

INDONESIA



Bhinneka Tunggal Ika (Unity in diversity)

- ✓ A vast archipelago stretching for over 5,000 kilometres and encompassing more than 17,000 islands, Indonesia is diverse and fascinating. Its appeal includes traditional cultures, rich volcanic beauty, tropical beaches and imaginative arts and architecture.
- ✓ Bali's beaches, easygoing air and warm hospitality have long made it a delightful holiday destination. Its interior is lush and green with vast terraced rice fields. Its strong artistic heritage is evidenced by exquisite batik paintings and intricate wood carvings. Lombok is less well-known and unique in its Sasak heritage and culture.
- ✓ Java plays host not only to the famous Borobudur Temple, an architectural wonder and UNESCO World Heritage Site, but also highland retreats, tea plantations, volcanoes and scenic mountain passes.
- ✓ Sulawesi's forested heart protects the regency of Tana Toraja where hanging graves and cliffs displaying ancestral sculptures are a vital element of the death-venerating culture.
- ✓ Hidden Balliem Valley in West Papua has traditional Dani villages and precarious dangling footbridges crafted entirely from natural twine.
- ✓ Sumatra's wild volcanic landscape offers plenty of options for trekking while its vast crater lake, Lake Toba, provides a spectacular backdrop for a few days' relaxing on the island of Palau Samosir.
- ✓ Kalimantan is Indonesia's portion of the island of Borneo. Orangutans and proboscis monkeys may be viewed from traditional boats weaving through the waters of the Tanjung Puting National Park. Komodo dragons are the stars on Komodo and Rinca, two of the very few islands where these massive lizards live in the wild.



Capital
Jakarta



Population
262 million



Language
Bahasa
Indonesia



Time Zone
Western islands +07:00
Central islands +08:00
Eastern islands +09:00



Electricity
220v, 50Hz.



Currency
Rupiah



DANCE & THEATRE

Indonesian dance is closely associated with rituals for exorcising spirits, ceremonial rites of passage for birth, circumcision and death, and celebrating various agricultural events. Traditional and folk dances are varied and include Javanese classical dance which is calm, controlled and subtle, while Balinese dance is energetic and ranges from comic to serious.

Wayang kulit, the tradition of shadow puppetry, is a fascinating spectacle, with powerful spiritual overtones for the audience. Puppets are believed to possess spiritual power, and the shadow puppet master is seen as a quasi-mystical figure. Indonesian traditional music includes gamelan and keroncong. Dangdut is a popular contemporary genre of pop music that draws influence from Arabic, Indian, and Malay folk music.

ETIQUETTE

'Adat' or custom determines Indonesian lifestyle. This is the unwritten code of traditional behaviour that is found in every city, town, village and farm. It is not a part of a religion, but it contains rules of conduct for almost every situation. All Indonesians practice some form of adat and it has an influence on their core customs and behaviours.

- For both men and women, it is advisable to cover your shoulders and wear knee-length skirts or trousers, unless you are in a very touristy beach area.
- You should never touch anybody's head intentionally as it is regarded as a particularly holy part of the body.
- Shoes should be taken off before entering someone's house or a mosque.
- The Balinese eat with their right hand, as the left is impure, a common belief throughout Indonesia. The Balinese do not hand, receive things or wave at anyone with their left hand

PEOPLE

With over 200 million inhabitants, Indonesia contains an astonishing diversity of people, with more than 300 ethnic groups and 250 distinct languages. Broadly speaking, four population groups have migrated to Indonesia over the centuries: the Negritos, the Australoids, the Proto-Malays and the Deutro-Malays. The Chinese are among Indonesia's most recent immigrants, and although they are a tiny minority, they are an important part of society and control a large portion of Indonesia's wealth. The main ethnic groups today are the Javanese, followed by the Sundanese, Madurese and coastal Malays. Among other groups such as the Dayaks in Kalimantan and the Irianese who live in very remote areas, there are some people that may never have seen a foreigner.

RELIGION

Four of the world's major religions of the world are found in Indonesia – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. At the turn of the century, over 80 percent of the Indonesian population were Muslims, the rest were Protestants, Roman Catholics, Hindus and Buddhist. Freedom of religion is defined by the first principle of the state philosophy, Pancasila, which upholds a 'belief in one supreme God'.



When to Go

SEASONS

Generally the best time to visit this beautiful enchanting country is in the dryer months of May to September.

Indonesia's impressive chain of tropical islands has a dry season which lasts from May to September and marks the time the country receives its most foreign visitors. The rainy season occurs from October to April. For more remote islands it is best to check local weather sources as the monsoon shifts.

WEATHER

Indonesia's dry season is characterised by generally warm to hot tropical sunny weather with occasional afternoon rain showers which typically don't last longer than an hour or two. In the rainy season the afternoon showers can last up to four to five hours bringing with it surges of water that can flood some areas. The weather in mountainous and highland areas experience cooler weather than the heat of lower coastal areas in both seasons.

WHAT TO BRING

Light clothes for this hot tropical climate are a must. Plenty of undergarments and socks as well as walking shoes for any adventures like temple viewing or jungle treks. Be advised that many places require long conservative dress for holy sites. A light sweater or jacket is also advisable for air-conditioned transportation or highland areas.

ADDITIONAL REMARKS

The rainy season can also be a good time to visit Indonesia to beat the crowds and bask in discount prices as the actual temperatures are nearly the same year round and the rainy season hosts an abundance of sun. However be advised of transportation issues to remote areas, and strong ocean currents created by rainy season afternoon storms that can cause dangerous conditions for inter-island boat travel.

Customs & Traditions

ART & ARCHITECTURE

Indonesia has a great variety of folk and classical arts, all of which are an integral part of traditional life and have been influenced by very different foreign cultures over the years including the ancient Indian and Chinese civilisations. The two main branches of traditional Indonesian art form are the old Malay traditions in the remote interiors of Sumatra and Borneo, and the Javanese and Balinese art forms based on Hindu stories of the Mahabharata and Ramayana. Balinese art and architecture is heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist temple art. Balinese sculpture and painting originated as temple decoration, though they later became art forms in their own right. Today, Bali is a centre of arts and crafts, producing exquisite sculptures, paintings, textiles, woodcarvings and intricate silver and gold jewellery.

