

Papua



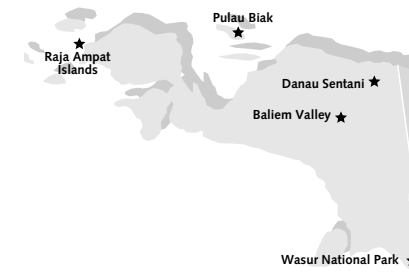
Papua's mystique piques the imagination of the explorer, naturalist, anthropologist, politician and traveller in you. What about Papua (formerly known as Irian Jaya) would not intrigue? The diversity in lifestyle and culture of the indigenous people, who speak more than 250 languages, is matched only by Papua's biodiversity and geography. The terrain covering half of New Guinea, the planet's second-largest island, ranges from the misty peak of Puncak Jaya (5050m) – which features permanent snowfields and small glaciers – to the steamy island groups of Biak and Raja Ampat, just shy of the equator. Endemic wildlife gracing this vast expanse of jungle, mountain, swamp and sea include such weird and wonderful creatures as cassowaries, dugongs, showy *cenderawasih* (birds of paradise), egg-laying echidnas and tree-dwelling monitor lizards.

Though much of the region is covered by impenetrable jungle, most inhabitants live in and around coastal towns. Almost all visitors head to the Baliem Valley, home to some of the most remarkable traditional cultures on earth, while others are drawn to the art of the Asmat region, or the bird life and coral reefs of the northern coast and islands.

With its limited infrastructure, administrative sloth, political strife that continually keeps hot spots off-limits to foreigners, and an equatorial climate that puts siesta time in effect between 1pm and 5pm, Papua poses a few travel challenges. To those willing to accept, the rewards flow with a generosity as life-sustaining as Papua's brown tributaries ribboning through its thick, enigmatic jungle canopy.

HIGHLIGHTS

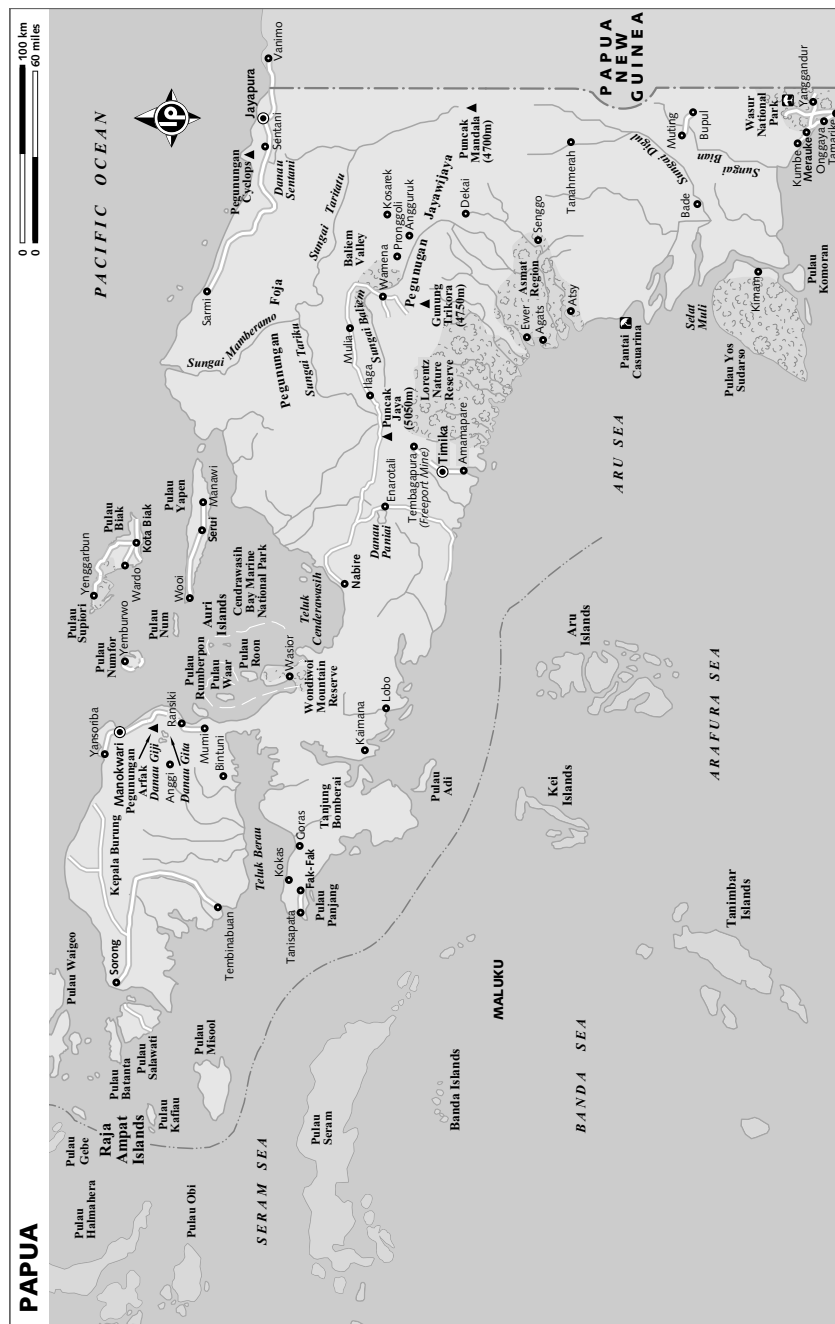
- Trekking through the sweet-potato terraces, thatch-hut villages and unique culture of the **Baliem Valley** (p816)
- Setting out for a chance glimpse of the rare *cenderawasih* or seeking out spectacular diving in the **Raja Ampat Islands** (p802) off the coast of Sorong
- Discovering white-sand beaches and dive sites around **Pulau Biak** (p809), a resting place for WWII wrecks and relics
- Cruising magnificent **Danau Sentani** (p835) by longboat, or hiking its undulating shoreline
- Exploring the indigenous lowland culture and Australian-looking flora and fauna of **Wasur National Park** (p837)



■ POPULATION: 2.7 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 421,981 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: PUNCAK JAYA (5050M)



IRIAN JAYA OR PAPUA?

When the Portuguese first sighted the island now shared by Papua and Papua New Guinea (PNG) in 1511 they called it *Ilhas dos Papuas* (Island of the Fuzzy Hairs), from the Malay word *papuwah*. Later, Dutch explorers called the island New Guinea, because the black-skinned people reminded them of the inhabitants of Guinea in Africa – and named the western half Dutch New Guinea. When sovereignty was transferred to Indonesia, the province was renamed Irian Barat (West Irian) and then Irian Jaya; *jaya* means ‘victorious’ in Bahasa Indonesia and *irian* means ‘hot land rising from the sea’ in the Biak language.

To placate the growing separatist movement, the Indonesian government agreed to rename the province Papua on 26 December 2001. To add to the confusion, many Papuan activists, and some international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), refer to it as West Papua. And at the time of writing, Papua was divided into two provinces: Papua and Irian Jaya Barat (or ‘Irijarbar’).

HISTORY Dutch Rule

In 1660 the Dutch recognised the Sultan of Tidore’s sovereignty over New Guinea island and, because the Dutch held power over Tidore (the Sultan’s territory), New Guinea theoretically became Dutch. The British unsuccessfully attempted to establish a settlement near Manokwari in 1793, but by 1824 Britain and the Netherlands agreed that the western half, Dutch New Guinea, would become part of the Dutch East Indies.

In 1828 the Dutch established a token settlement in Lobo (near Kaimana) but it also failed miserably. About 27 years later the first missionaries, Germans, established a settlement on an island near Manokwari. The Dutch didn’t try to develop the province again until 1896, when settlements were set up in Manokwari and Fak-Fak in response to perceived Australian ownership claims from the eastern half of New Guinea island. The province continued to be virtually ignored, except by mining companies from the USA and Japan, which explored the rich oil reserves during the 1930s.

WWII

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Dutch declared war on Japan, so the province, as part of the Dutch East Indies, inevitably assumed importance in the battle for the Pacific. (Some Indonesians welcomed the Japanese as Asian liberators who would eradicate the hated Dutch colonialists.)

In early 1944 a four-phase push, led by US army general Douglas MacArthur, was launched from what is now Papua New Guinea (PNG) to liberate Dutch New

Guinea from Japanese occupation. The Allies were far from optimistic: this part of the world was almost completely undeveloped, inhospitable and uncharted.

Phase one, the capture of Hollandia (Jayapura), was the largest amphibious operation of the war in the southwestern Pacific and involved 80,000 Allied troops. (Numerous WWII monuments and relics in and around Jayapura are testament to this event.) The second phase, to capture Sarmi, saw strong resistance from the Japanese. The third phase was the capture of Pulau Biak (primarily to control the airfield) and nearby Pulau Numfor, on the way to Sorong. Several hard battles were fought on Biak, exacerbated by Allied intelligence severely underestimating the Japanese strength. The fourth and final phase was the successful push to the Japanese air bases on Pulau Morotai, off northern Halmahera, and then towards the Philippines.

Along the south coast, the Allies fought for control of Merauke because of fears that it would be used as a base for Japanese air attacks against Australia.

Indonesia Takes Over

In 1945 the Dutch wrenched back the territory from the Japanese and used it as a place of exile. The infamous Boven Digul camp (in Tanahmerah) was established as a prison for Indonesian nationalists.

Following international pressure, the Dutch were forced to withdraw from the Dutch East Indies (which became Indonesia) after WWII, but still clung to Dutch New Guinea. In an attempt to stop Indonesia from gaining control, the Dutch encouraged Papuan nationalism and began

building schools and colleges to train Papuans in professional skills, with the aim of preparing them for self-rule by 1970.

Following WWII most Indonesian political factions claimed that Dutch New Guinea, like the rest of the former Dutch East Indies, should be part of Indonesia. Throughout 1962 Indonesian forces infiltrated the province, but with little success. The Papuan population failed to welcome the Indonesians as liberators and either attacked them or handed them over to the Dutch. However, US pressure eventually forced the Dutch to capitulate abruptly in August 1962.

A vaguely worded agreement in that year, under UN auspices, required that Indonesia allow the Papuans to determine, by the end of 1969, whether they wanted independence or to remain within the Indonesian republic. So in 1969 an 'Act of Free Choice' was 'supervised' by the UN. The Indonesian government, however, suddenly declared that it would use the procedure of *musyawarah*, by which a consensus of 'elders' would be reached.

In July 1969 the Indonesian government announced that the assemblies in the Merauke, Jayawijaya and Paniai districts had unanimously decided to become part of Indonesia. And West Irian, as it was then known, became Indonesia's 26th province.

Papuan Opposition

Even before the 'Act of Free Choice', the Indonesians faced violent opposition from the Papuans. In 1969 rebellions broke out on Pulau Biak and at Enarotali in the western highlands. Between 1977 and the mid-1980s occasional conflict erupted in the mountains around the Baliem Valley, at Tembagapura (site of the US-run Freeport mine), and in remote areas of the Paniai district.

After a short lull, anti-Indonesian activity recommenced. In 1995 members and sympathisers of the major independence group, the Free Papua Movement or Organisasi Papua Merdeka (OPM), stormed the Indonesian consulate in Vanimo, just over the border in PNG, and took to the streets in Tembagapura and Timika. In 1996 about 5000 Papuans rioted for several days and burned Pasar Abepura market in suburban Jayapura, resulting in several deaths.

In the same year, several European and Indonesian researchers were kidnapped in a remote part of the Baliem Valley. The Europeans were released unharmed four months later, but two Indonesian hostages were killed by the OPM.

By late 1998 the post-Soeharto government indicated a willingness to listen to separatists and reduced the military presence in the province. In December 2001 the province was officially renamed Papua and significant concessions were offered by Jakarta: increased autonomy and a reinvestment of 80% of the revenue from Papua into the province.

But most separatists still want total independence and demilitarisation by Indonesia. Papuans are also still angry because the Indonesian government continues to sell off parts of the province for logging, mining and other commercial purposes without compensation or consultation. And they resent the occasional brutal responses of the Indonesians to political dissent.

Transmigrasi

The Indonesian policy of *transmigrasi* is also one of the reasons for continuing unrest in Papua. Over one-third of Papua's population originates from outside the province, mainly from Java, Bali and Sulawesi. Most of the transmigrants live in settlements near the main towns of Jayapura, Merauke, Manokwari, Nabire and Sorong.

As Papua represents about 22% of Indonesia's total territory, but only about 1% of its population, the Indonesian government continues to move thousands of people to Papua from other, overcrowded islands. Poor locations and lack of planning for many existing settlements indicate that the main thrust of *transmigrasi* is less for the benefit of the transmigrants than to make the province truly 'Indonesian'.

CLIMATE

Generally the best (driest) time to visit Papua is between May and October, though it can – and does – often rain anywhere, anytime. (Rain falls in Kota Biak about 25 days a month.) Strong wind and rain are more common along the north coast from November to March. Along the south coast, however, it can get quite wet and windy from April to October – but this is the dry season

in Merauke, the only part of Papua with distinct seasons. The best time to visit the Baliem Valley is between March and August when the days are drier and cooler, though nights are usually cold year-round. Coastal towns are generally hot and humid, while it's often cooler in the highlands. See also the climate chart for Jayapura (pp848–9).

WILDLIFE

About 75% of Papua is forest, so it's no surprise that its flora is as varied as its geography. The usual lush collection of Asiatic species lie in the transition zone between Asia and Australia, postulated as the Wallace Line. The south coast's vegetation includes mangroves and sago palms, as well as eucalypts, paperbarks and acacias in the drier southeastern section. Highland vegetation ranges from alpine grasslands and heath to unique pine forests, bush and scrub. Papua boasts over 2500 species of orchids.

Animals are largely confined to marsupials, such as bandicoots, ring-tailed possums, pygmy flying phalangers, large cuscuses, tree kangaroos and wallabies. Reptiles include snakes both poisonous and not, crocodiles and frill-necked lizards. Papua is also home to about 800 species of spiders, 200 types of frogs and 30,000 kinds of beetles, while Pegunungan Arfak is renowned for its colourful butterflies.

Despite large-scale plunder, Papua's exquisite bird life is still a popular attraction for serious twitchers. Among the province's 600 species are thriving populations of casowaries, bowerbirds, cockatoos, parrots, kingfishers and crowned pigeons. The ac-

claimed and elusive *cenderawasih* inhabit parts of Kepala Burung and Pulau Yapen.

CULTURE

The interior is predominantly populated by indigenous Papuans, while coastal towns are inhabited by descendants of intermarriages between Papuans and Melanesians and Indonesians, as well as transmigrants from western Indonesia.

Dani from the Baliem Valley live in compounds of huts made from trees and mud, raising their precious pigs. They still often use stone implements to farm their dietary/agricultural staple, the sweet potato. See p817 for more information about the Dani.

Less accessible are the Manikom and Hatam people who live near the Anggi Lakes, and the Kanum and Marind near Merauke. Other inhabitants of the southeast are the Asmat people, who are renowned for their carvings (see p838). Further inland from the Asmat region, the Kombai and Korowai live in truly extraordinary tree houses, sometimes up to dozens of metres above ground, to avoid tides, wild animals and tribal invasion. Incredibly, the Indonesian media reported in mid-1998 that two 'new tribes' that use sign language to communicate had been 'found' in very remote parts of the interior.

Churches of all denominations are found throughout Papua, but (despite claims by fervent missionaries) indigenous people enjoy a combination of traditional beliefs and Christianity. Officially, 99% of the Papuan population is Christian, but this seems difficult to believe given the number of

PAPUAN EDEN

In early 2006, a team of American, Australian and Indonesian biologists made international news when they reported on their foray into an isolated area of Pegunungan Foja (the Foja mountain range) in northern Papua. In this very remote jungle, the team found a stunning wealth of wildlife, discovering at least 20 new species of frog, a tree kangaroo formerly believed to exist only on one mountaintop in PNG, and the first new species of bird (the orange-faced honeyeater) discovered on the island of New Guinea since 1940. They also spotted the six-wired bird of paradise, until then believed to be extinct. None of the animals showed any fear of humans, evidence that they'd had no exposure to our own dangerous species.

To date, 40% of Indonesia's forests have been destroyed. For now, Papua's Pegunungan Foja is a protected conservation area, although it remains to be seen if the Indonesian government will make the long-term committed effort to protect this museum of biodiversity from poachers and logging interests.

TOP FIVE READS

- *Throwin' Way Leg* by Tim Flannery (2000) – a mammologist's travelogue of sorts, detailing his research years in Papua and PNG – full of lovely, funny observations and wonderful insights into the people and environment.
- *Under the Mountain Wall* by Peter Matthiessen (1987) – chronicles his daily life among the Kurulu tribe of the Baliem Valley in 1961.
- *The Lost World of Irian Jaya* by Robert Mitton (1983) – compiled from his letters, diaries, maps and photographs after his death in 1976; criticises the reckless way that Papuans have been forced into the modern world.
- *Poisoned Arrows* by George Monbiot (1989) – details a remarkable journey to the wilds of Papua with the objective of uncovering the truth about *transmigrasi* and the nature of anti-Indonesian resistance.
- *The Open Cage* by Daniel Start (1997) – first-hand experience of a hostage taken by the OPM (Free Papua Movement); he creates a commendably thorough backdrop of the Papuan context leading to his situation.

transmigrants from Muslim-dominated Java and Sulawesi.

Estimates of the number of languages spoken in Papua range from 200 to over 700 (there has been very little study about the linguistics of the province). There is no doubt though, that Papua and neighbouring PNG, with a combined population of only a few million, speak an inordinately high percentage of the world's languages. Sadly, some of these languages are slowly and permanently disappearing.

TRAVEL PERMIT

For increasingly obscure political and bureaucratic reasons, foreigners must obtain a travel permit known as a *surat keterangan jalan* – commonly known as a *surat jalan* – before they can visit some places in Papua, particularly the interior.

At the time of writing, you could visit Jayapura, Sentani, Manokwari, Pulau Biak and Sorong without a *surat jalan*. Depending on the whim of the local police, you may need one for Pulau Biak, Nabire and Manokwari; however, you can get one easily after you arrive at these towns. For other areas, such as Merauke, the Asmat region, Pulau Yapen, Timika, Fak-Fak, and the Baliem Valley (including Wamena; see also p817), you *must* have a *surat jalan* before arrival. At the time of writing, foreigners were not permitted to go to Gunung Trikora (Trikora Mountain), the Paniai district, Danau Habbema (Lake Habbema) or

Sungai Mamberamo (Mamberamo River). For anywhere else not mentioned here, it's safe to assume that you'll need a *surat jalan*.

The permit lasts from one week to one month depending on the amount of time you request, the expiry date of your visa and the mood of the police. If you have a 30-day tourist visa, you can apply for a *surat jalan* at a local police station (*polres*). If you have a business visa or any other type of visa, you'll have to visit a branch of the provincial police force (*polda*), probably in Jayapura. Permits are normally available at any district capital, and are particularly easy to get in Kota Biak and Jayapura, where the staff are used to foreigners. Some police stations may be reluctant to issue a *surat jalan* allowing you to visit a more remote area of another district, so you may have to apply for a separate permit at the relevant district capital.

When you apply for the permit, supply the police with two passport-size photos and a big smile, and then tell them all the towns/places you may possibly travel to. It will take about one hour to type up for which an 'administration fee' is required (5000Rp is enough). The whole process may sound overwhelming, but don't be concerned: the police are invariably helpful and friendly, and as bored with the paperwork as you are. To save time and hassle, a travel agent or hotel in Papua may be able to arrange the permit for a negotiable fee. If you're

on an organised tour, the permit should be arranged by your travel agency.

In places where a *surat jalan* is needed, your hotel or guide will request a photocopy of your permit to bring to the local police for registration and stamping. If not, you'll have to report to the police station yourself, preferably as soon as you arrive; certainly within 24 hours. In remote areas, including the Baliem Valley, you'll need to report and show your permit to the police or village authorities wherever you stay overnight. Always keep a few photocopies of your permit handy to give to local authorities.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most visitors fly straight to Jayapura through Biak and/or Makassar (Sulawesi) for a connection to Wamena in the Baliem Valley, but there are a number of other interesting ways to enter Papua. You could fly to Port Moresby (capital of PNG), and on to Vanimo before chartering a boat or crossing on foot to Jayapura; take a Pelni liner to Timika or Merauke and fly to Jayapura; take a boat or plane between Sorong or Fak-

Fak and other Indonesian islands; or take a boat and/or plane along the north coast to Jayapura, stopping at Manokwari, Biak, Nabire and/or Serui.

Air

Unless you have lots of time, flying is the best way to get to and around Papua. Merpati Nusantara Airlines regularly links Papua's main regional centres (Sorong, Biak and Jayapura) with major cities elsewhere in Indonesia, such as Makassar and Jakarta. Garuda Indonesia airlines also links Biak and Jayapura with western Indonesia.

Current fares for flights to and around Papua are shown in the Papua Airfares map (p800), while information about schedules is included in the relevant sections later in this chapter.

Boat

Several Pelni liners, notably the *Tatamailau*, *Ciremai*, *Doro Londa* and *Nggapulu*, link the north and south coasts of Papua with Maluku, Sulawesi and Java every two or four weeks. See p872 for more information

TRAVELLING BETWEEN PAPUA & PNG

Though there are no flights between Papua and PNG, crossing the border by land or sea is fairly straightforward.

Boats leave daily at 6am from Hamadi port near Jayapura, but they only operate in good weather. Another option is to charter a boat between Jayapura and Vanimo for a negotiable 350,000Rp per person one way (minimum of three passengers). Ask around the port at Hamadi near Jayapura, or check with the travel agency PT Kuwera Jaya (p829) in Jayapura.

It's also possible to cross to the PNG border from Jayapura by land. Taxis head for the border from both Hamadi market and Yotefa market in Abepura, the latest leaving around 2pm. If none are available, you can charter one yourself for a negotiable 250,000Rp. It's a 2½-hour trip to Wutung, the village nearest the border. You'll have to cross the border itself on foot; once in PNG, you can hire a car to take you to Vanimo (about 10 kina/US\$2.50).

Most visitors to PNG need a visa; the 60-day, garden-variety tourist visa (US\$25) can be obtained at the **Consulate of PNG** (Map p834; ☎ 0967-531250; congenpng@yahoo.com.id; Jl Raya Argapura; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Thu, 8am-2pm Fri) in Jayapura. This usually takes two days, although they'll rush-process it for you in a few hours if you show up early and ask nicely. You can get a tourist visa without a ticket out of PNG, but you must show this visa to the airline company or travel agency when you buy an airline ticket out of Vanimo, the nearest town to Jayapura in PNG. Air Niugini currently flies between Vanimo and Port Moresby on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.

It is very important to note that you cannot get an Indonesian visa at the border if you're coming from Vanimo; you must obtain one beforehand. Indonesian tourist visas (valid for 30 days, nonextendable) are available in Vanimo or Port Moresby. If you're travelling to/from Jayapura by boat, visit the **Immigration office** (☎ 0967-521647; Jl Percetakan 15; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) in Jayapura to make sure you have the correct entry/exit stamp(s) in your passport. If departing on an early-morning boat, you'll have to stop by the Immigration office the day before in order to get a back-dated exit stamp – for which you may have to pay a small convenience fee.

about Pelni schedules, while the relevant sections later in this chapter list some fares for major routes.

A few Perintis boats regularly link the north coast of Papua with Sulawesi and northern Maluku, and connect the south coast of Papua with southeast Maluku.

GETTING AROUND

Very few roads have successfully crossed the seemingly impenetrable terrain of Papua. Roads between Jayapura and Wamena, and Sorong and Manokwari, have been started, but are unlikely to be completed in the next few years – if ever! Boats are slow, infrequent and often uncomfortable, so flying is the best, and sometimes only, option.

Air

The hubs for internal flights around Papua are Sorong for the northwest; Biak for the Teluk Cenderawasih (Cenderawasih Bay) region; Jayapura for the Baliem Valley; and Merauke for the southeast coast. Some flights on the main carrier, Merpati, are over-booked, while others are cancelled

through a lack of passengers. Garuda, which flies between Timika, Biak and Jayapura, is more reliable.

Merpati offices in Fak-Fak, Serui, Yemburwo (Pulau Numfor), Anggi, Senggo, Ewer and Manokwari are not computerised, so you can only book a flight from these towns at the relevant Merpati offices. This results in double-bookings and utter chaos at the offices, and a telephone reservation before arrival is usually worth diddly-squat. So, if you're flying with Merpati, always allow plenty of time and be prepared for delays and cancellations. Merpati planes to smaller destinations have a 10kg baggage limit per person, though this is usually ignored if you're a few kilograms over.

Between Sentani (Jayapura) and Wamena, planes are also operated by the cargo carrier **Trigana Air Service** (☎ Wamena airport terminal 0969-31611, Sentani airport terminal 0967-594383), Protestant-run **Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF)** (Wamena; ☎ 0969-31263; Jl Gatot Subroto; Sentani; ☎ 0967-91109; Jl Misi Sentani) and the Indonesian army. The MAF and the Catholic-run **Associated Mission Aviation (AMA)**; ☎ 0967-591009; amasantani@jayapura

PAPUA TRAVEL WARNING

Outbreaks of civil unrest and violence are not uncommon in Papua, but they should not dissuade you from visiting the province. Sporadic riots have been flaring up with increasing frequency since 2000 in the Jayapura and Sentani region; in early 2006 three policemen and one military guard were beaten to death at a clash at Cenderawasih University near Jayapura. In 2002, two American schoolteachers were murdered in Timika, a city not noted for tourism but for a large percentage of resident expats. Papua is so huge that civil unrest tends to be localised, so be sure to stay abreast of current events.

.wasantara.net.id; Jl Misi Sentani, Sentani) also fly from Sentani (Jayapura) and/or Wamena to a dozen or more remote villages in the central and western highlands. These organisations sometimes accept tourists, but their primary concern is missionary business. You can also often charter their planes – at exorbitant rates. Make sure you book at least one week in advance. **Airfast** (☎ 021-5200696; www.airfastindonesia.com) planes, based in Jakarta, can also be chartered to/from Timika.

Current fares for flights around Papua are listed on the Papua Airfares map (p800), while information about schedules is included in the relevant sections later in this chapter.

Boat

Travelling around Papua by boat will take some time as well as planning. Four big Pelni liners – the *Ciremai*, *Dobonsolo*, *Doro Londa* and *Nggapulu* – stop at major towns along the north coast every two weeks. The *Sangiang* plies the south coast every two weeks, while the *Tatamailau* and *Kelimutu* also crawl along the south coast every four weeks. The Transport chapter (p872) has more information about Pelni schedules, while the relevant sections later in this chapter list some fares for major routes.

The next best option is a Perintis boat along either coast, but they are less comfortable and slower than Pelni liners. Many other basic boats sail along certain smaller sections of both coasts, and as far inland as

the enormous rivers will allow. See relevant sections for more details.

No boat regularly links the north coast of Papua with the south coast.

WESTERN PAPUA

The western part of Papua offers outstanding diving and trekking, deserted beaches, remote islands, traditional cultures and easy-going towns. Travel around western Papua, however, is hindered by limited, costly and time-consuming transport, as well as annoying government regulations.

Conservationists continue to take an interest in the area: parts of Pegunungan Arfak (home to over 300 species of birds and 320 types of butterflies) are protected under the Arfak Mountains Wildlife Preservation (Capa) programme, with assistance from the World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF).

Activities

TREKKING

Pegunungan Arfak and Wondiwoi Mountain Reserve offer unlimited trekking opportunities, but you'll have to arrange everything yourself; there are no organised tours. The **Manokwari tourist office** (☎ 0986-212030; Jl Merdeka; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) can provide useful information about trails, guides and permits, but this often depends on who you talk to. Otherwise, contact the **WWF office** (☎ 0986-222493; Jl Rendani, Wosi) or the **Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park office** (☎ 0986-222356, 212303; Jl Rendani, Wosi) in Manokwari.

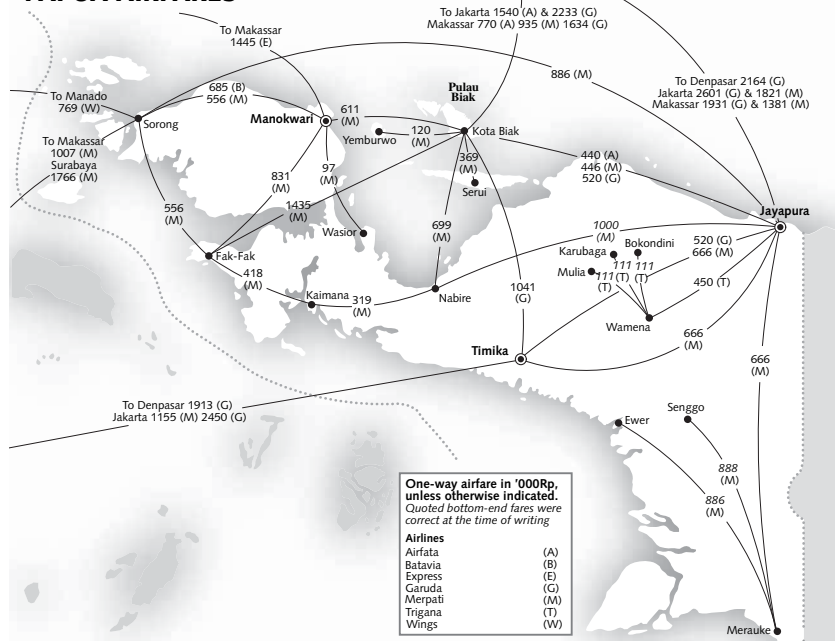
Guides/porters around western Papua cost about 80,000/45,000Rp per day. You can buy food in villages, and often stay in local houses for about 35,000Rp per person per night, but bring your own cooking and camping equipment, as well as wet-weather gear.

SORONG

☎ 0951 / pop 130,000

Though basically an oil, logging and district administration centre, Sorong makes a decent base for diving, trekking and bird-watching tours in western Papua. The city offers no compelling reason to linger, unless you're waiting for a plane or boat bound for

PAPUA AIRFARES



BIRDS OF PARADISE

Over 40 different species of *cenderawasih* (bird of paradise) are found in small areas of northern Papua and southern Maluku, as well as PNG.

Cenderawasih were first taken to Europe following colonial exploration around the Dutch East Indies. Their feathers fetched remarkable prices as fashionable accessories, so the birds soon faced extinction. Because traders often removed the birds' legs and wings to highlight their beautiful plumage, Europeans originally thought that the birds had no feet and spent their entire lives in flight.

The male bird is usually more brightly coloured than the female and displays its magnificent plumage during mating, often hanging upside down from branches to show off its colours. *Cenderawasih* usually nest in open parts of a tree, feed on fruit and insects, have remarkable thin, curled 'tail-wires' up to 30cm long with colourful tips, and make loud screeching noises.

These birds are scarce and elusive, but with lots of patience, time and a knowledgeable guide, it may be possible to spot some. Finding them will require chartering boats, organising guides and carrying camping equipment, as their territories are remote: Waigeo, Misool, Batanta and Salawati islands (off the coast of Sorong); along sections of the aptly named Teluk Cenderawasih; around the north coast of Pulau Yapen; and in the Aru Islands (southeast Maluku).

Organised bird-watching tours can be arranged through travel agencies in Sorong, Manokwari, Biak and Jayapura.

points beyond. Sorong is the jumping-off point for diving in Raja Ampat islands.

Orientation & Information

Sorong is quite spread out, so to visit banks, government and airline offices, as well as the main port and *angkot* (minibus) terminal, take a public/chartered *angkot*.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Ahmad Yani 99) Probably the best place to change money.

Police station (☎ 323210; Jl Basuki Rahmat) Will issue a *surat jalan* for travel to the interior or to any island off the coast of Sorong.

Sarana Solusi Informatika (SSI; Jl Yos Sudarso; per hr 8000Rp; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 3-8pm Sun) Internet access is charged in one-hour blocks, so watch that dock. About 100m west of Hotel Tanjung.

Tourist office (☎ 323070; Jl Burung Mambuk Remu Utara) Mildly useful.

Sights & Activities

Pantai Kasuari (Cassowary Beach) is ideal for swimming and snorkelling (bring your own gear) and accessible by public *angkot* from the terminal. A walk (40 minutes) around **Pulau Doom** is appealing, but be prepared: there are more 'hello misters' here per second than anywhere else in Indonesia! You can reach Doom (!) by public/chartered boat (2000Rp return) from the small harbour near Hotel Indah.

From the same harbour, you can also rent a boat (about 700,000Rp per day) to

the nearby **Raja Ampat** islands, one of the world's most diverse reef systems. The islands include **Pulau Batanta** (for bird life and sandy beaches), **Pulau Waigeo** (hiking, swimming and snorkelling among shipwrecks) and **Pulau Kofiau** (diving).

The tiny islands around **Pulau Misool** boast some of the best coral and marine life in Indonesia. The area is fairly sheltered, and diving is possible year-round.

Sorong's long-established major operator is **Papua Diving** (☎ 0411-401660; fax 325274; www.papua-diving.com; Jl Gunung Gamalama 3), which runs a range of professional diving, trekking and bird-watching trips. This outfit concentrates on pre-booked, multiday tours rather than day trips, specialising in diving holidays in the Raja Ampat. The website contains details about tours, current costs and some of the local marine life.

Sleeping

Hotel Indah (☎ 321514; Jl Yos Sudarso 4; r 65,000-120,000Rp; 🍷) The best deals at the breezy Hotel Indah are on the 2nd floor, with air-con, ocean views and a tiled terrace. Sweet tea is the sole item offered for breakfast.

Hotel Tanjung (☎ 323782; Jl Yos Sudarso; r 75,000-200,000Rp; 🍷) Situated on the waterfront near the local market, Hotel Tanjung has a range of acceptable rooms. Though the cheaper ones don't have an attached *mandi* (Indonesian-style bath), all rooms come

with a breakfast voucher for the oceanview restaurant upstairs.

Hotel Waigo (☎ 333500; Jl Yos Sudarso; r 165,000-300,000Rp; 🍷) Playfully decked out in pink paint, psychedelic tile and stylised murals, Hotel Waigo is a superb deal – especially if you can snag one of the few oceanview rooms. Rates include breakfast and afternoon tea, served on the open-air terrace on the 4th floor.

Hotel Mariat (☎ 323535; Jl Ahmad Yani; r 466,000-1,060,000Rp, ste 1,101,000-2,371,600Rp; 🍷 🍷) Though it's Sorong's pinnacle of luxury, the underwhelming accommodations don't quite merit these exorbitant prices. Still, if you're stranded in town, a standard room could be worth the splurge – the hotel boasts the only swimming pool in western Papua, as well as a full bar.

Eating

Every evening, warungs set up shop along the waterfront.

Rumah Makan Ruta Sayang (Jl Yos Sudarso; mains from 15,000Rp; 🍷 lunch & dinner) A few doors down from Restoran Tanjung, pick up the scent of meat on the grill at this hot spot.

Restoran Tanjung (Jl Yos Sudarso; mains around 30,000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) For spectacular sunsets and delectable baked fish, head upstairs from Hotel Tanjung's lobby.

Getting There & Away

Within Papua, Merpati flies daily from Sorong to Jayapura (with onward connections to Biak twice a week) and to Manokwari four times a week. Flights also leave daily for Jakarta, Makassar and Surabaya, while Wings flies to Manado once a week. Shop around for the best deals at the airline counters at the airport.

Sorong is the hub for all boat travel along the southern and northern coasts. Every two weeks, the *Rinjani* sails to Fak-Fak and Maluku (to Ternate 1st/economy class 323,000/149,000Rp), the *Sangiang* plies the south coast, the *Umsini* links Sorong with Sulawesi (to Makassar 1,247,000/575,000Rp), and the *Ciremai*, *Nggapulu*, *Dobonsolo* and *Doro Londa* connect Sorong with Sulawesi and/or Bali. The **Pelni office** (☎ 321716; Jl Ahmad Yani) also handles bookings for the Perintis boats. The **port** (Jl Ahmad Yani) is inconvenient, but accessible by *angkot*.

Getting Around

Gone are the days of schlepping 20km out to the Jefman Island airstrip to catch your flight; Sorong's new Domine Eduard Osok airport is conveniently located on the mainland, about 5km east of town.

Yellow *angkot* travel frequently along the main roads; from the airport, you'll have to transfer at the *angkot* terminal to one marked 'A' or 'B' to get into town. Airport taxis into town will cost 50,000Rp, while *ojek* (motorbike taxis) go for 10,000Rp.

FAK-FAK

☎ 0956

Wherever you turn in Fak-Fak – and yes, it is pronounced *that way* – your eyes will alight on picturesque views of the town's hills, trees and sparkling sea. But this quaint colonial town, built on coastal foothills, doesn't just have a pretty façade. While it was the first successful Dutch settlement in Papua, it retains some mystical local allure and lore. Ask around about the purported giants' bones found in the area, or venture northward to marvel at the rock-art sites along the coast.

Fak-Fak is accessible from Pulau Ambon and the Banda Islands (both in Maluku) by sea, and Sorong by air, so it's an enticing place to start and/or finish a visit to Papua.

Orientation & Information

Many facilities are along the main street, Jl Izaak Telussa, in the downtown area called Kota. As it snakes along the coast, this street leads to the tidy Pasar Tamburani (Tamburani Market) and the Tamburani *mikrolet* (minibus) terminal, facing the inlet. The steep roads climbing above Kota lead to the hillside quarters known as Wagon and Puncak, where you'll find the tourist office and Telkom office, respectively.

Alfa (Jl Cenderawasih; ☎ 9am-2pm & 5-10pm Mon-Sat, 5-10pm Sun) If this warnet in Puncak looks closed during opening hours, try knocking at the shop next door.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Izaak Telussa 26) Change cash and travellers cheques, but be prepared to wait.

Police (☎ 22200; Jl Tamburani) Once you arrive, report to this low-key police station, opposite Hotel Sulinah.

Post office (Jl Letjen Haryono)

Telkom (Jl Cenderawasih; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist office (☎ 22288; Jl Nuri 1; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Stop by for tips from the helpful staff, or a peek at the spectacular view from its balcony.

Sights & Activities

The best excursion is to **Pulau Tubir Seram** in the harbour. This tiny, uninhabited island is crossed with short **walking trails**, a huge monument dedicated to former German missionaries with a **museum** underneath, and superb views. The two-room **guesthouse** offers absolute seclusion. Before setting out, contact the tourist office about the status of the museum and guesthouse; at the time of writing, both were closed due to lack of funding and interest. You can charter a longboat (about 150,000Rp return) to the island from Danaweria village, just east of Fak-Fak.

About one hour by chartered boat from Terminal Tamburani, **Pulau Panjang** features the 1km-long, sandy **Pantai Wajob**.

Sleeping & Eating

The hotels listed below are all along, or just off, Jl Izaak Telussa.

Hotel Tembagapura (☎ 22136; Jl Izaak Telussa 16; r 65,000-165,000Rp; 🍽️) It's central, quiet and often full, and rates include breakfast.

Hotel Sulinah (☎ 22447; Jl Tamburani 93; r 80,000Rp) At the western end of the main street, this small family-run place offers clean rooms with shared *mandi* and the sounds of the call to prayer from the hill above. Breakfast and afternoon tea are included.

Fak-Fak Hotel (☎ 23196; Jl Suprpto 9; s 95,000-187,000Rp, d 105,000-220,000Rp; 🍽️) Priciest rooms have hot water, minibars and balconies with sweet 180-degree ocean views. Breakfast is not included, but you can order meals from the inhouse restaurant.

Hotel Marco Polo (☎ 22537; Jl Izaak Telussa 63; r 110,000Rp; 🍽️) This clean, friendly place is down a steep laneway opposite a mosque. Breakfast is included.

For ocean breezes and excellent *ikan bakar* (grilled fish) or *ayam lalapan* (fried chicken with chilli), head for the spit in the inlet known as Jl Baru or Jl Reklamasi. The waterside warungs are open in the evenings only and are most easily reached from the Terminal Tamburani side of the reclaimed road.

Getting There & Away

Merpati flies four days a week to Sorong, and twice a week to Nabire and Biak. The **Merpati office** (☎ 71275; Jl Izaak Telussa 57) is open irregularly.

Every two weeks, the Pelni liner *Rinjani* sails to Sorong and Ambon (1st/economy class 247,000/125,000Rp), the *Doro Londa* conveniently links Fak-Fak with the north coast of Papua, and the *Sangiang* sails down the south coast of Papua. Every four weeks, the *Tatamailau* and *Kelimutu* also ply the south coast of Papua and sail the ocean blue to Ambon.

Perintis boats stop at Fak-Fak every two or three weeks during their crawl along the south coast and around southeast Maluku. The port is centrally located at the eastern end of Jl Izaak Telussa, but the **Pelni office** (☎ 23371; Jl Di Panjaitan) is not – take a *mikrolet*.

Getting Around

Tiny Torea airport is on a hillside about 7km from town. From the airport, a chartered *mikrolet* might cost 25,000Rp if there's no one to share it with you; to the airport, you can usually catch one from Terminal Tamburani or charter one from town. The streets of Fak-Fak are extremely steep, so use *mikrolet* if you're straying beyond Kota to the hillside neighbourhoods.

AROUND FAK-FAK

Around the village and beach at **Kokas**, on the north coast of the peninsula, there is a plethora of Japanese WWII cannons, tunnels and shipwrecks, and a mosque built in 1870. With permission from the tourist office in Fak-Fak, you can stay in the guesthouse at Kokas, but watch out for the huge coconut crabs! *Mikrolet* travel the road from Fak-Fak to Ubadari, from where you can charter a boat to Kokas.

You should also charter a boat from Fak-Fak or Ubadari to inspect the ancient **rock paintings** along the coast as far as **Goras**, to explore the **Ugar Islands** (for diving) or to admire the magnificent **Air Terjun Madedred** (Madedred Waterfalls).

Those with bronze ambitions can take *mikrolet* to beaches starting about 1km west of town: **Pasir Putih I, II & III** all have white sands, azure waters and no crowds on weekdays.

MANOKWARI

☎ 0986 / pop 55,000

The first place in Papua to be settled by missionaries, Manokwari ('Old Village' in the Biak language) is a mellow base from

to explore Teluk Cenderawasih. The town is easy to roam around and provides most facilities.

Orientation & Information

Except for the suburb of Wosi to the west, most of Manokwari hugs Teluk Doreri. The eastern side of the bay, simply known as Kota, is a more convenient base than the western (Sanggeng) side.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Yos Sudarso)

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Merdeka 44) Also has a 24-hour ATM for Visa and MasterCard.

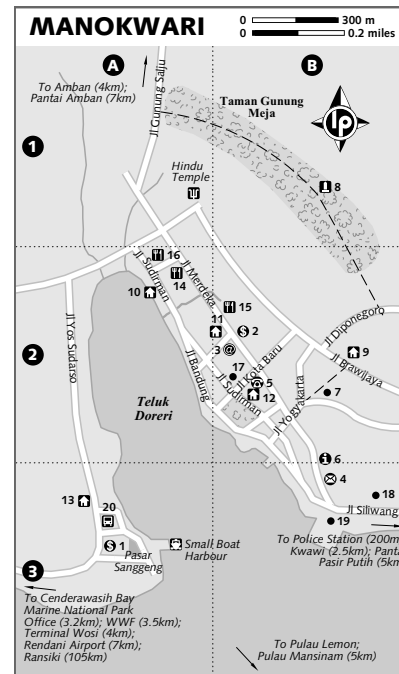
Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park office (☎ 222356, 212303; Jl Rendani, Wosi) About 3km west of town, towards the airport.

Flashlink.net (Jl Merdeka 46; ☎ 9am-1pm & 5-9pm Mon-Sat) Slow internet connection tempered by soothing air-con.

Main post office (Jl Siliwangi 28) Opposite the port; serves your basic needs.

Police station (☎ 211359; Jl Bhayangkara) About 200m east of the port, a *surat jalan* for surrounding areas is easy to obtain from here.

Telkom Wartel (cnr Jl Merdeka & Jl Kota Baru) Cushy booths in the most convenient place to make a telephone call.



Tourist office (☎ 212030; Jl Merdeka; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Worth visiting, especially if you plan to trek around Pegunungan Arfak.

WWF (☎ 222493; Jl Rendani, Wosi) Good source of information about Cenderawasih Marine National Park and Pegunungan Arfak.

Sights & Activities

A reasonably flat 2.5km path crosses picturesque **Taman Gunung Meja** (Table Mountain Park), a protected forest with plenty of bird life and butterflies. Take a taxi to Amban (a pleasant university town) from Terminal Sanggeng, and ask the driver to let you off at the unsigned start to the well-marked trail. The **Tugu Jepang** (Japanese Monument), 1km before the end of the trail, offers great views, and the path ends behind Hotel Arfak.

Gua Jepang (Japanese Cave) is more of a series of tunnels that was built by the Japanese in WWII. The entrance, which you can look at but not really explore, is along the stone steps leading to Hotel Arfak, between two tennis courts.

Two German missionaries settled on **Pulau Mansinam** in 1855 and became the first in Papua to spread 'The Word'. This picturesque island, set majestically in a bay under

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Pegunungan Arfak, is home to a small village, the ruins of an **old church**, a **memorial** to the missionaries, and a pleasant **beach**. It's best to report to the *kepala desa* (village head) before wandering around too far.

Nearby, **Pulau Lemon** boasts some more **beaches**, **WWII wrecks** and spots for **snorkelling** (bring your own gear), but is smaller, and less enticing and accessible, than Mansinam. A passenger boat (one way 3000Rp) from the jetty at Kwawi (accessible via the Pantai Pasir Putih taxis from Terminal Sanggeng) goes to Mansinam three or four times a day. It's more fun, however, to ask someone in Kwawi to take you in his canoe (about 100,000Rp return to both islands).

About 5km east of the town centre, **Pantai Pasir Putih** is a curved bay of white sand and clear water, ideal for **swimming** and **snorkelling** (bring your own gear). It's a little unkempt in parts, but quiet – except on Sunday when half of Manokwari invades the beach. The other half visits **Pantai Amban**, 3km north of Amban village and 7km north of Manokwari. This black-sand beach is perfect for **surfing** and watching the sunset. Taxis leave regularly from Terminal Sanggeng to both Pantai Pasir Putih and Amban village (from where you'll probably have to walk to the beach).

Tours

The only travel agency in Manokwari is **Arfak Paradigalla Tours & Travel** (☎ 0815-27004054; yoris_tours@yahoo.com). This effusive, one-man outfit offers tours around Manokwari, as well as bird-watching trips and treks around Pegunungan Arfak and the Anggi lakes.

Sleeping

All hotels listed below include breakfast (and some throw in afternoon tea) in their rates.

Losmen Apose (☎ 211369; Jl Kota Baru 4; s with shared mandi 50,000Rp, d with private mandi 150,000Rp) This is a friendly place opposite the Merperti agency. Rooms vary in quality, so view a few before deciding.

Billy Jaya Hotel (☎ 215787; Jl Merdeka 51; r 151,250-302,500Rp; 📶) Upstairs from Billy Café and its attached travel agency, the clean, cosy, lower-end rooms here are a terrific deal. Woven rattan ceilings, TVs and minibars add to the atmosphere and comfort.

Mutiara Hotel (☎ 217777; fax 211222; Jl Yos Sudarso 41; r 235,950-326,700Rp; 📶) All rooms at the Mutiara have bathroom and satellite TV, and are

comfortably outfitted. Garden-view rooms at the back are quieter and actually cheaper than those facing the busy boulevard.

Other accommodation options:

Hotel Arfak (☎ 213079; fax 211293; Jl Brawijaya 8; r 50,000-150,000Rp; 📶) Its decaying colonial shell could use some work, but some rooms are OK for the prices.

Hotel Maluku (☎ 211948; Jl Sudirman 52; r 115,000-140,000Rp; 📶) Central and quiet, and better maintained than the Arfak, but with only squat toilets.

Hotel Mokwam (☎ 211403; Jl Merdeka 49; r 186,000-270,000Rp; 📶) A step up in price and quality is the spacious, friendly Mokwam.

Eating

Hawai Billy Bakery & Coffee Shop (☎ 212189; Jl Sudirman 100; mains 15,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) An arm of the Billy empire, this relaxed spot serves espresso and pizza and features a wall of house-baked pastries.

Billy Café (☎ 211036; Jl Merdeka 51; mains around 25,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) The English menu details a few Western selections like hamburgers, but you're better off with the Indonesian or Chinese food. The main dining room blasts air-conditioning (good) and karaoke (bad).

Abresio Café (Jl Merdeka 87; mains around 30,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Popular among locals because it's the only joint in Manokwari that serves beer – 15,000Rp for a cold Bir Anker. Try the excellent sweet-and-sour fish with julienned veggies.

Mutiara Hotel Restaurant (Jl Yos Sudarso 41; mains 30,000Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) This classy restaurant with attentive service features live music most evenings – nonguests can come here for tasty, Western-style breakfasts.

Getting There & Away

Every week, Merperti flies four times to Sorong and Jayapura, and three times to Biak. There are also four weekly flights to Jakarta, Makassar, Manado and Surabaya. Book at the flighty **Merperti office** (☎ 211133; Jl Kota Baru 17; ☺ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-8pm Sun) and bring a bucket-load of patience.

In contrast to Merperti, the tranquil **Garuda office** (Jl Kota Baru; ☺ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Sat, 5.30-8pm Sun) next door sells tickets for flights to/from Biak. Local travel agents can also sell Batavia Air tickets for the four-weekly flights to Jakarta, Jayapura and Makassar.

Manokwari is a stop on the two-weekly run along the north coast to Sorong

(1st/economy class 394,000/182,000Rp), Biak (182,000/88,000Rp) and Serui (354,500/171,500Rp) on the Pelni liners *Ciremai*, *Dobonsolo*, *Doro Londa* and *Nggapulu*. Opposite the port, the **Pelni office** (☎ 215167; Jl Siliwangi 24) sells tickets for all major boats.

Getting Around

Rendani airport is a 10-minute drive west of the town centre. Charter a taxi (about 25,000Rp) or *ojek* (10,000Rp). Otherwise, walk straight outside the airport terminal and catch a public taxi to Terminal Wosi, another to Terminal Sanggeng and, if necessary, another to your hotel.

From Terminal Wosi, about 4km west of Manokwari, public taxis regularly leave for the airport and larger towns, such as Ransiki. From Terminal Sanggeng (in Manokwari), taxis link both sides of Teluk Doreri every nanosecond, and regularly depart for nearby beaches.

Yellow-helmeted *ojek* drivers hang around the taxi terminals and scoot along the main streets.

PEGUNUNGAN ARFAK & ANGGI LAKES

In Pegunungan Arfak, at an elevation of 2030m, are the Anggi Lakes: **Danau Giji** (29 sq km) and **Danau Gita** (24.5 sq km). These clear and deep lakes offer exquisite scenery and wildlife, as well as excellent **hiking** and **swimming**. Another reason to visit is to meet the traditional Manikom and Hatam people.

The two- or three-day trek to the lakes from Ransiki follows Sungai Momi to Siwi, and involves some climbing and hiking along muddy trails. A guide is essential – ask the district office in Ransiki. You can sleep in local huts along the way (per person about 30,000Rp), or the district office in Anggi can arrange accommodation (per person 40,000Rp). You should bring your own food, though you can buy vegetables along the way.

This trek can be done independently (with a guide), though **Arfak Paradigalla Tours & Travel** (☎ 0815-27004054; yoris_tours@yahoo.com) in Manokwari also can organise treks between Ransiki and the lakes.

RANSIKI

Crowded taxis (35,000Rp, three hours) leave every hour or so from Terminal Wosi in Manokwari for the pleasant *transmigrasi*

town of Ransiki. It's a rough trip – and often impassable during the wet season (November to March) – but the scenery through the jungle, along the coast and among traditional villages is superb. Even if you're not going to the Anggi lakes, the trip to Ransiki is still worthwhile.

There's a small **guesthouse** (per person 50,000Rp) next to the Telkom office in Ransiki, which is especially useful if you're trekking to the Anggi lakes or visiting Pulau Rumberpon.

CENDERAWASIH BAY MARINE NATIONAL PARK

This reserve (Taman Laut Teluk Cenderawasih) consists of 18 islands and 500km of coastline, and at 14,300 sq km is the largest of its kind in Indonesia. It's home to endangered species of giant clams, turtles and dugongs, and offers some of the best **trekking**, **diving** (130 types of coral) and **bird-watching** (150 bird species) imaginable. Like most of Papua, however, exploration is severely hindered by government travel regulations and a lack of transport.

The larger inhabited islands in the area are Rumberpon, Mioswaar, Roon and Angrameos. You can explore the coastline or islands by speedboat from either Nabire or Ransiki for about 250,000Rp per day, or base yourself on Pulau Rumberpon or at Wasior (though neither is strictly within the park). Otherwise, organise a tour with **Arfak Paradigalla Tours & Travel** (☎ 0815-27004054; yoris_tours@yahoo.com) in Manokwari.

Before venturing into the reserve independently, permission and advice should be obtained from the **Cenderawasih Bay Marine National Park office** (☎ 0986-222356, 212303; Jl Rendani, Wosi) in Manokwari.

Pulau Rumberpon

This island offers **snorkelling** among superb coral and marine life, and outstanding **hiking**. It's also worthwhile chartering a boat to nearby islands such as **Pulau Wairondi**, with its untouched population of **turtles**, and **Pulau Auri**.

If you ask the village head on Rumberpon, you should be able to camp on the beach for a few days (bring your own tent and cooking gear) or stay in a village hut. It's also worth checking with the tourist office in Manokwari about other accommodation possibilities on the island.

Public speedboats (about two hours) leave Ransiki for Rumberpon most days.

Wasior

From Wasior, you can charter a boat to islands in the marine reserve or organise a trek in the **Wondiwoi Mountain Reserve** (Taman Pegunungan Wondiwoi), home to more than 100 species of birds. There's no official accommodation in Wasior, but finding somewhere to stay should not be any problem. Check with the tourist office in Manokwari that your *surat jalan* covers this area. Merpati flies twice a week to Wasior for about the same cost as the overnight ferries (100,000Rp) that travel daily between the Manokwari port and Wasior.

CENTRAL PAPUA

The centre for transport, commerce and tourism in Central Papua is Pulau Biak (1898 sq km), scene of many horrific WWII battles between the Allies and Japanese. The island has a great deal to offer and is a worthy stopover, especially if you're a WWII buff or into diving. Kota Biak is the principal centre, while Nabire (on the southern shore of Cenderawasih Bay) and Serui (on Pulau Yapen) are also appealing towns from which to explore the Teluk Cenderawasih region.

PULAU BIAK Kota Biak

☎ 0981 / pop 57,500

Kota Biak is a relaxed town from which to explore attractions around Pulau Biak and the general Teluk Cenderawasih region. There is no accommodation elsewhere on the island, and transport is limited in the north, but most places of interest on Pulau Biak can be visited on day trips from the here.

Only one degree south of the equator, Biak is always hot and humid. So it's a good idea to start your day early and hibernate like the locals between 1pm and 4pm (when a lot of shops and offices are closed anyway).

In mid-August, Pulau Biak's **Munara Festival** features fire-walking, traditional dancing and boat races. Ask at the tourist office for more information.

ORIENTATION

Kota Biak is compact. A lot of what you'll need is along Jl Ahmad Yani (which joins Jl Prof M Yamin from the airport), Jl Sudirman (which heads past the port) and Jl Imam Bonjol, all of which intersect at the Bank Mandiri building. The majority of places to stay and eat are around this area, but a few offices, as well as the taxi (minibus) terminal and main market, are a short taxi ride away.

INFORMATION

A *surat jalan* is not required to visit anywhere on Pulau Biak, but Kota Biak is a handy place to obtain one for Pulau Yapen and the Baliem Valley.

Bank Mandiri (cnr Jl Imam Bonjol & Jl Ahmad Yani) Offers the best rates for cash and travellers cheques, and a 24-hour ATM.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Imam Bonjol 23) Has an ATM that accepts Visa and MasterCard.

diBiak.com (Jl Sudirman 4; per hr 9000Rp; ☎ 9am-9pm) Popular internet centre housing plenty of PCs in heavenly air-conditioned comfort.

Main post office (Jl Prof M Yamin 59; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) A short taxi ride (take a taxi marked 'Amroben') along the road to the airport; has a poste restante service.

Police station (☎ 21005; Jl Diponegoro) The friendly guys at the 'intel' section will need two photographs and an administrative fee of about 5000Rp to provide a *surat jalan*.

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 21294; Jl Sri Wijaya) The general hospital is 2.5km northwest of Hotel Sinar Kayu.

Telkom (Jl Yos Sudarso 1; ☎ 24hr) The mammoth office is at the split in the road, 500m southeast of the Bank Mandiri building.

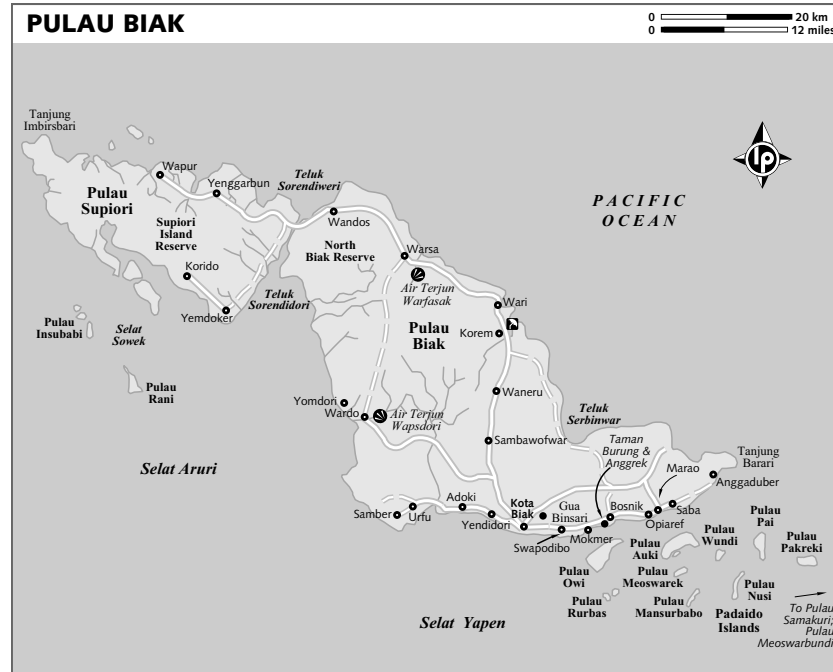
Tourist office (☎ 21663; Jl Prof M Yamin 56; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri) Has helpful staff, just opposite the main post office. If you're in town in mid-January, stop by to find out if anything's on for Papua Tourism Week.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cenderawasih Museum

This **museum** (Jl Sisingamangaraja) offers a dusty collection of shells, implements and WWII weapons, as well as a few Japanese war relics in the garden. Although touted by the local tourist office as a major attraction, this museum could be *far* better. If you're interested, find the caretaker (who lives on the grounds) and slip him a donation (per person 5000Rp) to open it up.

PULAU BIAK



Diving

The underwater attractions around Pulau Biak and Teluk Cenderawasih have the potential to compete with northern Sulawesi, with the added bonus of being cheaper and less overrun by tourists. However, some local fishermen blithely continue their practice of dynamite and cyanide fishing, so you may find spots that are slightly less stunning than others.

The diving industry in Biak is small but growing, and there's nowhere else in Central Papua to organise diving/snorkelling trips or rent equipment. **Biak Diving** (☎ 26017; diving@biak.wasantara.net.id; Jl Ahmad Yani 39). This well-established agency charges 900,000Rp per person for two boat dives (or 750,000Rp for two beach dives). A single beach night-dive costs 750,000Rp, while overnight packages including food and basic accommodation on an island start at 1,150,000Rp. All rates include equipment and transport, and are for a minimum of two people. Full diving equipment can be rented for 300,000Rp per day.

It also offers all-day snorkelling and sightseeing tours for 600,000Rp per person

(minimum of two, including equipment and transport) around Pulau Biak. Alternatively, you can just hire a snorkel, mask and fins for 70,000Rp per day.

Other Activities

Kota Biak is really the only base for organising bird-watching tours between Sorong and Jayapura. Check out Biak's two travel agencies for help with arranging regional tours. Independent guides who hang around the airport, like ecology-minded Matheus Rumbabar, can also customise bird-watching and island-hopping tours in the area.

Janggi Prima Tours & Travel (☎ /fax 22973; Jl Pramuka 5) This impressive one-man show offers a wide range of trekking, bird-watching and diving tours around Biak and Yapen islands. The manager speaks good English.

PT Biak Paradise Tours & Travel (☎ 23196; paradise@biak.wasantara.net.id; Hotel Arumbai, Jl Selat Makassar 3; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) The friendly manager Pak Benny speaks excellent English and is a valuable source of local information. He can arrange everything from bird-watching tours around the Biak island group to treks around Manokwari, the Baliem Valley and the Asmat region.

TOP FIVE BIAK DIVES

Around Pulau Biak, the best and most accessible diving spots:

- Noriko Mayumi – has a cave, off the coast of Pulau Meoswarek
- Pulau Rani – off the west coast of Pulau Biak, and accessible by chartered boat from the *pasar ikan* (fish market) in Kota Biak
- Pulau Rurbas – in the Padaido Islands
- Pulau Pakreki – another in the Padaido Island group
- Tanjung Barari – the cape at the eastern end of Pulau Biak.

SLEEPING**Budget**

Hotel Dahlia (☎ 21851; Jl Selat Madura 6; s/d from 50,000/80,000Rp; 🏠) This family-run affair offers nine rooms set around a semiwild garden courtyard. It's reasonably clean, conveniently located and prices include breakfast.

Hotel Sinar Kayu (☎ 22137; Jl Sisingamangaraja 89; s 50,000-80,000Rp, d90,000-150,000Rp; 🏠) The many rooms here mean you'll almost always find a place to sleep. But the cheap quarters are fanless with outside *mandis*, while the nicer air-con rooms have only squat toilets.

Hotel Maju (☎ 21841; Jl Imam Bonjol 45; s/d 60,000/80,000Rp; 🏠) Still Biak's best budget option, this place is often full. The rooms are smelly and nothing special, but they're clean (the ones at the back are far quieter). All rooms come with a simple breakfast.

Midrange & Top End

All places listed below offer rooms with private bathrooms, and all rates include breakfast (exception noted).

Hotel Irian Biak (☎ 21939; fax 21458; Jl Prof M Yamin 4; r 125,000-275,000Rp; 🏠) Opposite the western side of the airport, this vast old place has lots of good-value, wood-floored rooms. The priciest real estate here is in the quiet oceanfront rooms, with private balconies and tiled floors.

Hotel Nirmala (☎ 22005; fax 24660; Jl Selat Madura 13; s/d 160,000/230,000Rp; 🏠) Excellent value, with three meals and afternoon tea included in room rates, the clean and tidy rooms here

have hot water and overlook a tidy courtyard that catches cool breezes.

Intsia Beach Hotel (☎ 21891; Jl Monginsidi; s/d from 170,000/210,000Rp; 🏠) Formerly the Tita-waka, this comfortable, oceanfront spot is where Garuda crews choose to snooze. All rooms have patio seating, and the hotel is set around a small garden and gazebo. Rates include three home-cooked meals per day, afternoon tea and even airport transfers.

Hotel Marasi Biak (☎ 22345; fax 21496; Jl Prof M Yamin; s/d from 175,000/215,000Rp; 🏠) Across from the eastern end of the airport, the Marasi Biak is modern, clean and good value. Sniff around a few rooms before checking in, as some are severely musty. Rates include afternoon tea and dinner, but for breakfast you're on your bleary-eyed own.

Hotel Arumbai (☎ 21835; fax 22501; Jl Selat Makassar 3; r 185,000-618,000Rp; 🏠) Biak's top-notch option, the Arumbai has the only swimming pool on the island. Standard rooms come with cool marble floors and batik blankets, while superior rooms have bathtubs and carved wood furniture. Discounts of about 15% from the prices listed here are permanently offered.

Other decent deals worth looking into: **Padaido Hotel** (☎ 22144; Jl Monginsidi 16; r from 180,000Rp; 🏠) Also rents out a handful of immaculate, cheery little rooms.

Basana Inn (☎ 22281; fax 22343; Jl Imam Bonjol 46A; s 159,000-205,000Rp, d 200,000-240,000Rp; 🏠)

Hotel Mapia (☎ 21383; Jl Ahmad Yani 23; s 95,000-145,000Rp, d 120,000-170,000Rp; 🏠).

EATING

Barapen cuisine is food cooked under hot rocks, on which some of the braver (and possibly more intoxicated) guests attempt some impromptu fire-walking. To sample some traditional *barapen* cooking, you will have to be invited to a party in a village or arrange this through a local travel agency.

Padaido Café (☎ 21346; Jl Monginsidi 16; mains 15,000-25,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) With its large outdoor patio, it's the only waterfront eatery in town. The friendly owners offer a few Western-style meals along with delish fish dishes.

Rumah Makan Rindu Alam (☎ 23039; Jl Imam Bonjol 22; ☺ lunch & dinner) A cool, clean Padang place where the curries are spicy and the service fast and friendly.

Rumah Makan Nirwana (☎ 21506; Jl Sudirman 22; snacks from 2500Rp; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) The spot for cold soft drinks, pastries and assorted *kue-kue* (cakes).

The following restaurants provide menus with items listed in English:

Rumah Makan 99 (☎ 21450; Jl Imam Bonjol; mains 33,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) Small and friendly place with an extensive menu – your bill will have an unadvertised 10% service charge tacked on.

Rumah Makan Umum Jakarta (☎ 21969; Jl Imam Bonjol 10; mains 15,000-50,000Rp; ☺ lunch & dinner) As clean and harmless as the 99, serving Chinese and Indonesian meals.

The best of the cheap warungs are in and around the markets, **Pasar Inpres** (Jl Erlangga) and **Pasar Lama** (Jl Selat Makassar).

DRINKING

During the late afternoon, a drink in the seaview garden of Hotel Irian Biak is very pleasant indeed. Even better is a sunset Bintang on the outdoor terrace of Padaido Café – but don't forget the mosquito repellent.

SHOPPING

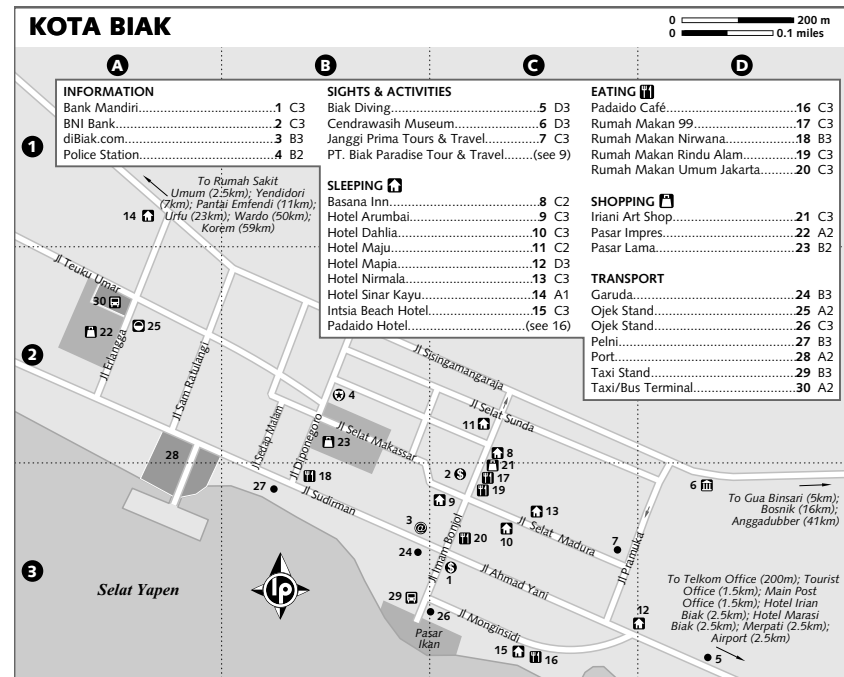
There's an art shop and two general markets: **Iriani Art Shop** (☎ 21457; Jl Imam Bonjol 40; ☺ 8am-2pm & 5-9pm) This wonderful shop carries an enticing selection of Papuan art, carvings and jewellery at reasonable fixed prices.

Pasar Lama (Jl Selat Makassar) This market sells locally made items such as batiks, carvings and souvenirs made from shells, as well as Asmat and Baliem carvings (most of which are authentic imitations).

Pasar Inpres (Jl Erlangga) Market next to the taxi/bus terminal, mainly selling food and clothing, if you need to stock up.

GETTING THERE & AWAY
Air

Biak is the major centre for air travel throughout Papua. Merpati flies a few times per week to Fak-Fak, Jayapura, Manokwari, Nabire, Serui, Sorong and Timika. The same airline also flies regularly to Makassar (on the way to Jakarta, Manado and Surabaya), as well as to Yemburwo in Pulau Numfor. Stop by the **Merpati office** (☎ 21213;



bikkmz@merpati.co.id; Jl Prof M Yamin; ☎ 8am-5pm), across the road from the airport, for current schedules.

Garuda (☎ 25737; bikdmga@garuda-indonesia.com; Jl Sudirman 3; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 5-9pm Sat & Sun) flies six times per week to Jakarta, Jayapura and Makassar; book tickets at its air-conditioned, computerised office.

Boat

Every two weeks, the *Dobonsolo*, *Nggapulu* and *Sinabung* stop at Biak on the way to Manokwari (1st/economy class 182,000/88,000Rp) and Jayapura (376,000/177,500Rp). You can book tickets at the **Pelni office** (☎ 23255; Jl Sudirman 37; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun), though it's worth paying a little extra for a ticket from one of the agencies that spring up from nowhere around the port when a boat is due, rather than wait in line at the Pelni office for hours.

Perintis and a few other boats also stop at Biak. Tickets and current schedules are available at the port.

Refer to the relevant sections later for information about boats to Pulau Numfor, Pulau Yapen and Nabire.

GETTING AROUND

Public taxis marked 'Ambroben' frequently link the Frans Kaisiepo airport with most places in Kota Biak for 1500Rp, while a private taxi from the airport to a hotel in town officially costs 50,000Rp.

Taxis to places around the island are well marked and leave from the terminal along Jl Erlangga, next to Pasar Inpres. Taxis can take some time to fill up, so chartering one for about 50,000Rp per hour is worthwhile.

A few buses leave several times a day from just outside the taxi terminal for more-distant places, eg those marked 'Kota Supiori Utara' travel as far as Yenggarbun (15,000Rp) on adjoining Pulau Supiori.

Ojek drivers – distinguishable by their orange, numbered helmets – laze about at designated spots outside the taxi terminal and along Jl Imam Bonjol.

Around Pulau Biak & Nearby Islands

Many fascinating places are dotted around Pulau Biak, but public transport to the more remote areas is irregular. Public taxis

and/or buses ply the rough roads to Samber (west of Kota Biak), Marao (to the east), Wardo (to the northwest), and Yenggarbun (in the far north). To places north of Wardo, and around most of Pulau Supiori, trucks, boats and feet are the main forms of transport.

Remember that villages on the island may look biggish on a map, but none is really more than a handful of huts with no accommodation or food for travellers.

URFU & SAMBER

Past Adoki, a side road continues for another bumpy 20 minutes to Urfu, surrounded by amazing **rock formations**. Along the beach to the pretty fishing village of Samber are some **relics**, reminders of a seemingly forgotten Dutch colonial past and of the Japanese occupation during WWII.

WARDO

At the end of the potholed road northwest of Kota Biak is Wardo, set on a picturesque bay. From Wardo (Biak for 'deep water'), you used to be able to charter a boat or canoe to the gorgeous, 12m-high **Air Terjun Wapsdori**. An earthquake in 1996, however, restricted access to these waterfalls by river, so an hour-long hike around damaged areas is necessary. Seek local advice in Wardo before chartering a boat/canoe.

GUA BINSARI

This **cave** (admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 7am-5pm) is known locally as Gua Binsari (*binsar* means 'grandmother' in the Biak language) because an old woman apparently lived in there before WWII. During the war, the cave, which is actually a tunnel that leads several kilometres to Bosnik, was home to thousands of Japanese soldiers, and a tomb for 3000 to 5000 killed by US bombs. Nowadays, the cave's only residents are the local bats.

A small **museum** over the road contains a remarkable collection of Japanese WWII weapons and photos. If the museum is unattended, ask someone at the house next door to open it. Chartering a taxi from Kota Biak is a good idea; otherwise, take a public taxi towards Bosnik and ask to be dropped off at the unsigned road that leads about 800m up the steepish hill to the cave.

TAMAN BURUNG & ANGGREK

About 4km east of Mokmer is the **Orchid & Bird Garden** (admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 7.30am-3pm). These large, serene gardens contain 72 species of orchids and about 50 types of caged birds, including strikingly-coloured lorries, hornbills and *cenderawasih* (which is probably as close as you'll ever get to one). Several semi-tame cassowaries roam freely around the park, so keep your eyes peeled. Except for busy Sundays, there's often no-one around – so just walk through the gate and pay your admission fee if or when someone runs after you.

BOSNIK & BEYOND

Bosnik was the Dutch capital of the island and a landing site for the Allies in WWII. Badly destroyed during the 1996 earthquake and tidal wave, it is still home to some **WWII relics** along the sandy **beach**, and a small, busy, early-morning **market** every Wednesday and Saturday. Bosnik is also the place to charter a boat to the enticing Padaido Islands.

The eastern road continues past **Opiaref**, renowned for its wood carvers, and **Saba**, where you can explore the ruins of an ambitious – but ultimately abandoned – four-star resort and its quiet beach. Opiaref also has a pleasant **beach** and an enticing **cave** with underground pools; ask for directions. A trail continues along the coast about 10km past more charming, deserted beaches until you reach the village of **Anggaduber**.

PADAIDO ISLANDS

This stunning cluster of 36 reefs and islands (of which only 13 are inhabited) are wonderful for **swimming**, **diving** and **snorkelling**. The most appealing islands to visit are Pulau Owi (for its powder-white beach and WWII relics) and Pulau Nusi (snorkelling).

Owi and Auki Islands are the most populated and the closest to Pulau Biak, so you're likely to find a passenger boat to these islands from Bosnik and be able to stay in a local hut. Passenger boats also travel between Bosnik and several inhabited islands on Bosnik's market days (Wednesday and Saturday). It's also possible to charter a boat from Bosnik, or the *pasar ikan* (fish market) in Kota Biak, to remote islands – but work out a price beforehand and be sure to bargain.

KOREM

On the north coast of Pulau Biak, Korem was mostly destroyed by an earthquake and subsequent tsunami in 1996. The village has been rebuilt on the western side of the main road, but the **beach** is still delightful. Most locals refuse to visit the beach because of the number of people who died there in 1996. Ask the taxi driver to drop you off at the turn-off to the beach, and wait for a lift or walk (about 30 minutes).

NORTH BIAK RESERVE

At the northern end of Pulau Biak is Taman Biak Utara, 110 sq km of dense wilderness and pristine beaches. One highlight in the general area is **Air Terjun Warfasak**, a broad waterfall that plunges into a small lake, near Warsa. The best way to get around the reserve is on foot with an experienced local guide. Tours and guides can be organised by one of the travel agencies in Biak (p809).

PULAU SUPIORI

Separated from Pulau Biak by a narrow channel, most of Supiori Island is designated as the **Supiori Island Reserve** (Taman Pulau Supiori), an area of mangroves and montane forests with endemic species of parrots and cockatoos. If the bridge over the channel is broken, a pontoon with an ingenious pulley system takes passengers and even vehicles across the water.

The main road on Supiori continues as far as Wapur, though buses stop at Yenggarbun. If you have time, soaking up the scenery by public (or chartered) taxi/bus from Kota Biak to the channel and back is worthwhile. One of Biak's travel agencies (p809) can arrange local guides, and accommodation in Wapur and Yenggarbun should you wish to stay.

PULAU NUMFOR

This irresistible, unspoilt and undeveloped island is about half-way between Biak and Manokwari. Dozens of unexplored **snorkelling** and **swimming** spots are scattered around the island, such as **Pantai Asaibori** in the west and **Pantai Pakreki** to the south. From Kameri on Numfor, you can charter a boat (20 minutes) to the heavenly **Pulau Manem**, where there's no shortage of **bird life**, sandy **beaches** and Japanese **WWII wrecks**.

There is no official accommodation on Numfor, but you can stay with a local family if you contact the *kepala desa* in the main villages of Yemburwo (on the north coast), Kameri (a little further west) and Namber (west coast).

Merpati flies between Biak and Yemburwo twice weekly. The *Padmos* boat leaves from the main port in Kota Biak every week for a circular route to Numfor (12 to 15 hours), Manokwari and Ransiki, before returning to Biak via Numfor. Ask at the port for more details. Also, unscheduled public speedboats (which can be chartered) leave the *pasar ikan* in Kota Biak (eight to 10 hours), while other boats leave from Andie, near Yemburwo, for Kota Biak and Manokwari (five to six hours).

PULAU YAPEN

☎ 0983

This elongated mountainous island south of Pulau Biak offers bird life around its northern shores and superb **snorkelling** in several spots.

The only town of any size is the district capital, Serui. A *surat jalan*, which is needed for anywhere on the island, can be easily obtained in Kota Biak. **Bank Mandiri** (Jl Diponegoro) will reluctantly change US dollars cash.

Sights & Activities

To find some of the few **cenderawasih** still surviving in the north of the island, charter a boat (holding about 10 people) from Serui for about 300,000Rp per day. A guide (about 90,000Rp per day) will arrange for you to stay in local villages (around 45,000Rp per person). A 'protection fee' of 100,000Rp is levied on each group looking for the birds. To save the hassle of organising things yourself, **bird-watching** tours can be arranged with the travel agencies listed in the Biak (p809) and Jayapura (p829) sections.

Less than one hour south of Serui, the district capital, **Pulau Arumbai** offers superb **snorkelling** (bring your own gear) among coral reefs and dolphins, and is home to thousands of cockatoos and hornbills. There are also decent beaches at **Pantai Mariadei** and **Pantai Ketuapi**, and the scenery around **Danau Sarawandori** is delightful. You must charter a boat to Arumbai from Serui, but the beaches and lake are accessible by public taxi from Serui.

Public transport goes as far as Woori in the west and Manawi in the east, but is infrequent, so chartering a taxi (about 50,000Rp per hour) is a quicker way of getting around. All roads on Yapen are rough and the terrain is mountainous, so allow plenty of time to get around.

Sleeping & Eating

The only three hotels on the island are all in Serui. Each offers rooms with a fan and bathroom, and the rates include three meals.

Merpati Inn (☎ 31154; Jl Yos Sudarso; s/d from 75,000/100,000Rp; 🍴) Though it's a bit noisy, this is Serui's best place to stay – staff are clued about chartered boats and Merpati schedules.

For rather unremarkable, but clean, hotel accommodation:

Bersaudara Hotel (☎ 31123; Jl Jendral Sudirman 56; r per person 70,000Rp)

Marina Hotel (☎ 31062; Jl Wolter Monginsidi; r per person 75,000Rp)

If you tire of hotel food, try a warung or *rumah makan* serving Padang food in the port area.

Getting There & Away

Merpati flies between Biak and Serui three times a week. Find the **Merpati office** (☎ 31620; Jl Yos Sudarso) next to (you guessed it) Merpati Inn.

Every two weeks, Pelni liners *Doro Londa*, *Nggapulu* and *Sinabung* stop on their way to Biak (1st/economy class 172,000/83,500Rp), Jayapura and Nabire. The overnight ferry *Teluk Cenderawasih I* makes the journey to Nabire and Biak twice a week. Tickets for all boats are available at the **Pelni office** (☎ 32347; Jl Diponegoro).

An adventurous alternative is to charter a boat from the *pasar ikan* in Kota Biak to the northern edges of Pulau Yapen, from where you'll have to wait around for public transport to Serui.

NABIRE

☎ 0984 / pop 45,000

Although travellers often pass over the capital of the Paniai district, Nabire is a pleasantly low-key town with wide streets, and nearby beaches and islands to explore.

FIRST CONTACT

Papua's last tracts of true wilderness likely secrete a few more undiscovered species, and possibly a few isolated tribes that have not yet made contact with outsiders. It's unknown how many groups, if any, remain uncontacted – or whether they wish to be – but there are certainly people actively trying to find them, and those purporting to sell such an experience.

'First contact' tours, intentions aside, are of questionable authenticity at best, and dangerous at worst – possibly for both the seekers and the sought. The possibility of introducing disease to a vulnerable population, or of forcing contact with a world that such a population may not be prepared to meet, makes these expeditions ethically insupportable.

Orientation & Information

Jl Pepera has a few important buildings, including the Telkom office and Bank Mandiri. Along nearby Jl Yos Sudarso (parallel to the waterfront) are the main post office, taxi terminal and most shops. The airport is walking distance (ask directions) from the hotels.

You can pick up a *surat jalan* for Nabire and/or trips into the interior at the **police station** (☎ 21110; Jl Sisingamangaraja) in Nabire.

Sights & Activities

Like most of Papua, the accessibility of nearby attractions is limited by irregular transport, rough roads and travel restrictions. For wonderful hiking and swimming, you can charter a boat to islands such as **Pulau Moor**, **Pulau Papaya** and **Pulau Nusi** (where it may be possible to stay in a hut, but bring your own food). Boats to these and other islands usually leave from the **MAF Beach** at the end of Jl Sisingamangaraja. Or perhaps charter a taxi to the **hot springs** near the port, or take a public taxi to **Pantai Wahario**, the best place for swimming and snorkelling (bring your own gear) in the area.

Sleeping & Eating

Anggrek Hotel (☎ 21066; Jl Pepera 22; r 80,000Rp) The second-best option, the Anggrek is set around a lovely garden. All rooms share *mandis*.

Hotel Nusantara (☎ 21180; Jl Pemuda 147; r from 125,000Rp; 🍴) The best of a limited choice,

this hotel has friendly service, a charming setting and a large range of rooms; prices include meals.

The most appealing of the cheap eateries around the taxi terminal are *Rumah Makan Sari* and *Rumah Makan Kebun Sirih*. For some of the most mouth-watering baked fish in Papua, try any of the warungs opposite the taxi terminal.

Getting There & Away

From Nabire, Merpati flies most days to Biak, and less frequently to Jayapura and Fak-Fak. Book as soon as you can at the **Merpati office** (☎ 21591; Jl Trikora), near Hotel Nusantara – as usual, be prepared for delays.

Every two weeks, the Pelni liners *Doro Londa* and *Nggapulu* stop at the Samabusa port near Nabire on the way to Serui (1st/economy class 77,500/36,500Rp) and Manokwari (210,000/65,000Rp). Perintis boats also crawl along the north coast and stop in Nabire every week or so, and *Teluk Cenderawasih I* heads to Serui (Pulau Yapen) and Kota Biak twice a week.

Samabusa port is about 20km east of Nabire; taxis are frequent when boats arrive and depart. The **Pelni office** (☎ 22350; Jl Sam Ratulangi 14) is behind the taxi terminal.

TIMIKA

☎ 0901 / pop 85,000

Timika exists almost entirely to service the Freeport copper and gold mine in Tembagapura, approximately 60km to the northeast. Although well connected to most cities in Papua, there are several reasons to avoid Timika: visiting the mine is not possible unless you've been officially invited by a Freeport employee; you will need a *surat jalan* before you can enter Timika; and, even more expensive than Wamena, Timika has little of interest to travellers.

Losmen Amole Jaya (☎ 22125; Jl Pelikan; d with fan & bathroom 120,000Rp) is the best – and about the only – budget-priced option. Meals are available to guests.

Serayu Hotel (☎ 321777; Jl Achmad Yani 10; d with bathroom 215,000Rp; 🍴) The Serayu is a solid, reliable midrange option, a five-minute drive from the airport.

Timika serves as a useful entry point to Papua. Merpati and Garuda flights connecting Jakarta or Denpasar with Biak or Jayapura often detour through Timika.

FREEPORT & FREE PAPUA

In the southern highlands, PT Freeport Indonesia (a subsidiary of the massive US company, Freeport-McMoRan) operates the third-largest copper mine and the largest gold mine in the world. Since the opening of the mines in the 1960s, Freeport has built the modern town of Tembagapura (Bahasa Indonesia for 'Copper Town') and a staggering complex of tunnels and private roads carved through the rugged mountain range.

From the outset, however, there have been serious concerns. For example, many are troubled about the adequacy of the consultation with, or compensation for, the displaced Amungme and Kamoro people; Freeport employs about 18,000 people (easily the largest private employer in the province), but only about 30% are Papuans; copper tailings cause enormous environmental damage and affect the health of villagers through contamination of sago palms and drinking water; to undertake further mining, Freeport moves entire villages with thousands of indigenous people from their homelands; and the Indonesian military presence in the area has resulted in instances of human rights abuses.

Yet Jakarta is likely to remain unmoved. Freeport is Indonesia's largest foreign taxpayer; it has paid about US\$3.9 billion in taxes and dividends between 1992 and 2005 and contributed about US\$40 billion to the Indonesian economy during that same period.

Because the mines make a *profit* of more than US\$1 million per day, local Papuan activists have made several demands: scholarships and other employment schemes for local youths; 1% of profits for local community projects; and changes to local Freeport and Indonesian security and community-development personnel.

Anger and frustration have resulted in sporadic riots and acts of sabotage by Papuan activists in Tembagapura and the nearby service town of Timika. The tragic Timika murders of one Indonesian and two American schoolteachers in 2002 remains unsolved; though 12 Indonesians were arrested in early 2006 in connection with the murders, it is still unclear whether Papuan extremists or the Indonesian army were responsible. (The Indonesian army has conducted similar atrocities in Papua.)

To its credit, Freeport spends around US\$20 million each year on local community development. Jakarta, meanwhile, is happy to collect the huge taxes and allow Freeport to act as a quasilocal government responsible for community development and welfare.

Book flights at the **Merpati office** (☎ 323362; Jl Cenderawasih 28) and **Garuda office** (☎ 323456; Jl Cenderawasih SPII). From the air, you can see the awesome Freeport mine and the snow-capped Puncak Jaya (Carstenz Pyramid), Papua's highest mountain.

Every two weeks, the Pelni liner *Sangiang* stops at the nearby Amamapare port on its way to Merauke (1st/economy class 416,500/129,000Rp), Agats and southeast Maluku. Every four weeks, the *Kelimutu* and *Tatamailau* stop on their way to Merauke and southeast Maluku.

THE BALIEM VALLEY

The Baliem Valley is easily the most popular destination in Papua and the most accessible place in the interior. While the Dani people who inhabit most of the inner valley have adopted some Western conveniences,

and the main town, Wamena, has a few modern facilities, the valley remains one of the last truly fascinating, traditional areas in the world.

The first white men chanced upon the valley in 1938, a discovery that came as one of the last and greatest surprises to a world that had mapped, studied and explored its remotest corners.

WWII prevented further exploration, so it was not until 1945, when a plane crashed in the valley and the survivors were rescued, that attention was again drawn to the region.

The first Dutch missionaries arrived in 1954, and the Dutch government established a post in Wamena two years later. These days, Indonesia has added its own brand of colonialism, bringing schools, police, soldiers, transmigrants and shops to the valley, though the local culture has in many ways proved resilient.

The 1272-sq-km Baliem Valley is about 60km long and 16km wide, with Wamena at its centre. Running through the valley, the mighty Sungai Baliem drops about 1500m in less than 50km on its way to the south coast.

Climate

The best time to visit is the drier months between March and August, when the days are fine (up to 26°C) and the evenings are cool (about 12°C). This coincides with the European summer, however, so the Baliem Valley is often busy in the middle of the year (especially August). During the wet season (September to February), trekking is often unpleasant and some trails will be impassable.

In any case, be prepared for rain *anytime* (on average, it rains 16 days every month in the valley), and always take cold-weather gear for higher areas, such as Danau Habbema (Lake Habbema).

Travel Permit

Enforcement of regulations get less stringent each year, but it's still prudent to get a *surat jalan* for Wamena and the Baliem Valley. You must obtain a *surat jalan* before arriving in Wamena; see p798 for more general information about the *surat jalan*.

The tiny police office in Wamena airport should be open when you arrive; if not, report to the **police station** (☎ 0969-31972; Jl Safri Darwin) yourself within 24 hours. It's painless, but necessary.

THE DANI

Several tribes around the Baliem Valley are grouped together under the name 'Dani', a rather pejorative term given by neighbouring tribes. Each tribe within the Dani group, however, is distinguishable by language, physical appearance, dress and social customs. The Dani are friendly, but can be shy. Long handshakes allowing time to really feel the other's hand are common.

Most Dani speak Bahasa Indonesia, but appreciate a greeting in their own language. Around Wamena, a man greeting another man says *nayak*; if greeting more than one man, *nayak lak*. When greeting a woman, a man says *la'uk*, or *la'uk nya* to more than one. Women also say (to men or women) *la'uk* to one person and *la'uk nya* to more than one. The northern and western Dani groups speak a dialect of Dani distinct from that spoken in the Wamena area.

Dani men often wear a penis sheath (*horim*) made of a cultivated gourd, the shape and size of which varies greatly from group to group. Many Dani, particularly in more remote areas, wear pig fat in their hair and cover their bodies in pig fat and soot for warmth. Traditionally, men wear no other clothing apart from ornamentation such as string hair nets, *cenderawasih* feathers and cowrie-shell necklaces. Unmarried women usually wear grass skirts, while married women traditionally wear skirts of fibre coils or seeds strung together, hung just below the abdomen. Dani women often carry string bags around their heads, usually heavily laden with vegetables, or even babies or pigs.

Dani men and women sleep apart in traditional Dani houses called *honai* (circular thatched-roof huts). The men from one compound sleep tightly packed in one hut, while women and children sleep in other huts. After a birth, sex is taboo for the mother for two to five years, apparently to give the child exclusive use of her milk. As a result, the average Dani life expectancy is 60 years, which is relatively high among traditional people, but this practice also contributes to polygamy and a high divorce rate. Despite pressure from the numerous missionaries around the valley, many Dani have maintained their polygamous marriage system – a man may have as many wives as he can afford. A man must give four or five pigs to the family of the girl he wishes to marry; his social status is measured by the number of pigs and wives he has.

One of the Dani's more unusual (and now prohibited) customs is to amputate one or two joints of a woman's finger when a close relative dies – you'll see many older women with fingers missing up to their second joint. Dani women will also often smother themselves with clay and mud at the time of a family death.

Throughout the region, locals request 1000Rp to 3000Rp or a cigarette or two if you want to take their photo, but they'll sometimes ask for up to 10,000Rp if they're decked out in feathers or ceremonial costumes.

HIKING & TREKKING IN THE BALIEM VALLEY

Papua's premier trekking destination and its strongest drawcard for foreign visitors, the Baliem Valley remains a fascinating area to visit. The rugged slopes of the Baliem Gorge, etched with its rocky patchwork of sweet potato terraces and thatch-roofed village compounds, are a testament to the resilience of the people who live here. Venturing even further over the valley walls brings trekkers to ever more diverse populations, from the Dani to the Yali and Lani people. Even short treks into the valley are well worth the effort.

The only half-decent map of the valley is the *Tourist Map* (25,000Rp), available from the Nayak Hotel (p822) in Wamena. However, do *not* use it as a substitute for a knowledgeable guide: the map is not completely accurate, nor is it detailed enough for trekking.

What to Bring

Everything is comparatively expensive in Wamena, so stock up in Sentani or Jayapura or bring your own supplies from home. Take a torch (flashlight) for exploring the caves in the area. Nights are always cold and usually wet, so bring warm clothes and waterproof gear if you're camping.

There is nowhere to rent hiking, camping or cooking equipment in Wamena, Jayapura or Sentani, so if you're trekking independently you'll have to bring your own gear. This will add considerable weight to your limited luggage allowance on the flights to/from Wamena, but you can avoid this by staying in village huts and eating local food – conditions will be basic but unforgettable. If you book a trek through an agency, it will provide all equipment except a sleeping bag.

Some larger villages have small kiosks selling biscuits, canned drinks, noodles and rice. The final reliable supplies are at Manda on the northeast side of the valley; Kimbim on the northwest; and Kurima to the south. You can buy sweet potatoes along the way, as well as some other vegetables and eggs at local markets. Your guide should know where to find drinking water, but you should bring tablets, filters or cooking equipment to purify it. If you bring your own bottled water, pack the empties out with you so they don't end up littering the trails.

Accommodation

Guides will know which villages around the valley still maintain Dani-style guest huts (50,000Rp per person). If you're trekking independently and aren't toting a tent, your best options are to ask for a bed in the house of a teacher (35,000Rp to 50,000Rp per person). Otherwise, ask at the village police station or the *kepala desa* where you can stay.

Sleeping on the floor of a Dani home is a last resort; and make sure you've been invited before entering a compound or hut. Dani huts are havens for all sorts of pesky insects; one traveller reported being badly bitten by fleas (from the pigs) and she was still madly scratching flea bites two months later.

Guides can make temporary shelters from trees and rocks, but this is not the lowest-impact way to go.

Guides & Porters

If you're travelling off the main roads or paths, a guide is essential. There are no decent maps of the valley, and a guide can help decide where to go, facilitate communication with locals, find or create places to stay, explain the local customs and ecology – plus, you'll get to know a local person.

Depending on the season and the number of tourists in town, guides will latch onto you as soon as you arrive in Wamena (and even in Sentani). An unfortunately common problem is that some guides, porters and/or cooks refuse to finish the trek until they're paid more than initially agreed. To avoid this, grill your fellow travellers for recommendations, or seek advice at the Wamena airport police office. The local police know the trustworthy local guides from the ones who've cheated past clients. And for what it's worth, if anything goes amiss you'll have someone to complain to.

When organising a trek yourself, allow a couple of days in Wamena to arrange things, and bargain long and hard. Expect to pay anywhere from 100,000Rp to 300,000Rp per day (around 200,000Rp is the usual speed) for an experienced guide who truly knows the area, and who speaks English and perhaps some of the local languages. Consider 'test-driving' a guide on a day hike before committing to anything longer term.

Porters are a very good idea and cost about 60,000Rp per day. On longer treks you may need two per trekker: one for a backpack and another for camping and cooking gear and food. A cook (if your guide or porter doesn't cook) costs another 120,000Rp per day. You will have to provide enough food for all guides, porters and cooks, and anything left over at the end should be distributed among the crew. A 10% tip at the end of a trek is also expected for each member of staff.

Day Hikes Without a Guide

Follow designated paths and/or roads, you can easily enjoy the short hikes listed below without a guide.

- Aikima–Suroba–Dugum–Mulima (three hours) – follow the foothills from Aikima to Dugum, then head back to the main road
- Elagaima–Ibele (three hours) – just follow the main road, and take a taxi one way
- Kimbim–Pummo (three hours) – mostly flat countryside, but only possible in the dry season when the Baliem River isn't too high
- Manda–Bugi (1½ hours) – a short, pleasant stroll
- Sugokmo–Kurima (two hours) – follow the main road/path; there's somewhere to stay in Kurima

Day Hikes With a Guide

Only a few of the many possible day hikes are listed below – your guide will know many more. For these hikes, you will need a guide to find the best and most direct paths and bridges. You can hire a guide in Wamena, or possibly a more knowledgeable one at the village you start from.

- Assologaima–Meagaima (four to five hours) – in Assologaima, Indonesian Independence Day (17 August) is marked with pig feasts, and traditional dancing and cooking
- Bolokme–Tagime–Kelila (seven hours) – consider staying in Kelila
- Kurima–Hitugi (three hours) – there's a place to stay in Kurima
- Meagaima–Manda–Bugi–Wolo (four hours)
- Meagaima–Manda–Munak–Pyramid (four hours) – can be combined with Pyramid–Pummo–Meagaima (3½ hours)
- Sugokmo–Tangma (five hours)
- Wolo–Ilugua (three hours) – two-thirds of the way, a track to the right leads around a huge sinkhole and down to Gua Yogolok and Goundal, a village on the floor of an awesome canyon

Organised Treks

Depending on your bargaining skills, the number of fellow trekkers in your group, and the company you deal with, using a travel agency may not be much more expensive than organising a trek yourself. However, budget-priced trekking companies based in Wamena have trouble staying afloat (though they may reopen if and when tourism picks up again), so those listed below are upmarket agencies based in top-end resorts in the Baliem Valley or located in Jayapura. Agencies generally arrange special events like mock tribal fighting and pig feasts during stays in the local villages.

Advindo Tours (☎ 537777; aroel_advindo@yahoo.co.id; Jl Percetakan 17; 🕒 8am–5pm) This Jayapura agency offers a solid selection of package tours around the Baliem Valley for up to 14 days. Five-day/four-night Baliem Valley trekking trips cost around US\$395 per person (minimum of two).

Baliem Valley Resort (☎ 32240; www.baliem-valley-resort.de) From the most upscale resort in the Baliem Valley come the priciest tours: five-day/four-night packages (including day treks, all transfers, accommodations and meals) cost a whopping US\$900 per person (minimum of two). Unless you're staying at the relatively isolated resort, make tour inquiries before arriving in Wamena.

Papua Adventure Tours & Travel (☎ 586755; www.papuaadventure.com; Komplek Kotaraja, Jl Raya Abepera; 🕒 8am–5pm) Specialising in multiday trekking trips in the Baliem Valley and the Asmat, this agency (near the provincial tourist office) offers five-day/four-night treks for around US\$575 per person (minimum of two, excluding airfare).

In the countryside, you should show your *surat jalan* to police stations or village authorities if you *stay* (ie not visit on a day trip) anywhere outside Wamena. Reporting to the police is often unnecessary (and sometimes impossible) if you're trekking to remote areas, but still try to report to village authorities as you go along.

Some more remote areas in the region may be off limits to foreigners; the police in Wamena will let you know about the current situation.

Getting There & Away

Flying into Wamena is the only way to access the Baliem Valley; see p824 for details of flights and carriers.

Getting Around

Trekking is certainly the best way to explore the landscape, witness special ceremonies and visit traditional people, but if you don't have the time, money or inclination to trek, don't be put off coming to the Baliem Valley. It is possible to see some traditional people, villages and customs, as well as mummies, markets, hanging bridges and wild pigs, on day trips by public/chartered taxi from Wamena – and it will be far cheaper and easier than arranging a trek.

PUBLIC TAXI

Hopelessly overcrowded taxis head out from Wamena as far north on the western side of the valley to Pyramid (35km, two

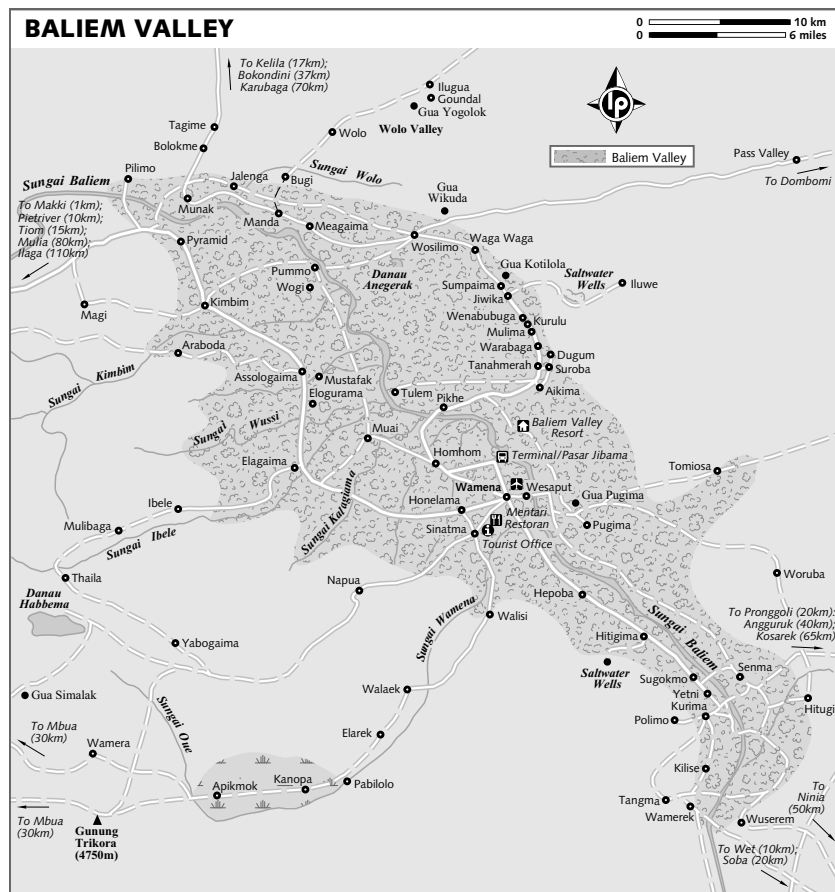
TOURISM IN THE BALIEM

Tourism in the Baliem Valley has been through several troughs and peaks: in 1988, only 758 foreigners visited, but by 1995 that figure had risen to over 6000. Then in 2002, only about 1000 came.

Regardless of numbers, the impact of tourism is still substantial. Wamena struggles to dispose of sewage and rubbish, and pollution from public transport is unacceptable. Gua Wikuda, near Wosilimo in the east, has been developed by indigenous people (with profits returning to them), but generally the tourist and transport industries, with the exception of guides, are run by non-Papuans.

There are ways for visitors to minimise the impact of tourism and improve the standard of living for indigenous people (see p58).

However, tourism can sometimes benefit indigenous people. Interest in the valley, for example, and travel within it, ensures that the Indonesian government does not mistreat indigenous Papuans. Also, traditions are often maintained, if only for the sake of tourist dollars, and some money does trickle back to help local community development.



hours); and north on the eastern side to Tagime (44km, 2½ hours). Public transport tends to slow down to a trickle all around the valley after 3pm and is less plentiful on Sunday. Almost no village or tourist attraction is signposted, so ask your taxi driver (or guide) to let you know when to get off.

All taxis are coded with numbers and/or letters, but knowing which one to take and from where it departs in Wamena is a tad confusing:

Around Wamena Taxis marked 'A3' leave for Wesaput (3000Rp) from along Jl Timor (opposite the main post office) in Wamena, and travel via Jl Gatot Subroto.

Baliem Valley – East The following taxis all leave from Terminal Jibama in Wamena. Taxis marked 'MM' go to Aikima (4000Rp), via Pikhe (3000Rp); 'SL' depart for Pikhe only; 'TM' and 'KL' head to Manda (8000Rp), via Jiwika (5000Rp) and Wosilimo (7000Rp); and 'BT' leave for Bolokme (10,000Rp) and Tagime (13,000Rp). Taxis that are marked, or claim to go to, 'Kurulu' actually start/finish at Jiwika. (Kurulu is the name of the local district based in Jiwika.)

Baliem Valley – South From the southern terminal, colloquially known as the 'Misi' terminal (Jl Ahmad Yani), taxis marked 'SG' or 'SK' go to Sugokmo (8000Rp). Those marked 'HM' stop at Hitigima (5000Rp).

Baliem Valley – West Taxis marked 'KMP' go to Kimbim (8000Rp) and Pyramid (10,000Rp), but you may need to get a connection in Kimbim for Pyramid. Taxis marked 'A1' go to Sinatma (2000Rp) from the corner of Jl Trikora and Jl Timor in Wamena. Those marked 'IB' leave for Ibele (6000Rp) from Sinatma.

CHARTERED TAXI

It is worth considering charter of a taxi for about 50,000Rp/400,000Rp per hour/day (a

lot more for remote and rougher roads) in order to avoid the sardine-cans-on-wheels or to reach more remote places. Paying for empty seats will always hurry up your departure – and make you very popular with other impatient passengers.

WAMENA

☎ 0969 / pop 8500

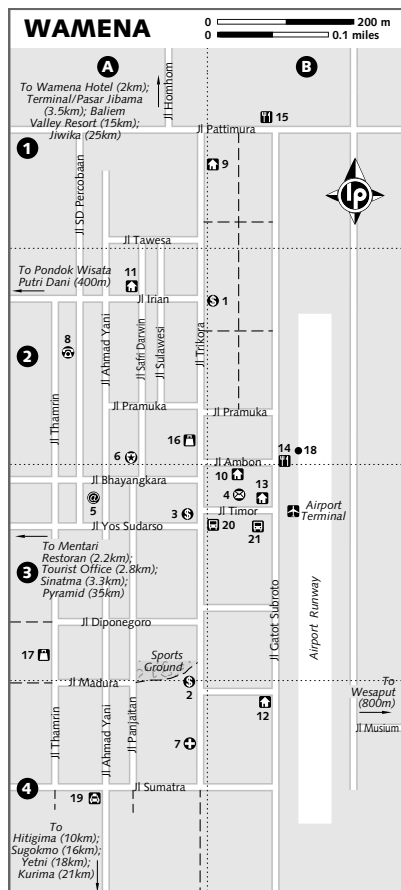
The main town in the Baliem Valley, and the capital of the Jayawijaya district, Wamena is dusty and sprawling. Although there's not much to do in the town itself, it really is the only base from which to explore nearby villages and organise treks. Wamena is expensive compared to the rest of Indonesia, but this is understandable because *everything* – from doors to floors, and a whole lot more – has to be shipped to Jayapura, trucked to Sentani, and then flown to Wamena.

Orientation

Many hotels, restaurants and other important buildings are along (or close to) Jl Trikora, only one block from the airport. While the main street is not especially attractive, just a few blocks to the west some lovely, quiet streets, such as Jl Thamrin, are worth wandering around. Take a torch (flashlight) at night, because there are few street lights anywhere.

Information

Unless you plan on extracting cash from the ATMs (which all banks in town now have), you're well advised to stock up on rupiah before coming to Wamena, as the exchange



INFORMATION	
Bank Mandiri.....	1 B2
Bank Papua.....	2 A4
BRI Bank.....	3 A3
Main Post Office.....	4 B3
Papua.com.....	5 A3
Police Station.....	6 A2
Rumah Sakit Umum.....	7 A4
Telkom.....	8 A2
SLEEPING	
Baliem Pilamo Hotel.....	9 B1
Hotel Anggrek.....	10 B3
Hotel Srikandi.....	11 A2
Hotel Syah Ria Makmur.....	12 B4
Nayak Hotel.....	13 B3
Pondok Wisata Mas Budi.....	(see 15)
EATING	
Kantin Bu Lies.....	14 B2
Rumah Makan Mas Budi.....	15 B1
SHOPPING	
Papua Glory.....	16 A2
Silimo Jaya.....	17 A3
Souvenir Shops.....	(see 16)
TRANSPORT	
MAF Office.....	18 B2
Misi Taxi Terminal.....	19 A4
Taxi to Sinatma.....	20 B3
Taxis to Wesaput.....	21 B3

Telkom office (Jl Thamrin; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist office (☎ 31365; Jl Yos Sudarso 73; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) This office is barely worth recommending, as the disinterested staff have very little on-the-ground knowledge of the area. If you go, the unsigned office is about 3km from the BRI building; look for the Indonesian flag outside the red-and-white brick building on the left as you come from Wamena.

Sleeping

Though most hotels in Wamena don't have water heaters, staff can usually bring a bucket of freshly boiled water for guests who don't fancy a frigid bath.

BUDGET

Hotel Syah Rial Makmur (☎ 31306; Jl Gatot Subroto 45; r 80,000-160,000Rp) The cheapest place in Wamena. Each room is different – so check out a few before deciding on one – most are simple, with squat toilets. It's only a three-minute walk from the airport.

Nayak Hotel (☎ 31067; Jl Gatot Subroto 63; s/d/tr 100,000/125,000/150,000Rp) Directly opposite the airport, this has plenty of rooms that include breakfast, TV and phone. The cheaper rooms facing the road and airport are a little noisy, but they're large, tidy and good value.

Pondok Wisata Putri Dani (☎ 31223; Jl Irian 40; r 150,000-175,000Rp) About 600m past Hotel Srikandi, this little place offers spotless, comfortable rooms in a family home. The friendly owners provide breakfast, as well as endless tea and coffee. It's often full, so book ahead.

Hotel Srikandi (☎ 31367; Jl Irian 16; s/d from 150,000/190,000Rp) Friendly and tidy, with afternoon tea included – but no breakfast. However, the rooms are small, the bathrooms have a squat toilet, and it's noisy when there are numerous guests or the TV at reception is cranked up loud.

Wamena Hotel (☎ 31292; Jl Homhom 61; r 150,000-200,000Rp) Worth considering for some peace, quiet and greenery, but the basic rooms surrounding the garden badly need some renovation. Breakfast is included here. The hotel is about 2km north of Jl Pattimura, an easy trip by becak or taxi.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Hot water can be prepared for you if water heaters are not available, and breakfast is included in rates at these hotels.

Pondok Wisata Mas Budi (☎ 31214; Jl Pattimura; r 180,000-240,000Rp) Attached to the restaurant of the same name, this family-run hotel offers a few large, clean and modern rooms (some with squat toilets). The serenity may be shattered if the karaoke machine winds up next door, but you won't have to walk far for a bite to eat.

Hotel Anggrek (☎ 31242, 0812-4850610; Jl Ambon 1; r from 187,000Rp) Immaculate, convenient and comfortable, this guesthouse is one of the few hotels in central Wamena that offers hot water. The warm, family-style atmosphere and homemade jams and house-roasted coffee (!) could explain why it's often full.

Baliem Pilamo Hotel (☎ 31043; fax 31798; Jl Trikora; r 276,000-414,000Rp) Tropical-garden kitsch might justify the otherwise exorbitant prices; some bathrooms have delightful fake-lava walls adorned with plants. If you can live without TV, the low-end rooms here are a decent deal, but make sure you stay away from the noisy road. There's also a restaurant here.

Baliem Valley Resort (☎ 32240; www.baliem-valley-resort.de; r US\$125) A majestic three-star resort set in 12 sq km of pristine countryside a 10km drive north of Wamena. The

guest rooms are designed in the style of traditional *honai* (huts), with stone-walled showers, wood floors and spectacular views. Lunch is US\$10 and dinner US\$15. The German proprietor runs his own expensive tours from here and has a wealth of expertise on the area. Charter a taxi from the airport, as hotel transfers cost a staggering 750,000Rp.

Eating

The local specialties are goldfish (*ikan mas* in Bahasa Indonesia) – far larger than the variety found in your goldfish bowl – and prawns (*udang*), which are more like crayfish. Both are expensive and in short supply, however. The restaurants listed below, except for Kantin Bu Lies, offer menus with items listed in English.

Kantin Bu Lies (☎ 31346; Jl Gatot Subroto; meals 10,000-15,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Next door to the airport, this spot is recommended for simple Indonesian food, though prices can be steep. It's the best place to wait for your flight.

Mentari Restoran (Jl Yos Sudarso 47; mains 15,000-50,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) A delightful spot with genuine charm. It's unsigned (look for the 'fork-and-spoon' sign along the road), a 30-minute walk up from the BRI bank building (or a short taxi ride towards Sinatma).

Rumah Makan Mas Budi (☎ 31214; Jl Pattimura; mains around 20,000Rp, seafood 50,000-75,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) The food and service here is commendable, and the place is deservedly popular. The bad news is that the karaoke machine inevitably cranks up most evenings.

Wamena is strictly designated a 'dry' area, so no alcohol should be brought into the capital by travellers. Your bags will be checked at the airport for contraband. Some hotels sell beer for discreet, pricey consumption.

Shopping

The Dani are fine craftspeople, so potential souvenirs can be found all over the valley. Generally, it's cheaper to buy directly from the Dani in the villages, but they often strike a hard bargain, so it's also wise to check out prices in the shops and markets. Traders will approach you on the streets of Wamena or hang around the doorways of

rates are at least 15% lower than those in Jayapura. There's nowhere else in the valley to change money. Wartel, aside from the Telkom office, are located along Jl Trikora. **Bank Mandiri** (Jl Trikora 92) Will only change US dollars cash.

Bank Papua (Jl Trikora 45) Has lousy rates and endless lines. **BRI bank** (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; cnr Jl Yos Sudarso & Jl Trikora)

Main post office (Jl Timor; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8am-11am Fri) Reasonably efficient.

Papua.com (Jl Ahmad Yani 49; per hr 9000Rp; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat, noon-10pm Sun) Surprisingly fast connections in this efficient little internet café.

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 31152; Jl Trikora) You're better off getting sick or injured elsewhere, but if you need a hospital you'll get the bare minimum of care here.

popular hotels and restaurants. Bartering is also acceptable.

The cost of stone axe blades (*kapak* in the Dani language) depends on the size and the labour involved; blue stone is the hardest and considered the finest material and is more expensive, from 45,000Rp to 500,000Rp (for something large and authentic). *Sekan* are thin, intricately hand-woven rattan bracelets which cost from 5000Rp. *Noken* are string bags made from the inner bark of certain types of trees and shrubs, which is dried, shredded and then rolled into thread. The bags are coloured with vegetable dyes, resulting in a very strong smell; patterns vary according to their origin. *Noken* cost from 10,000Rp to over 50,000Rp.

Other handicrafts include: various head and arm necklaces (*mikak*) of cowrie shells, feathers and bone; grass skirts (*jogal* and *thali*); assorted head decorations (*suale*), made entirely of cassowary feathers or topped off with the tusks of a wild pig, for up to 100,000Rp; woven baskets for around 35,000Rp; carved spears and arrows for about 15,000Rp each; and woven place mats for about 15,000Rp. Asmat woodcarvings, shields and spears are also available in the souvenir shops, but be wary of price and quality.

Of course, the most popular souvenir is the penis gourd, held upright by attaching a thread to the top and looping it around the waist or chest. These are priced from 5000Rp to 60,000Rp depending on size (!), quality of materials, craftsmanship and your bargaining ability.

Silimo Jaya (Jl Thamrin 2) Worth supporting if you can find something appealing, this genuine cooperative of Dani people makes and sells traditional crafts. Unfortunately, it suffers from neglect and has only a few pots on offer.

Papua Glory (☎ 32058; Jl Trikora 3) This shop is one of several souvenir merchants near the corner of Jl Trikora and Jl Ambon. Here, the young proprietor stocks an interesting selection of Papuan and PNG art and handicrafts.

Getting There & Away

Since flying is the only way in and out of the valley, flights are often heavily booked, especially during the peak season (August).

Always allow a couple of days' leeway for inevitable delays when travelling into or out of Wamena.

Trigana Air Service is the main carrier into and out of Wamena, with four flights a day. The fare from Wamena to Sentani (450,000Rp) is a bit less than the Sentani to Wamena fare (494,000Rp), when the planes are jam-packed with cargo. Trigana also flies from Wamena to Mulia, Karubaga and Bokondini. Book at the **Trigana office** (☎ Wamena airport terminal 31611, Sentani airport terminal 967-594383).

The missionary service, MAF, also flies between Sentani and Wamena once or twice a day, but the flights are almost triple the cost of Trigana's. MAF also flies to more obscure destinations around the highlands, such as Ilaga and Enarotali. Schedules are posted outside the **MAF office** (Wamena ☎ 31263; Jl Gatot Subroto; Sentani ☎ 0967-91109; Jl Misi Sentani).

The Indonesian army (TNI) also offers several cheap flights a day from Wamena to Sentani (only). These are primarily for locals and the military, but it is another possibility. Inquire at the TNI office inside the airport terminal in Wamena.

Getting Around

Most hotels in Wamena are within walking distance of the scruffy airport. For longer trips around town, take a becak. The official price for a becak is about 1500Rp per kilo metre, but foreigners are always charged more. Any trip around town should cost 3000Rp to 5000Rp, and about 8000Rp to Wesaput. Becak can be hailed from along any street, but they don't run at night and they're not allowed along Jl Yos Sudarso at any time. They also evaporate when it rains!

Refer to p820 for details about minibus taxis around the valley. Those marked 'A2' and 'A3' (1000Rp) head up Jl Trikora to the 'pasar', officially called Terminal Jibama, several kilometres north of Wamena. It's a short walk to the 'Misi' taxi terminal on Jl Ahmad Yani.

AROUND WAMENA Wesaput

Almost a suburb of Wamena, Wesaput is just across the other side of the airport. It's only accessible by becak (about 8000Rp) or public taxi (1500Rp); paths across the runway have been blocked by a large fence.

A decrepit stone clock marks the start of Jl Musium, the road through Wesaput.

At the end of Jl Musium, 800m past the clock, is the **Palimo Adat Museum** (☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat). It offers a small but interesting collection of Dani clothing, decorations and instruments, and is worth a look if only because it's the sole museum in the valley. A donation of about 5000Rp is expected. It does keep erratic hours, so it's best to visit before noon.

At the back of the museum is the nearest **hanging bridge** to Wamena. Strung across Sungai Baliem, it's 90m long and unstable at times. A tiny, impromptu Dani **market** is often set up by the bridge.

Pugima

The path from the other side of the bridge in Wesaput leads to Pugima, which has a few Dani compounds (past the huge church). Although Pugima is not particularly interesting, the one-hour, flat trail (with one small hill) from Wesaput provides an easy and convenient glimpse of Dani farms, villages and people, and of the magnificent scenery. Halfway along, behind a small lake, **Gua Pugima** is an eerie cave.

Sinatma

At the end of Jl Yos Sudarso, about 3.5km past the BRI bank building, is the 'suburb'

MARKET DAYS

Mingling at highland markets is a great way to meet locals in a relaxed, quotidian setting. You'll find souvenirs like the colourful *noken* (bark-string bags) that women sling over their foreheads, or pick up bundles of veggies for the next leg of your trek.

There are daily markets at Sinatma and Pasar Jibama (next to the taxi terminal), as well as weekly markets in other locations.

Village	Market days
Bolokme	Mon & Fri
Jiwika	Sun
Kelila	Tue, Thu & Sat
Kimbim	Tue & Sat
Kurima	Tue & Fri
Manda	Mon & Thu
Pyramid	Sat
Tagime	Tue & Fri
Wosilimo	Mon

of Sinatma, where there's a taxi terminal and a large, busy **market** (open daily). From the terminal, head right as you face Wamena and easy **walking trails** lead you to the raging Sungai Wamena, some pretty Dani compounds and dense woodlands. Near the small hydroelectric power station further up the hill you can cross the river on a treacherous **hanging bridge**.

BALIEM VALLEY – SOUTH

The area south of Wamena, hugging Sungai Baliem, boasts the most dramatic mountain scenery in the valley.

About 10km from Wamena, **Hitigima** has a school and mission. A sign on the right as you head south, a few hundred metres past the church, indicates the path (2km) to some **saltwater wells** (*air garam* in Bahasa Indonesia), similar to the ones near Jiwika.

Near the bridge in **Sugokmo**, 6km further on, is a small **memorial** to a Japanese tourist and his Dani guide who drowned when a hanging bridge collapsed. Another 2km brings you to **Yetni**, the primary site of the Baliem Festival (p826).

The main road finishes near Yetni, from where it's a 45-minute walk to **Kurima**. (The hike to Kurima does involve crossing a river that's often waist-deep during the wet season.) Kurima is a charming village and a perfect base for **hikes** around the southern valley. If you ask around, someone will almost certainly be able to find you a bed (about 50,000Rp per person).

BALIEM VALLEY – EAST

The main road heading north along the eastern side of the valley is paved most of the way, and public transport continues as far as Tagime. The area near the bridge in **Pikhe** is excellent for short **hikes**.

Aikima

About 8km north of Wamena as the crow flies (but about 13km by road), just to the east of the road to Jiwika, is Aikima. This nondescript village is famous for its 270-year-old **Werapak Elosak mummy** (admission 20,000Rp; ☎ daylight hours), but the one near Jiwika is more accessible and in better condition. To see the Aikima mummy, ask at the large, round hut slightly up a hill on the left-hand side of the road as you come from Wamena.

BALIEM FESTIVAL

To coincide with the busiest time for tourism (and the European summer holidays), a festival is held in the Baliem Valley between about 9 and 14 August each year. Check with the tourist office in Wamena for current details, though the dates and activities vary little from year to year.

With the encouragement of the Indonesian government and local missionaries, the highlight of the festival is mock 'tribal fighting', where men from villages dress up in full traditional regalia. The festival also features plenty of traditional dancing by men and women, as well as Dani music. Pig races are also a lot of fun – for the guests, not the pigs, which usually end up roasted on a spit. Other attractions include a festival of flowers, exhibitions of traditional archery, and foot and bicycle races.

The festival is usually held at Yetni, between Sugokmo and Kurima. Although it is set up for tourists, and there's no shortage of foreigners watching the main events, the festival is a magical (and very photogenic) time to visit.

Suroba & Dugum

Just off the main road, the pretty villages of Suroba and Dugum are worth exploring. Ask the taxi driver to let you off at the nearest spot along the main road. Then walk (15 minutes) along the path through some of the nicest scenery you'll see around Wamena, and over two fascinating and intricate **hanging bridges** – one for locals and another more stable one for timid foreigners. At a clearing nearby, traditional **pig feasts** and **dancing** can be prearranged at substantial cost, mainly for packaged tours. If you ask around either village, there's a good chance you'll be offered some basic accommodation in a **Dani hut** (per person 50,000Rp).

Jiwika

Jiwika (pronounced Yiwika) is a local administrative centre, a pleasant base from which to explore the eastern valley, and a cheap, quiet alternative to Wamena. Ask around and you may be able to arrange a **mock fighting ceremony** between villagers for about 200,000Rp.

At Iluwe, about one hour up a steep path (with some scrambling at the top) from Jiwika, are some **saltwater wells** (admission 5000Rp; ☞ daylight hours). To extract the salt, banana stems are beaten dry of fluid and put in a pool to soak up the brine. The stem is then dried and burned, and the ashes are collected and used as salt. If a local boy in Jiwika doesn't offer his services as a guide, ask one to show you the way and to find out if anyone is working at the wells. Start the hike from Jiwika before 10am.

At the turn-off to Iluwe in Jiwika is **Lauk Inn** (r 90,000Rp), the only proper accommoda-

tion outside Wamena, and a lovely spot to boot. It offers basic but clean rooms (as opposed to Dani-style huts), and decent **meals** (10,000-20,000Rp) are available for guests if preordered. If the place looks closed, just rattle the gate loudly or ask at the shop next door.

Sumpaima, just north of Jiwika (look for the blue sign), is home to the 280-year-old **Wimontok Mabel mummy** (admission 20,000Rp, photos 2000Rp; ☞ daylight hours). It is the best and most accessible of its kind near Wamena.

Gua Kotilola

The road between Jiwika and Wosilimo is flanked by rocky hills in which some of the valley's 50 listed **caves** are located. At the back of an attractive Dani compound, **Gua Kotilola** (admission 5000Rp; ☞ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) apparently contains the bones of victims of a past tribal war. It's on the right as you head north from Jiwika, about 22km from Wamena. Ask the taxi driver to drop you off outside the compound and yell for someone to open the gate.

Wosilimo

Wosilimo (or 'Wosi') is a major village with a few shops. **Gua Wikuda** (admission incl tour 10,000Rp; ☞ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat), along the road to Pass Valley, is nearly 900m long and boasts stalagmites over 1000 years old. The cave has been developed by some Dani people who will take you for a tour, though you can't see much without a lamp (another 15,000Rp).

One hour southwest from Wosi on foot, along a small path behind the church and over a hanging bridge, is **Danau Anegerak**.

This lake is another delightful area for **hiking**, and **fishing** is also available (locals rent out basic fishing equipment). You should be able to stay near the lake in a Dani-style **hut** (per person incl meals about 25,000Rp).

Pass Valley

A rough road continues from Wosilimo to Pass Valley. There is no public transport along this road, but Pass Valley is a popular place for **trekking**.

Manda

This enticing village has a shop and market, as well as loads of friendly people to meet, and wonderful scenery to admire and landscapes to hike around. Ask if the authentic **Dani-style huts** are open. They're not signposted, but easy to find just behind the market.

Wolo Valley

This is one of the most spectacular side valleys of Sungai Baliem. Inspired by a resolute strain of Evangelical Protestantism, **Wolo** is a nonsmoking village with lovely flower gardens. There is plenty of great **hiking** to be done in the area.

BALIEM VALLEY – WEST

The western side of the valley isn't as scenic for hiking or as interesting for day trips by taxi from Wamena; in fact, the road from Wamena to Pyramid (a six-hour walk) is comparatively dull.

Kimbim is a pleasant administrative centre with a few shops and a busy **market**. You should be able to find somewhere to stay if you ask at the police station or district office. About one hour on foot from Kimbim (ask directions), **Araboda** is home to the 250-year-old Allongga Huby **mummy** (admission 5000Rp; ☞ erratic opening hours).

About 7km past Kimbim is **Pyramid**, a graceful missionary village with a theological college, sloping airstrip and bustling **market**. Some taxis from Wamena go directly to Pyramid, but you may have to get a connection in Kimbim.

DANAU HABBEMA

This lake (3450m above sea level) is a wonderful **trekking** area and home to unique flora (including orchids). Also nearby are several caves, such as **Gua Simalak**.

The lake is sometimes off limits to foreigners (as it was at the time of writing) because of the nefarious activities of the Free Papua Movement (OPM). In any case, always check with the police in Wamena before visiting the lake and make sure your *surat jalan* includes 'Danau Habbema'. One reader has reported that some locals he encountered on the way to the lake demanded money from him to cross 'their land'.

There are two usual ways to reach the lake: trek from Elagaima, via Ibele (accessible by public taxi from Sinatma) and Thaila; or trek from Sinatma, via Walaek. (This road is sometimes accessible by vehicle as far as Pabilolo.) For both treks, you'll need a guide. Private camping is tolerated in the region, or ask to sleep in a local hut along the way. Some basic Dani-style accommodation is also available along the northern side of the lake.

GUNUNG TRIKORA

Gunung Trikora (4750m) is just 300m shy of Puncak Jaya, Papua's highest peak. Mountain-climbing experience, sturdy equipment and a knowledgeable guide are essential for climbing Trikora. Also required is a special permit, which can only be obtained from the army headquarters in Jakarta. Given plenty of notice, the tour agencies listed in the Jayapura section later may be able to organise trips.

LANI COUNTRY (WESTERN DANI)

West along Sungai Baliem and upstream from Pyramid is the home of the Western Dani who call themselves Lani. One accessible Lani village is Magi, about 1½ hours on foot from Kimbim or Pyramid.

Further west, between Sungai Pitt and Kuyawage, the Baliem disappears underground for 2km. **Ilaga**, about 60km west of Kuyawage, beyond the western Baliem watershed, is accessible by missionary flights from Nabire, Sentani and Wamena, but make sure your *surat jalan* allows you to travel this far.

YALI COUNTRY

East and south of the Baliem Valley are the Yali people. They live in rectangular houses, and the men often wear 'skirts' of rattan hoops, with penis gourds protruding from underneath. The Indonesian presence

is thinner here than in the Baliem Valley, so missionaries provide much of the infrastructure, such as schools and transport. Bordering the Yali to the east are the Kim-Yal people, who practised cannibalism up until the 1970s.

Reaching Yali country on foot involves plenty of tough hiking along steep trails. **Pronggoli**, the nearest centre from Wamena as the crow flies, is a three-day slog by the most direct route, with camping necessary along the way. From Pronggoli to **Angguruk** takes another day. It's then relatively easy trekking from Angguruk to nearby villages, such as **Panggele**, **Psekni**, **Tulukima** and **Tenggil**.

An easier but longer (about seven days) option is the southern loop through Kurima–Tangma–Wet–Soba–Ninia, and then north on to Angguruk village. Another popular trek is Kosarek–Serkasi–Telambela–Membahan–Helariki–Angguruk (about six days). You can cut this tough trek by taking a missionary flight (more likely if you're on an organised tour) from Wamena to Kosarek or Angguruk. You can usually rely on a hut belonging to a local

family or a teacher's house for somewhere to stay in the area, but bring all your own food.

EASTERN PAPUA

Many travellers come to this part of Papua just to get a connection to Wamena in the Baliem Valley, but Sentani, Jayapura and the surrounding areas, as well as the interior near Merauke, have a lot to offer. Adventurous travellers with *loads* of time and money also trickle down to the remote, swampy Asmat region, with its unique culture.

JAYAPURA

☎ 0967 / pop 195,000

Although Jayapura is dominated by non-Papuan and looks similar to most medium-sized Indonesian cities, it is pleasantly situated around Teluk Yos Sudarso and surrounded by steep hills. There's little reason to stay in Jayapura, because Sentani is more pleasant and convenient, but you may have to visit to book air or boat tickets, collect a

surat jalan for the Baliem Valley, or cash in travellers cheques.

See p833 for sights and activities around Jayapura.

Orientation

Just about everything you'll need is confined to the parallel main streets of Jl Ahmad Yani and Jl Percetakan. Along the waterfront, Jl Koti heads east to Hamadi, while Jl Sam Ratulangi goes north towards Tanjung Ria. Most government buildings are in the sprawling southern suburbs of Kotaraja, Abepura and Waena.

Information

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Consulate of Papua New Guinea (Map p834;

☎ 531250; congenpng@yahoo.com.id; Jl Raya Argapura; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Thu, 8am–2pm Fri) The friendly folks at this consulate issue visas to PNG. See p799 for details. To get to the consulate – about 3km east of downtown – catch a green B2 taxi (2000Rp) from along Jl Percetakan in Jayapura.

EMERGENCY

District police station (Polres; ☎ 531027; Jl Ahmad Yani; ☎ officially 7am–3pm Mon–Fri) Go to the 'Satuan IPP' office upstairs to arrange your *surat jalan*; expect to pay a 5000Rp administrative fee.

Provincial police station (Polda; ☎ 533861; Jl Sam Ratulangi 8) May keep longer hours, if you find the district police station closed.

Rumah Sakit Umum Pusat (☎ 533616; Jl Kesehatan) The city's public hospital is in the northern foothills.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration office (☎ 521647; Jl Percetakan 15; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri) If you travel between Jayapura and Vanimo (in PNG) by boat, stop by this office to get the proper Indonesian entry/exit stamps in your passport.

INTERNET ACCESS

Warnet Kopegtel (☎ 533891; Jl Ahmad Yani 18; per hr 9000Rp; ☎ 8am–midnight) Jayapura's smokier, more centrally located internet centre.

MONEY

All banks should be able to change rupiah into PNG *kina* (and vice versa); otherwise, try the reception desk at the Matoa International Hotel.

Stock up on rupiah before heading to the Baliem Valley, as the banks in Wamena offer woeful exchange rates. There are no exchange facilities at the Sentani airport.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Ahmad Yani) There's a 24-hour ATM, and you can exchange travellers cheques here if rates at the other banks are poor.

BII bank (Bank Internasional Indonesia; Jl Percetakan 22) Next to Hotel Dafonsoro, offers the same services and the best cash exchange rates in town.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Ahmad Yani) BNI changes cash and travellers cheques, gives cash advances, and has an ATM for Visa and MasterCard.

POST & TELEPHONE

Main post office (Jl Sam Ratulangi; ☎ 8am–9pm) Has a warnet centre next door.

Telkom (Jl Sam Ratulangi; ☎ 24hr) Near the post office.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (Map p834; ☎ 588765; www.papua.go.id; Komplek Kotaraja, Jl Raya Abepura; ☎ 7.30am–3pm Mon–Fri) The Papua provincial tourist office is barely worth visiting; but if you go, ask the taxi driver to let you off at the 'Kantor Dinas Daerah Otonom' building along the road between Jayapura and Abepura.

Tours

A few local travel agencies still offer a range of tours around Jayapura and Sentani (as well as tours to the Baliem Valley and Asmat region).

Advindo Tours (☎ 537777; aroel_advindo@yahoo.co.id; Jl Percetakan 17; ☎ 8am–5pm) Advindo Tours runs a range of package tours to the Baliem Valley, the Asmat region and elsewhere around Papua.

Benneti Expeditions (☎ 573323; benneti_travel@yahoo.co.id; Jl Ahmad Yani 39) Upstairs from PT Kuwera Jaya, independent Benneti can also arrange custom tours with English-speaking guides.

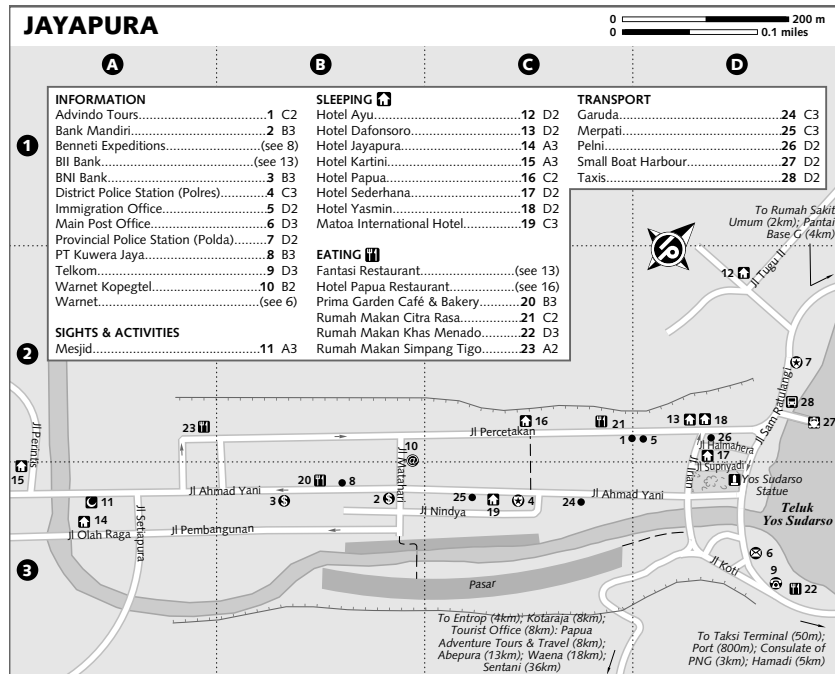
Papua Adventure Tours & Travel (☎ 586755; www.papuaadventure.com; Komplek Kotaraja, Jl Raya Abepura; ☎ 8am–5pm) This agency, near the provincial tourist office, offers a variety of tours around Papua, but specialises in multiday trekking trips in the Baliem Valley and Asmat region.

PT Kuwera Jaya (☎ 531583; Jl Ahmad Yani 39) This efficient company can book flights on airlines serving Jayapura – or for a small fee, Pelni tickets heading west.

Festivals & Events

Papua Tourism Week Held around mid-January, you may find a smattering of displays and events showcasing traditional culture as part of this promotion. Check in at the tourist office for more information.

Jayapura Cultural Festival During the first week of August, the city hosts an array of dance and music performances from around Papua.



Sleeping

Although hotels are scattered throughout Jayapura, staying in the city centre is most convenient for settling travel arrangements and reaching the city's services.

BUDGET

Hotel Jayapura (☎ 533216; Jl Olah Raga 4; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) What's it like to sleep in a chicken coop? Find out here. Ceilings in the fanless, steambox rooms slope down to windows covered in chicken wire (for real!). All rooms share *mandis*. Breakfast is not included.

Hotel Ayu (☎ 534263; Jl Tugu II 1; s 45,000-85,000Rp, d 75,000-100,000Rp; ☹) Being the best cheap choice in Jayapura, this place is often full, and no wonder – it's snug and bright, with breakfast included and a pleasant common hall. Fan-only rooms have shared *mandis*, while air-con rooms have attached *mandis*.

Hotel Kartini (☎ 531557; Jl Perintis 2; s 55,000Rp, d 66,000-77,000Rp) Rooms are small and noisy at this family-run spot. It's just over the bridge and to the right at the top end of Jl Ahmad Yani. All rooms come with fan and breakfast.

Hotel Sederhana (☎ 531561; Jl Halmahera 2; d 93,500-209,000Rp; ☹) Central and clean, but fairly unremarkable and noisy. Despite the inflated rates, it's often full. Breakfast is included.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Unless otherwise noted, rates include breakfast at the following hotels.

Hotel Dafonoro (☎ 531695; fax 534055; Jl Percetakan 20; s 198,500Rp, d 253,000-300,000Rp; ☹) Central and friendly, this spotless hotel has quiet, characterless rooms with hot water and air-con. Traditional-style carvings decorate the marble halls of this unpretentious place.

Hotel Papua (☎ 535800; fax 533700; Jl Percetakan 78; r 350,000-450,000Rp, ste 500,000Rp; ☹) Along with bonuses like hot water, satellite TV and bathtubs in superior rooms, this place goes the extra decorating mile with mismatched murals and elaborately carved furniture. It's predictably overpriced, but a comparatively attractive deal.

Hotel Yasmin (☎ 533222; fax 536027; Jl Percetakan 8; d from 365,000Rp; ☹) A classy but pretentious place offering small, well-furnished rooms, with satellite TV. Save a little cash by ask-

ing for rates quoted in rupiah rather than US dollars.

Matoa International Hotel (☎ 531633; fax 531437; Jl Ahmad Yani 14; r from 366,000Rp; ☹) The flashiest place in town charges accordingly. The guest rooms are most certainly comfortable (with satellite TV, fridge and hot water), but overpriced.

Eating & Drinking

Prima Garden Café & Bakery (☎ 532038; Jl Ahmad Yani 28; pastries around 6000Rp; ☹) breakfast, lunch & dinner Mon-Sat, dinner Sun; ☹) Relax upstairs with some scrumptious pandanus cake and diner coffee.

Rumah Makan Khas Manado (Jl Koti; meals about 12,000Rp; ☹) lunch & dinner) Has sea views, but surprisingly little fish. Most of what is available is simply a variation of the ubiquitous *nasi campur* (rice 'with the lot').

Rumah Makan Cita Rasa (☎ 534450; Jl Percetakan 66; meals 12,000-25,000Rp; ☹) lunch & dinner) A clean and friendly place that serves the usual range of Indonesian and Chinese food.

Rumah Makan Simpang Tigo (Jl Percetakan; meals 20,000Rp; ☹) lunch & dinner) Probably one of the better Padang-style places in town because it does offer other types of food. But the warbling diners at the karaoke machine are likely to limit any conversation.

Among the hotel restaurants downtown, the following are the best places for range, price, service and setting – plus, they will serve you a cold beer.

Fantasi Restaurant (Hotel Dafonoro; mains around 30,000Rp; ☹)

Hotel Papua Restaurant (Hotel Papua; mains around 30,000Rp; ☹)

At night along Jl Ahmad Yani and around the waterfront, warungs serve cheap and tasty *gado gado* (vegetables with spicy peanut sauce) and *nasi campur*. Plenty of food stalls along Jl Nindya also sell delicious, filling *nasi campur* and baked fish from 5000Rp. Jayapura is 'dry', but alcohol is served here and there.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Jayapura is well connected to the rest of Indonesia. Every day, Merpati flies between Jayapura and Jakarta, via Biak, Timika and/or Makassar, and from Jayapura to Merauke. It also flies four times a week to Nabire.

Book at the efficient **Merpati office** (☎ 533111; djgmmz@merpati.co.id; Jl Ahmad Yani; ☹) 7.30am-noon & 1-7pm). Refer to p824 for details about flights between Jayapura and Wamena.

Garuda also flies between Jayapura and Jakarta every day but Wednesday, via Biak and Makassar or Timika and Denpasar. Tickets are available at the **Garuda office** (☎ 522222; djidmga@garuda-indonesia.com; Bank Papua Bldg, Jl Ahmad Yani 4-7; ☹) 9am-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-3pm Sun).

The missionary service **AMA** (Map p832; ☎ 591009; amasantani@jayapura.wasantara.net.id; Jl Misi Sentani, Sentani) regularly flies to Ilaga, Nabire, Timika, Mulia and Enarotali, but not to Wamena. **MAF** (Map p832; ☎ 591109; Jl Misi Sentani, Sentani) can arrange charter flights.

All flights leave from the airport in nearby Sentani.

BOAT

Of course, all boats head west from Jayapura. Every two weeks, the Pelni liners *Sinabung*, *Nggapulu* and *Dobonsolo* travel to Biak (1st/economy class 356,500/115,500Rp), while the *Doro Londa* stops at Serui and Nabire (but not Biak).

The port is 800m east of the post office and accessible by any taxi to Hamadi. Tickets for all major boats are available at the **Pelni office** (☎ 531053; Jl Halmahera 1; ☹) 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) or for an extra fee at tour operator PT Kuwera Jaya.

Perintis boats also leave Jayapura every week or so for Serui, Nabire, Biak and Manokwari. These boats, and the other smaller ones that ply the north coast, normally leave from the **small boat harbour** (Jl Sam Ratulangi).

See p799 for details about crossing by boat from Jayapura to Vanimo.

Getting Around

A private taxi from Sentani airport to Jayapura will cost a whopping 100,000Rp. Try rounding up other passengers, or take a cheap, efficient public taxi. See p833 for details about catching public taxis between Sentani and Jayapura.

Public taxis to most places in and around Jayapura leave every second or two from designated stops along Jl Percetakan, Jl Ahmad Yani and Jl Sam Ratulangi. Trips around town cost 1500Rp. A ride on an *ojek* is a quick and easy way to get around the city centre.

SENTANI

☎ 0967

Sentani, 36km west of Jayapura, is a small town that services the airport. Built near the shores of the magnificent Danau Sentani, it's quieter, cooler and more convenient than Jayapura and has most of the facilities you'll need. But Sentani has lost some of its appeal: during riots by Papuan separatists between 1998 and 2002, many buildings, including offices and hotels, were destroyed, abandoned and/or looted. While some businesses have gotten back on their feet, others have been left to decay.

The only attraction is the unimpressive memorial-cum-cemetery, grandly named in English as the **Papua Freedom & Human Rights Abuses Memorial Park** (Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota). It contains the grave of the Papuan independence leader, Theys Eluay, who was murdered in November 2001 (by soldiers of the Kopassus special forces). See p833 for sights and activities around Sentani.

Information

You'll have to venture into Jayapura to change travellers cheques.

Airport information office (☹) 5am-5pm) At the airport terminal, it's useful for general inquiries, though it's not a tourist office.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota) You can change cash here, or withdraw rupiah from its 24-hour ATM.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Multi Jaya Shopping Centre; Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota) About 3km west of the post office, this bank changes cash and has an ATM.

District police station (Jl Raya Hawai 97) Conveniently, you can now get your *surat jalan* at this station 5km east of Sentani.

Duta Computer (Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota; ☹) 2-9pm) Slow internet access has hit Sentani.

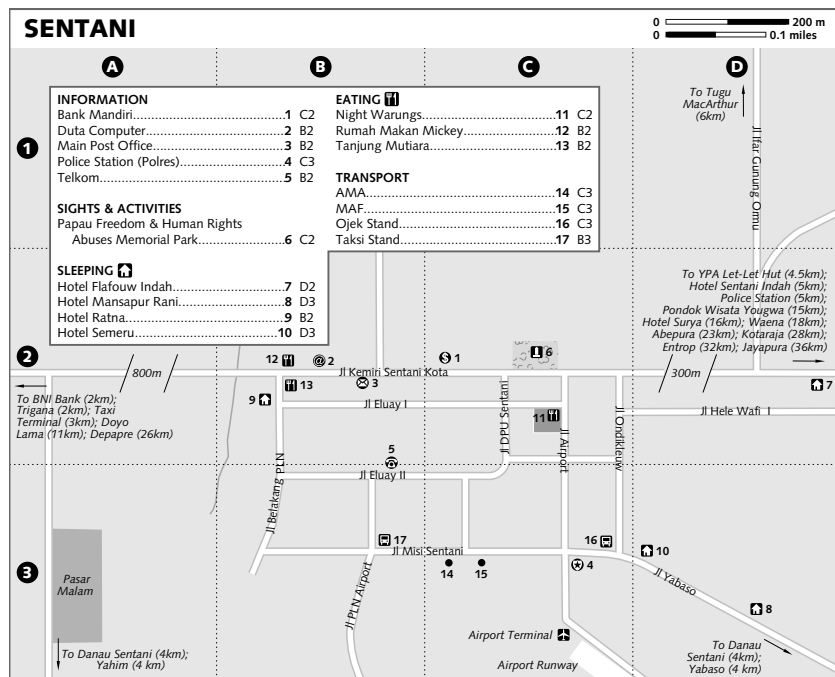
Main post office (Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota; ☹) 8am-5.30pm Mon-Sat) Has a poste restante.

Police station (Polres; ☎ 591105; Jl Airport) For local questions and complaints only; you cannot get a *surat jalan* here. The district police station issues the *surat jalan*.

Telkom office (Jl Eluay II; ☹) 24hr)

Sleeping

Since airport access is so easy from here and the town is so low-key, most visitors base themselves in Sentani rather than in Jayapura. All places listed below offer rooms with attached bathroom, and all rates include breakfast.



Hotel Semeru (☎ 591447; fax 591964; Jl Yabaso; s 100,000Rp, d 120,000-150,000Rp; 🏠) The most convenient and best-value option in town. The basic rooms are slightly worn, but they are clean and comfortable. Breakfast is do-and-berw-yourself.

Hotel Flafouw Indah (☎/fax 591478; Jl Raya Sentani Kota; r 110,000-165,000Rp; 🏠) Offers largish, cleanish rooms, but most are dark and noisy from the main road traffic. It's about 800m east of the post office.

Hotel Mansapur Rani (☎ 591219; Jl Yabaso 113; r 150,000-250,000Rp; 🏠) Priced more for its potential than for what you actually get, 'ekonomi' rooms here are dingy and dank, while the 'deluxe' rooms at the back are slightly larger and brighter. Upsides include the garden setting, complete with flowers and roving ducks, and its proximity to the airport.

Hotel Ratna (☎ 593410; fax 592640; Jl PLN 1; r 165,000-330,000Rp; 🏠) The Ratna's rooms are clean, green and comfortable, with cable TV and homey touches. Most staff speak English, and the standard is probably the best in Sentani for the price.

Hotel Sentani Indah (☎ 591900; fax 592828; Jl Raya Hawaii; r from 455,000Rp; 🏠) Along the road to Jayapura is this incongruous monstrosity about 5km from Sentani. It has a fitness centre, pool, café, and lots of rooms that aspire to luxury but look a little worn and weary.

Eating

Tanjung Mutiara (☎ 591355; Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota; mains around 8000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) Tasty Padang food in an immaculate, airy setting.

Rumah Makan Mickey (Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota 49; mains around 20,000Rp; 🍽 lunch & dinner) Mickey remains the most popular place for travellers and expats. The menu (written in English) has reasonably priced Indonesian and Western-style selections.

At the corner of Jl Airport and Jl Eluay I, several night warungs serve basic meals from late afternoon. A few nondescript *rumah makan* (eating houses) are dotted along the main road (the better ones are between Hotel Flafouw Indah and the turn-off to Tugu MacArthur). Sentani is another 'dry' town, though if you ask around, you can find a shop or two that sells cold beer.

Shopping

YPA Let-Let Hut (☎ 591372; Jl Raya Hawaii; 🕒 8.30am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat) Featuring an imaginative array of fair-trade souvenirs and handicrafts, this (thankfully, air-conditioned) shop is 4.7km east of Sentani, along the road to Jayapura. A portion of the shop's profits is funnelled back to the craftspeople's communities.

Getting There & Away

Several airline offices are conveniently located in the departure area of the airport terminal, including **Merpati** (☎ 591788), **Air Efata** (☎ 592030) and **Trigana** (☎ 594383).

Refer to p830 for details about travelling by plane from Sentani and by boat from Jayapura.

Getting Around

A private taxi from the airport to most hotels in Sentani costs about 10,000Rp, but you can easily walk (or hop on a public taxi).

Travelling by public transport between Sentani and Jayapura requires a change of taxis. First, catch a taxi to Abepura (4000Rp, 30 minutes) from anywhere in Sentani and disembark near the turn-off to the right for the Abepura terminal (look for the white church called *Jewaat Elim*). Then board one of the awaiting buses or taxis to Jayapura (2500Rp). From Jayapura, catch a taxi to Abepura from the waterfront terminal near the main post office, and get off at the roundabout in Abepura (the driver will probably kick you off here before returning to Jayapura). From here, catch another taxi to Sentani. If in doubt, check with the driver. Taxis stop running at about 8pm.

A convenient way to get around Sentani is by *ojek*. Drivers can take you to all the local sites, such as Yabaso (p835), Danau Sentani (p835) and Tugu MacArthur (p835), as well as to the taxi terminal in western Sentani – all for a negotiable fare. The most convenient *ojek* stand is on the corner of Jl Ondikleuw and Jl Misi Sentani.

AROUND JAYAPURA & SENTANI

☎ 0967

Several interesting places around Jayapura and Sentani can be easily visited on day trips from either town. Chartering a taxi for about 50,000Rp per hour is a painless way

to reach more remote places or to see a few sights in one day.

Museums

Museum Loka Budaya (Cultural Museum; Jl Abepura, Abepura; admission by donation; 🕒 7.30am-4pm Mon-Fri) contains a fascinating range of Papuan artefacts, including the best collection of Asmat carvings outside of Agats, as well as a small souvenir shop. It's in the grounds of the Cenderawasih University (in the closest building to Jayapura, on the right-hand side of the road from Sentani). To get to the museum take the Sentani-Abepura taxi, almost as far as the turn-off to the Abepura terminal.

The **Museum Negeri** (State Museum; Jl Abepura, Waena; admission 7500Rp; 🕒 8am-4pm Tue-Sat, 11am-4pm Sun) includes a marginally interesting collection of carvings, costumes, boats and artefacts from all over Papua, as well as historical items from Dutch colonial times. The museum is often closed; when open, a small shop inside sells souvenirs and books. The museum is easy to reach by taxi along the Sentani-Abepura road.

Next door, **Taman Budaya** (Cultural Park; Jl Abepura, Waena; admission free; 🕒 8am-4pm Tue-Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) is a collection of traditional houses, each representing a district of Papua – including the 'other district': the PT Freeport mine in Timika (!). The state of dilapidation of this park is a sad reflection of the general decline of Papua.

Pantai Base G

Made famous by General MacArthur, Base G Beach (also known locally as Pantai Tanjung Ria) is wide and desolate – except on Sunday when locals come in droves for a picnic and walk. Taxis marked 'Base G' regularly head north along Jl Sam Ratulangi in Jayapura for the pleasant trip to Tanjung Ria; ask to be dropped off at the beach, which is a 10-minute walk down the hill.

Depapre

Set under the dramatic mountain ranges of Pegunungan Cyclops, the pretty village of Depapre is an enjoyable day trip. From the village jetty you can charter boats or canoes to explore the sheltered Teluk Tanah Merah and enjoy some **snorkelling** (bring your own gear). A track (7km) from the back of the village leads to the secluded **Pantai Amai**.



Taxis for Depapre (one hour) leave about every hour from the taxi terminal, 4km west of the post office in Sentani. You can easily stop along the way at other charming villages, such as **Maribua Tua**, and the hot springs at **Sabron Siri**.

Hamadi

Hamadi's bustling but down-at-heel daily **market** is one of the most fascinating in the region. Several shops along the main road also sell souvenirs, including tacky mass-produced Asmat and Dani art (but you'll find better stuff in Wamena).

Pantai Hamadi, the site of a US amphibious landing on 22 April 1944, is another two minutes' drive past the market. The beach is pleasant, if a little dirty, however, it contains some rusting **WWII wrecks** and a **WWII monument**. At the start of the trail to the beach, you'll have to report to the military barracks with a copy of your *surat jalan*.

Hamadi is also the place to charter a boat to nearby islands and to Vanimo in PNG (see the boxed text, p799).

Mahkota Beach Hotel (☎ 532997; fax 534537; Jl Hamadi Tanjung 1; r 160,000Rp; 🚽) is, according to its brochure, 'a place where the Pacific Wave Singing'. Check out a few rooms here before settling on one, as some are in better repair than others. The breezy, seaside **restaurant** (meals 15,000-40,000Rp) offers tasty seafood, and live music most evenings. The hotel-restaurant is 500m down from the first bend in the road as you approach from Jayapura.

Taxis head to Hamadi from along Jl Koti in Jayapura every few seconds; you can also catch one directly to Hamadi from the terminal at Entrop.

Temples

Halfway along the Abepura-Entrop road, it's worth stopping for a look around two huge temples - if only for the magnificent views of Teluk Yofeta. The Buddhist temple, **Vihara Arya Dharma** (Jl Kotaraja; admission free; 🕒 daylight hours), was not built in any classical style, but the setting and views are worth the short, steep climb.

About 300m further down towards Jayapura, on the other side of the road, the

Hindu temple, **Pura Agung Surya Bhuvana** (Jl Kotaraja), is also fairly standard, but again the vistas are more than enough reason to visit.

Danu Sentani

This magnificent lake (96.5 sq km) is in itself worth a trip to Jayapura and/or Sentani. If you fly to Sentani, you will soar across the lake and see its 19 islands, as well as numerous fishing villages full of wooden houses precariously raised on stilts above the water. No organised tours of the lake are available, so you'll have to travel around independently, but it's certainly worth the effort. The lake is particularly attractive and photogenic at dusk and dawn.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Boating

A trip by boat across the lake is the best (and sometimes only) way to visit some of the islands and villages. From Yahim, 4km south of the *pasar malam* (night market) in Sentani by taxi, motorboats (for five people) can be rented for about 85,000Rp per hour, but you may have to spend some time looking for a solid boat and willing driver. Canoes cost considerably less, but obviously can't go far.

The most convenient and reliable option, especially if you're in a group, is to charter a motorboat from Pondok Wisata Yougwa (right). A sturdy boat (for nine people), with a knowledgeable driver-cum-guide, can be hired for a reasonable 150,000Rp per hour. From the same hotel, a *sepeda air* (paddle boat) costs from 15,000Rp per hour.

By boat, you can visit simple, friendly villages such as **Doyo Lama**, renowned for the manufacture of impressive, large **wood-carvings**, and for unexplained **rock paintings** nearby. Public transport to Doyo Lama also leaves from the taxi terminal in western Sentani two or three times a day (except Sunday). Alternatively, take a regular taxi (from the same terminal in Sentani) to Kemiri, along the main road to Depapre, and walk about 4km to Doyo Lama.

Hiking

Another way to explore the lake is to stroll for 40 minutes along Jl Yabaso from Hotel Mansapur Rani in Sentani. The road (then path) goes through **Yabaso** village and con-

tinues around the lake for another few kilometres past several villages. At the end of the path (90 minutes from Sentani), look for a public boat (or charter one) across the lake to a point close to Pondok Wisata Yougwa.

Between the Museum Negeri and Taman Budaya in Waena, another path (800m) leads to a decrepit lakeside recreational park, simply signposted as 'Danau Wisata'. After the boatman regains his composure from seeing a foreigner, he may agree to take you out on the lake.

Gunung Ifar

For breathtaking views of Danau Sentani, visit **Tugu MacArthur** on top of Gunung Ifar (2160m). Here, according to legend, MacArthur sat and contemplated his WWII strategies. A plaque on the monument reads: 'Here stood the Headquarters of General Douglas MacArthur and Task Force Reckless during the Pacific War'.

The very steep road (6km) to the top starts about 500m east of the corner of Jl Ondikleuw and Jl Kemiri Sentani Kota in Sentani. Taxis are irregular, except on Sunday when the hilltop is a popular picnic spot, so charter a taxi from Sentani or an *ojek* from the bottom of the access road, Jl Ifar Gunung Ormu. Just before you reach the monument, you may have to report to the local military office with a copy of your *surat jalan*.

SLEEPING & EATING

Along the Sentani-Abepura road, the charming **Pondok Wisata Yougwa** (☎ 571570; Jl Raya Sentani; r 180,000-220,000Rp; 🚽) overlooks the lake. The sparkling rooms have bathrooms, and balconies with lake views, but the serenity is shattered by the traffic (which does quieten down at night). The breezy **restaurant** (fish meals from 30,000Rp) provides wonderful views and delicious fish. The hotel/restaurant is unmarked, about 15km from Sentani; ask the taxi driver to drop you off.

MERAUKE

☎ 0971 / pop 50,460

Merauke is a quite prosperous, orderly and clean town, renowned in Indonesia as the most eastern settlement in the country. There is very little to do, but it's an obvious

starting point for trips to the interior, particularly the Asmat region.

Information

Merauke has no town centre, so virtually everything you'll need is along Jl Raya Mandala, which stretches about 7km between the airport and port.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Raya Mandala 1) At the western end of the main road, not far from Hotel Asmat, changes US dollars cash and travellers cheques and has an ATM.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Raya Mandala 168) Next to Hotel Megaria and has a 24-hour ATM for Visa and MasterCard.

Police station (☎ 321706; Jl Raya Mandala 48) North of Hotel Nirmala about 300m; handles extra permits for the interior.

Tourist office (☎ 322588; Jl Ahmad Yani 3; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Thu, 8-11am Fri) Along a street off the top end of Jl Raya Mandala; has a simple brochure, but no maps of town.

Sights & Activities

On Sundays when the tide is out, catch the motorcycle drag races along **Pantai Lampu Satu** – if you get there before the cops do. The beach is 5km along Jl Nowari, which starts southwest of the Bank Mandiri building in Merauke. If you don't mind an audience, splash around in the **hot springs** (Jl Yos Sudarso; admission free; ☎ 24hr), about 200m south of Hotel Asmat.

The peak of Merauke's dry season comes in October, the first week of which brings with it the **Asmat Art & Culture Festival** – also held in Agats (p838) – which features displays of Asmat woodcarving and traditional dancing. During the first week of November, the traditional festival of **Kimam** is celebrated with boat races, dancing and woodcarving, held on Pulau Yos Sudarso near Merauke (first week of November).

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Nakoro (☎ 322287; Jl Irmasu 96; s/d from 145,000/175,000Rp) This sweet spot is on a quiet road and has a home style sort of feel. All rooms come with breakfast, and the smaller ones upstairs have pleasant views of banana trees below. Prices include breakfast.

Hotel Megaria (☎ 321932; Jl Raya Mandala 166; r from 150,000Rp; ☎) Set back from the road and commendably quiet, the Megaria has a good selection of large, clean and well

furnished rooms. Breakfast is not included, but the staff will bring you tea or coffee.

Hotel Asmat (☎ 321065; Jl Trikora 3; r 290,000-350,000Rp; ☎) Just off the western end of Jl Raya Mandala, Hotel Asmat offers comfortable, quiet rooms (all with breakfast and amenities like satellite TV), as well as excellent service.

Kantin Mesaran (Jl Raya Mandala; meals from 10,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Just around the corner from Hotel Asmat, this place is run by deliriously cheery people who pile huge amounts of tasty eats on your plate.

Sandra Café (Jl Raya Mandala 125; meals from 15,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) Set in a quasijungle garden opposite Hotel Megaria, Sandra Café looks appealing but offers the usual fare.

Javanis Café & Resto (☎ 321515; Jl Raya Mandala; meals from 15,000Rp; ☎ lunch & dinner) About 100m west of Hotel Megaria, this is another friendly restaurant serving typical Indonesian meals. The traffic outside is a bit noisy, but the atmosphere inside is pleasant enough.

Getting There & Away

Merpati flies daily from Merauke to Jayapura, and less regularly to regional centres such as Ewer and Senggo. Book tickets at the **Merpati** office (☎ 321242; mkqdmzm@plasa.com; Jl Raya Mandala 226; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat, 11am-2pm Sun).

Every four weeks, the Pelni liner *Kelimutu* links Merauke with Timika (1st/economy class 416,500/129,000Rp) and southeastern Maluku, while the *Tatamailau* sails from Merauke to Timika, Fak-Fak and Sulawesi (1,801,500/558,000Rp). Also, every two weeks the *Sangiang* stops at Agats, Timika and Fak-Fak.

Perintis boats are the next best option. Other uncomfortable wooden boats also make fortnightly runs up and down the coast to Kimam (Pulau Yos Sudarso), Bade, Agats, and – incredibly – as far inland as Tanahmerah.

Tickets for Pelni and Perintis boats are available at the **Pelni** office (☎ 321638; Jl Sabang 318), about 200m south of Hotel Asmat.

Getting Around

Mopah airport is about 7km from Hotel Asmat. Take a private taxi for about 20,000Rp or a *mikrolet* outside the airport for 2500Rp. Yellow and red *mikrolet* hurtle

up and down the main road, between the airport and port, every nanosecond (per trip 1500Rp).

AROUND MERAUKE Wasur National Park

This **park** (admission 10,000Rp) is the joint project of the Indonesian Directorate of Forest Protection & Nature Conservation and the indigenous people (mainly the Kanum and Marind) who contribute to, and benefit from, the park and its management. The 4138-sq-km park (Taman Nasional Wasur) backs onto the PNG border, and features termite mounds, wetlands, traditional villages and extensive bird life (74 endemic species). Wildlife includes cuscus and kangaroos (including 27 endemic species), but animals are often very difficult to see. The best time to visit is during the dry season (July to January); access during the wet season (February to June) is often only possible to Yanggandur and Onggaya villages.

Before visiting, the **Wasur National Park office** (Balai Taman Nasional Wasur; ☎ 322495; info@wasur.com; Jl Garuda Leproseri 3; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Thu, 8-11am Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) asks that all travellers register with them to receive a travel permit. It is about 5km south of Merauke. It can arrange guides (150,000Rp per day) and organise transport. The park office at the Wasur entrance has a helpful **information centre** (☎ 8am-5pm).

Activities include **hiking** around the wetlands near Yanggandur, **horse-riding** around Rawabiru, and wildlife-viewing from the **observation tower** at Ukra.

It's possible to stay in various villages by checking in at the military posts and/or with the *kepala desa*, with a courtesy payment of around 50,000Rp per person. Visitors can also bring their own tents.

Public buses barrel over the park's dirt roads to the villages around the park only once or twice a day; otherwise, you'll have to charter a *mikrolet* from Merauke (about 50,000Rp per hour) or hire one of the knowledgeable, amiable park rangers to be your guide (recommended). The travel agencies listed on p829 can also arrange (expensive) tours around Wasur.

Sungai Bian & Muting

As an alternative to the comparatively over-run Baliem Valley, there are several regions

near Merauke that are worth exploring. The most accessible is an area 170km by winding road north of Merauke (mainly around Muting and other villages strung along Sungai Bian). In this region there are probably enough rainforests, wildlife and traditional people to keep most visitors happy.

Foreigners are not permitted to visit this area independently, however, so all visits must be arranged with **Yapsel** (☎ 323204; Jl Misi) in Merauke, a local indigenous-run organisation.

THE ASMAT REGION

The Asmat region is a massive area of mangroves, pandanus and rivers with huge tides. It remains almost completely undeveloped and one of the few truly unexplored regions left in the world. The Asmat people are justifiably famous for their woodcarvings and less so for their past head-hunting exploits. They are seminomadic and their lives are dictated by the rivers, a necessary source of transport and food.

To appreciate what the Asmat region has to offer definitely takes a *lot* of time and a *lot* of money. Independent travellers with a limited budget and no real interest in the regional culture may be very disappointed with how little they can see. And Agats and the Asmat region is nowhere near as developed or accessible as Wamena and the Baliem Valley.

The travel agencies listed on p829 can arrange expensive trips to the Asmat region and to inland areas where the Kombai and Korowai people live in extraordinary tree houses. Expect to pay about US\$150 per person per day, plus airfares.

Agats

☎ 0971 / pop 1350

Facilities in the Asmat region are very limited and almost nonexistent outside Agats, which has two hotels, limited electricity and precious little fresh water. Due to the extraordinary tides and location, the town is traversed on raised (and often broken) wooden walkways – watch your step! Report to the police station (er, hut) with your *surat jalan* as soon as you arrive. There is nowhere in the Asmat region to change money.

THE ASMAT PEOPLE

The word 'Asmat' comes from either *as akat* ('right man' in the local language) or *osamat* (man from tree), though the Asmat people refer to themselves as *asmat-ow* (real people).

Trees feature heavily in Asmat symbolism, which is not surprising given the immense jungles in the region. The Asmat believe that humans are the image of a tree: their feet are its roots, the torso its trunk, the arms are the branches, and the fruit represents the head. Also, an important element of their belief is that no person – except the very young and the very old – dies for any other reason than through tribal fighting or magic. So, each death of a family member must be 'avenged' if the spirit of the recently deceased can rest in the spiritual world known as *safan*. Not long ago, this 'avenging' took the form of head-hunting raids, and while it is now more ceremonial, 'avenging' is still taken seriously.

The centre of the Asmat people's beliefs is the figure of Fumeripitij, who first carved wooden figures, thereby 'creating' the Asmat people. Through their carvings, the Asmat remain in contact with their ancestors. Each village appoints a *wow ipits* (woodcarver) based on his skills. Carvings are traditionally made only for use in ceremonies and are then left to rot in the jungle, but these days, inevitably, there is strong tourist demand for these and other specially made carvings.

Funeral ceremonies involve decorated shields which represent and avenge the dead relative, ancestor poles (*bis*) and ancestor figures (*kawe*). Other ceremonial items include wooden masks, drums made from lizard skins, spears, paddles, and horns that were once used to herald the return of head-hunting raids and to frighten enemies.

Held during the first week of October, the **Asmat Art & Culture Festival** showcases the region's renowned woodcarving, and features traditional dancing.

The **Pusat Asmat & Pusat Pendidikan Asmat** (Asmat Education Centre & Asmat Centre; Jl Yos Sudarso; admission free; ☎ erratic hours), 400m north of the mosque, is an impressive collection of buildings, primarily of interest for their traditional architecture.

Museum Kebudayaan & Kemajuan (Museum of Culture & Progress; admission 5000Rp; ☎ about 8am-1pm Mon-Sat), one 'block' behind (south of) the mosque, offers a collection of varied cultural displays; try to recruit an English-speaking guide on your visit, as there are few interpretive signs to explain the exhibits.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are only two hotels in Agats. Guests can preorder meals at either for about 25,000Rp.

Losmen Pada Elo (☎ 31038; Jl Kompas Agats; r 100,000Rp) About 200m northeast of Asmat Inn, this losmen (basic accommodation) offers similar standards, as well as having friendly and helpful service. All rooms have shared *mandis*.

Asmat Inn (☎ 31002; Jl Yos Sudarso; r 125,000-165,000Rp) At the junction opposite the mosque, offers acceptable but unremarkable rooms.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The tiny Merpati planes fly several times a week between Merauke and Ewer (near Agats), though flights are usually cancelled in the wet season if the grass airfield is waterlogged. The only other air option is the flight three times a week from Merauke to Senggo, from where it's a five-hour boat trip to Agats. Missionary planes can also be chartered from Merauke or Timika for exorbitant sums.

The Pelni liner *Sangiang* comes past Agats twice every two weeks on the route between Merauke (1st/economy class 428,500/128,000Rp) and Timika. Other less comfortable Perintis boats stop every week or so on the way between Merauke and Fak-Fak. The port in Agats is a 10-minute walk north of the police station (and a superb place to watch sunsets).

GETTING AROUND

The airports at Ewer and Senggo are connected to Agats by boat. All passengers on arrival will get a seat on the boat, but to get to the airport, you'll have to organise a place on a boat yourself.

Motorboats are the only form of local transport. A sturdy boat with a reputable driver costs about 700,000Rp per day. These boats take between 10 and 15 passengers, but Agats never attracts enough visitors to 'get a group together' to share the cost. Cheaper

rates are possible if you ask around Sjuru village, a 10-minute walk south of Agats.

Canoes are a far cheaper alternative, but you obviously can't go very far. They cost about 30,000Rp per hour, plus 15,000Rp per hour for each rower. Ask around Sjuru or at the hotels in Agats.

AROUND THE ASMAT REGION

To explore the region properly, allow plenty of time and plenty of money. In addition to the exorbitant boat hire, add

about 150,000Rp per day for a guide and 60,000Rp for a porter or cook. And bring all your own supplies. (Shops in Agats sell basic items.) Alternatively, you can arrange tours from the agencies in Jayapura (p829).

There are no hotels outside of Agats, but in the larger villages, such as **Senggo**, you can sleep at missions or schools (35,000Rp to 50,000Rp per person). Alternatively, bring your own camping gear, although much of the ground is swampy.

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