, eucalyptus forests, some vertiginous Japanese bamboo and the prolific birdlife, including rare sightings of the Javan hawk eagle.

From April to October, you can also climb **Gunung Gede**, a spectacular 2958m volcanic peak with a huge crater; from its summit it's possible to see the Indian Ocean and Java Sea on clear days. The Perlindungan Hutan & Konservasi Alam (PHKA; Directorate General of Forest Protection & Nature Conservation) office, opposite the entrance to the gardens in Cibodas, issues permits (issued one day in advance, 5000Rp). It's six hours to the summit so start early (usually around 2am). PHKA guides can be hired for 250,000Rp for the hike, or speak to Freddy at Freddy's Homestay (see below).

Continuing east it's 19km to the market town of Cianjur, an important, if sprawling, rice-growing centre that makes a good base to explore the intriguing sights of the region. These include the lush hillsides and processing plants of the **Gedeh tea plantation** (admission free; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Sat), 15km northwest of town, and **Jangari**, a 'floating village' on a large lake with a substantial fish-farming community and a wonderful fish restaurant 1.8km northeast of town. Cianjur has several banks (with ATMs) on main drag Jl Cokroaminoto, and internet cafés are grouped together on Jl Siti Jenab.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation tends to be expensive close to the Puncak Pass as the area is popular with wealthy weekendening Jakartans. The Cianjur homestay programme (see p182) is an excellent and very affordable way to interact with local people.

Freddy's Homestay (☎ 515473; Jl Raya Cibodas, Cibodas; s/d with shared mandi 35,000/70,000Rp) The English- and Dutch-speaking owner at this rustic homestay is an excellent source of information about the region and its hiking, and his

CIANJUR HOMESTAY PROGRAMME

Set up by Yudi Sujana, a Javanese teacher who lived for years in New Zealand, the **Cianjur Homestay Programme** (☎ 081 7085 6691; westjava2002@yahoo.com) is a superb initiative that is very well set up to enable travellers to experience life in a nontouristy town in Java, and do some voluntary work. Yudi and his team all speak fluent English, so it's a wonderful opportunity to get to understand Sundanese and Indonesian culture. Guests can help English-language teachers in local schools, visit the town's plastic-recycling plant or join workers planting or harvesting rice. Hiking trips and tours of all the region's sights can be arranged at backpacking prices. Guests pay US\$10 per person per day, which includes family accommodation and three meals; it's best to book a place a few days in advance. Airport pick-ups and drop-offs can also be arranged at very moderate rates, allowing you to bypass Jakarta completely.

wife prepares lunchboxes. Located down a narrow alleyway 500m before the gardens, the rooms here are modest but acceptable.

Cianjur's speciality is *lontong* (sticky rice with tofu in a delicious sweet coconut sauce); there are several *warung* on Jl Dewisartika that specialise in this dish.

Getting There & Away

On weekdays buses leave Jakarta's Kampung Rambutan every 30 minutes to Cipanas (normal/air-con 15,000/21,000Rp, two hours) and Cianjur (17,000/25,000Rp, 2½ hours). At weekends (when traffic is terrible around Puncuk Pass) buses are routed via Sukabumi (add an extra hour to your journey time, and 5000Rp). Buses to/from Bandung (11,000/16,000Rp, 1¾ hours) leave every half-hour.

There are buses to Bogor from Cianjur (12,000/18,000Rp, two hours) and the highway by Cipanas every 20 minutes; *colt* ply the route on Sundays.

BANDUNG

☎ 022 / pop 2.7 million

Big, burly Bandung comes like a rush of blood to the head after the verdant mountains around Cibodas. Once dubbed the 'Paris of Java', today there's little left to admire in a city centre that's prone to Jakarta-style congestion. But if you rummage through the concrete sprawl, odd pockets of interest remain, including some Dutch Art Deco monuments, the quirky fibreglass statues of Jeans St and some stylish cafés popular with the thousands of students that call this city home. At an altitude of 750m, Bandung's climate is also far less oppressive than the capital's, and with a new toll road cutting driving times, it's even become a bit of a weekend retreat.

Orientation

The main drag, Jl Asia Afrika, runs through the heart of city centre past the *alun alun* (main public square). Most budget accommodation is dotted around the train station, while Jl Braga has a strip of cafés, bars and restaurants.

Information

Adventist Hospital (☎ 203 4386; Jl Cihampelas 161) A missionary hospital with English-speaking staff.

Bandung Tourist Information Centre (☎ 420 6644; Jl Asia Afrika; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, to 2pm Sun) Run by the ever-helpful Ajid Suriana, this office is currently in the foyer of the central mosque, but should move to an adjacent office in the *alun alun*. There's also a desk at the train station.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Merdeka) Has an ATM and exchanges travellers cheques and cash.

Main post office (cnr Jl Banceuy & Jl Asia Afrika; ☎ 8am-7pm Mon-Sat) Opposite the *alun alun*.

Wartel (Jl Kebonjati; ☎ 8am-9pm) International calls can be made here.

X-net (Jl Lengkong Kecil 38; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 8am-10pm)

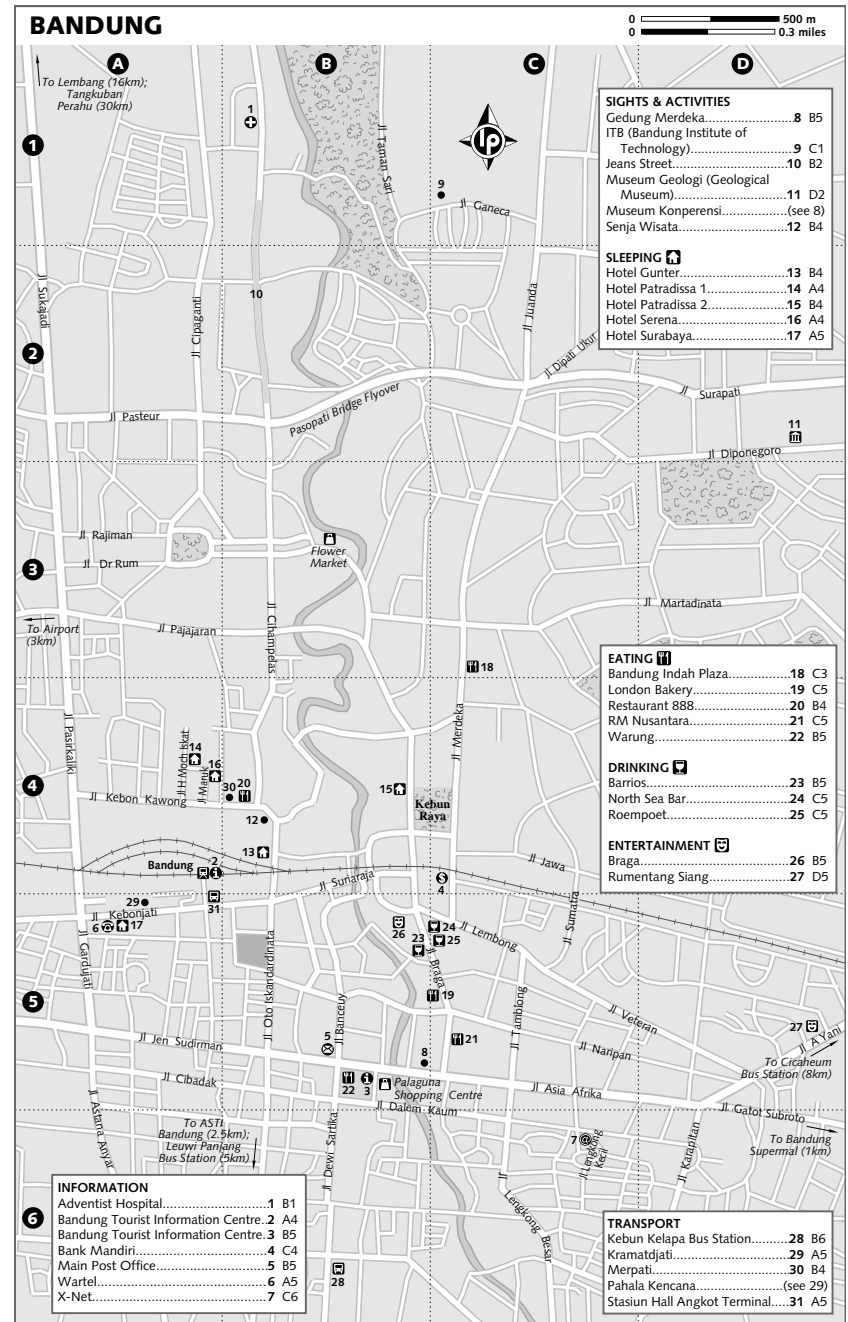
Sights & Activities

CITY CENTRE

The **Museum Konferensi** (Conference Museum) in the **Gedung Merdeka** (Freedom Bldg; ☎ 423 8031; Jl Asia Afrika 65; admission free; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) is dedicated to Bandung's 1955 Asia-Africa conference, attended by Soekarno, Ho Chi Minh, Nasser, Nehru and other leaders from the developing world.

NORTH BANDUNG

Bandung's **Institute of Technology** (ITB; Jl Ganeca) is one of the most important universities in Indonesia, with a reputation for activism – students here published corruption



allegations that helped bring down Soeharto. The canteen inside the *asrama mahasiswa* (dormitory) complex is a good place to socialise with students.

About 1km west, Jl Cihampelas is known to all as **Jeans Street** on account of the profusion of cheap denim stores here, many hung with supersized promotional statues of Rambo, Superman and the like.

Museum Geologi (Geological Museum; ☎ 720 3205; Jl Diponegoro 57; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Mon-Thu, to 1.30pm Sat & Sun), northeast of the centre, is a mecca for budding vulcanologists.

ADU DOMBA

One of Bandung's most popular pastimes is whiling away a Sunday morning watching a traditional *adu domba* (ram-butting fight). As the loser of this tête-à-tête turns and flees once the scrap is over, it's not a bloodthirsty business. Fights are usually held between 9am and 1pm but check schedules and location first with the Bandung Tourist Information Centre.

Tours

Senja Wisata (☎ 0852 2106 3788; Jl Otto Iskandardinata 6a; senjawisata_travellerscentre@yahoo.co.id) offers backpacker-gear-ed overland tours to Yogyakarta for 300,000Rp per person per day, with a minimum of two people. Ask the helpful English-speaking staff here about other tours in the Bandung region too.

Sleeping

Bandung has very few good budget options, so splash a little cash to crash in this city. The very cheapest places are on Jl Kebonjati, but these attract some dodgy characters and the area outside is filthy, and dark at night. Breakfast is included at all the following places.

Hotel Patradissa 1 (☎ 420 6680; Jl H Moch Iskhat 8; d 110,000-180,000Rp; ☎) Vaguely reminiscent of a nursing home, but this old-fashioned place enjoys a quiet location and has helpful staff.

Hotel Gunter (☎ 420 3763; Jl Otto Iskandardinata 20; r 140,000-165,000Rp; ☎) Well-run place with clean, spacious rooms that retain 1970s-style furnishings; you pay a little extra for air-con. All overlook a gorgeous central courtyard garden bursting with flowering shrubs and topiary.

our pick **Hotel Serena** (☎ 420 4317; Jl Maruk 4; r 210,000Rp; ☎) It's (just) stepping into midrange terrain, but this modern place represents ex-

ceptional value for money, with spanking-new, immaculately presented rooms, all with hot-water bathrooms, and it's on a quiet street near the station. Prices rise a little at weekends.

Also worth considering:

Hotel Surabaya (☎ 436791; Jl Kebonjati 71; r with shared/private mandi 40,000/65,000Rp) A tumbledown colonial hotel with plenty of character, but plenty of dust too.

Hotel Patradissa 2 (☎ 420 6657; Jl Wastukencana 7a; d from 125,000Rp; ☎) A newer, but more expensive option; most rooms here have air-con.

Eating

Jl Braga is by far the best place to hunt for a good restaurant. For a *warung* scoff head to Jl Cikapundung Barat, across from the *alun alun* near the Ramayana department store. Local specialities include *soto bandung* (a spicy soup with beef, coconut paste, peanuts and sliced *lobak* vegetable).

RM Nusantara (☎ 081 5610 4443; Jl Braga 10; mains 9000Rp; ☎ 24hr) Churns out fine Sumatran food from dusk till...well...dusk.

Restaurant 888 (☎ 423 4760; Jl Kebon Kawung 14; mains 10,000-26,000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Clean, new place opposite the station with a menu of Indonesian, and a few Chinese, dishes. Seafood is good here, including *cumi sop buntut* (squid soup).

London Bakery (☎ 420 7351; Jl Braga 37; meals from 12,000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Very stylish place where you can enjoy a breakfast, omelette, sandwich or pasta. Sip from a selection of Indonesian teas or coffees, and you'll find the *Jakarta Post* and other magazines to browse.

Good food courts include the following: **Bandung Supermal** (Jl Gatot Subroto; mains from 10,000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) Great for a pick 'n' mix scoff.

Bandung Indah Plaza (Jl Merdeka 56l; mains from 8000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Drinking

Jl Braga is the drinking hub of the city.

North Sea Bar (☎ 420 8904; Jl Braga 82; ☎ 5pm-late) Bandung's main expat boozier, scattered with assorted bar girls and a pool table, but not too sleazy.

Roempoet (☎ 423 6206; Jl Braga 80; ☎ 5pm-1am) Intimate venue with live bands (mainly playing covers) and a social vibe. Sizzling satay is also served up (mains 20,000Rp).

Barrios (Braga City Walk Mall 48; ☎ 11am-2am) This is a hip lounge bar with *Wallpaper** magazine-influenced décor, 25 brands of bottled beer and live music at weekends.

Clubbing

Braga (☎ 423 3292; Jl Suriaraja 7-9; ☎ 7pm-3am) An unpretentious club where House music and Indonesian dance rule the dance floor. There's a small cover charge of around 30,000Rp.

Entertainment

Bandung is a capital of Sundanese culture, particularly performing arts. Performance times are haphazard; check with the tourist information centre for the latest schedules.

Rumentang Siang (☎ 423 3562; Jl Baranangsiang 1; performances from 5000Rp) Bandung's principal arts centre hosts *wayang golek* performances, Jaipongan (West Javanese dance), *sandiwara* (traditional Javanese theatre) and *ketoprak* (folk theatre).

ASTI-Bandung (☎ 731 4982; Jl Buah Batu 212; performances from 5000Rp) South of the centre, ASTI is a school for traditional arts: Sundanese music, dance and *pencah silat* (self-defence).

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Asia (☎ 080 4133 3333; www.airasia.com) offers a direct daily link with Kuala Lumpur. **Merpati** (☎ 426 0253; www.merpati.co.id; Jl Kebon Kawung 16) has flights to cities including Surabaya, Denpasar and Tarakan. **Garuda** (☎ 420 9468; www.garuda-indonesia.com) is in the Grand Hotel Preanger.

BUS

The **Leuwi Panjang bus station** (☎ 522 0768), 5km south of the city centre on Jl Soekarno-Hatta, has half-hourly buses west to Cianjur (normal/air-con 11,000/16,000Rp, 1½ hours) and Bogor (26,000/38,000Rp, 3½ hours), and, via the toll road, to Jakarta's Kampung Rambutan station (40,000Rp, three hours). Buses to Bogor are not allowed to take the scenic Puncak Pass route on weekends.

Buses leave from the Cicaheum station, 8km east of town, for destinations to the east, including hourly buses to Pangandaran (48,000Rp, six hours) until 1pm, and Yogyakarta (normal/air-con 70,000/92,000Rp, 10 hours).

Sari Harum (☎ 607 7065) provides air-con *travel* minibuses to Pangandaran (70,000Rp, five hours); phone to arrange a pick-up from your hotel.

For luxury buses to long-distance destinations including Yogyakarta, **Kramatjati** (☎ 420 0858; Jl Kebonjati 96) and **Pahala Kencana** (☎ 423 2911; Jl Kebonjati 90) are two upmarket agencies.

TRAIN

Between them the *Parahyangan* and *Argo Gede* (*bisnis* 40,000Rp to 50,000Rp, *eksekutif* 60,000Rp to 75,000Rp; three hours) offer hourly trains to Jakarta's Gambir train station between 4am and 7pm.

The *eksekutif Argo Wilis* leaves Bandung at 7am for Surabaya (165,000Rp, 12½ hours). It calls at Yogyakarta and Solo en route. For train time and fare information, visit www.infoka.kereta-api.com.

Getting Around

Bandung's airport is 4km northwest of the city centre; it costs about 30,000Rp to get there by taxi. Regular *angkot* (2500Rp) link the airport and the centre of town.

Angkot (2000Rp to 3000Rp) to most places, such as Jl Cihampelas and Tangkuban Perahu, leave from the south side of the train station (Stasiun Hall). Abdul Muis terminal, at the Kebun Kelapa bus station, has *angkot* to Cicaheum and Luewi Panjang bus stations. Big Damri city buses 9 and 11 (2000Rp) run from west to east down Jl Asia Afrika to Cicaheum.

TANGKUBAN PERAHU AREA

Thirty kilometres north of Bandung, Tangkuban Perahu (literally 'Overturned Boat') is a huge active volcanic crater. Legend tells of a god challenged to build a huge boat during a single night. His opponent, on seeing that he would probably complete this impossible task, brought the sun up early and the boat builder turned his nearly completed boat over in a fit of anger.

The huge **Kawah Ratu** (Queen Crater) at the top is impressive, but as cars can also drive right up here, it's a weekend tourist trap with the usual parade of touts offering eggs to cook in the crater's scalding surface. A park entrance fee of 20,000Rp is payable on arrival. For safety, check the volcano's activity status first with the tourist information centre in Bandung.

You can escape the crowds by walking (anticlockwise) around the main crater and along the ridge between the two craters, but parts of it are steep and slippery. Safer and

more interesting is the walk to **Kawah Domas**, an active volcanic area of steaming vents and bubbling pools about 1km down from the car park. From here you can follow the trail back to the main road (ask for directions) and flag down a *colt* back to Bandung, or continue to the **Sari Ater Hot Springs Resort** (☎ 0260-471700; admission 10,000Rp, pools extra 20,000Rp; ☎ 24hr) at Ciater, 8km northeast of Tangkuban Perahu. Guides at Tangkuban Perahu will also offer to lead you to Ciater through the jungle.

To get here, take a Subang-bound *colt* (10,000Rp, 45 minutes) from Bandung's minibus terminal (Stasiun Hall) to the park entrance. Then take a minibus (8000Rp per person if full) to the crater; you may have to charter one or walk the 4.5km to the top on weekdays.

PANGANDARAN

☎ 0265

Java's principal beach resort, famous for its sweeping beaches and rolling surf, was struck by a tsunami in July 2006, claiming over 600 lives and laying waste to the shoreline. Pangandaran has picked itself remarkably quickly, and is back in business, though some sea-front structures at its southern end still bear gaping holes and will have to be pulled down.

Few Javanese visit (except in peak holiday periods), but with near-empty beaches, easy access to a national park, bags of budget hotels and great surf, Pangandaran is a great place to break your journey across Java.

Information

A once-only tourist tax (3000Rp) is charged when entering Pangandaran – keep your ticket safe. Note that at the time of research, none of the local ATMs were accepting Visa/Plus cards; the nearest Visa-friendly ATMs are in Sukaraja and Sidareja.

BNI ATM (Jl Bulak Laut) Opposite the Relax Restaurant, the ATM accepts MasterCard/Cirrus cards only.

BRI bank (Jl Kidang Pananjung; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri) Changes money and travellers checks for so-so rates; its ATM takes MasterCard/Cirrus cards.

CV Sawargi (☎ 639180; Jl Kidang Pananjung 123; per hr 18,000Rp; ☎ 9am-11pm) Internet access and local tours.

Magic Mushroom Books (Jl Pasanggrahan; ☎ 8.30am-8pm) Books can be bought here and money changed.

Main post office (Jl Kidang Pananjung; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Mon-Thu, to 1.30pm Sat) On the main street.

PT Lotus Wisata (☎ 639635; lotus_wisata@yahoo.com; Jl Bulak Laut; ☎ 6am-midnight) Helpful travel agency with excellent transport information.

Telkom office (Jl Kidang Pananjung; ☎ 6am-midnight)

Sights & Activities

The **Taman Nasional Pangandaran** (Pangandaran National Park; ☎ 081 2149 0153; admission 2500Rp; ☎ dawn-dusk), which fringes the southern end of town, is a stretch of untouched forest populated by barking deer, hornbills and Javan gibbons, and with some spectacular white-sand beaches. The **Boundary Trail** offers the best walk through the park, skirting the jungle. Other trails are very vague, so it's best to ask a ranger (50,000Rp) to accompany you. You can also take a guided walk with a tour company.

Surf lessons (per half-day incl board hire 100,000Rp) are offered at the northern end of the beach; just look out for the 'Surf here' banner spread between the palm trees. Pangandaran is a good place to learn, and local instructors have 'soft' boards ideal for beginners.

Pangandaran can have big seas, and drownings do occur – swimmers take care!

Tours

The top trip is to the Green Canyon (see p189), which costs around 70,000Rp (minimum four people). Guided walks through the national park (50,000Rp, five hours, minimum four people) are also offered. Contact **CV Sawargi** (☎ 639180; mponxz@yahoo.com; Jl Kidang Pananjung 123).

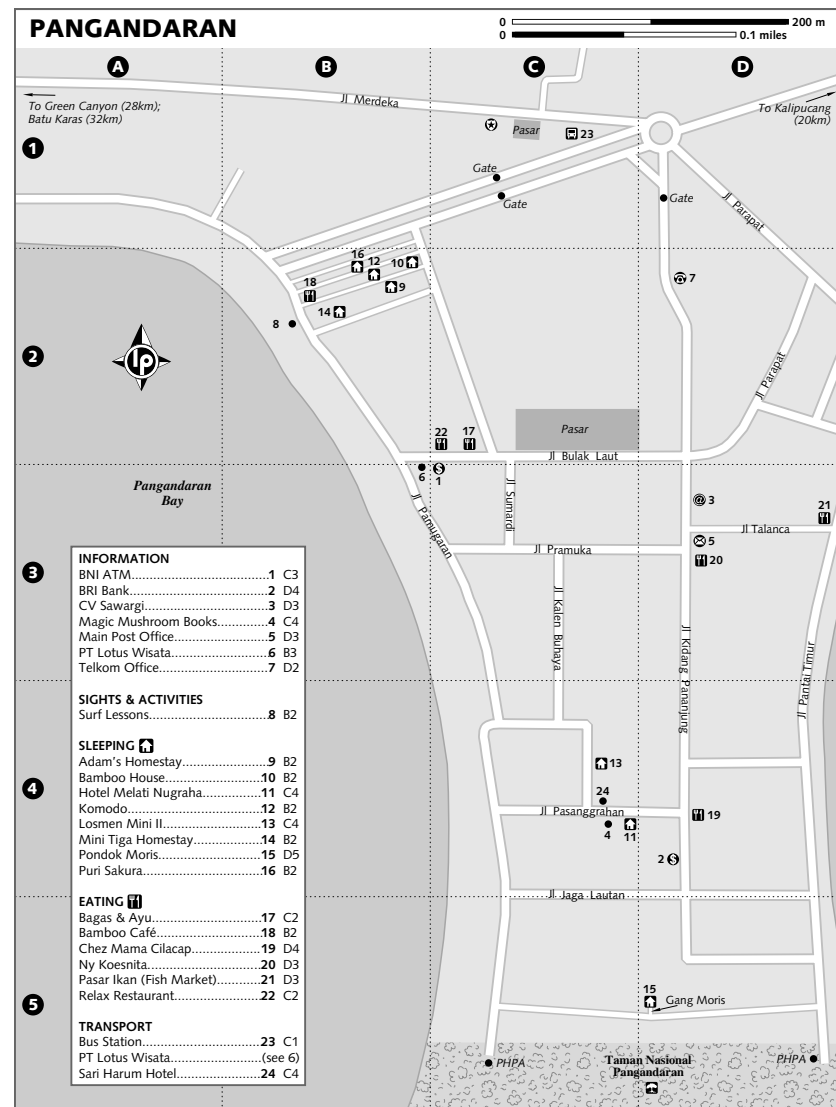
Sleeping

As Pangandaran has close to 100 hotels you should have no bother finding a bed, except during Christmas and Lebaran (the end of Ramadan) when half of Java seems to head here, and prices skyrocket.

The northern end of Jl Pamugaran, on the west beach, is the best place to start looking. All places include breakfast unless stated.

Hotel Melati Nugraha (☎ 639225; Jl Pasanggrahan 3; r35,000Rp) New place with a row of clean if bare rooms facing a grassy plot. Atmospheric? Not really, but it is great value.

our pick Mini Tiga Homestay (☎ 639436; katmaja95@yahoo.fr; s/d 50,000/65,000Rp) Very well-run, French-owned place with clean, bright rooms, well-scrubbed *mandi* (large concrete basin from which you scoop water to rinse your body and flush the squat toilet) and communal



areas decorated with artwork. Guests can slurp free tea and coffee all day long too.

Pondok Moris (☎ 639490; Gang Moris 3; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp) Within easy striking distance of the national park, this quirky six-roomed place has clean if slightly dark digs, each with a little porch and a *mandi*, all set off a little lane bursting with greenery. Pack your

ear plugs though, there's a mosque on your doorstep.

Bamboo House (☎ 639419; r 50,000-85,000Rp; ☎) First impressions aren't great here but once you get past the shabby lobby you'll see the rooms are in decent nick and good value, though the air-con options are a tad uninspiring décorwise.

Losmen Mini II (☎ 639298; Jl Kalen Buhaya 14; s 50,000-75,000Rp, d 65,000-100,000Rp; 🏠) An absolutely spotless guesthouse, quiet and homely, with neat rooms and beds with good-quality mattresses. Rooms on the upper deck enjoy more natural light and have balconies.

Adam's Homestay (☎ 639164; r from 125,000Rp; 🏠) Immaculate guesthouse, with spacious garden and fair-sized pool. All the rooms have character and atmosphere, many with balconies and beamed ceilings, though the very cheapest are small.

Other recommendations:

Puri Sakura (☎ 630552; r 50,000-85,000Rp; 🏠)

Spruce place with neat rooms around a courtyard.

Komodo (☎ 630753; Jl Bulak Laut 105; r 75,000-100,000Rp; 🏠) Friendly, family-owned place with spotless, if gaudy, large rooms.

Eating & Drinking

Bagas & Ayu (☎ 631712; Jl Bulak Laut 81; dishes from 5000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) Very clean and hospitable little *warung*, with a bargain-priced menu – *ayam goreng* (fried chicken) is 6000Rp.

Relax Restaurant (☎ 630377; Jl Bulak Laut 74; dishes 10,000-36,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Clean, orderly European-owned place with a slightly overpriced menu that takes in goulash, macaroni and some local grub. Try the wholemeal bread sandwiches.

Pasar Ikan (Fish Market; Komplek Pasar Ikan, Jl Talanca; mains 15,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) For seafood at its freshest, choose your catch here, pay by the weight and one of the *warung* will cook it as you like.

Bamboo Café (Jl Pamugaran; mains 15,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ramshackle beach-front bar that's home from home for Pangandaran's dwindling band of hard-drinking expats. Get used to hearing Bob Marley's *Legend* round the clock. Also serves meals.

Chez Mama Cilacap (☎ 639098; Jl Kidang Pananjung 187; mains 30,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Sporting the biggest sign in Pangandaran, this seafood specialist offers a mean selection of crab dishes under a wooden roof propped up by palm trees.

Also try **NY Koesnita** (☎ 630028; Jl Kidang Pananjung; mains 15,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) for authentic Sundanese and Padang dishes.

Getting There & Away

With tourist numbers down in Pangandaran, many transport options have ceased (including the regular ferry and boat connections

to Cilacap). Check the latest schedules with **PT Lotus Wisata** (☎ 639635; lotus_wisata@yahoo.com; Jl Bulak Laut). There are currently no flights to Pangandaran.

BOAT

Virtually no travellers are currently doing the once-popular backwater boat trip east of Pangandaran to Pamotan, but it can still be done. Involving a bus trip to Cilacap, and chartering a *compreng* (wooden boat) from there to Pamotan (allow 300,000Rp for this), it's a scenic route through rich swampland. PT Lotus Wisata can help in setting up the logistics and booking the boat. From Cilacap there are direct buses to Yogyakarta (46,000Rp, five hours) or Wonosobo (34,000Rp, four hours).

BUS

Local buses run from Pangandaran's bus station, just north of town, to Sidareja (15,000Rp, 1¼ hours) and Cijulang (9000Rp, one hour). Express buses also leave for Bandung (48,000Rp, six hours) and Jakarta's Kampung Rambutan terminal (88,000Rp, 8½ hours).

MINIBUS

Sari Harum door-to-door *travel* minibuses go to Bandung (70,000Rp, six hours) daily. Its office is in the **Sari Harum Hotel** (☎ 639276; Jl Pasanggrahan; 🍽 6am-10pm). Heading to Yogyakarta by road is quickest by a *travel* minibus (125,000Rp, eight hours); contact PT Lotus Wisata to arrange a trip.

TRAIN

To get to Yogyakarta by train you first need to get to Sidareja, from where there are train services to Yogya (*bisnis* class 50,000Rp); there's a fast train leaving Sidareja at noon which takes 3½ hours.

BATU KARAS

☎ 0265 / pop 2500

The one-lane fishing village of **Batu Karas** (admission 1500Rp), 32km from Pangandaran, is the perfect antidote to Java's teeming cities, with great swells and a slightly scruffy but very relaxed charm. Alongside the two fine beaches and a scattering of *warung*, there's a lot of surf talk. The locally run surf co-op here charges 80,000Rp per person per day for lessons, board hire is extra.

Most of Batu Karas dodged the 2006 tsunami that hit Java's south coast, though some places in the northern part of town suffered some damage.

Sleeping & Eating

Reef Hotel (☎ 0813 2034 0193; d 75,000-200,000Rp) This attractive place, right by one of the main surf breaks, was affected by the tsunami, but it's up and running again (apart from the pool). Rooms are large, and filling Indonesian and Western food is served (meals from 15,000Rp).

Java Cove (☎ 633683; www.javacovehotel.com; economy r 80,000Rp, luxury 290,000-450,000Rp; 🏠) An old concrete monster of a hotel that's been superbly renovated by its new Australian owners into something very special indeed. The gorgeous decked, beach-facing garden with its hip bar area looks as if it'd be far too flash for a backpacker's budget, but there are clean, plain economy rooms on the ground floor.

Other places to stay:

Alana's (Jl Legokpari; d with shared mandi 30,000Rp) Basic bamboo shacks.

Teratai (☎ 633681; r 80,000-120,000Rp) Welcoming family-owned place with accommodation scattered around a large grassy plot.

Kang Ayi Restaurant (☎ 633676; Jl Legokpari; mains 10,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The best of three *warung* near Java Cove hotel, serving fresh fish, Indonesian faves and some Western food including omelettes.

Getting There & Away

There are no buses to Batu Karas. To get here from Pangandaran take a bus to Cijulang (9000Rp, one hour) then a 3km ride in an *ojek* (4000Rp) over the bamboo bridge (toll 1000Rp).

AROUND BATU KARAS

About 6km inland from Batu Karas, pleasure boats run upriver to the **Green Canyon**, a lush river valley where you can swim in surging emerald currents and take a natural power shower under the streams that tumble into the gorge (don't look up!). Boats cost 70,000Rp, and run between 7.30am and 4pm. Day trips can be organised from Pangandaran (see p186) but it's easy enough to get here on a hired motorbike, as the route to the canyon is very well signposted.

WONOSOBO

☎ 0286 / pop 103,000

Wonosobo is the main gateway to the Dieng Plateau and has some reasonable budget accommodation; otherwise it's a forgettable agricultural centre.

The **BNI bank** (Jl A Yani) has an ATM and exchange facilities. There's also internet access at **Bina** (Jl Veteran 36, per hr 5000Rp; 🌐 24hr), and a centrally located **tourist office** (☎ 321194; Jl Kartini 3; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Fri).

Just south of the bus station, **Wisma Duta Homestay** (☎ 321674; Jl Rumah Sakit 3; r with shared/private mandi 50,000-250,000Rp) has very simple but tidy budget rooms and some swanky upmarket options.

Hotel Sri Kencono (☎ 321522; Jl A Yani 81; d from 50,000Rp; 🏠) is a good bet, with everything from no-frills fan rooms with shared *mandi* to air-con doubles with hot-water bathrooms (220,000Rp).

Popular with travellers, **Dieng Restaurant** (☎ 21266; Jl Mayjend Bambang; mains from 20,000Rp; 🕒 7am-9.30pm) has Indonesian, Chinese and Western grub served up buffet style. Tours of the plateau can be arranged too.

Wonosobo's bus station is 3km out of town on the Magelang road. From Yogyakarta, take a bus to Magelang (10,000Rp, one hour) and then another bus to Wonosobo (15,000Rp, two hours). **Rahayu Travel** (☎ 321217; Jl A Yani 95) has door-to-door minibuses to Yogyakarta (38,000Rp, three hours). Hotels can arrange pick-ups.

Frequent buses to Dieng (8000Rp, one hour) leave from Dieng terminal, 500m west of the town centre, throughout the day.

DIENG PLATEAU

☎ 0286

A startling contrast from the heat and fecundity of the lowlands, the plateau of Dieng (Abode of Gods) is another world: a wind-swept volcanic landscape of swirling clouds, green hills, mist and damp punctuated with ancient ruins.

Information

The small tourist info office near Losmen Bu Djono has extremely sporadic opening times.

BRI bank (🕒 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) Near Hotel Gunung Mas, changes US dollars (cash) at poor rates.

Kios Telephone Dian (🕒 8am-6pm) A *wartel* just before the Hotel Gunung Mas.

Sights & Activities

It costs 12,000Rp to visit the plateau and the main temples (Telaga Warna is an extra 7000Rp) and there's a small **ticket office** (☎ 8am-5:30pm) in the village which has a basic map of Dieng region.

On the swampy plain in front of Dieng village are the five Hindu temples of the **Arjuna Complex** that are thought to be the oldest in Java, dating back to AD 680. Though historically important, they are small, squat and visually not that impressive. **Candi Gatutkaca**, a temple to the south, has a small site **museum** (admission included in entrance ticket; ☎ 8am-4pm) containing statues and sculpture from the temples.

The plateau's natural attractions and remote allure are the main reasons to visit. From the village, you can do a two-hour loop walk that takes in the turquoise lake of **Telaga Warna** and **Kawah Sikidang**, a volcanic crater with steaming vents and frantically bubbling mud pools. You can see all the main sights, including the temples, on foot in a morning or afternoon, though to really explore the plateau and its crater lakes, allow a couple of days.

The walk to **Sembungan** village (2300m) to see the sunrise is heavily touted by the guesthouses, though having to pay to get up at 3.30am is a dubious privilege (particularly on cloudy mornings). All the guesthouses can arrange **guides** (per person 40,000Rp) and hire out warm clothing.

Sleeping & Eating

Arctic-cold *mandi* are the norm unless stated.

Hotel Asri (☎ 642034; r with shared mandi 30,000-40,000Rp) As cheap as chips, but very basic. It's 200m south of the bus stop for Wonosobo.

Losmen Bu Djono (☎ 642046; Jl Raya, Km 27; r 30,000-40,000Rp, with hot water 70,000-80,000Rp) Friendly place with good info if slightly shabby digs, though there is reliable hot water and a café that sells Bintang.

Dieng Plateau Homestay (Jl Raya, Km 27; r 50,000Rp) Rooms here are homey enough and there's food available.

Hotel Gunung Mas (☎ 592417; Jl Raya, Km 27.5; r 80,000, with hot water 100,000Rp) The most 'upmarket' hotel in town, but it's overpriced considering the sparse rooms.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses (8000Rp, one hour) run between Dieng and Wonosobo throughout the day.

YOGYAKARTA

☎ 0274 / pop 669,000

A hotbed of Javanese intellectual and political thought, and boasting an incredibly rich artistic and cultural heritage, Yogya is one of the nation's most enjoyable and cosmopolitan cities. Architecturally, much of its historic core remains intact – despite some damage inflicted by the 2006 earthquake – and though traffic woes and pollution levels are worsening, it remains a highly rewarding destination for travellers.

Still headed by its sultan, whose *kraton* remains the focus of traditional life, modern Yogya is as much a city of batik, *gamelan* and ritual, as *macet*, chic cafés and internet junkies. It's also a terrific place to shop, with bargains galore at perhaps Java's premier market, and dozens of stores selling everything from antique textiles to tie-dyed sarongs.

With the puffing summit of volcanic Gunung Merapi on one flank, the ancient ruins of Borobudur on the other and the crashing waves of the Indian Ocean to the south, Yogyakarta is a vital pit stop on any Indonesian itinerary.

Orientation

Jl Malioboro is the main drag, running south from the train station to become Jl A Yani at its southern end (where you'll find the *kraton*). It's lined with stores, and you'll find the main budget accommodation enclave of Sosrowijayan just off it. A second hotel and restaurant district lies to the south around Jl Prawirotaman.

Information

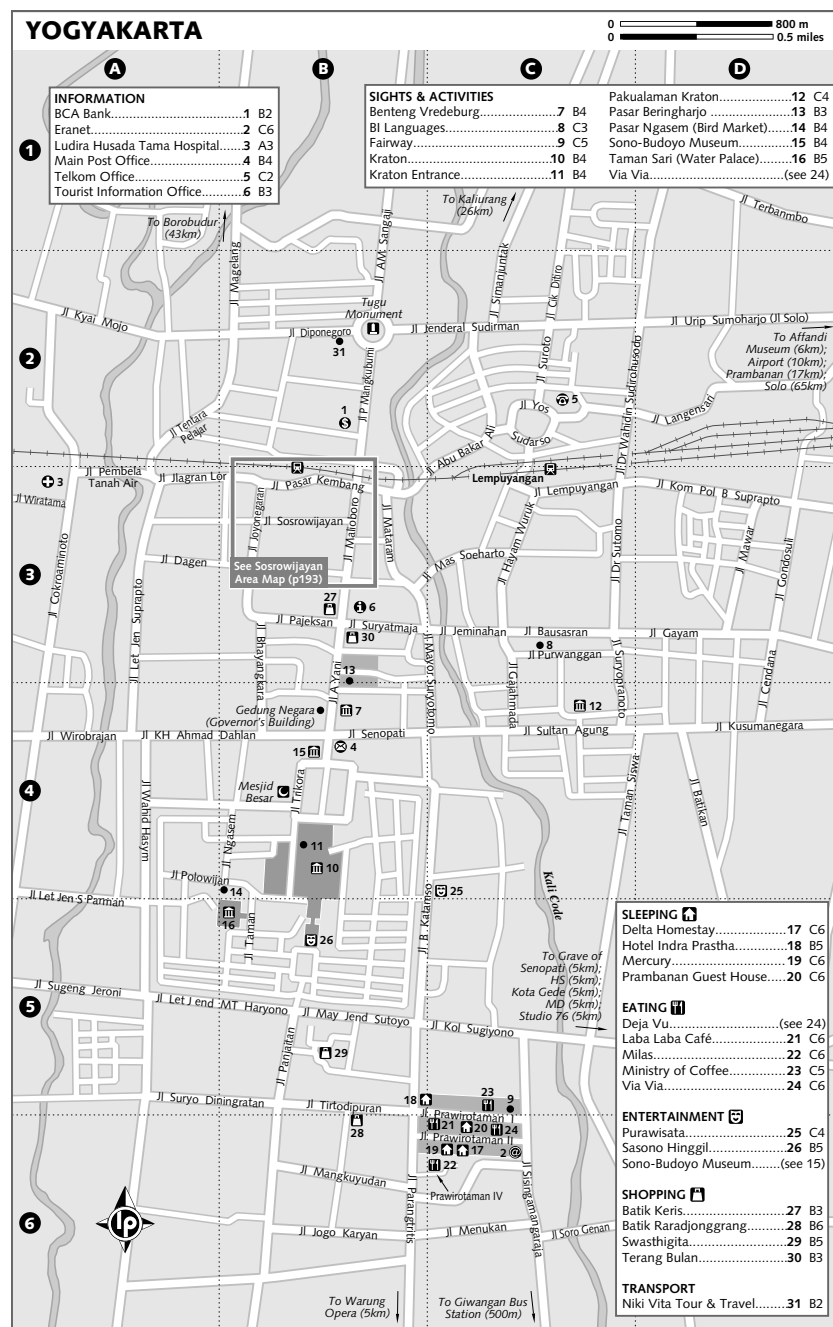
BOOKSHOPS

Lucky Boomerang (Map p193; ☎ 895006; Gang 1-67; ☎ 8am-9pm) Stocks Peripus maps, guidebooks, fiction and souvenirs.

Rama Bookshop (Map p193; ☎ 0818 0274 7533; off Jl Sosrowijayan; ☎ 9am-7pm) Stocks a small selection of fiction.

GETTING INTO TOWN

Prepaid taxis from a booth at the airport to Yogya, 10km away, cost 35,000Rp. From the main road, only 200m from the terminal, you can get a *colt* into the centre (3000Rp).



neighbourhood of narrow *gang* (alleyways), lined with backpacker-gear accommodation, eateries, laundries and the like.

Dewi Homestay (Map p193; ☎ 516014; dewihomestay@hotmail.com; s/d 45,000/50,000Rp) Highly atmospheric converted house, replete with mosaic-tiled hallways and a leafy front garden. The rooms, though many have four-poster beds, are a tad dark.

our pick Losmen Setia Kawan (Map p193; ☎ 512452; www.bedhots.com; Gang II 58; s 50,000-80,000, d 60,000-100,000Rp; 🍴) The first choice for travellers in this area, this very well-run and kept place has atmosphere in abundance, with lovely old floor tiles, magazines to read and free tea and coffee. Prepare yourself for walls covered in hippy-dippy Roger Dean-style psychedelic murals, though. You should book ahead.

Bladok Losmen & Restaurant (Map p193; ☎ 560452; Jl Sosrowijayan 76; s/d from 70,000/80,000Rp; 🍴) Elegant, classy little hotel of real character and charm with three floors of immaculate rooms, all with hand-carved wooden beds, fan and bathroom. Pot plants adorn every corridor and there's a heat-busting pool, but no breakfast. Rooms 11 and 12 have balconies with city views.

Gloria Amanda (Map p193; ☎ 565286; Jl Sosrowijayan 195; r 80,000-175,000Rp; 🍴) New hotel just off the main drag with 35 very neat, orderly though smallish rooms with good beds and TV.

The best no-frills places (none include breakfast):

Jaya Losmen (Map p193; ☎ 515035; Gang II 79; s/d with shared mandi 25,000/30,000Rp) Simple, clean, well-swept rooms; a restaurant is planned downstairs.

Losmen Anda (Map p193; ☎ 512452; Gang II; s/d 25,000/30,000Rp) Very cheap and very basic.

Nuri Losmen (Map p193; ☎ 543654; d with shared/private mandi 25,000/30,000Rp) Bare rooms but there's a communal balcony for people-watching.

Losmen Lucy (Map p193; ☎ 513429; Jl Sosrowijayan GT 1; s/d 30,000/35,000Rp) A pad to crash.

JL PRAWIROTAMAN AREA

This area used to be the centre for midrange hotels in Yogya, but many have slashed their prices in recent years and there are bargains to be had.

Hotel Indra Prastha (Map p191; ☎ 374086; Jl Prawirotaman I 169; d 60,000Rp) A good deal, this quiet place has two rows of very neat, spacious rooms that face a pleasant central garden. It's down a little lane.

Mercury (Map p191; ☎ 370846; Jl Prawirotaman II 595; s/d 60,000/80,000Rp) Bizarre-looking place with an ostentatious *kraton*-style reception hall where you can swan around like a sultan at breakfast time, though you'll have to retire at night to a plain, almost featureless bedroom.

our pick Delta Homestay (Map p191; ☎ 372064; Jl Prawirotaman II 597A; d with shared/private mandi from 75,000/90,000Rp; 🍴) The lovely pool area is this place's trump card, but rooms are very decent too, if small, with stylish wooden beds and the odd artistic touch; all but the cheapest have hot water.

Prambanan Guest House (Map p191; ☎ 376167; Jl Prawirotaman I No 14; r 80,000-140,000Rp; 🍴) Set off the road, this deservedly popular place has fine rooms, with *ikat*-style bedspreads (cloth in which a pattern is produced by dyeing individual threads before the weaving process), that look out over a peaceful garden and pool. Staff are switched on here and can organise transport and tours.

Eating & Drinking

Try to taste some of the local specialities; see opposite.

SOSROWIJAYAN AREA

You'll find plenty of Western-gear menus in this area, but check out the *warung* by Tugu train station for cheap, authentic local grub.

Atap (Map p193; ☎ 0856 4318 2004; www.atap.8m.com; Jl Sosrowijayan GT 1/113; dishes from 10,000Rp; 🍴 dinner) Very quirky, intimate little joint, rich on atmosphere and *kretek* (clove cigarette) smoke, with rickety wooden chairs, and tables made from car tyres. Check out the upper open terrace and the *kopi osama*, a special coffee that contains a healthy slug of brandy – the bearded one would not approve.

Bintang Café (Map p193; ☎ 374566; Jl Sosrowijayan 54; mains 15,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The formula is beginning to look a bit weary, but for now this age-old backpacker favourite still stumbles on regardless with a happy hour (1pm to 8pm), live covers bands and a menu of standard traveller-oriented fodder.

Bladok Restaurant (Map p193; ☎ 560452; Jl Sosrowijayan 76; mains 25,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) With Alpine-style dark-wood décor, this is the place to come for Western dishes – it's renowned for its schnitzel.

Other recommendations:

RM Surya Masakan Padang (Map p193; ☎ 749 2039; Jl Pasar Kembang 55; mains 10,000Rp; 🍴 24hr) Reliable

chilli-rich Padang food in authentic (read net curtains and tiled floors) surrounds.

Bedhot (Map p193; ☎ 512452; Gang II; mains 18,000-27,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Reliable, if overpriced, backpacker eats in clichéd backpacker surrounds, complete with swirling psychedelic murals.

JL PRAWIROTAMAN AREA

our pick Via Via (Map p191; ☎ 386557; www.viavia.cafe.com; Jl Prawirotaman I 30; mains 12,000-25,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This happening place gets everything right. The modernist concrete building, with an open-air upper area and greenery to screen you from the road, is superb and the (all) female staff are efficient, friendly and helpful. Plenty of thought has gone into the menu: feast on well-presented and executed local dishes, Western treats and daily specials. There are always vegetarian selections and wine by the glass. You'll also find magazines to browse and information boards. Via Via offers a number of trips and courses too, see p193.

Milas (Map p191; ☎ 742 3399; Jl Prawirotaman IV 127; meals 20,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Down a quiet side road, this project centre for street youth has a vegetarian restaurant set in a spacious garden and a menu of healthy snacks, sandwiches, salads and organic coffee.

Ministry of Coffee (Map p191; ☎ 747 3828; www.ministryofcoffee.com; Jl Prawirotaman I 15A; mains 25,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Occupies a striking modern structure, with a library (with English-language books and periodicals) upstairs and a café below. It's a great place for a Java hit (espresso and cappuccino are available) but the food (mainly sandwiches, and cakes) is only so-so.

Other recommendations:

Deja Vu (Map p191; ☎ 782 2844; Jl Prawirotaman 28; mains from 15,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner)

YOGYA SPECIALITIES

Yogya has a rich culinary tradition and many dishes are unique to the region. To try many of these you'll have to head into the market areas, where some stallholders have been churning out a particular speciality for decades. *Gudeg* is young jackfruit served in a spicy coconut sauce, served with a little tempeh (or chicken), egg, and sweetened with palm sugar. Look out too for *nasi brongkos*, a dark bean and tofu stew served with small chunks of meat, rice and *krupuk* (prawn crackers).

Yogya-style espresso is *kopi jos*, a cup of potent coarsely ground Java coffee that's dunked with a few pieces of glowing charcoal – try it at the stalls around Tugu train station. *Teh poci* (traditional tea served with unprocessed sugar in a clay pot) is best sampled from the *warung* in front of the Pakualaman Kraton.

Stylish place ideal for a sandwich or a *nasi goreng*. Daily specials are on the blackboard.

Laba Laba Café (Map p191; ☎ 374921; Jl Prawirotaman I 2; mains 20,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Bar-eatery with cheapish Western and local nosh. Not a gar bar, but popular with gays.

OTHER AREAS

Warung Opera (off Map p191; ☎ 718 1977; Jl Parangtritis, Km 6.3; dishes 5500-13,000Rp; 🍴 dinner) On the road to the beach, about 5km south of Prawirotaman, Warung Opera is a wonderfully flamboyant-looking restaurant scattered with antique furniture and chandeliers but with an extremely moderately priced, creative menu of Indonesian dishes and Yogya specialities. Donny, your host, can also read your fortune from the residue of your *kopi java*.

Entertainment

Dance, *wayang* or *gamelan* are performed most mornings at the *kraton* (admission free). Check with the tourist office for current listings.

DANCE

Most dance performances are based on the Ramayana. The spectacular Ramayana ballet held in the open air at Prambanan in the dry season (see p197) is the one to catch if you can.

Purawisata (Map p191; ☎ 380644; Jl B Katamso; tickets 100,000Rp, with dinner 175,000Rp) Stages the Ramayana daily at 8pm.

PUPPET PERFORMANCES

Wayang kulit performances can be seen at several places around Yogya every night of the week.

Sasono Hinggil (Map p191; tickets 20,000Rp) Marathon all-night performances are held every second Saturday from 9pm to 5am in the *alun*

alun selatan (south main square) of the *kraton*. Bring a pillow.

Sono-Budoyo Museum (Map p191; ☎ 376775; Jl Trikora 6; tickets 3000Rp) Near the *kraton*, the museum has performances nightly from 8pm to 10pm.

Wayang golek plays are also performed frequently; check listings at the tourist information office.

Shopping

Yogya is a great place to shop for crafts and artefacts; try the Beringharjo market first for bargains, or the Prawirotaman area which has several fine antique stores.

Jl Malioboro is one great, long, throbbing bazaar of souvenir shops and stalls selling cheap cotton clothes, leatherwork, batik bags, *topeng* masks and *wayang golek* puppets.

BATIK

Have a good look around first before you buy, as quality is very variable. Batik in the markets, especially Pasar Beringharjo, is cheaper than in the shops, but toughen up your bargaining skills first. The best quality is *batik tulis* (hand-drawn batik), which has incredibly intricate detailing, with the designs created by using wax to 'resist' the multiple dyeing processes. It's much less bother to use a *cap* (metal stamp) to form patterns, and most of the textiles you'll be offered are made using this method. *Batik cap* is much duller on the reverse side.

Good fixed-price places to try:

Batik Keris (Map p191; ☎ 557893; Jl Malioboro 21;

☎ 9am-9pm)

Terang Bulan (Map p191; ☎ 588522; Jl A Yani 108;

☎ 9am-8pm)

Most of the batik workshops and several large showrooms are along Jl Tirtodipuran, south of the *kraton*. These places cater to tour groups so prices are very high. **Batik Raradjonggrang** (Map p191; ☎ 375209; Jl Tirtodipuran 6A; ☎ 8am-7pm) gives free guided tours of its factory.

LEATHERWORK

Yogya's leatherwork can be excellent value for money; shops and stalls on Jl Malioboro are the best places to look.

Swasthigita (Map p191; ☎ 378346; Ngadinegaran MJ 3/122; ☎ 9am-4pm) Just north of Jl Tirtodipuran,

this is a large *wayang kulit* puppet manufacturer.

SILVERWORK

Head to the silver village of Kota Gede for the best prices and to see the silversmiths at work – or even make your own (see p193). In Yogya, Jl Kemesan and Jl Mondorakan have some good buys.

HS (Jl Mandarokan I, Kota Gede) Has a good selection of jewellery, but bargain hard.

MD (☎ 375063; Jl Pesegah KG 8/44, Kota Gede) Down a small alley; good discounts can be negotiated here.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Garuda (☎ 0807 142 7842; www.garuda-indonesia.com) has twice-daily flights to Jakarta (from 252,000Rp), a daily flight to Denpasar (308,000Rp) and flights to Balikpapan and Kuala Lumpur.

Lion Air and its subsidiary **Wings Air** (☎ 555028; www.lionair.co.id) operate daily flights to Jakarta (149,000Rp to 246,000Rp), Denpasar (199,000Rp) and Surabaya (from 110,000Rp).

Mandala (☎ 520602; www.mandalaair.com) has daily flights, including to Jakarta (188,000Rp), Balikpapan and Banjarmasin (both 325,000Rp).

BUS

Yogyakarta's **Giwangan bus station** (☎ 410015; Jl Imogiri) is 5km southeast of the city centre, on the ring road.

Economy/air-con bus services include Semarang (19,000/27,000Rp, 3½ hours), Bandung (70,000/92,000Rp, 10 hours), Surabaya (62,000/80,000Rp, eight hours), Probolinggo (68,000/90,000Rp, nine hours), Solo (12,000/18,000Rp, two hours), and Denpasar (from 170,000Rp, 16 hours). Services to Jakarta (12 hours) cost from 90,000Rp depending on the quality of the bus.

Buses also operate regularly to towns in the immediate area, including Borobudur (11,000Rp, 1½ hours) and Kaliurang (6000Rp, one hour).

If you're travelling long distance, tickets for the luxury buses can be bought at the bus station but it's far less hassle to check fares and departures with the ticket agencies along Jl Sosrowijayan and Jl Prawirotaman. These agencies can also arrange pick-up from your hotel.

Local bus 4 leaves from Jl Malioboro (2000Rp) for Giwangan.

MINIBUS

Door-to-door *travel* service all major cities from Yogyakarta, including Surabaya (110,000Rp, eight hours), Jakarta (195,000Rp, 12 hours), Denpasar (200,000Rp, 15 hours), Gunung Bromo (150,000Rp, 10 hours) and Pangandaran (125,000Rp, eight hours). Most *travel* will pick you up from your hotel. Hotels and travel agencies can arrange tickets for the minibuses, or you can book directly through **Niki Vita Tour & Travel** (Map p191; ☎ 561884; Jl Diponegoro 25).

TRAIN

Yogya's main **Tugu station** (☎ 512870) is conveniently central, although some *ekonomi* trains run to/from the Lempuyangan station 1km further east.

For journeys to Jakarta, the smart *Argo Lawu* (210,000Rp, eight hours) and decent but slower *Taksaka* (160,000Rp, nine hours) are both scheduled to leave at 9am. *Argo Dwipanggaa* (180,000Rp, nine hours) departs at 9pm.

For Solo, the best option is the *Prameks* (*bisnis* 7000Rp, one hour) departing from Tugu at 6.50am, 9.45am, 1pm, 4.10pm and 6.52pm.

To Surabaya, *Sancaka* leaves at 7.30am and 4pm (*bisnis* 70,000Rp, 5½ hours), while for Bandung the *Lodaya* (*eksekutif/bisnis* 155,000/90,000Rp, eight hours) leaves at 10.05am and again at 9.20pm, or the *Argo Wilis* (155,000Rp, six hours) leaves at 12.15pm.

For details of all times and prices, visit www.infoka.kereta-api.com.

Getting Around

BUS

Bis kota (city buses) operate on set routes around the city for a flat 2000Rp fare.

LOCAL TRANSPORT

Bicycles (12,000Rp per day) and motorcycles (25,000Rp) can be hired from travel agents and hotels. Furious bargaining is required with local becak drivers – count on 5000Rp for a short trip.

TAXI

Metered taxis are readily available in Yogyakarta at 4500Rp for the first kilometre and 2500Rp for subsequent kilometres; try **JAS Taxi** (☎ 373737).

PRAMBANAN

The grandest and most evocative Hindu temple complex in Java, **Prambanan** (☎ 0274-496435; admission US\$10; ☎ 6am-6pm, last admission 5.15pm) features some 50 temple sites. Many of these were damaged by the large earthquake that struck the region in 2006, and the main temples were off limits at the time of research, though the authorities hope to reopen (most) of the site by the time you read this. Nevertheless, the temples still look stunning from a distance, and Prambanan is definitely still worth a visit. The main temples face Prambanan village on the highway, while others are scattered across the surrounding fields. Prambanan is 17km east of Yogya on the Solo road.

The **Shiva temple** is the largest and most lavish, towering 47 dizzy metres above the valley and decorated with an entire pantheon of carved deities. The statue of Shiva stands in the central chamber and statues of the goddess Durga, Shiva's elephant-headed son Ganesha and Agastya the teacher stand in the other chapels of the upper part of the temple. The Shiva temple is flanked by the **Vishnu** and **Brahma temples**, the latter carrying further scenes from the Ramayana. In the small central temple, opposite the Shiva temple, stands a statue of the bull Nandi, Shiva's mount.

Built in the 9th century AD, the complex at Prambanan was mysteriously abandoned soon after its completion. Many of the temples had collapsed by the 19th century and only in 1937 was any form of reconstruction attempted.

The spectacular **Ramayana ballets** performed here have been suspended in the aftermath of the earthquake. If they've resumed they are well worth attending, with a cast of hundreds performing in front of a floodlit Shiva temple; check with the Yogya tourist information office.

From Yogya, take a bus (3500Rp, 30 minutes) from Giwangan bus station; Solo-bound buses also stop here. A motorbike or bicycle is a good way to explore all the temples in the area via the back roads; Via Via (p195) organises good half-day trips for 100,000Rp per person including guide/motorbike chauffer.

BOROBUDUR

☎ 0293

Ranking with Bagan and Angkor Wat as one of the great Southeast Asian monuments, **Borobudur** (☎ 788266; www.borobudurpark.com;

admission 99,000Rp; ☎ 6am-5.30pm) is a stunning and poignant epitaph to Java's Buddhist heyday.

The temple, 42km northwest of Yogya, consists of six square bases topped by three circular ones, and it was constructed at roughly the same time as Prambanan in the early part of the 9th century AD. With the decline of Buddhism, Borobudur was abandoned, covered in volcanic ash by an eruption in 1006, and only rediscovered in 1814 when Raffles governed Java.

Nearly 1500 narrative relief panels on the terraces illustrate Buddhist teachings and tales, while 432 Buddha images sit in chambers on the terraces. On the upper circular terraces there are latticed stupas, which contain 72 more Buddha images.

Borobudur is best witnessed at sunrise, when morning mist hangs over the lush surrounding valley and distant hills. By 7am, the hordes have arrived: it's a very popular school trip for students, so expect requests for pictures from giggling teenagers.

Unfortunately the two site **museums** (entrance included in ticket price) have little information in English, but check out the 16m wooden out-rigger, a replica of a boat depicted in one of Borobudur's panels. This boat was sailed to Africa in 2003, a voyage retracing Javanese trading links, the original spice trade, with the continent over a thousand years ago. Around 750m southeast of the main monument, a new **monastery** is being constructed by Indonesian Buddhists.

The **Mendut Temple** (admission free), 3.5km east of Borobudur, has a magnificent 3m-high statue of Buddha seated with two disciples. It has been suggested that this image was originally intended to top Borobudur but proved impossible to raise to the summit. Your tour bus from Yogya will stop here if you ask, otherwise a bemo is 1500Rp.

Knowledgeable guides for Borobudur can be hired (50,000Rp) at the ticket office.

Sleeping & Eating

There are plenty of cheap *warung* around the site's exit.

Lotus II (☎ 788845; Jl Balaputradewa 54; r 110,000Rp) Offers spacious, stylish rooms with quality beds and mosquito nets, plus great rice-paddy views from the balcony.

Also recommended:

Pondok Tingal Hostel (☎ 788245; Jl Badrawati; dm 15,000Rp, r from 80,000Rp; 📶) Ultracheap dorms, good

rooms, a restaurant and a leafy garden; 1km east of the site.

Hotel Bhumisambhara (☎ 788205; Jl Badrawati; r 50,000-60,000Rp) Quiet and homely, on the eastern side of the temple complex.

Lotus Guest House (☎ 788281; Jl Medang Kamulan 2; s/d 65,000/85,000Rp) Old-timer that's seen better days, but run by friendly folk.

Getting There & Away

Most travellers get to Borobudur on a tour, which costs around 50,000Rp per person and includes door-to-door pick-up/drop off at about 4am/noon; all the Yogya hotels can book this for you. To do the trip yourself, direct buses leave Yogya's Giwangan terminal (11,000Rp, 1½ hours). Or from the Sosrowijayan area, flag down a northbound bus 5 on the corner of Jl Sosrowijayan and Jl Joyonegaran, which will take you to Jombor (2000Rp, 20 minutes), where you can get a Borobudur bus (7000Rp, 50 minutes). The last bus back from Borobudur leaves around 6pm.

KALIURANG & GUNUNG MERAPI

☎ 0274

On the flanks of Gunung Merapi, Kaliurang is a pleasant mountain resort, with crisp air and some spectacular views of one of Java's most boisterous volcanoes. It is 26km north of Yogya.

Gunung Merapi (Mountain of Fire) is Indonesia's most active volcano and has been in a near-constant state of eruption for hundreds of years. People living on its conical flanks are regularly killed by pyroclastic flows, and in 2006 28,000 villagers had to be evacuated after intense seismic activity. It's extremely unlikely anyone will be allowed anywhere near its summit in the near future, though you get a spectacular view from the viewing point of Kali Aden.

In Kaliurang, the owner of **Vogels Hostel** (☎ 895208; Jl Astamulya 76; dm 12,000Rp, r 30,000-100,000Rp), Christian Awuy, has been conducting tours of Merapi for two decades, and while little at the hotel has changed in that time it remains Kaliurang's best budget option, with excellent info and filling grub. Otherwise **Christian Hostel** (r 40,000Rp) is very spartan, while **Hotel Satriafi** (☎ 895128; Jl Kesehatan 193; r from 80,000Rp) is a bit more comfortable.

Buses to Kaliurang (6000Rp, one hour) run regularly from Yogya's Giwangan terminal. To get to Kali Aden yourself, get off at the

Kalurang Hill Resort, then catch one of the waiting *ojek* (8000Rp) from there for a view of the action, lava and gas. Tour agencies in Yogya can also arrange Merapi-viewing trips, which are best at night.

SOLO

☎ 0271 / pop 560,000

Perhaps the least Westernised city in Java, Solo (also known as Sala and Surakarta) has long rivalled Yogyakarta as a centre of Javanese culture and identity. Briefly rising to prominence as the capital of the Mataram empire, Solo is known today for its *wayang*, dance and music, *kraton*, crumbling back alleys and a thriving arts scene, minus the tourist hordes of Yogyakarta.

Solo's culture is undeniably rich, and it makes a fascinating place to visit, but it also has a reputation throughout Indonesia as being a base for radicals and political firebrands. Terrible riots engulfed the city in 1998, when Chinese-owned businesses were torched, and anti-Western protests are not uncommon. Many Jemaah Islamiya (JI) members attend the city's Pesantren Ngruki *madrasah*. That said, most citizens are extremely hospitable and welcome visitors, but it's best to bear in mind that this is a conservative city, with a volatile temperament.

Orientation

Solo's main street is Jl Slamet Riyadi, running east-west through the centre of the city, with most budget accommodation conveniently clustered just off it around Jl Yos Sudarso and Jl Ahmad Dahlan. The oldest part of Solo is east of here around the Kraton Surakarta and Pasar Klewer.

Solo's train station is about 2km north of the city centre, the main Tirtonadi bus terminal about 1.5km north again.

Information

BCA bank (cnr Jl Dr Rajiman & Jl Gatot Subroto) Has ATM and currency-exchange facilities.

BumiNet (Jl Ahmad Dahlan 39; per hr 4000Rp;

☎ 11am-2am) Huge place with dozens of internet-wired PCs.

Main post office (Jl Jen Sudirman; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat)

Rumah Sakit Panti Kosala (Jl Slamet Riyadi; ☎ 24hr) Hospital with English-speaking doctors.

Telkom office (Jl Mayor Kusmanto; ☎ 7am-8pm) Also has internet access.

Tourist office (☎ 711435; Jl Slamet Riyadi 275; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) The helpfulness of this office very much depends on who you speak to (ask for Patrick Orlando). Can provide listings of cultural events, but also drop by the Istana Griya guesthouse for a brilliant map and information.

Sights & Activities

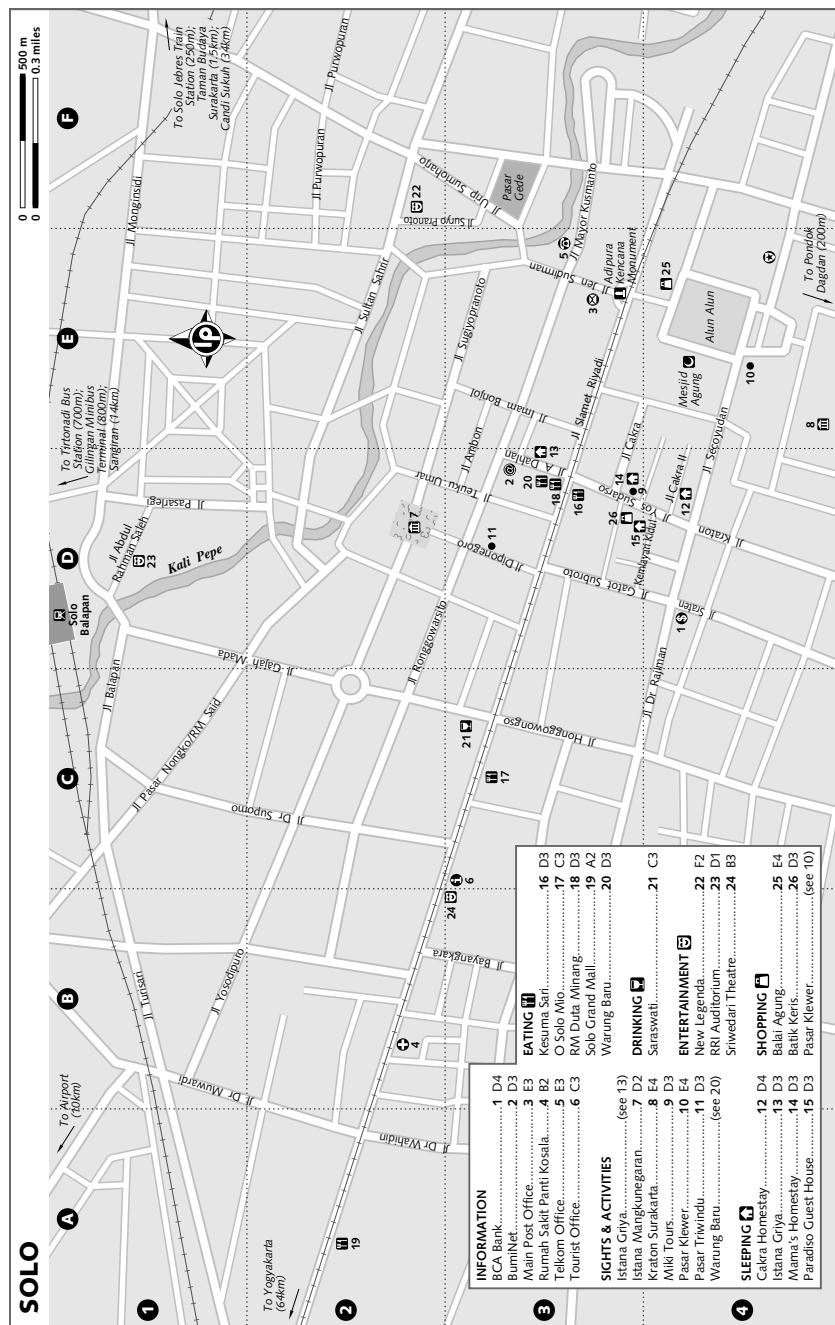
The once-mighty **Kraton Surakarta** (☎ 656432; admission 8000Rp; ☎ 9am-2pm Tue-Thu, to 2pm Sat & Sun) dates back to 1745, when it was first opened as Susuhunan of Mataram, Pakubuwono II's royal home. Unfortunately much of its splendour was lost in a 1985 fire, which gutted much of the place including the *pendopo*, and most of the compound is off limits to visitors. Nevertheless, some fine silver and bronze Hindu-Javanese figures remain alongside dusty Javanese weapons, parasols and what must qualify as a near-definitive horse carriage collection. Presentation could be so much better, however, and labelling is poor or nonexistent. The distinctive pagoda-like tower, Pangung Songgo Buwono, built in 1782, is original and is used for meditation.

Children's **dance practice** can be seen here on Sunday from 10am to noon and adult practice from 1pm to 3pm.

Istana Mangkunegaran (☎ 644946; Jl Ronggowarsito; admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Sun) is a rival palace founded in 1757 by a dissident prince, Raden Mas Said. The weathered main structure itself, built in Javanese-European style with an extended front canopy, is in urgent need of restoration, but the museum rooms at the rear have some fascinating curios, including a diminutive gold genital cover, a tremendous mask collection and wonderfully gaudy dining room complete with lashings of gild and a mirrored ceiling. One of Java's finest *gamelan* orchestras is based here.

Guided tours (a 12,000Rp donation is acceptable) are much less hurried and more informative than at Kraton Surakarta. Try to time your visit to coincide with **dance practice** (10am to 12.30pm Wednesday and Sunday) or Javanese singing (10am to noon Tuesday).

Solo's markets are always worth a browse, especially **Pasar Klewer** (Jl Secoyudan; ☎ 8am-6pm), the multistorey batik market, and **Pasar Triwindu** (Jl Diponegoro; ☎ 8am-5pm), the flea market, which always turns up something of interest.



Festivals & Events

The **Solo dance festival** is held in late April. There are traditional and modern Javanese dance performances, and film screenings.

Courses

Solo is renowned as a centre for traditional Javanese religion and mysticism, but few travellers now come here to participate; speak to the tourist office about schools offering meditation classes. Batik courses (one day, 70,000Rp) are also popular; contact the restaurant **Warung Baru** (☎ 656369; Jl Ahmad Dahlan 23) for further information.

Tours

Several places, including the hotel **Istana Griya** (☎ 632667; istanagriya@yahoo.com; Jl Ahmad Dahlan 22), **Miki Tours** (☎ 653278; Jl Yos Sudarso 17) and **Warung Baru** (☎ 656369; Jl Ahmad Dahlan 23), organise excellent trips around Solo by bicycle (around 70,000Rp) or motorbike (100,000Rp to 150,000Rp) to the sights of the region, including tea plantations, batik workshops and *gamelan* factories. Trips beyond the city to Candi Sukuh (120,000Rp) and Gunung Merapi can also be arranged.

Sleeping

Solo has some great budget hotels.

Paradiso Guest House (☎ 652960; Kemlayan Kidul 1; d incl breakfast 37,000-66,000Rp) Occupying a superb, ornate whitewashed city mansion, this inexpensive, quiet, likable place has corridors strewn with pot plants and artistic touches including Venetian mirrors. The rooms are well kept and airy.

our pick **Istana Griya** (☎ 632667; istanagriya@yahoo.com; Jl Ahmad Dahlan 22; r 50,000-200,000Rp; 🏠) Extremely well-run place where every effort is directed at making the traveller at home and highly informed about the city. Rudi, the switched-on owner, understands his backpacking clientele well, organises superb tours and ensures the wide selection of rooms are all absolutely spotless. Guests can socialise in the little terrace, and slurp on free tea and coffee, and everyone's provided with a map dotted with good restaurant and sightseeing recommendations.

Cakra Homestay (☎ 634743; Jl Cakra II/15; d with shared/private mandi from 60,000/75,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) Tucked away down an anonymous backstreet, this enigmatic and historic hotel scores top marks for its architecture, tranquil location

and lovely pool area. If only a little more love and affection was devoted to the plain, if clean, rooms it really would be a gem.

Also recommended:

Pondok Dagdan (☎ 669324; Jl Carangan Baluarti 42; s/d with shared mandi 25,000/35,000Rp) Simple bamboo rooms in a quiet garden south of the centre.

Mama's Homestay (☎ 662466; Jl Cakra 33; s/d with shared mandi 35,000/45,000Rp) The hospitable family here rents out three bare rooms in their home.

Eating

Solo's street food is varied and can be wonderful. Roaming *kaki lima* (mobile food stall) hawkers pack the streets at night advertising their wares by screeching, striking buffalo bells or clattering cutlery. Certain areas are synonymous with specific dishes: to try *nasi gudeg* (young jackfruit served with sweet coconut sauce, rice and chicken) head to the lanes around Pasar Triwindu. For Solo-style satay the stalls on the south side of Jl Slamet Riyadi where it meets Jl Yos Sudarso excel.

Kesuma Sari (☎ 656406; Jl Slamet Riyadi 111; mains 7000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Very popular, inexpensive place that offers a fair attempt at Indo-style Western dishes including steaks and chicken Maryland.

Warung Baru (☎ 656369; Jl Ahmad Dahlan 23; mains 12,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Solo's original travellers' scoff stop has fallen on hard times as fewer folk traverse Java, but it still bakes good bread even if the cooking's pretty average. Tours can be organised here.

O Solo Mio (☎ 727264; Jl Slamet Riyadi 253; mains 35,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) If you can't be bothered climbing Gunung Merapi, you can instead eat a pizza here that has been cooked on a slab of stone from the mountain. The décor oozes Mediterranean pizzazz and there's a little yard out back for alfresco dining.

Other recommendations:

Solo Grand Mall (Jl Slamet Riyadi; dishes from 8000Rp 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) About 2km west of the centre, this mall has an inexpensive, diverse food court.

RM Duta Minang (☎ 648440; Jl Slamet Riyadi 66; meals 9000Rp; 🍴 24hr) Serving up Padang's finest around the clock.

Drinking

A pub crawl is not on the agenda here. Solo's few bars are attached to expensive hotels.

Saraswati (Novotel, Jl Slamet Riyadi 272; 🍴 6pm-late) This smart hotel bar attracts a hip crowd, including a gay contingent at weekends.

Clubbing

This isn't Ibiza – club action is limited.

New Legenda (Jl Suryo Pranoto; admission 25,000Rp; ☎ 8pm-late Fri & Sat) Crepuscular club where the dance floor bounces to modern *dangdut* dance beats. There's a modest cover charge of around 30,000Rp.

Entertainment

Solo is an excellent place to see traditional Javanese performing arts; the tourist office has a full schedule of events.

Sriwedari Theatre (Jl Slamet Riyadi; tickets 3000Rp) Located at the back of Sriwedari Amusement Park, this theatre has a long-running *wayang orang* (dance-drama enacted by masked performers, recounting scenes from the Ramayana) troupe. Performances are staged nightly, Mondays to Saturdays, from 8pm to 10pm.

RRI auditorium (☎ 641178; Jl Abdul Rahman Saleh 51; tickets from 6000Rp) The radio auditorium hosts an erratic but eclectic schedule of cultural performances.

Taman Budaya Surakarta (TBS; ☎ 635414; Jl Ir Sutami 57) In the east of the city, this culture centre holds all-night *wayang kulit* and some Western plays.

Istana Mangkunegaran and Kraton Surakarta also have traditional Javanese dance practice (see p199).

Shopping

Balai Agung (☎ 8am-4pm) On the northern side of the *alun alun*, you can see high-quality *wayang kulit* puppets being made here, and *gamelan* sets are for sale.

Solo is a major batik centre. You can see the batik process on one of Warung Baru's batik tours (see p201).

Other recommendations:

Batik Keris (☎ 643292; Jl Yos Sudarso 62; ☎ 9am-7pm) Expensive, but top quality and fixed prices.

Pasar Klewer (Jl Secoyudan; ☎ 8am-6pm) Market stuffed with cheap batik.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Air Asia (code AK; ☎ 080 4133 3333; www.airasia.com) connects Solo with Kuala Lumpur daily from 110,000Rp. **SilkAir** (code MI; ☎ 724604/5; www.silkair.com) flies Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday to Singapore for US\$350 return. **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 630082; www.garuda-indonesia.com) has four daily flights to Jakarta.

BUS & MINIBUS

The Tirtanadi bus station is 2.5km north of the city centre. Frequent buses go to Prambanan (9000Rp, 1½ hours) and Yogyakarta (normal/air-con 12,000/18,000Rp, two hours), and numerous buses go to Surabaya (56,000/72,000Rp, six hours). Agents at the bus station sell tickets for the longer express routes (eg Jakarta from 130,000Rp; Denpasar from 150,000Rp).

Across the road from here, the Gilingan minibus terminal has air-con services to almost all the same destinations, with prices usually about 10% to 20% higher.

Homestays and travel agencies also sell tickets for *travel*; a door-to-door service to Bromo (Ngadisiri) costs 150,000Rp.

TRAIN

Solo is on the main Jakarta–Yogyakarta–Surabaya train line. **Solo Balapan** (☎ 714039) is the main station, but some local trains depart from Solo Jebres, further east.

The quickest and most convenient way to get to Yogyakarta is on the *Prameks* (*bisnis* 7000Rp, one hour), which departs from Balapan five times daily at 5.45am, 8.36am, 11.35am, 2.26pm and 5.55pm. All these trains start in Jebres 15 minutes earlier.

Express trains to Jakarta include the *Argo Lawu* (*eksekutif* 210,000Rp, 8½ hours, once daily at 8.10am), which is the most luxurious day train; the *Senja Utama* (*bisnis* 100,000Rp, 10 hours, once a day at 6pm); and the *eksekutif Bima* (from 200,000Rp, nine hours, once daily at 9pm).

The *Lodaya* (*bisnis/eksekutif* 100,000/150,000Rp, nine hours) departs from Bandung at 8pm and the *Sancaka* (*bisnis/eksekutif* 60,000/85,000Rp, five hours) swings through Balapan at 8.14am and 4.58pm on its way from Yogyakarta to Surabaya.

For further information on all times and prices, visit www.infoka.kereta-api.com.

Getting Around

A metered taxi from the airport, 10km north-west of the city centre, costs 55,000Rp, or take a bus via Kartasura. An *ojek* or becak from the train or bus station into the city centre costs around 5000Rp, a taxi about 15,000Rp. Minibus 06 costs 2000Rp to Jl Slamet Riyadi.

After dark many taxis refuse to use their meters and want a minimum of 10,000Rp for short trips. Bicycles and motorcycles

(motorcycle/bicycle per day 50,000/15,000Rp) can be hired from homestays.

AROUND SOLO Sangiran

Prehistoric 'Java Man' fossils were discovered at Sangiran, 16km north of Solo, where a small **museum** (admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) has fossil exhibits of *Homo erectus*, mammoth bones and hippo teeth. To get there take a Purwodadi bus to Kalijambe (3000Rp) and it's a 4km walk from there (by *ojek* 6000Rp).

Candi Sukuh

This fascinating, remote temple complex on the slopes of Gunung Lawu (3265m), some 36km east of Solo, is well worth a visit. Dating from the 15th century, Sukuh was one of the last temples to be built in Java by Hindus, who were on the run from Muslims and forced to isolated mountain regions (and Bali). From the site, there are sweeping views across terraced fields.

The main pyramid resembles an Incan or Mayan monument, with steep sides and a central staircase; at its base are flat-backed turtles that may have been sacrificial altars. It's clear a fertility cult built up around the temple, as there are all manner of erotic carvings, including a *yoni-lingga* (vagina-phallus) representation and a figure clasping his erect penis.

Take a bus to Karangpandan (5000Rp, 40 minutes), then a Kemuning minibus to the turn-off for Candi Sukuh (3000Rp, 20 minutes). On market days the bus goes right to the temple; otherwise it's a steep 2km uphill walk; or grab an *ojek* from the turn-off for about 6000Rp.

SURABAYA

☎ 031 / pop 2.4 million

The smog-prone capital of East Java is first and foremost a business city. It's not a cosmopolitan place, and is a hard city to get to like (especially when you've spent 10 minutes trying to cross one of the five-lane highways that tear through its city centre). But though Surabaya's sheer size seems intimidating at first, it does have the odd curious attraction, including a remarkable *Arabian Nights*-style bazaar district and a vibrant Chinatown. But a night is enough for most travellers, if that.

Orientation

There's no natural centre to this sprawling city but Jl Pemuda, which runs west from Gubeng train station, is something of a main drag, with two shopping malls plus several hotels and banks.

Around 5km north of here is the Chinatown district and the Arab quarter of Qubah.

Information

Jl Pemuda has several banks with ATMs, including a BNI branch. The Tunjungan Plaza is also ATM-rich.

Abacommnet (LG fl, Tunjungan Plaza, Jl Tunjungan; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 8am-9pm) Has broadband connections and doubles as a *wartel*.

Main post office (Jl Kebon Rojo; ☎ 8am-7.30pm Mon-Sat) North of the centre.

Rumah Sakit Darmo (☎ 567 6253; Jl Raya Darmo 90) Hospital with English- and Dutch-speaking doctors. It's west of the centre.

Tourist Information Centre (☎ 534 0444; www.sparklingsurabaya.com; Jl Pemuda; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) There are helpful staff at this office, and good colour maps are proffered.

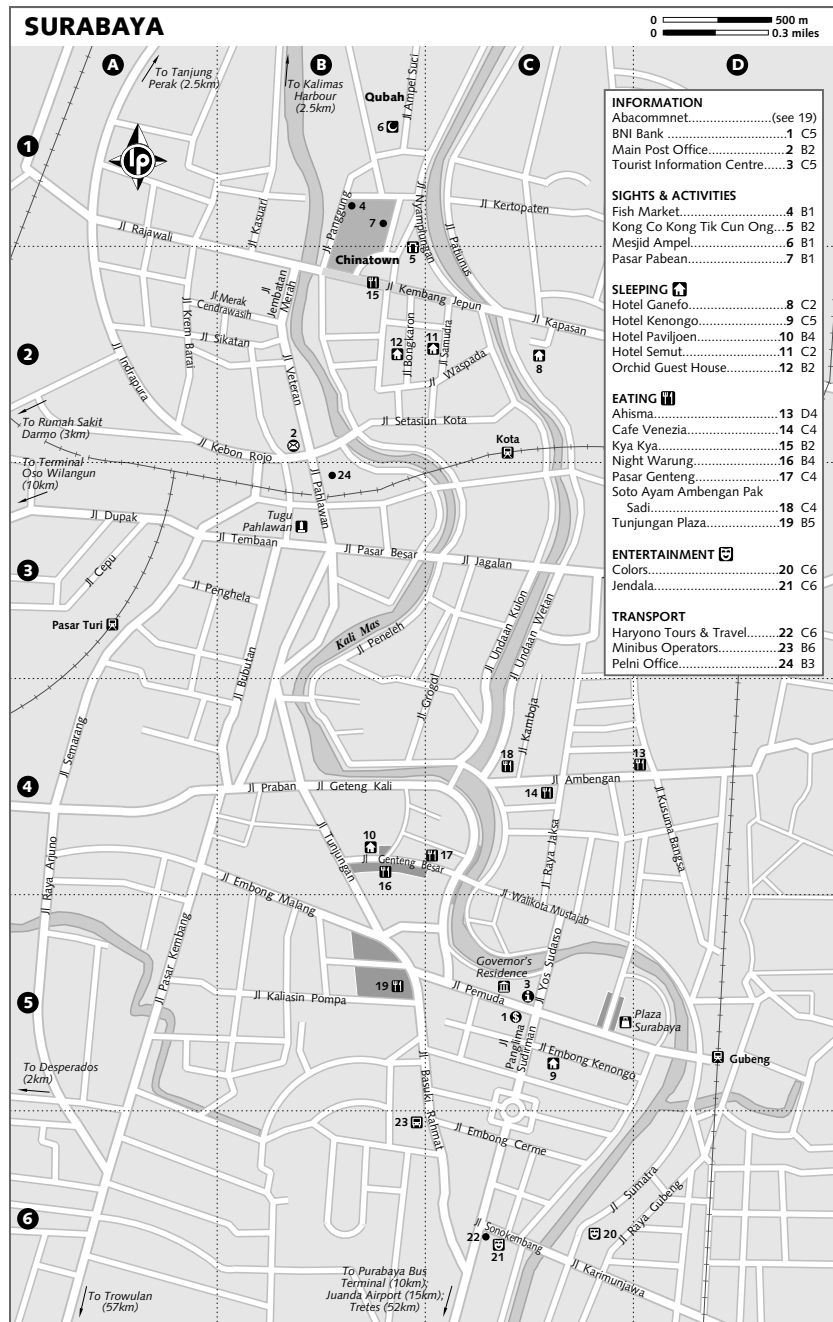
Sights

Surabaya may have a grand history, but she wears it lightly, for little substantial remains. The **Qubah** – the city's labyrinthine Arab quarter, centred upon the imposing **Mesjid Ampel** (Jl Ampel Suci) – is fascinating, however, and begs exploration. The mosque itself marks the burial place of Sunan Ampel, one of the *wali songo* (holy man) who brought Islam to Java; pilgrims chant and present rose-petal offerings at his grave behind the mosque. The warren of surrounding lanes are reminiscent of a Damascene souk, with stalls selling perfumes, sarongs, prayer beads, *peci*

GETTING INTO TOWN

Taxis from Juanda Airport (15km away) operate on a coupon system and cost 55,000Rp to the city centre. Damri airport buses (5000Rp) drop off in the city centre and at Purabaya bus station.

Official taxis from the Gubeng train station should cost 10,000Rp to 15,000Rp for journeys of 2km to 3km. It's easy to get a freelance taxi in the parking area outside, but to be safe call **Bluebird** (☎ 372 1234) or **Silver cabs** (☎ 560 0055) for a ride.



(black Muslim felt hats) and other religious paraphernalia.

Chinatown, just south of here, bursts into life at night when Jl Kembang Jepun becomes a huge street kitchen known as Kya Kya (see below). Much of the food here is sourced from the nearby **Pasar Pabean** (Jl Panggung; ☎ 8am-6pm) and the nearby **fish market** (pasar ikan; Jl Panggung; ☎ from 8pm). Close by too is the 300-year-old Chinese temple **Kong Co Kong Tik Cun Ong** (Jl Dukuh; admission by donation; ☎ dawn-dusk).

Elsewhere in the city, plenty of **Makassar schooners** can be seen at the Kalimas wharf north of town.

Sleeping

Some of the very cheapest, and roughest, hotels can be found near Kota train station. It's best to spend a little extra. All the following prices include breakfast.

Hotel Ganefo (☎ 371 1169; Jl Kapasan 169-171; d with shared/private mandi 70,000/105,000Rp; ☎) Boasts a dramatic Chinese-style veranda, a panelled lobby and two classes of accommodation: bare, cell-like but clean rooms in the main house or functional, if bland air-con, doubles in the modern extension. Pity the poor caged monkeys at the rear.

Hotel Paviljoen (☎ 534 3449; Jl Genteng Besar 94; r 77,000-126,000Rp; ☎) This beautiful, if flaky, colonial mansion has clean, spartan rooms each with gorgeous shutters and a little porch. Breakfast is *roti* and tea or coffee.

Orchid Guest House (☎ 355 0211; orchidguesthouses@yahoo.com; Jl Bongkaran 49; d 150,000Rp; ☎) Good new hotel near the Kya Kya, run by an ever-helpful English-speaking team who can help with travel and city info. The rooms' wallpaper is a tad garish, but all have top-quality mattresses, colour TV, air-con and spotless bathrooms with hot water. There's a little café here too.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Semut (☎ 353 1770; Jl Samudra 9; s/d from 127,000/145,000Rp; ☎) A bizarre chintz-rich time warp of a hotel.

Hotel Kenongo (☎ 534 1359; Jl Embong Kenongo 12; s/d from 180,000/190,000Rp; ☎) Benefits from a quiet central location and the rooms are light and airy.

Eating

There's a strip of night *warung* on Jl Genteng Besar and along the nearby riverbank on Jl Genteng Kali.

Kya Kya (Jl Kembang Jepun; mains from 9000Rp; ☎ dinner) A pedestrianised strip lined with dozens of street stalls, flaming woks and steaming cauldrons on Chinatown's main drag. Highly enjoyable and sociable; feast on local faves like *pangsit mie* (egg noodle and wonton soup) and fresh seafood.

Tunjungan Plaza (5th fl, Jl Tunjungan; mains from 12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Offers a mind-boggling array of squeaky-clean eateries, each specialising in a cuisine: Malay-style chicken, *roti*, noodles and all the usual Indonesian dishes.

Ahisma (☎ 535 0466; Jl Kusuma Bangsa 80; mains from 25,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Escape the madness of the city at this peaceful, elegant vegetarian restaurant run by a hospitable Indo-Chinese family. Choose from salads, soups, rice and noodle dishes, and save some room for the vegan ice cream. The small veggie deli here stocks *krupuk* (prawn crackers), cookies and other treats.

Cafe Venezia (☎ 534 3335; Jl Ambengan 16; mains 40,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Set in swanky colonial surroundings, this pricey restaurant raids Europe, Japan, Korea, and even Indonesia, for inspiration.

Also recommended:

Pasar Genteng (Jl Genteng Besar; mains 6000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Come here for Indonesian street food par excellence; try the *soto madura* (beef broth).

Soto Ayam Ambengan Pak Sadi (☎ 532 3998; Jl Ambengan 3A; mains 20,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Renowned for its chicken, but also serves a few Madurese specialities.

Drinking

There's very, very little drinking culture in Surabaya, with the soulless hotel bars the only (overpriced) option.

Desperados (☎ 566 1550; Shangri La Hotel, Jl Mayjend Sungkono 120; ☎ 6pm-1.30am Sun-Thu, to 2.30am Fri & Sat) Swish hotel bar west of the centre with live music and Tex-Mex food; try the margaritas. There's a cover charge of around 40,000Rp.

Clubbing

Colors (☎ 503 0562; www.colorsclub.com; Jl Sumatra 81; ☎ 7pm-3am) This place can be a riot, with a young, hip clientele largin' it to propulsive DJ-driven dance mixes, and some live bands. The outrageous fashionista door staff set the tone here.

Entertainment

Jendala (☎ 531 4073; Jl Sonokembang 4-6) A varied programme of so-called culturetainment (sometimes dance, sometimes live music, sometimes theatre), plus food.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Surabaya's Juanda airport has a few international departures and is an important hub for domestic flights.

The following airlines all operate flights out of Surabaya.

Adam Air (code KI; ☎ 505 5999; www.flyadamair.com)

Daily flights to Jakarta (from 142,000Rp).

Air Asia (code AK; ☎ 531 0303; www.airasia.com) Two daily flights to Kuala Lumpur (from 425,000Rp) via Jakarta.

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 080 7142 7832; www.garuda-indonesia.com) Over a dozen daily flights to Jakarta (from 221,000Rp) and four daily to Denpasar (from 187,000Rp).

Lion Air (code JT; ☎ 535 3500; www.lionair.co.id) Low cost carrier with six daily flights to Jakarta, and also daily to Kupang (from 378,000Rp), Pulau Batam and Balikpapan.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 568 8111; www.merpati.co.id) Flights to Denpasar, Makassar and Kuala Lumpur (US\$178).

TransNusa (☎ 546 7505; www.transnusa.co.id)

Haryono Tours & Travel (☎ 532 5800; Jl Panglima Sudirman; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) can book tickets for all airlines.

BOAT

Surabaya is an important port and **Pelni** (☎ 355 9950; www.pelni.co.id; Jl Pahlawan 112) ships serve destinations including Pontianak (197,000Rp, 40 hours), Makassar and Banjarmasin. Boats depart from Tanjung Perak harbour; to get there take bus P1 from Tunjungan Plaza.

Ferries to Kamal on Pulau Madura (5000Rp, 30 minutes) also leave every half-hour from Tanjung Perak.

BUS & MINIBUS

Most buses operate from Surabaya's main Purabaya bus terminal in Bungurasih, 10km south of the city centre. Buses along the north coast and to Semarang depart from the Terminal Oso Wilangun, 10km west of the city.

Services from Purabaya include Yogyakarta (normal/air-con 62,000/80,000Rp, eight hours), Banyuwangi (38,000/58,000Rp, six hours), Solo (56,000/72,000Rp, six hours), Probolinggo (17,000/26,000Rp, two hours), Jakarta (230,000Rp, 18 hours), and Sumanep on Pulau Madura (44,000Rp, 4½ hours).

Luxury long-haul buses also depart from Purabaya. Most are night buses leaving in the late afternoon/early evening. Bookings can be made at the terminal, or travel agencies in the centre of town sell tickets with a mark-up.

Door-to-door *travel* operate to Denpasar (165,000Rp, 10 hours), Solo (95,000Rp, six hours) and Yogyakarta (110,000Rp, eight hours). Hotels can make bookings and there are minibus operators on Jl Basuki Rahmat.

TRAIN

Trains from Jakarta, taking the fast northern route via Semarang, arrive at the Pasar Turi train station. Trains taking the southern route via Yogyakarta, and trains from Banyuwangi and Malang, arrive at Gubeng and most carry on to Kota. **Gubeng** (☎ 503 3115) is central and sells tickets for all trains.

Most fast Jakarta trains leave from **Pasar Turi** (☎ 534 5014), such as the *Gumarang* (*bisnis/eksekutif* 120,000/220,000Rp, 1½ hours), which leaves at 5.20pm. Coming the other way, it leaves Gambir in Jakarta at 5.50pm.

From Gubeng, the slower *Bima* (*eksekutif* 200,000Rp, 14½ hours) departs at 5pm for Jakarta, via Yogyakarta, and the *bisnis Mutiara Selatan* (90,000Rp, 13 hours) departs at 4.05pm for Bandung.

The *Sancaka* is the best day train for Yogyakarta, leaving Gubeng at 7.30am and 3.10pm for Solo (4½ hours) and Yogyakarta (5½ hours). It costs 45,000/70,000Rp in *bisnis/eksekutif* to either destination.

Apart from services to the main cities, trains leave Gubeng for Malang (4000Rp, two hours) every two hours. Heading east towards Bromo and Bali the *Mutiara Timur* goes at 9.02am via Probolinggo (two hours) to Banyuwangi (seven hours); tickets to both destinations are the same (*bisnis/eksekutif* 40,000/55,000Rp).

Getting Around

Surabaya has plenty of air-con metered taxis; **Bluebird** (☎ 372 1234) and **Silver** (☎ 560 0055) are the most reliable companies.

Bemo are labelled A, B, C etc and charge 2000Rp.

AROUND SURABAYA

Scattered around **Trowulan**, 60km southwest of Surabaya on the Solo road, are the ruins of the capital of the ancient Majapahit empire, Java's last great Hindu kingdom. One

kilometre from the main Surabaya-Solo Hwy, the **Trowulan Museum** (admission 2000Rp; ☎ 7am-3.30pm Tue-Sun) houses superb examples of Majapahit sculpture and pottery from throughout East Java. Reconstructed temples are scattered over a large area, some within walking distance, though you need to hire a becak to see them all.

The hill resort of **Tretes**, 55km south of Surabaya, is a cool break if you have to kill time in Surabaya, with walks around town and trekking to **Gunung Welirang**.

PPLH Environmental Education Centre (☎ 0321-618752; pplh@indo.net.id; dm/bungalows 15,000/150,000Rp), in a stunning setting near Trawas, a few kilometres northwest of Tretes, is the perfect place to unwind. It mainly caters to groups, but its trekking packages and herbal-medicine and ecology courses are open to individuals. There's fine accommodation and a humble but excellent organic restaurant. Take a bus to Pandaan, then a Trawas bemo (ask for PPLH) and then take an *ojek*.

PULAU MADURA

Only half an hour from Surabaya by ferry, but soon to be connected by Indonesia's largest bridge, the rugged, poor island of Madura is famed for its colourful **bull races**. Called *kerapan sapi*, these kick off in late August and September and climax with the finals held at Pamekasan. The bulls are harnessed in pairs, two teams compete at a time and they're raced along a 120m course in a special stadium – the bulls can do nine seconds over 100m. Bull races for tourists are sometimes staged at the Bangkalan Stadium, and race practice is held throughout the year in Bangkalan, Pamekasan and Sumenep, but dates are not fixed. Contact the **Surabaya Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 031-534 0444; www.sparklingsurabaya.com; Jl Pemuda; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) for race details.

Pamekasan, the capital of Madura, comes alive in the bull-racing season, but is quiet the rest of the year. **Sumenep**, 53km north-east of Pamekasan, is a more refined, royal town and the most interesting on Madura. It has a **tourist office** (☎ 0328-667148; Jl Sutomo 5; ☎ 7am-3pm Tue-Sat), banks with ATMs, and a few internet cafés. You can see Sumenep's 18th-century mosque, and the **kraton** (admission 1000Rp; ☎ 7am-5pm) with its water palace and interesting museum. **Asta Tinggi**, the royal cemetery, is only about 3km from the town centre.

In Pamekasan, **Hotel Ramayana** (☎ 0324-324575; Jl Niaga 55; r 45,000-85,000Rp; ☎) has bright, airy accommodation; the more expensive rooms have air-con.

In Sumenep, **Hotel Wijaya I** (☎ 0328-662433; Jl Trunojoyo 45-47; r 30,000-70,000Rp; ☎) is a long-running place with a range of rooms. It's popular with travellers.

The 5km Suramadu bridge linking Surabaya and Kamal on Madura is scheduled to open in late 2008. Until that time ferries (5000Rp) run from Tanjung Perak, Surabaya to Kamal. Buses and *colt* head from Kamal to all other towns, including Bangkalan. Buses from Surabaya's Purabaya terminal run direct to Sumenep (44,000Rp, 4½ hours).

GUNUNG BROMO

☎ 0335

Gunung Bromo's extraordinary volcanic landscape is East Java's biggest attraction, and the perfect escape from all the island's teeming cities. The smoking cone of Bromo is just one of three peaks to emerge from a vast caldera, the Tengger Massif (which stretches 10km across), its steep walls plunging down to a vast, flat sea of lava and sand. This desolate landscape has a distinctly end-of-the-world feeling, particularly at sunrise.

An even larger cone – Java's largest mountain, the fume-belching Gunung Semeru (3676m) – oversees Bromo's supernatural beauty, and the entire volcanic wonderland forms the Bromo-Tengger-Semeru National Park.

Bromo is an easy side trip from the main backpacking highway that runs between Bali and Yogyakarta, or it's about three hours from Surabaya. The usual jumping-off point is the town of Probolinggo, served by trains and buses from Surabaya and Banyuwangi.

Information

However you approach Bromo, a 25,000Rp park fee is payable at one of the many PHKA checkpoints.

The **PHKA post** (☎ 541038; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) in Cemoro Lawang is opposite Hotel Bromo Permai and has information about Bromo.

Sights & Activities

The best vantage point over this bewitching landscape is from the viewpoint known as Gunung Penanjakan (2770m). All the hotels, and several freelance guides, can put together

4WD trips (around 240,000Rp for four people and warm jackets), leaving around 4am to catch the sunrise from Penanjakan. It's usually well worth the early start, as the views of Bromo, the Tengger crater and towards smoking Gunung Semeru are spellbinding – this is where those postcard shots are taken. You'll then be driven back down the lip of the caldera and across the crater bed to the squat grey cone of Gunung Bromo itself, allowing you to gaze into the steaming guts of this small but highly active volcano.

Alternatively, it's a straightforward hike (around an hour) from Cemoro Lawang to Bromo. Take the wide track downhill from the village and follow the white stone markers that lead the way to Bromo. In the pitch-black route can be a little indistinct, but remember that Bromo is on the left, accessed by 253 steps (the neighbouring peak is Batok).

The beautiful Hindu temple at the foot of Bromo and Bator is a relatively recent addition to the moonscape, but it's only open for religious ceremonies.

Though Probolinggo is the usual approach, Bromo can also be reached via **Tosari** from the northwest and **Ngadas** from the southwest.

Festivals & Events

The **Kesada festival** is staged annually by the local Hindu community, when offerings are made to appease Bromo. The date changes each year – check with the **Surabaya Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 031-534 0444; www.sparkling-surabaya.com; Jl Pemuda; 🕒 9am–5pm Mon–Sat).

Sleeping & Eating CEMORO LAWANG

At the lip of the Tengger crater and right at the start of the walk to Bromo, Cemoro Lawang is the most popular place to stay.

our pick **Cafe Lava Hostel** (☎ 541020; d with shared mandi 55,000, with private mandi from 100,000Rp) Spilling down a hillside, this backpacker-geared hostel is the most popular place to stay in town. The minuscule economy rooms were being renovated at the time of research to offer more comfort, while the larger digs are very pleasant rustic affairs, many with lovely views from their verandas. The café here is also the most popular place to eat in the village, and serves filling Indonesian and Western grub (meals from 12,000Rp), and cool Bintang, though it is periodically cursed by plagues of flies of near-biblical proportions.

Cemara Indah Hotel (☎ 541019; r with shared/private mandi from 60,000/160,000Rp; 🍴) On the crater's edge with sublime views over Bromo, but the basic rooms are seriously spartan.

Lava View Lodge (☎ 541009; r from 160,000Rp) Right on the lip of the crater, this hotel's location is unmatched. Efficiently run by a friendly team, the cabin-style rooms are homely and the hot water is reliable. Prices rise 20% between June and October. There's a large café-restaurant here (meals from 17,000Rp), but few diners, unless a tour group rolls in.

NGADISARI

Another 3km back towards Probolinggo is the tiny village of Ngadisari.

Yoschi's Guest House (☎ 541018; yoschi_bromo@telkom.net; d with shared/private mandi 75,000/150,000Rp) Well-run place with Alpine-style kitsch décor, a garden area, a restaurant (meals from 11,000Rp) and helpful staff. Offers small, neat rooms and daily tours to the volcano (240,000Rp for four).

PROBOLINGGO

On the highway between Surabaya and Banyuwangi, this is the jumping-off point for Gunung Bromo. Most travellers only see the bus or train station, but the town has hotels if you get stuck.

Hotel Bromo Permai (☎ 422256; Jl Panglima Sudirman 237; r from 65,000Rp; 🍴) Popular travellers' hotel, with comfy rooms and an English-speaking owner. It's on the main road close to the centre of town.

Hotel Paramita (☎ 421535; Jl Siaman 7; r 80,000–150,000Rp; 🍴) New place with plain, spotless rooms around a landscaped garden.

Getting There & Away

Probolinggo's bus station is 5km west of town on the road to Bromo; catch a yellow *angkot* from the main street or the train station for 2000Rp.

Some of the ticket desks here try to overcharge travellers, so shop around before you purchase a ticket. Normal/air-con buses include Surabaya (17,000/26,000Rp, two hours), Banyuwangi (27,000/40,000Rp, five hours), Yogyakarta (52,000/77,000Rp, eight hours) and Denpasar (85,000/120,000Rp, nine hours).

Colt from the terminal go to Cemoro Lawang (12,000Rp, two hours) via Ngadisari until around 5.30pm. Some late-afternoon buses ask for more to go to Cemoro

Lawang, when fewer passengers travel beyond Ngadisari.

Probolinggo's train station is 2km north of the centre. The *Mutiara Timur* travels to Banyuwangi (*bisnis/eksekutif* 40,000/55,000Rp, five hours) at 11.16pm, and on the return trip heads to Surabaya (*bisnis/eksekutif* 40,000/55,000Rp, two hours) at 13.44pm. The *Tawang Alun* leaves at 16.49 (*ekonomi* 19,000Rp) for Banyuwangi, returning to Surabaya at 11.15.

Travel agencies in Solo and Yogyakarta book *travel* to Bromo.

BALI

Bali is a brand unto itself, an island that has long outgrown its cramped spot on the map to become the very epitome of the tropical paradise. Like a stack of picture postcards, the images are straight from the drawer marked 'Southeast Asian clichés': a technicolour fanfare of golden beaches, ultramarine seas, emerald palm tops and boot-polish suntans. Boasting world-class surf, some of Asia's most chic restaurants and euphoric nightlife, it's hardly surprising that Bali is Indonesia's premier-league tourist destination.

Flip the postcard over, however, and Bali's unique Hindu culture with its devotion to art, dance, religious rituals and elaborate ceremonies remains as enduring and impressive as ever. Much of the Kuta area may be wall-to-wall bars and boutiques, but once you leave this strip the island's volcanic interior beckons with its dazzling crater lakes, white-water rapids, temples and highland markets. And wherever you go, it's impossible not to be seduced by the grace and warmth of the Balinese people, who maintain such great pride in their island and care of its unique traditions. So whether you're here for the waves, the sculpture, the hangovers, or the culture, Bali is the little isle with everything.

History

Bali's first prehistoric tourists strolled out of the spume and onto the island's western beaches around 3000 BC. Perhaps distracted by primitive beach life, however, they got off to a relaxed start and it was only in the 9th century that an organised society began to develop around the cultivation of rice.

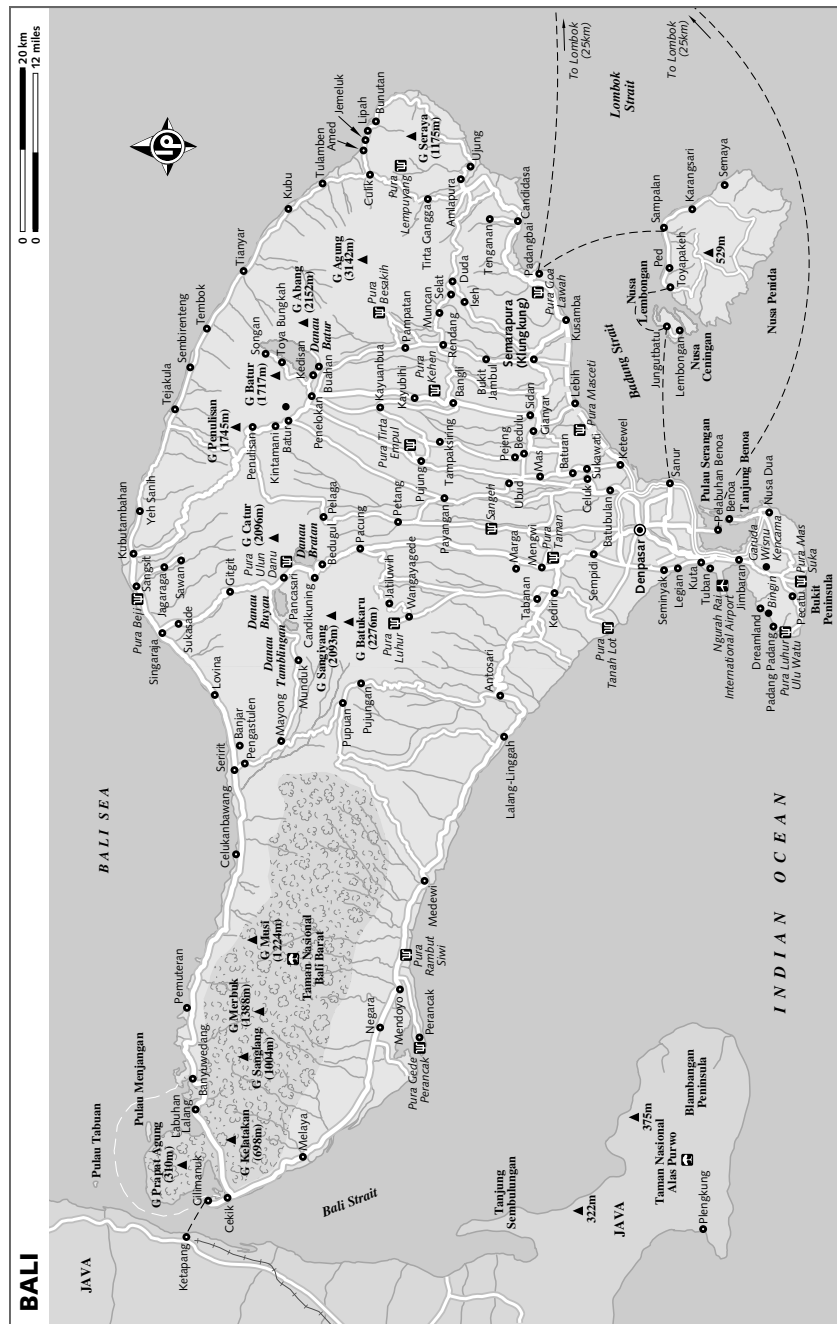
Hinduism followed hot on the heels of wider cultural development and as Islam swept through neighbouring Java in the following centuries, the kings and courtiers of the embattled Hindu Majapahit kingdom began crossing the straits into Bali, making their final exodus in 1478. The priest Nirartha brought many of the complexities of the Balinese Hindu religion to the island, and established superb offshore temples, including Rambut Sivi, Tanah Lot and Ulu Watu.

In the 19th century the Dutch began to form alliances with local princes in northern Bali. A dispute over the ransacking of wrecked ships was the pretext for the 1906 Dutch invasion of the south, which climaxed in a suicidal *puputan* (fight to the death). The Denpasar nobility burnt their own palaces, dressed in their finest jewellery and, waving golden *kris*, marched straight into the Dutch guns. The rajahs of Tabanan, Karangasem, Gianyar and Klungkung soon capitulated, and Bali became part of the Dutch East Indies.

In later years Balinese culture was actually encouraged by many Dutch officials. International interest was aroused and the first Western tourists arrived.

After WWII the struggle for national independence was fierce in Bali. Independence was declared on 17 August 1945 (still celebrated as Independence Day), but power wasn't officially handed over until 27 December 1949, when the Dutch finally gave up the fight. The island languished economically in the early years of Indonesian sovereignty, but Bali's greatest national resource, beauty, was subsequently marketed to great effect. In the years that followed the island's promotion, the tourist industry brought with it all the good (growing prosperity) and bad (massive overdevelopment) of the modern age. It also dragged Bali into the international limelight, making it a target for investors and terrorists alike.

In October 2002 two simultaneous bomb explosions ripped through Kuta, killing 202 people and decimating Bali's tourist industry overnight. Three years later, just as the island was regaining confidence, the bombers struck again. But despite these atrocities, Bali's allure is unique: traditional 'bucket-and-spade' family tourism has dipped but the island is increasingly becoming a mecca for a hip globetrotting tribe of designers, clubbers and gay Asians.



Dangers & Annoyances

Persistent hawkers are the bane of most visitors to Bali. The best way to deal with them is to ignore them from the first instance.

Take a little extra care in the Kuta area. Pickpockets sometimes target drunk revellers stumbling home after a night out and you may be offered drugs and solicited by sex workers of every gender. Drug-users and dealers are dealt with very strictly in Indonesia – you could face years in jail for having a joint, and entrapment by police is a possibility. Bali's famed *oong* (magic mushrooms) contain psilocybin, a powerful hallucinogen that can have unpredictable effects.

Travellers have been stung badly by card-game cons and dodgy holiday 'timeshare' deals. Some have been tricked into paying large amounts for unnecessary repairs to rental cars and motorcycles. Gigolos, 'guides' and friendly locals have persuaded visitors to hand over money to help pay for education expenses and life-saving operations. Money-changers are adept at switching notes at the last minute – a healthy scepticism is your best defence if you're offered a great rate.

The beaches of Kuta, Legian and Seminyak are subject to heavy surf and strong currents – swim between the flags.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The internal Indonesian flight market is now extremely competitive, with new airlines starting (and folding) each year. Prices have tumbled on many routes, particularly if you book up early. Unfortunately many of the airlines' websites do not function well, if at all, so you may be faced with having to pitch up and grab the first available flight, or using a good travel agent.

Merpati offers the most comprehensive network of flights in Indonesia, covering virtually the entire archipelago. For sample one-way fares see Map p161).

Ngurah Rai airport (code DPS; ☎ 0361-751011), a few kilometres south of Kuta, is a major international hub and well connected globally. See p159 for international airlines servicing Bali.

Domestic airline offices (located at Ngurah Rai airport unless specified otherwise):

Adam Air (code KI; ☎ 0361-761104; www.adamair.com)

Air Asia (code AK; ☎ 080 4133 3333; www.airasia.com)

Batavia Air (code 7P; ☎ 0361-254955; www.batavia-air.co.id)

Garuda (code GA; in Denpasar ☎ 080 7142 7832, Ngurah Rai airport 0361-751011, ext 5228; www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Lion Air (code JT; ☎ 0361-236666; www.lionair.co.id)

Mandala (in Denpasar ☎ 0361-222751, Ngurah Rai airport 0361-759761; www.mandalaair.com)

Merpati (code MZ; in Denpasar ☎ 080 0101 2345, Ngurah Rai airport 0361-235358; www.merpati.co.id)

Pelita Air (code PAS; ☎ 0361-762248; www.pelita-air.com)

TransNusa (☎ 0361-754421; www.transnusa.co.id)

BOAT

Ferries (7000Rp, one hour) travel between Gilimanuk in western Bali and Ketapang (Java) every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day.

Ferries (21,000Rp, 4½ to 5½ hours) run between Padangbai and Lombok every two hours, 24 hours a day.

The **Gili Shop** (Map p215; ☎ 0361-753241; www.gili-paradise.com; Poppies 1-12, Kuta) operates a pricey fast charter boat between Bali and Lombok (690,000Rp, two hours) from Beroa harbour. By the time you read this, the shop should also be running trips from Kuta to Gili Trawangan on the *Mahi Mahi* (550,000Rp).

Three Pelni boats stop at Pelabuhan Benoa, linking Bali with most major Indonesian destinations. In Kuta, the **Pelni office** (☎ 0361-763963; www.pelni.co.id; Jl Raya Kuta 288; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-4pm Mon-Thu, 8-11.30am Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) has the latest schedules.

BUS

Many buses travel daily between the Ubung terminal in Denpasar and major cities in Java; most travel overnight. Fares from Denpasar: Surabaya (150,000Rp, 12 hours), Yogyakarta (170,000Rp, 16 hours) and Jakarta (300,000Rp, 26 hours).

Perama (☎ 0361-751551; www.peramatour.com; Jl Legian 39, Kuta) runs daily bus-boat services between all tourist destinations and Mataram/Senggigi/Gilis in Lombok (100,000Rp to 300,000Rp).

Getting Around BICYCLE

You can hire bicycles in tourist centres for 15,000Rp per day; most have gears.

BEMO & BUS

Most of Bali's public transport is provided by minibuses called bemo; the main hub is in Denpasar, (see p214).

You can flag down a bemo pretty much anywhere along its route, but Bali's bemo are notorious for overcharging tourists.

You can also charter a whole vehicle for a trip (negotiate the price beforehand), or by the day (for around 375,000Rp depending on the distance). The price should include driver and petrol.

Several shuttle bus companies link Kuta-Legian with the other main tourist centres. **Perama** (Map p215; ☎ 0361-751551; www.peramatour.com; Jl Legian 39, Kuta) is highly recommended. Book a ticket at least one day before you want to travel.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Virtually every hotel and many businesses in Bali can offer you a hire car or motorbike. This should involve you signing a written contract with the owner, agreeing to an excess in case of damage, and includes limited insurance. Obviously check the vehicle first for signs of damage. Make sure you obtain an International Driving Permit (IDP) before you leave home – there are steep fines for unlicensed driving, and travel insurance may be invalidated.

Four-seater Suzuki Jimnys cost around 110,000Rp a day, larger Toyota Kijangs around 150,000Rp. Alternatively, **Avis** (☎ 0361-282635; www.avis.com; Ngurah Rai airport) offers cars from US\$35 per day, including full insurance.

Motorcycles cost about 30,000Rp per day, including limited insurance. If you don't have an IDP, ask the renter to take you to the relevant police station in Denpasar, where you can buy a temporary SIM Turis licence (200,000Rp).

TAXI

Prepaid taxis from the airport cost 40,000Rp to Kuta or 175,000Rp to Ubud. Otherwise, walk across the airport car park to the main road, from where bemo go to Denpasar's Tegal terminal via Kuta (2000Rp).

Taxis cost 5000Rp for the first kilometre and then 2000Rp for each subsequent kilometre. **Bluebird** (☎ 0361-701111), in Kuta and Denpasar, is reliable.

DENPASAR

☎ 0361 / pop 412,000

Denpasar is a typical provincial Indonesian city – a grey place that's heavy on the concrete, choked by traffic and cursed by relentless heat.

It holds near-zero interest for the visitor, but if Bali is your only stop in the country, you may just be tempted to see what an Indonesian city entails, warts and all. Otherwise there's no real reason to linger – bar a museum and a temple.

Orientation

The main street of Denpasar starts as Jl Gajah Mada in the west, becomes Jl Surapati in the centre, then Jl Hayam Wuruk and finally Jl Raya Sanur in the east. The airport is south of the city.

Information

There are banks with ATM and exchange facilities across town, including several on Jl Gajah Mada.

Post office (Jl Raya Puputan; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Way out in the Renon district.

Prima Medika (☎ 236225; www.primamedika.com; Jl Pulau Serangan No 9X; ☎ 24hr) Private hospital with English-speaking staff.

Target Tours (☎ 240967; Jl Diponegoro 75; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) For plane tickets.

Tourist office (☎ 223602; Jl Surapati 7; ☎ 7.30am-3.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-1pm Fri) Deals with Denpasar municipality, including Sanur; has copies of the useful Bali-wide *Calendar of Events*.

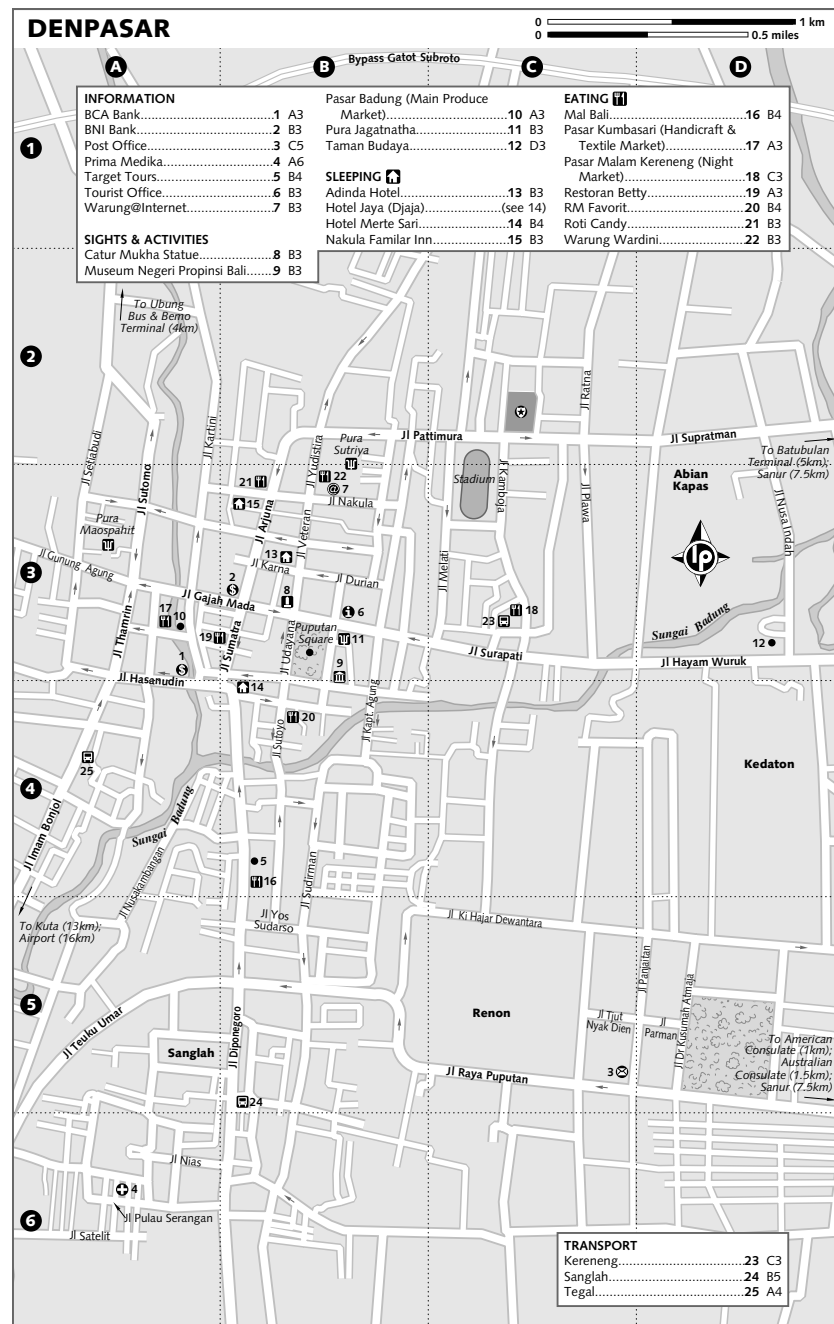
Warung@internet (Jl Nakula 33; per hr 6000Rp; ☎ 9am-5am)

Sights & Activities

The **Museum Negeri Propinsi Bali** (☎ 222680; Puputan Sq; admission 2000Rp, camera 1000Rp; ☎ 8am-3pm Sun-Thu, to 12.30pm Fri) showcases Balinese crafts and is worth an hour or two. Alongside the fine hand-spun textiles are some incredibly intricate drawings of the Ramayana, and startling *barong* costumes used for Balinese dance.

Next to the museum is **Pura Jagatnatha** (Puputan Sq; dawn-dusk), the state temple with a striking tiered central monument. Opposite here is **Puputan Square**, with its heroic **Catur Mukha statue**. Despite the statue's rather macabre role commemorating the suicidal stand against the Dutch in 1906, it is a popular local meeting place.

Downtown Denpasar rotates around Bali's biggest market, **Pasar Badung** (Jl Gajah Mada; ☎ 7am-7pm). There are a few handicrafts here, but it's best used as a place to get a grip on the hubbub of day-to-day Denpasar and fire off a few colourful snaps.



Taman Budaya (☎ 227176; alleyway off Jl Nusa Indah; admission 2000Rp; 🕒 8am-5pm) is a venue for Balinese arts, and explodes into life during the major festivals – the **Bali Arts Festival** in June-July is a must. It's pretty quiet here the rest of the time.

Sleeping

Nakula Familiar Inn (☎ 226446; Jl Nakula 4; s/d incl breakfast from 60,000/80,000Rp; 🕒) A fine, hospitable place where host Sunli and his family have been looking after travellers for years: city maps are provided, and travel tips generously dispensed. All the rooms are very spacious and have nice balconies or verandas.

Adinda Hotel (☎ 240435; Jl Karma 8; r incl breakfast 160,000Rp; 🕒) New hotel with well-scrubbed modern rooms, all with good-quality beds, TV and air-con. Free drinking water is provided.

Other recommendations:

Hotel Merte Sari (☎ 222428; Jl Hasanudin 24; s/d 60,000/75,000Rp) A noisy location, but the rooms are well kept.

Hotel Jaya (Djaja) (☎ 222911; Jl Hasanudin 26; d 75,000-125,000Rp; 🕒) Comfortable enough, and check out the ornamental Hindu deities.

Eating

Denpasar is no culinary mecca, though carnivores should definitely try the delicious local speciality, *babi guling* (roast suckling pig). The cheapest places are the *warung* at the markets and the bemo/bus terminals: Pasar Kumbasari (Handicraft and Textile Market) has the largest selection of street kitchens (open 6pm to 11.30pm) while at Pasar Malam Kereneng (Kereneng Night Market) dozens of vendors dish it up till dawn.

Restoran Betty (Jl Sumatra 56; mains 7000-12,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This calm place (compared to the madness of the street outside) has good juices and Indonesian dishes.

Warung Wardini (☎ 224398; Jl Yudistira 2; meals 8000-11,000Rp; 🕒 lunch) Superb, inexpensive place packed with local office workers that's renowned for its Balinese cuisine – pick 'n' mix a plate from the counter.

Also recommended:

Roti Candy (☎ 238409; Jl Nakula 31; snacks 5000Rp; 🕒 breakfast & lunch) Cakes and bread.

RM Favorit (☎ 262439; Jl Mayjen Sutoyo 3; dishes 10,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Budget Indonesian eats.

Most of the shopping centre eateries serve a wide variety of cheap Indonesian and Chinese food in hygienic, air-con comfort; try the food court at **Mal Bali** (Jl Diponegoro; dishes 10,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner).

Getting There & Around BEMO & BUS

Denpasar is *the* hub for bemo transport around Bali. Unfortunately, the city has several confusing terminals and you will often have to transfer between them. Each terminal provides regular connections to the other terminals (2000Rp). The following are the official prices, but tourists often end up paying more.

From Ubung, north of the town centre, bemo travel to destinations in northern and western Bali, including Kediri (for Pura Tanah Lot; 5000Rp, 40 minutes) and Bedugul (for Danau Bratan; 9000Rp, one hour).

From Batubulan, 6km northeast of the city centre, bemo head to east and central Bali including Candidasa (14,000Rp, 1½ hours), Padangbai (17,000Rp, 1¾ hours) and Ubud (12,000Rp, 1½ hours).

Tegal, on the road to Kuta, has bemo to destinations south, including the airport (6000Rp, 30 minutes), Sanur (6000Rp, 30 minutes) and Kuta (6000Rp, 30 minutes).

Sanglah is a roadside stop on Jl Diponegoro, with bemo serving Kereneng (3000Rp, 20 minutes) and Pelabuhan Benoa (5000Rp, 30 minutes).

Kereneng, to the east of the centre, has bemo to every other terminal and also to Sanur.

Buses go from Ubung terminal to Surabaya (140,000Rp, 12 hours), Jakarta (300,000Rp, 26 hours) and destinations in Lombok; try **Pahala Kencana** (☎ 410199; Ubung terminal) for air-con services.

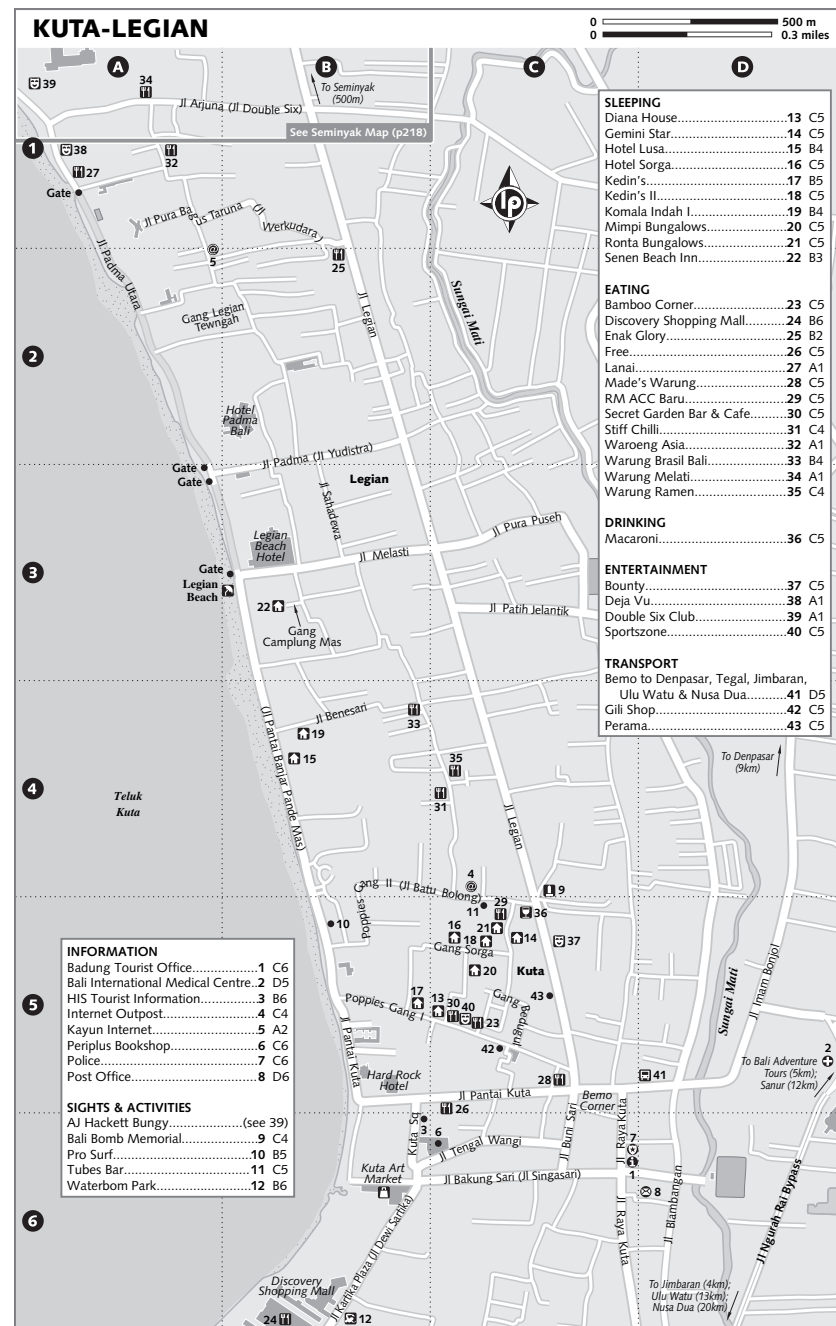
TAXI

Taxis can be flagged on the street. Flag fall is 4000Rp to 5000Rp, then 2000Rp per kilometre.

KUTA

☎ 0361

Kuta is Bali-on-a-budget, a raucous, infamous holiday enclave dedicated to fun and sun. A bustling network of narrow lanes lined with bars, *losmen* (basic accommodation), and stalls piled high with fake surfwear, dodgy



DVDs and lurid football shirts, Kuta is all about bacchanalian nights and rampant commerce. Prepare yourself for plenty of attention from the shopkeepers and armies of hawkers that comb the streets here.

Yet a few steps away, Kuta's *raison d'être* remains as wonderful as ever, as another set of perfect rollers washes over its magnificent golden sands. And while subtlety is not Kuta's strength, the resort retains a slice of Balinese charm – incense wafts down the *gang* and offerings of flower petals are laid out each morning to placate the Hindu gods.

And if you've had your fill of Kuta's frenetic energy, consider shifting just up the coast to the less manic surrounds of Legian or stylish Seminyak with its designer bars and legendary clubbing scene. Both are continuations of the same strip that creeps up the coastline; the further north you get from central Kuta, the less built-up and more exclusive the area becomes. But even in the heart of Seminyak there are a few budget hotels, and some terrific, authentic *warung*.

Following the bombs of 2002 and 2005, the area is not quite as busy as it used to be, but the locals remain upbeat, and stylish new places are emerging. So if you've spent weeks hiking the jungle trails of Kalimantan or thirsting for a bar in deepest Papua, Kuta could be ideal for a few nights R and R, for this is where Indonesia slips on its boldest board shorts and really lets its hair down.

Orientation

Prepaid taxis from the airport cost 40,000Rp to Kuta Beach or 55,000Rp to Seminyak. Reliable **Bluebird** (☎ 701111; www.bluebirdgroup.com) taxis can be called in advance.

The *kelurahan* (local government area) of Kuta extends for nearly 8km along the beach and foreshore, and comprises four communities that have grown together. Traffic-snarled Kuta is the original fishing village-cum-budget-beach resort, merging into Legian (which is more family-g geared but has some good bars at its northern end). Further north again, hip Seminyak is less densely developed. South of Kuta, Tuban has modern shopping centres, upmarket hotels and a good beach.

Jl Legian is the main road running north from Kuta to Seminyak, lined with shops, restaurants and internet cafés. Between Jl Legian and the beach is a tangle of narrow

streets, tracks and alleys, with a hotchpotch of hotels, souvenir stalls, *warung*, bars, construction sites and even a few remaining coconut palms.

Information

BOOKSHOPS

There are dozens of secondhand booksellers along Poppies Gang I and II.

Periplus Bookshop (Map p215; ☎ 763988; 4th fl, Matahari department store, Kuta Sq) A comprehensive range of English-language newspapers, magazines and books, including some Lonely Planet titles.

EMERGENCY

Police (Map p215; ☎ 751598, emergency 110; Jl Raya Kuta; ☎ 24hr)

INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

There are plenty of internet cafés, many have broadband.

Internet Outpost (Map p215; ☎ 763392; Poppies Gang II; ☎ 8am-2am) Has telephone services and luggage storage.

Kayun Internet (Map p215; Jl Werkudara 526; per hr 12,000Rp; ☎ 9am-2am) Helpful place with broadband that doubles as a *wartel*; most countries cost 7000Rp per minute.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Bali International Medical Centre (Map p215; ☎ 761263; www.bimcbali.com; Jl Ngurah Rai Bypass 100X; ☎ 24hr) Australian-run hospital, with diagnostic testing.

MONEY

Banks with ATM and change facilities are located all over Kuta, Legian and Seminyak. Moneychangers often offer the best rates for cash and travellers cheques, but there are some shifty operators so take extra care if you use their services.

POST

Post office (Map p215; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri, to 1pm Sat) On a small lane, east of Jl Raya Kuta.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The *Beat* (biweekly) is a good free listings and events guide; *The Yak* (monthly) is also excellent but focuses more on Seminyak. Both are readily available in restaurants and bars.

Badung Tourist Office (Map p215; ☎ 765401; Jl Raya Kuta 2; ☎ 8am-5pm) Has limited information on Kuta, Bali, Nusa Tenggara and Java.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Most so-called 'tourist information centres' are actually travel agencies selling organised tours, bus tickets and airline tickets.

HIS Tourist Information (Map p215; ☎ 758377; Kuta Sq Block C-17)

Sights & Activities

Kuta's biggest thrills roll in 24/7 and the resort town is a mighty fine place to catch a wave. Plenty of freelance beach-based surf instructors, some of whom are excellent, offer tuition for about 120,000Rp a half-day including board rental. Otherwise, surf schools are far more pricey. **Pro Surf** (Map p215; ☎ 081 2367 5141; www.prosurfschool.com; Grand Istana Rama Hotel, Jl Pantai Kuta) offers half-day lessons from US\$35. **Tubes Bar** (Map p215; ☎ 753510; Poppies Gang II) was being rebuilt at the time of research but when it reopens it should reclaim its mantle as Kuta's premier surf info spot.

Those after some more mild-mannered waves should head for **Waterbom Park** (Map p215; ☎ 755676; www.waterbom.com; Jl Kartika Plaza; admission US\$18.50; ☎ 9am-5pm), where you'll find slides and pools galore.

From Kuta you can go sailing, diving, fishing, horse riding or white-water rafting anywhere in the southern part of Bali, and still be back in time for dinner. For information and bookings, try **Bali Adventure Tours** (off Map p215; ☎ 721480; www.baliadventuretours.com; Adventure House, Jl Ngurah Rai). Bungy freaks can get airborne at **AJ Hackett Bungy** (Map p215; ☎ 731144; www.aj-hackett.com/bali; Double Six Club, Jl Arjuna; ☎ noon-8pm), where a leap from its 45m tower costs 600,000Rp.

It certainly isn't a tourist attraction, but you will be hard-pressed to walk down Jl Legian without noticing the **Bali Bomb Memorial** (Map p215; cnr Jl Legian & Poppies Gang II). It is a simple and sombre monument, listing the names of those killed by the 2002 blast.

Sleeping

Kuta is the budget accommodation capital of Indonesia, with hundreds of cheapies on and around Poppies Gang I and II. Most places chuck in a simple breakfast.

With so much competition, there are some great deals: simple, clean rooms start at 40,000Rp, but spend around 80,000Rp to 100,000Rp and a swimming pool can be yours for the splashing.

KUTA

Many cheap places are along the tiny alleys and lanes between Jl Legian and Jl Pantai Kuta, only a short walk from the beach, shops, bars and restaurants.

Ronta Bungalows (Map p215; ☎ 754246; s/d 40,000/60,000Rp) A solid choice, this simple place consists of two blocks of 10 rooms that face a well-maintained garden.

Komala Indah I (Map p215; ☎ 751422; Jl Benesari; s/d from 40,000/60,000Rp; ☎) Not the prettiest kid on the block but the rooms here are spacious and good value, set around a sprawling grassy plot.

our pick **Kedin's** (Map p215; ☎ 756711; Poppies Gang I; s/d from 70,000/90,000Rp; ☎) Eschew the uninviting lobby area and you'll find a welcome quiet retreat that's been recently renovated to something approaching backpacking boutique chic. The spacious rooms are stylishly kitted out and boast modern design details, and most have balconies. Outside, the garden and pool area, complete with hip sun loungers, is an ideal base for chillin' away the day if you've a hangover to nurse, well away from the madness that is Kuta.

Kedin's II (Map p215; ☎ 763554; Gang Sarga; s/d from 70,000/90,000Rp; ☎) Like its brother, get past reception and this is a fine place, with 16 large rooms, each with a huge balcony or veranda, and there's an attractive, leafy pool area too.

Hotel Sarga (Map p215; ☎ 751897; sarga@idola.net.id; Gang Sarga; s 75,000-145,000Rp, d 115,000-175,000Rp; ☎) Efficient place with excellent service and a shop, laundry and internet facilities. The Sarga's accommodation is understated and very well presented, all rooms with stylish chairs, wardrobes and bathtubs.

Gemini Star (Map p215; ☎ 750558; Gang Ronta; s/d from 80,000/95,000Rp; ☎) Previously a no-frills cheapie, this place has had a serious makeover but still offers great value. The rooms, all with balconies, are huge and come with hot-water bathrooms.

Senen Beach Inn (Map p215; ☎ 755470; Gang Campung Mas 25; r from 85,000Rp; ☎) Simple, tranquil family-owned place just off Legian beach where the rooms with outdoor bathrooms are set around a small garden; there's a café too.

Other recommendations:

Diana House (Map p215; ☎ 751605; Poppies Gang I; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp) Family owned and humble.

Mimpi Bungalows (Map p215; ☎ 751848; kumimpi@yahoo.co.sg; Gang Sarga; s/d

100,000/150,000Rp; 🏠) Peaceful cottages in a shady garden. Good but slightly overpriced; ask for a discount.
Hotel Lusa (Map p215; ☎ 753714; www.hotellusa.net; Jl Benesari; s/d from 100,000/120,000Rp; 🏠 🚽 🚿) Midranger with some good economy options and a lovely pool, café and leafy grounds.

SEMINYAK

Considering all the nightlife here, there's a dearth of cheap places to crash.

Losmen Inada (Map p218; ☎ 732269; putu.inada@hotmail.com; Gang Bima; s/d 60,000/70,000Rp) A great little 12-room guesthouse tucked away on a quiet lane with friendly owners. The pleasant tiled rooms all have wardrobes and verandas and cold-water bathrooms.

Galaxy Hotel (Map p218; ☎ 730328; www.galaxyhotelbali.com; Jl Dhyana Pura; d 175,000Rp; 🏠 🚽 🚿) Set at pole position on the main party strip, and offers large discounts for longer stays. Good value, but pack those earplugs.

Eating

There's an incredible selection of restaurants in the Kuta area, from no-nonsense noodle bars to seriously swanky eateries in Seminyak.

For a quick feed, local style, check out the street kitchens at the **Seminyak night market** (Map p218; cnr Jl Oberoi & Jl Raya Seminyak; 🕒 6-11pm) or the *warung* in the back streets near the main post office.

Don't neglect the eateries on the 2nd floor of the **Discovery Shopping Mall** (Map p215; Jl Kartika Plaza; mains from 10,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner), which offer authentic, inexpensive Balinese cooking in hygienic, air-conditioned surrounds.

KUTA

Warung Brasil Bali (Map p215; ☎ 752692; Jl Benesari; dishes from 8000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Brazilian-themed place with cooking from the motherland, including *feijoada* (a stew of beans with various beef and pork products), plus the usual Western and Indonesian dishes at cheap prices. Surf movies are shown upstairs.

Free (Map p215; ☎ 751330; Jl Pantai Kuta 39A; mains 8000-15,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right on the main drag, this place has bargain-priced Indo (try the stir-fried veggies) and Western grub and arctic-cool large Bintang for 14,500Rp.

Stiff Chili (Map p215; ☎ 745486; Jl Benesari; dishes from 16,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Great little Italian with hip orange concrete banquet seating and fine pizza, pasta and paninis.

Wayung Ramen (Map p215; dishes 17,000-25,000Rp; 🕒 dinner) What's this, authentic Japanese cooking, including plenty of *ramen* (noodle) dishes and *gyoza* (dumplings) at backpackers prices? Better believe it.

Made's Warung (Map p215; ☎ 755297; Jl Pantai Kuta; mains from 22,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Perennially, and justifiably, popular Balinese restaurant with an East meets West menu taking in everything from Balinese fish curries to gourmet burgers.

Also recommended:

Bamboo Corner (Map p215; Poppies Gang I; dishes from 8000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Breakfasts, backpacker staples and great people-watching.

RM ACC Baru (Map p215; mains from 8000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Pure Padang. It's in the Poppies Gang II area.

Secret Garden Bar & Cafe (Map p215; ☎ 757720; Poppies Gang I; mains 20,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Sociable, down-to-earth place ideal for filling tucker, ice-cold beer and a chinwag.

LEGIAN

Legian's best-located eateries are right on the beach, just south of where Jl Arjuna (Jl Double Six) meets the sand.

Warung Melati (Map p215; ☎ 081 2390 6506; Jl Arjuna; most dishes 6000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Hospitable little place with pavement tables serving delicious, fresh Indonesian food. You pay by the dish, about three is enough for a good feed.

Warong Asia (Map p215; ☎ 742 0202; Jl Arjuna 23; dishes from 13,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Simple yet atmospheric little place cranking out Thai food at very fair prices.

Enak Glory (Map p215; ☎ 751091; Jl Legian 445; mains from 20,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Venerable fish restaurant, cooking up an *ikan bakar* (grilled fish) in more ways than you can cast a fly line at.

Lanai (Map p215; ☎ 753367; Jl Pantai; meals from 26,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) A spectacular beachside location, where you could spend all day watching the wave riders from the upper deck. The menu has a bit of everything, with breakfasts, good burgers and pasta.

SEMINYAK

Surprisingly, Seminyak has a good choice of inexpensive places alongside some of Asia's most remarkable restaurants.

Warung Hibac Qemangi (Map p218; ☎ 738870; Jl Dhyana Pura 103N; meals 14,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Enjoyable little place, with pavement seating, friendly staff and excellent Indonesian food.

our pick! Trattoria (Map p218; ☎ 081 7972 6065; Jl Oberoi; mains from 24,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Unquestionably the finest Italian in Bali, owned and run by Italians, who are here every night to ensure quality standards do not drop. The open-sided dining room is delightful and the menu is terrific, including pasta (from 25,000Rp), pizza (from 24,000Rp) and beef and tuna *carpaccio* (from 29,000Rp). Many unusual regional Italian and vegetarian choices are offered as daily specials, prepared from imported ingredients. And best of all, prices are fairly wallet-friendly, if you stay off the vino. Book ahead.

Zula Veggie Paradise (Map p218; ☎ 732723; Jl Dhyana Pura 5; dishes from 28,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner; 🍷) Veggie stronghold with an extensive, if slightly pricey, choice of dishes, including falafel, salads and Mediterranean platters. Wash it down with a boost juice or tonic drink.

Other recommendations:

Baku Dapa (Map p218; ☎ 731148; Jl Dhyana Pura 11A; meals 12,000Rp; 🕒 24hr) Great *warung*-style grub around the clock.

Warung Mimpi (Map p218; ☎ 732738; Jl Dhyana Pura 29; meals 17,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Modest, friendly place, serving authentic Indonesian food and cold Bintang at fair prices.

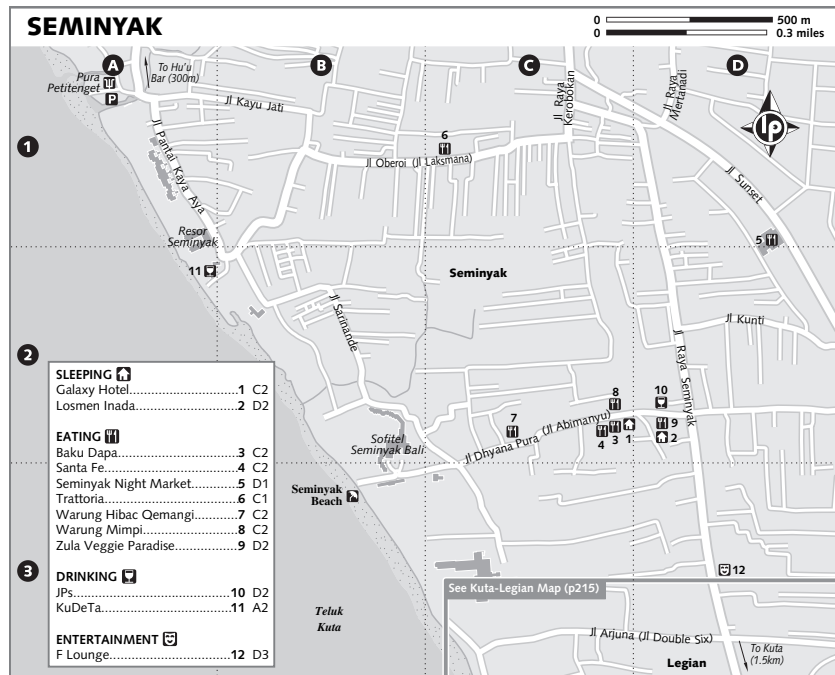
Santa Fe (Map p218; ☎ 731147; Jl Dhyana Pura 11; dishes 30,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular bar-restaurant that knocks out Tex-Mex eats.

Drinking

Kuta still has its share of cheap boozers but the scene is changing slowly as more hip places open. Most restaurants on Poppies Gang I and II double as lively bars and run happy hours from 6pm to 9pm.

Northern Legian and Seminyak have a very different, but equally lively scene concentrated on Jl Dhyana Pura, which has dozens of lounge bars, gay and straight, and small clubs.

KuDeTa (Map p218; ☎ 736969; www.kudetana.net; Jl Oberoi; 🕒 8am-2am) An astonishing beachfront place, the design straight out of *Wallpaper** magazine, with a gorgeous bar area, an Asian-fusion restaurant and reclined seating where you can gaze out at the spotlight waves and sea spray. Of course it's not cheap, but you have to see this place, and beer prices are not that outrageous.



Maccaroni (Map p215; ☎ 754662; Jl Legian 52; www.maccaroniclub.com; 🕒 9am-2am) Simply stunning concrete-and-steel creation with a suspended DJ box and plenty of greenery to soften the urban nature of the bar-restaurant's design. There's a fine Italian menu (a set pasta lunch is 39,000Rp), two-for-one cocktails (after 11pm), live music, and free wi-fi.

Hu'u Bar (off Map p218; ☎ 736443; www.huubali.com; Jl Oberoi; 🕒 4pm-2am) Another striking venue, with modish seating, a pool and DJs spinning deep House mixes – though the inland location can't touch KuDeTa. Home from home for Seminyak's cocktail-quaffing classes.

JPs (Map p218; ☎ 736288; Jl Dhyana Pura; 🕒 10-3am) For more humble surrounds there's this pub-cum-warung with live music most nights, great staff and free wi-fi.

Clubbing

Bounty (Map p215; ☎ 752529; New Bounty Mall, Jl Legian; 🕒 24hr) Topping the decks of a giant prefab galleon, with fully rigged masts, this club is Kuta's most famous nightclub, with a mix of Aussie tourists, backpackers and a sprinkling of working girls. Musically, expect everything from bumpin' R & B to grunge classics.

Deja Vu (Map p215; ☎ 737639; Jl Arjuna 7; 🕒 6pm-4am) This stylish, hip bar-club is consistently a top night out, drawing an international crowd and plenty of Balinese scenesters. It mutates into a club after about 11pm, primarily playing progressive House. It sometimes charges 30,000Rp entry on busy nights.

F Lounge (Map p218; ☎ 730562; Jl Raya Seminyak 66; 🕒 6pm-5am) Bar-meets-club with one of the best sound systems on the island that draws respected international DJs to Bali. It's not too pretentious and not too expensive either, but can be quiet except on weekend nights.

Double Six Club (Map p215; ☎ 733067; www.doublesixclub.com; Jl Arjuna; 🕒 11pm-6am) Bali's premier club boasts a terrific beachfront location, elegant décor, a swimming pool and a good quota of Asia's beautiful crowd. Some legendary turntablists have played here including Tiesto.

Entertainment

Numerous bar-restaurants around Poppies Gang II show Hollywood and surf movies.

Large hotels and restaurants present tourist-version Balinese dances, but Ubud is a much better (and cheaper) place to see these; see p227.

Sportszone (Map p215; ☎ 736654; Poppies Gang 1; 🕒 24hr) For live cricket, basketball, tennis, and every code of football from Australia, Europe and the USA, this is the number-one bar in Kuta.

Shopping

Jl Legian is the place for fashion, with all the global surf brands represented, as well as local names such as Surfer Girl and Dreamland. The northern end of Jl Legian has the best boutiques, most of which are owned by local designers.

Poppies 1 and 2, and the 'art markets' on Jl Melasti and at the beach end of Jl Bakung Sari are loaded with stalls selling fake sports gear, pirated DVDs and CDs, beachwear and cheap sunglasses – bargain hard.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Planes from Ngurah Rai airport, located near Kuta, serve destinations across Indonesia and the world. See the domestic airline listings on above, and international listings on p159. for more information

BOAT

Pelni ferries link nearby Pelabuhan Benoa with destinations throughout Indonesia (see p211).

BUS & BEMO

Public bemo travel regularly between Kuta and the Tegal terminal in Denpasar (6000Rp, 30 minutes). The main bemo stop in Kuta is situated on Jl Raya Kuta (Map p215), just east of Bemo Corner. Bemo head south from here to Jimbaran and Ulu Watu, but for anywhere else in Bali you'll have to go via Denpasar.

For bus tickets to Java, Lombok and Sumbawa it's most convenient to book via a travel agency; there are dozens in Kuta and Legian. Make sure the transfer to Ubung terminal in Denpasar (the bus departure point) is included.

Tourist shuttle buses travel between the Kuta area and all points of interest in Bali and Lombok. **Perama** (Map p215; ☎ 751551; www.peramatour.com; Jl Legian 39) is the best-known operator with daily services. Sample prices from Kuta are Ubud (30,000Rp, one hour), Lovina (100,000Rp, 3¼ hours), Padangbai (40,000Rp, 1¼ hours) and the Gilis (240,000Rp, nine hours).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Car- and motorcycle-hire places offer some of the most competitive prices in the world. To charter a vehicle, just walk up Jl Legian and listen for the offers of 'Transport? Transport?' Expect to pay 110,000Rp per day for a Suzuki Jimny, or 30,000Rp for a 90cc scooter. See p212 for advice about vehicle rental in Indonesia.

Getting Around

Bemo do a loop from Bemo Corner along Jl Pantai Kuta, Jl Melasti and Jl Legian and back to Bemo Corner (about 3000Rp). Bemo are infrequent in the afternoon and nonexistent in the evening.

Bicycles can be hired for around 15,000Rp per day from guesthouses and stores.

BUKIT PENINSULA

The southern peninsula, a limestone plateau often simply known as Bukit (Hill), is dry and sparsely populated, although it does have pockets of tourism development.

Just south of the airport, **Jimbaran Bay** is a superb crescent of white sand and blue sea, with a colourful fishing fleet, a fish market and a few luxury hotels. Seafood *warung* here offer a blissful setting for a sunset meal, right by the shoreline.

The western side of the peninsula holds some of Bali's best surf spots. The fabled cove known as **Dreamland** is perhaps the most exquisite of these, and has some very chilled little cafés popular with surfers and in-the-know travellers. Further south lies a chain of legendary surf beaches that includes **Padang Padang**, the left-handers **Bingin** and **Impossibles** and finally **Ulu Watu**. Simple, surfer-gear *losmen* and *warung* are scattered around the headlands of these beaches.

At the southwestern tip of the peninsula, **Pura Luhur Ulu Watu** (admission 3000Rp; 🕒 8am-7pm) is a stunningly sited Hindu temple that clings to sheer cliffs, high above the crashing waves below. Enchanting **kecak dances** (admission 40,000Rp) are held here every night from 6pm to 7pm. Just before the temple car park, a sign points to **Pantai Suluban**, which is yet another famous surf break.

Inland is a deserted carbuncle of a complex, the snappily titled **Garuda Wisnu Kencana Cultural Park** (☎ 0361-703603; admission 15,000Rp; 🕒 8am-10pm), which features near-empty malls and restaurants all topped by a monstrous 66m

half-finished statue of a *garuda* (mythical half-man, half-bird creature).

Tanjung Benoa

☎ 0361

The peninsula of Tanjung Benoa extends about 4km north from the exclusive **Nusa Dua** resort enclave to the fishing village of **Benoa**. Jl Pratama runs the length of the peninsula, lined by a strip of midrange hotels and restaurants and holiday villas. On the beaches, water-sports centres offer diving, snorkelling, parasailing, jet skiing and water-skiing.

Near the top of Jl Pratama, a few places offer reasonably affordable accommodation, including **Pondok Agung Homestay** (☎ 771143; roland@eksadata.com; Jl Pratama; d from 130,000Rp; 🕒), which has Balinese character and a lovely garden. There are plenty of excellent seafood restaurants nearby, although all are on the pricey side.

Bemo run from Tegal terminal in Denpasar, via Kuta, to Nusa Dua (one hour, 9000Rp) where you'll have to change bemo to go north up to Benoa (3000Rp, 15 minutes).

SANUR

☎ 0361

Sanur (nicknamed 'Snore' by some) is Kuta in a cardigan, offering a gentler, more effete and rather more middle-aged take on the tried-and-tested holiday cocktail of sand, sea and sundowners. Resort hotels are the norm here, but the Sanur does have a few decent budget digs.

The once-slimline beach has recently been beefed up with tons of imported sand and now ranks among Bali's best, with a lovely traffic-free promenade lined with genteel bars and restaurants.

Sleeping

Rooms tend to be a little more upmarket in Sanur, as do the prices.

Watering Hole I (☎ 288289; wateringhole_sanur_bali@yahoo.com; Jl Hang Tuah 37; r 80,000-120,000Rp; 🕒) At the rear of an ugly bar-restaurant, this place has 25 good-value rooms with big double beds and attractive wood furniture around a garden area.

Kaya Manis (☎ 289410; Jl Pantai Sindhuh; s/d 85,000/150,000Rp; 🕒) Behind this smart restaurant are five gorgeous rooms, all spotless and with stylish furnishings, that face a little garden.

Flashback's (☎ 281682; www.flashbacks-chb.com; Jl Danau Tamblingan 106; s/d from 110,000/160,000Rp; ☎ ☎) Very hospitable and cheerful Australian-owned place with a choice of rooms, from near-economy to boutique-hotel chic. There's a tiny saltwater pool, shady garden, guests' kitchen area and a fine café out front.

Other recommendations:

Ida Homestay (☎ 288598; Jl Danau Toba Gang I 4; s/d 80,000/100,000Rp) With a quiet garden setting.

Yulia 2 Homestay (☎ 287495; Jl Danau Tamblingan; s/d 95,000/110,000Rp) Eccentric place awash with hunting-lodge kitsch. Tidy rooms and a bar-café.

Eating & Drinking

Sanur isn't exactly known for its punk-rock scene; smooth jazz bars are more the thing here. For cheap eats check out the food carts at the southern end of Jl Danau Tamblingan, and the Pasar Sindhu (Night Market) at the beach end of Jl Segara Ayu.

Warung Mama Putu (☎ 282025; Jl Kesuma Sari; mains 13,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) One of a number of cheap eateries on this strip of beach; try the seafood.

Kalimantan (☎ 289291; Jl Pantai Sindhu 11; mains from 18,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Run by an amiable American who's been here for years, Kalimantan scores strongly for Western and Mexican grub (seasoned with Bill's home-grown peppers).

Getting There & Away

The bemo stops are at the southern end of Sanur on Jl Mertasari, and at the northern end outside the entrance to Grand Bali Beach Hotel. Blue bemo go to Denpasar's Tegal terminal (6000Rp, 30 minutes); green bemo go to Kereng terminal (6000Rp, 30 minutes).

Perama (☎ 285592; Jl Hang Tuah 39; www.perama.co.id) is at Warung Pojok, at the northern end of town. It runs buses to Kuta and the airport (15,000Rp, 30 minutes), Ubud (20,000Rp, 45 minutes), Lovina (from 85,000Rp, three hours) and Padangbai (40,000Rp, 1½ hours).

UBUD

☎ 0361 / pop 8000

Once upon a time, there wasn't a whole lot to do in Ubud but dabble in the arts, and wander whimsically through the bottle-green paddy fields past the farm ducks (a local speciality). Now the beating heart of a thriving cultural scene, Ubud is an overgrown village where Bali's Hindu heritage is at its most vivid and

there's a temple on (virtually) every street corner.

In recent years Ubud has developed at breakneck speed to satisfy the large numbers of visitors eager to experience the 'real' Bali and in some ways has become a victim of its own success. An orgy of construction has seen the village expand way beyond its previous boundaries, and buzzing bemo compete with the quacking ducks in the decibel stakes. But away from the town centre there are still plenty of peaceful corners, and the shopping, and programme of dance and music performances are exceptional. So for anyone with a degree of curiosity about the island's unique culture, Ubud is still a must.

Orientation

About 25km north of Denpasar, Ubud now encompasses its neighbours: Campuan, Penestanan, Padangtegal, Peliatan and Pengosekan. The centre of town is the crossroads near the market and the Ubud palace.

Information

Banks with ATMs and moneychangers are profuse in Ubud. Internet cafés, charging about 250Rp per minute, are scattered across town.

BOOKSHOPS

Ganesha Books (Map p223; ☎ 970320; www.ganesha-books.com; Jl Raya Ubud 73; ☎ 9am-6pm) New and secondhand titles, including many books about Indonesian culture and society.

Periplus (Map p225; ☎ 975178; Monkey Forest Rd; ☎ 9am-9pm) Books, magazines, maps and some Lonely Planet titles.

INTERNET ACCESS

Bali 3000 (Map p223; ☎ 978538; Jl Raya Ubud; per hr 15,000Rp; ☎ 8am-11pm) Fast connections and serves good sandwiches, coffees and juices.

LIBRARIES

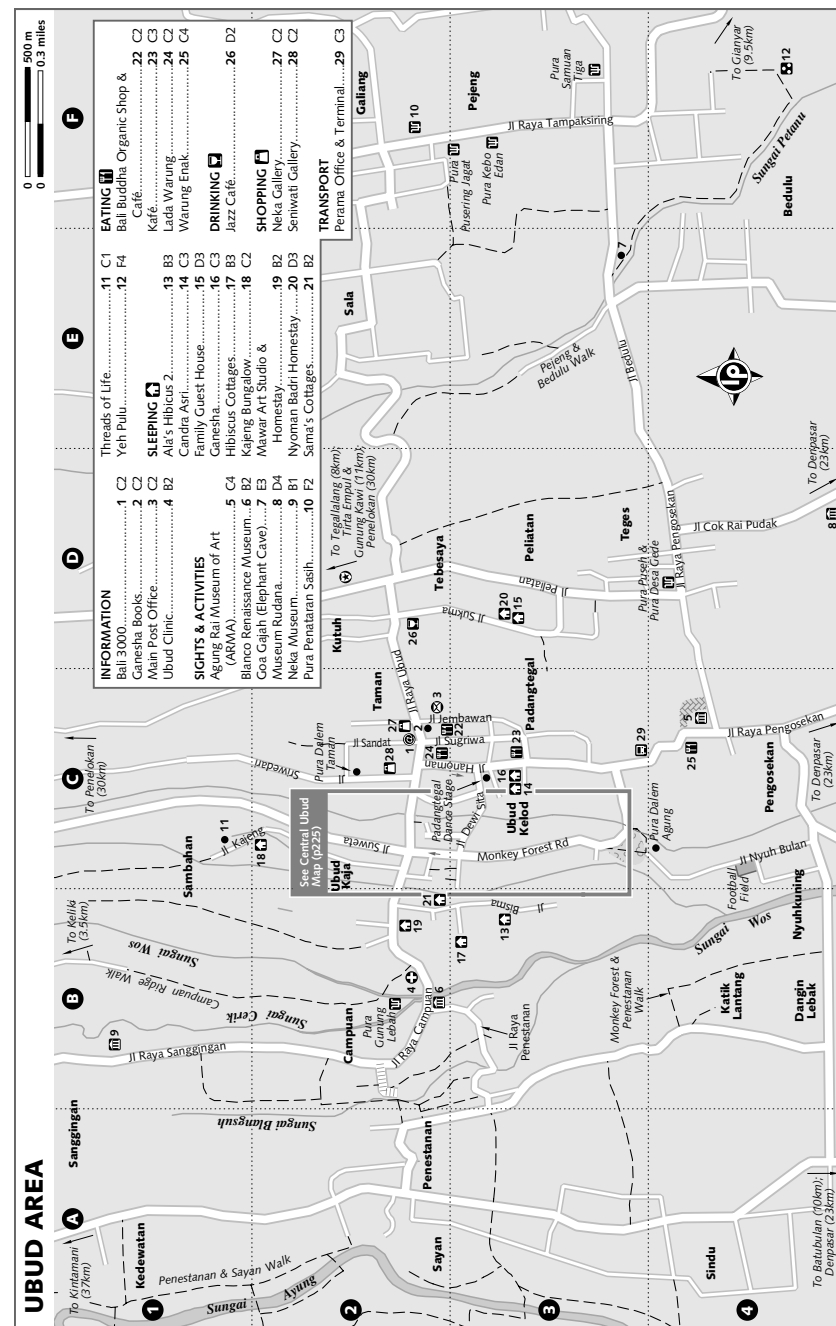
Pondok Pekak Library (Map p225; ☎ 976194; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, 1-5pm Sun) Has a good children's section and a café, but there's a 40,000Rp joining fee.

MEDICAL SERVICES

Mua Farma (Map p225; ☎ 974674; Monkey Forest Rd;

☎ 8am-9pm) A centrally located pharmacy.

Ubud Clinic (Map p223; ☎ 974911; Jl Raya Campuan 36; ☎ 24hr) Offers round-the-clock medical services.



MONEY

Lippobank (Map p225; Jl Raya Ubud; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) Has an ATM and exchange facilities.

POST

Main post office (Map p223; Jl Jembawan 1; ☎ 8am-6pm)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (Yaysan Bina Wisata; Map p225; ☎ 973285; www.ubudvillage.com; Jl Raya Ubud; ☎ 8am-8pm) Provides ceremony and dance performance schedules, and sells tickets too.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

HIS (Map p225; ☎ 972621; Monkey Forest Rd; ☎ 10am-6pm) A reliable travel agent.

Sights**MONKEY FOREST SANCTUARY**

South of town, the **Monkey Forest Sanctuary** (Map p225; ☎ 971304; www.balimonkey.com; Monkey Forest Rd; admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 8.30am-6pm) is a patch of forest inhabited by a troop of cheeky, ever-hungry, long-tailed Balinese macaques. The monkeys are both consummate comedians and pathological kleptomaniacs – keep a tight grip on snacks and bags.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Bali has some terrific museums and galleries, so if it's a rainy day (or week) you've plenty of high culture to delve into. **Museum Puri Lukisan** (Map p225; ☎ 971159; www.museumpurilukisan.com; Jl Raya Ubud; admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm) has an astonishing collection of fine examples from all schools of Balinese art, including many early-20th-century works, and offers seminars and workshops; there's a café here too. The superb **Neka Museum** (Map p223; ☎ 975074; www.museumneka.com; admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat, noon-5pm Sun), in Campuan, has modern Balinese and Indonesian art and choice pieces by Western artists who have worked in Bali.

Also check out **Agung Rai Museum of Art** (ARMA; Map p223; ☎ 976659; Pengosekan; admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 10am-6pm), which has an eclectic collection including work by Walter Spies and some pleasant gardens, and **Museum Rudana** (Map p223; ☎ 975779; Jl Cok Rai Puduk; admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm), where a grand modern house showcases three storeys of permanent exhibitions and there's a commercial gallery.

Finally, try to drop by the **Blanco Renaissance Museum** (Map p223; ☎ 975502; Jl Raya Campuan; adult/

student 20,000/10,000Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm), the former home of the eccentric Antonio Blanco, for an ogle at his erotic art.

Activities**TREKKING**

As well as visiting the museums and galleries it is well worth exploring the natural beauty that inspires so much of it. There are wonderful walks around Ubud: east to Pejeng, across picturesque ravines south to Bedulu; north along the Campuan ridge; and west to Penestanan and Sayan, with views over the Sungai Ayung (Ayung River) gorge. There is also a loop walk to southwest Ubud via the Monkey Sanctuary.

MASSAGE

Fancy a pamper? Ubud has a host of beauty salons offering massages, body scrubs and manicures.

Fair Way (Map p225; ☎ 970810; Jl Goutama 17; facial 50,000Rp, 1hr massage 40,000Rp; ☎ 9am-8pm)

Milano Salon (Map p225; ☎ 973488; Monkey Forest Rd; 1hr massage 60,000Rp; ☎ 8.30am-8pm)

Courses

Ubud is a superb place for courses in crafts, arts, cooking or Balinese music and dance; check out the noticeboards at the tourist board and Kafé (p227).

ARMA (Map p223; ☎ 976659; www.armamuseum.com; Jl Raya Pengosekan; courses from US\$24; ☎ 9am-6pm)

Painting, batik and woodwork courses, and academic studies in everything from Hinduism to architecture.

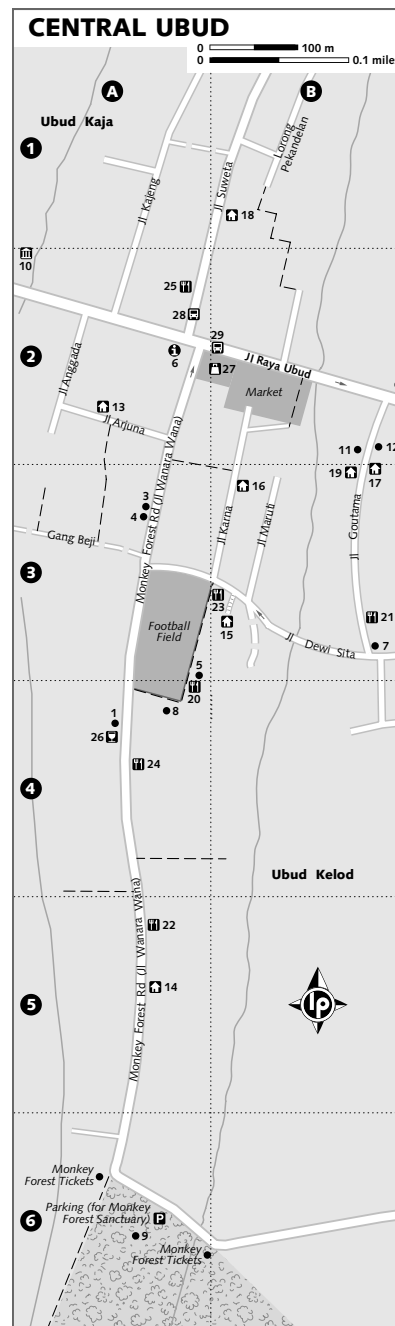
Nirvana (Map p225; ☎ 975415; Nirvana Pension & Gallery, Jl Goutama 10; 1-day course US\$35; ☎ classes 10am-3pm Mon, Wed & Sat) Batik-making courses.

Threads of Life (Map p223; ☎ 972187; www.threadsoflife.com; from 150,000Rp; Jl Kajeng 24) Lectures and textile-appreciation courses.

Studio Perak (Map p225; ☎ 0812 365 1809; Jl Goutama; half-day course 150,000Rp) Popular silversmith workshops.

Sleeping

Ubud has over a hundred places to stay, and some of Asia's best-value and most attractive budget guesthouses. Virtually every hotel in town adds an artistic touch here and there – a batik painting, or a wood carving perhaps – in even the very cheapest rooms. Since the bombs, visitor numbers have fallen, and you should be able to score a good room for 50,000Rp; spend double that and you can



expect real comfort. Virtually everywhere throws in a basic breakfast.

CENTRAL UBUD

Jungut Inn (Map p225; ☎ 978237; Jl Arjuna; s/d 35,000/45,000Rp) If price is a real issue, look no further than this family-run place, with three spartan but clean rooms. There are more ultra-cheap options on this road.

Shana Bungalows (Map p225; ☎ 975045; Jl Goutama 7; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) Old-timer that's ageing fast, but still has a little charm.

Wena (p225; ☎ 975416; Jl Goutama; r with cold/hot water 50,000/70,000Rp) Four inexpensive, large tiled rooms with bedside reading lights, large bathrooms and verandas at the rear of a family compound.

Suci Inn (Map p225; ☎ 975304; Jl Suweta; s/d 55,000/70,000Rp) This place is attractive, centrally located and popular; it's worth booking ahead for a bed here.

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Masih Bungalow (Map p225; ☎ 975062; Jl Dewi Sita; r 70,000Rp) Up some steps off Dewi Seta, this family-run place offers attractive, spacious rooms with balconies and hot-water bathrooms. There's a little garden area with a shade-providing, fruit-rich rambutan tree.

Kubu Saren (Map p225; ☎ 975704; Monkey Forest Rd; s/d 70,000/85,000Rp) Poke your nose into this tidy outfit and you'll be hard-pressed not to catch someone sweeping or polishing. There are eight spacious rooms.

Sania's House (Map p225; ☎ 975535; sania_house@yahoo.com; Jl Karna 7; r 80,000Rp, with hot water from 100,000Rp; 🍴 🚿) Giving the hanging gardens of Babylon a run for their money, this very well-run place has a choice of excellent accommodation, with more on the way. The more pricey rooms here have gorgeous hand-carved wooden furniture and sprung mattresses, and some even have four-poster beds.

EAST OF THE CENTRE

Nyoman Badri Homestay (Map p223; ☎ 977047; Jl Sukma; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) No frills or spills, just a warm welcome and plain, clean if smallish rooms with high ceilings and en-suite bathrooms.

Ganesha (Map p223; ☎ 970517; Jl Hanoman 43; d from 60,000Rp) This guesthouse, down a quiet *gang*, has sweeping aspects over rice fields and large, comfortable rooms with great balconies and bathtubs.

Candra Asri (Map p223; ☎ 970517; Jl Hanoman 43; d from 60,000Rp; 🍴 🚿) Well-swept, spacious rooms with bamboo furniture and verandas, some with fine rice-paddy views.

Family Guest House (Map p223; ☎ 974054; Jl Sukma; d 88,000-250,000Rp; 🍴 🚿) Spilling down a river valley, this well-run place has a leafy garden and excellent rooms with homely touches and solid wooden furniture, the most expensive with four-poster beds. There's a book exchange here.

NORTH OF THE CENTRE

Kajeng Bungalow (Map p223; ☎ 975018; Jl Kajeng 29; s/d from 70,000/80,000Rp; 🍴 🚿) Ignore the dingy entrance, and soak up the scenery: a dramatic, plunging riverside setting and attractive rooms, some with great views.

WEST OF THE CENTRE

Mawar Art Studio & Homestay (Map p223; ☎ 975086; Jl Raya Ubud; s/d 100,000/150,000Rp) Airy light rooms with good views.

our pick! Sama's Cottages (Map p223; ☎ 973481; Jl Bisma; s/d 100,000/150,000Rp; 🍴 🚿) Everything you could ask for, this wonderful retreat has a luxuriant garden and 10 very private cottages plus a small oval pool. Nyoman, your host, could not be more hospitable either.

Hibiscus Cottages (Map p223; ☎ 970475; hibiscuscottages@hotmail.com; Jl Bisma; d/tr 120,000/150,000Rp) Enjoys a serene location among the rice fields, and offers high quality rooms with *ikat* bedspreads and large hot-water bathrooms with bathtubs.

Ala's Hibiscus 2 (Map p223; ☎ 970476; r 120,000Rp) Smack bang in the middle of rice paddies, this place enjoys sublime views. The rooms with hot-water bathrooms are a little plain but well kept – ask for a discount.

Eating

Ubud's many restaurants offer the most diverse and delicious food on the island. It's a great place to stretch your budget, and your waistline. The market area is a terrific place to try Balinese specialities: look out for *sate lilit* (fish satay prepared with lemon grass), while carnivores really must try the *babi guling* (suckling pig, cooked Balinese style with crackling).

CENTRAL UBUD

Dewa Warung (Map p225; Jl Goutama; mains from 5000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Very cheap and popular backpackers' favourite with filling Indonesian faves and Balinese specials, including chicken with cashews and ginger (12,000Rp) and smoked duck.

Deli Cat (Map p225; ☎ 971284; Jl Dewi Sita; sandwiches 15,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Occupies a fine traffic-free position opposite the footie field, though more effort could go into the slightly pedestrian menu of salads, sandwiches and sausages. The wine list is excellent, including Aussie house reds by the glass (20,000Rp to 28,000Rp).

Warung Ibu Oka (Map p225; Jl Suweta; dishes 15,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Legendary Ubud place that specialises in one delicious dish – *babi guling*. Tables are communal and it has often run out by late afternoon.

Waroeng (Map p225; ☎ 970928; Monkey Forest Rd; meals from 16,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This is a hip, bright little place where you can create your own *nasi campur* (rice with a little meat, fish or vegetables) from an array of fresh items.

Tutmak (Map p225; ☎ 975754; Jl Dewi Sita; mains 19,000-48,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) With a double aspect overlooking the football pitch and busy Jl Dewi Sita, this enjoyable, if pricey, café-restaurant has low tables and a menu of Western dishes, sandwiches, juices and the like.

Three Monkeys (Map p225; ☎ 974830; Monkey Forest Rd; mains from 24,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Fine restaurant with tables evocatively set right by rice fields, making a wonderfully peaceful setting for a memorable meal. By day there are sandwiches and salads, at night feast on Indonesian classics, pasta and steaks.

EAST & SOUTH OF THE CENTRE

Lada Warung (Map p223; ☎ 972822; Jl Hanoman; meals 8000-15,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tiny, very clean and orderly modern *warung* with chunky wooden tables and very inexpensive and fresh local food – a *nasi goreng komplit* (*nasi goreng* with extra trimmings) is 10,000Rp.

Bali Buddha Organic Shop & Café (Map p223; ☎ 976324; Jl Jembawan 1; dishes 12,000-36,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Veggie temple to all things wholemeal and organic, with art exhibitions and a store downstairs selling healthy snacks and fruit and veg.

Kafé (Map p223; ☎ 970992; Jl Hanoman 446; www.balispirit.com; dishes 16,000-38,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Boho hang-out with a healthy eating menu (try the spiced pumpkin soup), tonic drinks and juices (like lime and mint slush), and there are magazines to browse and a great noticeboard.

Warung Enak (Map p223; ☎ 972911; Jl Raya Pengosekan; www.warungenakbali.com; dishes from 18,000Rp, mains 38,000-55,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) About 3km from central Ubud, this two-storey temple to kitsch – a riot of wacky lighting, mirrors and ornaments and mismatched furniture – has rice-paddy views from the breezy upper level. The creatively assembled modern Indonesian menu has plenty of veggie options.

Drinking

No-one comes to Ubud for wild nightlife, but these days a few bars offer after-dinner diversion.

Jazz Café (Map p223; ☎ 976594; Jl Sukma 2; 🍴 5-11.30pm) A mellow, middle-aged expat haunt with live jazz bands (except Sunday and Monday) from 8pm. Food is pricey at 50,000Rp a main, though substantial.

Putra Bar (Map p225; ☎ 975570; Monkey Forest Rd; 🍴 4pm-1am) The only real nightspot in town hosts live reggae, ska and indie bands, and films.

Entertainment

Try to see at least one of the Balinese dances performed in or near Ubud every night. The tourist office has the latest schedules, and sells tickets (50,000Rp).

Shopping

Pasar Seni (Art Market; Map p225; cnr Jl Raya Ubud & Monkey Forest Rd; 🍴 8am-8pm) The two-storey market sells a wide range of clothing, sarongs and souvenirs of variable quality at very negotiable prices, as do many small shops along Monkey Forest Rd.

Paintings are sold at many commercial galleries and museums: **Neka Gallery** (Map p223; ☎ 975034; Jl Raya Ubud; 🍴 9am-5pm) is one of the largest, while **Seniwati Gallery** (Map p223; ☎ 975485; www.seniwigallery.com; Jl Sriwedari 2B; 🍴 9am-5pm) showcases female artists.

For less expensive artworks, look in individual artists' studios on Jl Hanoman and in the village of Penestanan.

Getting There & Around

Public bemo stop at two convenient points in the centre of town. Orange bemo travel between Ubud and Gianyar (7000Rp, 30 minutes), which has bus and bemo connections to most of eastern Bali. Brown bemo go to/from Batubulan terminal (12,000Rp, 1½ hours), with connections to the other Denpasar terminals (another 2000Rp).

Perama (Map p223; ☎ 973316; Jl Hanoman) has a terminal that is inconveniently located south of town in Padangtegal. Sample prices: Sanur (20,000Rp, one hour); Kuta and the airport (30,000Rp, one hour); Padangbai (40,000Rp, 1¼ hours) and Lovina (from 85,000Rp, 2½ hours).

Car- and motorcycle-hire prices are as cheap as anywhere in Bali. Bicycles cost about 12,000Rp per day.

AROUND UBUD

Two kilometres east of the centre, the cavern of **Goa Gajah** (Elephant Cave; Map p223; admission 4100Rp; 🍴 8am-6pm) was discovered in the 1920s and is believed to have been a Buddhist hermitage. Nearby is **Yeh Pulu** (Map p223; admission 4100Rp; 🍴 8am-6pm), a complex of rock

carvings with carved bas-relief. A couple of kilometres north in Pejeng, **Pura Penataran Sasih** (Map p223; admission by donation; ☎ 9am-6pm) houses a bronze drum said to be 2000 years old. A legend tells of it falling to earth as the Moon of Pejeng.

In Tampaksiring, 11km northeast of Ubud on the road to Gianyar, **Gunung Kawi** (admission 4100Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm) is an astonishing group of stone *candi* (shrines) cut into cliffs on either side of the fecund, plunging Pakrisan River valley. The shrines are thought to have been carved as monuments to an 11th-century royal family headed by King Udayana, though this theory is open to conjecture. Whatever their origin, Gunung Kawi is certainly one of Bali's most impressive sights. Access is signposted from Tampaksiring, via a 10-minute descent down a steep, slippery staircase.

A few kilometres north of Tampaksiring, in the shadow of the Soekarno-era presidential palace, is the holy spring and temple of **Tirta Empul** (admission 4100Rp; ☎ 9am-6pm). An inscription dates the spring from AD 926. There are fine carvings and *garuda* on the courtyard buildings. Both sites can be reached by bemo (3000Rp, 30 minutes) from Ubud.

PURA BESAKIH

This is Bali's 'mother temple'. With a photogenic location, 1000m up the flanks of Gunung Agung, **Pura Besakih** (☎ 0361-222387; admission 7500Rp, camera charge 1000Rp; ☎ dawn-dusk) is actually a complex of 35 separate, but related, religious structures, which only narrowly escaped destruction during the devastating eruption of Gunung Agung in 1963. Although the architecture is a bit of a disappointment and the inner courtyards are largely closed to visitors, the temple bursts into life during its colourful festivals – particularly during **Odalan**, the temple's anniversary, which falls in the 10th month of the Balinese calendar (usually April). Unfortunately you'll encounter an army of guides offering their 'services'; haggle hard and agree on a price first if you hire one.

Most trips to Pura Besakih require a change in Semarapura, about one hour away. Ask the driver to drop you at the temple, rather than the village, which is about 1km south. As transport options evaporate around 3pm, getting here with your own wheels is far more convenient.

GUNUNG AGUNG

Often obscured beneath a thick duvet of mist, Gunung Agung is a relatively infrequent feature of Bali's skyline. When the clouds part, however, Bali's highest and most revered mountain is an imposing sight and is visible from much of southern and eastern Bali.

Gunung Agung is a relatively moody volcano. A 700m-wide crater marks the mountain's summit and in 1963, Gunung Agung shrank by 126m after a devastating eruption. It now stands 3142m above sea level.

A hike to the summit is best attempted in the dry season (April to September) – the route may be treacherously slippery at other times. There are several possible approaches. From the village of Besakih (about 1km south of the temple complex) it's a very demanding climb: allow at least six hours going up and four hours coming down. Start at midnight to reach the summit for sunrise, before it's enveloped in cloud. You'll need a guide; inquire at the information office at the Pura Besakih car park or contact a guide through **Pondok Wisata Puri Agung** (☎ 0361-23037). Guides ask 350,000Rp per person (minimum two people), with discounts for larger groups.

A shorter route is from **Pura Pasar Agung** (Agung Market Temple), at around 1500m on the southern slopes of the mountain, which can be reached by a sealed road north from **Selat**. From the temple you can climb to the top in three or four hours, but it's also a demanding trek. Report to the police station at Selat before you start, and take a guide; they'll charge about 300,000Rp, plus the cost of food and transport. The closest accommodation is **Pondok Wisata Puri Agung** (☎ 0361-23037; s/d 80,000/100,000Rp), on the road between Selat and Duda.

Agung hikes can also be organised in the village of Tirta Gangga, home to several trekking operations and guides.

SEMARAPURA (KLUNGKUNG)

☎ 0366 / pop 28,000

Once the centre of an important Balinese kingdom, Semarapura (also known as Klungkung) is the capital of Klungkung regency. Formerly the seat of the Dewa Agung dynasty, the **Semara Pura Complex** (admission 5000Rp; ☎ 7am-6pm) has now largely crumbled away, but history and architecture buffs will enjoy a wander past the **Kertha Gosa** (Hall of Justice) and **Bale Kambang** (Floating Pavilion).

Frequent bemo and minibuses from Denpasar (Batubulan terminal) pass through Semarapura (11,000Rp, one hour) on the way to Padangbai and Amlapura.

NUSA LEMBONGAN

☎ 0366

Nusa Lembangan is one of three islands (along with Nusa Penida and Nusa Ceninga) that together comprise the Nusa Penida archipelago. Nusa Lembangan, with its scuba diving, surf breaks, white-sand beaches and hotels, is the biggest tourist drawcard and remains a pleasant escape from the hubbub of Bali's south coast resorts. Jungutbatu Beach is the most convenient base.

Information

Bank BPD will accept cash and travellers cheques, as will many hotels. Pondok Baruna has internet access.

Activities

World Diving (☎ 081 2390 0686; www.world-diving.com; Pondok Baruna, Jungutbatu) is a PADI school offering courses (open-water is US\$350) and dive trips (from US\$60 for two dives including all gear) on the exceptional reefs around Lembangan, and beyond.

The dry season is surfing season in Nusa Lembangan, with winds bringing in the waves from the southeast. The Shipwreck, Lacerations and Playground surf breaks are off the island's west coast, near the little settlement of Jungutbatu.

Sleeping & Eating

Most of the cheap accommodation is in Jungutbatu, a strip of working beach on the northwest coast.

Agung's Lembangan Lodge (☎ 24483; r 60,000-175,000Rp) Well-priced, simple but clean rooms and smarter, attractive thatched cottages. The restaurant has ocean views, a pool table and a much nicer atmosphere than most other places. It's 1km north of the dock.

Linda Bungalows (☎ 24495; r75,000-100,000Rp) On a great section of the beach, this is a very well presented and maintained place with 12 clean cold-water rooms, one offers an ocean view. It's just north of Agung's.

Pondok Baruna (☎ 081 2390 0686; www.world-diving.com; r 75,000-100,000Rp) A popular place with friendly staff, the seven smallish tiled rooms here are pleasant and their porches face the

ocean. Great food is served (dishes 10,000Rp to 12,000Rp). Just north of the dock.

Getting There & Away

Public boats (60,000Rp, 1½ hours) leave at 7.45am and other times of the day from the northern end of Sanur Beach. Or book up with Perama (which is more reliable), whose boat leaves at 8.30am (70,000Rp, 1½ hours).

PADANGBAI

☎ 0363

Padangbai is the main port for ferries to Lombok, but it's a pleasant enough place in its own right. Lying at the bottom of a wooded headland, this classic cove has a sandy beach lined with fishing boats and plenty of decent hostels, restaurants and a couple of dive schools.

Information

Made Homestay (☎ 41441; Jl Silayukti; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 9am-9pm) has internet access and a *wartel*. There are ATMs in nearby Candi Desa.

Activities

There's excellent diving around the east coast of Bali. **Water Worxx Dive Center** (☎ 41220; www.waterworxxbali.com; Jl Silayukti) offers two dives at the blue lagoon for US\$40, while **Absolute Scuba** (☎ 081 7474 5536; www.absolutescubabali.com; Jl Silayukti) charges US\$55 for diving the *Tulamben* wreck.

The good folk at Topi Inn (p230) offer myriad workshops and fun activities from *ikat*-weaving and *batik*-painting (US\$12 to US\$15) to coconut tree-climbing!

Sleeping

Hotels fill up quickly, and some increase their prices in August, but otherwise you should have no bother finding a bed. Most places are on Jl Silayukti, the beachfront road.

Kerti Beach Inn (☎ 41391; kertibeachinn@yahoo.com; Jl Silayukti 9; s/d from 40,000/50,000Rp; ☎) Justifiably popular, Kerti's has pleasant *lumbung*-style (rice barn) bungalows all with ceiling fans and cold-water bathrooms. Catch the sunrise or, failing that, the Lombok ferries from its 1st-floor terrace eatery.

Made Homestay (☎ 41441; mades_padangbai@hotmail.com; Jl Silayukti; s/d 40,000/60,000Rp; ☎) A good budget choice, the large plain rooms here have high ceilings and bathrooms with Western

toilets; those on the upper level enjoy partial sea views.

Kembar Inn (☎ 41364; Jl Segara 6; r 50,000-150,000Rp; 🏠) Clean, neat little homestay in the village with six good rooms.

Padangbai Billabong (☎ 081 2360 7946; Jl Silayukti 14; cottage with fan 60,000Rp, r with air-con 150,000Rp; 🏠) Choose from comfortable, if smallish, rooms with elaborately carved wooden doors, verandas and big bathrooms or go native in one of the rice barn-style two-storey cottages at the rear.

Topi Inn (☎ 41424; www.topiinn.nl; Jl Silayukti 99; d 90,000Rp; 🏠) Highly sociable and atmospheric Dutch-owned place with a huge café with magazines and books to browse. Five attractive, well-presented rooms and a vast attic area that's sometimes used as an accommodation overspill. Numerous craft and cultural workshops can be organised here.

Eating & Drinking

Puri Rai (☎ 41187; Jl Silayukti 7X; mains 16,000-30,000Rp; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Smart seafood place with an eclectic menu that takes in jaffles and a number of veggie selections, seafood and Indonesian dishes. There's espresso coffee, Bali-brewed Storm beer, and cocktails which are best savoured in the bar upstairs.

Ozone (☎ 41780; Jl Segara 8; mains from 17,000Rp; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The nearest thing Padangbai has to a bar, this place has walls covered in travellers' scrawls, filling Western and local food and occasionally some live music.

Padang Bai (Jl Silayukti; fish 20,000Rp; 🍽️ lunch & dinner) Simple *warung* where owner Dana serves up wicked fresh fish and squid cooked in your choice of either garlic, chilli, or onion-and-chilli sauce.

Getting There & Away

From the car park in front of the port, bemo go to Amlapura (11,000Rp, 45 minutes), via Candidasa (5000Rp, 20 minutes) and Denpasar (17,000Rp, 1¼ hours). Tourists are commonly overcharged.

Perama (☎ 41419; www.peramatour.com; Jl Pelabuhan), just inland from the main jetty, runs shuttle buses to Kuta and the airport (40,000Rp, 1¼ hours), Ubud (30,000Rp, one hour) and Lovina (100,000Rp, 3½ hours).

Public ferries between Padangbai and Lombok (Lombok) run every two hours, 24 hours a day (21,000Rp, 4½ to 5½ hours).

CANDIDASA

☎ 0363

Candidasa is not natural backpacking terrain, catering mainly to midrange tourists, but there are several decent budget options here as well. The resort's beach was washed out to sea years ago when developers blew up the offshore reef to make cement, but a pleasant sandy sliver survives on Candi's eastern fringes.

Orientation & Information

Candidasa is a one-street (Jl Raya Candidasa) town, cut in half by a pleasant lagoon. The area east of the lagoon tends to be a little quieter.

Internet cafés, travel agencies and ATMs are dotted along the main drag.

Sights & Activities

Right next to the lagoon, **Gedong Gandhi Ashram** (☎ 41108; www.ashramgandhi.com) is an ashram that was established in 1976, after the founder was inspired by the teachings and principles of Mahatma Gandhi. It's looking a little run-down these days, but provides a home for disadvantaged children, a kindergarten for local families, library, yoga sessions (6.30am daily) and offers free acupuncture (Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1pm to 4pm). Volunteers who want to teach English or help out are provided with free accommodation.

There's reasonable **snorkelling** offshore; Seaside Cottages has masks and fins for rent (20,000Rp).

Sleeping

The quietest area to stay is about 1.5km east of the centre, down a shady lane known as Jl Pantai Indah. Here you'll find a slimline beach, and you're well away from traffic.

Temple Cafe & Seaside Cottages (☎ 41629; www.bali-seafront-bungalows.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; s/d from 35,000/50,000Rp; 🏠) There are no fewer than six classes of room at this well-run, centrally located place that meanders right down to the sea (where you'll find some sun loungers). All are kept very neat and tidy, and there's a great café here too (see opposite).

Puri Oka Cottages (☎ 41092; puri_oka@hotmail.com; Jl Pantai Indah; r 80,000-170,000Rp; 🏠) Pass through a banana grove east of town, and this place has a beachfront plot, and homely rooms, all with bedside lights and en-suite bathrooms.

Sekar Orchid (☎ 41086; www.sekar-orchid.com; Jl Pantai Indah 26; bungalow with fan from 150,000Rp) It's not for the fiscally challenged but this place, located beachside east of the lagoon, is worth every rupiah. The Dharmawaty family used to live in Germany, and keep an efficient and immaculate ship, with gorgeous cottages decorated with local artefacts, and all the hot-water bathrooms have tubs.

Other recommendations:

Genggong (☎ 41105; Jl Pantai Indah; s/d with fan 55,000/65,000Rp, air-con bungalows 130,000Rp; 🏠) Serviceable rooms right on the beach.

Ari Homestay (☎ 081 7970 7339; Jl Raya Candidasa; d from 65,000Rp) On the traffic-blighted main drag, but run by some amiable Aussies.

Ida's Homestay (☎ 41096; jsidas1@aol.com; Jl Raya Candidasa; d from 130,000Rp) Quirky but comfy wooden bungalows in a shady setting west of the lagoon.

Eating & Drinking

There are dozens of eateries in Candidasa along the main drag. For a cheap scoff check the evening food stalls at the western end of town near the Perama office.

ourpick Temple Cafe (☎ 41629; Jl Raya Candidasa; mains 24,000-34,000Rp; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Despite the roadside location, this is a friendly, relaxed place for a *lassi* (an Indian yogurt-based drink), cappuccino or a cocktail, with newspapers and books to read. Tuck into the generous Western mains, or British home-comfort snacks such as toast with Marmite.

Iguana Café (☎ 41973; Jl Raya Candidasa; mains from 26,000Rp; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Offers a good spread of local and seafood dishes and there's live music some nights.

Legend Rock Café (Jl Raya Candidasa; set meals 32,000Rp; 🍽️ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Your best bet for a (not so) wild night out; clap along with the grannies to a covers band (Wednesday and Saturday nights). Happy hour is 7pm to 8pm, when Bintangs are 11,500Rp. Also offers Western and local grub.

Getting There & Away

Candidasa is on the main road between Amlapura and Denpasar – there's no terminal, so hail bemo anywhere along the main road (buses probably won't stop).

Perama (☎ 41114; www.peramatour.com; Jl Raya Candidasa) is at the western end of the strip, near Ari Homestay. It runs tourist shuttle buses to Sanur (30,000Rp, 1¼ hours), Kuta

(30,000Rp, two hours), Ubud (30,000Rp, one hour), Lovina (80,000Rp, three hours) and Padangbai (10,000Rp, 20 minutes).

AMLAPURA

☎ 0363

Amlapura isn't worth making a diversion for, but there are worse places to stop if you are already making the trip through eastern Bali. Twenty-first-century hustle and bustle dominates the streets today, but you can catch a glimpse of the fast-fading 'good old days' at the former palace of the Raja of Karangasem, the **Puri Agung Karangasem** (Jl Sultan Agung; admission 3000Rp; 🕒 8am-6pm).

Villa Amlapura (☎ 23246; Jl Gajah Mada; r 65,000-130,000Rp), around the corner from the palace, is a friendly place if you're not in a rush to get back on the road.

Amlapura's bus/bemo terminal has regular connections to/from Denpasar (Batubulan terminal; 15,000Rp, two hours) and around the north coast to Singaraja (28,000Rp, 3¼ hours).

TIRTA GANGGA

☎ 0363

The village under the volcano, Tirta Gangga (Water of the Ganges) sits in the shadow of Gunung Agung and in the midst of some of Bali's most beautiful scenery. Passed in a gear change and a slow right-hand turn, it's small, isolated and quiet and remains a blissfully serene stopover on the slow road through Bali.

Sights & Activities

The old **Taman Tirta Gangga** (www.tirtagangga.com; admission 3000Rp; 🕒 7am-6pm) water palace has ornamental ponds and swimming pools – a dip is an extra 6000Rp. A typhoon destroyed its auditorium and felled numerous trees in March 2007, but the palace remains open to visitors.

The surrounding countryside has sublime rice-field vistas and good **trekking** possibilities through stunning evergreen landscapes. Popular destinations include the temple of Pura Lempuyang (five hours return from Ngis, a village 5km northeast of Tirta Gangga and the Buddhist villages of Bukit Kusambi (six hours return from Tirta Gangga). Hikes to Agung can also be organised here: Nioman Budiasa at Genta Bali Warung asks US\$45 (minimum two people) for this trip.

Sleeping & Eating

For the cheapest eats head to the *warung* near the palace gate.

Dhingin Taman Inn (☎ 22059; r 40,000-80,000Rp) Venerable, ramshackle warren of a place with bizarre colour schemes and décor mismatched enough to send a feng shui freak gaga. On the plus side the family running the place could not be more friendly, the grub is good (dishes 7000Rp to 12,000Rp), and prices are low.

Rijasa (☎ 21873; d 70,000Rp) A row of good, solid cottages that are spacious and clean and have fine views from their elevated porches. There's a cheap *warung* and a store out front.

Good Karma (☎ 22445; s/d 90,000/100,000Rp) Directly facing shimmering rice paddies, these four rustic cottages (two doubles and two twins) are clean, homely and peaceful. The attractive roadside restaurant serves delicious food (dishes 10,000Rp to 18,000Rp), including fish satay, BBQ dishes and many vegetarian options.

Puri Sawah (☎ 21847; r 100,000, bungalows 200,000Rp) A little out of town, up a steep access road, this place enjoys sweeping views and has spacious, comfy rooms and huge bungalows. There's a lush garden and a good café with Indonesian and Western food (mains 16,000Rp to 23,000Rp).

Genta Bali Warung (☎ 22436; mains from 12,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Quirky traveller-gearied roadside café with a menu of 'spaggetty' (13,000Rp), curries and local dishes.

Getting There & Away

Regular bemo and minibuses pass through Tirta Gangga on routes north of Amlapura (2000Rp to Amlapura); just flag them down.

Perama tourist buses also pass through to Kuta (40,000Rp, 2½ hours); try your hotel for tickets and times.

AMED & THE FAR EAST COAST

☎ 0363

The coast east of Amed is one of Bali's largely forgotten stretches of seaside. Developers are starting to gatecrash the party, but the island's wild east is a far cry from the concrete jungle of the south coast.

Most of the development is spread along the coastal road, around the bays of Jemeluk, Bunutan and Lipah. Facilities are improving, with several hotels and stores offering telephone, internet and money-changing services.

Euro-Dive (☎ 23469; www.eurodivebali.com), in Amed, is a professional scuba outfit offering courses and dive packages (from US\$45).

Sleeping & Eating

Amed Café (☎ 23473; www.amedcafe.com; d from 80,000Rp; ☺ ☑ ☒) Located a little further east than Three Brothers, Amed Café is a very well-run operation with several classes of attractive accommodation, including budget rooms and *lumbung*-style cottages. Diving and snorkelling trips can be arranged here, and there's also a restaurant (dishes 7000Rp to 22,000Rp) and internet café over the road.

Three Brothers (☎ 23472; r 90,000-130,000Rp) This long-running place about a kilometre east of Amed has a superb beachfront plot and neat, clean tiled bungalows with fine sea views. The café here serves up good local food, including specials like *sate ikan* (fish satay).

Aiona Health Garden (☎ 0813 3816 1730; r from 170,000) This spot has well-constructed bungalows, as well as a veggie restaurant with local and Indonesian meals (from 20,000Rp) and invigorating juices in a gorgeous, fragrant herb garden setting. It is 2km east of Bunutan.

Eka Purnama (☎ 0868 1212 1685; www.eka-purnama.com; s/d 190,000/230,000Rp) With oceanic views from its well-constructed wooden bungalows and twin-decked restaurant, this is an inspirational place to stay for vista junkies. There's also a family house that sleeps six (perfect if you can get a backpacking tribe together), and mountain bikes and snorkelling gear for hire. It's just before Aas, about 11km from Amed.

Other good places around the coast:
Galang Kangin Bungalows (☎ 23480; Jemeluk; s/d from 65,000/85,000Rp) Simple, clean rooms with expansive sea views and cold-water bathrooms.
Waeni (☎ 23515; madesani@hotmail.com; s/d 80,000/95,000Rp) Rustic cottages in a wonderful cliff-top location overlooking Bunutan.

Getting There & Around

Regular bemo between Singaraja (22,000Rp, three hours) and Amlapura (6000Rp, 40 minutes) go through Culik, the turn-off for Amed. Infrequent bemo then link Culik with the resort villages. If you arrive or leave late you may have to charter an *ojek* (around 2000Rp per kilometre).

TULAMBEN

☎ 0363

First impressions of Tulamben, a featureless sprawl strung out along the coastal road, are hardly inspiring. But don a mask and fins and an aquatic extravaganza is revealed, for offshore is the coral-encrusted wreck of the US cargo ship *Liberty* – probably the most popular dive site in Bali. Even snorkellers can enjoy the wreck (located 50m east of Puri Madhu Bungalows), and other fine dive sites are nearby. Reputable dive operations include **Tauch Terminal** (☎ 0361-774504; www.tauch-terminal.com) and **Ocean Sun** (☎ 54699; www.ocean-sun.com), based at Puri Wirata (below); two dives typically cost US\$45 including all gear and a guide.

Sleeping & Eating

Most hotels have a restaurant, a dive shop and a variety of rooms.

Puri Madha Bungalows (☎ 22921; r from 70,000Rp) Right opposite the wreck, and sitting on a black pebble beach, this place has good fan-cooled economy rooms (numbers 1 and 2 have direct sea views) and pricey air-con bungalows. There's a dive shop on site and plenty of bubble-blowing banter in the little café.

Puri Wirata (☎ 54699; s/d incl breakfast 80,000/100,000Rp) Excellent new place with spotless modern rooms, all with sleek hot-water bathrooms. It's right on the main road, but a huge bacon 'n' egg breakfast is included.

Rumah Makan Sandya (☎ 22915; mains 20,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Also on the main road, this no-nonsense eatery serves up decent grub and travel information from its breezy garden setting.

Getting There & Away

Buses and minibuses pass through Tulamben en route between Amlapura (8000Rp, one hour) and Singaraja (18,000Rp, 2½ hours) but they become less frequent after 3pm.

SINGARAJA

☎ 0362 / pop 144,000

Disney fans may be amused to know that Singaraja translates as 'Lion King', but the big city of northern Bali offers little more than a handful of Dutch colonial buildings and an increasingly weathered, olde-worlde waterfront.

If you are sick, it is also worth knowing that the city is home to the biggest hospital

in northern Bali, **RSUP Umum** (☎ 26277; Jl Ngurah Rai; ☺ 24hr).

It's best to stay at Lovina, about 10km to the west, which has far better options than Singaraja. Food stalls congregate around the **main market** (nr Jl Durian & Jl Sawo; ☺ 8am-7pm).

Singaraja has three bemo/bus terminals. From the main Sukasada terminal, about 3km south of town, minibuses go to Denpasar (Ubung terminal; 22,000Rp, 2½ hours) via Bedugul (8000Rp, one hour) about every 30 minutes from 6am to 4pm.

Banyuasi terminal, on the western side of town, has minibuses for Gilimanuk (16,000Rp, two hours), Lovina (4000Rp, 25 minutes) and express buses to Surabaya (200,000Rp, 11 hours) and Jakarta (350,000Rp, 24 hours) in Java.

The Penarukan terminal, 2km east of town, has bemo to Yeh Sanih (5000Rp, 40 minutes) and Amlapura (28,000Rp, 3½ hours) via the coastal road.

AROUND SINGARAJA

Yeh Sanih

Freshwater springs at the spot, 14km east of Singaraja, are channelled into clean **swimming pools** (admission 2000Rp; ☺ 8am-6pm), set in pleasant gardens. There is frequent public transport from Singaraja.

Gitgit

About 11km south of Singaraja, there is a well-signposted path that goes 800m west from the main road to the touristy waterfall, **Air Terjun Gitgit** (admission 3300Rp; ☺ 8am-5pm). About 2km further up the hill, **Gitgit Multi-Tier Waterfall** (admission 5000Rp; ☺ 8am-5pm) is less spectacular, but it's a nicer walk. You can have a refreshing dip at both falls.

Minibuses between Singaraja and Denpasar will stop at Gitgit.

LOVINA

☎ 0362

Lovina is the north coast's beach-bum magnet, an attractive necklace of villages and black-sand beaches catering to budget travellers drawn by the calm seas, family-owned guesthouses and laid-back ambience. There's no great party scene here, but there are a few bars and some atmospheric restaurants – the resort mainly attracts couples searching for a relaxed tropical vibe rather than an all-night rave.

Lovina is still struggling to pick itself up after the tourist lulls that followed the Bali bombings, and big discounts are now on offer (except in July and August). Building a bypass and a few speed bumps would be one way to kick start a recovery: one of the banes of getting around Lovina is having to compete with the thundering traffic that rips along the north coast highway.

Information

Kalibukbuk is the focus of the Lovina area, with plenty of moneychangers and *wartel*.

BCA ATM (cnr Jl Bina Ria & Jl Raya Lovina; 24hr)

Police station (☎ 41010; Jl Raya Lovina)

Spice Cyber (☎ 41305; Jl Bina Ria; per min 300Rp;

☎ 8am-midnight; 📺) Modern PCs but no broadband.

Activities

Divers should head to **Spice Dive** (☎ 41509; www.balispicedive.com; Jl Bina Ria, Kalibukbuk; 2 dives from US\$45), which also has an office on the beach, 500m west of Jl Bina Ria. The island Pulau Menjangan, situated off Bali's northwestern tip, is home to reef sharks and prolific sea life, and has the best diving on the north coast.

Lovina's touts constantly hype **dolphin-watching trips** (40,000Rp), which leave daily at 6am.

Courses

Balinese cooking courses are offered by **Adjani** (☎ 081 2385 6802; per person from 150,000Rp), 1.5km west of Kalibukbuk.

Sleeping

Most of Lovina's cheap accommodation is clustered on side roads to the beach. In high season listed prices can increase by 25% or so; in quiet periods discounts are likely. Most places include breakfast.

KALIBUKBUK

A little over 10km from Singaraja, this is the 'centre' of Lovina, with the biggest concentration of hotels, restaurants... and touts.

Harris Homestay (☎ 41152; Gang Binaria; s/d from 40,000/50,000Rp) This venerable place in a quiet location is run by a friendly soul. It has some of the cheapest beds in town.

Angsoka Hotel (☎ 41841; www.angsoka.com; Gang Binaria; d from 60,000Rp; 📺 📺) This large hotel complex is not the prettiest kid in town, but there's a plethora of options, including a pretty row of fine-value cold-water cottages (80,000Rp), and the pool area is very peaceful.

Taman Lily's (☎ 41307; Jl Ketepang; s/d 60,000/75,000Rp) The chintzy pink décor is a little unsettling, but this family-run place is as immaculate as Barbie's summerhouse and there's a nice garden for lounging in.

Pondok Elsa (Gang Binaria; d from 65,000Rp; 📺) A fabulously baroque exterior, though the seven tidy rooms here are far less extrovert, but good value nonetheless.

Manik Sari (☎ 41089; Gang Binaria; d from 70,000Rp; 📺) Good-value, spacious cottages scattered around what must be Lovina's most elaborately manicured garden, complete with concrete Hindu gods.

Villa Jaya (☎ 700 1238; Jl Ketepang; d with fan/air-con 100,000/150,000Rp; 📺 📺) A great deal, this newish hotel enjoys a quiet location a short stroll from the beach. All the tiled rooms are immaculate, with quality mattresses, bedside reading lights and balconies. It's run by a friendly family that also offers cooking courses.

OUTSIDE KALIBUKBUK

The little fishing village of Anturan is a bit scruffy, but there's a good community buzz, plenty of hostels and a regular stream of backpackers. Otherwise, most other places are located down dirt trails that run off the highway.

Puspa Rama (☎ 42070; agungdayu@yahoo.com; Jl Kubu Gembong, Anturan; s/d 60,000/70,000Rp) Six fan-cooled bungalows with lampshades and pictures on the walls, located in a leafy garden plot.

Gede Homestay (☎ 41526; gedehomesat@yahoo.com; Jl Kubu Gembong, Anturan; d with cold-/hot-water bathroom 60,000/80,000Rp; 📺) A hospitable, family-run place that's been switched on to travellers' needs for years; the rooms are spacious and there's a great seafood café where you can watch the fishermen come and go. Ask the owner nicely and he'll also give you a free ride into Kalibukbuk.

ourpick Kubu Lalang (☎ 42207; s/d from 90,000/130,000Rp) Down a lonely track through the rice paddies, this tranquil and exceptionally well-run place has a choice of beautiful rice barn-style cottages. Most have verandas with day beds and some have wonderful open-air pebble bathrooms with tubs. There's a seafood restaurant and the staff could not be more helpful. It's east of Anturan.

Suma (☎ 41566; www.sumahotel.com; Jl Laviana; r from 100,000Rp; 📺 📺) The frilly décor in the rooms is a bit overelaborate, but the whole place is immaculately kept, with pebble-dash detailing, a well-tended garden, large pool and café. It's between Anturan and Kalibukbuk.

Bilibo Beach Cottages (☎ 41355; Jl Raya Lovina; r with fan/air-con 100,000/200,000Rp; 📺) Right on the beach, and close to a snorkelling spot, these spacious bungalows represent decent value; all have balconies and bamboo furniture. It's west of Kalibukbuk.

Other recommendations between Anturan and Kalibukbuk:

Ray's Beach Inn (☎ 41088; Jl Laviana; s/d 35,000/45,000Rp) Grungy, but well cheap.

Hotel Indra Pura (☎ 41560; Jl Laviana; r 60,000Rp)

Decent budget rooms facing a central garden.

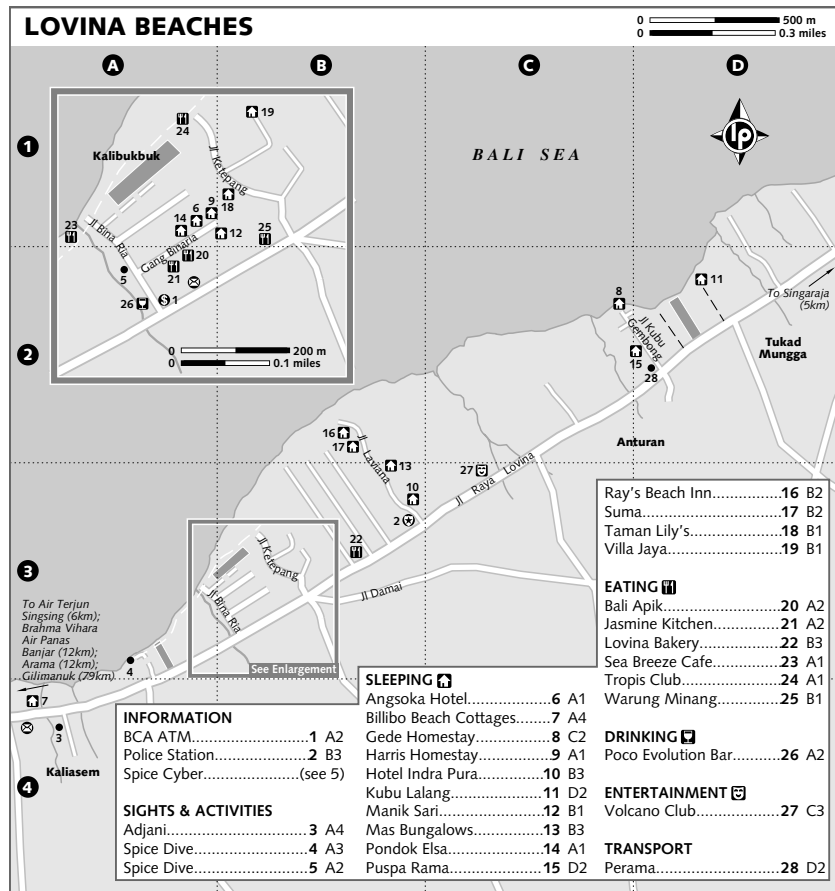
Mas Bungalows (☎ 41773; mas_bali@hotmail.com; Jl Laviana; d from 80,000Rp; 📺) Smallish, clean rooms, some with air-con.

Eating & Drinking

Most hotels in Lovina serve food, and there are food carts, *warung*, cafés and quite classy restaurants – Kalibukbuk has the best choices. There's a cluster of bars at the top end of Jl Bina Ria, all of which have happy hours.

Bali Apik (☎ 41050; Gang Binaria; mains from 15,000Rp; 📺 lunch & dinner) A blueprint backpackers café, where you can get a facial (yes, really) while you savour a Bintang and wait for the house special, two-person *rijsttaffel* (Indonesian feast; 70,000Rp).

Tropis Club (☎ 42090; Jl Ketepang; dishes 16,000-32,000Rp; 📺 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Large new place



just off the beach with a wood-fired pizza oven. Films are shown here most nights.

Sea Breeze Cafe (☎ 41138; Jl Bina Ria; mains 20,000-36,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) This place enjoys the best location in Lovina, with beachside tables offering sweeping views along the coast to the rugged western hills. The extensive menu is a little pricey, but has Western food including cauliflower cheese and pasta, Indonesian staples, jolly fine cakes and a full cocktail list (30,000Rp to 45,000Rp).

our pick **Jasmine Kitchen** (☎ 41565; Gang Binaria; mains 20,000-40,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This stylish pan-Asian restaurant on two levels tries a lot harder than most in Kalibukbuk, and arguably serves the best food in town. Lounge on an axe-head cushion and treat yourself to a Malay-style Penang curry or Thai noodles. Definitely leave room for dessert (which include homemade ice cream) and an espresso.

Other recommendations:

Warung Minang (☎ 081 2393 0792; Jl Raya Lovina; dishes 6000-8000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) A modern take on a Padang restaurant.

Poco Evolution Bar (☎ 41535; Jl Bina Ria; ☺ 11am-1am) Probably the most popular of several bars on this strip; covers bands perform here most nights. Also serves travellers' fare (dishes 12,000-18,000Rp).

Lovina Bakery (☎ 42235; Jl Raya Lovina; sandwiches 22,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Upmarket deli that sells baguettes, German bread, cheese, cured meats and wines.

Clubbing

Volcano Club (☎ 41222; Jl Raya Lovina; ☺ 9pm-late) Sculpted out of cement, like a volcano set from *The Flintstones*, this is Lovina's only night-spot. You'll probably have the dance floor to yourself unless it's high season.

Getting There & Around

From southern Bali, by public transport, you will need a connection in Singaraja, from where there are also air-con buses to Java (see p233 for details). Regular bemo go from Singaraja's Banyuasri terminal to Kalibukbuk (4000Rp, 25 minutes).

Perama (☎ 41161; www.peramatour.com; Jl Raya Lovina) links Lovina with Kuta and the airport (70,000Rp, 3¼ hours), Ubud (70,000Rp, 2½ hours) and other destinations including Padangbai (100,000Rp, 3½ hours) and even the Gilis in Lombok (300,000Rp, 12 hours), but a minimum number of passengers is required.

Lovina is an excellent base from which to explore northern and central Bali; rates and hire prices for cars and motorcycles are quite reasonable. For an excellent, experienced driver call **Made Wijana** (☎ 0813 3856 3027), who knows northern Bali very well and can organise excursions all over the island at fair rates. Bicycles can be hired for about 12,000Rp per day.

AROUND LOVINA

About 5km west of Kalibukbuk, a sign points to **Air Terjun Singingin** (Daybreak Waterfall), where you can have a refreshing swim. The falls are sometimes just a trickle in the dry season.

About 10km from Kalibukbuk, near the village of Banjar, a side road leads for 4km to **Brahma Vihara Arama**, a Buddhist monastery. It's a handsome structure with views down the valley and across to the sea. Not far from the monastery, the **Air Panas Banjar** (Hot Springs; admission 4100Rp; ☺ 8am-6pm) feed several pools where you can soak in the soothing sulphurous water, surrounded by lush tropical gardens.

GUNUNG BATUR AREA

☎ 0366

Volcanic Gunung Batur (1717m) is a major tourist magnet, offering treks to the summit (see opposite) and spectacular views of Danau Batur (Lake Batur), at the bottom of a huge caldera. Touts and tourist coaches detract from the experience around the rim of the vast crater, but the crater lake and cone of Batur are well worth exploring. Entry to the area costs 4000Rp per person.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Regular buses go to Kintamani from Denpasar (Batubulan terminal) via Ubud and Payangan (21,000Rp, 2½ hours); some continue to Singaraja. Bemo regularly shuttle back and forth around the crater rim, between Penelokan and Kintamani (2000Rp). Public bemo from Penelokan to the lakeside villages go mostly in the morning (5000Rp to Toya Bungkah, 30 minutes).

Perama shuttles run to Kintamani in busy periods; check with their **Kuta office** (☎ 0361-751551; www.peramatour.com; Jl Legian 39).

Around the Crater Rim

From the south, **Penelokan** is the first place you'll come to on the rim of the caldera. There's a brilliant view if it's clear, but be

prepared for wet, cold and cloudy conditions, and aggressive souvenir selling. Big restaurants do buffet lunches for tour groups – small restaurants and *warung* are better value.

Further northwest, the villages of **Batur** and **Kintamani** virtually run together. Batur's **Pura Ulun Danu** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk) is an important temple, while Kintamani is famed for its colourful **market**. Continue to **Penulisan**, where Bali's highest temple (at 1745m), **Pura Puncak Penulisan** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk), has a great view to the north coast.

Around Danau Batur

KEDISAN

Kedisian is a quiet village at the bottom of the road down from Penelokan. There are fewer guides touting treks here than in nearby Toya Bungkah.

A stone's throw from the lake, **Hotel Surya** (☎ 51139; r with cold/hot-water bathroom from 60,000/80,000Rp) has a choice of tidy, tiled rooms, some with great views across the water. The restaurant serves good local food and the management can advise about hiring a local guide.

Hotel Astra Dana (☎ 52091; s/d 50,000-80,000Rp) is a little cheaper but it's looking a bit worse for wear.

TOYA BUNGKAH

From Kedisian an undulating paved road weaves through fields of lava to Toya Bungkah, the usual jumping off point for an ascent of Gunung Batur. The village itself is a scruffy assembly of rusty tin-roofed homes and the locals have a reputation for being gruff and direct.

Activities

There are several sets of hot springs in Toya Bungkah, the most formal – and expensive – of which is the **Natural Hot Spring Swimming Pool** (☎ 51204; admission US\$5; ☺ 7am-8pm) in the middle of the village.

The most popular trek is from Toya Bungkah to the top of Gunung Batur for sunrise – a magnificent sight requiring a 4am start from the village. The **Association of Mount Batur Trekking Guides** (HPPGB; ☎ 52362; volcanotrek@hotmail.com) operates a local monopoly and an extremely complicated system of charges that works out at about 180,000Rp for one to four people to hike Batur; breakfast is extra. Its office is opposite Arlina's. Those attempting to trek Batur

alone can expect hassle and intimidation from this association.

Sleeping & Eating

Most of the hotels listed here have restaurants, all with similar menus and prices.

Under the Volcano III (☎ 081 3386 0081; r 60,000Rp) Right by the shore, this place has the best location in town and six quiet rooms with textile wall hangings and bathtubs. If it's full try the two other nearby inns in the Volcano empire, all run by the same cheery family.

Arlina's (☎ 51165; r 60,000-100,000Rp) These semi-detached cottages facing a central garden were about to be renovated at the time of research, hopefully to a slightly less dour design. The restaurant here serves up mean grilled *mujair* (lake fish; 20,000Rp) and less impressive Western food.

Lakeside Cottages (☎ 51249; www.lakesidebali.com; r incl breakfast US\$8-36; 🏠) With a perfect water's edge location, this attractive hotel has some simple tiled economy rooms with cold-water bathrooms. The breakfast is American style, and if you book via the net, you get a discount.

Volcano Breeze Cafe (☎ 51824; mains 15,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Close to the lake, this rustic travellers-style café modestly describes itself as 'the fantastic grill house', though 'decent local grub but be prepared for a long wait' might be more apt.

DANAU BRATAN AREA

☎ 0368

This area of pretty lakes is in the crater of an old, large-extinct volcano. The main village is **Candikuning**, which has a bemo stop, a good local market with an incredible array of spices (including nutmeg and vanilla pods) and nuts. The graceful **Pura Ulun Danau Bratan** (☎ 21191; admission 3300Rp; ☺ 7am-6pm) lakeside temple is very close by, and boat rental, water-skiing and parasailing are available by the lake shore. The **Kebun Raya Eya Karya Bali** (☎ 21273; admission 3500Rp; ☺ 7am-6pm) botanical gardens, near Candikuning, are a pleasant spot for an afternoon's loafing and have a world-renowned wild-orchid section.

Southwest of Danau Bratan is **Gunung Baturkaru**, with the remote **Pura Luhur** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk) perched on its slopes. The road east to **Pacung** has wonderful panoramas.

Interesting trips by road or on foot can be made to the west around **Danau Buyan** and **Danau Tamblingan**.

Further west, **Munduk** is a pretty, spread-out village perched high on a ridge with good hiking in the vicinity. Budget beds are in short supply here, the best option being **Made Homestay** (☎ 081 2387 4833; r 70,000Rp), which has jaw-dropping views over the valley, and sometimes offers yoga classes.

Sleeping & Eating

The best budget accommodation is along the road to the botanical gardens.

Pondok Permata Firdous (☎ 21531; Jl Kebun Raya; d 60,000Rp) A functional spot on the gardens' doorstep with bright bedspreads and scrubbed bathrooms.

Pondok Wisata Dahlia Indah (☎ 21233; r 70,000Rp, with hot water from 90,000Rp) In Candikuning, along a lane near the road to the botanical gardens, this old favourite has two rows of good, if plain, budget rooms that face a pretty garden.

Strawberry Hill (Bukit Stroberi; ☎ 21265; meals from 13,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) About a kilometre south of Candikuning, this restaurant is a dead ringer for an English pub, complete with dart board and fireplace.

Food stalls at Candikuning market offer cheap eats (mains 7000Rp), and there are food carts further north at the car park overlooking the lake.

Getting There & Away

Plenty of bemo, minibuses and buses travel between Denpasar's Ubung terminal (14,000Rp, 1½ hours) and Singaraja's Sukasada terminal (7000Rp, one hour), and stop anywhere along the main road between Bedugul and Pancasari. Some of the **Perama** (☎ 0361-751551; www.peramatour.com) Ubud-Lovina services also stop here.

Public transport to the areas southwest and west of Danau Bratan is very scant.

SOUTHWEST BALI

From Denpasar's Ubung terminal, buses and bemo go west to Gilimanuk, via Tabanan and Negara. From this western road, turn north to **Mengwi**, where there's the impressive **Pura Taman Ayun** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ 8am-5pm) water palace and temple. About 10km further north is the monkey forest and temple of **Sangeh** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ 8am-5pm) – watch out, as the monkeys will snatch anything they can. South of the main road, **Pura Tanah Lot** (admission 3300Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk) is a reconstructed

temple and a major tourist trap, especially at sunset.

The turn-off to the legendary **Medewi** surfing point is well marked on the main road. **Mai Malu** (☎ 43897; s/d 70,000/85,000Rp), near the highway, is one of the best budget options with clean fan-cooled rooms and huge portions of Western and local food; other alternatives are close by.

The beautiful temple of **Pura Rambut Sivi** (admission 3000Rp; ☺ 8am-5pm) is just south of the main road, high on a cliff top overlooking the sea. It's definitely worth a stop.

WEST BALI

Negara

Bullock races are held in nearby Perancak between July and September/October each year; check schedules with the **Taman Wisata Perancak** (☎ 0365-42173). Otherwise, Negara is a quiet, untouristy town; the banks here change money and most have ATMs. Try **Hotel Wira Pada** (☎ 0365-41161; Jl Ngurah Rai 107; d from 90,000Rp; ☺) if you need a bed. Many buses and bemo stop here.

Taman Nasional Bali Barat

This substantial national park has prolific bird life, with many of Bali's 300 species represented, including the famous *jalak putih* (Bali starling), and encompasses offshore waters that include some of Bali's most pristine coral reefs.

The **park headquarters** (☎ 0365-41021; admission 10,000Rp; ☺ 7am-4pm) is at the junction at Cekik. You can arrange a guide here for trekking in the southern part of the park.

There's a visitors' centre at **Labuhan Lalang**, in the northwest, where you can get a guide, arrange short treks and snorkel on the reef close to shore. Labuhan Lalang is also the access point for **Pulau Menjangan**, a very popular diving and snorkelling site. A boat to Menjangan costs about 300,000Rp for a four-hour trip. Hire snorkelling gear from the *warung* here (about 40,000Rp per four hours).

Trips can also be organised in Lovina through Spice Dive (see p234).

Gilimanuk

Gilimanuk is the terminus for the ferries to/from Java (7000Rp, one hour), which run every half-hour throughout the day and night. You'll find a bank (with poor exchange rates),

post office, a *wartel* and a handful of gloomy hotels here.

There are frequent buses between Gilimanuk and Denpasar (Ubung terminal; 25,000Rp, three hours), or along the north coast to Singaraja (16,000Rp, two hours).

SUMATRA

Lush, enormous and intriguing, Sumatra stretches for 2000km across the equator. Happily, there is a payoff for every pothole along the Trans-Sumatran Hwy: volcanic peaks rise around tranquil crater lakes, orang-utans swing through pristine rainforests, and long white beaches offer world-class surf breaks above the surface, and stunning coral reefs below.

Besides natural beauty, the world's sixth-largest island boasts a wealth of resources, particularly oil, gas and timber. These earn Indonesia the bulk of its badly needed export dollars, even as their extraction devastates habitats. Little of the cash has trickled back to Sumatra in the form of improved infrastructure, like badly needed sewers and roads, heightening resentment of the political centre in Java.

When mother nature is this majestic and bountiful, there is usually a flip side, and Sumatra has seen more than its share of her fury. The 2007 earthquake in the mountains of West Sumatra, near Bukittinggi, was just the latest in a string of bloody headlines since the 2004 tsunami, so it's no shock that most tourists steer clear of unpredictable Sumatra. That's their loss. Rugged travellers will find mind-bending beauty throughout this gorgeous, warm yet unforgiving island that's nearly four times the size of Java, but with less than a quarter of the population. At times you'll feel like a lone explorer rediscovering a magical landscape, and you will be rewarded with tranquillity, low prices and the gratitude of locals who are glad someone out there hasn't forgotten them.

History

Mounds of stone tools and shells unearthed near Medan prove that hunter-gatherers were living along the Straits of Melaka 13,000 years ago. But Sumatra had little contact with the outside world until the emergence of the kingdom of Srivijaya

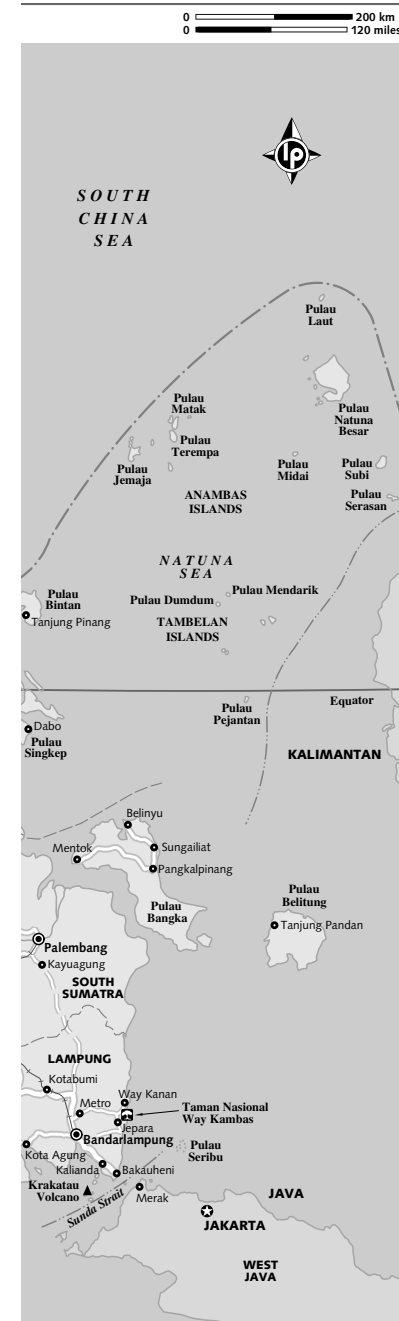
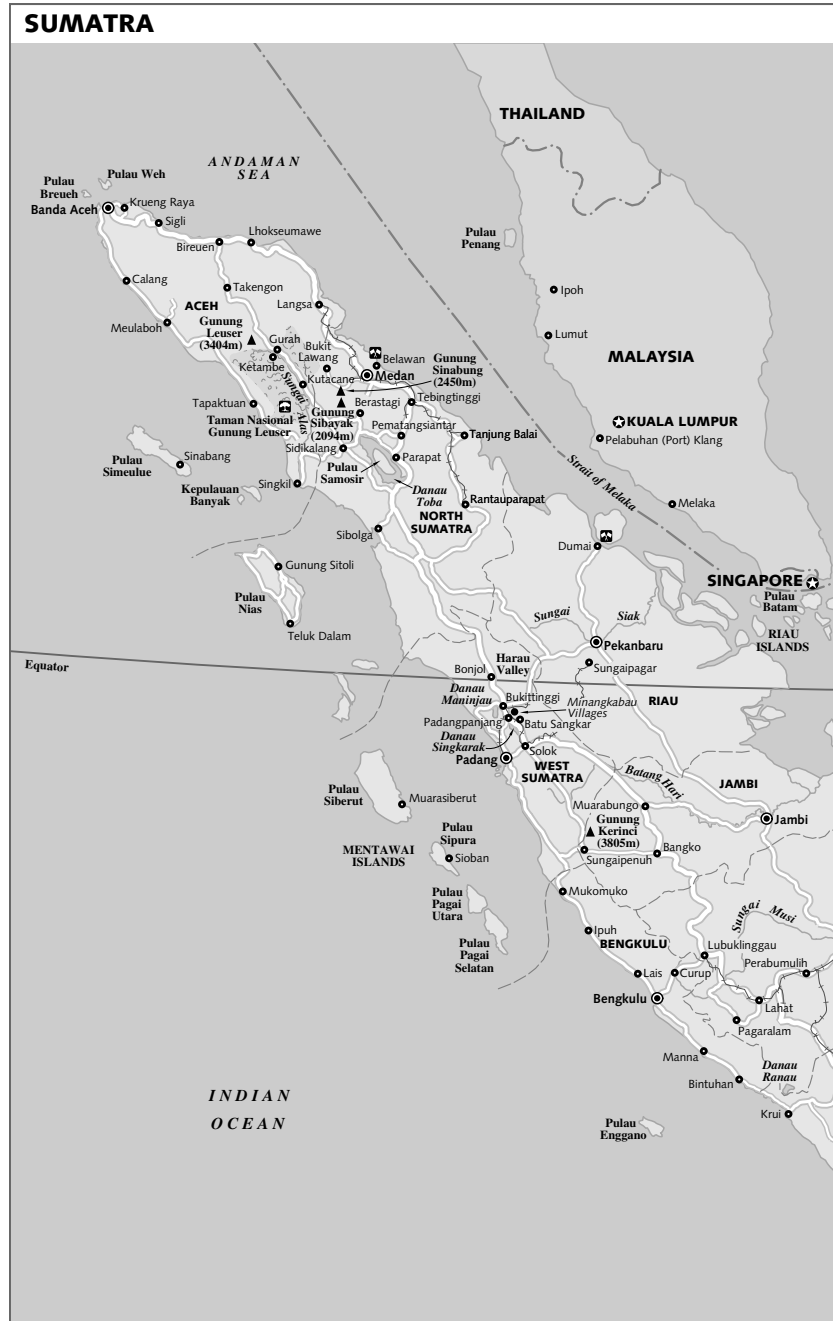
at the end of the 7th century. At its 11th-century peak, it controlled a great slab of Southeast Asia covering most of Sumatra, the Malay Peninsula, southern Thailand and Cambodia. Srivijayan influence collapsed after it was conquered by the south Indian king Ravendra Cholahadewa in 1025, and for the next 200 years the void was partly filled by Srivijaya's main regional rival, the Jambi-based kingdom of Malayu.

After Malayu was defeated by a Javanese expedition in 1278, the focus of power moved north to a cluster of Islamic sultanates on the east coast of present-day Aceh. The sultanates had begun life as ports servicing trade through the Straits of Melaka, but many of the traders were Muslims from India, and Islam quickly gained its first foothold in the Indonesian archipelago. These traders also provided the island with its modern name, 'Sumatra', derived from Samudra, or 'ocean' in Sanskrit.

After the Portuguese occupied Melaka in 1511 and began harassing Samudra and its neighbours, Aceh took over as the main power. Based close to modern Banda Aceh, it carried the fight to the Portuguese and won substantial territory, covering much of northern Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Acehnese power peaked with the reign of Sultan Iskandar Muda at the beginning of the 17th century.

The Dutch came next and kicked off their Sumatran campaign with the capture of Palembang in 1825, working their way north before running into trouble against Aceh. The Acehnese turned back the first Dutch attack in 1873, but succumbed two years later. The Dutch were booted out of Aceh in 1942, immediately before the Japanese WWII occupation, and did not attempt to return during their brief effort to reclaim their empire after the war.

Sumatra supplied several key figures to Indonesia's independence struggle, including future vice-president Mohammed Hatta and the first prime minister, Sutan Syahrir. It also provided some problems. First up were the staunchly Muslim Acehnese, who rebelled against being lumped together with the Christian Bataks in the newly created province of North Sumatra and declared an independent Islamic republic in 1953. Aceh didn't return to the fold until 1961, when it was given special provincial status.



The Sumatran rebellion of 1958–61 posed a greater threat, when the rebels declared their rival Revolutionary Government of the Republic of Indonesia (PRRI) in Bukittinggi on 15 February 1958. The central government showed no interest in negotiations, however, and by mid-1958 Jakarta had regained control of all the major towns. The guerrilla war continued for another three years.

Since the 1970s, Aceh has re-emerged as a trouble spot in the archipelago, with continued calls for greater autonomy and secession from the Indonesian republic. In 1989 the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) began a low-level uprising against the government, and the Indonesian armed forces were sent in to ‘monitor’ the situation.

In 1998 the Indonesian press revealed years of army atrocities in Aceh, prompting armed forces chief General Wiranto to visit the area to apologise. In July 1999, however, an army massacre took place, killing a religious leader and Free Aceh Movement supporters at Lhokseumawe. Another shooting, this time of 40 people, occurred in a crowd at Krueung Geukueh. Over one million people rallied for independence in Banda Aceh on 8 November 1999.

In 2002 an internationally brokered peace deal was signed by both sides, but sporadic violence continued. In May 2003, 30,000 Indonesian troops returned to the province and attacked rebel strongholds. With rampant corruption, a broken economy and an extremely fragile social structure, peace appeared elusive.

The Boxing Day 2004 quake and tsunami brought a ray of hope, even as aftershocks continued to terrorise the local population. Both sides concentrated on providing emergency relief, and thousands of foreign aid workers flooded the region, acting as unofficial observers. Helsinki-brokered talks led to an agreement in August 2005 under which thousands of Indonesian security forces were withdrawn from the province and GAM gave up hundreds of weapons. The three-decade war appears to have come to an end, as this peace deal has held so far. However, a mysterious spring 2007 grenade attack against GAM government headquarters in Banda suggest tensions persist and that this latest bloody chapter in Sumatran history may not be over yet.

WARNING

An Aceh peace deal spurred by the common suffering brought by the tsunami appeared to have taken hold in late 2005, but a 2007 grenade attack on the new government headquarters suggest tensions persist. Check media reports and with your embassy before heading into what was a conflict zone for the better part of three decades.

Getting There & Away

The international airports at Medan, Padang and Pekanbaru are visa-free (for more on visas, see p341), as are the seaports of Sekupang (Pulau Batam), Belawan (Medan), Dumai, Padang and Sibolga.

AIR

Medan is Sumatra's major international airport and has the widest choice of destinations. Malaysian Airlines flies the 40-minute hop from Medan to Penang and to Kuala Lumpur. SilkAir and China Airlines both fly between Singapore and Medan as well.

Garuda, Merpati, Sriwijaya, Adam Air, Mandala and Batavia have services linking Jakarta and Sumatran destinations including Padang, Medan, Pekanbaru, Pulau Batam and Palembang.

BOAT

The express ferries between Penang in Malaysia and Medan's Belawan port are the quickest and easiest way to enter Sumatra by water. The

crossing from Melaka (Malaysia) to Dumai is another direct route. The route between Singapore and Pekanbaru via Pulau Batam is a popular alternative.

Pelni (www.pelni.com) has ships from Jakarta to a number of Sumatran ports. For the latest schedules and prices, check the website.

Other boats link Jakarta with Pulau Batam and Pulau Bintan: the islands are only a short ferry ride away from Singapore.

From Merak (in Java) to Bakauheni (at the southern tip of Sumatra), the easiest options are through buses between Jakarta and destinations in Sumatra, which include the price of the ferry ticket. Ferries (13,000Rp) operate every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day between Merak and Bakauheni. The trip across the narrow Sunda Strait takes two hours. Less frequent fast ferries make the crossing in 40 minutes (22,500Rp).

Pulau Batam, just 45 minutes south of Singapore by fast ferry, is a good stepping stone to Sumatra. Boats run from here to other Riau islands and to Jakarta.

Frequent ferries run between Singapore's HarbourFront and Pulau Batam's port of Sekupang. Leave Singapore on the earliest boat to ensure a connection with onward Indonesian ferries that leave from Sekupang for Sumatran destinations such as Pekanbaru.

Getting Around**AIR**

An hour on a plane is an attractive alternative to countless hours on a bus. Several domestic airlines link Sumatra's major cities; see Map p161 for sample air fares.

CHICKENBUS ENLIGHTENMENT

Hike all the peaks, visit all the ethnic minorities, and read all the anthropological studies you want, but nothing gets you closer to the real Sumatra than hopping on the sweltering, uncomfortable, yet somehow exhilarating economy buses. It's a cultural experience like no other.

There will be chain-smoking, deafeningly loud Indo-pop tunes, visits from roadside troubadours, rampant breast-feeding, hitchhiking cockroaches and, yes, vomiting. The bus driver will stop at random to pray, eat and perhaps get laid, and you and your fellow passengers will be at his mercy.

The aisles are packed with cargo and absolutely overflowing with passengers – at least three to a seat. At one point on our ride to Danau Toba from Medan we were touching seven people at once. At home we'd be disgusted. But in the Sumatra slow lane boundaries erode, you drop your hang-ups and begin to go with the flow. Next thing you know, a smiling stranger is urging you to share some exotic fruit, you're buying lollipops for children, and chatting with someone who speaks broken English and loves Green Day. And you will laugh and smile like a Zen saint drunk on life.

BUS

If you stick to the Trans-Sumatran Hwy and other major roads, the big air-con buses can make travel fairly comfortable – which is fortunate since you'll spend a lot of time on the road in Sumatra. The best ones have reclining seats, toilets and video but run at night to avoid the traffic, so you miss out on the scenery. The non-air-con buses are sweaty, cramped, but unforgettable. Numerous bus companies cover the main routes, and prices vary greatly, depending on the comfort level. Buy tickets direct from the bus company. Agents usually charge 10% more.

Travel on the back roads is a different story. Progress can be grindingly slow and utterly exhausting (see opposite).

TRAIN

Sumatra has a very limited rail network. The only useful service runs from Bandarlampung in the south to Palembang.

BANDARLAMPUNG

☎ 0721 / pop 857,400

Bandarlampung – Sumatra's fourth-largest city and an amalgam of the old coastal town of Telukbetung and Tanjungkarang further inland – is only worth visiting to experience the Krakatau volcano or Taman Nasional Way Kambas. Most visitors come on package tours arranged in Jakarta, but local guides and tour agencies can set you up nicely for less.

When Krakatau erupted in 1883, the tremors generated a 30m-high wave that devastated Telukbetung and claimed 36,000 lives. The **Krakatau Monument** is a huge steel buoy washed up on a hillside overlooking Telukbetung. Everything below this point was a wasteland.

Information

Banks and ATMs can be found all over town.

BCA bank (Jl Raden Intan 98) The branch on Jl Kartini offers the best exchange rates.

Central post office (Jl Kotaraja)

Squid Net (Jl Raden Intan 88A; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 10am–8pm) Internet access.

Tours

Several travel agents on Jl Monginsidi offer tours to Taman Nasional Way Kambas. They can also arrange tours to Krakatau via a bus to Kalianda, followed by a boat ride to Krakatau. You may be able to get a cheaper deal from the port (see p244).

Sleeping

Budget options in Bandarlampung are seriously limited.

Hotel Gading (☎ 255512; Jl Kartini 72; d from 66,500Rp; ☹) Cheap and dingy.

Kurnia Perdana Hotel (☎ 262030; Jl Raden Intan 114; d from 130,000Rp; ☹) This is a clean, charmless option.

Hotel Purnama (☎ 261448; Jl Raden Intan 77; d from 180,000Rp; ☹) This is the best value in town, with large, comfortable rooms.

Getting There & Away**AIR**

Arie Tour & Travel (☎ 474675; Jl Monginsidi 143) is a helpful travel agency that sells Adam Air and Sriwijaya flights to Medan and Jakarta.

BUS

Rajabasa bus terminal is one of Sumatra's busiest, with a constant flow of departures 24 hours a day. Most people heading north go to Bukittinggi, a long haul that costs from 160,000Rp economy (up to 28 hours) to 300,000Rp for the best air-con services (22 hours). The trip south to Jakarta (eight to 10 hours) costs 100,000Rp to 130,000Rp for air-con, which includes the ferry between Bakauheni and Merak. Buses leave daily from the Bandarlampung train station at 9am and 9pm. Chartered minibuses to Jakarta cost 170,000Rp.

TAXI

Share taxis are a pleasant alternative to buses. Reputable **Taxi 4848** (☎ 255388; Jl Suprpto 26) runs to Jakarta (140,000Rp) and Bandung (220,000Rp). Other companies go from Bandarlampung to Bakauheni (20,000Rp) and Palembang (100,000Rp).

TRAIN

The train station, at the north end of Jl Raden Intan in the heart of Tanjungkarang, is where you'll find Sumatra's only convenient rail service. Two trains a day run between Bandarlampung and Palembang, at 9am and 9pm (economy/business 28,000/85,000Rp, 10 hours).

Getting Around

Taxis charge 80,000 to 90,000Rp for the 22km ride from the airport to town. Take the green *opelet* from the town center to the Rajabasa bus terminal for 2000Rp.

KRAKATAU

Krakatau's beauty masks a mean streak of apocalyptic proportions. When it combusted in 1883, the boom was heard as far away as Perth (Australia). Tens of thousands were killed by either the resulting 30m-high tsunami or the molten lava that flowed across 40km of ocean to incinerate coastal villages. The monster mountain spewed an 80km-high ash plume that turned day into night over the Sunda Strait and altered the world's climate for years. The earth kept rumbling under the remains of Krakatau. In 1927 it erupted again and this time it created an evil mini-me, the Child of Krakatau (Anak Krakatau). And it grumbles still, so make sure to seek the latest advice on seismic activity.

Most travellers head to Krakatau from Carita in West Java, but the island group actually belongs to Sumatra. Tours operate from Bandar Lampung and Kalianda (see below).

TAMAN NASIONAL WAY KAMBA

The Taman Nasional Way Kambas (Way Kambas National Park), a 130,000-hectare stretch of steamy lowland rainforest and mangrove coastline, is home to dozens of tigers, some 200 elephants and an estimated 20 rare red Sumatran rhinoceroses. With Sumatra's heavily logged, lowland rainforests on the verge of extinction, a visit here is one of the only ways to explore this stunning wild ecosystem. But get here soon because national parks in Sumatra lack the protection of those elsewhere in the world, and poaching, illegal logging and development pressure continue to threaten what's left. Simple tourist facilities include lodges, wooden pole houses, an observation centre and riverboat rides. The park and the Way Kambas elephant training centre, Pusat Latihan Gajah, are about two hours by road east of Bandar Lampung, where travel agencies offer a variety of wildlife-spotting trips (these are separate to the Krakatau volcano tours). Or DIY and hire an *ojek* from Rajabasalama, the closest town to the national park, to Way Kanan (45,000Rp, 20 minutes), where you can hire a guide (50,000Rp to 100,000Rp) and arrange transport.

KALIANDA

☎ 0727
The small coastal port of Kalianda is the best place to arrange boat trips to Krakatau. Survey the seaworthiness of your boat and check for

life jackets and a two-way radio. Kalianda is 30km north of the Bakauheni ferry terminal. Organised tours to Krakatau cost about \$90 a person, but you may have to charter a whole boat from Canti, a fishing village outside of Kalianda, if visitor numbers are low. That will cost you 500,000Rp to 900,000Rp for up to 15 people.

Hotel Beringin (d from 50,000Rp) has comfortable rooms, Dutch villa charm and can organise tours to Krakatau.

There are buses that go to Kalianda from Bandar Lampung (8000Rp, one hour) and Bakauheni (10,000Rp, one hour), but they drop you off at the highway turn-off. From there, grab an *opelet* into town (2000Rp).

BAKAUHENI

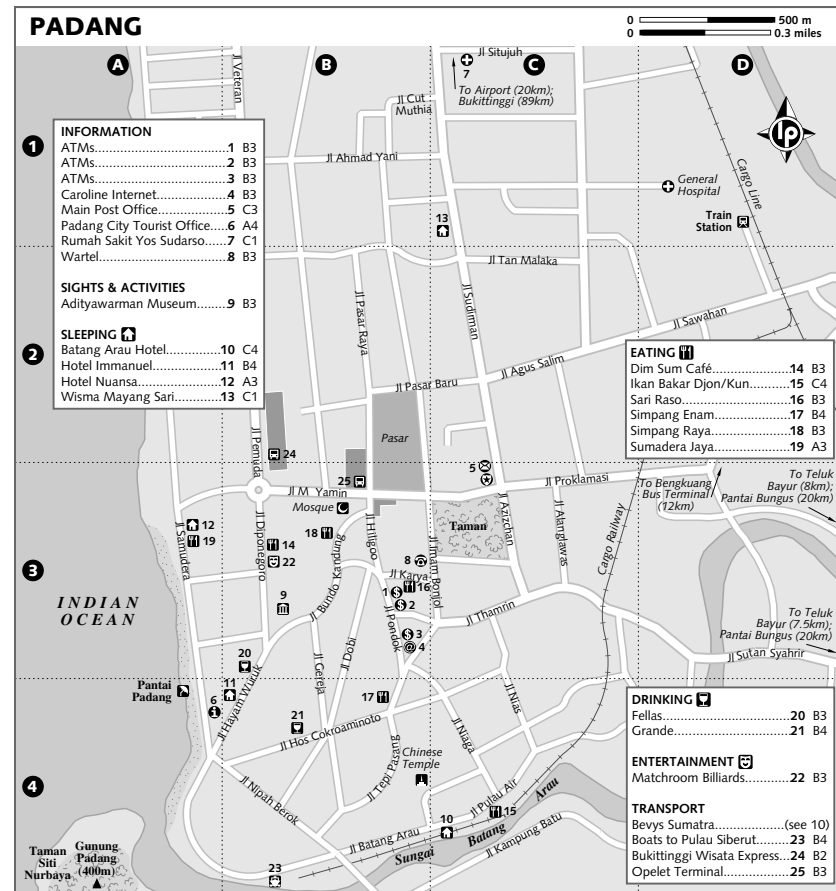
Bakauheni is the departure point for ferries to Merak, Java. Fast ferries run every 30 minutes from 7am to 5pm and cost 22,500Rp; the crossing takes 40 minutes. A slow ferry runs every 30 minutes, 24 hours a day and costs 13,000Rp for the two-hour trip.

Frequent buses depart from outside Bakauheni's terminal building and travel the 90km trip to Bandar Lampung (economy/aircon 8000Rp/15,000Rp, one to two hours). If you're planning to stay the night in Bandar Lampung, pay 30,000Rp for a private taxi, which will take you to the hotel of your choice.

PADANG

☎ 0751 / pop 899,400

Most backpackers fly into Padang only to catch the first bus out to Bukittinggi. Big mistake. Sumatra's largest west-coast city has never been more appealing. Gorgeous Minangkabau roofs soar from modern public buildings, blending the present and the past. The leafy south end is dominated by a narrow, brackish river harbour crowded with colourful fishing boats, as well as lux Bugis schooners, and modern yachts bound for the famed Mentawai surf. Old Dutch and Chinese buildings are scattered along its frontage road, and across a lovely antiquated bridge strung with lanterns is a palm-fringed hillside that is the antithesis of urban. The coastline south of town is magnificent too, and the city beach is edged by a popular promenade, which is where you'll want to be when the sun drops. Then you'll stroll to dinner and enjoy one of your best meals in Indo. Oh yes, Padang is worth your while.



Orientation

Padang is an easy puzzle. The busy main street, Jl M Yamin, runs inland from the coast road to the junction with Jl Azizchan. Several hotels and the bus station are on Jl Pemuda, which runs north-south through the western side of town, while the techno-funky *opelet* terminal and central market are on the northern side of Jl M Yamin.

But getting out of Padang takes a bit of time. The Teluk Bayur port is 8km east of the centre, the shiny new airport is located 20km to the north, and the Bengkuang bus terminal is inconveniently located in Aie Pacah, about 12km from town. There are a few options for getting into Padang (see p247), and some Mentawai-bound boats leave from the old port on Batang Arau (see p248).

Information

Padang has branches of all the major Indonesian banks. There are ATMs all over town, and a string on Jl Pondok.

Caroline Internet (☎ 35135; Jl Pondok; per hr 5000Rp; 9am-9.45pm) Solid connection.

Main post office (Jl Azizchan 7)

Padang City Tourist Office (☎ 34186; Jl Hayam Wuruk 51; ☎ 7.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat) There are some useful town and regional maps here.

Rumah Sakit Yos Sudarso (☎ 33230; Jl Situjuh 1) Privately owned health clinic.

Wartel (Jl Imam Bonjol 15H; ☎ 24hr)

Sights & Activities

Stroll among antiquated Dutch and Chinese warehouses in the **old quarter** along Jl Batang

Arau, or sit and watch the fishing boats ease into dock after a night's work. Don't miss the incense-perfumed, candlelit **Chinese Temple**, an evocative homage to the Confucian age.

Locals converge on the **beach promenade** at sunset for snacks, cool drinks and football games on the sand.

The **Adityawarman Museum** (☎ 31523; Jl Diponegoro; admission 800Rp; ☎ 8am-4pm Tue-Sun) is beautifully built in the Minangkabau tradition with two rice barns out front. It has a bland collection, but lovely grounds.

Sleeping

One drawback in Padang is that budget digs are unmentionable. Your best bet is to spend above 100,000Rp per night and save in Bukittinggi and points north.

Wisma Mayang Sari (☎ 22647; Jl Sudirman 19; d from 103,000Rp; ☎) Set in a weird-looking modern villa, the clean, economy rooms out back are good value.

Hotel Immanuel (☎ 28560; Jl Hayam Wuruk 43; d from 125,000Rp; ☎) Near the old harbour, this small, friendly place with clean, comfy and quiet rooms attracts young surfers.

Hotel Nuansa (☎ 26000; Jl Samudera 12; d incl breakfast from 180,000Rp; ☎) This is the best value in town. Rooms are superclean, light and breezy, with hardwood floors, and some have balconies overlooking the bay.

Batang Arau Hotel (☎ 27400; Jl Batang Arau 33; d from 335,000Rp; ☎) Other than Hotel Nuansa, this is the classiest place in Padang. It's got a groovy location in an old bank building, wooden floors, local art, a veranda overlooking the harbour, and a lobby bar that attracts every surfboat captain in town. Come as a group of three and the price won't sting so much – a triple costs the same as a double.

Eating

The city is famous as the home of *nasi Padang* (Padang food), the spicy Minangkabau cooking that's found throughout Indonesia, and is served quicker than fast food. You simply sit down, and immediately the waiter will bring over a dozen bowls of various curries and vegetable dishes. You pay only for what you eat. But you can eat Padang food anywhere in Indonesia, and this city has choice joints serving dim sum, grilled fish and chilli crab joints that are not to be missed.

Dim Sum Café (☎ 841653; Jl Diponegoro 19; servings 10,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Come taste Indo-

Chinese staples like *lumpia*, *gulangan* (water chestnut spring roll), and *sio may* (shrimp dumplings) in kitschy environs.

Ikan Bakar Djoni/Kun (☎ 081 2660 3149; Jl Pulau Air 1A; mains 25,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Just up the road from Batang Arau is a family-owned fish-grill fave that overlooks the harbour. It is packed with locals daily because the spicy fish is fresh, and the bill is light.

Samudera Jaya (☎ 26050; Jl Samudera 16; mains 45,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Huddled on the seafront is a local diner run by a no-nonsense grill master. Tempting as it may be to watch him work, he does not appreciate it and will move you over to a table to dine on fresh grilled snapper, prawns, or calamari smothered in coconut chilli sauce, accompanied by tangy and crispy wok-sautéed vegetables. And you will be the only *bule* (foreigner) in the building. Hell, yes!

our pick **Simpang Enam** (☎ 25030; Jl Tepi Pasang 67; chilli crab for 2 people 81,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) You are here for chilli crab, a garlicky, fiery, messy, visceral dish that will soon be in your dining hall of fame. The glamorous owner-chef, Ing, will make it herself from her grandmother's recipe. And a blessed grandmother she was. Expat consider this the best meal in Padang.

Sari Raso (☎ 33498; Jl Karya 3; dishes 8000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) and **Simpang Raya** (☎ 26430; Jl Bundo Kandung 3; dishes 8000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) are among the local favourites for Padang food.

Around sunset, head to the beachfront *warung* along the southern end of Jl Samudera for a banana pancake, grilled corn and a fresh breeze.

Drinking

Grande (☎ 39431; Jl Hos Cokroaminoto 68; ☎ 5pm-5am) Hip, young, upwardly mobile Padangians flock here for late-night karaoke, pool, drinks and snacks.

Fellas (Jl Hayam Wuruk 47; ☎ noon-5am) Another hipster joint. This one has hookah pipes, a tasty kitchen, and a bar stocked with good liquor.

Entertainment

Matchroom Billiards (☎ 21919; Jl Diponegoro; ☎ 11am-2am) This place has everything you could want in a pool hall: it's dark (even in the daytime), smoky, and there are swarms of hipster sharks hovering over three storeys of perfect blue-felt tables to a pulsing soundtrack. It has

everything, that is, except booze, thanks to the devout Muslim national-billiards champion owner.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Domestic and international prices fluctuate greatly out of Padang's Bandara Internasional Minangkabau Airport, but there are some very competitive rates to Jakarta, which make flying a far more attractive option than catching the long-distance bus.

SilkAir (code MI; ☎ 38120; www.silkair.com) flies to Singapore twice a week. **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 444831; www.merpati.co.id) flies three times a week to Pulau Batam, a short ferry ride from Singapore. **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 30737; www.garuda-in-donesia.com) and **Mandala** (☎ 333100; www.mandalaair.com) fly to Jakarta twice daily. **Lion Air** (code JJ; ☎ 446100; www.lionair.co.id) makes the run three times a day, and **Adam Air** (code KI; ☎ 840999; www.flyadamair.com) has daily flights. **Mandala** and **Batavia** (code 7P; ☎ 446600; www.batavia-air.co.id) serve Medan daily.

BOAT

Pelni ships call at Padang's Teluk Bayur port once a month on their way west, and again on the way to Jakarta, Surabaya and beyond. The **Pelni office** (☎ 61624) is at the port, but you can buy tickets from agents around town.

Boats to Pulau Siberut leave from the harbour on Sungai Batang Arau, just south of Padang's city centre.

BUS

Every north-south bus comes through Padang. Popular routes include Bukittinggi (12,000Rp, two hours) and Jakarta (air-con/superexecutive 140,000/250,000Rp, 30 hours). Heading north there are regular departures to Parapat (for Danau Toba; 100,000/180,000Rp, 17 hours) and Medan (120,000/200,000Rp, 21 hours).

Bukittinggi Wisata Express (☎ 812644; Jl Pemuda 4) offers bus tickets to Medan, Bukittinggi, Dumai (economy/air-con 70,000/100,000Rp, 12 hours) and beyond.

Getting Around

Airport taxi charge between 60,000Rp and 90,000Rp for the ride into town. The budget alternative is to take one of the two white Damri buses (15,000Rp) that do a loop through Padang. Tell the conductor which

street you're headed for and he'll direct you to the right bus.

Numerous *opelet* and *mikrolet* operate around town out of the Pasar Raya terminal off Jl M Yamin. The standard fare is 2000Rp.

MENTAWAI ISLANDS

☎ 0751

Surfing put the Mentawais on the tourism radar, and dozens of wave-hunting liveboards run from Padang harbour year-round. But more and more ecotourists are braving the rugged ocean crossing and muddy malarial jungle of this remote archipelago, 85km to 135km west of Padang, to trek, glimpse traditional tribal culture and spot endemic primates. Many consider it the highlight of their trip through Southeast Asia.

The largest island, Siberut, is home to the majority of the ethnic Mentawai population – known for their tattoos and filed teeth – while sparsely populated Sipora, Pagai Utara and Pagai Selatan are seldom visited. Get here fast, though, because the tourism boom, government-sponsored housing and *transmigrasi* (transmigration) employment projects, and continued logging are no doubt changing the culture, environment and daily life on the Mentawais.

Tours

Tour operators in Bukittinggi will tell you it's cheaper to book a Mentawai tour through them. This is a falsehood. Ten-day tours out of Bukittinggi cost up to US\$300, plus all your cash will land in the grip of Sumatran tour guides, rather than the local people. The economic, and culturally responsible, choice is to take a public boat to Siberut and seek out a Mentawai guide. You pay less and directly benefit the community you've come to experience. Remember, more cash in hand means less poaching and illegal logging on the ground, which will help preserve the Mentawais long after you leave.

Trips can also be organised in Padang; check with **Padang City Tourist Office** (☎ 0751-34186; Jl Hayam Wuruk 51; ☎ 7.30am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, to 1pm Sat). On the islands, be ready for rain, bland food (bring hot sauce) and malaria.

For information on surf trips to the Mentawais and other islands, check www.sumatransurfariis.com, www.surfingmentawai.com and www.wavepark.com.

Getting There & Away

Boats leave from Padang's Batang Arau harbour to Siberut every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday (from 85,000Rp, 12 hours). The return trip leaves for Padang on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Make sure you spend the extra 15,000Rp for a cabin.

Asimi (☎ 23321) runs to Siberut town and Sikabalan, both on the island of Siberut, on Monday; to Sikabalan and Siberut town on Wednesday; and to Sioban and Tuapejat, both on the island of Sipora, on Friday. **Simeulue** (☎ 39312; Jl Arau 7) boats, on the small lane behind Jl Batang Arau, leave for Sioban on Tuesday and Tuapejat on Saturday.

Tickets can be purchased from **Bevys Sumatra** (☎ 0751-34878; Jl Batang Arau 33, Padang), a reliable travel and ticketing agency based in the Batang Arau Hotel.

BUKITTINGGI

☎ 0752 / pop 102,500

A well-maintained road snakes from Padang, between rice paddies, over raging rivers, past waterfalls and onto the jungled shoulders of Mt Merapi, which is where you'll find the cool, quiet market town of Bukittinggi, the first stop for many travellers in West Sumatra. With dozens of budget digs and accessible adventure at your fingertips, Bukittinggi is a great base for volcano treks, crater-lake canoe trips and 4WD tours of the nearby Sianok Canyon, and it's an easy place to lose track of time. Perched at 930m above sea level, the town is laced with footpaths, alleyways and staircases, and blessed with views of three volcanoes: Merapi, Singgalang and the distant Sago. Tourism is down to a trickle here, but if the clinging clouds part at sunset, exposing the volcanic triad's naked tips to the orange sun, you will quickly see why it was once a mandatory stop on the Southeast Asia trail. At the time of research an earthquake measuring 6.7 on the Richter scale shook the town (literally) to its moorings, cracking walls and crumbling a section of the lively Pasar Atas market. But repairs began immediately and should be complete when you visit.

Orientation

This is an outstanding walking town, with a compact town centre. A landmark clock tower (Jam Gadang) stands at the southern (top) end of the main street, Jl Ahmad Yani, near the Pasar Atas (market). Walk downhill along Jl

Ahmad Yani to reach a cluster of cheap hotels and restaurants. The bus station, south of town, is accessible by public transport.

Information

Banks with ATMs and moneychangers are clustered along Jl Ahmad Yani. International calls can be made from dozens of *wartel*. There are dozens of travel agents in town, most on Jl Ahmad Yani.

Boom Net (☎ 33728; Jl Pemuda 15) Very reliable. It even managed to open the day after the earthquake.

Main post office (Jl Sudirman 75)

Rumah Sakit Sayang Bayi (☎ 627099; Jl Dr A Rivai 15; ☎ 24hr) Medical services.

Tourist office (Jl Muka Jam Gadang 2; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Across from the clock tower, this little office distributes city maps and brochures.

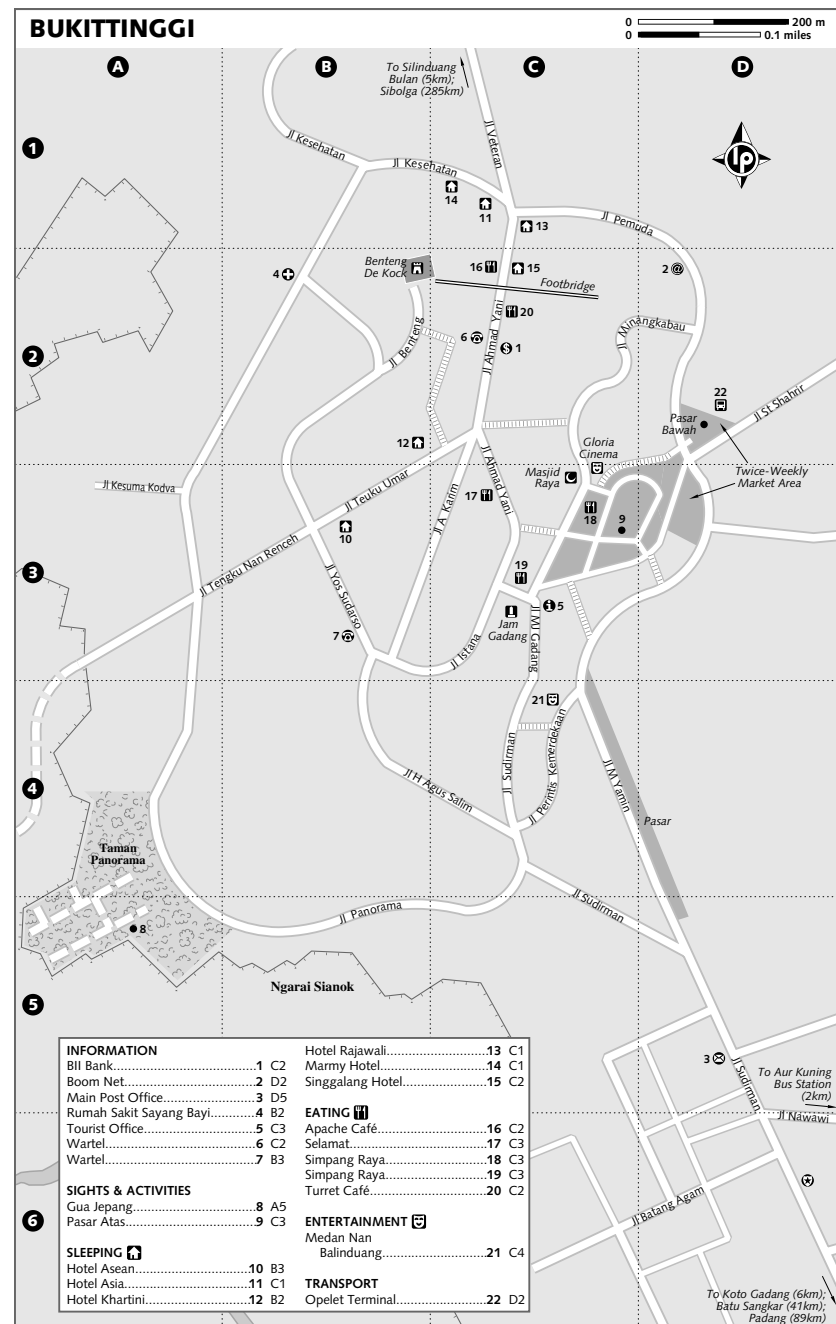
Sights & Activities

Taman Panorama (Panorama Park; Jl Panorama; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 8am-8pm), on the southern edge of town, overlooks Sianok Canyon, which is especially thrilling at sunset when fruit bats put on an aerial show. Cool locals will casually suggest that you visit the **Gua Jepang** (Japanese Caves) with them. Don't be confused, this isn't just friendship, payment is expected. The caves are actually a labyrinth of combat tunnels constructed by the Japanese using Indonesian slave labour during WWII.

Pasar Atas (btwn Jl Minangkabau & Jl M Yamin) is almost always sprawling, colourful and alive, bursting with fruit and vegetables and handicrafts. It's open daily, but on Wednesday and Saturday villagers descend from the surrounding area and the number of stalls – and the energetic buzz – magically multiplies. Unfortunately, the market was hit hard by the 2007 quake. An entire wing collapsed and another section caught fire, claiming 13 lives. At the time of research the market was in clean-up mode.

Tours

Beware the guide gauntlet. Tourism is down, which makes you the mark for every unemployed guide in town, whether you are at your hotel, café or just wandering aimlessly down the street. But don't grumble or cower, take your time, make conversation, and you'll book a great deal with a guide who you like and trust. Popular tour destinations include architectural excursions to traditional Minangkabau villages, overnight volcano treks, and



trips to Danau Singarak and Danau Maninjau. Hotel Khartini is the best place to organise a summit attempt on Mt Merapi (350,000Rp). Ulrich, the quirky German owner of Hotel Rajawali, offers cheap 4WD tours of the canyon where he'll show you hundreds of natural caves. Surf, cultural and jungle trips to the Mentawais are also on offer.

Sleeping

Hotel Rajawali (☎ 31905; Jl Ahmad Yani 152; d from 35,000Rp) You want cheap? You got it at this rickety homestay owned by an Indonesian-German couple. The rooftop garden has potential and so does the location, but ambition doesn't run rampant at the Rajawali. Then again, you're here for the price.

Marmy Hotel (☎ 23342; Jl Kesehatan 30; d from 50,000Rp) Marmy is another supercheapie. The rooms aren't that clean, but they're not revolting either, plus hot water is standard, and there's a nice common area and garden to lounge in.

Singgalang Hotel (☎ 21576; Jl Ahmad Yani 130; d from 75,000Rp) A nice colonial-style spot on the main drag. The three-storey addition has large, clean rooms.

Hotel Asean (☎ 21492; Jl Teuku Umar 13B; s/d 85,000/140,000Rp) Not much style here, but it's clean and shielded from mosque chatter.

Hotel Asia (☎ 625277; Jl Kesehatan 38; d 90,000Rp) This big, pseudo-opulent place has lots of mirrors and plastic chandeliers. Still, the rooms are spacious, comfy and come with hot water and TV.

Hotel Khartini (☎ 22885; Jl Teuku Umar 6; d from 100,000Rp) This is the best value in town. It's got kitschy character, it's very clean, there's hot water and Western toilets.

Eating & Drinking

The travellers' restaurants on Jl Ahmad Yani feature everything from banana pancakes to the local speciality, *dadiah campur*, a tasty mixture of oats, coconut, fruit, molasses and buffalo yoghurt. But the best eating in town isn't found at the backpacker joints, so try to visit some other options, such as Selamat or Simpang Raya.

Selamat (☎ 22959; Jl Ahmad Yani 19; dishes 6000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A preferred Padang food diner recommended by locals.

Apache Café (Jl Ahmad Yani 109; meals from 10,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Breakfasts are stellar, portions are big and the interior pays homage

to rock gods, past and present. A live rock/reggae band plays every Saturday night.

Turret Café (Jl Ahmad Yani; mains from 12,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The owner of this open-air restaurant is proud of the Western toilet; his self-proclaimed Jewish-Indonesian brother harbours a prodigious and hilarious distrust of his countrymen; and it serves tacos. This isn't just a meal, it's a cocktail-party story waiting to be told.

Simpang Raya (☎ 22163; Jl Sudirman 8; meals from 15,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place is always packed with locals because it serves up delicious, spicy Padang food in an immaculate setting. The marble tables are heated to keep the food warm and healthy. There's another branch at Jo Minangkabau 77.

Entertainment

Medan Nan Balituduang (☎ 22438; Jl Perintis Kemerdekaan 19; tickets 40,000Rp; ☺ performances 8.30pm Thu) These Minangkabau dance/theatre shows feature graceful dancing, colourful costumes and a martial-arts demonstration, but the curtain only rises if enough people show up.

Bloodless bullfight anyone? Known locally as *adu kerbau*, the fights – which are essentially a locked-horn wrestling match – are held irregularly and found in the nearby villages of Kota Baru and Batagak. Ask local guides about upcoming battles.

Getting There & Away

The Aur Kuning bus station is about 2km south of town, but easily reached by *opelet* (1500Rp). There are endless local buses to Padang (12,000Rp, two hours) and Danau Maninjau (10,000Rp, 1½ hours), as well as frequent services east to Pekanbaru (35,000Rp, five hours) and Dumai (economy/air-con 60,000/90,000Rp, 10 hours).

All buses travelling the Trans-Sumatran Hwy make a pit stop at Bukittinggi. Heading south, you can catch a bus right through to Jakarta (from 190,000Rp, 20 to 36 hours), but flights are so cheap you should really just fly.

The road north to Sibolga and Parapat is twisting and narrow for much of the way. Regular buses take at least 12 hours to Sibolga (70,000Rp). The express air-con buses (aka executive buses) cut hours off the journey to Parapat by bypassing Sibolga. They will get you to Parapat in 15 hours for 140,000Rp. The trip to Medan takes 20 hours and costs from 190,000Rp.

If you're arriving in Bukittinggi from the north (Parapat) or east (Pekanbaru), get off the bus near the town centre to save the hassle of an *opelet* ride back from the bus station.

Getting Around

Opelet around Bukittinggi cost 1500Rp. A *bendi* (two-person horse-drawn cart) costs from 5000Rp depending on the distance. Motorcycles are a good way to explore the district and can be hired from travel agencies on Jl Ahmad Yani or coffee shops for around 65,000Rp a day (no insurance, no petrol).

AROUND BUKITTINGGI

Handcrafted silver is the pride of **Koto Gadang**, a village 5km from Bukittinggi that can be reached by *opelet* from Aur Kuning bus station (4000Rp). Local craftsmen display their wares in antiquated Dutch colonial homes. You can walk here through the Sianok Canyon too. Go through Panorama Park, take the back exit down a series of overgrown steps, and the path through the forest is on the left off the first sharp bend. Of course, it's a route worked by local guides – only the truly determined will manage to avoid them.

Grab lunch in the bustling small town of **Batu Sangkar**, 41km southeast of Bukittinggi, in the heart of traditional Minangkabau country. Five kilometres north, the **Rumah Gadang Payarugung**, in the village of Silinduang Bulan, is a scaled-down replica of the original palace, which belonged to rulers of the former Minangkabau kingdom.

Or just cruise the countryside by rented motorbike or *ojek* and glimpse rice terraces that climb the base of a looming and jagged mountain range. In the villages you'll find traditional wooden Minangkabau houses with soaring, buffalo-horned roofs.

DANAU MANINJAU

☎ 0752

Maninjau, 38km west of Bukittinggi, is one of Sumatra's most spectacularly peaceful crater lakes. The unforgettable final descent includes 44 hairpin turns that offer stunning views over the shimmering sky blue lake (17km long, 8km wide), and the 600m crater walls. Maninjau is well set up for travellers, and should be considered an alternative to Bukittinggi as a place to stay. With early morning swims, morning canoe sessions and quiet afternoons in the shade watching clouds

wisp down the mountainsides, this is the kind of place where time evaporates slowly and sweetly.

Orientation & Information

The main village (and bus stop) is also called Maninjau. It has post and Telkom offices and a BRI bank that changes US dollars. But most people stay near Bayur, 3km north. Tell the conductor where you want to stay and he'll drop you there.

Indowisata Travel (☎ 61418) At Café Bagoes; sells bus and boat tickets.

PT Kesuna Tour & Travel (☎ 61422) Arranges air travel and minibus tickets to Padang; it's in the main village of Maninjau.

Activities

This is an outstanding swimming lake. Though it's 480m deep in some places, the water is warmer than Danau Toba, and, outside of town, the water becomes pure as liquid crystal. Some guesthouses rent dugout canoes or truck inner tubes to float upon.

When relaxation becomes too much, many visitors tackle the 70km sealed road that circles the lake. It's about six hours by mountain bike or 2½ hours by moped.

There's a strenuous two-hour trek to Sakura Hill and the stunning lookout of **Puncak Lawang**. Catch a Bukittinggi-bound bus to Matur and climb 5km to the viewpoint; from there descend to the lake on foot.

Sleeping

Lakeside bungalows with eateries are strung out north of Maninjau, towards Bayur village, 3km away. Look for the roadside signs and follow the path through the rice paddies.

Lili's (Jl Lubuk Basung; d from 25,000Rp) Close to the village, Lili's sports basic cheap bungalows, just a cut above camping. But it does have some stilted rooms set among the trees – sleepwalking is not recommended!

Batu C (d 25,000Rp) Next door to Lili's is another basic joint with a collection of beach huts that have a certain ramshackle romance to them, if the bathrooms don't scare you away.

Arlen (d 100,000Rp) This secluded spot has eight bungalows with front porches that are great for lounging and provide spectacular views of the lake and jungle-covered island. Bathrooms are clean, the garden blooms, and hammocks beckon.

magnificence hits you on the bus ride into Parapat, when you'll also spot Pulau Samosir – a Singapore-sized island where you'll make yourself at home. When there's a touch of mist in the air, and the horizon is obscured, the water seems to blend perfectly with the sky. It's a stunning place to hang out with North Sumatra's fun-loving Batak people, who once bathed in tourist dollars and now are simply happy to see anyone with a backpack and a smile. Nice hotel rooms are dirt-cheap, and the food is good here. You may find it difficult to leave.

Parapat

☎ 0625

Parapat is the Danau Toba's commercial centre, with dozens of hotels and restaurants, a lively market adjacent to the port, and a few upmarket resorts, but you'll only need to stay here if you miss the last ferry to Samosir, which is something that's easily avoided. Most likely you will step off the bus, walk through town and get right on a ferry, where you'll meet Samosir's charming young guesthouse touts.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The bus will drop you at the junction of Jl Pulau Samosir and Jl Haranggaol. From there, walk downhill for 300m, past a string of hotels, shops, low-rate moneychangers and restaurants to get to the passenger ferry dock. The car-ferry port to Tomok is 1.5km further southwest around the bay.

SLEEPING & EATING

Charlie's Guesthouse (☎ 41277; d 30,000Rp) Right by the ferry dock and market, Charlie's is cheap, and run by a local musical luminary who jams with guests deep into the night.

Mars Family Hotel (☎ 41459; Jl Kebudayaan 1; d from 80,000Rp) This place is quieter, and a touch cleaner, with a range of rooms. The lake-front rooms are the most appealing, and the most expensive.

Blue Monday Coffee Shop (Jl SM Raja; mains from 15,000; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Run by a pop-song crooning tour guide, named Mr Diamond, who serves up tasty Indonesian fare and good coffee.

Hong Kong (☎ 41395; Jl Haranggaol 9; mains from 20,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) This sparkling Chinese place next to the Tobali Inn is the best bet for a central snack.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The bus terminal is on the highway, 2km east of town, but you probably won't see it. Instead, you'll be shuttled from the ferry port to a bus parked further up the hill in Parapat. Public, sweaty, cramped buses leave frequently for Medan (25,000Rp, five hours) and Sibolga (65,000Rp, six hours). Long-distance buses can also be arranged to Bukittinggi (economy/executive 110,000/140,000Rp, 15 hours) and Padang (economy/superexecutive 100,000/180,000Rp, 17 hours).

Getting to Berastagi (22,000Rp, six hours) is an adventure in public transport, involving transfers, and a bit of waiting, at Pematangsiantar and Kabanjahe.

GETTING AROUND

Opelet run a constant loop between the ferry dock and the bus station, via Jl Singamangaraja (1000Rp), but the bus company may shuttle you over for free.

Pulau Samosir

☎ 0625 / pop120,000

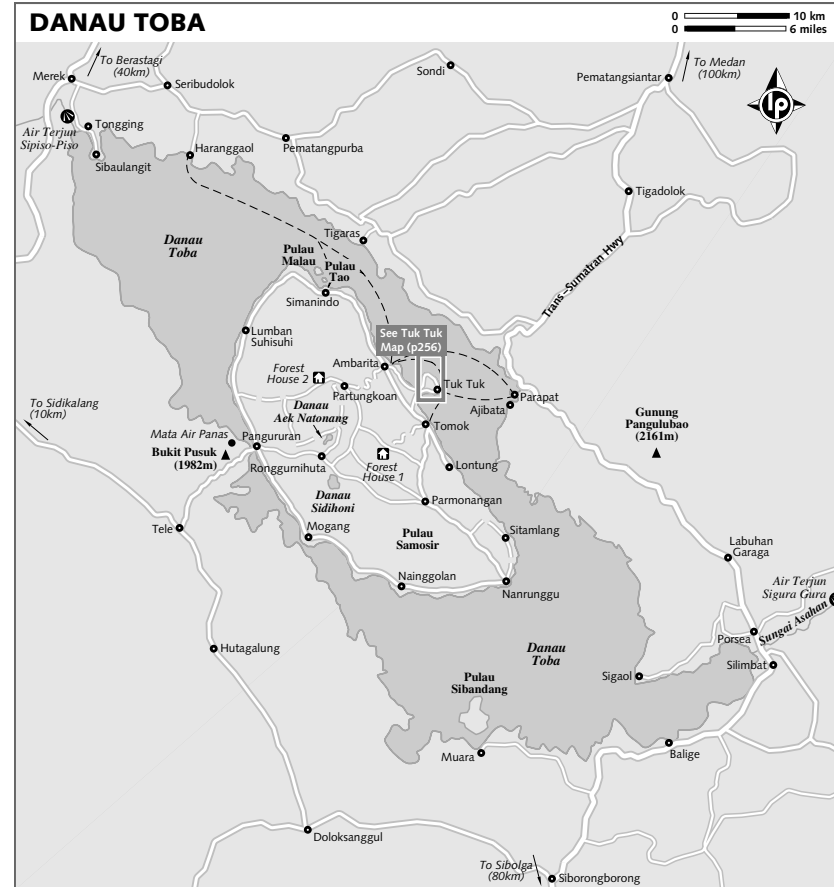
If you want to trek, swim, explore traditional Batak villages, soak in hot springs, party or just chill with some cool local people, Pulau Samosir is your Eden. Your chickenbus beaten body will begin to unwind on the slow 8km ferry cruise over to this volcanic isle (it's actually connected to the mainland by a narrow isthmus, but why quibble?) 900m above sea level. In the late '90s, **Tuk Tuk**, the island's resort town, rocked with full-moon ravers, but Thailand stole their thunder, and now empty hotels and quiet streets are the norm. Which means low prices, high value and tranquillity.

INFORMATION

There are no useful banks or ATMs on the island. Exchange rates aren't great, so change money well before you get to Tuk Tuk, and preferably before you get to Parapat.

Gokhon Library (☎ 451241; Tuk Tuk) has a good book selection, rents motorbikes (65,000Rp per day), and has reliable, but slow, internet service (20,000Rp per hour). Just up the road, the Wicked Laugh has DVD rentals, a wider book selection and live football matches on satellite TV. For international calls hit **Samosir Cottages** (☎ 41050; Tuk Tuk).

The police post is near the Carolina Hotel, in Tuk Tuk; the post office is in Ambarita.



SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Tomok

Tomok, 5km south of Tuk Tuk, is the main village on the east coast of Samosir and the souvenir-stall capital of the island. Tucked away among them, 500m up a path from the road, is the ancient **Tomb of King Sidabutar** (admission 5000Rp; ☎ dawn-dusk), one of the last pre-Christian animist kings. The grave's hand-carved details are intriguing, but the grounds need some love.

Ambarita

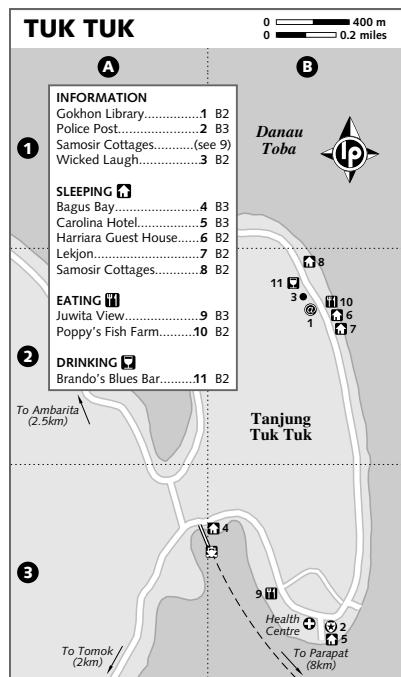
A couple of kilometres north of the Tuk Tuk Peninsula, Ambarita has a group of **stone chairs** (admission 2000Rp; ☎ 8am-6pm) where important matters were discussed among village elders,

and wrongdoers were tried – then apparently led to a further group of stone furnishings where they were beheaded.

Simanindo & Pangururan

The gorgeous old king's house at Simanindo, a sterling sample of Batak architecture 17km north of Tuk Tuk, has been turned into a **museum** (admission 5000Rp; ☎ 10am-4pm). The adjoining replica of a traditional village stages a **Batak dance** (tickets 30,000Rp; ☎ shows 10.30am & 11.45am Mon-Sat, 11.45am Sun), as long as at least five tourists show up.

Crave privacy? From the nearby jetty, you can charter a boat (50,000Rp) to **Pulau Tao**, aka Honeymoon Island, where a small restaurant is occasionally open to serve guests.



SLEEPING & EATING

Samosir has great-value accommodation. The shoreline of Tuk Tuk is a backpacker haven, lined with sweet guesthouses and restaurants. The most stylish places are done up like Batak houses. Hotels usually outnumber tourists, and competition is fierce. If you arrive early, you can spend the afternoon seeking out a nest, or you can just let the local guys on the ferry steer you to theirs. Either way, it's hard to lose. The ferry will drop you off at or near your guesthouse, starting near Bagus Bay and moving northward. East-coast places have sunrise views and the cleanest water.

Samosir Cottages (☎ 41050; d from 25,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) The lobby-bar-restaurant here is the splashiest around, with billiard and Ping-Pong tables, a friendly barkeep and weekly Batak music and dance performances that are fairly underwhelming. Still, the rooms are clean, there is internet, satellite TV, and rumours of free coconuts.

Lekjon (☎ 41578; d from 45,000Rp) Large rooms with terraces, divine lake views, hot water and the friendliest service in Tuk Tuk are standard at this new arrival. You'll feel like part of the family from the moment you arrive. Stay here, but dine elsewhere.

Bagus Bay (☎ 451287; d from 50,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) This place has more than you need. The Batak-style rooms are sweet, and so are the shady avocado trees, and the classic rice-field landscape is superb, but is minigolf absolutely necessary?

Harriara Guest House (☎ 081 3978 23842; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) It doesn't look like much from the road, but walk downstairs and you'll find clean, well-done rooms that open to a lovely garden and lawn area and a sweet slice of lake front. A great choice!

Carolina Hotel (☎ 451520; d from 80,000Rp; 🏠 🚿) Medan money comes calling here because the grounds are lovely, the rooms posh, the setting secluded. Spend extra for hot water and lake-front views.

Juwita View (☎ 451217; dishes 12,000Rp; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Here's a big statement: Juwita just might serve the best *gado gado* (fresh salad with prawn crackers, boiled egg and peanut sauce) in Indonesia. It also makes a mean chicken curry and sweet and sour fish. It's a bit out of the way, on the hillside above the Carolina Hotel, but it's worth the trek, and not just for the food. The easterly views from the patio towards Tomok are spectacular.

Poppy's Fish Farm (☎ 451291; fish dinners 50,000Rp; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Poppy's has the best home cooking in Tuk Tuk. Breakfast pancakes are fluffy and packed with fresh fruit, and the farm-raised tilapia will be netted mere hours before it's cleaned, spiced, butterflied and grilled to perfection. It's near Harriara Guest House.

DRINKING

The locals you'll meet on the ferry talk a big game about the crazy nights ahead, and if you're up for it, you will definitely meet a handful of night owls to revel with. But truthfully, Tuk Tuk is nobody's idea of a party town. However, if you do stay out late, you will almost certainly greet the wee hours at **Brando's Blues Bar** (☎ 451084; beers 16,000Rp; 🍷 9pm-2am) because that's where nights wind down in Tuk Tuk.

ENTERTAINMENT

Hotels host rotating Batak dance performances almost every night. Check around. If you're lucky you may even get invited to a house party or Batak wedding.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Boat

Ferries between Parapat and Tuk Tuk (7000Rp, 30 minutes) operate roughly every hour or two. The last one to Tuk Tuk leaves at 7.30pm and the last one back to Parapat leaves Tuk Tuk at about 5.30pm. Tell them where you want to get off on Samosir and you'll be dropped off nearby. When leaving for Parapat, just stand out on your hotel jetty anytime from 8am and flag a ferry down.

There are also car ferries to Tomok from Ajibata, just south of Parapat.

Bus

From Tuk Tuk you can catch a ferry to Parapat, and from there you can travel by bus (see p254 for details on bus travel to/from Danau Toba). There are daily buses from Pangururan to Berastagi (30,000Rp, four hours) via Sidikalang.

GETTING AROUND

Tuk Tuk sprawls a bit, but can be handled on foot or by pedal (bicycles hire for about 25,000Rp a day). Circumnavigators should rent a motorbike with a full tank of petrol for 65,000Rp. It takes about nine hours to

get around the island, so start early. You will need to fill up along the way.

Regular minibuses run between Tomok and Ambarita (2000Rp), and on to Simanindo (3000Rp) and Pangururan (10,000Rp). Services dry up after 3pm.

BERASTAGI

☎ 0628

Come for the volcanoes, stay for the Giant Cabbage? Um, no. There is a sculpture of the world's most underrated leafy green on Berastagi's main drag, but you're here to bag peaks: Gunung Sinabang and Gunung Sibayak. They can each be done in a day and both offer sublime views of the gorgeously cultivated and thankfully cool Karo Highlands.

Information

BNI bank (Jl Veteran 22) Has an ATM.

Post office (Jl Veteran) Near the war memorial.

Telkom office (Jl Veteran; 📞 24hr) Also near the memorial, for international calls and internet service.

Trans Tour & Travel Agency (☎ 91122; Jl Veteran 119) Run by Losmen Sibayak (p258). Sells plane and ferry tickets from Medan, as well as local mountain and jungle trips.

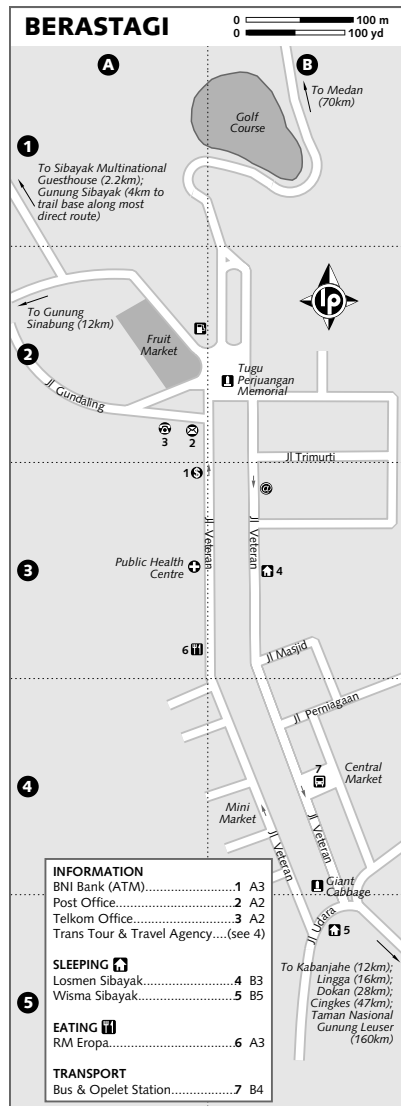
Sights & Activities

Gunung Sibayak (2094m) offers summit views straight out of a tourist brochure, especially during the June–August dry season. Try to avoid weekends, when Medan day-trippers are out in force. If you're with a friend, you could probably do without a guide, but don't hike alone. Guides charge around 150,000Rp for the day. You'll need good walking shoes, warm clothes, food and drink.

The easiest route starts northwest of town, 10 minutes' walk past the Sibayak Multinational Guesthouse. Take the left track beside the entrance hut (2000Rp). From here it's 7km, and three hours, to the top.

Alternatively, you can catch a local bus (2000Rp) to Semangat Gunung at the base of the volcano, from where it's a two-hour climb to the top; there are steps part of the way, but the trail is narrow and in worse condition than the one from Berastagi.

The endurance option is to trek through the jungle from the **Air Terjun Panorama**, the waterfall on the Medan road, 5km north of Berastagi. This five-hour walk demands a local guide.



On the way down, stop and soak in the **hot springs** (admission 3000Rp), a short ride from Semangat Gunung on the road back to Berastagi.

Gunung Sinabung (2450m) is Sibayak's taller, better-looking (meaning the views), and far more difficult sister. It takes around 10 hours for the return trip, and should be tackled

with a guide. Solo hikers have perished here. Sinabung is shy, often hiding behind thick cloudbanks that obscure views.

Berastagi also has plenty of guides offering treks along the well-trodden trails through **Taman Nasional Gunung Leuser** (Gunung Leuser National Park), particularly to Bukit Lawang (three days) or Kutacane (six days).

Anthro-architecture hounds will dig the traditional villages of **Lingga, Dokan** and **Cingkes**.

Sleeping

Losmen Sibayak (☎ 91122; Jl Veteran 119; d from 60,000Rp) Great budget choice, with clean rooms, a chilled-out atmosphere and an all-purpose, in-house travel agency.

Wisma Sibayak (☎ 91104; Jl Udara 1; d from 100,000Rp) A popular choice, the tidy, spacious rooms here have great views, but street noise filters in. The affable staff here enables your trekking fantasies.

Sibayak Multinational Guesthouse (☎ 91031; Jl Pendidikan 93; d from 100,000Rp) An oasis of calm, unless you're here on weekends when jovial (and loud) Medan families take over. But the rooms are nice, with piping hot showers, great views and a garden for lounging and sun soaking. Catch a *Kama opelet* (1500Rp) from the monument.

Eating

The Karo Highlands are North Sumatra's breadbasket. Produce of all shapes, sizes, scents and colours pass through the local market. Passionfruit is particularly great here, and so is the *marquisa bandung*, a large, sweet, yellow-skinned fruit. The purple-hued *marquisa asam manis* is blended into a mean juice. Food stalls twinkle along Jl Veteran at night. Most of the hotels serve local and Western food, but also consider:

RM Eropa (☎ 91365; Jl Veteran 48G; dishes 12,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) It has feta and sausage in the window, sizzling woks inside, and serves excellent Chinese and European fare.

Getting There & Away

Frequent buses to Medan (8000Rp, 2½ hours) go from Berastagi's central market. *Opelet* leave here every few minutes for Kabanjahe (2500Rp, 20 minutes). Getting to Parapat by public bus (22,000Rp, six hours) involves transfers, and a bit of patience, at Kabanjahe and Pematangsiantar.

MEDAN

☎ 061 / pop 1,763,900

Medan, Indonesia's third-largest city and a former Dutch tobacco town, can provoke contrasting reactions: repulsion at the toxic tangle of traffic, poverty and pollution, or enjoyment of the mayhem of a decaying city hopelessly striving to rejuvenate through the construction of shopping malls for the affluent. Don't worry, there are no wrong answers when it comes to Medan, there is just honest visceral response. But whichever way your gut leads you, whether you stay one night or five, there is no denying that Medan, which translates as 'battlefield', is a great place to get logistically organised and prepared for the next great adventure.

Orientation

A taxi ride from the airport to the nearby centre should cost 25,000Rp. From the southern bus terminal, the giant Amplas, it's a 6.5km bemo ride (5000Rp) into town.

Backpackers typically head to Jl Sisingamangaraja (SM Raja), where cheapies huddle in the shadows of the impressive Grand Mosque.

Parallel to SM Raja, to the west across the railroad tracks, runs Jl Katamso, which changes names further north to Jl Pemuda, then Jl Ahmad Yani and Jl Soekarno-Hatta. This is where you'll find many restaurants, the Chinese Night Market, major banks, travel agents and some colonial relics.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police (☎ 110)

INTERNET ACCESS

Hokki Bear Internet (☎ 735 6202; Yuki Plaza, SM Raja; per hr 4000Rp; ☎ 10am-9.30pm Mon-Thu, 9.30am-midnight Fri-Sun)

MEDICAL SERVICES

Rumah Sakit Gleneagles (☎ 456 6368; Jl Listrik 6) English-speaking doctors.

MONEY

ATMs are everywhere, with a string on Jl Pemuda.

BCA (cnr Jl Diponegoro & Jl H Zainal Arifin) Exchanges money.

Citibank (Jl Imam Bonjol 23; ☎ 8.30am-3pm) Has a 24hr ATM.

POST

Main post office (Jl Bukit Barisan 1) Fax, photocopy and parcel services set in an expansive Dutch colonial building.

TELEPHONE

Wartel Maymoon (Jl SM Raja 31-45) One of countless *wartel* in Medan.

TOURIST INFORMATION

North Sumatran Tourist Office (☎ 452 8436; Jl Ahmad Yani 107; ☎ 7.30am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 3pm Fri) Centrally located, here you will get free maps, and adequate information from the quasi-friendly, almost-English-speaking staff.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

Boraspati Express (☎ 452 6802 Jl Dazam Raya 77) Phenomenal deals on air fares throughout Indonesia, and the owner, a surfer and motorcycle buff, has in-depth knowledge of North Sumatra, Pulau Nias and Aceh, and speaks flawless English. It's near Ibung Raya.

Sights & Activities

The **Istana Maimoon** (Maimoon Palace; Jl Katamso 66; admission by donation; ☎ 8am-5.30pm) was built by the sultan of Deli in 1888. The family still occupies one wing, but it's falling down around them. The black-domed **Mesjid Raya** (Grand Mosque; cnr Jl Mesjid Raya & Jl SM Raja; admission by donation; ☎ 9am-5pm, except prayer times) is breathtaking, especially when pilgrims stream in for Friday prayers. It was commissioned by the sultan in 1906 and built in the Moroccan style with Italian marble and Chinese stained glass.

Fans of Southeast Asian mall culture, latte globalisation or air-conditioned movie theatres on hot days should make their way to the bustling **Sun Plaza**, where current cinema, a bowling alley, an oft-defunct ice rink, decent shopping and Starbucks await.

Sleeping

Most hotels are on SM Raja, with a sprinkling of *losmen* around the Mesjid Raya (prepare for the 4am sermon/wake-up call). More bad news: the cheap joints in Medan are disgusting. On the plus side, they are near the Yuki Plaza (a low-budget Sun Plaza), which has ATMs, phone and internet services – and even a bowling alley and billiard tables. More good news: splurge for a midranger and you will get a damn-good deal.

Hotel Zakia (☎ 732 2413; Jl Sipiso-Piso 10-12; d from 40,000Rp) If you like past-their-prime, dirt-bag hotels crawling with unemployed tour guides

MEDAN

0 300 m
0 0.2 miles

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6

INDONESIA

and accented by a midnight curfew imposed by people who aren't your parents, then you'll love it here!

Hotel Tamara (☎ 732 2484; d from 50,000Rp) Down the lane from UKM; it's not as nice, but it is quieter.

UKM Preferred Budget Hotel (☎ 736 7208; Jl SM Raja 53; d from 85,000Rp; 🍷) The former Hotel Deli Raya is the best budget choice in town. That isn't necessarily an endorsement.

Hotel Antares (☎ 732 4000; Jl SM Raja 84; d from 100,000Rp) This is the best deal in town. It's plush, modern and affordable.

Ibunda Hotel (☎ 734 5555; Jl SM Raja 31; d from 150,000Rp; 🍷) The popular Rumah Makan Famili restaurant is downstairs, and upstairs are comfortable air-conditioned rooms with a view.

Hotel Danau Toba International (☎ 415 7000; Jl Imam Bonjol 17; d from 270,000Rp) This ageing minireort, close to the airport, is popular among expat corporate and nongovernmental organization (NGO) types. It's got all the mod cons – cable TV, swimming pool, gym, prostitutes (you can't miss them) – and it's near Sun Plaza, an Indian Hindu Temple (and tasty Indian food), and not too far from Merdeka Walk and the Kesawan Sq night market. Ask for a room on the top floor, where city views are staggering.

Eating & Drinking

Taman Rekreasi Seri Deli (dishes from 5000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Opposite the Mesjid Raya; this is where you'll find Malay street food on the cheap. Try Masaka Minang, the cart right next to the Corner Café. It's considered the best *warung* in Medan.

Rumah Makan Famili (☎ 736 8787; Jl SM Raja 31; dishes from 8000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Below the Ibunda Hotel, this cheap and spotless Padang food haunt is popular with local businessmen. Its speciality is beef *rendang* with duck egg, or would you rather the beef heart simmered in coconut milk?

Corner Café (☎ 734 4485; Jl Sipiso-Piso; dishes 8000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Owned by an expat Indo couple, and nestled in the shadow of Mesjid Raya, this is a great lunch spot, with cheap, ice-cold beers. Try the chicken schnitzel sandwich (20,000Rp). It's monstrous, delicious, a work of art, and should be considered for the sandwich hall of fame.

Cahaya Baru (☎ 453 0962; Jl Teuku Cik Ditiro 12; dishes from 12,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Run by a South

Indian family, near the Hindu Temple, this is one of the best kitchens in town. The smoky, peppery, tender chicken tikka is addictive. It even has wi-fi.

Tip Top Restaurant (☎ 453 2042; Jl Ahmad Yani 92; dishes from 15,000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The first restaurant in town, this fraying-at-the-edges relic hasn't redecored since the Dutch old days. The real attraction isn't the food, it's the original 1940s black-and-white photos on the wall that tell the story of colonial Medan.

Merdeka Walk (dishes 15,000-25,000Rp) This modern promenade is a collection of cafés serving pan-Asian food and offering outdoor seating to young, upwardly mobile Medanites.

O'Flaherty's (Jl Kom Udara Adi Sucipto 8 U-V; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The beating heart of the expat ghetto, this lively Irish pub is south of the airport. Join the international set for a Guinness or three, and make sure not to spend your 25,000Rp cab fare on one last round.

Chinese food, anyone? After dark, Jl Ahmad Yani is closed off north of Jl Palang Merah, and the excellent, greasy **Kesawan Square night market** (dishes from 10,000Rp; 🍷 7pm-1am) springs to life. There's karaoke, noodles, every kind of meat you could imagine... and some that you'd rather not. If only the beer was colder. Also good for Chinese food after midnight is the other **night market** (Jl Semarang), east of the railway line off Jl Pandu.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are daily international flights to Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang. For details see p242. Airlines with international connections include **Air Asia** (code AK; ☎ 080 4133 3333; www.airasia.com) and **SilkAir** (code ML; ☎ 453 7744; www.silkair.com).

For domestic routes, **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 455 6777; www.garuda-indonesia.com) flies daily to Jakarta and Banda Aceh; **Mandala** (☎ 414 3430; www.man dalaair.com) connects Medan with Jakarta and Padang; **Batavia** (code 7P; ☎ 453 7620; www.bata via-air.co.id) flies to Jakarta, Padang, and Pulau Batam; **Sriwijaya** (code SJY; ☎ 455 21111) serves Pekanbaru and Pulau Batam; **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 455 1888; www.merpati.co.id) flies to Sibolga and Pekanbaru.

BOAT

See p262 for information on high-speed ferries to Pulau Penang in Malaysia.

GETTING TO MALAYSIA

Malaysia-bound travellers can make the hop from Medan's Belawan port to Georgetown in Pulau Penang by ferry. Two high-speed ferries, *Behagia Ekspres* and **Perdana Express** (☎ 456 6222; Jl Katamsu 35C) leave daily at 10am and 11am respectively. **Pacto Travel** (☎ 451 0081; Jl Katamsu 35G) handles tickets for the *Behagia Ekspres*.

Both companies charge RM95 (about 250,000Rp) for the trip, plus 26,000Rp extra for the port tax and the bus from Medan to Belawan). Book tickets the day before to confirm your departure time as schedules have been known to fluctuate. Malaysian tourist visas are issued gratis upon arrival in Georgetown.

See p451 for information on doing the trip in the opposite direction.

Pelni boats leave Tuesdays for Jakarta. Perdana Express sells tickets. The main **Pelni office** (☎ 662 2526; www.pelni.com; Jl Krakatau 17A) is 8km north of the centre.

BUS

There are two main bus stations. Buses south to Parapat (25,000Rp, five hours), Bukittinggi (190,000Rp, 20 hours) and beyond leave from the **Amplas bus terminal** (Jl SM Raja), 6.5km south of downtown. Almost any *opelet* heading south on Jl SM Raja will get you to Amplas.

Buses to the north leave from **Pinang Baris bus terminal** (Jl Gatot Subroto), 10km west of the city centre. Get there by taxi (around 25,000Rp) or by *opelet* down Jl Gatot Subroto. There are public buses to both Bukit Lawang (10,000Rp, four hours) and Berastagi (8000Rp, 2½ hours) every half-hour between 5.30am and 5pm. Buses to Banda Aceh (110,000Rp, 12 hours) leave from 8am to 11pm.

Tobali Tour & Travel (☎ 732 4472; Jl SM Raja 79C) also runs a 'tourist' minibus to Parapat (80,000Rp).

Getting Around

Is it wrong to hate taxi drivers who hate using meters? This is the question you'll mutter as Medan cabbies do their best to gouge you. Don't let them get away with it. Becak drivers fetch about 5000Rp for most destinations in town, and *opelets* are omnipresent. The White line hits Kesawan Sq, Merdeka Walk and the train

station; Yellows will take you to Little India and Sun Plaza. They cost 2500Rp per ride.

BUKIT LAWANG

☎ 061 / pop 3000

Bukit Lawang, a jungle village put on the map by the Bohorok Orang-Utan Viewing Centre, has endured tragedy, and risen from the ashes. In November 2003 a flash flood decimated the town and killed 280 people. Everyone who lives here was deeply affected, but slowly the people of this incredible river town, enclosed on all sides by jungle, have rebuilt it, and they welcome tourists like old friends. With great deals and spectacular scenery, this is a great place to be. It's also an ideal base for jungle treks into Taman Nasional Gunung Leuser, where you will see wild and semiwild orang-utans (see boxed text, opposite).

Orientation & Information

The nearby village of Gotong Royong, 2km east of the river, is the new town centre, with *wartel* and shops, but no banks or post office. Near the radio tower, Valentine Tour and Travel changes money, cashes travellers cheques and organises bus, ferry and plane tickets. The nearest clinic and police station are 15km away in the town of Bohorok. The bus station is 1km east of the riverside tourist district. Minibuses may go a bit further to the small square at the end of the road, where a rickety hanging bridge crosses the river to the hotels. At the square, the **PHKA permit office** (tickets 20,000Rp; ☎ 7am-3pm) sells tickets for the orang-utan feeding centre.

Sights & Activities

BOHOROK ORANG-UTAN VIEWING CENTRE

Twice a day (8.30am and 3pm), visitors can watch rangers feed nearly a dozen semiwild orang-utan who are being rehabilitated from captivity or sudden habitat displacement due to logging. The bland fare of bananas and milk encourages the apes to forage on their own. So far, 200 have been successfully re-released into the jungle, mating with communities of wild apes. From the PHKA permit office in town, it's a 30-minute walk up the east bank and a canoe river crossing before a steep path leads to the feeding site.

To learn more about these animals, check out these websites: www.orangutans-sos.org and www.sumatranorangutan.com.

THOSE INCREDIBLE REDHEADS

Orang-utans, the world's largest arboreal mammal, once owned Southeast Asia's rainforests. They swung through the canopy by day, foraging for kilos of fruit, shoots, leaves and nuts that they ground with their forceful jaws, and they'd nest in a new tree every night. Wired with primordial family planning – females birth an average of just three babies (one every six years) – and blessed with relatively long life (they can live 40 years), they were destined to thrive as long as the forests did, and that's the problem.

Rampant deforestation has confined our distant cousins to the last swaths of healthy rainforest in Sumatra and Borneo, and even those remnants are in jeopardy thanks to illegal logging and slash-and-burn agriculture. Rehabilitation centres in Sumatra and Kalimantan are now overcrowded with semiwild primates, but if you see an orang-utan (Malay for 'person of the forest') in the wild, her expressive face will burn into your brain, and shine in your memory forever.

TREKKING

Trekking in Taman Nasional Gunung Leuser is an absolute must. Guides are mandatory in the national park and prices are fixed. It's 150,000Rp for a three-hour guided trek, 250,000Rp fetches a full day, and 450,000Rp is good for two days and one night in the bush, including basic meals, guide fees, camping gear and park permits. That's the popular choice, because a night out increases your chances of spotting wild orang-utan. Most people count a Bukit Lawang trek among their favourite Sumatra memories. Remember, not all guides are sensitive to the environment. Check your guide's licence, talk to the park rangers and ask other travellers before signing up.

RAFTING

Ecolodge Bukit Lawang Cottages (☎ 081 2607 9983) organises white-water rafting on the Wampu River for US\$40 a day. River tubing is possible from your guesthouse. Ask around. It'll cost US\$5.

Sleeping & Eating

Most *losmen* that survived the flood are on the west bank, across the footbridge. Or haul your bum (and your backpack) uphill for 15 minutes to jungle hideaways with excellent views, closer to the feeding centre.

Garden Inn (d from 25,000Rp) This place has basic rooms and great views away from the devastation downriver. There are cold beers, tacos and pancakes at the nearby Indra Valley Café.

Nora's Homestay (d from 30,000Rp) It isn't riverfront, but the bamboo huts are set above ponds, near the rice fields, next to a gurgling stream. Ask the bus driver to drop you off 3km before the river.

Jungle Inn (d from 50,000Rp) Just across the river from the park entrance, this place lives up to its name. One room overlooks a waterfall, another incorporates the rock face into the interior design and has a shower that spouts from a living fern. Indulgence is easy here. The Honeymoon Suite (150,000Rp) comes with two balconies, cosy hammocks for two and panoramic jungle views.

Ecolodge Bukit Lawang Cottages (☎ 081 2607 9983; ecolodge.blc@indo.net.id; d from 125,000Rp) This downriver resort really is green. There's an organic garden, a medicinal plant botanical garden, and it recycles. The rooms are a bit upmarket, set back in the forest, and the guides who hang out here are trustworthy. Top-level Orang-Utan Suites come with open-roofed jungle bathrooms.

Well-established pizza place **Tony's Restaurant** (pizza 18,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) has moved to the bus station. It may look closed, but it isn't. Along the river towards the park there's a string of open-air cafés serving fruit salad, *nasi goreng* and delicious views.

Getting There & Away

Direct buses (10,000Rp, four hours) and public minibuses (15,000Rp, 3½ hours) to Medan's Pinang Baris bus station go at least every half-hour between 5.30am and 5pm. Be warned: everything's big in this jungle, especially the potholes.

BANDA ACEH

☎ 0651 / pop 268,900

The provincial capital of Aceh endured a fate of biblical proportions. Banda was sucker punched twice on the same day by mama nature. The quake that produced the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami (p264) toppled all buildings

BOXING DAY TSUNAMI – THE DAY THE SEA ERUPTED

On the morning of Sunday, 26 December 2004, a magnitude 9 underwater earthquake – the world's most powerful in 40 years – triggered a devastating tsunami that killed more than 220,000 people.

In Banda Aceh, ships came to rest kilometres into the city zone, palm forests were levelled, once-lush rice paddies became stagnant puddles of black water, and the stench of death lingered for months.

Like the catastrophe itself, the global aid effort was unprecedented. Australia, Germany, Japan, Spain, the US and other countries sent troops, and global tsunami-aid pledges eventually topped US\$5 billion.

Of course, recovery from such incomprehensible loss of loved ones and property takes a lifetime, but the devout Acehnese, led by former rebel leaders who are suddenly legit government officials, are steadily rebuilding, and looking forward to an optimistic future.

more than three storeys tall, and the ensuing tidal wave obliterated middle-class coastal enclaves. In Banda alone, 61,000 were killed. But within a year the rubble was removed, the dead were buried, and the GAM rebel separatists disarmed peacefully. Reconstruction is moving at a snail's pace, but the city is bustling once again, and there is a new army in town – international aid workers who are helping jump-start the economy with their work and their wallets.

For all it's headline-grabbing horror, today's Banda Aceh is a fairly laid-back place. It's devoutly Muslim, yes, but women are modern and educated, and people often use official prayer times (when the city virtually shuts down) simply to visit friends rather than to log mosque hours. Still, fundamentalism persists. Adultery and extramarital sex are punishable by the cane here (see PAGING NATHANIAL HAWTHORNE, opposite). Plus, a recent grenade strike against GAM civic leaders has brought back memories of a 30-year war. Check the local news before you travel here.

Orientation & Information

Thanks to bulging NGO expense accounts, airport taxis charge 60,000Rp to 70,000Rp for the 16km ride into town. Tell them you're a tourist and you may score a discount. There are plenty of ATMs around town.

BCA bank (Jl Panglima Polem 38-40)

BII bank (Jl Panglima Polem)

Jambo Internet (☎ 31270; cnr Jl Panglima Polem & Jl Nyak Arief; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Post office (Jl Kuta Alam 33) A short walk from the city centre; has internet facilities.

Telkom wartel (Jl Nyak Arief 92) For international calls.

Sights & Activities

With its brilliant white walls and liquorice black domes, the **Mesjid Raya Baiturrahman** (Jl Mohammed Jam; admission by donation; ☎ 7-11am & 1.30-4pm) somehow survived the tsunami intact, which, despite the rampant loss of life, has been interpreted by fundamentalists as evidence of a merciful God.

The **Museum Negeri Banda Aceh** (Jl Alauddin Mahmudsyah 12; admission 800Rp; ☎ 8.30am-4pm Tue-Thu, to noon Fri & Sat) is the site of the Rumah Aceh, a traditional stilt home built without nails.

Sleeping

Most of the hotels were destroyed in the disaster and haven't reopened. Those that have are usually packed with aid workers. Expect high rates but not high standards.

Hotel Prapat (☎ 22159; Jl A Yani 19; d from 100,000Rp; ☎) Next to the Medan, this is a touch cheaper and a bit rougher, but it has Western toilets and clean sheets.

Hotel Medan (☎ 21501; Jl A Yani 15; d from 175,000Rp; ☎) There was a freight ship parked here for a while, but it's gone now, and the flooded rooms have been nicely renovated.

Eating

Rumah Makan Asia (☎ 23236; Jl Cut Meutia; dishes from 9000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Aceh's answer to Padang food. Try the spicy baked fish.

Warung Ibu Pocut (Jl Nyak Adam Kamil IV 41-VII; dishes from 12,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Set in an open-sided stilt house, this *warung* offers great local fare with a fresh breeze.

Tropicana (Jl SM Raja; mains from 15,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) One of two seafood restaurants that double as NGO magnets. You'll see the SUVs out front.

There's also a lively night food market, known as the **Pasar Malam Rek** (cnr Jl Ahmad Yani & Jl Khairil Anwar).

Getting There & Away

Adam Air (code KI; www.flyadamair.com) and Garuda fly daily to and from Medan, connecting to Jakarta and beyond. To get a current rundown on prices, schedules, and to book flights call **BP Travel** (☎ 32325; Jl Panglima Polem 75).

From **Terminal Bus Seutui** (Jl Teuku Umar), Kurnia runs 11 air-con buses to Medan, leaving between 8am and 8pm (110,000Rp, 12 hours).

Getting Around

Taxis to the Uleh-leh port (for Pulau Weh) cost 100,000Rp. The same trip via *opelet* (aka *labi-labi*) is only 5000Rp from the main **opelet terminal** (Jl Diponegoro). Motorised becak charge 5000Rp to 10,000Rp for most destinations.

PULAU WEH

☎ 0652 / pop 125,000

It's hard to believe that before WWII Pulau Weh, which means 'away from' in Acehnese, was a more important port than Singapore. Today it is a languid, mountainous isle with a muddy road, sleepy fishing villages, beckoning coconut-palm coves and spectacular diving – with walls, canyons, pinnacles and pelagic fish aplenty. And it dodged the tsunami, much to the delight of backpackers and divers, but also aid workers and Banda urbanites who come here to decompress and remember that, while tragic, life can be a beautiful gift.

Orientation & Information

You'll stop through the main town of Sabang, a laid-back little port, on the way to sun, sand and sea. You probably won't overnight here, but you'll find necessities on Jl Perdagangan, the lively main drag.

PAGING NATHANIAL HAWTHORNE

The Scarlet Letter is alive and well in Sumatra, especially in Aceh, where Sharia'a law is observed, and Padang, a growing fundamentalist hotbed. Adultery (read: any sex out of wedlock) is dealt with harshly. In Padang, young adults in committed relationships must surreptitiously book hotel rooms to have sex. If management doesn't approve, he (it's always a he) will call the cops, who will arrest the lovers and plaster the woman's picture on the front page the next morning.

That's nothing. Sex out of wedlock is punishable by the cane in Aceh, for men and women. Recently, an Italian aid worker and his Acehnese girlfriend were caught in Banda, and caned in front of the mosque by a masked cleric in black robes who quoted scripture before each lashing as thousands of people watched in person, and on television!

BRI bank (Jl Perdagangan) Changes money at terrible rates and has a MasterCard-only ATM.

Lumbalumba Dive Centre (☎ 081 168 2787; www.lumbalumba.com; Jl Pantai Gapang; per hr 20,000Rp) Has the most reliable internet in town.

Post office (Jl Perdagangan 66)

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 21310; Jl Teuku Umar) Offers medical facilities near Pantai Kasih.

Telkom office (Jl Perdagangan 68; ☎ 24hr) Next door to the post office.

Sights & Activities

The castaway vibe saturates **Iboih Beach**, which attracts backpackers to pretty bungalows set on the sand and forested slopes above turquoise waters. Just offshore (15,000Rp return by charter boat) lies the tiny, densely forested **Pulau Rubiah**, surrounded by epic coral reefs known as the **Sea Garden**.

Around the headland from Iboih is the more social **Gapang Beach**. It's terrific for swimming, with frequent turtle sightings. Rates and visitors double on weekends. **Pantai Kasih** (Lover's Beach), about a 2km walk from town, is a palm-fringed crescent of white sand.

There are two dive operators on the island. At Iboih you'll find **Rubiah Tirta Divers** (☎ 331119; www.rubiahdivers.com), which charges US\$54 for two tanks. In Gapang, the Dutch-run **Lumbalumba Dive Centre** (☎ 081 168 2787; www.lumbalumba.com; Jl Pantai Gapang) charges €45 for two tanks and offers an array of PADI courses. Snorkelling gear can be hired anywhere for 15,000Rp per day.

Sleeping & Eating

In Iboih, a walking path leads to groups of palm-thatch bungalows, set on the shore or overlooking the water. Rooms start at 30,000Rp. Arina, Fatimah, Oong's and Yulia's bungalows are popular. Communal meals of *ikan bakar* are served by most *losmen* for

15,000Rp. Arina restaurant makes lasagne and a tasty prawn curry.

At the slightly more upmarket Gapang, your choices range from basic huts on the sand to pseudoresorts. At the end of the beach, the basic, recently completed **No-name Bungalows** (bungalows from 20,000Rp) is only bare foot-steps from the waves. **Ramadilla** (cabins 50,000Rp) is a collection of cabins on a hillside, with a longhouse that commands a sultan's view of the Indian Ocean. If you're flush, try **Laguna Resort** (d 175,000Rp), which has a great seaside restaurant (open breakfast, lunch and dinner), and spacious sea-view chalets.

Getting There & Away

Fast ferries to Pulau Weh (60,000Rp, two hours) leave at 9.30am and 4pm from Uleh-leh, 15km northwest of Banda. A slow ferry leaves at 2pm (40,000Rp, three hours). In the other direction the slow ferry leaves at 8am, and the fast ferry at 8.30am and 4pm. Get to the port an hour before departure to buy tickets.

Getting Around

From the port there are regular bemo to Sabang (10,000Rp, 15 minutes), and Iboih and Gapang (50,000Rp, 45 minutes). *Labi labi* run from Jl Perdagangan in Sabang to Gapang and Iboih (30,000Rp, 45 minutes).

PEKANBARU

☎ 0761 / pop 705,500

This once-sleepy river port on Sungai Siak (Siak River) is further evidence that the discovery of oil (by US engineers c WWII) is a big deal. Today Pekanbaru is a modern city, Indonesia's helter-skelter oil capital, and a business destination for multinational executives. It's also a convenient overnight stop between Singapore and Bukittinggi if you take the ferry.

Orientation & Information

Airport taxis charge 60,000Rp for the 10km trip into town. Most banks and hotels are on Jl Sudirman. The new bus station is 7km west of town.

BCA bank (Jl Sudirman 448)

Micronet (☎ 21219; Jl M Yamin; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 9am to 11pm) Internet service.

Riau Provincial Tourist Office (☎ 858441; Jl Gajah Mada 200; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri)

Santa Maria Hospital (☎ 22213; Jl Ahmed Yani)

Tigobalai (☎ 28559; Jl Sam Ratulangi 62G) Reliable travel agency.

Sleeping & Eating

Poppie's Homestay (☎ 45762; Jl Cempedak III 11A; d 50,000Rp) Bunk at this budget fave located in a converted family home nestled in a residential neighbourhood. Friendly locals will point you in the right direction. It organises bus trips.

Shorea Hotel (☎ 48239; Jl Taskurun 100; d from 120,000Rp; ☎) Clean, modern rooms in a quiet location off the main strip.

If this is your first night in Indo, take an evening food-stall crawl on Jl Sudirman, at the junction with Jl Imam Bonjol. Or bypass culinary immersion to munch burgers, cakes, pastries and ice cream in scrubbed-fresh environs at **Vanhollano Bakery** (Jl Sudirman 153; meals 15,000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner.

Getting There & Away

Simpang Tiga Airport is a visa-free entry point and has five flights to Jakarta each day. The flights are handled by **Batavia** (code 7P; ☎ 856031; www.batavia-air.co.id), **Lion Air** (code JJ; ☎ 40670; www.lionair.co.id); **Adam Air** (code KI; www.flyadamair.com), **Sriwijaya** (code SJY; ☎ 859800) and **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 29115; www.garuda-indonesia.com). **Merpati** (code MZ; www.merpati.co.id) and Sriwijaya fly to Medan.

Frequent buses go to Bukittinggi (economy/air-con 35,000/70,000Rp, five hours) from the uncharacteristically reserved, organised and modern Terminal Akap.

Booths at the north end of Jl Sudirman sell speedboat tickets to Pulau Batam (200,000Rp, six hours; 8am). There are also three boats a week to Melaka, Malaysia (200,000Rp, eight hours; 9am). Considering the time involved and the prevalence of affordable air fare, flying is the better choice.

DUMAI

☎ 0765 / pop 154,400

Like most of Pekanbaru's oil, travellers come and go through the industrial port of Dumai. But only to use its visa-free port for ferry trips to Melaka, Malaysia. There are two ATMs near the river end of Jl Sudirman.

If you get stuck here, stay at the tolerable **Hotel Tasia Ratu** (☎ 31307; Jl St Syarif Kasim 65; d from 150,000Rp).

There is a rash of buses to Pekanbaru (40,000Rp, five hours), Bukittinggi (economy/air-con 60,000/90,000Rp, 10 hours), and Padang (economy/air-con 70,000/100,000Rp, 12 hours).

GETTING TO MALAYSIA

High-speed ferries depart Dumai for Melaka at 8am, 10.30am and 1pm (160,000Rp, two hours). Tickets are available at the port; check in and pay your 3500Rp port tax two hours before departure. There are also three Melaka-bound boats each week that leave from Pekanbaru (200,000Rp, eight hours).

Malaysian visas are free and are issued upon arrival.

See p438 for information on doing the journey in the opposite direction.

Melaka-bound ferries leave at 8am, 10.30am and 1pm (160,000Rp, two hours) daily. Ferries travel daily to Pulau Batam, as well (195,000Rp, six hours). You must check in at the port two hours before departure. Port tax is 3500Rp. Two Pelni ships sail from Dumai to Pulau Bintan, then on to Jakarta.

PULAU BATAM

☎ 0778 / pop 311,800

It's not a good bet that you've chosen to overnight here. Of course, if multinational industrial plant sweatshops, bizarre retirement homes, low-end golf courses and sweaty, doughy business executives getting loose in girly bars turns you on, then you'll have a blast. More than likely you just missed your ferry, and need a place to crash.

GETTING TO MALAYSIA & SINGAPORE

To Malaysia

From Batam Centre ferry terminal there are (almost) hourly departures to Johor Bahru in Malaysia (160,000Rp) from 8am to 5pm. Numerous taxis and public minibuses make the run between Sekupang port, Nagoya and the Batam Centre ferry terminal. For more information on tickets and schedules call **Batam Centre** (☎ 334704). Malaysians are available upon arrival in Johor Bahru.

From Pulau Bintan, there are five boats a day to Johor Bahru (140,000Rp, two hours).

See p456 for details of crossing from Malaysia to Indonesia.

To Singapore

Flying from Indonesian cities to Pulau Batam in the Riau Islands is far cheaper than catching a plane directly to Singapore, which is only a short ferry ride away. From Pulau Batam's airport, take a 50,000Rp taxi to the Sekupang ferry terminal. From here, 45-minute fast ferries (S\$18) leave every half-hour between 6am and 8pm for Singapore's HarbourFront terminal, where visas are issued, on arrival, for many nationalities.

There are also frequent boats from Pulau Bintan to Singapore's Tanah Merah terminal (S\$25) between 7am and 6.30pm.

For details on crossing in the reverse direction, see p654.

Orientation & Information

Travellers usually arrive at the Sekupang port by boat from Singapore, and rush to the domestic terminal next door for Sumatran connections. Arrive with cash for immigration proceedings, or you'll need to catch a cab to Nagoya.

Nagoya, in the north, is the island's largest town, a cluster of hotels, necessities and diversions. Jl Imam Bonjol is the main drag, where you will find ATMs and internet cafés. The **Batam Tourist Promotion Board** (☎ 322871) has a small office outside the international terminal at Sekupang; hours are erratic.

Sleeping & Eating

Most budget hotels on Pulau Batam double as brothels.

Hotel CityView (☎ 429022; Block V, 35; d 98,000Rp; ☎)

If you're stuck here for a night, this will work.

Dozens of tempting outdoor food stalls gather on Pujasera Nagoya across the canal.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 458620; www.garuda-indonesia.com),

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 424000; www.merpati.co.id), **Mandala** (☎ 432278; www.mandalaair.com) and **Air Asia** (code AK; ☎ 080 4133 3333; www.airasia.com) fly daily to/from Jakarta. Merpati destinations also include Medan, Padang, Palembang, Jambi, Pekanbaru and Pontianak, Kalimantan. Most of the Nagoya hotels have travel agencies.

BOAT

The main reason travellers come here from Singapore is for its connections to Pekanbaru on the Sumatran mainland. Boats leave from the domestic wharf next to the international terminal. For Pekanbaru (190,000Rp, six hours), two boats leave Sekupang around 7.30am, so you'll need to catch the first ferry from Singapore to make it. Change money in Singapore to save time here.

There are also two morning boats from Sekupang to Dumai (195,000Rp, six hours).

From Sekupang there is one morning boat to Kuala Tungkal (231,000Rp), on the Jambi coast in Malaysia, and there are three boats weekly to Palembang (305,000Rp, eight hours). Pelni ships pass through Pulau Batam every four days, on their way to Belawan or Jakarta.

There are also boats to Singapore and Johor Bahru in Malaysia; see p267 for details.

If you're stuck in Nagoya, **Dumai Express** (☎ 427758; Komplek Lucky Plaza) sells ferry tickets.

To get to Pulau Bintan, take a taxi (65,000Rp) to the Telaga Punggur ferry dock, 30km southeast of Nagoya. Frequent boats leave for Tanjung Pinang (35,000Rp, 45 minutes) from 8.15am to 5.15pm.

Getting Around

A local *ojek* ride is around 5000Rp. A taxi from Sekupang to Nagoya costs 50,000Rp.

PULAU BINTAN

Pulau Bintan is Pulau Batam's polar opposite, with the charming old harbour town of Tanjung

Pinang (a visa-free entry/exit point), interesting Muslim ruins on nearby Pulau Penyengat, a population of ethnic Hakka people and Indo-Malays, and a string of quiet beaches with several small islands sprinkled off the east coast.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

While Pulau Batam is the main link to Sumatra proper, Tanjung Pinang is the jumping-off point to the remote islands of the Riau Islands. It also has links to Singapore and Malaysia. Most services leave from the main pier at the southern end of Jl Merdeka. See p267 for more information on boats to Singapore and to Johor Bahru in Malaysia.

Regular speedboats leave from the main pier for Telaga Punggur on Pulau Batam (35,000Rp, 45 minutes) from 7.45am to 4.45pm daily.

There are daily ferry services to Pekanbaru (300,000Rp, two days), and Dumai (275,000Rp, two days).

Pelni (☎ 21513; Jl Ketapang 8, Tanjung Pinang) sails to Jakarta (195,000Rp, 28 hours) twice weekly from the southern port of Kijang. You can organise a trip and book with agents on Jl Merdeka.

GETTING AROUND

The bus terminal is 7km out of Tanjung Pinang. There are no regular public buses to Pantai Trikora, but you can probably flag one down on the highway and ask the driver to stop in Trikora (20,000Rp), or charter a taxi (100,000Rp). *Opelet* will shuttle you around Tanjung Pinang, most destinations cost

2000Rp, but negotiate before you climb aboard. Tanjung Pinang is also crawling with *ojek*.

Tanjung Pinang

☎ 0771 / pop 130,700

Tanjung Pinang has a busy harbour, great shopping, decent Indo-Chinese food and a smattering of traditional stilted villages on the outskirts.

INFORMATION

There are several ATMs on Jl Merdeka; bank branches are on Jl Teuku Umar.

BNI bank (Jl Teuku Umar)

Hospital (☎ 25310; Jl Atos Ausri; ☎ 24hr)

Post office (Jl Merdeka)

Tanjung Pinang Tourism Office (☎ 21284; Jl Merdeka 5; ☎ 7.30am-5pm) Has English-speaking staff and maps.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

The old stilted part of town around **Jl Plantar II** is worth a wander. Turn left at the colourful **fruit market** at the northern end of Jl Merdeka.

Senggarang is a fascinating village just across the harbour from Tanjung Pinang, where the **Chinese temple** is held together by the roots of a huge banyan tree. Five hundred metres further on lies the 100-year-old **Vihara Darma Sasana** temple complex.

Boats to Senggarang (10,000Rp) leave from the end of Jl Pejantan II.

SLEEPING & EATING

Bong's Homestay (☎ 22605; Lorong Bintan II 20; d 30,000Rp) Backpackers have been landing here since your

parents were hippies. The family speaks great English and is a wealth of information.

Hotel Surya (☎ 21811; Jl Bintan 49; s/d 45,000/80,000Rp) Value varies here, from dank concrete boxes to sunny, freshly painted, naturally lit rooms.

Outdoor restaurants and coffee shops line the front of the volleyball stadium.

Pulau Penyengat

This tiny island, a 15-minute *pompong* (diesel-powered wooden boat) ride (4000Rp) from the main pier, was once the capital of the Riau rajas. Explore the ruins of an old palace, visit stilted Malay villages and glimpse the sulphur-tinted Sultan Riau mosque, with its many minarets. Dress appropriately to gain access.

Pantai Trikora & Teluk Bakau

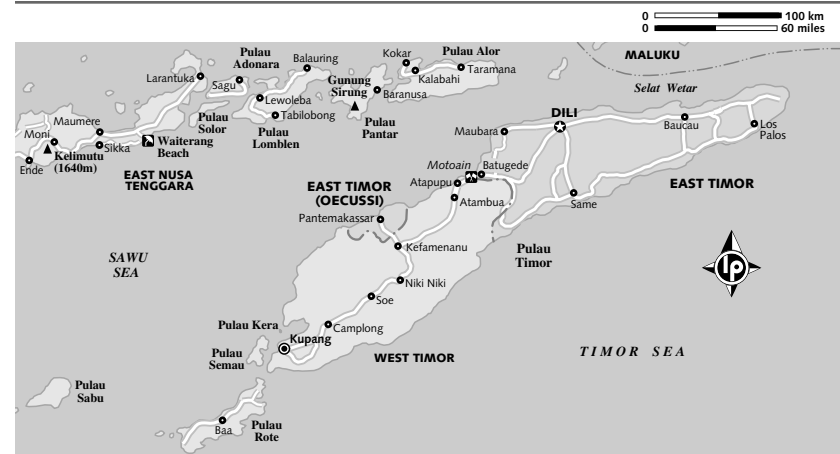
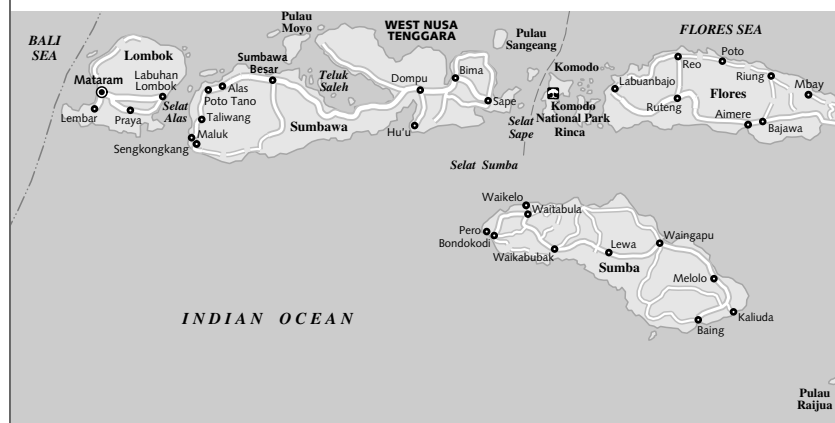
The best beaches on Pulau Bintan, with good snorkelling and attractive offshore islands, are on the east coast at **Pantai Trikora**. Beach huts are just a cut above camping. At low tide the beach becomes a dull mud flat.

South of Teluk Bakau village, try **Shady Shack** (bungalows 150,000Rp), or **Gurindam Resort** (☎ 26234; bungalows 150,000Rp), an overwater bungalow complex.

NUSA TENGGARA

Everything that's great about Indonesia – jaw-dropping mountains, thundering rivers, stunning beaches, ethnic and religious diversity, and exotic wildlife – can be found

NUSA TENGGARA



along this arc of islands that stretches towards Australia. If you get bored here it's because you missed the nightly parties on sugar-white Gili island beaches, bypassed some of the best diving in the world, thumbed your nose at lush volcanoes waiting to be climbed, missed the Komodo dragons patrolling a parched, jagged landscape, or turned down the twists and turns of a Flores road trip. In other words, it's your own fault.

The one drawback is that transportation between the islands can be unpredictable and maddening. Ferry, bus and flight departures are often less frequent than cancellations as you wander further east. But patience and intrepidness net rewards that will make your camera sing and your friends jealous.

Getting There & Away

Denpasar, Bali, is the main international gateway for Nusa Tenggara: you can go by ferry or plane across to Lombok, or fly to one of the other islands and work your way back.

Mataram, in Lombok, does have an international airport with SilkAir flights to Singapore. Merpati also flies twice weekly from Kupang, in West Timor, to Darwin, Australia.

Getting Around

The easiest and most popular way to explore Nusa Tenggara is to fly from Bali to Labuanbajo (Flores) or Kupang (West Timor) and island-hop from there.

AIR

Merpati, IAT and Trigana cover most destinations in Nusa Tenggara. Despite its manual ticketing process, Trigana is the best choice. Garuda, Adam Air, Batavia, Lion Air and Wings Air offer routes to Mataram.

Mataram, Kupang and Labuanbajo are the main air hubs and the most reliable places to get a flight. Bima, Maumere and Ende also have flights, though at the time of research the schedules were eviscerated due to national flight-safety upgrades. Overall, booking flights in Nusa Tenggara can be a nightmare. Purchase tickets from the point of departure, and reconfirm at least once or you may get bumped. Remember, schedule changes and cancellations are the norm.

BOAT

Regular vehicle/passenger ferries connect Bali–Lombok, Lombok–Sumbawa, Flores–

Sumbawa, and Flores–Sumba. Perama makes the run from Lombok to Flores and back, taking in Komodo and Rinca. There are also dive liveboards that run a similar route, but offer adventure beneath the surface.

Pelni (www.pelni.com) has regular connections throughout Nusa Tenggara. Check the website for details.

BUS

Air-con coaches run across Lombok, Sumbawa, and from Kupang to Dili in Timor, but elsewhere small, slow minibuses are the only option. They constantly stop for passengers and drive around town for hours until full. A 100km ride can take up to four hours.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

A motorcycle is an ideal way to explore Nusa Tenggara, but hiring one is not always easy outside Lombok. You can rent one in Bali or Lombok, and portage across by ferry. Bring an extra gas can, and don't underestimate the sinuous, rutted roads. For groups, cars with driver/guides are a great option, and cost about US\$40 a day.

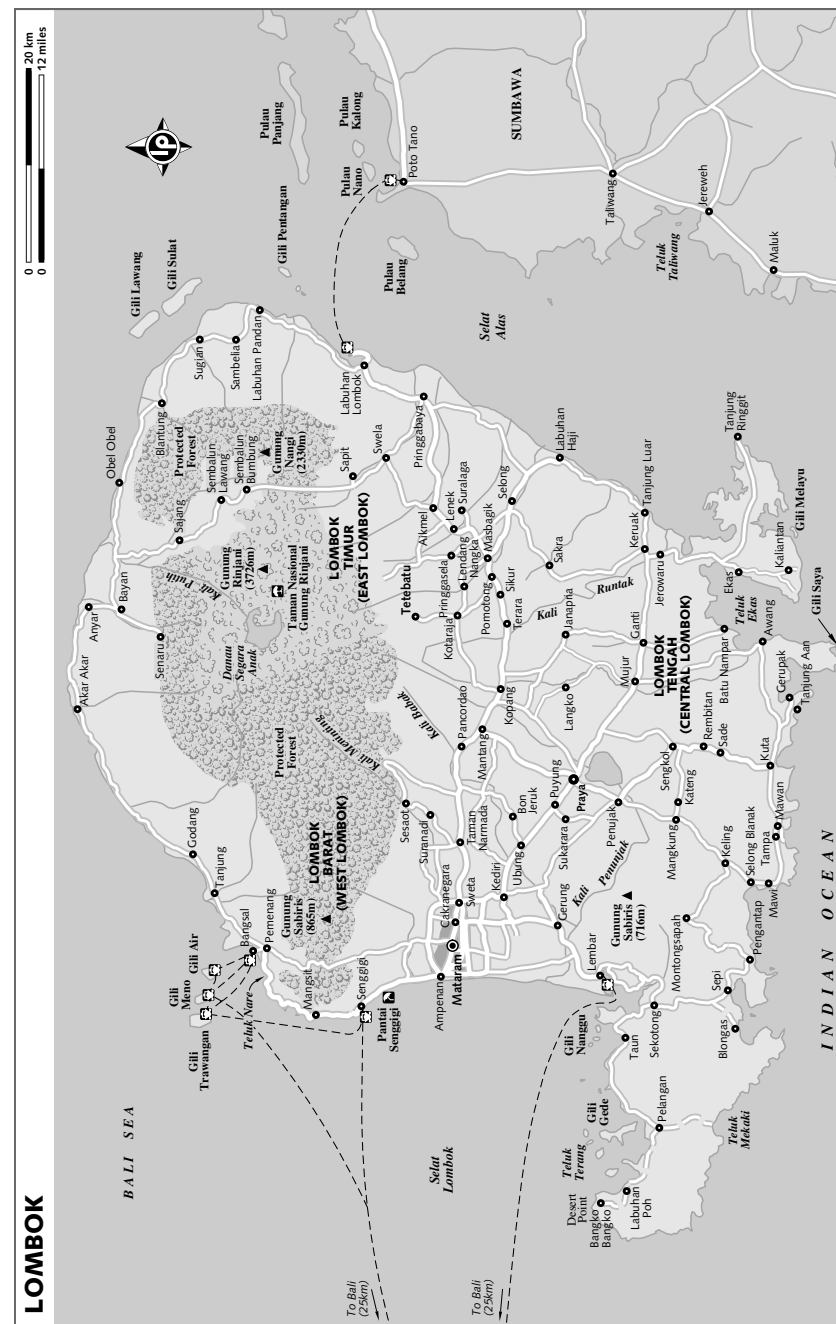
LOMBOK

Lombok is an easy hop from Bali, and is the most popular spot in Nusa Tenggara. It has a spectacular, mostly deserted coastline with palm coves, Balinese Hindu temples, looming cliffs and epic surf. The majestic and sacred Gunung Rinjani rises from its centre – a challenging climb with rewards of seas and sunrise panoramas. And dive sites in the Gilis – Lombok's biggest draw, a car-less collection of islands that are sprinkled with great restaurants, sweet bungalows and infused with a party vibe – are patrolled by sharks and rays. Sun-drenched and nocturnal adventures await.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

There are daily flights to/from Denpasar on **Merpati** (☎ 0370 621111; www.merpati.co.id) and **Wings Air** (☎ 0370 629111; www.lionair.co.id). **Lion Air** (☎ 0370 629111; www.lionair.co.id) and **Garuda** (☎ 0370 638259; www.garuda-indonesia.com) operate daily flights to Surabaya with connections to Jakarta. **Silk-Air** (☎ 0370 628254; www.silkair.com) has two daily flights to/from Singapore. Departure tax is 10,000Rp for domestic flights and 100,000Rp for international.



Boat

Large car ferries travel from Bali's Padangbai port to Lombok's Lembar harbour every two hours (21,000Rp, 65,000Rp for motorcycles; five hours).

Perama (☎ 0370-635928; Jl Pejangik 66, Mataram) runs a variety of tours between Bali, Lombok and Komodo. Ships leave Padangbai daily at 9am for Gili Trawangan (200,000Rp, 4½ to 5½ hours), from where smaller boats connect to Gili Meno and Gili Air, before sailing on to Senggigi (six hours).

From Senggigi, Perama boats leave daily at 9am for the Gilis (70,000Rp) and for Padangbai (200,000Rp, five hours). From the Gilis, Perama runs 7am boats to Bangsal harbour, from where a minibus connects with the 9am Senggigi–Padangbai boat. Meals are provided on board.

From Sumbawa, public ferries leave Poto Tano for Labuhan Lombok, in east Lombok, hourly (12,500Rp, about 1½ hours).

Three **Pelni** (☎ 0370-637212; Jl Industri 1, Mataram) ships do regular loops through Nusa Tenggara, each one stopping in Lembar.

Bus

Long-distance public buses depart daily from Mataram's Mandalika terminal for major cities in Bali and Java in the west, and to Sumbawa in the east. Purchase tickets in advance from travel agencies along Jl Pejangik in Mataram. Fares include the ferry crossings.

Perama runs bus/public-ferry services between main tourist centres in Bali (Kuta-Legian, Sanur, Ubud etc) and Lombok (Mataram, Senggigi, Bangsal and Kuta).

GETTING AROUND

Bicycle

Empty but well-maintained roads, spectacular vistas and plenty of flat stretches make cycling in Lombok a dream. But you'd better bring your own.

Bus & Bemo

Mandalika, Lombok's main bus terminal, is in Bertais, 6km southeast of central Mataram. Regional bus terminals are in Praya, Anyar and Pancor (near Selong). You may need to transfer between terminals to get from one part of Lombok to another.

Chartering a bemo can be an inexpensive way to get around (175,000Rp per day) if you're travelling in a group.

Car & Motorcycle

Senggigi is the best place to rent wheels. Elsewhere, prices skyrocket and selection suffers. Suzuki Jimmys cost 150,000Rp per day, Kijangs are 225,000Rp. Motorcycles can be rented in Senggigi for 60,000Rp per day. Scooters are cheaper.

Lembar

☎ 0370

Lembar, Lombok's main port, is where ferries and Pelni ships dock (see left). Bus connections are abundant, and bemos run regularly to the Mandalika bus terminal (3500Rp), so there's no reason to crash here.

Mataram

☎ 0370 / pop 323,400

Lombok's sprawling capital, actually a cluster of four towns – Ampenan (port), Mataram (administrative centre), Cakranegara (commercial centre) and Sweta (bus terminal) – has some charms. There are ample trees, decent restaurants and even a few cultural sights – including an old Balinese water temple and a bustling central market – but with Senggigi so close by few travellers spend any time here.

ORIENTATION

Ampenan-Mataram-Cakranegara-Sweta is connected by one busy thoroughfare that changes names from Jl Yos Sudarso to Jl Langko then Jl Pejangik and Jl Selaparang. It's one-way, from west to east. The parallel Jl Panca Usaha/Pancawarga/Pendidikan takes traffic back toward the coast.

INFORMATION

BCA, Mandiri and other banks on Jl Selaparang have ATMs. Most change foreign cash and travellers cheques.

The most reliable internet cafés are at the Mataram Mall.

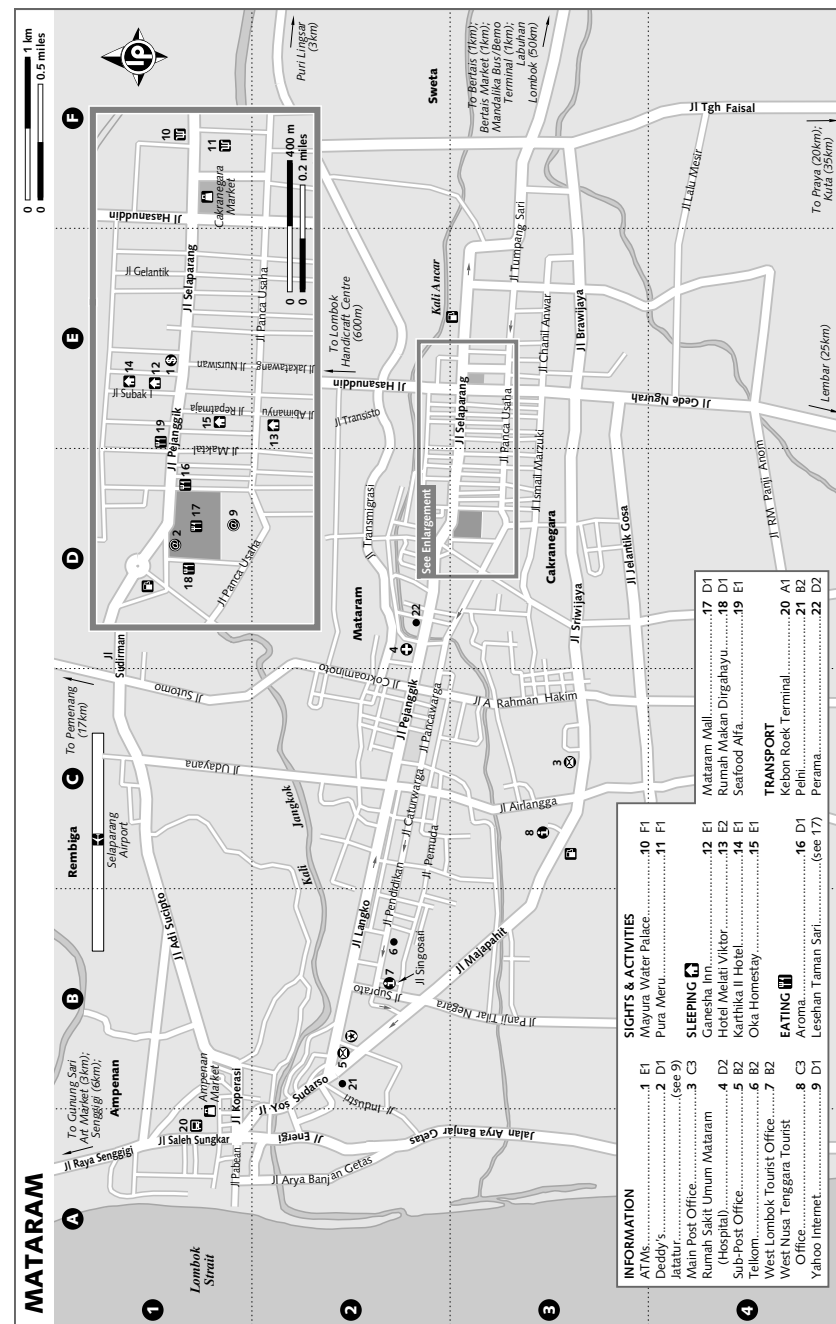
Deddy's (Mataram Mall; per hr 6000Rp) Internet access. Enter from parking lot.

Jatatur (☎ 632878; jatatur@yahoo.com; Jl Panca Usaha Block A 12) Well-run travel agency with English-speaking staff, but even the most astute agents are stumped by the bizarre Nusa Tenggara flight schedules.

Main post office (☎ 632645; Jl Sriwijaya) Has internet access for 6000Rp per hour.

Rumah Sakit Umum Mataram (☎ 622254; Jl Pejangik 6; ☎ 24hr) Medical services.

Sub post office (Jl Langko 21) More central than the main post office.



Telkom (☎ 633333; Jl Pendidikan 23; 🕒 24hr) Make telephone calls here.

West Lombok Tourist Office (☎ 621658; Jl Suprpto 20; 🕒 8am–2pm Mon–Sat) For maps, not insight.

West Nusa Tenggara Tourist Office (☎ 635874; Jl Singosari 2; 🕒 8am–3pm Mon–Sat, to 11am Fri) English-speaking staff knows more about Sumbawa than Lombok.

Yahoo Internet (☎ 627474; Mataram Mall A11; per hr 6000Rp) Internet access.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Everyone loves those sweet Balinese, but did you know they colonised Lombok for 100 years before the Dutch arrived? The proof is in the relics. **Pura Meru** (Jl Selaparang; admission by donation; 🕒 8am–5pm), built in 1720, is a Hindu temple with 33 shrines, and wooden drums that are thumped to call believers to ceremony. The nearby **Mayura Water Palace** (Jl Selaparang; admission by donation; 🕒 7am–7.30pm) was built in 1744 for the Balinese royal court.

The **Bertais Market** (🕒 7am–5pm), near the bus terminal, is a great place to get localised after you've overdone on the *bule* circuit. There are no tourists here, but it's got everything else: fruit and veggies, fish (fresh and dried), baskets full of colourful, aromatic spices and grains, freshly butchered beef, palm sugar, enormous and pungent bricks of shrimp paste, and cheaper handicrafts than anywhere else in Lombok.

SLEEPING

A handful of good budget options are hidden among the quiet streets off Jl Pejanggalik/Selaparang, east of Mataram Mall.

Ganesha Inn (☎ 624878; Jl Subak 1; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) Stylish exterior, nice location, but the rooms are yellow at the edges. It's the kind of place that begs the question, why are these walls so dirty?

Oka Homestay (☎ 622406; Jl Repatmaya 5; d from 40,000Rp) Balinese-owned, this garden compound patrolled by three friendly poodles is another great deal. Rooms are fan cooled and quite clean.

Karthika II Hotel (☎ 641776; Jl Subak I 16; s/d/tr 65,000/70,000/80,000Rp; 🕒) This is a nice courtyard place with a Balinese theme, but choose rooms wisely. Some of the standard rooms are in better shape than the VIPs. Air-con rooms cost 20,000Rp more.

Hotel Melati Viktor (☎ 633830; Jl Abimanyu 1; d from 80,000Rp; 🕒) The high ceilings, clean rooms and Balinese-style courtyard, complete with Hindu statues, make this the best value in town.

EATING & DRINKING

Mataram Mall (Jl Pejanggalik; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Satisfy your sweet tooth with doughnuts, pastries and cakes from Mirasa Modern Bakery or Hokky Cake Shop.

Rumah Makan Dirgahayu (☎ 637559; Jl Gilinaya 19; rice dishes from 7,000Rp, seafood from 25,000Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This popular Makassar-style place opposite the mall, with gurgling fountains and twirling ceiling fans, is an ideal lunch oasis on sweaty afternoons.

Aroma (Jl Pejanggalik; meals from 15,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) This modern, spotless Chinese seafood restaurant serves an outstanding fried *gurami* (local freshwater fish; 35,000Rp) accompanied by a fiery sweet chili sauce.

Lesahan Taman Sari (☎ 629909; Mataram Mall; meals 25,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) Attached to the mall, this place wins with ambience and multi-course traditional Lombok meals, served on banana leaves and enjoyed in stilted, thatched *beruga* (huts) set around a lush garden. This is where locals go at night.

Seafood Alfa (☎ 660088; Jl Pejanggalik; grilled fish 30,000Rp; 🕒 lunch & dinner) A bright, friendly place, set in a strip mall, that specialises in grilled fish and noodle dishes.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

See p270 for information on flights and airlines.

Mandalika terminal, on the eastern fringe of the Mataram area, has regular bemo to Lembar (3500Rp, 30 minutes, 22km), Labuhan Lombok (11,000Rp, 69km), and Pemanang, for the Gili islands (6000Rp, 31km). The Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan has bemo to Senggigi (3000Rp, 10km).

Yellow bemo shuttle passengers between the Kebon Roek and Mandalika terminals (1500Rp), where you may also charter bemo.

Perama (☎ 635928; Jl Pejanggalik 66) runs bus services across Lombok and its neighbouring islands.

Around Mataram

Puri Lingsar (admission by donation; 🕒 dawn–dusk) is the oldest, holiest temple complex in Lombok. Built in 1714 by King Agung, it has two sides, one for Hindus and a second one built for followers of the *Wektu Telu* religion. Today it is considered a multidemoninational wing that unites Hindu, Islam and animist faiths. Feed the holy eels, and make a wish.

The **Gunung Sari Art Market** (Jl Gunung Sari; 🕒 9am–5pm), 3km west of Mataram, is a collection of a dozen art shops, each with much better deals on masks, bowls, baskets and other local handicrafts than you'll find in Senggigi.

Senggigi

☎ 0370

You can spend a lifetime of travel in search of the perfect beach, and it would be hard to top those around Senggigi, Lombok's original tourist town. Think: a series of sweeping bays with white-sand beaches, coconut palms, cliff and mountain backdrops, and blood-red views of Bali's Gunung Agung at sunset. There are sweet, inexpensive guesthouses, a few luxury hotels and dozens of restaurants and bars. Senggigi has everything, except tourists. Well, it's not completely empty, but it's desolate enough (except during July and August) to feel a bit strange. Still, the sheer beauty of the place is worth a night or two.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Senggigi spans nearly 10km of coast. Hotels, shops, banks and restaurants are clustered

along a central strip starting 6km north of Ampenan.

Police station (☎ 110) Also next to the Pasar Seni.

Senggigi Medical Clinic (☎ 673210) Based at the Senggigi Beach Hotel.

Super Star Net Café (☎ 693620; Senggigi Plaza B1/05; per hr 18,000Rp) High-speed internet access.

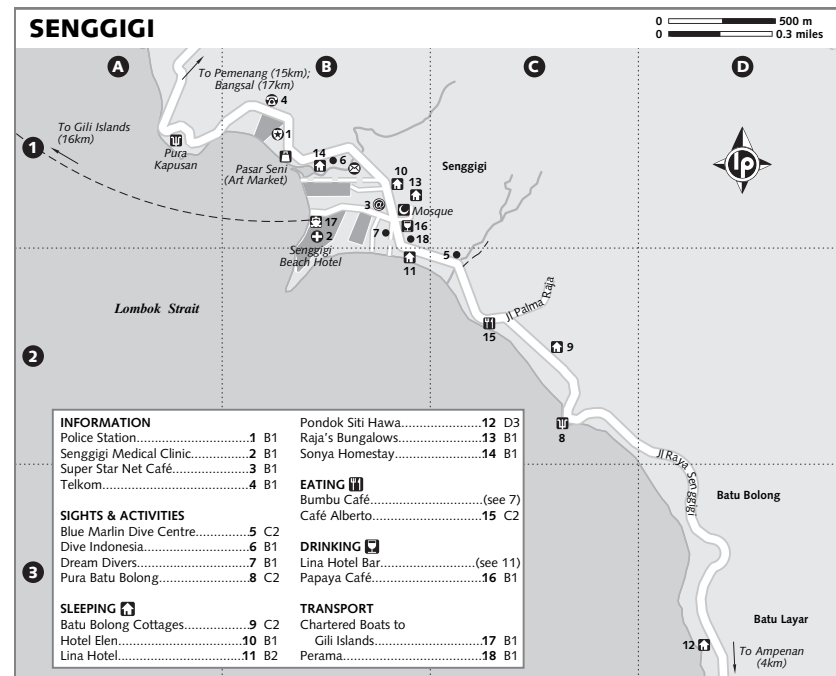
Telkom Near the Pasar Seni (Art Market).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Pura Batu Bolong (admission 5000Rp; 🕒 dawn–dusk) is a small Balinese-Hindu temple set on a rocky volcanic outcrop that spills into the sea, 2km south of central Senggigi. The detailed pagodas are oriented towards Gunung Agung, Bali's holiest mountain. You'll need to wear a sash to enter the temple.

Another must is to rent a motorbike and cruise the coast. You'll skirt fishing villages, palm groves and discover wide, deserted beaches. It's a soul-stirring, breathtaking drive.

There's decent **snorkelling** off the rocky point that bisects Senggigi's sheltered bay in front of Windy Cottages; many hotels and restaurants in central Senggigi hire out mask-snorkel-fin sets for 25,000Rp per day.



There are dive centres on the main drag in Senggigi – **Dream Divers** (☎ 693738, 692047; www.dreamdivers.com), **Dive Indonesia** (☎ 642289; www.diveindonesiaonline.com) and **Blue Marlin Dive Centre** (☎ 692003; www.dive-indo.com) – but the sites are in the Gilis, so divers should base themselves there (see opposite).

SLEEPING

Pondok Siti Hawa (☎ 693414; Jl Raya Senggigi; d 40,000Rp) This isn't a homestay, it's a novelty act, starring an eccentric European expat and his family, a captive monkey, and ramshackle bamboo cottages set on one of the most beautiful beaches in Senggigi.

Sonya Homestay (☎ 0813 3989 9878; Jl Raya Senggigi; d from 40,000Rp) A shady family-run enclave of six rooms with nice patios and bright-pink bedspreads. Nathan, the owner, offers free driving tours of Mataram and the surrounding area. He'll even shuttle you to Bangsal harbour for a song.

Hotel Elen (☎ 693077; Jl Raya Senggigi; d from 55,000Rp; ♿) Elen is the current backpackers choice. Rooms are basic, but those facing the waterfall-fountain and koi pond come with spacious tiled patios that catch the ocean breeze.

Lina Hotel (☎ 693237; Jl Raya Senggigi; s/d from 60,000/75,000Rp; ♿) Rooms are bland and simple, but they all come with views of the point break.

Raja's Bungalows (☎ 081 2377 0138; d 85,000Rp) Rooms are big, clean and tastefully decorated, with high ceilings, gecko sculptures on the walls, and outdoor bathrooms. But it's set behind the mosque and 300m from the sand.

Batu Bolong Cottages (☎ 693065; Jl Raya Senggigi; d from 150,000Rp; ♿) Bamboo is the operative term at this charming bungalow-style hotel set south of the centre. Beachfront rooms open onto a manicured lawn that fades into white sand.

EATING

Welcome Home Café (☎ 693833; Jl Raya Senggigi; mains 30,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This place feels like it was transplanted from the Florida Keys, with a fantastic knotted-wood bar, bamboo furniture, coral floors, and fresh fish on the grill (at reasonable prices).

Angels Café (☎ 081 33974 0957; Jl Raya Senggigi; dishes from 20,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Serves up traditional Lombok fried chicken with spicy *taliwang* sauce, followed by a free ice-cream sundae.

Café Alberto (☎ 693039; mains from 30,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Eat beachfront at this popular Italian café on the sand.

Square (☎ 693688; Senggigi Sq; mains 35,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Uberhip design, with lounge seating, a blue-lit, open dining room and veranda sea-views. Try the wok-tossed calamari with baby bok choy.

Bumbu Café (Jl Raya Senggigi; mains 35,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular choice for tasty pan-Asian fare. The owner says, 'We always full!' It's no coincidence.

DRINKING

Senggigi nightlife is fairly low-key. Weekends can pick up when an influx of Mataram 20-somethings hit the strip.

Lina Hotel Bar (☎ 693237; Jl Raya Senggigi; Ankor small/large 10,000/13,000Rp) There's no better place for a sundowner than Lina's seafront deck. Happy hour starts at 4pm and ends an hour after dusk.

Papaya Café (☎ 693136; Jl Raya Senggigi) The décor is slick, with exposed stone walls, rattan furniture and evocative Asmat art from Papua; there's a nice selection of liquor; and it has a tight house band that rocks.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Regular bemo travel between Senggigi and Ampenan's Kebon Roek terminal (3000Rp, 20 minutes, 10km). You can easily wave them down on the main drag. Headed to the Gilis? Organise a group and charter a bemo to Bangsal harbour (60,000Rp, one hour).

Perama (☎ 693007) has daily buses across Lombok and 9am boats to the Gili islands (70,000Rp, 1½ hours). This is highly recommended, if only to avoid the Bangsal touts (see boxed text, opposite).

Mopeds rent for 35,000Rp per day plus petrol. Motorcycles go for 60,000Rp.

Gili Islands

☎ 0370

For decades, backpackers have made the hop from Bali for a dip in the turquoise-tinted, bathtub-warm waters of the tiny, irresistible Gili islands, and stayed longer than they anticipated. Perhaps it's the deep-water coral reefs teeming with sharks, rays and reasonably friendly turtles? Maybe it's the serenity that comes with no motorised traffic, dogs or cops? Or it could be the beachfront bungalows, long stretches of white sand and the friendly locals?

Each of these jungled pearls, located just off the northwestern tip of Lombok, have their own unique character, but they have one thing in common: they are all hard to leave.

Family-friendly Gili Air is the closest to the mainland, with plenty of homestays dotted among the palm trees. Mellow Gili Meno, the middle island, is small, quiet, a bit pricier, but a wonderful chilled-out retreat.

Gili Trawangan (population 800), the furthest out, has been tagged as the 'party island'. And it's true that you will be invited to purchase dope and magic mushrooms somewhere between six and 6000 times. But that's not the whole story. Trawangan is growing up, with stylish accommodation, a fun expat community and outstanding dining.

INFORMATION

There are no banks or ATMs on the Gilis, and though each island has shops and hotels that will change money and arrange cash advances from credit and debit cards, rates are low and commissions are high. Bring ample rupiah with you – enough for a few extra days, at least. There is mobile phone coverage, and all islands have a *wartel*. Air and Trawangan are wired for internet. Most places charge about 400Rp per minute.

Ozzy's Shop, on Gili Air next door to Abdi Fantastik, has phone and slow-motion internet services. Meno's internet access is near the harbour, and Trawangan is sprinkled with dozens of internet cafés. **Perama** (Map p280; ☎ 638514) has a small office on Gili Trawangan, just north of the jetty, and even smaller outlets on Air, close to the Gili Indah Hotel, and on Meno, at the Kintiki Meno Bungalows.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Don't try to swim between the islands. The currents are strong, and people have died.

BANGSAL GAUNTLET

When you arrive at Bangsal (the principal departure point for the Gili islands) by bus, bemo or taxi, you will be dropped off at the Bangsal terminal, nearly a kilometre from the harbour. From which point irrepressible touts hustling a dishonest buck will harass you nonstop. It's not fun. Just ignore them and do not buy a ticket from them or from anyone else on the road. There is but one official Bangsal harbour ticket office, it is on the beach, not on the dirt road, and arranges all local boat transport – shuttle, public and chartered – to the Gilis. Buy a ticket anywhere else and you're taking a hit. You could also avoid Bangsal altogether by booking a speedboat transfer from Senggigi via one of the dive schools, or by travelling with Perama from Bali, Mataram, Kuta, Lombok or Senggigi (the best choice).

When the wind gusts, watch out for jellyfish, which sting and leave a memorable rash.

There are no police on the Gilis, so report any theft to the island *kepala desa* (village head) or Trawangan's Satgas community council. They'll help resolve issues, and recover stolen items privately, and with a minimum of embarrassment. Remember that magic mushrooms and other drugs are illegal, even if they are widely sold.

Cases of sexual harassment and assault have been reported on the Gilis. This is extremely rare, but single women should walk in pairs to the quieter, darker ends of the islands.

You'll experience the most common nuisance if, like most people, you travel to the Gilis from Bangsal harbour (see boxed text, below). Suffice it to say, these touts are adept at raising blood pressure, and you should sooner ignore than trust them.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Walking and cycling are the best land sports. Bikes can be hired for 25,000Rp per day. On Trawangan, time your circumnavigation (2½ hours on foot) with the sunset, and watch it from the hill on the southwest corner where you'll have a tremendous view of Gunung Agung.

Gili Meno's 2500-sq-metre **Taman Burung Bird Park** (☎ 642231; admission 60,000Rp; ☺ 9am-5pm) is home to 300 exotic birds from Asia and Australia, three demure kangaroos and a Komodo dragon. Birds are liberated from their cages three hours a day, to fly around an expansive atrium covered in netting.

Land diversions pale in comparison to the ocean variety. Trawangan has a fast right break that can be surfed year-round and at times swells overhead. It's just south of the Villa Ombok. **Karma Kayak** (☎ 081 8055 93710; tours

225,000Rp), a new kayaking school on the northern end of Gili T, offers full-day kayaking trips around the Gilis. Snorkelling is fun and the fish are plentiful on all the beach reefs. Gear can be hired for 20,000Rp to 25,000Rp per day.

Diving is the big draw. The shops are highly professional, with new and well-maintained gear, and they all charge a uniform US\$35 for one dive and US\$30 for subsequent tanks. Five dives can get you 10% off, and a wide array of dive courses – from Open Water to Advanced – can be arranged as well.

On Trawangan, try **Manta Dive** (☎ 643649; www.manta-dive.com), **Blue Marlin** (☎ 632424; www.diveindo.com), **Dive Indonesia** (☎ 642289; www.diveindonesiaonline.com), **Big Bubble** (☎ 625020; www.bigbubblediving.com) and **Dream Divers** (☎ 634496; www.dreamdivers.com). On Gili Air, try **Blue Marlin** (☎ 634387) or **Dream Divers** (☎ 634547). On Gili Meno seek out **Blue Marlin** (☎ 639979) yet again.

Dynamite fishing and overfishing have been eliminated, thanks to the local ecotrust. As a result, fish numbers are up, but the reefs are still recovering from devastating El Niño-related warm-water bleaching. Those expecting a colourful, diverse reef system above 20m will be disappointed. Deep reefs are still reasonably healthy, however, and seeing sharks, rays and turtles up close will help take your mind off the wounded reefs.

SLEEPING & EATING

The vibe on easy-going rural Gili Air falls somewhere between sedate Meno and social Trawangan. Air and Meno only get crowded during the high season (July, August and around Christmas) when hotels double or triple their prices. Tap water on all the islands is brackish.

Gili Air

Hotels and restaurants are scattered along the southern and eastern coasts, which have the best swimming beaches. The hotels have dining rooms, but there are a few dedicated restaurants. Walking around the island takes about 90 minutes.

Nusa Tiga Bungalows (bungalows from 40,000Rp) A humble collection of bamboo bungalows nestled within an inland coconut grove.

Lucky's (bungalows 45,000Rp) Basic, cheap, and run by a friendly family in a serene locale on the south coast.

Lombok Indah (d 80,000Rp) A rare option on the north coast, this comfortable English-run



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TRANSPORT

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place has bamboo bungalows and views of both sunrise and sunset.

Kira Kira Cottages (☎ 641021; s/d from 80,000/100,000Rp) Also a bit inland, there are some stylish thatched cottages here with ceiling fans, hammocks, garden views, and a fresh-water shower!

Sunrise Cottages & Restaurant (☎ 642370; s/d from 100,000/150,000Rp) This rustic place offers two-storey *lumbung*-style bungalows on the main east-coast strip. There's a safe for valuables and a fine seaside restaurant.

Coconut Cottages (☎ 635365; www.coconuts-giliair.com; d 185,000Rp) Set back from the beach on the east coast, this Indo-Scottish-owned place has intricately detailed bungalows scattered around a well-loved garden. The restaurant is highly recommended.

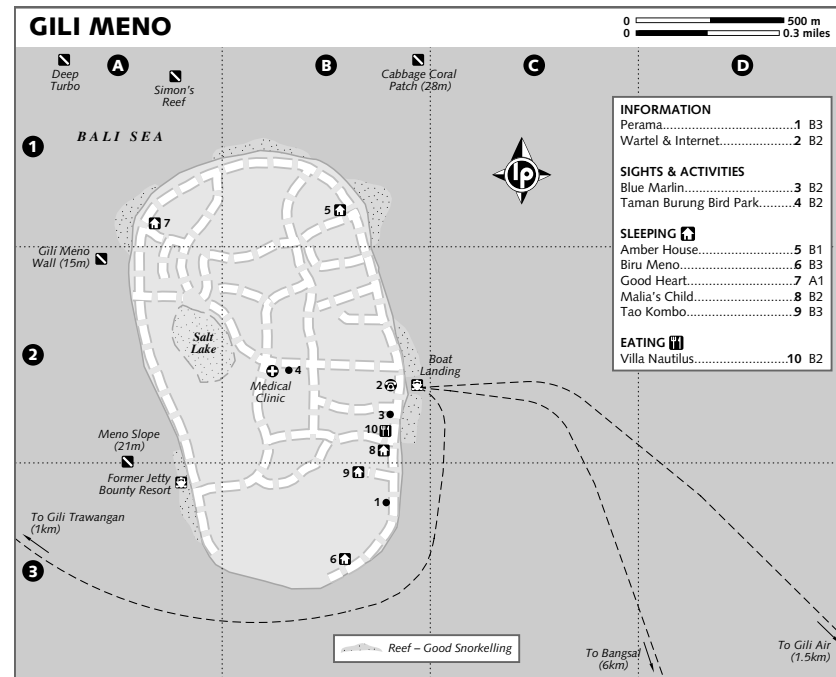
Munchies (dishes from 7500Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Nice curries, fish and skyscraper sandwiches. It's located about halfway down the east coast.

Gecko Café (☎ 641014; dishes from 10,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) The vibe and the food are consistently good here. The Wednesday night dinners (from 35,000Rp), featuring a take on mum's roast beef and apple crumble, provide comfort food for homesick dive masters. It's inland, north of the boat landing.

Sasak Warung (mains from 12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Eat well, beneath beautiful shell lanterns, by the sea.

Gili Meno

Mellow Meno –the setting for your *Robinson Crusoe* fantasy – is a bit pricey and attracts a more 'mature' crowd. Electricity is ephemeral, so if the fan stops twirling, make sure you have a mosquito net. All guesthouses serve food.



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Tao Kombo (☎ 081 2372 2174; huts from 60,000Rp) Known more for its bar, this place has decent Italian and Indonesian food, and more expensive bungalows have open-sky bathrooms and safety boxes.

Good Heart (☎ 081 3395 56976; bungalows from 80,000Rp) Opposite a narrow stretch of sand that faces Trawangan, these superb newish bungalows with coconut-wood roofs, fresh-water(!) bathrooms and good eating are an excellent choice.

Amber House (d 100,000Rp) Cheap is done right at this northerly Zen-tinged garden compound with a glimpse of the sea. Bungalows sparkle, and the restaurant steams cappuccinos and bakes fresh muffins.

Biru Meno (r from 120,000Rp) Tranquillity is yours at this seaside spot south of the main strip. The best rooms have huge windows and native coral walls.

Malia's Child (☎ 622007; d from 200,000Rp) Attractive and clean bamboo-thatched bungalows set on a sweet stretch of beach near the boat landing.

Villa Nautilus (☎ 642143; pizza 40,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Order the wood-fired pizza, please. It's near Malia's Child.

Gili Trawangan

Social but not trashy, relaxed but not boring, all natural, yet updated with technology (internet, DVD pavilions and top-range sound-systems), and sprinkled with great restaurants and bars that would satisfy any devout cosmopolitan, Gili T is the road-weary backpacker's fantasy incarnate.

Dive resorts offer accommodation, as well. The bungalows tend to be a bit upmarket, and each of the seven dive centres has its own vibe and personality.

Aldi Homestay (☎ 081 33954 1102; s/d 30,000/35,000Rp) A village bargain. Some rooms are nicer than others. Look for the ripped-off logo of the German supermarket chain Aldi, which is also the name of the owner's son.

Pondok Lita (☎ 648607; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp) Popular family-run place in the village that has spacious courtyard rooms with a library and in-house laundry service.

Sandy Beach Cottage (☎ 625020; d from 50,000Rp) One of several village homestays, inland from the coastal road, catering to budgeters, this is a shady hideaway, close to the action. Could be cleaner.

Edy Homestay (d incl breakfast from 60,000Rp) The best of the village cheapies. These are very clean and come with ceiling fans and a big breakfast.

Warna Homestay (☎ 623859; d from 80,000Rp) Arguably the best value on the island, Warna has five sweet tropical-flower garden bungalows mere steps from the sea.

Balenta (☎ 081 805 203464; d from 90,000Rp) Next to the upmarket Good Heart is one of Gili T's better value places. It's opposite a great stretch of beach and the rooms are big and immaculate.

Quiet Water (☎ 081 2375 0687; d from 100,000) A plush, affordable village choice with queen beds, soft linens, air-con, hot water and in-room DVD players.

Blue Beach Cottages (☎ 623538; cottages from 200,000Rp; ☎) Native thatch meets minimalist at this locally owned collection of sea-view cottages on the north end of the strip. There are outdoor bathrooms, queen beds, wide decks and glass doors. Can bungalows look any smoother? Long-term and low-season discounts are available if you negotiate.

Manta Dive (☎ 643649; www.manta-dive.com; d 250,000Rp; ☎) This laid-back English-run dive centre introduced the mod-bungalow motif to Gili T, and theirs remain some of the most stylish. It's a fun place to be after the afternoon dive when beers flow.

Big Bubble (☎ 625020; www.bigbubblediving.com; d from 250,000Rp; ☎) More native wood, thatched modernism can be found in a row of beautiful rooms behind the dive school. These have hammocks on the front terrace.

Blue Marlin (☎ 632424; www.diveindo.com; d from US\$30) The air-con rooms are nice, but not US\$30 nice. It does have an excellent fresh-fish grill served on tablecloths by candlelight, and on Monday nights revellers descend for a techno dance party.

Anna's (dishes from 8,000Rp; ☎ 24hr) Backpackers rejoice: opposite the harbour is a tasty, high-turnover local *warung* serving *nasi campur* for 10,000Rp. It's the cheapest meal in town, and it's damn good.

Rumah Makan Kikinovi (nasi campur 12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This local *warung* has cheap, satisfying meals. It's north of the art market.

Beach House (☎ 642352; dishes from 17,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) It isn't cheap, but with plush seaside digs, the best fresh fish and salad bar selection on the island and a solid jazz soundtrack, it's worth the splurge. The grilled calamari (17,000Rp) is an absolute steal.

Ryoshi (☎ 639463; dishes from 17,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Next to TiR Na Nog Irish pub, this sushi bar is a delectable Bali import. The melt-in-your-mouth tuna *carpaccio* is life altering.

Café Wayan (dishes from 20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The third instalment of a Balinese-owned chain (others are in Senggigi and Ubud) serves all your Indonesian faves and terrific fresh-baked breads and pastries. Try

the garlic prawns. Outstanding! It's located at the northern end of the strip.

Kayangan (dishes from 20,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Across from Ryoshi is a cheap and cheerful expat fave known for its tasty curries, satays and *gado gado*.

Coco's (sandwiches 25,000Rp; ☎ breakfast & lunch) If only there was a café like this in every town. The women of Marlin Dive and TiR na Nog have made a major contribution to the dining scene with mouth-watering bacon-and-egg baguettes for breakfast and roast turkey or meatball sandwiches at lunch. The brownies and smoothies are incredible too. It's north of the art market.

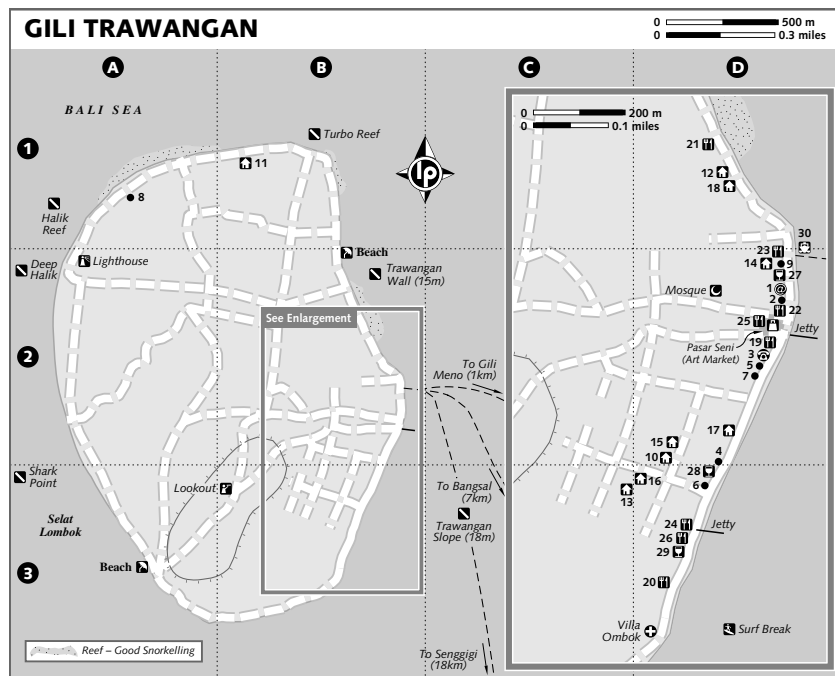
Karma Kayak (☎ 081 805 593710; meals 35,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) This new kayak school on the quiet north end of the island doubles as a Spanish tapas bar. It was brand-new at the time of research and generating significant buzz.

Juku (grilled fish from 35,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Among expats, this is known as the most affordable and the best-value fish grill on the island. The barracuda with ginger glaze is exceptional. You'll find it at the northern end of the strip.

DRINKING

The official party nights in Gili Trawangan are on Monday, Wednesday and Friday – although given the amount of contraband on offer and the scattering of stylish bars to investigate, each and every night can be a party here.

Rudy's Pub (☎ 8am-4am Fri, to 11pm Sat-Tue) Rudy's has as much to do with Gili T's party-hard reputation as all other bars combined. Mostly due to its debauched Friday-night parties and a preponderance of drinks and dishes involving a certain fungus.



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TiR na Nog (☎ 639463; drinks from 15,000Rp; 🕒 8am-4am Wed, to midnight Thu-Tue) Known simply as 'The Irish Pub', it has a barnlike, sports-bar interior with big screens; private, thatched DVD lounges that guests can use free (its film selection is huge); and a brilliant outdoor bar with live DJs that draw the biggest crowds in town. Jameson is cheap, and Wednesday is its blow-out night.

Ocean Dua (drinks from 13,000Rp; 🕒 till the last guy leaves) With football on the telly, fun-loving bartenders, a good crowd, and no discernable closing time. It's the kind of place Charles Bukowski would have loved.

Legend Pub (Gili Air; 🕒 10am-11.30pm Thu-Tue, party 10pm-2am Wed) The Wednesday-night reggae party bumps till the wee hours during high season.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Perama (☎ in Senggigi 0370-693007, on Gili Trawangan 638514) operates a fleet of tourist shuttles to the Gilis – a popular option since it spares you the Bangsal menace (see boxed text, p277). Boats leave Senggigi for the Gilis at 9am (70,000Rp, 1½ hours). Perama also sells bus tickets from the Gilis to other points in Lombok and beyond.

Another way to dodge Bangsal is to book passage from Kuta to Gili Trawangan on the **Mahi Mahi** (550,000Rp) through the **Gili Islands Shop** (☎ 0361-753241; www.gili-paradise.com) in Bali. The shop and website have objective, timely information about all the Gilis.

To get to the Gilis by public transport, the cheapest option, take or charter a bemo to Pemenang, then get a *cidomo* (horse-drawn cart; 3000Rp) to the pier at Bangsal.

Here the local cartel, the Koperasi Angkutan Laut, runs boats to the islands: 8000Rp to Air, 6800Rp to Meno and 8000Rp to Trawangan. Boats leave when full, so you have to wait until 18 people buy tickets to the same island. Arrive early because there will be more people wanting to leave in the morning than in the afternoon; it's tougher to get a crowd after midday. There are regularly scheduled tourist shuttles from each Gili back to Bangsal (25,000Rp) at 7.30am and 8.15am daily. To charter a whole boat from Bangsal to the Gilis costs 155,000Rp.

For travel between the islands, a twice-daily island-hopper loops the archipelago. It launches from Air around 8.30am, drops by Meno at 8.45am, and docks at Trawangan at 9.45am.

Then it loops back. The afternoon boat leaves Air at 3pm. It costs 15,000Rp between two islands and 18,000Rp between three islands.

Short *cidomo* rides on the islands are about 7000Rp, and circumnavigation costs about 20,000Rp. But, the horses don't look like they're having fun. Rent a bike (from 25,000Rp per day) and feel good about it.

Gunung Rinjani

Lombok's highest peak, the second-highest volcano in Indonesia at 3726m, is home to a smattering of small villages on her slopes, and is of great climatic importance to Lombok. Balinese call Gunung Rinjani 'the seat of the Gods', and place it alongside Gunung Agung in spiritual lore. Lombok's Sasaks also revere it, and make biannual pilgrimages here to honour the mountain spirit. It's one hell of a climb. Reach the summit and look down on a 6km-wide caldera with a crescent-shaped cobalt lake, hot springs and smaller volcanic cones. The stunning sunrise view from the rim also takes in north Lombok, Bali's Gunung Agung and the infinite ocean drenched in an unforgettable pink hue.

SENARU pop 1330

With sweeping views east and south, and an eternal spring climate, the picturesque mountain villages of Senaru and nearby **Batu Koq** are the best bases for Rinjani climbs. Be sure to make the 30-minute walk to the spectacular **Air Terjun Sendang Gila** (admission 2500Rp; 🕒 dawn-dusk) waterfalls, and visit the traditional village, **Dusun Senaru** (admission by donation).

Many *losmen* along the main road have basic rooms with breakfast. **Bukit Senaru Cottages** (d from 40,000Rp), located just before Dusun Senaru, has four bungalows with garden verandas. Reputable **Pondok Indah** (d 100,000Rp), the first place you'll pass from Bayan, has sublime views and a good restaurant.

To reach Senaru, get to Anyar and catch a local bemo from there (4000Rp). They leave every 20 minutes until 4.30pm.

SEMBALUN LAWANG & SEMBALUN BUMBUNG

High on the eastern side of the mountain is the remote and beautiful Sembalun valley, another Rinjani launch pad.

TREKKING GUNUNG RINJANI

Agencies in Mataram and Senggigi arrange all-inclusive treks, but you can make your own, cheaper, arrangements in Senaru, Sembalun Lawang or even Sapit. Seek out the **Rinjani Trek Centre** (☎ 081 7575 7399; www.rinjani_directory.com) in Senaru. Partially funded by the New Zealand government, the centres have great maps and rotate local guides and porters for trekking tours. June to August are the best months to go. During the wet season (November to April), tracks can be slippery and very dangerous, and the view is often obscured by clouds. Trekkers were attacked and robbed on the mountain in 2000 and 2005 by armed robbers. Bandit activity is rare, but it's worth asking about.

The most common trek is to climb from Senaru to Pos III (2300m) on the first day (about five hours of steep walking), camp there and climb to Pelawangan I, on the crater rim (2600m), for sunrise the next morning (about two hours). From the rim, you descend into the crater and walk around to the **hot springs** (two hours) on a very exposed track. The hot springs, revered by locals for their healing properties, are a good place to relax and camp for the second night, before returning all the way to Senaru the next day.

For summit seekers, guides and porters are mandatory. Continue east from the hot springs, and camp at Pelawangan II (about 2900m). From there a track branches off to the summit. It's a heroic climb (three or four hours) over loose footing to the top (3726m). Start at 3am so you can see the sunrise on the summit. Return to Pelawangan II (two or three hours), and go east to Sembalun Lawang (five or six hours) to complete a traverse of the mountain.

You can trek from Senaru to the hot springs and back without a guide – the trail is fairly well defined. For summit attempts, it's perilous to hike without one. Guide and porter rates are standard and firm. Choose from four-day, all-inclusive tours (1,250,000Rp) or design an independent itinerary, and make your own food, water and transportation arrangements. Guides can be hired for 100,000Rp per day, and porters cost 80,000Rp.

Tent, sleeping bag and stove can be hired in Senaru through the **Rinjani Trek Centre** (☎ 081 7575 7399). Bring several layers of clothing, solid footwear, rain gear, extra water (do not depend on your guide for your water supply, or you may suffer), and a torch (flashlight). Buy food in Mataram or Senggigi, where it's cheaper and the selection is wider.

Hardy Kruger (☎ 081 7575 0585; www.rinjanilombok.com) offers 'deluxe trips' up the mountain, with transport to/from Mataram, equipment rental, ample food and toilet tents (three days, US\$150).

In Sembalun Lawang, **Maria Guest House** (d 50,000Rp) has simple accommodation.

Take a bus from Mandalika bus terminal in Mataram to Aikmal (8000Rp) and transfer to a Sembalun Lawang-bound coach (9000Rp). Lawang and Bumbung are connected via hourly bemo.

SAPIT

Tiny Sapit, on Rinjani's southeastern slopes, boasts a huge panorama towards Sumbawa.

Hati Suci Homestay (☎ 036-722197; s/d45,000/85,000Rp) has excellent bungalows in a fragrant garden.

Bemo go to Sapit from the Sembalun valley to the north and from Pringgabaya to the south (6000Rp).

TETEBATU

Situated on the low southern slopes of Gunung Rinjani, the village of Tetebatu (eleva-

tion 400m) is a lovely rural retreat where tobacco and rice fields unfurl into the distance in all directions. A shady 4km-long path from the main road, near the mosque, leads to a **Monkey Forest** (admission free) peppered with black monkeys and ringing with the sound of waterfalls. Balding backpackers take note: the **Air Terjun Jukut** (admission 1500Rp) waterfall, a steep 2km-long walk from the car park at the end of the road, is said to spur hair growth. Guides are recommended for both trips.

Cenderwasih Cottages (cottages 65,000Rp) has four gorgeous *lumbung* cottages with bamboo walls and a dining room with commanding views.

Losmen Hakiki (r from 60,000Rp) is another *lumbung* property situated beautifully over rice fields, with a dynamite restaurant serving Indo and Sasak cuisine.

Kuta

☎ 0370

They may share a name, but Lombok's Kuta is no tourist ghetto like the Bali version. It's languid, empty and stunningly gorgeous, with white-sand bays that lick chiselled cliffs and rugged hills, and world-class surf. There are some charming hotels in Kuta, but otherwise the coastline is undeveloped and the stomping ground of seaweed collectors, fishermen and water buffalo. You may hear whispers of impending five-star development, but thus far all attempts have fizzled, and the only real action Kuta sees is during the August high season and the *nyale* (seaworm) fishing festival in February or March. Otherwise, you'll have the place almost all to yourself.

INFORMATION

Several places change money, including the Kuta Indah Hotel and **Segara Anak Cottages** (☎ 654846; segarecottages@hotmail.com), which is also a postal agency. There is a small *wartel* in town and several places have internet access including **Kuta Corner Internet Café** (per hr 8000Rp).

ACTIVITIES

For surfing, stellar 'lefts' and 'rights' break on the reefs off Kuta and east of Tanjung Aan. Boatmen will take you out for around 70,000Rp. Seven kilometres east of Kuta is the fishing village of **Gerupak**, where there's a series of reef breaks, both close to the shore and further out, but they require a boat, at a negotiable 200,000Rp per day. Mawi also offers regular swells.

For surfing tips, forecasts, repairs and board rentals (35,000Rp per day), visit **Kimen Surf** (☎ 655064).

SLEEPING & EATING

While tourism numbers are down, standards can slip, so look around and bargain hard. Most places have their own restaurants; room rates usually include breakfast

Anda Cottages (☎ 654836; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp; ☑) For the buck, these cottages next door to Rinjani Bungalows might work, but inspect carefully as standards vary.

♣day Inn (s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) A little inland, this popular family-run place was recently renovated, the rooms are clean and the kitchen makes your mouth water.

Melon Homestay (☎ 081 736 7892; apt 60,000Rp) Tired of that beach-bungalow feeling? This place has two sweet apartments with lounges, kitchens and sea views from the balcony.

Segara Anak Cottages (☎ 654846; d from 60,000Rp; ☑) These basic huts are showing their age, but newer concrete bungalows are decent value. It's on the beach, the café has cable TV and internet access, and this is also where you'll find the local Perama office.

Mimpi Manis (☎ 081 836 9950; www.mimpimanis.com; d from 65,000Rp; ☑) If you like in-room DVD players, an ample library and tasty Indo-Western cooking, then check into one of two rooms in a house owned by an English-Balinese couple. It is 2km from the beach, but the owners will drop you off and scoop you up for free.

Rinjani Bungalows (☎ 654849; d from 95,000Rp; ☑) A nice choice at the far end of the beach. Its bamboo bungalows with hardwood furniture and *ikat* bedspreads are inviting. Air-con rooms cost 200,000Rp.

Surfer's Inn (☎ 655582; lombok_hotel@yahoo.com; d from 100,000Rp; ☑) Six hundred metres east of the junction, this place has five classes of smart, stylish rooms with picture windows and large beds. Call ahead, because it sells out.

Astari (dishes from 8000Rp; ☑ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Granted, its mountaintop perch, with mind-bending views of undulating surf, can make anything delicious, but the mostly veggie menu lives up to the view.

You'll find *warung* and food carts on the esplanade.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

How many bemo does it take to get to Kuta? Three. Take one from Mataram's Mandalika terminal to Praya (5000Rp), another to Sengkong (3000Rp), and a third to Kuta (2000Rp).

Or travel with **Perama** (☎ 654846; www.perama.tour.com) to or from Mataram (90,000Rp, two hours) Senggigi (105,000Rp, 2½ hours), and the Gilis (185,000Rp, 3½ hours).

Labuhan Lombok

The one reason to visit this town is to catch a Sumbawa-bound ferry (see opposite).

Arrive early to avoid staying overnight. If you get mired, the only decent option is **Losmen Lima Tiga** (☎ 23316; d 55,000Rp) on the main road inland from the port.

Frequent buses and bemo travel between Labuhan Lombok and Mandalika terminal (11,000Rp, three hours).

SUMBAWA

Nestled between Lombok and Flores, and separated from each by narrow straits, is Sumbawa, one of Indonesia's undiscovered treasures. Sumbawa is poor, with the most rudimentary health and education systems, and transport is uncomfortable and unpredictable. But there's so much to see. The island is larger than Bali and Lombok combined and populated by two distinct cultures (the Sumbawanese and Bimanese), each with its own language. Animist traditions still thrive in remote corners, and the topography is spectacular. Sumbawa's dry, twisted mass sprawls into the ocean in a series of jutting peninsulas. Volcanic stumps form the backbone, with dramatic and steep hills angling from the spine to the sea. Surfers drift in with the swells, but if you travel inland, you will be, literally, off the beaten path.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Bima is the one and only air hub, with direct Merpati flights to Denpasar (five times per week). You can also connect to Mataram and Maumere (although flights to east Flores are forever in flux). Departure tax is 6000Rp.

Boat

Ferries from Poto Tano depart for Lombok every hour around the clock. In the east, Sape is the departure point for daily ferries to Labuanbajo, Flores. Peln ships bound for Lombok, Bali and Kalimantan, and those headed to Sulawesi, Papua and Timor, dock at Bima.

Bus

Night buses run in a convoy from Mataram to Bima, where they hook up with smaller shuttles to the Flores ferry at Sape.

Poto Tano & Around

Poto Tano is the Lombok-bound ferry port, but there's no reason to linger. Most travellers pass straight through to Sumbawa Besar. You can also head into town, catch a bus to Taliwang, and another 30km south to the superb surf at **Maluk**, a contemporary boom town thanks to a nearby copper mine. Backpackers and surfers flock to **Kiwi Maluk** (Jl Pasir Putih; d from 85,000Rp). Fifteen kilometres further south is another gorgeous surf beach, **Sengkongkang**, where you can find a number of beachfront *losmen*.

Ferries run regularly between Lombok and Poto Tano (see left). The through buses from Mataram to Bima include the ferry fare.

Buses also meet the ferry and go to Taliwang (5000Rp, one hour) and Sumbawa Besar (15,000Rp, two hours).

Buses run all day between Taliwang and Maluk (7000Rp, 1½ hours).

Sumbawa Besar

☎ 0371 / pop 54,300

Sumbawa Besar is the provincial principal-ity on the western half of the island. Here *cidomo* still outnumber bemo. Aside from nearby traditional villages, the sole attraction is **Dalam Loka**, the crumbling Sultan's Palace, just off Jl Sudirman.

INFORMATION

BNI bank (Jl Kartini 10) Has an ATM and changes money.
Gaul Net Café (☎ 626110; Jl Setiabudi 14; per hr 11,000Rp) The last internet café until Ende.

Post office (Jl Garuda)

Telkom (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☑ 24hr)

Tourist office (☎ 237114; Jl Bungur 1; ☑ 7am-1pm Mon-Sat, to 11am Fri)

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Harapan (☎ 21629; Jl Dr Cipto 7; d 35,000Rp) The rooms, with *mandi* and Western toilets, are tiny but bearable at this family-run courtyard hotel.

Hotel Dewi (☎ 21170; Jl Hasanuddin 60; d from 50,000Rp; ☑) Furnishings pay homage to the 1970s at this clean and basic budget spot. Air-con comes cheap if you're wilting in the Sumbawa sunlight.

Hotel Tambora (☎ 21555; Jl Kebayan; d from 51,000Rp; ☑) Just like your nemesis in high school, this place used to be good-looking and popular, and now it just looks old, raggedy and vacant.

Ikan Bakar 99 (☎ 23065; Jl Wahidin 31; dishes from 9000Rp; ☑ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An inexpensive local haunt serving grilled fish (the house speciality) and delicious *kapitang rebus* (boiled crab).

Warung set up in front of the stadium on Jl Yos Sudarso.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

At the time of research commercial flights to and from Sumbawa Besar had ceased.

Pelni ships no longer dock in Sumbawa Besar. All traffic runs through Bima.

Morning buses to Bima leave from the **Brang Bara Terminal** (Jl Kaharuddin). Routes include Bima (60,000Rp, seven hours) via Dompu (20,000Rp, 4½ hours), and Poto Tano (15,000Rp, two hours). Deluxe, air-con buses run through between Bima and Lombok. Book them the day before at your hotel.

Pulau Moyo

Two-thirds of Pulau Moyo, 3km off Sumbawa's north coast, is a nature reserve, and its protected reefs are teeming with marine life. There are two resorts on the island: one is basic and run by the Forest Service (PHKA), the other is expensive. Hitch a ride over on a PHKA boat from Sumbawa Besar.

Hu'u

Sumbawa's south coast is a burgeoning surf mecca. The sweeping, white-sand beach of Hu'u, south of Dompu, has several attractive places to stay, from budget to midrange. This is an ideal beach retreat, even if you're not called to ride waves. The excellent **Alamanda Bungalows** (cottages from 90,000Rp) offers detached digs with ocean views.

Getting to Hu'u by public transport is an ordeal. From Dompu's Ginte bus station take a bemo to the Lepardi bus station (1000Rp), hop a bus to Rasabau (5000Rp, 1½ hours) and finally a crowded bemo to the beach (2000Rp). Most visitors come here by chartered taxi from Bima Airport (350,000Rp!).

Bima & Raba

☎ 0374 / pop 100,000

These fraternal twin cities – one is grubby but alive, the other is orderly and dull – form Sumbawa's main port and commercial hot spot. Consider it a stopover on the way through Sumbawa.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Bima's airport is 17km out of town; it's 60,000Rp by taxi.

BNI bank (Jl Sultan Hasanuddin) Changes currency and has an ATM.

Tourist office (☎ 44331; Jl Soekarno-Hatta; ☎ 7am–3pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat) About 2km east of the Raba town centre.

SLEEPING & EATING

Most hotels are in central Bima, near the market.

Hotel Lila Graha (☎ 42740; Jl Lombok 6; d from 80,000Rp; 🏠) The labyrinthine passages access an array of rooms (some with phones and hot water), and a damn-good restaurant.

Hotel La'mbitu (☎ 42222; Jl Sumbawa 4; d from 80,000Rp; 🏠) Bima's best, with several clean, bright and airy rooms to choose from.

Rumah Makan Mawar (☎ 42272; Jl Sulawesi 28; meals from 10,000Rp; 🍳 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Delicious and filling *nasi campur*.

Hit the *pasar* (market) for a variety of supercheap, if not nutritious, eats.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 44221; www.merpati.co.id) is east of the town centre and flies five times a week to Denpasar with connections on to Mataram, Ende, Maumere, Surabaya and Jakarta.

There are currently no fast ferries to Bima. **Pelni** (☎ 42625; Jl Kesatria 2), at Bima's port, sails to Flores and Papua, or Lombok (from 263,000Rp, 24 hours), Bali (from 132,000Rp, 24 hours) and Sulawesi.

Buses to points west of Bima leave from the central bus station, just south of town. Express night bus agencies near the station sell tickets to Sumbawa Besar (60,000Rp, seven hours) and Mataram (120,000Rp, 11 hours). Most buses to Mataram leave around 7pm.

Buses to Sape (9000Rp, two hours) depart from Kumbé in Raba, a 20-minute bemo ride (1500Rp) east of Bima, but they can't be relied upon to meet the early morning ferry to Flores. Charter a bemo to Sape (about 100,000Rp, two hours) to make the 8am ferry.

Sape

☎ 0374

The only real attraction is the ferry to Labuanbajo, Flores, from Pelabuhan Sape, the small port 3km from town. There's been a history of scam artists in the area, though the downturn in Nusa Tenggara tourism has thinned out the buzzards.

The **PHKA Komodo information office** (☎ 7am–3pm) is inland from the port.

For a bed, **Losmen Mutiara** (☎ 71337; d from 30,000Rp), just outside the port entrance, is the only decent choice.

Buses go to Sape (9000Rp, two hours) from the Kumbé terminal in Bima-Raba, though you may have to charter a predawn bemo (100,000Rp, two hours) from Bima to make the 8am ferry to Flores.

Ferries to Labuanbajo (27,000Rp, eight hours) leave **Pelabuhan Sape** (☎ 71075) at 8am Wednesday to Monday, and at 3pm on Tuesday. They no longer stop at Komodo.

Ships leave for Waikelo, Sumba (32,000Rp, seven hours), on Monday at 5pm. Schedules change often, delays and cancellations are frequent. Be prepared to wait.

KOMODO & RINCA

Parched, isolated, desolate yet beautiful Komodo and Rinca rise from waters that churn with riptides and boil with whirlpools, and they are patrolled by lizard royalty, the Komodo dragon. It would be hard to create a more forbidding environment, yet a few hundred fishing families eke out a living within the Komodo National Park, the boundaries of which encompass both islands and several smaller, neighbouring isles. Thanks to its nutritious, pristine coral reefs that feed an incredible array of marine life, and those dragons you've heard so much about, the park is a World Heritage site – yours to hike, dive and explore.

Orientation & Information

The only village on Komodo is **Kampung Komodo** on the east coast, half an hour's walk from the gateway to Komodo, **Loh Liang** national park headquarters, set in a sheltered bay.

Visitors are tapped for entrance (40,000Rp) and conservation (US\$15) fees upon arrival. For more information contact the **PHKA Office** (☎ 0385-41005; www.komodonationalpark.org; Jl Yos Sudarso) in Labuanbajo.

Sights & Activities

Dragons lurk year-round at the dry riverbed Banu Nggulung (below), but hunting (figura-

tively speaking) them on foot through primordial **Poreng Valley** feels wilder. **Gunung Ara** can be climbed (3½ hours) in an afternoon, and there's good snorkelling at **Pantai Merah** (Red Beach) and the small island of **Pulau Lasa**, near Kampung Komodo. The PHKA rents snorkels and masks for 50,000Rp. Guides (30,000Rp) are mandatory, and useful, for hikers.

Sleeping & Eating

Accommodation at Loh Liang's **PHKA camp** (d from 45,000Rp) consists of large, stilted cabins with balconies. In July/August the rooms may be full, but the PHKA will rustle up spare mattresses.

Quieter Rinca island, where wildlife is more diverse (you may even see long-tailed macaques), has a similar PHKA camp at Loh Buaya.

The camp restaurants serve simple meals and drinks.

Getting There & Away

Tours and private charters are your only way in to the islands. Expensive three- and five-day tours from Lombok to Labuanbajo abound. Most tour prime snorkelling sites and include a dragon-spotting hike on Komodo. Whether you are on a tour or organising a private charter, inspect boats carefully and make sure they have life vests and a radio. There have been shipwrecks.

Perama (☎ 0385-41289; Central Bajo Tours, Jl Yos Sudarso, Labuanbajo) boats stop at the dragon islands on their three-day trips between Labuanbajo and Lombok (deck/cabin 1,400,000/2,000,000Rp), which run every six days. They visit Komodo when sailing east and Rinca when heading west. They also stop for snorkelling and offer good food and freshwater showers.

DRAGON SPOTTING

Komodo's gargantuan monitor lizards (*ora*) grow up to 3m long and can weigh in at a whopping 100kg. These prehistoric beasts feed on pigs, deer and buffalo. A blood-poisoning bite from their septic jaws dooms prey within a few days.

Banu Nggulung, a dry riverbed a half-hour walk from Loh Liang, is the most accessible place to see dragons on Komodo. It was once set up like a theatre, though the curtain has fallen on the gruesome ritual of feeding live goats to the reptiles. On Rinca, dragons will often congregate near the PHKA post when the rangers are cooking, or guides will lead hikes to their favourite lizard haunts.

Spotting dragons is not guaranteed, but a few of these royal reptiles are usually around – especially around watering holes in the June–September dry season. They rarely venture into the midday sun, so get to the islands early. A guide costs 30,000Rp per person.

Boat tours to Komodo, Rinca and other islands are easily arranged in Labuanbajo. Many hotels, various 'tourist information centres', and independent tour guides organise day and overnight trips to Komodo or Rinca (from 225,000Rp to 600,000Rp per day for up to six people). You may also charter private boats from Labuanbajo harbour and organise your own itinerary.

It takes two hours to get to Rinca, or four hours to get to Komodo. Rinca day trips make sense. Day trips to Komodo don't. Stay the night.

FLORES

Flores is the kind of gorgeous that grabs hold of you tightly. There are empty white- and black-sand beaches and bay islands; exceptional diving and snorkelling near Labuanbajo; an infinite skyline of perfectly shaped volcanoes; and a vast tapestry of hip-high, luminescent rice fields that undulate in the wind next to swaying palms in spectacular river canyons. The serpentine, potholed east-west Trans-Flores Hwy is long and slow, but never boring. It skirts waterfalls, conquers mountains, brushes by traditional villages in Bajawa, leads to the incredible multicoloured volcanic lakes of Kelimutu, and connects both coasts. The Portuguese named it 'Flowers' when they colonised Flores in the 16th century. The name stuck (so did Catholicism) because of its sheer, wild beauty.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Labuanbajo has become Flores' primary gateway because scores of tourists funnel in to see the dragons and dive the reefs of Komodo National Park. Maumere, Ende and Ruteng are also serviced by flights that are often cancelled. Purchase your ticket at an airline office at the point of departure only, and always reconfirm. Schedules change frequently.

Trigana flies daily to Denpasar from Labuanbajo. It also schedules flights from Ende to Denpasar five times weekly, and three times a week from Maumere to Denpasar, but they're often cancelled. Merpati flies from Maumere to Denpasar, Kupang and Waingapu, and from Ende to Kupang thrice weekly.

Boat

Daily ferries connect Labuanbajo with Sape, Sumbawa. From Larantuka, ferries go to

Kupang (West Timor) and Pulau Solor and Pulau Alor. From Ende and Aimore, boats will take you to Waingapu on Sumba.

Pelni ships provide some useful, though rare links, including Labuanbajo-Lembar (from 140,000Rp, two days), Ende-Waingapu (from 51,000 Rp, seven hours), Maumere-Kupang (from 166,000Rp, two days), Maumere-Makassar (from 131,000Rp, two days), Labuanbajo-Makassar (from 124,000Rp, two days) and Larantuka-Kupang (from 105,000Rp, two days).

GETTING AROUND

The Trans-Flores Hwy twists and tumbles for 700 (almost always) paved, tremendously scenic kilometres from Labuanbajo to Larantuka. Luxury buses are extinct on Flores, but cheap, cramped public buses run when full, which means packed! Many tourists hire a car and driver. Trans-Flores trips run from 450,000Rp to 500,000Rp a day, including petrol. You'll need to negotiate and customise your trip, but rates don't vary that much. Ask at any hotel or travel agency in Labuanbajo or Maumere.

The flat, coastal 'Trans-Northern Hwy' now runs from Maumere to Riung.

Labuanbajo

☎ 0385 / pop 7500

Welcome to Indonesia's 'Next Big Thing' in tourism. At least it feels that way, with a steady stream of Komodo-bound package tourists and younger backpackers descending on this gorgeous ramshackle harbour. It's freckled with bay islands, blessed with surrealist sunsets, and surrounded by rugged, undeveloped coastline. Dive boats leave day and night for world-class reefs in the nearby national park, there are sweet beach bungalows on empty islands closer to shore, and there's an ever-expanding collection of restaurants with a view.

INFORMATION

The Telkom office is near the tourist office.

BNI bank (Jl Yos Sudarso) Changes money, and has an ATM.

Dinas Pariswata (☎ 41170; Jl IY Kasimo; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Sat, to 11am Fri) One kilometre from town on the airport road.

Dive Komodo (☎ 41354; www.divekomodo.com) One of several main-street dive shops.

Post office (Jl Yos Sudarso)

THE LITTLE PEOPLE OF FLORES

The Manggarai people of Flores have long told folk tales of child-sized, hairy people with flat foreheads who roamed the island's deep jungles during the times of their distant ancestors. Nobody paid them much attention – until September 2003, when archaeologists made a stunning find.

Digging through the limestone cave at Liang Bua, they unearthed a female skeleton that was the size of a preschooler but had the worn-down teeth and bone structure of an adult. Six more remains supported their theory that they had stumbled upon a new species of human, *Homo floresiensis*, a 1m-tall pygmy which they unkindly dubbed the lady 'hobbit'.

Lab tests brought another surprise: the pint-sized female with the nutcracker jaw, overlength arms and chimp-sized brain purportedly lived just 18,000 years ago, a blip on the scale of human evolution. Only then did *Homo sapiens* arrive and – being taller, smarter and better at the harsh survival game – push the little people off the island and into oblivion.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Diving Komodo National Park is one of the big draws to Labuanbajo. Currents are strong and unpredictable with cold up swellings and dangerous down currents thanks to the convergence of the warm Flores Sea and the cooler Selat Sumba (Sumba Strait). These conditions also nourish a rich plankton soup that attracts whales, mantas, dolphins, turtles and sharks. Factor in pristine coral and clouds of colourful fish and the diving is nothing short of exhilarating. But it isn't easy, so it's best to tune into local conditions on shallower dives before you endeavour to venture into the depths. There are several solid dive shops in Labuanbajo, each with different prices. Take your time and assess the gear before signing up for a trip. Generally, two tanks will cost you US\$90.

Boats can also be chartered at reasonable rates to **Pulau Bidadari** (per person for a half-day trip 60,000Rp), where the water is crystal clear and the snorkelling is superb. Ask your hotel about charters or just walk down to the harbour and negotiate yourself.

TOURS

Labuanbajo is the main jumping-off point for tours to Komodo and Rinca; see p287 for details.

SLEEPING

Hotel Mutiara (☎ 41383; Jl Yos Sudarso; d from 60,000Rp; ☎) The wooden rooms hover above the harbour, which has a certain downmarket appeal, but the walls are thin and the rooms are grimy.

Bajo Beach Hotel (☎ 41008; Jl Yos Sudarso; s/d from 70,000/75,000Rp) In the centre of town, but set back from the main road, these clean, tiled

rooms are often full. The proprietor can organise affordable tours by land and sea.

Golo Hilltop (☎ 41337; www.golohilltop.com; s/d 75,000/85,000Rp; ☎) The concrete bungalows aren't stylish, and it's a bit removed from 'downtown', but the setting – on a hillside high above the bay – is exquisite.

Gardena Bungalows & Restaurant (☎ 41258; Jl Yos Sudarso; d from 85,000Rp) A collection of basic bamboo huts on a rambling hillside overlooking a bay dotted with boats and islands all the way to the horizon. The restaurant is good. The staff is vaguely disinterested.

EATING & DRINKING

Rumah Makan Minang Indah (Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes from 8000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A tasty Padang food joint with seafood tendencies.

Arto Moro (Jl Yos Sudarso; fried chicken & squid 10,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Located next to Bajo Dive Club, this funky two-storey place with warped floors and harbour views serves the best-value food in town. It's always packed with locals.

Pesona Bali (Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes from 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Faint Balinese echoes filter through this open-air dining room like the ocean breeze. The grilled whole snapper is delicious and an absolute steal at 25,000Rp.

Lounge (Jl Yos Sudarso; tapas from 20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Across from Arto Moro is a sleek tapas and coffee bar with red lounges, Balinese art and (of course) amazing views. Tapas are exceptional, but servings are skimpy. And in grand coffee-house tradition, local hipsters tend the espresso machine (espresso from 18,000Rp).

Paradise Bar (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 6pm-2am Fri & Sat) The staff here grill fish, and serve mixed drinks, cold beers and live music at Labuanbajo's only bar scene. If you are looking for

a nightcap, and some conversation, you will almost certainly land here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

TransNusa/Trigana (code TGN; ☎ 41800; www.transnusa.co.id) flies daily to Denpasar. Purchase tickets at the airline office only, do so well in advance, and confirm your seat and departure time. In Flores, flight schedules shift with the wind.

Boat

The daily Labuanbajo–Sape ferry (27,000Rp, eight hours) usually leaves at 8am.

Pelni ships sail to Makassar (from 124,000Rp, two days) or Bima (from 59,000Rp, seven hours), Lembang (from 140,000Rp, two days) and Benoa (from 172,000Rp, two days). The **Pelni agent** (☎ 41106) is hard to find, tucked away on a side street northeast of town.

Bus

Buses leave for Ruteng (30,000Rp, four hours), Bajawa (70,000Rp, 10 hours) and even Ende (105,000Rp, 15 hours) at around 7am from the bus terminal 10km outside of town.

A car with a driver starts at 450,000Rp per day, including fuel. The driver will organise his own lodging, but you buy his meals.

Ruteng

☎ 0385 / pop 35,700

Ruteng, a highland market town, is simply a place to stretch your legs between bus trips. Compang Ruteng, 3km southwest, is a semi-traditional village, home to the local Mangarai people, and nearby Gunung Ranaka is an active volcano.

INFORMATION

BNI bank (Jl Kartini) Currency exchange, and an ATM.

Post office (Jl Dewi Sartika 6; ☎ 7am–2pm Mon–Sat)

Warnet Infokom.net (☎ 21604; Jl Pertiwi 1; per hr 5000Rp) Quick connection amid dusty environs.

SLEEPING & EATING

Losmen Agung (☎ 21080; Jl Waeces 10; d from 70,000Rp) Ditch town for this rustic rice-paddy setting with clean rooms.

Hotel Rima (☎ 22196; Jl Ayan 14; s/d 75,000/100,000Rp) A kitschy Swiss Alpine knockoff with clean, comfy rooms. Feels out of place, but still a good value.

Café Agape (Jl Bhayankari 8; mains 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A coffee factory, with an attrac-

tive café that serves excellent espresso and a lovely *kwetjau goreng* (fried flat noodles).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 21197; www.merpati.co.id) flies three times a week to Kupang, but cancellations are frequent.

Buses to Labuanbajo (30,000Rp, four hours) leave every two hours, while those to Bajawa (40,000Rp, five hours) and Ende (70,000Rp, nine hours) leave around 7.30am. Take a bemo to the terminal (1000Rp), located 3.5km out of town. Tickets can be booked through hotels

Bajawa

☎ 0384

With a pleasant climate, and surrounded by forested volcanoes, Bajawa is a great base from which to explore dozens of traditional villages that are home to the Ngada people. Their fascinating architecture features *ngadhu* (carved poles supporting a conical thatched roof).

INFORMATION

BNI bank (Jl Pierre Tendean) Has an ATM.

Telkom office (☎ 21218; Jl Soekarno Hatta)

Tourist office (☎ 21554; Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Sat, until 11am Fri) Not much practical advice available.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Bena, 19km south of Bajawa on the flank of Gunung Inerie, is one of the most spectacular traditional villages in the area. **Nage** and **Wogo** are also interesting. Guides linger around hotels and can arrange day trips for 250,000Rp per person with transport, village entry fees and lunch.

SLEEPING & EATING

Edelweis (☎ 21345; Jl Ahmad Yani 76; d from 75,000Rp; ☎) Nice gardens, great volcano views, very clean and owned by a friendly family who will boil water for a very welcome hot-water *mandi* in the morning. The manager, Ivan Botha, leads trips to traditional villages.

Hotel Korina (☎ 21162; Jl Ahmad Yani 81; d 75,000Rp) Across the road from the Edelweis is another tidy, family-run place with a range of rooms.

Villa Silverin (☎ 222 3865; Jl Bajawa; d from 150,000Rp) A shiny new place, on the road to Ende, with colonial panache, beckoning verandas and jaw-dropping views.

Dito Restaurant (☎ 081 339 198600; Jl Ahmad Yani; mains 12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Brand-new at the time of research, it's opposite the Camellia and just as good. The seafood *mie goreng* (fried noodles; 15,000Rp) are superb.

Camellia (☎ 21458; Jl Ahmad Yani 74; mains 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The dining room is too bright, but the food is delicious. Try the chicken *sate* (17,000Rp). It comes with a unique sweet, smoky pepper sauce. The guacamole rocks too.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The Watujaji bus station is 3km south of town, but hotels arrange tickets and pick-ups. Buses to Labuanbajo (70,000Rp, 10 hours) leave around 7am. More frequent buses go to Ruteng (40,000Rp, five hours). Buses to Ende (44,000Rp, five hours) leave at 7am and noon. Buses to Riung (18,000Rp, three hours) leave at 8am and noon.

Bemo and trucks to surrounding villages depart from the Jl Basuki Rahmat terminal.

Riung

Fans of laid-back coastal mangrove villages will love Riung, but the 21 offshore islands of the **Seventeen Islands Marine Park** (nobody said governments made sense), with luscious white-sand beaches and excellent snorkelling, are the real attraction. The park entrance fee is 10,000Rp per person plus 5000Rp per boat. Day trips (250,000Rp for up to six people) are easily arranged in Riung.

Pondok SVD (d from 150,000Rp; ☎), run by missionaries, offers the best rooms in town, with nice touches like reading lights, soap, and towels. But the food is pricey.

There are a scattering of budget places on the road into town and clustered around the harbour. None stands out. **Rumah Makan Murak Muriah** (dishes from 10,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) serves tasty local fare.

Daily buses run between Riung and Bajawa (18,000Rp, three hours), leaving Bajawa at 8am and noon. Buses from Ende (26,000Rp, two hours) go daily at 6am. Otherwise take a 1pm bus to Mbay (15,000Rp, 1½ hours) and a bemo to Riung.

Ende

☎ 0381 / pop 81,600

Muggy, dusty and crowded, this south-coast port's ultimate saving grace is its spectacular

setting. The eye-catching cones of Gunung Meja and Gunung Iya loom over the city, while barrels roll in continuously from the Sawu Sea and crash over a coastline of black sand and blue stones.

Soekarno was exiled here during the 1930s, where he reinvented himself as a truly horrid playwright. Thank God that the whole national revolutionary hero-thing worked out.

INFORMATION

Bank Danamon (Jl Soekarno) Changes money and the ATM will allow you to withdraw larger amounts than some others.

Telkom office (Jl Kelimutu 5) Internet access.

Tourism office (☎ 21303; Jl Soekarno 4; ☎ 8am–1pm Mon–Sat) Enthusiastic staff.

SIGHTS

Meander through the aromatic **waterfront market** (Jl Pasar) with the requisite fruit pyramids and an astonishing fish section including giant tuna and sharks. The adjacent **ikat market** (cnr Jl Pabean & Jl Pasar) sells hand-woven tapestries from across Flores and Sumba.

History buffs can visit Soekarno's house of exile, now **Musium Bung Karno** (Jl Perwira; admission by donation; ☎ 7am–noon Mon–Sat); most of the original period furnishings remain. This is where he penned the epic *Frankenstein*-inspired *Doctor Satan*.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Ikhlas (☎ 21695; Jl Ahmad Yani 69; s/d from 25,000/40,000Rp) High quality (from a backpacker's perspective) for a song, this is the best choice in town. Rooms are clean, service is tiptop, and the restaurant serves both Western and Indo fare (also extremely cheaply). Choose one of the garden rooms with a red tiled terrace and views of magnificent Gunung Meja peaking over the neighbours' tin roofs.

Hotel Safari (☎ 21997; Jl Ahmad Yani 65; d from 60,000Rp; ☎) Located next door to Ikhlas, and there are some decent rooms, but they just aren't clean enough. You'll need to add 90,000Rp for air-con.

Restoran Istana Bambu (☎ 21921; Jl Kemakmuran 30; dishes 20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Near the sea, Bambu serves top-notch Chinese seafood, as well as freshly baked bread and cakes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY**Air**

TransNusa/Trigana (☎ 24222; www.transnusa.co.id) has scheduled flights from Ende to Denpasar five times a week. But during our research trip these flights were suspended indefinitely. **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 21355; www.merpati.co.id) flies from Ende to Kupang three times a week.

Boat

ASDP (☎ 22007) operates a Waingapu ferry (42,500Rp, six hours) every Thursday. There are also twice-weekly services to Kupang (58,000Rp, seven hours).

Pelni (☎ 21043; Jl Cathedral 2; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat) sails fortnightly from Ende to Waingapu (from 51,000Rp, two days), Lembar (from 140,000Rp, two days) and Benoa (from 264,000Rp, two days).

Bus

Buses to eastern Flores leave from Terminal Wolowana, 5km from town. Buses to Moni (14,000Rp, two hours) operate from 6am to 2pm. Maumere-bound coaches (37,000Rp, five hours) leave at 7am, 9am and 4pm.

Westbound buses leave from Terminal Ndao, 2km north of town, to Bajawa (44,000Rp, five hours), Ruteng (70,000Rp, nine hours) and Labuanbajo (105,000Rp, 15 hours).

Kelimutu

One of the most awesome sights in all of Indonesia, sacred Mt Kelimutu (1640m), with its trio of multihued crater lakes, will make you glad you braved the Trans-Flores Hwy. During research one was turquoise, the other dark green and the third lake was black. From the rim, colours are so dense that the lakes' water seems the thickness of paint. Minerals in the water account for the chameleonic colour scheme – although the turquoise lake never changes, the other lakes can fluctuate to yellow, orange and red.

Most visitors glimpse them at dawn, leaving nearby Moni at 4am. But afternoons are usually empty and peaceful at the top, and when the sun is high the colours sparkle. Clouds are your only obstacle, and they can drift in at anytime.

Public transport is no longer available, but you can hire an *ojek* (25,000Rp to 35,000Rp one way, 45,000Rp to 60,000Rp return) or chartered bemo (100,000Rp to 200,000Rp) from Moni.

Negotiate! The park entry post, halfway up the road, charges a 2000Rp entry fee.

You can walk the 13.5km down through the forest and back to Moni in about 2½ hours. There's a short cut from just beside the entry post, which comes out by the hot springs and waterfall.

Moni

Moni is a picturesque village sprinkled with rice fields, ringed by soaring volcanic peaks, with distant sea views. It's a slow-paced, easy-going town that serves as a gateway to Kelimutu, and the cool, comfortable climate invites long walks, and a few extra days. But there are no banks and only one telephone. About 2km west of Moni is the turn-off to Kelimutu. The Monday market, held on the soccer pitch, is a major local draw and a good place to snare *ikat*.

SLEEPING & EATING

Moni has a cluster of cheapies to choose from.

Sylvester Homestay (d from 40,000Rp) A very basic, upstart homestay across from Arwanti Homestay. It's clean with tiled baths and a big bed. If you stay here you can watch the fun-loving owner weave *ikat* with her sister.

Watugana (s/d 40,000/60,000Rp) Clean, serviceable rooms, but it's across from the pool hall so noise drifts in late.

Maria Inn (d from 50,000Rp) Nice setting, back from the road. Rooms have Western toilets, 'new beds', and tiled verandas with garden and mountain views.

Sao Ria Bungalows (d from 75,000Rp) A string of bamboo bungalows – about 1.5km west of Moni, off the Kelimutu turn-off – with tremendous road appeal, and a magical panorama. Closer inspection reveals that the floors at this state-run place are warped, the garden needs work and the beds are stone. Here's another vote against government administration.

Palm Bungalows (☎ 081 339 147983; d from 80,000Rp) This is your secluded sweet spot, a ramshackle bungalow on a farmlike property off a dirt road with incredible mountain views. The dusty turquoise stream that skirts the property sings a tremendous lullaby and offers an even better wake-up call. Arnol, the manager, is also a driver and tour guide who rents motorbikes. His prices are the best in town.

Arwanti Homestay (bungalows 100,000Rp) It's a small place with two sweet, two-room bungalows set next to a gurgling brook. The road-

side restaurant is inviting and road-weary travellers will be glad to have the owners arrange *ojek* shuttles to the crater.

Most homestays provide simple meals, but for variety check out the well-perched **Chenty Restaurant & Pub** (mains from 10,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) and the cavernous **Flores Sare Inn** (mains 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

For Ende (14,000Rp, two hours), buses start around 7am. Other buses come from Ende through to Maumere (23,000Rp, three hours) at about 9am or 10am, then later at around 7pm. Additional buses and trucks leave on Monday (market day).

Maumere

☎ 0382 / pop 49,200

Maumere lacks the looks of Ende and Labuanbajo, but it has the second-most connected airport on the island, and unless you are doubling back west by car, you'll likely do some time here. It isn't completely charmless. Beach bungalows line the coast, the recovering reefs make a decent diversion, and some of Flores' best *ikat* weavers live in traditional villages outside of town.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The airport is 3km out, and a taxi there costs 10,000Rp. Bemo around town cost 2000Rp.

BNI bank (Jl Soekarno Hatta 4) Best rates in town; ATM.

Comtel (☎ 22132; Jl Bandeng 1; per hr 12,000Rp;

☎ 9am-9pm) High-speed internet access.

Post office (Jl Pos; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat)

Telkom office (Jl Soekarno Hatta 5)

Tourist office (☎ 21652; cnr Jl Melati & Jl Wairkau;

☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Sat) Not a great resource.

SLEEPING & EATING

The harbour doubles as restaurant row, with a string of inexpensive seafood and Indonesian kitchens.

Hotel Wini Rai (☎ 21388; Jl Gajah Mada 50; s/d 44,000/65,000Rp; ☎) There's a wide variety of rooms here, and the budget choices are decent enough for a night or two.

Gardena Hotel (☎ 22644; Jl Patirangga 28; s/d from 70,000/100,000Rp; ☎) Touted by both guides and travellers as Maumere's top choice. It's clean and the service is great.

Hotel Maiwali (☎ 21220; Jl Raja Don Tomas 40; d from 90,000Rp) Like a bad dream, or maybe a horror movie, this seems like a nice hotel with decent

rooms until the lights go off at bedtime and the roaches take over. Not good!

Rumah Makan Bunaken (☎ 081 33944 8814; mains from 10,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) So spicy it hurts, this is another popular waterfront seafood café. Thankfully, they realise that with food this hot, cold Bintang is mandatory.

Ikan Bakar Jakarta (☎ 081 2379 5559; dishes 12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right by the port, this cheap and tasty Javanese joint serves up chilli-tinged squid, chicken and shrimp. Bring your own beer.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 21342; www.merpati.co.id) flies to Denpasar, Kupang and Waingapu three times weekly. **TransNusa/Trigana** (code TGN; ☎ 23821; www.transnusa.co.id) advertises flights to Denpasar, but those flights were suspended indefinitely when we visited. Check for updates.

Pelni (☎ 21013; Jl M Sugiyono Pranoto 4) sails fortnightly to Makassar (from 131,000Rp, two days) and Kalimantan, and to Kalabahi (from 64,000Rp, two days) and Kupang (from 166,000Rp) in the other direction.

Buses and bemo travel east to Larantuka (32,000Rp, four hours), Waiara and Wodong, and depart from the Lokaria (or Timur) terminal, about 3km east of town. Westbound buses, such as those heading to Ende (37,000Rp, five hours) via Moni (23,000Rp, three hours), leave from the Ende Terminal 1.5km southwest of town.

Buses often endlessly cruise town searching for passengers. Hotels can arrange pick-up.

Around Maumere

A small army of expert artisans lays in wait in the weaving village of **Sikka**, 26km south of Maumere. Along the north coast, east of Maumere, is where you'll find the best beaches and healthiest reefs.

Waiara, 9km east of Maumere, was once considered the gateway to the Maumere 'sea gardens' before the 1992 tsunami wreaked havoc on the reefs. They are now well into recovery mode, and it's a nice spot to linger in or out of the water. **Sea World Club** (0382-21570; www.sea-world-club.com; s/d from US\$15/20; ☎) is worth a splurge. It charges US\$50 for two dives. To get there, catch any Talibura- or Larantuka-bound bus from Maumere (2000Rp).

The beaches of **Ahuwair** and **Waiterang**, 24km and 26km east of Maumere, ooze tranquillity. **Sunset Cottages** (bungalows 40,000Rp) has coconut

wood and bamboo beachside bungalows, snorkelling trips to nearby islands, and fantastic fish dinners.

A bit further, you'll find **Ankermi** (☎ 0382-21100; s/d 30,000/35,000Rp), a mellow Swiss-Indo-owned place set back from shore, with nice food, comfy hammocks and a small dive school, and the simple **Wodong Beach Cottages** (s/d 35,000/40,000Rp). Come via a Larantuka-bound bus or bemo from Maumere's Lokaria terminal (3000Rp, 35 minutes).

Larantuka

☎ 0383

This busy little port, and former Portuguese enclave, nestles at the base of Gunung Ili Mandiri on the eastern tip of Flores, separated from the Solor and Alor archipelagos by a narrow strait. Most people come simply to hop a ferry.

The BRI bank will change money, but their 'forthcoming' ATM was still MIA.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Rulies (☎ 21198; Jl Yos Sudarso 40; s/d/tr from 40,000/60,000/80,000Rp) A popular budget hotel with clean rooms, private *mandi* and saggy beds.

Hotel Fortuna II (☎ 21383; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp; 🍴) The best of the three Fortunas. Rooms are spacious, and the air-con variety (from 82,000Rp) are the best in town.

Rumah Makan Nirwana (Jl Niaga; mains 14,000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) It's a modest Chinese-Indo establishment, but the fish is fresh and the portions are filling.

Warung set up in the evening along Jl Niaga.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Ferries to Kupang (50,000Rp, 13 hours) leave Monday and Wednesday at 1pm from Waibulan, 4km southwest of Larantuka (by bemo 1500Rp). They leave Kupang on Thursday and Sunday afternoons.

Wooden boats to Adonara (15,000Rp), Solor (5000Rp) and Lembata (25,000Rp, four hours) leave from the pier in the centre of town at 7.30am and noon.

Pelni ships call at Larantuka on their Labuanbajo–Papua and Kupang–Makassar trips.

Regular buses run between Maumere and Larantuka (30,000Rp, four hours). The main bus station is 5km west of town (2000Rp by bemo), but you can pick buses up in the town centre.

Solor & Alor Archipelagos

This remote, mountainous chain of volcanic islands, separated by swift, narrow straits from the eastern end of Flores, is reached by ferry from Larantuka. Lembata, in the Solor chain, is home to the traditional whaling village of Lamalera. Alor, home to head-hunters only 50 years ago, is protected by rich coral reefs that attract divers.

LEMBATA

The sleepy commercial centre of Lewoleba is overshadowed by the smoking cone, **Gunung Ili Api**. Lewoleba has no banks, but if you're stuck you can exchange money at the Flores Jaya shop opposite the post office. Stay at the central **Hotel Lewoleba** (☎ 41012; Jl Awololong 15; s/d 45,000/60,000Rp; 🍴), or the long running Dutch-Indo-owned **Lile Ile homestay** (s/d 35,000/45,000Rp), with stunning volcano views.

On the south coast, **Lamalera** is an isolated whaling village, where locals hunt whales with spears, rowboats and prayer. Being a small-scale subsistence activity, the hunting is considered legal. Villagers take occasional visitors out on a hunt during the May–October whaling season. It's as harrowing as it sounds.

A daily truck bumps from the port of Lembata to Lamalera along a very poor 65km road (12,000Rp; 3½ hours). Occasional passenger ferries run between Larantuka and Lewoleba, as well. Check at the harbour.

Ferries to Kalabahi (Alor) depart from Lewoleba twice a week. They stop for the night at Balauring in eastern Lembata before continuing to Kalabahi (51,000Rp, 13 hours).

ALOR

☎ 0386 / pop 170,000

Alor, the final link in an island chain that extends east of Java, is as remote, rugged and beautiful as it gets. Thanks to impenetrable terrain, the 170,000 inhabitants are fractured into 50 tribes and 14 languages, and they were still taking heads into the 1950s. Alor is also famous for its strange, bronze *moko* drums (see boxed text, opposite), and superb diving, which can be arranged through **La Petite Kepa** (www.la-petite-kepa.com; 2 tanks US\$65) on Pulau Kepa. You can also stay with La Petite Kepa on this tranquil offshore islet (from 75,000Rp), or contact **Dive Alor** (www.divealor.com) in Kupang (see p297).

Kalabahi, located on a sweeping, palm-fringed bay, is the main port. Bring ample

ALOR'S STRANGE MOKO DRUMS

Thousands of hourglass-shaped bronze drums known as *moko* have been found mysteriously buried all over Alor. They were once traded for human heads and are still highly prized in wedding dowries, sometimes indebting a family for a generation. Researchers believe the drums hail from Vietnam's ancient Dongson culture and were brought by spice traders. Locals say *moko* grew from the earth.

cash as exchange rates are criminal. The views at **Hotel Adi Dharma** (☎ 21280; Jl Martadinata 12; s/d from 57,000/77,000Rp), near the pier, make it the most popular stop.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 21041; www.merpati.co.id) has a dinky 12-seater that flies four times a week to Kupang. Book in advance.

The Kupang ferry (40,500Rp, 20 hours) leaves on Wednesday and Sunday at noon. Ferries to Lewoleba (51,000Rp, 14 hours) and Larantuka (42,500Rp, 16 hours) leave Thursday and Sunday at 8am. East Timor-bound folks should take the 8pm Tuesday ferry to Atapupu (22,700Rp, eight hours).

Pelni ships call fortnightly at Kalabahi and sail to Kupang, Ende, Lombok, Bali, and Makassar (Sulawesi).

WEST TIMOR

West Timor is still off the tourism radar, but with rugged countryside, empty beaches and scores of traditional villages, it's an undiscovered gem. Thanks to the recent calm nerves in historically politically tense East Timor, and the accessibility of Kupang, Nusa Tenggara's top metropolis, traffic on the inexpensive East Timor visa run is picking up. But venture further afield, where animist traditions persist alongside tribal dialects, and where *ikat*-clad, betel-nut-chewing chiefs govern beehive-shaped hut villages, and you may find that, in Timor, even Bahasa Indonesia can be a foreign tongue.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Merpati connects Kupang with Denpasar (daily), and cities throughout Nusa Tenggara (regularly). Wings Air flies the Kupang–Surabaya route daily. From there you can connect to Jakarta. A good way to explore

eastern Nusa Tenggara is to fly directly from Bali to Kupang, and island-hop from there (see p297).

Boat

ASDP (☎ 0380-890420; Bolok), based in Kupang, has regular car-and-passenger ferries throughout east Nusa Tenggara. Ferries run from Kupang to Larantuka (Flores), Kalabahi (Alor), Rote and Waingapu (Sumba) via Sabu and/or Ende. From Atapupu, near Atambua in West Timor, a ferry runs once a week to/from Kalabahi. The routes are fairly constant but schedules are constantly changing; check on arrival in Kupang.

Pelni passenger ships *Awu*, *Dobonsolo*, *Sirimau*, *Pangarango*, *Tatamailau* and *Kelimitus* connect Kupang with Maumere, Ende, Kalabahi, Larantuka, Waingapu and onward destinations such as Surabaya and Makassar.

GETTING AROUND

The good main highway is surfaced all the way from Kupang to East Timor, though the buses are of the cramped, crowded, thumping-disco variety. Away from the highway, roads are improving but can be impassable in the wet season.

Kupang

☎ 0380 / pop 311,300

Kupang, the capital of Nusa Tenggara Timur (NTT), is noisy, energetic, scruffy, bustling with commerce, and a fun place to hang around for a few days. Captain Bligh did after his emasculating mutiny problem.

ORIENTATION

Kupang's El Tari airport is 15km east of town. Taxi fare into town is fixed at 50,000Rp. By public transport, turn left out of the terminal and walk 1km to the junction with the main highway. From there bemo to the city cost 2000Rp. Around town, the tricked-out, bass-booming bemo cost 1500Rp.

INFORMATION

The NTT Tourist Office is out in the sticks near the bus station – it's not worth the trip.

BNI bank (Jl Sumatera) Has fair rates and an ATM.

L'Avalon (Jl Sumatera; www.geocities.com/lavalon_edwin/) This bar-cum-tourism-information-centre has the best internet service around.

Main post office (Jl Palapa 1) Accepts poste restante mail and has internet facilities.



SIGHTS

East Nusa Tenggara Museum (Jl Raya El Tari; admission free; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Sat) is worth a look for its dusty collection of crafts and artefacts. But the rambling **Pasar Inpres**, the main market, is more energizing. It's southeast of the centre.

TOURS

Many fascinating traditional villages can be visited in West Timor, but Bahasa Indonesia, let alone English, is often not spoken, so a local guide is necessary. Kupang is a decent base for dive trips around Timor and Alor. Try **Dive Alor** (☎ 821154; www.divealor.com; Jl Raya El Tari 19) or **Nusafin** (☎ 821086; Jl Sudirman 48).

SLEEPING

Hotel Marina (☎ 822566; Jl Ahmad Yani 79; d from 60,000Rp; 🏠) The economy rooms have shared bathrooms, but the air-con rooms (from 110,000Rp) are a decent deal.

Hotel Maliana (☎ 821879; Jl Sumatera 35; d 70,000Rp; 🏠) A low-rise, spotless motel, set back from the sea with helpful staff.

Pantai Timur Hotel (☎ 831651; Jl Sumatera; economy s/d 75,000/100,000Rp; 🏠) On the seafont, with good-value economy rooms, and better ones in the standard class.

EATING & DRINKING

In case you're wondering, RW is dog meat, a Kupang speciality that sizzles endlessly in local *warung*. We hear the best are around the Kota Kupang bemo terminal.

Teluk Kupang (☎ 833985; Jl Timor Timur; dishes from 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The décor is awful, but the delicious *ikan waku* (spicy fish) is why you're here.

Silvia Steakhouse (Jl Beringin 3; steaks 30,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) This almost stylish place has a frighteningly extensive Western menu, but the house speciality is steak, served with cold beer.

GETTING TO EAST TIMOR

Take a bus from Kupang to Atambua (52,000Rp, eight hours), a bemo to the Motoain border and a bus to Dili. Or book a more comfortable Kupang–Dili tourist bus (170,000Rp, 12 hours), run by **Timor Tour & Travel** (Dili ☎ 333 1014; Rua Quinze de Outubro 17; Kupang ☎ 0380-881 543; Jl Timor Raya 8). The 30-day entry visa to East Timor is US\$30.

This route is also the cheapest way to renew your Indonesian visa from Nusa Tenggara; once in East Timor, you can get another 30-day visa at the Indonesian embassy. It costs a lot less than getting back to Bali and flying to Singapore or Kuala Lumpur.

See p141 for information on doing the trip in the reverse direction.

L'Avalon (☎ 832256; Jl Sumatera; www.geocities.com/lavalon_edwin/) The design motif at this tiny beachside bar would be considered ramshackle/tumbledown, but Edwin, the owner, is keeping it together with Band-Aids, rubber bands and personality, and it is a superb diversion.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 833111; www.merpati.co.id) flies daily from Kupang to Denpasar, and also serves cities throughout Nusa Tenggara. **TransNusa/Trigana** (code TGN; ☎ 822555; www.transnusa.co.id) flies to Denpasar five times a week. **Wings Air** (code 1W; ☎ 882155; www.lionair.co.id) operates flights to Surabaya. From there you can connect to Jakarta.

Boat

Pelni (☎ 821944; Jl Pahlawan 3) ships leave from Tenau, 10km southwest of Kupang, for Maumere (from 166,000Rp, two days), Kalabahi (from 72,000Rp, two days), Larantuka (from 105,000Rp, two days) and Waingapu (from 154,000Rp, two days), and many other ports, including those in Sulawesi and West Papua.

Ferries leave from Bolok, 13km southwest of Kupang. **ASDP** (☎ 890420) has ferries to Larantuka, Kalabahi and Ende. The Ende ferry continues on to Waingapu (Sumba) and another ferry runs to Kupang–Sabu–Waingapu. Most ferries sail once or twice a week.

Bus

Long-distance buses depart from Oebobo Terminal on the east side of town (take bemo 10 to get there). Departures include: Soe (25,000Rp, three hours), Niki Niki (25,000Rp, 3½ hours), Kefamenanu (36,000Rp, 5½ hours) and Atambua (52,000Rp, eight hours). Bemo to villages around Kupang go from the central Kota Kupang Terminal.

See below for information on getting to East Timor.

Around Kupang

Head to the great **Tablolong** beaches, 27km southwest of Kupang. The small islands of **Pulau Semau** and **Pulau Kera**, just off the coast, are also interesting. Grab a local boat from Namosaen, west of the city.

Baun, a tiny village in the hills 30km south-east of Kupang, is an *ikat*-weaving hot spot with a few colonial edifices. Visit the *rumah raja*, the last raja's house, occupied by his widow.

Camplong, a mellow foothill town 46km from Kupang, is home to the **Taman Wisata Camplong**, a forest reserve that has caves and a spring-fed swimming pool.

Soe

☎ 0368

The traditional, beehive-like *lopo* (hut) villages and the indigenous Dawan people who live in them are the attraction of this modernising market town 800m above sea level. On the outskirts, ubiquitous *lopo* rise from bush reminiscent of Australia. Government has deemed the *lopo* a health hazard (they're smoky and lack much ventilation) and is in the process of replacing them with modern homes. Once received, the Dawan simply build new *lopo* behind them. It's a great system. Village tours are easily arranged in Soe.

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 21149; Jl Diponegoro) can arrange guides. **BNI** (Jl Diponegoro) and **BRI** (Jl Hatta) branches have ATMs, which is good because currency exchange rates are low.

Hotel Cahaya (☎ 21087; Jl Kartini 7; s/d 35,000/75,000Rp) is a cheap central choice.

At **Nope's Royal Homestay** (☎ 21711; Jl Merpati 8; bungalows 75,000Rp) you can bed down with royalty in a well-kept bungalow within the family compound of a former raja (the owner), who is also a well-respected tour guide and speaks perfect English.

The Haumeni bus station is 4km west of town (by bemo 2000Rp). Regular buses run from Soe to Kupang (25,000Rp, three hours), Kefamenanu (20,000Rp, 2½ hours) and Oinlasi (9000Rp, 1½ hours). Assorted bemo cover Niki Niki (8000Rp) and Kapan (5000Rp) routes.

Around Soe

Market days attract villagers from miles in every direction, who arrive wearing traditional dress and sell exquisite hand-woven *ikat*, carvings and masks. This is why you

travel. The Tuesday market at **Oinlasi**, 51km from Soe, is one of the biggest and best in West Timor, and the Wednesday market at **Niki Niki**, 34km east of Soe, is a lively, more accessible, second choice.

The main attraction around Soe is **Boti**, a traditional village presided over by a self-styled raja who is something of a fundamentalist animist. Traditional dress code and hairstyle is enforced, and locals maintain strict adherence to *adat* (customary law), a devotion that has proven almost completely immune to Christian missionaries. The unique village has become an attraction, and locals are used to tourists, and even receive (gasp!) the occasional tour bus. Take a bus from Oinlasi for 2km to the Boti turn-off. Then hike the 9km rocky road to Boti. Per raja's orders, bring a guide from Soe who speaks the local dialect. You can stay overnight with the enigmatic **raja** (all-inclusive 50,000Rp).

Kefamenanu

☎ 0388 / pop 30,500

Kefamenanu (Kefa) is another cool, quiet town with a few colonial buildings, and a passionate weaving tradition. Prepare to haggle with the *ikat* cartel. They will find you. **Temkessi**, 50km northeast of Kefa, is a spectacular traditional village. The only way in is a small passage between two huge rocks. Bahasa Indonesia won't get you far, so bring a guide. Kefa is also the gateway to the poor and isolated East Timorese enclave of Oecussi. The best overnight option is **Hotel Cendana** (☎ 31168; Jl Sonbay; d with private mandi from 40,000Rp; ☎), which can help arrange a chartered *mikrolet* for the two-hour ride across the border (100,000Rp, two hours).

Atambua

☎ 0389 / pop 37,000

Atambua is the major town on the overland Dili-Kupang route, and home to some pro-Jakarta militiamen who fled now-independent East Timor with blood on their hands. In 2000, after East Timor's independence, three UN workers were murdered here by the pro-Jakarta militia, and riots broke out in 2005. Thankfully, there's no reason to stop here, as you can now make the trip to East Timor nonstop (see boxed text, p297). **Atapupu**, 25km away, is a port with a weekly ferry to Kalabahi (Alor).

If you must overnight (perhaps you want to visit the nearby villages of **Kletek**, **Kamanasa**

and **Bolan** where flying foxes soar), stay at **Hotel Nusantara Dua** (☎ 21773; Jl Kasimo; d from 85,000Rp).

Timor Tour & Travel (☎ 22292; Jl Sukarno 43) arranges shuttle buses to Kupang and Dili.

SUMBA

According to local legend, humankind first made landfall on earth by climbing down a huge celestial ladder from heaven to Sumba – a dry, lowland isle made of limestone and covered in grasslands. Broken off the archipelago's south-eastern arc, in the Sawu Sea, Sumba has kept to itself ever since, and although Christianity has seeped in, tribal traditions – such as *marapu*, a religious belief system that revolves around ancestral spirits, bloody sacrificial funeral rites, hand-carved tombs, divine *ikat* weaving, and the use of horses for status, wealth and to score a hot wife – remain strong and pure. Generational tribal tensions also simmer beneath the surface, and are recalled every year during western Sumba's Pasola festivals (see opposite), when mock battles between mounted warriors often descend into actual violence.

Most of the 540,000 residents live in comparatively moist and fertile West Sumba, and though some Bahasa Indonesia is spoken throughout the island, six tribal languages are more prevalent, which makes this often overlooked island even more appealing to the intrepid wanderer.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Merpati flies to Maumere and Denpasar three times a week from Waingapu, four times a week from Tambolaka in West Sumba to Maumere, and three times weekly to Denpasar. Schedules change frequently, so book flights as soon as you land here and reconfirm before departure.

Boat

Waingapu is well serviced by ASDP ferries from Ende and Aimere on Flores. Connecting ferries to/from Kupang operate via Ende, and the ship to Sabu stops at Aimere en route.

Pelni has useful services from Waingapu to Ende, and on to Laruntuka, Alor and Benoa, Bali.

Waingapu

☎ 0387 / pop 50,500

Sumba's gateway town has grown up from a dusty trading post to an urbanizing com-

PASOLA FESTIVAL – SUMBA AT WAR

The thrilling, often gruesome mock battles between spear-hurling horsemen during Sumba's Pasola festival are a must for travellers passing through Nusa Tenggara in February and March. The high-energy pageant aims to placate the spirits and restore harmony with the spilling of blood. Happily, though, blunt spears have been used in recent decades to make the affair less lethal. The ritualistic war kicks off when a sea worm called *nyale* washes up on shore, a phenomenon that also starts the planting season. Call Waingapu or Waikabubak hotels to find out the latest schedules. The festival is generally held in the Lamboya and Kodi districts in February, and at Wanokaka and Gaura in March.

mercial centre. But just like in the old days business revolves around dyewoods, timber and the island's prized horses. You're here to explore the surrounding villages.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Waingapu spreads from the harbour in the north, 1.5km southeast to the main market and bus station. Taxis from the airport into town, 6km away, cost 15,000Rp. There's still no internet access on Sumba.

BNI bank (Jl Ampera) Near the market, has an ATM that accepts most cards.

Post office (Jl Hasanuddin) Near the harbour.

Telkom office (Jl Tjut Nya Dien)

SLEEPING & EATING

Most hotels are in the new part of Waingapur, near the bus station. Cheap rooms are rare.

Hotel Elvin (☎ 61462; Jl Ahmad Yani 73; s/d from 55,000/66,000Rp; ☎) The air-con wing (from 140,000Rp) has been renovated and all those rooms have appealing verandas. But the budget wing is also nice enough and worth considering.

Hotel Merlin (☎ 61300; Jl Panjaitan 25; s/d from 88,000/110,000Rp; ☎) Rooms are stylish and clean, with 4th-floor views of Flores on clear days, but it's on the noisiest street in town.

Rumah Makan Restu Ibu (Jl Ir Juanda 1; dishes from 8000Rp; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner) It has been around a long time, serving Indo's greatest hits.

Steak House (☎ 61751; Komplek Ruko; mains to 25,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This tasty place has grilled T-bones, fish and chips, *nasi goreng*, cappuccino, a rather harsh 'vodka', and a lot more.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 61323; www.merpati.co.id; Jl Soekarno 4) flies four times a week to Maumere and three times weekly to Denpasar.

Boat

Schedules change frequently, so check at the **ASDP office** (☎ 61963; Jl Adamalik 85).

A ferry leaves Waingapu for Aimere at midnight on Monday (60,000Rp, six hours). A ship also leaves Waingapu for Ende (42,500Rp, six hours) on Friday at 7pm and returns from Ende on Friday at 9am. Ferries run to Sabu (32,000Rp, 17 hours) on Saturday at noon, arriving Sunday at 5am and continuing to Kupang. Pelnis ships leave from the Dermaga dock, west of town (by bemo 2500Rp). One ship links Waingapu with Ende and Kupang. Another route stops in Ende then travels to Larantuka, Alor and Benoa (Bali).

Bus

Eastbound buses to Meolo, Rende and Baing leave from the terminal near the market. The new West Sumba terminal is 5km west of town. Buses to Waikabubak (40,000Rp, four hours) leave here at 7am, 8am, noon and 3pm. Book at the hotels or the agencies opposite the bus station.

Around Waingapu

Several traditional villages in the southeast can be visited from Waingapu by bus and bemo. The stone tombs are impressive, and the area produces some of Sumba's best *ikat*. Almost every village gatekeeper will produce a dusty visitor book to sign. Small donations are expected.

Just 3km southeast of town, **Prailiu** is a busy *ikat*-weaving centre that's worth a peek. There are also some interesting traditional thatched huts and carved concrete tombs.

Located about 7km away from unspectacular **Melolo** – accessible by bus from Waingapu (8000Rp, 1½ hours) – is **Praiyawang**, the ceremonial centre of **Rende** village, with its traditional Sumbanese compound and stone-slab tombs. The most massive belongs to a former

raja. **Umabara** and **Pau**, 4km from Melolo, are other places to snap traditional Sumba architecture and tombs, and witness the weaving process. These villages are a 20-minute, 1.5km walk from the main road; the turn-off is 2km northeast of Melolo.

Some 70km from Waingapu, **Kaliuda** has Sumba's best *ikat*. Seven buses a day make the trip from Waingapu (12,500Rp, 2¾ hours).

There's epic surf at **Kalala**, about 2km from Baing, off the main road from Melolo. The well-respected namesake of **Mr David's** (www.eastsumba.com; all-inclusive US\$35) has lived and surfed here for 30 years. His other resort is on blissful **Manggudu Island**, where you'll snorkel with mantas and enjoy stellar surf and fishing. Four buses a day depart Waingapu for Baing (28,000Rp, four hours), but they'll gladly drop you off at the beach.

An even more rustic and somehow more beautiful beach is at **Tarimbang**, a coco palm-draped cove south of Lewa. The reef break is superb, the snorkelling decent, and either of the two homestays will do just fine. Both charge 50,000Rp, all-inclusive. Buses run to Tarimbang from Waingapu (15,000Rp, four hours) in the morning.

Waikabubak

☎ 0387

At the greener end of Sumba, Waikabubak, a conglomeration of thatched clan houses, ancient tombs, concrete office buildings and satellite dishes, is strange but appealing. Interesting traditional villages such as **Kampung Tarung**, up a path next to Tarung Wisata Hotel, are right within the town. One of the spectacular attractions of West Sumba is the **Pasola**, the mock battle held near Waikabubak each February or March (see boxed text, p299).

The **tourist office** (☎ 21108; Jl Teratai 1; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat, to 1pm Fri) is on the outskirts, **BNI bank** (Jl A Yani) can change money, and **BRI bank** (Jl Gajah Mada) has an ATM that accepts MasterCard and Cirrus.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Pelita (☎ 21104; Jl Ahmad Yani 26; s/d from 30,000/35,000Rp) The economy rooms are severe depressants. But the renovated superior rooms (70,000Rp) are Prozac.

Hotel Artha (☎ 21112; Jl Veteran 11; s/d 30,000/60,000Rp) Golden staff that will help realise all your sightseeing desires. The decent rooms set around a tranquil garden courtyard aren't bad either.

Hotel Aloha (☎ 21245; Jl Sudirman 26; d from 55,000Rp) Rooms sparkle, the food satisfies, and the staff overflows with local know-how.

Rumah Makan Fanny (☎ 21389; Jl Bhayangkara 55; dishes from 10,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) It's clean, quaint and the most popular place around. Try the *udong saos tiram* (prawns in oyster sauce).

Warung congregate opposite the mosque on the main strip.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The airport is at Tambolaka, 42km north. Taxis there cost 100,000Rp. A bus to Waitabula and an *ojek* from there is the budget option.

The **Merpati agent** (☎ 21051; Jl Ahmad Yani 11) is above a shop. It flies four times a week to Maumere and three times weekly to Denpasar.

The bus station is central. Buses run to Waingapu (40,000Rp, four hours) throughout the day, and to Waitabula (4000Rp, one hour). Frequent bemo rattle to Anakalang, Wanokaka and Lamboya.

Around Waikabubak

Anakalang, 22km east of Waikabubak, sports some of Sumba's most captivating megalith tombs, right beside the highway. More interesting villages are south of town past the market. **Kabonduk** has Sumba's heaviest tomb. It took 2000 workers over three years to carve it. A pleasant 15-minute walk from there is the hillside village of **Matakakeri** and the original settlement in the area, **Lai Tarung**, which has more tombs and breathtaking views. A festival honouring the ancestors is held every odd year in July.

Located directly south of Waikabubak is the Wanokaka district, which is a centre for the Pasola festival (p299). **Praigoli** is a somewhat isolated, and therefore deeply traditional, village. The south coast has some blissfully desolate fishing beaches that immediately silence brain chatter. Head to **Pantai Rua**, with basic accommodation, or **Pantai Morosi**.

On the west coast, **Pero** is a charming village with a couple of decent surf breaks. If you sail due west from here, the first land you hit would be Africa. Homestay Stori is comfortable and the food is fantastic. From Waikabubak, take a bus to Waitabula and one of many bemo from there to Pero.

KALIMANTAN

Indonesia's portion of Borneo is famous for orang-utans – Malay for forest person – and Dayaks, forest people who resist modern intrusions on their traditions. Here in one of the earth's great rainforest lungs and last frontiers, visitors can still find wonders that captivated naturalist Alfred Russel Wallace and novelist Joseph Conrad.

Kalimantan's natural attractions also draw miners, loggers and oil-palm planters, legal and otherwise. Their exploitation of resources means travellers need more time, energy and money to reach unspoiled nature. But issues here come as thickly layered as the jungle: logging and mining roads are now principal paths to reach the green heart of Kalimantan. That mixed blessing also means trading pleasant and economical passenger-boat travel for more numb-bum bus rides.

Getting There & Away

AIR

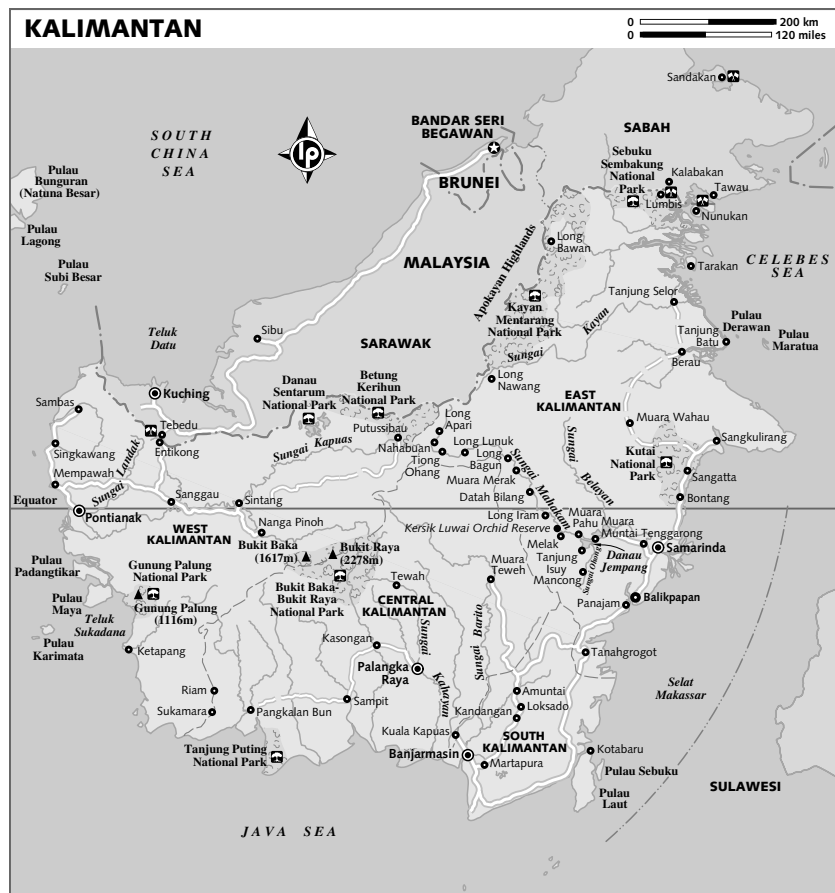
Garuda (code GA; www.garuda-indonesia.com) and its Citilink subsidiary connect to international destinations via Jakarta or Surabaya from Balikpapan, Banjarmasin and Tarakan. **SilkAir** (code MI; www.silkair.net) flies daily from Balikpapan to Singapore. **Batavia Air** (code 7P; www.batavia-air.co.id) flies from Pontianak to Kuching in Sarawak and Pulau Batam near Singapore. Garuda and Batavia fly the most routes to the rest of Indonesia. Generally, Kalimantan's travel agents will offer better service, hours and prices than airline offices.

BOAT

Pelni (www.pelni.co.id) and private companies connect to Java and Sulawesi. Check with local offices for latest schedules. Fast ferries link Tarakan and Nunukan to Tawau in Sabah in Malaysia (see boxed text, p304).

BUS

Despite the long land border with Malaysia, there are only two official crossings. The Kuching–Pontianak express bus route (10 hours) crosses at Entikong in West Kalimantan (see boxed text, p310). A less-used crossing in East Kalimantan links Lumbar and Kalabakan in Sabah.



Getting Around

Roads connect nearly all major towns, though quality varies dramatically. Bus routes quickly follow road construction.

Where available, *kapal biasa* (river ferries) or *long bots* (narrow wooden boats with covered passenger cabins) are the best ways into the jungle. Expensive speedboats also ply the Barito, Kapuas, Pinoh, Kahayan and Kayan Rivers.

Kal-Star (www.kalstaronline.com) and Dirlgantara Air Service (DAS) are the main air carriers within Kalimantan.

TARAKAN

☎ 0551 / pop 220,000

The usual reason to visit Tarakan is border crossing, to or from Tawau in Malaysia. Com-

bat buffs may inspect memorials to bloody WWII battles between Australian and Japanese troops. A joint WWF-government project recently created a **mangrove forest** (Jl Gadjah Mada; admission 5000Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm) on the fringe of the town centre. From the wooden walkway, see proboscis monkeys, macaques and *ikan tempakul*, a fish exclusive to Kalimantan that crawls over mudflats on its fins.

Orientation & Information

Airport taxis are pretty pricey at 30,000Rp to 35,000Rp for the short ride (5km). Kalimantan's most accommodating *angkots* (3000Rp) stop outside the airport and harbour gates, routinely adjusting routes to suit passengers.

Find ATMs along Jl Yos Sudarso and at facing shopping centres THM Plaza and **Grand Tarakan Mall** (cnr Jl Sudirman & Jl Yos Sudarso), plus Gusher Plaza ('guess-air'), 500m west on Jl Gadjah Mada.

BNI bank (Jl Yos Sudarso) Changes currency and travellers cheques.

Haji La Tunrung Money Changer (☎ 21405; Jl Yos Sudarso 32; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) Chain throughout Kalimantan and beyond; changes cash.

Immigration office (☎ 21242; Jl Sumatra) Visa and border-crossing information.

Perta Medika Hospital (☎ 31403; Jl Mulawarman)

Tourist office (☎ 32100; 4th fl, Jl Sudirman 76;

☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri) Well-meaning but inept. WWF representative in the government environmental department one floor above has better information on Sebuku Sembakung and Kayan Mentarang National Parks and surrounds.

Utama Computer (☎ 33292; Jl Sudirman 155; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 9.30am-10.30pm) Internet access.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Bunga Muda (☎ 21349; Jl Yos Sudarso 7; r 55,000-132,000Rp; ☎) Located between the two harbours, Ibu Ida's establishment provides *wartel*, flight and boat bookings, plus plenty of smiles.

Hotel Bahagia (☎ 37141; Jl Gadjah Mada; r 60,000-150,000Rp; ☎) Opposite Gusher Plaza, this place has big, bright rooms with two beds, two fans, closet, desk and chair, and shared Western

or Asian bathrooms. Pricier rooms are very comfortable but not all have windows.

Hotel Sakura (☎ 22730, 0852 4657 0888; Jl Sudirman 17; s 80,000-120,000Rp, d 120,000-160,000Rp; ☎) Small, modern, somewhat clinical digs, all with air-con and TV. Economy rooms share spotless Western bathrooms; standard rooms have private bathrooms with hot water.

Hotel Kamur (☎ 31988; r incl breakfast from 140,000Rp; ☎) Feeling flush? Cross to Hotel Sakura's sister property with more complete furnishings.

Warung choices line Jl Seroja, north of Jl Sudirman. Food stalls in THM and Gusher serve Indonesian dishes from morning until late. More stalls bloom nightly along Jl Sudirman and environs. Try local fresh fish.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Angkasa Express (☎ 32088; Hotel Tarakan Plaza) is the local agent for Garuda and DAS, and sells tickets for all carriers. Garuda connects via Balikpapan to Jakarta, Surabaya and beyond.

Kal-Star (☎ 51578, 25840; www.kalstaronline.com) flies twice daily except Sundays to Nunukan (230,000Rp), Berau (320,000Rp) and Samarinda. DAS flies to Malinau (250,000Rp), Long Bawan (167,000Rp), Berau and Balikpapan. **Mission Aviation Fellowship** (code MAF; ☎ 22904) has irregular service into the interior.

PULAU DERAWAN – WHERE'S PAPA?

If Ernest Hemingway came back a sensitive new-age guy, he'd go to Pulau Derawan to write. The Sangalaki archipelago off East Kalimantan is famous for diving and fishing, but you'll get hooked on local charm.

There are more than 30 islands in the archipelago, most uninhabited, visited mainly by scuba enthusiasts, turtle-egg poachers, and (successful) antipoaching patrols. Derawan is the inhabited island nearest the Borneo 'mainland'. This tear-drop-shaped oasis of 125 households can be circled on foot in less than an hour. There are no cars, and electricity only runs dusk to dawn. Shops scattered along the sandy main street offer the day's freshly arrived produce, basic supplies plus homemade sweets reflecting islanders' Bajo heritage; a few sell beer through the back door.

Losmen Danakan (☎ 081 35014 8954; r per person incl meals 75,000Rp) captures Derawan's friendly spirit. Danakan means 'family' in local sea patois, and guests will enjoy the embrace of Ibu Ridahi, Pak Kasino and their clan. Simple wooden rooms line a pier extending 50m into clear sea. Turtles paddle between the pilings, a leaping dolphin may punctuate the spectacular sunsets.

Visitors usually reach Derawan via Berau (also known as Tanjung Redep), with air and bus links to other parts of Kalimantan. A weekly ferry service (80,000Rp, four hours) leaves Berau Saturdays only if enough passengers show up, and returns Sundays. *Sepit* (speedboats) make the trip in three hours; bargaining begins at 2,000,000Rp one way. The economy alternative is a Kijang from Berau's riverfront Central Graha Hotel to Tanjung Batu (50,000Rp, 2½ hours), then a speedboat (200,000Rp, 35 minutes) or inboard (50,000Rp, 1½ hour) to Derawan. For the best deal, stick close to the Indonesian passengers leaving the Kijang.

GETTING TO MALAYSIA

A fast ferry leaves Tarakan for Tawau in Malaysia every morning, except Sunday, from Pelabuhan Malundung. Purchase a ticket (Rp180,000 including port taxes, 3½ hours), then report to the immigration counter, which collects your passport; it is returned with a departure card and 90-day visa upon arrival in Malaysia. It's also possible to cross from Tarakan via Nunukan (150,000Rp, 2½ hours; Nunukan to Tawau 75,000Rp, 1¼ hours), where the border post opens daily. For crossings in the reverse direction, see p492.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 51169; Jl Yos Sudarso) ships steam to Makassar (250,000Rp, 24 hours), Pantaloan (110,000Rp, 10 hours), Pare Pare (221,500Rp, 22 hours), Surabaya (365,000Rp, 2½ days) and beyond from Pelabuhan Malundung at the south end of Jl Yos Sudarso. Speedboats to Tanjung Selor (70,000Rp, two hours) leave several times daily from Pelabuhan Tangkayu, opposite the post office.

SAMARINDA

☎ 0541 / pop 562,000

At the mouth of Sungai Mahakam, this trading port is the customary launch point for exploring the natural and cultural treasures of East Kalimantan's mightiest river. But Samarinda is overrated as a backpacker haven, while nearby Balikpapan is underrated.

Orientation & Information

Airport taxi cost 35,000Rp, or walk 100m down Jl Gatot Subroto to catch a route B *angkot* (3000Rp). *Angkot* (also called taxis) routes cover main streets. ATMs abound along Jl Sudirman and in shopping centres.

Acacia Travel (☎ 746744; Jl Agus Salim 21) Air tickets.

BNI (cnr Jl Panglima Batur & Jl Sebatik) Changes only US dollars (cash and traveller cheques).

Meganet (Hotel MJ, Jl Khalid 1; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 24hr) Internet access.

Post office (cnr Jl Awang Long & Jl Gajah Mada)

RS Bhakti Nguraha (☎ 741363; Jl Basuki Rahmat 150) For simple ailments.

Rumah Sakit Haji Darjad (☎ 732698; Jl Dahlia)

Modern hospital off Jl Basuki Rahmat.

Sumangkat (Jl Agus Salim 35; per hr 6000Rp; ☎ 8am-midnight) Internet plus postal services.

Tourist office (☎ 736850; cnr Jl Awang Long & Jl Sudirman 22; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Thu, 8-11am Fri) Kalimantan's best government tourism office.

Sleeping & Eating

Hanyani (☎ 742653; Jl Pirus 31; r 70,000-140,000; ☎) Large rooms in this cavernous place include *mandi* and choice of one or two beds. Fan-cooled economy rooms are marginally cleaner on the 3rd floor. Discounts are possible.

Hotel Gelora (☎ 742024; gelora@smd.mega.net.id; Jl Niaga Selatan 62; r 75,000-200,000Rp; ☎) Overlooking Citra Niaga market and routinely overlooked by foreigners, Gelora is somewhat dark but well kept. Pricier rooms have air-con.

More choices:

Aida (☎ 742572; Jl KH Mas Tumenggung; r incl breakfast from 95,000Rp; ☎) Variety of rooms, cleaner than its neighbours.

Hotel Hidayah I (☎ 731210, 731261; Jl KH Mas Temenggung; s 100,000-155,000Rp, d 125,000-190,000Rp, all incl breakfast; ☎) Still popular but heading downhill; guides frequent its balcony (coffee) bar.

Sample local pride *udang galah* (giant river prawns) at seafood *warung* or Citra Niaga. Walk north from Mesra Indah Shopping Centre for a culinary *tour de Indonesia*.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kal-Star (☎ 742110; www.kalstaronline.com) flies to Tarakan, Berau and Nunukan (796,000Rp). **DAS** (☎ 735250) serves Tarakan, Berau (500,000Rp) and Tanjung Selor (167,500Rp). Flights to Data Dawai near Long Lunak were suspended at the time of research.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 741402; Jl Sudarso 76) routes serve Pare Pare (127,500Rp, 21 hours), Surabaya (258,000Rp, 24 hours), Toli Toli (134,000Rp, 24 hours), Tarakan (259,000Rp, 24 hours) and Nunukan (225,000Rp, 24 hours).

In addition, there's twice-weekly private service to Pare Pare (125,000Rp, 24 hours). Check with the **harbour master** (Jl Yos Sudarso 2) for details.

Mahakam river ferries (*kapal biasa*) leave at 7am from Sungai Kunjang terminal at the west end of town to Tenggarang (20,000Rp, two hours), Melak (100,000Rp, 16 hours), Long Iram (120,000Rp, 18 hours) and – sometimes – Long Bagun (350,000Rp, 36 hours).

BUS

Samarinda has multiple bus depots. Sungai Kunjang terminal serves Kota Bagun (20,000Rp, three hours), a short cut to upper Mahakam destinations, and Balikpapan (19,500Rp, two hours). Use Lempake terminal at the north end of town for Bontang (20,000Rp, three hours), Sangatta (25,000Rp, four hours) and Berau (135,000Rp, 16 hours). Buses leave as they're filled from 7am until early afternoon. Minibuses to Tenggarang (10,000Rp, one hour) depart from Harapan Baru terminal on the south bank of the Mahakam, reached via *angkot* route G. Minibuses to see Sunday afternoon Dayak rituals at Pampang (7000Rp, 35 minutes) leave from Segiri terminal at the north end of Jl Pahlawan.

SUNGAI MAHAKAM

Public ferries traversing this 920km river provide economical access to Dayak tribes of East Kalimantan's interior and to jungle treks. These *kapal biasa* have dormitory-style sleeping decks upstairs. Samarinda is the usual starting point since boats originate there and independent guides frequent budget hotels. Balikpapan also has good guides; if that's your point of entry, try making arrangements there.

One usual travellers' route is to take a ferry to **Muara Muntai** (10 hours from Samarinda), stay overnight, then travel via a smaller boat to **Tanjung Isuy** on the south shore of Danau Jempang. **Louu Taman Jamrot** (Jl Indonesia Australia; r per person 60,000Rp), a longhouse, arts centre and *losmen*, stages dancing in the Kenyah, Kayan and Banuaq Dayak styles – it's touristy but worthwhile. Nearby scenic **Mancong** offers a more authentic longhouse experience; you'll need to bring your own bedding, candles and food.

The critically endangered **lrawaddy dolphin** (*orcaella berrivirostris*; known locally as *pesut Mahakam*) with its rounded snout is best spotted around **Muara Pahu** (13 to 14 hours from Samarinda). **Yayasan Konservasi RASI Information Centre** (Foundation for Conservation of Rare Aquatic Species of Indonesia; ☎ 0541-206406; www.geocities.com/yayasan_konservasi_rasi) organises dolphin-spotting trips. Fewer than 80 dolphins may remain in the Mahakam.

For a more uncommon adventure, continue to **Melak** (16 hours from Samarinda), the upper Mahakam's biggest town, famous

for what remains of **Kersik Luwai Orchid Reserve**, a 20-sq-km black-orchid habitat devastated by fire more than a decade ago. From there, ride a minibus to **Eheng**, with a traditional longhouse busiest on Monday nights before the festive Tuesday market. Overnight at the longhouse or in Melak at a newish **Penginapan Setiawan** (☎ 0545-41437; Jl Dr Sutomo; r 50,000Rp) or neighbouring **Penginapan Blue Safir** (☎ 0545-41098; Jl Dr Sutomo; r 50,000Rp). Nearby **Mencimai** has an excellent museum detailing Banuaq Dayak traditions.

Long Iram, 409km and 18 hours from Samarinda, is where ferries terminate if the river is low. It's a pleasant 1½-hour walk or 40-minute outboard ride (60,000Rp) to Tering, three villages straddling the Mahakam where inhabitants sport elongated earlobes and traditional tattoos. Stay at **Penginapan Wahyu** (Jl Soewondo 57; r per person incl breakfast 70,000Rp).

Further upriver find Bahau, Kenyah and Punan longhouses between **Datah Bilang** and **Muara Merak**. **Long Bagun** (1½ days from Samarinda) is end of the line for river ferries in high water. Continue upriver by motorised canoe or trek to **Long Lunuk**, **Tiong Ohang** and **Long Apari**, the picturesque uppermost longhouse settlement on the Mahakam. From there, intrepid cross-Borneo trekkers head for West Kalimantan.

DAS flights from Samarinda to **Data Dawai**, an airstrip near Long Lunuk, were suspended at our publication time. Check with DAS for possible resumption.

Mesra Tours (☎ 0541-738787, 732772; www.mesra.com/tour) in Samarinda, **Bayu Buana Travel** (☎ 0542-422751; www.bayubuanatravel.com), **River-tours** (☎ 0542-422269; www.borneokalimantan.com) and **TransBorneo** (☎ 0542-762671) in Balikpapan offer full-service excursions on the Mahakam and beyond. Reliable independent guides in Samarinda include **Junaid Nawawi** (junaid.nawawi@plasa.com; Hotel Pirus, Jl Pirus 30; ☎ 2-5pm), **Suryadi** (☎ 081 6459 8263), and **Rustam** (☎ 0541-735641, 081 2585 4915). Tours can be customised to fit your schedule and budget.

BALIKPAPAN

☎ 0542 / pop 450,000

An oil town gushing with some of Kalimantan's best food, nightlife and other expensive treats, Balikpapan often gets the cold shoulder from budget travellers. But sampling its charms needn't fracture finances.

Orientation & Information

Taxis from Sepinggan Airport (7km) cost 35,000Rp. Balikpapan Plaza (corner of Jl Sudirman and Jl Ahmad Yani) is the centre of town. There are plenty of banks that change currencies and have ATMs.

BNet (Budiman Hotel, Jl Ahmad Yani; per hr 6000Rp; ☎ 9am–11pm) Internet access.

Golden Nusa Travel (☎ 417321; www.goldennusa.com; Hotel Benakutai, Jl Ahmad Yani) Sells air tickets; English is spoken.

Post office (☎ 733585; Jl Sudirman 6)

PT Agung Sedayu (☎ 420601; Jl Sudirman 28) Best source for PelnI schedules and all boat tickets. Also handles domestic flights.

Rumah Sakit Ibu Restu (Jl Ahmad Yani) Hospital, opposite Bondy's.

Sleeping

Some top budget sleeping options are near the fork of Jl Ahmad Yani and Jl Pangeran Antasari, also known as Gunung Kawi, 2km north of Balikpapan Plaza via *angkot* route 3 or 5.

Hotel Murni (☎ 738692; Jl Pangeran Antasari 2; s from 55,000Rp, d 75,000–125,000Rp; 🛏) Indonesian solo travellers are mainstays of this family-run place featuring immaculate rooms on three floors. Enjoy free coffee, tea and water and the huge TV with other guests on the huger red leather sofa.

Hotel Ayu (☎ 425290; Jl Pangeran Antasari 18; r 100,000–160,000Rp; 🛏) Ambience and furnishings more like a friend's place than a hotel. Climb a second flight of stairs for the cheapest fan-cooled digs.

Also consider:

Hotel Aida (☎ 731011; Jl Ahmad Yani 29; r 75,000–150,000Rp, f 200,000Rp, all incl breakfast; 🛏) Student favourite with varied rooms in a maze of corridors.

Hotel Gajah Mada (☎ 734634; Jl Sudirman 328; s 95,000–235,000Rp, d 135,000–285,000Rp plus 10% tax; 🛏) Next to Balikpapan Plaza; good luck beating local tourists to rooms.

Eating

Cheap *warung* abound near the water, particularly around Pasar Klandasan, 500m west of Balikpapan Plaza.

our pick **Wisma Ikan Bakar** (Jl Sudirman 16; meals 11,000–28,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) A local legend, the 'Grilled Fish Inn' is deliciously less toxic to wallets than Bondy's.

Bondy's (☎ 424438; Jl Ahmad Yani; mains from 30,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Balikpapan institution set in a

courtyard; famed for budget-busting seafood and steak.

Getting There & Away

AIR

SilkAir (code MI; ☎ 730800; www.silkair.com) flies daily to Singapore (US\$291). **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 424452; www.merpati.co.id) flies daily to Makassar (796,000Rp). **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 422301; www.garuda-indonesia.com) flies to Manado, Surabaya (310,000Rp), Denpasar (663,000Rp) and Tarakan (327,000Rp). **Kal-Star** (☎ 737473; www.kalstaronline.com) flies to Berau (659,000Rp). **DAS** (☎ 764362) flies three times weekly to Pontianak (965,000Rp), plus Berau and Tarakan. **Batavia** (code 7P; www.batavia-air.co.id) flies to Banjarmasin (395,000Rp), Tarakan, Jakarta, Surabaya, Yogyakarta (545,000Rp), Palu (415,000Rp) and Manado (565,000Rp). **Adam Air** (code KI; www.flyadamair.com) and **Lion Air** (code JT; www.lionair.co.id) fly to Jakarta and Surabaya. **Mandala** (www.mandalaair.com) also flies to Tarakan. **Sriwijaya Air** (code SJY; www.sriwijayaair-online.com) and **Air Asia** (code AK; www.airasia.com) serve Jakarta (from 350,000Rp).

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 424171; Jl Yos Sudarso 76) sails to Makassar (economy/1st class 122,000/377,000Rp, 36 hours), Pare Pare, Surabaya and beyond.

Dharma Lautan (☎ 422194; Kampung Baru dock) runs daily ferries to Mamuju (96,000Rp, 14 hours).

Prima Vista (☎ 732607; Jl Sudirman 138) sells tickets for private boats to Pare Pare (120,000Rp, 20 hours), Makassar (125,000Rp, 24 hours) and Surabaya (160,000, 36 hours).

BUS

Buses to Samarinda (19,500Rp, two hours) leave from the northern Batu Ampar bus terminal. Buses to Banjarmasin (from 75,000Rp, 12 hours) leave from the terminal across the harbour. Take a route 6 *angkot* from Jl Sudirman to Jl Monginsidi and hop a speedboat (6000Rp, 10 minutes) to the other side.

BANJARMASIN

☎ 0511 / pop 800,000

Kalimantan's largest city sprawls untidily from its riverfront roots into 21st-century suburbanization. But Banjarmasin's traditional charms still shine along its maze of waterways. This heartland of Banjar culture is also gateway to scenic trekking in Dayak villages of Pegunungan Meratus (Meratus Mountains).

Orientation & Information

Taxis cost 70,000Rp to or from the airport, located 26km from the centre of town. Alternatively, take an *angkot* from Jl Pasar Baru to Km 6 terminal, then a Martapura-bound *colt* to the branch road leading to the airport and walk (1.5km).

Find ATMs along Jl Lambung Mangkurat and outside the Istana Barito Hotel on Jl Haryono MT. The South Kalimantan Tourist Office is about 6km east of the centre; it's not worth the trip.

Adi Angkasa Travel (☎ 436 6100; fax 436 6200; Jl Hasanuddin 58) Flight bookings.

Daissy.net (☎ 336 5872; Jl Haryono MT 4; per hr 6000Rp; 🍴 24hr) This place has air-con internet; there's no smoking from 8am to 3pm.

Family Tour & Travel (☎ 326 8923; familytourtravel@yahoo.com; Jl A Yani Km 4.5) English-speaking help with flights, tours throughout Kalimantan, and car hire. It's southeast of the centre.

LippoBank (Jl Pangeran Samudera) Cashes travellers cheques.

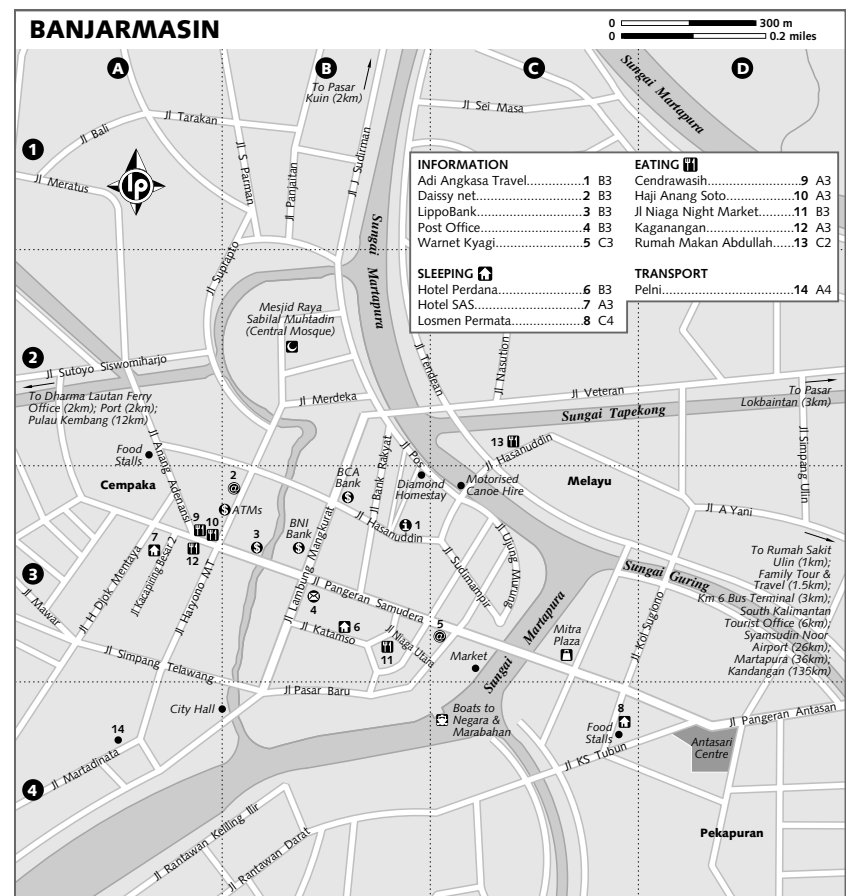
Post office (cnr Jl Pangeran Samudera & Jl Lambung Mangkurat)

Rumah Sakit Ulin (Jl A Yani Km 2) Hospital, southeast of the centre.

Warnet Kyagi (Jl Pangeran Samudera 94-96; per hr fan/air-con 4500/5200Rp; 🍴 24hr) Internet access.

Sights & Activities

Banjarmasin's top attractions are **Pasar Kuin** and **Pasar Lokbaintan floating markets** (🍴 5-9am), as well as **canal tours** to observe residents of the



stilt homes that line the waterways washing dishes, clothing and themselves in a joyful festival of smiles, splashes and high fives.

Budget at least 25,000Rp per hour to rent a *klotok* (motorised canoe) without a guide, depending on your Bahasa Indonesia and bargaining prowess. Guided canal tours at early morning or late afternoon washing time run about two hours and start at 60,000Rp per person. Floating market tours cost around 75,000Rp and usually offer a stop at **Pulau Kembang**, home to an aggressive troop of long-tailed macaques.

Tailah (☎ 327 1685; Diamond Homestay, Jl Hasanudin 58) is an independent guide who can arrange local tours and Pegunungan Meratus treks.

Sleeping

Losmen Permata (☎ 326 5775; Jl Kol Sugiono 14; s/d 30,000-35,000) Most basic and friendly of economy (and above) options in the domestic tourist haven across Jl Pangeran Samudera bridge from the traditional town centre.

Hotel Perdana (☎ 335 2376; hotelperdana@plasa.com; Jl Katamso 8; s 60,000Rp, d 75,000-110,000Rp; 🍷) Best among budget choices overlooking Jl Niaga night market (*belauran* in Banjarese). Gracefully ageing, clean rooms are stacked around a comfortable atrium lounge. Single females may particularly appreciate Perdana's zero tolerance for prostitutes.

Hotel SAS (☎ 335 3054; Jl Kacapiring Besar 2, off Jl Pangeran Samudera; r from 72,000Rp; 🍷) A step up from *losmen*. Economy-room porches in the open-air lobby are great for catching the travel vibe.

Eating & Drinking

Banjar cuisine combines unique dishes, such as *bingka barandum* (boiled pancakes), and twists on Indonesian standards like grilled fish and fried chicken. Pasar Wadai, the cake market outside the main mosque during Ramadan, is famous throughout Indonesia. Sample these sweets year-round at Jl Niaga *belauran*, or nail some at a floating market.

Rumah Makan Abdullah (Jl A Yani Km 1; meals 9000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Elsewhere in Indonesia, *nasi kuning* – saffron rice with coconut milk, veggies, chicken or fish, and tomato sauce – is breakfast. It's a Banjar favourite day and night, and Abdullah's weds the flavours brilliantly.

Haji Anang Soto (☎ 7231549; Jl Pangeran Samudera; meals from 11,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner) This place is

renowned for its *soto banjar* (aromatic soup topped with a chicken leg or breast quarter). Ask for *lonton* (rice steamed in pandan leaves), and respect the fiery homemade *sambal* (relish).

Cendrawasih (mains from 15,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner), next door to Haji Anang Soto, and **Kaganangan** (mains from 18,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner), across the street, serve full Banjarese meals, best enjoyed in groups, with higher prices and free side orders of bad attitude toward foreigners. Jl Niaga is more economical and friendly for sampling local specialities.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 3359065; www.garuda-indonesia.com) and **Sriwijaya Air** (code SJY; www.sriwijayaair-online.com) fly to Jakarta. **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 3264005; www.merpati.co.id), **Mandala** (www.mandalaair.com) and **Adam Air** (code KI; www.flyadamair.com) fly to Surabaya. **Batavia** (code 7P; www.batavia-air.co.id) flies to both plus Balikpapan. **DAS** (☎ 4705277) flies to Muara Teweh (298,000Rp); the service to Pangkalan Bun, near Tanjung Puting National Park (see boxed text, opposite), Sampit, and Kota Baru, was suspended at print time.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 3353077; Jl Martadinata 10) runs boats every other day to Semarang (233,500Rp, 24 hours) and twice monthly to Jakarta (359,000Rp, 20 hours) from Trisakti Pinisi Harbour. **Dharma Lautan Utama** (☎ 4414833; Jl Yos Sudarso 8) ferries travel to Surabaya (165,000, 18 hours) every other day.

River boats from Pasar Baru wharf leave five times weekly to Marabahan (15,000Rp, six hours), continuing twice weekly to Negara (20,000Rp, 18 hours).

BUS

The main bus terminal is at Jl A Yani Km 6, southeast of downtown. *Colts* depart frequently for Martapura (16,000Rp, 30 minutes), Banjarbaru (16,000Rp, 45 minutes), Kandangan (40,000Rp, three hours), Negara (35,000Rp, four hours) and other Meratus destinations.

Several companies run day and night buses to Balikpapan (from 75,000Rp, 12 hours), Samarinda (from 115,000, 15 hours), Muara Teweh (60,000Rp, 12 hours), Palangka Raya (35,000Rp, six hours), and Pangkalan Bun (105,000Rp, 20 hours).

GO APE AT TANJUNG PUTING

Borneo has several spots for seeing orang-utans, but the best place in Kalimantan – possibly on earth – is **Tanjung Puting National Park** (☎ /fax 0532-23832; Km 1.5 Jl HM Raffi; 🕒 7am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri, to 1pm Sat). Once ranging across Southeast Asia, orang-utans survive only on Sumatra and Borneo, threatened by destruction of their rainforest habitat.

An oasis amid mining, logging, and oil-palm plantations, Tanjung Puting harbours gibbons, macaques, sun bears, clouded leopards, proboscis monkeys, crocodiles, hundreds of bird species, and brilliant butterflies. The park's three research camps attract orang-utans with daily hand-outs of bananas, cassava and milk. Guided jungle treks reveal more wildlife and, especially in February and March, wild orchids. Find accommodation at a pair of ecolodges or village homestays through **Friends of the National Parks Foundation** (☎ 0361-977978; www.fnfp.org).

But the best way to appreciate Tanjung Puting is staying aboard a *klotok*. These 8m wooden boats offer basic comforts for up to four adults and a put-putting motor straight out of *African Queen*. Sleep on deck, mattresses under mosquito nets, jungle sounds your lullaby and morning alarm.

Rent a *klotok* in Kumai, near Pangkalan Bun. Budget 725,000Rp daily, including boat, captain, park fees and options such as food, cook and English-speaking guide. Booking gets more difficult May to August and during Indonesian school holidays.

Getting to Kumai can be tricky. Passenger ships stop at Kumai from Surabaya and Semarang, but not from Kalimantan ports. Flights to Pangkalan Bun are difficult to find due to frequent schedule or route changes. At the time of writing there was service only from Pontianak in West Kalimantan via Ketapang, and from Semarang on Java. Once found, flights are hard to confirm without immediate cash payment or assistance from local travel agents. Bus service is available from Banjarmasin (105,000Rp, 20 hours) via Palangka Raya and Sampit, both of which may be reached by flights from Java.

For help, contact **Borneo Holidays** (☎ 0532-29673, 081 2500 0508; borneoholidays@planet-save.com) in Pangkalan Bun, **Family Tour & Travel** (☎ 0511-326 8923; familytourtravel@yahoo.com) in Banjarmasin, **Rivertours** (☎ 0542-422269; rivertours@borneokalimantan.com) in Balikpapan, **Times Tours and Travel** (☎ 0561-770259; timestravell@yahoo.com) in Pontianak, or **Nusantara Tours and Travel** (☎ 024-844 2888) in Semarang.

AROUND BANJARMASIN

For nature enthusiasts, Banjarmasin is the launch point for treks into **Pegunungan Meratus**. Travel agencies or guides in Banjarmasin such as **Tailah** (☎ 436 6100, 327 1685) can arrange treks. You should expect daily rates of 150,000Rp for an English-speaking guide, plus food, accommodation and transport costs.

To go independently, take a *colt* to Kandangan, then a pick-up (15,000Rp, 1½ hours) to Loksado, a small village that's literally the end of the road. **Amat** (☎ 081 34876 6573) assists tourists in Loksado. He can point you in the right direction for treks through breathtaking primary forest, overnighing in village homestays. Many trips end with bamboo rafting down Sungai Amandit to Muara Tanuhi and a dip in the hot-spring pool there.

Three sights near Banjarmasin can be combined into a day trip by *colt*. Banjarbaru's **museum** (☎ 0511-92453; Jl Ahmad Yani 36; admission 750Rp;

🕒 9.30am-3.00pm Tue-Sun, to 11am Fri), on the road to Martapura, features Banjar and Dayak artefacts, plus statues excavated from pre-Islamic Hindu temples. **Cempaka mines** (🕒 closed Fri), 43km south of Banjarmasin, show the dark side of diamonds. Miners labour in muddy water – often up to their necks – sifting for gold, agates and gems. Stone shops at **Martapura market** sell local finds. This Friday market also sees brightly dressed Banjar women amid a cornucopia of exotic fruit, with the town mosque's turquoise and black onion dome as backdrop.

PONTIANAK

☎ 0561 / pop 483,000

Astride the equator at the confluence of Sungai Landak and Sungai Kapuas, Pontianak is a rambling, frenetic industrial port that leads to Dayak settlements and virgin forests along the upper Kapuas, plus unspoiled South China Sea beaches to the north. A replica **longhouse** (Jl Letjen Sutoyo 4A) hosts Dayak festivities every

May. Unlike Kalimantan's usual urban sprawl, Pontianak's inner core, now centred along Jl Gajah Mada, thrives. An 18th-century gold rush attracted waves of Chinese immigrants; their ancestors and influence remain, though Pontianak's sophisticates sip coffee, not tea, at roadside cafés.

Orientation & Information

Airport taxis into town (15km) cost 60,000Rp. *Opelet* (3000Rp) routes cover downtown. Main streets have ATMs aplenty.

BNI bank (Jl Tanjungpura) Changes money.

Borneo Access (☎ 081 2576 8066; www.borneoaccess.com) Alex Afdhal, West Kalimantan Guides Association general secretary, arranges tours and is a fount of regional knowledge and enthusiasm.

Kalimantan Barat Tourist Office (☎ 742838; Jl Su- toyo 17; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 11.30am Fri) Friendly Pak Iwan speaks English and has myriad travel suggestions.

Klinik Kharitas Bhakti (☎ 734373; Jl Siam 153; ☎ 24hr) Medical services.

Mitra Tour & Travel (☎ 733544; Jl Teuku Umar Komplek; per hr 4000Rp; ☎ 9.30am-midnight) Internet access, plus air bookings.

Panorama Anugrah Pratama Tour & Travel (☎ 739483; tour_paparoma@yahoo.com; Jl Diponegoro 149) Air, boat and Kuching bus tickets with local delivery, plus responses to English emails.

Post office (Jl Sultan Abdur Rahman 49)

Sleeping & Eating

Meranti Guest House (☎ 731783; Jl Meranti 31A; r 50,000-130,000Rp; ☎) On a residential street, close to downtown, Meranti has small, spotless rooms, priced according to features such as air-con and hot water.

Pontianak Raya City Hotel (☎ 732496; fax 733781; Jl Pa'kasih 44; s/d incl breakfast from 77,000/88,000Rp plus 10% tax; ☎) Welcoming staff and cosy rooms off a landscaped, open corridor recalling a 1960s motor inn.

GETTING TO MALAYSIA

Companies along Jl Sisingamangaraja and Jl Pahlawan offer bus service to Kuching (from 140,000Rp, 10 hours) via the border crossing at Entikong (Indonesia) and Tebedu (Malaysia). Private vehicles and hikers can also cross. The border is open 7.30am to 5pm. Malaysia grants 90-day visas to tourists at the border. For crossings in the reverse direction, see p498.

our pick Ateng House (☎ 732683; atenghouse@yahoo.com; Jl Gajah Mada 201; s/d incl breakfast 79,000/89,000 plus 15% tax; ☎) This place bills itself as a transit hotel but it's plenty comfy for longer stays. All rooms include air-con and homely extras such as bedspreads and drinking water dispensers. Above is Ateng Tour for travel assistance, and opposite Borneo's best Java at Cafe Corner.

Food and coffee stalls spring up nightly all over Pontianak, the widest selection along Jl Gajah Mada. Eat and drink until at least 10pm. For a stellar Chinese street feed, try **Sam Hak Heng** (mains 8000-14,000Rp), a stall opposite Hotel Gajahmada.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Batavia Air (code 7P; ☎ 734488; www.batavia-air.co.id) flies to Kuching (US\$45), Putussibau (725,000Rp) at the head of Sungai Kapuas, Pulau Batam near Singapore (continuing to Pekanbaru), Jakarta, and Surabaya via Yogyakarta. **Kal-Star** (☎ 739090; www.kalstaronline.com) and **DAS** (☎ 736407) fly to Ketapang (320,000Rp) and Pangkalan Bun (600,000Rp). Kal-Star also serves Semarang (1,170,000Rp). **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 734986; www.garuda-indonesia.com), **Sriwijaya** (code SJY; ☎ 768777) and **Adam Air** (code KI; ☎ 767999; www.flyadamair.com) also fly to Jakarta.

BOAT

Riverboats for the 800km journey to Putussibau are now very rare.

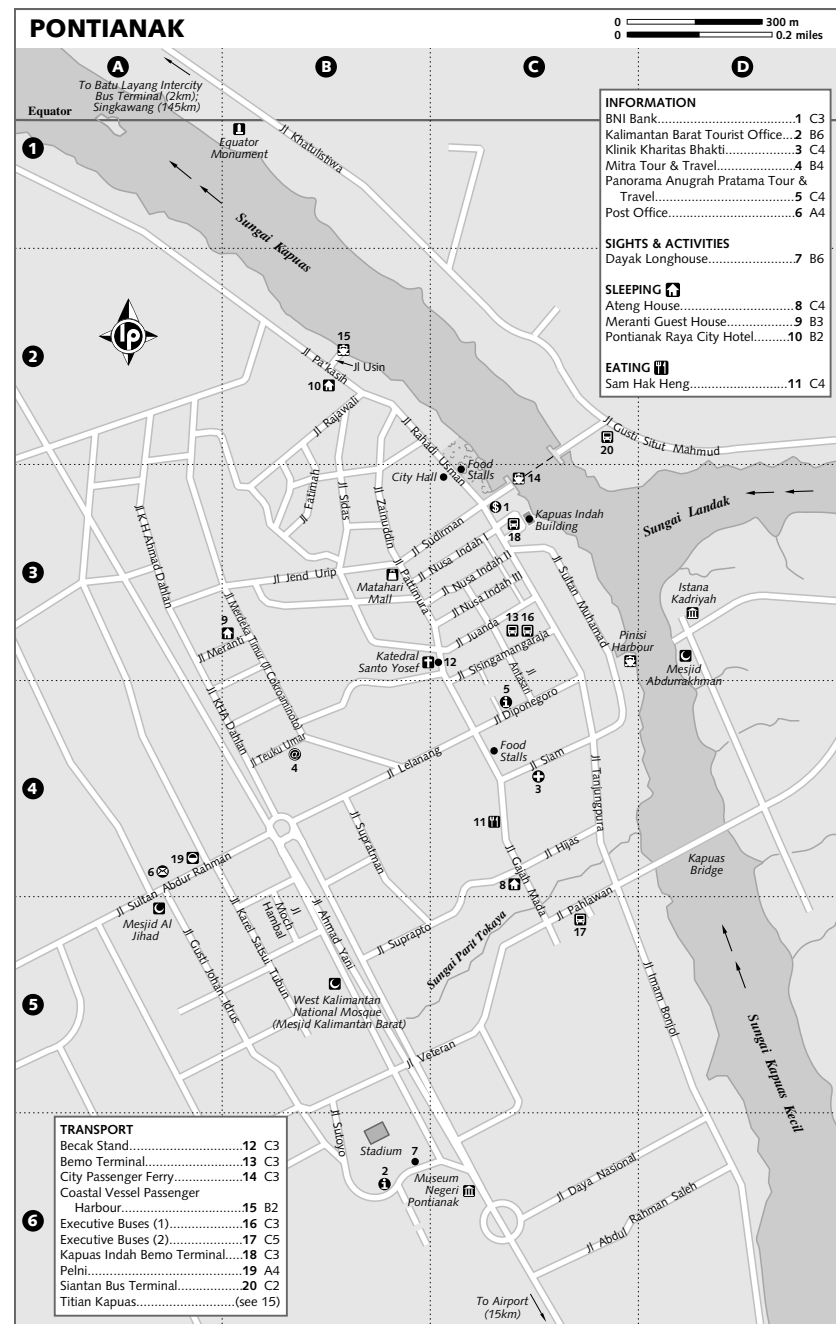
Pelni (☎ 748124; Jl Sultan Abdur Rahman 12) ships leave every other week for Jakarta (210,000Rp, 36 hours), Surabaya (197,000Rp, 40 hours) and Semarang (165,000Rp, 38 hours) from the harbour at Jl Pa'kasih, north of the Kartika Hotel.

Titian Kapuas (☎ 731187; Jl Usin 3) sells tickets for *Dharma Kencana* to Semarang (179,000Rp, 32 hours) and *Marisa* to Jakarta (170,000Rp, 32 hours). Daily jet-boats travel to Ketapang (90,000Rp to 135,000Rp, six hours), near Gunung Palung National Park.

BUS

Pontianak's intercity bus station is in Batu Layang, northwest of town. Take a boat across the river to Siantan bus terminal for a white bemo to Batu Layang, or a direct bemo from Jl Sisingamangaraja.

Several companies along Jl Sisingamangaraja and at the south end of town on Jl Pahlawan offer executive bus service to Kuching



(see boxed text, p310), Sintang (90,000Rp, nine hours), Putussibau (200,000Rp, 20 hours) and Sinkawang (40,000Rp, 3½ hours). Fares are higher than at Batu Layang, but consider the savings in time and hassle.

Getting Around

Opelet routes run throughout town (3000Rp). Unmetered taxis can be flagged down or picked up from the stand near Matahari Mall at Jl Pattimura and Jl Jendral Urip. Becak congregate near Katedral Santo Yosef on Jl Pattimura. River ferries (1000Rp) cross from the Kapuas Indah building to Siantan bus station. More frequent motorised canoes (3000Rp, charter 10,000Rp) to Siantan depart next door.

SULAWESI

Directly north of Nusa Tenggara is a twisted orchid of an island, with four mountainous peninsulas that sprawl haphazardly into the sea. This is Sulawesi – once known as Celebes – and within her mountains, river valleys and coves are jaw-dropping landscapes, evocative cultures, spectacular beaches and damn-good food. The surrounding sea is blessed with world-class coral walls, and pristine underwater canyons and caves that nourish an amazing variety of sea life. The diving around Pulau Bunaken is the biggest draw, but the entire island deserves tropical playground status. And if you explore deeply, Sulawesi will give you a buzz that's hard to shake.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Garuda, Merpati, Lion/Wings and Adam Air service domestic routes to Sulawesi, via Makassar and Manado. SilkAir flies from Manado to Singapore four times a week.

BOAT

Makassar is a major hub for the Pelni network, with nearly a dozen liners servicing ports throughout Sulawesi. See www.pelni.com for details.

MAKASSAR (UJUNG PADANG)

☎ 0411 / pop 1,380,800

Makassar – the long-time gateway to Eastern Indo, and Sulawesi's most important city – can be unnerving, so most travellers immediately

head for Tana Toraja. But there's poetry in this mad swirl. Chinese lanterns dangle and sway from makeshift power lines in the bustling seaside city centre that's home to some of the best eating in Indonesia. The busy port is stacked and packed with Bugis schooners, and the neighbourhood surrounding it is accented by children playing football on dry docks, as huge trucks are loaded down with endless bananas and a windfall of rice.

Makassar played a key role in Indonesian history. The 16th-century Gowa Empire was based here until the Dutch weighed in. Three centuries later, in the 1950s, the Makassarese and Bugis revolted unsuccessfully against the central government. Loud, independent-minded, intense and proud, Makassar certainly leaves an impression.

Orientation & Information

Hasanuddin airport is 22km east of the city centre, 80,000Rp by taxi or 4000Rp by *petepete* (bemo). Most of the action takes place in the west, near the sea. The port is in the northwest; Fort Rotterdam is in the centre of the older commercial hub. Countless banks with ATMs surround Lapangan Karebosi. *Wartel* are ubiquitous.

Cybercafé (☎ 322664; 3rd fl, cnr Jl Kajaalalido & Jl Ahmad Yani; per hr 6900Rp) Web connection above Pizza Ria.

Main post office (☎ 323180; Jl Slamet Riyadi 10)

Rumah Sakit Pelamonia (☎ 324710; Jl J Sudirman 27) Well-equipped hospital.

Sulawesi Tourism Information Centre (Dinas Kebudayaan & Pariwisata; ☎ 872336; Jl J Sudirman 23; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Sat) Helpful staff, minimal maps.

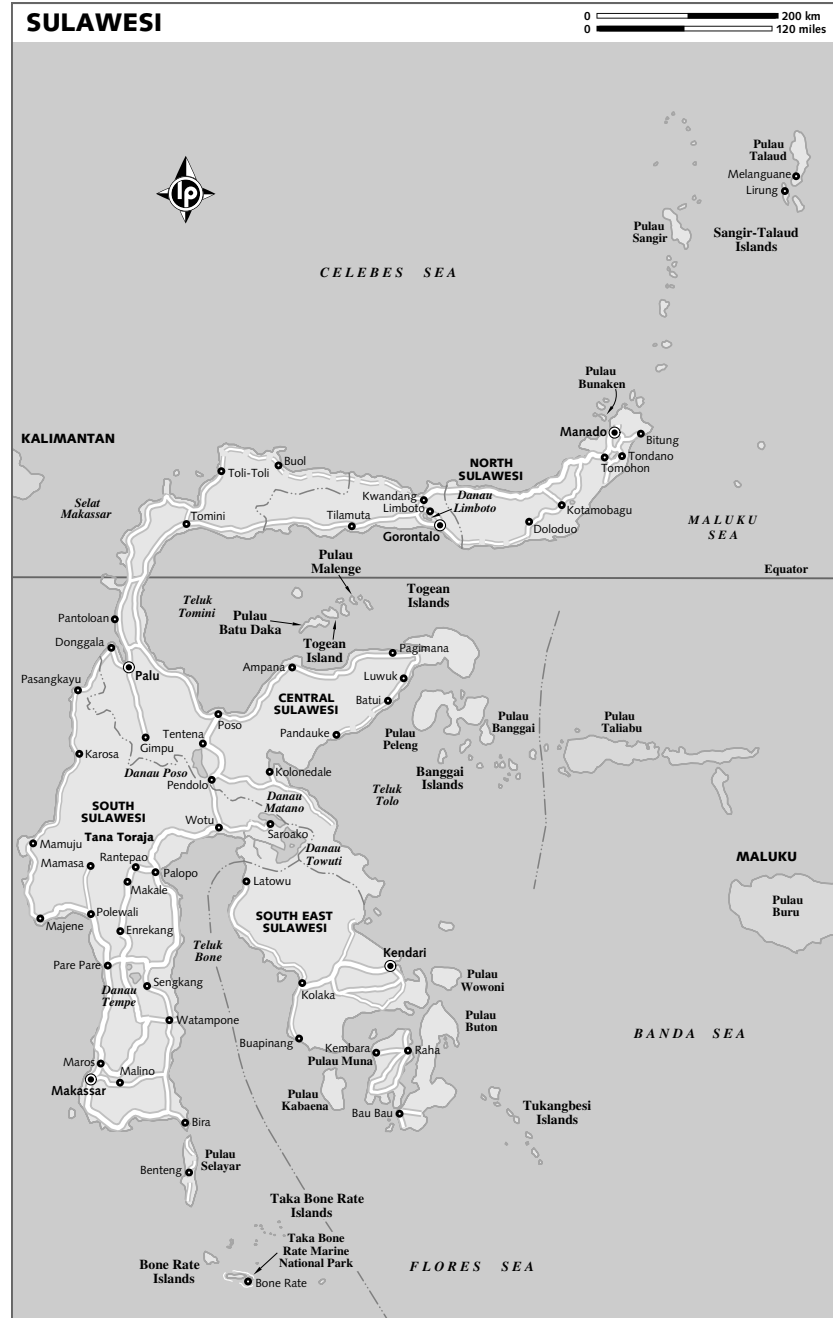
Sights & Activities

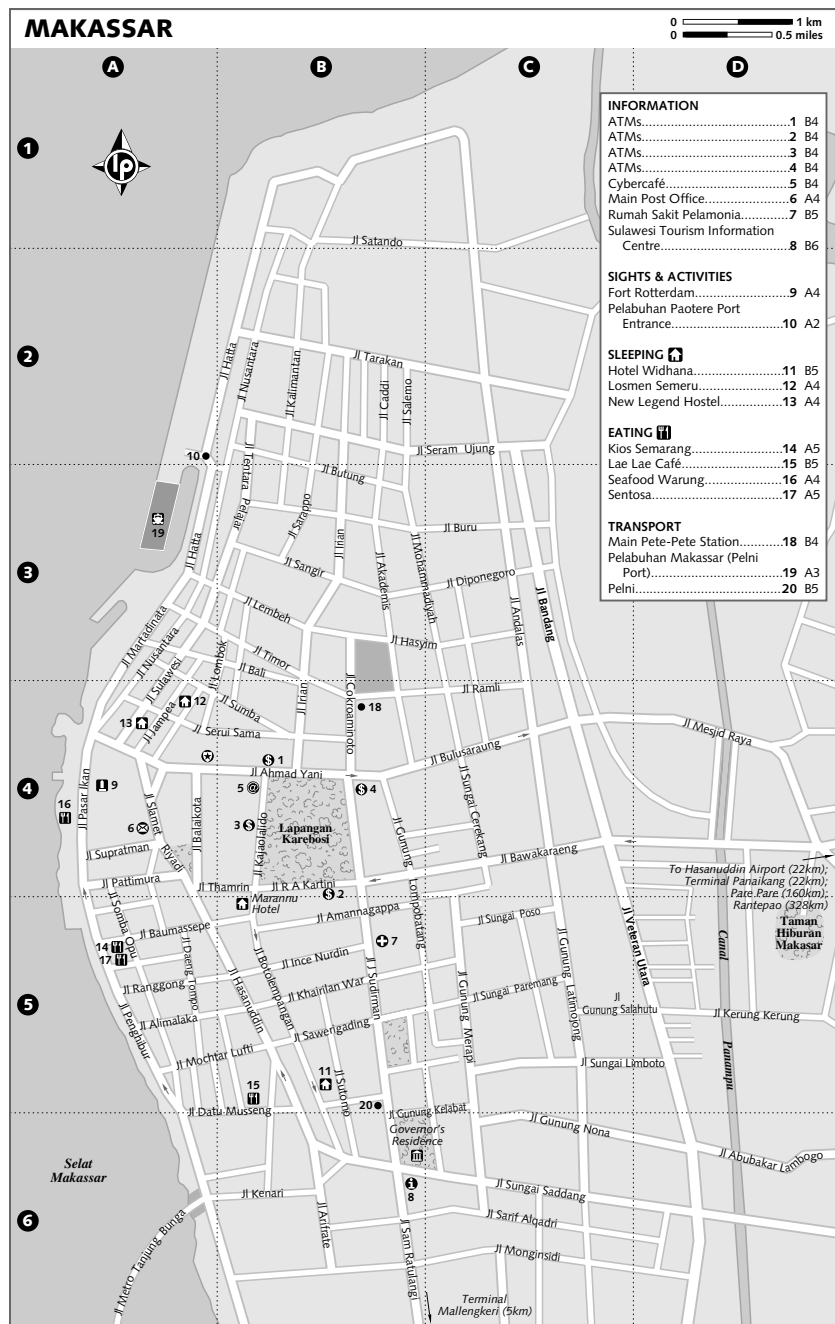
Fort Rotterdam (☎ 321305; Jl Pasar Ikan; admission by donation; ☎ 8am–4pm) dates from 1545. First a Gownese fort, usurped by Dutch forces in 1667, this is one of the best-preserved examples of colonial Dutch architecture in Indonesia.

Bugis schooners dock at **Pelabuhan Paotere** (admission 2000Rp), a becak ride north from the city centre. This place is captivating. You can spend hours wandering the sweltering alleyways.

Sleeping

New Legend Hostel (☎ 313777; Jl Jampea 56; dm/s/d 50,000/75,000/100,000Rp) Legend is the best budget traveller's choice. The digs are clean, there's an attractive art gallery-café upstairs and management is friendly and knowledgeable.





Losmen Semeru (☎ 310410; Jl Jampea 28; d 50,000Rp; 🏠) This place is shabbier and decidedly less friendly, but the rooms are clean and it's definitely a good deal.

Hotel Widhana (☎ 321393; Jl Botolempangan 53; s/d 72,000/80,000Rp; 🏠) This is your cave, absent of natural light (and heat), and accented by even darker furnishings. For the price, rooms are reasonably comfy.

Eating & Drinking

Sentosa (☎ 326062; Jl Penghibur 26; wonton soup 6000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) Locals flock here for endless bowls of aromatic soup. The place sells gallons of it.

Kios Semarang (Jl Penghibur; meals 15,000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) At times, Makassar days can devolve into a steamy, maddening muddle. That's when you come to this local institution for fried shrimp and icy Bintang served on a shaded top-floor patio. Sip away your worries and watch windsurfers carve the bay.

Lae Lae Café (☎ 334326; Jl Datu Musseng 8; fish from 15,000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) It's not exactly romantically lit, but the fish is perfectly done, and flakes off the bone. Shred the lemon basil, mix it with rice and fish, add a squeeze of lime, a dollop of spicy *sambal* and scoop it with your fingers. Utensils are for package tourists.

A line-up of makeshift seafood *warung* set up at night opposite Fort Rotterdam, serving cheap and tasty fried fish.

Getting There & Away

AIR
Makassar is well connected to airports throughout Indonesia. Flight schedules and rates fluctuate.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 442471; www.merpati.co.id) flies daily to Jakarta, Balikpapan, Manado and Jayapura.

Garuda (code GA; ☎ 365 4747; www.garuda-indonesia.com) has daily services to Manado, Jakarta, Balikpapan, and Denpasar. It also flies to Jayapura, Pulau Biak, and Timika.

Lion Air/Wings Air (code JT; ☎ 327038; www.lionair.co.id) flies to Manado, Gorontalo, Palu, Jakarta, Surabaya, Denpasar and Ambon.

Adam Air (code KI; ☎ 319222; www.flyadamair.com) flies to Jakarta and Surabaya.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 331401; www.pelni.com; Jl J Sudirman 38) has connections to countless destinations across

Indonesia from Makassar, one of its principal hubs. Check the website for details.

BUS

Buses heading north leave from Terminal Panaikang, aka Dayak Terminal, in the eastern suburbs, to Pare Pare (22,000Rp, three hours), Sengkang (33,000Rp, four hours) and Rantepao (normal/air-con 55,000Rp/70,000Rp, eight hours) in Tana Toraja. **Bintang Prima** (☎ 477 2888) is the new luxury bus line in town, with trips to Toraja (70,000Rp, with air-con). Get here by blue *pete-pete* from Makassar Mall (2000Rp, 30 minutes).

Southbound buses leave from Terminal Mallengkeri, 10km southeast of the centre, a 3000Rp bemo ride.

Getting Around

The main *pete-pete* station is at Makassar Mall, and the standard fare is 2000Rp. Becak drivers/hawkers can be charming and exhausting all at once. Their shortest fare is 3000Rp. Taxis are metered.

TANA TORAJA

Get ready for a dizzying cocktail of stunning serene beauty, elaborate, brutal and captivating funeral rites, exquisite traditional architecture, and a profoundly peculiar fascination with the dead. It comes garnished with a pinch of Indiana Jones intrigue, and is served by some of the warmest and toughest people you'll ever meet: the Torajans. Before Pulau Bunaken's rise to glory, Tana Toraja was Sulawesi's top attraction. During funeral season, in July and August, they still get a flow of khaki-clad package tourists, and day-trippers from cruise ships, but the rest of the year it's empty and starved for visitors, which means grateful hosts, good deals and a frontierlike appeal.

The capital, Makale, and Rantepao, the largest town and tourist magnet, are the main centres. Bemo link them to surrounding villages, where you'll find cultural hot spots tucked into spectacular countryside (see boxed text, p318).

Rantepao

☎ 0423 / pop 41,400

With a variety of budget lodging and solid public transport, Rantepao is the best base for exploring Tana Toraja. There is one unforgettable sight: **Pasar Bolu**, the market 2km

northeast of town. It peaks every six days, with an overflowing livestock market. A must see for all urbanites.

INFORMATION

Bank Danamon (Jl Diponegoro) The ATM here will allow you to withdraw larger amounts than some others.

BNI bank (Jl Ahmad Yani) Changes money and has an ATM.

Post office (☎ 21014; Jl Ahmad Yani)

Rumah Sakit Elim (☎ 21258; Jl Ahmad Yani) Basic medical facilities.

Telkom office (Jl Ahmad Yani; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist office (☎ 25210; Jl Ahmad Yani 62A; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Sat, to noon Fri) Useful for its rudimentary trekking trail map.

Warinet Petra (Jl Andi Mappanyukki 46; per hr 10,000Rp) The only viable internet service in town.

ACTIVITIES

To truly immerse yourself in Toraja land, you've got to trek off the main roads. Good footwear is vital, and so is ample food, water, a torch (flashlight; some villages lack electricity) and rain gear. If you desire a professional trekking outfitter, contact **Indosella** (☎ 25210; www.sellatours.com; Jl Anddi Mappanyukki 111), which also organises white-water rafting trips. For a brilliant day trek, take a morning bemo to Deri, then veer off-road and traverse the incredible cascading rice fields all the way to Tikala. Farmers and villagers will help point the way, but a guide would be a wise decision for this trek. Popular multiday treks include the following:

Batumonga–Lokomata–Pangala–Baruppu–Pulu Pulu–Sapan Three days.

Bittuang–Mamasa Three days.

Pangala–Bolokan–Bittuang Two days on a well-marked trail.

Sa'dan–Sapan–Pulu Pulu–Baruppu–Pangala A gruelling three-day mountain trek.

SLEEPING

Pia's Poppies Hotel (☎ 21121; Jl Pongtiku; s/d/tr 45,000/65,000/75,000Rp) A kilometre south of town, Pia's is fun and quirky, with mosaic showers, built-in stone deck furniture, and a sweet garden setting.

Hotel Pison (☎ 21344; Jl Pongtiku; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp) Next door is another clean, quiet spot, with mountain and rice-field views from tiny balconies.

Wisma Irama (☎ 21371; Jl Abdul Gani 16; economy/standard r 60,000/80,000Rp) There's an authentic

Torajan rice barn in the sunny courtyard, relatively modern rooms and a nice lounge.

Wisma Surya (☎ 21312; Jl Mongsinsi 36; d 75,000Rp) Cleanish and basic with a nice sitting room and inviting back porch overlooking that churning chocolate river.

Duta 88 (☎ 23477; Jl Sawerigading; d 80,000Rp) Bromeliads and ferns sprout from the grass roofs of these comfortable replica Torajan cottages, built with ample deck space. Hot water included.

EATING & DRINKING

The food here only borders on interesting. A local speciality is *pa'piong*, a mix of meat (usually pork or chicken) and leaf vegetables smoked over a low flame. Order in advance and enjoy it with black rice.

Rumah Makan Padang (☎ 21134; Jl Diponegoro 58; dishes 10,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) This place is clean and friendly. Try the fried chicken, stewed greens and Padang-style baked potato.

Rimiko Restaurant (☎ 25223; Jl Andi Mappanyukki; dishes from 20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This is the best of a bland bunch. The avocado and shrimp salad is great, and so is the satay, while the Torajan dishes are the best around.

Riman Restoran (☎ 23626; Jl Andi Mappanyukki 113; mains 25,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The beer's cold, but the food is so-so.

Warung sizzle along the main road.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

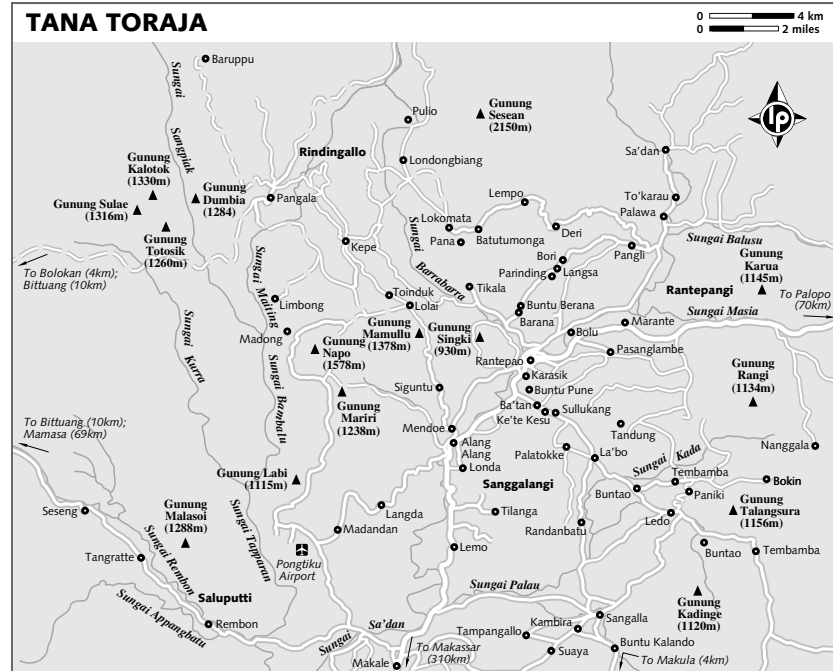
Bus companies are clustered in the town centre around Jl Andi Mappanyukki. For the 330km trip to Makassar (economy/air-con 55,000/70,000Rp), check **Litha** (☎ 21204) and **Bintang Prima** (☎ 21142). Even more buses head to Pare Pare (25,000Rp, five hours).

Northbound buses travel to Pendolo (80,000Rp, 10 hours), Tentena (95,000Rp, 12 hours), Poso (110,000Rp, 13 hours) and Palu (135,000Rp, 19 hours).

Kijang leave for Makale (4000Rp, 20 minutes) constantly, and will drop you at the signs for Londa, Tilanga or Lemo, to walk to the villages.

From Terminal Bolu, 2km northeast of Rantepao, frequent vehicles go east to Palopo (20,000Rp, two hours), and regular bemo and Kijang go to all the major villages, such as Lempo (near Batutumonga).

Motorbikes can be rented from hotels and tour agencies for 60,000Rp per day.



Around Rantepao

There's the beautiful: stunning panoramas, magical bamboo forests, and rice terraces, shaped by natural boulders and fed by waterfalls, that drop for 2000m. There's the strange: *tau tau* (wooden effigies) of long-lost relatives guarding graves carved out of vertical limestone rock faces or hung from the roof of deep caves. And there's the intermingling of the two: incredibly festive and colourful four-day funerals where buffalo are slaughtered and stewed, palm wine is swilled from bamboo carafes, and a spirit soars to the afterlife. All this is accessible on day trips from Rantepao. Multiday trekkers can stay overnight in private homes for a small fee and/or a carton of smokes. Guides aren't essential, but they are inexpensive (150,000Rp per day), will offer cultural insights and can escort you to local ceremonies.

SOUTH OF RANTEPAO

Karasik (1km from Rantepao) is on the outskirts of town, just off the road leading to Makale. The traditional houses were erected years ago for a funeral.

Just off the main road, southeast of Rantepao, **Ke'te Kesu** (6km) is famed for its woodcarving. On the cliff face behind the village are cave graves and some very old hanging graves – the rotting coffins are suspended from an overhang.

Located about 2km off the Rantepao–Makale road, **Londa** (6km) is an extensive burial cave, one of the most interesting in the area. Above the cave is a line-up of *tau tau* that peer down, in fresh clothes, from their cliff-side perch. Inside the dank darkness, coffins hang above dripping stalagmites. Others lie rotting on the stone floor, exposing skulls and bones. Very Indiana Jones. Hire a guide with an oil lamp from the village gate (20,000Rp).

Lemo (11km) is among the largest burial areas in Tana Toraja. The sheer rock face has dozens of balconies for *tau tau*. There would be even more *tau tau* if they weren't in such demand by unscrupulous antique dealers who deal in bad karma. A bemo from Rantepao will drop you off at the road leading up to the burial site, from where it's a 15-minute walk.

TORAJA CULTURE

Architecture

Traditional *tongkonan* houses – shaped like boats or buffalo horns, with the roof rearing up at the front and back – are the enduring image of Tana Toraja. They are similar to the Batak houses of Sumatra's Danau Toba and are always aligned north-south, with small rice barns facing them.

A number of villages are still composed entirely of these traditional houses, but most now have corrugated-iron roofs. The houses are painted and carved with animal motifs, and buffalo skulls often decorate the front, symbolising wealth and prestige.

Burial Customs

The Toraja generally have two funerals, one immediately after the death, and a second, more elaborate, four-day ceremony after enough cash has been raised. Between the two ceremonies, the dead will live at home in the best room of the house and visitors will be obliged to sit, chat and have coffee with them. Regularly. This all ends once buffalo are sacrificed (one for a commoner, as many as 24 for a high-ranking figure, and these animals aren't cheap: a medium-sized buffalo costs several million rupiah) and the spirit soars to the afterlife.

To deter the plundering of generous burial offerings, the Toraja started to hide their dead in caves or on rocky cliff faces. You can often see *tau tau* – life-size, carved wooden effigies of the dead – sitting in balconies on rock faces, guarding the coffins. Descendants are obliged to change and update their fake deceased relatives clothing. Also regularly.

Funeral ceremonies are the region's main tourist attraction.

Ceremonies & Festivals

The end of the rice harvest, from around May onwards, is ceremony time in Tana Toraja. These festivities involve feasting and dancing, buffalo fights and *sisemba* kick-boxing. Guides around Rantepao will take you to ceremonies for a negotiable price.

EAST OF RANTEPAO

Marante (6km) is a traditional village right by the road east to Palopo, near rice fields and stone and hanging graves guarded by *tau tau*. Further off the Palopo road, **Nanggala** (16km) has a grandiose traditional house with 14 rice barns. Charter a bemo from Rantepao, and they'll take you straight there, or take a public one, and walk 7km from the Palopo road.

NORTH & WEST OF RANTEPAO

This is where you'll find the finest scenery in Tana Toraja. **Batutumonga** (20km) has an ideal panoramic perch, sensational sunrise views and a few homestays. The best is **Mentirotik** (☎ 081 142 2260; d 80,000Rp). The views are even more stunning from the summit of **Gunung Sesean**, a 2150m peak towering above the village. Most bemo stop at **Lempo**, an easy walk from Batutumonga.

There are more cave graves and beautiful scenery at **Lokomata** (26km), just a few kilometres west past Batutumonga.

The return to Rantepao is an interesting and easy trek down the slopes through

tiny villages to **Pana**, with its ancient hanging graves, and baby graves in the trees. The path ends at **Tikala**, where regular bemo go to Rantepao.

The three-day, 59km trek from **Mamasa** in the west to Bittuang is popular, and there are plenty of villages en route with food and accommodation (remember to bring gifts). There's no direct transport from Rantepao to Mamasa because the roads are appalling, but you can travel to Bittuang from Mamasa by Kijang or bemo, or take a bus from Makale (80,000Rp, 10 hours) three times a week.

PENDOLO

Pendolo is a quiet village with lonely swimming beaches on the south shore of enormous **Danau Poso** in Central Sulawesi.

Mulia Poso Lake Hotel (Jl Pelabuhan; d 150,000Rp) has lovely cottages on the beach.

The daily 8am ferry from Pendolo will shuttle you across the lake to Tentena (25,000Rp, three hours). If the weather's rough, take the bus.

TENTENA

☎ 0458

This lakeside village lacks Pendolo's fine beaches, but is larger with better accommodation. There has been some sectarian violence in Tentena, and police are everywhere (see boxed text, below).

Hotel Pamona Indah (☎ 21245; Jl Yos Sudarso 25; d from 110,000Rp) is the place to stay in Tentena. The building is grand, with large columns and peach trim, the 20 rooms are spotless and comfortable and the restaurant, serving the town's famous *sugili* (giant eels), is the best in town.

Buses make the run to Poso (15,000Rp, two hours) throughout the day.

POSO

☎ 0452 / pop 50,300

Central Sulawesi's second-largest city, Poso is simply a transit point or a place to withdraw or change money before you head to the Togeans. Recent Sectarian Christian-Muslim riots and the murder of resident Balinese has scarred Poso deeply (see boxed text, below) and spurred the deployment of patrolling national *polisi* squadrons.

The city has a **BNI bank** (Jl Yos Sudarso) and a vaguely useful **tourist office** (☎ 23290; Jl Sudirman; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Sat, to 11am Fri).

Losmen Alugoro (☎ 21336; Jl Sumatera 20; d from 55,000Rp; 🚽) is a bit smarter than Losmen Lalanga Jaya, but only if you snag an air-con room (110,000Rp).

Losmen Lalanga Jaya (☎ 22326; Jl Yos Sudarso; d 65,000Rp) has creaky rooms with a view, and is conveniently located next to the port.

Buses leave the terminal, 800m north of the post office, for Palu (35,000Rp, six hours), Tentena (20,000Rp, two hours), Ampana (35,000Rp, five hours) and Rantepao (115,000Rp, 13 hours).

WARNING

Central Sulawesi is volatile and has suffered sectarian (read Christian versus Muslim) violence between young thugs since 1998. A 2001 peace deal was followed by shootings, bombings and church attacks in December 2004. Locals compare it to gang violence in the US. In April 2005 both sides agreed to another fragile peace deal. Then in late May 2005, twin explosions ripped through the morning market in the mainly Christian town of Tentena, near Poso, killing at least 20 people and wounding 40. In 2007 several Balinese Hindus were murdered. Foreigners are not considered targets, and the police presence here is tremendous, but you should watch the news and consider renting a car if you want to make the trip from Tana Toraja to Ampana or go overland from Makassar to Manado.

PALU

☎ 0451 / pop 307,500

Set in a rain shadow, Central Sulawesi's capital is one of the driest places in Indonesia. The main reason to visit Palu is to arrange the 100km trip to trek the remote 2290-sq-km **Taman Nasional Lore Lindu**, where you can glimpse ancient stone megaliths, and explore lowland and montane rainforest, home to 227 bird species (including 77 varieties endemic to Sulawesi). It's also the focal point of a German climate-change study that attracts a steady stream of European scientists.

Orientation & Information

Palu's airport is 7km east of town, 25,000Rp by taxi.

Balai Taman Nasional Lore Lindu office

(☎ 457623; just off Jl Tanjung Manimbayan) For essential permits, maps and information.

Tourist office (☎ 455260; Jl Dewi Sartika 91;

☎ 7.15am-4pm Mon-Sat, until 11.30am Fri) Has city maps and national park tips.

Sleeping & Eating

Purnama Raya Hotel (☎ 423646; Jl Wahidin 4; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) The brightest of Palu's subpar cheapies. The knowledgeable manager moonlights as a local guide.

Rama Garden Hotel (☎ 429500; Jl Mogsini 81; s/d 110,000/160,000Rp; 🚽) The rooms border on plush, making this a worthy step up. The outdoor lounge is lovely.

Depot Citra (Jl Moh Yamin; mains 15,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Friendly, hole-in-the-wall seafood joint.

Night *warung* gather in a fragrant herd along the breezy seafront, Jl Raja Moili.

Getting There & Around

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 423341; www.merpati.co.id), **Batavia Air** (code 7P; ☎ 428888; www.batavia-air.co.id) and

Lion Air (code JT; ☎ 428777; www.lionair.co.id) fly to Makassar. Merpati also flies to Luwuk. Batavia flies to Balikpapan.

Pelni (☎ 421696; Jl Kartini 96) is well connected to East Kalimantan and other Sulawesi ports. Ships dock at Pantoloan, 22km north of Palu, where there is another Pelni office.

Buses depart from Terminal Masomda for Poso (130,000Rp, six hours), Ampana (180,000Rp, 10 hours), Rantepao (170,000Rp, nine hours), Gorontalo (150,000Rp) and Manado (200,000Rp, 14 hours).

Minibuses and shared taxis to Pantoloan (for Pelni boats; 25,000Rp, 30 minutes) and Donggala (for Tanjung Karang; 15,000Rp, one hour) leave from Terminal Manonda.

DONGGALA

☎ 0457

Donggala's main attractions are the reefs at **Tanjung Karang** (Coral Peninsula), north of town. Prince John Dive Resort is the only scuba shack. Its house reef suits snorkellers and beginner divers.

Travellers buzz about this slice of white sand at **Kaluku Cottages** (bungalows all-inclusive 75,000Rp), 15km from Donggala. The nearby coral reef is ideal for snorkellers. Get here by *ojek*.

Prince John Dive Resort (☎ 71710; www.prince-john-diveresort.de; all-inclusive d from 350,000Rp) is a worthy splurge for divers, especially midweek when tranquillity reigns on the sands.

From Palu, you can catch a shared *taksi* (taxi) to Donggala for 6000Rp, and walk 30 minutes to the beach, or charter a Kijang for around 25,000Rp.

AMPANA

☎ 0464

Ampana is the gateway to the Togeans. Given bus and ferry schedules, you will likely spend a night here. Remember, the lone ATM only takes MasterCard!

Oasis Hotel (☎ 21058; Jl Kartini; dm/d 30,000/70,000Rp), run in conjunction with Kadidiri Paradise, is within sprinting distance to the ferry port, has a lovely garden and treats guests like family.

Marina Cottages (☎ 21280; cottages 77,000Rp), at Labuhan, 10 minutes east by *bendi*, has a string of wooden cottages on a pebble beach.

Ferries shove off to Gorontalo, via the Togeans ports of Wakai (45,000Rp, 4½ hours), Katupat, Malenge and Dolong, on Monday,

Thursday and Saturday. Two other boats share the Ampana–Wakai route. At least one boat leaves the Ampana port at 10.30am every day except Friday and Sunday. There are two departures on Monday and Wednesday and all three sail on Saturday.

Ampana is on the main road from Poso (35,000Rp, five hours by bus). A night bus from Palu goes through Ampana on the way to Luwuk (50,000Rp, six hours).

TOGEAN ISLANDS

These jungled limestone islands, with fire-streak sunsets, peaceful pink dawns, glassy seas and pure white sand are Sulawesi's true treasure. Villagers, who descend from seven ethnic groups, are warm and welcoming, and the mangroves are thick with life. There are lost lagoons and forgotten coves, and arguably the best diving in Sulawesi (which ranks it near the top worldwide). Disregard those outdated dynamite-fishing whispers, and plunge into crystal-clear, bottomless seas, to explore all three major reef systems – atoll, barrier and fringing. Colours absolutely pop. Fish are everywhere. You will extend your stay immediately upon arrival. Everyone does. Prices for lodging include meals.

GETTING AROUND

Public transport within the Togeans is snafu, but charters are easily arranged in Wakai, Bomba and Kadidiri. Kadidiri Paradise and Black Marlin shuttle their guests to/from the ferry port gratis. Otherwise you will have to pay at least 50,000Rp for a ride to Pulau Kadidiri.

Pulau Kadidiri

This island sucks stress from your bones. The beach is pure white, the sea 1000 colours of blue, there are jutting limestone karsts, and a perfectly imperfect jetty. The two eco-dive resorts both offer tasteful crash pads with varying degrees of comfort.

Kadidiri Paradise Resort (☎ 046 421 058; www.kadidiri-paradise.com; bungalows 100,000–250,000Rp) is a first-class ecodive resort that has intricately detailed bungalows with French doors and expansive verandas. There are bonfires and beach barbecues, and the fashionable matriarch, Huntje, is Central Sulawesi's answer to Martha Stewart – but with better style, and a lot more soul. The resort also has a full-service dive school run by the hilarious, iconoclastic French Swiss dive master,

Gonsag, who has been on Pualu Kadidiri for 12 years and counting. He charges US\$30 per dive.

The beach bungalows at **Black Marlin Cottages** (☎ 043 583 1869; www.blackmarlindive.com; d from 100,000Rp; 🗺) lack the character of Kadidiri's, but the beach is lovely, and the dive school is solid (also US\$30 per dive).

Togean Island & Around

Katupat is the main village on Togean Island, and it's a must-see. Stroll the charming streets and you'll meet warm, welcoming locals in the front yards of their stilted tin-roofed shacks. You'll also spot two-stroke coconut grinders and cows grazing on the soccer pitch, and you may contemplate following the narrow hiking trail that disappears into the nearby village.

Fadhila Cottages (cottages 95,000Rp), opposite the village on private Pagempa Island, offers new wooden cottages with superb beaches and outstanding bay views in all directions. **Boli-langga Cottages** (cottages 80,000Rp), on Bolilangga Island, is for wannabe castaways.

Pulau Malenge

Remote Pulau Malenge has great snorkelling near the village.

Malenge Indah (cottages 70,000Rp) is the choice here.

Pulau Batu Daka

BOMBA

This tiny outpost at the southeastern end of Pulau Batu Daka has nearby reefs and exquisite beaches.

Set on a spectacular beach, **Island Retreat** (www.togian-island-retreat.com; d from 125,000Rp) is run by an eccentric California refugee, and overrun by her precious animal herd. The newer,

CRUSTACEANS: MASSIVE, ENDANGERED

The Togeans are one of the last remaining habitats of coconut crabs, the world's largest terrestrial arthropod. The crabs, weighing up to 5kg and as much as 90cm across, once scuttled across islands throughout the western Pacific and eastern Indian Oceans, but humans have eaten them to the verge of extinction. If you see them on the menu, go with the *nasi goreng* (fried rice). Again.

upmarket bungalows are blessed with sensational mosaic bathrooms, and the kitchen is the best in the Togeans archipelago.

WAKAI

The Togeans' largest settlement is a departure point for ferries to Ampana and Gorontalo and for charters to Pulau Kadidiri and beyond. There are a few general stores, if you need supplies, but there's no reason to stay the night.

MANADO

☎ 0431 / pop 479,700

Once described by Alfred Russel Wallace as 'one of the prettiest [cities] in the East', Manado has become shopping-mall hell, but that doesn't mean it's unenjoyable. After all, it is relatively modern, the people are warm and charming, and it's a great base for exploring North Sulawesi.

Orientation

Mikrolet from Sam Ratulangi airport go to Paal 2 terminal, where you change to another for Pasar 45 (the central *mikrolet* terminal) or elsewhere in the city (1500Rp). Metered taxis from the airport (13km) cost around 60,000Rp.

Along Jl Sam Ratulangi, the main north-south artery, you'll find restaurants, hotels and supermarkets. The shopping-mall blitz dominates parallel Jl Tendeau, closer to the sea.

Information

You're never far from a bank, ATM or *wartel* in Manado.

BCA bank (Jl Sam Ratulangi) Good conversion rates and larger credit-card advances.

Main post office (Jl Sam Ratulangi 23) There's put-put internet here for 6000Rp per hour.

North Sulawesi tourism office (☎ 851723; Jl Diponegoro 111; 🕒 8am–2pm Mon–Sat) The more useful counter is at the airport.

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 853191; Jl Monginsidi, Malalayang) This is a full-service hospital with decompression chamber.

Showtime (4th fl, Mega Mall, Jl Tendeau; per hr 15,000Rp) Swift internet service.

Sleeping

Rex Hotel (☎ 851136; Jl Sugiono 3; economy r 30,000–65,000Rp, standard d 75,000Rp; 🗺) *Ekonomi* rooms resemble prison cells, but standard rooms are clean, comfy and great value.

RESPECT YOUR ELDERS

Think you're outgrowing your backpacker days? Tell that to Ole, a Norwegian who, at 73, standing straight as an arrow, still lives like a tramp after more than 60 years on the road. He's been to six continents, countless countries and Southeast Asia is his favourite destination. His secret is packing light. He carries two pairs each of quick-drying trousers, shirts, underwear and socks. He stuffs it all in a beat-up 30-year-old pack that he always carries himself. 'When I can no longer carry my own bag, I will stop travelling,' he says. When he does travel (at least four months a year) it's by local economy bus. 'I'm not sure my friends would like it,' he says the day after braving a 40-plus hour odyssey from Makassar through Poso to Manado. 'I enjoy the atmosphere, being with the locals. That's why I travel.'

Manado Bersehati Hotel (☎ 855022; Jl Sudirman 20; s/d from 47,000/74,000Rp; 🍴) Set in a converted traditional Minahasan house, off the main road, the cleanish economy rooms here are cramped, but the huge veranda provides room to stretch.

New Angkasa (☎ 863250; Jl Sugiorno 9; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp; 🍴) Excellent-value budget digs. Even the superior air-con rooms are affordable (d 85,000Rp).

Eating & Drinking

Adventurous diners migrate to the night *warung* along Jl Pierre Tendean. Regional delights include *kawaok* (fried 'forest rat') and *rintek wuuk* (spicy dog meat).

Singapura Bakery (Jl Sam Ratulangi 22; pastries from 5000Rp; 🍴 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Explore an addictive array of delectable pastries at arguably Indonesia's finest bakery. Its Javanese diner (meals from 8000Rp) next door also attracts a crowd.

Famili Café (Jl Pierre Tendean; lunch 19,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Local businesspeople flock here for the spicy grilled fish lunch specials, which include rice, greens and *sambal*.

Dabu Dabu (☎ 854511; Jl Pierre Tendean; fish 40,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) Tasty grilled fish and fresh juices served in an old converted wooden house.

The **Mega Mall** (Jl Tendean) has an extensive food court, and directly behind it is a string of oceanfront seafood *warung*. Try **Blue Terrace** (fried calamari 20,000Rp; 🍴 lunch & dinner) for icy Bintang and appetisers at sundown.

Entertainment

Studio 21 Cinema (☎ 856725; Jl Sam Ratulangi; tickets 15,000Rp) Four screens show recent Western releases.

Getting There & Away

AIR

These have useful services out of Manado:

Batavia (☎ 386 4338; www.batavia-air.co.id)

Garuda (☎ 877737; www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Lion/Wings Air (☎ 888022; www.lionair.co.id)

Merpati (☎ 842000; www.merpati.co.id)

SilkAir (☎ 863744; www.silkair.com)

International connections include SilkAir's three weekly flights to Singapore. Merpati flies to Jakarta, Gorontalo and Kota Ternate, among others. Lion flies to Luwuk, and Wings flies to Sorong, Papua.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 33848; Jl Sam Ratulangi 7) liners call at the deep-water port of Bitung, 55km from Manado, where you'll also find the ticketing office. Ships sail once or twice a week to Makassar (from 401,000Rp, three days), Ternate (from 315,000, three days), Ambon (from 203,000Rp, two days), Sorong (from 274,000Rp, two days) and Biak (1,200,000Rp, four days).

Small, slow, uncomfortable boats from Manado sail north to Tahuna (Pulau Sangihe) and Lirung (Talaud Islands), or east to Ternate and Ambon.

BUS

From Karombasan terminal, 5km south of the city, buses go to Tomohon (4000Rp, 40 minutes) and destinations south; from Malalayang terminal they go to Gorontalo (60,000Rp, eight hours); and from Paal 2 terminal, at the eastern end of Jl Martadinata, public transport runs to Bitung (5000Rp, one hour) and the airport (2000Rp, 40 minutes).

Getting Around

There's no *mikrolet* shortage in Manado. Destinations are shown on a card in the front windscreen. There are various bus stations around town for destinations outside

Manado; get to any of them from Pasar 45. Private, inexpensive metered taxis are usually within shouting distance.

PULAU BUNAKEN

Pulau Bunaken is Sulawesi's top destination, attracting short-termers and ramblers alike to see 300 varieties of pristine coral and 3000 species of fish in Bunaken Manado Tua Marine National Park. Given Pulau Bunaken's rise to worldwide dive-mecca status, prices are a touch high and some resorts refuse nondivers, but there are still bargains hidden among the towering mangroves, crumbling cliffs and white sand.

Activities

Dive rates range from US\$25 to US\$35 plus US\$10 for equipment hire. Check out **Living Colours** (☎ 081 2430 6401; www.livingcoloursdiving.com), **Froggies** (☎ 081 2430 1356; www.divefroggies.com), **Bunaken Village Dive Resort** (☎ 081 340 757268; www.bunakenvillage.com) and **Ocean Star** (☎ 081 340 037657; ternity@yahoo.com).

The Bunaken park fee is 50,000Rp per day or 150,000Rp for an annual pass.

Sleeping & Eating

Pantai Liang, to the west, has a beautiful stretch of sand that doubles as Manado's de facto refuse dump when tides turn. Pantai Pangalisang, near Bunaken village, is the eco-choice. There's no beach to lie on, but it overlooks an armada of stately mangrove trees closer to Bunaken village, and the nearby reef is ideal for snorkelling. Most hotels quote rates per person for full board.

PANTAI LIANG

Panorama Cottages (☎ 081 2447 0420; 75,000Rp) Some rooms are rickety, but they're set on the cliffs with marvellous sea and volcano views. Attractive new bungalows were being completed when we visited.

Nelson's Cottages (☎ 043-185 6288; 150,000Rp) These basic huts are built into the hillside, have gorgeous turquoise bay views and are steps from the sand.

Niyur Melambi Cottages (☎ 043-1330 9015; 150,000Rp) Next door to Nelson's with similar views, and a more modern duplex setup.

Froggies (☎ 081 2430 1356; www.divefroggies.com; from €25) This charming French-run place was the first dive resort on Pulau Bunaken, and it's almost always fully booked. You

can find all the creature comforts here, including freshwater showers! But they refuse nondivers.

PANTAI PANGALISANG

Lorenzo Cottages (from 100,000Rp) These rattan bungalows are situated nicely in the shadow of nearby mangrove trees, and Lorenzo is known to break out the freshly caught and grilled barracuda at supertime.

Ocean Star (☎ 081 34003 7657; 150,000Rp) A new arrival, this intimate Minahasan-run resort has just three wood-and-bamboo bungalows steps from the sea. Its affordable dive centre has brand-new gear!

Living Colours (☎ 081 2430 6401; from €25) This place has the best bungalows on Pulau Bunaken, with thick wooden floors, stylish stone bathrooms, coconut-wood beds and ample deck space. The dive center is excellent, and it shuttles guests to and from Manado for free.

Getting There & Away

Boats leave the fishing harbour in Manado daily at 3pm (25,000Rp, one hour), except Sunday. The return from Pulau Bunaken is at 8am. A charter costs at least 150,000Rp one way. If you're staying and/or diving with one of the upmarket resorts, call ahead and they'll shuttle you for free.

TOMOHOH

Pleasantly cool and lush, this popular weekend escape from Manado rests at the foot of Gunung Lokon in the Minahasa Highlands.

The recently renovated bamboo bungalows at **Happy Flower Homestay** (☎ 352787; Jl Rungku Dusun 1; d 85,000Rp) have hot water. **Onong's Palace** (☎ 315 7090; d 250,000Rp) is more upmarket, with exquisite grounds and great views. Frequent *mikrolet* travel to Tomohon (4000Rp, 40 minutes) from Manado's Terminal Korombasan.

BITUNG

☎ 0438 / pop 145,900

Bitung, the chief port of Minahasa, is 55km east of Manado. The **Pelni office** (☎ 35818) is in the harbour compound.

Mikrolet depart regularly from Manado's Paal 2 terminal. They drop you at the Mapalus terminal, outside Bitung, where you catch another *mikrolet* for the short trip into town.

MALUKU (MOLUCCAS)

All alluring tropical traits can be applied to Maluku. Pristine and lonely white-sand beaches? Check. Superb snorkelling? Check. Hospitable locals, slow pace, tasty cuisine, low prices? Absolutely. Maluku's economy peaked in the 16th century, when these 'Spice Islands' were the world's sole source of cloves and nutmeg, and fabled as the place where money does grow on trees. The ensuing frantic, competitive spice grab actually sparked the bloody era of European colonisation.

These days it's protected by distance and a reputation for civil unrest, so if you land here, dust off your Bahasa Indonesia and enjoy your stint as the lone *bule* living the lucid tropical dream.

Getting There & Around

Ambon and Ternate are the regional air hubs. Both have daily connections to Jakarta via Surabaya, Makassar, Manado, and limited connections to Papua. Merpati also manages a web of regional flights with ever-shifting schedules and frequent cancellations. One-way tickets must be booked from your point of departure.

Several Pelni liners port in Maluku. Check the latest schedules at www.pelni.com. Slow ASDP ferries, wooden motorboats and Perintis cargo ships cover the more remote Maluku islands.

PULAU AMBON

Pulau Ambon is ribboned with villages, dressed in shimmering foliage, defined by two great bays, and has recovered from recent civil unrest. This is your launch pad to the Bandas.

Kota Ambon

☎ 0911 / pop 379,700

The bay and mountain backdrop are magnificent, but Maluku's trade and transport centre is a battle-scarred, dusty city that still gets politically tense around elections. Travellers don't hang around for long (see the boxed text, right).

INFORMATION

Bank Mandiri (Jl Pantai Mardika) The best conversion rates in town.

IS IT SAFE?

Kota Ambon, in Maluku, has been another flash point of sectarian violence, with sporadic shootings and bomb blasts. The conflict has left more than 5000 Muslims and Christians dead since 1999. The anniversary of the failed 1950 declaration of a self-styled South Maluku Republic – 25 April – is a dangerous day, when religious violence has broken out in the past. In the 2004 riots, dozens died and hundreds were injured. Although all is calm now, and has been for a few years, be sure to monitor news reports for updates.

Maluku Tourist Bureau (☎ 312300; Jl Jendral Sudirman; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat)

SLEEPING & EATING

Penginapan Beta (☎ 353463; Jl Wim Reawaru; d 90,000Rp; 🏠) The reigning backpacker fave, thanks to the English-speaking owner.

Pondok Wisata Listari (☎ 355596; Jl WR Supratman 18; d from 125,000Rp; 🏠) Centrally located, airy and comfortable, with English-speaking management.

For cheap eats, there are *warung* near the Batu Merah market, and on Jl Ahmad Yani.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

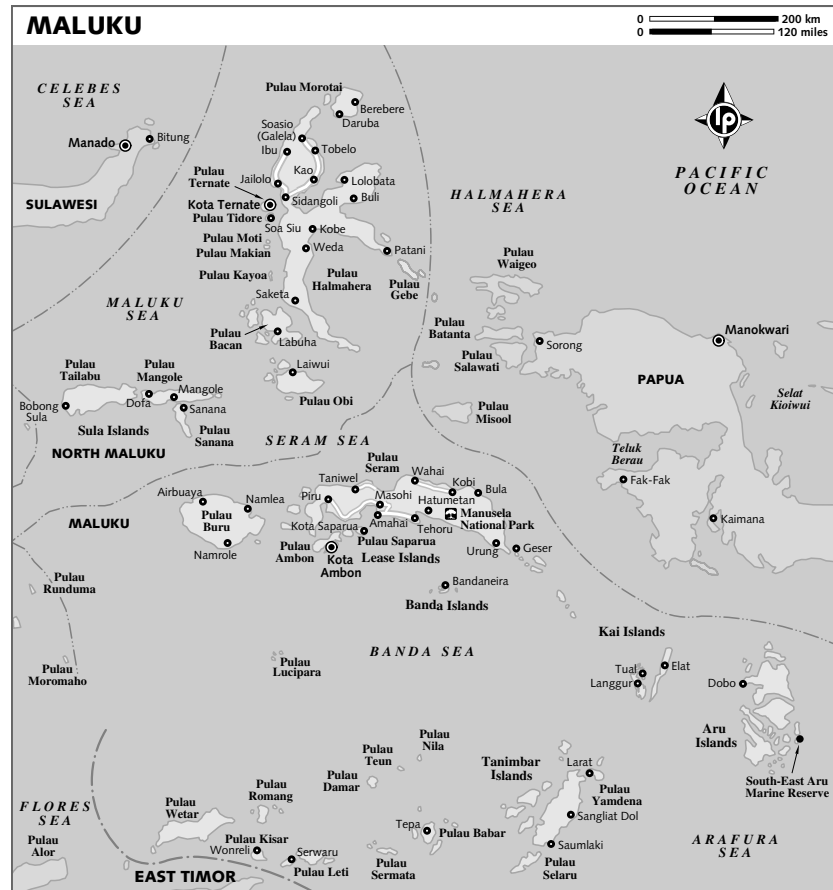
Lion Air/Wings Air (code JT; ☎ 342251; www.lionair.co.id) flies daily to Makassar with connections to Manado, Jakarta and beyond. **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 342480; www.merpati.co.id) flies Tuesday to Kota Ternate.

Pelni (☎ 342328) has an office opposite the Pattimura Memorial. Boats leave from Yos Sudarso harbour.

Smaller boats from Slamet Riyadi Harbour serve north, east and remote southeast islands in Maluku.

BANDA ISLANDS

A gathering of epic tropical gems, with deserted stretches of white sand, and crescent bays, the storied Bandas once lured greedy Chinese, Arab, Javanese and European traders with a lust for nutmeg. In the 1990s they briefly blipped onto the backpacker radar, and have now faded back into glorious anonymity. Which means you'll have the beaches and those stark undersea drop-offs draped in Technicolor coral gardens, to yourself.



Bandaneira

☎ 0910

The main port of the Banda islands, situated on Pulau Neira, is a friendly, pleasantly sleepy town of colonial villas and blooming flowers.

Stop by the impressive **Benteng Belgica** (admission 20,000Rp; 🌅 dawn-dusk), built on the hill above Bandaneira in 1611. The fort's upper reaches have incredible views of **Gunung Api**.

Hotel Maulana (☎ 21022; 2 tanks from US\$90) has the Banda's only dive center. Rates are relatively expensive and equipment is 'mature'.

Think: comfortable waterfront rooms, a sweet wooden jetty, cold beer and an English-speaking owner that knows the reef. That's **Vita** (☎ 21332; d from 75,000Rp; 🏠).

At **Delfika 2** (☎ 21127; d from 75,000Rp; 🏠), two of the rooms glimpse the volcano, and the peaceful terrace has one of the best views in town.

Guesthouses serve tasty local fare.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 21060; www.merpati.co.id) flies to Ambon and Amahai (Seram) on Mondays. Book ahead and know that cancellations happen. Pelni ships sail from Ambon to Bandaneira. To tour the reef and explore other islands, charter a longboat at the fish market.

Other Islands

Pulau Banda Besar is the largest of the Banda islands, and the most important historical source of nutmeg. You can still visit **nutmeg groves** at the **Kelly Plantation** or explore the ruins of fort **Benteng Hollandia** (c 1624).

Pulau Hatta has crystal waters and a mind-expanding, coral-encrusted vertical drop-off near Lama village. **Pulau Ai** is more accessible and is also blessed with rich coral walls, and postcard beaches. On Ai, **Revenge 2** (d 75,000Rp) has new rooms and excellent food.

Passenger longboats buzz between Bandaneira and Pulau Banda Besar (3000Rp) and Pulau Ai (10,000Rp). To land on Pulau Hatta, you'll have to leave early, and charter a sturdy covered boat for a day trip (from 300,000Rp, one way three hours).

PULAU TERNATE & TIDORE

The perfect volcanic cone of Ternate highlights north Maluku's gateway and transport hub. Pulau Tidore, Ternate's age-old, next-door rival, is a laid-back island of charming villages and empty beaches.

Kota Ternate

☎ 0921 / pop 103,900

With frequent air connections, the town of Kota Ternate on Pulau Ternate is a logical first stop, and a good base for exploring north Maluku.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The airport is just 6km from Kota Ternate; 50,000Rp for a taxi, or 15,000Rp by *ojek*. The city centre is compact and walkable.

BNI bank (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi) Has an ATM and is the only bank to change money.

North Maluku Tourist Office (☎ 27396; Jl Kamboja 14; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Arranges guides up the volcano.

Warnet Gamalama.net (Jl Pattimura; per hr 8000Rp) Comfortable environs, decent connection.

SIGHTS

Built in 1796, **Keraton Sultan** (Sultan's Palace; ☎ 21166; admission by donation; ☎ 6am-6pm) is 2km north of town. It has an interesting collection of colonial swords and armour, and the current Sultan's sister loves telling tales of the Ternatean royal family, a history that dates back to 1257.

SLEEPING & EATING

Taman Ria (☎ 22124; d from 75,000Rp) Pleasant rooms set in a waterfront garden south of the centre.

Hotel Sejathara (☎ 21139; Jl Salim Fabanyo 21; d from 77,000Rp) Clean and recently repainted, but the rooms are tiny.

Rumah Makan Jailolo (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi 7; meals 6000-10,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) This place has cheap fresh fish.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Wings Air (code 1W; www.lionair.co.id) flies daily to Makassar, with connections to Jakarta and Surabaya. **Merpati** (code MZ; ☎ 21651; www.merpati.co.id) has two small planes that hop between remote north Maluku islands.

Every two weeks, the Peln liners link Ternate with Ambon and Bitung.

Around Kota Ternate

On the southern outskirts, the 1540 Portuguese **Benteng Kalamata** proves too much restoration can ruin ruins, but the setting, with waves licking its angled walls, is sensational.

Not far from Takome, in the west, is **Danu Tolire Besar**, a deep-green volcanic lake crawling with crocs. A trail from the main road leads to the lake.

The island's dominant force is 1721m **Gunung Api Gamalama**. It exhaled fire and ash most recently in 1994. With a guide and five hours of masochism, you'll reach the summit.

Pulau Tidore

☎ 0921 / pop 47,300

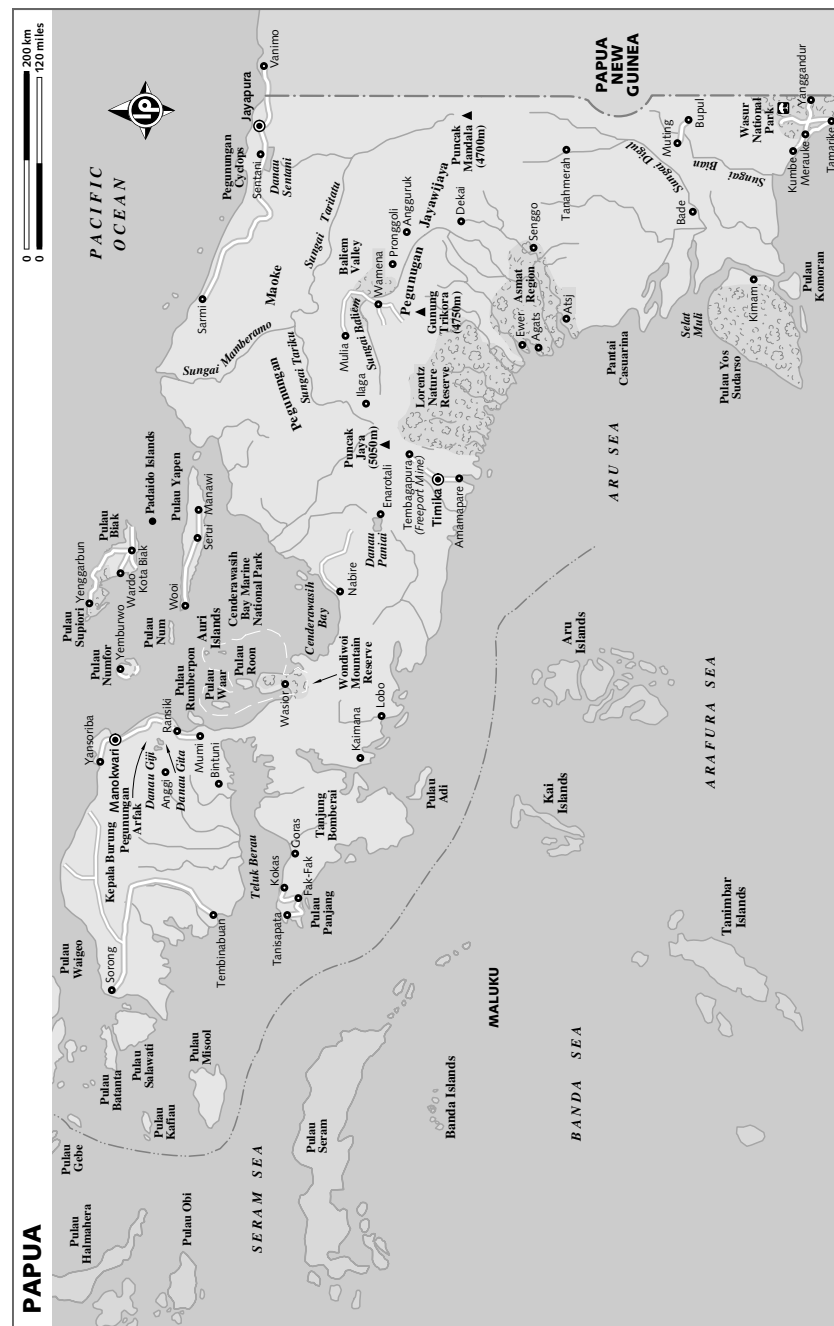
Pulau Tidore, Ternate's better-looking rural reflection, lacks its rival's infrastructure, but therein lies its charm.

In and around **Soasio**, the capital, are hot springs, beaches, the photogenic village of **Lada-Ake**, and the looming **Gunung Kiematubu**. Between Rum and Soasio are the splintering remnants of **Benteng Tohula** and the **Sultan's Memorial Museum**, where you can glimpse the magical sultan's crown, in fact you can find the absentee curator. **Penginapan Seroja** (☎ 61456; Jl Sultan Hassanuddin; s/d 82,000/100,000Rp) is a splendid waterfront nest in Soasio.

Frequent speedboats (6000Rp) fire over from Bastiong port in Ternate.

PAPUA (IRIAN JAYA)

Papua – Indonesia's half of New Guinea, the world's second-largest island – is the living definition of wild. Its steep, layered mountains are impenetrable thanks to 400,000 sq km of thick jungle teeming with endemic species, and carved by churning chocolate rivers. Peaks are frosted with glaciers and snowfields, and slopes



and valleys are home to an array of exotic cultures (250 and counting), like the pig-herding, sweet-potato-growing, gourd-wearing Dani, woodcarving Asmat warriors, and tree-house-dwelling Korowai. In the interior the Stone Age lives on, while anthropologists and botanists continue to 'discover' new cultures and species. The coast is more modern, and more Indonesian, unless you venture to the Raja Ampats, a remote archipelago where you can find empty beaches, fishing villages, waterfalls and, according to experts, the world's richest reefs.

Papua's history is no slouch either. The battle for the Pacific was decided here – with memorials and WWII wrecks to prove it. Indonesia didn't inherit Papua until 1963, when they named it Irian Jaya, and immediately began liquidating her abundant resources with the giddy complicity of multinational corporations, and paltry reinvestment into Papua. This did not sit well with the proud Papuans, whose Free Papua Organisation (OPM) remains active. Concessions have been made – there's now an 80% reinvestment requirement – but the continued military occupation, resettlement of Indonesians into Papua, and an undeniable economic apartheid keeps tensions bubbling beneath the surface.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Papua is well connected with the rest of Indonesia, and with so few viable roads, flying is the only way to travel once you're here. The transport centres are Sorong (the biggest city on the bird's-head-shaped island), Biak and Jayapura

Merpati, Garuda and Trigana are the main carriers to, from and within Papua, but seats can be double booked, airports run out of gas, and flights are regularly cancelled. Wings Air flies to Sorong from Manado daily.

There are no scheduled air services into Papua New Guinea (PNG).

BOAT

Pelni links the north and west coasts of Papua with one another, and with Maluku, Sulawesi and Java. For the latest schedules, visit www.pelni.com.

The best way to get PNG is to charter a boat from Jayapura (ask around the Hamadi port) to Vanimo (from 350,000Rp per person, minimum of three). See boxed texts, p330 and opposite for more information.

JAYAPURA

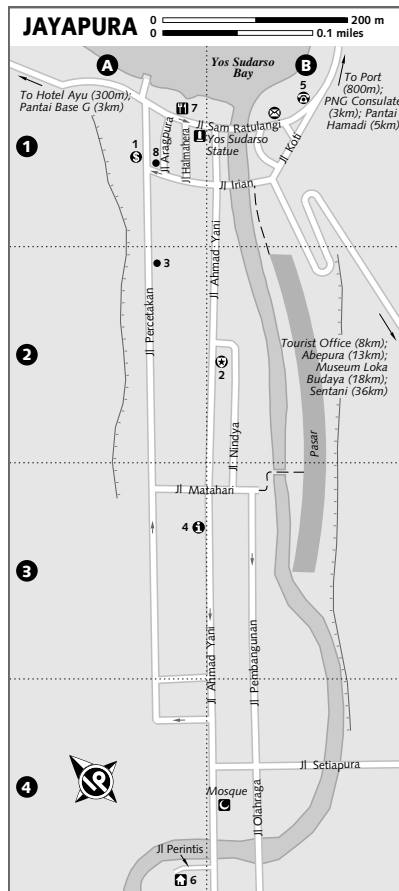
☎ 0967 / pop 140,700

Most residents are Indonesian and street life pulses to their rhythm, but the environment is all Papua. Dramatic jade hills cradle the city on all sides, while the gorgeous Teluk Yos Sudarso kisses the north coast. Unless you're headed to PNG, it's not necessary to stay here as the airport is in nearby Sentani, which has all the services. But Jayapura has more soul.

Orientation

Jayapura airport is at Sentani, 36km from Jayapura, and 100,000Rp by taxi.

You'll find everything you'll need on Jl Ahmad Yani and the parallel Jl Percetakan. Jl Sam Ratulangi and Jl Koti front the bay.



VISITOR PERMITS (SURAT JALAN)

Within 24 hours of arrival in Papua, visitors must obtain a *surat jalan*, a permission to travel, from the local police station (*polres*). They are easiest to get in Jayapura and should be ready within one hour. Bring three passport photos, three copies of the photo page in your passport and three copies of the passport page with the Indonesian visa on it. Police will charge a flexible 'administration fee' of around 5000Rp.

List every conceivable place you might want to visit, as it might be difficult to add them later, outside the large cities. As you travel around Papua, you are supposed to have the document stamped in local police stations. It is worth keeping a few photocopies of the permit in case police or hotels ask for them.

In practice, these are only necessary if you plan on visiting the interior. In cities and within the Raja Ampats, nobody will bother you about it. But if you're going to the Baliem Valley, get your papers in order.

Information

The tourist office is about 8km from the centre; it's not worth the trip.

Bill bank (Jl Percetakan 22) Changes money and has an ATM.

District police station (☎ 531027, Jl Ahmad Yani;

☎ 7am–3pm Mon–Fri) Arrange your *surat jalan* (special permit) at the 'Satuan IPP' office upstairs.

PT Kuwera Jaya (☎ 531583; Jl Ahmad Yani 39) Efficient travel agency with English-speaking staff.

Telkom office (Jl Sam Ratulangi)

Warner Media (Jl Percetakan; per hr 12,000Rp) Jayapura's best web connection.

Sights & Activities

On the Cenderawasih University campus is **Museum Loka Budaya** (Jl Abepera, Abepera; admission by donation; ☎ 8.30am–4pm Mon–Fri). The curator offers free tours of his incredible collection of sculptures, bark paintings, canoes, spears and shields. The small, authentic art shop is a gold mine for collectors. The museum is along the Sentani–Abepera bemo route.

Pantai Hamadi was the site of an American amphibious landing in 1944. There are rusting WWII wrecks on the beach. A famous 1944

INFORMATION	
Bill Bank.....	1 A1
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SLEEPING	
Hotel Kartini.....	6 A4

EATING	
Duta Café.....	(see 7)
Seafood Warung.....	7 A1

TRANSPORT	
Garuda.....	8 A1

General MacArthur photo op made **Pantai Base G**, west of the centre, famous. The beach is a 10-minute downhill walk from where the public taxis, marked 'Base G', drop you off.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Ayu (☎ 534263; Jl Tugu 11; s/d from 60,000/90,000Rp; ☎) By far the best bargain. It's nestled in an attractive, quiet neighbourhood just west of the centre. Second-floor rooms have lovely balconies.

Hotel Kartini (☎ 531557; Jl Perintis 2; s/d with outside bathroom 66,000/99,000Rp; ☎) Not especially charming, but clean enough and fairly quiet. The management is friendly and it's often full.

Seafood *warung* line the bay along Jl Sam Ratulangi. Try **Duta Café** (meals 45,000Rp; ☎ dinner), where the Makassar-style dishes come with four types of *sambal*. Nice!

Getting There & Away

AIR

Jayapura's airport is actually located in Sentani; see p330 for flight and transport details.

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 533270; Jl Argapura 15) sails to Biak (from 144,000Rp, 24 hours), Manokwari (from 203,000Rp, two days) and Sorong (from 286,000Rp, two days) fortnightly. The port is about 800m east of the Yos Sudarso statue.

SENTANI

☎ 0967

Jayapura's airport is actually in the hamlet of Sentani (36km from Jayapura) and near the shores of magnificent **Danau Sentani**. It's quieter, cooler, more convenient, but a bit blander than Jayapura.

GETTING TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

As far as border crossings go, this one is relatively quick and easy, once you secure a PNG visa (one-month tourist visa US\$25) at the **PNG consulate** (☎ 0967-531250; Jl Raya Argapura; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 2pm Fri) in Jayapura, which takes a couple of days. After that you can charter a boat between Jayapura (Hamadi) and Vanimo for about 350,000Rp, with a minimum of three passengers, or you can charter a taxi to the border (250,000Rp, 2½ hours), and cross on foot. If you travel by boat, you must get stamped out, within 24 hours of your departure, at the **Immigration Office** (Jl Peretakan) opposite the Dafonsoro Hotel in Jayapura, not at the border itself, and pay a 50,000Rp 'fee'. On the PNG side, a taxi will take you to Vanimo (10kina/US\$2.50).

Don't miss the soul-soothing views of Danau Sentani from **Tugu MacArthur**. This is where Douglas devised his winning strategy.

Most facilities are on Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota. **Hotel Semeru-Anaron** (☎ 591447; Jl Yabaso; d 120,000Rp; 🍷) is the cheapest choice, but the rooms are tired. For another 100,000Rp you'll get hot water, cable TV, breakfast and a ride to the airport at **Hotel Ratna** (☎ 593410; Jl PLN 1; d 222,000Rp). Restaurants in town are brutal. Take an *ojek* ride to the lakeshore (20,000Rp) and eat very well at **Yougwa Restaurant** (☎ 571570; Jl Raya Danau Sentani; 🍷 lunch & dinner).

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 533111; www.merpati.co.id) flies to Jakarta and Makassar via Biak and Timika. **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 522222; www.garuda-indonesia.com) flies to Jakarta every day but Wednesday, and flies daily to Makassar and Denpasar. **Trigana Air Service** (code TGN; ☎ 594383; www.transnusa.co.id) runs four flights a day to and from Wamena in the Baliem Valley. Missionary airlines **AMA** (☎ 591009; Jl Misi) and **Mission Aviation Fellowship** (code MAF; ☎ 591109; Jl Misi) fly to remote airstrips within Papua's interior, and sell seats if there's room.

Getting to Sentani from Jayapura via public transport demands three different bemo, and three hours. *Ojek* are much more convenient (about 25,000Rp per hour), taxis are pricey (from 100,000Rp) but more comfortable.

PULAU BIAK

☎ 0981 / pop 41,600

Pulau Biak has an impressive line-up of WWII sights, but with the emergence of the Raja Ampats as Papua's top beach and dive destination, Biak is almost irrelevant.

Kota Biak is compact and easy to manage. Services are strung along Jl Ahmad Yani, Jl Sudirman and Jl Imam Bonjol. The Frans Kaisiepo airport is a short bemo ride away.

Don't miss **Gua Binsari** (admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 7am-5pm), a deep tunnel where thousands of

Japanese soldiers lived and died after a deadly US bombing raid.

Charter boats from **Bosnik**, a famous allied WWII site, to the lovely **Padaido Islands**, where you'll find excellent snorkelling (Pulau Nusi), white sand and more rusted WWII relics (Pulau Owi).

Small, basic, yet clean, **Hotel Maju** (☎ 21841; Jl Imam Bonjol 45; s/d 65,000/85,000Rp; 🍷) remains the best budget choice on Pulau Biak.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 21213; www.merpati.co.id) flies daily to Merauke, Jayapura and Makassar. **Garuda** (code GA; ☎ 25737; www.garuda-indonesia.com) flies daily to Jayapura, Makassar and Jakarta.

Every two weeks three **Pelni** (☎ 23255; Jl Sudirman 37) liners stop in Biak, and continue to Jayapura and Manokwari.

CENDERAWASIH BAY

Stretching from Manokwari, on the back of the bird's head, to the far eastern shore of Pulau Yapen, is the immense **Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park** (Taman Laut Teluk Cenderawasih). Beneath the surface you'll find endangered species of giant clams, turtles and dugongs, and 130 coral varieties. On land you can trek through coastal jungle and spot 150 bird species. If it was more accessible it would be an eco-adventure jackpot, but it's just not that easy to explore. It's not impossible, however. From Manokwari you can take a three-hour shared taxi ride to Ransiki, from where you can get a boat (250,000Rp) to **Pulau Rumberpon**, where you'll find outstanding snorkelling. Or go to **Pulau Wairondi** and hang out with rare turtles. For tips, seek out the **Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park office** (☎ 0986-222356; Jl Rendani Wosi) in Manokwari.

Manokwari

☎ 0986 / pop 56,200

The first place in Papua to be inhabited by missionaries, Manokwari is easy to navigate

and well connected. Nearby there's **trekking** in the Arfak Mountains and around the Anggi Lakes. The **Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park office** (☎ 222356; Jl Rendani Wosi) is the best place to source adventure options.

White sand and crystal water can be found 5km east of town at **Pasir Pasir Putih**. Surfers should paddle out from the black sands of **Pantai Amban**, located 3km north of Amban village and 7km north of Manokwari.

Cheap sleeps include **Losmen Apose** (☎ 211369; Jl Kota Baru 4; s/d 50,000/100,000Rp; 🍷), opposite the Merpati office, and **Hotel Arfak** (☎ 213079; Jl Brawijaya 8; d from 90,000Rp; 🍷), set in a crumbling colonial shell.

Merpati (code MZ; ☎ 211153; www.merpati.co.id) flies four times a week to Sorong and Jayapura. **Batavia** (code 7P; ☎ 215666; www.batavia-air.co.id) flies daily to Jayapura. Four **Pelni** (☎ 215167; Jl Siliwangi 24) liners, servicing Papua's north coast, stop in Manokwari.

BALIEM VALLEY

The Baliem Valley is the most accessible gateway to tribal Papua. It's a place where *koteka* (penis gourds) are not yet out of fashion, pigs can buy love, sex or both, and the hills bloom with flowers and deep purple sweet-potato fields. Unless you land here during the August high season, when Wamena and nearby villages host a spectacular festival with pig feasts, mock wars and traditional dancing to attract the tourism buck, you will be outnumbered by Christian missionaries (a constant presence since the valley's 'discovery' in 1938) and Javanese *transmigrasi*. You may also be startled by blatant evidence of Indonesia's neocolonisation of Papua, but mostly you will marvel at the mountain views, roaring rivers, tribal villages and at the tough but sweet spirit of the warm Dani

people (for more on visiting the tribal interior, see boxed text, below).

Wamena

☎ 0969 / pop 8500

The commercial centre in the Baliem Valley, Wamena is dusty and sprawling, but the air is cool, purple mountains peak through billowy white clouds, and local markets are enthralling. It's also a base from which to explore nearby tribal villages. Wamena is expensive – a consequence of having to fly everything in from Jayapura.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Wamena is an easy walking town, but the becak rides are cheap and fun. The BRI and Mandiri banks have ATMs. Internet doesn't exist.

Post office (Jl Timor)

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 31152; Jl Trikora) Basic medical care.

Tourist office (☎ 31365; Jl Yos Sudarso 73) Look for the Indonesian flag.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hotel Syahrial Makmur (☎ 31306; Jl Gatot Subroto 45; d 100,000Rp) The cheapest place in town. The rooms aren't clean, but they're not horrible. Worth a look if your budget's tight.

Hotel Anggrek (☎ 31242; Jl Ambon 1; d 200,000Rp) Sparkling rooms, hot water, homemade jams and house-roasted coffee make this place deservedly popular. It's also almost always full, so call ahead.

Hotel Nayak (☎ 31067; Jl Gatot Subroto 63; d 220,000Rp) Just south of the airport, some of the street-front rooms here are cleaner than others. Choose wisely.

Rumah Makan Mas Budi (Jl Pattimura; dishes from 25,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Decent Indonesian and

HOW NOT TO GET YOUR SURAT JALAN

Anti-establishment types take note. To visit the tribal interior you need a *surat jalan* (special permit). So don't thumb your nose at the system, show up for your flight to Wamena, and brag to the helpful Trigana ticketing agent about how you don't have a permit and that you'll talk your way out of a jam if the 'scary' *polisi* confront you. Otherwise, you may find yourself on the back of an *ojek* in a driving rainstorm tearing along Sentani's rutted roads to the district police station outside of town in the jungle where you will bribe and beg listless clerks to type your permit on a manual typewriter so you can make a flight. Luckily these slacker clerks happen to love Tupac Shakur, and you clumsily reference hip-hop. Forty-five minutes later you will arrive back at the airport, papers in hand, drenched and 30 minutes late for the last plane of the day to Wamena. Thank God you're in Indonesia, where planes are always a minimum of 30 minutes late.

TREKKING THE BALIEM VALLEY

This is outstanding trekking country. Trails skirt and traverse rivers and sweet-potato fields, scale steep mountains, wind through remote mountain villages, and lead you to magnificent panoramas. The hiking isn't easy, but you will come across old local women carrying bulging *noken* (string bags) strapped to their forehead like saddlebags, so quit whining and enjoy the view of their wrinkled husbands working the soil dressed penis-gourd-chic. It's normally cold at night, and it often rains, so bring appropriate gear. Your guide will arrange meals, but you should bring your own water, and plenty of it.

Staying in village huts is an unforgettable experience. They should cost about 50,000Rp per person per night.

In Wamena, guides greet you at the airport and can be tough to shake. But if you plan on trekking, you should hire one. They may ask for some money upfront for supplies. That's standard, so don't stress.

English-speaking guides should cost around 200,000Rp per day, and a porter around 100,000Rp.

Chinese fare, but at night they unveil an evil karaoke machine. Come for lunch.

Baliem Pilamo Hotel (Jl Trikora; meals from 25,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) The restaurant at this slightly upmarket hotel is clean and passable. Fresh fish and prawns are flown in from Sentani daily.

Wamena is officially a 'dry area', so no Bintang for you!

SHOPPING

Possible souvenirs include *noken* (string bags; (15,000Rp to 50,000Rp)); *suale* (head decorations made from cassowary feathers); the inevitable *koteka* (10,000Rp to 60,000Rp), if you're that kind of man; *mikak* (necklaces made of cowrie shells, feathers and bone); and *kapak* (black- or blue-stone axe blades; upward from 50,000Rp). Prepare to bargain.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Trigana Air Service (code TGN; ☎ 31611) flies to and from Jayapura four times a day (from Wamena 490,000Rp, from Jayapura 534,000Rp). Book ahead!

Around Wamena

Trekking is the best way to taste traditional life, and considering lodging prices in Wamena, the cost isn't prohibitive, but you can also see traditional people and customs, mummies, markets and terrific scenery during day trips from Wamena, Jiwika and Kurima.

Getting Around

From Wamena, hopelessly overcrowded *taksi* go as far south as Yetni (5000Rp, 20 minutes,

18km); as far north, on the western side of the valley, as Pyramid (10,000Rp, 45 minutes, 35km) and as far north on the eastern side as Tagime. They gather at the 'Misi' *taksi terminal* (Jl Ahmad Yani).

CENTRAL & SOUTH BALIEM VALLEY

Wesaput is just across the airport, and home to the valley's only museum, the **Palimo Adat Museum** (admission by donation; ☺ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat), with its limited collection of Dani artefacts.

Behind the museum, a swinging bridge leads to **Pugima**, a flat 4km walk on a trail that skirts charming Dani villages. At the end of Jl Yos Sudarso is **Sinatma**, where you'll find a bustling market and trails that lead to the thundering Sungai Wamena.

The road south through Baliem Valley stops a few kilometres short of **Kurima**, a village bursting with flowers, divided by the river and fed by cascading streams. This is the land of eternal spring. The walk here and around will take you through sweet-potato terraces to the best panoramas in the valley. You can rent a room in Kurima at the missionary house, but the best plan is to keep walking up the ridge to **Kilise**, where you can bed down at the **Kilise Guest House** (per person 50,000Rp, bring your own food) on clean bamboo mats in a traditional Dani grass hut with sweeping views that will simply immobilise you. Guides are a good idea for this trek, but they're not essential if you don't mind cooking. A popular three-day trek to the best southern villages is **Wamena-Kurima-Syoma-Wamena**.

EAST BALIEM VALLEY

Near **Pikhe**, the northern road crosses mighty Sungai Baliem and passes **Aikima**, the resting place of a 270-year-old **Werapak Elosak mummy** (admission 5000Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk). **Jiwika** is the best base to explore the east. **Sumpaima**, 300m north of Jiwika, is home to the 280-year-old **Wimontok Mabel mummy** (admission 5000Rp; ☺ dawn-dusk), the best of its kind near Wamena.

At the turn-off to Iluwa in Jiwika, you'll find **Lauk Inn** (d 90,000Rp) the only proper accommodation outside Wamena.

In **Wosilimo**, the incredible **Gua Wikuda** (admission 5000Rp; ☺ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) cave is 900m long and has stalagmites that are 1000 years old. Stay in a hut and fish well at **Danau Anegerak**, an hour's walk west of Wosilimo. From Wosilimo, a trekking trail continues beyond Pass Valley. A popular three-day trek will also take you from Jiwika, off the main road, to Pass Valley.

Public transport continues north to **Manda**, where there is more pretty countryside and hut-style sleeps. From Manda, trek to the Protestant, nonsmoking village of **Wolo**.

WEST BALIEM VALLEY

Pyramid is a graceful missionary village with churches, a theological college and a bustling market. You may be able to stay at **Kimbim**.

Pondok Kanopa is a pristine rainforest, in the northwest, with frequent python sightings. The jungle is also thick with OPM resisters, and a heavy military presence. It's legal to be here, but Indonesian soldiers love hassling Papuan guides (a must in the rainforest), which is why your guide will know exactly how to avoid confrontation. Edgy!

SORONG

☎ 0951 / pop 132,700

An industrial port on the beak of the bird's head, Sorong's newest industry is tourism, thanks to the nearby Raja Ampat islands' coronation as the 'it' diving destination. You won't stay long, but daily connections from Manado via **Wings Air** (☎ 043 1888 0022) make Sorong an inexpensive and accessible gateway to Papua.

The town sprawls, so taxis, *ojeks* and chartered *angkot* are the best way to visit banks, airline offices, the main port or government offices. Most hotels are on Jl Yos Sudarso. Acceptable bargain beds can be found at **Hotel**

Tanjung (☎ 323782; Jl Yos Sudarso; d from 105,000Rp, ☺), next to a superb fresh-fish grill, **Lido Kuring** (☎ 322971; mains 35,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner). But the massive, oceanfront rooms at **Hotel Waigo** (☎ 333500; Jl Yos Sudarso; d from 200,000Rp, ☺) are the best deal in town.

RAJA AMPAT ISLANDS

Located off Papua's west coast, this cluster of 1500 lush limestone islands, protected by rich coral reefs that shelter and feed the highest fish count on earth, has divers buzzing. Some islands are huddled so close that they look like a single mountain range stacked against the sky. To move between them you cross narrow passes of deep blue water occasionally striped turquoise and green. There are 47 mapped dive sites, but the number is limitless. The original outfitter in the region is Max Ammer's **Papua Diving** (☎ 0411-401 660; www.papua-diving.com). It has two all-inclusive dive resorts in the Raja Ampats. The most affordable rooms are the stilted, overwater grass bungalows at **Kri Eco Resort** (per night €85) You can do 5 dives for €175.

If you're short on time, money or friends, these islands may remain on the horizon of your mind. It takes cash to reach these deserted beaches, sleepy lagoons, fishing villages, waterfalls and limestone peaks. You can charter a sheltered longboat from the main port in Sorong, but that will cost at least 2,000,000Rp per day, which can work for a big group, but is tough on soloists. An affordable, and far more comfortable, group alternative is to charter the **Helena** (☎ 081 148 5371; walliston@cdn.net.id; per person per day all-inclusive US\$100), a beautiful wooden ship that sleeps six, with two decks. Her captain knows the Raja Ampat's hidden secrets. Guests aboard **Helena** dive with Papua Diving.

INDONESIA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel, losmen, penginapan, wisma: there are several words for somewhere to lay a weary head, and options to suit every budget in most Indonesian towns.

Cheap hotels are usually pretty basic and with tourist numbers down over recent years, standards tend to be lower than in many other tourist destinations. In compensation, a simple breakfast is often included. Traditional

washing facilities consist of a *mandi*, a large water tank from which you scoop cool water with a dipper. Climbing into the tank is very bad form! Rooms are assumed to come with a private *mandi* in this chapter, unless otherwise specified. The air-con symbol (❄️) denotes whether air-con rooms are available, otherwise rooms are assumed to come with a fan.

Accommodation prices in tourist areas peak in July and August, and also during Easter and the Christmas period, though at the budget end of the market price hikes are marginal. Elsewhere in the country, rates increase during Idul Fitri (the period following Ramadan).

Finding a room for 50,000Rp to 70,000Rp a night is possible wherever you are. In the large cities and provincial towns, expect a very plain, purely functional room for this. But along the main travelling trail, in Yogyakarta and in parts of Lombok and Sumatra, many budget places can be very attractive and decorated with artistic touches, and often come with a veranda. Bali is in a league of its own in terms of value for money, and if you can stretch to 100,000Rp a night there are some wonderful places, many with pools and stylish open-air bathrooms.

ACTIVITIES

Indonesia has world-class surfing, diving and snorkelling, trekking and rafting, and operators' prices are very competitive.

Diving & Snorkelling

Indonesian waters are some of the world's richest, its coral reefs incredibly diverse. But damage by destructive fishing practices has damaged and destroyed many once-pristine areas. Visibility can be limited during the wet season (roughly October to April).

Highlights include western Flores and Komodo, the Gili islands, Amed and Pulau Menjangan in Bali, Pulau Bunaken and the Togean Islands in Sulawesi, Pulau Weh in Sumatra, the Banda Islands in Maluku and Pulau Biak in Papua.

PADI-linked schools are by far the most common, but there are also NAUI and BSAC operators. You'll need to bring your certification card if you are already qualified. If you want to get qualified, the Gili islands, Pulau Bunaken and Labuanbajo in Flores have the best choice of dive schools.

For information on responsible diving, see p912.

All the above dive sites also offer excellent **snorkelling**, but if you're looking for a beach somewhere where you can just roll out of your bungalow in the morning, don a mask and fins and explore a wonderful reef, the Gilis and Pulau Bunaken fit the bill perfectly. Snorkelling gear costs about 20,000Rp a day to hire.

Spas & Treatments

If you fancy a pamper, Indonesia has some excellent-value options. From a humble massage on the beach (about 40,000Rp) through facials and beauty treatments (starting at 60,000Rp) in salons to luxe spa sessions (from around 100,000Rp), you'll find plenty of opportunity to indulge.

Bali leads the way, with a multitude of beauty salons and spas in all the main travellers' centres. You'll also find a fair selection of spas in Yogyakarta (Java) and Senggigi (Lombok).

Surfing

Indonesia has waves that will send most surfers weak at the knees. With waves building momentum across the expanse of the Indian Ocean, all the islands on the southern side of the Indonesian archipelago – from Sumatra to Timor – get reliable, often exceptional, and sometimes downright frightening surf. The dry season, May to September, offers the most consistent waves, but is also the busiest time of year. During the wet season, the easterly beaches of Bali such as Lebih and Nusa Dua come into their own.

If you are just starting out, courses are run in Bali (p217) and Java (p186). Surf stores in Bali and Java stock most surfing accessories, including a wide range of boards, but come fully equipped if you're planning on surfing off the beaten track.

Highlights are almost too numerous to mention, but include Pulau Nias in Sumatra, southern Lombok, Batu Karas in Java, Bukit peninsula in Bali, and Hu'u in Sumbawa.

Trekking

Despite massive potential, trekking is far less established in Indonesia than it is in, say, Thailand. Local guide services are developing where demand exists, however, and the national parks offer some wonderful terrain to explore.

In Java, organised trekking is largely confined to some spectacular volcano hikes. There's more variety in Bali, the location of the wonderful Gunung Batur region, and the region around Tirta Gangga, which offers walks on the lower slopes of Gunung Agung and through rice fields and forests. Gunung Rinjani on Lombok is one of Indonesia's most dramatic and rewarding treks (from two to five days).

The Baliem Valley in Papua is also one of Indonesia's better-known walking destinations, and Tana Toraja has plenty of fabulous trekking opportunities through Sulawesi's spectacular traditional villages.

BOOKS

Lonely Planet's *Bali & Lombok, Borneo and Indonesia* guides explore the country in more detail, while Lonely Planet's *World Food Indonesia* is the perfect guide to the nation's cuisine and *Indonesian Phrasebook* its language. Read *Healthy Travel: Asia* for the lowdown on keeping healthy during your travels.

Check out *Indonesia: Peoples and Histories* by Jean Gelman Taylor for an up-to-date history primer. *Nathaniel's Nutmeg* by Giles Milton is a fascinating account of the battle to control trade from the Spice Islands.

The Malay Archipelago by Alfred Russel Wallace is the 1869 classic of this famous naturalist's travels throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

Pramoedya Ananta Toer is perhaps Indonesia's best-known novelist. Look for the novels *This Earth of Mankind*, *Child of All Nations*, *Footsteps and House of Glass*.

Daniel Ziv's *Jakarta Inside Out* is a highly recommended under-the-skin portrait of the city. *Bule Gila: Tales of a Dutch Barman in Jakarta*, by Barthelemy Santema, manager of Bugils (p175) is light-hearted and entertaining.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices are *generally* open Monday to Friday from 8am to 4pm – with a break for Friday prayers from 11.30am to 1.30pm – and Saturday until noon. Go early if you want to get anything done.

Banks are open Monday to Friday, usually from 8am to 4pm. In some places banks open on Saturday until around noon. Foreign exchange hours may be more limited and some banks close their foreign exchange counter at 1pm. Moneychangers are open longer hours.

Restaurants are generally open daily from around 7am until 9pm, though many large cities have 24-hour places and late-night stalls.

Most shops are open daily between 8am and 6pm; in tourist areas, they'll often open as late as 9pm.

CLIMATE

Indonesia is hot and humid all year round, with wet and dry seasons. In coastal areas the heat is usually less oppressive, and it can get downright chilly in the high mountains at dawn.

Generally, the wet season starts later the further southeast you go. In North Sumatra, the rain begins to fall in September, but in Timor it doesn't fall until November. In January and February it rains most days. The dry season is basically from May to September. The odd islands out are those of Maluku, where the wet season is the reverse, running from May to September.

See the regional climate charts (p916).

CUSTOMS

Customs regulations allow you to bring in 1L of alcohol and 200 cigarettes (or 50 cigars).

Any material containing partial nudity may be deemed pornographic and be confiscated.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

If you've never been before, Indonesia might seem like one of the world's most dodgy nations: accident-prone, and cursed by natural disasters and terrorist outrages.

But while transport safety standards are poor, earthquakes are frequent and a small band of extremists have wreaked terror in Bali and Jakarta, Indonesia is actually a very safe nation for travellers, unless you're very unlucky.

Personal safety, even in the big cities, is not usually a major concern. Keep your wits about you, yes, but violent crime (and even petty theft) is very rare in Indonesia. Be mindful of your valuables and take the usual precautions and the chances of getting into trouble are tiny.

It is important to keep abreast of current political developments, however, and maybe give political or religious demos a wide berth. At the time of writing, areas of Central Sulawesi were of particular concern, and tensions remain in parts of Maluku, Papua and Aceh. Newspapers and the internet should keep you in touch with developments, or consult your embassy.

See also p915 for information on the risks associated with recreational drug use and p937 for an update on avian influenza (bird flu).

But most importantly, go and enjoy yourself.

DRIVING LICENCE

If you plan to drive a car or motorbike in Indonesia it's essential to have an International Driving Permit. There can be steep fines for unlicensed driving, particularly in Bali, where some policemen regularly target drivers.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Consult p341 for details of visa and entry requirements.

Embassies & Consulates in Indonesia

Australia Denpasar (off Map p213; ☎ 0361-241118; Jl Hayam Wuruk 88B); Jakarta (Map p168; ☎ 021-2550 5555; Jl Rasuna Said Kav C15-16)

Brunei (Map p170; ☎ 021-3190 6080; Jl Tanjung Karang 7, Jakarta 10230)

Canada (Map p168; ☎ 021-2550 7800; 6th fl, World Trade Centre, Jl Sudirman Kav 29-31, Jakarta)

East Timor (Map p172; ☎ 021-390 2978; tjjkt@yahoo.com; 11th fl, Surya Bldg, Jl Thamrin Kav 9, Jakarta 10350)

France (Map p170; ☎ 021-2355 7600; Jl Thamrin 20, Jakarta)

Germany (Map p170; ☎ 021-3985 5000; Jl Thamrin 1, Jakarta)

Japan (Map p170; ☎ 021-3192 4308; Jl Thamrin 24, Jakarta)

Malaysia (Map p168; ☎ 021-522 4947; Jl Rasuna Said Kav X/6 1, Jakarta)

Myanmar (Map p170; ☎ 021-314 0440; Jl Haji Agus Salim 109, Jakarta)

Netherlands (Map p168; ☎ 021-524 8200; Jl Rasuna Said Kav 5-3, Kuningan, Jakarta)

New Zealand (Map p168; ☎ 021-570 9460; 23rd fl, BRI II Bldg, Jl Sudirman Kav 44-46, Jakarta)

Papua New Guinea Jakarta (Map p168; ☎ 021-725 1218; 6th fl, Panin Bank Centre, Jl Sudirman 1, Jakarta); Jayapura (☎ 531250; Jl Raya Argapura; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, to 2pm Fri)

Philippines (Map p170; ☎ 021-310 0334; Jl Imam Bonjol 6-8, Jakarta)

Singapore (Map p168; ☎ 021-520 1489; Jl Rasuna Said, Block X/4 Kav 2, Jakarta)

Thailand (Map p170; ☎ 021-390 4052; Jl Imam Bonjol 74, Jakarta)

UK (Map p170; ☎ 021-315 6264; Jl Thamrin 75, Jakarta)

USA Denpasar (off Map p213; ☎ 0361-233605; Jl Hayam Wuruk 188); Jakarta (Map p172; ☎ 021-3435 9000; Jl Medan Merdeka Selatan 4-5)

Vietnam (Map p170; ☎ 021-310 0358; Jl Teuku Umar 25, Jakarta)

Indonesian Embassies & Consulates Abroad

Countries with an Indonesian embassy:

Australia (☎ 02-6250 8600; www.kbri-canberra.org.au; 8 Darwin Ave, Yarralumla, ACT 2600)

Canada (☎ 613-724 1100; www.indonesia-ottawa.org; 55 Parkdale Ave, Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 1E5)

France (☎ 01 45 03 07 60; www.amb-indonesie.fr; 47-49 Rue Cortambert 75116, Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-478 070; www.indonesian-embassy.de; Lehrter Str 16-17, 10557 Berlin)

Japan (☎ 03-3441 4201; indonesian-embassy.or.jp; 5-2-9 Higashi Gotanda, Shinagawa-Ku, Tokyo)

Netherlands (☎ 0703-10 81 00; www.indonesia.nl; 8 Tobias Asserlaan, 2517 KC Den Haag)

New Zealand (☎ 04-475 8697; www.indonesian-embassy.org.nz; 70 Glen Rd, Kelburn, Wellington)

Papua New Guinea (☎ 25 1116; 1 + 2/410 Kiro St, Sir John Guise Dr, Waigani)

UK (☎ 020-7499 7661; www.indonesianembassy.org.uk; 38 Grosvenor Sq, London W1K 2HW)

USA (☎ 202-775 5200; www.embassyofindonesia.org; 2020 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036)

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Although some public holidays have a fixed date, the dates for many events vary each year depending on Muslim, Buddhist or Hindu calendars.

January/February

New Year's Day Celebrated on 1 January.

Imlek (Chinese New Year) Special food is prepared, decorations adorn stores and homes, and *barongasai* (lion dances) are performed; held in January/February.

March/April

Mohammed's Birthday Celebrated in March in 2008 and 2009; prayers are held in mosques throughout the country, and there are street parades in Solo and Yogyakarta.

Hindu New Year (Nyepi) Held in March/April; in Bali and other Hindu communities, villagers make as much noise as possible to scare away devils. Virtually all of Bali closes.

Good Friday Occurs in March or April.

April/May

Waisak (Buddha's Birthday) Mass prayers are said at the main Buddhist temples, including Borobudur.

May/June

Ascension of Christ Occurs in May/June.

August

Independence Day Celebrated on 17 August with plenty of pomp and circumstance; government buildings are draped in huge red-and-white flags and banners, and there are endless marches.

September/October

Ascension of Mohammed Special prayers are held in mosques; it occurs in September in 2008 and August in 2009.

Lebaran (Idul Fitri) Celebrated in October in 2008 and September in 2009; everyone who is able to returns to their home villages for special prayers and gift giving, and it's a time for charity donations.

November/December

Idul Adha The end of the Haj is celebrated with animal sacrifices, the meat of which is given to the poor; occurs in December in 2008 and November in 2009.

Muharram (Muslim New Year) The date varies each year, but it will be celebrated in December in both 2008 and 2009.

Christmas Day Marked by gift giving and special church services in Christian areas; the celebration falls on 25 December.

The Muslim fasting month of Ramadan requires that Muslims abstain from food, drink, cigarettes and sex between sunrise and sunset. Many bars and restaurants close and it is important to avoid eating or drinking publicly in Muslim areas during this time. For the week before and after Lebaran (Idul Fitri), the festival to mark the end of the fast, transport is often fully booked and traveling becomes a nightmare – plan to stay put at this time. Ramadan, Idul Fitri and Idul Adha (Muslim day of sacrifice) move back 10 days or so every year, according to the Muslim calendar.

With such a diversity of people in the archipelago there are many other local holidays, festivals and cultural events.

The *Indonesia Calendar of Events* covers holidays and festivals throughout the archipelago; some tourist offices stock it.

FOOD & DRINK

Food
A *rumah makan* (literally 'eating house') is the cheaper equivalent of a *restoran*, but the dividing line is often hazy. The cheapest option of all is the *warung*, a makeshift or permanent food stall, but again the food may be the same as in a *rumah makan*. With any roadside food

it pays to be careful about the hygiene. The *pasar* (market) is a good food source, especially the *pasar malam* (night market). Mobile *kaki lima* (food stalls) serve cheap snack foods and meals.

As with food in the rest of Southeast Asia, Indonesian cuisine is heavily based on rice. *Nasi goreng* is the national dish: it's basically fried rice, with an egg on top in *istimewa* (deluxe) versions. *Nasi campur*, rice with a little meat, fish or vegetables (whatever is available), is a *warung* favourite and is often served cold. The two other typical Indonesian dishes are *gado gado* and *satay* (*sate* in Bahasa Indonesia). *Gado gado* is a fresh salad with prawn crackers, boiled egg and peanut sauce. It tends to vary a lot, so if your first one isn't so special try again somewhere else. *Satay* are tiny kebabs served with a spicy peanut sauce.

Padang food, from the Padang region in Sumatra, is famed for its rich, chilli-heavy sauces, and is popular throughout Indonesia. It's usually delicious, though not cooked fresh – dishes are displayed for hours (days even) in the restaurant window. Padang restaurant (*masakan Padang*) food is served one of two ways. Usually a bowl of rice is plonked in front of you, followed by a whole collection of small bowls of vegetables, meat and fish. Or you approach the window display and pick a few dishes yourself. Either way you pay for what you eat (typically 8000Rp to 15,000Rp).

Drink

Bottled water and soft drinks are available everywhere, and many hotels and restaurants provide *air putih* (boiled water) for guests. The iced juice drinks can be good, but take care that the water/ice has been boiled or is bottled.

Indonesian tea is fine and coffee can be excellent; for a strong local brew ask for *kopi java* or *kopi flores*, depending where you are of course. Beer is quite superb: Bintang ('best enjoyed with friends' according to the label) is one of Asia's finest and costs 11,000Rp to 18,000Rp for a large bottle in most places. Bali Brem rice wine is really potent, and the more you drink the nicer it tastes. *Es buah*, or *es campur*, is a strange concoction of fruit salad, jelly cubes, syrup, crushed rice and condensed milk. And it tastes absolutely *enak* (delicious).

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELLERS

Gay travellers in Indonesia will experience few problems, especially in Bali. Physical contact between same-sex couples is acceptable (Indonesian boys and girls often hold hands or link arms in public). Homosexual behaviour is not illegal – the age of consent is 16. Immigration officials may restrict entry to people who reveal HIV-positive status. Gay men in Indonesia are referred to as *homo* or *gay*; lesbians are *lesbi*.

Indonesia's transvestite/transsexual *waria* – from *wanita* (woman) and *pria* (man) – community has always had a public profile.

Indonesia's first Gay Pride celebration was staged in Surabaya in 1999.

For some background information and listings of gay-friendly bars, restaurants plus gay-scene updates and chat forums, check out www.utopia-asia.com/tipsindo.htm.

HOLIDAYS

See p336 for a list of public holidays.

INTERNET ACCESS

Internet cafés are common in most towns and tourist centres. Speeds are usually very pedestrian though, and broadband access is very rare outside Bali and the main cities. Expect to pay between 4000Rp and 12,000Rp per hour.

INTERNET RESOURCES

Antara News (www.antara.co.id/en) The official Indonesian news agency; has searchable English-language database.

CIA – The World Factbook (<https://www.cia.gov>) Click on the World Factbook link, and then Indonesia. Good for all the facts and figures.

Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (www.dfat.gov.au/geo/indonesia/index.html) The up-to-date website of the Australian Government.

History of Indonesia (www.geocities.com/amemorikaze) Click on the Everything about Indonesia link for a comprehensive examination of contemporary Indonesian culture and the nation's history.

Jakarta Post (www.thejakartapost.com) The website of Indonesia's main English-language newspaper.

Living in Indonesia (www.expat.or.id) This website provides information, advice and links to the expatriate community.

Lonely Planet (www.lonelyplanet.com) Has succinct summaries to most places on earth, the Thorn Tree bulletin board, travel news and updates, and links to useful travel resources.

Some other interesting sites:

Indonesia WWW Virtual Library (<http://coombs.anu.edu.au>) Australian National University's links site is the ultimate portal to all things Indonesian, from human rights to shadow puppets.

Tourism Indonesia (www.tourismindonesia.com) Indonesia's official tourist information site.

Ultimate Indonesian Homepage (<http://indonesia.elga.net.id>) An excellent introduction to the nation and its culture.

LEGAL MATTERS

Drugs, gambling and pornography are illegal, and it is an offence to engage in paid work, or stay in the country for more than 60 days, on a tourist pass.

Despite claims of reform, corruption is still widespread. Police often stop motorists on minor or dubious traffic infringements in the hope of obtaining bribes. The best advice is to remain calm, keep your money in your pocket until it is asked for and sit through the lecture – it is unlikely more than 50,000Rp will be demanded.

In case of an accident involving serious injury or death, the best advice is to drive straight to the nearest police station as an angry mob may soon gather.

MAPS

Many locally produced maps are pretty inaccurate, Periplus produces excellent maps of most Indonesian cities and regions.

MEDIA

Newspapers & Magazines

You'll find copies of the daily *Jakarta Post* (www.jakartapost.com) available in most cities; while it's not as thorough as similar newspapers in Thailand and Malaysia it does deal with all the main stories. For in-depth reporting and analysis of political events, the bimonthly *Inside Indonesia* (www.insideindonesia.com) and weekly *Tempo* (www.tempointeractive.com) are both excellent magazines.

In Bali, European and Australian papers are sold by street hawkers; elsewhere you can find the odd one in the major bookshops.

Radio & TV

You can pick up BBC World Service, Voice of America, Radio Australia and many more stations with a short-wave radio, though reception quality varies a lot.

'DECENCY' LAW

As far as Islamic nations go, Indonesia has always had a reputation as being a pretty tolerant place. But by 2006, growing pressure from strict Muslims and the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI) saw the drafting of a new Indonesian penal code, often dubbed the 'Decency' or 'Pornography Law', to combat declining moral standards and the introduction of Western values deemed to be corruptive.

The proposed law criminalises adulterers, cohabiting unmarried couples, public kissing and bikini-wearing tourists. Topless old ladies in islands like Sumba and Bali, and penis-gourd-wearing Papuan men could be prosecuted for wearing their traditional dress.

One of those charged with drafting the law was Yahya Zaini, a politician who was head of the Golkar party's Spiritual and Religious Affairs committee, with direct responsibility for moral issues. Unfortunately for him, a video was circulated on the internet showing the married politician naked in bed with a raunchy young *dangdut* (Indonesian dance music with strong Arabic and Hindi influences) singer called Maria Eva. He later resigned.

Despite the resultant furore, the bill looks set to be enacted, albeit with some of its more controversial clauses toned down. Christian leaders, former president Megawati Soekarnoputri and her party, the tourism industry, artists, cultural activists and human rights groups continue to oppose the law.

Many hotel rooms have TVs – a box is almost standard in midrange places. Thanks to satellite broadcasting, most major sporting events can be seen (often on ESPN) and you'll have no problem seeing English Premier League football games; Australian and American sports are far less popular.

MONEY

The unit of currency in Indonesia is the rupiah (Rp). Coins of 50, 100, 200 and 500 rupiah are in circulation in both the old silver-coloured coins and the newer bronze-coloured coins. Both 1000Rp and 25Rp coins exist but are very rarely seen. Notes come in 1000, 5000, 10,000, 20,000 50,000 and 100,000 rupiah denominations.

ATMs

ATMs are becoming very numerous in Indonesia – indeed, it's possible to travel through most of the nation with just a card or two without ever setting foot inside a bank. But ATMs fail much more frequently (sometimes due to poor satellite connections) here than in the developed world, and some only dispense pitifully small amounts (500,000Rp) in one transaction. Others will only accept one of Visa/Plus or MasterCard/Cirrus.

It's wise to take a few travellers cheques along with you – American Express are the best, and note that many minor brands are not accepted – and a cash stash of US dollars for emergencies.

Bargaining & Tipping

Bargaining is generally required in markets and for transport (particularly taxis) in places where prices are not fixed. Tipping is not a normal practice in Indonesia but is often expected for special service.

Credit Cards

MasterCard and Visa are by far the most widely accepted plastic cards.

Don't expect to pay for a meal in a *warung* with plastic; generally it's only top-end places that accept credit cards.

Getting a cash advance on your card is a particularly useful way to obtain a large chunk of money in one transaction, though it's often only the major bank branches in larger towns that will give you this facility in Indonesia; you should expect a charge of around 15,000Rp to 30,000Rp for the privilege.

Exchanging Money

After years of turmoil the rupiah has been relatively stable for several years; check out the latest rates on www.xe.com.

US dollars are the most widely accepted foreign currency and have the best exchange rates, euros are second best.

Moneychangers are open longer hours and change money (cash or cheques) much faster than the banks. Be careful in Kuta, Bali, where moneychangers are notorious for short-changing.

The following were the exchange rates at the time of press:

Country	Unit	Rupiah (Rp)
Australia	A\$1	7893
Canada	C\$1	9088
Euro zone	€1	12,994
Japan	¥100	8127
Malaysia	RM1	2695
New Zealand	NZ\$1	6683
Singapore	S\$1	6183
Thailand	10B	2932
UK	UK£1	18,806
USA	US\$1	9362

POST

The postal service in Indonesia is generally good and the poste-restante service at *kantor pos* (post offices) is reasonably efficient in the main tourist centres. Expected mail always seems to arrive, eventually.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

You have to haggle in Indonesia, but it's important to do so respectfully, and learn when to draw the line. It's very bad form to shout or lose your temper. Remember that a few extra rupiah may make a great deal of difference to the other party.

Indonesia is a conservative, largely Muslim country and while bikinis and Speedos are tolerated in the beach resorts of Bali, try to respect local clothing traditions wherever possible. This is particularly true if you are near a mosque.

Couples should avoid canoodling or kissing in public.

A little Bahasa Indonesia, which is very easy to pick up, will get you a long way. Not only will you delight the locals, but it'll save you cash when it comes to dealing with stall owners, hoteliers and becak drivers.

STUDYING

Many cultural and language courses are available, particularly in the main tourist areas. Bali takes the lead, offering a little something to just about everyone. Ubud is Bali's culinary capital and there are courses to teach the inquisitive gastronome a thing or two. Look for advertisements at your hotel, enquire at local restaurants and bars, ask fellow travellers and hotel staff, and check out the tourist newspapers and magazines.

Culture junkies and art addicts are also looked after with a host of courses in Ubud teaching silversmithing, woodcarving, batik, Balinese music and dance and more (see p224 for more information). Short batik courses are popular in Yogyakarta (see p193) and in Solo (p201).

Yogyakarta is probably the most popular place for Bahasa Indonesia courses; see p193 for details.

TELEPHONE

International calls (and faxes) are usually cheapest from the state-run Telkom offices found in every town. Privately run *wartel* offer the same services. You can also call home using phonecards (*kartu chip*) for similar rates to a *wartel*.

It's cheaper to ring on weekends and public holidays, when a 25% to 50% discount applies, or on weekdays from 9pm to 6am for Asia and Oceania, or midnight to 7am for North America, Europe and Africa.

Indonesia has an extensive and reliable mobile network. SIM cards (around 25,000Rp) are very widely available in Indonesia, allowing you to use your phone for cheap local calls. International texts (and even international calls) can also be very reasonable depending on the supplier. SIMPATI is the market leader. You may have to get your phone's SIM unlocked before using it in Indonesia.

It's also possible to use your own phone and home provider's SIM card in Indonesia, but international roaming rates can be extortionate – check before you leave.

The country code for Indonesia is ☎ 62; the international access code is usually ☎ 001, but it varies from *wartel* to *wartel*.

TIME

Indonesia has three time zones. Western Indonesia time (Sumatra, Java, West and Central Kalimantan) is seven hours ahead of GMT, central Indonesia time (Bali, South and East Kalimantan, Sulawesi and Nusa Tenggara) is eight hours ahead, and east Indonesia time (Maluku and Irian Jaya) is nine hours ahead.

TOILETS

Public toilets are extremely rare except in bus and train stations. Expect to have to dive into restaurants and hotels frequently.

Indonesian toilets are basically holes in the ground with footrests on either side, although Western-style toilets are becoming more common. To flush the toilet, reach for that plastic scoop, take water from the tank and flush it away.

TOURIST INFORMATION

The usefulness of tourist offices varies greatly from place to place. Those in places that attract lots of tourists, like Bali or Yogyakarta, provide good maps and information, while offices in the less-visited areas may have nothing to offer at all. Wherever you are, signs are not always in English; look for *dinas pariwisata* (tourist office).

The Indonesian **Directorate General of Tourism** (Map p170; ☎ 021-383 8000; www.tourismindonesia.com; Jl Merdeka Barat 16-19, Jakarta) has its headquarters in Jakarta, but it is really more of a coordinating body than a helpful source of information.

Often a really clued-up guesthouse owner or travel agent is the best source of tourist information.

TRAVELLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Laws covering the disabled date back to 1989, but Indonesia has very few dedicated programmes, and is a difficult destination for those with limited mobility. Bali, with its wide range of tourist facilities, and Java are the easiest destinations to navigate.

VISAS

Most Western nationalities (including those from Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK, the US and most European countries, plus China and India) qualify for a 30-day Visa on Arrival (US\$25) at the main points of entry; for a full list of these consult www.indonesianembassy.org.uk.

At the time of research getting a 60-day visa could be extremely problematic. From a Western nation this required a bank statement, proof of exit, sufficient funds (at least US\$1500) and even a letter from an employer stating that you were planning to return to your home country, and other – frankly absurd – official requirements.

On the other hand, those seeking a 60-day visa in some Asian countries, including Malaysia and Singapore, were not being asked for all these, usually just proof of funds and an onward ticket.

Mercifully, at the time of writing the Indonesian vice president had signalled a change of policy and announced a four-month visa was to be introduced. But, being Indonesia, this may or may not happen; you should check one of the embassy websites (see p336) for the latest.

Tourist passes are not extendable. If you do overstay you may be lucky and get charged the official US\$20 per day, but then again an immigration official may decide not to let you board your flight. The maximum penalty for an overstay of 60 days is a five-year prison sentence!

Indonesia requires that your passport is valid for six months following your date of arrival.

Travel Permits

Technically, if you're heading to Aceh, Papua or parts of Maluku, you should obtain a *surat jalan* (special permit) from the Indonesian Immigration Office. It rarely translates to necessity though, but checking with your nearest Indonesian embassy before you go is wise.

VOLUNTEERING

Volunteering opportunities are pretty thin on the ground unless you prebook through one of the large NGOs or gap-year organisations.

Yudi Sujana's excellent homestay programme (see p182), based in the west Javan town of Cianjur, offers travellers the opportunity to help out with English teaching in schools, and has contacts with local development projects.

The **Orangutan Foundation** (www.orangutan.co.uk) offers six-week programmes for volunteers (£600 per person) in Kalimantan. In Sumatra, **Orangutan Health** (www.orangutan-health.org) also welcomes volunteers (two-week programme US\$1289). Neither programme offers direct contact with the apes themselves – volunteers help out with field work and construction.

WOMEN TRAVELLERS

Indonesia is predominantly a Muslim society and though it is male oriented, the sexes are not as divided here compared with many other Islamic nations. It's easy to strike up conversations with Indonesian women, and you'll see women on the streets and working in offices.

Travelling alone is considered an oddity – women travelling alone, even more of an oddity – and it is certainly tougher-going for a woman travelling alone in isolated regions.

Some women invent a husband, who they are ‘meeting soon’. A wedding ring can also be a good idea, while a photo of you and your ‘partner’ also works well.

Plenty of Western women travel in Indonesia either alone or in pairs – most seem to enjoy the country and its people, and get through the place without any problems.

Dressing modestly can help you avoid being harassed.

Be prepared for plenty of male attention in places like Kuta, the Gili islands and parts of Sumatra, where local self-styled gigolos are renowned for their charm and flattery (and thirst for your cash).

As ever the Lonely Planet Thorn Tree forum is a superb resource for female travellers (even if we do say so ourselves); if you’ve any questions or concerns check out <http://thorntree.lonelyplanet.com>.