

# Nusa Tenggara



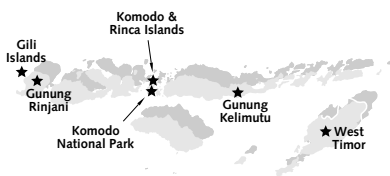
If you've ever dreamt of powder-white sand, azure bays, frothing hot springs and hidden traditional villages, then Nusa Tenggara is your wonderland. Here's an arc of islands that is lush and jungle-green in the north, more arid savannah in the south and in-between has some of the world's best diving, limitless surf breaks, and technicolor volcanic lakes. It's a land of pink-sand beaches, schooling sharks and rays, and the world's largest lizard: the swaggering, spellbinding Komodo dragon.

You'll also find a cultural diversity that is unmatched in Indonesia. East of Hindu Bali are the largely Islamic islands of Lombok and Sumbawa, followed by predominantly Catholic Flores, while Timor and the remote Alor and Solor Archipelagos have Protestant majorities. Throughout, animist rituals and tribal traditions thrive alongside the minarets, temples and chapels. Though Bahasa Indonesia is a unifying tongue, each main island has at least one native language, which is often subdivided into dialects. Eavesdrop on one of the weekly markets in the countryside and you'll hear several.

The easily accessed and ultimately seductive Gili Islands see the bulk of the tourism here, along with the rest of Lombok and its towering Gunung Rinjani (3726m). But those with a hunger for adventure head further east to Flores, charter boats to Komodo and back, then keep moving south and east where the *bule* (foreigner) crowds and creature comforts are thin on the ground and the travelling can be challenging and incredibly rewarding. In fact, you may fantasise about your next trip here before the first one is over.

## HIGHLIGHTS

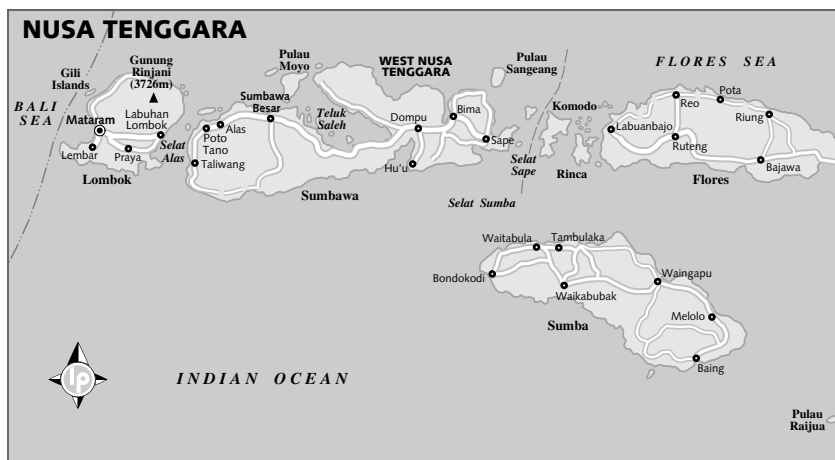
- Gazing at the lunarlike landscape atop **Gunung Kelimutu** (p548), with its three astonishing crater lakes, each a different colour
- Trekking up the lush slopes of **Gunung Rinjani** (see boxed text, p508), the sacred volcano that dominates northern Lombok
- Coming face-to-face with the mother of all lizards in **Komodo** or **Rinca** (see boxed text, p530)
- Exploring the remote villages of **West Timor** (p564), characterised by their beehive-shaped clan houses, and experiencing the island's unique tribal culture, markets and textiles
- Snorkelling or diving in coral reefs teeming with marine life around the **Gili Islands** (see boxed text, p497) and **Komodo National Park** (see boxed text, p531)



■ POPULATION: 8.3 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 68,053 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: GUNUNG RINJANI (3726M)



## HISTORY

Before the 15th century, the only external contact these islands had were sporadic visits from Chinese and Arab traders in search of sandalwood, spices and tortoiseshell. In 1512 the Portuguese landed in (and named) Flores, then Timor and Solor and brought Christianity to all three islands.

The Dutch muscled into the region in the 17th century, taking control of Kupang in 1653 and later shunting the Portuguese off to East Timor. But, with few resources to tempt them, they devoted little attention to Nusa Tenggara, only really establishing firm control over the area in the 20th century by forming alliances with tribal rajas. Crowns were stolen and redistributed, which has had a lasting effect on local politics. To this day, locals bicker over who the real Timor royals are.

Little changed after WWII, with the vast majority of people continuing to make a living from fishing or subsistence farming. Periodic droughts have been devastating: famine killed an estimated 50,000 in Lombok in 1966, provoking the government to implement a *transmigrasi* program that moved thousands of families from the island to other parts of the nation.

Today there remains very little industry in the region, apart from a colossal mine in Sumbawa; various international NGOs are also helping to develop tourism and seaweed farming in Flores and Alor. Many Nusa Tenggaraans move to Java, Bali or Malaysia to find work. Tourism is expanding, however.

Dubai investors are deeply entrenched in South Lombok, and smaller-scale tourism development is underway in West Flores. Throw in Bali's continued growth and an increase in flights from Denpasar and Kupang, and the hope among local people is that this influx will help develop the region's poor infrastructure and eventually trickle down to them.

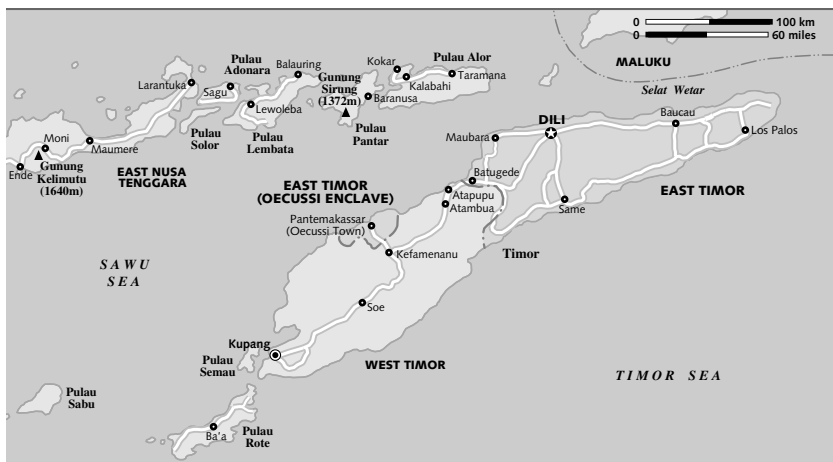
## WILDLIFE

The big brawny action hero is the Komodo dragon (see boxed text, p530), the world's largest lizard, which is easily spotted on the islands of Komodo and Rinca. Small numbers also exist in western Flores.

The coral reefs of Nusa Tenggara are some of the richest in the world, and there's an incredible array of marine life, from tiny reef dwellers such as nudibranchs, sea snails and pipefish to pelagic giants: manta and devil rays, gray and hammerhead sharks, pilot and blue whales, orcas and dolphins.

## CLIMATE

On the islands east of Bali, seasonal differences are more pronounced. The driest months are August and September, and the wettest months are between November and February. However, the duration of the seasons varies from island to island. The seasons in Lombok are more like those in Bali, with a dry season from April to September and a wet season from October to March. Much the same applies to both Sumbawa and Flores. The duration of the dry season increases the



closer you get to Australia – the rusty landscapes of Sumba and Timor contrast strongly with lush Flores.

## GETTING THERE & AROUND

Overland travel is arduous in mountainous Nusa Tenggara, particularly in Flores. Lombok, Sumbawa and Timor have fairly decent surfaced main roads and some comfortable bus services. Get off the highways and things slow down considerably, however. Ferry services are frequent and consistent in the dry season, but in the wet season, when the seas get rough, your ship may be cancelled for days, weeks even. Fortunately, several airlines now cover the main interisland routes, as few travellers who have endured the punishing long haul across Nusa Tenggara by surface transport are up for a repeat.

### Air

Most visitors use Bali as the international gateway to Nusa Tenggara. At research time, the only international flights to Nusa Tenggara were landing in Mataram, with twice-weekly connections to Singapore on Silk Air. Kupang is an international airport and rumours were swirling that the Darwin–Kupang hop, once jointly operated by Air North and Merpati, would resume in 2009.

Several airlines operate within Nusa Tenggara, but the most prolific are Merpati and Transnusa. ITA has new planes and operates the Denpasar–Mataram and Denpasar–Labuanbajo flights. Other airlines, including

Adam, Lion, Batavia and Wings Air, concentrate on the main routes to/from Mataram and Kupang.

Merpati has shaped up in recent years, and ranks behind ITA as the second-best airline in the region. The choice is not always yours, however. Merpati and Transnusa monopolise few of the more remote hops. Air travel in Nusa Tenggara is not an exact science. Delays happen, and sometimes routes are cancelled for months and then resume abruptly. It's wise to book early, and reservations are essential in the peak August tourist season. If a flight is 'full', it is still worth going to the airport before departure, as there are often 'no-shows', making last-minute seats available.

Nusa Tenggara is not well connected to other parts of Indonesia, and you'll have to travel via Bali to get to Sulawesi, Maluku and Papua.

### Bicycle

Bicycles dominate the carless Gili Islands, but they are not a popular form of transport anywhere else in Nusa Tenggara. Long-distance cycling is an option on Lombok (though the roads are narrow and traffic can be quite heavy) and across the undulating terrain of Sumba and western Sumbawa. Cycling on volcanic Flores or mountainous Timor requires Tour de France levels of endurance, commitment (maybe even blood doping), though some riders do travel across both islands using buses to get their bikes up the steepest inclines and freewheeling downhill.

## Boat

Pelni's *Awu*, *Kelimutu*, *Sirimau*, *Siguntang*, *Willis* and *Tilongkabila* ferries all service Nusa Tenggara. Schedules are provided under individual town entries in this chapter. Pelni's more basic Perintis cargo ships cover many routes and are an option if you get stuck. Ask at the office of the *syahbandar* (harbour master) or at the shipping offices. Cabins are almost always available for rent.

Fast and slow ferries also connect many of the islands. There are daily crossings between Bali and Lombok, Lombok and Sumbawa, Sumbawa and Flores, Lantaka (Flores) and Lembata, and between Kupang (Timor) and Rote.

Other ferry connections include weekly services between Kupang and Lantaka, and Ende (Flores) and Waingapu (Sumba). There are plenty of other possibilities; see the relevant sections of individual town entries for more details.

A popular way of travelling between Lombok and Flores or vice versa is on a boat tour, stopping at Komodo and other islands along the way. See the boxed text on p540 for more information.

## Bus

Aside from the main cross-island routes covered by air-con express coaches, travelling by bus is uncomfortable in Nusa Tenggara. Here's what you can expect: an oven-hot bus with legroom for a four-year-old, no shocks, errant betel-nut spittle, and an aromatic infusion of dried fish. Buses never leave on time. Sometimes they crawl around town for hours on endless loops looking for passengers – a maddening local practice called *keliling*. Don't underestimate journey times – a trip of only 100km may take up to four hours.

Most buses leave in the morning between 6am and 8am, so be prepared for early starts. There are also night buses between Mataram and Bima. Long-distance buses meet ferries for those travelling to or from Bali and Java.

Buying bus tickets for the right price can be a hassle as foreigners routinely get overcharged. Touts linger around hotels and bus terminals, willing to 'assist', but the true price is only available through the actual bus company office.

## Car & Motorcycle

Self-drive cars can be found at reasonable rates in Senggigi and Mataram on Lombok.

Remember to inspect the car thoroughly first, as insurance is often extremely basic, and you'll usually have to pay for any damage. Consider hiring a car with a driver from 350,000Rp a day including petrol. Elsewhere in Nusa Tenggara it's much more difficult and expensive to rent a car. Hotels are good contact points. Expect to pay from 450,000Rp to 700,000Rp a day, including driver and petrol. Bemo can be chartered for shorter trips.

If you are an experienced rider, motorcycling is a great way to see Nusa Tenggara, and you can transport your bike on ferries between most of the islands. If you want a real motorcycle, it's best to bring your own machine from Bali or Lombok. Short-term motorbike hires are possible virtually anywhere (from 50,000Rp to 75,000Rp a day).

# LOMBOK

Its proximity to Bali is one reason Lombok is the most popular destination in Nusa Tenggara, but its white-sand beaches, epic surf and spectacular diving also have something to do with it. Oh, and you'll probably notice mighty Gunung Rinjani (3726m), Indonesia's second-highest volcano. Rivers and waterfalls gush down its fissured slopes and feed the island's crops (which are chiefly rice, cashews, coffee and tobacco), while its summit – complete with hot springs and a dazzling crater lake – lures international trekkers as well as local Balinese Hindu and indigenous Sasak Muslim pilgrims hungry for divine blessings.

You won't want to miss the fabled Gili Islands – three exquisite droplets of white sand, sprinkled with coconut palms and surrounded by coral reefs teeming with marine life – where you'll nest in mod beach huts and feast on everything from humble *nasi campur* (rice with a choice of side dishes) to a fresh daily selection of grilled seafood to melt-in-your-mouth sashimi. You can happily burn daylight hours diving, snorkelling or chilling by the sea, and if you're nocturnal, you'll love Gili Trawangan's bar scene.

Lombok's dramatic south coast is a labyrinth of turquoise bays, white sand, world-class surf breaks, undulating tobacco fields and massive headlands. Given its drop-dead

good looks, it's no surprise that it also happens to be the vortex of Lombok's onrushing US\$600 million metamorphosis.

Thankfully, that transformation will take some time. So get Zen, forget about the future and enjoy Lombok's sweet, spacious and wild present.

## History

In the early 17th century Balinese warriors overthrew Lombok's Sasak royalty in the west, while the Makassarese invaded from the east. By 1750 the whole island was dominated by Bali's Hindu monarchy. In western Lombok, relations between the Balinese and the Sasaks were relatively harmonious, but in eastern Lombok peasant rebellions were common.

The Dutch intervened in the late 19th century and, after an initial defeat that cost 100 lives, they took control of Cakranegara. Here the last raja families were made martyrs during a grizzly *perang poepoetan* ritual. Men, women and children in white robes threw themselves upon perplexed Dutch soldiers, who shot to kill. Afterwards, the Dutch galvanized the support of the surviving Balinese and the Sasak aristocracy and soon controlled more than 500,000 people with 250 troops.

Even after Indonesian independence, Lombok continued to be dominated by its Balinese and Sasak elite. In 1958 Lombok was declared part of the new province of Nusa Tenggara Barat (West Nusa Tenggara) and Mataram became its administrative capital. Following the attempted coup in Jakarta in 1965, Lombok experienced mass killings of communists and ethnic Chinese.

Under former president Suharto's 'New Order', there was stability and some growth, but crop failures led to famine in 1966 and to severe food shortages in 1973. Many moved away from Lombok under the government-sponsored *transmigrasi* program.

Tourism took off in the 1980s but was mostly developed by outside investors and speculators. Indonesia descended into economic crisis and political turmoil in the late '90s, and on 17 January 2000, serious riots engulfed Mataram. Christians and Chinese were the primary victims, but the agitators were from outside Lombok. Ultimately all Lombok suffered, and the faint pulse of tourism was muted further by the Bali bombs of 2002 and 2005.

Then something miraculous happened. Lombok took off. Bali's recent resurgence in tourism has spilled over, big time. The Gili Islands, once a backpacking and diving stronghold, are setting new tourism records every year, with an influx of moneyed Indonesian tourists, villa developers and families eager to play on the carless isles. Luxury development has also swept through the mainland, in the north and south where Dubai suits envision the next Nusa Dua. There's even an expanded international airport in the works at Praya. Only time will tell if this bubble will expand exponentially or pop during the global recession.

## Culture

Lombok has a population of just over three million. Almost 90% of the people are Sasak, about 10% are Balinese, and there are small numbers of Chinese, Javanese, Bugis and Arabs.

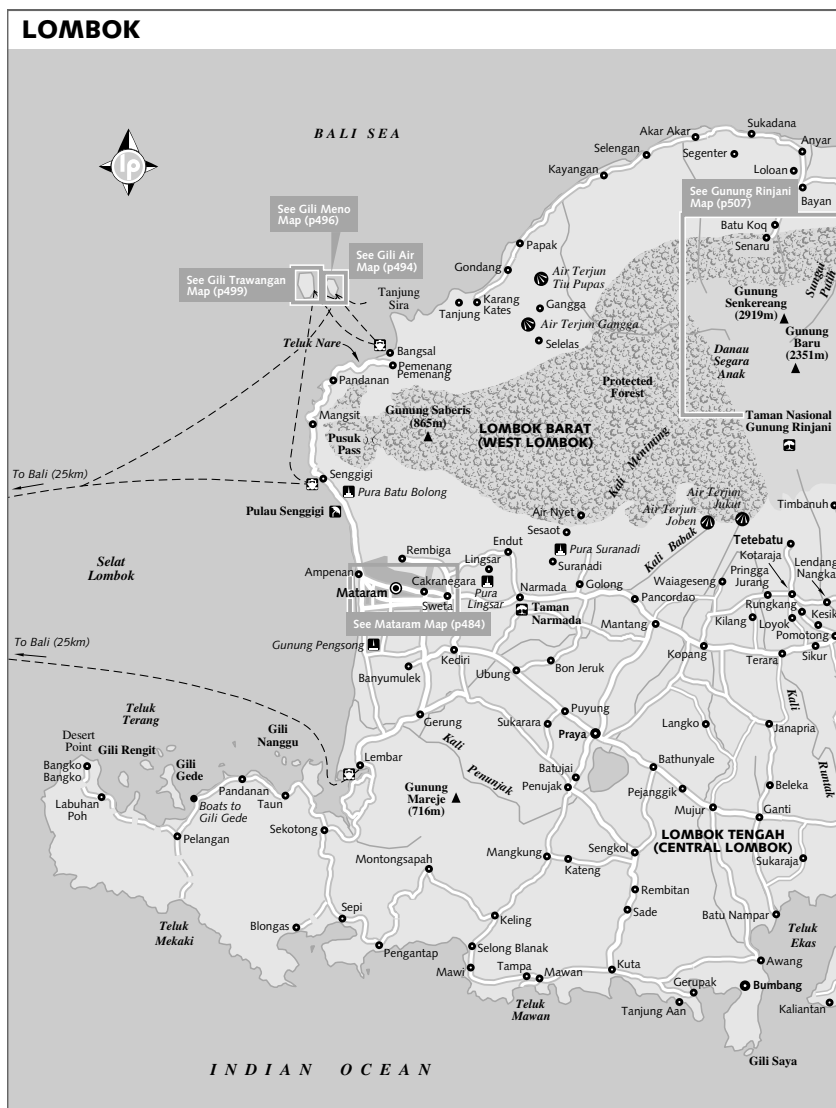
Originally hill people, the Sasaks are now spread all over Lombok and are generally much poorer than the Balinese minority. Virtually all Sasaks are Muslims, but many retain much less orthodox *Wektu Telu* beliefs and ancient animist rituals. *Adat* (indigenous and animist traditions) is still fundamental to their way of life, particularly customs relating to birth, circumcision, courtship and marriage.

Sasaks show a fascination with heroic trials of strength, physical prowess and one-on-one contests. *Peresehan*, sometimes misleadingly called 'Sasak boxing', is a fight between two men using long rattan staves and small rectangular shields made of cowhide.

Most of Lombok's Chinese population lives in Ampenan or Cakranegara. The Chinese first came to Lombok with the Dutch as a cheap labour force, but after independence most stayed on and started businesses.

Lombok's Balinese are concentrated in the west. Before the arrival of Islam in the 15th century, Balinese Hindu culture dominated Lombok. Their temples still stand, and today the Balinese remain a powerful minority.

Lombok has an indigenous music style. The Tandak Gerok dance, theatre and singing to music played on bamboo flutes and on a two-stringed bowed lute called *rebab*. It's usually performed after harvesting or other hard physical labour, but it is also staged at traditional ceremonies. The Genggong



involves seven musicians using a simple collection of instruments, including a bamboo flute and a *rebab*.

A number of traditional dances are performed during seasonal ceremonies and rites of passage. The popular Cupak Gerantang, which originated in Java, tells the story of Panji, a romantic hero. A version of the Panji

story, the Kayak Sando, featuring masked dancers, is found only in central and eastern Lombok. The Gandrung is about love and courtship, usually performed by the young men and women of Narmada, Lenek and Praya. Men and young boys in central and eastern Lombok love to perform the Oncer war dance.



## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Lombok's Selaparang Airport has a decent terminal with a few shops to keep you occupied when your flight is inevitably delayed (unless you're on the first flight out). Domestic departure tax is now 30,000Rp and international departure tax is 150,000Rp. There has

been wind blowing about a new international airport to be built near Praya for a number of years now, and with the impending South Lombok development those rumours may finally be coming true. At the time of writing authorities had publicised an opening date of 2010, but construction schedules said otherwise. **Jatatur** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-632 888; Mataram Mall, Mataram) is the best travel agent in Lombok. They book flights throughout Indonesia and take major credit cards.

**Batavia Air** (☎ 0370-648 998, 021-3899 9888; www.bataviaair.co.id) Flies daily to Surabaya and on to Jakarta.

**Garuda Indonesia** (Map p484; ☎ 0804 180 7807; www.garuda-indonesia.com; Hotel Lombok Raya, Mataram) Flies twice daily to Jakarta and once to Denpasar.

**IAT** (☎ 0370-639 589) Twice daily to Denpasar.

**Lion Air** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-629 333; www.lionair.co.id; Hotel Sahid Legi, Mataram) Flies direct to Jakarta.

**Merpati Airlines** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-621 111; www.merpati.co.id; Jl Pejanggi 69, Mataram) Flies to Denpasar three times daily.

**Silk Air** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-628 254; www.silkair.com; Hotel Lombok Raya, Mataram) Serves Singapore with three direct flights weekly (Monday, Thursday, Saturday).

**Transnusa/Trigana Airlines** (☎ 0370-616 2433; www.trigana-air.com) Three Denpasar flights a day.

**Wings Air** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-629 333; www.lionair.co.id; Hotel Sahid Legi, Mataram) Flies to Surabaya three times daily.

### BOAT

Lombok has 24-hour ferry connections with Sumbawa and Bali. Gili-bound fast and slow boats launch from Benoa, Serangan and Padangbai harbours in Bali, and Peln ships steam in regularly from elsewhere in Indonesia.

Ferries travel between Padangbai (Bali) and Lembar (Lombok) every 90 minutes around the clock. Fares are 32,000Rp for foot passengers, 75,000Rp for motorcycles (with two passengers) and 479,000Rp for cars (up to four passengers). The trip takes four hours.

Much of the Gili Islands' recent tourist boom is due in large part to the speedboats that carry passengers directly from Bali. **Gili Cat** (☎ 0361-271 680; www.gilicat.com) leaves from Padangbai (660,000Rp, 2½ hours, 9am daily). **Blue Water Express** (☎ 0361-310 4558; www.bwsbali.com) leaves from Benoa Harbour (690,000Rp, 2½ hours). The new **Eka Jaya** (☎ 0361-752 277; www.baliekjajaya.com) had just launched their Padangbai service (660,000Rp, 2½ hours) at research time.

There's also a **Perama** ([www.peramatour.com](http://www.peramatour.com)) shuttle bus and boat service (300,000Rp) from Padangbai, stopping at Senggigi (six hours) where for an additional 90,000Rp passengers can shift to smaller boats bound for the Gili Islands (one to 1½ hours).

Ferries also travel between Labuhan Lombok and Poto Tano on Sumbawa every 45 minutes (passenger 15,500Rp, motorcycle 75,000Rp, car 322,000Rp). They run 24 hours a day and the trip takes 1½ hours.

Pelni ships link Lembar with other parts of Indonesia. The *Awu* heads to Waingapu, Ende, Larantuka, Kupang and Kalabahi; the *Kelimutu* goes to Surabaya, Bima, Makassar, Ambon and Papua; and the *Tilongkabila* goes to Bima, Labuanbajo and Sulawesi. Buy tickets at the **Pelni office** (Map p484; ☎ 0370-637 212; Jl Industri 1; ☎ 8am-noon & 1-3.30pm Mon-Thu & Sat, 8-11am Fri) in Mataram.

#### PUBLIC BUS

Mandalika terminal in Mataram is the departure point for major cities in Sumbawa, Bali and Java, via interisland ferries. For long-distance services, book tickets a day or two ahead at the terminal, or from a travel agency along Jl Pejanggi/Jl Selaparang in Mataram. If you get to the terminal before 8am, there may indeed be a spare seat on a bus going in your direction, but don't count on it, especially during holidays.

Among the destinations are Bima (economy/luxury 100,000/150,000Rp, 12 hours), Denpasar (luxury 135,000Rp, seven hours), Sumbawa Besar (economy/luxury 75,000/90,000Rp, six hours), Jakarta (luxury 375,000Rp, 38 hours), Surabaya (luxury 179,000Rp, 20 hours) and Yogyakarta (luxury 272,000Rp, 30 hours).

#### TOURIST SHUTTLE BUS/BOAT

The Bali-based company **Perama** ([www.perama.tour.com](http://www.perama.tour.com)) has tourist shuttle bus/boat services between the main tourist centres in Lombok (Senggigi, Gili Islands and Kuta) and most tourist centres in Bali (Ubud, Sanur and the Kuta region). Tickets can be booked directly or at any travel agency in Lombok or Bali.

#### Getting Around

There is a good road across the middle of the island, between Mataram and Labuhan Lombok. Though narrow, the Mataram-Praya-Kuta and Mataram-Senggigi-Anyar

routes are also decent sealed roads. Public transport is generally restricted to the main routes; away from these, you need to hire a car or motorbike, or charter a bemo, *cidomo* (horse-drawn cart) or *ojek* (motorcycle taxi). During the wet season, remote roads are often flooded or washed away, particularly around the foothills of Gunung Rinjani.

#### BUS & BEMO

The main terminal, Mandalika, is at Bertais, 6km southeast of central Mataram; other regional terminals are in Praya, Anyar and Pancor (near Selong). You may have to go via one or more of these terminals to get from one part of Lombok to another. A list of fixed fares should be displayed at the terminals. Public transport becomes scarce in the late afternoon and normally ceases after dark.

Chartering a bemo can be convenient and reasonably cheap – about 250,000Rp per bemo per day (including petrol), depending on distance and road conditions, although some bemos are restricted to specific routes or regions.

#### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Senggigi is the best place to organise car or motorcycle rental. Arrangements can be made in Mataram and other places, but rates are much higher. Hotels and travel agencies offer the most competitive rates; 'official' car-rental companies often have a wider range of vehicles but tend to be more expensive.

SUVs are best for Lombok's roads. Suzuki Jimmys cost from 150,000Rp per day, and Toyota Kijangs cost about 225,000Rp, excluding petrol. Discounts are offered for longer periods. Hiring a car with a driver is a very sensible and popular option as you won't be liable for any damage – expect to pay between 350,000Rp and 525,000Rp per day, depending on the season.

Motorbikes can be rented in Mataram and Senggigi for around 35,000Rp per day. Motorcycles run for 65,000Rp per day in Senggigi.

Indonesian law dictates that you should carry an International Driving Licence if you plan on operating a motor vehicle. Your rental agency won't request it, but police may ask for one at checkpoints, and will issue a fine (to be paid immediately) if you don't have it.

Check your insurance arrangements carefully. Some agencies do not offer any coverage



at all, and others offer only basic coverage. Even insured Balinese vehicles are often not covered at all in Lombok. It is best to proceed to Lombok and arrange a rental in Senggigi.

## MATARAM

☎ 0370 / pop 330,000

Lombok's capital, a conglomeration of several separate towns – Ampenan (the port), Mataram (administrative centre), Cakranegara or Cakra (business centre), and Bertais-Sweta (transport hub), is a quintessential Indonesian city. Its chaotic, traffic-choked streets sprawl more than 10km from east to west. But it's also attractive, with broad tree-lined avenues and friendly, exuberant locals. Since sights are slim and the beaches are so close, few visitors choose to stay here – which is exactly why you should.

## Orientation

The four towns are spread along one main road – it starts as Jl Pabean in Ampenan, becomes Jl Yos Sudarso, then changes to Jl Langko, Jl Pejanggi and travels from Sweta to Bertais as Jl Selaparang. It's one-way throughout, running west to east. A parallel one-way road, Jl Tumpang Sari–Jl Panca Usaha–Jl Pancawarga–Jl Caturwarga–Jl Pendidikan, brings traffic back to the coast.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 631 225; Jl Langko) In an emergency, dial ☎ 110.

**Rumah Sakit Umum Mataram** (☎ 622 254; Jl Pejanggi 6) The best hospital on Lombok has English-speaking doctors.

### IMMIGRATION

**Kantor Imigrasi** (☎ 632 520; Jl Udayana 2; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri)

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

There are wartel on Jl Pejanggi and at the airport.

**Elian Internet** (Mataram Mall, Jl Panca Usaha; www.elianmedia.net; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 24 hr)

**Telkom** (☎ 633 333; Jl Pendidikan 23; ☎ 24hr) Offers phone and fax services.

### MONEY

You'll find plenty of banks with ATMs scattered along Cakra's main drag, particularly on Jl Pejanggi; most of them change cash and travellers cheques.

## POST

**Main post office** (Jl Sriwijaya 37; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Thu, 8–11am Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) Inconveniently located, but has internet and poste restante services.

**Sub-post office** (Jl Langko; ☎ 8am–4.30pm Mon–Thu, 8–11am Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) Near the Nitour Hotel.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**West Lombok tourist office** (☎ 621 658; Jl Suprato 20; ☎ 7.30am–2pm Mon–Thu, 7.30–11am Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) Just a slim selection of maps and leaflets.

**West Nusa Tenggara tourist office** (☎ 634 800; Jl Singosari 2; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Thu, 8–11am Fri, 8am–12.30pm Sat) Friendly staff offers limited information.

## Sights

### MUSEUM NEGERI NUSA TENGGERA BARAT

This dusty **museum** (☎ 632 519; Jl Panji Tilar Negara 6; admission 20,000Rp; ☎ 8am–2pm Tue–Thu, Sat & Sun, 8–11am Fri) has exhibits on the geology, history and culture of Lombok and Sumbawa. There's an interesting collection of prehistoric pottery, massive bronze kettledrums and a captivating assortment of kris (traditional daggers) and *songket* (silver- or gold-threaded cloth). For an extra 40,000Rp, check out gold swords and jewellery that once belonged to Sumbawan sultans and Javanese kings.

### MAYURA WATER PALACE

Built in 1744, this **palace** (Jl Selaparang; admission by donation; ☎ 7am–7.30pm) includes the former king's family temple, a pilgrimage site for Lombok's Hindus on 24 December. In 1894 it was the site of bloody battles between the Dutch and Balinese. Unfortunately, it has become a neglected public park with a polluted artificial lake.

### PURA MERU

Opposite the water palace, **Pura Meru** (Jl Selaparang; admission by donation; ☎ 8am–5pm) is the largest and second most important Hindu temple on Lombok. Built in 1720 by Balinese prince Anak Agung Made Karang, it's dedicated to the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Wooden drums call believers to ceremonies (the June full moon is the most important, but the grounds are also packed on Christmas Eve) in the outer courtyard. The inner court has 33 small shrines and three thatched, teak-wood *meru* (multitiered shrines). The central *meru*, with 11 tiers, is Shiva's house; the *meru* to the north, with nine tiers, is Vishnu's; and the



seven-tiered *meru* to the south is Brahma's. The *meru* also represent the three sacred mountains, Rinjani, Agung and Bromo, and the mythical Mount Meru.

The caretaker will lend you a sash and sarong if you need one.

## Activities

Lombok's back roads are ideal for bicycle touring. Two interesting routes are Mataram to Banyuwulek and back via Gunung Pengsong, and along the coastal road from Mataram to Pemenang via Senggigi. If you feel energetic, return via the gorgeous yet steep road through Pusuk Pass.

## Sleeping

Most folks nest among Cakranegara's quiet streets off Jl Pejanggik/Jl Selaparang, east of Mataram Mall.

### BUDGET

**Ganesha Inn** (☎ 624 878; Jl Subak 1; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) Stylish exterior, nice location, but some of the rooms are yellow at the edges.

**Oka Homestay** (☎ 622 406; Jl Repatmaya 5; d from 40,000Rp) Balinese-owned, this garden compound patrolled by three friendly poodles, is a great deal. Rooms are fan-cooled and quite clean.

**Hotel Melati Viktor** (☎ 633 830; Jl Abimanyu 1; d from 80,000Rp; ♿) The high ceilings, clean rooms and Balinese-style courtyard, complete with Hindu statues, make this one of the best value places in town.

### MIDRANGE

**Zaitun Selaparang** (☎ 632 235; [www.zaitun.hotels.com](http://www.zaitun.hotels.com); Jl Pejanggik 41; standard/superior/deluxe 225,000/235,000/400,000Rp) In the thick of Cakra's commercial district, this minimall atrium hotel isn't fabulous, but it has new, recently remodelled rooms.

**Hotel Sahid Legi** (☎ 636 282; [sahid@mataram.wasantara.net.id](mailto:sahid@mataram.wasantara.net.id); Jl Sriwijaya 81; r/deluxe 365,000/580,000Rp; ♿ ♿) Once Mataram's grand dame of business hotels, thanks to the blend of modern and Indonesian design influences, three restaurants, international TV and a circular pool. But the halls are dark and even the deluxe rooms can be musty.

**ourpick Hotel Lombok Raya** (☎ 632 305; [lora@mataram.wasantara.net.id](mailto:lora@mataram.wasantara.net.id); Jl Panca Usaha 11; s/d from 390,000/525,000Rp, plus 21% tax; ♿ ♿) This well-located hotel has spacious, comfortable rooms with balconies and all the mod cons including a terrific spa.

## Eating

You'll find Western fast-food outlets in Mataram Mall.

**Rumah Makan Dirgahayu** (☎ 637 559; Jl Cilinaya 19; rice dishes from 7000Rp, seafood from 25,000Rp) A popular Makassar-style place opposite the mall, with gurgling fountains and twirling ceiling fans.

**ourpick Bakmi Raos** (Jl Panca Usaha); dishes 9000-20,000Rp) An authentic yet modern Indonesian noodle-and-soup joint behind the mall that attracts a steady stream of Mataram's hip, young and beautiful.

**Aroma** (Jl Pejanggik; meals from 15,000Rp) Popular among Mataram's Chinese Indonesian families, this modern, spotless Chinese seafood restaurant serves an outstanding fried gourami (35,000Rp) accompanied by a fiery sweet chilli sauce.

**Papillon** (☎ 632 308; Jl Cilinaya 1; dishes 19,000-45,000Rp) An upstart restaurant off the mall, with lamp-lit tables, red vinyl booths and an international menu.

**Lesehan Taman Sari** (☎ 629 909; Mataram Mall; meals 25,000Rp) Attached to the mall, this place wins with ambience and multicourse, traditional Sasak meals served on banana leaves and enjoyed in *berugas* (raised thatched huts without walls).

## Shopping

For handicrafts try the outlets on Jl Raya Senggigi, which heads north from Ampenan.

**Mataram Mall** (Jl Selaparang; ☎ 7am-7pm) A multi-storey shopping mall with a supermarket, electronics and clothes stores as well as food stalls.

**Traffic** (☎ 0819 1792 8974; Jl Pejanggik; ☎ 9am-9.30pm) Get your hipster, skate-punk fashion here.

**Rinjani Handwoven** (☎ 633 169; Jl Pejanggik 44) This is where you can see weavers in action and buy their work.

**Pasar Bertais** (☎ 7am-5pm) A great place to get localised after you've overdosed on the *bule* circuit. There are no tourists at this market near the Mandalika bus terminal, but they have got everything else: fruit and veggies, fish (fresh and dried), baskets full of colourful, aromatic spices and grains, freshly butchered beef, palm sugar, pungent bricks of shrimp paste and cheaper handicrafts than you will find anywhere else in West Lombok.

## Getting There & Away

### BUS & BEMO

The sprawling, dusty Mandalika bus station in Bertais is the main bus and bemo terminal for the entire island and also for long-distance buses via ferry to Sumbawa, Bali and Java.

The terminal is fairly chaotic, so be sure to keep a level head to avoid the 'help' of the commission-happy touts. Long-distance buses leave from behind the main terminal building, while bemos and smaller buses leave from one of two car parks on either side.

Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan has the bemo to Bertais (2000Rp) and services to Senggigi (4000Rp).

### TOURIST SHUTTLE BUS

Perama (☎ 635 928; www.peramatour.com; Jl Pejanggalik 66) operates shuttle buses to popular destinations in Lombok (including Bangsal, Senggigi and Kuta) and Bali.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM AIRPORT

Lombok's Selaparang Airport is on the north side of the city, 5km from Cakra. A taxi desk sells prepaid tickets: 30,000Rp to anywhere in Mataram, 85,000Rp to Senggigi, 125,000Rp to Bangsal and Lembar, 250,000Rp to Kuta, 400,000Rp to Senaru. Alternatively, walk out of the airport to Jl Adi Sucipto and take Bemo 7 to Ampenan.

### BEMO

Mataram is *very* spread out. Yellow bemos shuttle between Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan and Mandalika terminal in Bertais (10km away) along the two main thoroughfares. Bemo terminals are good places to organise a charter trip. Outside the Cakranegara market (corner of Jl Hasanuddin and Jl Selaparang) there is a handy bemo stop for services to Bertais, Ampenan, Sweta and Lembar. The standard fare is 2000Rp, regardless of the distance.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Most hotels can arrange chauffeured car hire (400,000Rp to 525,000Rp per day), but you'll find a better deal in Senggigi. Self-drivers should try **Trac Astra Rent-a-Car** (☎ 626 363; Jl Adi Sucipto 5, Rembiga Mataram; per day with driver/self-drive 525,000/360,000Rp).

## AROUND MATARAM

The gorgeous villages, rice fields and temples east of Mataram are reminiscent of some of Bali's best landscapes. You can easily visit all of the following places in half a day with your own transport.

### Pura Lingsar

This large **temple compound** (admission by donation; ☎ 7am-6pm) is the holiest in Lombok. Built in 1714 by King Anak Agung Ngurah, and nestled beautifully in the lush rice fields, it's multid denominational, with a temple for Balinese Hindus (Pura Gaduh) and one for followers of Lombok's mystical take on Islam, the Wektu Telu religion.

Pura Gaduh has four shrines: one orientated to Gunung Rinjani (seat of the gods on Lombok), one to Gunung Agung (seat of the gods in Bali) and a double shrine representing the union between the two islands.

The Wektu Telu temple is noted for its enclosed pond devoted to Lord Vishnu, and the holy eels, which can be enticed from their lair with hard-boiled eggs (available at stalls outside). It's considered good luck to feed them. You will be expected to rent a sash and/or sarong (or bring your own) to enter the temple.

A huge ritual battle, **Perang Topat**, is held here every year in November or December (the exact date depends on the lunar month). After a costumed parade, Hindus and Wektu pelt each other with *ketupat* (sticky rice in coconut leaves).

Pura Lingsar is 9km northeast of Mandalika. Take a bemo from the terminal to Narmada, and another to Lingsar. Ask to be dropped off near the entrance to the temple complex.

### Pura Suranadi

Set amid gorgeous countryside, holy **Pura Suranadi** (admission by donation; ☎ 7.30am-6pm) is worth a visit for its lovely gardens, which have a bubbling, icy natural spring and restored baths with ornate Balinese carvings (plus the obligatory holy eels).

Just opposite Pura Suranadi market, an entrance leads to **Hutan Wisata Suranadi** (admission 1000Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm), a quiet forest sanctuary good for short hikes and birdwatching.

The temple is 6km northwest of Narmada and served by frequent public bemos. Failing that, charter one.

## Sesaot & Around

Some 4km northeast of Pura Suranadi is Sesaot, a charming market town with an ice-cold, holy river that snakes from Gunung Rinjani into the forest. There are some gorgeous picnic spots and swimming holes here. Regular transport connects Narmada with Sesaot, and bites are available at the warungs along the main street.

Further east, **Air Nyet** is another pretty village with more options for swimming and picnics. Ask for directions to the unsigned turn-off in the middle of Sesaot. The bridge and road to Air Nyet are rough, but it's a lovely stroll (about 3km) from Sesaot.

## Gunung Pengsong

This hilltop **temple** (admission by donation; ☎ 7am–6pm), 9km south of Mataram, has spectacular views across undulating rice fields towards distant volcanoes and the sea. Japanese soldiers hid here towards the end of WWII, and cannon remnants can be found, as well as plenty of playful monkeys.

Once a year, in March or April, a buffalo is taken up the steep slope and sacrificed to give thanks for a good harvest. The **Desa Bersih Festival** also occurs here at harvest time – houses and gardens are cleaned, fences whitewashed and roads and paths repaired. Once part of a ritual to rid the village of evil spirits, it's now held in honour of the rice goddess, Dewi Sri.

It's a 15-minute walk up to the temple top from the entrance. You'll need your own wheels to get here.

## Banyumulek

This is one of the two main **pottery centres** on Lombok, specialising in pots with a woven fibre covering, traditional urns and water flasks. It's close to the city – head south of Sweta on the main road to Lembar. After 6km veer right to Banyumulek.

## LEMBAR & THE SOUTHWESTERN PENINSULA

### Lembar

☎ 0370

Lembar is West Lombok's main port for ferries, tankers and Peln liners. It's also a haven for would-be hustlers (touts even try and open your car door as they peddle bus tickets for Bali's tourist centres), but the setting – think azure inlets sheltered by jungled peninsulas – makes up for it. That doesn't mean you'll want

to crash here, and since bus connections to Mataram and Senggigi are abundant, you won't have to. If you do manage to get stuck, or need a bite, the clean, hospitable **Losmen Tidar** (☎ 681 444; Jl Raya Pelabuhan; r from 50,000Rp, cottages from 100,000Rp, all incl breakfast) 1km north of the ferry port, is an excellent deal. They serve up some mean Javanese food.

Plenty of bemos shuttle between Lembar and the Mandalika terminal in Bertais (3500Rp), or you can catch one at the market stop in Cakra (15,000Rp). See p481 for details on the ferries and boats between Bali and Lembar. Taxis cost 60,000Rp to Mataram and 100,000Rp to Senggigi.

## Southwestern Peninsula

☎ 0370

The jagged coastline west of Sekotong is blessed with deserted white-sand beaches, turquoise coves and tranquil offshore islands, which is why it has long been hyped as Lombok's next big tourist destination. And while vacation villas are beginning to sprout, it remains laid-back and pristine with few services for visitors. The narrow, paved road hugs the coast until Selegang, where a dirt track continues west past Bangko Bangko to Tanjung Desert (Desert Point), one of Asia's legendary 'lefts'. Waves are finicky, and the break can go from flat glass to cranking overhead barrels in an hour.

A few of the palm-dappled offshore islands with silky beaches and fine snorkelling are inhabited. Gili Nangu and Gili Gede both have accommodation. Gede is also home to Bugis craftsman who build gorgeous wooden schooners.

## SLEEPING & EATING

Rooms and restaurants are slim on the ground, and some close in the rainy season. The **Sundancer Beach Resort** ([www.sundancer.com](http://www.sundancer.com)) in Pelangan has been promising to bring upmarket, four-star sophistication to the peninsula for years now. Yet this massive compound of high-end modern apartments connected by pebbled footpaths is still not finished. At the time of writing they were due to open in 2010.

## Mainland

The following places are listed in the order you'll find them as you head southwest from Sekotong.

**Dolphins Lodge** (☎ 0819 1607 6770; Jl Raya Taun, Taun; r 500,000Rp) Breezy two-storey thatched wooden cabanas have queen beds, satellite TV, DVD players and fine terraces overlooking the sea. For 200,000Rp they'll shuttle you to Gili Nanggu.

**Bola Bola Paradis** (☎ 078 616 2156; www.bolabolaparas.com; Jl Raya Palangan Sekotong; r 300,000-400,000Rp; 🏠) Just west of Pelangan, this nice midranger has superclean sweet octagonal bungalows, comfortable air-con rooms with tiled floors and private patios, and a funky restaurant/lounge (mains 25,000Rp to 75,000Rp) on grassy palm-shaded grounds that bleed into the sand.

**Nirvana Roemah Air** (☎ 660 8060; www.floatingvilla.com; Jl Raya Medang, Sekotong Barat; villas incl airport transfers US\$100-125; 🏠) Enjoy secluded, floating luxury in the mangroves, 2km west of Sekotong. Book via the internet for substantial low season discounts.

**Hotel Aman Gati** (☎ 0817 5720 6699; Jl Raya Medang, Sekotong Barat; bungalows 250,000Rp; 🏠) Things get increasingly isolated on this end of Lombok, which makes these basic yet cosy bungalows – the last of their kind before the surf break – an oasis for wave hunters. Food is so-so at best, but views are lovely, and their boat shuttles surfers to the waves and back (300,000Rp, 30 minutes).

## Islands

**Secret Island Resort** (☎ 0818 0376 2001; www.secretislandresort.com; r 200,000Rp, bungalows 250,000Rp, 2-bed villas 1,000,000Rp; 🏠) Southwest Lombok's best island accommodation comes with fine sea or mountain views. The restaurant grills up dynamite seafood, and kayak, hiking, snorkelling and dive trips can be arranged. Call ahead for airport pick-up and/or free boat transfer from Pantai Tembowong.

**Gili Nanggu Cottages** (☎ 623 783; www.gilinandgu.com; cottages s/d 240,000/250,000Rp, bungalows 350,000Rp; 🏠) Nobody regrets crossing the Lembar channel to these rustic two-storey *lumbung* (rice barn) cottages just off the beach. Meals are 16,000Rp to 38,000Rp.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bemos buzz between Lembar and Pelangan (1¼ hours, every 30 minutes) via Sekotong (25 minutes). West of Pelangan transport is less regular, but the route is still served by infrequent bemos until Selegang.

To reach Gili Nanggu, a return charter on a *prahu* (outrigger fishing boat) from Taun costs

250,000Rp. Public boats connect Tembowong with Gili Gede and Gili Rengit (both 8000Rp one-way), leaving from Putri Doyong losmen, 2km north of Pelangan. Alternatively, you can charter boats for 60,000Rp one-way or arrange a day trip around the islands for 250,000Rp.

## SENGGIGI

☎ 0370

Lombok's original tourist town rambles along a series of sweeping bays and wide beaches dappled in coconut palms. Blood-red views of Bali's Gunung Agung are revealed at sunset when locals congregate on the cliffs and watch yet another day turn to night. As darkness descends, the bright lanterns of the local fishing fleet glint like fallen stars against the black sea.

There are sweet, inexpensive guest houses, a few luxury hotels and dozens of restaurants and bars. Senggigi has everything, save a steady flow of tourists. However, with Lombok's growing popularity, that appears to be changing. And even if it is a relative ghost town when you roll through, the sheer beauty of the place is still worth staying a night or two.

## Orientation

The Senggigi area spans 10km of coastal road. Most shops, facilities and hotels are on the main road, Jl Raya Senggigi, which starts about 6km north of Ampenan. Mangsit, 5km north of the main strip, has some top-end properties. Street numbers are not used in Senggigi.

## Information

### EMERGENCY

**Police station** (☎ 110) Next to the Pasar Seni.

**Senggigi Medical Clinic** (☎ 693 856; 🕒 8am-7pm)

Based at the Senggigi Beach Hotel.

**Tourist Police** (☎ 632 733)

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

Internet cafes on the main strip also double as wartel.

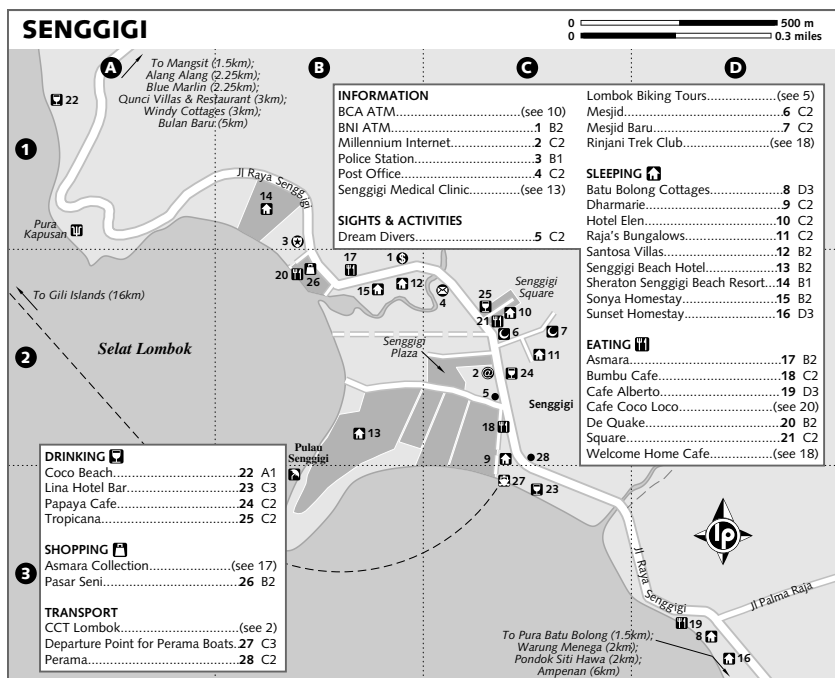
**Millennium Internet** (☎ 693 860; Jl Raya Senggigi; per min 500Rp; 🕒 24hr)

## MONEY

Bank Central Asia (BCA) and Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI) on Jl Raya Senggigi both have ATMs and will exchange cash and travellers cheques.

## POST

**Post office** (Jl Raya Senggigi; 🕒 8am-6pm)



## Sights

It's not the grandest, but **Pura Batu Bolong** (admission by donation; ☎ 7am-7pm) is Lombok's sweetest Hindu temple. Join an ever-welcoming Balinese community as they leave offerings at the 14 altars and pagodas that tumble down a rocky volcanic outcropping into the foaming sea about 2km south of central Senggigi. The rock underneath the temple has a natural hole, hence the name (*batu bolong* literally means 'rock with hole'). The temple, orientated towards Gunung Agung, is a perfect sunset spot.

## Activities

### SNORKELLING & DIVING

There's reasonable snorkelling off the point in Senggigi, in the sheltered bay around the headland, and in front of Windy Cottages, a few kilometres north of the town. You can rent snorkelling gear (25,000Rp per day) along the beach near Senggigi Beach Hotel.

Diving trips from Senggigi normally visit the Gili Islands, so consider basing yourself there. The following are professional dive centres:

**Blue Marlin** (☎ 0812 376 6496; [www.bluemarlinlive.com](http://www.bluemarlinlive.com); Holiday Resort Lombok; Alang Alang; Senggigi Beach Hotel)

**Dream Divers** (☎ 692 047; [www.dreamdivers.com](http://www.dreamdivers.com); Jl Raya Senggigi)

### BIKING & HIKING

**Lombok Biking Tours** (☎ 660 5792; Jl Raya Senggigi; day excursions per person from 200,000Rp) offers guided rides through the rural Sekotong region and the countryside around Lingsar and Suranadi.

Drop by the well-informed **Rinjani Trek Club** (☎ 693 202; [rtc.senggigi@gmail.com](mailto:rtc.senggigi@gmail.com); Jl Raya Senggigi) if you're interested in climbing the sacred volcano.

### Sleeping

Senggigi has no shortage of excellent accommodation spread up and down the coastal road. Outside peak times discounts of up to 50% are common.

### BUDGET

**Sonya Homestay** (☎ 0813 3989 9878; Jl Raya Senggigi; d from 50,000Rp) A shady family-run enclave of six rooms with nice patios and bright pink

beds. Nathan, the owner, offers driving tours of Mataram and the surrounding area.

**Hotel Elen** (☎ 693 077; Jl Raya Senggigi; d from 55,000Rp; 🍷) Elen is the long-time backpackers choice. Rooms are basic, but those facing the waterfall fountain and koi pond come with spacious tiled patios that catch the ocean breeze.

**Pondok Siti Hawa** (☎ 693 414; Jl Raya Senggigi; s/d 60,000/100,000Rp) This isn't a homestay, it's a novelty act, starring an eccentric European expat and his family, a captive monkey, and ramshackle bamboo cottages set on one of the most beautiful beaches in Senggigi.

**Raja's Bungalows** (☎ 0812 377 0138; d 85,000Rp) Rooms are big, clean and tastefully decorated with high ceilings, gecko sculptures on the walls and outdoor bathrooms. But it's well within range of the mosque's loudspeaker and 300m from the sand.

**Windy Cottages** (☎ 693 191; Mangsit; cottages with cold/hot water 110,000/150,000Rp, r 140,000Rp; 🍷) These attractive thatched cottages with sea views have been popular for years. There's decent snorkelling offshore.

**Batu Bolong Cottages** (☎ 693 065; Jl Raya Senggigi; s/d 150,000/300,000Rp; 🍷) Bamboo is the operative term at this charming bungalow-style hotel set on both sides of the road south of the centre. Beachfront rooms open onto a manicured lawn that fades into white sand.

**Bulan Baru** (☎ 693 786; Mangsit; r 180,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) Set in a lovely garden and a short walk from a fine sandy beach, this welcoming hotel has spacious, well-furnished rooms, all with mini-bar, air-con and hot-water bathrooms. No children allowed.

## MIDRANGE

**our pick** **Sunset Homestay** (☎ 692 020; www.sunsethouse-lombok.com; r 275,000/400,000Rp; 🍷) The six tastefully simple bungalows on a quiet stretch of shore come with all the mod cons and homey touches.

**Dharmarie** (☎ 693 050; www.dharmarie.com; r 300,000Rp; 🍷) These comfortable sea-view cottages with French doors and indoor/outdoor bathrooms are a great value. Breakfast is included.

**Santosa Villas** (☎ 693 090; www.santosavillas.com; standard/superior/deluxe/villa 560,000/650,000/1,500,000/3,000,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) The recently renovated and rebranded Santosa resort has accommodation ranging from midrange to luxury villas on a nice beach and smack in the centre of the Senggigi strip.

## TOP END

**Sheraton Senggigi Beach Resort** (☎ 693 333; www.sheraton.com; r from 775,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) Just north of the centre, the Sheraton has been, until relatively recently, Senggigi's top resort. And although the newer, hipper spots have stolen some of its thunder, rooms still come with terraces or balconies. There's a palm-fringed swimming pool and a kids' pool, two restaurants and a well-regarded spa and health club. Families love it.

**Senggigi Beach Hotel** (☎ 693 210; www.senggigi.beach.aerowisata.com; r US\$70, beach bungalows US\$80, plus 21% tax; 🍷 🍷) Detached bungalows surrounded by a lush garden and set back from the beach. The complex includes a large pool situated close to shore, a spa and tennis courts.

**Qunci Villas** (☎ 693 800; www.quncivillas.com; Mangsit; r with garden/ocean view US\$70/95, plus 21% tax; 🍷 🍷) Senggigi's most stylish hotel is also a great deal. Rooms have indoor and outdoor living areas and bathroom. The pool bar and tasty restaurant are outfitted with cool block-wood furnishings.

**Alang Alang** (☎ 693 518; www.alang-alang-villas.com; Mangsit; s/d bungalows US\$95/100; 🍷 🍷) If you're looking for more of a classic Indonesian-themed hotel, you'll like it here. The 20 rooms come with teak furnishings and are set in a lush, blooming garden. The small pool overlooks a thin sliver of beach where fishermen cast into the waves.

## Eating

Central Senggigi has far more restaurants than necessary, varying from local warungs to contemporary fine dining. Most offer free transport for evening diners – phone for a ride. For authentic Indonesian street food, head to the hillside warung on the route north to Mangsit where sate sizzles, pots of noodles bubble and corn cobs roast at dusk.

**Asmara** (☎ 693 619; www.asmara-group.com; mains 18,000-75,000Rp; 🍷) An ideal family choice, this place spans the culinary globe from tuna carpaccio to Wiener schnitzel to Lombok's own *sate pusu* (minced-meat or fish sate). It also has a playground and kids menu.

**De Quake** (☎ 693 694; mains from 23,000Rp; 🍷 10am-10pm) Like The Square, this new spot blends pan-Asian cuisine with ambitious high design. It's right on the beach behind the art market.



**Cafe Coco Loco** (☎ 693 396; mains from 23,000Rp) Munch tempura, curries and fresh fish Lombok-style at this popular new cafe in the art market.

**Welcome Home Cafe** (☎ 693 833; Jl Raya Senggigi; mains 30,000Rp) Recalls that Jimmy Buffet feeling, with a fantastic knotted-wood bar, bamboo furniture, coral floors and fresh fish at reasonable prices.

**Cafe Alberto** (☎ 693 039; mains from 30,000Rp; ☎ 11am-11pm) Eat beachfront at this popular pizzeria on the sand.

**The Square** (☎ 693 688; Senggigi Square; mains 35,000Rp; ☎ 11am-11pm) Uber-hip design, with lounge seating, a blue-lit, open dining room and verandah sea views. Try the wok-tossed calamari with baby bok choy.

**Bumbu Cafe** (Jl Raya Senggigi; mains 35,000Rp) Popular choice for tasty pan-Asian fare. The owner says 'We always full!' – it's no coincidence.

**ourpick Warung Manega** (Jl Raya Senggigi; meals 75,000-250,000Rp; ☎ 11am-11pm) If you fled Bali before experiencing the spectacular Jimbaran fish grills, you can make up for it at this sister restaurant to one of Jimbaran's finest. Choose from a fresh daily catch of barracuda, squid, snapper, grouper, lobster, tuna and prawns – all of which are grilled over smouldering coconut husks and served on candlelit tables in the sand.

## Drinking & Entertainment

Senggigi's nocturnal activity is mellow mid-week with a mild spike on weekends. It revolves around a handful of bars with live music, a disco or two, and a rather conspicuous karaoke bar.

**ourpick Coco Beach** (☎ 0817 578 0055; Pantai 2 Kerandangan, Jl Raya Senggigi; ☎ noon-10pm) Rent comfortable beachside bamboo *beruga* for sunset drinks where the coconut groves meet the sand north of Senggigi. Sip from a bar that serves traditional *jamu* tonics, fresh organic juices and tropical cocktails. Very popular with the moneyed Mataram set.

**Lina Hotel Bar** (beer small/large 10,000/13,000Rp) Lina's seafront deck is another great spot for a sundowner. Happy hour starts at 4pm and ends an hour after dusk.

**Papaya Cafe** (☎ 693 136; Jl Raya Senggigi) The decor is slick, with exposed stonewalls, rattan furniture and evocative Asmat art from Papua. There's a nice selection of liquor, and they have a tight house band that rocks.

**Tropicana** (☎ 693 432; www.tropicalombok.com; admission 25,000Rp) Your cliché, cheeseball disco with DJs spinning Western pop, rock and a few Indo hits plus live bands. Be warned, you may be asked to participate in 'Mr & Miss Tropicana' contests.

## Shopping

Senggigi's shops are generally not well patronised. The **Pasar Seni** (Art Market; Jl Raya Senggigi) has some cheap handicraft stalls, but most of the wares here aren't worth your time. The **Asmara Collection** (☎ 693 619; Jl Raya Senggigi; ☎ 8am-11pm), on the other hand, is sensational. Here you will find authentic, hand-woven Lombok textiles, intense tribal masks, carved hair combs and a lovely collection of jewellery.

## Getting There & Away

### BOAT

**Perama** (☎ 693 007; Jl Raya Senggigi) operates a daily boat service from Padangbai, Bali to Senggigi (p481; 300,000Rp, six hours), and from Senggigi to the Gili Islands (70,000Rp to 100,000Rp, one to 1½ hours), which enables you to avoid Bangsal. Gili dive schools (p493) also operate speedboat shuttles (from 120,000Rp per person) most days – contact them in advance.

### BUS

Regular bemos travel between Senggigi and Ampenan's Kebon Roek terminal (4000Rp, 40 minutes). Wave them down on the main drag. Headed to the Gilis? Organise a group and charter a bemo to Bangsal harbour (60,000Rp).

Perama has a few tourist shuttle bus/boat services daily between Senggigi and Kuta (Bali), Denpasar airport (150,000Rp), Ubud (150,000Rp) and other Lombok destinations, including Kuta (185,000Rp).

## Getting Around

If you stay within walking distance of the main drag, you won't need wheels. Motorbikes are readily available for hire in Senggigi and are the easiest way to get around. They rent for 35,000Rp per day plus petrol. Motorcycles go for 60,000Rp. Ask about rental at your hotel, or call Dino at **CCT Lombok** (☎ 668 1864, 0819 1715 9365). He also rents Kijangs (self-drive 300,000Rp, with driver 375,000Rp per day).

## GILI ISLANDS

☎ 0370

For decades, travellers have made the hop from Bali for a dip in the turquoise-tinted, bathtub-warm waters of the tiny, irresistible Gili Islands, and stayed longer than they anticipated. Perhaps it's the deep-water coral reefs teeming with sharks, rays and reasonably friendly turtles? Maybe it's the serenity that comes with no motorised traffic? Or it could be the beachfront bungalows, long stretches of white sand and the friendly locals. Each of these pearls, located just off the northwestern tip of Lombok, has its own unique character, but they have one thing in common. They are all hard to leave.

Gili Air is the closest to the mainland, with plenty of stylish bungalows dotted among the palms. Mellow Gili Meno, the middle island, is the smallest, quietest, and makes for a wonderful chilled-out retreat.

Gili Trawangan, the furthest out, has been tagged as the 'party island'. And with three weekly parties and a groovy collection of beach bars, you can get loose here. But Trawangan is growing up, with stylish accommodation (including a number of inland vacation villas), a fun expat community and outstanding dining.

Bring ample rupiah with you to the islands – enough for a few extra days, at least. Though each island has shops and hotels that will change money and arrange cash advances from credit and debit cards, rates are low and commissions are high. It's also not uncommon for the ATM on Gili Trawangan to malfunction.

### Dangers & Annoyances

There are no police on the Gilis. Report theft to the island *kepala desa* (village head) immediately. They will stop all boats heading out and search passengers before they can leave the island. If you need help locating them or need someone to help you translate, the dive schools are a good point of contact. If you are on Gili Trawangan, notify Satgas, the community organisation that runs island affairs.

#### GILI ISLANDS CURRENTS: WARNING

The currents between the Gili Islands are very strong. Do not attempt to swim between the islands. People do get sucked out to sea.

Satgas uses its community contacts to resolve problems or track down stolen property with a minimum of fuss.

Incidents are very rare, but some foreign women have experienced sexual harassment and even assault while on the Gilis – it's best to walk home in pairs to the dark corners of the islands.

Jellyfish are common when strong winds blow from the mainland. Big ones leave a painful rash.

### Getting There & Away

The relatively new fast boats from Bali have fed the recent tourist boom. Seats sell out during July and August so be sure to book ahead. See p481 for price and contact details for these boat services.

There's also a cheaper direct service from Bali. Perama buses and their slow boat head to the Gilis via Padangbai (see p334) and Senggigi. Or you can fly to Mataram and make arrangements from there.

Coming from other parts of Lombok you can travel via Senggigi; via the public boats that leave from Bangsal (the cheapest route), you can charter your own boat from Bangsal (195,000Rp) or book passage on a private speedboat. Blue Marlin and Manta Dive (p500) on Gili Trawangan can arrange transfers (600,000Rp for up to three people). Speedboats use the Teluk Nare harbour south of Bangsal.

Coming by public transport, catch a bus or bemo to Pemenang, from where it's 1km by *cidomo* (3000Rp) to Bangsal Harbour. Bangsal is beyond annoying (see boxed text, opposite). The touts raise blood pressure for a living, and you should sooner ignore than trust them. Boat tickets are sold at the Koperasi harbour office on the beach. Public boats run roughly from 8am to 5pm, but don't leave until full (about 18 people). One-way fares at the time of research were 8000Rp to Gili Air, 9000Rp to Gili Meno and 10,000Rp to Gili Trawangan. Special charters can also be organised in Bangsal.

Boats pull up on the beach when they get to the Gilis. You'll have to wade ashore with your luggage.

### Getting Around BOAT

There's a twice-daily island-hopping boat service that loops between all three islands (20,000Rp to 23,000Rp). The morning boat leaves Air at 8.30am, stopping on Meno at

## BANGSAL GAUNTLET

If you arrive to the principal Gili Islands port by bus, bemo or taxi, you will be dropped off at the Bangsal terminal – nearly a kilometre from the harbour, from which point irrepressible touts will hustle you non-stop. Do not buy a ticket from them. There is but one official Bangsal Harbour ticket office; it is on the beach left of the dirt road, and arranges all local boat transport – shuttle, public and chartered – to the Gilis. Buy a ticket elsewhere and you're getting played. You could also avoid Bangsal altogether by booking a speedboat transfer from Senggigi via one of the dive schools, taking one of the new speedboat services direct from Bali (the best choice), or by travelling with Perama from Bali or Mataram, Kuta, Lombok or Senggigi.

8.45am, Trawangan at 9.30am, Meno again at 9.45am and returning to Air at 9.45am. The afternoon boat leaves Air at 3pm, Meno at 3.15pm, Trawangan at 3.30pm, Meno at 4.15pm and gets back to Air at 4.30pm. Check the latest timetable at the islands' dock. You can also charter your own island-hopping boat (170,000Rp to 195,000Rp).

## CIDOMO

The Gilis are flat and easy enough to get around by foot or bicycle (p494). A torch (flashlight) is useful at night. You can buy one at local shops for around 25,000Rp. Hiring a *cidomo* for a clip-clop around an island is a great way to explore; a short trip costs between 20,000Rp and 35,000Rp. You'll pay 50,000Rp or more for a two-hour jaunt.

## Gili Air

pop 1800

Closest to Lombok, Gili Air falls between Trawangan's sophistication and less-is-more Meno. It's a rural island, and like the other two was settled by Sasak and Bugis farmers who planted the lovely coconut groves that dominate the flat interior and cloak some of the better bungalows. On clear mornings you'll have stunning views of both Gunung Rinjani and Bali's Gunung Agung. The white-sand beaches are thin yet beautiful, lapped by turquoise water and sprinkled with laid-back beach bars and cafes. Traditionally, families have made Gili Air their offshore Lombok base, but Gili Trawangan has been gobbling up that market, so these days it's mostly couples lazing in the sun. Although it feels delightfully empty at times, Air is still the most populous of the Gili Islands.

## ORIENTATION

The main harbour is located at the southern end of the island, near the jetty; the **Koperasi**

(☎ 8am-5.30pm) harbour office has a hut here with public boat prices marked clearly outside. Almost all accommodation and restaurants are on the east and south coasts, which have the best swimming beaches. A network of sand and dirt tracks criss-cross the island, but can get quite confusing. Keep it simple and stick to the coastal path around the island – it's a gorgeous 90-minute walk.

## INFORMATION

There's a small **Perama** (☎ 637 816) office next to the Gili Indah Hotel. **Gecko Cafe** (per min 500Rp; ☎ 8am-9pm) has the best web connection on the island. **Ozzy's Shop** (☎ 622 179; ☎ 8am-8pm), about halfway up the east coast, has a wartel and will change money, as will Hotel Gili Air, but exchange rates are poor. Blue Marlin charges 7% for cash advances on credit cards. There's a **medical clinic** (☎ 8am-6pm) in the village.

## ACTIVITIES

### Snorkelling & Diving

There's great **snorkelling** all along the east-coast reef with more than its share of colourful fish. Gear can be hired from **Ozzy's Shop** and a number of beach bars for 20,000Rp a day. Check with dive centres about currents, as they can be extremely strong.

**Scuba diving** is excellent throughout the Gilis (see boxed text, p497). Gili Air has three established dive schools, **Blue Marlin Dive Centre** (☎ 634 387, 0812 377 0288; www.bluemarlindive.com), **Dream Divers** (☎ 634 547; www.dreamdivers.com), and **Manta Dive** (☎ 0813 5305 0462, 0813 3778 9047; www.manta-dive.com), which just opened its Gili Air branch on the east coast; plus one radical upstart, **7 Seas Dive Center** (☎ 0813 3877 7144; www.diveindonesia.com), which was breaking ground at research time, offering scooter diving, tech- and free-diving instruction, and has ambitious plans to cater scuba diving to the disabled.

## Surfing

Directly off the southern tip of the island there's a long, peeling right-hand break that can get big. The dive schools will help you find a board.

## Cycling

Ozzy's Shop has bikes for hire for 25,000Rp a day. Pedalling on Gili Air can be fun. You'll have to walk it when you inevitably land in deep sand, and you're sure to roll into villagers' back yards if you explore the inland trails, but isn't that kind of accidental mingling the reason why you're here?

## SLEEPING

Most places are spread up and down the east coast. Prices quoted are high-season rates – expect substantial discounts in low season. The price categories below reflect those found on both the Gilis and Bali. See p817 for details.

## Budget

**Gili Air Santay** (☎ 0818 0375 8695, 0819 1599 3782; www.gili-air-santay.com; d 80,000–180,000Rp) Set back from the beach in a quiet coconut grove, these spacious bamboo-and-timber huts are a good budget choice. The shoreside restaurant serves authentic Thai food (see opposite).

**Gusung Indah** (☎ 0812 378 9054; bungalows 100,000–150,000Rp) Nice bungalows, most with a sea view, served with a touch of attitude by the man in charge.

**Abdi Fantastik** (☎ 636 421; r 150,000Rp) Family-owned bungalows strung with hammocks, steps from the sea.

**Mawar Bungalows** (☎ 0813 6225 3995; bungalows 130,000–220,000Rp) Basic, thatched bungalows set 30m from the sea in the coconut grove. The new ones have Western-style toilets. All have hammocks and come with breakfast in a stylish dining area. They serve family dinners for guests and staff every night (50,000Rp per person).

**Resota Bungalows** (☎ 0818 0571 5769; bungalows 250,000Rp) Nestled in the coconut palms near the harbour, is this charming bungalow property. They feel new, and come with a stocked minibar and inviting hammocks.

**Sunrise Hotel** (☎ 642 370; bungalows 250,000–350,000Rp) Charming, if a bit aged. These two-storey thatched bungalows have outdoor living rooms and are set back from the beach.

**Sandy Cottages** (☎ 0812 378 9832; bungalows 250,000–400,000Rp; ♿) New stone and low-slung thatched bungalows. They offer great low-season deals.

## INFORMATION

Gecko Cafe.....	1	A2
Koperasi.....	2	A2
Medical Clinic.....	3	A2
Ozzy's Shop.....	4	B1
Perama.....	5	A2

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

7 Seas Dive Center.....	6	A2
Blue Marlin Dive Centre.....	7	B1
Dream Divers.....	8	B2
Manta Dive.....	9	B2

## SLEEPING

Abdi Fantastik.....	10	B1
Corner Bungalows.....	11	B2
Gili Air Santay.....	12	B2
Gusung Indah.....	13	B1
Manta Dive.....	(see 9)	
Mawar Bungalows.....	14	B2
Resota Bungalows.....	15	A2
Sandy Cottages.....	16	B1
Sejuk Cottages.....	17	B1
Sunrise Hotel.....	18	B2
Villa Karang.....	19	A2

## EATING

Ali Baba.....	20	B1
Gusung Indah.....	(see 13)	
Harmony Cafe.....	21	A1
Hikmah's.....	22	B2
Munchies.....	23	B2
Santay.....	(see 12)	
Tami's.....	24	B2
Wiwin Cafe.....	25	B2

## DRINKING

Blue Bar.....	26	B2
Chill Out Bar.....	27	B2
Legend Pub.....	28	A1
Zipp Bar.....	29	B2



## Midrange

**Corner Bungalows** (☎ 0819 1722 9543; bungalows 350,000Rp) Owned by a welcoming local family, these new (at the time of research) bamboo bungalows all have hammocks slung over a varnished deck.

**Manta Dive** (☎ 0813 5305 0462, 0813 3778 9047; www.manta-dive.com; bungalows US\$50-65; 🍷 🍷) Manta are the innovators of the Zen mod-hut motif that has been replicated throughout the Gilis. These were brand new at research time with arched roofs, minimalist interiors, decks and outdoor baths.

**our pick Sejuk Cottages** (☎ 636 461, 0813 3953 5387; bungalows 450,000-650,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) Your experience will begin with an ice-blended latte – their welcome drink – which you'll slurp on the deck of your low-slung *lumbung* cottage or in the rooftop living room of your split-level bungalow. They all have outdoor baths, superb lighting and homey touches like hand-painted wardrobes. And they open onto a flower garden which fades into a coconut grove that sways to the sand.

**Villa Karang** (☎ 0813 3990 4440; bungalows from 500,000Rp; 🍷) This ambitious harbour resort is a mishmash of newer concrete and tile rooms and older thatched wood bungalows. For the money, it's not the best value. But it has a lovely pool area and it does book up.

## EATING

Gili Air dining isn't fancy, and service tends to be (painfully) slow, but you'll be seated cross-legged on cushions atop beachfront *berugas*, so no bitching! Most cafes serve simple Indonesian and Western dishes, and they almost all have wood-fired pizza ovens...for some unexplained reason.

**Tami's** (dishes 10,000-40,000Rp) A funky Sasak-themed cafe decorated with masks, bamboo furniture, dining platforms and shaggy new *berugas*. Try the *urap-urap* (cooked vegetables with grated, spiced coconut) and *ayam taliwang* (roasted chicken served with a peanut, tomato, chilli and lime dip). It also has a nightly fish grill.

**Ali Baba** (dishes 10,000-50,000Rp) A creative beachside warung infused with wacky coconut and seashell sculpture on a lovely rocky beach. It has the usual Indonesian, seafood and Western fare.

**Santay** (dishes 12,000-30,000Rp) The only Thai kitchen on Gili Air. Meals are served with gorgeous Rinjani views, if the Gods allow.

**Hikmah's** (baguettes 35,000-40,000Rp) Set on the island's southeast corner, it serves homemade baguettes. Choices include chicken-asparagus, smoked salmon and cream cheese, and brie with green pepper. It also rents snorkel gear for 20,000Rp per day.

**Harmony Cafe** (dishes 15,000-100,000Rp; ☎ 4-9pm) This is the island's classiest dinner spot. It's set on a bamboo pier, with pink tablecloths, ample pillows to lean into and exquisite sunset views. Come for a sundowner at happy hour (cocktails 25,000Rp) or for a full grilled fish dinner (50,000Rp to 100,000Rp).

**Wiwini Cafe** (dishes 25,000-45,000Rp) Its wood-fired pizzas smell divine and it has the most extensive veggie menu on the island.

Or try one of the following:

**Munchies** (dishes 7500-26,000Rp; ☎ noon-11pm) Serves good curries, fish and overflowing sandwiches.

**Gusung Indah** (☎ 0812 378 9054; dishes 15,000-40,000Rp) Sit under a beachfront *beruga* and feast on *opor ayam* (braised chicken in coconut milk), sandwiches or pasta.

## DRINKING

On full and dark moons the island can rock, but usually Gili Air is as mellow as Meno.

**our pick Zipp Bar** (☎ 0819 1593 5205; ☎ 7am-late) This beautiful teak bar, set on a sandy beach perfect for swimming, is the island's main hub of activity. It has an excellent booze selection, outstanding fresh-fruit cocktails and decent pub grub. It throws a beach party every full moon.

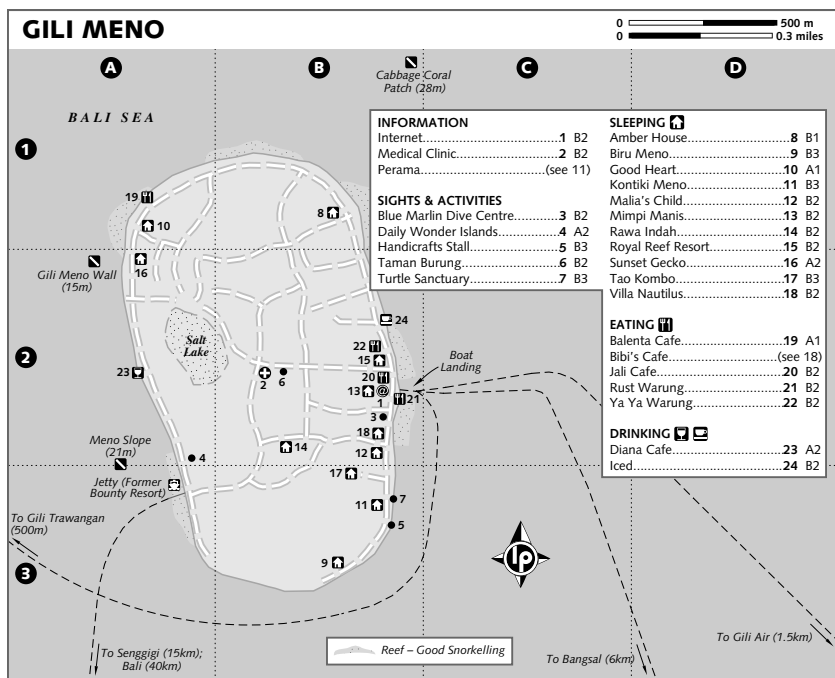
**Chill Out Bar** (☎ 11-2am) Popular with both visitors and locals, it has a good selection of spirits and cocktails.

**Blue Bar** (☎ 8.30am-late) You'll find comfy beach *berugas* and a great vibe here.

**Legend Pub** (☎ 10am-11.30pm Thu-Tue, happy hour 5-7pm, dark-moon party 10pm-2am) Your standard-issue island reggae bar. It throws monthly dark-moon parties.

## Gili Meno pop 300

Gili Meno is the smallest of the three islands and the perfect setting for your Robinson Crusoe fantasy. The beaches here are the best in the archipelago, and with a population of just 300 it's quiet day and night. Most of the accommodation is strung out along the east coast, near the widest and most picturesque beach. Inland you'll find scattered home-steads, coconut plantations and salt flats.



## INFORMATION

There are a couple of minimarkets and a wartel near the boat landing; this is also where you can get access to **internet** (per min 600Rp). Money can be exchanged at poor rates at the Gazebo Meno and Kontiki Meno bungalows. **Perama** (☎ 632 824) is based at Kontiki Meno bungalows. A resident nurse attends the medical clinic near the bird park. Doctors are on call in Mataram.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Gili Meno's 2500-sq-metre **Taman Burung** (bird park; ☎ 642 321; admission 50,000Rp; ☎ 9am-5pm) is home to 300 exotic birds from Asia and Australia, three demure kangaroos and a Komodo dragon. Birds are liberated from their cages three hours a day, to fly around an expansive atrium covered in netting.

Meno's **turtle sanctuary** ([www.gilimenoturtles.com](http://www.gilimenoturtles.com)) is a complex of kiddie pools and bathtubs on the beach, bubbling with filters and teeming with baby turtles. The cute critters are nurtured until they're strong enough to be released into the wild with a minimum of predatory risk. The sanctuary releases about 250 turtles a year.

A late afternoon stroll around tiny Meno is a must. It can be completed in an hour and is best done with a few stops for sundowners along the way. Look for the ramshackle **handicrafts stall** just south of Kontiki. Blink and you'll miss it.

## Snorkelling & Diving

There's good snorkelling off the northeast coast near Amber House, on the west coast near Good Heart and also around the former jetty of the (abandoned) Bounty resort. Gear is available for 20,000Rp per day from several places on the eastern strip. For more on snorkelling and diving, see boxed text, opposite. **Daily Wonder Islands** (☎ 0818 0361 2402; per person 235,000Rp; ☎ tours depart at 9am & 2pm) offers half-day (four hours) snorkelling tours. Price includes hotel pick-up.

**Blue Marlin Dive Centre** (☎ 639 979, 0819 1719 3285; [www.bluemarlindive.com](http://www.bluemarlindive.com)) offers fun dives and courses from Discover Scuba to Divemaster.

## SLEEPING

Price categories below reflect those found on both the Gilis and Bali. See p817 for details.

## Budget

**Tao Kombo** (☎ 0812 372 2174; tao\_kombo@yahoo.com; bungalows 100,000-300,000Rp) About 200m inland, you'll find Meno's most unique bungalow property. There are open huts with bamboo screens instead of walls, and nicer, enclosed cottages with vaulted ceilings, thatched roofs and stone floors.

**Rawa Indah** (☎ 0819 1793 8813; bungalows 150,000Rp) Basic, bamboo, thatched, palm-shaded and dangling with seashell wind chimes.

**Good Heart** (☎ 0813 3955 6976; bungalows 200,000Rp) Excellent, friendly Balinese-owned place with a row of twin-deck *lumbung*-like bungalows sporting open-air fresh-water bathrooms.

**Mimpi Manis** (☎ 642 324; r 200,000Rp) Basic bamboo bungalows set back from the beach.

**Kontiki Meno** (☎ 632 824; cottages with fan/air-con 200,000/300,000Rp; 🗺) The beach is gorgeous, the seaside wooden platforms demand sunbathing, but the cold-water, cinderblock cottages are just okay.

## UNDERWATER GILIS

The Gili Islands are a superb dive destination. Marine life is plentiful and varied. Turtles, black and white-tip reef sharks are common, and the microlife (small stuff) is excellent with seahorses, pipefish and lots of crustaceans. Around full moon, large schools of bumphead parrotfish appear to feast on coral spawns, while at other times of the year manta rays soar.

Though an El Niño-inspired bleaching damaged soft corals above 18m, the reefs are now in recovery. In front of every dive shop an electric current runs to a **Biorock reef**, which over time will evolve into a natural coral reef. This is a project of the Gili Eco Trust, a partnership that was formed between dive operators and the local community, which aims to improve the condition of the reefs and protect them in perpetuity. All divers help fund the trust by paying a one-off fee of 30,000Rp with their first dive – part of those funds go to locals who are actually paid not to fish.

The Gilis also have their share of virgin coral. **Hidden Reef**, a recently discovered site, pops with colourful life above 20m, and there's also an abundance of deep coral shelves and walls at around 30m, where the coral is, and always has been, pristine.

Safety standards are high in the Gilis despite the modest dive costs – there are no dodgy dive schools, and instructors and training are professional. Rates are fixed (no matter who you dive with) at US\$35 a dive, with discounts for packages of five dives or more. A PADI Open Water course costs US\$350, the Advanced course is US\$275, and Divemaster starts at US\$650.

Surrounded by coral reefs and with easy beach access, the Gilis offer superb snorkelling too. Masks, snorkels and fins can be hired for as little as 20,000Rp per day. On Trawangan, turtles appear on the reef right off the beach. You'll likely drift with the current, so be prepared to walk back. Around Gili Meno, the pier by the (closed) Bounty resort has prolific marine life, while over on Air, the walls off the east coast are good.

Some of the best dive sites:

**Deep Halik** This canyon-like site is ideally suited to drift diving. Black- and white-tip sharks are often seen at 28m to 30m.

**Deep Turbo** At around 30m, this site is perfect for Nitrox diving. It has impressive sea fans and leopard sharks hidden in the crevasses.

**Hans Reef** Off the northeast coast of Gili Air, and great for microlife including frogfish, ghostfish, seahorses and pipefish.

**Hidden Reef** (12-25m) Nestled between Meno and Air, and not yet flagged on most dive maps, this site has vibrant, pristine soft corals.

**Japanese Wreck** For experienced divers only (it lies at 45m), this Japanese WWII patrol boat suits Nitrox divers. You'll see prolific soft coral and lots of nudibranchs. Look out for lionfish and frogfish.

**Shark Point** (15-30m) Reef sharks and turtles are encountered regularly, along with schools of bumphead parrotfish and mantas. At shallow depths there can be a strong surge.

**Simon's Reef** (16-30m) The reef here is in excellent condition; you can see schools of trevally, and occasionally barracuda and leopard sharks.

**Sunset (Manta Point)** The sloping reef has good coral growth below 18m, including some impressive table coral. Large pelagics are frequently encountered and strong currents are rarely an issue.

**Amber House** (☎ 0813 3756 9728; 250,000Rp) Attractive, circular bungalows with outdoor showers on the island's sleepy north end.

### Midrange

**Royal Reef Resort** (☎ 642 340; bungalows 300,000Rp) The name recalls an old-school yacht club. But it's just six large but basic, thatched bamboo bungalows opposite the marina. Um, that's a good thing.

**ourpick Sunset Gecko** (☎ 0813 5356 6774; www.thesunsetgecko.com; bungalows 350,000Rp; ♿) These attractive thatched, two-storey A-frame bungalows have outdoor and indoor bedrooms, wood shutters and the best views on Meno.

**Malia's Child** (☎ 622 007; www.gilimeno-mallias.com; bungalows US\$35) Some of the best bungalows on this end of Meno. They're thatched, bamboo and lined up along the deep white sand. If you want one, you'd better book ahead. They'll negotiate a lower daily rate for long stays.

**Biru Meno** (☎ 0813 365 7322; bungalows 450,000Rp) The staff are friendly, the bungalows are tastefully crafted from mostly native materials like bamboo and coral, and their beach is stunning. But without hot water, it's a touch overpriced.

**Villa Nautilus** (☎ 642 143; www.villanautilus.com; r €66; ♿) Five deluxe detached villas, finished in contemporary style with natural wood, marble and limestone. Plenty of natural light floods the lounge, which opens onto a terrace.

### EATING & DRINKING

The beachfront restaurants near the boat landing all offer a soothing symbiosis of fine views with slow service.

**ourpick Rust Warung** (☎ 642 324; mains 8000-75,000Rp; ☎ 7-10am, 11am-3.30pm, 6pm-late) This restaurant has beachfront *berugas* and a terrific assortment of fresh daily catch. Fish is perfectly grilled, glazed with garlic or sweet and sour sauce and served with grilled corn, cabbage salad and baked potato. If only its bar's soundtrack wouldn't bounce from Bollywood classics to techno club anthems to death metal.

**Jali Cafe** (☎ 639 800; dishes 10,000-20,000Rp) Friendly owners serve up tasty Indonesian, Sasak and curry dishes. At night they grill fresh fish and strum guitars by the fire. Everyone is welcome.

**Ya Ya Warung** (dishes 10,000-20,000Rp) It looks like a stiff breeze might blow over this lean-to

beach warung, and that's part of the charm. It serves all your Indo faves and a huge selection of pasta dishes.

**Balenta Cafe** (mains from 20,000Rp, fish at market price) Next to the Good Heart, this fantastic cafe has a full menu of Sasak and international food and a great seafood barbecue.

**Diana Cafe** (☎ 0818 057 7622; drinks 12,000-25,000Rp) The stilted *berugas* have cushions, coffee tables and ideal sunset views. It also has great snorkelling nearby and rents gear on the cheap (12,500Rp).

**Iced** (coffee 10,000-12,000Rp, scoops 6000Rp, sundaes 15,000-28,000Rp; ☎ 8am-sunset) A half-dozen tables tastefully scattered on the white sand and shaded by parasols make this the perfect setting for iced coffee and...*ice cream!*

### Gili Trawangan

pop 1500

Social but not trashy, relaxed but not boring, all-natural yet sprinkled with a collection of restaurants and bars that would satisfy any devout cosmopolitan, Gili Trawangan is the road-wear rambler's lucid fantasy.

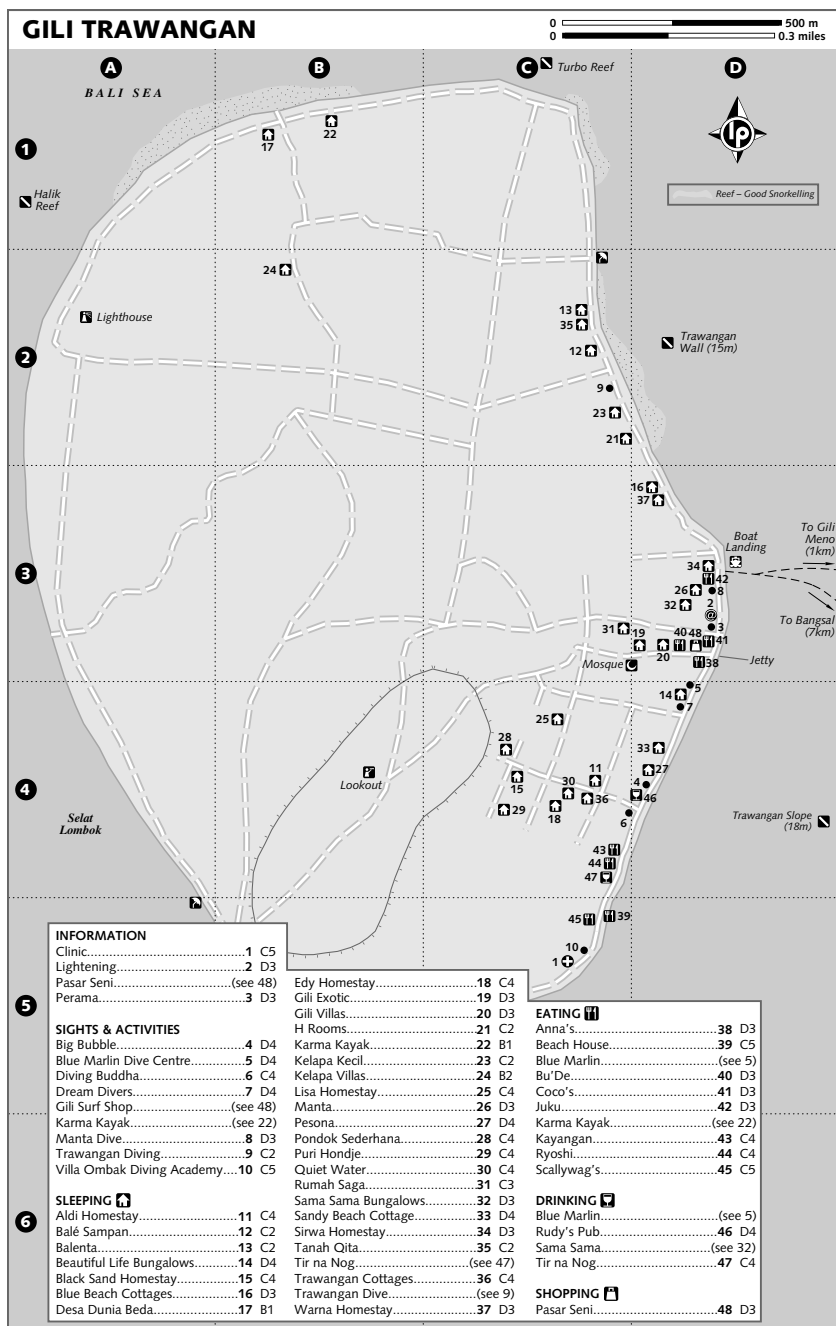
The largest and most popular of the carless Gilis, Gili Trawangan first blipped on the tourism radar during the '90s, when Bali rose to global prominence and backpackers descended in search of white sand, warm water, rich reefs and a good party. Expectations were exceeded across the board. But thanks to an overt, entrenched weed and 'shrooms' trade, and three all-night ravelike events a week, it was that party label which stuck.

Gili Trawangan is a lot more than that now. Part of this latent maturity is due to a recent drug bust sparked by undercover cops who posed as humble DVD hawkers. But it also has something to do with the Bali fast boats, which shepherd over a diversified clientele of young families and moneyed weekenders from Singapore and Jakarta. Then there's the, ahem, 'maturing' expat community.

Yes, the once carefree dive entrepreneurs have families now. And they're building swanky villas, upscale dive schools and shabby chic cafes. Trawangan's Indonesian community has benefited from the surge in tourism here, as well. Some of the best new bars and bungalows are locally owned.

Agoraphobics needn't worry. Even with the new construction boom, the lightly developed northwest coast remains pristine – where the





crowds are (much!) thinner, the water is the turquoise shade you dream about and the snorkelling is superb. Nest here and you're still just a 20-minute beach stroll away from that scrum of dive shops, sushi bars, lounges, reggae joints and beachfront dining rooms that are impossible to resist.

### ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Boats dock on the island's eastern shore, which is also home to most of Trawangan's accommodation, restaurants and facilities. The best stretch of beach is on the stunning northwest corner. Stay here, and you'll have a longer trek to the action.

There is finally an ATM machine on Gili Trawangan at Villa Ombak but it's frequently out of service. Several stores will change cash or travellers cheques, but the rates are notoriously poor. Dive shops give cash advances on credit cards for a hefty commission of 7% to 10%.

There is no post office, but stamps and postcards are sold in the wartel and *pasar seni* (art market).

### Emergency

**Satgas** Contact this community organisation which controls security on the island via your hotel or dive school.  
**Clinic** (☎ 9am-5pm) At the Villa Ombak Hotel.

### Internet Access & Telephone

Also offering a wartel, **Lightening** (internet access per min 500Rp) has a satellite-fed broadband connection. If you have a laptop, Scallywag's (p503), one of Trawangan's most popular restaurants, has wireless connection.

### Travel Agencies

**Perama** (☎ 638 514; www.peramatour.com) Located north of the jetty.

### ACTIVITIES

#### Diving

Trawangan is made for divers, with six established scuba schools, including one of the best tech-diving schools in the world (see boxed text, p497), and one newcomer (Diving Buddha).

**Big Bubble** (☎ 625 020; www.bigbubblediving.com)

**Blue Marlin Dive Centre** (☎ 632 424, 0813 3993 0190; www.bluemarlindive.com)

**Diving Buddha** (☎ 644 179)

**Dream Divers** (☎ 634 496; www.dreamdivers.com)

**Manta Dive** (☎ 643 649; www.manta-dive.com)

**Trawangan Diving** (☎ 649 220, 0813 3770 2332; www.trawangandive.com)

**Villa Ombak Diving Academy** (☎ 638 531)

#### Snorkelling

There's fun snorkelling off the beach north of the jetty. The coral isn't in the best shape here, but there are tons of fish. The reef is healthier off the northwestern coast, but you may have to scramble over coral to access it at low tide. If the current is quick, you'll have fun flying above the reef, but will have to walk back to your starting point.

Snorkelling gear can be hired for around 25,000Rp per day from shops near the jetty.

#### Surfing & Kayaking

Trawangan has a fast right break that can be surfed year-round and can swell overhead. It's just south of Villa Ombak. **Gili Surf Shop** (☎ 0812 372 7615) in the *pasar seni* rents boards.

**Karma Kayak** (☎ 0818 0559 3710; tours 300,000Rp), a hotel, tapas bar and kayaking school, is set on the northern end of Gili Trawangan, where Astrid, a former champion stunt kayaker (she took silver at the 1991 world championship) leads half-day kayaking trips around the Gilis when currents allow.

### GILI T'S TECHNICALITIES

Simon Liddiard, founder and owner of Blue Marlin and the first Westerner with a Gili address, also happens to be one of the world's best tech-dive instructors. The Gilis' vibrant coral walls, which descend to more than 1000m beneath the surface, are his classrooms, and his curriculum includes Nitrox, Tri-Mix, Extended Range and Rebreather courses. Rebreathers recycle your air, are almost totally silent and allow for much longer dives.

Liddiard once held the world record for deepest dive with a Rebreather (170m), and his affable lead instructor Will Goodman, the perfect blend of London punk and dive god, owns the current record for the longest dive ever (30 hours). So you know you'll be in good hands.

Just remember, going deep (more than 45m) has a certain psychedelic effect on the brain. Technicolor coral throbs and sways, and you will be forgiven if you commune with a glowing, fluorescent green nudibranch and become convinced it holds the secrets of the universe.

**MANDI SAFAR**

Most of Trawangan's locals do not visit the island's beach frequently, but during an annual ceremony held at the end of the second month of the Islamic calendar – a ritual purification called *Safar* – hundreds of villagers dip into the ocean to symbolise the Prophet Muhammed's final bath. Prayers are written on mango leaves before participants wade into the sea, taking their prayers with them.

**Walking & Cycling**

Trawangan is fun to explore on foot or by bike. You can walk around the whole island in a couple of hours – if you finish at the hill on the southwestern corner (which has the remains of an old Japanese WWII gun placement), you'll have terrific sunset views of Bali's Gunung Agung.

Bikes are the preferred mode of transport and are easily hired from 25,000Rp per day. Your hotel can arrange rental or you can approach the bike shops on the main drag directly.

**SLEEPING**

There are now more than 100 places to stay in Gili Trawangan. They range from simple village huts to mod Zen beach bungalows with outdoor baths to sprawling air-conditioned villas with private pools. The cheapest digs are in the village – where the mosque is everyone's alarm clock. You'll pay more for a beachside address. We like the island's rugged north coast.

All budget and most midrange places have brackish tap water. Pure water is available in some bungalows. High-season rates quoted here can drop up to 50% off-peak. Breakfast is included unless stated otherwise.

Price categories below reflect those found on both the Gilis and Bali. See p817 for details.

**Budget**

**Sirwa Homestay** (s/d 40,000/45,000Rp) Spacious rooms – some have two double beds – with prices to suit those on a strict budget.

**Aldi Homestay** (☎ 0813 3954 1102; s/d 60,000/100,000Rp) Another village bargain. Some rooms are nicer than others, so check around. Look for the ripped-off logo of the German supermarket chain Aldi, which is also the name of the owner's son.

**Lisa Homestay** (☎ 0813 3952 3364; r 75,000Rp) Very friendly little place with airy and light tiled rooms that overlook a garden.

**Sandy Beach Cottage** (☎ 625 020; d from 100,000Rp) A shady hideaway, close to the action.

**Edy Homestay** (d from 120,000Rp) One of the best of the village cheapies. Rooms are very clean and come with ceiling fans.

**Warna Homestay** (☎ 623 859; d from 150,000Rp) Arguably the best value on the island, Warna has five sweet, tropical flower garden bungalows mere steps from the sea.

**Puri Hondje** (r 150,000Rp; 🍷) Tucked away down a quiet village lane, these very stylish rooms overlook a small koi pond surrounded by bougainvillea and palms.

**Balenta** (☎ 0818 0520 3464; d from 180,000Rp) Next to the upmarket Good Heart, it's one of Gili Trawangan's better values. It's opposite a great stretch of beach and the rooms are large and immaculate.

**Pondok Sederhana** (☎ 0813 3860 9964; r 200,000Rp) At the foot of the hill, and run by a house-proud, friendly Balinese lady, the spotless rooms here face a neat little garden. Low-season discounts to 80,000Rp are available.

**Trawangan Cottages** (☎ 639 282; s/d 200,000/250,000Rp) These clean, freshly painted tiled rooms have built-in wood desks and a nice garden. Bathrooms could be cleaner. Long-stay discounts are available in off-peak season.

**Quiet Water** (☎ 0819 1753 1652; d from 250,000Rp) A plush yet affordable village choice with queen beds, soft linens, air-con, hot water and in-room DVD players.

**Midrange**

**Black Sand Homestay** (☎ 0812 372 0353; r from 300,000Rp) One- and two-storey wooden bungalows are nestled in a sweet garden with views of the hill. Two-storey jobs come with TV and an outdoor bath. Management is hospitable, and prices drop in the low season.

**Tir na Nog** (☎ 639 463; [timanog@mataram.wasantara.net.id](mailto:timanog@mataram.wasantara.net.id); r from 300,000Rp; 🍷) At the rear of the bar, these huge rooms with air-con have been thoughtfully designed and decorated; most have spacious private terraces and swanky modern bathrooms.

**Rumah Saga** (☎ 648 604, 0818 0571 4315; [www.rumahsaga.com](http://www.rumahsaga.com); cottages 350,000–500,000Rp; 🍷) Clean, modern cottages with TV, air-con and hot water are set around a lovely garden area with a nice pool. The large bungalows sleep up to three people.

**Pesona** (☎ 660 7233; www.pesonaresort.com; r 400,000-600,000Rp; 🍷) You'll enjoy these new concrete and tile bungalows with inviting hammocks-laced porchside. The rooms, which are named for flowers, all have TVs, DVDs and safety boxes, and the shell-embedded terrazzo bathrooms are four-star quality.

**Sama Sama Bungalows** (☎ 0812 376 3650; r with air-con 400,000, deluxe lumbung 650,000Rp; 🍷) Combining natural materials with mod cons, these stylish rooms set back from the beach make a comfortable base.

**Beautiful Life Bungalows** (☎ 0818 0376 4102; bungalows 450,000Rp; 🍷) If you don't enjoy life in one of these new, clean, tiled garden bungalows, each with TV/DVD, air-con, and a front porch made for island slackers like you, it's your own fault.

**Tanah Qita** (☎ 639 159; bungalows 500,000Rp) Perhaps Trawangan's best new addition, these thatched, teak *lumbung*-style bungalows have high ceilings, outdoor bathrooms and style and grace to spare. The staff are marvellous. If they invite you to share a home-cooked Sasak meal, say 'yes, please'.

**Bale Sampan** (☎ 0813 3988 2153, 0813 3774 8469; www.balesampambungalows.com; bungalows with garden/sea view 500,000/800,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) The name means 'boat house'. But there are no broken outboards, fishing nets and oily concrete floors here. Just fine modern-edge beach bungalows served with Yogja stone baths, a freshwater pool, plush duvet covers and a proper English breakfast.

**Manta** (☎ 643 649, 0812 376 4780; www.manta-dive.com; bungalows 550,000Rp; 🍷 🍷) This laid-back English-run dive centre introduced the mod-bungalow motif to the Gilis, and its own remain some of the most stylish. It's a fun place to be after the afternoon dive when beers flow.

**our pick Karma Kayak** (☎ 0818 0559 3710; bungalows 550,000Rp) A beautiful bungalow property on the tranquil north end, co-owned by a former champion kayaker. Owners and staff are lovely, the well-lit bungalows are spotless and the beach is absolutely gorgeous, especially at sunset. When we visited, a turtle nest hatched in the dunes less than 50m from the front gate. Spectacular!

**Blue Beach Cottages** (☎ 623 538; bungalows from 550,000Rp; 🍷) Native thatch meets minimalist at this locally owned collection of sea-view cottages on the north end of the strip. There are outdoor bathrooms, queen

beds, wide decks and glass doors. Large long-term and low-season discounts are available if you negotiate.

**Trawangan Dive** (☎ 649 220, 0813 3770 2332; www.trawangadive.com; bungalows US\$60-80; 🍷 🍷) The swankiest dive school on the island – think luxe locker rooms with stone floors and a climate-controlled rebreather room – has just opened 12 stylish new rooms decked out in Indian limestone. They have fresh-water showers and a sunken pool bar.

**Kelapa Kecil** (☎ 0812 376 6496; bungalows US\$70-90; 🍷 🍷) These sleek, minimalist mod bungalows have little luxuries like security boxes, limestone baths, a plunge pool, and are steps away from the sea.

**H Rooms** (☎ 639 248; villas from 800,000Rp) Directly behind Horizontal Lounge, these seriously chic minivillas offer space and style in abundance, each with a large sun terrace and private jacuzzi, living area with hi-fi and plasma TV, master bedroom and luxe open-air bathroom.

## Top End

**Desa Dunia Beda** (☎ 641 575; www.desaduniabeda.com; bungalows US\$110-140 plus 21% tax; 🍷) Beautifully isolated on the north end are some astonishing rebuilt Javanese Joglo bungalows. Each is decked out with colonial-era antiques, including a four-poster bed, writing desk and sofa, and you'll dig the back-to-nature open-air bathrooms. The pool is small, but you have your own beach, so why quibble. This is a proper eco-retreat, so there's no air-con and no fresh water.

**Gili Exotic** (☎ 692 113, 0818 360 019; www.giliexotic.com; villas 1,500,000Rp; 🍷 🍷 🍷) Sasak-owned and adjacent to the Gili Villas are these luxe wood, one-bedroom villas with classic Indo style and modern accents like satellite TV and wireless web access.

**Kelapa Villas** (☎ 632 424, 0812 375 6003; www.kelapa villas.com; villas US\$150-550 plus 21% tax; 🍷 🍷) The villa complex that started the Trawangan luxe development boom. It has 14 villas, all privately owned, varying in size from one- to five-bedroom, less than half a click from the deserted western shore. The largest (which sleep up to eight people) are tropical palaces with granite kitchen counter tops, terrazzo baths and massive open-air rooms that spill onto a private pool deck, tropical flower garden and manicured lawn, which rolls toward the swaying palms. Bring a big group, and that gaudy price tag won't hurt too much.

**Gili Villas** (☎ 0812 376 4780; www.gilivillasindonesia.com; villas US\$250; 🏠 📶) Hidden in the village, just inland from the art market is the latest villa development on Trawangan. These are ultramodern two-bedroom villas with Yogja stone floors, indoor-outdoor kitchen, living room and dining room, attentive staff and a sweet pool deck. They're well located in the middle of the action.

## EATING

It's easy to munch your way around the world – from Indonesia to Japan to Spain and Australia – in tiny Trawangan. In the evenings several places display and grill fresh seafood.

**Anna's** (dishes from 8000Rp; 🕒 24hr) Opposite the harbour is another tasty, local warung serving *nasi campur* for 10,000Rp. It's the cheapest meal in town, and it's damn good.

**Blue Marlin** (mains 9000-35,000Rp) Perhaps the best fish grill on the island. Choose your catch and enjoy it with a limitless buffet of salads and sides. It's always cooked to perfection.

**Bu'De** (☎ 0812 3637 9516; meals from 15,000Rp; 🕒 9am-7pm) Shoestringers and dive masters now have a new place to inhale terrific local food on the cheap. Choose from an array of fresh, spicy food on display. The *nasi campur* is special and usually comes with fried or curried chicken. Service is friendly and the bright dining room is spotless.

**Beach House** (☎ 642 352; dishes 17,000-60,000Rp) This once great restaurant isn't cheap, but with plush, sand floor, seaside digs, a terrific fresh fish and salad bar selection and a solid jazz and rock soundtrack, people keep coming. The food has slipped a touch, but the barmen are exceptional and it's still a fun scene.

**Ryoshi** (☎ 639 463; dishes 17,000-48,000Rp) Another delectable Bali import. The melt-in-your-mouth tuna carpaccio should not be missed.

**Kayangan** (dishes from 20,000Rp) Across from Ryoshi is a cheap and cheerful expat fave, known for its tasty curries, sates and *gado gado* (dish with mixed vegetables and peanut sauce).

**Coco's** (espresso drinks from 15,000Rp, sandwiches 25,000Rp; 🕒 8am-6pm) If only there was a cafe like this in every town, with mouth-watering bacon and egg baguettes for breakfast and roast turkey or meatball sandwiches at lunch. The brownies, cakes, smoothies and shakes are incredible too.

**Karma Kayak** (☎ 0818 0559 3710; tapas from 35,000Rp) Tasty Spanish tapas (including house-cured olives, exquisite garlic prawns and delicious meatballs) are served on the beach, in *berugas* or on tables and lounges made from driftwood. It's a popular spot at sunset.

**Juku** (grilled fish from 35,000Rp) Among local expats, Juku has long been known as the most affordable and one of the best fish grills on the island. Exceptional dishes like grilled barracuda with ginger glaze made its reputation.

**ourpick Scallywag's** (☎ 631 945; meals from 45,000; 📶) Its open, shabby chic decor, and plush patio seating help make this new hot spot a major draw at all hours. But style only counts if the food works, and it does. They have tender steaks, spicy chorizo, a daily selection of fresh fish and Aussie pies, an organic ethos, wireless internet, a full bar, terrific salads (the chilli prawn salad is off the charts) and exceptional desserts (including some truly kick-ass ice cream). They do not always have timely service, but you won't mind waiting here.

## DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Trawangan's rotating parties are no secret. They fire up around 11pm and go on until 4am as imported DJs from Bali and beyond mix techno, trance and house music (except during Ramadan when the action is completely curtailed out of respect for local culture). At research time the party schedule shifted between Blue Marlin (Monday), Tir na Nog (Wednesday) and Rudy's (Friday). But with this many cool beach bars, every night is a good time.

**Blue Marlin** (🕒 8am-midnight Tue-Sun, 8am-3am Mon) Of all the party bars, this upper-level venue has the largest dance floor and the meanest sound system – which pumps out trance and tribal sounds on Monday.

**Tir na Nog** (🕒 7am-2am Wed-Mon, 7am-4am Tue) Known simply and affectionately as 'The Irish', it has a barnlike, sports-bar interior with big screens, private thatched DVD lounges that guests can use for free (their film selection is huge), and a brilliant outdoor bar with a live DJ that draws the biggest crowds in town. Jameson comes cheap, and they have a Wii video game system indoors (although it's typically dominated by local dive professionals hell bent on bowling that elusive, perfect 300). Wednesday is their blow-out night, but it's always fun here.

**Rudy's Pub** (☎ 8am-4am Fri, 8am-11pm Sat-Tue) Rudy's has as much to do with Gili T's party-hard reputation as all other bars combined. Mostly due to their weekly debaucherous Friday-night throwdowns and a preponderance of drinks and dishes involving a certain fungus. Drug bust? What drug bust?

**Sama Sama** (☎ 8am-late) Locally owned and easily the best reggae bar in Indonesia (and probably Southeast Asia). They have a top-end sound system, a killer live band at least six nights a week, and great barmen who mix tasty mojitos.

## NORTH & CENTRAL LOMBOK

☎ 0370

Lush and fertile, Lombok's scenic interior is stitched together with rice terraces, undulating tobacco fields, too many varieties of fruit and nut orchards to count, swathes of monkey forest, and it's capped by sacred Gunung Rinjani, which haemorrhages springs, rivers and waterfalls. Entwined in all this big nature are traditional Sasak settlements. Public transport is not frequent or consistent enough to rely on, but with wheels you can explore the black-sand fishing beaches, inland villages, and waterfalls, and if you're here in August you can attend the annual Sasak stick-fighting tournament.

### Bangsals to Bayan

The port of Bangsal is a hassle (see boxed text, p493), and public transport north from here is infrequent. Several minibuses go from Mandalika terminal in Bertais (Mataram) to Bayan, but you'll have to get connections in Pemenang and/or Anyar, which can be difficult to navigate. Simplify things and get your own wheels.

### SIRA

This peninsula has an insanely gorgeous white-sand beach, some snorkelling off-shore where the reef is under recovery, and Lombok's two finest hotels. The rooms, villas and pavilions at **Oberoi Lombok** (☎ 638 444; www.oberoihotels.com; r from US\$240, villas from US\$350, plus 21% tax; ☎ ☎ ☎) ooze luxury, with sunken marble bathtubs, worn teak floors, antique entertainment armoire, oriental rugs and time-stopping verandahs, with sea and sunset views. The new **Tugu Hotel Lombok** (☎ 62011; www.tuguhotels.com; r from US\$175 plus 21% tax; ☎ ☎ ☎) is likewise stunning. Owned by

one of Java's greatest antique collectors, the hotel lobby is set in a rebuilt 500-year-old home. Throughout the property you'll find fascinating wood paintings, masks, statues, doors, wardrobes and palatial beds. Deluxe rooms open onto private plunge pools and then the beach. The mosaic bathrooms (with deep tubs and rain showers) are fantastic. And the gallery, where some of the pieces are for sale, is museum quality.

Next door, the **Lombok Golf Kosaido Country Club** (☎ 640 137; per round incl caddy & cart US\$80) is an attractive seaside 18-hole, 72-par course. Hole 9 faces glorious Teluk Sira, while holes 10 to 18 have exceptional Rinjani views. Guests who stay at Manta Dive or Gili Villas pay discounted member rates.

### GONDANG & AROUND

Just northeast of Gondang village, a 6km trail heads inland to **Air Terjun Tiu Pupas**, a 30m waterfall that's only worth seeing in the wet season. Trails continue from here to other wet-season waterfalls including **Air Terjun Gangga**, the most beautiful of all. A local guide will turn up at the trailhead to lead you there.

### BAYAN

Wektu Telu, Lombok's animist-tinted form of Islam, was born in humble thatched mosques nestled in these Rinjani foothills. The best example is **Masjid Kuno Bayan Beleg**, next to the village of Beleg. Its low-slung roof, dirt floors and bamboo walls reportedly date from 1634, making this mosque the oldest on Lombok. It's built on a square platform of river stones with a pagoda-like upper section. Inside is a huge old drum, which served as the call to prayer before PA systems. Ah, the good old days. With the exception of an annual pilgrimage, the mosque is usually dormant. Some of the outlying buildings are tombs, including one for the mosque's founding haji. You will be asked to sign a visitors' book and make a donation.

### Senaru & Batu Kq

These picturesque villages merge into one along a ridge with sweeping Rinjani and sea views. They are also way stations for would-be climbers. But even without a peak-bagging itch, the beautiful walking trails and spectacular waterfalls are worth spending a day or so.

## INFORMATION & ORIENTATION

The two villages are spread out along a single steep road which heads south to Rinjani. Batu Koq is about 3km south from Bayan, Senaru is a further 3km uphill.

**Rinjani Trek Centre** (RTC; ☎ 0868 1210 4132; www.info2lombok.com), at the southern end of the village, has good information on Rinjani and the surrounding area.

## SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Do not miss **Air Terjun Sindang Gila** (2000Rp), a spectacular set of falls 20 minutes' walk from Senaru. You'll stroll through forest and alongside an irrigation canal that follows the contour of the hill. Locals love to picnic by Sindang Gila. The hearty and foolish make for the creek, edge close, and then get pounded by the hard foaming cascade that explodes over black volcanic stone 40m above. If you crave a shot of life, join them.

Another 50 minutes uphill is **Air Terjun Tiu Kelep**, another waterfall with a swimming hole. The track is steep and tough at times. Guides are compulsory (25,000Rp).

Six kilometres south of Bayan is the traditional village of **Dusun Senaru**, where locals will invite you to chew betel nut (or tobacco) and show you around.

Community tourism activities can be arranged in most guest houses. They include a rice terrace and waterfall walk (50,000Rp), which takes in Sindang Gila, and the Senaru Panorama Walk (75,000Rp), led by female guides who blend stunning views with insight into local traditions.

## SLEEPING & EATING

These places are dotted along the road from Bayan to Senaru.

**Bukit Senaru Cottages** (r75,000Rp) Shortly before Dusun Senaru, there are four decent semi-detached bungalows nestled in a sweet flower garden.

**Pondok Indah & Restaurant** (☎ 0817 578 8018; s/d 75,000/100,000Rp; 📺) Simple rooms with great views of the valley and the sea beyond. It's owned and operated by the 'Rinjani Master'. There's ample parking, a good restaurant (dishes 7000Rp to 18,000Rp) and free internet.

**ourpick Pondok Senaru & Restaurant** (☎ 622 868, 0868 1210 4141; r200,000-350,000Rp) Perfectly perched on a cliff near the trail to the waterfalls. It offers easterly views of the rice-terraced

valley from its recommended restaurant (dishes 13,000Rp to 21,000Rp) and spacious, spotless rooms that are the most comfortable digs in town.

Also worth considering is **Rinjani Homestay** (☎ 0817 575 0889; r60,000Rp). A little further uphill, it has basic bamboo and tile bungalows with twin beds, and amazing views.

Head to **Emy Cafe** (dishes 5000-12,500Rp) or **Warung Galang Ijo** (dishes 13,000-18,500Rp), midway between Batu Koq and Senaru, for simple Sasak cuisine and cold drinks.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Mandalika terminal in Mataram catch a bus to Anyar (20,000Rp, 2½ hours). Bemos leave Anyar for Senaru (7000Rp) every 20 minutes until 4.30pm. If you're coming from eastern Lombok, get off at the junction near Bayan, and hop a bemo to Senaru.

## The Sembalun Valley

☎ 0376

High on Gunung Rinjani's arid eastern slope is the beautiful Sembalun Valley, surrounded by farmland and golden foothills that turn green in the wet season. When high clouds part, Rinjani goes full-frontal from all angles. The valley has two main settlements, Sembalun Lawang and Sembalun Bumbung. Bumbung is wealthier but has no tourist facilities. Lawang is the best launch pad for Rinjani summit attempts, but it's no tourist magnet. Most trekkers base themselves in Senaru, which is reason enough to consider nesting here, among the relatively shy, sun-baked local Sasaks and Hindu Javanese who work the garlic fields. It's always interesting being the only foreigner(s) in town.

## INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES

The national-park rangers who staff the **Rinjani Information Centre** (RTC; 🕒 6am-6pm) speak decent English and are well informed. They can hook you up with guides for day treks such as the four-hour **village walk** (per person 150,000Rp, minimum 2 people) and the strenuous slog to the **crater rim** (guide & park entrance fee 250,000Rp). The **wildflower walk** (per person incl guide, porters, meals & camping gear 550,000Rp) is a challenging two-day trek through blooming savannah. If you have your own gear and wish to hire guides and porters at day rates, the rangers will get you sorted for a summit attempt. Guides cost 100,000Rp per day and porters cost 80,000Rp per day.

The RIC has also helped local women to revive traditional weaving in Sembalun Lawang. Follow the signs from the village centre to their workshops.

### SLEEPING & EATING

The local hotel market is a bit bleak, but the RIC and their network of guides can help you find a homestay (75,000Rp). Wherever you stay, you will wash in frigid Rinjani water.

**Pondok Sembalun** (☎ 0852 3956 1340; r 75,000Rp) Stay in thatched, brick and bamboo bungalows set in a lovely garden. The restaurant serves basic Indo and Western fare, but that massive cell-tower is an eyesore.

**Lembah Rinjani** (☎ 0818 0365 2511; r 150,000Rp) The better of the two hotels in town. It has queen-size beds, spotless bathrooms and breathtaking mountain and sunrise views.

**Warung Madiya** (Jl Pariswata-Sembalun; meals from 10,000Rp) The rangers' choice for local food. It's across the street from the police station.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Mandalika bus terminal in Mataram take a bus to Aikmel (12,000Rp) and change there for Sembalun Lawang (12,000Rp). Hourly trucks connect Lawang and Bumbung.

There's no public transport between Sembalun Lawang and Senaru; you'll have to charter an *ojek*, or a bemo for around 100,000Rp. Roads to Sembalun are sometimes closed in the wet season due to landslides.

### SAPIT

☎ 0376

On the southeastern slopes of Gunung Rinjani, Sapit is a tiny, very relaxed village with views across the sea to Sumbawa. *Open* (tall red-brick tobacco-drying buildings) loom above the lush landscape, and thick blocks of the local crop can be found in the market.

### Sights

Between Swela and Sapit, a side road leads to **Taman Lemor** (admission 3000Rp; ☎ 8am-4pm), a park with a spring-fed swimming pool and some monkeys. Further towards Pringgabaya, **Makam Selaparang** is the burial place of ancient Selaparang kings.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hati Suci Homestay** (☎ 0818 545 655; www.hatisuci.tk; s 40,000-45,000Rp, d 75,000-85,000Rp) The budget bungalows come with en suite bathrooms set in

a blooming garden. The accommodation and restaurant (dishes 8000Rp to 18,000Rp) both offer stunning views over the sea to Sumbawa. Breakfast is included and hikes to Rinjani can be organised here.

### Getting There & Away

From Mataram or Central Lombok, head to Pringgabaya, which has frequent bemo connections to Sapit. Occasional bemos also go to Sapit from the Sembalun Valley.

### GUNUNG RINJANI

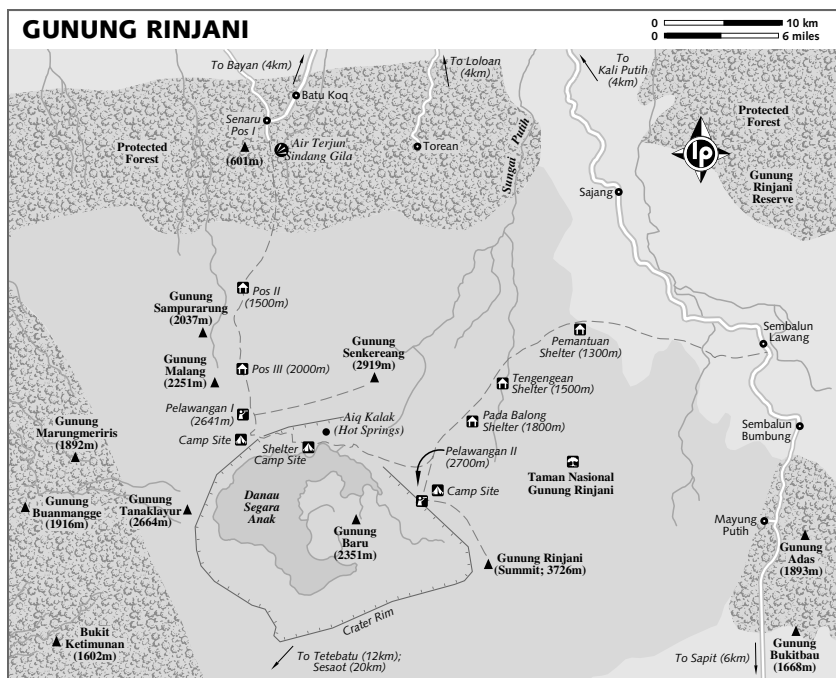
Rising over the northern half of Lombok, the mighty Gunung Rinjani (3726m), Indonesia's second-highest volcano, has spiritual gravitas. Balinese Hindus and Sasak Muslims consider it sacred and make pilgrimages to its peak and lake to leave offerings for the Gods. To the Balinese, who come once a year, Rinjani is one of three sacred mountains, along with Bali's Agung and Java's Bromo. Sasaks descend throughout the year around the full moon. International tourists also make the gruelling three-day trek. But we're generally after a more earthly satisfaction.

The mountain also has climatic significance. Its peak attracts a steady swirl of clouds which shower the valley and feed a tapestry of rice paddies, tobacco fields, cashew and mango trees, banana and coconut palms.

Inside the immense caldera, 600m below the rim, is a stunning, 6km-wide cobalt-blue lake, Danau Segara Anak (Child of the Sea). The Balinese toss their jewellery into the lake in a ceremony called *pekelan*, before they slog toward the sacred summit. The mountain's newest cone, Gunung Baru (or Gunung Barujari), which only emerged a couple of hundred years ago, rises from the lake's shores in all its ominous glory. It remains highly active and erupted as recently as October 2004. Natural hot springs bubble up within the crater. Locals suffering from skin diseases trek here with medicinal herbs to bathe and scrub.

Treks to the rim, lake and peak are challenging, and guides are mandatory. Climbing Rinjani during the wet season (November to March), when there's a real risk of landslides, is not at all advisable – the national-park office often completely forbids access to Rinjani for the first three months of each year. Between June and August there's minimal rain and few clouds, but come prepared with layers because it gets extremely cold at the summit.





Senaru has the best services for trekkers, and many treks begin there. This adds about 1000 vertical metres to the itinerary, so wise guides drive their guests to Sembalun Lawang on the eastern slope, and begin hiking from there.

### Organised Treks

The best and least expensive way to organise a trip is to head to either the Rinjani Trek Centre (p505) in Senaru or the Rinjani Information Centre (p505) in Sembalun Lawang. The centres use a rotation system so that all local guides get a slice of the trekking purse. And though guides are always eager for a gig, they are laid-back and easy to work with.

Whether you book through your losmen, or directly at the RTC or RIC, the same trek packages are offered, but in Senaru the prices often vary depending on demand and level of luxury. The most popular is the three-day, two-night trek from Senaru to Sembalun Lawang via the summit. It includes food, equipment, guide, porters, park fee and transport back to Senaru. This costs about

1,750,000Rp per person. An overnight trek to the crater rim from Senaru costs 1,000,000Rp for one person, 900,000Rp per head for two people and 750,000Rp per head for three.

Two Senaru outfitters stand out. **John's Adventures** (☎ 0817 578 8018; [www.lombok-rinjani-trek.com](http://www.lombok-rinjani-trek.com); per person 1,750,000Rp) has been leading Rinjani climbs since 1982. He has toilet tents, offers four meals a day, provides thick sleeping mats and starts hiking from Sembalun. **Galang Jo Expedition** (☎ 0819 1740 4198; for 2 people 2,300,000Rp) has competitive prices and a network of experienced guides.

In Sembalun Lawang the prices are uniform. Summit attempts cost 2,300,000Rp for two people; the per-person price falls for larger groups. All-day hikes to the crater rim (6am to 6pm) cost 1,500,000Rp per person.

### Guides & Porters

Hiking independently is prohibited, but if you abhor all-inclusive trekking packages, you can hire guides (100,000Rp per day) and porters (80,000Rp) at day rates. You'll have to bring your own camping gear and supplies. Make sure you take a radio

(10,000Rp per day) as well. Contract your guides and porters directly from the centres in Senaru and Sembalun Lawang. Guides are knowledgeable and informative, but won't carry anything for you, so take at least one porter. You'll need to arrange transport, and

bring ample food and water for you and your support team.

### Entrance Fee & Equipment

The entrance fee for the Gunung Rinjani National Park has ballooned to 150,000Rp –

#### CLIMBING GUNUNG RINJANI

The best route on the mountain is the five-day trek (described below) that starts at Senaru and finishes at Sembalun Lawang. A strenuous dash from Senaru to the crater rim and back is also popular among short-timers. This trek is outlined on the Gunung Rinjani map (Map p507). A better map can be purchased from the Rinjani Trek Centre (RTC; p505) in Senaru – it is large, glossy and easy to understand.

Rinjani's trails are often closed during the wet season, particularly after heavy rainfall when the trail around the lake is vulnerable to land- and rockslides.

#### Day One: Senaru Pos I to Pos III (Five to Six Hours)

At the southern end of the village is the Rinjani Trek Centre (Pos I, 601m), where you register and pay the park fee. Just beyond the post, the trail forks – continue on the right fork. The trail climbs steadily through scrubby farmland to the signed entrance of Gunung Rinjani National Park. The wide trail climbs for another 2½ hours until you reach Pos II (1500m), where there's a shelter. Water can be found 100m down the slope from the trail, but it should be treated or boiled.

Another 1½ hours' steady ascent brings you to Pos III (2000m), where there are two shelters in disrepair. Water is 100m off the trail to the right, but sometimes evaporates in the dry season. Pos III is the place to camp at the end of the first day.

#### Day Two: Pos III to Danau Segara Anak & Aiq Kalak (Four Hours)

From Pos III, it takes about 1½ hours to reach the rim, Pelawangan I (2641m). Set off very early for the stunning sunrise. It's possible to camp at Pelawangan I, but level sites are limited, there's no water and it can be blustery.

It takes about two hours to descend to Danau Segara Anak and around to Aiq Kalak (hot springs). The first hour is a very steep descent and involves boulder-hopping. From the bottom of the crater wall it's an easy 30-minute walk across undulating terrain around the lake's edge. There are several places to camp, but most prefer to rest and recuperate near the hot springs. There are some caves nearby which are interesting but are not adequate shelter. The nicest campsites are at the lake's edge. Fresh water can be gathered from a spring near Aiq Kalak. The climb back up the rim is taxing – allow at least three hours and start early to make it back to Senaru in one day. Allow five hours from the rim down to Senaru. Or instead of retracing your steps, complete the Rinjani trek by continuing to Sembalun Lawang, where you can arrange transport back to Senaru (see p506).

#### Day Three: Aiq Kalak to Pelawangan II (Three to Four Hours)

The trail starts beside the last shelter at the hot springs and heads away from the lake for about 100m before veering right. It then traverses the northern slope of the crater, for an easy one-hour walk along the grassy slopes before you hit a steep, unforgiving rise; from the lake it takes about three hours to reach the crater rim (2639m). At the rim, a sign points the way back to Danau Segara Anak. Water can be found down the slope near the sign. The trail forks here – go straight on to Lawang or continue along the rim to the campsite of Pelawangan II (2700m). It's only about 10 minutes more to the campsite, which is on a bare ridge.

#### Day Four: Pelawangan II to Rinjani Summit (Five to Six Hours Return)

Gunung Rinjani stretches in an arc above the campsite at Pelawangan II and looks deceptively close. Start the climb at 3am in order to reach the summit in time for the sunrise and before the clouds roll in.

register and pay at the RTC in Senaru or the RIC in Sembalun Lawang before you begin climbing.

Sleeping bags and tents can be hired at either RTC or RIC. You'll also need solid footwear, layers of warm clothing, wet-weather

gear, cooking equipment and a torch (flashlight), but these can also be hired from the RTC. Expect to pay about 75,000Rp a head per day for all your equipment.

Poaching firewood at high altitude is an environmental no-no, so take a stove. Also

It takes about 45 minutes to clamber up a steep, slippery and indistinct trail to the ridge that leads to Rinjani. Once on the ridge, it's a relatively easy walk uphill. That peak you see ahead isn't the finish line. After an hour, the real summit of Rinjani looms above you.

The trail gets steeper and steeper, and with just 350m to go before the summit, your footing deteriorates into loose scree – it's easiest to scramble on all fours. This section can take about an hour. The views from the top are magnificent on a clear day. In total it takes three hours or more to reach the summit, and two to get back down.

### Day Five: Pelawangan II to Sembalun Lawang (Five to Six Hours)

After bagging the peak, it's possible to reach Lawang the same day. After a two-hour descent, it's a long and hot three-hour walk back to the village. Head off early and make sure you've brought along plenty of water. From the campsite, head back along the ridge-crest trail. A couple of hundred metres past the turn-off to Danau Segara Anak there is a signposted right turn leading down a subsidiary ridge to Pada Balong and Sembalun Lawang. Once on the trail, it's easy to follow and takes around two hours to reach the bottom.

At the bottom of the ridge (where you'll find Pada Balong shelter; 1800m) the trail levels out and crosses undulating grassland all the way to Sembalun Lawang. After about an hour you will hit the Tengengean shelter (1500m); it's then another 30 minutes to Pemantuan shelter (1300m). Early in the season, long grass obscures the trail until about 30 minutes beyond Pemantuan. The trail crosses many bridges; at the final bridge, just before it climbs uphill to a lone tree, the trail seems to fork; take the right fork and climb the rise. From here, the trail follows the flank of Rinjani before swinging around to Lawang at the end. As always, a guide is essential.

### Variations

- Compress the last two days into one (racking up a hefty 10 to 11 hours on the trail). On the plus side, it's downhill all the way after the hard climb to the summit.
- Retrace your steps to Senaru after climbing to the summit, making a five-day circuit that includes another night at the hot springs.
- Another popular route is a three-day trek from Senaru to the hot springs and back. The first night is spent at Pos III and the second at the hot springs. The return to Senaru on the final day takes eight to nine hours.
- For (almost) instant gratification (if you travel light and climb fast), you can reach the crater rim from Senaru in about six hours. You'll gain an altitude of approximately 2040m in 10km. Armed with a torch (flashlight), some moonlight and a guide, set off at midnight to arrive for sunrise. The return takes about five hours.
- If you reach Pelawangan I early in the day, consider taking a side trip east along the crater rim for about 3km to Gunung Senkereang (2919m). This point overlooks the gap in the rim where the stream that comes from the hot springs flows down towards the sea. It's not an easy walk, however, and the track is narrow and very exposed in places – if you decide to do it, allow two hours.
- Start trekking from Sembalun Lawang, from where it takes six or seven hours to get to Pelawangan II. This is a shorter walk to the rim than from Senaru, with only a three-hour trek up the ridge.

pack up your rubbish, including toilet tissues. As the saying goes, 'take only pictures, leave only footprints'.

Excess baggage can be left at most losmen in Senaru or the RTC for 5000Rp per day.

### Food & Supplies

Trek organisers at RTC and RIC arrange food supplies. If you bring your own, buy most of your supplies in the Mataram markets, where it's cheaper and there's more choice. Bring a lighter, and drink more water than seems reasonable. Dehydration can spur altitude sickness.

### Getting There & Away

For transport options from Sembalun Lawang to Senaru, see p506. If you've purchased a trekking package, transport back to your point of origin is included.

## TETEBATU

☎ 0376

Laced with spring-fed streams and canals, sprinkled with traditional villages and blessed with rich soil, Tetebatu is a Sasak breadbasket. The surrounding countryside is quilted with tobacco and rice fields, fruit orchards and cow pastures that fade into remnant monkey forest where you'll find some fabulous waterfalls. At 400m it's also high enough on Rinjani's lower slopes to mute that hot, sticky coastal mercury. Dark nights come saturated in sound courtesy of a frog orchestra accompanied by countless gurgling brooks. Even insomniacs snore here.

Though small, the town is actually quite spread out, with facilities on roads north and east (nicknamed 'waterfall road') of the *ojek* stop in the centre of the village. There's a **wartel** (☎ 9am-9pm) next to Salabuse Cafe, but internet has yet to arrive.

### Sights & Activities

A shady 4km track leads from the main road, just north of the mosque, into **Taman Wisata Tetebatu** (Monkey Forest) with black monkeys and two waterfalls. Both waterfalls are accessible by private transport or a spectacular two-hour walk (one way) through rice fields from Tetebatu. If walking, hire a guide (80,000Rp to 100,000Rp), easily found through your hotel. The best ones describe the vegetation and village life, and make the experience even richer.

Locals still believe that water from **Air Terjun Jukut** (admission 20,000Rp) will increase hair growth. So if baldness frightens you, wade over and let the frigid cascade rain down on your man-scalp. It's a 2km walk from the car park at the end of the road.

Northwest of Tetebatu, **Air Terjun Joben** (admission 20,000Rp) is more of a public pool.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Pondok Tetebatu** (☎ 632 572; s/d 60,000/80,000Rp) North of the intersection, these detached, ranch-style rooms set around a flower garden are basic and could be cleaner, but the staff are fantastic, the restaurant, which specialises in Sasak cooking, is a good bet, and they offer guided walks through the villages and to the falls (50,000/80,000Rp village walk/falls walk).

**our pick** **Cendrawasih Cottages** (☎ 0818 0372 6709; r 90,000Rp) Sweet little *lumbung*-style cottages nestled in the rice fields. You'll sit on floor cushions in their stunning stilted restaurant, which has Sasak, Indonesian or Western grub (7000Rp to 22,000Rp) and 360-degree paddy views. It's about 500m east of the intersection.

**Wisma Soedjono** (☎ 21309; d 150,000-200,000Rp; 🍽️) About 2km north of the intersection, these basic, functional rooms (with thin walls) and lovely two-storey, chalet-style cottages (with both balconies and verandahs) are scattered around the grounds of a rambling family farm.

**Green Orry** (☎ 632 233; cottages incl breakfast 175,000Rp) Twenty of the newest and cleanest rooms in town. It's a large, family-run place, and when the town blacks out (a frequent occurrence), they still have juice.

**Bale Bale** (☎ 0828 375 8688; dishes 10,000-22,000Rp) Tastefully candlelit, this streetside café has outstanding local food, such as fiery *pelecing kangkung* (spinach in tomato sauce) and Lombok-style *gado gado*. The friendly owner pours free shots of rice wine when the electricity falters.

### Getting There & Around

Public transport to this end of Lombok is infrequent and unpredictable. Buses do go from Mandalika terminal in Mataram to Pomotong (10,000Rp), on the main east-west highway. On market days (Monday and Wednesday) catch a bemo from here to Kotaraja (2000Rp), and an *ojek* (3000Rp) or *cidomo* (4000Rp) to Tetebatu.

Private cars (with drivers) can be arranged at Pondok Tetebatu (opposite) to all of Lombok's main destinations (250,000Rp to 500,000Rp for up to four passengers).

Pondok Tetebatu also rents bicycles and motorbikes for 15,000Rp and 50,000Rp per day, respectively.

## SOUTH OF TETEBATU

The nearest market town to Tetebatu is **Kotaraja**, the transport hub of the area. It's known for its skilled blacksmiths, and in August you can take in the annual **Sasak Stick Fighting** festivities. Fights are fierce, but end gracefully at the first sight of blood. There's a market on Monday and Wednesday mornings.

**Loyok** is noted for its fine basketry and **Rungkang** is known for its pottery, made from local black clay. You'll find home workshops in both villages.

**Masbagik** is a large town on Lombok's east-west highway with a huge cattle market on Monday afternoon, an imposing new mosque with elegant minarets, and the region's only reliable ATM. Look for the BCA sign opposite the mosque. **Masbagik Timur**, 1km east, is a centre for black-clay pottery and ceramic production.

## SOUTH LOMBOK

☎ 0370

Beaches just don't come any better. The water is warm, striped turquoise and curls into barrels. The sand is silky and snow-white, framed by massive headlands. And village life is still vibrant. You'll see seaweed and tobacco harvests, duck into tribal homes and listen to Sasak drum corps. Southern Lombok is noticeably drier and more sparsely populated, with limited roads and public transport, for now. But with long-anticipated hotel development on the immediate horizon, authentic tropical tranquillity may be on its way out. Especially in Kuta – which is the antithesis of Bali's version and the south coast's best base. Come soon.

### Praya

pop 37,000

Praya sprawls, with tree-lined streets and a few Dutch colonial relics. There's nothing of much interest right now, however, except a couple of ATMs on Jl Jend Sudirman, but soon Lombok's new international airport (at the time of writing due to open in 2010) will be

here, boosting the local economy – especially in the surrounding crafts villages. Until then, the bemo terminal, on the northwest side of town, is the transport hub for the region.

## Around Praya

Sukarara's main street is the domain of textile shops, where you can watch weavers work their looms. **Dharma Setya** (☎ 660 5204; ☎ 8am–5pm) has an incredible array of hand-woven Sasak textiles, including ikat and *songket*.

To reach Sukarara from Praya, take a bemo to Puyung along the main road. From there, hire a *cidomo* or walk the 2km to Sukarara.

## Penujak

Penujak is well known for its traditional *gerabah* pottery, made from chocolate-coloured terracotta, hand-burnished, and topped with braided bamboo. The pots are gorgeous, dirt-cheap and for sale in humble home studios. The best of the bunch belongs to **Wadiah** (☎ 0819 3316 0391), a local potter who is all smiles and has a terrific inventory. Find her opposite the cemetery.

Penujak is on the main road from Praya to the south coast; any bemo to Sengkol or Kuta will drop you off.

## Rembitan & Sade

The area from Sengkol down to Kuta is a centre for traditional Sasak culture where you can tour working Sasak villages, meet the villagers, check out their decorative rice barns (*lumbung*) and sip coffee in their homes, crafted from bamboo, mud, cow and buffalo dung and called *bale tani*.

Rembitan, aka Sasak Village, is on a hill just west of the main road. Forget the theme-park moniker, it boasts an authentic cluster of thatched houses and *lumbung*. Teens from the village offer short but interesting walking tours where they'll fill you in on village life. **Masjid Kuno**, an ancient thatched-roof mosque, crowns the nearby hill. It's a pilgrimage destination for Lombok's Muslims, as one of the founding fathers of Indonesian Islam is buried here.

A little further south is Sade, another traditional, picturesque village that has been extensively renovated. Many Sade villagers actually work and live part-time in Kuta. Donations are 'requested' by guides at both villages – 30,000Rp is enough, but you may have to pay extra for photos.

## Kuta

Imagine a crescent bay – turquoise in the shallows and deep-blue further out. It licks a wide white-sand beach, backed by swaying trees and framed by domelike headlands. It's deserted – save a few fishermen, seaweed farmers and their children. Now imagine a coastline of nearly a dozen just like it, all backed by a dry, rugged range of coastal hills patched with lush tobacco fields, and you'll have a vague idea of Kuta's majesty.

For years it's been an under-the-radar surf paradise, thanks to the world-class beach and reef breaks within 30 minutes' drive, and the international packs of surfers who congregate here in August. But it's not all about the waves. The local, fun-loving Sasaks saturate Kuta with their charm, and the motley assortment of barefoot bars and cafes serve some terrific meals and good conversation. Unfortunately, this incarnation of Kuta is on the clock.

There have been whispers linking resort developers to Kuta's pristine coastline for nearly a decade. Now a Dubai development firm is involved, \$600 million has been put on the table, and road construction to what folks on the ground claim will be a new Ritz Carlton began in January 2009 (see boxed text, below). Will this project involve a few well-placed, exclusive resorts or will it become another Nusa Dua? Nobody but the suits knows for sure, and they haven't been completely forthcoming. What is clear is that if you want to catch the last throes of Kuta natural, you'd better book now.

## INFORMATION & ORIENTATION

Several places change money, including the Kuta Indah Hotel (about 400m west of the junction) and Segare Anak Cottages (some 800m east of the junction), which is also a postal agency.

There's a wartel in town, and **Ketapang Cafe** (☎ 8am-11pm) has slow but functional internet access. The **market** fires up on Sunday and Wednesday.

Virtually everything in Kuta is on a single road that parallels the beach, and intersects the road from Praya.

## ACTIVITIES

### Surfing

Plenty of good 'lefts' and 'rights' break on the reefs in Teluk Kuta, and more on the reefs east of Tanjung Aan. If you're after a reef break, local boatmen will buzz you out for around 70,000Rp. About 7km east of Kuta is the fishing village of **Gerupak**, where there are five reef breaks, including those way out by the mouth of the bay that demand a boat. The current charter rate is a negotiable 200,000Rp per day. West of Kuta, **Mawi** is absolutely gorgeous and offers consistent world-class surf. Expect company in the high season. Local surfers are privy to another handful of hidden breaks. If you happen to befriend one, you'll likely dodge the crowds and surf in relative peace.

Drop by the friendly, professional **Kimen Surf** (☎ 655 064; [www.kuta-lombok.net](http://www.kuta-lombok.net)), just west

### THE KUTA SITUATION

Emaar Property, a Dubai development concern, is poised to transform Kuta's pristine coast. The team planned their US\$600 million takeover from Astari (see p514). We spoke to Gaz, one of the restaurant's owners, watched unnoticed as they unfurled blueprints and eyed a plot of land that stretches from the west end of Teluk Kuta to the east end of Tanjung Aan. Construction of a widened road to the site of their first new five-star hotel (possibly a Ritz Carlton) began at Tanjung Aan in January 2009. All the small businesses on Kuta's main road are in danger of being bulldozed when it too doubles in size.

Kuta's sea change was just a matter of time. Tommy Suharto, the former dictator's ne'er-do-well son, stockpiled coastal property for years, under an Indonesian law that allows government ministers to force owners to sell their land at will. But every time he began to build, locals torched the construction site, so he sold out to Dubai. Whether the Dubai developers bring economic opportunity, ecological and cultural awareness, or all of the above, remains to be seen.

Nobody in Kuta knows exactly what is about to happen; in Indonesia developers are not required to divulge information to the public. The public voice is still not very strong and there is a lack of consistent development standards. But the Emaar Property spokesman in Jakarta did tell us that 'this project involves multiple luxury hotels and golf courses and will be rolled out over the next 10 to 15 years.' Sounds like Nusa Dua to us.

of the junction, for swell forecasts, tips and information. Boards can be rented here (50,000Rp per day), repairs undertaken, lessons are offered (360,000Rp, four hours) and so are guided day trips. **Gloro** (☎ 0818 0576 5690) rents boards (35,000Rp per day) and offers lessons (200,000Rp, four hours).

### Diving

**Dive Zone** (☎ 660 3205; [www.divezone-lombok.com](http://www.divezone-lombok.com)) has two locations, one in town and the other at the Novotel Lombok Resort. They dive in Teluk Kuta (US\$80 for two tanks) and at **Magnet** (US\$120 for two tanks), a site famous for schooling hammerheads.

### SLEEPING

All accommodation is on or within walking distance of the beach, except for Mimpimanis. Breakfast is included.

### Budget

**our pick Seger Reef Homestay** (☎ 655 528; r 80,000-100,000Rp) Ignore the ramshackle courtyard because these bright, spotless, family-owned bungalows across the street from the beach are the sweetest deal in town.

**Mimpimanis** (☎ 0818 369 950; [www.mimpimanis.com](http://www.mimpimanis.com); s/d 80,000/130,000Rp; 🏠) An inviting English-Balinese-owned guest house with two spotless rooms in a two-storey house, all with en suite shower and TV/DVD player. There's home-cooked food, plenty of good books to browse and DVDs to borrow. It's 2km inland from the beach, but the owners offer a free drop-off service and arrange bike and motorbike rental.

**Rinjani Bungalows** (☎ 654 849; s/d with fan 80,000/95,000Rp, with air-con 200,000/250,000Rp; 🏠) This well-run place, situated 1km east of the junction, offers very clean bamboo bungalows with ikat bedspreads. The spacious, newer concrete bungalows have two double beds, hot water, hardwood furniture and cable TV.

**G'Day Inn** (☎ 655 342; s/d 90,000/100,000Rp) This friendly, family-run place offers clean rooms (some with hot water), as well as a cafe.

**Melon Homestay** (☎ 0817 367 892; r 100,000Rp, apt 150,000Rp) This place has two sweet apartments with a lounge and self-catering facilities, one with sea views from its balcony. There are a couple of smaller modern rooms with verandah and bathroom. It's about 400m east of the junction.

### NYALE FISHING FESTIVAL

On the 19th day of the 10th month in the Sasak calendar – generally February or March – hundreds of Sasaks gather on the beach at Kuta, Lombok. When night falls, fires are built and teens sit around competing in a Sasak poetry slam, where they spit rhyming couplets called *pantun* back and forth. At dawn the next day, the first of millions of *nyale* (wormlike fish who appear here annually) are caught, then teenage girls and boys take to the sea separately in decorated boats – and chase one another with lots of noise and laughter. The *nyale* are eaten raw or grilled, and are considered to be an aphrodisiac. A good catch is a sign that a bumper crop of rice is coming too.

**Bungalow Anda** (☎ 655 049; r with fan/air-con 120,000/150,000Rp; 🏠) Tiled bungalows are relatively charmless, but management is friendly, it's on the beach road and it tends to have vacancies during the August rush.

**Sekar Kuning** (☎ 654 856; r 150,000; 🏠) A charming beach-road inn. Top-floor rooms have ocean views.

**Matahari Inn** (☎ 655 000; [www.matahariinn.com](http://www.matahariinn.com); r 175,000-550,000Rp; 🏠 🚗) Sure, it's OD'd on knick-knacks, but the lush tropical gardens and Balinese polish make it one of Kuta's better options.

**Surfers Inn** (☎ 655 582; [www.lombok-surfersinn.com](http://www.lombok-surfersinn.com); r 180,000-400,000Rp; 🏠 🚗) A very smart, stylish and orderly place with five classes of modern rooms, each with huge windows and large beds, and some with sofas. Book ahead as it's very popular.

### Top End

**Novotel Lombok** (☎ 653 333; [www.novotel-lombok.com](http://www.novotel-lombok.com); r without/with terrace US\$105/120, villa US\$195, plus 21% tax; 🏠 🚗) This appealing, Sasak-themed four-star resort spills onto a superb beach 3km east of the junction. Rooms have high sloping roofs and modern interiors. There are two pools, a wonderful spa, good restaurants, a swanky bar and a plethora of activities on offer including catamaran sailing, fishing and scuba diving. European families love it.

### EATING & DRINKING

There are some exceptional dishes hidden within Kuta's largely bland dining scene.

**Family Cafe** (☎ 653 748; mains 12,000-30,000Rp) You won't need that thick menu, just order the *sate pusut* (minced fish, chicken or beef mixed with fresh coconut, chilli and spices, moulded and grilled on lemongrass stalks) and *kangkung pelecing* (sautéed water spinach and bean sprouts, topped with tomato sauce and shredded coconut).

**Ketapang Cafe** (☎ 0878 6541 5209; meals 12,000-50,000Rp) There are three charming dining pagodas shaded by grass umbrellas, but you should belly up to the fine bamboo bar. The Indonesian fare is tasty and pizzas get rave reviews by the expat locals.

**Astari** (dishes 18,000-25,000Rp; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Tue-Sun) Perched on a mountaintop 2km west of town on the road to Mawan, this breezy, Moroccan-themed vegetarian lounge-restaurant has spectacular vistas of pristine bays and rocky peninsulas that take turns spilling further out to sea. And its delicious, health-conscious menu lives up to the setting. The blackboard always has a daily dish and drink of the day, but the mainstays are the focaccia sandwiches, salads and superb shakes (the coconut shake will make your beverage hall of fame immediately). You will not eat and run.

**ourpick Lombok Lounge** (☎ 655 542) Yes, it has inexpensive Indonesian food and scrolls of pedestrian Western dishes. But you won't need to search the menu because you're here for the scintillating, finger-licking, meaty chilli crab (50,000Rp), a Chinese Indonesian classic. It's more than just the best meal in town, it's a full body experience. Wash it down with icy Bintang.

**Cafe Chili** (Novotel Lombok; breakfast buffet US\$10; ☎ 8-10.30am) Breakfast lovers, rejoice! The Novotel opens its bottomless array of Western breakfast delights to all comers. Grab a table seaside and munch deeply.

**Shore Beach Bar** (☎ 10am-late, live band on Sat night) Owned by Kimen, Kuta's original surf entrepreneur, the open dance-hall interior has been recently renovated, the sound system is fantastic, there's breezy patio seating, cushy red booths and an expansive bar. If you're in town on a Saturday night, you'll probably wind up here.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Kuta is a hassle to reach by public transport. From Mandalika terminal in Mataram you'll have to go to Praya (5000Rp), then Sengkol

(3000Rp) and finally to Kuta (2000Rp). You'll usually have to change buses twice. Most opt for the shuttle-bus option offered by **Perama** (☎ 654 846) – from Mataram (125,000Rp, two hours), Senggigi (150,000Rp, 2½ hours) and the Gilis (225,000Rp, 3½ hours), or hire private transport.

## GETTING AROUND

*Ojeks* congregate around the main junction as you enter Kuta. Bemos go east of Kuta to Awang and Tanjung Aan (5000Rp), and west to Selong Blanak (10,000Rp). Most guest houses rent motorbikes for 40,000Rp to 50,000Rp per day.

## Around Kuta

Decent roads traverse the coast to the east and west, passing a seemingly endless series of beautiful bays punctuated by headlands.

The beach within walking distance of town, **Pantai Segar** is about 2km east around the first headland. The enormous rock of **Batu Kotak**, 2km further on, divides two glorious white-sand beaches. Continuing east, **Tanjung Aan** is an idyllic turquoise, horseshoe bay with five powder-white sand beaches. It's also the best swimming beach on this end of Kuta. Regrettably, it won't look like this for much longer (see boxed text, p512). The road continues another 2km to **Gerupak**, the fishing village with a market on Tuesday, a restaurant on the beach and five exceptional surf breaks. Alternatively, turn northeast just before Tanjung Aan and go to **Awang**, a busy fishing village with a sideline in seaweed harvesting. You could take a boat from Awang across the bay to Ekas (a charter costs around 120,000Rp) or to some of the other not-so-secret surf spots in this bay.

West of Kuta is yet another series of awesome beaches that all have sick surf when conditions are right. The road is potholed and very steep in places, detours inland and skirts tobacco, sweet potato and rice fields in between turn-offs to the sand.

The first left after Astari leads to **Mawan** (parking costs 3000/5000Rp for a motorbike/car), a sweet cove with a majestic old shade tree, a wide stretch of white sand that extends into the deep sea, and views of offshore islands. It's a terrific swimming beach when the undertow isn't too treacherous.

The very next left – although it's quite a bit further down the road – leads through



### SOUTH LOMBOK SECURITY WARNING

Tourists have been threatened and robbed at knifepoint on the back roads of South Lombok, in particular around Mawi. Ask around about the latest situation and don't leave your vehicle or valuables unattended – tip a local to watch them for you.

a gate (admission 5000Rp) down a horribly rutted track to **Mawi** (parking 5000Rp), 16km from Kuta. Although the white-sand beach is relatively thin, it's still a stunning scene, with several additional beaches scattered around the bay. Surfers descend for the legendary barrels that roll in liberally. Sadly, thefts have been reported here.

After **Mawi** head back to the main road and when it forks, make a left into **Selong Blanak** village. Park and cross the rickety pedestrian bridge to a wide sugar-white beach with water streaked a thousand colours of blue, ideal for swimming.

From **Pengantap** the road climbs across a headland then descends to another superb bay; follow this around for about 1km, then look out for the turn-off west to **Blongas**, which is a very steep, rough and winding road with breathtaking scenery.

### EAST LOMBOK

☎ 0376

All that most travellers see of the east coast is Labuhan Lombok, the port for ferries to Sumbawa. But the real highlight is the remote southeastern peninsula. If you've ever wondered what Bali's Bukit looked like before all the villages, villas and surf rats, here's your chance.

### Labuhan Lombok

Labuhan Lombok (or Labuhan Kayangan) is the Sumbawa-bound ferry port. The town centre, 3km west of the ferry terminal, is a scruffy place with great views of Gunung Rinjani.

Try to avoid staying overnight as there's only one decent place, **Losmen Lima Tiga** Jl Raya Kayangan; r 55,000Rp). About 2.5km inland from the port on the main road, it's a family-run place with small rooms and shared bathrooms with western toilets and *mandis*. Warungs are scattered around the ferry terminal.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

#### Bus & Bemo

Frequent buses and bemos travel between Labuhan Lombok and Mandalika terminal in Mataram (11,000Rp, two hours). Buses and bemos that don't go directly to Labuhan Lombok will drop you off at the port entrance, where you should catch another bemo to the ferry terminal. It's a long walk.

#### Ferry

See p517 for details on ferry connections between Lombok and Sumbawa, and p486 for bus connections between Mataram and Sumbawa.

### North Of Labuhan Lombok

Leaving Labuhan Lombok, look out for the giant mahogany trees about 4km north of the harbour. From Labuhan Pandan, or from further north at Sugian, you can charter a boat to the uninhabited **Gili Sulat** and **Gili Pentangan**. Both islands have lovely white beaches and good coral for snorkelling, but no facilities.

### South Of Labuhan Lombok

The capital of the East Lombok administrative district, **Selong**, has some dusty Dutch colonial buildings. The transport junction for the region is just west of Selong at **Pancor** where you can catch bemos to most points south.

**Tanjung Luar** is one of Lombok's main fishing ports and has lots of quaint Bugis-style houses on stilts. From there, the road swings west to **Keruak**, where wooden boats are built, and continues to **Sukaraja**, a traditional Sasak village. Just west of Keruak a road leads south to **Jerowaru** and the spectacular southeastern peninsula.

A sealed road branches west past Jerowaru to **Ekas**, where you'll find a huge bay framed by stunning sheer cliffs on both sides. There are two sensational surf breaks (inside and outside) at Ekas and boat charters to Awang across the bay. Or, you could just find **Heaven on the Planet** (☎ 0812 370 5393; www.heavenontheplanet.co.nz; per person all-inclusive for 5 days or less/6 days or more US\$120/100; 📍). Chalets are scattered among the cliffs (there is one beach chalet), where you'll have mind-blowing bird's-eye views of the sea and swell lines. It's especially magical at sunset, when the rippled bay flashes hot pink then melts into a deep purple, before the light fades and stars carpet a black-dome sky. Although Heaven does offer fun dives (US\$37) on a wall

lit by colourful soft corals, it is primarily a surf resort. From here you can paddle out to the inside break at Ekas or take the boat to the outside break. Heaven's groovy Kiwi owners recently opened a second resort, **Ocean Heaven**, right on Pantai Ekas. Both have tasty food, a full bar, friendly staff, and guests receive massages every second day. Room rates and contact details are the same at both resorts.

The roads here are confusing and pretty terrible, but if you reserve a room in Heaven, their angels provide free transfer. If you're already in Kuta, just charter a boat from Awang (see p514).

## SUMBAWA

Beautifully contorted and sprawling into the sea, Sumbawa is all volcanic ridges, terraced rice fields, jungled peninsulas and sheltered bays. The southwest coast is where Sumbawa is at her most spectacular, with a layered series of headlands and wide, silky white beaches that see incredible surf. The southeast is no slouch. It's also a bit more accessible, which explains why Lakey Peak has become Sumbawa's premier year-round surf magnet. Massive, climbable Gunung Tambora (2850m), a mountain that exploded so large it forever influenced the climate and topography of the island, looms in the north.

Though well connected to Bali and Lombok, Sumbawa is a very different sort of place. It's far less developed, much poorer and extremely conservative. Transport connections off the cross-island road are infrequent and uncomfortable, and most overland travellers don't even get off the bus in Sumbawa as they float and roll from Lombok to Flores. For now, it's the domain of surfers, miners and mullahs. But if you charter transport or rent a motorcycle, and take some time, you'll find more than a little bit of beauty.

### History

Before the 17th century Sumbawa had been subject to Javanese Hindu influence creeping east from Bali and Lombok, but it was the expansionist Makassarese states of Sulawesi who gained control of the island by force and, by 1625, Sumbawa's rulers had converted to Islam.

Soon West Sumbawa held sway over much of Lombok and this brought it into conflict

with the Balinese during the 18th century. The wars had barely ceased when Gunung Tambora exploded in April 1815, killing tens of thousands. One of the most cataclysmic eruptions of modern times, it reduced a 4200m peak to approximately 2850m and devastated agricultural land. The following year was known as 'the year without a summer'. The sun was muted worldwide thanks to the tremendous amount of Tambora ash in the atmosphere.

From the middle of the 19th century, immigrants repopulated Sumbawa, and the island's coastal regions now have small numbers of Javanese, Makassarese, Bugis, Sasaks and other ethnic groups.

In 1908 the Dutch intervened to prevent the prospect of a war between the three states that made up West Sumbawa. The sultans kept a fair degree of their power under the Dutch, but after Indonesian independence their titles were abolished; now their descendants hold official power only when they are functionaries of the national government. The only traces of the old sultanates are the palaces in Sumbawa Besar and Bima.

### Culture

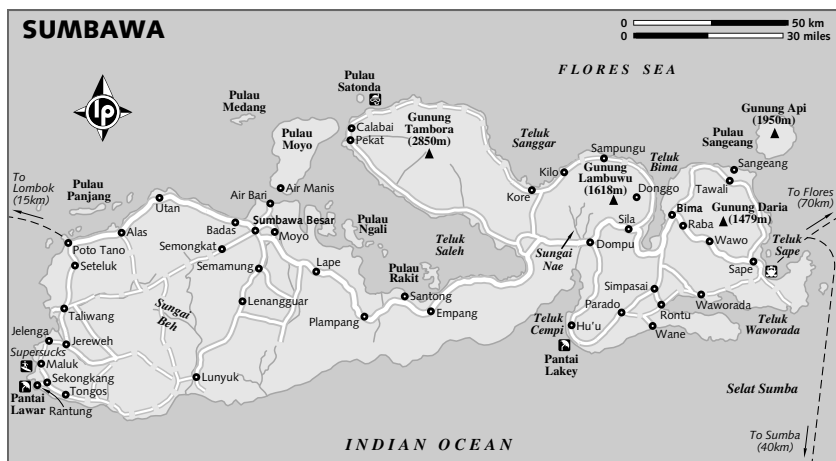
Sumbawa is split between two distinct peoples. Those who speak Sumbawanese probably reached the west of the island from Lombok. Bimanese speakers dominate the Tambora Peninsula and the east. The shorter, darker-skinned and more outgoing Bimanese are more closely related to the people of Flores, while the western, more reserved Sumbawans are closer to the Sasaks of Lombok. Both languages have considerable variation in dialect.

Sumbawa is an overwhelmingly Islamic island, but in remote parts *adat* thrives under the veneer of Islam.

During festivals you may come across traditional Sumbawan fighting, a sort of bare-fisted boxing called *berempah*. Dynamic horse and water-buffalo races are held before the rice is planted.

### Dangers & Annoyances

Most Sumbawans are friendly and hospitable, but you may encounter some tension. Weeks before our arrival in 2009, there was significant civil unrest between the Dou Donggo people, who have long resented Bimanese control, and Bima police. Two died in the standoff.



## Getting Around

Sumbawa's main highway is in great condition and runs from Taliwang (near the west coast) through Sumbawa Besar, Dompus and Bima to Sape (on the east coast). Fleets of long-distance buses, most of them air-conditioned and quite comfy, link all the towns on this road as far as Bima.

Car hire is possible through hotels in Sumbawa Besar or Bima, but prices are higher than in Bali or Lombok at about 450,000Rp per day, excluding petrol but including a driver. Plan on paying for your driver's meals and lodging as well. Motorcycles are a far cheaper option at 75,000Rp a day.

## WEST SUMBAWA

☎ 0372

West Sumbawa is drop-dead gorgeous. Beaches are wide, empty, sugar-white, framed with domelike headlands and backed by rolling jungled hills. Bays are just as spectacular, enormous and dynamic. They can be tranquil one hour and fold into overhead barrels the next. Sumbawa Besar is a humble Muslim town with a friendly population and a damn fine morning market. Pulau Moyo, a jungled jewel off the northern shore, has special diving and snorkelling, but it's difficult to access unless, of course, you're rolling with your black Amex at the ready.

## Poto Tano

Poto Tano, the main port for ferries to/from Lombok, is a ramshackle harbour, fringed by

stilt-fishing villages with tremendous views of Gunung Rinjani. Pretty place, but there's no need to sleep here.

Ferries run every 45 minutes, 24 hours a day, between Labuhan Lombok and Poto Tano (15,500Rp, 1½ hours). You can also bring your hired car (322,000Rp) or motorcycle (75,000Rp). Through buses from Mataram to Sumbawa Besar or Bima include the ferry fare.

Buses meet the ferry and go to Taliwang (15,000Rp, one hour) and Sumbawa Besar (12,000Rp, two hours).

## Taliwang

It may be the regional capital and transport hub, but Taliwang is just a small, conservative village, 30km south of Poto Tano.

There's a BRI Bank with ATM on the main road, a few internet cafes and plenty of Padang-food warungs. The best eats are found at **Rumah Makan Totang Raja** (☎ 81387; Jl Jendral Sudirman 51; dishes 10,000-35,000Rp). Try their *ayam bakar pelecing*, aka *ayam taliwang*.

Buses go from Taliwang to Poto Tano (15,000Rp) almost hourly. Six buses a day head for Mataram (65,000Rp, six hours, last bus at 1.30pm) and around 30 a day go to Sumbawa Besar (25,000Rp, three hours). For Maluk there are two daily buses (10,000Rp, two hours) and regular bemos.

## Around Taliwang

**Lebok Taliwang**, Sumbawa's largest lake, is just off the highway south of Poto Tano. Look for the wetlands dotted with water lilies. **Poto**

**Batu**, 6km from Taliwang, is a favourite swimming spot among locals, with a cave, a blow hole and a decent beach. The muddy flats of **Labuhan-balat** are home to a Bugis stilt-fishing community on a spectacular bay – the first of several you'll see as you head south. It's 7km from Taliwang; take a truck or bemo here, and beware the motorbike buffalo rustlers.

From Taliwang, bemos and trucks run 11km south to Jereweh, from where it is 6km to the remarkable beach and enormous horseshoe bay at **Jelenga**, a humble country village with rice fields, goat farms and a tremendous 'left' break known as Scar Reef. **Sunset View** (☎ 0813 3716 7726; tr 200,000Rp) is the chilled-out, rustic surf lodge of your dreams with huge rooms, a ping-pong table, satellite TV, and garden that creeps to the white sand. The kitchen churns out burgers, seafood and curries. **Jelenga Mulia** (☎ 0813 5369 1920; bungalows 150,000Rp) is another solid option. The cute, simple beach huts are clean and have private outdoor baths.

## Maluk, Rantung & Sekongkang

As you keep moving south along the west coast, the beaches and bays work hard to outdo one another. Your first stop is the working-class commercial district of **Maluk**, 30km south of Taliwang. Yes, the town is ugly, but the beach is superb. The sand is a blend of white and gold, and the bay is buffered by two headlands: a massive rock to the north, and a long, slender peninsula to the south. Protected by an offshore reef, there's good swimming in the shallows, and when the swell hits, the reef sculpts barrels.

A massive open-pit copper and gold mine about 30km inland of Maluk has driven a wave of development and attracted international and domestic staff from the US, Australia and Java to the area. The Newmont mine employs about 10,000 workers, and had a huge impact on Maluk when it first opened, but most of the expat restaurant and bar traffic has now shifted to **Townside**, a private company enclave complete with health club, golf courses and the best hospital in Sumbawa. You need a personal invite to breach the gates, but you can arrange one with a week's notice. Some spill-over still trickles into Maluk, along with a pinch of the mining proceeds, which reach over 12 billion Rp in an average year. There's a **BNI bank** with ATM on Jl Raya Maluk, adjacent to the Trophy Hotel. Just south, **K-Link** (per hr 5000Rp) offers broadband access on Jl Raya Maluk.

Directly south of Maluk, within walking distance of the beach is **Supersuck**, one of Indonesia's best surf breaks. Many an aging surfer has proclaimed this wave to be the finest barrel of their lives. It only pumps in the dry season (May to October).

Fifteen kilometres further south, the spread-out settlement of **Sekongkang** includes three superb beaches with another handful of tremendous breaks. Pantai Rantung, 2km downhill from Sekongkang Atas, spills onto a secluded and majestic bay framed by 100m-high headlands. The water is crystal-clear and waves roll in year-round at **Yo Yo's**, a right break at the north end of the bay. **Hook**, which breaks at the edge of the northern bluff, is also a terrific right. **Supershit**, which breaks straight in front of the Rantung Beach Hotel, is a good, consistent beginner's break year-round, but gets heavy and delivers a long left when the swell comes in. The next bay down is where you'll find **Tropical**, another phenomenal beach (named for the resort) and home to great left and right breaks that beginners can enjoy all year. North of Rantung is Pantai **Lawar**, a tree-shaded stretch of white sand on a turquoise lagoon sheltered by volcanic bluffs draped in jungle. When the surf is flat, come here to swim, snorkel or spearfish.

## SLEEPING & EATING

The following hotels are listed in geographical order.

**Maluk Resort** (☎ 635 424; Jl Pasir Putih, Maluk; standard/deluxe 200,000/250,000Rp; ♿) One block west of the main road and steps from the sand is this pleasant, palm-studded three-star resort. Rooms are spotless with queen beds, wood furnishings, air-con and ceiling fans.

**Super Suck Hotel** (☎ 0812 3637 3122; jwscfe@yahoo.com; Maluk; dm 50,000Rp, standard with Western-style shared bath 200,000Rp, deluxe 400,000Rp; ♿) Accessible from Pantai Maluk or via the half-paved strip that meets the Maluk–Sekongkang road. Deluxe rooms are large and come with HBO and Cinemax, hot water and queen beds. The smaller, shared rooms also have cable TV and are quite clean. The American owner serves tasty Western breakfasts, burgers and seafood. He'll even arrange transport to the lodge from Mataram or Poto Tano if you email him in advance. Book ahead during the surf season.

**Rantung Beach Hotel** (☎ 0878 6393 5758; Rantung; s/d 50,000/80,000Rp; ♿) The region's cheapest option attracts budget surfers to their somewhat

ramshackle rooms (which come with fans and mosquito nets). The young, hip Sasak-born management are full of surf tips and good vibrations.

**Rantung Restaurant & Cottages** (☎ 0812 375 4456; Rantung; cottages 650,000Rp; dishes 30,000-70,000Rp) Next door, the expat and Javanese mining crowd has enjoyed more than a few sundowners at this fantastic beach location. The food won't win any awards, but the new stylish cottages are the best beachfront option in the region. There are high ceilings, queen beds, nice wooden wardrobes, hot water, and they open onto leafy private decks with sea views.

**Depot Balikpapan** (Pantai Wisata Maluku, Maluku; meals 20,000-50,000Rp) Its fish-grill aroma stands out among the other stalls in Maluku's thatched beach dining complex, in a very good way. Fish plates come with a snarling, spicy *sambal* (chilli sauce).

**Lesehan Bu Diah** (0818 0525 4022, Jl Raya Maluku, Maluku; meals 10,000-80,000Rp; ☎ 11am-10pm) Sit cross-legged on the floor of wooden pagodas and dine on fresh seafood and Chinese Indo faves overlooking an artificial pond in a leafy garden. Located on Maluku's far south end, it gets a nice local dinner crowd.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bemos travel between Taliwang and Maluku (10,000Rp, 2 hours) almost hourly from 7am to 6pm. Three buses leave Terminal Maluku, north of town across from the entrance to the Newmont mine (look for the big gates and massive parking area), for Sumbawa Besar (30,000Rp, four hours) at 7am, noon and 7pm daily.

## SUMBAWA BESAR

☎ 0371 / pop 56,000

Sumbawa Besar, often shortened to 'Sumbawa', is the principal market town of the island's western hemisphere. It's leafy, devoutly Muslim, and runs on the bushels of beans, rice and corn cultivated on the outskirts. It's also quite friendly and easy to navigate on foot, by *ojek* or horse cart (called *benhur*). There's not a lot to see here aside from the old palace (assuming it does eventually get rebuilt), a lazy mocha river that meanders through town and a lively morning market. Trips out to Pulau Moyo and to nearby villages are worthwhile but take time and money, which is why most travellers simply consider this town a respite on the trans-Sumbawa highway.

## Orientation

Sumbawa Besar is mostly doable on foot. Traffic runs in a high-speed Jl Hasanuddin–Jl Diponegoro loop. The best sleeping and eating options are clustered along Jl Hasanuddin.

## Information

**Bank Mega** (Jl Diponegoro 55; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) ATM and cash advances available.

**BNI** (Jl Kartini 10; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Currency exchange and an ATM. There's also an ATM on Jl Kebayan, next to the supermarket.

**Klinik Lawang Gali** (☎ 270 5993; Jl Sudirman 18-20; per hr 11,000Rp) Brand-new hospital with ambulance services.

**Main post office** (Jl Garuda)

**Perlindungan Hutan dan Konservasi Alam** (PHKA; ☎ 23941; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) The office of the national-park service has information about Pulau Moyo and can occasionally offer transport to the island for just 10,000Rp per person. It's about 4km southwest of town in the village of Nijang; take a bemo from the roundabout on Jl Garuda.

**Sejoli.Net** (Jl Hasanuddin 50; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 8am-1am) Surf well for cheap.

**Sub-post office** (Jl Yos Sudarso) Closer to the town centre.

**Telkom** (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 24hr) Still the cheapest place to make international calls.

**Tourist office** (☎ 23714; Jl Bungur 1; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri, to 1pm Sat) Just off Jl Garuda, 100m south of the main post office on the edge of town. Expect nothing more than a few brochures.

## Sights

Originally built over 200 years ago, the remains of the **Dalam Loka** (Sultan's Palace), a once-imposing structure that covers an entire city block, had deteriorated until near dereliction by the 1980s. A shoddy subsequent renovation included an ill-fitted tin roof hammered to the few remaining original pillars and carved beams, which is why Japanese archaeologists, with blessings from the Indonesian government, had dismantled it to the frame and were in the midst of a complete restoration at research time.

The descendants of the sultans now live in the **Balai Kuning** (Yellow House; ☎ 21101; Jl Dr Wahidin; tours for up to 10 people 100,000Rp), a handsome whitewashed mansion with a peaked shingled roof that was gifted to the royals by the Dutch on 11 February 1932. There are numerous artefacts from the days of the sultanate here. Call the day before to arrange a tour; otherwise admire it from **Sultan's Park** across the street.

## SUMBAWA BESAR

- A** To Pelni & Labuhan Sumbawa (3km);  
Samar Ngung Terminal (5.5km);  
Samar Ngung Ferry Terminal (5km);  
Hotel Pantai Kencana (1.1km);  
Poto Tano (72km)
- B** Jl. Karang
- C** Jl. Manggis
- D** Jl. Manggis
- E** To Air Baru (15km)
- F**



- 1** To Airport (50km);  
Main Post Office (1.5km);  
Tourist Office (1.5km);  
PHKA (4km)
- 2**
- 3**
- 4**

## INFORMATION

- Bank Mega.....1 B1  
BNI ATM.....2 A1  
BNI Bank.....3 E3  
Klinik Lawang Gali.....4 E4  
Sejoli Net.....5 C2  
Sub-Post Office.....6 D2  
Telkom.....7 D2

## SIGHTS &amp; ACTIVITIES

- Balai Kuning.....8 E3  
Dalam Loka.....9 E3  
Sultan's Park.....10 E3

## SLEEPING

- Hotel Dian.....11 B2  
Hotel Suci.....12 B2

## EATING

- Aneka Rasa Jaya.....(see 13)  
Ikan Bakar 99.....13 C2  
Night Warnings.....14 E2  
Warung Kila 2.....15 E3

## SHOPPING

- Pasar Syketeng.....16 E3

## TRANSPORT

- Panca Sari Tours & Travel.....17 B2  
Seketeng Bemo Terminal.....18 E3  
Tiara Mas.....19 C2  
Transnusa.....20 B2

To Tegay (9km);  
Sawar (10km);  
Baru Tengah (30km)

To Poto (12km);  
Bima (220km)

Since you are waking up in Sumbawa, rise early and hit the steamy, exotic **Pasar Syketeng**. Beginning at 7am, its dank alleyways come alive as young and old descend to barter and haggle for every conceivable item from bras to live chickens. The fish market is interesting and the spicy aroma of chilli and turmeric compete with recently slaughtered beef for your olfactory attention. Locals are always happy to laugh and chat if you produce even a modicum of Bahasa Indonesia.

## Sleeping

Hotels congregate on Jl Hasanuddin. The nearby mosque provides free wake-up calls.

**Hotel Dian** (☎ 21708, 22297; Jl Hasanuddin 69; s/d with fan 45,000/60,000Rp, with air-con 90,000/135,000Rp; 🚽) There's a wide variety of rooms here, and the best have air-con and spring beds. The worst feel like concrete cells. Still, it's reasonably clean and hospitable.

**Our pick Hotel Suci** (☎ 21589; Jl Hasanuddin 57; d with fan 60,000Rp, with air-con 150,000Rp; 🚽) Right next to the mosque is the top of the local lodging heap. Economy rooms aren't great, but the air-con rooms in the new building are large and airy, with high ceilings, and are reasonably clean. Service here is top-notch. It isn't fancy, but it feels good.

**Hotel Pantai Kencana** (☎ 270 8855; Jl Raya Tano Km 11; bungalows standard/deluxe 300,000/350,000Rp; 🚽 🚿) A bit out of town, the grounds have seen better days. Still, the wooden bungalows are decent and on the beach. Deluxe bungalows come outfitted with air-con, TV and minibar, but it's the standard variety that enjoys the breeze and sea views.

## Eating

**Warung Kita 2** (☎ 23065; Jl Setiabudi 13; dishes 9000-17,000Rp) A bright, delicious pick 'n' mix diner with trays of broiled chicken, tasty fried shrimp, and curried green beans.

**Aneka Rasa Jaya** (☎ 21291, 23670; Jl Hasanuddin 16; dishes 12,000-55,000Rp) Clean and popular, this Chinese seafood house plates tender fish fillets, shrimp, squid, crab and scallops in oyster, Szechuan, and sweet and sour sauce. The *soto kepiting* (crab soup) is particularly popular.

**Ikan Bakar 99** (☎ 21102; Jl Hasanuddin 15; dishes 15,000-45,000Rp) Yes, the environs are not so savoury, but they do have tasty fresh seafood, and lots of it. Choose shrimp, squid, crab or fish and pair it with spicy Padang, oyster or butter sauce. Get it fried or grilled.

For cheap eats, make your way to the night warungs in front of the stadium, where you'll find sate sizzling.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

At research time **Transnusa** (☎ 21565, 21370; Jl Hasanuddin 110) was Sumbawa Besar's only active carrier, with daily flights to Denpasar via Mataram. Flights depart at 8am Monday to Thursday and at 2.30pm Friday to Sunday. Departure tax is 10,000Rp.

### BUS

Sumbawa Besar's main long-distance bus station is **Terminal Sumur Payung**, 5.5km northwest of town on the highway, where seven bus lines run air-con coaches to Bima (90,000Rp, seven hours via Dompu) departing between 2pm and 3pm. Routes also include Poto Tano (25,000Rp, three hours, hourly 8am to midnight), Mataram (65,000Rp to 70,000Rp including ferry, six hours, departures at 8am, 10am and 9pm) and Denpasar (225,000Rp including ferries, around 12 hours, two daily). You can book tickets at **Tiara Mas** (☎ 21241; Jl Yos Sudarso). **Panca Sari Tours & Travel** (☎ 21513; Jl Diponegoro 49) books faster minibuses to Mataram (110,000Rp, departures 5.30am and 10.30pm).

## Getting Around

There are no taxis awaiting your arrival, but it's easy to walk into town from the airport, just 500m from the hotel cluster. Turn to your right as you exit the terminal and cross the bridge. Alternatively, take a yellow bemo (2000Rp) or an *ojek* (3000Rp).

The streets here, apart from the bemo speedway along Jl Hasanuddin, are relatively stress-free. Bemo and *benhur* cost 2000Rp for trips anywhere around town. The local **Seketeng bemo terminal** (Jl Setiabudi) is in front of the *pasar* (market).

A Kijang is 450,000Rp with a driver. Sumbawa's longest-tenured tour guide, **Gitasyata 'Iyat'** (☎ 0852 5366 4574), is knowledgeable, warm and easy to work with. He speaks terrific English. Motorcycles are best arranged in Lombok and ferried over to Poto Tano.

## AROUND SUMBAWA BESAR

All these attractions are tricky to reach by public transport. Ask at Hotel Suci (left) about hiring a local guide and transport charters.

## Pulau Moyo

A gently arcing crescent of jungled volcanic rock, Moyo – all 36,000 hectares of it – floats atop the gorgeous azure seas north of Sumbawa Besar. The same size as Singapore, it has almost no commercial development and is peopled by just five small villages. The majority of the island, and the rich reefs offshore, form a nature reserve laced with hiking and biking trails, dripping with waterfalls and offering some of the best diving west of Komodo. Loggerhead and green turtles hatch on the beaches, long-tail macaques patrol the canopy, and wild pigs, barking deer and a diverse bird population including megapodes all call Moyo home.

Unfortunately, accommodation is limited to just one expensive (like ‘if you have to ask, you can’t afford it’ expensive) resort, but it is possible to visit Moyo on a day trip.

For transport contact the PHKA office (p519) in Sumbawa Besar; they may be able to shuttle you over for 10,000Rp per person. Otherwise, head to Air Bari, which is on the coast north of Sumbawa Besar. Public bemos (7000Rp, one hour) run to Air Bari three or four times daily, starting at around 7am. They leave from the turn-off to Air Bari, at the far end of Jl Sudirman.

From Air Bari, speedboats cost 100,000Rp per person (fishing boats and outriggers about half that) to the south coast of the island (3km away). The boats will take you to snorkelling spots Air Manis, and Tanjung Pasir (the better of the two). Good reefs with a plunging wall can be found all around the island if you are prepared to charter a boat for a bit longer. Just northeast of Pulau Moyo is small **Pulau Satonda**, which also has good beaches and tremendous snorkelling. It’s three hours by boat from Air Bari.

With the recent demise of Sumbawa’s Laguna Biru Resort, there are only two ways to dive at Pulau Moyo. You can join a Bali- or Lombok-based, Komodo-bound live-aboard or check in to the luscious Amanwana, the swankiest dive camp on the planet. There are worse fates.

The seas around Moyo get turbulent from December to March. If boat operators are hesitant to launch, they probably have good reason.

## SLEEPING

**Amanwana Resort** (☎ 22233; [www.amanresorts.com](http://www.amanresorts.com); all-inclusive jungle tents s/d US\$825, ocean tents US\$925, plus 21%

tax; 🍷) On Moyo’s western side, Amanwana is the ultimate island hideaway. This is where the rich and famous go ‘camping’, albeit in lavish permanent tents with antique wood furnishings, king-sized beds, two sofas and, of course, air-con. But nature still rules here. The resort is built around diving, hiking and mountain biking, they sponsor turtle hatcheries, deer breeding and reef-protection projects. There’s a full-service spa and a dive school where courses and dive trips are private. Guests arrive by private seaplane from Bali (US\$400 return) or are shuttled over from mainland Sumbawa on an Aman cruiser.

## Other Sights & Activities

Some of the best ikat and *songket* sarongs are made by members of a women’s weaving *klompok* (collective) in the conservative mountain village of **Poto**, 12km east of Sumbawa Besar and 2km from the small town of Moyo. Traditional designs include the *prahu* (outrigger boat) and ancestor head motif. You’ll hear the clack of their looms from the street and are welcome to duck into their humble huts. The most intricate pieces take up to 45 days to produce. **Haj Masturi** (☎ 0852 3954 3485) is one of Poto’s leading weavers. Call her when you get to town and she can show you around.

The hills south of Sumbawa Besar are home to a number of **traditional villages** and offer **hiking** possibilities. One of the more interesting villages is **Tepal**, where horses can be hired to venture higher into the forest, but you will need to charter a 4WD vehicle from Sumbawa Besar to get there.

Near **Batu Tering** are megalithic sarcophagi, carved with low-relief crocodile and human figures, believed to be the 2000-year-old **tombs** of ancient chiefs. Footprints in the stones are said to be those of the gods. Batu Tering is about 30km by bemo from Sumbawa Besar, via Semamung. Hire a guide in the village to visit the sarcophagi, which are 4km away.

**Air Beling** is a pretty waterfall in the southern mountains. Take the road south through Semamung to Brangrea, from where it is 6km along a rough road with many forks. It’s usually inaccessible without a 4WD vehicle, and impossible to find without a guide.

If you have your own wheels and are doing the trans-Sumbawa disco, stop for lunch at **Warung Santong** (Pantai Santong; meals 25,000Rp; 🍷 24hr), a tasty fish shack teetering on the rocky shore at the island’s midway point. Dine



on fresh catch, grilled or fried, in the 'dining room', or on one of three stilted pagodas at the water's edge.

## EAST SUMBAWA

☎ 0373

Twisted into a shape all its own, and linguistically and culturally distinct from the west, the eastern half of Sumbawa sees the most visitors thanks to accessible year-round surf near Hu'u village. Adventurous souls may also want to tackle majestic Gunung Tambora, a mountain that changed the world. And there are a handful of traditional villages in the hills above chaotic Bima, the haywired commercial heart of East Sumbawa.

### Gunung Tambora

Looming over central Sumbawa is the 2850m volcano, Gunung Tambora. Its peak was obliterated during the epic eruption in April 1815 (see p516), which buried residents alive and forever altered the region's geography. Tambora, not deforestation, is the reason that the oldest trees on Moyo are under 200 years old. In 2004, University of Rhode Island and Indonesian vulcanologists unearthed bronze bowls and ceramic pots from a Pompeii-like village, which indicate that the region once had strong trading links with Vietnam and Cambodia.

But you're here to bag the peak. From the summit you'll have spectacular views of the 6km-wide caldera, which contains a two-coloured lake, and endless ocean vistas that stretch as far as Gunung Rinjani (Lombok). The base for ascents is the village of Pancasila near the town of Calabai on the western slope, which is five hours by a very crowded bus from Dompu (35,000Rp), two hours by wooden boat (250,000Rp plus petrol), or an hour by speedboat from Sumbawa Besar (500,000Rp plus petrol). From Calabai take a *benhur* (15,000Rp) or *ojek* (25,000Rp) to Pancasila, where guides and porters (100,000Rp each per day) can be easily arranged. Due to trail conditions, it can only be climbed in the dry season (June to October).

### Dompu

Nestled in a sweet coconut-studded valley with lush granite hills rising on both sides, Dompu, the seat of one of Sumbawa's former independent states, is Sumbawa's third-biggest town. There's a colourful market snaking

through its back streets, but otherwise it's just an attractive pit stop for the road-weary.

Money can be changed at the **BNI bank** (Jl Nusantara; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-noon Sat), which has an ATM.

The best hotel is the hospitable **Wisma Samada** (☎ 21417; Jl Gajah Mada 18; standard d 55,000Rp, VIP with air-con d 110,000Rp; 🍴), which has plenty of spacious rooms with attractive wooden beds and desks and private bathrooms. The gleaming **Rumah Makan Rinjani** (☎ 21445; Jl Sudirman; mains 5000-17,500Rp) serves up a delicious *nasi campur*. It also has a few rooms for rent.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

Daily buses run from Ginte main bus terminal, 2km from the centre, to Bima (15,000Rp, two hours), Sape (15,000Rp, four hours) and Sumbawa Besar (35,000Rp, five hours). If availability allows, you can hop an air-con bus through to Mataram (110,000Rp). Several travel in convoy from Bima, passing by the terminal at 9pm.

Two buses leave the Lepardi local bus terminal on the southern side of town for Hu'u (15,000Rp, 1½ hours) at 7am and 2pm daily. From there you can charter an *ojek* (10,000Rp) to Pantai Lakey. At all other times you'll have to charter a car (300,000Rp).

### Hu'u & Pantai Lakey

Pantai Lakey, a gentle crescent of golden sand 3km south of Hu'u, is where Sumbawa's tourist pulse beats year-round, thanks to seven world-class surf breaks that curl and crash in one massive bay. **Lakey Peak** and **Lakey Pipe** are the best-known waves and are within paddle distance of the various hotels and bungalow properties. You can also paddle out to **Mangas**. You'll need to rent a motorbike or hire an *ojek* to get to **Cobblestone**, the one-time house break of local turned international surf star **Oney Anwar** (see boxed text, p524), and **Nangadoro**. **Periscope** is 150m from the sand and at the far north end of the bay near **Maci Point**, another good spot. Most surfers share the cost of a boat (500,000Rp, maximum five people) to get there and back. Waves can be very good (and very big) year-round, but the most consistent swell arrives between June and August. From August to October the wind blows in, which turns Pantai Lakey into Indonesia's best kite-surfing destination – regarded as one of the 10 best in the world.

## SURF DREAMS

When he was just five years old, Oney Anwar found a broken nose-end of a surfboard and paddled to the outside reef at his native Lakey Peak. Fearless, he lined up with seasoned local and international surfers who laughed at the groom's ballsy antics.

No one is laughing now.

Sponsored by Rip Curl at 12 and national junior champion at 13, Anwar (now 16) is living on Australia's Gold Coast where he attends high school. Before and after class he is being groomed by some of the world's best fitness trainers and surf coaches to compete on the world tour like his idols, Mick Fanning and Kelly Slater. Not bad for a kid who grew up in a three-room hut, just steps from the Cobblestone break near Pantai Lakey.

'It's a special area if you're a surfer,' he says. 'We get good waves all year and people come from all over – Hawaii, Australia – to surf, which helped us locals learn new tricks and get better.'

Anwar's aerial displays and his innate ability to get barrels have earned him 11 junior titles in three years. But he has bigger dreams. 'I want to become the first Indonesian world champ, so I can support my country.'

Inexperienced surfers should take good care. Waves break over a shallow reef. At research time an experienced, sponsored surfer from California fractured vertebrae at Lakey Peak. The airlift didn't arrive for three days. Thankfully, he's expected to make a full recovery.

Hu'u is a small, poor, but very friendly fishing village, 3km north of Lakey. It's suffused with the scent of drying fish and blessed with breathtaking pink sunsets. When the swell gets really big, there's a beach break here as well.

## INFORMATION

Most hotels will change US and Australian dollars at poor rates; bring ample rupiah. There's a wartel at Balumba and an expensive but decent internet cafe at **Aman Gati** (per minute 1000Rp; ☎ 7am-10pm).

## SLEEPING & EATING

There are plenty of decent-value digs strung along Pantai Lakey. Most places have their own restaurants. Prices fluctuate depending on the season. Options are listed in the order you reach them from Dompu.

**Mona Lisa Bungalows** (r with fan 50,000-75,000Rp, with air-con 100,000-150,000Rp; 🏠) A popular, long-running choice with 22 rooms, from economy options with shared *mandi* to comfortable bungalows in a verdant garden. Safety deposit boxes are available, and there's a good restaurant.

**Balumba** (☎ 21682, 623 430; d with fan/air-con 100,000/150,000Rp; 🏠) The cheaper rooms with private bathrooms, set around a garden, are

not a bad value, while the air-con bungalows are only slightly better and are garishly pink. There's a small convenience store where you can buy beer, play ping-pong and use the wartel.

**Any Lestari** (☎ 21684; r with fan 75,000Rp, bungalow with air-con 150,000Rp; 🏠) Fan rooms are quite large, but pretty basic. Air-con rooms in shingled bungalows have newer, tiled floors, and ownership isn't shy about filling every inch with mattresses so four surf rats can share the price of one air-con room.

**ourpick Hotel Aman Gati** (☎ 623 031; www.lakeypeakamangati.com; Jl Raya Hu'u; s/d with fan 165,000/235,000Rp, s/d/tr with air-con 275,000/355,000/435,000Rp; 🏠 📺 📶) A Balinese-run, three-star spot with wood furnishings, high ceilings, crown mouldings, (almost) hot water, DVD players and international cable TV opposite Lakey Peak. The fan bungalows are the oldest, cheapest, and yet closest to the beach. All rooms are set around a lovely garden and beachfront pool. The meals (which include the typical Indo-Western tourist fare and veggie choices) are generous and quite good, and the beer is icy, which explains why folks who sleep elsewhere tend to eat (and drink) here.

**Alamanda Bungalows** (☎ 623 519; Jl Raya Hu'u; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp) Small concrete bungalows set on a patch of grass with high ceilings, ceiling fans and reasonably clean bathrooms with Western toilets.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Dompu's main bus terminal take a bemo (2000Rp) or *benhur* to the Lepardi local terminal on the southern outskirts.

There are two (slow) buses daily as far as Hu'u (15,000Rp, 1½ hours), where you can hire an *ojek* (10,000Rp) to Pantai Lakey.

Try doing this with a surfboard and you'll see why so many people take a taxi from Bima airport (around 400,000Rp). Leaving Hu'u, there's one early morning bus, but any of the hotels can arrange a taxi (300,000Rp to Dongu, 400,000Rp to Bima).

## Donggo

From Sila, on the Dompū–Bima road, infrequent buses run to the traditional village of Donggo, the domain of the Dou Donggo (mountain people) who speak an antiquated form of the Bima language and may have descended from Sumbawa's original inhabitants. Numbering about 20,000, they've layered Islam and Christianity over their traditional beliefs in the last few decades, and they're slowly being absorbed into Bimanese culture, but not without a fight. Just a few weeks before research the latest episode of civil unrest took place between Dou Donggo youth and Bima police. By the time the intermittent month-long battle was over, two people were dead. The most traditional village is **Mbawa**, where up until a decade ago people still wore distinctive black clothes. You'll find a few *uma leme* (traditional stilted houses with nearby rice barns) here, though most of the homes have replaced the thatched roof with corrugated tin. From Bima, it's 4km along a smooth road, and then 20km on an occasionally rough one up the mountain, where you'll have incredible views of terraced rice fields tumbling to the sea.

## BIMA & RABA

☎ 0374 / pop 71,000

Let's be frank. Bima will never be your favourite Indonesian getaway. Chalk it up to the traffic-choked streets, architecture that manages to be charmless and crumbling, and some fairly aggressive locals who are unlike those in the rest of Sumbawa. Still, if you keep your cool, you may find charm in the chaotic intensity of it all. Or you may want to flee to Raba, the much more orderly but dull administrative centre a few kilometres east. Together the twin towns form East Sumbawa's largest metropolitan centre.

Beneath its, um, exuberant veneer, Bima is a conservative Islamic place with one mediocre sight – the former sultan's palace. The

*pasar malam* (night market) in the Old Palace compound is also worth a wander.

Almost all the tourists who pass through are in transit between the waves at Lakey Peak and Bali, or plan on taking the ferry to Labuanbajo in Flores, the launch pad to Rinca and Komodo. Rest assured, the ferry between Sumbawa and Flores no longer stops at Komodo, no matter what some hustlers may claim.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

**Internet & Game Center** (Jl Sumbawa; per hr 3000Rp)

**Telkom** (Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 24hr) Adjacent to the tourist office.

### MONEY

**BNI bank** (Jl Sultan Hasanuddin; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Fri) Has an ATM and changes foreign currency.

### POST

**Main post office** (Jl Sultan Hasanuddin) Located a little way out.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Dinas Pariwisata** (☎ 44331; Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 7am–3pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon Sat) Friendly English speakers staff the tourist office in Raba's Kantor Bupati, 2km from Bima.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Doro Parewa Makmur** (☎ 42926; Jl Sumbawa 16) Organises trips to Komodo and Rinca from Sape.

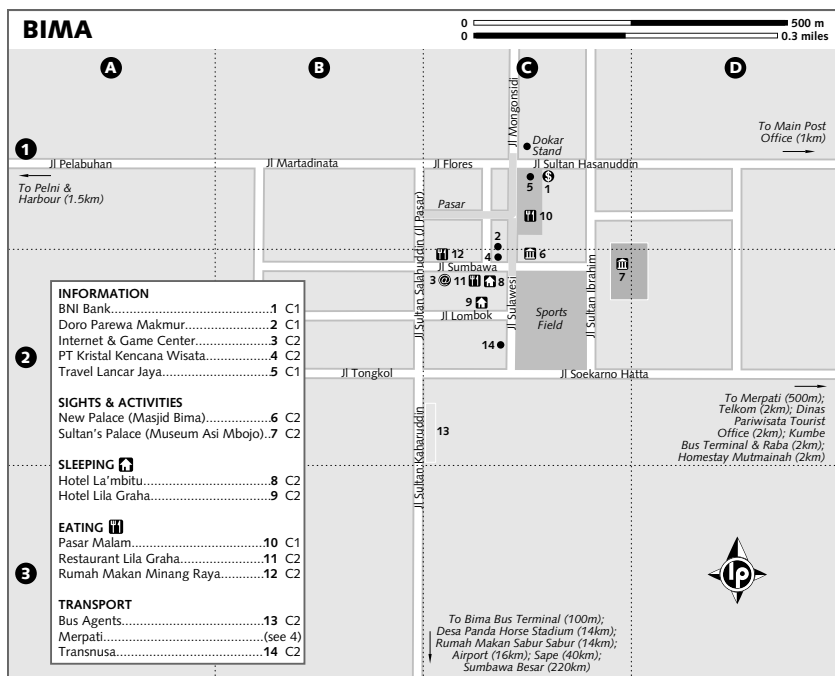
**PT Kristal Kencana Wisata** (☎ 43440, 44221; Jl Sumbawa 19) Merpati's official agent in Bima.

**Travel Lancar Jaya** (☎ 43737; Jl Sultan Hasanuddin 11) Also books Komodo-bound boats.

## Sights

The Sultan's Palace, former home of Bima's rulers, is now **Museum Asi Mbojo** (Jl Sultan Ibrahim; tourist admission 5000Rp; ☎ 8am–5pm Mon–Sat), a grab-bag of dusty curios, including a royal crown, battle flags and weapons. Built in 1927, the palace had fallen into complete disrepair by the late 1950s but has since been restored and freshly painted. Look for the royal bedchamber.

The new palace, **Masjid Bima**, also looks pretty damn royal, with a gushing fountain and five towers. The patchy **sports field** opposite the palaces is the destination for soccer and volleyball games at dusk.



## Activities

**Horse racing** is held four times a year, in May, July, August and December at the Desa Panda horse stadium, 14km from town on the airport road. There's a large grandstand, a gaggle of warungs and plenty of cheering as horses thunder around a dusty track. Racing – and gambling – peaks on 17 August as independence fever kicks in.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Lila Graha** (☎ 42740; fax 44705; Jl Lombok 6; d with fan 100,000-125,000Rp, with air-con 150,000-300,000Rp, plus 10% tax; 🚽) One of two four-storey, block-long hotels, each with a wide range of rooms. The economy rooms are poky, while some of those in the new wing have two beds, phones and hot water.

**Hotel La'mbitu** (☎ 42222; fax 42304; Jl Sumbawa 4; standard/superior/jr ste 110,000/170,000/250,000Rp; 🚽) Virtually next door, and Bima's best choice. This is the newer, cleaner version with spotless tile floors, fresh paint and wood furnishings throughout. The top-floor rooms have direct access to a common terrace overlooking Bima's green hills.

**Homestay Mutmainah** (☎ 646 826, 42351; Jl Gajah Meda, Raba; d 350,000Rp; 🚽 🚿) Set in a converted house in laid-back Raba. There are four-post beds, wardrobes, bathtubs, TV, air-con, hot water and rice-field views.

## Eating

**our pick** **Rumah Makan Sabur Sabur** (☎ 646 236; Jl Salahudin, Bandara; meals 9000Rp; 🕒 7am-6pm) These long wooden tables are always crowded with locals who come to munch *bandeng goreng* (a flash-fried freshwater fish). Like herring, you can eat it whole, bones and all. It's best combined with their fiery crushed-tomato *sambal*, torn leaves of lemon basil and a bit of rice. Wow!

**Rumah Makan Minang Raya** (Jl Sumbawa; mains 13,000-17,000Rp) A tasty Padang food haunt with fried and broiled shrimp, and stewed and curried chicken.

**Restaurant Lila Graha** (Jl Sumbawa; mains 15,000-25,000Rp) Attached to the hotel of the same name, this clean and friendly joint serves up Chinese and Indonesian reliables, with a few Western dishes thrown in.

Or dine cheap at the **pasar malam**, which sets up along the walking streets within the

Old Palace compound. There's fish and chicken sate grilling, *mie goreng* (fried noodles) and *nasi goreng* (fried rice) sizzling, *bakso* (meatball soup) and *gado gado* aplenty. As always, look for fresh ingredients and be discerning.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

You can fly to Bima with **Merpati** (☎ 43440; Jl Sumbawa 19), which has daily flights to and from Denpasar (720,000Rp) where there are daily connections to Mataram, Ende and Kupang. **Transnusa** (☎ 647 251, Jl Sulawesi 26) also has daily flights to and from Denpasar (865,000Rp) via Mataram (489,000Rp).

Departure tax from Bima is 20,000Rp.

### BOAT

*Willis* travels monthly from Bima to Maumere, Larantuka, Papua, and back to Benoa in Bali. *Kelimutu* connects Bima with Larantuka, Benoa and Papua monthly. *Tilongkabila* sails to Labuanbajo and Sulawesi, and returns via Lembar and Benoa every two weeks. Travel agencies in town can organise tickets, since the **Pelni office** (☎ 42625; Jl Kesatria 2) is at Bima port.

### BUS

The Bima bus terminal is a 10-minute walk south along Jl Sultan Kaharuddin from the centre of town, though you can buy a ticket in advance from bus company offices on Jl Sultan Kaharuddin.

The majority of buses heading west to Lombok, via Sumbawa Besar, leave in a convoy (7pm to 7.30pm), but there is one daytime service departing at 9.30am. Fares to Mataram range from 100,000Rp for normal services (without air-con) to 150,000Rp for the luxury, air-con buses that take about 11 hours. Tiara Mas has the best buses. Many continue to Denpasar, arriving at 11am the next morning.

Local buses stop anywhere and everywhere. They run between 6am and 5pm. Destinations from Bima include Dompu (15,000Rp, two hours) and Sumbawa Besar (90,000Rp, seven hours).

Buses east to Sape go from Kumbe bus terminal in Raba, a 20-minute (2000Rp) bemo ride east of Bima. Pick up a yellow bemo on Jl Sultan Kaharuddin or Jl Soekarno Hatta. Buses leave Kumbe terminal for Sape

(9000Rp, two hours) from about 6am until 5pm. If you leave at 6am sharp, you'll make it to Sape for the 9am ferry to Flores. Or sleep a little later and charter a car (200,000Rp, 1½ hours).

## Getting Around

The airport sits amid salt flats 17km from the centre. You can walk out to the main road and catch a passing bus. Alternatively, taxis meet arrivals, charging 80,000Rp to Bima or 400,000Rp to Hu'u.

A bemo around town costs 2000Rp per person; *benhur* are 5000Rp.

As there are no official rental agencies, try hiring a motorbike through your hotel or one of the travel agencies; expect to pay around 75,000Rp per day.

## AROUND BIMA

On the main highway between Bima and Sape, the Wawo area is noted for its traditional houses, *uma lengge*. The 'traditional' village of **Maria**, just off the highway, has examples of indigenous architecture, but the materials are modern. **Sambori**, located off a rugged road, has the real-deal grass roofs and some impressive three-storey houses. A chartered 4WD, compulsory for the trip, from either Sape or Bima will cost 500,000Rp.

The stunning Wera region extends north-east of Bima and includes some impressive scenery of rice terraces, gorges and views of the active **Gunung Api** (1950m). Bugis schooners are built in the village of **Sangeang**, 10km north of Tawali. Public transport is limited here, so renting a motorbike in Bima is the best way to explore.

## SAPE

☎ 0374

It's got a tumbledown port-town vibe, perfumed with the conspicuous scent of drying cuttlefish, but what it lacks in style it makes up for in soul. The outskirts are quilted in rice fields backed by jungled hills, and the streets are busy with *benhur* and bustling with early morning commerce. There's decent food and doable lodging here too, so if you are catching a ferry, consider this an alternative to the Bima madness.

There's a **PHKA Komodo Information Office** (☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) 500m inland from the port with a few brochures and maps.

Sape's best lodging option is **Losmen Mutiara** (☎ 71337; Jl Pelabuhan Sape; economy/standard/deluxe r 35,000/80,000/100,000Rp; ☹), right next to the port gates. Rooms are reasonably clean. The smiling ladies of **Rumah Makan Citra Minang** (Jl Pelabuhan Sape; meals 20,000Rp) bring Padang's finest and spiciest dishes to life. The cracked concrete floor and water-stained walls betray the quality and flavour of the food. **Arema Sape** (☎ 71015; Jl Pelabuhan Sape; dishes 8000-20,000Rp) is the cleaner, brighter option. The squid dishes look good. If you come for breakfast, order the pancake.

## Getting There & Around

### BOAT

Regular breakdowns and heavy storms disrupt ferry services – always double-check the latest schedules in Bima and Sape. Or you can call **Cabang Sape** (☎ 71075; Jl Yos Sudarso, Pelabuhan Penye Berangan Sape). It operates the daily ferry to Labuanbajo (60,200Rp per person, 125,000Rp per motorcycle, eight to nine hours). Ferries are non-stop and leave at 9am daily. Tickets can be purchased at the pier about one hour before departure. Expect Indo heavy metal at high decibels if you're sitting outside, and assorted B-grade Hollywood flicks and kung fu movies indoors. Do not expect comfort.

It is possible to charter a boat to Komodo, but it's a much better idea to get to Labuanbajo and sort out a boat there, as many of the Sape-based vessels are not seaworthy and the seas around Komodo are notoriously treacherous. Travellers have even had to swim to shore after being shipwrecked.

There is also a ferry service connecting Sape with Waikelo (50,000Rp, eight hours) in West Sumba. It leaves Sape at around 10pm twice a week on Monday and Friday and returns from Waikelo on Tuesday and Saturday at 5pm.

### BUS

Express buses with service to Lombok and Bali meet arriving ferries.

Buses leave every half hour for Raba (9000Rp, two hours) until around 5pm. From Raba take a bemo to Bima (2000Rp, 20 minutes), where you can catch local buses to Sumbawa destinations. Taxi drivers will no doubt claim buses have stopped running and you must charter their vehicle to Bima – ignore them.

# KOMODO & RINCA ISLANDS

Nestled between Sumbawa and Flores, the islands of Komodo and Rinca, their jagged hills carpeted with savannah and fringed with mangroves, are home to a few hundred fishermen and the legendary Komodo dragon (see boxed text, p530). The world's largest lizard, known locally as *ora*, it can reach over 3m in length and weigh up to 100kg. It hunts alone and feeds on animals as large as deer and buffalo, both of which are found here. The males also try to eat the females' eggs, inevitably sparking a vicious battle of the sexes.

These isolated islands are surrounded by some of the most tempestuous waters in Indonesia. The convergence of warm and cold water currents breeds nutritious thermal climes, rip tides and whirlpools that attract large schools of pelagics, from dolphins and sharks to manta rays and blue whales. The coral here is pristine. Add it all up and you have some of the best diving in the world, which is why live-aboards based in Bali and Lombok ply these waters between April and September when the crossing is smooth and the diving at its finest.

Rinca receives just as many visitors as Komodo because it's closest to Labuanbajo, Flores – the main departure point for trips to the Komodo National Park. Dragons are easy to spot, as they tend to hang around the camp kitchen. Komodo looks and feels wilder, the off-shore dive sites are magnificent, but the dragons don't hang about the camps too often, so you have to hike to find them. A steady stream of visitors make their way here these days, but to understand how far off the beaten track it used to be, read *Zoo Quest for a Dragon* by naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough, who filmed the dragons in 1956.

There are numerous hiking trails, but it's not permitted to explore without a guide, a forked staff his primary weapon, as dragons have very occasionally attacked (and killed) humans. Two villagers have died in the last 20 years, and three days before our visit a ranger was attacked on Rinca in his office while doing paperwork. He survived, but his bloodstains remained for all to see. Dragons are a docile bunch for the most part, but they could snap your leg as fast as they'll cut a goat's throat. Respect the beasts.



## Visiting Komodo National Park

This **national park** ([www.komodonationalpark.org](http://www.komodonationalpark.org)), a Unesco World Heritage site, encompasses Komodo, Rinca, several neighbouring islands, and their incredibly rich marine ecosystem.

A three-day visitor permit includes your park entrance fee (40,000Rp adult or child) and the conservation fee (US\$20 adult/US\$10 child), collected on arrival by rangers.

A short, guided dragon-spotting trek is included with your entrance fee. For a longer, hour-long trek on Rinca you'll pay an additional 50,000Rp. On Komodo, where the hiking is superb, you can pay from 50,000Rp to 250,000Rp for guided treks that range from flat 3km strolls to steep 10km hikes up and over peaks and into deep valleys. Arrange your trek upon registration in Komodo. All guides speak some English and are very knowledgeable about the islands' flora and fauna. A camera permit is another 25,000Rp.

Komodo is one of the driest corners of Nusa Tenggara, and heavy rains are not common. However, the seas are calmest between April and September.

## KOMODO

Spectacular Komodo, its steep hillsides jade in the short wet season, frazzled by the sun and winds to a deep rusty red for most of the year, is the largest island in the national park. A succession of eastern peninsulas spread out like so many fingers, fringed in pink sand, thanks to the abundance of red coral reefs offshore. The recently renovated camp of **Loh Liang** and the PHKA office, where you can organise treks, is also on the east coast of the island.

The fishing village of **Kampung Komodo** is an hour-long walk south of Loh Liang. It's a friendly stilted Bugis village that's full of goats, chickens and children. The inhabitants are said to be descendants of convicts exiled to the island in the 19th century by one of the sultans in Sumbawa.

## Activities

### DRAGON SPOTTING

You're likely to see dragons if you do the standard stroll to Banu Nggulung, a dry riverbed about a half-hour walk from Loh Liang. The organised feeding of goats to dragons is a thing of the past, and dragons are now only

## KOMODO DRAGONS

There were rumours of these awesome creatures long before their existence was confirmed in the West. Fishers and pearl divers working in the area had brought back tales of ferocious lizards with enormous claws, fearsome teeth and forked yellow tongues. One theory holds that the Chinese dragon is based on the Komodo lizard. The first Dutch expedition to the island was in 1910; two of the dragons were shot and their skins taken to Java, resulting in the first published description.

The Komodo dragon is actually a monitor lizard. All monitors have some things in common: the head is tapered, the ear openings are visible, the neck is long and slender, the eyes have eyelids and round pupils, and the jaws are powerful. But the dragons also have massive bodies, powerful legs (each with five-clawed toes) and long, thick tails (which function as rudders underwater, but can also be used for grasping or as a potent weapon). The body is covered in small, non-overlapping scales; some may be spiny, others raised and bony.

The dragons' legs allow them to sprint short distances, lifting their tails as they run. When threatened, they'll take refuge in their normal resting places – holes, trees (for the smaller ones) or water. They are dangerous if driven into a corner and will then attack even a much larger opponent. Komodo dragons often rise up on their hind legs just before attacking, and the tail can deliver well-aimed blows that will knock down a weaker adversary. Their best weapons are their sharp teeth and dagger-sharp claws, which can inflict severe wounds.

Komodo dragons have a very keen sense of smell. All monitors feed on other animals – small ones on insects, larger ones on frogs and birds, and the *ora* (the local name for the dragon) on deer, wild pig and water buffalo. *Ora* can expand their jaws considerably, enabling them to swallow prey as large as a goat. To tackle even bigger prey, they ambush their victim, bite it and wait for the potent bacteria their mouths contain to take effect – waiting around for up to two weeks for a buffalo to die – before tucking in. Mature dragons are also cannibalistic, and small *ora* live the first five years of their lives up in trees for safety, not moving to ground level until they are 1m in length.

Of all the monitors, the *ora* lay the largest eggs – around 90mm long and weighing around 200g. The female lays 15 to 30 eggs at a time and often buries them in the wall of a dry river. She then protects her cache for three months from predators – including male dragons. The incubation period is nine months.

Komodo dragons are *not* relics of the dinosaur age; they're remarkably versatile, hardy modern lizards, if not exactly sensitive and New Age. Why they exist only on and around Komodo is a mystery, as is why males outnumber females by a ratio of 3.4 to one. Around 1300 *ora* live on Komodo, perhaps 1100 on Rinca and a small number (around 50) on the west coast of Flores. Today the *ora* are a protected species.

fed here when the PHKA wants to do a head count. Banu Nggulung still occasionally attracts dragons, but you're more likely to find them on your way here and back.

When you do come across a scaly beast, it's wise to keep a safe distance and move slowly and calmly. A telephoto lens is handy but not essential. It is also possible to spot dragons foraging for food and fresh water on some of the other walks, but it's never guaranteed.

### HIKING

Most visitors stay one night at Komodo and only do the short hike to **Banu Nggulung** – bad decision. The longer you hike, the more spectacular the scenery (think massive sea views,

lonely beaches and bays, deep valleys that recall the Land of the Lost).

Walks from Loh Liang include the climb to the 538m-high **Gunung Ara** (200,000Rp, 9km, five hours return). The chances of seeing a dragon are slim, but there are expansive views from the top. **Poreng Valley** (150,000Rp, 5.5km, four to five hours return) is another potential dragon haunt, and has a more out-in-the-wild feeling than Banu Nggulung. The trail continues over **Bukit Randolph**, a memorial to the 79-year-old Randolph Von Reding who disappeared on Komodo in 1974, to **Loh Sebita** (150,000Rp, 9km, four hours). This is the best hike. It's challenging, the views are spectacular, you'll likely see a dragon



or two, and you can organise your boat to pick you up in Loh Sebita, so you don't have to retrace your steps. There's also plenty of other wildlife, such as buffaloes, deer, wild boar and Komodo's rich bird life, including the fabled megapodes.

### SNORKELLING & DIVING

Almost everybody who visits the park hires a boat in Labuanbajo (see right). Boats always offer snorkelling (gear included) as part of the itinerary. Most folks snorkel around the small island of **Pulau Lasa** near Kampung Komodo, and just off the pink sands of **Pantai Merah** (Red Beach), which is just an hour's walk from Loh Liang.

Of course, diving is the thing here. Given the conditions – up and down currents, and chilly temperatures – and the effort involved in diving these amazing sites, it is not recommended for the inexperienced diver. But if you have 50 or more dives, stay calm and mind

your dive guide, you will have a tremendous experience. See boxed text, below for a full rundown.

### Getting There & Away

Ferries travelling between Sape and Labuanbajo haven't been stopping at Komodo for several years now, so the only way here is by some sort of charter. One way to arrive is on a boat tour between Lombok and Flores – these stop at Komodo for a night or two. See the boxed text, p540, for the pros and cons of such trips.

Labuanbajo is the best jumping-off point for Komodo and Rinca. It is possible to charter boats from Sape (see p528) in Sumbawa to Komodo, but be extremely cautious, as many boats here are barely seaworthy.

Two-day Komodo trips for up to six people cost a standard 1,500,000Rp from Labuanbajo. Price includes landings on Rinca and Komodo, meals and snorkelling gear.

### DIVING & SNORKELLING AROUND KOMODO & LABUANBAJO

Komodo National Park has some of the most exhilarating scuba diving in Indonesia. It's a region swept by strong currents and cold upwellings, created by the convergence of the warmer Flores Sea and the cooler Selat Sumba (Sumba Strait) – conditions that create rich plankton soup and an astonishing diversity of marine life. Mantas and whales are drawn here to feed on the plankton during their migration from the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, while dolphins are also common in the waters between Komodo and Flores.

Among the several dozen dive sites mapped in the park are **Batu Bolong**, a split pinnacle with absolutely pristine coral and, compared to elsewhere in the park, light current; **Crystal Bommie** (aka Crystal Rock), with electric soft corals, turtles and schooling pelagics. We saw 19 reef and grey sharks in one dive. The currents are strong here and at **Castle Rock** (aka Tako Toko Toko), a tremendous sunrise dive site where, with a little luck, you'll dive with dolphins. Then there's **The Cauldron**, aka Manta Soup a shallow drift dive over white sand where massive manta rays school and clean themselves on the rocks. If you've never seen mantas before, dive here. It's guaranteed.

When it comes to Komodo outfitters, there are several choices. You could sign up for day trips with the Labuanbajo dive shops (see p535). This is the cheapest way to go (800,000Rp for two dives). They operate year-round, but it's a long haul (up to three hours) to and from the sites, you can't customise your itinerary, and if you're diving multiple days this doesn't make much sense. If you are based out of Labuanbajo, the best bet is to arrange a private live-aboard through one of the dive shops. **CN Dive** (☎ 41159, 0813 3928 5913) offers live-aboards with unlimited diving and all meals from US\$120 per day (two people minimum). They run trips off-season, when crowds are thin and you'll have the dive sites to yourself. They also have a fat, 40m luxury yacht (think mosaic showers, a plasma big-screen TV, air-con and two sun decks) available for live-aboard charters from US\$250 per day (minimum two people). An absolute steal if it's available.

Several multiday live-aboard cruises also depart from Bali, Gili Trawangan and nearby Labuanbajo during the peak April to September season, when the seas are at their calmest. **Ikan Baru** (☎ 0813 534 4511; [www.goodwilldiving.com](http://www.goodwilldiving.com); 7-day cruise from US\$1350), a luxe Bugis schooner operated by Gili T's Trawangan Dive and led by world record holder Will Goodman, offers one of the best live-aboard experiences in Komodo.

## RINCA

Rinca is slightly smaller than Komodo and every bit as alluring. It's also close to Labuanbajo and easily done in a day trip. Boats arrive at the sheltered dock of Loh Kima. It's a five-minute walk through the mangroves, where you run across long-tail macaques and wild water buffalo grazing in the tidal marsh, to the PHKA camp at **Loh Buaya**, which has a ticket office and information centre, ramshackle wooden bungalows and a cafe. Keep the entrance ticket if you're heading to Komodo.

Two types of guided walks are offered. An hour's loop trail is included with your admission, or you could pay an extra 50,000Rp for a two-hour hike. As temperatures will inevitably be furnace-hot, most people opt for an hour of exploring the area close to the camp.

There are no set dragon-feeding places on Rinca, but there are often a half-dozen massive beasts near the camp kitchen at Loh Buaya. Finding dragons in the bush is not so easy, but the guides know spots where Komodo dragons sun themselves, and they'll show you dragon nests (the females dig huge burrows to lay their eggs, which they then guard for three months). Wildlife is much more abundant than on Komodo; in addition to the monkeys and buffalo you may find Timor deer, horses or even wild boar. Bird life includes spangled drongos, fish eagles, megapodes and orange-footed scrub fowl.

## Sleeping & Eating

Komodo's **PHKA camp** (per person per night 300,000Rp) accommodation just went through a renovation, but what once was a series of basic wood cabins is now an overpriced version of a basic Indo hotel, complete with musty interior. Rinca's large stilted cabins, on the other hand, are riddled with mould and falling apart. New bungalow construction was underway at research time. Most folks opt to sleep on the decks of their chartered boats – a lot more palatable, if a bit cramped.

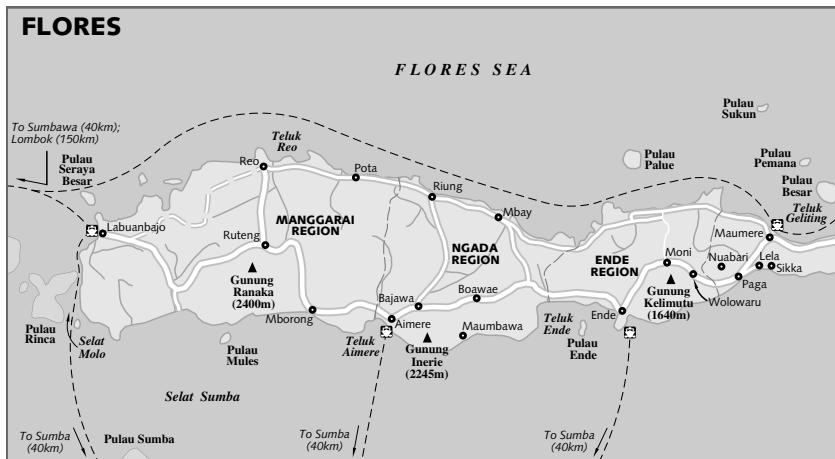
Both camps have restaurants with a limited menu of *nasi/mie goreng*, fish and other simple meals.

## Getting There & Away

Chartering a boat to Rinca costs about 750,000Rp return from Labuanbajo. Boats usually leave at about 8am for the two-hour journey to the island and then return via snorkelling spots. You can book through your hotel, an agency or freelance agents in Labuanbajo, or speak directly to the captains at the harbour, which will allow you to size up the boat and check that the vessel has a radio and life jackets.

# FLORES

Flores is the kind of gorgeous that grabs hold of you tightly. There are empty white-sand beaches and bay islands, exceptional diving and snorkelling near Labuanbajo, and terrific muck diving near Maumere. An infinite sky-



line of perfectly shaped volcanoes craft knife-edge ridges, and spectacular river canyons are carpeted by a vast tapestry of hip-high, luminescent rice fields that undulate in the wind next to swaying palms. The serpentine, potholed 'trans-Flores highway' is long and slow, but never boring. It skirts waterfalls, conquers mountains, brushes by traditional villages in Bajawa, leads to the incredible multicoloured volcanic lakes of Kelimutu, and connects the east and west coasts. The Portuguese named it 'Flowers' when they colonised Flores in the 16th century. The name stuck (so did Catholicism) because of its sheer, wild beauty.

## History

A startling recent find near Ruteng indicates that a unique species of dwarf hominid lived in Flores until around 12,000 years ago (see boxed text, p539), although evidence has not yet been universally accepted by scientists.

Anthropologists and historians do agree that the island's diverse cultures developed from a common ancestry. Long before Europeans arrived in the 16th century, much of coastal Flores was firmly in the hands of the Makassarese and Bugis from southern Sulawesi. They brought gold, elephant tusks (used as currency), linen and copperware, and left with rubber, sea products, sandalwood, cinnamon, cotton and fabric. Bugis and Makassarese slave raids on the coasts of Flores were a common problem, forcing indigenous people to retreat inland. Eastern Flores was

controlled by Ternate in Maluku during the 15th and 16th centuries.

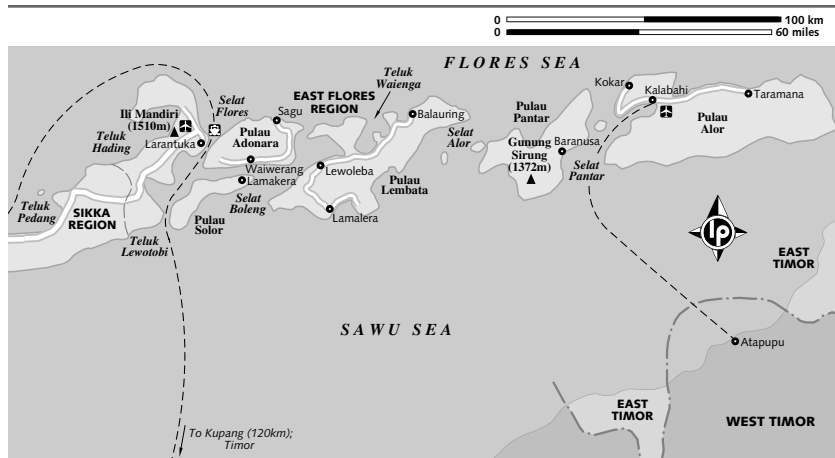
In 1512, Portuguese navigator Antonio de Abreu spotted Flores. Drawn by the lucrative sandalwood trade, the Portuguese built fortresses on Pulau Solor and at Ende, and named their landing site on the island's easternmost cape, Cabo das Flores. Christianity was a successful import, and today a church is the centrepiece of almost every village.

In the 17th century, the Dutch muscled the Portuguese out of most of Flores. By 1850 they had purchased Portugal's remaining enclaves in the area, including Larantuka, and were constantly confronted with rebellions and inter-tribal wars. Unrest continued until a major military campaign in 1907 subdued central and western Flores. Missionaries moved into the isolated western hills in the 1920s.

Today, western Flores is in the midst of a tourism boom. More visitors than ever are venturing to Labuanbajo to explore the Komodo and Rinca islands. A new luxury tower hotel just opened on the outskirts of Labuanbajo and a 100-room Jakarta hotel is currently under construction. There's even talk of an expanded airport to accommodate direct flights from Singapore in the near future.

## Culture

The island's 1.8 million people are divided into five main linguistic and cultural groups. From west to east, these are the Manggarai (main town Ruteng), the Ngada (Bajawa), the



closely related Ende and Lio peoples (Ende), the Sikkane (Maumere) and the Lamaholot (Larantuka). In remote areas, some older people don't speak a word of Bahasa Indonesia, and their parents grew up in purely animist societies.

Physically, the people at the western end of the island are more Malay, while the other inhabitants of Flores are more Melanesian.

Around 85% of the people are Catholic, but in rural areas Christianity is welded onto *adat*. Animist rituals are still used for births, marriages and deaths and to mark important points in the agricultural calendar. Even educated, English-speaking Florinese participate in the odd chicken, pig or buffalo sacrifice to the ancestors when rice is planted.

Muslims congregate in fishing villages and coastal towns such as Ende (where they make up half the population).

## Getting Around

The 'trans-Flores highway' twists and tumbles nearly 700km from Labuanbajo to Larantuka, at the eastern end of the island. It's sealed, but often rutted and narrow. Buses are invariably small, cramped and overcrowded, but the stunning scenery certainly helps compensate. It is best to break up a trans-island journey to avoid the bus passengers' version of road rage.

For those with more money than time, car rental is available in Labuanbajo or Maumere. The trans-island rate is 500,000Rp to 550,000Rp per day, including driver and petrol. This is becoming a very popular option for small groups, as you can stop for photos where you like, and take in remote attractions. See p538 for reliable transport fixers.

Motorcycling across the island is fantastic with the combination of roads and scenery, but it's only for experienced bikers, due to tough conditions and blind bends. A few superhuman cyclists with legs of steel manage to traverse the island too, using local buses to get up the worst hills and freewheeling down, but the topography of the island rules out cycling for all but Tour de France outcasts.

## LABUANBAJO

☎ 0385

Welcome to Nusa Tenggara's 'next big thing' in tourism. At least it feels that way, with a steady stream of Komodo and Rinca-bound tourists descending on this gorgeous ram-

shackle harbour, freckled with bay islands, blessed with surrealist sunsets and surrounded by rugged green hills. Dive and snorkelling boats leave day and night for world-class reefs in the nearby national park, there are sweet beach bungalows on empty islands closer to shore, and there's an ever-expanding collection of hotels and restaurants with a view.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

The Telkom office, 1km west of town, offers the best rates. The wartel near the waterfront seem to pluck high prices from the ether.

**Apik** (Jl Yos Sudarso; per hr 10,000Rp) The strongest connection in town.

### MONEY

There are two banks with ATMs in Labuanbajo. They change travellers' cheques and dollars. Local moneychangers offer similar rates.

**BNI** (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) ATM accepts Visa/Plus cards.

**BRI** (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) MasterCard/Cirrus ATM only.

### POST

**Post office** (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Sat)

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Dinas Pariwisata** (☎ 41170; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to 11am Fri) About 1km out of town on the road to the airport.

**PHKA information booth** (☎ 41005; tnkomodo@indosat.net.id; Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 8am-2.30pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri) PHKA administers the Komodo National Park and provides practical information for Komodo and Rinca islands. Their larger headquarters on Jl Kasimo has a cool dragon skeleton in the lobby, but no tourist info.

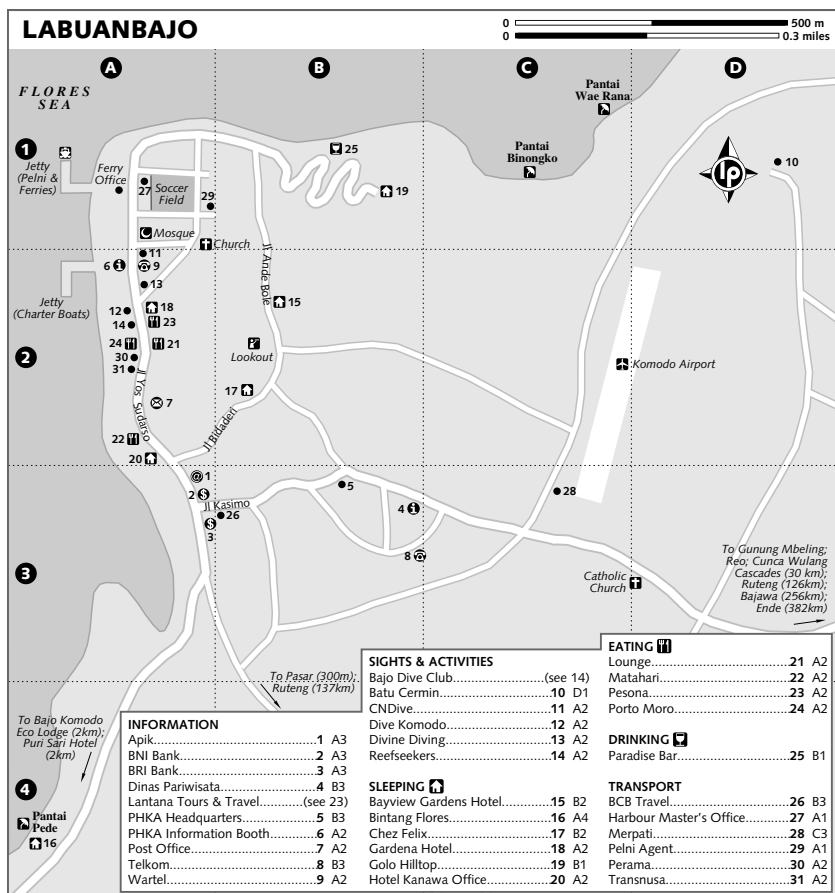
### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**Lantana Tours & Travel** (☎ 41289; Jl Soekarno Hatta) A helpful tour operator that can arrange trans-Flores car rental and trips to Komodo National Park.

## Sights & Activities

### ISLANDS

Excursions to nearby islands make great day trips, offering the chance to snorkel or lounge on a deserted beach. Most hotels will offer to set you up with a boat to the uninhabited island of your choice, or you can bargain at the docks. A half-day trip to **Pulau Bidadari**, where there's lovely coral and crystalline water, costs around 100,000Rp per person



with four or more passengers. You can snooze on **Pantai Waecicu** and snorkel around the tiny offshore islet of **Kukusan Kecil**. **Pulau Serayu** and **Pulau Kanawa** are both gorgeous and have basic beach-hut accommodation with free transport. Boats leave from the shoreline at the northern end of the main street.

## DIVING & SNORKELLING

With dive sites around the islands near Labuanbajo and the proximity of Komodo National Park, there are some excellent scuba opportunities here; see the boxed text on p531 for a full rundown.

Local dive operators share uniform prices. At research time the price was 800,000Rp for two dives around Rinca, plus a 200,000Rp

surcharge to stop and see the dragons. Custom dive safaris to the best northern Komodo sites are also available. Itineraries hover around 1,500,000Rp per person with a two- to four-person minimum depending on the dive shop. Dive offices are strung along or just off the seafrost road:

**Bajo Dive Club** (☎ 41503; www.komododiver.com)

**CNDive** (☎ 41159, 0813 3928 5913)

**Dive Komodo** (☎ 41862; www.divekomodo.com)

**Divine Diving** (☎ 41948; www.divinediving.info; Jl Soekarno Pelabuhan 1)

**Reefseekers** (☎ 41443; www.reefseekers.net)

It's best to chat with all the dive schools first, and survey their equipment and boats before you make a decision. We've heard reports

of broken dive gauges, which can be critical when dealing with Komodo's currents. Bring a computer if at all possible. Condo Subagyo, the proprietor of CNDive, the area's first Indonesian dive operator and a former Komodo National Park ranger with over 10,000 dives in these waters, offers a 'manta guarantee', and has good deals on a range of live-aboard options, from a basic wooden boat (US\$120 per day, minimum two people) to **Sila Lona**, an absurdly luxurious 40m yacht (US\$250 per day, minimum two people). His trips include unlimited diving.

Dive operators will rent equipment for snorkelling, as will some hotels.

### BATU CERMIN

This **limestone outcrop** (admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 8am-5pm), aka Mirror Rock, has a series of caves 4km east of town. The main cave is in the centre of the outcrop – take the ladder walkway up and around into the longest canyon, then proceed through a series of chambers to where the cave opens into a towering, narrow canyon. This is the 'mirror rock' that gives the outcrop its name; between 9am and 10am, depending on the time of year, the sun shines into the canyon and reflects off the walls, but it's hardly spectacular. The fee includes a guide, though navigation is not difficult.

### GUNUNG MBELING & CUNCA WULANG CASCADES

With the help of AusAID, SwissConnect and the regional government, West Flores tourism is on the rise. The goal is to get the tourism dollar into the local villages. You'll see their slick brochure upon arrival in Labuanbajo; also check out their website ([www.floreskomodo.com](http://www.floreskomodo.com)).

Climbing up the rain-forested slopes of **Gunung Mbeling** (1239m) is the latest attraction in West Flores. The two-day trip includes eight hours of hiking, sunrise at the summit and a stop-off at the Cunca Rami Air Terjun, where you can bathe in fresh swimming holes, on the way down. The **Reo Ecotourism Association** (☎ 0852 3906 1205, 0813 5378 1200; [www.floreskomodo.com](http://www.floreskomodo.com); 750,000Rp per person) organises the treks. Reo is just an hour's drive from Labuanbajo.

If you like canyoning, you'll enjoy the **Cunca Wulang Cascades**, where local guides lead you down natural rock waterslides, off 7m rock jumps and into swimming holes beneath a series of waterfalls. Trips generally last half a day and cost 100,000Rp per person.

## Sleeping

Hotel rates include breakfast.

### CENTRAL AREA

**Gardena Hotel** (☎ 41258; Jl Yos Sudarso; bungalows 85,000-100,000Rp) A collection of basic bamboo huts on a rambling hillside, overlooking the gorgeous bay harbour and distant islands. The restaurant is solid, and this is easily the most popular spot in town.

**Chez Felix** (☎ 41032; Jl Bidaderi; r 150,000-200,000Rp) Set in a quiet location above the bay and run by a friendly family who all speak good English, this is a good option, with cute, clean tiled rooms.

**Golo Hilltop** (☎ 41337; [www.golohilltop.com](http://www.golohilltop.com); d with fan 175,000, d with air-con 325,000-450,000Rp) Modern, superclean concrete bungalows in a hilltop garden setting with magnificent views of Teluk Labuanbajo (but not the harbour). Deluxe rooms are on the top ridge and have safety boxes. The purple and yellow colour scheme works...kind of. They arrange transport to and from town as needed.

**ourpick Bayview Gardens Hotel** (☎ 41549; [www.bayview-gardens.com](http://www.bayview-gardens.com); Jl Ande Bole; s/d 400,000/450,000Rp; ♿) A new Dutch-Indo-owned hillside property. The five sweet cottages each have queen beds, private terraces (where breakfast is served), security boxes, a gorgeous garden (with over 450 plant species) and commanding harbour views. They collect rainwater for showers and use grey water to irrigate the garden. It books up, so reserve in advance.

### BY THE BEACH

This is where Labuanbajo's newest hotels are rising. At the time of writing the Jayakarta hotel chain was set to open its 100-room resort in 2010.

**Bajo Komodo Eco Lodge** (☎ 41362; [www.ecolodgesindonesia.com](http://www.ecolodgesindonesia.com); s/d 660,000/720,000Rp; ♿) This imposing neocolonial house has six bright and spacious rooms and two detached bungalows, each with stylish pebble-floored bathrooms. It doesn't feel like an ecolodge, but it is solar-powered, collects rainwater for the showers, and grey water is recycled.

**Puri Sari Hotel** (☎ 42010; Jl Pantai Pede; d US\$90; ♿) Another brand-new luxe hotel, set 2km down a rutted dirt road and on the beach. Rooms are huge, with king beds, wi-fi, wood furnishings and marble sinks. The garden needed work when we visited. Show up in low season and you may be able to get the room for the promotional rate of 500,000Rp.

**Bintang Flores** (☎ 42000; Jl Pantai Pede; d/stc US\$120/230; 📍 📍) Relatively swish, and built like a classic tower hotel, it's set on a private beach with an attractive pool area. Rooms are large, with high ceilings, modern wood furnishings and international satellite TV. There's an internet cafe off the lobby.

## ISLAND HOTELS

It's an hour's boat ride – free for guests – to reach the following hotels from Labuanbajo. Both have a minimum two-night stay.

**Serayu Island Bungalows** (Map p529; ☎ 41258; [www.serayaisland.com](http://www.serayaisland.com); s/d with fan & mosquito net 120,000/135,000Rp) Get-away-from-it-all bliss exists on Pulau Serayu. Bunk in simple bamboo bungalows with *mandis* set on a white-sand beach, with offshore snorkelling. Contact the Gardena Hotel to get here.

**Kanawa Island Bungalows** (Map p529; ☎ 0852 3917 6718; bungalows s/d 150,000/200,000Rp) A lovely beach hideaway with a strip of white sand, turquoise lagoon, endless island views and a long crooked jetty. Accommodation is basic and romantically weathered. Meals cost from 25,000Rp to 40,000Rp. Contact the Kanawa office opposite restaurant Nirvana for a lift.

## Eating & Drinking

**Porto Moro** (Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes 10,000Rp) Across from The Lounge, this funky two-storey place with warped floors and harbour views serves the cheapest food in town. It's always packed with locals, and not just because of the price.

**Matahari** (☎ 41083; Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes 10,000-23,000Rp) Terrific views from the deck, particularly at sunset, and a tasty menu recommended by locals that includes sandwiches, soups and hot plates.

**ourpick The Lounge** (☎ 41962; Jl Yos Sudarso; tapas from 20,000Rp, mains 22,000-60,000Rp, espresso from 18,000Rp) Across from Porto Moro is a sleek dining room with red lounges, Balinese art and (of course) amazing views. Tapas are exceptional, as are the pizzas and homemade ravioli. But they may need to upgrade the soundtrack – c'mon, Céline Dion?

**Pesona** (☎ 41950; Jl Soekarno Hatta; meals 26,000Rp) Cute, ramshackle wooden restaurant perched above the harbour, specialising in fresh seafood. Try the whole snapper steamed or grilled. Meals include salad and fries or rice.

There's no real bar scene in Labuanbajo and most are content to enjoy a beer or two

with their meal. But **Paradise Bar** (📞 6pm-2am Fri & Sat), set up a steep hill on the north side of town, does attract a regular weekend crowd. It satisfies all the requirements of a tropical watering hole. There's ample deck space, a natural wood bar, massive sea and island views, ice-cold beer and live music.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Transnusa** (☎ 41800, 41955; Jl Yos Sudarso) offers daily flights departing at 11.30am from Labuanbajo's **Bandar Udara Komodo** (Komodo Airport) bound for Denpasar (700,000Rp). It also flies to Kupang (956,000Rp) on Wednesday and Friday at 10am. **IAT** (BCB Travel; Jl Kasimo) has daily noon flights to Denpasar (850,000Rp) on much newer planes. **Merpati** (☎ 41177) offers four flights a week to Denpasar (705,000Rp), leaving at 11am on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday. Its office is 1.5km from town on the road to the airport.

Departure tax from Labuanbajo is 11,000Rp.

### BOAT

The ferry from Labuanbajo to Sape (60,200Rp, eight to nine hours) leaves at 8am daily. Tickets for Sape can be purchased at the harbour master's office (in front of the pier) one hour before the vessel's departure. See also p528 for Sape boat schedules.

The **Pelni agent** (☎ 41106) is easy to miss, tucked away in a side street in the north-east of town. The monthly Pelni ship, *Tilongkabila*, heads to Makassar and the east coast of Sulawesi; or to Bima, Lembar and Benoa.

Many travellers choose to take a boat trip between Flores and Lombok, stopping at Komodo and Sumbawa along the way for snorkelling and exploration. For more on this option, see boxed text, p540. The local Perama boat contact is **PT Diana Perama Matteredu** (☎ 42015, 42016; [www.peramator.com](http://www.peramator.com); Jl Soekarno Hatta). It also books Transnusa flights.

### BUS

With no bus terminal in Labuanbajo, most people book their tickets through a hotel or agency, which makes them more expensive than they should be. If you get an advance ticket, the bus will pick you up from your hotel.

Buses to Ruteng (40,000Rp, four hours) depart every two hours from the terminal in Garantolo. One Bajawa-bound bus (100,000Rp, 10 hours) leaves at 6am daily, and buses to Ende (150,000Rp, 15 hours) run regularly via Ruteng and Bajawa, so just take the first available eastbound bus. There's also a decent minibus service. **Bajo Express** (☎ 42068) runs regular routes to Bajawa, Ruteng, Maumere and Ende, and they leave on time, without looping around town in search of passengers.

## Getting Around

The airfield is 1.5km from the town. Hotel reps and dive shops will meet flights and offer free lifts. A private taxi to town costs 30,000Rp. Once you're in town you can walk to most places, or hop aboard an *ojek* (3000Rp) or into a bemo (2000Rp); they do continual loops following the one-way traffic. After dark, however, the bemos cease running, *ojeks* are hard to find and you may be forced to hoof it.

Speak to transport wrangler **Jak Terming** (☎ 0852 3896 4782; jakflores@gmail.com) about renting a Kijang (500,000Rp to 550,000Rp a day, including driver and fuel) for trips across Flores. **Sipriano Muda** (☎ 0852 3924 2406) is a terrific driver, and he speaks good English. Motorbike rental is possible through most hotels.

## RUTENG

☎ 0385 / pop 37,000

Cool, refreshing and nestled among lush volcanoes and rice fields in the heart of Manggarai country, Ruteng is surrounded by beauty. But this sprawling market town is otherwise rather charmless. There are some interesting tribal villages nearby, which is why it does get its share of overnight guests in the high season. Don't miss Ruteng's lively, sprawling **pasar** (Jl Kartini), a vital lifeline to the outside world for villagers in the surrounding hills.

## Information

**BNI bank** (Jl Kartini; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Sat)  
Changes cash and travellers cheques and also has a Visa/Plus ATM.

**BRI bank** (Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) MasterCard/Cirrus ATM.

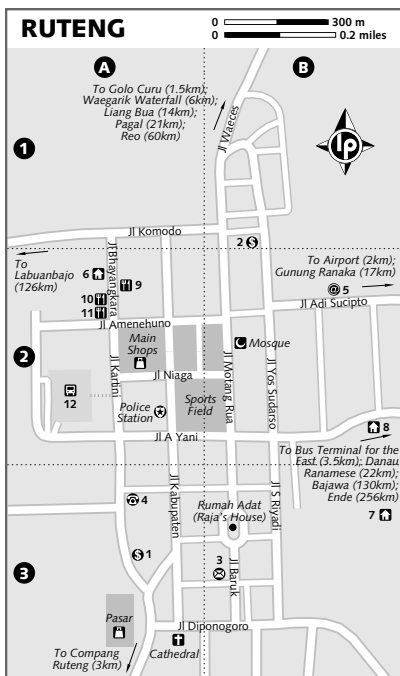
**Post office** (Jl Baruk 6; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Sat)

**Telkom** (Jl Kartini; ☎ 24hr)

**Z-Net** (☎ 21347; Jl Adi Sucipto 8; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 9am-6pm) Ruteng's only connection.

## Sleeping

**Rima Hotel** (☎ 22196; Jl A Yani 14; economy s/d 75,000/100,000Rp, standard s/d 125,000/175,000Rp) One of the two best options in town. Clean standard rooms all have queen beds, wood furnishings, showers and *mandis*. Economy rooms have shared baths with *mandis*, and showers. There's also a sweet patio garden and a streetside terrace. Motorbike hire can often be arranged here.



## INFORMATION

BNI Bank.....	1	A3
BRI Bank.....	2	B1
Post Office.....	3	B3
Telkom.....	4	A3
Z-Net.....	5	B2

## SLEEPING

Hotel Dahlia.....	6	A2
Kongregasi Santa Maria Berdukacita.....	7	B3
Rima Hotel.....	8	B2

## EATING

Agape Cafe.....	9	A2
Restaurant Merlin.....	10	A2
Rumah Makan Surya.....	11	A2

## TRANSPORT

Bus Terminal.....	12	A2
-------------------	----	----



## THE FLORES 'HOBBIT'

The Manggarai have long told folk tales of *ebo gogo* – hairy little people with flat foreheads who once roamed the jungle. Nobody paid them much attention until September 2003, when archaeologists made a stunning find.

Excavating the limestone cave at Liang Bua, they unearthed a skeleton the size of a three-year-old child but with the worn-down teeth and bone structure of an adult. Six more remains appeared to confirm that the team had unearthed a new species of human, *Homo floresiensis*, which reached around 1m in height and was nicknamed the 'hobbit'.

Lab tests brought another surprise. The hominid with the nutcracker jaw and gangly, chimplike arms lived until 12,000 years ago, practically yesterday in evolutionary terms, when a cataclysmic volcanic eruption is thought to have wiped out the little people and devastated the island of Flores.

It seems that *Homo floresiensis* could represent the first ever example of human dwarfism, an evolutionary phenomenon that has been well documented in the animal world, particularly on islands. In Jersey, one of the British Channel Islands, red deer shrank to a sixth of their normal European size in just 6000 years, while California's Channel Islands were once home to the ultimate oxymoron of the animal world – a pygmy mammoth.

Flores is particularly rich in these evolutionary quirks of nature. It had minielephants called 'stegodon' as well as examples of gigantism (which tend to occur in the same locations as dwarfism), such as colossal rats and Komodo dragons (see boxed text, p530).

But not all scientists are convinced about the origins of the Flores find. The prevailing school of thought argues that the Flores hominids are descendants of *Homo erectus*, a species that fled Africa around two million years ago and spread throughout Asia – though no DNA has yet been extracted to confirm this. Until recently it was thought that the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in Asia led to the demise of *Homo erectus* around 50,000 years ago. Flores humans could indicate that the species survived in isolated places.

Anthropologists opposed to this suggest that the Flores find could represent *Homo sapiens* (who were known to be travelling between Australia and New Guinea 35,000 years ago) that suffered from microcephaly – a neurological disorder causing stunted head growth, and often dwarfism, that runs in families.

But the momentum still seems to be with the original theory, given that in 2005 a second large jawbone was found, of similar dimensions to the first discovery. And with tools very similar to those found in Liang Bua reportedly unearthed in Timor, and possibly in Sulawesi, more little people could yet emerge from the evolutionary backwoods.

For details about visiting Liang Bua, see p540.

### **ourpick** Kongregasi Santa Maria Berdukacita

(☎ 222 834; Jl A Yani 45; standard s/d 140,000/160,000Rp, VIP r 200,000Rp) Set on serene convent grounds, this welcome new option has gorgeous valley views and 10 large, spotless guestrooms with high ceilings, crown mouldings and plenty of natural light. The VIP room is huge, with a TV, two beds and two bathrooms, and can sleep three comfortably.

**Hotel Dahlia** (☎ 21377; Jl Bhayangkara; economy/standard r 150,000/200,000Rp, VIP s/d 250,000/275,000Rp) From the outside the place looks abandoned, condemned even, but the lovely courtyard garden is surrounded by dozens of tiled rooms, and they do have up-to-date travel info. The VIP rooms are miles cleaner than the rest.

### **Eating**

**Rumah Makan Surya** (Jl Bhayangkara; dishes 3000Rp-10,000Rp) Heaped portions of tasty, spicy Padang food.

**Agape Cafe** (☎ 22561; Jl Bhayangkara 6-8; dishes 8000-30,000Rp) A darling newcomer a few years ago, its move to the large, soulless dining room was not a shrewd one. But even if the atmosphere has suffered, the coffee, roasted on the premises (check out the large roasters in the back) is still the best in town. It also has decent Indo grub, pasta dishes, Guinness and Heineken.

**Restaurant Merlin** (☎ 22475; Jl Bhayangkara 32B; mains 30,000Rp) This somewhat dingy dining room is the place to be for tasty Chinese food and fresh juices. Try the squid in oyster sauce or the chicken with chilli sauce.

## BOAT TOURS BETWEEN LOMBOK & FLORES

Travelling by sea between Lombok and Labuanbajo is a popular way to get to Flores, as you get to see more of the region's spectacular coastline and dodge some painfully long bus journeys. Typical itineraries from Lombok take in snorkelling at Pulau Satonda off the coast of Sumbawa, and a dragon-spotting hike on Komodo. From Labuanbajo boats usually stop at Rinca and Pulau Moyo.

Be warned, this is no luxury cruise – a lot depends on the boat, the crew and your fellow travellers. Some shifty operators have reneged on 'all-inclusive' deals en route, and others operate decrepit old tugs without lifejackets or radio. And this crossing can be extremely hazardous during the rainy season, when the seas are rough.

The well-organised tours on decent boats run by Perama (see Gili Trawangan, Mataram or Senggigi sections for contact details) are safe, however. Current charges for cabin/deck are 2,600,000/2,000,000Rp for the three-day trip.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

The airport is 2km southeast of town, but at research time it was still under renovation with no flights available.

### BUS

The bus terminal for eastern destinations is located 3.5km and a 2000Rp bemo ride out of town. Local buses heading west still run from the central bus/bemo terminal near the police station.

There are regular buses and bemos to Reo, which stop off at Pagal (10,000Rp, every 1½ hours). It's best to leave early from Ruteng and aim to be out of Pagal by 3pm. Gunung Mas buses going to Bajawa (60,000Rp, five hours) and Ende (120,000Rp, nine hours) depart at 7am. Buy your ticket in advance through your hotel. Buses to Labuanbajo leave at 7am, 1pm and 3pm (40,000Rp, four hours).

## Getting Around

Bemos cost 2000Rp around town. Contact Rima Hotel about motorcycle rental.

## AROUND RUTENG

**Compang Ruteng**, a 'traditional' village 3km from Ruteng has a *compang*, a traditional ancestor altar composed of a raised stone burial platform and a couple of renovated *rumah adat* (traditional houses). One is the Mbaru Gendrang, a ceremonial meeting-house that contains heirlooms, including a gold-and-silver *panggal*, a mask shaped like a buffalo horn and used in ceremonial *caci* (a martial art in which participants duel with whips and shields).

Visitors are asked to sign in and make a donation (about 20,000Rp). Ask around Ruteng for information on ceremonies held further afield.

**Golo Curu**, a hill to the north of Ruteng, offers spectacular early morning views of the rice paddies, terraced slopes and distant mountain valleys. Walk down the Reo road and, when you're about 20 minutes past Hotel Karya, turn right at the small bridge. There's a derelict shrine on the hilltop with a statue of the Virgin Mary on a pedestal. You can also drive here by *ojek* (20,000Rp). Further north, 6km from Ruteng, near Cancar, is the waterfall, **Air Terjun Waegarik**.

Manggarai sarongs are black with pretty embroidered patterns. They are sold in the main Ruteng market; or visit the weaving village of **Pagal**, 21km north of Ruteng on the main road to Reo. See left for transport information.

The 2400m **Gunung Ranaka**, an active volcano that erupted in 1987, can be reached by road from the 8km mark east of town past the airport, but views are obscured by young trees.

The limestone cave of **Liang Bua**, where the Flores 'hobbit' was found (see boxed text, p539), is about 14km north of Ruteng, down a very rough dirt track that is often not passable after periods of heavy rain. Archaeologists believe that the lip along the entrance permitted sediments to build up steadily as water flowed through the cave over millennia, sealing the remains of the humans and animals that lived and died here. There is not much to see, although some sticks mark the place where the little folk were found. Local guides, whose service is included in your 20,000Rp entry fee, will meet you at the cave's entrance

and explain why Liang Bua is considered sacred. To get here take an *ojek* (10,000Rp) from Ruteng.

**Danau Ranamese**, a circular aquamarine lake 22km from Ruteng, is right next to the main Bajawa road. There are picnic spots here, and a couple of waterfalls tumble from the rear of the crater, flooding the rice paddies below. Trails loop around the lake and visitors centre, where you may be charged a 10,000Rp entrance fee. Bajawa–Ruteng buses pass the lake.

## BAJAWA

☎ 0384

Framed by forested volcanoes and blessed with a pleasant climate, Bajawa, a laid-back hill town at 1100m, is a great base from which to explore dozens of traditional villages that are home to the local Ngada people. Bajawa is the Ngada's de facto trading post, and you'll mingle with them as you stroll these quiet streets edged by blooming gardens and surrounded by cornfields. Gunung Inerie (2245m), a perfectly conical volcano looms to the south where you'll also find some hot springs. The

recently emerged volcano, Wawo Muda, with its Kelimutu-esque lakes, is another favourite among the trans-Flores set.

## Information

**BNI bank** (Jl Pierre Tendean; ☎ 8am–3pm Mon–Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Has an ATM. Exchanges dollars and travellers cheques.

**Post office** (Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Sat)

**Telkom** (Jl Soekarno Hatta; internet per hr 15,000Rp;

☎ 24hr) The cheapest place for international calls and decent internet service.

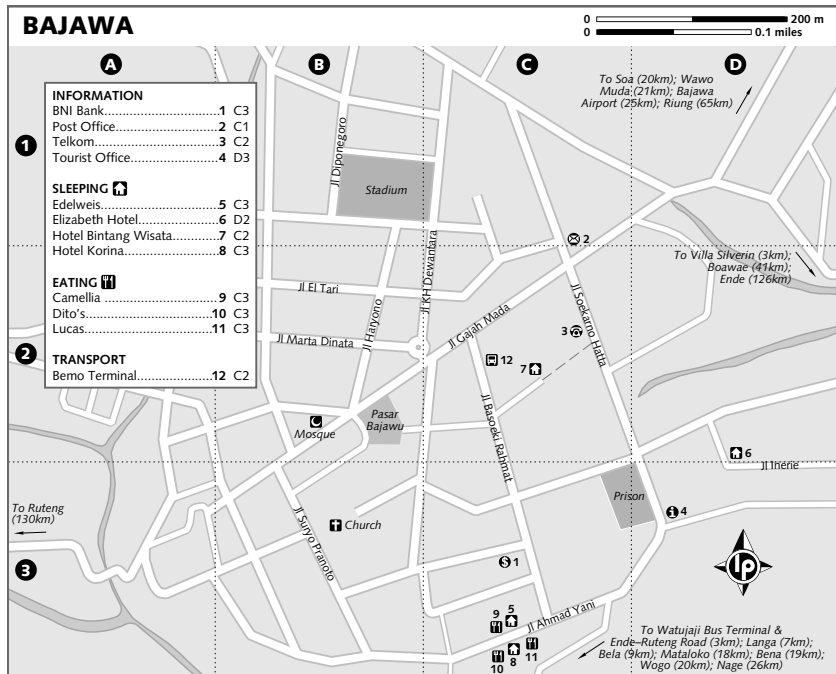
**Tourist office** (☎ 21554; Jl Soekarno Hatta;

☎ 8.30am–3pm Mon–Fri, to 1pm Sat)

## Sleeping

There once was a good choice of budget digs in Bajawa, but virtually all the cheap rooms have suffered from neglect. A good scrub and a coat of paint are needed across the board. All prices include breakfast.

**Hotel Korina** (☎ 21162; Jl Ahmad Yani 81; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) The bottom of the Bajawa barrel in terms of room size, frills and cleanliness, but the staff are friendly and it will do for a night.



**ourpick Villa Silverin** (☎ 222 3865; www.villa-silverinhotel.com; Jl Bajawa; economy/standard/VIP r 75,000/175,000/275,000Rp) Set just outside of town on the road to Ende, with beckoning verandahs and jaw-dropping valley views. VIP rooms have queen beds, hot water and are the cleanest rooms in Bajawa.

**Edelweis** (☎ 21345; Jl Ahmad Yani 76; economy/standard/VIP r 90,000/100,000/120,000Rp; 📺) Even Edelweis needs a little TLC. Nevertheless, their nice gardens, great volcano views, reasonably clean VIP rooms and friendly ownership, which may boil water for a very welcome hot-water morning *mandi*, make this an appealing choice.

**Elizabeth Hotel** (☎ 21223; Jl Inerie; s/d 100,000/125,000Rp) Set in a quiet corner of town away from the restaurants (a car comes in handy here), rooms are cleanish, airy and very pink. Some are brighter than others. Be choosy.

**Hotel Bintang Wisata** (☎ 21744; Jl Palapa 4; standard s/d 150,000/175,000Rp, VIP r 320,000Rp) This newer place has modern rooms, from plain 'standard' class to 'VIP' rooms with TVs and shared balconies that have views of the volcano...obscured by a beautiful mobile-phone tower.

## Eating

For a small town, Bajawa has a good range of restaurants, including plenty of *makassan-Padang* (Padang-food restaurants) clustered around the bus terminal.

**Lucas** (☎ 21340; Ahmad Yani 6; mains 10,000-15,000Rp) Set in a cute cabin, done up with lanterns and chequered tablecloths, it serves fine pork sate and other local faves, including a fearsome yet quaffable *arak*.

**Camellia** (☎ 21458; Jl Ahmad Yani 74; mains 15,000Rp) The dining room is too bright, but the food is delicious. It has Western dishes, but try the chicken sate (17,000Rp). It comes with a unique sweet, smoky pepper sauce. And the guacamole rocks.

**Dito's** (☎ 21162; Jl Ahmad Yani; mains 15,000-25,000Rp) The newest of the Chinese-Indo diners on Ahmad Yani. It's reasonably priced, the food is fresh and tasty, and the cheery bamboo interior works. Their tamarillo juice is *delish*.

## Shopping

Pasar Bajawu (Bajawa Market) bustles with colourful commerce in the mornings, and is a fun scene. Local women wear and sell their

ikat, and there's tons of beautiful fresh fruit to sniff and sample.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Merpati has resumed its Bajawa-Kupang hop. Contact its office in Kupang (see p569).

### BEMO & TRUCK

Regular bemos travel from the **terminal** (Jl Basoeki Rahmat) to Soa, Mangulewa, Mataloko, Langa and Boawae. Bemos to Bena run irregularly, two or three times a day. There is also at least one truck a day that runs to Jerebuu, passing through Bena.

### BOAT

The ASDP fairly fast ferry *Perum* runs from Aimere, on the coast near Bajawa, to Waingapu (60,000Rp) in Sumba, leaving on Monday at 4pm. It returns to Aimere overnight and then leaves for Kupang (80,000Rp) on Tuesday morning at around 9am. Take a bemo or bus from the Watujaji terminal to Aimere (15,000Rp) and buy the ticket on the ferry. Ask for the latest schedule at hotels in Bajawa, as changes are common.

### BUS

Most buses will pick you up at your hotel if you book a ticket in advance, but you'll probably have to endure endless loops around town before the bus finally leaves from the main Watujaji terminal, 3km south of the centre just off the Ende-Ruteng road.

The bus to Labuanbajo (100,000Rp, 10 hours) leaves at 6am, to Ruteng (60,000Rp, five hours) at 7am, and buses to Ende (35,000Rp, five hours) go at 7am and 11am. There are also two buses to Riung (20,000Rp, three hours), along a tough, winding road, at 1pm.

## Getting Around

Yellow bemos (2000Rp) cruise around town, but it is easy to walk almost everywhere except to the bus terminals. *Treks* (trucks) serve remote routes, most leaving the villages in the morning and returning in the afternoon.

Motorbikes cost 75,000Rp a day. A Kijang (with driver) is 550,000Rp. Most hotels can arrange rental.

The airport (Map p544) is 25km from Bajawa and about 6km outside Soa. Bemos from the Pasar Bajawu cost 5000Rp, but don't get stranded in Soa.

## AROUND BAJAWA

Bajawa's big draw is the chance to explore traditional villages in the gorgeous countryside. Their fascinating architecture features carved poles supporting a conical thatched roof. It is certainly possible to visit the area alone, but you'll learn a lot more about the culture and customs (like the caste system) with a good guide. Some organise meals in their home villages. Guides linger around hotels and can arrange day trips for 250,000Rp per person with transport, village entry fees and lunch.

The villagers are now quite used to tourists. If visiting, it is customary to sign the visitors' book and make a donation. Taking photos is usually OK, but ask first and remember that entering a village is like entering someone's home. Bena and Wogo are the most traditional and impressive villages. Bena has spectacular views.

### Langa & Bela

There are totem pole-like *ngadhu* (dedicated to male ancestors) and *bhaga* (miniature thatched-roof house, dedicated to female ancestors) in Langa, which is 7km from Bajawa, but this village is fairly modern. Bemos travel here from Bajawa's bemo terminal. Bela is more interesting and traditional and is a couple of kilometres away, off the main road.

### Bena

On the flank of the **Gunung Inerie** (2245m) volcano, 19km from Bajawa, Bena is one of the most traditional Ngada villages, and its fabulous stone monuments are the region's best.

Houses with high thatched roofs line up in two rows on a ridge, the space between them filled with fine *ngadhu*, *bhaga* (smeared with sacrificial blood) and megalithic tomblike structures. Most houses have male or female figurines on their roofs, while doorways are decorated with buffalo horns and jawbones – a sign of the family's prosperity.

A small Christian shrine sits on a mound at the top of the village and behind it a recently built lookout offers a spectacular view down a jagged valley to the sea – a two-hour walk away. Gunung Inerie can be climbed from Watumeze, between Langa and Bena, in about four hours.

Bena is the most visited village, and weavings and souvenir stalls line the front of houses. Although the village is crowded when tour groups arrive during high season and all villagers are now officially Catholic and attend a local missionary school, traditional beliefs and customs endure. Sacrifices are held three times each year, and village elders still talk about a rigidly enforced caste system that prevented 'mixed' relationships, with those defying the *adat* facing possible death.

Bena is 12km from Langa down a degraded road that's passable only in a 4WD vehicle or by motorbike. There's one daily bemo to/from Bajawa (15,000Rp); it leaves Bena at 7am and returns from Bajawa at 1pm.

### Nage

Nage is a traditional village on a plateau about 7km from Bena, with views of Gunung Inerie. A number of *ngadhu*, *bhaga* and tombs lie

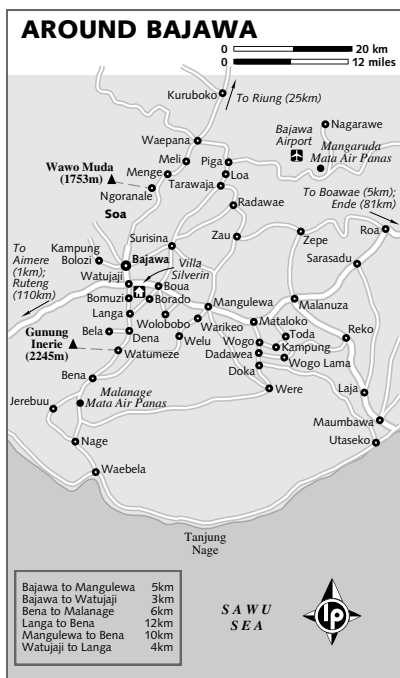
## THE NGADA

Over 60,000 Ngada people inhabit the upland Bajawa plateau and the slopes around Gunung Inerie. Older animistic beliefs remain strong, and most Ngada practise a fusion of animism and Christianity. They worship Gae Dewa, a god who unites Dewa Zeta (the heavens) and Nitu Sale (the earth).

The most evident symbols of continuing Ngada tradition are pairs of *ngadhu* and *bhaga*. The *ngadhu* is a parasol-like structure about 3m high, consisting of a carved wooden pole and thatched 'roof', and the *bhaga* is a miniature thatched-roof house.

The *ngadhu* is 'male' and the *bhaga* is 'female', and each pair is associated with a particular family group within a village. Some were built over 100 years ago to commemorate ancestors killed in long-past battles.

In addition to *ngadhu*, *bhaga* and the ancestor worship that goes with them, agricultural fertility rites continue (sometimes involving gory buffalo sacrifices), as well as ceremonies marking birth, marriage, death and house building. The major annual festival is the six-day Reba ceremony at Bena, 19km from Bajawa, held in late December or early January. Villagers wear specially made all-black ikat, sacrifice buffalo and sing and dance through the night.



between two rows of high-roofed houses. About 2km before Nage are the **Malanage Mata Air Panas** (hot springs), where a fast-flowing, hot, emerald-green river mixes with a cold-water stream.

You can walk from Nage to Bena; just continue north on the sealed road through the village. Morning and afternoon bemos run from Bajawa via Bena and Mangulewa.

## Wogo

Wogo is a large village with nine sets of *ngadhu* and *bhaga*, ringed by traditional houses. This is one of the area's largest and most traditional villages, though a few mod cons have arrived, including electricity.

About 1km further on from Wogo, turn off at the Dadawea sign and follow the track to the left to Wogo Lama, where vast groups of jagged stones jut out from the ground. These megalithic **ancestor tombs** are still used in ceremonies.

Wogo is 1.5km from Mataloko, which is 18km from Bajawa on the Ende road and easily reached by bus or bemo – very regular bemos shuttle to Wogo from behind Pasar

Bajawu (2000Rp). Mataloko is famous for its huge seminary, located on the highway.

## Wawo Muda

Wawo Muda (1753m) is the latest volcano to emerge in Flores, exploding in 2001 and leaving behind a mini-Kelimutu, complete with several small lakes coloured a burnt orange inside its crater. Pine trees charred by the eruption stand in isolated patches, and there are spectacular views of Gunung Inerie.

The volcano is best visited in the wet season from November to March, if the trails are not too muddy. The lakes usually evaporate in the dry. To get there take one of the regular bemos from Bajawa (8000Rp, 50 minutes) or an *ojek* to the village of Ngoranale, near Menge, and walk an hour up an easy-to-follow trail. Some *ojek* drivers may offer to take you the whole way up, as the path is doable on a motorbike.

## BOAWAE

Charming, remote Boawae is 41km from Bajawa on the highway to Ende and is the centre for the Nage-Keo people. It sits at the base of **Gunung Ebulobo**, a steaming volcano, which can be climbed with a guide (50,000Rp). It usually involves an overnight stop on the mountain, then a two-hour ascent early the next morning. Trails are closed during the rainy season.

This is also the source of the best Bajawa-area ikat, which you can see modelled by the locals when they descend here for a massive **market** every Wednesday from 8am to 2pm. Turn down the town's only 'T' intersection and you'll find it.

Ritual buffalo sacrifices also take place here, and an equally messy form of boxing called *etu* is part of the May to August harvest festivities. The boxers wear tree-bark armour painted with animal blood, and their gloves may be studded with broken glass. Talk about ultimate fighting.

Few visitors bother to stop at Boawae, but **Hotel Sao Asih Melati** (☎ 0813 3947 4289; s/d 60,000/80,000Rp), set off a dirt road (follow the signs) on a family plot amidst gorgeous gardens, has clean wooden rooms with flush toilets and showers. Meals are available, and they can help arrange guides to Gunung Ebulobo.

**Wisma Nusa Bunga** (r 70,000Rp) has basic concrete rooms just off the main road. It's run by a lovely family who can help you find a mountain guide.

## RIUNG

This quiet fishing village 65km from Bajawa lies opposite a scattering of offshore islands with white-sand beaches and excellent snorkelling known as the **Seventeen Islands Marine Park**. There are actually 21 islands, but government authorities decided on the number as a convenient tie-in with Indonesia's Independence Day (17 August).

Riung sprawls along a shoreline of mudflats and mangroves that is home to a Muslim Bugis stilt-house community.

### Information

The PHKA office on the main drag has information about the Riung area. Before going to the islands you must sign in and pay 15,000Rp per person (plus a 20,000Rp boat fee) at a separate booth by the dock.

There's no ATM or official currency exchange facilities in Riung. Come with ample rupiah.

### Sights & Activities

Guides will appear at your hotel offering to organise **boat trips** to the islands. **Al Itchan** (☎ 0813 8759 0964) is one of Riung's most experienced and dependable guides, and is highly recommended. A day trip costs 250,000Rp (for up to six), not including park admission, boat fee, snorkel gear or lunch. Three or four islands are usually included in the boat trip, including **Pulau Ontoloe**, which has a massive colony of flying foxes (these huge fruit bats blacken the sky around Riung at sunset). **Pulau Tiga** is also not to be missed. The sea is a glassy turquoise, the small reef is pristine with clouds of tropical fish, and there's a long sweep of white sand perfect for barefoot strolls.

It's also possible to **dive** the islands with **Awing Muhammad** (☎ 0812 3019 8727), an experienced Divemaster. Two dives cost 600,000Rp per person including gear, for two or more divers.

Hike up **Bukit Watujapi**, about 3km from Riung, for a magnificent view of the coast and the Seventeen Islands Marine Park. It's 10,000Rp to get here by *ojek*. A trek to the **Bintang Ireng** waterfall is the region's newest activity. The trail begins 8km from Riung and winds for an hour beneath cathedral trees before reaching the towering 27m cascade. Guided trips cost 275,000Rp including lunch transport to and from the trail by *ojek*. The coastline east and west of Riung is beauti-

ful and makes for some great motorbiking. Rent yours (50,000Rp to 60,000Rp per day) and drive the gorgeous 16km west to **Ruki** village, then double back and head 14km east of Riung to **Pantai Watulajar**, the best of Riung's white-sand beaches.

### Sleeping & Eating

At the time of writing, **Hotel Bintang Wisata** of Bajawa was set to open a Riung property in autumn 2009.

**Pondok SVD** (☎ 0813 3934 1572; standard s/d 110,000/190,000Rp, superior s/d 270,000/300,000Rp) Clean as a whistle, this missionary-run place has absolutely spotless rooms with desks, reading lights and Western toilets. The superior-class rooms have an additional living area with a sofa and a TV.

**Nirvana** (☎ 0813 3710 6007; bungalows 150,000-185,000Rp) Here's your Robinson Crusoe Riung outlet, with six well-constructed detached bamboo bungalows, all with open-air bathrooms. They don't serve meals.

There are only a few restaurants in Riung. The best is **Rumah Makan Murah Muriah** (mins 15,000-30,000Rp, large beer 15,000Rp), your destination for delicious, fresh grilled fish and icy Bintang.

### Getting There & Away

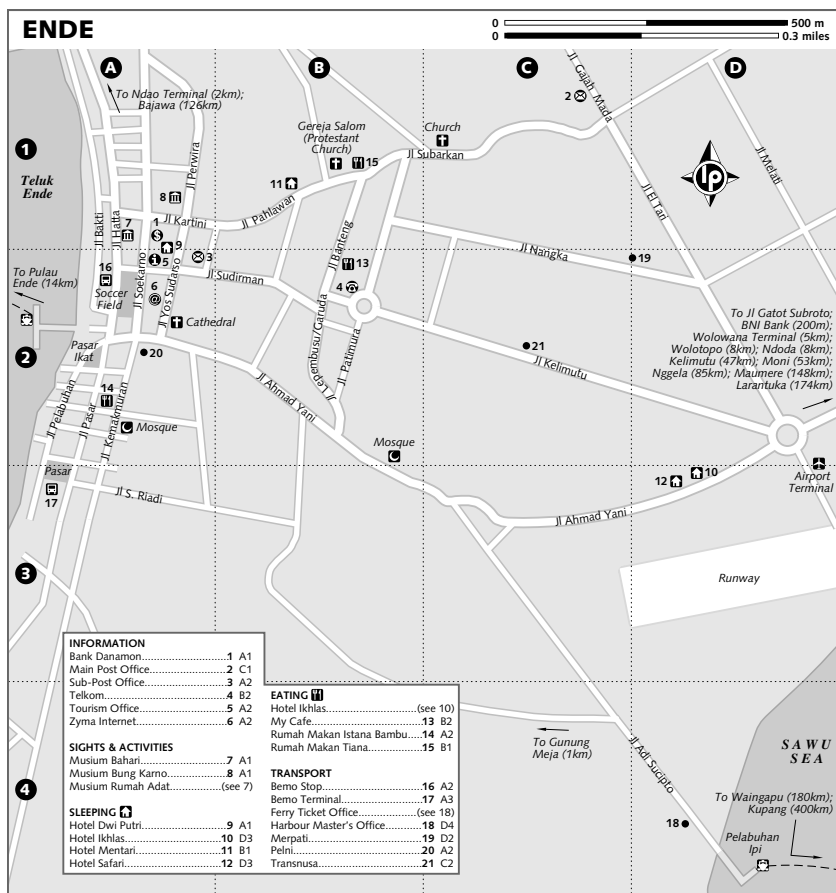
From Ndao terminal in Ende (40,000Rp, four hours) a bus leaves every afternoon at 1pm. The road to Ende is narrow but sealed and in mostly good condition. Two buses from Bajawa (20,000Rp, three hours) leave at 1pm. This road is a mess and is 4WD-only. The Riung-Ende bus leaves at 7am, and the bus to Bajawa departs at 6am.

### ENDE

☎ 0381 / pop 65,000

The saving grace of this muggy, dusty and crowded south-coast port and important transport hub is its spectacular setting. The eye-catching cones of Gunung Meja (661m) and Gunung Iya (637m) loom over the city and the nearby black-sand and blue-cobblestone coastline. Sukarno was exiled here in the 1930s, when he reinvented himself as a playwright...kind of.

The aristocratic families of Ende link their ancestors through mythical exploits and magical events to the Hindu Majapahit kingdom of Java. Today the population of Ende is evenly split between Christians and



Muslims, and there are decent connections from here to other destinations in eastern Nusa Tenggara.

## Orientation

Ende is at the neck of a peninsula jutting south into the sea. The old port and most of the shops are on the western side. The main port, Pelabuhan Ipi, is on the eastern side.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

**Telkom** (Jl Kelimutu; ☎ 24hr) Offers cheap international calls and internet access (10,000Rp per hour).

**Zyza Internet** (☎ 24697; Jl Yos Sudarso 3; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 11am-10pm) Good connection in the cathedral's shadow.

## MONEY

**Bank Danamon** (Jl Soekarno; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Has an ATM and offers larger credit-card withdrawals.

**BNI bank** (Jl Gatot Subroto) Situated out near the airport, this bank offers the best exchange rates and also has an ATM.

## POST

**Main post office** (Jl Gajah Mada) Out in the northeastern part of town.

**Sub-post office** (Jl Yos Sudarso) Sells stamps; opposite Hotel Dwi Putri.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourism Office** (☎ 21303; Jl Soekarno 4) Enthusiastic staff dispenses up-to-date transport information.



## Sights

Meander through the aromatic **waterfront market** (Jl Pasar) with the requisite fruit pyramids and an astonishing fish section including giant tuna and sharks. The adjacent **ikat market** (cnr Jl Pabean & Jl Pasar) sells hand-woven tapestries from across Flores and Sumba.

History buffs can visit Sukarno's house of exile, now **Musium Bung Karno** (Jl Perwira; admission by donation; ☎ 7am-noon Mon-Sat). Most of the original period furnishings remain. This is where the beloved revolutionary penned the *Frankenstein* knock-off, *Doctor Satan*. Thank God for his day job.

The **Musium Bahari** (Maritime Museum; Jl Hatta; admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 7am-8pm) has a large collection of seashells but little else. Next door, the **Musium Rumah Adat** (admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) is a large, traditional house with a stylised village compound in front of it that has a *tubu musu* (sacrificial stone altar).

**Wolotopo**, approximately 8km east of Ende, has traditional houses built on several levels, and stunning sea views. Bemos run from Ende about twice a day. Otherwise, it's a 45-minute walk from Wolowana along the **Nanga Nesa** black-sand beach.

Northeast of Ende the road rises along a ridge opposite misty, jagged jungled peaks, overlooking a roaring river and gushing with ribbons of waterfalls in the wet season. Throw in the jade rice terraces and you have some of Flores' most jaw-dropping scenery. Yes, it's a beautiful drive to Kelimutu.

## Sleeping

Accommodation is spread all over town, but frequent bemos make it easy to get around.

**Hotel Ikhlas** (☎ 21695; Jl Ahmad Yani 69; economy s/d/tr 50,000/60,000/85,000Rp, standard s/d/tr 60,000/80,000/90,000Rp) This well-run place has plenty of basic but neat little rooms at good prices. Those at the rear, around a sunny courtyard, are the most desirable.

**Hotel Safari** (☎ 21997; Jl Ahmad Yani 65; economy s/d 100,000/125,000Rp, with air-con s/d 200,000/250,000Rp; ☎) Right next door to Hotel Ikhlas, this is a step-up. Rooms are large, clean and open onto a courtyard garden. Air-con rooms should be booked in advance. Breakfast is included.

**Hotel DwiPutri** (☎ 21685; Jl Yos Sudarso 27-29; standard/VIP r 150,000/250,000Rp; ☎) Big, white, modern and air-conditioned, this hotel feels almost classy at first, but should be cleaner. Some standard rooms have mountain views, but

VIP rooms, which have air-con and hot water, are the best of the bunch.

**our pick Hotel Mentari** (☎ 21802; Jl Pahlawan 19; standard/superior/VIP r 250,000/300,000/350,000Rp; ☎ ☎) Another whitewashed hotel with a brushed-up exterior. The rooms are clean, with high ceilings, and are easily the best in Ende. Some rooms have garden views and catch a bit of breeze. Be choosy. The standard class are quite sufficient unless you need a fridge and a TV. There's wireless internet access throughout.

## Eating

The waterfront market has a concentration of warungs.

**Hotel Ikhlas** (☎ 21695; fax 22555; Jl Ahmad Yani; dishes 3500-12,000Rp) This hotel-restaurant has bargain-priced Indonesian and Western food – the fish and chips come highly recommended.

**Rumah Makan Tiana** (Jl Pahlawan 31; dishes 6000-15,000Rp) A fun hole-in-the-wall with terrific Indonesian soul food, including a gingery *soto ayam* (chicken soup), a chilli-fired *rendang* (beef coconut curry), and *ayam sate* (chicken sate) drenched in ginger sauce.

**My Cafe** (☎ 22755; Jl Banteng 10; meals 12,500-17,000Rp, coffee drinks from 6000; ☎ 5pm-11pm) Ende's hipster central has a coffee bar, cold Bintang, a few standard Indo dishes (ie *nasi goreng* and *mie goreng*) and a bakery-case packed with cakes, cookies and doghnuts.

**our pick Rumah Makan Istana Bambu** (☎ 21921; Jl Kemakmuran 30A; mains 15,000-35,000Rp) Here's a classic, funkified Chinese fish house. The cast includes a sweet mouthy matriarch, her dour smirking sisterhood, and a hot, flirty waitress. But the food is the star. There's fresh fish, squid, shrimp and lobster, addictively spicy *sambal* (which they bottle and sell), and a shelf of freshly baked cakes, breads and pastries.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Schedules are historically fluid in eastern Nusa Tenggara, so always check flight information in advance. At the time of research, **Transnusa** (☎ 24333, 0852 3925 8392; Jl Kelimutu 37) offered daily flights to Denpasar. **Merpati** (☎ 21355; Jl Nangka) offered four flights a week to Denpasar (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday) and Kupang (Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday).

Departure tax is 10,000Rp.

## BOAT

Ende is the major port for southern Flores and is well connected to other islands. A new ferry port was recently built 11.5km north of Ende, but the seas are too rough around this 'improved' harbour to make it useful most of the year. Ships almost always dock at Pelabuhan Ipi, which is the main port, 2.5km southeast from the town centre. Nevertheless, it's worth double-checking where your boat will arrive.

The following schedules change frequently. At research time **ASDP** (☎ 0813 3948 9103) ferries to Waingapu (60,000Rp, seven hours) were leaving Ende every Thursday night at midnight, before looping back again and heading to Kupang (125,000Rp) at 7pm on Friday. Buy tickets at the harbour.

Pelni's *Awu* stops in Ende every two weeks. It sails west to Waingapu, Benoa and Surabaya, then east to Kupang, Kalabahi and Larantuka. Visit the helpful **Pelni office** (☎ 21043; Jl Cathedral 2; ☎ 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat).

## BUS & KIJANG

It's about 5km from town to Wolowana terminal, where you catch buses for eastern Flores. Buses to Moni (15,000Rp, two hours) operate from 6am to 2pm. Buses to Maumere (40,000Rp, five hours) leave at 7am, 9am and 4pm. Maumere buses will drop you off in Moni but charge the full fare through to Maumere. A bus to Nggela leaves between 6am and 7am, and a through bus to Larantuka leaves at 7am (nine hours).

Buses heading west leave from the Ndao terminal, 2km north of town on the beach road. Departures from Ende are to Ruteng (120,000Rp, nine hours) at 7.30am, Labuanbajo (150,000Rp, 15 hours) at 7am, Bajawa (35,000Rp, five hours) at 7am and 11am, and Riung (40,000Rp, four hours) at 1pm.

A handful of Kijang SUVs operate as shared taxis between Ende and Maumere (62,500Rp, 4½ hours).

## Getting Around

The airport is just east of the centre. Taxis to town cost around 20,000Rp.

Bemos run frequently to just about everywhere (even Pelabuhan Ipi) for a flat rate of 2000Rp. You can easily flag a bemo on the street; or find the bemo stop on Jl Hatta (near the old port).

## KELIMUTU

There aren't many better ways to wake up than to sip ginger coffee as the sun crests Kelimutu's western rim, filtering mist into the sky and revealing three deep, volcanic lakes – each one a different striking shade. That's why the tri-coloured lakes of **Kelimutu National Park** have long been considered a Nusa Tenggara must. During our research one was turquoise, the other dark brown with flecks of rust, and the third was black glass. Colours are so dense that the lakes seem the thickness of paint. It's thought that dissolving minerals (a process that can accelerate in the rainy season) account for the chameleonic colour scheme – although the turquoise lake never changes, the others fluctuate to countless shades of yellow, orange, red and brown. The summit's moonscape gives Kelimutu an ethereal atmosphere, especially when clouds billow across the craters and sunlight shafts burn luminescent pinpoints to the water's surface.

Kelimutu is sacred to local people, and legend has it that the souls of the dead go to these lakes: young people's souls go to the warmth of Tiwu Nuwa Muri Koo Fai (Turquoise Lake), old people's to the cold of Tiwu Ata Polo (Brown Lake) and those of the wicked to Tiwu Ata Mbupu (Black Lake).

Ever since locals led early Dutch settlers here, sightseers have made the sunrise trek. Today there's a sealed road up to the lakes from Moni, 13.5km away at the base of the mountain. Kelimutu's relative isolation means that surprisingly few visitors make it here outside of the July–August high season, and even then it's not too hard to find a peaceful spot to enjoy the scene. Visit in the rainy season or in the afternoon and you will probably have Kelimutu to yourself.

There's a staircase up to the highest lookout, Inspiration Point, from where all three lakes are visible. It's not at all advisable to scramble around the fringes of the craters. There once was a trail winding around them, but it crumbled years ago. Now it's just loose scree. The footing's so bad and the drop so steep, a couple of hikers perished here recently.

Pray for a sunny day – the turquoise lake reaches its full brilliance in the sunlight, and clouds may hover over the other two unless the sun is out. If the weather is not good, come back the next day – Kelimutu is really worth seeing at its best.

## Getting There & Away

Moni is the usual base for visiting Kelimutu. It's normally best to view the lakes in the early morning after the predawn mist rises, and before clouds drift in. Public bemos to Kelimutu (25,000Rp) only run from June to August. You can catch them on the main road in Moni, but you should book your seat through your hotel the day before. They leave around 4am and return to town at 7.30am. The rest of the year you'll have to charter an *ojek* (one way/return 35,000/60,000Rp), bemo (one way/return 150,000/250,000Rp, maximum four people) or car (400,000Rp return, maximum five people). Actual prices may depend on your negotiating skills. There's a PHKA post halfway up, where you'll pay the 20,000Rp admission. From the car park it's a nice 20-minute walk up through the pines to Inspiration Point.

If the skies look particularly clear and you have your own transport, it's well worth considering a trip to Kelimutu later in the day when everyone has gone, the silence of the mountain returns and the natural spectacle becomes even more moving.

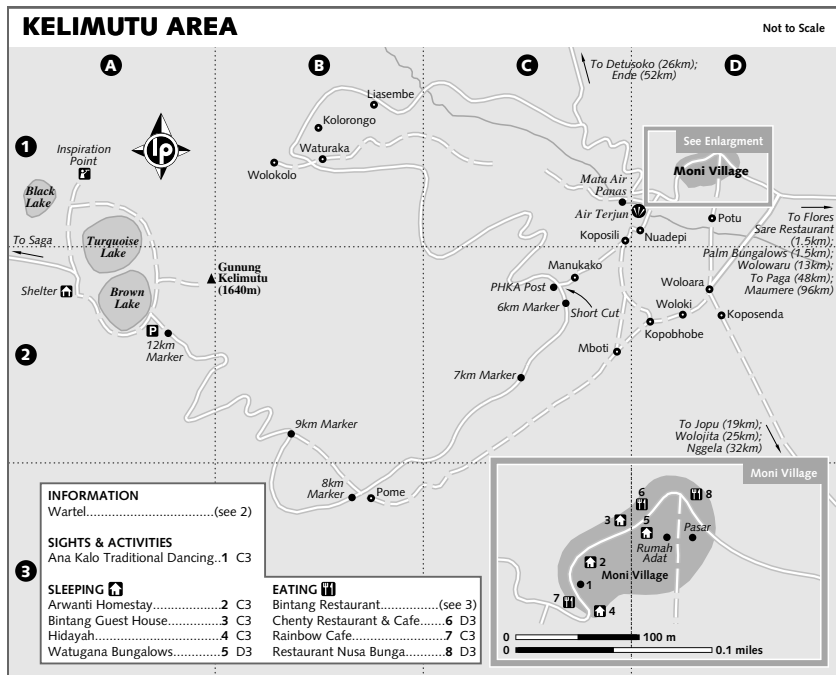
Some prefer to hire transport to the top and stroll down the mountain, through the village past rice fields and along cascading streams all the way to Moni. The walk down takes about 2½ hours and isn't too taxing. A *jalan potong* (short cut) leaves the road back to Moni 1km south of the PHKA gate and goes through Manukako village, then meanders back to the main road 750m uphill from Moni.

A second short cut diverges from the trail and goes through Tomo, Mboti, Topo Mboti, Kolorongo and Kuposili villages, skirts a waterfall and returns to Moni without rejoining the highway.

## MONI

Moni is a picturesque village sprinkled with upcountry rice fields and ringed by soaring volcanic peaks and distant sea views. It's a slow-paced, easy-going town that serves as a gateway to Kelimutu, and the comfortable climate invites long walks, and staying a few extra days. The turn-off to Kelimutu is 2km west of town.

Moni unfurls along the Ende–Mauumere road in the heart of the Lio region, which extends



from east of Ende to beyond Wolowaru. Lio people speak a dialect of the Ende language and are renowned for their weaving; pieces are adorned with bands of blue and rusty-red. The Monday market, held on the soccer pitch, is a major local draw and a good place to snare local ikat.

## Information

There are no banks here and exchange rates are appalling. Carry cash. There's an expensive wartel at Arwanti Homestay.

## Sights & Activities

**Ana Kalo Traditional Dancing** (admission 25,000-35,000Rp) presents nightly shows in their large, thatched performance space during the peak season. Private shows (150,000-200,000Rp) can be commissioned during low season. Your guest house can help make arrangements.

Apart from the trek to/from Kelimutu, there are several other walks from Moni. About 750m along the Ende road from the centre of Moni, paths lead down to a 10m **air terjun** (waterfall), with a swimming hole and **mata air panas** (hot springs) near the falls. The trail branches to the left of Rainbow Cafe. There are more gorgeous hot springs in the middle of the rice fields at **Kolorongo** (3.5km from Moni) on the way to Kelimutu. Or walk south past the church to **Potu** and **Woloara** (about 2.5km from Moni). From Woloara, continue on through several villages to **Jopu** (about 19km), where you'll find a large traditional home with engraved beams inside and out. You can buy some really good Moni ikat here. Energetic types could walk on to **Wolajita** or loop back to Wolowaru and catch a bus, truck or *ojek* back to Moni.

## Sleeping

Moni accommodation is virtually all in the budget category and quite spread out along the highway. Guest houses do book up in the June–August high season, so it makes sense to reserve ahead. These places are listed in the order you approach them from Ende.

**ourpick Hidayah** (☎ 0853 3901 1310; d 200,000Rp)

Four huge, superclean rooms with outstanding mountain and valley views from the common porch. Without question, this is the most comfortable choice in town.

**Arwanti Homestay** (s/d 75,000/100,000Rp) This place has three spacious bungalows, each equipped with bamboo furnishings, two

bedrooms, a sitting room, a bathroom with shower and a front verandah. Unfortunately, they aren't so clean, and the staff could certainly be a little more helpful.

**Bintang Guest House** (☎ 0852 3790 6259; s/d 60,000/75,000Rp) Just four tidy rooms with little garden patios out front and great views of the valley below. You'll be hanging around with Mr Tobias and his brood. They rent motorbikes for 75,000Rp per day.

**Watugana Bungalows** (s/d/tr 75,000/90,000/125,000Rp) Reasonably priced, older tiled rooms with a shady porch, set downhill from the main road. The management is very friendly and informative.

**Palm Bungalows** (☎ 0813 3914 7983; d from 75,000Rp) This is your secluded sweet spot, a ramshackle bungalow on a farm with incredible mountain views. The dusty turquoise stream that skirts the property sings a tremendous lullaby and an even better wake-up call.

## Eating

The places are listed in the order you approach them from Ende.

**Rainbow Cafe** (mains 11,000-18,000Rp) This little yellow bamboo cafe up the hill from Hidayah is the newest addition to Moni. Its menu is creative (its *nasi campur* is called 'hot gossip'), but the food is more of Moni's typical cheap Indo and Western mains.

**Bintang Restaurant** (dishes 12,000-47,000Rp) Moni's standard Indo-Western fare (*nasi goreng* and *mie goreng*, pasta, macaroni and cheese, fried chicken and chips) and ice-cold beer.

**Chenty Restaurant & Cafe** (dishes 12,000-40,000Rp) Long-running, popular place with a nice porch overlooking the rice fields. The special here is the Moni cake (25,000Rp), a vegetable and mashed potato pie topped with cheese.

**Restaurant Nusa Bunga** (dishes 8000-27,000Rp) The funkiest grub shack in town belongs to this long-time standby across from the market. It has chicken club sandwiches, *gado gado*, omelettes and all the Indo basics.

**ourpick Flores Sare Restaurant** (☎ 0852 3902 9357; dishes 15,000-45,000Rp) Attached to the perpetually incomplete hotel of the same name, this is Moni's best kitchen, with a wide array of fresh fish, squid, chicken and pork dishes to choose from. Hire an *ojek* to get here, then burn off the meal and stroll the 1.5km back to town.

## Getting There & Away

Moni is 53km northeast of Ende and 98km west of Maumere. Buses travel to Ende (15,000Rp, two hours), starting at around 7am, and there's a bus all the way to Labuanbajo at noon.

For Maumere (35,000Rp, four hours), the first buses from Ende start coming through at around 9am or 10am and the last one passes through town at around 6pm. It's always best to travel in the morning, when buses are often half-empty. Afternoon buses are usually overcrowded. Don't book through your homestay – hail the bus as it passes through town.

Shared taxis also make the Ende–Maumere run via Moni. They travel in both directions all day until 9pm. It'll cost you 25,000Rp to Ende and 50,000Rp to Maumere.

## AROUND MONI

### Wolowaru

The village of Wolowaru, straggling along the Maumere road just 13km southeast of Moni, is a handy transport hub for the ikat-weaving villages of Wolojita and Nggela. There's a daily morning market that winds down at around 9am, except on Saturday, the main market day.

All Maumere–Ende buses stop in Wolowaru. A few morning buses originate here – check schedules at **Rumah Makan Jawa Timur** (mains 8000-16,000Rp). Most buses stop here for a meal break.

### Nggela & Wolojita

Nggela has a gorgeous hilltop position perched above the coast, but the chief attraction is the weaving, usually done by hand and still using plant-based dyes. In former times the size, colour and pattern of the ikat shawls of this region indicated the status of the wearer. Nggela ikat typically has black or rich dark-brown backgrounds, with patterns in earthy red, brown or orange. Nggela locals have earned a bad reputation for slashing tires and harassing drivers if their clients aren't buying. Bottom line: if you do come here, buy something. Or simply bypass Nggela altogether, and peruse ikat of similar quality in Wolojita, situated about 7km inland.

A road branches off the Ende–Maumere road at Wolowaru and heads to Wolojita (12km) and Nggela (19km). One bus per

day leaves Ende between 6am and 7am for Nggela, passing Moni at about 9am and then Wolojita. Otherwise, it's a good half-day's walk to Nggela from Wolowaru. Your Kijang won't make it unless it's a 4WD. It's only 2km or 3km further from Moni via Woloara, so you could start from there. The volcano-studded scenery is beautiful, particularly on the downhill stretch of the road as it runs into Nggela.

From Wolojita to Nggela, either follow the road or take a short cut past the hot springs (ask for the *jalan potong ke Nggela*). It would be pushing it to do the return walk on the same day. Locals will offer you a bed for the night, but there might be a late truck going back to Wolowaru, from where you can easily find transport back to Moni.

### Detusoko

Wedged into the misty peaks above an emerald valley blanketed with rice fields is the friendly village of Detusoko. Located halfway between Ende and Moni, and just a 45-minute drive to Kelimutu, it's a great alternative to bunking in Moni. You can sleep at **Wisma Santo Fransiskus** (☎ 0813 2561 5488, 0813 1435 0522; d 125,000-175,000Rp), a convent with a dozen tidy guestrooms with private patios and mosquito nets. The cheaper rooms have better views, but a western-style shared bath. Breakfast is included and dinner is 50,000Rp.

### Paga

Located halfway between Moni and Maumere, is this quaint fishing village with a lovely, lonely beach and a placid bay with good snorkelling at its western edge. But you're here to lunch at the fabulous **Restaurant Larys** (0813 3941 8893; Jl Raya Maumere-Ende; meals 30,000-45,000Rp), a tumbledown fish joint on the beach. Choose your fresh catch and have it grilled or fried to perfection. And don't skimp on the fiery fresh *sambal*. Owner Agustinus Naban speaks German and English and can show you megalithic stone graves and amazing ocean views from the nearby village of **Nuabari**. If you're, um, lucky, you'll happen upon a burial ceremony and witness the ritual slaughter of pigs and buffalo. You can barely see his restaurant from the road east of town and buses won't stop here, so you'll need private transport. Drivers know it well.

## MAUMERE

☎ 0382 / pop 51,000

Blessed with a long, languid coastline backed by layered hills, Maumere should be a nice place to hang out for a while. Unfortunately the city – a sprawling, sweaty port town with a graffiti-scrawled jumble of concrete buildings, crumbling streets, a profound litter problem and relentless heat – gets in the way. Still, it is one of the main gateways to Flores, and remains well connected with Bali and Timor, so you'll probably wind up here for a night.

Thankfully, you don't have to stay in the city. There are sweet beach bungalows on the coast, along with some pleasant diversions to nearby ikat-weaving villages, the once-legendary Maumere sea gardens, and a sunken WWII wreck.

Maumere is a vortex of Sikkane language and culture, which extends east between central Flores and Larantuka, and has been the centre of Flores' Catholic missionary activity since Portuguese Dominicans arrived 400 years ago.

## Information

### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

**Comtel** (Jl Bandeng 1; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎) The best connection in Maumere.

**Telkom** (Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 24hr) Opposite BNI.

### MONEY

**Bank Danamon** (Jl Pasar Baru Barat) Has an ATM.

**BNI bank** (Jl Soekarno Hatta) Has the best rates in town and an ATM. There's another branch opposite the market in Geliting, on the way to Waiterang.

### POST

**Post office** (Jl Pos) Next to the soccer field.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Tourist office** (☎ 21652; Jl Waiklau) Out of the way, and not particularly helpful.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**PT Floressa Wisata** (☎ 22281; Jl Sudirman; www.floressa-bali.com) This efficient company can book boat and airline tickets and offers organised tours.

## Sleeping

There's one good budget choice in Maumere, some terrific beach spots west of the city, and along the road to Larantuka in Waiara and Waiterang (see p554).

**Hotel Wini Rai** (☎ 21388; Jl Gajah Mada 50; s 50,000-250,000Rp, d 90,000-350,000Rp; ☎) About 1km west of the centre, this sprawling courtyard hotel has five classes of rooms. The best deal here is on the spotless, air-con rooms out back. It's close to the Ende (west) bus terminal. A second branch, **Hotel Wini Rai II** (☎ 21362; Jl Soetomo) has near-identical room categories and prices.

**Gardena Hotel** (☎ 22644; Jl Patirangga 28; s/d with fan 60,000/80,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/120,000Rp; ☎) A terrific budget spot on a quiet residential street east of the harbour crush. Fan rooms have newish tile, shower and *mandi*, while the air-con rooms also have TV. Rates include breakfast.

**Hotel Nara** (☎ 22001; Jl Moan Subu Sadipan; r with fan/air-con 90,000/130,000Rp; ☎) It's a 2.5km hike from the harbour and city centre, but its clean, bright, freshly painted rooms are tremendous value. Management is warm, attentive and can arrange transport to your boat, bus or plane.

**Gading Beach Hotel** (☎ 0852 3900 4490; Jl Raya Don Siripe; r with fan/air-con 90,000/130,000Rp; ☎) A new beach property, right on the sea, 8.5km west of town. This one is a collection of very clean bamboo bungalows with imaginative paint jobs. The barefoot bamboo restaurant has an upstairs terrace that catches the rare sea breeze, and management offers free transport to the airport and bus stations.

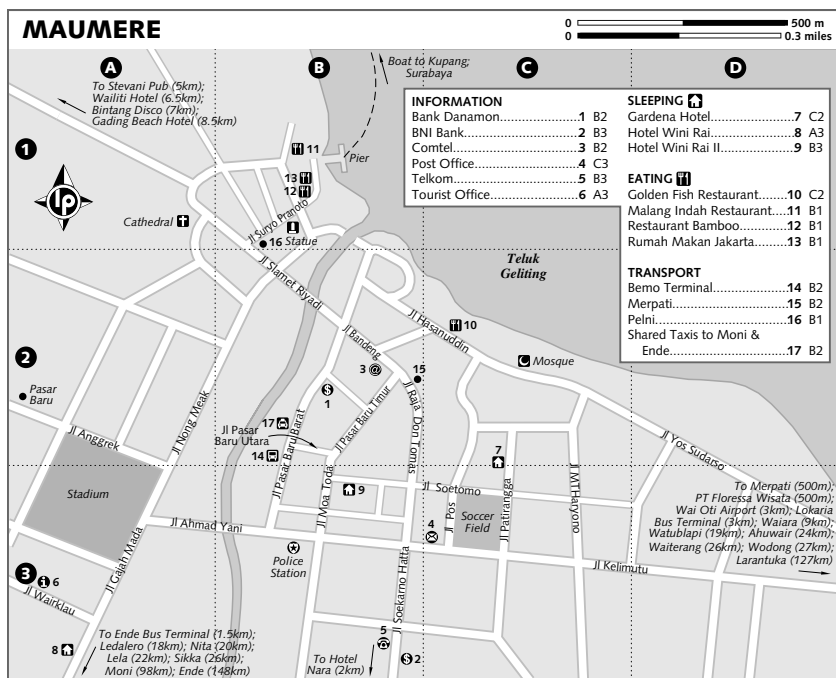
**Walitri Hotel** (☎ 23416; Jl Raya Don Silva; s 200,000-350,000Rp, d 250,000-290,000Rp; ☎) Another brand-new beach hotel with views of offshore islands, 6.5km from the city. Immaculate tiled rooms spill onto a black-sand beach. Some standard rooms are larger and nicer than the superior class, and they're closer to the sea.

## Eating

The best Maumere kitchens belong to inexpensive fish houses on the harbour.

**ourpick Rumah Makan Jakarta** (☎ 0812 379 5559; most dishes 6000-30,000Rp) The popular choice among sailors for a reason. And it isn't the cute, friendly staff, or its proximity to the pier. It's the fish – fresh and perfectly prepared and served almost instantly with a sensational roasted chilli *sambal* that will make you sweat. There may not be a better fish house outside of Makassar and Padang – and we do not say this lightly.

**Restaurant Bamboo** (☎ 0857 3755 9981; dishes 10,000-32,500Rp) Bringing a little design panache to Maumere's funky harbour is this new spot,



dressed tastefully in black bamboo with floor and table seating. It offers pasta, steak and Japanese dishes like beef *yakiniku*.

**Malang Indah Restaurant** (☎ 0813 3943 0303; mains 10,000-38,000Rp) This breezy diner grills and fries seafood at market prices. It has a nice menu of fresh juices and patio seating with harbour views.

**Golden Fish Restaurant** (☎ 21667; Jl Hasanuddin; large fish 35,000Rp) Hidden in town, there's another exceptional seafood choice. Walk through their open kitchen and peruse the day's live catch – including crab and lobster – on your way to the breezy second-storey dining room.

## Entertainment

There's one disco, though it's usually empty, even on Saturday. Nightlife generally revolves around karaoke and Javanese working girls.

**Stevani Pub** (☎ 8pm-2am) Still a funky little garden pub near the sea, 5km west of town. It can get busy late at night.

**Bintang Disco** (☎ 7pm-2am Fri & Sat) If you're looking for a classy night out, don't come to this beer-distribution warehouse turned

nightclub, 7km from town. It's dark, cavernous, loud and beer-soaked.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Maumere has good air connections. **Merpati** (☎ 21393; Jl Raya Don Tomas) has daily flights to/from Kupang and Denpasar with connections to Jakarta.

Departure tax is 10,000Rp.

### BOAT

There are no longer any ASDP ferries calling in Maumere, but **Pelni's Wilis** sails fortnightly to Kupang, Larantuka, Kalimantan and Makassar. **Siguntang** sails to Lewoleba and Kupang every two weeks. **Pelni** (☎ 21013; Jl Suryo Pranoto) is near the entrance to the port.

### BUS & KIJANG

Maumere has two bus terminals. Departure times are rarely precise – be prepared to wait around until there are sufficient passengers.

Buses to Larantuka (32,000Rp, four hours), and buses and bemos to Geliting, Waiara, Ipir and Wodong leave from the Lokaria (or

Timur) terminal, 3km east of town, at 7.30am and 3pm. Shared taxis also leave from here to Larantuka (60,000Rp, three hours) at 7.30am, and sometimes later in the day.

The Ende (or Barat) terminal, 1.5km southwest of town, is the place for buses west to Moni (35,000Rp, three hours) and Ende (40,000Rp, five hours), leaving at 7am and 3pm. Buses to Sikka and Ledalero also depart from here. Shared taxis leave this terminal for Ende (62,500Rp per person, 4½ hours) at around 7.30am.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Maumere's Wai Oti Airport is 3km from town, 800m off the Maumere–Larantuka road. A taxi to/from town is 12,000Rp, or 50,000Rp from the beach hotels in Waiterang. It's a 1km walk out of the airport to the Maumere–Larantuka road where you can hop a bemo (2000Rp) into town.

### BEMO

Bemos cost 2000Rp and run around town regularly.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Renting a car costs 550,000Rp per day, including driver and fuel for trips around the Maumere region. Those organising road trips to Moni and further west should agree on an itinerary and a schedule of staggered payments before departure. PT Floreisa Wisata and the Gardena Hotel can organise rental cars. Gardena staff can also arrange motorbike (75,000Rp per day) rental.

## AROUND MAUMERE

### Ledalero & Nita

Many Florinese priests studied at the Roman Catholic **Seminari Tinggi St Paulus Ledalero** in Ledalero, 18km from Maumere on the Ende road. The chief attraction on these shady grounds is the **museum** (suggested donation 10,000Rp; ☎ 7am–2pm Mon–Fri, 7am–noon Sat), which houses a collection of historic stone tools, old Portuguese weaponry, and Florinese ikat, with designs and natural dyes that are either rare or no longer produced.

Nita is 2km beyond Ledalero and has a Thursday market, where you should be able to purchase some extremely good-quality Sikka-style ikat. Bemos to Ledalero and Nita leave from Maumere's Ende terminal.

## Sikka & Lela

The highway descends through coconut and banana groves to the south-coast weaving and fishing village of Lela, 22km from Maumere. Villagers live in bamboo huts sprinkled on a rocky black-sand beach. Around 4km further on is the charming seaside village of Sikka, one of Flores' first Portuguese settlements. Its kings dominated the Maumere region until the 20th century. You'll be swarmed by ikat-wallahs as soon as you enter town, but they're a charming bunch. Buy even one piece and all of them will smile. For a 20,000Rp to 50,000Rp donation you can watch them work the looms. But the big draw is Sikka's gorgeous, narrow Catholic **cathedral** (admission by donation), which dates from 1899. The open windows in the arched, beamed eaves allow the sound of crashing waves to echo through the sanctuary.

The road to Sikka leaves the Ende road 20km from Maumere. Regular bemos (5000Rp) run from Maumere to Sikka.

## Watublapi

Watublapi is nestled in the coastal mountains 19km southeast of Maumere. Among the swaying palms, mango and avocado trees is a large Catholic mission. From here, it is a pleasant walk to **Ohe**, set on a spiny ridge with views over both coasts of Flores. Locals will no doubt be confused, even startled by your presence, but it's a very safe town. **Bola** is a large village 6km from Watublapi, and 2km further on is the traditional coastal weaving village of **Ipir**. Market day in Ipir is Monday and bemos go there from Maumere (5000Rp, 1½ hours). On other days bemos usually finish at Bola. It may be possible to stay with villagers or the *kepala desa* in Bola or Ipir.

## Waiara

Waiara is the departure point for the Maumere 'sea gardens', once regarded as one of Asia's finest dive destinations. The 1992 earthquake and tidal wave destroyed the reefs around Pulau Pemana and Pulau Besar, but they've recovered a fair bit.

Just off the Larantuka road, 9km east of Maumere, Waiara has two resorts. The past-its-prime **Flores Sao Resort** (☎ 21555, 0813 3906 2904; s/d 200,000/350,000Rp; ☎ ☎) has dated rooms with 1970s sitcom decor on a gorgeous stretch of black sand. The dive shop has shut down, and some of the rooms are pretty musty. **Sea World**



**Club** (Pondok Dunia Laut; ☎ 21570; www.sea-world-club.com; bungalows US\$25-60; 🏠) is not just a suburban Maumere beach resort, it's an Indo-German Christian collaborative started to provide local jobs and build tourism. The cabanas and bungalows are clean and comfortable, with ikat bedspreads, hot water and air-con. And even if they are a bit overpriced, they are on a quiet black-sand beach with views of Pulau Besar. The restaurant is decent, and they have a dive shop (US\$60 for two dives including gear).

To get to the hotels, catch any Talibura-or Larantuka-bound bus from Maumere to Waiara (3000Rp). Both hotels are signposted from the highway; Flores Sao Resort is about 500m further along the road.

### Ahuwair, Wodong & Waiterang

The greater Maumere area does not get any more tranquil or beautiful than the narrow, palm-dappled beaches of Ahuwair, Wodong and Waiterang, 26km to 29km east of the city. There are two simple bungalow operations here and a shockingly inexpensive and classy barefoot resort with a scuba school and tremendous Indonesian cuisine.

There's an impressive variety of dive and snorkelling sites here, as well, with plenty of marine life around Pulau Babi and Pulau Pangabaton, a sunken Japanese water-transport ship from WWII, and colourful micro-life in the 'muck' (shallow mudflats). All the hotels can organise snorkelling trips to the islands for around 95,000Rp per person, including lunch and equipment, with a minimum of three people. Local fishermen also offer extended snorkelling trips from their boats (350,000Rp, maximum five people). **Happy Dive** (☎ 0812 466 9667), based at Ankermi cottages, charges €55 for two dives, including gear and boat transfers. In November whale-watching trips are also offered, although you'll probably see migrating sperm whales breach and spout from the beach.

All of the following places are signposted from the highway and are located down trails 10m to 500m from the road; they are listed in the order you approach them from Maumere. Rates include breakfast.

**Sunset Cottages** (☎ 0852 5309 9597; sunsetcottages@yahoo.co.uk; Maumere-Larantuka Rd Km 25; s/d bungalows with mandi 60,000/100,000Rp) Nest on a secluded black-sand beach, with views of offshore islands, shaded by swaying coco palms. The seven thatched, coconut-wood and bamboo

bungalows have Western toilets and *mandis*, with decks overlooking the sea. Snorkel gear is available for hire, and they offer overnight camping trips to the islands' deserted beaches. Order ahead for fresh fish.

**Lena House** (☎ 0813 3940 7733; bungalows with mandi 45,000Rp) Chill out in one of three clean bamboo bungalows, operated by a sweet young family and set on a spectacular stretch of beach, with jungled mountains painted against the eastern horizon. Owners arrange snorkelling trips, but you may be just as happy to let your mind drift as you watch local fishermen ply the glassy bay in their dugouts. It's convenient to stay here if you're diving with Happy Dive.

**our pick Ankermi** (☎ 0812 466 9667; www.ankermihappydive.com; bungalows per person 165,000Rp, mini-villa incl 2 meals & afternoon tea 210,000Rp) A groovy Swiss-Javanese couple own the area's sweetest choice. She's the dive instructor; he's the dive guide, designer and chef. The cute, thatched concrete and bamboo bungalows have Indo toilets and showers, and front decks with ocean views. Their dive shop, Happy Dive, is the best in the Maumere area. They grow their own organic rice and vegetables on site, and their imaginatively prepared and presented Javanese meals are spectacular.

Wodong, the main village in the area, is on the Maumere-Larantuka road. Take any Talibura, Nangahale or Larantuka bemo or bus from the Lokaria terminal in Maumere (3000Rp). A bemo from Wodong to Waiterang costs another 1000Rp. A taxi or chartered bemo from Maumere is around 50,000Rp. Buses and shared taxis to Larantuka pass by throughout the day.

### Around Waiterang

The five- to six-hour climb of the hulking, still steaming **Gunung Egon** (1703m) is a popular day trip. Charter a bemo (15,000Rp) to the village of **Blidit**, 6km back toward Maumere, where you can arrange a guide (75,000Rp) and walk or drive another 7km to **Andalan**. From here it's another 2.5km hike to the crater. Once back in Blidit, you can soak in riverside **hot springs** before catching a bemo back to Waiterang. The climb can only be attempted in the dry season, and you'll need solid walking shoes. Start early to avoid the heat.

**Nangahale**, 10km northeast of Wodong, is an interesting boat-building village that was settled by survivors from Pulau Babi after the 1992 earthquake and tsunami. It's easily

reached by bemo or bus from Waiterang. On the way to Nangahale, the road passes **Patiahu**, 33km from Maumere, which has the area's best white-sand beach.

## LARANTUKA

☎ 0383

A busy port of rusted tin roofs at the easternmost end of Flores, Larantuka rests against the base of **Gunung Ili Mandiri** (1510m), separated by a narrow strait from Pulau Solor and Pulau Adonara. It has a fun street-market vibe at dusk, when Jl Yos Sudarso and its tributaries come alive with the commerce of fresh fruit and fish, but most visitors stay just one night on their way to Kupang or the Solor and Alor Archipelagos.

Larantuka was one of Indonesia's first ports to attract European interest, as it lay on the route used by Portuguese sandalwood runners based in Timor. By 1575 more than 20 Dominican missions were built in the area. Portugal maintained a presence in Larantuka until the mid-19th century, and their descendants, called 'Topasses', still live in Larantuka.

Easter is a particularly good time to be in town, when there are huge processions of penitents and cross-bearers.

### Orientation & Information

Most hotels, the ferry pier, shipping offices and the main bus terminal are in the southern part of town. Further northeast is the Muslim quarter, as well as the **tourist office** (☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Fri), post office, **Telkom warnet** (per hour 10,000Rp; ☎ 24hr), which has solid internet access, and airport. **BNI bank** (Jl Fernandez 93) and **BRI bank** (Jl Udayana) both have branches with ATMs and change dollars and travellers cheques.

### Sights & Activities

Catholicism flourishes in Larantuka. There's a large **cathedral**, and the smaller **Kapela Tuan Maria** (Holy Mary Chapel) contains Portuguese bronze and silver known as *ornamento*. Across the street from the chapel is the **Mater Dolorosa Shrine** with a series of Passion reliefs.

### Sleeping & Eating

**our pick** **Hotel Rulies** (☎ 21198; Jl Yos Sudarso 40; s/d/tr 50,000/75,000/90,000Rp) This funky spot, near the harbour and across the street from the sea, has clean rooms with concrete floors, mostly

saggy beds and shared *mandis*. Management is friendly, English-speaking and on top of current transport schedules.

**Hotel Fortuna I** (☎ 21140; Jl Basuki Rahmat 170; s/d with mandi 60,000/90,000Rp, r with air-con 175,000-200,000Rp; ♿) By far the best of the three Fortunas in town. It rambles along the water in the north end of town, but somehow manages to avoid ocean views at all costs. The rooms are a bit scruffy, but have queen beds and air-con.

**Hotel Tresna** (☎ 21072; Jl Yos Sudarso 8; s/d 75,000/125,000Rp, with air-con 125,000/175,000Rp; ♿) Has soulless rooms, but a nice little garden. If Rulies is full, it's a good alternative.

**Rumah Makan Nirwana** (Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes 5000-14,000Rp) Larantuka's first choice. The Chinese and Indonesian dishes come in filling portions, and if you buy the fresh fish at the late-afternoon sidewalk market on Jl Yos Sudarso, only steps from its front door, they'll grill it up for a modest fee.

Or stop by the **night market** (Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes 8000-27,000Rp), where you can get *mie ayam* (chicken noodles), *bakso* (meatball soup) and grilled chicken and fish opposite the Hotel Tresna.

### Getting There & Away

#### AIR

At the time of research, **Transnusa** (☎ 232 5386; 0852 3910 9100) was about to reopen links between Larantuka and Kupang (590,000Rp, 45 minutes), leaving Larantuka on Tuesday and Friday.

#### BOAT

All boats – from large Pelni cruisers to wooden ferries – depart from the main pier in the centre of town. Double-check departure times in advance, especially in the rainy season, when schedules are more like suggestions. Boats can get crowded, so arrive early to claim a seat, and bring food and water with you.

Wooden boats to Lewoleba on Lembata (30,000Rp, four hours), all via Waiwerang (Adonara, 12,000Rp) and Lamakera (Solor, 16,000Rp), depart from the pier in the centre of town at 8am and 1pm.

Three useful Pelni services call on Larantuka. *Siguntang* serves Lewoleba, Kupang and Makassar every two weeks. *Wilis* sails to Makassar, Kalimantan, Maumere and Kupang. *Sirimau* docks at Kalabahi, Kupang

and Makassar, then sails west to Semarang and Jakarta. The **Pelni office** (☎ 21155; Jl Diponegoro) has details on all Pelni services.

## BUS

The main bus terminal is 5km west of town, but drivers may drop you off at a hotel if you ask. Buses also pick up passengers in the centre of town – speak to your hotel staff about this.

Buses to/from Maumere cost 32,000Rp and take almost five hours. You'll also find Kijangs waiting at the terminal; these speedy shared taxis cost 60,000Rp per person for an air-con three-hour ride to Maumere. Transport to Maumere is regular until around 5pm.

## Getting Around

Bemos (3000Rp) run up and down Jl Niaga and Jl Pasar, and to outlying villages. *Ojeks* also run to the pier and bus terminal for about 5000Rp.

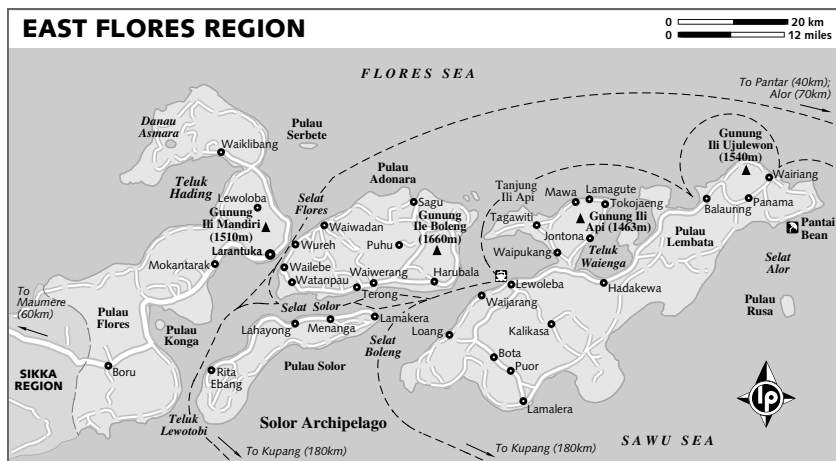
## AROUND LARANTUKA

Six kilometres north of Larantuka, **Weri** is a popular sundown swimming spot among locals. The views from here are gorgeous and the beach has a nice mix of white and black sand, but the floating rubbish will tempt you to stay dry. You can get there by bemo from the central bemo stop in Larantuka. If you arrive by *ojek*, return to town via the narrow coastal road, which winds through banana groves and offers glimpses of front-porch family life.

# SOLOR & ALOR ARCHIPELAGOS

This is where you land if you crave the under-explored Indonesia, if you are dreaming of jade volcanic islands dropped in dimpled blue glass, if you're hoping to trek to authentic head-hunting villages, or shove off with indigenous whalers in rowboats, armed with nothing but bamboo harpoons. Adonara, Solor and Lembata form the Solor Archipelago, just east of Flores and separated by a swift, narrow strait. Lembata attracts the most attention because of the ethnic Lamalera whalers, but it receives barely a trickle of tourism. Adonara and Solor were settled by the Portuguese in the 16th century and haven't seen a major *bule* influx since. Together their people are known as the Lamaholot.

Thanks to its gorgeous anemone gardens, underwater walls draped in fluorescent sponges, migrating whales and schooling hammerheads, the Alor Archipelago gets the bulk of the region's tourism and offers almost daily flights to Kupang. But its recently expanded access masks the fact that churning cold water surrounds the islands and that it kept them remote and pristine for centuries, which explains why on the islands of Pantar and Alor you can venture deep into the countryside and visit some of the friendliest and most authentic tribal villages in Indonesia. Here you can hike red-earth trails from village to



village, chew betel nut, smoke home-cured tobacco, learn to handle a bow and arrow, and spend the night in traditional huts with massive sea views. Kalabahi (Alor), a burgeoning port town teeming with migrants and merchants from Java and Flores, is Alor's commercial centre.

You'll definitely need some basic Bahasa Indonesia to get by, and because foreigners are so few and far between, constantly being the centre of attention can make you feel like Britney Spears on an island of paparazzi. Still, the Lamaholot islanders mean well, so breathe deep and try not to lash out.

Food quality and general hygiene are not great away from the urban centres of Kalabahi and Lewoleba (Lembata). Rupiah won't be a problem with ATMs in both Lewoleba and Kalabahi.

## History

European contact was made as early as 1522 when the last remaining ship of Magellan's fleet sailed through Selat Alor (Lembata-Pantar Strait). By the middle of the century, the Dominican Portuguese friar Antonio Taveira had landed on Solor to spread his gospel. The Solor mission became the base for extending Christianity to mainland Flores, and a fort was built to protect the converts from Muslim raids. The Dutch eventually forced the Portuguese out of Solor in the mid-19th century.

## Getting Around

Alor and Lembata have bemos, *mikrolet* (small taxi) and a few ancient buses, but most of the islands have only one decent road, and transport to isolated areas is limited to a few trucks.

## ADONARA

Adonara, edged by a network of coastal mangroves and pearl farms, and more than a few empty beaches, remains a place to be discovered. It was known as the 'Island of Murderers' because of a feud between two clans. The feud apparently ran for hundreds of years, with people in the hills being killed and houses burned – it was very likely a case of ritual conflict between the Demon and Paji groups. Animist traditions remain influential in the hinterland, where Christianity and Islam have tenuous footholds. One traveller even reported placing her hands on a sacred

rock above one village and being unable to remove them. The chief settlements, Wailebe (on the west coast) and Waiwerang (on the south coast) are linked by a few bemos.

## Waiwerang

With the jumble of tin roofs, fishing boats, mosques, churches and coconut groves, even a few hours here offers the romance of wandering a remote tropical outpost. Waiwerang's markets on Monday and Thursday attract villagers from throughout the island and from Solor. Waiwerang has a post office, a wartel and a bank, but money cannot be changed.

There's only one decent place to stay. **Hotel Ile Boleng** (Jl Pasar Baru; s/d 75,000/120,000Rp) has English-speaking management, and meals can be arranged. Rooms at the back have sea views.

All the boats from Larantuka to Lewoleba on Lembata call at Waiwerang (12,000Rp, two hours). Passenger ferries usually dock at the main wharf in the centre of town, but at low tide may dock at the car-ferry port 1km west of town.

Small boats run between Waiwerang and the towns of northern Solor (Lamakera, Menanga and Lahayong) on Monday and Thursday. Otherwise you can charter a boat to Solor for around 250,000Rp.

## LEMBATA

With just over 300 tourists per year, Lembata, a rugged island laced with earthen roads and knitted together with cornfields, banana, papaya and coconut groves, is barely on the tourism radar. But thanks to the smoking cone of **Ili Api** (1463m), which towers over the main town of Lewoleba, and the fascinating whaling village of Lamalera, it usually manages to win over the intrepid ones who pass through.

## Lewoleba

☎ 0383

The nearby, smouldering Ili Api notwithstanding, Lewoleba, the commercial centre on Lembata, is just a sprawling, muggy, laid-back town with a couple of large government buildings and a Telkom office. Locals will notice you, so get used to the 'Hey, mister!' symphony.

Boats stop at the pier, which is a 10-minute walk west of town – take an *ojek* for 5000Rp. Extending over the water, 500m from Lile Ile guest house, is the stilted village of Bajo. Stroll over at low tide to meet local pearl divers who will probably invite you out on diving trips.

## ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The centre of Lewoleba is the market place, which comes alive every Monday. There are **BNI** and **BRI** branches with ATMs on the main road. You can change dollars inside.

The post office is off the main street near the southern side of the market. The **Telkom office** (☎ 7am-11pm) is 500m west of town past the **Government Plaza** (per hr 12,000Rp; ☎ 8am-2pm), where you'll find the only web portal in town.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Life Ile** (☎ 41250; s/d 25,000/40,000Rp) This long-running homestay is hidden behind a concrete plant and owned by Jim, an affable Dutch-Indonesian transplant. He is a great conversationalist, an authority on local travel information, and he has a tremendous DVD collection, which is why despite the ramshackle rooms and overgrown grounds (he once had volcano views), backpackers still crash here. He did promise a renovation when we passed through.

**Hotel Lewoleba** (☎ 41012; Jl Awolong 15; s/d with fan 45,000/60,000Rp, s/d with air-con 90,000/110,000Rp; ♿) The somewhat upmarket lobby, complete with cushy sofas, sets the tone in this fairly slick place, which has the largest rooms in town. It's down the road opposite the Losmen Rejeki, past the post office. The owners speak good English and can book Merpati flights.

**Losmen Rejeki** (☎ 41028; Jl Trans Lembata 93; s/d 75,000/100,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/150,000Rp; ♿) Opposite the market, this family operation has comfortable rooms, some with very efficient air-con. Management speaks good English and can arrange Pelni reservations.

**Rumah Makan Idaman** (meals 8000-15,000Rp) On the main road, west of the commercial crush, this simple Javanese joint serves smoked and grilled fish, baked chicken wings, and spinach in a tangy peanut sauce.

**Warung Makan Berkat Lomblen** (☎ 41647; Jl Rayuan Kelapa; meals 10,000-18,000Rp) The best meals on the island can be found at the bamboo dining room adjacent to the mosque. Pak Tanto, the engaging, English-speaking owner cut his teeth as a food and beverage manager at the Grand Hyatt in Nusa Dua, and he serves up terrific grilled and fried fish and chicken dinners. The powdered-sugar doughnuts are addictive.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati operates three flights a week to Kupang (596,000Rp), leaving at 7am on

Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Flights depart from the Lamahora airstrip, 4km west of Lewoleba.

Daily ferries to Larantuka (30,000Rp), via Pulau Adonara, depart at 8am and 1pm. At research time there was also one ferry a week to Kalabahi (59,000Rp) on Alor, leaving on Monday night at 9pm, passing through Baranusa and arriving at 2pm. But rough seas lead to frequent cancellations in the wet season. Pelni's *Siguntang* offers an almost weekly service to Kupang (economy/private cabin 120,000Rp/270,000Rp, eight hours), leaving at 11pm and arriving the next morning. You can check the schedule and buy tickets at Losmen Rejeki.

## GETTING AROUND

*Mikrolet* cost 2000Rp and run around town and to the harbour. *Ojeks* cost 3000Rp for anywhere in Lewoleba and 5000Rp to the docks.

There are no longer any ferries between Lewoleba and Lamalera; a truck convoy (30,000Rp, four hours) covers this route, leaving daily at around 1pm. The road is extremely rough, rutted and muddy. If you've missed the noon truck, consider chartering a 4WD through **Robert 'Obet' Keraf** (☎ 0813 3940 5412; 700,000-800,000Rp).

Buses run northeast from the Lamahora terminal, 4km west of town, to Wairiang (40,000Rp, three hours), where there's a good Thursday market and wooden ferries to Alor. *Mikrolet* run to Hadakewa (10,000Rp, 45 minutes) and direct to Balauring (25,000Rp, two hours).

Hiring a motorbike costs 75,000Rp per day; best arranged through your guest house.

## Around Lewoleba

Lembata's best ikat, recognisable by its burgundy base and detailed patterns, comes from the villages on the slopes of Ili Api, 15km to 20km from Lewoleba. On the north coast, **Atawatun** and **Mawa** are two sources of fine weaving. At **Jontona**, on the eastern side of a deep inlet on Lembata's north coast, it's possible to stay with the *kepala desa*. An hour's walk from Jontona towards Ili Api is the **Kampung Lama** (Old Village), where you'll find some traditional houses. These contain sacred and prized objects, including a huge number of elephant tusks, but are occupied by villagers only for ceremonies such as the *kacang* (bean) festival in late September or

early October. It is possible to climb **Ili Api** from Lama; it takes a full day to go up and down and is easiest with a guide (best arranged in Jontona).

Regular bemos from Lewoleba head to Waipukang (30 minutes), from where you can walk to Jontona in an hour. Infrequent bemos also run to Atawatun, Mawa and Lamagute, though this region is best explored with your own wheels.

Lembata has some good **beaches**. Take an *ojek* to Pantai Lerahinga, where there's good snorkelling. Sunbathing is difficult, as crowds of kids block all sunlight.

## Lamalera

pop 1900

Like characters from an Indonesian *Moby Dick*, the hard-scrabble men of Lamalera village on the south coast of Lembata hunt sperm and pilot whales using nothing more than bamboo harpoons (with iron warheads), wooden boats and prayer (see boxed text, opposite). Because of the small numbers of whales taken – around 15 to 25 a year – these hunters are exempt from the international ban on whaling, and their hazardous livelihood continues. The whaling season runs from May to October, when the seas aren't too rough. Locals welcome guests-gone-primal on whale hunts. It costs 100,000Rp for the goriest thrill of your life.

Lamalera itself is a tiny, fascinating little village centred on a black-sand cove lined with 22 thatched boathouses where you'll find oars, nets, harpoons and more than a little bit of whale bone. Local men will pose for pictures and allow you to watch them build and repair boats, and will deeply appreciate a pack of smokes. Homes arc around the beach and ramble up the steep hillside offering views of the deep-blue sea and migrating whales. And if there's been a recent kill, bits of drying whale meat hang from the eaves. You won't find any phones, internet or banks, and electricity exists between 6pm and 6am only. There's some decent snorkelling around the rocky outcropping at the west end of the bay, and you can charter a boat and troll for tuna if you bring a rod and reel.

On Saturday there's an interesting **barter-only market** at Wulandoni, about a 1½-hour walk along the coast from Lamalera. Another nice walk along the coast is to **Tapabali**, where you can see local weaving – the *ikat* has motifs of whales and mantas.

## SLEEPING & EATING

There are four small homestays in Lamalera. Rates include all meals.

**White House** (r 60,000Rp) Here's a – dare we say – Mediterranean perch overlooking the beach and rock reef. Rooms have queen or bunk beds, private baths and share a living room and deck. It was quite dirty when we visited, but nothing a little elbow grease couldn't fix. Meals are not recommended; eat at Mama's.

**Abel Beding** (r with shared/private bath 60,000/75,000Rp) Across the road from the beach is the best-appointed homestay in town. Rooms are clean, tiled, and some have sea views. Abel speaks some English and has a boat available for private charter.

**Mama Maria's Homestay** (r 75,000Rp) Nestled just behind the main square, the cramped rooms in mama's house have cracked concrete floors and curtains where doors should be – but nobody in town cooks better than she. If you want to eat but not sleep here, arrange meals (10,000Rp to 15,000Rp) in advance.

**Guru Ben's** (r 75,000Rp) Up the steep staircase west of the town square, there is no better view in town. Rooms have concrete floors, double beds, but no fans and shared baths with *mandis*. There is one breezy room off the front porch with an incredible panorama of the soaring green peaks and the undulating ocean.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Lewoleba, a daily truck convoy is scheduled to leave the market at 1pm (30,000Rp, four hours) bound for Lamalera. Returning to Lewoleba, a daily truck leaves at 4.30am. It wasn't running when we visited, but we were assured that there's usually a much more comfortable group taxi service (30,000Rp, 3½ hours) running between Lewoleba and Lamalera. Shared SUVs supposedly leave Lewoleba at 11am and return at 4pm. You may also consider chartering a 4WD through **Robert 'Obet' Keraf** (☎ 0813 3940 5412; 700,000-800,000Rp).

## Wairiang

This small town on the eastern peninsula is a departure point for weekly wooden ferries linking Alor and Lembata, but there's no pressing reason to stay, although there is a good Thursday market here and nearby **Pantai Bean** is arguably the island's best white-sand beach.

## LAMALERA'S WHALERS

'*Baleo, Baleo!*' the shout goes when potential targets are spotted in the waters off Lamalera. This is the last village on earth where humans still regularly hunt whales by hand, using bamboo-shafted harpoons. It's a hazardous way of life that takes around 15 to 25 sperm whales from the ocean in an average year, a subsistence livelihood that conservation groups have determined does not threaten sperm whale numbers (estimated at over a million worldwide).

Be warned that if you accompany the whalers on a hunting trip it can be an extremely harrowing and bloody experience that can drag on for hours. However, your chances of seeing a whale hunt or the bloody butchering of a whale are quite small. Note that, if a whale has been speared but is not dead, the hunters will not necessarily want to head for home as night approaches so you can get your evening meal – their food supply for the next few weeks is on the other end of the line.

The wooden whaling boats (called *tena*) are around 10m long and held together with wooden dowels and lashed twine. Some engine-powered boats are now being used in Lamalera for hunting dolphins and manta rays, but all whaling vessels still carry a mast, a sail made from palm leaves and a crew who row furiously to bear down on a whale when one is spotted. As the gap between the boat and the whale narrows, the harpooner – balanced on a protruding plank – takes a bamboo harpoon and attempts to leap onto the back of the whale (using the force of his weight to drive home the harpoon). An injured whale will try to dive, dragging the boat with it, but cannot escape since it has to resurface. Often the whale will need to be speared with several harpoons before it weakens, and the ocean becomes a blood bath as the hunters prod the great mammal with knives, attempting to speed up its death.

Every part of the sperm whale is used. The dark meat is shared according to traditional dictates, with most of it reserved for the crew and portions going to virtually every family in the village. Spermacetu oil from the head (which was particularly prized by 19th-century whalers and used to burn lamps) is used for cooking. Innards are traded for fruit and vegetables in a barter-only market in the hills. Tourists buy the teeth.

The sperm whale is particularly prized, though other toothed whales (pilots and orcas) are occasionally taken. Baleen whales (plankton-eaters with sieve-like feeding mechanisms) are never touched. Mantas, dolphins, sharks (mainly hammerheads but also the odd whale shark) are hunted throughout the year – all are caught using harpoons.

Buses (40,000Rp, three hours) run from Wairiang over the sealed road to Lewoleba.

## ALOR

The final link of the island chain that stretches east of Java is wild, volcanic and drop-dead gorgeous. There are crumbling red-clay roads, jagged peaks, white-sand beaches and chilly, crystal-clear bays that have some remarkable diving – with plenty of pelagics and sheer walls draped in eye-popping sponges. The cultural diversity here is simply staggering. In this tiny archipelago alone there are over 100 tribes who, by some accounts, speak eight languages and 52 dialects. The terrain and lack of roads isolated the 185,000 inhabitants from one another and the outside world for centuries. Although the Dutch installed local rajas along the coastal regions after 1908, they had little influence over the interior, where people were still taking heads in the 1950s.

Today, Alor is around 75% Protestant and 20% Muslim, although indigenous animist traditions endure. Most islanders survive on subsistence fishing and farming, and are cultivating new cash crops, including vanilla, turmeric, candlenuts and cloves. The export of seaweed is also increasing thanks to the work of European NGO SwissConnect. But make no mistake, Alor is very poor and in some pockets children are morbidly malnourished.

Though a network of new roads now covers the island, boats are still a common form of transport. The few visitors who land here tend to linger on nearby Pulau Kepa or dive these waters from live-aboards. But if you take the time to explore the tribal interior, you will meet some of the most upbeat, charming people on earth; folks who are always psyched to share their culture – and their home-cured tobacco – with visitors. And if you want to spend the night, all you have to do is ask.

## Kalabahi

☎ 0386 / pop 59,000

Kalabahi is the chief town on Alor and is located at the end of a spectacular 15km-long, palm-fringed bay on the west coast. Not that the city planners have taken advantage of it. The town's main drag is a long, hot concrete sprawl that doesn't so much as hint at the sea, although you can grab a sea breeze – and a tasty grilled-fish dinner – at the night market on the harbour. Thanks to the punishing heat, the streets only come to life in the morning, and again an hour before sundown, when the city park is a jumble of volleyball and basketball games.

Kalabahi is very Indonesian and relatively prosperous, but extreme poverty lurks just outside town. There are some interesting villages and beautiful beaches nearby, some with spectacular snorkelling and diving.

### INFORMATION

It's best to bring plenty of cash to Alor as rates for US dollars and travellers cheques are poor, although there is a MasterCard/Cirrus ATM at **BRI bank** (Jl Sutoyo; ☎ 7.30am–2pm) and a Visa/Plus ATM at **BNI Bank** (Jl Sutomo 5). There's a **Telkom office** (Jl Soetomo; ☎ 24hr), about 2km north of town, and a **warnet** (Jl Sudirman 56; per hr 7000Rp) on the main drag.

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Kalabahi's modest **museum** (Jl Diponegoro; ☎ 8am–3.30pm Mon–Sat), just west of the market, has fine ikat, *moko* (bronze drums; see boxed text, opposite) and assorted artefacts.

**Scuba diving** in Alor can be exceptional. La Petite Kepa (see opposite) offers two dives for €60, including gear. Other scuba schools offering dives around the island include **Alor Dive** (☎ 222 2663, 0813 3964 8148; www.alor-dive.com; Jl Gatot Subroto 33) in Kalabahi, **Alor Divers** (☎ 0813 1780 4133; www.alor-divers.com) on Pulau Pantar, and **Dive Alor** (www.divealor.com), based in Kupang. Five Bali-based live-aboard dive boats cruise and plunge these waters in the high season, including **Grand Komodo Tours** (www.komodoalordive.com) and **The Seven Seas** (www.thesevenseas.net).

### SLEEPING

The most popular place to stay around Alor is La Petite Kepa homestay (opposite) on Pulau Kepa, near Alor Kecil.

**Hotel Nusa Kenari Indah** (☎ 21208; Jl Diponegoro 11; economy s/d with fan & mandi 40,000/50,000Rp, standard s/d

with air-con 110,000/140,000Rp, VIP r 240,000Rp; ☎) Has clean and fairly comfortable air-con rooms; the VIP rooms here are modern and smart, with tiled floors and fancy furnishings. It's near the Pelangi Indah.

**Hotel Pelangi Indah** (☎ 21251; Jl Diponegoro 100; economy s/d 50,000/100,000Rp, standard s/d with air-con & shower 90,000/150,000Rp, VIP s/d 135,000/200,000Rp; ☎) Set on the main drag, the reasonably clean rooms flank a flower garden, and the VIP rooms have new spring-mattresses.

**Hotel Adi Dharma** (☎ 21280; Jl Martadinata 26; standard r with fan & bathroom 67,500–87,500Rp, VIP r with TV & air-con 97,500–112,500Rp; ☎) Cheap, and just 200m from the harbour. Rooms are cleanish, and they'll do for a night if you have an early morning ferry.

**Hotel Nur Fitra** (☎ 222 2124; Pasar Kadelang; standard/VIP r 100,000/200,000Rp; ☎) Rooms are large and very clean. VIP bungalows are air-conditioned, landscaped and have sun porches, and the terrace restaurant raised over the mangroves is beautiful. However, the in-room air-con units don't always work, standard-room ceiling fans rattle, and food takes forever to emerge from the kitchen. Still, it has great potential.

### EATING

Kalabahi is no culinary diamond, but the half-dozen warungs, which set up near the harbour on **Pantai Reklamasi** (☎ 7pm–11pm), turn out tasty sate, *soto ayam*, *nasi goreng* and tremendous fresh grilled fish. It's also the closest thing to nightlife in Kalabahi.

**Didha Cafe** (☎ 0813 1007 0227; dishes 8000–18,000Rp) Come here for simple, clean food opposite the night warungs. They have assorted noodle dishes, fresh blended juices and freshly baked roti.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

The airport is 9km from town, and offers one of the most dramatic approaches in the country. Transport schedules are subject to frequent changes.

**Transnusa** (☎ 21039; Jl Sudirman 100) flies to and from Kupang six times a week on a newish plane. Departure tax is 13,000Rp.

Kalabahi is also linked by passenger/car ferries to Kupang (West Timor) and Larantuka (Flores) via Baranusa (Pantar), Balauring and Lewoleba (Lembata). These ferries leave from the ferry terminal 1km southwest of the town centre, a 10-minute walk or 1500Rp bemo ride.



To Kupang, ferries leave on Tuesday and Sunday (70,000Rp, around 18 hours). Ferries depart Kalabahi for Larantuka (75,000Rp, around 24 hours) on Sunday and Thursday, passing through Baranusa, Balauring and Lewoleba (59,000Rp, 14 hours). Bring plenty of food and water. Irregular wooden ferries also cross to Alor from Wairiang (50,000Rp, 6 hours) on Lembata.

**Pelni** (☎ 21195) ships leave from the main pier in the centre of town (the Pelni office is opposite the pier). The *Awu* sails every two weeks between Kalabahi and Kupang, Ende, Waingapu and Larantuka. Finally, the *Sirimau* connects Kalabahi with Kupang, Larantuka and Makassar.

Daily wooden boats from the central wharf head to Baranusa (25,000Rp, four hours) at 8am.

#### GETTING AROUND

Transport around town is by red bemo (2000Rp). It's possible to rent a motorbike through the Hotel Adi Dharma for 50,000Rp to 60,000Rp per day. *Ojeks* are easily hired for 30,000Rp per day.

#### Around Kalabahi

**Takpala** is a stunning traditional village etched into a hillside about 13km east of Kalabahi. There are several *talihutan* (traditional high-roofed houses), held together with lashings and scattered beneath mango trees, papaya and banana groves. The villagers are charming, and will be more than happy to teach you how to use a traditional bow and arrow, or roll you one of their home-cured cigarettes, which go well with a pinch of betel. And you'll probably notice the massive sea

views from every angle. To get here take a Mabu bus (3000Rp) from the terminal at Kalabahi market. Walk about 1km uphill on a sealed road from where the bus drops you off.

You can also do a fascinating village tour of Alor's bird head. From Kalabahi head to **Mombang**, up through the clove trees and coffee plots of **Kopidil** to **Julta**, and then down to the stunning sweep of white sand and coconut palms that is **Batu Putih**. It's backed by granite bluffs and cornfields, and cradles a turquoise and emerald lagoon 10km north of Mali. You'll either need to hire a motorbike (50,000Rp to 60,000Rp) or charter an *ojek* (30,000Rp per day) for this. Bring plenty of water, a boxed lunch, betel nut and a few essential food items to share with your new friends, and the best Bahasa Indonesia you've got.

Nearby, the fishing villages of **Alor Kecil** and **Alor Besar** are nice white-sand beaches with excellent snorkelling. The best is at **Sebanjar**, 3km north of Alor Kecil. The water here is wonderfully cool, with a gorgeous soft-coral garden offshore. Alor Kecil is the jumping-off point for beautiful Pulau Kepa, an offshore islet with Alor's most popular guest house, **La Petite Kepa** (☎ 0813 3820 0479; [www.la-petite-kepa.com](http://www.la-petite-kepa.com); bungalows incl meals per person 150,000-200,000Rp). This French-run, solar-powered property has eight beachfront bungalows, three of which are replicas of traditional Alor homes. All have sea and island views. Meals are tasty and eaten family-style. There are two beaches on Kepa, including an exquisite sliver of white sand on the west side with spectacular sunset views and good snorkelling offshore. The owners offer scuba

#### MOKO

Alor's fame lies in its mysterious *moko* – bronze drums about 50cm high and 33cm across, tapered in the middle like an hourglass and with four ear-shaped handles around the circumference. Thousands of them are scattered around the island – the Alorese apparently found them buried in the ground and believed them to be gifts from the gods, though they were probably brought by traders from India, China or Makassar. There's a good collection in Kalabahi's museum.

Most *moko* have decorations similar to those on bronze utensils made in Java in the 13th- and 14th-century era, but others resemble earlier Southeast Asian designs and may be connected with the Dongson culture that developed in Vietnam and China around 700 BC and then pushed its influence into Indonesia.

*Moko* have acquired enormous value among the Alorese. In years past, wars were fought over prized *moko*, and they remain an essential part of a bride's *belis* (dowry). Export of *moko* is illegal.

diving (€\$60 for two dives, including equipment), with price breaks at six dives or more. You can rent snorkelling gear for 50,000Rp per day and join the dive boat for snorkelling excursions at 90,000Rp per trip. July and August books up months in advance, so reserve ahead.

Buses and blue bemos to Alor Kecil (5000Rp, 30 minutes) and Alor Besar leave from the Kalabahi Pasar Inpres, or catch them on the harbour-front road. You can also charter a taxi from the airport (100,000Rp to 150,000Rp). If you're heading to Keba, stop by the pier and the resort will ferry you across for free.

The traditional village of **Bumpa Lola** makes a nice excursion from Keba. Once back on Alor, it's an easy half-day round-trip hike to where you can hang out with villagers in their peaked-roof huts and check out their *moko* drums.

## Pantar

☎ 0386

The second-largest island of the Alor group is about as far off the beaten track as Indonesia gets. Ferries between Larantuka and Alor stop at **Baranusa**, the island's sleepy main town, with a straggle of coconut palms and a couple of general stores.

**Homestay Burhan** (r 60,000Rp), Baranusa's only accommodation, is a friendly place with just three rooms; the price includes meals.

The main reason to visit Pantar is to climb **Gunung Sirung** (1372m), an impressive, smouldering volcano. From Baranusa take a truck to Kakamauta, and walk for three hours to Sirung's crater. Bring water from

Baranusa and stay with the *kepala desa* in Kakamauta.

Pantar is also home to the area's newest and most upscale dive resort. **Alor Divers** (☎ 0813 1780 4133; www.alor-divers.com; multiday packages from €500), built and operated by a French-Slovenian couple on the island's eastern shore, caters exclusively to divers. Guests stay a minimum of three nights, in smart, thatched bungalows, and dive at least twice daily. If you land here in June or December, make your way to the west coast where you may glimpse migrating orcas, sperm and pilot whales.

Sandwiched between Pantar and Alor is **Pulau Pura**, which has a couple of fishing villages. The water is crystal-clear here and has some of Alor's best dive sites.

## WEST TIMOR

With rugged countryside, empty beaches and scores of traditional villages, West Timor is an undiscovered gem. Deep within its lontar palm-studded interior, animist traditions persist alongside tribal dialects, and ikat-clad, betel nut-chewing chiefs govern beehive-shaped hut villages; while Kupang, its coastal capital and East Nusa Tenggara's top metropolis and transport hub, buzzes to a typical Indonesian beat.

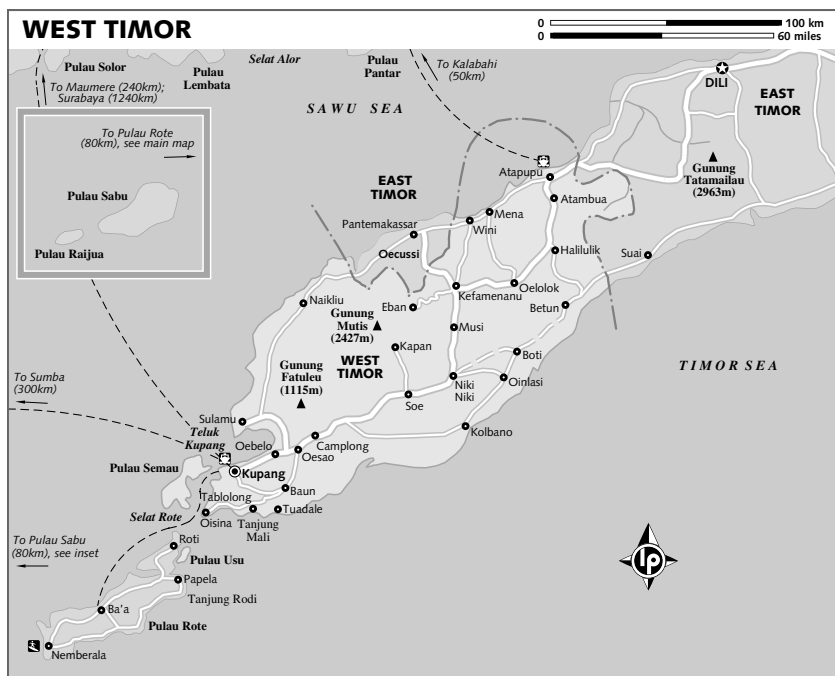
Aggravated by dry winds from northern Australia, the dry season is prolonged and often results in food shortages, which explains Kupang's sizable NGO presence. Maize is the staple crop, but coffee and rice are also important. Hit one of the many weekly markets

### EAST TIMOR VISA RUN

Hitting Dili in East Timor is one way to renew your Indonesian visa from Nusa Tenggara. If you decide to go, be aware that East Timor is considerably more expensive than Indonesia and the return trip normally takes more than a week by the time you've got to Dili, hung around for your visa and travelled back to West Timor.

Starting in Kupang, West Timor, book a Dili-bound minibus from Kupang (see p569), which will take you to the border at Motoain. Once over the border with your East Timor visa (available at the border for US\$30) secured, you'll find your onward bus waiting for the 2½ hour trip to Dili.

The next morning, head to the Indonesian consulate for your visa (US\$35), which all passport holders must have to re-enter West Timor. The consulate is near the Pertamina office on the western outskirts of Dili. Travellers have been issued with 60-day visas here upon request. Visas take five working days to issue, though some persuasive visitors have received theirs in three. Enjoy the delights of Dili and then run the route in reverse.



in tribal country and you'll get a feel for rural Timor life, while eavesdropping on several of some 14 languages spoken on the island. Yes, in West Timor even Bahasa Indonesia can be a foreign tongue.

## History

The Tetum of central Timor are one of the largest ethnic groups on the island, and boast the dominant indigenous language. Before Portuguese and Dutch colonisation, they were fragmented into dozens of small states led by various chiefs. Conflict was common, and head-hunting a popular pastime.

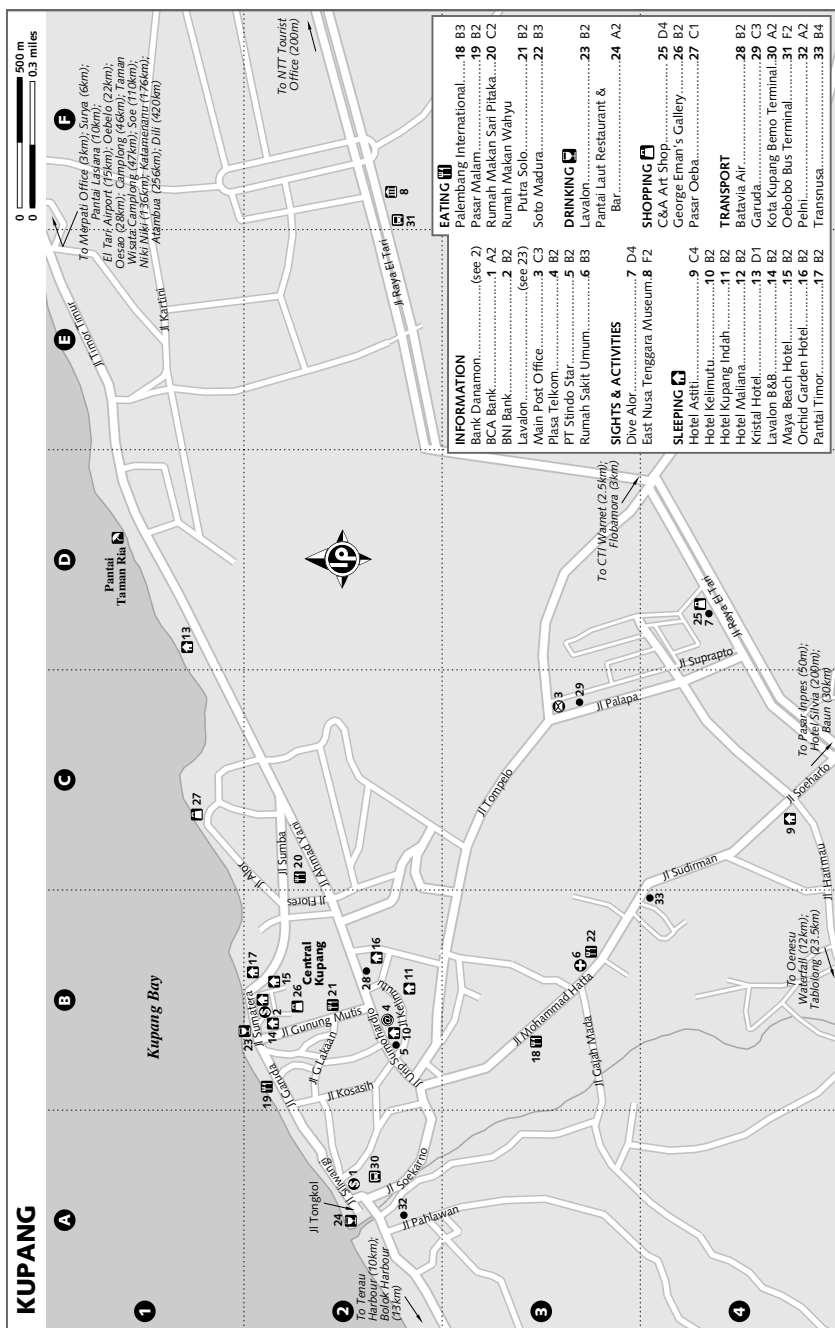
The first Europeans in Timor were the Portuguese, who prized its endemic sandalwood. In the mid-17th century the Dutch landed in Kupang, beginning a prolonged battle for control of the sandalwood trade, which the Dutch eventually won. The two colonial powers divided up the island in a series of treaties signed between 1859 and 1913. Portugal was awarded the eastern half plus the enclave of Oecussi, the island's first settlement.

Neither European power penetrated far into the interior until the 1920s, and the

island's political structure was left largely intact. The colonisers spread Christianity and ruled through the native aristocracy, but some locals claim Europeans corrupted Timor's royal bloodlines by aligning with imported, and eventually triumphant, Rotenese kingdoms. When Indonesia won independence in 1949 the Dutch left West Timor, but the Portuguese still held East Timor, setting the stage for the tragedy that continued until the East's independence in 2002.

During August 1999, in a UN-sponsored referendum, the people of East Timor voted in favour of independence. Pro-Jakarta militias, backed by the Indonesian military, went on a murderous rampage in East Timor, destroying buildings and infrastructure before peacekeepers intervened. Back in West Timor, the militias were responsible for the lynching of three UN workers in Atambua in 2000, making West Timor an international pariah.

By 2006, relations had stabilised and transport links by road and air were thriving. Today, Kupang and the rest of West Timor are safe.



## KUPANG

☎ 0380 / pop 340,000

When East Nusa Tenggara (Nusa Tenggara Timur; NTT) teens dream of attending university in the big city, they picture Kupang, its wide streets abuzz with high-speed traffic, and its funky bass-heavy bemos jammed full of hip and beautiful students from Java, Flores and beyond. Kupang is the capital of NTT, and although the city's waterfront is scruffy, its newer commercial district a sprawling gnarl of deafening traffic, and there are almost no endearing cultural or architectural elements, this is a place you can get used to. Chalk it up to Kupang's easy-to-navigate but still vaguely chaotic public transport system, the romantic, ramshackle Lavalon bar with its incredible oceanfront perch, and the fantastic pedestrian-only night market that takes over the old seaside commercial corridor and draws out Kupang's young, diverse population. Given its role as a regional transport hub, you will do some Kupang time. Just don't be surprised if you linger between trips to the interior, East Timor, Alor or Rote, and discover that you actually dig it. After all, England's Captain Bligh had the same epiphany when he spent 47 days here after that emasculating mutiny on the *Bounty* incident in 1789.

### Orientation

Kupang sprawls, and you'll need to take bemos or *ojeks* to get around. You will likely land in one of two main areas. The waterfront district, which stretches along Jl Sumba, Jl Sumatera, Jl Garuda and Jl Siliwangi, and rambles inland with Jl Ahmad Yani, has the bulk of the budget lodging options, plenty of restaurants, and hosts the fantastic night market. Jl Mohammad Hatta/Jl Sudirman to the south, is the new commercial centre with a selection of business hotels, bookstores, restaurants, hospitals and internet cafes. El Tari airport is 15km east of town; Tenau and Bolok harbours are 10km and 13km west, respectively.

### Information

#### INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

**CTI Warnet** (Jl Lalamentik 38; per hr 4500Rp;

☎ 11am-11pm)

**Plasa Telkom** (Jl Urip Sumohardjo 11; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) A new building offering international calls, and a free, air-conditioned hot spot.

### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Rumah Sakit Umum** (☎ 832 892; Jl Mohammad Hatta 19) A large, full-service hospital with ambulances on call.

### MONEY

Kupang has scores of banks and ample ATMs in both ends of town.

**Bank Danamon** (Jl Sumatera) Equipped with an ATM and offers cash advances.

**BCA bank** (Jl Siliwangi 37) ATM and decent rates.

**BNI bank** (Jl Sumatera) Has an ATM and fair rates.

### POST

**Main post office** (Jl Palapa 1) Take bemo 5.

### TOURIST INFORMATION

**Lavalon** (☎ 832 256, 0812 377 0533; www.lavalon.touristinfo.com; Jl Sumatera 44; ☎) You gotta love a town where a bar is by far the best place to find out what's what. Owner Edwin Lerrick dishes the knowledge, and his website is worth checking too. He offers free high-speed internet.

**NTT Tourist Office** (☎ 21540; ☎ 7am-3pm Mon-Thu) Has maps and a few brochures, but little else. It's about 4km east of the centre; take bemo 10 or 7, get off at Jl Raya El Tari at the SMP5 secondary school and walk 200m east.

### TRAVEL AGENCIES

**PT Stindo Star** (☎ 809 0583, 809 0584; Jl Urip Sumohardjo 2) An efficient travel agency that arranges flights to Bali, Java and throughout NTT.

### Sights & Activities

The **East Nusa Tenggara Museum** (Jl Raya El Tari; admission 2000Rp; ☎ 8am-noon, 1-4pm Mon-Sat), near the tourist office, houses a collection of skulls, seashells, stone tools, swords, gourds and antique looms from across the province. To get there, take bemo 10 from the Kota Kupang Terminal.

### EXPLORING TIMOR

Kupang is a gateway to West Timor's fascinating and welcoming traditional villages. Bahasa Indonesia – let alone English – is often not spoken, so a local guide is advisable. **Oney Meda** (☎ 0813 3940 4204) is a highly recommended English-speaking guide with 15 years of experience who organises anthropological tours and treks throughout West Timor and Alor. His guiding services run from 300,000Rp to 600,000Rp per day depending on the itinerary.

## DIVE TRIPS

Nearby Alor has some spectacular diving. Kupang-based **Dive Alor** (☎ 821 154; www.divealor.com; Jl Raya El Tari 19), run by the Australian father-son team of Graeme and Donovan Whitford, is an experienced scuba outfit that arranges trips to the island.

## Sleeping

### BUDGET

**Lavalon B&B** (☎ 832 236; Jl Sumatera I 8; r with shared baths 40,000Rp, with fan 55,000Rp) The best value in town with clean, ceramic tiled rooms and western-style bathrooms. Guests can use the kitchen. Run by the much-loved Oney Meda, West Timor guide extraordinaire.

**ourpick Hotel Maliana** (☎ 821 879; Jl Sumatera 35; r with fan/air-con 100,000/160,000Rp; 🏠) These basic yet comfy motel rooms are a popular budget choice. Rooms are clean and have ocean views from the front porch. Breakfast is included, and the helpful staff can arrange early morning taxis to the airport.

**Maya Beach Hotel** (☎ 832 169; Jl Sumatera 31; r with air-con & TV 115,000Rp, with hot water 135,000Rp; 🏠) A decent choice, this large concrete hotel has plenty of cleanish rooms just a cut above basic. Some have sea views.

**Pantai Timor** (☎ 831 651; Jl Sumatera 44; standard/deluxe r 175,000/200,000Rp; 🏠) This large hotel is both centrally located and on the water. Rooms are huge with new tile floors, high ceilings and crown mouldings, as well as TV and air-con. Bathrooms are basic, but the standard rooms are still tremendous value.

**Orchid Garden Hotel** (☎ 833 707; fax 831 339; Jl Gunung Fateleu 2; s/d from 175,000/200,000Rp; 🏠) Even a fresh coat of lime paint can't hide its age, but the rooms, set around a garden and empty pool, are quite clean and spacious, with air-con and framed ikat on the walls.

Or try these:

**Hotel Kupang Indah** (☎ 21919; Jl Kelimutu 21; r with fan & bathroom 50,000Rp, with air-con 65,000Rp; 🏠) Management is lovely and the air-con rooms are Kupang's cheapest.

**Hotel Kelimutu** (☎ 831 179; Jl Kelimutu 38; r with fan 100,000Rp, with air-con & TV 140,000Rp; 🏠) Friendly management and decent-sized rooms.

### MIDRANGE

**Hotel Astiti** (☎ 832 622; Jl Sudirman 166; standard/superior/deluxe r 190,000/250,000/300,000Rp) This large business hotel, with an attached BNI bank ATM, has 60 rooms with minibar, international satellite TV, laundry and room service.

Recently renovated deluxe rooms are the best in town. Location is the only drawback.

**Hotel Silvia** (☎ 825 191; Jl Soeharto 51-53; standard/superior/VIP r 300,000/350,000/500,000Rp; 🏠 📺) Less cosy than Astiti, this spot has all the business-hotel perks. They sell wireless internet vouchers to laptop luggers (11,000Rp for four hours).

**Kristal Hotel** (☎ 825 100; kristal@kupang.wasantara.net.id; Jl Timor Raya 59; standard/superior d 610,000/762,000Rp, ste 1,600,000Rp; 🏠 📺) Like a past-their-prime Hollywood star, this aging megahotel by the beach, 2km east of the centre, just had work done. There are ballrooms and a nice pool area by the sea. Rooms in the new wing have the nicest bathrooms in town and satellite TV.

## Eating

Kupang was never considered a good eating town until the wonderful, lamp-lit **pasar malam** (Jl Garuda; dishes from 6000Rp; 🕒 6pm-10pm) was launched. With motorised traffic blocked every night, Jl Garuda has become the domain of streetside grill and wok chefs that expertly prepare inexpensive fresh fish (choose yours from the cooler), chicken and vegetable dishes.

**Rumah Makan Sari Pitaka** (Jl Sumba 4; meals 7000-12,000Rp) Enjoy cheap and tasty Balinese soul food. The *babi* (pork) comes shredded, grilled and stewed, and is served with rice and stir-fried *kangkung* (local spinach).

**Soto Madura** (☎ 809 9505; Jl Mohammad Hatta 21; most dishes 7,000-18,000Rp) A clean Javanese sate depot with huge simmering vats of *soto* (soup).

**Rumah Makan Wahyu Putra Solo** (☎ 821 552; Jl Gunung Mutis 31; meals 10,000-25,000Rp) Kupang's best pick-and-mix warung offers beef, chicken, fish, potatoes and greens deep- and stir-fried, stewed in coconut sauce, and chilli-rubbed and roasted. Even vegetarians will find something delicious here.

**Palembang International** (☎ 822 784; Jl Mohammad Hatta 54; dishes 17,500-50,000Rp; 🕒 11am-10pm) A popular Chinese-Indo seafood house, with a clean dining room accented by dozens of potted plants. Try the fish in black bean sauce (30,000Rp to 50,000Rp).

## Drinking

**Lavalon** (☎ 832 256, 0812 377 0533; www.geocities.com/lavalon\_edwin; Jl Sumatera 44; 🏠 📺) This rickety-looking, open-air, tin-roof watering hole with spectacular sea views is a must for any new traveller in town. Edwin and his local crew will give you an earful on all their favourite

NTT sweet spots. The beer is cold, and the wireless high-speed internet is free.

**Pantai Laut Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 0852 3910 9999; Jl Tongkol 3; ☺) A new tropical bar with a huge thatched roof, no walls, beach views and the ever-present sound of rolling surf. It has free wi-fi internet, a pool table, a menu of day-glow cocktails, and the coldest beer in town.

## Shopping

Kupang's main shopping mall is the **Flobamora** (Jl Lamamentik), 3km southeast of town. Take bemo 6 from the roundabout at Jl Beringin.

The main market is the rambling **Pasar Inpres** (☎ 7am-4pm) off Jl Soeharto in the south of the city. To get there, take bemo 1 or 2 and follow the crowd. The smaller **Pasar Oeba** (Jl Alor) is about 1km east of town.

**C&A Art Shop** (☎ 802 6969; Jl Raya El Tari 27) One of several places in town that sells new production and antique ikat (with a great selection of the naturally dyed variety), masks and sculpture. The owner speaks English and prices are low.

**George Eman's Gallery** (☎ 0812 368 3562; Jl Taruna 2; ☎ by appointment only) Based in the artist's home, and stacked with oil and mixed-media canvases that blend cubism with tribal Sumba art. You'll recognise *marapu* (spiritual forces), megalithic figures and Pasola warriors.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Kupang is the most important hub for air travel in Nusa Tenggara. **Merpati** (☎ 833 833; Jl Timor Timur Km 5) flies to Denpasar (daily), Mataram (daily), Waingapu (four weekly), Waikabubak (three weekly), Maumere (daily), Ende (four weekly), Lewoleba (three weekly) and Atambua (twice weekly).

**Transnusa** (☎ 822 555; fax 832 573; Jl Sudirman 68) flies to Kalabahi (six weekly), Ende (twice daily), Maumere (twice daily) and Rote (twice weekly).

**Garuda Air** (☎ 827 333; www.garuda-indonesia.com; Jl Palapa 7) flies daily to Denpasar and on to Surabaya, Yogyakarta and Jakarta.

**Batavia Air** (☎ 830 555; Jl Ahmad Yani 73) flies daily to Surabaya and on to Jakarta. **Lion Air** (☎ 882 119; El Tari Airport) flies exactly the same route. Both operate flexi-fares, depending on how early you book.

At research time, Darwin flights had been cancelled for over a year, but were getting set to re-launch.

Departure tax is 20,000Rp for domestic flights and 70,000Rp for international flights.

### BOAT

Pelni ships depart from Tenuu Harbour, 10km southwest of Kupang (4000Rp, bemo 12); ferries leave from Bolok Harbour, 13km southwest of Kupang (4000Rp, bemo 13). Expect to pay approximately 25,000Rp for a hotel drop when coming into town by bemo.

Boats are routinely late and schedules shift, particularly during the rainy season, when seas are rough.

**Pelni** (☎ 824 357; Jl Pahlawan 3; ☎ 8.30am-3pm Mon-Sat, 9-11am Sun) is near the waterfront. Pelni's *Dobonsolo* runs every two weeks from Bali to Kupang, and on to Kota Ambon and Papua. The fortnightly *Awu* sails from Kupang to Ende, Waingapu, Lombok and Bali, or Kalabahi, Larantuka and Sulawesi. *Sirimau* sails between Kupang, Alor and Makassar every two weeks. The fortnightly *Pangrango* sails from Kupang to Surabaya, Waingapu and Bima. The *Tatamailau* connects Kupang with Maumere, Bima and Benoa, and on the return trip heads to Saumlake and Tual. Finally, the *Siguntang* links Kupang with Lewoleba and Maumere.

From Bolok Harbour, ferries sail to Larantuka (Sunday and Thursday), and to Ende on Friday. The Ende ferry continues on to Waingapu. For Rote ferry info, see p577.

### BUS & BEMO

Long-distance buses depart from Oebobo terminal on the eastern side of town – catch bemo 10. Daily departures include Soe (45,000Rp to 60,000Rp, three hours) and Niki Niki (45,000Rp to 60,000Rp, 3½ hours) every hour from 5am to 6pm; Kefamenanu (50,000Rp to 70,000Rp, 5½ hours) and Atambua (75,000Rp, eight hours) at 7am, 9am, noon and 5pm.

Direct minibuses (175,000Rp one way, 11 hours) to Dili are operated by **Timor Travel** (☎ 881 543), **Paradise** (☎ 823 120) and **Livau** (☎ 821 892). Call for a hotel pick-up.

### OJEK WARNING

Sadly, sexual assault against women by their *ojek* drivers has become an issue in Kupang. Don't hail an *ojek* randomly. Ask hotel staff to recommend someone.

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Kupang's El Tari Airport is 15km east of the town centre. Taxis from the airport to town cost a fixed 50,000Rp. For public transport, turn left out of the terminal and walk 1km to the junction with the main highway, from where bemos to town cost 3000Rp. Going to the airport, take the Penfui bemo to the junction and then walk.

### BEMO

A ride in one of Kupang's unique bass-thumping hip-hop bemos (2000Rp) is one of the city's essential experiences. Windscreens are festooned with girly silhouettes, Jesus of Nazareth or his mom, and English premier-ship football stars. The low-rider paint job is of the *Fast & Furious* technicolour variety, while banks of subwoofers will have your ass involuntarily shaking to the drivers' C-list hip-hop soundtrack. They stop running by 9pm.

Kupang is too spread out to walk. The bemo hub is the Kota Kupang terminal. Useful bemo routes:

**1 & 2** Kuanino–Oepura; passing many popular hotels.

**5** Oebobo–Airona–Bakunase; passing the main post office.

**6** Goes to the Flobamora shopping mall and the post office.

**10** Kelapa Lima–Walikota; from terminal to the tourist office, Oebobo bus terminal and East Nusa Tenggara Museum.

Several bemos use names instead of numbers. **Tenau** and **Belok Harbour** bemos run to the docks. The **Penfui** bemo links to the airport.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

It's possible to rent a car with a driver from 400,000Rp per day. Motorcycles cost around 60,000Rp per day. Ask at your hotel or travel agent.

## AROUND KUPANG

### Islands

**Pulau Semau** to the west of Kupang has some decent sandy beaches and snorkelling. Collective boats (10,000Rp) make the run from Tenau Harbour throughout the day, but there's no lodging here. Chartered boats cost around 500,000Rp.

**Pulau Kera** (Monkey Island), an uninhabited blob of trees and sand, surrounded by clear

water, is visible from Kupang. Access is by chartered boat (750,000Rp to 1,000,000Rp) only.

### Beaches

Kupang's beaches are grubby and flotsam-strewn. **Pantai Lasiana**, about 10km east of town by bemo 17, is a wide sandy beach and a busy weekend picnic spot. There's playground equipment, football games, offshore island views, and shady snack stalls where you can enjoy fresh young coconut (3000Rp).

The road to Tablong, 27km southwest of Kupang, rises and falls along a ridge with some spectacular ocean views. Get off the bemo at the cell tower and make the next left down a rugged 3km road, past lontar huts to **Tuadale**, where you'll find an undiscovered surf break along the offshore reef. Head southwest from here and you'll find **Air Cina**, another golden beach and turquoise bay that's the domain of fishermen and seaweed farmers. Bring plenty of food and water, and check when the last bemo goes back to Kupang from Tablong, so you don't get stranded.

### Oenesu

Hidden in this sleepy farming village just off the Kupang–Tablong road, is an impressive three-stage, turquoise-tinted waterfall (admission 4000Rp). There's a nice swimming hole beneath the last cascade. Locals love it, which explains the rubbish issue. The turn-off is 13km from Kupang near Tapa village, serviced by regular bemos from Tabun. From the main road it's a 2.5km walk to the falls. Take the road to Sumlili; after the Immanuel church turn and walk 800m along a rough road.

### Baun

A leafy and relatively prosperous market town 30km southeast of Kupang in the hilly Amarasi district, Baun is an ikat-weaving centre with one Dutch colonial building of note: the *rumah rajah*, now occupied by Ibu Mari, the late raja's charming widow. Inside is an enclosed porch, a blooming backyard garden and some aged black-and-white photos of old rajas in tribal dress. Market day in Baun is Saturday. From Baun to the south coast is a solid day's hike; there's a good surf beach down there.

To get to Baun, take a bemo from Kupang's bus terminal or Pasar Inpres.



## Oebelo & Oesao

Oebelo, a small salt-mining town 22km from Kupang on the Soe road, is notable for a terrific Rotenese musical-instrument workshop, **Sasandu** (☎ 0813 3913 7007, 0852 3948 7808), run by Pak Pah and his family. Traditional 20-stringed harps, aka *sasando* (featured on the 5000Rp note), are made and played in all sizes, along with coconut-shell drums and electrified versions of the Rotenese lontar-leaf hat, *ti'i langga*. Pak may treat you to a haunting instrumental number, or *Yellow Submarine*.

Oesao is another 6km down the road and has a war memorial dedicated to the 2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion.

## SOE

☎ 0388 / pop 30,000

The cool, leafy market town of Soe (800m) makes a decent base to explore West Timor's interior, which comes dotted with ubiquitous *ume kebu* (beehive-shaped hut) villages that are home to local Dawan people. With no windows and only a 1m-high doorway, *ume kebu* are cramped and smoky. Government authorities have deemed them a health hazard and are in the process of replacing them with cold concrete boxes, which the Dawan have deemed a health hazard. They build new *ume kebu* behind the approved houses, and live there.

## Information

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 21149; Jl Diponegoro) has good detail on the surrounding area and is the best place to arrange guides.

**Pae Nope** (☎ 0813 3914 1576) has royal bloodlines and is a terrific English-speaking guide who organises ethnological and bird-watching trips throughout West and East Timor. Both **BNI** (Jl Diponegoro) and **BRI** (Jl Hatta) banks have ATMs, but exchange rates for cash and travellers cheques are poor. Hotel Bahagia II has an attached internet cafe (15,000Rp per hour).

## Sleeping

**Nope's Royal Homestay** (☎ 21711; Jl Merpati 8; bungalows incl breakfast 100,000Rp) One aging little bungalow with *mandi* on the grounds of Pae Nope's family home. Pae speaks fluent English, is Soe's best guide, and lived in Darwin for years.

**Hotel Bahagia II** (☎ 21095; Jl Gajah Mada 55; d 145,000Rp, cottages 225,000-495,000Rp; 📺) A decent

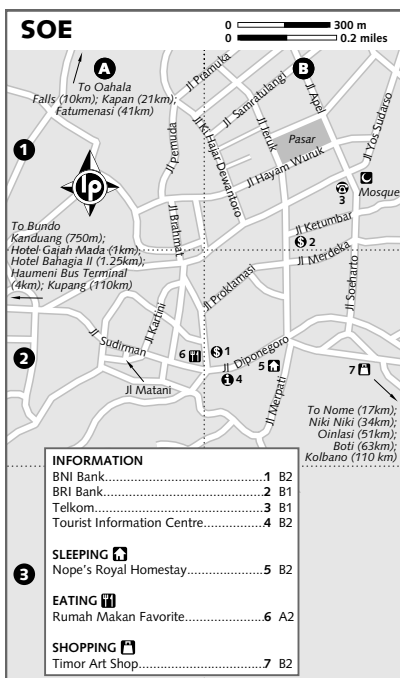
choice with plenty of spacious rooms, queen beds (with wooden headboards), and a few cottages that make sense for families.

**Hotel Gajah Mada** (☎ 21197; Jl Gajah Mada; standard/VIP r 150,000/250,000Rp) Soe's newest rooms have queen beds, crown mouldings and hot water. The odd, isolated location nets some nice mountain views from the second-storey terrace.

## Eating

**Bundo Kandang** (☎ 0813 3947 0896; Jl Gajah Mada; dishes 6000-18,000Rp) If you've been waiting to find a clean, fresh spot to try Padang food, this is it. There are devilled eggs with chilli, fried and curried fish, *rendang*, stewed veggies, and potato cakes. Almost everything is spicy and it all rocks. It's 1.5km west of the centre.

**Rumah Makan Favorite** (☎ 21031; Jl Diponegoro 38; dishes 10,000-15,000Rp) The newest, cleanest and hippest spot in Soe. You'll dig the 1970s paint job, tablecloths and silk flowers. The menu is all chicken and shrimp dishes made to order, and those fresh ginger muffins are lovely.



## Shopping

If you're interested in antiques and handicrafts, do not miss **Timor Art Shop** (☎ 21419; Jl Bill Nope 17; ☒ by appointment) where you'll find Timor's best selection of masks, sculpture and carvings at unbelievable prices. There's no sign, so call owner Alfred Maku before coming over. He speaks excellent English

## Getting There & Away

The Haumeni bus terminal is 4km west of town (2000Rp by bemo). Regular buses go from Soe to Kupang (45,000Rp to 60,000Rp, three hours), Kefamenanu (25,000Rp, 2½ hours) and Oinlasi (10,000Rp to 15,000Rp, 1½ hours), while bemos cover Niki Niki (5000Rp) and Kapan (5000Rp).

## AROUND SOE

### Oinlasi

Regular buses from Soe (10,000Rp, two hours) make the 51km trip along a winding mountain road to Oinlasi. Its Tuesday market, which spreads for blocks along a ridge overlooking two valleys, attracts villagers from the surrounding hill districts, many of whom are wearing traditional ikat. Weavings, carvings, masks and elaborately carved betel-nut containers can be found, along with fruit, livestock, local sweets and some of the worst popular music ever recorded. The market starts early in the morning and continues until 2pm, but is at its best before 10am.

If you want to immerse yourself in Timor life or troll the surrounding villages for handicrafts, stay the night 1.5km from Oinlasi at the **Desa Anin Homestay** (☎ 0812 3641 2317; per person incl meals 50,000Rp), a sweet, family-run traditional hut complex.

### Boti

In an isolated mountain valley, 12km from Oinlasi along a rutted, mountain road – often impassable without a 4WD – is the traditional, almost orthodox, village of Boti, where the charismatic young *kepala suku* (chief) has vowed to maintain the strict laws of *adat*.

Villagers wear shirts, ikat sarongs and shawls made only from locally grown and hand-spun cotton thread coloured with natural dyes. After marriage men must let their hair grow long. Indonesian education is largely shunned, and Boti's 300 or so villagers still follow ancient animist rituals, though

another 700 neighbouring families who live in Boti's geographical sphere of influence have adopted Protestantism and attend public schools.

On arrival you will be led to the raja's house, where, keeping with tradition, you will offer betel nut to the chief as a gift. It's possible to stay with the raja in his house with all meals provided for 75,000Rp per person. Day-trippers are expected to contribute a donation (25,000Rp should work).

The Boti chief requests that you do not visit independently; bring a guide from Soe conversant with local *adat*.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Niki Niki, there is a new turn-off to Boti. It's 20km on a rocky, hilly road that's passable by motorcycle or 4WD. Make sure to bring water from Soe. An *ojek* charter from Niki Niki is around 50,000Rp, or you can hire a 4WD in Soe for 750,000Rp.

### Niki Niki

Niki Niki is 34km east of Soe along the Soe–Kefamenanu road and is the site of some old royal graves and two palaces, one imposing structure belonging to Rajah Nope. The village has a busy Wednesday market, a couple of restaurants, but no accommodation. Regular buses and bemos link Niki Niki and Soe (5000Rp).

### Nome

17km east of Soe is Kefa's last head-hunting village and one of the area's best attractions. A trail begins 1km from where the bemo will drop you off on the main road. Stroll past corn and bean fields and hop over a meandering stream and you'll reach scattered *ume kebubu*, where parents still bury their baby's placenta in the centre of their hut. The village is protected by a native rock fort, which abuts a sheer cliff. At the cliff's edge you'll find a 200-year-old banyan tree and a totem pole where shamans once met with warriors before they left on head-hunting expeditions. The wise ones consulted chicken eggs and their wooden staff before predicting if the warriors would prevail. Villagers are warm and welcoming, and break out their looms at the village *lopo* (meeting place) for weaving demonstrations. It is so peaceful here that it's hard to believe they were taking heads just two generations ago.

## THE MIDWIFE

Living in her dark, smoky beehive hut in the head-hunting village of Nome is a humble silver-haired woman, with *sirih*-stained lips, a generous smile and a gift. Helena Talam is a midwife, and for the past three decades she's delivered all the village children and hundreds, maybe thousands of others whose mothers come from kilometres away to see 'the one with blessed fingers'. As she tends the cook fire in the centre of her hut, the smoke snaking into the roof's storage cavity preserving bushels of rice and corn, she says 'I never studied as a nurse, what I have is a blessing from God.' She shares her wisdom with other Timorese midwives freely. 'They listen because I have never had a fatality. I just want to make mothers' lives easier and safer before, during and after delivery.' And while the government has built her a modern home that seems a good deal cleaner, she isn't moving. 'I prefer to stay here', she says.

## Kapan & Around

10km from Soe, on the way to Kapan, the **Oahala Falls** are tucked into a forested grotto, where the aqua water seems to paint the boulders as it threads through the forest. It's nothing spectacular but it has gravitas. During the head-hunting days, when the Molo and Amanuban kingdoms were going at it, they met here in 1911 to make peace – hence the name, Ohala (aka peaceful) Falls. Kapan buses will drop you off on the highway, from where it is a 2.5km walk to the falls, or you can hire an *ojek* (15,000Rp) or car (75,000Rp) from Soe.

Some folks call the pastureland around **Bola Plelo** 'little Scotland'. It slopes into river canyons and crawls up limestone ridges, 12km from Soe. Around 9km further on, **Kapan** rambles along a steep ridge with views of **Gunung Mutis** (2427m). There's an interesting regional market here on Thursday. From Kapan, trucks run to **Fatumenasi**, 20km away, with even more spectacular alpine scenery. Matheus Anin runs the government **homestay** (per person incl all meals 75,000Rp). Guests nest in lontar huts and join Anin for guided walks up Gunung Mutis (100,000Rp).

## Kolbano

The village of Kolbano is on Timor's southern coast, 110km from Soe. The empty white-sand beaches see good surf between May and August. The easiest access is by bus from Noilmina on the Kupang–Soe road (about six hours).

## KEFAMENANU

☎ 0388 / pop 32,000

A former Portuguese stronghold, Kefamenanu was just another quiet hill town as recently as 2007, but with a magnesium boom in full

effect, commerce has arrived along with new construction. It remains devoutly Catholic and has a couple of impressive colonial churches. There's a terrific range of accommodation in town, and it's the jumping-off point to Temkessi, one of West Timor's 'can't miss' villages. Known locally as Kefa, it lies at the heart of an important weaving region. Prepare to haggle with the ikat cartel.

## Orientation & Information

Kefa stretches in all directions from the old market, *pasar lama*, which is around 2.5km north of the bus terminal.

**BRI Bank** (Jl El Tari) Change dollars or use the MasterCard/Cirrus ATM at this gleaming new building.

**Dinas Pariwisata** (☎ 21520; Jl Sudirman) The tourist office, opposite the field north of the highway, can help locate a guide.

**Post office** (Jl Imam Bonjol) Opposite the market.

**Telkom** (Jl Sudirman; internet per hr 10,000Rp;

📶 7am-midnight) Your speedy internet connection.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Cendana** (☎ 31168; Jl Sonbay; r with mandi & fan 75,000Rp, with air-con 140,000-160,000Rp; 📶) Cendana's new rooms (160,000Rp) are terrific value, with fresh paint, crisp linens, air-con, hot-water *mandis* and flat-screen TVs. It's down a quiet side street with a small convenience store attached. Staff can help you charter bemos, find a guide, and they rent motorcycles, but they don't speak much English.

**our pick Hotel Livero** (☎ 233 2222; Jl El Tari; standard/deluxe r 250,000/300,000Rp; 📶) Brand-new and sparkling in the centre of town. Rooms have wooden bed-frames, flat-screen TVs, private terraces and rain showerheads. The restaurant out back features daily live music. Outstanding value.

**Litani** (Jl El Tari; dishes 10,000-30,000Rp) If you're over Padang food, dine in these breezy bamboo environs, and munch fresh fish, prawns and squid.

**Rumah Makan Padang 2** (☎ 31641; Jl El Tari; meals 20,000-25,000Rp) They do all your Padang faves: curried fish and coconut greens, chilli-rubbed chicken thighs, and devilled eggs; they also pack lunch to go if you're planning a day out in the villages.

## Getting There & Away

Terminal Bus Kefa is a few kilometres south of the town centre. From here there are regular buses to Kupang (50,000Rp to 70,000Rp, 5½ hours), Soe (25,000Rp, 2½ hours) and Atambua (15,000Rp, two hours) from 6am until about 4pm.

## AROUND KEFAMENANU

### Oelolok

Oelolok, a weaving village 26km from Kefa by bus and a further 3km by bemo, is home to **Istana Rajah Taolin**, a massive beehive hut with a huge outdoor patio and carved beams dangling with corn from decades of harvests. Royals have lived here for five generations, and its current residents (the aging prince and his princess) are more than happy to share the myths and legends of their culture and kingdom. Ask about the power of the 'sword with seven lines'.

### Temkessi & Around

Accessible through a keyhole between jutting limestone cliffs, 50km northeast of Kefa, is

one of West Timor's most isolated and best-preserved villages. The raja's house overlooks the village. That's your first stop, where you'll offer gifts of betel nut, make a donation and pay your respects. After that you can shoot pictures of the low-slung beehive huts built into the bedrock and connected by red clay paths that ramble to the edge of a precipice. If you drop something, don't pick it up. Let local villagers do it, lest you bring bad vibes into your life. Oh, and about that vertical rock on the left. At least once every seven years, young warriors climb its face, *sans* rope, with a pure white goat strapped to their back. They slaughter the animal on top and can't come down until they roast and eat it in full. This Natamamausa ritual is performed to give thanks for a good harvest or to stop or start the rain. Very little Bahasa Indonesia is spoken here, so a guide is essential.

Regular buses run from Kefa to Manufui, about 8km from Temkessi. On market day in Manufui (Saturday), trucks or buses should run through to Temkessi. Otherwise, charter an *ojek* in Manufui or hike over limestone ridges with Oecussi sea views.

**Gua Santa Maria**, a sacred pilgrimage site for West Timor's Catholics 22km from Kefa on the Manufui road, is a deep limestone cave with a mother Mary statue inside, teeming with thousands of bats!

**Maubesi** is home to the Kefa regency's best textile market. You'll find it 19km from Kefa on the road to Temkessi. Market day is Thursday when goods are spread beneath riverside shade trees. Sometimes cockfights break out. **Maubesi Art Shop** (☎ 0852 8508 5867) has a terrific selection of local ikat, antique masks, statues, and carved beams, reliefs and doors from old Timorese homes. Prices are quite low. Look for the plain yellow-and-black 'Textile' sign. They can also organise traditional war dances (1,000,000Rp) with advance notice.

## ATAMBUA & AROUND

☎ 0389 / pop 38,000

Atambua is a scruffy border town close to East Timor. Large numbers of pro-Jakarta refugees and militias from East Timor – some with blood on their hands – settled here after East Timor's independence, and three UN workers were murdered here in 2000. Most Timor locals would rather you not pass through, and now that the Alor ferry from the nearby port of **Atapupu** has stopped running, and with a

### THE STORY OF SEVEN

Ethnic Timorese are known as the 'people of the sunrise' and trace their ancestry back to seven sisters who came down to earth from the sun for a bath. A lustful man watched as they bathed, and hid the most beautiful sister's robes. Naked and ashamed, she was left behind, and eventually became mother of the Timorese people.

The number seven permeates Timor. Their sacred swords have seven lines, special rituals are carried out every seven years, and seven also symbolizes completion of the human life cycle; from birth, through childhood and adulthood, to marriage and the cultivation of wisdom, and finally death and the merging of the soul back into the universe.

regular fleet of direct Dili–Kupang minibuses available for visa runs, there's absolutely no reason to visit.

**Betun** is a prosperous town 60km south, near the coast, which has a couple of hotels, including the recommended **Cinta Dama** (r90,000Rp). A few intrepid travellers have visited the nearby villages of **Kletek**, **Kamanasa** and **Bolan** – you can see flying foxes and watch the sun set over the mountains at Kletek.

### Information

There's a **tourist office** (☎ 21483; Jl Basuki Rahmat 2) and a branch of **BNI bank** (🏦 8.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri), which has an ATM and exchanges foreign currencies.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Nusantara Dua** (☎ 21773; Jl Kasimo; standard/VIP r 90,000/200,000Rp; 🏠) The best in town, with comfortable rooms. It's close to the bus terminal but a fair walk from the centre.

Tuck in at **Padang Raya** (Jl Soekarno) for a fiery point-and-eat meal.

### Getting There & Away

Merpati has two flights a week between Atambua and Kupang.

The bus terminal is 1km north of town (1000Rp by *mikrolet* 3 or 4). Destinations include Kupang (75,000Rp, eight hours) and Kefamenanu (15,000Rp, two hours). Bemos to the border cost 5000Rp (50 minutes). Buses for Dili leave from the other side when full. For more details about the trip over the border, see the boxed text on p564.

## ROTE

A slender, rain-starved limestone jewel with powdery white-sand beaches and epic surf, Rote floats just southwest of West Timor, but has an identity all its own. From a tourism perspective it's all about the surf, which is gentle enough for beginners and sick enough for experts. Stunning Pantai Nemberala is home to the world-renowned T-Land break, and there are dozens of hidden white-sand beaches, aquamarine lagoons, and seldom-surfed waves on the beaches, south and north of Nemberala. To find them you'll roll through thatched traditional villages, over natural limestone bridges and through an undulating savannah that turns from green in the November–March

### LONTAR PALM

Rote is extraordinarily dependent on the drought-resistant lontar palm. The palm is extremely versatile; its tough yet flexible leaves are woven to make sacks and bags, hats and sandals, roofs and dividing walls. Lontar wood is fashioned into furniture and floorboards. But what nourishes the islanders is the milky, frothy *nirah* (sap) tapped from the *tankai* (orange-stemmed inflorescences) that grow from the crown of the lontar. Drunk straight from the tree, the *nirah* is refreshing, nutritious and energising. If left to ferment for hours, it becomes *laru* (palm wine), which is hawked around the lanes of Rote. With a further distillation, the juice is distilled into a ginlike *sopi* – the power behind many a wild Rote night.

'wet season' to gold in the 'dry season' which also happens to be when the offshore winds fold swells into perfect tubes. The whole experience lends a nostalgic Endless Summer feeling, even as 21st-century Rotenese voice typical Indonesian pride in their beloved Barack Obama. And don't overlook the tiny offshore islands where you can find gorgeous ikat, more silky white sand and life-affirming turquoise bays, and, of course, more surf.

Historically, the simple local economy revolved around the majestic and nutritious lontar palm (see boxed text, above). Then in the late 17th century, after a bloody campaign, Rote became the source of slaves and supplies for the Dutch. But the Rotenese also took advantage of the Dutch presence, adopted Christianity and, with Dutch support, established a school system that eventually turned them into the NTT's best-educated island. This allowed them to influence the much larger island of Timor both politically and economically.

### Ba'a

☎ 0380

Ba'a, Rote's commercial centre, is a sleepy port town that snakes south along the island's west coast among banyan trees, banana and coconut groves. The fast ferry and twice-weekly flights land here. Some houses have curious boat-shaped thatched roofs, but the town doesn't offer enough of a reason to linger, although the coast from the ferry port at Pantai Baru to Ba'a is sparsely populated

and has some superb beaches. There is a **BRI bank** (Jl Pabean) with an ATM on the main drag, but it won't accept Visa. Bring plenty of rupiah from Kupang, as exchanging cash is difficult here.

If you do stick around, **Hotel Ricky** (☎ 871 045; Jl Gereja; r with fan 75,000Rp, s/d with air-con 150,000/200,000Rp; 🚽) has cleanish tiled rooms that are far more welcoming than the industrial exterior would have you believe. Air-con rooms are larger and cleaner than the fan-cooled variety. They have a decent restaurant and can sort you out with transport to Nemberala. But the best place to stay is **Grace Hotel** (☎ 871 055; Jl Pabean; r 250,000Rp). The rooms are spotless and some overlook the harbour. They only serve breakfast, but they do offer free transport to the new **Rumah Makan Pantai Permai Prinov** (☎ 871 030; Jl Raya Ba'a-Papela Km 2; dishes 18,000-60,000Rp), where you can munch fresh seafood with spectacular sea views. **Rumah Makan Kelapa Satu** (Jl Pabean; meals 15,000-40,000Rp) has a decent selection of Chinese-Indonesian dishes. Meals are served on a seafront terrace.

When they can get it, shops sell the local delicacy, *susu goreng*, made from buffalo milk that's cooked until it becomes a brown powder. It's sweet and very tasty.

## Papela

This Muslim Bugis fishing village in the far east of Rote is set on a beautiful harbour, a two-hour drive north from Ba'a. Every Saturday it hosts the biggest market on the island. There is one hotel, the **Wisma Karya** (Jl Lorong Asem), but a day trip is a better bet. Buses go to Papela from Ba'a and Pantai Baru on an occasionally crumbling road.

## Nemberala

A surfers' secret for years, the word is slowly leaking out about Nemberala, a chilled-out fishing village on an exquisite white-sand beach sheltered by a reef that helps form the legendary 'left', **T-Land**. This wave gets big, especially between June and August, but it's not heavy, so the fear factor isn't ridiculous. Just north of the Nemberala fishing-boat harbour is a terrific beginners' break called **Squealers**. And if you rent a bike and drive the occasionally rutted coastal road, you'll notice that you're within reach of a half-dozen other desolate beaches and superb uncharted surf breaks. If the world is just a little too mapped out for you, you'll love Nemberala.

## SLEEPING & EATING

The surf and tourist season peaks between June and September. Accommodation range and value are solid, but there aren't a lot of rooms. Book ahead.

**Tirosa** (per person incl meals 100,000Rp) These lime-green and concrete bungalows are the cheapest beach option available. It's run by a sweet local *ibu* (older woman), and budget surfers love it. Some book rooms for the season. Turn right at the first intersection in town, and head north along the dirt road for 500m.

**Losmen Anugrah** (☎ 0852 3916 2645; per person incl breakfast 150,000Rp) You'll love the cute, compact, superclean lontar-palm bungalows with front patios and *mandis*, right on the beach opposite T-Land. They also have older, concrete rooms, but you don't want one of those, so reserve ahead during surf season. Their restaurant, which is decked out with ikat tablecloths, serves *ikan bakar* (grilled fish), fried squid and other basics.

**our pick Malole Surf House** (☎ 0813 3776 7412; per person incl three meals US\$75-130) Built by surf legend Felipe Pomar and run by his business partner Diego Arrarte, this surf lodge blends comfort, cuisine and style better than anywhere else in Rote. The four rooms are set in a large wooden house and guest house with accent lighting, day beds, ikat bedspreads, limitless laundry and bottled water, and security boxes. Diego, the longest-tenured expat in Nemberala, will be your surf guide and get you to the right waves at the right time. Maria, the chef, carves fresh sashimi, blends spectacular soups and serves up what are among the best tapas in Indonesia. Mountain bikes, fishing trips and island excursions are also on offer. Closed during the wet season.

**Nemberala Beach Resort** (☎ 0813 3773 1851; www.nemberalabeachresort.com; per person US\$175; 🚽 📺) Right on the ocean, this relaxed four-star spot has spacious slate-and-timber bungalows with ceiling fans, outdoor baths and freshwater showers. There's a swimming pool, volleyball court and pool table, and a terrific beach bar and restaurant specialising in seafood, including sashimi and lobster. A speedboat can whisk you out to other nearby surf breaks; excursions to limestone caves and tidal lagoons, and fishing trips for dog-toothed tuna and mackerel can also be arranged. Price includes all meals and transfers. It's closed during the wet season.

While all but one of the lodges and guest houses are all-inclusive, a few local warungs have popped up in recent months, so you do have a (very) few options if you've soured on *makan* homestay. **Rumah Makan Tessa Lifu** does cheap eats from her house next to the soccer pitch. **Jenet's Place** is a cute patio joint with tablecloths, silk flowers and a simple menu (think pastas, *nasi goreng* and burgers) during the high season. Cold Bintang is here year-round.

## Around Nemberala

You really must explore this lonely limestone coast by motorbike in order to absorb its majesty. If you prefer a heavier, hollow wave, your first stop should be 3km north to **Suckie Mama's**. About 8km south of Nemberala, **Bo'a** has a spectacular white-sand beach and consistent off-season surf. However, the wave is usually inconsistent when Nemberala is cranking. From Bo'a continue south over the dry rocky road, look out for monkeys, and after you traverse the natural limestone bridge, negotiate the descent and reach **Oeseli** village; then make a right on the dirt road which leads to another superb beach with some good waves, and a huge natural tidal lagoon that shelters local fishing boats and floods limestone bat caves.

The southernmost island in Indonesia, **Pulau Ndana** can be reached by local fishing boat from Nemberala. It's currently a military camp, but for years it was uninhabited. Legend has it that the entire population was murdered in a 17th-century revenge act, staining the island's small lake red with the victims' blood. Ndana has wild deer and a wide variety of birds. Its beaches are prime turtle-nesting territory, and the snorkelling here is superb.

**Boni** is about 15km from Nemberala, near the northern coast, and is one of the last villages on Rote where traditional religion is still followed. Market day is Thursday. To get here, rent a motorcycle in Nemberala.

**Pulau Do'o** is a flat spit of pale golden sand with terrific though finicky surf. You can see it from Pantai Nemberala. Further on is the stunning **Pulau Ndao**, which has more powdery white-sand beaches, limestone bluffs, and a tidy, charming ikat-weaving, lontar-tapping, fishing village that is home to nearly 600 people who speak their own indigenous dialect, Bahasa Ndao. There are some fantastic swimming beaches up the west and east coast, and good though inconsistent surf off the southern

point. Ndao is 10km west of Nemberala. To get here you'll have to charter a boat (700,000Rp to 800,000Rp, maximum five people). You could easily do both islands in one trip.

## Getting There & Away

**Transnusa** (in Kupang ☎ 0380-822 555) offers two flights a week between Rote and Kupang (250,000Rp, 20 minutes). Flights leave Kupang at 6am on Monday and return from Rote at 8am. Friday flights depart Kupang at 11am and return at noon.

The Rote-Kupang slow ferry sank in 2006 and cost many lives. But there's a new slow ferry (40,000Rp, four hours) in town. It docks at Pantai Baru, north of Ba'a, and leaves for Kupang between 9am and 10.30am daily, returning at around 3pm. The better bet is the **Baharai Express** (executive 100,000Rp, VIP 140,000Rp, two hours), a fast ferry that departs from Kupang at 8.30am daily, docks at Ba'a and returns at 11am. The service is sometimes cancelled due to rough seas.

## Getting Around

A pack of buses and bemos greet boats at Pantai Baru and run to Ba'a (1½ hours). Buses leave Ba'a for Pantai Baru around 10am to meet the slow ferry. Regular bemos run from Ba'a to Busalangga, and at least one bemo runs to Papela in the morning, while trucks service more remote locations. To get to Nemberala you'll have to charter a bemo (250,000Rp to 350,000Rp, two hours), or hire an *ojek* (100,000Rp to 200,000Rp). Price depends on your negotiation skills.

The Hotel Ricky in Ba'a and most of the Nemberala resorts can arrange a car and driver to meet you at the dock and carry you to the beach, but this will cost around 500,000Rp. Once you're in Nemberala, hire a motorbike (75,000Rp per day) through your hotel or guest house, and explore.

# SUMBA

Sumba is a dynamic mystery. With its rugged undulating savannah and low limestone hills knitted together with more maize and cassava than rice, physically it looks nothing like Indonesia's volcanic islands to the north. Sprinkled throughout the countryside are hilltop villages with thatched clan houses clustered around megalithic tombs, where





villagers claim to be Protestant but still pay homage to their indigenous *marapu* with bloody sacrificial rites. Throw in outstanding hand-spun, naturally dyed ikat, and the annual **Pasola festival** – where bareback horsemen ritualise (and stir up) old tribal conflicts as they battle one another with hand-carved spears – and it's easy to see that Sumba runs deep. It's also the poorest island in Indonesia's poorest province, and an influx of international and government aid is changing the landscape. Thatched roofs are becoming tin, tombs are now made from concrete, traditional dress is becoming increasingly rare, and remote villagers expect larger and larger donations from visitors – whether they be government officials, NGO staff or tourists.

Some traditions still persist, however. Sumba's extensive grasslands make it one of Indonesia's leading horse-breeding islands. Horses still serve as a mode of transport in more rugged regions; they remain a symbol of wealth and status and are still used to win a bride. Sumba is also one of the last Indonesian islands where water buffalo are essential to rice cultivation, particularly in the fertile and remote western half where tribal traditions are strongest.

## History

According to local legend, a great ladder once connected heaven and earth. Down it clambered the first people on earth to Sumba, and they settled at Tanjung Sasar, on the northern tip of the island.

Though 14th-century Javanese chronicles place Sumba under Majapahit control, Sumbanese history is more a saga of internal wars over land and trading rights between small kingdoms. Despite their mutual hostility, they often depended on each other economically. The inland regions produced horses, timber, betel nut, rice, fruit and dye-woods, while coastal people concentrated on ikat production and trade with other islands.

The Dutch initially paid little attention to Sumba because it lacked commercial possibilities. But in the early 20th century they finally decided to bring Sumba under their control and invaded the island.

In 1913 a civilian administration was set up, but Sumbanese nobility continued to reign as the Dutch ruled through them. When the Indonesian republic ceased to recognise the

native rulers' authority, many of them became government officials. These long-time ruling clans continued to exert hegemony by monopolising local government appointments.

It all came to a head during the 1998 Waikabubak riots. Initially sparked by demonstrations against such nepotism, and Suharto-era corruption in general, the bad political blood developed into a full-scale tribal conflict perpetrated by a horseback posse of at least 3000 men. Armed with machetes, they rampaged through town and hacked at least 26 people to death (though fatalities were thought to be vastly under-reported).

## Culture

### IKAT

Sumbanese ikat is the most dramatic and arguably best executed in Indonesia. Natural dyes are still preferred by weavers who sell their wares to serious collectors in Bali and beyond. The earthy orange-red colour comes from *kombu* tree bark, indigo-blue and yellow tones are derived from *loba* leaves. Some motifs are historical: a record of tribal wars and precolonial village life. Others depict animals and mythical creatures, such as *marapu*.

Traditionally, ikat cloth was only worn ceremonially. Less than 90 years ago, only members of Sumba's highest clans and their personal attendants could make or wear it. The most impressive use of the cloth was at royal funerals, where dancers and the guards of the corpse were dressed in richly decorated costumes. The deceased was dressed in the finest textiles, bound with dozens – sometimes hundreds – more, so that the corpse resembled a huge mound before burial.

Dutch conquest broke the Sumbanese royal ikat monopoly and opened up a large external market, which increased production. In the late 19th century ikat was collected by Dutch ethnographers and museums (the Rotterdam and Basel museums have fine collections), and by the 1920s visitors were already noting the introduction of nontraditional designs, such as lions from the Dutch coat of arms.

A Sumbanese woman's ikat sarong is known as a *lau*. A *hinggi* is a large rectangular cloth used by men as a sarong or shawl.

### SUMABANESE TRADITIONS

Old beliefs fade, customs die and rituals change: the Sumbanese still make textiles but no longer hunt heads; 25 years ago the

bride price may have been coloured beads and buffalo – today it might include a bicycle. Certainly, though, the bride price can still be high, and many Sumbanese men migrate just to find wives who don't expect gifts.

Some Sumbanese elders still carry their long-bladed knife in a wooden sheath tucked into their waistband. They wear scarves as turbans and wrap their brightly coloured sarongs to expose the lower two-thirds of their legs, with a long piece of cloth hanging down in front. A woman may have her legs tattooed after the birth of her first child as a mark of status; often it will be the same motifs that adorn her sarong. Another custom, teeth-filing, has all but died out, but some older people have short brown teeth from the time when jagged white teeth were considered ugly.

Churches are now a common sight, and though in some areas traditions are dying, they continue to thrive in the west.

## VILLAGES

A traditional Sumba village usually consists of two parallel rows of houses facing each other, with a square between. In the middle of the square is a stone with another flat stone on top of it, on which offerings are made to the village's protective *marapu*. These spirit stones, or *kateda*, can be found in the fields around the village and are used for offerings to the agricultural *marapu* when planting or harvesting.

The village square also contains the stone-slab tombs of important ancestors, once finely carved, but nowadays virtually always made of cement and occasionally covered in garish bathroom tile. In former times the heads of slain enemies would be hung on a dead tree in the village square while ceremonies and feasts took place. These skull trees, called *andung*, can still be seen in some villages today and are a popular motif on Sumbanese ikat.

A traditional Sumbanese dwelling is a large rectangular structure raised on stilts, and held together with lashings and dowels rather than nails; it houses an extended family. The thatched (or nowadays often corrugated tin) roof slopes gently upwards from all four sides before abruptly rising to a peak. *Marapu maluri* objects are placed in the loft (for more details, see right).

Rituals accompanying the building of a house include an offering, made at the time of planting the first pillar, to find out if the

*marapu* agree with the location. One method is to cut open a chicken and examine its liver. Many houses are decked out with buffalo horns or pigs' jaws from past sacrifices.

## RELIGION

The basis of traditional Sumbanese religion is *marapu*, a collective term for all the spiritual forces, including gods, spirits and ancestors. At death the deceased join the invisible world, from where they can influence the world of the living. *Marapu mameti* is the collective name for all dead people. The living can appeal to them for help, especially their own relatives, though the dead can be harmful if irritated. The *marapu maluri* are the original people placed on earth by god; their power is concentrated in certain places or objects, much like the Javanese idea of *semangat*.

## DEATH CEREMONIES

On the day of burial, horses or buffalo are sacrificed while ornaments and a *sirih* (betel nut) bag are buried with the body. The living must bury their dead as richly as possible to avoid being reprimanded by the *marapu mameti* and to ensure the dead can enter the invisible world – which, some say, is accessed via a ladder from Tanjung Sasar.

Funerals may be delayed for up to 10 years (the body of the deceased is sometimes stored in the loft of the family's house or given a temporary burial) until enough wealth has been accumulated for a full ceremonial funeral, and a massive stone- or concrete-slab tomb.

When the Indonesian republic was founded, the government introduced a slaughter tax in an attempt to stop the destruction of hundreds of livestock. This reduced the number of animals killed, but it didn't alter basic attitudes. The Sumbanese believe you *can*, and should, take the animal with you.

## VISITING VILLAGES

Many Sumbanese villagers are now accustomed to tourists, but still may have difficulty understanding the strange desire of Westerners to simply observe their daily life. If you're interested in their weavings or other artefacts, the villagers put you down as a potential trader. If all you want to do is chat and look around, they may be puzzled about why you've come; and if you simply turn up with a camera and start putting it in their faces, they're likely to be offended.

On Sumba, offering *sirih pinang* (betel nut) is the traditional way of greeting guests or hosts. You can buy it at most markets in Sumba. Offer your gifts to the *kepala desa* and to other village elders.

Many places also keep a visitors' book, which villagers will produce for you to sign, and you should donate a few thousand rupiah. Hiring a guide, at least to isolated villages, is a big help and offers some protection from getting into the wrong situation. No matter where you go, taking the time to chat with the villagers helps them see you more as a guest than a customer or alien.

## WAINGAPU

☎ 0387 / pop 53,000

Waingapu is a leafy, laid-back town that is plenty walkable and makes a decent base to explore the surrounding villages. It became an administrative centre after the Dutch military 'pacified' the island in 1906 and has long been Sumba's main trading post for textiles, prized Sumbanese horses, dyewoods and lumber.

The town has a groovy harbourfront dining scene, a few ikat shops and workshops.

Traders with bundles of textiles and carvings hang around hotels or walk the streets tout-ing for rupiah.

## Orientation & Information

Waingapu stretches for 1.5km between its northern harbour and the town's main centre.

**BNI bank** (JI Ampera) ATM accepts Visa/Plus cards. It usually has the best exchange rates.

**BRI bank** (JI Ahmad Yani) MasterCard/Cirrus ATM.

**Post office** (JI Hasanuddin; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Close to the harbour.

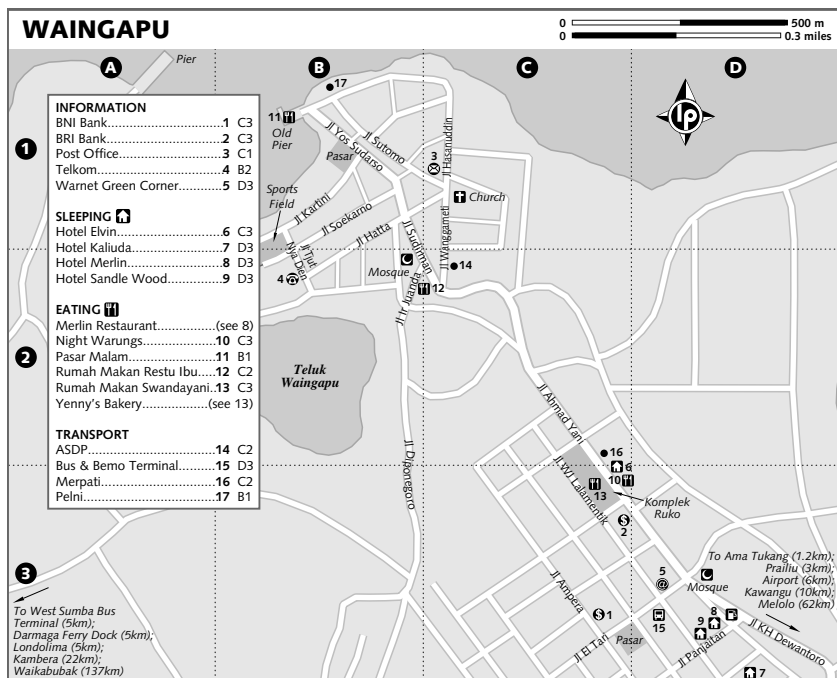
**Telkom** (JI Tjut Nya Dien; ☎ 24hr)

**Warnet Green Corner** (JI El Tari 4; per hr 5000Rp; ☎ 11am-10pm)

## Sleeping

Breakfast and free airport transfer (if you call in advance) are included.

**Hotel Sandle Wood** (☎ 61887; JI Panjaitan 23; s/d 2nd class 77,000/99,000Rp, 1st class 99,000/143,000Rp, VIP 187,000/209,000Rp; 🚿) Decent-value rooms set around a bright courtyard on a quiet street. Second-class rooms have shared baths. VIP rooms come with air-con. Management is



top-notch and can hook you up with cars (with drivers) and motorbikes.

**Hotel Elvin** (☎ 61462; Jl Ahmad Yani 73; r with mandi/air-con 80,000/275,000Rp; 🍴) This is where package tourists and business travellers converge for the new air-con rooms with queen beds and terraces. The fan rooms are aging, however, and management was pulling an air-con/fan room bait and switch at the airport when we visited.

**our pick Hotel Merlin** (☎ 61300; Jl Panjaitan 25; r with fan 110,000Rp, with air-con & TV 200,000Rp; 🍴) The long-standing travellers' favourite has a decent assortment of rooms on three floors, with Flores views from the rooftop restaurant. Rooms are large, with wood furnishings, fresh paint and room service, but they vary in quality. For instance, the top-floor fan rooms are a lot nicer and cleaner than the VIP rooms on the 1st floor.

**Hotel Kalijuda** (☎ 61264; Jl Lalamentik 3; r 125,000Rp) This reasonably clean, quiet motel has just six basic rooms with fans at a decent value. It also has a small antique collection.

## Eating

Good restaurants are thin on the ground in Waingapu. The best dinner option is the **pasar malam** at the old wharf, where three permanent warungs and half a dozen gas-lit carts set up to grill, fry and sauté seafood on the cheap. It's especially nice when the moon glows. Another collection of **night warungs** blooms across from Komplek Ruko. They offer *mie ayam*, *gado gado* and *soto ayam*.

**Yenny's Bakery** (☎ 62449; Komplek Ruko; pastries 2000-12,000Rp) Got a sweet tooth? Peruse the shelves of doughnuts, cakes, pastries and breads at this friendly bakery. They'll pack a box for the road.

**Merlin Restaurant** (☎ 61300; Jl Panjaitan 25; mains 7000-25,000Rp) Hotel Merlin's rooftop dining room is actually one of the best choices in town. The menu is typical Chinese Indonesian, and the views are superb. Try the chicken with mustard greens (10,000Rp).

**Rumah Makan Swandayani** (☎ 256 4145; Komplek Ruko; dishes 7000-25,000Rp) The biggest deal in the slowly sputtering Komplek Ruko, it has a substantial menu of Indo and Chinese cuisine featuring seafood, chicken and veggie dishes. The *soto ayam* is tasty and so is their fiery *tempeh penyyet* (deep-fried tempeh). Mains are served with tangy pickled chillies and cucumbers.

The long-running **Rumah Makan Restu Ibu** (☎ 61218; Jl Ir Juanda 1) was in the midst of a complete reconstruction when we visited. But we were assured that Ibu's pick 'n' mix buffet would be back soon.

## Shopping

Waingapu has a few 'art shops' selling Sumbanese ikat and artefacts. Vendors also descend on hotels – some will squat patiently all day. Prices are actually very fair, and there's far more choice here than in the countryside.

**Ama Tukang** (☎ 62414, 0852 3747 4140; Jl Hawan Waruk 53) Do not miss this ikat workshop, even if you've overdone on weaving. You'll see the whole process from motif design to colouring to weaving, and the collection – featuring *marapu*, village scenes, horsemen and buffalo, is simply spectacular; arguably the best in all of Indonesia. To get there, head south of the bridge on the southern side of Waingapu and turn left onto Jl Hawan Waruk. It's on the left.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Merpati** (☎ 61323; Jl Soekarno 4) has four weekly flights to/from Kupang (742,000Rp), and three weekly flights to Denpasar (978,000Rp).

### BOAT

Waingapu is well serviced by ASDP ferries, all departing from the old pier in the centre of town. One ferry departs from Ende for Waingapu on Thursday at midnight, returning to Ende (60,000Rp, seven hours) and continuing on to Kupang at 7pm on Friday. There's also a connection to Aimere in Flores (Monday at around midnight) and a regular service to Pulau Sabu. Schedules are subject to change – check them at the **ASDP office** (☎ 61533; Jl Wanggalmeti 3).

**Pelni** (☎ 61665; Jl Hasanuddin) ships leave from the newer Darmaga dock to the west of town. Don't try and walk – it's further than it looks; bemos charge 5000Rp per person. The *Awu* sails for Ende and on to Lantuka, Kalabahi, Benoa in Bali, Surabaya and Kalimantan.

### BUS

The terminal for buses going east is in the southern part of town, close to the market. The new West Sumba terminal is about 5km west of town, where buses to Waikabubak

(30,000Rp, five hours) depart at around 7am, 8am, noon and 3pm.

Southeast-bound buses head to Melolo (20,000Rp, two hours), Rende (35,000Rp, two hours) and Baing (30,000Rp, four hours). Several travel through the morning and afternoon to Melolo, with a few continuing on to Rende, Ngalu (30,000Rp, four hours) and Baing. Most return to Waingapu on the same day.

There are also daily trucks southwest to Tarimbang (35,000Rp, five hours).

## Getting Around

### TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

The airport is 6km south on the Melolo road. A taxi into town costs about 20,000Rp, but most hotels offer a free pick-up and drop-off service for guests.

### BEMO

It's 3000Rp for a bemo ride to any destination around town, and 5000Rp to the western bus terminal.

### CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Sumba has some of the highest car-hire rates in Nusa Tenggara. Even after bargaining, 600,000Rp is a good price per day, including driver and petrol. The Elvin, Sandle Wood and Merlin hotels can all help sort you out.

Virtually any hotel worker can arrange a motorbike (from 75,000Rp per day).

## AROUND WAINGAPU

**Londolima**, a sliver of sand about 7km north-west of town, is a favourite local swimming spot on weekends and holidays. The bay is turquoise and glassy; the beach isn't so magical. Bemos from Terminal Kota (the local name for the West Sumba bus terminal) pass by regularly. Continue along this road and you'll reach an even better beach, **Kambera**, and then come to **Maru**, about 35km from Waingapu, which has some fine traditional houses. Three daily buses (5000Rp) go to/from Waingapu and Maru.

Three kilometres southeast of Waingapu, **Prailiu** is an ikat-weaving centre that's worth a quick look. Alongside traditional thatched houses are some concrete tombs bearing carvings of crocodiles and turtles, as well as empty graves that will be filled when the deceased's family can afford the funeral (see p580). Visitors are asked for a cash donation.

Bemos to Prailiu run from Waingapu's main bus and bemo terminal. Continuing south-east, it's a further 7km to **Kawangu**, which has two massive stone-slab tombs in the pasture, 300m off the road to Melolo.

## EAST SUMBA

Southeast of Waingapu, nestled in dry undulating savannah interspersed with cashew orchards, are several traditional villages, some with striking ancestral tombs. The area produces some of Sumba's best ikat. Most villages are quite used to tourists – you'll have to pay to visit, and be prepared for plenty of attention from ikat vendors.

### Umabara & Pau

Pau, about 4km southwest of Melolo and set along the banks of a wide, muddy river, is not the traditional village of your dreams. The large original homes are falling apart and being replaced with replicas made of new wood, tin roofs and paid for by the government. But villagers do sell terrific ikat here.

Nearby Umabara (population 150, admission by donation 10,000Rp) has 10 thatched and lashed traditional Sumbanese houses scattered beneath swaying coconut palms and set among some fantastic stone megaliths. The largest tombs are carved with images of crocodiles and turtles. Villagers form a sweet yet persistent ikat army. You will feel compelled to buy something.

The turn-off to the villages is on the main Waingapu–Melolo road, from where you head 1.5km down a side road until you come to a horse statue; here you can fork right for Umabara or left for Pau, both just a few minutes further on. Trails link the two villages.

### Praiyawang & Rende

Nestled in a shallow valley between grassy hills, Praiyawang is a traditional compound of Sumbanese houses and is the ceremonial focus of the more modern village of **Rende**, located 7km south of Melolo). It has an imposing line-up of nine big stone-slab tombs. The largest is that of a former chief. Shaped like a buffalo, it consists of four stone pillars 2m high, supporting a monstrous slab of stone about 5m long, 2.5m wide and 1m thick. Two stone tablets stand atop the main slab, carved with figures. A massive Sumbanese house with concrete pillars faces the tombs, along with a number of older *rumah adat*.

Several buses go from Waingapu to Rende (35,000Rp), starting at about 7am; otherwise, take a bus to Melolo (20,000Rp), from where bemos and trucks run throughout the day. The last bus back to Waingapu leaves at 3pm.

### Mangili

The Mangili district, centred on the villages of **Ngalu** and **Kaliuda**, is famed for its fine weaving. Kaliuda ikat is reputedly the best in Indonesia and is noted for its rich natural colours and fine lines. Much of the best stuff is made to order for traders and gets shipped off to Bali (and beyond). Kaliuda also has some fine stone-slab tombs and a gaudy modern grave painted red, yellow and blue and decorated with animal figures and crosses. Seven buses a day head here from Waingapu (30,000Rp, four hours), passing through Melolo and Ngalu. Kaliuda is a 3km walk from Ngalu towards the coast.

### Kallala

Kallala, 126km from Waingapu and 2km down a dirt road from the nearby village of **Baing**, has emerged as the surf capital of east Sumba. It's an absolutely stunning stretch of white-sand beach that arcs toward the coastal mountains, which tumble down to form East Sumba's southernmost point. Waves break 500m offshore.

If you plan on spending the night, you'll bunk at the once-renowned **Mr David's** (☎ 0813 3787 3589; all-inclusive bungalows 250,000Rp). Mr David (as he is referred to throughout East Sumba) has lived in Sumba for over 30 years, but the resort has seen better days. Bungalows have warped wooden floors, weathered mattresses and no furnishings. But the open dining room has some definite remote surf-camp appeal. Old boards decorate the rafters and there's a stack of boards for rent. Plus, Mrs David (the lovely Yohanna) can whip up some outstanding meals in short order. Dedicated surf rats won't mind it here at all.

Four buses a day go to Baing (30,000Rp, four hours), leaving Waingapu between 7am and 8am, and then again at around 11am and 1pm. The road is sealed all the way but is bumpy past Melolo. A dirt track with many branches runs from Baing to Kallala. Buses will drop you off at the beach if you ask the driver.

## SOUTH-CENTRAL SUMBA

This part of the island is gorgeous, but difficult to access. Although there are daily buses from Waingapu to Tarimbang and trucks to Praingkareha, getting around may require a 4WD or motorcycle and, often, some hiking.

If you're looking for uncrowded waves, check out **Tarimbang**, a life-altering crescent of white sand framed by a massive limestone bluff 88km southwest of Waingapu. The beach thumps with terrific surf, there's some nearby snorkelling, and rustic accommodation at Marthen's Homestay and the *kepala desa's* six-room place. Both charge about 50,000Rp per person including meals. Daily trucks to Tarimbang leave Waingapu in the morning (35,000Rp, five hours).

**Praingkareha**, 26km east of Tarimbang on a terrible 4WD road, has a majestic wet-season waterfall, the 100m-high **Air Terjun Laputi**. There's a pond with eels above the falls and a beautiful pool at its base. Tradition forbids women to look into the pool, but an exception is made for foreigners. The falls are about 3km from the village. If you walk via the valley, locals will offer to guide you there (this is recommended). Otherwise, follow the main road to a fork, take the old road to the left and walk down a steep path to the falls. This is a full-day excursion that may not be possible by motorbike. Ask around before you make the trip.

## WAIKABUBAK

☎ 0387 / pop 19,000

A dusty, country market town, home to both thatched clan houses and rows of concrete stores, administrative buildings and tin-roof homes sprouting satellite dishes, Waikabubak makes Waingapu feel like a metropolis. It's a welcoming place, and at about 600m above sea level, it's a little cooler than the east and a good base for exploring the traditional villages of West Sumba.

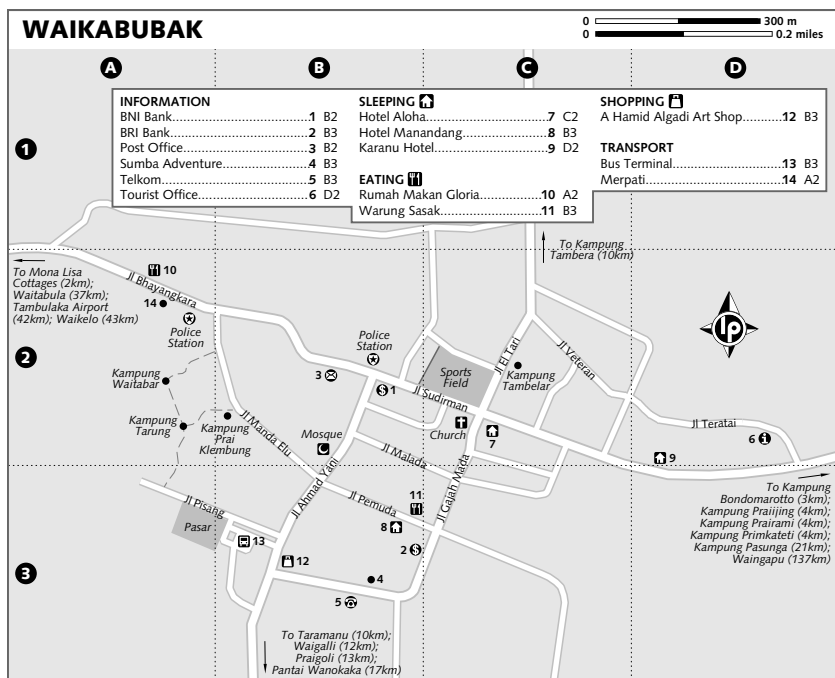
### Information

**BNI bank** (Jl Ahmad Yani; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Has an ATM and offers fair exchange rates.

**BRI bank** (Jl Gajah Mada) Its ATM only accepts Cirrus cards.

**Post office** (Jl Sudirman; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

**Telkom** (Internet per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 24hr) Their dial-up connection is the only internet connection you'll find in town.



**Tourist office** (☎ 21240; Jl Teratai 1; 🕒 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) On the outskirts of town. Staff are well informed about forthcoming funerals and cultural events.

## Sights

### TOMBS & TRADITIONAL KAMPUNG

Within the town are some friendly and quite traditional *kampung* (villages) with stone-slab tombs and thatched houses. You don't need a guide here. Locals will love to show you their spacious homes lashed with old ironwood columns and beams. Charming children will mug for the camera. Old folks will offer betel nut. Bring gifts, offer a donation (5000Rp to 25,000Rp), or buy a handicraft or two and the villagers will beam with gratitude and pride.

**Kampung Tambelar**, just off Jl Sudirman, has very impressive tombs, but the most interesting *kampung* are on the western edge of town. It's only a short stroll from most hotels to **Prai Klembung** and then up the slippery slope to **Tarung** and **Waitabar**.

In November, Kampung Tarung, reached by a path off Jl Manda Elu, is the scene of an important month-long ritual, the Wula Podhu. This is an austere period when even

weeping for the dead is prohibited. Rites consist mainly of offerings to the spirits (the day before the ritual ends, hundreds of chickens are sacrificed), and people sing and dance for the entire final day.

Other interesting *kampung* occupying ridge or hilltop positions outside town include **Praijijng**, with nine traditional huts set around some cool primitive stone tombs and surrounded by coconut palm and bamboo groves, and **Bondomarotto**. **Kampung Prairami** and **Kampung Primkateti** are also beautifully located on adjacent hilltops. You can take a bemo to the turn-off for Praijijng (2000Rp).

## Tours

**Sumba Adventure** (☎ 21727, 0813 3710 7845; [sumba.adventure@yahoo.com](mailto:sumba.adventure@yahoo.com); Jl Pemuda) Experienced professional guide Philip Renggi is the best in West Sumba. He leads trips into seldom-explored villages north of Waikabubak, including his native Manukalada village and Wawarungu, where there are several sacred *marapu* houses that only shamans can enter. He charges 150,000Rp per day for guiding services or 650,000Rp per day with car and driver.

## Sleeping

**Karanu Hotel** (☎ 21645; Jl Sudirman 43; economy/standard r 85,000/110,000Rp) A bright garden hotel east of the downtown swirl within view of nearby rice fields. Rooms are clean, with new tiles and crisp sheets, though the mattresses are a bit tired. They don't have air-con, but they do have a fading 'Last Supper' rug framed in the lobby. Very un-Sumba.

**Hotel Aloha** (☎ 21245; Jl Sudirman 26; r from 100,000Rp, r with TV/air-con 150,000/225,000Rp; ♿) Bright, clean-ish, basic fan rooms with soft mattresses, and one overpriced air-con room, all set around a plot of grass and a fledgling garden. Cheapest rooms have Indonesian toilets.

**Hotel Manandang** (☎ 21197; Jl Pemuda 4; 2nd-/1st-class r 185,000/285,000Rp; ♿) Tidy, good-value rooms, and management works hard to keep it that way. If the 1st-class rooms with air-con and satellite TV are too pricey, try the very decent 2nd-class rooms with fans and private baths, clustered around a back garden.

**ourpick Mona Lisa Cottages** (☎ 21364; www.monalisacottages-sumba.com; Jl Adhyaska 30; s/d 300,000/350,000Rp; ♿) You'll find the best night's sleep 2km northwest of town, across from the rice fields. The 10 cottages with peaked tin roofs each have a private patio with bamboo furnishings, spring beds, minifridge, air-con and TV. The deluxe master cottage (500,000Rp) has a king-sized bed, DVD player and a bathtub. Dial-up internet access is 15,000Rp per hour.

## Eating

**Warung Sasak** (☎ 0813 3954 5222; Jl Pemuda; dishes 8000-25,000Rp) A humble nod to Lombok, get cheap *nasi campur* here if you don't mind the roadside, bamboo-shack environs.

**ourpick Rumah Makan Gloria** (☎ 21389; Jl Bhayangkara 46; dishes 10,000-20,000Rp) Cute and cheerful, with chequered tablecloths, silk flowers and colourful handwritten menus, it rolls out all the Indo-Chinese hits, including a mean *ifu mie* (chinese noodles) with seafood (25,000Rp).

## Shopping

Traders gather at hotels with ikat from East Sumba, locally made bone, wood, horn and stone carvings, and jewellery.

**A Hamid Algadi Art Shop** (☎ 21170; Jl Ahmad Yani 99) Fantastic stone carvings in the front yard, wooden antiques and some cool old stone grinders and bronze jewellery indoors. Not to mention its all-natural ikat. Your Sumbanese treasure hunt starts here.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Merpati** (☎ 21051; Jl Bhayangkara 20) has three flights weekly from Tambulaka airport (42km north-west of Waikabubak) to Kupang (829,000Rp) and four to Denpasar (852,000Rp).

Departure tax is 10,000Rp.

### BUS

Five daily buses run from the central terminal to Waingapu (30,000Rp, five hours) and throughout the day to Waitabula (12,000Rp, one hour). There are frequent bemos to Anakalang (25,000Rp), Wanokaka (5000Rp) and Lambuya (10,000Rp). To Kodi district, take a bus to Waitabula and catch a truck or bemo from there.

## Getting Around

Tambulaka, 42km northwest of Waikabubak, is the closest airport. A bus to Waitabula and a bemo or *ojek* from there is the cheapest ride, but most people get a taxi or charter a bemo (around 100,000Rp) from Waikabubak.

Bemos, trucks and minibuses service most other towns and villages in West Sumba; for details, see individual village entries. Generally, it's best to leave early in the day, when they tend to fill up and depart quickest.

Waikabubak is the place to rent a motor-bike for exploring West Sumba. Expect to pay 75,000Rp a day. For car rental (around 650,000Rp with a driver), contact Hotel Manandang or Sumba Adventure.

## WEST SUMBA

☎ 0387

If you're hungry for traditional Sumba culture, you'll head west into the golden rice fields that crawl up blue mountains, carved by rivers and sprouting with bamboo and coconut palms. *Kampung* of high-roofed houses are still clustered on their hilltops (a place of defence in times past), surrounding the large stone tombs of their ancestors. Rituals and ceremonies for events like house-building and marriage often involve animal sacrifices and can take place at any time. Some *kampung* are unaccustomed to foreigners; gifts of betel nut help warm the waters.

Give yourself a few days around West Sumba. Once you have learned some basic manners as a guest arriving in a village – hopefully armed with some Bahasa Indonesia – it's possible to do without a guide.



## Anakalang Villages

Set in a fertile valley carpeted in rice fields, the Anakalang district (east of Waikabubak) has some exceptional stone megaliths that are worth seeing, but traditional values have been eroded somewhat. Right beside the main road to Waingapu, 22km east of Waikabubak, **Kampung Pasunga** boasts one of Sumba's most impressive tombs. The grave of particular interest consists of an upright stone slab carved with images of a chief and his wife with their hands on their hips. This monument dates from 1926 and took six months to carve; 150 buffalo were sacrificed for the funeral ceremony. It is visible from the road. Pasunga's *kepala desa*, whose house has racks of buffalo horns, is friendly if you share some *sirih* or cigs with him. He will ask you to sign the visitors' book and leave a donation.

At **Gallubakul**, 2.5km down the road from the modernising village of **Kabonduk**, most of the tombs are crafted from concrete and cheesy tile, but it's also home to Sumba's heaviest tomb, weighing in at 70 tonnes. It is said that 6000 workers took three years to chisel the Umbu Sawola tomb out of a hillside and drag it 3km to town. The tomb is a single piece of carved stone, about 5m long, 4m wide and nearly 1m thick. At its eastern end is a separate upright slab with carvings of the raja and queen who are buried here, as well as buffalo and cockerel motifs. The raja's son lives right by the tomb with his wife and can tell its story. He'll also ask you to sign in and make a donation.

Regular minibuses run between Waikabubak and Anakalang (fewer after 1pm). Buses to Waingapu can drop you off on the highway.

## South of Waikabubak

The Wanokaka district south of Waikabubak has stunning mountain and coastal scenery and several very traditional *kampung*. It's a gorgeous drive from Waikabubak, taking a sealed but narrow road that splits at Padede Weri junction 6km from town. This is where golden, white-headed eagles soar over mountains, which tumble to the azure sea. Turn left at the junction, and the road passes through the riverside settlement of **Taramanu** 4km further on. It's 2km or so downhill to **Waigalli**, which has fine tombs and is the scene of one of the March Pasola

events (see boxed text, p589). Just up a side road on the western side of the Waigalli valley, you'll find the nearly 200-year-old Watu Kajiwa tomb in the deeply traditional and isolated village of **Praigoli**. It's one of Sumba's best, with a striking symbol that resembles the fleur-de-lis.

From Praigoli it's just a short drive further on to lovely **Pantai Wanokaka**, where there's a crescent of sand, a bay bobbing with fishing boats, and a beachfront Pasola site. In the rocky coves west of the beach the water becomes clearer and rolls into decent, if inconsistent, surf. Nearby is the traditional village of **Wangli**, with views of rice fields, a river, the sea and coastal mountains, and another stone tomb with a 2.5m-tall fleur-de-lis.

**Rua**, the next in a series of luscious south Sumba beaches, is 5km southwest of the Padede Weri junction. You'll have more pale golden sand and turquoise water, and great waves when the swell hits between June and September. There's only one very basic lodging option. Heading west again, the road passes through the villages of Kabokarudi and **Kadenga**, another exceptional *kampung* with a terrific hilltop Pasola field in the coco palm-studded hills, before there's another turn-off south to the idyllic white sands of **Pantai Marosi**, 32km from Waikabubak. The sweet Sumba Nautil resort overlooks it all; they can point out the secluded, powdery white **Pantai Etreat**, the glassy **Pantai Tarikaha**, and take you to **Magic Mountain**, a coral-draped underwater volcano that is one of Sumba's best dive sites. Just before Sumba Nautil, the road forks. If you take the right fork you'll reach *kampung* **Litikaha**. From here it's just a 30-minute hike to **Tokahale**, **Kahale**, and **Malisu**, three marvellous and seldom-visited villages with spectacular panoramas. Sumba does not get more beautiful.

The world-class surf spot known as Occy's Left, featured in the film *The Green Iguana*, is on **Pantai Nihiwatu**, east of Morosi on another absolutely stunning stretch of sand buffered by a limestone headland. Unfortunately, this beach suffers from bad vibes perpetuated by Nihiwatu Resort's narrow definition of exclusivity. Only paying guests have the right to walk this beach, and surfers who try to ride its legendary waves are chased off by resort security. Thankfully, there are a few more 'lefts' and 'rights' scattered within a 30-minute boat ride from both Marosi and Nihiwatu.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Ama Homestay** (r incl all meals 100,000Rp) Give new meaning to the term 'surf camp' and crash in this thatched, wall-less pagoda mere steps from the waves.

**Sumba Nautil** (☎ 21806, 0868 1211 5302; www.sumbanautilresort.com; cottages US\$136-156, plus 21% tax; 🚽 🚿) West Sumba's answer to a French country resort. These brick cottages on the hill above Pantai Morosi all have ceiling fans, hot water, minibar, day beds and outrageous sea views. The menu (dishes US\$3 to US\$9) is French, just like the owners, who make their own pastas, breads, ice creams and chocolate. Meals are served in a marvellous open-air dining room. They have trail maps for hikers, a courtesy car to shuttle you to the beaches and surf breaks, and a dive shop. Village visits can be organised. Rates include breakfast.

**Nihiwatu Resort** (www.nihiwatu.com; bungalows & villas from US\$420-1500, plus 21% tax; 🚽 🚿) Luxury hotel in extensive grounds, perched above idyllic Pantai Nihiwatu. The American hotel owner has restricted access to the beach itself, allowing only guests, tour groups and only a few locals. Seven air-con bungalows and three villas all face the ocean and are fully equipped with modern amenities. Plenty of activities – fishing, surfing, diving, horse riding and mountain biking – are offered for additional costs. The minimum stay is five nights.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Two daily buses run southeast to Waigalli from Waikabubak. Lamboya district buses cover the southwest towns and run through Padede Watu to Kabukarudi, Kadenga and Walakaka. Four buses a day run between Wanokaka and Waikabubak, stopping in Praigoli village.

By far the best way to visit the area is by car or motorbike. Most roads are sealed and traffic is light. The hills south of Waikabubak are a taxing yet exhilarating ride for cyclists.

## Kodi

Kodi is the westernmost region of Sumba, and the small town of Bondokodi, about 2km from the coast, is the centre of this district. Sumba is at its most lush on this corner of the island, which is alive with teak plantations, avocado, mango and cashew groves. Local villages have incredible high-peaked houses and unusual megalithic tombs; and the long white-sand beaches come with pounding waves and off-shore reefs.

The region's biggest **market** (held every Saturday) is at Kori village. A couple of buses run from Bondokodi in the morning, before 8am.

Kodi does have a reputation for lawlessness, and Sumbanese from other districts of the island are wary of Kodi people. Exploring with a guide is highly recommended.

## Pero

Pero is a friendly, modern coastal village situated on spectacular coastline just a few kilometres from Bondokodi. There are a couple of surf breaks just offshore and one directly in front of Pantai Pero. From here you won't hit land again until Africa. The long-running **Homestay Stori** (per person incl all meals 100,000Rp) is run by a hospitable family, has neat little rooms and delicious local food. To visit traditional *kampung*, go north or south along the coastline.

To reach **Ratenggaro**, take the new paved road from Bondokodi, or go off-road for about 3km along Pantai Radukapal, a sliver of white sand along a pasture, until you come to the *kampung* of Ratenggaro, framed by a low rock wall. Visitors are asked to contribute a 10,000Rp admission.

The view from Ratenggaro along the coastline is breathtaking – coconut palms fringe the shoreline, waves pound the rocks and the high roofs of **Wainyapu**, a collection of 12 *kampung* and more than 40 homes, peek out above the trees across the river. On the near side of the river mouth – where the mocha river meets the turquoise sea – unusual stone tombs occupy a small headland. To get to Wainyapu, you'll probably have to wade across the river at low tide.

On the way to Ratenggaro, look out for the thinner, high-peaked roofs of **Kampung Paranobaroro** through the trees, about 1km inland. Stone statues decorate the public space and pig jaws and numerous buffalo horns dangle on every front porch. During the day only women and children are in the village. Women are often weaving and happy to chat.

To reach **Tosi**, about 6km north and the scene of the Kodi Pasola in March, head north from Bondokodi market along the sealed road. Coming from Pero, it's a simple left at the T-junction. About 1km further on is a track on the left: follow it for 5km, past a series of tombs. Many people have reported

### PASOLA: LET THE BATTLES BEGIN

A riotous tournament between two teams of spear-wielding, ikat-clad horsemen, the Pasola has to be one of the most extravagant (and bloodiest) harvest festivals in Asia. Held annually in February and March, it takes the form of a ritual battle – not so much a quarrel between opposing forces as a need for human blood to run to keep the spirits happy and bring a good harvest. The riders gallop at each other, hurling their *holas* (spears) at rival riders (it's not permitted to use a spear as a lance). Despite the blunt spears, there will be blood, and sometimes deaths still do occur.

Pasola takes place in four areas, its exact timing determined by the arrival on nearby coasts of a certain type of sea worm called *nyale*. Two days before the main events, brutal boxing matches called *pajura* are held, the combatants' fists bound in razor-sharp local grasses.

Before the Pasola can begin, priests in full ceremonial dress must first wade into the ocean to examine the worms at dawn; they're usually found on the eighth or ninth day after a full moon. Fighting begins on the beach, and continues further inland later that same day. Opposing 'armies' are drawn from coastal and inland villages.

In February, Pasola is celebrated in the Kodi area (centred on Kampung Tosi) and the Lamboya area (Kampung Sodan); in March it's in the Wanokaka area (Kampung Waigalli) and the remote Gaura area, west of Lamboya (Kampung Ubu Olehka). Call hotels in Waingapu or Waikabubak to find out the approximate dates before travelling to Sumba, or contact a travel agent in Bali, Flores or Timor.

aggression here, so you may wish to bypass the village itself.

From Waikabubak there are direct buses to Waitabula and frequent bemos and trucks from there to Pero.

### Waitabula

☎ 0387

This sleepy market town, on the main highway between Tambulaka airport and Waikabubak, is a useful transport hub with frequent connections to Bondokodi, Pero, Waikelo and Waikabubak.

**Penginapan Melati** (☎ 24055; r with fan/air-con 125,000/275,000Rp; ♿) Despite its ramshackle entrance, this friendly spot has excellent rooms with white tiled floors, wooden bed frames and spotless bathrooms.

The alternative, **Losmen Anggrek** (r 50,000Rp), is a basic, concrete-floor job with a fresh coat of paint.

Daily direct buses make the run all the way to Waingapu (12,000Rp). Public bemos to the airport are 5000Rp. *Ojeks* are 10,000Rp and chartered bemos are 15,000Rp.

### Waikelo

☎ 0387

This small and predominantly Muslim town north of Waitabula has a small picturesque harbour that is the main port for West Sumba. The town has a superb, powdery white-sand beach with flecks of red coral that give it a pink hue. It's a great swimming spot at high tide and ideal for beachcombing at low tide.

**Newa Sumba Resort** (☎ 021-522 9117; [www.newasumbaresort.com](http://www.newasumbaresort.com); s/d 500,000/650,000Rp) A secluded beach resort with fine timber *kampung*-style bungalows in a garden set back from the beach. The location is worth the price, but the grounds could use some maintenance. Meals are generally pretty tasty (especially if you get the lobster) and cost about 50,000Rp. Regular buses and bemos travel between Waikelo and Waitabula, and a few continue on to Waikabubak.

There is a ferry service between Waikelo and Sape (Sumbawa) twice a week. It departs from Sape for Waikelo on Monday and Friday at around 10pm and returns to Sape (50,000Rp, eight hours) at 5pm on Tuesday and Saturday.

© Lonely Planet. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted.

In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'