

INDONESIA

The Insiders' Guide



From the jungles of Sumatra and the beaches of Bali to the surf breaks of Lombok, Sumba and Sumbawa, discover the best of Indonesia.

Welcome!

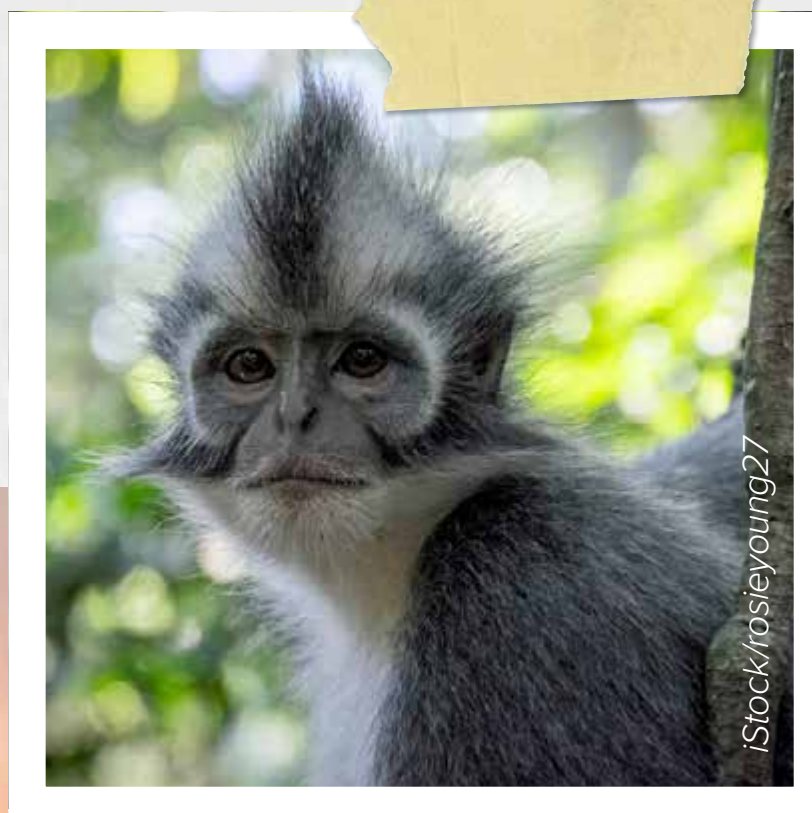
Whether you're searching for secluded surf breaks, mountainous terrain and rainforest hikes, or looking for a cultural surprise, you've come to the right place. Indonesia has more than 18,000 islands to discover, more than 250 religions (only six of which are recognised), thousands of adventure activities, as well as fantastic food. Skip the luxury, packaged tours and make your own way around Indonesia with our Insider's tips.



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10 Unique Experiences in Indonesia



Take a jungle trek in Gunung Leuser National Park, Sumatra
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Hike to the top of Mt. Batur to see the sunrise, Bali

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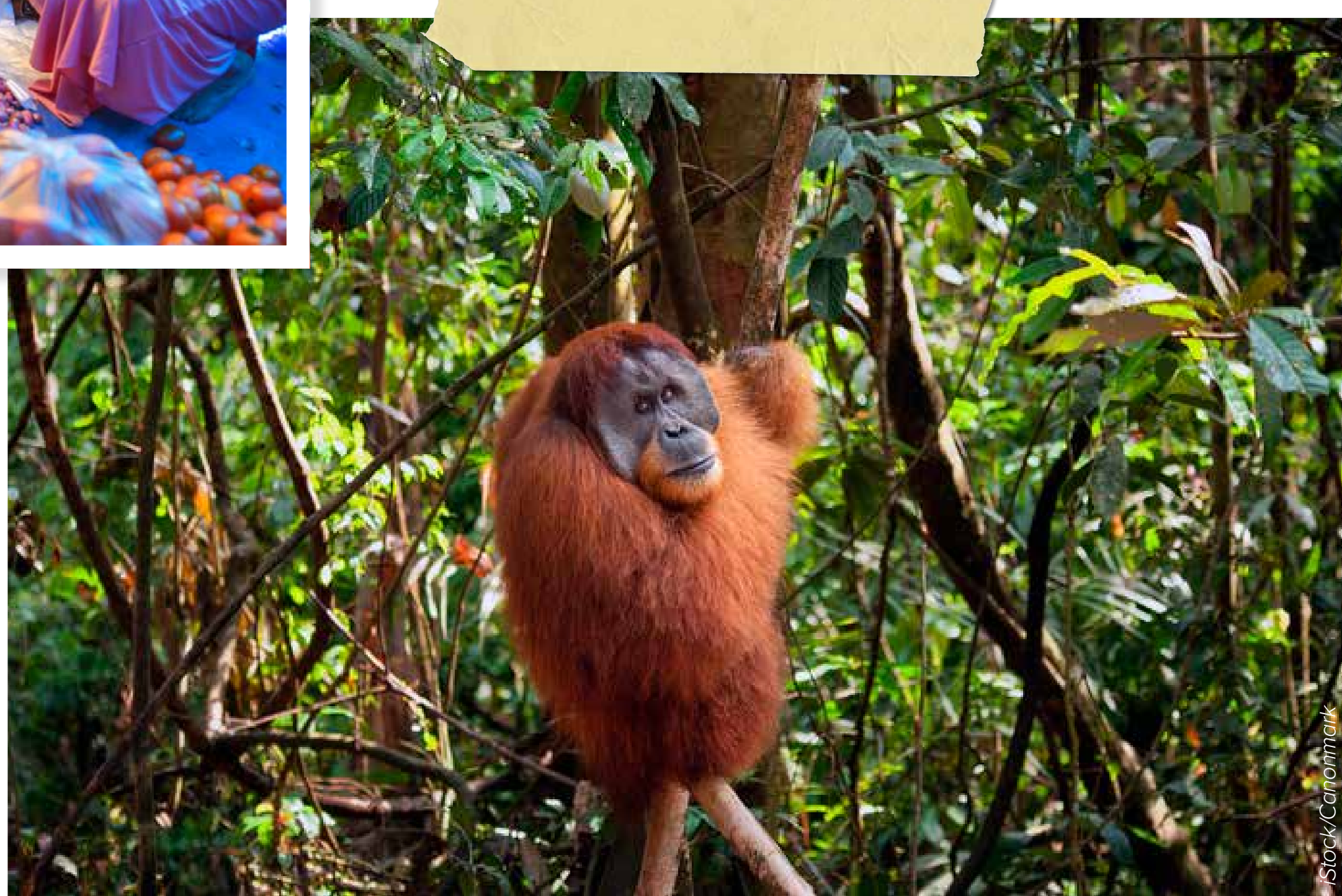
See the world's largest lizards in the wild, Komodo Island

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Try a cooking class and sample the flavors of Indonesia

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See primates at play in Tanjung Puting National Park, Kalimantan

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Island-hop around the Nusa & Gili islands

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Explore the volcanic landscapes of Dieng Plateau, Java

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Scuba dive in the Raja Ampat archipelago, West Papua

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Witness the cultural rituals of Tana Toraja, South Sulawesi

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Surf's Up at Desert Point, Lombok

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Where to Stay

As far as accommodation goes, you dream it, Indonesia has it.

You can rent a hammock, a private poolside villa in the rice paddies or a bed on a catamaran out at sea. While there are plenty of hotels, backpackers and resorts in the main tourist areas, beyond these, don't expect accommodation to be of a high standard, although it will usually be clean and owned by friendly locals.

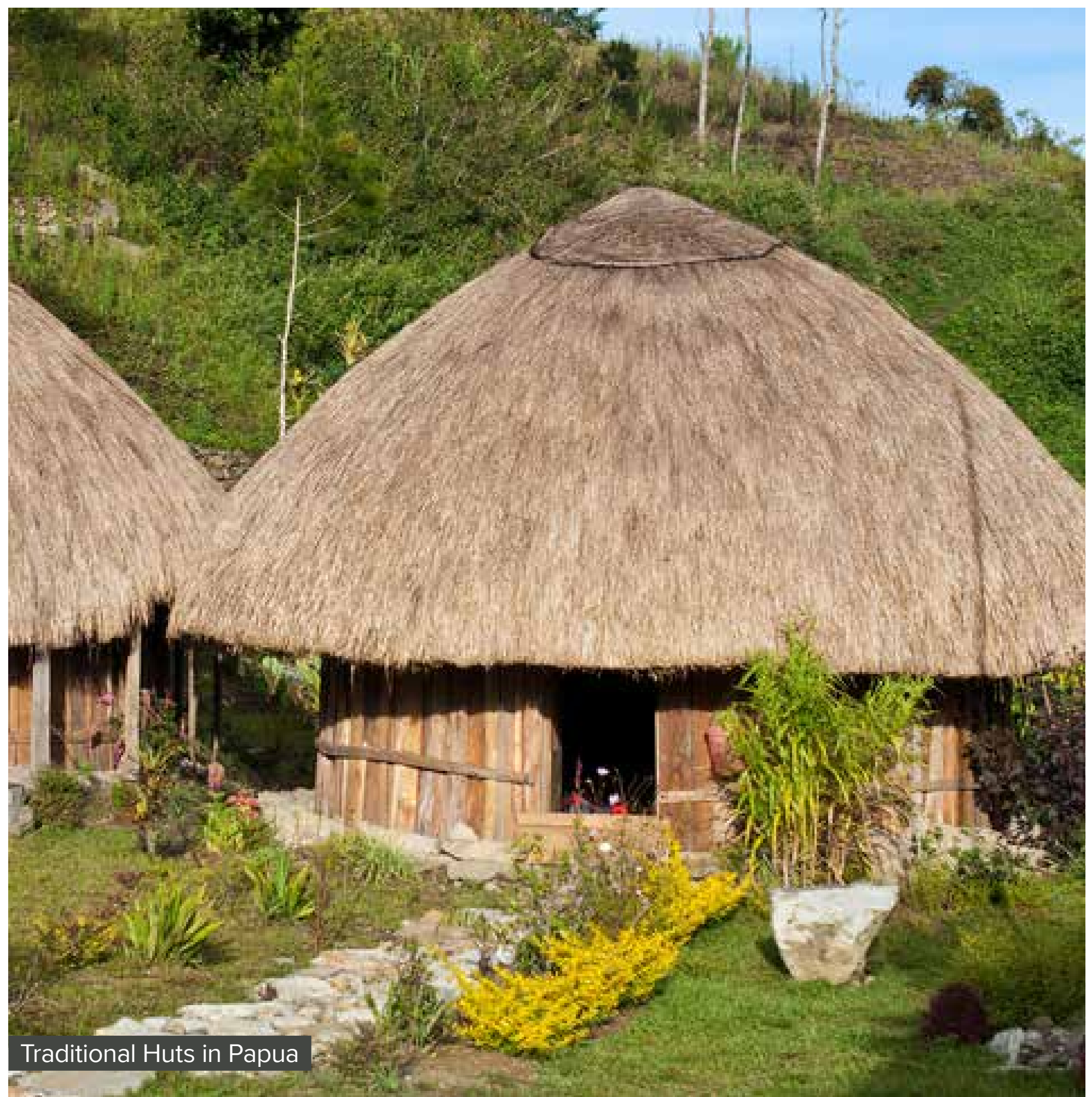
Homestays

While the traditional Indonesian *Losman* (inn) is becoming scarce in Bali, you can find very cheap basic lodging nearly everywhere else. Homestays in villages (known as *penginapan*) are common, and one of the best things about staying in a



Jack McEvoy

Colorful house in Kampung Pelangi



Traditional Huts in Papua

istock/gaagys

family-run place is the opportunity to meet local people and get a glimpse of village life. You will get a bed, but not always your own room, and food is often included. Don't expect air-conditioning or internet access. Be aware of cultural sensitivities, dress appropriately and be respectful of local customs. <https://www.homestay.com/indonesia> has more than 5,000 options.

Camping

While camping in national parks might be included in some trekking options, outside of these areas, camping isn't something people do in Indonesia, probably because budget accommodation is so cheap. However, glamping (luxury camping) is becoming popular, and <https://www.glamping.com> has several options.

“One of the best things about staying in a family-run place is the opportunity to meet local people and get a glimpse of village life.”

Villas

Renting villas is popular, particularly on Bali. Many are set among rice fields and come with a pool and staff, a cook or driver and more, and are not always very environmentally friendly. However, do your research and you'll find there are villa owners who are using and reusing water sensibly, have solar panels and bio sewage treatment to try to minimize their impact on the environment.

Surf and Scuba

With surfing a popular reason to visit Indonesia, you'll find inexpensive surf camps wherever there is a decent wave. Usually, basic wooden structures on stilts with a small deck, they are a good place to base yourself for some ocean action, and to meet other surfers. Check out <https://booksurfcamps.com>.

Scuba divers can choose from accommodation on the coast or live aboard boats. *Phinisis* (traditional wooden fishing boats), range from



Traditional village in Tana Toraja, Sulawesi

istock/fbxx

basic to luxurious, and tour companies offer stays from one night to several, depending on the destination. Try <https://www.liveaboard.com/>

Check for the best prices and read traveler reviews online at sites including <https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/>, <https://www.hostelworld.com/>, or <https://www.booking.com>.



Jack McEvoy

Handy Phrases for Travelers

Indonesians across the archipelago speak a plethora of local dialects, but are united by the common language, Bahasa Indonesia.

From Bali to Jakarta, to Sumba or Borneo, you'll want to be able to get by – or at least amuse the locals – with a few phrases.

Let's start with good stuff. Bali is *"bagus"* and *"baik"*, both meaning good. That fried rice or *nasi goreng* you're eating is *"enak"* (delicious).

Be sure to mind your Ps and Qs throughout the country by saying *"silahkan"* (please) and *"terima kasih"* (thank you, sounds like 'tear up my car seat'). Also on the manners front, *"ma'af"* is sorry and *"permissi"* is excuse me.

Finally, while no means no in most languages, *"tidak"* means no in Bahasa, and yes is *"ya."*

Getting Around

Transportation in Indonesia is as diverse as the country's terrain, but you're mostly likely to arrive from overseas by flying to Bali (Denpasar) or Jakarta. From these major hubs, you can get to most destinations by plane, car or boat.

Flying

Domestic air travel is often cheaper and much, much easier than traveling overland or by boat. For example, to get to Lombok from Bali by boat you can expect to sit in traffic for one to three hours to get to the port, then take a two-hour speed boat or 12-hour ferry ride across the Lombok Strait, and still have a long drive to your final destination. Or, you can take a 20-minute flight.

If possible, choose Garuda Indonesia over budget airlines, like Lion Air or Indonesian Air Asia. Both are notoriously late and frequently cancel flights without notice. Garuda also carries surfboards for free on domestic flights!

Motorbikes and scooters

Once at your destination, many travelers like to rent a self-drive motorbike or scooter to get around. Although scootering was once a favorite pastime in Bali, today the heavily trafficked streets can make riding extremely stressful, not to



Colorful cars in Yogyakarta town square

Jack McEvoy

mention very dangerous.

Hiring a driver with an air-conditioned vehicle for a day – or week – is the best option for inexperienced motorbike riders, or for longer journeys – especially if you split the costs (and carbon emissions) with fellow travelers.

Driving a hire car in Bali isn't recommended due to the traffic and confusing street layouts. If you are comfortable on a motorbike, a safer (and often more enjoyable) course of action is to rent one just to use in your local area, say in Canggu or the Bukit Peninsula, and hire a driver to take you on journeys that are more than 20 to 30 minutes away.

Hiring a driver

On islands other than Bali, where there is less traffic, hiring a scooter or a car with driver are both viable

Public holidays and disruption to travel

During Ramadan (May/June), the Muslim holiday, and the week immediately after, many Indonesian families travel, and accommodation can be scarce.

Bali also has its share of holidays that can affect traffic and accommodation availability, including Nyepi Day (March) where everyone – visitors and locals alike – must stay inside for 24 hours.

Climate and Weather

With so many islands to choose from, when is the best time to go?

Although it varies throughout the country, monsoon season generally runs from November to March, while the dry season is April to October.

The dry season sees less rain, but more visitors. Rain is heavy during the wet season but not so torrential that the country should be avoided completely. It's not a bad idea to aim for shoulder season, with fewer crowds.

Bali and Kalimantan are relatively unaffected by the seasons, but this changes as you travel further east into the Nusa Tenggara region, where there's a greater chance of flooding in the wet season.



iStock/AsianDream

Tourists arriving to Gili Air

options that won't set you back too much. A scooter often costs as a little as RP. 50,000 (US \$3.60) per day, and a driver and car RP. 350,000 (US \$25) per day.

If you're riding a scooter, always wear a helmet, and make sure you have a motorbike or scooter licence from home, and an Indonesian licence or an International Driver's

Permit valid for the size and type of bike you'll be riding. Without one you are driving illegally and won't be covered by your insurance if you have an accident.

Island hopping by boat

Boat trips are a popular way to surf, dive or explore parts of Indonesia, such as the Mentawais, Komodo Islands or Nusa islands off Bali. Don't take the local ferries or slow boats unless absolutely necessary.

It's better to travel on a fast boat where possible, for safety, convenience, and to avoid sickness.

Cycling and walking

If you're tired of hearing the buzz of motorbikes and gridlock traffic, head to the Gili Islands where walking or cycling are the only ways to get around.



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Motorbike traffic in Yogyakarta

Indonesian Food

Whether you're choking down smoked sago with hunter-gatherer nomads or enjoying fine dining, cooking in Indonesia is never dull.

Coffee plantations

Java is one of the world's top coffee producers, with growers in Bali, Sumatra, Papua and beyond, creating impressive single-estate brews.

Whether in Bali or Java, a coffee plantation tour is a spectacular way to pass the morning. While on the tour, you'll typically see the coffee "cherries" on the plant, watch the different stages of processing (from soaking away the skin and pulp, to sun-drying and roasting), and then taste the finished product.

Cooking classes and foraging for food

As you'd expect of an archipelago with around 18,000 islands and 700 languages, Indonesian food is highly regional, and cooking classes are a great way to discover the flavors.

In remote areas, ask the owner of your guesthouse (or your guide) for their recommendation. On Sulawesi, learn to cook tangy, spicy Minahasa food in bamboo, or try foraging for a rice-field salad in the terraces around Payangan, outside Ubud. The thrill of discovery, as your guide



Street Food Vendor in Jakarta

iStock/zdebalta

points out edibles hidden in the jungle, is unforgettable.

Foodies will love Bali. Street food chef Will Meyrick offers cooking classes that include a market tour, and a memorable street food and culture tour of Bali's less-visited capital, Denpasar. At Bali Asli Restaurant and Cooking School, Penelope Williams works with local fishermen, farmers and foragers to offer immersive, all-day culinary experiences.

Ubud Village Plate can connect travelers with local families for cooking classes, and the prepared food is then shared together. All the families in the program have different skills and expertise to share, and each village has its own unique heritage.

Embrace street food

From rat on a stick to the succulent flavor of babi guling (roast sucking

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Whether in Bali or Java, a coffee plantation tour is a spectacular way to pass the morning.”

pig) fresh from the spit, Indonesia tempts the adventurous with its myriad flavors.

At a typical streetside *warung* (family restaurant) you can eat for a dollar, feast for two dollars, and make new friends for free. You will learn to love chili – *sambal hijau* (green chili sauce) is a good place to start – IndoMie noodles, the breakfast of champions, and *sate* (*grilled meat*), which comes in almost infinite variations across the islands.

Savor Indonesia's many flavors

One type of food you'll find everywhere is Padang, which originates in Sumatra but has Arabic and Indian influences. This translates into rich curries – beef rendang, the smooth curry with intense caramelized coconut flavors, is a Padang signature – served with oodles of *sambal* and rice.

Java, which has a larger



Vegetables and fruits for sale in Jakarta

iStock/Nikada

population than Japan, has a range of distinct cooking styles. In Yogyakarta, look out for *gudeg*, a mild, sweet coconut-jackfruit curry; *rawon*, a thick black beef soup with intense umami flavors from the kluwak nut, is a Surabaya speciality; and *Madura sate*, which is famous for its tasty peanut sauce.

Further afield, Maluku has some excellent fish dishes, Makassar in South Sulawesi is a culinary destination for soups and seafoods, while Hindu Bali's many ceremonies fuel a rich source of dishes that focus on pork.

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Why You Shouldn't Support the Kopi Luwak Trade

Please don't support the *kopi luwak* (or civet coffee) trade. Traditionally, *kopi luwak* was produced by wild palm civets (small mammals), which chose the finest and ripest cherries (or coffee fruit) as part of their mixed diet, then pooped out the pits or beans to produce a mellow, balanced coffee flavour. Today, civets – intelligent, sensitive animals that love to roam – are caged and fed only coffee beans. It's cruel and it makes (literally) crap coffee.



Picking coffee beans, Java

iStock/musicphonel

Cultural Etiquette

Be mindful of traditional customs and traditions throughout Indonesia. With more than 250 religions, many sacred religious sites, and multiple festivals throughout the year, here's how to avoid causing offence.

Whether it's your first or 40th trip to Indonesia, you'll find that the locals love asking questions and learning about your life. Don't be offended if they pry: "are you married?," "how many children do you have?," "where are you going?," "where are you staying?" Respond politely and go on your way; this is a typical way to greet a person throughout Indonesia.

Dress appropriately

Always dress appropriately for the island and the activity. This means covering your shoulders, wearing



Melasti Day in Bali

iStock/LP7

sarongs in temples, and leaving beach attire at the beach. It also means dressing modestly when visiting predominantly Muslim islands.

Saving face

People in Indonesia embarrass easily, and it's considered very rude to deliberately embarrass someone. This might include raising your voice or making accusations. Problems should be solved in private, not on the street. Ego-based or emotional outbursts are inappropriate.

Cultural sensitivities

Religion plays a large role in Indonesian life and values. The history of religion in Indonesia is fascinating, complex, and difficult to fully understand. You might not comprehend what's going on, just be respectful of its customs.

“People in Indonesia embarrass easily, and it's considered very rude to deliberately embarrass someone.”



Borobudur temple

iStock/yaiti12


iStock/yaiti12
Dieng Plateau village, Java

More than 85% of Indonesians identify as Muslim, though their practices differ considerably from the version of Islam practiced in the Middle East. This is because of the rich texture of different religious traditions in the archipelago; from Buddhism and Hinduism, to Chinese Confucianism, European Christianity, Indigenous animism, and ancestor worship practices.

It's considered shameful and impolite for women to wear skimpy clothing, especially in cities like Aceh, home to the Grand Mosque and perhaps the most devout, traditional Muslim city in Indonesia.

Even in cosmopolitan areas like Jakarta and Bali, women wearing shorts, mini-skirts and revealing tops will often be mistaken for prostitutes,

and will get unwanted attention, especially at night.

When entering a mosque, wear long pants, and a long-sleeved shirt, and women should invest in a kerchief, or shawl, to cover their hair.

A man should also never shake hands with a Muslim woman, unless she extends her hand first.

Homosexuality is frowned upon outside of the cosmopolitan cities, so you should avoid overt displays of affection in public. While most Indonesians will be polite enough to mind their own business, you may get strange or nasty looks and hear comments.

While violence against the LGBTQ community is generally rare, it's best to err on the side of caution when visiting Jakarta.

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Sustainable Travel

Contributing to poor waste management, selecting unethical tour operators, and purchasing questionable souvenirs are just some of the poor choices travelers make each day while exploring Indonesia. Make a difference while you travel by following these tips.

Mass tourism impacts

With its volcanic landscapes, diverse marine life, and deep jungles, it's no surprise that Indonesia, particularly Bali, has been a popular destination for decades. The problem is, many places are being spoiled by the high numbers of travelers.

While mass tourism does have a positive impact for locals and the government economically, it has a negative impact on the environment. The impact of overcrowded beaches and attractions, poor waste management, pollution, and development practices are starting to have an impact.

Animal tourism concerns

In several southeast Asian countries, there are many cases where animals are exploited to entice travelers to spend money, from photo opportunities to attractions, and even food. This sinister side to travel, results in many of these animals



being abused and forced to perform against their will.

There are several facilities in Indonesia where photo opportunities are offered with turtles, such as the Turtle Island on Nusa Dua. Avoid these, as many turtles suffer when they are dropped and injured, and are kept in small, barren enclosures.

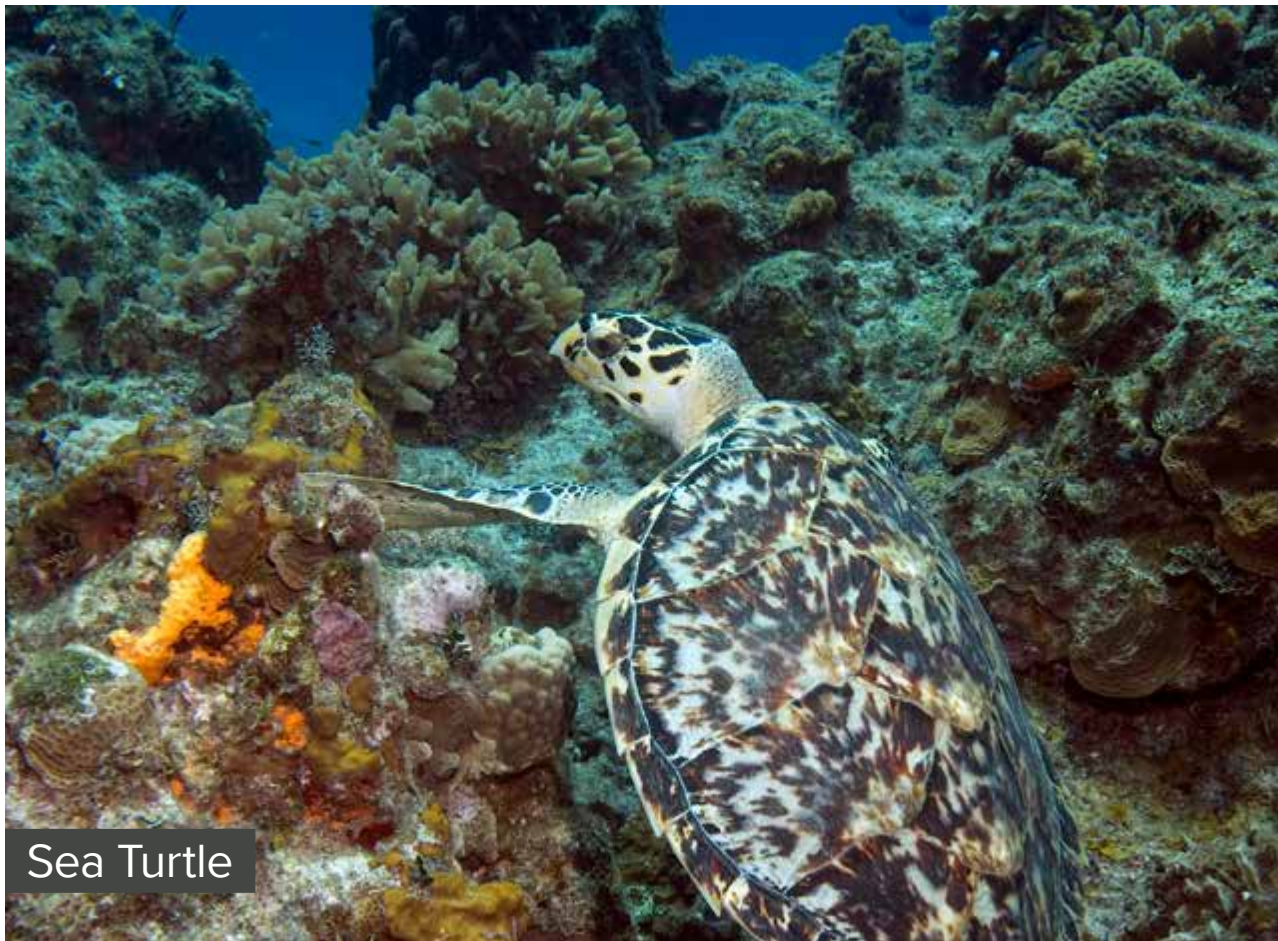
At other attractions, dolphins are kept in harmful conditions and forced to perform tricks for paying audiences. Any time you buy a ticket to an attraction like this, your money is funding the continued cruelty of these animals.

Many of the elephants used in elephant rides are captured illegally from the wild, only to have their spirits broken by their 'owner' and to be treated poorly or abused behind the scenes. Avoid elephant rides at all costs.

Questionable souvenirs

Never buy any souvenirs made

“
While mass tourism does have a positive impact for locals and the government economically, it has a negative impact on the environment.”


 iStock/kkbunker
 Sea Turtle

from animal parts. You could be buying something made from a rare, protected, or illegally trafficked species.

Turtle populations across the world are under pressure from the impacts of climate change, fishing, urban development, pollution, and poaching. Tortoiseshell comes from the shell of a turtle, and Hawksbill turtles are highly prized due to the color and pattern of their shell.

Despite a worldwide ban, stockpiles still exist in Indonesia. Don't buy any souvenirs made from tortoiseshell.

Eat, stay and tour local

It's estimated that 85% of tourism businesses in Bali are owned by foreign operators. So to experience authentic dishes, eat at street stalls, and support local eateries including those that provide staff skill initiatives.

Stay in locally-run accommodation rather than big hotels. Many local hostels are environmentally friendly, and the owners will provide you with local insights.

Choose eco-friendly tour packages which don't exploit animals or people, and give back to the local

community. Research and ask questions; ethical operators will have no hesitation providing information.

Poor waste management

Each year, approximately eight million tons of plastic fills the oceans. Indonesia ranks second in the world for contributing waste, and is home to Citarum River – one of the most polluted rivers in the world.

Traditionally, locals would use banana leaves or other natural resources to wrap food and carry items. After they were done with the wrapping, they'd throw it onto the ground. Now, everyone is using single-use plastic, but the habit of throwing the waste onto the ground hasn't changed, and plastic doesn't decompose.

Limit your contribution to the plastic waste by traveling with cutlery, a filtration water bottle, and a reusable bag.

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Palm Oil Impact: How Travelers Can Help

While wildlife encounters and rainforests are what draw most people to Kalimantan, there's almost a 'see it before it's gone' mentality. Flying into Kalimantan, palm oil trees are planted in perfect rows and stretch as far as the eye can see.

Deforestation has devastated the island's ecosystem, killing an estimated 100,000 orangutans since 1999, with thousands of orphaned orangutans being cared for at rescue centres across the island.

Growing the ecotourism industry in Kalimantan is an important step towards protecting the rainforests, as it provides the local communities with an alternative source of income.

If you want to volunteer during your time in Kalimantan, research local conservation organisations – there are plenty in need of help for projects such as tree planting, community outreach and education programs.

By volunteering, you'll gain insights into daily Indonesian village life, have the privilege of intimately learning about orangutans, and seeing the local conservation efforts in action.

Safety and Scams

Nothing puts a downer on your trip like losing your wallet, passport, camera, or laptop. Here's what you should know before you go.

Crime

Indonesia's crime is largely non-violent. But, what thieves lack in physical aggression, they make up for with cunning ways to separate you from your money, jewelry, personal electronics, and passports.

Common sense rules apply in Indonesia. Always assume that pickpockets will be in crowded areas, and that the stranger striking up a conversation could be trying to scam you or distract you from being robbed. That isn't to say you should avoid chatting to locals – just be on alert, and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

Over the past decade, there have been a number of terrorist attacks on nightclubs, bars and hotels in Bali. These attacks have specifically targeted travelers, so it's important to check your government travel advisory before booking a trip. Terrorism is unlikely to be an issue, make sure you stay informed.

Scooter tips

Minimize the risk of having your valuables stolen by placing them under the seat compartment



Jack McEvoy

(if available) or put your bag in between your feet. Avoid using sling style bags, as would-be thieves can easily grab it, causing you to be knocked over and injured.

If you're riding a rented motorcycle or scooter, always wear a helmet, and you must have a license to ride in your home country and an Indonesian licence or an International Driver's Permit valid for the size and type of bike you'll be riding. Without one you are driving illegally and won't be covered by your insurance if you have an accident.

Train tips

Don't use the "ekonomi" class trains if you're worried about your belongings being stolen. Most travelers use the "ekonomi AC" class trains, while others use the

“Always assume that pickpockets will be in crowded areas, and that the stranger striking up a conversation could be trying to scam you.”

overcrowded non-air-conditioned ones. Always hold your bags in front of you, and don't keep anything valuable in your pockets.

Bus tips

Hold your bags in front of you. Don't let the distractions on the bus (musical performers, magic shows) take your mind off your belongings. Minimize the amount of luggage you travel with so you have fewer things to keep an eye on and for potential thieves to steal.

Taxi tips

Make sure the windows are closed and the doors are locked. People may walk or ride up to your window at a stoplight, reach into the cab, grab a bag from your lap, and get away before you can do anything about it.

Hotel taxis are often the most reliable. If you're going out late at night, consider paying the taxi driver to wait for you. Blue Bird Taxiku, Express, Dian Taksi and Taxicab are the four most reliable servicers in Jakarta and throughout Javanese cities.

Ask your taxi driver, "argo?" to determine if he has a meter. If he says no, or if he says "tidak," find another taxi – he's trying to scam you.

Bajaj (three-wheeler scooter transport) shouldn't cost more than 5,000 Rp. If your driver tries to charge more, move on.

Police corruption

Policemen in Indonesia are paid meager wages, which they sometimes try to supplement by intimidating travelers with made-up offenses, that disappear with a bribe. The best way to get out of this situation is to smile, nod, pretend you don't understand, and politely ask for them to write up an official citation. If the policeman is dishonest, he'll walk away.

Drug trafficking

Indonesian police are cracking down on all drug-related crimes. Visitors to the Bali or Jakarta airports are greeted with a sign saying, "DEATH TO DRUG TRAFFICKERS." This extends to drug users as well.

Avoid drugs. You've been warned.

“**Hotel taxis are often the most reliable. If you're going out late at night, consider paying the taxi driver to wait for you.**”



Flooding on the streets en route to Semarang

Jack McEvoy

Visas & Vaccinations

Before you get too far into planning an extended journey around Indonesia, find out how long your visa will last before you need to pay for an extension, and what vaccinations you will need to travel with peace of mind.

Visas

Show a passport from one of 140 countries given free entry into Indonesia, and you'll be granted 30 days on arrival without paying a Rupiah.

Keep in mind this visa is non-extendable, so if you foresee lingering longer than a month, pay US \$35 for 30 days plus the option to extend, one time only, for another 30.

If your passport is not from one of the 140 countries (listed here: <http://www.indonesia.travel/au/en/before-you-go/visa-immigration>), you must apply for a visa before you arrive in Indonesia.

Vaccinations

There isn't a Yellow Fever risk in Indonesia, however if you're traveling to Indonesia from a Yellow Fever endemic country, you will need proof of vaccination before entering.

Stay up to date with your travel vaccinations, including: Hepatitis A and B, Measles, Typhoid, Tetanus, and Cholera.

If you've been bitten by a street dog in Bali, seek medical assistance immediately, even if you have been immunized against rabies. If rabies is suspected, your travel insurance can help cover the cost of the series of injections you may need, and our emergency assistance team can direct you to the nearest doctor or hospital to get you the help you need.

Health and Hygiene

Bali Belly strikes thousands of travelers each year, with the worst cases being hospitalized. Caused by bacteria, it's often contracted via contaminated food and water, or by not practising good hygiene. Seek medical help if symptoms (diarrhea, dehydration, cramping, occasional vomiting) appear, as you may need a dose of antibiotics to kill it.

Don't drink the local tap water, even when brushing your teeth. Make sure your food is cooked thoroughly before eating. Only eat fruit or vegetables that you can wash and peel yourself. Avoid ice cubes or crushed ice in drinks, as this is often made using non-filtered water. Keep some anti-diarrhea medication in your first-aid kit.

Avoid black henna tattoos in Bali, particularly around Kuta. The ink contains dye which produces severe skin reactions, including blistering and scars. Some vendors will also add pen ink, boot polish, and kerosene to the ink. If you do plan to get a temporary tattoo, seek out a traditional henna artist who uses the reddish-brown ink.

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Don't drink the local tap water, even when brushing your teeth. Make sure your food is cooked thoroughly before eating.



SUMATRA and Kalimantan

Swap Bali for jungle treks to spot orangutans in Kalimantan, tubing through whitewater rapids in Sumatra, and sharing a smile with the friendly locals.

Sumatra

The largest island in Indonesia, Sumatra is a fantastic destination for authentic cultural experiences and adventures.

Bukit Lawang

Bukit Lawang is a small village, in the heart of Gunung Leuser National Park, on the banks of the Bahorok River, in North Sumatra. It became popular with visitors after an orangutan rehabilitation center was opened here in 1973. Soon after, in spite of the winding five-hour drive from the Sumatran capital, Medan, travelers started to come to the village to spot the semi-wild orangutans who live in the national park.

Today, Bukit Lawang is a bustling tourist village with many hotels, restaurants, and handicraft shops. It's also the base for many of the orangutan treks which leave daily, so it's easy to book a tour.

Tip: There are no ATMs in Bukit



Female orangutan

iStock/USO



Bukit Lawang village, Sumatra

iStock/mazzur

Lawang, so make sure to get money out in Medan.

Trekking to see orangutans

Treks to see Sumatran orangutans are the main drawcard for travelers visiting Sumatra. Once widespread in Indonesia, there are now less than 15,000 Sumatran orangutans left in the wild.

Classified as critically endangered, orangutans are on the edge of extinction due to rainforest deforestation to allow for palm oil plantations and an illegal black-market trade.

Thanks to the work of the Sumatran Orangutan Conservation Programme, the orangutans who call Gunung Leuser National Park home are protected.

Many tour companies in Bukit Lawang offer one-day or multi-day

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Classified as critically endangered, orangutans are on the edge of extinction due to rainforest deforestation from the palm oil plantations and an illegal black-market trade.

SUMATRA AND KALIMANTAN

orangutan treks. When choosing a tour operator, look for eco-friendly companies that don't feed the orangutans, and follow the “leave no trace” principles of trekking.

Most of the orangutans you'll see are semi-wild, but you may get lucky and spot a wild one. While many orangutans will beg for food, it's vital you don't feed the animals.

Jungle trekking and river rafting

Orangutans aren't the only animals you'll spot in the jungle of Gunung Leuser National Park. It's also home to Thomas's leaf monkeys, macaques and gibbons. While extremely rare to spot, Sumatran tigers, Javan rhinoceros and Sumatran elephants, also live here.

To explore the beauty of the rainforest, book a multi-day jungle trek; you'll see a lot more orangutans, and have a better chance of spotting other wildlife, like monkeys, birds, lizards, and more. The further you trek into the lush jungle, the more it comes alive with birds and insects.

During multi-day jungle treks, you'll camp beside the trails and the river in a tent. Your guides will provide water and home-cooked food throughout the trek. Be prepared to eat lots of fresh tropical fruit!

Most tour companies offer camping along the Bahorok River in tents, with gear provided by the tour company, before returning to Bukit Lawang by river tube (inflatable rings that float on the water).

The guides tie the large rubber



Bukittinggi, Sumatra

iStock/DavorLovinc

tubes together and guide you through the small whitewater rapids. While it takes about six hours to reach your jungle camp on foot, it only takes about 20 minutes to return by river tube.

Cultural experiences

Locals in Northern Sumatra, especially in Bukit Lawang, are very friendly. The village thrives on tourism and many locals speak good English. Sumatra is primarily a Muslim island, so it's important to dress conservatively and respect local religious customs.

Many tour companies in Bukit Lawang and elsewhere offer cultural tours to local villages to see the farming of brown sugar, tofu, rice, and rubber. The village women will demonstrate how they weave bamboo for their houses, and don't miss the chance to visit the local markets for fresh produce, handicrafts, and more.

“

To explore the beauty of the rainforest, book a multi-day jungle trek

Kalimantan

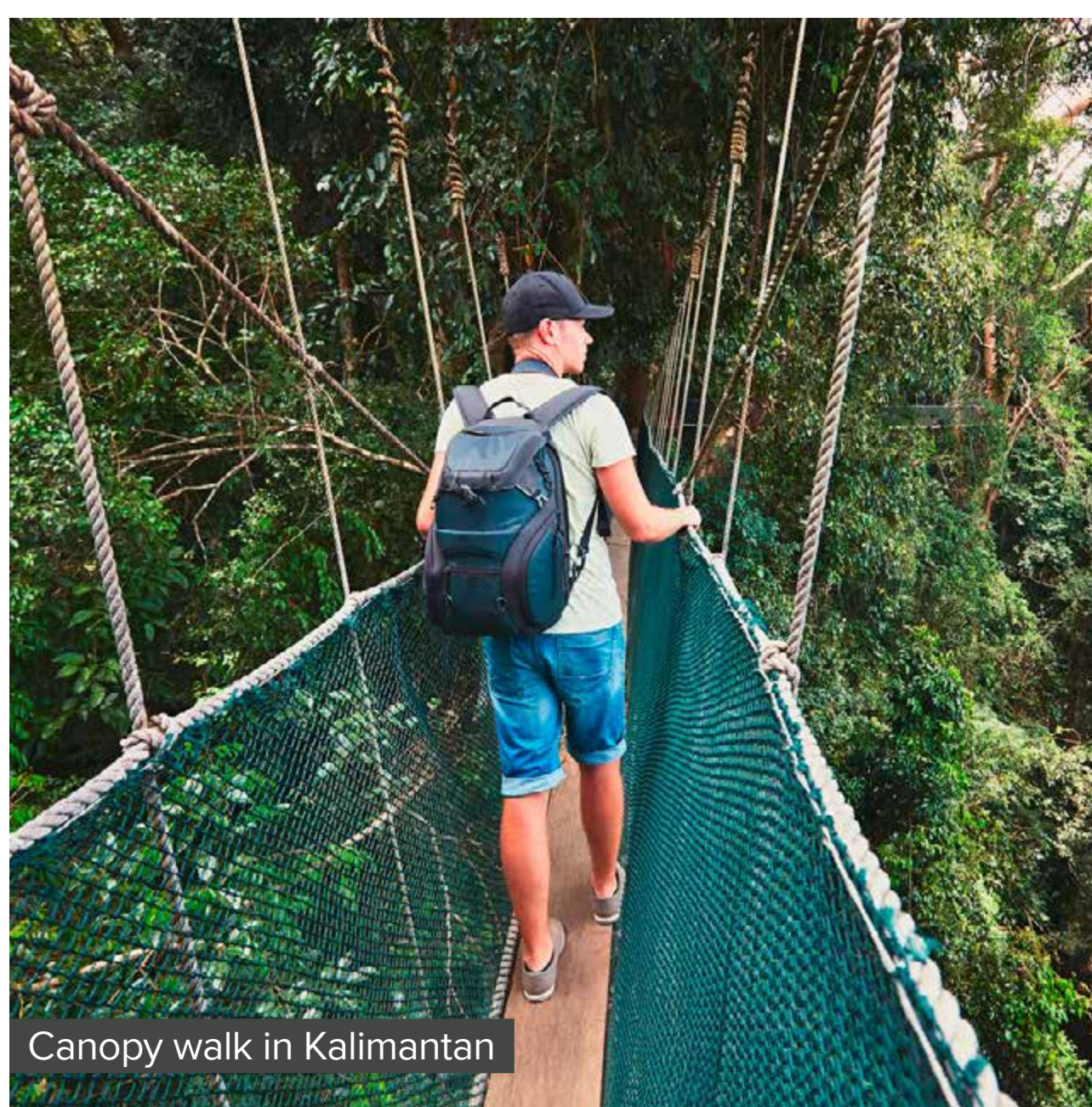
Venture to the Kalimantan, on the island of Borneo, to see Indonesia's epic jungle and diverse wildlife.

Tanjung Puting National Park

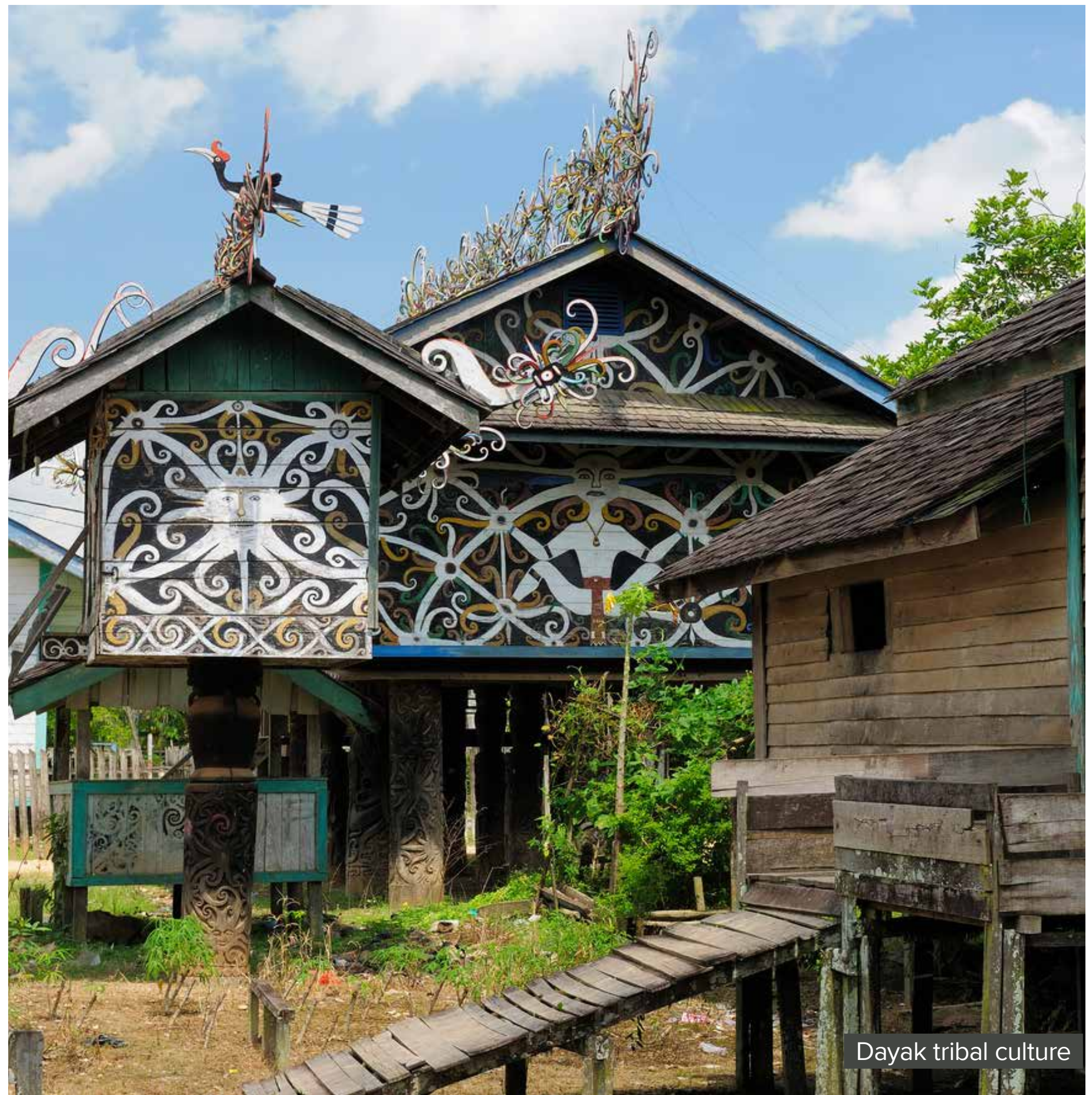
No trip to Kalimantan would be complete without glimpsing orangutans in the wild. Tanjung Puting National Park in Central Kalimantan offers one of the best opportunities to see the primates at play.

Board a *klotok* (a traditional wooden house boat) and make your way up the Sekonyer River to the famed Camp Leakey research camp, where you're almost guaranteed to see wild orangutans swinging through the trees. Working to protect and study the orangutans in their natural habitat, Camp Leakey offers an insight into how dedicated the staff are about preserving the land and native species.

Other great alternatives are Gunung Palung National Park in West



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Kalimantan and Kutai National Park in East Kalimantan; both of which have populations of wild orangutans.

The tribes of Kalimantan

The indigenous people of Kalimantan are known as the Dayak, a name that encompasses many different tribal groups. Community is at the heart of the Dayak way of life and this is evident in the wooden longhouses that the Dayaks traditionally live in.

Rising off the ground on wooden poles, entire communities live under the same roof and these longhouses are found throughout the island. The riverside town of Putussibau in West Kalimantan is the best place to travel upriver to spend time in an authentic Dayak village.

Living in one of the most biodiverse regions in the world, it's no surprise that the Dayak

Selecting sustainable tours in Kalimantan

Kalimantan is facing major exploitation of its natural resources, due to palm oil plantations, and mining. To do your part to protect the last remaining rainforests, always choose locally run, ethical tour companies that support the local community.

When venturing into the rainforest, don't have physical contact or interaction with the wildlife (including the orangutans), and avoid any tour operators that offer anything along those lines.



Green sea turtle in Derawan, Kalimantan

iStock/fenkieandreas

have co-existed in harmony within the rainforest ecosystem. These custodians of the forest had a fierce reputation in the past as headhunters, although this is one tradition that's no longer upheld.

Hiking in Kalimantan

Kalimantan is a great base for hikes, including the famed cross Borneo trek, for those wishing to unleash their inner explorer. Not for the faint hearted, this hike takes roughly 16 days, covering 559 miles (900 km) from east to west, through the mountainous interior of the island.

If you're seeking a less strenuous alternative, there are many other hikes through the Meratus Mountains in South Kalimantan and Merabu in East Kalimantan.

It's important to be prepared for high humidity and temperatures, as well as leeches and mosquitoes, and to pack a good quality first-aid kit, as medical clinics can be hard to access.

The Derawan Islands

As the second-largest island in the Indonesian archipelago, Kalimantan isn't short of beaches. If it's picture perfect islands, clear waters and teeming marine life that you're after, head to the Derawan Islands off the coast of East Kalimantan.

Accessed by boat from the small town of Berau, the Derawan Islands, which comprise Derawan, Sangalaki, Kakaban, Maratua, Panjung and Samama islands, offer great opportunities to dive with manta rays, as well as the chance to spot nesting green turtles.

Help Protect Orangutans

You'll need to hire a guide to visit any of the national parks in Kalimantan. It's extremely important to remember that orangutans are wild animals and there should be zero interaction with them.

As orangutans share 97% of the same DNA as humans, it's easy to pass respiratory illnesses on to them, so you should always keep your distance.

For safety reasons, stay on the designated paths and visiting areas in the parks, and never eat food around orangutans or offer them any of yours.

WEST PAPUA

Venturing this far east comes with danger and excitement – the kind an explorer would experience upon discovering a place for the first time. For your own safety, please consider your government’s travel advice before deciding to travel to West Papua.

West Papua

Far east on the island of New Guinea, this province of Indonesia is rugged and ready for true adventurers. Go diving in the Raja Ampat archipelago, trek through the dense jungle, and experience a cultural encounter unlike anywhere else on earth.

Wamena

In Wamena, there are several tribal villages to explore in the surrounding countryside. These can be visited in just one day, and one of them is allegedly home to a 300-year-old tribal chieftain mummy. There is also a local fruit and vegetable market.

As you walk along the pavement, watch out for enormous manholes. At night they're hard to spot, but easy to fall into – which can lead to some nasty injuries.

If you're looking for WiFi packages, check out Berkat Cellular. If you don't have any cash or credit cards, go to Bank Rakyat where you can withdraw



Dani Village, Wamena

iStock

sent cash via world Remit.

Most people visit Wamena to arrange a trek through the Baliem Valley. Unless you've got an excellent grasp of Papuan, hire a guide. Expensive guides can be found at the airport, or you can organize a mid-range priced guide through your hotel.

When interviewing potential guides, it's important to have a map, notepad and pen to agree on a fixed route and stop prices fluctuating. Be safe and take the time to get to know who you'll be venturing into Papua's Wild West with.

Tip: Check with your hotel staff to be sure your guide is legit. Some they'll vouch for, others can't be trusted and have a bad reputation around town.

Baliem Valley

There are a variety of routes to choose from through the Baliem

“
Most people visit Wamena to arrange a trek through the Baliem Valley. Unless you've got an excellent grasp of Papuan, hire a guide.”



Cooking food in the Baliem Valley

iStock/VittoriaChe

WEST PAPUA

Valley. Inform your guide of your fitness and the kind of experience you're looking for – such as whether you mostly want to see the countryside or pass through lots of villages.

This way, you can pick the route and pace, to suit the experience you're craving. A five-day trek could take you through the scenic villages of Wamarek, Userem, Syokosimo and Yogoshine.

Yali Country

If you have several weeks, you can make the challenging journey into the highlands of Yali country, which is even more isolated. If you don't want to make the entire journey back again, you can charter one of the infrequent missionary planes from Yali country to Wamena. Go to the missionary office by the airport to arrange this.

Finally, bear in mind that tribal conflict can occur. Make sure your guide is comfortable taking your selected route and there is no risk to either of you. Also check for travel warnings before you set off.

Cultural encounters

Don't be surprised if the people of the tribes you visit are mostly naked. The further into the jungle you venture, fewer clothes are worn.

“Wah” means welcome, as does being given a whole sweet potato when you arrive at your accommodation. Eat it – skin and all! Bring cigarettes (vital) and sweets



iStock:Velvetfish

(big bonus) as presents, but unwrap sweets and remove the wrappers so the children don't drop them on the ground.

Very few of the villagers speak English. Try communicating with pictures – either on your phone or bring some printed photographs to gift before you go. They'll be interested to see a glimpse of the outside world.

While tramping through the jungle, you'll see all manner of wild flora and fauna, including stunning orchids, huge spiders, birds, and large lizards.

The Baliem Valley is littered with pristine fossils. Keep your eyes peeled for them on the ground, but don't touch or remove them.

Raja Ampat

The Raja Ampat Islands are a truly stunning archipelago, almost dreamlike in their pristine nature and stunning coral reefs. It's impossible

“**Bear in mind that tribal conflict can occur. Make sure your guide is comfortable taking your selected route and there is no risk to either of you.**”

WEST PAPUA

to explain quite why they're unlike anywhere you've visited before – you will simply have to go. As for the scene beneath the waves: rainbow-colored forests of coral litter the sea bed, as huge tuna and sleek sharks dive after shimmering schools of fish. It will take your breath away.

To get to the Raja Ampat Islands, first fly to Sorong. Go to the Raja Ampat Tourism office across the road from the airport and buy your Raja Ampat Entrance Ticket for 500,000 IDR (US \$36).

Get a taxi to Sorong Ferry Harbor and buy your ticket at the office. From here, you need to get a ferry to Waisai, capital of the Raja Ampat Regency. Ferries leave at 9am or 2pm every day, but can be both exceptionally late and early – you've been warned! Express boats take two hours, while slow boats take four and cost US \$10.

The easiest way of getting from Waisai to your island of choice is to arrange to be picked up at the harbor through your accommodation.

Tip: bring the strongest mosquito repellent you can find, use a mosquito net and wear long sleeves at night to keep the pests at bay.

Island life here is wonderfully slow, to be spent sitting in a hammock with a book all day, or going diving.

If you're a scuba diver, you'll need to be confident fitting your BCD, and getting set up without guidance within minimal time, before rolling backwards out of the tiny boat and into the water.



iStock:Veivetfish

Hike to the top of Kri

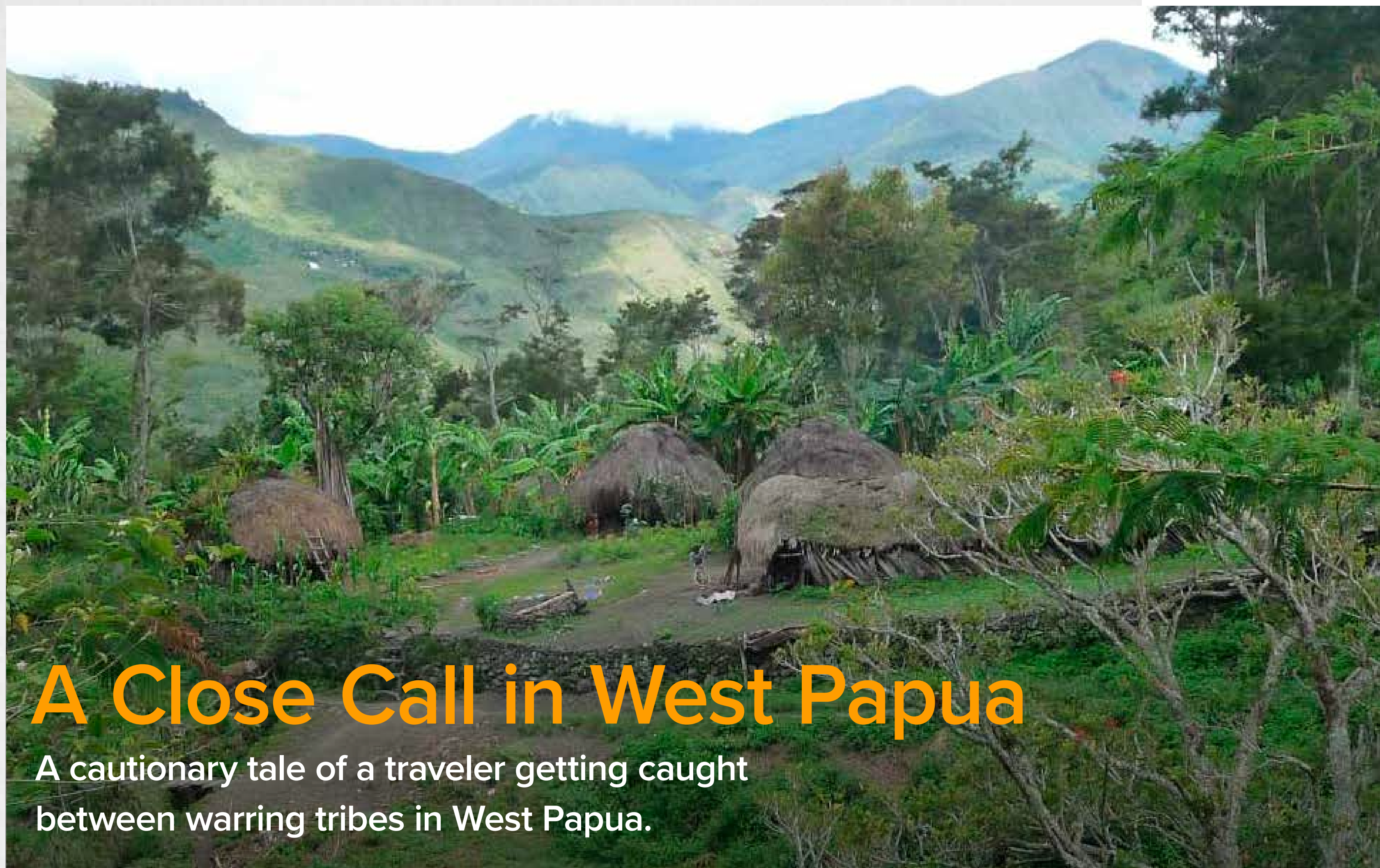
There is a truly stunning view from Kri, on the far western side of Papua. At first, the jungle path alternates between being visible and non-existent, so pay close attention to your surroundings, as the path is less clear coming down.

After climbing 490ft (150m), take a left and make the half kilometer climb to the sunset viewpoint. There are a few twists and turns, but for the most part there's a path to follow – just look up every once-in-a-while to check for spider webs.

After the steep climb, you'll emerge from the jungle to a small clearing overlooking the island. Watch the sky go red as the sun sets, and flick your head torch on to head back down.

It's easy to get lost on the way back down. Make sure you leave with a decent amount of light, it's far darker beneath the dense canopy. Stick to the path you followed on the way up!

“
The Raja Ampat Islands are a truly stunning archipelago, almost dreamlike in their pristine nature and stunning coral reefs.”



Alex Hatton

A Close Call in West Papua

A cautionary tale of a traveler getting caught between warring tribes in West Papua.

“ Now we have very big problem.”

Yesaya hopped from foot to foot anxiously as he scratched at his bulbous white beard. His eyes darted through the jungle as though some unseen assailant might burst through the trees at any moment.

It was a fair assumption to make. We'd just been badly shaken up.

It happened right after Yesaya – the local guide I was traveling with through remote West Papua – realized the third member of our group was missing. Almost immediately, seven naked men exploded out of the jungle, screeching to a stop in front of us. Their skin was streaked with black war paint, so that the whites of their eyes seemed to glow. Their hands clutched bows and spears three times my height. One of them stared at me in disbelief as the apparent leader of the group exchanged heated words with Yesaya.

Suddenly, the party took off past us, running effortlessly along the tree roots. Yesaya gazed ruefully after them.

It was just the two of us again – the wide-eyed youth Yasaya referred to only as his “helper” was nowhere to be seen. Now Yesaya explained, “My friend. He from Yali tribe. These men are at war with the Yalis. If they find him, they kill him. Then, if they prove he was with us, they come back and kill me. Then maybe they kill you, too.” His voice – normally so bright and cheerful – had grown serious. My skin began to crawl. Before I could respond, he bolted into the jungle.



Alex Hatton

Alex Hatton has explored west, central and southeast Asia and beyond, tumbling and bumbling, rumbling and fumbling as he goes. When he's not lost in some obscure part of the world, he immerses himself in music, ecology and creative writing.

A NOMAD'S STORY

I lurched into a run, struggling to keep up. It wasn't easy. I was already exhausted. We had been traveling since sunrise, and now the sky was darkening.

Earlier in the day, Yesaya had offered to take me on a shortcut that would turn two days of travel into one. Eager to get as far off the beaten track as I could, I had agreed. What ensued was a four-hour ascent through 2,600ft (800m) of vertical jungle. My hands were raw and bloody from grabbing at vegetation, and my heavy backpack rolled this way and that, throwing me off balance. Even Yesaya and his helper were gasping for breath (yet still somehow managing to laugh). I later found out Yesaya had only taken this route four times before, despite having lived in the Baliem Valley his entire life.

I was here on something of a whim. Less than two weeks earlier, while in Bali, I had felt the sudden urge

to declare to the entire hostel my intention to set forth for West Papua. I received a mixture of high fives, applause, and the odd "far out, man!"

What had inspired me? There were several reasons. First, I was more than a little drunk. Second, it seemed like a great way to annoy my brother Will by traveling further east than he had. But the main reason was this: all my life, whenever I have heard the word Papua, it was spoken with a tone of mystery and awe – and quite often, fear.

I like fear. I love awe. I am obsessed with mystery. I had to go.

As I spent the next 10 days poring through the somewhat limited information I could find on Papua, one place kept being mentioned again and again. "If you are going to Papua, you have to see the Baliem Valley. A cultural and landscape sensory overload." The thickly forested, mountainous terrain has so isolated the indigenous tribes that many have developed entirely unique languages and customs. The landscapes are like something from the age of the dinosaurs, home to giant crocodiles and rumored to house even stranger creatures, like the Ropen, a giant fluorescent bat. As for the people, they're as tough, adaptable, and awake as they were when man first came into being.

And so, with that in mind and little money to my name, I resolved to trek through the Baliem Valley for a week.

“

My hands were raw and bloody from grabbing at vegetation – my heavy backpack rolled this way and that, throwing me off balance.



“

The thickly forested, mountainous terrain has so isolated the indigenous tribes that many have developed entirely unique languages and customs.



Alex Hotton

“

I looked up to see children, old people, young adults, and dogs staring at me in fascination.

When Yesaya, his helper, and I finally completed that punishing first climb on our shortcut through the valley, the view confirmed all I had read and heard. Below us was a dense sprawl of vibrant green as far as the eye could see, a great, tumbling river slicing through it like a watery scar. We pressed on, hacking our way through the jungle until what little patches of sky we could make out through the canopy were a crimson red. That was when we realized that Yesaya's helper had disappeared.

Now we were both running for our lives. Branches clawed at us as we struggled through undergrowth, half tripping over roots. We crashed into and across the river, wading up to our hips in the icy water and then scrambling up the muddy ditch on the other side.

The trees abruptly melted away as we entered a clearing. Ahead of us rose a small, grassy hill. It was bare of trees, and I thought I could see a trail of smoke lazily spiraling towards the sky from its top.

Whoops and cries echoed in the jungle behind us. “Go, go, go!” bellowed Yesaya as he sprinted up the side of the mound. Wheezing like an 80-year-old man, I forced myself into another run. We heard the calls again, even closer – high pitched yips and trilling whoops, almost playful in their nature, but sinister, too.

The whole situation seemed unreal, as if I was watching a movie through someone else's eyes. I knew I would either be caught or I wouldn't. This simplicity was almost a relief – all I had to think about was running.

We finally reached the top, and then I did collapse, first onto my knees and then my hands. I heard a voice. “Wah! Wah, wah, wah, wah, wah!” A pair of bare feet appeared on the ground next to me, and then I was surrounded by them. I looked up to see children, old people, young adults, and dogs staring at me in fascination. Their hands stretched out to me as they repeated, “Wah!” I knew

A NOMAD'S STORY

that word – it meant: “welcome.”

We had made it to safe territory. The top of the hill was ringed by a semi-circle of small, thatched huts. Yesaya was laughing as he embraced an old friend.

His helper appeared some 30 minutes later, soaking wet. Yesaya spoke to him and told me what had happened. The young lad had somehow sensed the tribesmen coming towards us, and slipped back, swimming through the stronger currents of the river to avoid crossing their path.

He must have known he was risking his life to join our trek, but did so wordlessly, all for extra income to support his family.

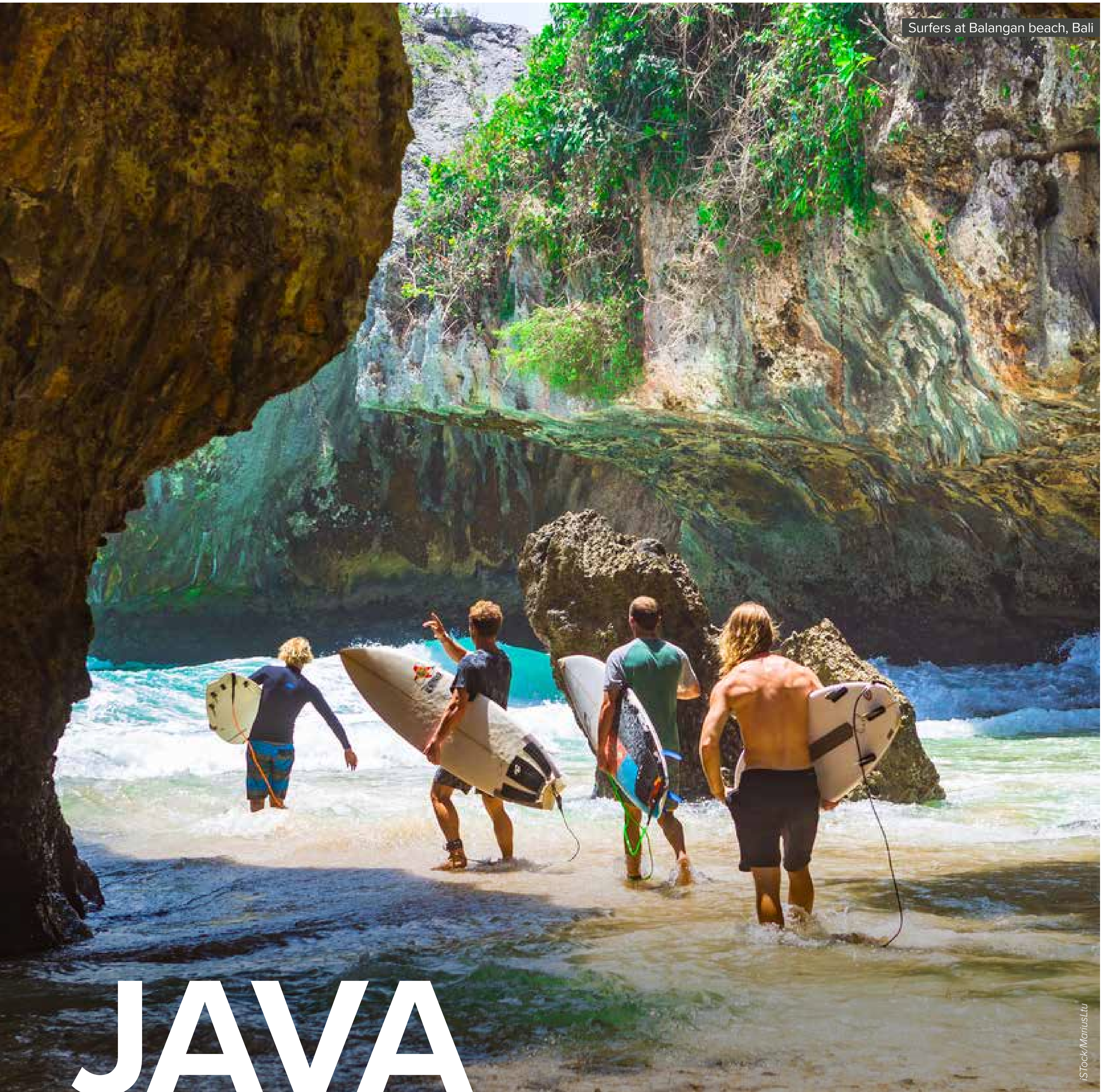
Despite the nerve-wracking experience we had, I was amazed by the warm and friendly nature of Papuans. They are not only hands-down some of the most tenacious and badass people I have ever met, living in tranquil harmony with an unforgiving environment, but they are also welcoming and full of laughter. Had I possessed more money and equipment I would have loved to keep going, delving deeper into the mysteries of this place. Some day, I'm going back to do just that.

Editor's note: We obviously admire Alex's adventurous spirit, as we love independent travel and exciting travel stories. Are we suggesting you go to West Papua? It depends: check your government travel advisory before you commit.

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iStock/MariusLtu

JAVA and Central Indonesia

This region is perfect for lazy days, late nights, culture and adventure – both spiritual and physical. Get into it.

Java

Many travelers skim Java, only seeing the popular temples and volcanoes, and missing the beauty and distinct culture of this fascinating island.

Village life

Escape the busy streets and mayhem of Jakarta, and head west to the quiet region of Banten, Java's westernmost province, to experience a different type of local encounter.

In the small village of Balimbing in Baduy, the local traditional Bantenese community live almost completely isolated from the outside world, without electricity or transport.

Here, you can spend the night at a homestay and see the locals harvesting crops, weaving clothes, making banana leaf rooftops, and playing local instruments.

As English isn't spoken in the Baduy villages, you can only visit with a guide or on a sustainable tour; traveling with a local also shows the villagers that you're visiting with the utmost respect.



Kampung Naga village

istock



Lake Telaga Warna

istock/quirks

Keep in mind that photos should only be taken once permission has been granted, be sure to dress conservatively, and always leave shoes outside homes.

The locals don't usually ask for money, but a donation is appreciated to cover the cost of meals, and to support the local community.

Idul Fitri

Held every June, the festive season of Idul Fitri is the largest and longest Muslim celebration and holiday, and can put some travelers off visiting Java at that time. But rather than avoiding the island because of the festival – embrace it; despite bigger crowds and slightly higher prices, it's a great time to make friends with welcoming locals, and perhaps score invitations to their homes to take part in the celebration.

“
The locals don't usually ask for money, but a donation is appreciated to cover the cost of meals, and to support the local community.”

JAVA AND CENTRAL INDONESIA

After the fasting of Idul Fitri, most weddings take place in the following six weeks, and if you're lucky, you could be invited to a typical Javanese, multi-day wedding.

Indonesians are very friendly, earning your friendship in no time. If you're invited along to a celebration, enjoy the full immersion in the local culture.

Bandung

In West Java, you can enjoy the fresh air of the rice and tea plantations, explore the sulphuric volcanic crater of Kawah Putih, take a rowing boat out on Lake Patenggang, and be mesmerized by the 430ft (130m) waterfall known as Curug Citampur. But be warned, you may never want to leave.

Pangandaran

On the southern coast of Java, Pangandaran offers night markets, beach restaurants and an easy-paced nightlife.

Thrill seekers can spend the day canyoning in the Green Canyon and the Green Valley, driving past sugarcane farms, donating at the Turtle Sanctuary, or requesting a private puppet show from the local Javanese puppeteers.

Malang

Malang is the hotspot for adventurers who want to ride a trail bike to tour the infamous Mount Bromo, an active volcano at 7,641ft (2,329m). An hour's drive to the west of Malang, Batu



Crater of Bromo volcano

iStock

Javanese Food

Known for its simplicity, compared to the rest of Indonesia, Javanese food varies from one town to the next.

Famous dishes include:

Bakso – a simple meatball soup served with noodles, bean sprouts, and eggs. Best eaten in Bandung.

Nasi Rawon – a traditional beef black soup made from fermented black nuts and served with rice. Best eaten in Surabaya and Malang.

Ketoprak – popular with vegetarians, this dish consists of tofu, noodles, vegetables and rice crackers topped with peanut sauce. Best eaten in Yogyakarta.

Krengsengan – diced mutton served with rice, seasoned with spices and sweet soy sauce. Best eaten in Surabaya.

Dawet – a sweet drink made from rice flour and brown sugar, served with coconut milk. Best eaten in Bandung and Semarang.

is often ignored by travelers, but is popular for paragliding, and offers stunning views from the launch site at the top of Mount Banyak.

Dieng Plateau

Right in the center of Java, this volcanic complex is 6,500ft (2,000m) above sea level, and offers countless homestays. You'll find many ancient Hindu temples to explore, a multi-colored lake, superb scenery, and light trekking routes.

Surabaya

The second-largest city in Indonesia, Surabaya is on the north coast of Java. With fewer visitors than Jakarta, Surabaya still offers plenty for travelers passing through. Take a walk along the promenade to see the illuminated bridge to the neighboring island of Madura.

Shop at Tunjungan Plaza (the largest shopping mall in East Indonesia), pay your respects at Tugu Pahlawan (The Heroes Monument), and indulge in the great local food the city offers.

Bali

Escape the crowded streets and tourist hotspots of Kuta to see a local's side of the island.

Getting around

There are multiple ways to roam around the Dewata Island from renting a car with a driver, to self-driving a rented car, motorbike or scooter.

If you're riding a rented motorcycle or scooter, always wear a helmet, and you must have a license to ride in your home country and an Indonesian licence or an International Driver's Permit valid for the size and type of bike you'll be riding. Without one you are driving illegally and won't be covered by your insurance if you have an accident.

Surfing in Uluwatu

Bali's best surf can be found in an area called the Bukit, better known as Uluwatu, along Bali's southern coast.

There are two great places for surfing here, the first is Balangan Beach where you'll find surfing schools and huts for the surfers. Balangan is a long stretch of white sand, with green seaweed covering the rocks around.

The second option is Suluban Beach, but it's strictly for advanced surfers. To find the beach, search for its nickname, Blue Point. To get to the beach, follow a relatively narrow path, and swim out to wait for the perfect



Kevin Anda

break. What makes this area special are the sunsets, local cafes and restaurants.

Banyumala waterfall

On your way to Buleleng Regency in the north of Bali, you'll pass beautiful highlands, many temples, and rural villages.

Banyumala waterfall may be just a short walk from the parking lot, but the sticky climate will leave you sweaty and ready for a dip in the jungle waters.

Tip: arrive in the morning to beat the crowds before the heat of the day.

About 30 minutes from Banyumala, you'll find Sekumpul waterfall. When you arrive at the stairs, you'll see a majestic view of the waterfall from above. Before you can take a dip, you'll have to descend 100 steps.

“

There are two great places for surfing here, the first is Balangan Beach where you'll find surfing schools and huts for the surfers.

Remember, every step you take down, you've got to take back up.

Mt. Batur

Hiking to the top of Mt. Batur in time to see the sunrise is an unforgettable experience. This active volcano sits at 5,633ft (1,717m) above sea level, and should take you two to three hours to reach the summit.

From the top, you can see Mt. Abang, as well as the most sacred and highest mountain in Bali, the 9,944ft (3,031m) Mt. Agung. Check local alerts to be sure there isn't any volcanic activity when you plan to walk.

On a clear day, you can also see the neighboring island of Lombok and its majestic mountain, Mt. Rinjani.

Tip: avoid hiking in the high season, as the summit can become seriously overcrowded.

Uluwatu cliffs

Once you've explored Bali's interior and you're ready to see the ocean again, make your way to the south coast. Head to the famous cultural site of Uluwatu Temple at sunset, and then ditch the crowds for the lesser-known Karang Boma – a cliff that offers views of the surf break and the temple at Uluwatu.

Lempuyang Temple

More than 80% of Bali's population practices Hinduism. To get an insight into the religion's beliefs and practices, take the time to visit the temples.

From Seminyak, it's a 2.5 hour



Kevin Ando

drive to Lempuyang Temple. It's best to go early in the morning to witness Mt. Agung perfectly lined up in the main gate of the temple, and watch as the sun lights up the mountain. You can walk around the temple grounds along a short or longer path, depending on how much time you have to see the site.

Ubud and Gunung Kawi Temple

Ubud is not only a destination for adventure, but a prime spot for an insight into Balinese culture. Check out the art galleries, traditional markets, the sacred monkey forest, the Campuhan Ridge Walk, and the paddy fields at Tegallalang.

Visit the mesmerizing Gunung Kawi temple, just a 10 to 15-minute scooter ride from the center of Ubud. This temple is dedicated to the king, and the enormous rock carvings and beautiful gardens will keep you occupied for hours.

“Hiking to the top of Mt. Batur in time to see the sunrise is an unforgettable experience. This active volcano sits at 5,633ft (1,717m) above sea level, and should take you two to three hours to reach the summit.”

Nusa & Gili Islands

Bali's next door neighbors offer sanctuary for those seeking unspoilt landscapes, adventure and solitude.

Nusa Lembongan

If you're looking to leave the big smoke, but aren't entirely ready to let go of the creature comforts of Bali – the luxury villas, cold-press coffee shops, abundant yoga studios and vegan restaurants on every corner – then head to the island of Nusa Lembongan, which lies in wait just seven miles (12 kilometers) to the east.

On this Hindu island, you will still see the beautiful offerings and intriguing temples familiar in Bali.

In spite of recent development, Nusa Lembongan is still a lovely place to pass a few days. Go surfing at Shipwrecks, watch the sunset over Bali's Mount Batur, dive with manta rays, or hike to the white sand and clear water at Mushroom Bay.

Nusa Ceningan

Rent a scooter in Nusa Lembongan (make sure you're covered before hopping on) and find your way over the recently rebuilt yellow suspension bridge to the neighboring island of Nusa Ceningan.

The bridge is excitingly narrow and the waterway below is home to a 8-ft (2.5m) underwater Buddha, that you can snorkel to. Circumnavigate the



Yellow bridge to Nusa Lembongan

istock/Nature

island and experience the slow pace of local life; fishermen carefully throw out their nets as women work the seaweed patches just offshore.

Before you leave, be sure to stop at the gorgeous Blue Lagoon, famous for its clear blue waters.

Nusa Penida

A 10-minute boat trip from Nusa Lembongan, you'll find unspoilt Nusa Penida, a haven for adventurers, but with few visitors.

Start at Atuh Beach, where you could have the beach to yourself, as the steep descent to the sand keeps many people away. Head on to Pura Goa Giri Putri Cave, don a sarong and squeeze through the narrow opening in the rockface alongside the Hindu pilgrims who come to the cave to pray in the underground temple.

On the west side of the island, visit Broken Beach, where a natural rock arch spans the sea below, and nearby Angel's Billabong, a natural rock pool carved out of the volcanic sea cliff.

“

Go surfing at Shipwrecks, watch the sunset over Bali's Mount Batur, dive with manta rays, or hike to the white sand and clear water at Mushroom Bay.

Gili Trawangan

“Gili” means “island” in the local Sasak language, but for most travelers “Gili” refers to one of three places: Gili Trawangan, Gili Air or Gili Meno. The Gilis are considered part of Lombok, so the local people are predominantly Sasak Muslims.

All three Gilis are motorized-vehicle-free, so you have to walk or cycle to get around.

Gili T is the largest and most developed of the trio. Known among backpackers as a party island, the eastern side is home to beach bars and reggae clubs, and house and electronic music blares at night. Many of the bartenders, waiters and hotel staff come from Lombok to work and are dedicated to making sure partygoers have a good time.

If the bright lights become too much, escape to the west side, where families and resort-lovers find solace and a slower pace.

Grab dinner at the Night Market, watch a local stick fighting competition or explore the underwater world; Gili T is one of the world’s cheapest and safest places to learn to scuba dive. Dive sites including Shark Point, Mantra Point and Halick are well-loved by novice and expert divers.

To neutralize your carbon footprint, join Gili Eco Trust for the Debris Free Friday beach clean-up, or try the RE-Cycle Gili Tour which focuses on the Sasak culture, sustainability and includes an eye-opening visit to the dump.



Stock/MasterLu

Gili Air

If the thought of beer pong tables (the drinking game) makes you cringe, head to Gili Air; it’s the ‘Goldilocks island’ – not too busy, not too quiet – with just the right mix of amenities, authenticity and peace.

Yet, Gili Air is far from boring; here you can snorkel with turtles, hire a glass-bottom kayak or take a yoga class. Watch the sunset with a cold Bintang in hand and chat with the locals as they cook up chargrilled corn on the cob with *sambal*.

Gili Meno

Gili Meno could easily be renamed Gili Mellow. This quiet, secluded island is home to just 300 locals, and generally hosts more chilled-out travelers and honeymooners rather than partygoers.

You’ll find the indigenous population of Gili Meno to be enterprising and friendly; they are proud of their island and love talking about it as they offer you a fresh cut pineapple or beach massage. Walk around the island, dive with brightly colored fish, and go shoe-free for your entire trip.

“Gili Meno could easily be renamed Gili Mellow. This quiet, secluded island is home to just 300 locals, and generally hosts more relaxed travelers.”

Lombok

Wave goodbye to the colorful offerings, scent of incense and guys named Wayan (a name given to all first-born, Balinese children) as you board a plane and fly over the Lombok Strait.

Adjust your expectations as you drive away from Praya International Airport. While Bali's dominant religion is Hindu, Lombok is almost entirely Muslim. For the most part, Lombok Muslims are moderately shy to newcomers, but as the flights to Lombok become increasingly full, a new generation are changing the reputation of the island and their relationships with travelers. A local surf guide summed this trend up with eloquence: "I am Muslim. But I am a rock 'n' roll Muslim."

Get to know the locals

Take the time to get to know the locals, who are very proud of all things Sasak (the indigenous tribe



Smiles in Lombok

Rhys Ireland

that accounts for 85% of Lombok's residents). You will constantly hear them praise the local food, waves, people and textiles. Try what they offer you, be it rice, satay, or whole fish served on the ground. Go to a Sasak stick fight to experience an iconic tribe tradition; forging a connection to the people of Lombok could alter your experience of the island and your perception of Muslim culture.

Go surfing

Lombok is a great alternative to Bali for keen surfers, serving up waves for every skill level, from sheltered bays with gentle peelers to the world-famous shallow barrel, Desert Point. The area surrounding Kuta abounds with options that handle every wind and swell.

“
Try what they offer you, be it rice, satay, or whole fish served on the ground.”



Surfing in Lombok

Rhys Ireland

JAVA AND CENTRAL INDONESIA

Be sure to surf Mawi, Ekas, Are Guling, Gerupuk and Tanjung Aan – where you're bound to find the perfect wave.

Watch the sunset

Ask a local to point you towards Seger Beach. Just 10 minutes from downtown Kuta, it's an insanely beautiful beach below a small hill. Climb to the top and watch the sunset over Kuta with a cold Bintang in hand.

Hopping from beach to beach

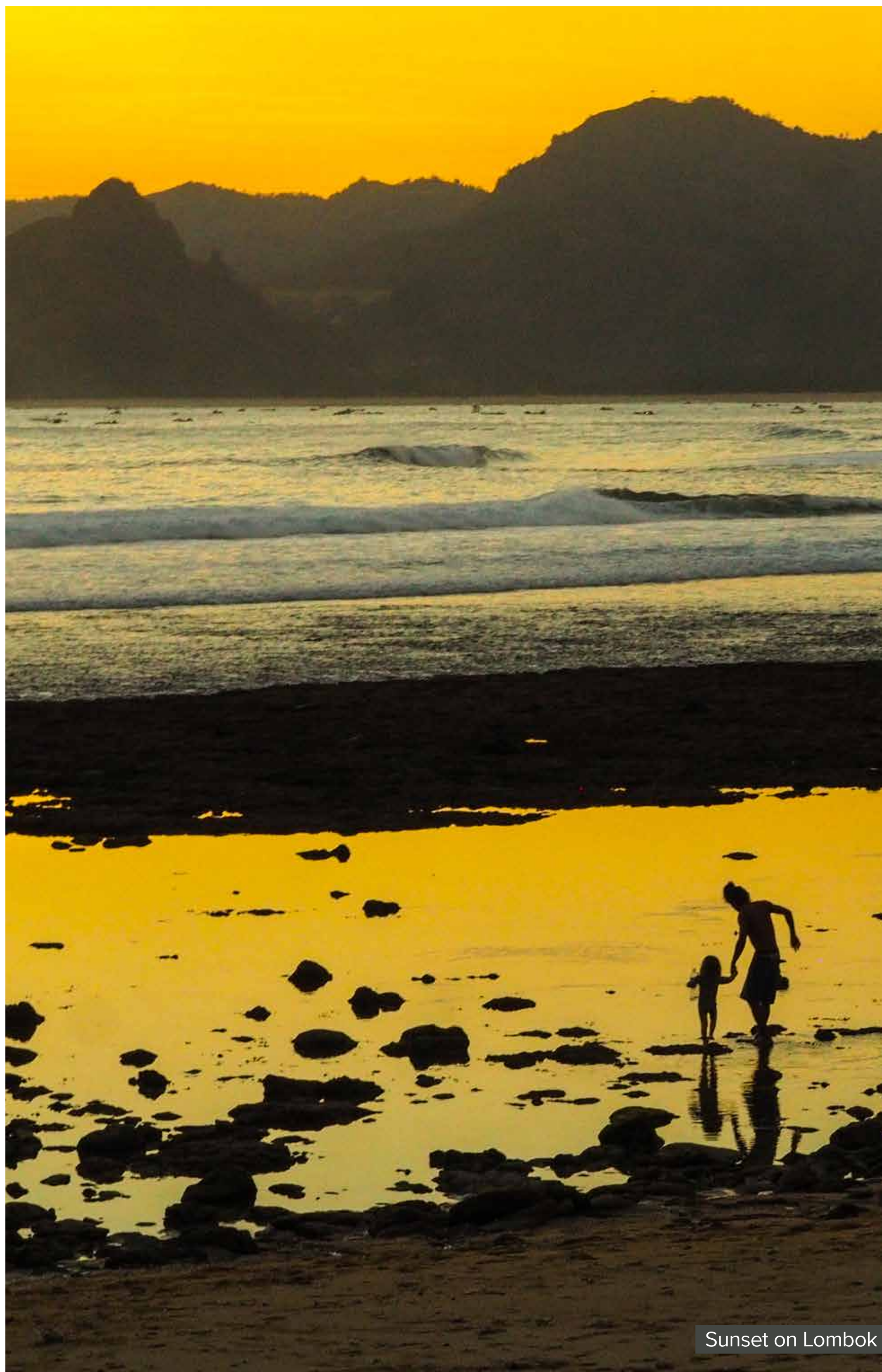
Beaches are a huge draw-card for travelers to Lombok. You can pick a different beach for each day and spend it surfing, swimming, drinking coconuts, and eating inexpensive mie goreng under the thatched roof of a *warung* (a small restaurant or café).

Check out Tanjung Aan and Mawi. While at Mawi, enjoy the beautiful, empty, white sand beach.

Finding waterfalls

Venture inland and leave the parched landscape of the coast behind, as you wind your way through lush valleys and rice fields of the countryside. Hire a guide (or private transport) to take you to the waterfalls, where you'll see countless monkeys.

Check out Benang Stokel and Benang Kelambu waterfalls. Be sure to take a dip in Benang Kelambu – where the icy water flows direct from Mount Rinjani – and is a welcome relief after a steamy hike.



Sunset on Lombok

Audrey Hills

Observing Lombok customs

Be observant of the people around you and act accordingly, taking notice of local customs. In major tourist hubs, locals are more accustomed to travelers, but that doesn't mean you should wear your bikini on the street.

Things to avoid include: eating or greeting people with your left hand, drinking or eating in public during Ramadan and, just like in Bali, drinking the local liquor called arak.

Outside of Kuta, Senggigi and the Gilis, people are more traditional. Be particularly modest in rural areas by covering your knees and shoulders. You should also avoid traveling alone or at night in remote areas.

You may make your own Lombok family or attend a Sasak Nyongkolan (a wild in-street block party to celebrate a marriage).

Oh and one last thing: bring ear plugs if you don't want to be woken by the 4:30am call to prayer.

Sulawesi

Political instability has rocked the center of Sulawesi, making it a difficult destination for travelers. As one of the largest islands in the Indonesian archipelago, we take a look at Sulawesi's safe (and wonderful) places to explore.

Safe places to go

While Central Sulawesi might be fraught with instability, the rest of the island is safe for travelers. In fact, as the 11th largest island in the world, there's plenty to discover.

Of the island's six provinces, the North, West, South and South East provinces of Sulawesi offer safe travel and stunning natural beauty.

North Sulawesi is the perfect stepping stone to discovering wildlife on land and in the sea, while West Sulawesi offers the chance to experience traditional village life.

South Sulawesi is the gateway to the famed Toraja highlands, where the predominantly Christian



Taupe village in Tana Toraja

!Stock/fbxx



Tarsier in the wild

!Stock/marcophotos

population still carry out traditional funeral rites, drawing thousands of visitors each year. Southeast Sulawesi, the most geographically remote province, will fulfil your fantasy of deserted tropical islands.

Adventure awaits

The city of Manado in North Sulawesi is the perfect base to explore the Minahasa Highlands, and to trek the active volcanoes of Mount Lokon and Mount Empung.

For some of the best diving in the world, head to Bunaken National Park, in the coral triangle in North Sulawesi.

Located off the south-eastern leg of Sulawesi, the Wakatobi National Marine Park is challenging to get to – you may have to travel by small plane, ferry and canoe – but it's worth it for the unspoilt reefs and almost deserted islands.

“Of the island's six provinces, the North, West, South and Southeast provinces of Sulawesi offer safe travel and stunning natural beauty.”



Reef drop off in Wakatobi National Park

iStock/Velvetfish

Wildlife encounters

The Tangkoko National Park in North Sulawesi offers an authentic jungle experience. Here, you'll have the chance to spot wild tarsiers (super-cute primates) and the black-crested macaque.

Many of the wildlife experiences in Sulawesi are only possible with a guide; it's important to always choose a reputable and ethical tour company when visiting any nature sites in Sulawesi.

Authentic cultural experiences

The Bugis are one of the largest ethnic groups in Indonesia, and traditionally occupy the southern part of Sulawesi. Tied to the sea, the Buginese are known for their ocean travels and have settled along coastlines across Indonesia.

For an insight into local life, visit some of the traditional Bugis villages, where the houses are still built on stilts over the water.

Tana Toraja culture

One of the major cultural rituals that attracts visitors to Sulawesi is the funeral rites of the Torajan people in South Sulawesi. According to custom in Toraja, the dead are kept in mummified states in the house for years, while raising money for the burial.

Funeral ceremonies are a big deal in Toraja, and are only held during the dry season (June to September).

A word of warning if you're planning on visiting Toraja during funeral season, as there's a mass slaughter of buffalos to accompany the dead into the afterlife.

Danger in Central Sulawesi

The ongoing political instability in Central Sulawesi has put travelers off visiting the entire island. Fueled by religious tension between the Muslim and Christian populations, the situation in the past has spiraled out of control, with troops being sent in by the Indonesian government.

While tensions have calmed down recently, it's always important to check for up-to-date travel information prior to your departure, as the situation can change quickly.

Flores and Komodo

To observe the largest lizards in their natural habitat, a trip to Flores and Komodo in southern Indonesia is a must. After that, stick around to discover everything else Komodo National Park and Flores have to offer.

Hiking in the central highlands of Flores

Bajawa in the central highlands of Flores is the base for travelers to organize challenging two to four-hour treks up pyramid-shaped Mt. Inerie volcano. Ask your guide to start your hike early, so you don't miss the magic of the sun slowly rising from behind the hills.

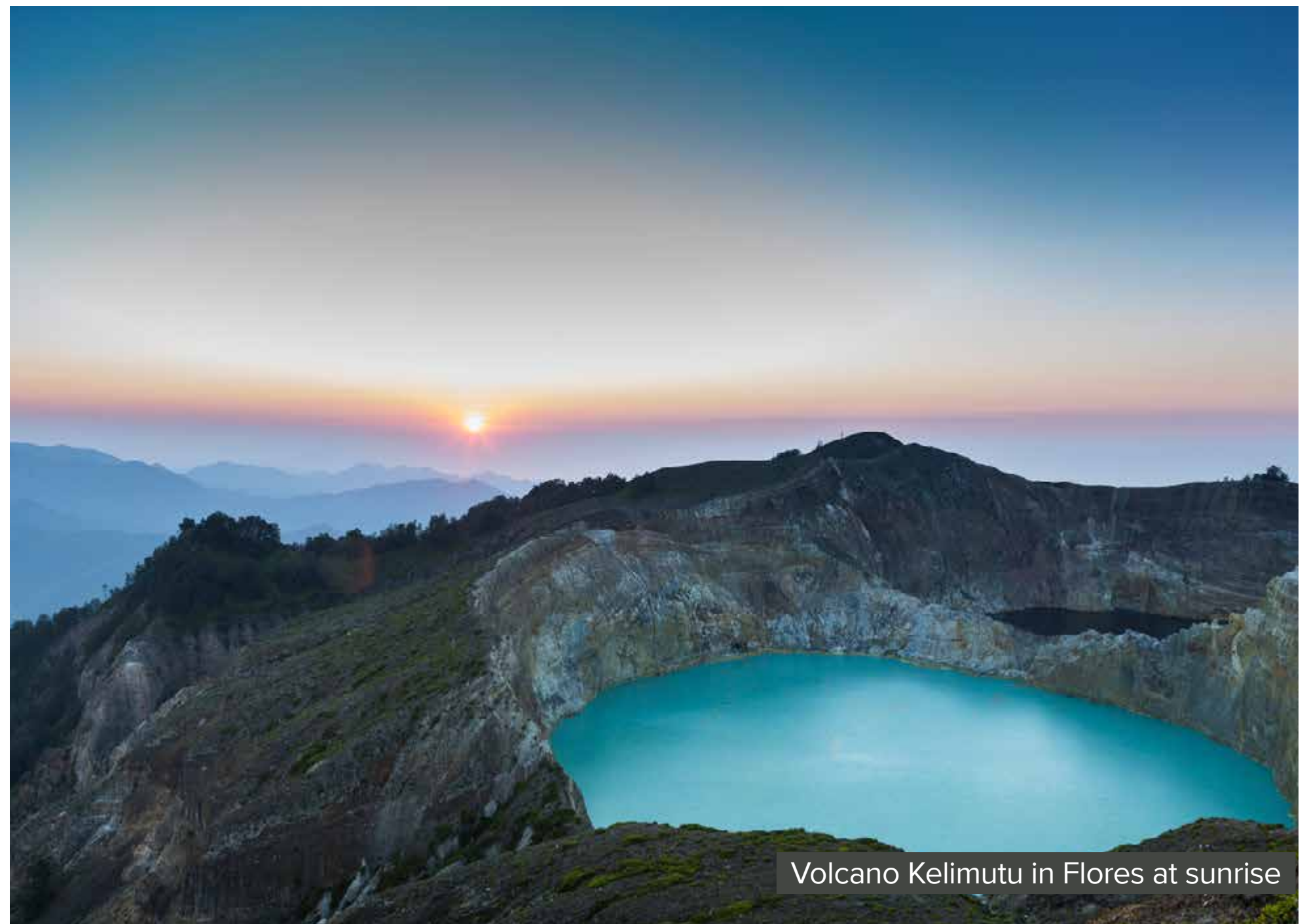
Set aside time to explore mountains surrounding the town, which are dotted with waterfalls and hot springs.

Watch the sunrise over the tri-colored Kelimutu volcano crater



iStock/Photographer, Videographer, Writer

Traditional houses in Flores



Volcano Kelimutu in Flores at sunrise

iStock/oakimbkk

lakes, which is easily one of Flores' highlights – not to mention a rewarding experience after braving the early morning cold.

Cultural etiquette on Flores

You'll feel like you've taken a step back in time when you visit the traditional villages of Flores. Villagers typically practice animism (a belief that objects, places, and creatures possess a distinct spiritual essence), sometimes alongside Christianity, and animal sacrifices during ceremonies are common.

Be respectful of the villagers' customs and beliefs and, in particular, show respect to the elders.

Where to stay on Flores

Accommodation is plentiful across Flores, especially in the town of Labuan Bajo. Spend the night in one of the traditional villages (such as Wae Rebo), to gain a better understanding of local life. This can easily be organized by hiring

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Be respectful of the villagers' customs and beliefs and, in particular, show respect to the elders.



Komodo dragon, Komodo National Park

ISTOCK/ANDREYUDKOV

a car and driver from Labuan Bajo or Ruteng, or it can be done independently by using local transport.

Many of these traditional villages are quite isolated, and some hiking may be involved to get to them. Soak up the peaceful village life, spend an evening (or three) eating local food under a sky full of stars, before settling down for a comfortable night's sleep in a traditional hut.

Komodo Island

Komodo, which shares its name with the largest species of lizard, isn't the only island where the creatures can be observed; they can also be spotted on Rinca Island. Both islands can be visited on an organized boat trip from Labuan Bajo on Flores. Trips are typically combined with other attractions, such as Pink Beach, Padar Island and Manta Point.

A park ranger, armed with a stick, will take you trekking to observe

the Komodo dragons in their natural habitat. Tip: menstruating women or visitors with fresh wounds should notify the ranger, as lizards are very quick to smell blood, and will immediately think of food.

Attacks are rare, but precautions are necessary.

Padar Island

The views from the summit of Padar Island are nothing short of spectacular, and making the trek is very rewarding. Wear sturdy shoes for the short, 30-minute hike on the dust and gravel-lined path.

Scuba diving and snorkeling

Pristine waters, rich marine life and healthy corals make Komodo National Park one of the most popular diving and snorkeling spots in Indonesia. Sharks, manta rays and turtles can easily be spotted at several sites including Batu Bolong – an aquarium-like reef that's popular with divers and snorkelers.

Getting to Komodo Island

Flights to Labuan Bajo from nearby islands in Indonesia are frequent. Operators also run multi-day boat trips from Lombok to Labuan Bajo, so you can stop at different islands on the way.

Essential Insurance Tips

Indonesia: smoky jungles, spicy food, sunshine, and thick air. Before you head off, here are the top 3 tips to help protect yourself and your gear.

Surviving Bali Belly

Bali belly can take down even the most experienced foodie, so if a local restaurant dish results in a rumble to equal Mt Agung, and explosions from your own ring of fire, our assistance teams can help point you to the nearest doctor to get you the help you need. And, with World Nomads travel insurance, you can make a claim for reimbursement for these medical expenses (less any excess, which may apply), even if you're still traveling.

Travel insurance is designed for even the smallest medical emergency, and our assistance team can support you 24/7, even if you're held up in the nearest squat toilet. Not only can they guide you to the best available medical care for your situation, if it's really serious, they can arrange for an emergency evacuation to the nearest hospital, and guarantee payments if necessary, so you have one less worry.

The danger with gastro, which can cause nausea, vomiting, tummy pain and cramps, watery diarrhea, is that you can lose more fluids than you can keep down.

Dehydration can be deadly, so even though you may have a trusty

stash of Imodium, don't rely on your own instincts or Dr Google for medical advice. Hospitals in Indonesia (especially if you're near Jakarta or Bali) see gastro all the time, and are well-equipped to be able to test you to see if that's what you have, or if it's something more serious. However, given Indonesia's size, it's easy to get remote very quickly, and access to medical care becomes scarce, so that's where our assistance teams can help to ensure you end up in the most suitable medical facility. And remember, even if the local hospital doesn't seem as modern as what you'd find at home, it doesn't mean that they can't help you get better and back on the road.

Real-life claim story

"I had diarrhea for more than four days, and finally decided to go to the BIMC hospital in Bali, Indonesia. Five days before, I ate lunch at a restaurant and within two hours I was vomiting profusely and had diarrhea. I lay in bed for four days until I decided to seek medical help after my condition was not improving. The doctors checked me out and, after the analysis was complete, they found no traces of parasites and prescribed me (drugs) to combat my diarrhea and stomach cramping. The hospital was very thorough and professional. They deal with many tourists and travel insurance claims, so they provided me with a very intensive report."

**US resident in Bali, Indonesia.
Claim Paid, 100% medical expenses
less USD 100 excess.**

“**Travel insurance is designed for even the smallest medical emergency, and our assistance team can support you 24/7, even if you're held up in the nearest squat toilet.**”

Riding Motorbikes & Scooters

Motorbike/scooter accidents are common all over southeast Asia, and especially in Bali. It's easy to hire a bike, so, it's not surprising that we see everything from exhaust pipe burns to injuries caused by horrific crashes, which can sometimes be fatal.

If you're going to ride a bike anywhere in Indonesia, it's essential that you know what travel insurance covers, what it doesn't cover, and how to get help if you need it. If you're properly licensed for the bike that you're riding (i.e the size and type of bike), have an international licence or Indonesian licence, comply with local laws, and if you've purchased the correct plan or adventure sport upgrade (if applicable), World Nomads plans can cover you to ride a motorbike or scooter. If you're injured in an accident while riding a motorcycle, there's cover for:

- Emergency medical expenses for treatment at the hospital or by a doctor at the local medical centre.
- Evacuation to more suitable medical facility if it's urgent, medically necessary and if you're fit to travel (by the most appropriate means including helicopter when necessary and available).
- Repatriation home if you're seriously ill or injured and unable to continue your trip.

If you're in need of a medical evacuation or repatriation, you or someone with you **MUST** contact our Emergency Assistance Team immediately. The Emergency Assistance Team can arrange and

pre-approve all expenses. Search and rescue is not covered.

Limits and exclusions to cover will apply on all plans so read the policy you choose carefully for full details. For example, for UK and Irish residents who plan to tour around Indonesia, please be aware that this policy doesn't cover you for motorbike touring when using a motorbike as your main mode of transport. This can't be added, even for an additional premium.

Real-life claim story

"I was riding back to my hotel at night in Pecatu in Bali, coming back from Uluwatu, when I hit gravel around a corner and my scooter slid out. I fell on my side. Luckily, I was not going too fast so I only had minor bumps and scratches, but my arm landed awkwardly, and ripped my shoulder out of the socket, causing it to dislocate by about four inches. It required surgery to correct it."

**South African resident in Bali, Indonesia.
Claim Paid USD 2,673.49, for medical expenses less USD 100 excess.**

Theft

Theft is very common across Asia. It's a good idea to leave valuables at home, and, if you take out your camera, tech, wallet or cash in public, be aware of your surroundings, and look out for passing motorcyclists.

Before you travel to Indonesia, it's a good idea to be prepared and store a copy your receipts and gear to prove you own it, as you'll need to provide this with any claim you make in the event your gear is stolen.

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Limits and exclusions to cover will apply on all plans so read the policy you choose carefully for full details.

All World Nomads travel insurance plans will have some coverage for theft or if a carrier has lost your checked in luggage. However, with any insurance plan, limits, conditions and exclusions may apply, for example, if you have simply misplaced your gear or if your tech gets damaged. Generally, you need to be able to show that you took reasonable care to look after your gear. That means not leaving your gear behind or your camera in your checked-in baggage. You should carry your electronics and valuables with you at all times, and lock your gear up into a secure location when you can't take it with you. If your stuff is stolen, you will need a police report or some other kind of report from an authorized representative (e.g a property irregularity report from the airline or bus company if your bags were checked in) to validate your claim.

Real-life claim story

“We were traveling in Legian, Indonesia, and were walking home around 12am, back to our hotel when we saw two people on a

scooter coming down the narrow street. They turned around on their scooter and we stopped and waited for them to pass, as it was narrow. I had my purse slung over my opposite shoulder and all of a sudden it snapped off my neck. The guy on the back of the scooter had grabbed it, and they sped away. It contained about \$100 cash, my brand new Olympus camera and both our iPhones, as well as our hotel key.”

Canadian resident in Legian, Indonesia. Claim paid for theft of stolen items (excluding cash).

“**You should carry your electronics and valuables with you at all times, and lock your gear up into a secure location when you can't take it with you.**”

Will an excess or deductible apply to reduce my claim?

A policy excess is the amount you may be required to contribute towards your expenses before any payment can be made for claimable expenses. It can be deducted from the claimable expenses or a co-pay in conjunction with the insurer for the bills you receive. If your expenses for any event are less than the excess, then you don't get paid out. The policy wording will tell you when an excess does and doesn't apply.

All of the information we provide about travel insurance is a brief summary only. It does not include all terms, conditions, limitations, exclusions and termination provisions of the travel insurance plans described. Coverage may not be available for residents of all countries, states or provinces. Please carefully read your policy wording for a full description of coverage.

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Kecak Fire Dance, Uluwatu Temple, Bali

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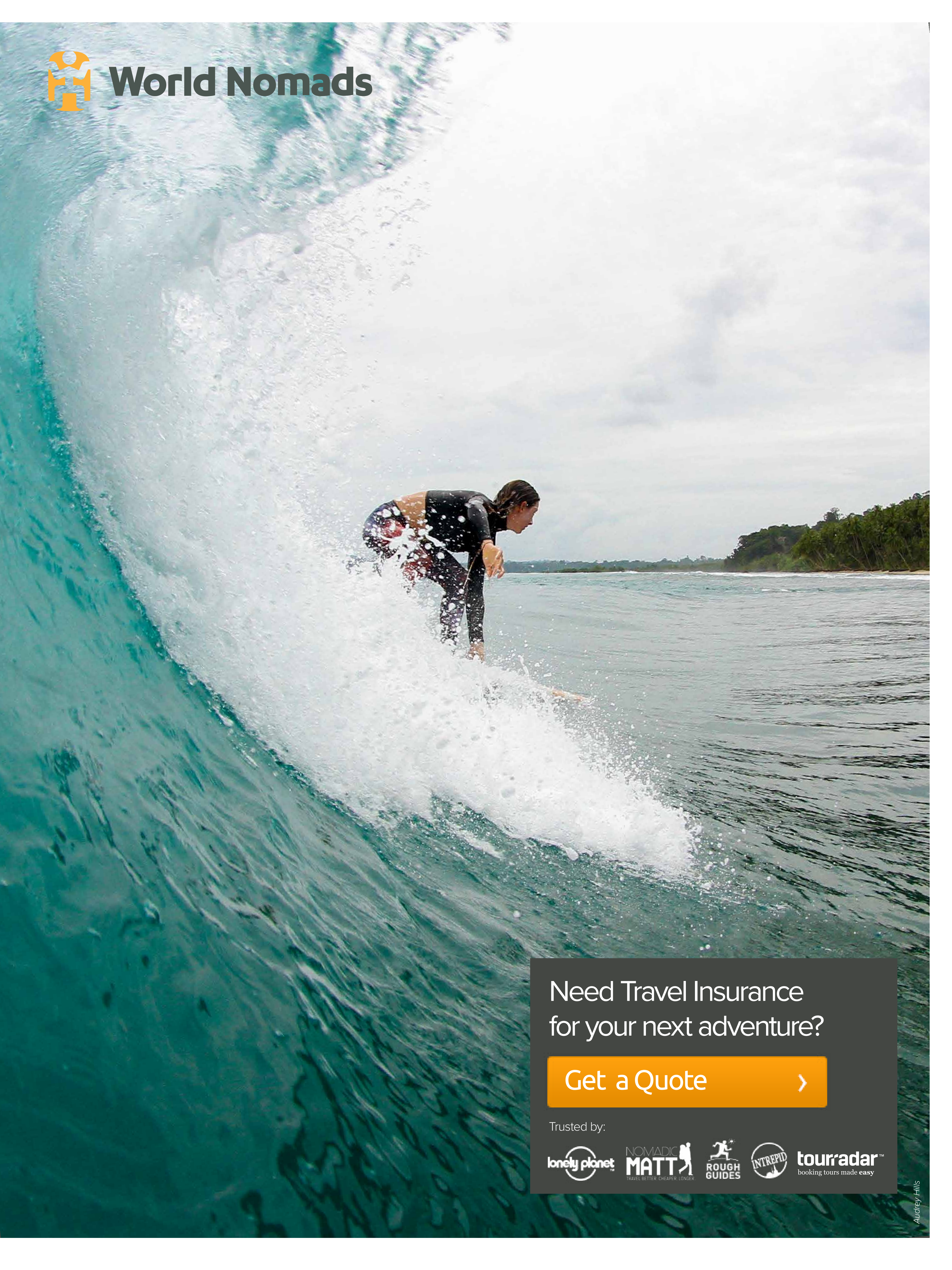


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