

INDONESIA & TIMOR LESTE

with Jonathan Hodgson

22 days

Created on: 10 May, 2026

Day 1 Arrival in Jakarta

Today we arrive in Jakarta (on the island of Java), the capital and largest city of Indonesia.

With its busy streets, the capital is a lively adventure for any traveller. This city, one of the world's biggest, is a contrast of modern western architecture and traditional Indonesian culture. Its rapid growth into a metropolitan city, however, is a reflection of the economic, political, social and industrial development of the nation. Established in the fourth century, the city became an important trading port for the Kingdom of Sunda. It was the de facto capital of the Dutch East Indies and continued being the capital city of Indonesia, after its independence in 1945.

Overnight in Jakarta.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Jakarta City Touring

Today we explore the heart of Jakarta, starting with a visit to the National Museum, which boasts an impressive collection of artefacts and relics that tell the story of Indonesia's rich history. As we wander through the galleries, we'll come face-to-face with an extensive array of bronzes and ceramics dating back to the Han, Tang, and Ming dynasties - a true treasure trove for history buffs. The museum also showcases a fascinating selection of cultural instruments, household utensils, and arts and crafts, giving us a glimpse into the daily lives of Indonesia's diverse ethnic groups.

After a quick photo opportunity at the National Monument, we'll drive by some of Jakarta's iconic landmarks, including the Merdeka Palace, Istiqlal Mosque, and Church. These brief glimpses will give us a sense of the city's vibrant cultural and spiritual heritage.

After a break for lunch at a local restaurant, we'll make our way to Fatahillah Square, a charming cobblestoned area that's steeped in history. As we stroll along the picturesque Kali Besar Barat, we'll be surrounded by beautiful Dutch architecture, including the old Train Station and the Bank Indonesia Museum.

Our final destination for the day is the 500-year-old Sunda Kelapa Harbour, a bustling port that's played a vital role in the region's history. This ancient harbour was once the lifeblood of the 15th-century kingdom of Pajajaran and a key hub for the spice trade. Today, it's still an important centre for maritime trade, with brightly painted phinisi boats lining its shores, carrying goods from across Indonesia. As we explore the harbour, we'll get a glimpse into the lives of the people who call this vibrant city home.

Overnight in Jakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 3 Jakarta - Fly to Pangkalan Bun - Tanjung Puting National Park

This morning, we fly from Jakarta to Pangkalan Bun in Kalimantan, Borneo. From there, we drive to the Kumai River harbour, where we board our traditional klotok boat. As we head to our lodge, we'll relax on the upper deck, taking in the sights of the rainforest gliding by. The klotok's distinctive "klok tok tok tok" sound will accompany us as we depart the bustling river port, passing by shipyards where Makassar schooners are handcrafted from tropical hardwoods.

As we make our way upriver, we'll observe monkeys along the riverside and witness vibrant life along the riverfront - women washing clothes, men fishing, and children waving as we pass. Our destination is Tanjung Puting National Park, a protected area with vast tracts of wetlands, lowland forests, and swamp forests. The park is home to orangutans, proboscis monkeys, and over 400 species of trees.

We'll have a flexible itinerary to allow for maximum wildlife viewing opportunities, including the orangutan nursery at Tanjung Haraphan and Camp Leakey. We'll have the chance to see orangutans feeding at close range, as well as other wildlife like proboscis monkeys, hornbills, and macaques. We'll also take a walk into the Kalimantan rainforest, one of the earth's most biologically diverse areas.

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Overnight at the Rimba Orangutan Eco Lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 4 Orangutan Exploration & Camp Leakey

Situated on the edge of the Tanjung Puting National Park, our forest lodge on the Sekonyer River provides a great base for seeing up to nine primate species. This is one of the only places in the world where orangutans can be seen in the wild! Here we hope to be able to observe Orangutans, Proboscis Monkeys, Gibbons, Tarsiers and other primate species in their natural habitat.

The excitement continues today as we further our exploration of the area. After breakfast we will board our klotoks and travel upriver for about 2 hours and then up a side creek to Camp Leakey where the older orangutans are reintroduced into the rainforest. At Camp Leakey we will have the opportunity to walk into the rainforest with our guides and forestry rangers to appreciate the flora as well as perhaps sight wild orangutans, gibbons, macaques, and birds.

Camp Leakey was set up in 1971 by Louis Leakey to support research activities in Tanjung Puting Wildlife Reserve. Louis Leakey was both teacher and mentor for three young primatologists who would go on to become well known in their field and beyond. Jane Goodall and Dian Fossey were two who went on to become known worldwide for their work with chimpanzees and gorillas respectively. The third, Birute Galdikas, went on to become the leading authority on orangutans and remains so to this day as president of the Orangutan Foundation International.

This afternoon we will visit the feeding station to see the rehabilitated orangutans and then we will travel back down the river to overnight at our riverside lodge.

Overnight at the Rimba Orangutan Eco Lodge.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 5 Klotok - Fly to Semarang - Borobudur - Yogyakarta

Today we'll transfer to the airport for our flight to Semarang, followed by a drive to the magnificent Borobudur Temple, a magnificent 9th-century Mahayana Buddhist temple in Central Java. This 9th-century marvel is a UNESCO-listed site and one of the continent's most revered temples. The sprawling structure rises above a picturesque landscape of lush green paddies and swaying palms, a testament to the ingenuity and craftsmanship of the ancient Javanese people and considered one of the greatest Buddhist monuments in the world.

The temple's design is a massive stepped pyramid, representing a cosmic mountain, with multiple levels symbolizing spiritual enlightenment. The structure features over 2,600 relief panels and 504 Buddha statues, depicting scenes from Buddhist scriptures and everyday life. After being abandoned for centuries, Borobudur was rediscovered in the 19th century and restored to its former glory. Today, it's a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a major tourist destination. As we explore the temple, we'll learn about its history, design, and artwork, and experience the tranquil atmosphere of this sacred site.

We then transfer by road to our hotel in Yogyakarta.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Yogyakarta Area Touring

This morning's sightseeing begins with the Sultan's palace, the Kraton, a vast complex of courtyards, halls and pavilions in Javanese traditional style. The most important structure is the Golden Pavillion; ornately carved, and heavily gilded, its graceful roof is supported by finely carved wooden beams. Here the Sultan used to receive royal guests and hold balls and banquets. We also visit the nearby Taman Sari (Water Castle), the ruins, pools, arches and underground passages of the former pleasure gardens. It was built in 1758 by Sultan

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Hamengkubuwono I, as a rest house and pleasure park for the Royal Family.

In the afternoon continue drive to visit the most extensive Hindu temple site in Indonesia – Prambanan Temple. Prambanan is the largest Hindu temple compound in Indonesia. The temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the largest Hindu temples in Southeast Asia. It is characterized by its tall and pointed architecture, typical of Hindu temple architecture, and by the 47m (154 ft) high central building inside a large complex of individual temples. It was built around AD 850 by either Rakai Pikatan, king of the second Mataram dynasty, or Balitung Maha Sambu, during the Sanjaya Dynasty

We will also enjoy a Ramayana Ballet Performance with Prambanan temple as a background. It's a performance that combines drama and dance without dialogue, based on the epic Ramayana. The Ramayana epic tells the story of Rama Wijaya's journey to retrieve Dewi Shinta who was kidnapped by Rahwana, King of Alengka. The story ends with Ravana's death by Rama Wijaya's arrow and Rama Wijaya's reunion with his beloved wife, Dewi Shinta.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 7 Yogyakarta - Train to Mojokerto - Bromo

Today we embark on a scenic journey from Yogyakarta to Bromo Village, with a relaxing ride on the Sancaka train. We'll make our way to Yogyakarta Train Station, where we'll board the train, settle into our seats, as the train chugs out of the station and into the Javanese countryside. As we travel, we'll have the chance to watch local life unfold both on-board and alongside the track. We'll see villages, rice fields, and forests passing by our windows, with locals going about their daily business. Perhaps we'll even spot some children playing in the streets or farmers tending to their crops.

After a leisurely journey of about 3 hours, we'll arrive at Mojokerto where we'll be met by our driver, who will take us on the final 60 km (37 miles) to Bromo Village. The drive will take us through scenic landscapes and picturesque villages, with the majestic Mount Bromo looming in the distance.

As we arrive in Bromo Village, we'll check-in to our hotel and have the rest of the day free to spend at leisure. We can take a stroll around the village, explore the local markets, or simply relax in our hotel room, taking in the stunning views of the surrounding mountains. It's the perfect opportunity to unwind and recharge for the adventures ahead.

Overnight in Bromo.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Sunrise & Mt Bromo - Fly to Makassar

Today we rise early to witness one of nature's most breathtaking spectacles -- the sunrise over the majestic volcanoes of Bromo, Batok, and Semeru. We'll depart at around 3 am, transferring in a four-wheel drive vehicle to the sunrise point, where we'll watch the sky come alive with hues of pink and orange as the sun slowly rises (weather-permitting). From the viewing platform near the smouldering volcanic complex of Tengger Massif, we'll take in the stunning panorama of the surrounding landscape. As the sun rises, the volcanoes will be bathed in a warm golden light, offering a truly unforgettable experience.

Next, we'll make our way to the foot of Mount Bromo, where we'll climb the stairs to the crater's edge. Peering inside the rumbling volcano, we'll get a glimpse into the geological forces that have shaped this incredible landscape. The experience is sure to be both awe-inspiring and humbling. After our descent, we'll return to our hotel to refresh and recharge.

Later, we'll transfer to Surabaya for our flight to Makassar, the historic port capital of the island of Sulawesi – Indonesia's third-largest island, stretching like a four-armed starfish across the waters between Borneo and Maluku.

Overnight in Makassar.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Makassar - North Toraja

Today we head into the remote, mountainous interior of the island of Sulawesi, embarking on an immersive journey into local ethnic life. Today's road journey is an eight-hour drive to Toraja, covering a distance of 350 km (217 miles).

We'll break up the journey with a stop for lunch at a seafood restaurant in the charming coastal city of Parepare, where we can sample some fresh seafood and take in the local atmosphere. Continuing our drive, we'll stop at Puncak Lakawang, where breathtaking views of expansive lakes and rolling hills await us.

As we arrive in Rantepao in the late afternoon, we'll check-in to our hotel and have the rest of the day free to explore this picturesque town. Rantepao is the capital of North Toraja Regency, and we'll take a leisurely stroll to get a feel for the local culture and daily life. With a good night's sleep ahead, we'll be ready for tomorrow's adventures in this fascinating region.

Overnight in Rantepao.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 10 Toraja Highlands

Travel is all about immersive experiences, and today sees us get a glimpse into the lives of the Torajan communities indigenous to this region. After breakfast at the hotel, we set out on our full-day discovery with a drive to the Toraja Highlands to learn about the unique funeral rituals of the ethnic group. Our first stop is Lemo, where we can admire the rugged cliff that houses 75 small hand-carved holes containing colorful effigies of the dead that date back to the 16th century.

We then hit the road for Londa, home to an ancient cave cemetery. Here, the deceased are buried in a steep cave wall with wooden dolls standing close by that are believed to represent the dead. Our final destination of the day is the traditional Toraja village of Kete Kesu. We will be welcomed by villagers before taking a tour of their homes, rice barns and workshops where the wood-carvings that Kete Kesu is famed for are hand-made.

Overnight in Rantepao.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 11 Toraja Excursion

Today we combine history and culture as we delve deeper into Toraja's rich heritage. After breakfast at the hotel, we'll set off for Bori, an ancient site that's home to ceremonial grounds featuring over 100 menhirs. Each menhir represents a funeral feast performed in the past, offering a glimpse into the region's unique cultural traditions. As we explore the site, we'll see huge boulders, some of which have been carved out to house human remains.

Next, we'll visit some of the small traditional Toraja villages that dot the area, where we'll receive a warm welcome from the locals. We'll continue to Batutumonga, a spectacular spot situated on the slopes of Mount Sesean, Toraja's highest mountain. From this vantage point, we'll enjoy stunning views of the surrounding valleys and expansive lakes.

We'll then drive to the hilltop village of Pallawa, where we'll see more traditional Tongkonan houses, rice barns, and granaries. A visit to Nanggala will give us insight into the daily lives of the villagers, showcasing the unique customs and traditions of this fascinating region. After a day of exploration, we'll return to our hotel, with the rest of the day at our leisure to relax and reflect on our experiences.

Overnight in Rantepao.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 12 Toraja - Makassar - Fly to Denpasar, Bali

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Today we'll rise early to catch a spectacular sunrise (weather permitting), offering a breathtaking start to the day before we enjoy breakfast at the hotel. After breakfast, we'll embark on the eight-hour return drive from Rantepao to Makassar.

Once we arrive in Makassar, we'll transfer to the airport for our domestic flight to the island of Bali – Indonesia's most iconic island and our gateway to the cruise ahead.

Overnight in Kuta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Bali - Fly to Sumbawa Besar - Cruise Boarding

We fly east from Bali to the island of Sumbawa, a rugged, largely undiscovered island lying between Lombok and Flores in the heart of the Lesser Sunda chain. Sumbawa Besar, the island's main town, is where the cruise team will greet us dockside. Upon arrival at the airport, we'll be greeted by the cruise team, who will escort us to the ship for onboarding. As we set sail from Sumbawa Besar, we'll head east towards the island of Moyo, surrounded by crystal-clear waters and teeming marine life.*

Once we arrive on Moyo Island, we'll have the opportunity to explore its lush interior in search of hidden jungle waterfalls. We'll also discover the island's stunning underwater world, either by snorkeling or diving, and marvel at the vibrant coral reefs and diverse marine life that call Moyo home.

* PLEASE NOTE that the cruise program can be altered as needed depending on weather conditions.

Overnight on Mutiara Prasana Nusantara Cruise

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Saleh Bay & Satonda

We'll start the day with breakfast on board, enjoying the ocean views as we sail through the morning. After a short overnight journey, we'll wake up in Saleh Bay, a known hotspot for whale shark sightings. We'll have the thrilling opportunity to dive near the fisherman's platforms, getting up close and personal with these gentle giants.

This experience is sure to be a highlight for both kids and adults alike. After our encounter with the whale sharks, we'll set sail north towards Satonda Island, an ancient volcano with a unique feature - a saltwater lake in the centre of the island.

On Satonda Island, we can swim in the lake, try our hand at kayaking, or paddle around on a stand-up paddleboard, taking in the stunning scenery and enjoying the island's tranquil atmosphere.

Overnight on Mutiara Prasana Nusantara Cruise

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 15 Sangeang Island

We'll start the day with breakfast on board, and as we wake up, we'll be treated to the breathtaking view of the towering Sangeang volcano, situated off the coast of Sumbawa. Today, we'll explore the island and get a glimpse into the traditional skills of local shipwrights. We'll watch as they handcraft traditional boats using simple tools and techniques that have been passed down through generations.

With its crystal-clear waters, the island is also the perfect spot for a refreshing swim. We'll enjoy the island's beauty and then return to the ship for lunch and dinner, relaxing as we sail on.

Overnight on Mutiara Prasana Nusantara Cruise

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 16 Padar Island - Komodo Island - Manta Point

We'll begin the day with a thrilling trek to watch the sunrise on Padar Island, taking in the breathtaking views as the sky comes alive. Afterward, we'll sail to Komodo Island, where we'll spend a few hours exploring the island in search of the legendary Komodo dragons.

A local ranger will guide us and share insights into the unique role these creatures play in the ecosystem and how they came to inhabit this region. Later, we'll head to Makassar Reef, also known as Manta Point, where we'll have the chance to swim alongside the majestic manta rays.

The reef's shallow waters, rich in plankton, make it a perfect feeding ground for these gentle giants. As the day comes to a close, we'll cruise to Pulau Kalong, an island home to thousands of bats that reside in the mangroves. As the sun sets, the island will come alive with the sounds of the bats stirring, and we'll witness a truly spectacular sight as they take to the skies, heading towards Flores Island in search of fruit.

Overnight on Mutiara Prasana Nusantara Cruise

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 17 Labuan Bajo - Fly To Denpasar, Bali

Today we disembark at Labuan Bajo, a small fishing-town-turned-dive-hub on the western tip of the island of Flores, and transfer to the airport for our flight back to Bali.

Overnight in Kuta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 18 Denpasar, Indonesia - Dili, Timor-Leste

Today transfer to the airport for our flight to Dili. Welcome to Timor-Leste! (East Timor)

East Timor, officially the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, is a country in Maritime Southeast Asia. It comprises the eastern half of the island of Timor, the nearby islands of Atauro and Jaco, and Oecusse, an exclave on the northwestern side of the island, within Indonesian West Timor. Timor-Leste was colonized by Portugal in the 16th century, and was known as Portuguese Timor until Portugal's decolonization of the country. In late 1975, Timor-Leste declared its independence, but later that year was invaded and occupied by Indonesia and declared Indonesia's 27th province the following year. In 1999, following the United Nations-sponsored act of self-determination, Indonesia relinquished control of the territory, and Timor-Leste became the first new sovereign state of the 21st century on May 20, 2002.

After a break to freshen up (and flight timing-permitting), we an introductory tour of Dili, Timor-Leste's largest town with only 150,000 people. It is beautifully-situated along a crescent beach at the base of steep hills. One end of the bay is dominated by a 27m statue of Christ and the other by a centuries old lighthouse. From the peculiar coloured Portuguese colonial buildings, the local shopping areas, and a history of trade with China, India, and Arabia.

Our tour includes the Chega Exhibition, Santa Cruz Cemetery, statue of John Paul II, and the statue of Cristo Rei.

Overnight in Dili.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

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Day 19 Dili: WWII Memorial - Aileu - Maubisse - Village Visit

Today we drive up the backdrop hills of Dili en route to Maubisse. This drive gives you a bird's eye view of the capital city, Dili Bay, and the Island of Atauro set 32km across to the North of Dili.

We stop at the Dare Australian WWII Memorial before continuing the drive to the historic town of Aileu in the central ranges, where we stop for a coffee break at a popular restaurant. After a break we resume the drive to Maubisse, a once favoured town by the Portuguese for the cool climate. Maubisse is a town set in the central mountain ranges, where farming is the main activity, and the abundance of locally-grown vegetables supplies the capital city's demand.

The cone shaped thatched homes, built with bamboo or mud that can be spotted throughout the drive, are the traditional house typical of this region. After lunch we visit one of the many local traditional villages set on top of a hill and get an insight of how people in the rural areas live and learn about some Timorese traditions.

Overnight in Dili.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 20 Dili: Aipelu - Liquica - Maubara Fort

This morning we depart Dili once again and follow the West Coast Road along the ocean to the town of Aipelu where we visit the crumbling ruins of the Ai Pelo Prison, which stare hauntingly out to sea on the windswept coast. This stone-walled and weather-beaten prison is a colonial stain on the landscape, a place built by the Portuguese to house dissidents and criminals, the dark memories of which are still fervently avoided by the locals today.

We continue to Liquiça, where most of the inhabitants speak Tocodede, a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken by only about 39,000 people. We pass some historic sites including the Liquiça Church, site of a notorious massacre during which most of the city's buildings were destroyed in the period before the 1999 independence referendum.

Our next stop is the town of Maubara to visit the 16th Century Dutch-built fort. Maubara is situated on the coastline of Liquiça Municipality; the beaches that border this region are particularly beautiful.

We'll have some refreshments here and stop by the basket weaving huts along the beach front before transferring back to Dili.

Overnight in Dili.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 21 Dili, Timor Leste- Fly to Denpasar, Bali

Today we fly back to Bali once again, enjoy a farewell dinner, and spend the last night of our adventure.

Overnight in Kuta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 22 Departure

Departure from Denpasar.

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast