

# Papua



Even a country as full of adventure as Indonesia has to have its final frontier, and here it is – Papua, half of the world’s second-biggest island, New Guinea. Here the modern world is still clawing at the edges of a very traditional one, where some people buy food in supermarkets but others hunt it with bows and arrows, where one woman dons the *jilbab* and another just a grass skirt. In this youngest part of Indonesia no roads connect the dozen or so towns, and to travel any distance you must take to the air or the water. In many ways, Papua seems a different country – which is what most Papuans, who are ethnically distinct from other Indonesians, would like it to be.

Some tribes were still hunting heads and fighting village wars just a couple of decades ago. Under the influence of missionaries and Dutch and Indonesian governments, such pastimes are now history. Travelling in Papua’s interior today will awe you only with the charm of its peoples, the resilience of their cultures and the splendour of their landscapes.

Nor is awesome any exaggeration for the islands and beaches around Papua’s coasts or the marine life on their coral reefs. The diversity of life around the Raja Ampat islands, in particular, has biologists and scuba divers reaching for ever more original superlatives.

Travel in Papua is undoubtedly a challenge, and not one that comes cheap. But everything you do here is an adventure, and those who take on Papua’s challenge are guaranteed that combination of trepidation and exhilaration of which only the very best travels are made.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Trekking among the thatched-hut villages, unique culture and mountain grandeur of the **Baliem Valley** (p801)
- Diving and snorkelling in the real-life tropical aquarium of the **Raja Ampat islands** (p782)
- Discovering the pristine beaches and waters and friendly folk of **Pulau Biak** (p796)
- Exploring the surprisingly traditional villages around beautiful **Danau Sentani** (p794) by longboat
- Searching out the indigenous lowland culture and Australia-like flora and fauna of **Wasur National Park** (p814)



■ POPULATION: 2.8 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 422,000 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: CARSTENZ (PUNCAK JAYA; 5030M)



## HISTORY

It's estimated that Papua has been inhabited for 30,000 or 40,000 years, but contact with the outside world was extremely limited until the mid-20th century.

### Dutch Rule

In 1660 the Dutch recognised the Sultan of Tidore's sovereignty over New Guinea, based on occasional tribute and homage from some Papuan coastal peoples. Since the Dutch held sway over Tidore, they could argue that New Guinea was theirs too. Their first settlement, at Lobo on Teluk Triton, near Kaimana, only lasted from 1828 to 1838. By the end of the 19th century three colonial powers had agreed to divide New Guinea between them: Holland got the western half (today's Papua); Britain and Germany got the southeastern and north-eastern quarters respectively (which together make up today's Papua New Guinea).

The Dutch didn't set up their first administrative posts, in Fak-Fak and Manokwari, till 1898. A few further posts and some exploration and missionary activity followed, but Dutch involvement with Papua was minimal right up to WWII.

### WWII

Japan seized all of New Guinea except the south in 1942 and was driven out in 1944 by Allied forces under US general Douglas MacArthur, in a campaign that saw Hollandia (Jayapura) taken by the largest amphibious operation of the war in the south-western Pacific, involving 80,000 Allied troops, and bitter fighting, with many casualties around Sarmi and on Pulau Biak.

### Indonesia Takes Over

When the Netherlands withdrew from the rest of the Dutch East Indies (which became Indonesia) in 1949, it hung on to Dutch New Guinea, arguing that the territory was culturally distinct from the rest of the former colony. Subsequent Dutch-Indonesian talks over the territory's future got nowhere and the Dutch began to prepare Papua for self-rule, encouraging Papuan nationalism and building schools and colleges to train Papuans in professional skills. In 1961 an assembly with a majority Papuan membership, the New Guinea Council, was elected and began working towards the goal of independence in about 1970.

Meanwhile Indonesia's President Sukarno, with Soviet backing, was preparing a military takeover. Through 1962 Indonesian paratroopers and marines attempted to infiltrate the territory in preparation for an invasion. The Papuan population either attacked them or handed them over to the Dutch. But by now the USA had decided it didn't want to risk a damaging defeat for its Dutch ally by a Soviet-backed regime. In response to US pressure, on 15 August 1962 the Netherlands signed the New York Agreement, under which Papua became Indonesia's 26th province on 1 May 1963. The Papuan people were to be allowed to confirm or reject Indonesian sovereignty in a UN-supervised vote within six years.

Indonesian rule was unpopular among Papuans from the start. The first big revolt, by Arfak mountain tribes near Manokwari, began in 1965, giving rise to the Organisasi Papua Merdeka (Free Papua Organisation; OPM) guerrilla movement, which is still in existence today.

### Papua under Suharto

In 1969, against a background of Papuan revolt and military counter-operations that killed thousands, Indonesia decided that the sovereignty vote by Papuans would involve just over 1000 selected 'representatives' of the Papuan people. The chosen few were then threatened if they voted against integration with Indonesia. Just over a thousand complied, in what was officially named the 'Act of Free Choice'.

The following three decades saw a steady influx of Indonesian settlers into Papua – not just officially sponsored transmigrants but also 'spontaneous' migrants who saw Papua as a land of greater economic opportunity. Intermittent revolts and sporadic actions by the small, primitively armed OPM were usually followed by drastic Indonesian retaliation, which at times included bombing and strafing of Papuan villages. Indonesia invested little in Papuans' economic or educational development, while the administration, security forces and business interests extracted resources such as oil, minerals and timber.

### The 'Papuan Spring'

Following Suharto's fall in 1998, the *reformasi* (reform) period in Indonesian politics led many Papuans to hope that independence might be on the cards for Papua as it

### A LOT IN A NAME

When the Portuguese first encountered New Guinea and its surrounding islands in the early 16th century, they called them *Ilhas dos Papuas* (Islands of the Fuzzy-Hairs), from the Malay word *papuwah*. In 1545, Spanish sailors named the island *Nueva Guinea* (New Guinea). The Dutch later named the western half of the island Dutch New Guinea. As this territory prepared for independence in the 1950s and 1960s, local leaders chose West Papua as the name for their future nation. When Indonesia took over in 1962, Sukarno named the territory Irian Barat (West Irian), using a Biak name for New Guinea that means 'Hot land rising from the sea'. In 1973 Irian Barat was changed to Irian Jaya (Victorious Irian).

To most native Papuans, the name Irian symbolises unwanted Indonesian rule. Papuan nationalists still refer to their land as West Papua. In a nod to their feelings, the reformist Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid renamed it Papua in 2000. His successor Megawati Sukarnoputri seemed to forget all about this in 2003 when she announced her plan to divide the province of Papua into three, to be named Irian Jaya Barat (West Irian Jaya), Irian Jaya Tengah (Central Irian Jaya) and Irian Jaya (the eastern part). After violent protests, only the western province was hived off, and it was renamed Papua Barat (West Papua) in 2007. So today Papua comprises one small province, Papua Barat, and one large one, still called Papua – and the name West Papua means one thing to administrators and another, much bigger thing to Papuan independence activists.

was for East Timor. In June 2000 the Papua People's Congress (over 2500 Papuan delegates meeting in Jayapura) declared that Papua no longer recognised Indonesian rule and delegated a smaller body called the Papua Council Presidium to seek a UN-sponsored referendum on Papuan independence.

But what some commentators have called the Papuan Spring was short-lived. The second half of 2000 saw a big security-force buildup in Papua, and attacks on pro-independence demonstrators. And in November 2001 the Papua Council Presidium's leader Theys Eluay was murdered by members of the Indonesian army (see the boxed text, p793).

### 'Autonomy' & Human Rights

November 2001 also saw the passing of a Special Autonomy charter for Papua – Jakarta's response to Papuan grievances, whose major provision was to give Papua a bigger share (70% to 80%) of the tax take from its own resources and more money to develop education and health. Many Papuans rejected the very concept of Special Autonomy – they wanted full independence – and its implementation has received much criticism, chiefly that little benefit is seen at grassroots level because too much of the money disappears into the hands of a fast-expanding bureaucracy.

Sporadic OPM actions have continued and pro-independence protests are on the rise. The increased concern for human rights seen elsewhere in Indonesia is less evident

in Papua, where torture, rape, murder and disappearances continue to be documented by organisations such as the United Nations, the US State Department, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Papuans regularly receive jail sentences of 10 years or more for simply raising the Morning Star flag, symbol of Papuan independence.

Living standards in Papua's cities have risen in the past few years, but the poverty rate in Papua as a whole is double the national average. The villages and countryside, where most ethnic Papuans live, remain among Indonesia's poorest. The AIDS rate in Papua is the highest in Indonesia, and rising. Most Papuans want to be free of Indonesian rule, but their chances of that seem as slim as ever now that Papua is home to over a million non-Papuans.

### CLIMATE

In general, the drier season is from May to November, but all parts of Papua get some rain year-round. December to April sees roughly twice as much rain per month in most areas – which can be inconvenient and uncomfortable but doesn't make travel impossible. Sorong and the Raja Ampat islands at the tip of the Vogelkop are exceptions to the general pattern, getting their heaviest rain between April and September. The far south is the only area with a proper dry season: Merauke normally receives less than 50mm of rain per month from June to October.

Temperatures and humidity are high all year in the lowlands, but it's cooler in the highlands, and highland nights can be positively cold.

## WILDLIFE

Thanks to its former existence as part of the Australian continent – New Guinea was still joined to Australia as recently as 10,000 years ago – Papua's terrestrial wildlife has big differences from that of the rest of Indonesia. Here dwell marsupials such as tree kangaroos, wallabies, bandicoots, cuscuses and possums, as well as echidnas, which are among the planet's few egg-laying mammals.

Papua is still about 75% covered in forest and its habitats range from savannas, coastal mangroves and river floodplains, to lowland rainforest, higher-altitude montane forest and the glaciers around 5030m Carstensz Pyramid (Puncak Jaya), the highest peak in Oceania. These diverse ecosystems harbour more than half the species found in Indonesia, including over 190 mammals, 550 breeding birds, 2650 fish species and more than 2000 types of orchid. Papua shares many plants with Indonesia as well as Australia.

The megastars of the feathered tribe are the birds of paradise, whose fantastically coloured males perform weird and wonderful mating dances. Papua and neighbouring Papua New Guinea (PNG) are home to nearly all the world's 40-plus species of birds of paradise. Also here are large, ground-dwelling cassowaries, colourful parrots and lorikeets, unique types of kookaburra, crowned pigeons, cockatoos, and the curious bowerbirds, whose males decorate large ground-level dens

in their efforts to find mates. See the boxed text, p788, for more on birds of paradise and birdwatching in Papua.

Marine life is even more fantastic and varied, especially around the Vogelkop, which sits at the heart of the 'Coral Triangle' stretching from the Philippines to Indonesia's Nusa Tenggara and east beyond PNG. Most stunning of all are the still-being-explored seas around the Raja Ampat islands (p782), which are now a fast-developing mecca for divers.

New species continue to be found on land too. A 2005 Conservation International expedition in the almost untouched Foja Mountains, on the edge of the vast Mamberamo basin, found types of bird of paradise and bowerbird that had been thought extinct, four new species of butterfly, 20 new frogs, and the golden-mantled tree kangaroo, which was previously known only on one mountain in PNG.

Modern economic developments and some older human activities threaten Papua's wildlife. Forests are under assault from logging (much of it illegal, with the timber smuggled out to Asia), road construction, mining, transmigration settlements and new oil-palm plantations. This means a loss of habitat for many birds and forest animals such as the tree kangaroo. Commerce in brightly coloured birds or their feathers has been a fact of life here for centuries. Birds of paradise continue to be smuggled out of Papua even though trade in their feathers has been illegal in Indonesia since 1990.

The classic, if weighty, text on Papuan wildlife is Marshall and Beehler's two-volume *The Ecology of Papua*.

### TOP FIVE READS

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

## PAPUA TRAVEL WARNING

Outbreaks of civil unrest and violence do happen in Papua, but they shouldn't deter you from visiting the region unless some generalised outbreak occurs. Political demonstrations in Abepura, Jayapura and elsewhere sometimes turn violent, and the 2009 local election period was marked by several OPM attacks in the western highlands as well as the stabbing to death of four *ojek* (passenger motorcycle) drivers in Wamena and an assault on the Abepura police station by attackers armed with bombs, spears and bows and arrows. In 2002, one Indonesian and two American teachers from the international school near Timika were shot dead in an ambush, and in 2001 two Belgians were kidnapped by the OPM near Ilaga (and later freed). But mainstream tourists have not been targeted and are welcomed by the great majority of people here. Unrest tends to be localised, so you should stay abreast of current events and ask the police if you have concerns about particular places.

## CULTURE

Papua is a land of hundreds of cultures – those of the 200-plus indigenous peoples and those of all the immigrants from other parts of Indonesia, who dominate in the cities and now make up over 40% of Papua's population. Relations between native Papuans and immigrants are often good on a person-to-person level but poor when it comes to group dynamics. Papuans tend to resent the increasing numbers and dominance of non-Papuans as well as the conduct of the Indonesian security forces. Non-Papuans may consider Papuans 'primitive', uneducated and uncultured. The immigrants are predominantly Muslim, while Papuans are mostly Christian with an undercoat of traditional animism, but violent clashes between Papuan and non-Papuan civilians are mercifully rare.

Indigenous Papuan culture is much more apparent in the villages than the towns. It has altered a lot in the past few decades, under the influence of Christian missionaries and Dutch and Indonesian governments. Tribal warfare, headhunting and cannibalism, practised by some tribes well into the second half of the 20th century, have all but disappeared. But reverence for ancestors and pride in cultural traditions such as dances, dress and wood-carving persist. Papuan woodcarving is prized throughout Indonesia and beyond: the Asmat, Kamoro, Sentani, Biak and Yapen peoples produce the most striking work.

Tribal culture varies from area to area, starting with languages, of which Papua has approximately 280. Traditional housing shows marked differences according to environment: while waterside people often live in stilt houses, the Dani of the Baliem

Valley inhabit snug, round, wood-and-thatch huts known as *honai*, and the Korowai and Kombai tribes of the southern interior build their homes high in trees as a refuge against animals, enemies and floods. Gender roles remain traditional among the tribal peoples: polygamy is still practised by some men, and women do most of the carrying as well as domestic tasks.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

You must first get to Jakarta, Makassar, Denpasar, Manado or Ambon, then take an onward domestic flight. Visitors heading straight for the Baliem Valley must fly first to Jayapura, which is served by five airlines from Jakarta and Makassar, and by Garuda from Denpasar. For the Raja Ampat islands, fly to Sorong from Jakarta, Makassar, Ambon or Manado. You can also fly to Manokwari, Biak or Timika from Makassar or Jakarta, and to Fak-Fak from Ambon. Most flights to Papua from Jakarta are overnight, with a small-hours stop in Makassar. The cheapest Jakarta-Jayapura fares at research time, from around 1,500,000Rp one way, were with Batavia Air and Lion Air.

Book as far ahead as possible with all airlines, as low fares or even seats may not be available in the last few days before departure. Following are the airlines linking Papua with other parts of Indonesia.

**Airfast** ([www.airfastindonesia.com](http://www.airfastindonesia.com))

**Batavia Air** ([www.batavia-air.co.id](http://www.batavia-air.co.id))

**Expressair** ([www.expressair.biz](http://www.expressair.biz))

**Garuda** ([www.garuda-indonesia.com](http://www.garuda-indonesia.com))

**Lion Air** ([www.lionair.co.id](http://www.lionair.co.id))

**Merpati** ([www.merpati.co.id](http://www.merpati.co.id))

**Wings Air** ([www.lionair.co.id](http://www.lionair.co.id))

## TRAVEL PERMIT

Foreigners are required to obtain a travel permit known as a *surat keterangan jalan* (commonly called a *surat jalan*) before they can visit many places in Papua.

Rules and procedures for this change from time to time, and enforcement varies from place to place. At the time of writing, you could visit Jayapura, Sentani, Pulau Biak and Sorong without a *surat jalan*. Elsewhere, it is safest to assume you need one, even for day trips out of the above places, though sometimes you won't need to show it.

A *surat jalan* is usually easily and quickly obtained from the police in regency capitals (of which Papua has about 30). See city sections in this chapter for details of specific police stations issuing the *surat jalan*. The relevant departments are typically open from 9am to 3pm Monday to Friday, although some may be able to attend you outside those hours. Take your passport, two passport photos, and one photocopy each of the passport pages showing your personal details and your Indonesian visa. The procedure normally takes about an hour with no payment requested.

Some police stations will only issue a *surat jalan* for their own regencies or limited other destinations. The best place to go to obtain a wide-ranging *surat jalan* is Polresta in Jayapura (p790), where you can present a list of every place that you intend to visit and then get them all listed on one *surat jalan*. Don't omit any obscure, off-the-beaten-track places that you plan to visit. Having them already covered by your *surat jalan* when you arrive can save hassles and wasted time.

Once you have your *surat jalan*, make several photocopies of it. Each time you arrive in a new town, your hotel should report your arrival to the police and they will need photocopies of your passport and/or *surat jalan* to do so. In a few places you may need to report to the police yourself. Carry your *surat jalan* whenever you take out-of-town trips.

Some parts of Papua are sometimes off-limits to tourists, usually because of OPM activity. This was the case at research time with the Ilaga area in the highlands. Police to whom you apply for a *surat jalan* will tell you if anywhere on your itinerary is off-limits.

The permit lasts from one week to one month, depending on how long you request and the expiry date of your visa.

## Boat

Several Pelni liners link Papuan ports with Maluku, Sulawesi and Java every two or four weeks. Almost all pass through Sorong, which has six inbound and six outbound sailings every two weeks. Jayapura has five arrivals and departures every two weeks. See p848 for general information about sailing on Pelni ships.

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

## GETTING AROUND

Inter-city roads are an unknown concept in Papua's undeveloped terrain. Boats are an option for travel between coastal towns if you have enough time, or along rivers if you have enough money. Aircraft go almost everywhere, and are generally the most convenient, and sometimes the only, option for getting around Papua.

## Air

The hubs for flights within Papua are Jayapura and Sorong. Some direct flights between other towns exist, but you will probably have to return to Jayapura or Sorong for some connections. Most flights within Papua cost around 1,000,000Rp, give or take a hundred thousand or two.

Delays and schedule changes are common, and the routes operated by different airlines change frequently. It also has to be said that, even by Indonesian standards, Papua seems to suffer more than its fair share of aviation incidents and crashes. The number of small aircraft negotiating tricky highland landing strips obviously has something to do with this.

In addition to flights between the bigger towns by commercial airlines, missionary airlines such as the Roman Catholic **Associated Mission Aviation** (AMA; [www.ama-papua.com](http://www.ama-papua.com)) and Protestant Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) do a lot of flying between small, remote airstrips. Tourists are not a priority for



them, but they will often carry them if there are spare seats.

For destinations not served by scheduled flights, chartering a small plane for seven to 10 people is another option, typically costing around 7,000,000Rp for a short hop under 100km, or 20,000,000Rp to 35,000,000Rp for a longer flight such as Wamena to Ewer (Agats).

**Trigana Air** ([www.trigana-air.com](http://www.trigana-air.com)), **Aviastar** ([www.aviastar.biz](http://www.aviastar.biz)) and Merpati are among charter carriers, and AMA mission planes are sometimes available for charter.

## Boat

Five big Pelni liners – the *Dorolonda*, *Gunung Dempo*, *Labobar*, *Nggapulu* and *Sinabung* – sail from Sorong to Jayapura and back every two weeks, stopping at various combinations of the main ports en route (Manokwari, Wasior, Nabire, Serui and Biak). The *Nggapulu* also sails between Sorong and Fak-Fak, while the *Tatamailau* links Fak-Fak to Timika, Agats and Merauke along Papua's southern coast (once every two weeks in each direction), and the *Kelimutu* sails between Timika, Agats and Merauke every four weeks.

The next best option is a Perintis boat along either coast, but these are much slower and less comfortable, with bare boards for sleeping. The basic Perintis routes around Papua are Sorong to Jayapura, Sorong to Merauke, and Manokwari–Sorong–Ternate. Perintis boats stop at more, and smaller, ports than Pelni liners, and some go up rivers such as the Mamberamo or Digul to inland villages or towns.

On routes without any public service, or just to get there quicker, you can charter a boat. This will usually be a longboat (motorised outrigger canoe). Costs are highly negotiable and depend on the distance, price of fuel (about 10,000Rp per litre at research time) and size of boat.

## Tours

Given the logistical difficulties of Papua travel, it can make sense to take an organised tour, and particular sense for more challenging destinations such as the Asmat, Korowai or Kombai areas or the little-explored Mamberamo basin in the north. It's well nigh essential (given the bureaucracy involved) for mountaineers

### TRAVELLING BETWEEN PAPUA & PNG

There are no flights between Papua and PNG, and the only route across the border that is open to foreigners is between Jayapura (northeast Papua) and Vanimo (northwest PNG, about 65km from Jayapura).

You can charter a *taksi* (small minibus) from the market at Abepura (called Pasar Abepura or Pasar Yotefa), 13km south of downtown Jayapura, to the border at Wutung (1½ hours) for 200,000Rp to 400,000Rp. Cross the border itself on foot, then hire a car to Vanimo for about 10 kina (US\$3.50). Air Niugini links Vanimo with Port Moresby three times weekly.

Another option, more expensive but possibly useful if the land border is suffering one of its occasional closures, is to charter a boat to Vanimo. You can ask around the ports at Argapura or Hamadi near Jayapura, or check with PT Kuwera Jaya (p790) in Jayapura.

Most visitors to PNG need a visa; the standard 60-day tourist visa (225,000Rp) can be obtained at the **Consulate of Papua New Guinea** (☎ 0967-531 250; [congenpng\\_id@yahoo.com](mailto:congenpng_id@yahoo.com); Blok 6 & 7, Ruko Matoa, Jl Kelapa Dua, Entrop; 🕒 9am-noon & 1-2pm Mon-Fri) 4km south of downtown Jayapura. To get there catch an Entrop-bound *taksi* (2500Rp) from Jl Percetakan Negara or Terminal Mesran in Jayapura. The consulate is in the same street as the Entrop *taksi* terminal.

Details of the visa procedure change often, but you can expect it take two to five working days and to be asked for two photos, a copy of an onward ticket out of PNG or Indonesia, and a typed letter requesting a 60-day tourist visa. Travellers from Eastern European, Asian or African countries should make advance enquiries at a PNG consulate, as PNG has different regulations for some of these nationalities.

Travellers *entering* Indonesia from Vanimo cannot get an Indonesian visa at the border; you must obtain one beforehand. Indonesian 30-day tourist visas are available in Vanimo or Port Moresby for US\$25. The Vanimo consulate usually issues them within one working day. If you're travelling to/from Jayapura by boat, visit Jayapura's **immigration office** (Map p790; ☎ 0967-533 647; Jl Percetakan 15; 🕒 9am-2pm Mon-Fri) to make sure you have the correct entry/exit stamp in your passport.



### EXCHANGING MONEY IN PAPUA

Only a handful of banks in Papua will exchange any kind of foreign money, and those that do (chiefly in Jayapura and Kota Biak) will only accept cash US dollars, usually in US\$100 bills only – and they like clean ones! There are fairly reliable ATMs in all towns, however, with Visa, Visa Electron, MasterCard, Maestro, Cirrus and Plus cards all widely accepted.

wanting to climb Papua's high peaks such as Carstensz Pyramid (Puncak Jaya) or Gunung Trikora. The following local and specialist operators can all be recommended.

**Baliem Valley Resort** (www.baliem-valley-resort.de) The most upmarket hotel in the Baliem Valley (p805) offers challenging trips to destinations like Carstensz and the Korowai and Kombai regions, and also general Baliem Valley tours.

**Benneti Expeditions** (☎ 0967-573 310; www.bennetiexpeditions.com; Kompleks Ruko Denzipur 9, Jl Raya Sentani, Waena) An experienced outfit based in Waena, near Jayapura, with a speciality in the Asmat, Korowai and Kombai.

**Biak Paradise Tours** (☎ 0981-23196; www.discoverpapua.com; Hotel Arumbai, Jl Selat Makassar 3, Kota Biak, Biak) An established, efficient, Biak-based operator that offers a wide range of tours in many parts of Papua.

**Grand Irian Tours & Travel** (☎ 0967-536 459; www.grandiriantours.com; Jl Batu Putih 49, Jayapura) Efficient Sumatran-run agency offering a range of adventurous trips.

**Papua Adventure Tours & Travel** (☎ 0967-572 622; www.papuaadventure.com; Jl Raya Sentani 20, Waena) Based between Sentani and Jayapura, this agency offers tours in the Baliem Valley, Asmat, Korowai, Kombai and other areas. You're looking in the region of US\$2000 for a 10-day Baliem Valley trip.

**Papua Expeditions** (www.papuaexpeditions.com) This ecotourism-minded, Sorong-based company specialises in birdwatching trips in all the best Papuan destinations.

**Papua/Irian Jaya Adventure** (☎ 0852-4413 1512; justinus\_daby@yahoo.com; Jl Gatot Subroto 15, Wamena) Run by a Baliem Valley native who offers trips in the Baliem Valley, Asmat and Korowai and Kombai regions.

**Papua Trekking** (www.papuatrekking.com) Czech-based company specialising in the most challenging destinations such as Carstensz, Mamberamo, Asmat and Korowai and Kombai. Also covers the Baliem Valley area.

For more information on hiring guides, see the boxed text, p823.

## WEST PAPUA

The controversially hived-off province of West Papua chiefly comprises two large peninsulas – the Vogelkop (Bird's Head/Kepala Burung/Semdoberai) and the more southerly Bomberai Peninsula – and several hundred offshore islands. The attractions here are primarily natural, especially the world-class diving and gorgeous island scenery of the Raja Ampat islands, and the birdlife of Pegunungan Arfak. Sorong and Manokwari are well-provided urban bases from which to launch your explorations.

### SORONG

☎ 0951 / pop 140,000

Papua's second biggest city, Sorong sits at the northwestern tip of the Vogelkop. It's a busy port and base for oil and logging operations in the region, which has many transmigration settlements. Few travellers stay longer than it takes to get on a boat to the Raja Ampat islands, but Sorong is quite fun to stay in for a day or two.

### Orientation & Information

Sorong stretches 6km following the coast from the airport at the eastern end of town to Pantai Lido and the Kampung Baru area at the western end, then another couple of kilometres north. One main street runs the whole way, called Jl Basuki Rahmat outside the airport, then Jl Yani and Jl Yos Sudarso after it turns north along Pantai Lido. You'll find most of what you need along this street. Three ATMs cluster outside the biggest supermarket, **Saga** (☎ 322 794; Jl Yani; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon-Sat, 10am-10pm Sun).

**Aloysius Computer College** (Jl Kesehatan, Kampung Baru; internet access per hr 6000Rp; ☎ 9am-7pm) Has an air-conditioned public internet room. It's 300m off Jl Yos Sudarso, along the street next to the hospital.

**Kencko Tours** (☎ 0813 4437 3398, 0812 4864 8838; rudie-rajaampat.blogspot.com; airport) This small, welcoming, English-speaking operation provides travel agency services, help with obtaining a *surat jalan*, luggage storage (per hr 5000Rp) and snorkel-gear rental (per day 200,000Rp). It's based at Kencko Café (follow 'Raja Ampat Tourism Center' signs outside the arrivals hall).

**Polresta Sorong** (☎ 0812 4876 4928; Jl Basuki Rahmat; ☎ 8am-3pm Sun-Fri) Head to this police station, 1km west of the airport, for a *surat jalan*.

**Raja Ampat Tourism Office** (☎ /fax 326 576; JE Meridien Hotel, Jl Basuki Rahmat km 7; www.gorajaampat.com, www.diverajaampat.org; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri)

This incredibly helpful office will tell you all you need to know about the Raja Ampat islands. It even has maps and printed information sheets in English. It also runs a booth in the airport arrivals hall, open when flights arrive. You must pay your 500,000Rp fee to visit the islands at one of these places.

## Sights & Activities

**Pantai Kasuari** (Cassowary Beach), 5km north of grubby Pantai Lido, is a long, sandy strand with some coral, ideal for swimming and snorkelling (bring your own gear). You can get there by public *taksi* to Tanjung (Cape) Kasuari from Boswesan market in town (5000Rp). For a taste of Sorong city life, wander through **Pasar Remu** (Jl Selat Sagawin; ☎ from 6am), the large main market, on a side street off Jl Basuki Rahmat about 500m from the airport gate.

## Sleeping

Breakfast is included at all these places.

**Hotel Tanjung** (☎ 323 782; Jl Yos Sudarso; s 126,000-225,000Rp, d 136,000-255,000Rp; 🍷) Situated on the Pantai Lido waterfront, popular Hotel Tanjung has a range of acceptable rooms, though the cheapest ones share bathrooms and lack air-con.

**Hotel Waigo** (☎ 333 500; Jl Yos Sudarso; s 250,000-378,000Rp, d 300,000-476,000Rp; 🍷) Playfully decked out in pink paint, psychedelic tiles and stylised murals, Hotel Waigo is a good deal. Standard rooms are good-sized; the oceanview 'suites' are massive. All rooms come with air-con, hot showers and drinking-water dispensers, and you can order meals in your room.

**JE Meridien Hotel** (☎ 327 999; hoteljemeridien Sorong .blogspot.com; Jl Basuki Rahmat km 7; r 350,000-650,000Rp, ste 750,000-850,000Rp; 🍷 📺 ☎) Handily placed opposite the airport, Sorong's newest hotel offers solid, modern comfort in cool, white, good-sized rooms with a touch of kitschy art. The quoted prices include the normal 20% discount from official rates.

Also recommended:

**Cenderawasih Hotel** (☎ 322 367; Jl Sam Ratulangi 54, Kampung Baru; s/d 191,000/221,000Rp; 🍷)

**Hotel Mariat** (☎ 323 535; mariathotel@gmail.com; Jl Yani 1; r 350,000-682,000Rp, ste 825,000-1,500,000Rp; 🍷 📺 ☎)

## Eating

Most of the best eateries cluster on and just off Jl Yos Sudarso near Hotel Tanjung. Restaurants in Sorong are generally better

stocked with alcohol (beer, at least) than those elsewhere in Papua. For cheaper eats, seafood warungs set up in the evenings at the southern end of the Yos Sudarso waterfront.

**our pick** **Rumah Makan Ratu Sayang** (☎ 321 184; Jl Yos Sudarso; mains from 20,000Rp; ☎ noon-3pm & 6-10pm) Pick up the scent of fish on the grill and head inside this popular spot, 200m from Hotel Tanjung, for delicious *ikan bakar* (grilled fish). With rice, spinach and three sauces, this will set you back 60,000Rp.

**Sunrise** (☎ 322 709; Jl Yos Sudarso; mains 25,000-100,000Rp; ☎ noon-midnight) Sunrise overlooks Pantai Lido and faces west for spectacular sunsets. It's nice for a beer as well as good rice, noodle, seafood, meat, tofu and vegetable dishes.

## Shopping

**Irian Jaya Art & Souvenirs** (☎ 321 713; Jl Yani; ☎ 10am-9pm) This shop 1km east of Hotel Mariat has some of the most original wares in Papua, including antique Chinese, Dutch and Indonesian ceramics.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

You can book at the airlines' airport counters or at their offices or travel agents. **Merpati** (☎ 327 000; Jl Sam Ratulangi 50, Kampung Baru), **Expressair** (☎ 328 200; JE Meridien Hotel, Jl Basuki Rahmat km 7) and **Lion Air** (☎ 321 444; Jl Basuki Rahmat km 7) all fly daily to Makassar and Jakarta. Expressair also goes daily to Jayapura, and three times weekly to Manokwari, Fak-Fak, Ambon and Manado. Merpati heads to Manokwari and Fak-Fak three times weekly, and Lion goes three times a week to Ambon and Manado.

### BOAT

**Pelni** (☎ 321 716; Jl Yani 13), near the western end of Jl Yani, has five ships sailing every two weeks east to Jayapura (via various combinations of intermediate ports including Manokwari, Biak and Serui) and west to ports in Maluku, Sulawesi and Java. The *Tatamailau* heads round to Fak-Fak, Timika, Agats and Merauke on Papua's southern coast. Sample fares (1st class/economy) are 820,000/263,000Rp to Biak, 937,000/299,000Rp to Jayapura, 1,383,000/437,000Rp to Merauke and 602,000/171,000Rp to Ambon.

## Getting Around

Official airport taxis charge 70,000Rp to hotels in town; out on the street you can charter a public *taksi* for half that. Using the yellow public *taksi* (2500Rp), first get one going west outside the airport, then change to another at a local terminal after 600m. Hordes of *taksi* run along Jl Basuki Rahmat/Yani/Yos Sudarso.

Short *ojek* rides of 2km to 3km are 5000Rp; to/from the airport is 10,000Rp to 20,000Rp.

## RAJA AMPAT ISLANDS

pop 40,000

This group of 610 mostly uninhabited islands off Sorong offers some of the best – if not *the* best – diving in Indonesia. Raja Ampat's sheer number and variety of fish, and its huge reef systems, with hundreds of hard and soft corals, have divers in raptures. It's like swimming in a tropical aquarium! Little known until the last few years, Raja Ampat now sees a steady traffic of liveboard dive boats, and the current handful of land-based dive resorts is growing. The sparsely populated islands – though not geared to travellers on tight budgets – are also great for snorkelling, birdwatching and just exploring amid sublime scenery of steep, jungle-covered islands, pristine white-sand beaches, hidden lagoons and pellucid waters.

The four biggest islands are Waigeo in the north, with the fast-growing new regional capital, Waisai; Salawati, just southwest of Sorong; Batanta, off northern Salawati; and Misool to the southwest. The Dampier Strait between Waigeo and Batanta has many of the best dive sites, so most accommodation options are on Waigeo, Batanta or two smaller islands between them, Mansuar and Kri.

Useful websites on Raja Ampat include those of **Raja Ampat Culture & Tourism Affairs** ([www.gorajaampat.com](http://www.gorajaampat.com), [www.diverajaampat.org](http://www.diverajaampat.org)), **Papua Diving** ([www.papua-diving.com](http://www.papua-diving.com)) and **Misool Eco Resort** ([www.misool.ecoresort.com](http://www.misool.ecoresort.com)).

## Activities

### DIVING

You can get up close with huge manta rays and giant clams, gape at schools of barracuda, fusiliers or parrotfish, peer at tiny pygmy seahorses or multicoloured nudibranchs ('sea slugs'), and with luck encounter a wobbling shark, and with luck encounter a wobbling shark, which uses its fins to 'walk' on the sea bottom. The reefs have hun-

dreds of brilliantly coloured soft and hard corals, and the marine topography varies from vertical walls and pinnacles to reef flats and underwater ridges.

Most dives are drift dives due to the currents washing over the reefs. You can dive year-round, although the usually smooth seas can be rougher in July, August and September. The dive resorts offer packages of seven days or more but also provide diving services to people visiting independently, normally for €30 to €40 per dive, with equipment rental at around €30 per day.

Here's a selection of the best dive sites, in approximate north-to-south order:

**Wayag Islands** These small, uninhabited islands with white-sand beaches 30km northwest of Waigeo feature varied coral gardens and sloping walls with schools of anthias (small fish that can change sex), sea fans and soft corals. Grey reef sharks hang out in a cave off Pulau Uranie.

**Teluk Kabui** Between Waigeo and the smaller Pulau Gam, Kabui is packed with picturesque jungle-topped limestone islets. Visibility isn't fantastic, but Nudibranch Rock, with an amazingly varied population of brightly coloured nudibranchs, is a Raja Ampat highlight.

**The Passage** This 20m-wide channel between Waigeo and Gam is effectively a saltwater river. It's heaven for macro photographers with its shrimp gobies, nudibranchs, sponges and tunicates ('sea squirts'). Sharks, archerfish, turtles, barracuda, rays and schools of bumphead parrotfish are seen here too.

**Fam Islands** At the western end of the Dampier Strait, this island cluster has very calm waters, stunning coral and masses of fish, notably at the Melissa's Garden site.

**Manta Point** Near Pulau Arborek between the Gam and Mansuar islands, this famous site is a manta cleaning station, where huge manta rays, some with wing spans over 5m, wait above large coral heads to be cleaned by small wrasses. You can get very close to 15 or more mantas.

**Cape Kri** The number and variety of fish at the north-eastern point of Pulau Kri, just off the eastern end of Pulau Mansuar, have to be seen to be believed. Schools of barracuda, jacks, batfish and snapper coexist with small reef fish, rays, sharks, turtles and a few giant Queensland groupers. There's beautiful coral too.

**Sardine Reef** About 3km northeast of Pulau Kri, this offshore reef, sloping down to 33m, has so many fish that it can get quite dark at times. The fish-and-coral combination is great for photographers.

**Pulau Wai** The reefs around this small island off the north coast of Batanta are home to masses of unusual sea life including the recently discovered Raja epaulette shark, wobbling shark, crocodile fish and double-ended pipefish (a seahorse relative). There are also manta rays, and a WWII US fighter-plane wreck. The night diving is spectacular.

## PROTECTING THE MARINE EPICENTRE

Marine biologists consider eastern Indonesia to be the world's epicentre of marine life, and Raja Ampat harbours probably the greatest diversity of all – including at last count 1223 species of coral reef fish, 565 hard corals (over 75% of the world total) and some 700 molluscs. Ocean currents carry coral larvae from here to the Indian and Pacific Oceans to replenish other reefs.

Seven Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) were declared in Raja Ampat in 2007 to protect the reefs from threats such as cyanide and dynamite fishing, large-scale commercial fishing, and the effects of mining, logging and road building. The MPAs cover over 9000 sq km and sustainable marine tourism plays a big part in the conservation effort. As part of this, foreign visitors must pay a 500,000Rp entrance fee to visit the islands (Indonesians pay 250,000Rp). You can do this at Sorong airport or the Raja Ampat Tourism Office (p780) in Sorong. The money goes to local conservation and community development and the Raja Ampat Tourism Department.

**Pulau Misool** This remote southern island – especially the small islands off its southeastern corner – has stunningly beautiful coral life. The pristine reefs attract pygmy seahorses, epaulette sharks, manta rays and a vast range of other fish.

## SNORKELLING

There are strong currents in some areas, but the Fam Islands, northwestern Misool, Pulau Wai and Mios Kon (10km east of Kri) are all fine, and you can see plenty of coral and sea creatures close to the shore in many places. If you don't have your own gear, some accommodation places can rent or lend it, and you can rent it at Kennko Tours (p780) in Sorong.

## BIRDWATCHING

Two fantastically coloured birds of paradise, the red and the Wilson's, are endemic to just a few areas of the Raja Ampat islands. The red male has a spectacular courtship dance in which he spreads his wings and shakes like a big butterfly. The best base for seeing both species is Wailebet (or Wai Lebed) village on the southern coast of Batanta, although this area is less attractive than it was because of illegal logging. Ask for guides Kris Sauyai or Yehuda Dei. Basic accommodation is available in the village.

Village guides in Yenwaupnor and Sawingrai on Pulau Gam will also take you to nearby spots where you may see the red bird of paradise. They charge 50,000Rp for about three hours.

Birds of paradise – like many other birds – usually do their stuff soon after dawn, which usually means a very early start to walk to viewing spots. Lorikeets, parrots, kingfishers, eagles and hornbills are fairly abundant around the islands.

Sorong-based **Papua Expeditions** ([www.papuaexpeditions.com](http://www.papuaexpeditions.com)) offers specialised birding trips to Raja Ampat.

## Sleeping & Eating ON LAND

A few villages have constructed basic tourist accommodation where you sleep on mats for around 150,000Rp per person (take a mosquito net and some food; the villagers will usually cook for you). Options:

**Wailebet** Southern coast of Batanta.

**Yenbuba** Eastern end of Pulau Mansuar; contact English-speaking Pak Dedy (☎ 0812 4855 7279).

**Yensawai** Northern coast of Batanta; the 'homestay' is on Pulau Dayan, a few kilometres away. Contact Pak Leo (☎ 0813 4475 4379).

If you just turn up at a village you can usually sleep in someone's house. You can pay anything from 10,000/20,000Rp for a mat/bed, and another 10,000Rp if they provide a meal.

**Kobe Oser Resort** (☎ 0813 4437 3398; fax 0951-335 692; [mariarumbiak@yahoo.com](mailto:mariarumbiak@yahoo.com); Yenwaupnor, Pulau Gam; full-board per person 350,000Rp) Kobe Oser, also known as Ibu Maria's, has two rustic still bungalows set over the water at Yenwaupnor on the southern coast of Pulau Gam. Meals are basic, but it's a welcoming, relaxed place and they can provide snorkel gear and will run you round in their boat for a reasonable charge (around 300,000Rp for a typical day excursion).

**Raja Ampat Dive Resort** (☎ 0812 4844 2284; [www.rajaampatdiveresort.com](http://www.rajaampatdiveresort.com); Waiwo, Waigeo; r/cottages full-board per person from 250,000/300,000Rp, 7-night dive package US\$900-1035) This place a few kilometres west of Waisai is further from the best dive sites than the other island resorts are, but it can be

convenient if you just want to come for a few days. Packages include an average two dives a day, meals and transfers from/to Waisai. Cottages and rooms all hold two people, but the cottages are newer and nicer, with private bathrooms. Guests have free use of snorkelling gear.

**ourpick Kri Eco Resort** (☎ 0951-328 038; www.papua-diving.com; Pulau Kri; 7-night dive package per person €998-1295) Kri Eco, operating since 1994, is the original Raja Ampat dive lodge, and belongs to Papua Diving, whose Dutch founder, Max Ammer, pioneered scuba in Raja Ampat. It has a gorgeous setting on little Pulau Kri, off the eastern tip of Mansuar, and six of the spacious, airy, wooden guest bungalows are built over crystal-clear waters along the jetty. Bathrooms are shared. Packages run Sunday to Sunday and include at least 12 dives a week, meals and Sorong transfers.

**Misool Eco Resort** (www.misoolcoresort.com; Pulau Batbitim; 11-night dive package per person €1810-3535; closed Jul-Sep; 🏠) Set on a beautiful small island off southwestern Misool, this comfortable, well-equipped dive resort has a strong conservation and community ethos, and plenty of great dive sites within a few minutes' boat ride. Dive packages include excellent meals, excursions and Sorong transfers (four to six hours each way). Most of the cottages have air-con and a verandah over the water; all have private bathroom.

**Sorido Bay Resort** (☎ 0951-328 038; www.papua-diving.com; Pulau Kri; 7-night dive package per person €1791-2247; 🏠 📶 📶) Papua Diving's newer, more luxurious option offers Western-style comforts, with air-con and hot showers in spacious waterside bungalows, internet access and special facilities for underwater photographers. As at Kri Eco, packages run Sunday to Sunday and include meals and Sorong transfers.

At least two more dive lodges were due to open by the end of 2009:

**Papua Paradise** (www.papuparadise.com) On Pulau Birie, off Batanta.

**Raja Ampat Dive Lodge** (www.dive-paradise-indonesia.com) On the north coast of Pulau Mansuar.

## LIVEBOARDS

The ultimate Raja Ampat experience could be cruising around on a twin-masted Bugis-style schooner specially kitted out for divers. A couple of dozen Indonesian- and foreign-owned liveboards now do regular 10- to 12-day dive cruises around the islands, usually starting

and ending in Sorong. There are also itineraries combining Raja Ampat with Maluku or Triton Bay (Teluk Triton) south of Kaimana. Most boats carry 12 to 16 passengers and some are luxurious, with air-conditioned cabins and en suite bathrooms. The majority of cruises run between November and April, when Raja Ampat seas are calmest. Some can rent diving gear, but generally it's better if you can bring your own.

Total costs typically range between US\$3000 and US\$5000 per person per cruise. **Dive Paradise Indonesia** (www.dive-paradise-indonesia.com), a long-running Indonesian operation with five liveboards, operates year-round and is among the least expensive. The **Seven Seas** (www.thesevenseas.net) is probably the last word in Raja Ampat liveboard luxury. Other established boats include the **Cheng Ho** (www.kararu.com), **Ondina** (www.thebestdivingintheworld.com), **Pindito** (www.pindito.com) and **Seahorse** (www.indocruises.com).

## Getting There & Around

Mega Express operates fast passenger boats with airline-style seating (economy/VIP 105,000/125,000Rp, two hours) to Waisai from Sorong's Usaha Mina harbour at 9am Monday to Saturday, and noon Sunday, starting back from Waisai at 2pm. The harbour is on Jl Yani, 1km east of Sorong's Peln port. The slower but breezier *Gracelia* sails at 2pm Wednesday, Friday and Sunday (per person 100,000Rp, four hours) from Sorong's Pelabuhan Rakyat, off Jl Baru, and starts back from Waisai at 2pm Monday, Thursday and Saturday. The *Raja Ampat I*, *Raja Ampat II* and *Raja Ampat III* sail various routes around the islands from Sorong: ask at Usaha Mina or Pelabuhan Rakyat for details of their itineraries.

The main dive resorts include boat transfers from and back to Sorong in their dive packages. Smaller accommodation places will usually collect you at Waisai if you contact them ahead. If you have to charter a boat yourself from Waisai, it's all very negotiable. Ask around the pier where the ferries arrive, or take an *ojek* to the motorboat jetty (*pelabuhan speedboat*) or the river behind the town-centre market. You might pay 200,000Rp to 300,000Rp to Yenbuba or Yenwaupnor.

It's possible to hire a small longboat in island villages for several days with captain and shipmate and follow your own itinerary round



the islands, sleeping under the stars or in village homes. A fair price is around 300,000Rp per day plus fuel and food.

## FAK-FAK

☎ 0956

This port and regency capital rambles up and down green hills on the Bomberai Peninsula. Along with Manokwari, Fak-Fak was one of the first successful Dutch settlements in Papua, established in 1898. It merits a special trip if you have an interest in ancient rock paintings. Beware: outbound flights are often heavily booked.

### Orientation & Information

Fak-Fak's shoreline stretches between two inlets – one with the main port, and the other, 1.5km west, with the tidy Tambaruni market and Tambaruni *taksi* terminal. Jl Izak Telussa, the main street, and its westward continuation Jl Tambaruni, connect the two.

**Bank Mandiri** (Jl Izak Telussa 26) Doesn't exchange any form of foreign money but has a very busy Visa, Visa Electron and Plus ATM.

**Police** (☎ 22200; Jl Tambaruni) For a *surat jalan*, report to this police station halfway between the port and Terminal Tambaruni.

**Toko Alfa** (☎ 22224; Jl Cenderawasih 9; internet access per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 9am-1pm & 6-10pm Mon-Sat, 6-10pm Sun) The young, English-speaking owner, Alex Ferdinand, is very willing to dispense helpful information. Alfa is in the Puncak district, 2.5km uphill from Jl Izak Telussa – take a *taksi* or *ojek*.

### Sights & Activities

If you have time for a spell on the beach, take a *taksi* from Terminal Tambaruni west to Pasar Seberang (3000Rp), then another to Pasir Putih (5000Rp) – a total trip of about half an hour to reach the three beaches of **Pasir Putih**, all with white sands, azure waters and no crowds on weekdays.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Tembapapura** (☎ 22136; Jl Izak Telussa 16; r 125,000-150,000Rp; 🍴) It's central and the rooms are clean and reasonable, all with air-con and private *mandi* (Indonesian-style bath).

**Fak-Fak Hotel** (☎ 23196; fax 24281; Jl Suprpto 9; s 120,000-200,000Rp, d 130,000-220,000Rp; 🍴) A couple of winding streets up the hill from Jl Izak Telussa, the top-price rooms here have hot water, minibars and balconies with bay views. Cheaper rooms are dilapidated and most lack

hot water, but staff are amiable. Snack breakfast is included, and you can order other meals in your room.

**Hotel Grand Papua** (☎ 24695; grandpapua\_hotel@yahoo.com; Jl Panjaitan 1A; r incl breakfast 424,000-635,000Rp; 🍴) Half a kilometre uphill from the Fak-Fak Hotel, the Grand Papua has clean, spacious, comfy rooms, a bland atmosphere and a reasonable restaurant (mains 35,000Rp to 50,000Rp).

**Warungs** (Jl Baru; dishes 15,000-50,000Rp; 🍷 evening) For ocean breezes and excellent *ikan bakar* or *udang asam manis* (sweet-and-sour prawns), head for the line of warungs out along the reclaimed road in front of Pasar Tamburani.

### Getting There & Away

**Merpati** (☎ 22130; Jl Izak Telussa 57; 🕒 8am-12.30pm Mon-Sat) flies three days a week to Sorong, and once to Kaimana and Manokwari. **Wings Air** (☎ 25555; Hotel Grand Papua, Jl Panjaitan 1A; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) heads to Ambon twice a week. **Expressair** (☎ 25377; Jl Izak Telussa; 🕒 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) flies to Jayapura daily except Sunday, alternately via Sorong–Manokwari and Kaimana–Nabire.

**Pelni** (☎ 23371; Jl Panjaitan) has five sailings every fortnight, including two each to Sorong (1st class/economy 329,500/108,500Rp) and Ambon (446,000/144,500Rp), and one each to Timika, Agats, Merauke, Tual and Banda. The office is about 1km uphill from the town centre.

### Getting Around

Little Torea airport is on a hillside 7km west of town. A chartered *taksi* should cost 50,000Rp to or from the town. Hundreds of red, yellow, green and white public *taksi* (2500Rp) follow incomprehensible routes around Fak-Fak's hilly, circuitous streets. An *ojek* in town costs 4000Rp.

### AROUND FAK-FAK

A trip out to **Kokas**, on the north coast of the peninsula 42km by mostly paved road from Fak-Fak, is the most interesting thing to do in the area. In Kokas **Freddy Bola** (bollafreddy@yahoo.com; Toko Jaya, Jl Rumagesar), by the main jetty, can organise a motorboat trip along the coast to see several sites of striking **rock paintings** (of marine life, crocodiles, human handprints and other motifs), as well as groups of **human skulls** on cliff ledges – all of uncertain age and origin. There is also a muddy WWII '**Japanese cave**' (actually a set of tunnels) in the village,

and an unusual European-style 19th-century **mosque** at Patimburak, a 10-minute boat ride away. Bolla charges around 600,000Rp for a two- to three-hour boat trip to the main sites, and can provide accommodation should you need it.

Public *taksi* to Kokas (20,000Rp, 1½ hours) leave when full from Fak-Fak's Terminal Kokas, reached by local *taksi* (2500Rp) from Terminal Tambaruni. If you miss the last *taksi* back from Kokas, an *ojek* is 200,000Rp.

## MANOKWARI

☎ 0986 / pop 59,000

Capital of West Papua (Papua Barat) province since it was created in 2003, Manokwari sits on Teluk Cenderawasih near the northeastern corner of the Vogelkop. It's a mellow enough place but only merits a special trip for out-of-town attractions, especially hiking and birding in Pegunungan Arfak.

### Orientation & Information

Most travellers' facilities are in the area known as Kota, on the eastern side of the Teluk Sawaisu inlet. Local transport terminals and the airport (7km) are to the west and southwest.

**Arfak Paradigalla Tours** (☎ 0813 4475 1664; yoris\_tours@yahoo.com) This effusive, one-man, English-speaking outfit offers city tours, as well as birdwatching trips and treks around Pegunungan Arfak and the Anggi lakes, for a guide fee of 250,000Rp per day (500,000Rp overnight outside town), not counting transport, accommodation or food.

**ATMs** (Jl Yos Sudarso) You'll find several cash machines across the street from the Swiss-belhotel.

**BNI bank** (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Merdeka 44) ATM good for most international cards.

**Flashlink.net** (Jl Merdeka 46; internet access per hr 9000Rp; ☎ 9am-9pm Mon-Sat) Slow connections tempered by soothing air-con.

**Police station** (☎ 211 359; Jl Bhayangkara) A *surat jalan* for surrounding areas is easy to obtain here, 1km southeast of the port.

**Tourist office** (☎ 211 689; Jl Percetakan Negara; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Fri) Worth visiting, especially if you plan to visit Pegunungan Arfak or Cenderawasih Bay National Park.

### Sights & Activities

A reasonably level 2.5km path crosses picturesque **Taman Gunung Meja** (Table Mountain Park), a protected forest with plenty of birdlife and butterflies. The trail is well marked, but

the start is unsigned: if you take a public *taksi* towards Amban you can ask the driver to let you off at the right place. The **Tugu Jepang** (Japanese Monument), 1km before the end of the trail, offers great views.

Two German missionaries settled on **Pulau Mansinam** off Manokwari in 1855 and became the first in Papua to spread 'The Word'. The picturesque island is home to a small village, a **ruined church**, a **memorial** to the missionaries, and a pleasant **beach**. It's best to report to the *kepala desa* (village head) before wandering around too far. A passenger boat (3000Rp one way) sails between Kwawi, 2.5km southeast of central Manokwari, and Mansinam whenever it fills up with passengers.

Teluk Doreri in front of Manokwari is peppered with the wrecks of WWII ships and planes lying in shallow, clear water, as well as abundant coral and marine life. There is no local dive operator, but Papua Diving (p784) or Dive Paradise Indonesia (p784) can bring you here.

About 5km southeast of the centre, **Pantai Pasir Putih** is a curved bay of white sand and clear water, good for **swimming** and **snorkelling** if you have gear. It's a little unkempt in parts, but quiet – except on Sunday when half Manokwari invades the beach. The other half visits black-sand **Pantai Amban**, 7km north of Manokwari and perfect for **surfing**. Regular public *taksi* to both Pantai Pasir Putih and Amban village (4km before the beach) start from Terminal Sanggeng and run through town en route.

### Sleeping

All these hotels include breakfast in their rates, and some throw in afternoon tea.

**Losmen Apose** (☎ 211 369; Jl Kota Baru 4; s/d 120,000/250,000Rp) This is a friendly place opposite the Merpati office. Most rooms have private *mandi*, but they vary in quality, so view a few before deciding.

**Hotel Mokwam** (☎ 211 403; Jl Merdeka 49; r 180,000-204,000Rp; ☎) This hotel has been around a while, but it's still clean and quite comfy, with good-sized rooms (all upstairs), airy walkways and amiable staff.

**Billy Jaya Hotel** (☎ 215 787; fax 215 827; Jl Merdeka 51; s 181,500Rp, d 224,000-333,000Rp; ☎) The clean, cosy, lower-end rooms at this efficient, friendly hotel are a terrific deal. Rattan ceilings, TVs and minibars add to the atmosphere and comfort. The Billy company is also building a grander new hotel next door.



Also recommended:

**Hotel Maluku** (☎ 211 948; Jl Sudirman 52; r 125,000-180,000Rp; 🏠) Fairly quiet, but rather airless and with only squat toilets.

**Swiss-belhotel** (☎ 212 999; fax 212 777; www.swiss-belhotel.com; Jl Yos Sudarso 8; r 900,000-2,130,000Rp; 🏠 📺 📶) Way above anywhere else for service and style. Check the website for discounts.

## Eating

**Hawai Billy Bakery & Coffee Shop** (☎ 212 189; Jl Sudirman 100; cakes & pastries 6000-9000Rp; 🕒 6am-1am) An arm of the Billy empire, this relaxed spot serves espresso, pizza and Indonesian soups, and features a wall of house-baked pastries including chocolate muffins.

**Abressio Café** (Jl Merdeka 87; mains 20,000-60,000Rp) A large and spacious restaurant, with a quiet air-con section and plenty of well prepared dishes. Try the excellent *ikan rica-rica* (fish in a spicy sauce made with ginger, shallots and lime).

**Billy Café** (☎ 211 036; Jl Merdeka 51; mains 25,000-60,000Rp) The menu details a few Western selections like hamburgers, but you're better off with the Indonesian or Chinese food, which

comes in generous portions. The main dining room blasts moderately effective air-con and live music in the evenings.

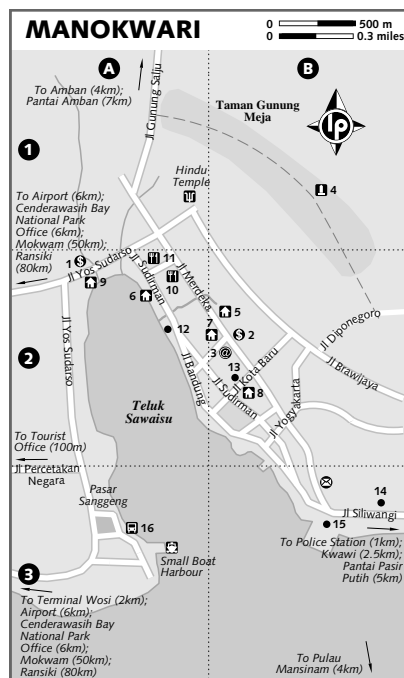
## Getting There & Away

**Merpati** (☎ 211 153; Jl Kota Baru 39) flies three times a week to Jayapura, Sorong, Makassar and Jakarta and theoretically twice to Biak. **Batavia Air** (☎ 215 666; Jl Sudirman 30) heads to Jayapura, Makassar and Jakarta four times weekly. There are also flights by Expressair: three weekly to Jayapura, Sorong, Makassar, Jakarta and Fak-Fak.

Every two weeks **Pelni** (☎ 215 167; Jl Siliwangi 24) has four sailings each to Jayapura (1st class/economy 685,000/230,000Rp) and Sorong (364,000/124,000Rp), three each to Serui and ports in Sulawesi, two each to Ternate and Jakarta, and one each to Biak, Fak-Fak and Ambon. ASDP Indonesia Ferry's *Teluk Cenderawasih II* sails to Biak (88,000Rp, about 26 hours) via Pulau Numfor every Thursday at 6pm.

## Getting Around

You can get a taxi to town on the road outside the airport for 30,000Rp or 40,000Rp. Some public *taksi* (3000Rp) come past here too, bound for Terminal Wosi, halfway to the centre. From Wosi get another to Terminal Sanggeng on the western side of Teluk Sawaisu, then another (or walk) to Kota. *Ojeks* cost 4000Rp within town, and 10,000Rp to or from the airport.



### INFORMATION

ATMs.....	1	A2
BNI Bank.....	2	B2
Flashlink.net.....	3	B2

### SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Tugu Jepang.....	4	B1
------------------	---	----

### SLEEPING

Billy Jaya Hotel.....	5	B2
Hotel Maluku.....	6	A2
Hotel Mokwam.....	7	B2
Losmen Apose.....	8	B2
Swiss-belhotel.....	9	A2

### EATING

Abressio Café.....	10	A2
Billy Café.....	(see 5)	
Hawai Billy Bakery & Coffee Shop.....	11	A2

### TRANSPORT

Batavia Air.....	12	A2
Merpati.....	13	B2
Pelni.....	14	B3
Port.....	15	B3
Terminal Sanggeng.....	16	A3

## FEATHERED PARADISE

Papua is a spectacular destination for bird lovers, and of all the many exotic and rare birds found here, the undoubted stars are the 30 birds of paradise (*cenderawasih*), which include astrapias, sicklebills, riflebirds and manucodes as well as those actually named 'bird of paradise'. Papua and neighbouring PNG are the chief homes of these fantastically colourful birds, whose males perform spectacular mating 'dances'.

Papuans have long used bird-of-paradise feathers in traditional dress, and the feathers have also been exported for many centuries. Because traders often removed the birds' legs and wings to highlight their beautiful plumage, Europeans once believed the birds had no feet and spent their entire lives in flight. The plumes became so popular and valuable as European women's fashion accessories that by the late 19th century more than 50,000 skins were being exported from Papua every year, bringing the birds close to extinction. After WWI conservationist pressure and changes in fashion put an end to the trade.

Birds of paradise are elusive and tend to live in remote areas, but with patience, time and a knowledgeable guide, it's quite possible to spot some in the wild. The easier sites include the Raja Ampat islands (p783), Pegunungan Arfak (below), Pulau Yapen (p800) and Danau Habbema (p811). The same areas are generally excellent for many other birds too.

Most good Papuan tour companies (see p779) can arrange specialised birding trips with expert local guides. UK-based **Birdquest** ([www.birdquest.co.uk](http://www.birdquest.co.uk)) is one overseas operator that regularly brings groups to Papua.

Terminal Sanggeng is the starting point for very frequent public *taksi* running through Kota and out to Kwawi and Pantai Pasir Putih, or Amban, as well as west to Terminal Wosi.

## PEGUNUNGAN ARFAK

The thickly forested Arfak mountains, rising to more than 2800m south of Manokwari, are a region of beautiful tropical mountain scenery, exotic wildlife (especially birds) and a mostly indigenous Papuan population (the Hatam and other peoples). You can spend a few days trekking here or select one base and focus on the wildlife. The Arfak region was the scene of the first and one of the biggest Papuan revolts against Indonesian rule, in 1965–68.

The best **birdwatching** base is **Mokwam** village, about a 50km drive from Manokwari. Ask for Zeth Wonggor in the part of Mokwam known as Syobri. Zeth is a highly experienced bird guide who has worked here with, among others, Sir David Attenborough. He has forest hides for viewing birds such as the magnificent bird of paradise, western parotia (another bird of paradise) and Vogelkop bower bird. There are many other rare and exotic birds to be spotted – along with spectacular, iridescent birdwing butterflies with wingspans of up to 25cm. You might also see marsupials such as the tree kangaroo. Zeth has tourist **accommodation** (per person 30,000Rp) in a well-built wooden

house. Bring a sleeping bag, and any food you want beyond rice and a vegetable or two. Zeth charges about 150,000/300,000Rp per half-day/day for guiding.

Four-wheel-drive vehicles to Mokwam (the road fords a couple of rivers) leave from outside Manokwari's Terminal Wosi. They charge around 1,000,000Rp for the 1½-hour trip for up to 12 passengers. To share with others, get to the terminal by about 7am – otherwise you may have to pay the full million yourself.

Another way to enjoy the Arfak area is to trek to the two deep, clear **Anggi Lakes**, Danau Giji (29 sq km) and Danau Gita (24.5 sq km), 2030m high on the southwestern side of the mountains. They're a two- or three-day walk from **Ransiki**, a coastal *transmigrasi* town 80km south of Manokwari that has a small **guest house** (per person 50,000Rp) next to its Telkom office. Crowded *taksi* to Ransiki (50,000Rp, two to three hours) leave every hour or so from Manokwari's Terminal Wosi. From Ransiki the route follows Sungai Momi upstream, with some steep, muddy sections. A guide is a very good idea – ask the district office in Ransiki or make arrangements with Arfak Paradigalla Tours (p786). You can sleep in local huts along the way or ask the district office in Anggi to arrange **accommodation** (per person 50,000Rp) – the huts cost the same. Vegetables are available along the way, but bring other food. From

the lakes it's possible to continue round to Mokwam in about three days via Dimaisi and Minyambou villages.

## CENDERAWASIH BAY NATIONAL PARK

This reserve (Taman Nasional Teluk Cenderawasih), with about 20 islands and 500km of coastline, is easily the biggest protected area in what conservationists call the Bird's Head Seascape – the waters around the Vogelkop, which harbour a vast diversity of marine life. The potential for diving, snorkelling, hiking and birding is obvious, but there is very little regular transport and no dedicated tourist accommodation. Before visiting, consult the **Cenderawasih Bay National Park office** (Map p787; ☎ 0986-212 303; btntc@telcom.net; Jl Drs Esau Sesa, Sowi, Manokwari), on a hillside above Manokwari airport, or Manokwari tourist office (p786). Arfak Paradigalla Tours (p786) can help set up a trip.

The larger inhabited islands are Rumberpon, Mios Waar, Roon and Angrameos. You can explore the coastline or islands by boat from Ransiki for about 800,000Rp per day, or base yourself on **Pulau Rumberpon**, which offers **snorkelling** among superb coral and marine life, outstanding **hiking** and the possibility of boat trips to smaller islands. Public speed-boats (about two hours) leave Ransiki for Rumberpon most days, or you can charter one for 250,000Rp. On Rumberpon, you should be able to camp on the beach (bring everything with you) or stay in a village hut.

## THE NORTH

Papua province's capital, Jayapura, and its airport town of Sentani, in the northeastern corner of Papua, are the hubs of Papuan travel, and there's a variety of appealing things to see and do in and around these towns. Further west the islands of Biak and Yapen in Teluk Cenderawasih are fine places for a spot of beach relaxation, with good snorkelling and diving, wildlife to search for and WWII sites to investigate.

### JAYAPURA

☎ 0967 / pop 150,000

Central Jayapura's streets are fairly grungy, but they have a beautiful setting between steep, forested hills opening on to Teluk Imbi. If you just want to get up to Wamena as soon as

possible, you can often make all arrangements in Sentani without coming into Jayapura. But if you want to see Papua's biggest and most important city, this is it.

A small settlement named Hollandia, established by the Dutch in 1910, was the target of the large-scale American amphibious attacks of April 1944. After WWII Hollandia became the capital of Dutch New Guinea. Following the Indonesian takeover in 1963, it was renamed Kota Baru, then Sukarnapura, then Jayapura ('Victory City') in 1968. With nearby towns and villages that it has now engulfed, and Kotaraja, Abepura and Waena a bit further south, the Jayapura conurbation now counts perhaps 300,000 people. Cenderawasih University at Abepura is a particular focus of Papuan nationalism.

### Orientation

Most of what you'll need is on the parallel main streets, Jl Yani and Jl Percetakan, and the waterfront streets Jl Sam Ratulangi and Jl Koti. From the centre Jayapura stretches about 6km northeast along the coast, and is joined to a string of formerly separate towns and villages to the south: Argapura (2km), Hamadi (3km) and Entrop (4km).

### Information

#### INTERNET ACCESS

**Warnet Andhika** (Jl Yani 16; per hr 8000Rp; ☎ 9am-1am) Slow but open late.

**Warnet Media Papua** (Jl Percetakan; per hr 7000Rp; ☎ 9am-10pm) As slow as everywhere else, but bigger and with better prices.

#### MEDICAL SERVICES

**Rumah Sakit Umum Daerah** (☎ 533 616; Jl Kesehatan 1, Dok II) Jayapura's large public hospital is in the northern foothills, 1km from downtown.

#### MONEY

**Bank Mandiri** (Jl Yani 35; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) You can exchange cash US dollars here, and there's a Visa ATM.

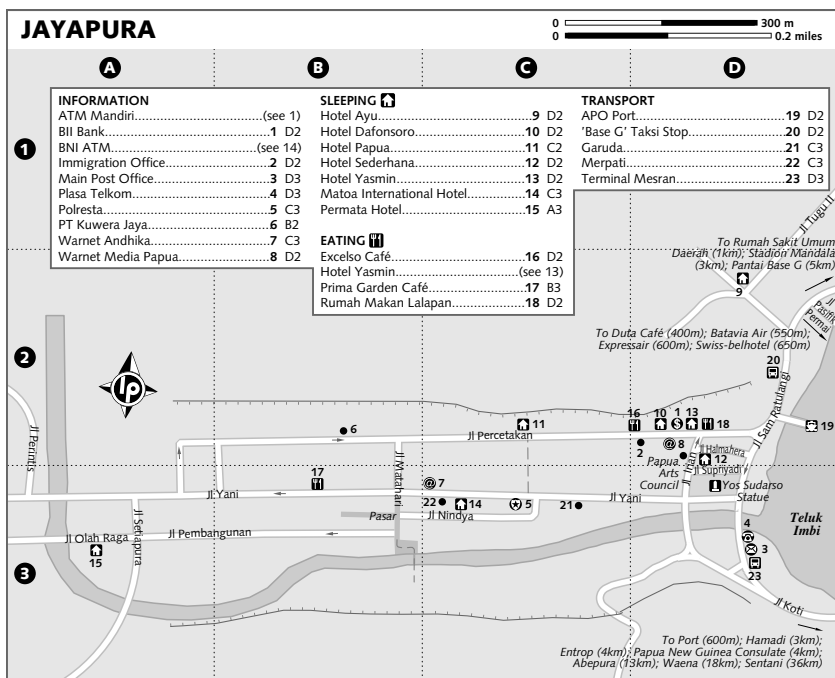
**BII bank** (Bank Internasional Indonesia; Jl Percetakan 22; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) Will change cash US dollars and has an ATM for most international cards.

**BNI ATM** (Jl Yani 14) Accepts Visa, Visa Electron, MasterCard, Cirrus, Plus and Maestro cards.

#### POST & TELEPHONE

**Main post office** (Jl Koti 3; ☎ 7.30am-6.30pm Mon-Sat)

**Plasa Telkom** (Jl Koti; ☎ 8am-midnight) You can phone from here.



## TRAVEL AGENCIES

**PT Kuwera Jaya** (☎ 533 333; Jl Percetakan 96; ☒ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 10am-9pm Sun) This efficient company sells tickets for flights and Pelni boats from Jayapura and also for some flights from other Papuan cities.

## TRAVEL PERMIT

**Polresta** (☎ 531 027; Jl Yani 11; ☒ officially 7am-3pm Mon-Fri) Police elsewhere in Papua will usually only issue a *surat jalan* for their own regencies, but here you can get one for everywhere you want to go in Papua (that's not off-limits). It normally takes one to two hours. See p778 for more on the *surat jalan*.

## Sleeping

Rates include breakfast at all these hotels.

## BUDGET

**Hotel Ayu** (☎ 532 174; Jl Tugu II 1; s 82,500-198,000, d 110,000-198,000Rp, tr 297,000Rp; ☒) Being the best cheap choice in Jayapura, this place is often full, and no wonder – it's snug and bright, with a pleasant common hall. Fan-only rooms have shared *mandis*, while air-con rooms have private ones.

**Hotel Sederhana** (☎ 531 561; Jl Halmahera 2; r 110,000 or 220,000Rp; ☒) It's drab, but central and quite clean. The cheaper rooms (often full) have fans and shared *mandis*; the others have air-con with private *mandis*.

## MIDRANGE & TOP END

**Hotel Dafonsoro** (☎ /fax 531 695, 534 055; Jl Percetakan 20; r 198,000-330,000; ☒) The Dafonsoro is friendly, quiet and clean, with hot showers, though the rooms are characterless and only the most expensive have windows (they have small terraces over the street too). Breakfast is fairly minimal.

**our pick Permata Hotel** (☎ 531 333; [hotelpermata@yahoo.co.id](http://hotelpermata@yahoo.co.id); Jl Olah Raga 3; s 195,000-355,000Rp, d 270,000-430,000Rp; ☒) This new hotel on the edge of the market zone provides good, modern rooms with hot showers, shiny tile floors and kettles. Staff are welcoming and the restaurant is open 24 hours – it's good value.

**Hotel Papua** (☎ 535 800; fax 533-700; Jl Percetakan 78; r 400,000-550,000; ☒) Along with bonuses like hot water, satellite TV and bathtubs in the most expensive rooms, this place goes the extra decorating mile with colourful, quite tasteful

murals and photos. It's a bit overpriced, and staff can be sleepy, but there's a reasonable restaurant (with beer).

**Swiss-belhotel** (☎ 551 888; www.swiss-belhotel.com; Jl Pasifik Permai; r 672,000-1,340,000Rp; ♿ ♿ ♿) Opened in 2007, the Swiss-bel provides high-quality, European-style comfort right by the sea on the northern side of the centre. There's nothing very Papuan about it, but with a lovely open-air pool, a business centre and a good restaurant (mains 50,000Rp to 170,000Rp, lunch buffet for 79,000Rp from 11.30am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday), you can't beat it for comforts.

Also recommended:

**Matao International Hotel** (☎ 531 633; Jl Yani 14; s/d 365,000/475,000Rp; ♿ ♿) Rooms are good and comfy, and there's interesting Papuan art in the lobby.

**Hotel Yasmin** (☎ 533 222; Jl Percetakan 8; s 381,000-610,000Rp, d 457,000-686,000Rp; ♿ ♿) A quite classy place with well-equipped but small rooms.

## Eating & Drinking

Jayapura is 'dry' except for the restaurants of the better hotels.

**Prima Garden Café** (☎ 532 038; Jl Yani 28; cakes & pastries 3000-4500Rp, drinks 7000-14,000Rp; ☒ closed Sun) Join locals relaxing over coffee, tea, juice and *wajik* (sweet black rice cake) at this old-fashioned, fan-cooled upstairs joint.

**Duta Café** (☎ 0852-4450 6672; Jl Pasifik Permai; rice & noodle dishes 15,000-30,000Rp, fish mains 30,000-55,000Rp; ☒ evening) Long lines of warungs open in the evening along Jl Pasifik Permai, cooking up all sorts of Indonesian goodies including seafood galore. You won't go wrong at the large, clean Duta Café. An excellent *ikan bakar* comes with five *sambals* (chilli sauces) lined up on your table, and the juice drinks go down very nicely too.

**Rumah Makan Lalapan** (☎ 531 949; Jl Percetakan 8; mains 20,000-50,000Rp) The best of a poor lot downtown (hotels excepted), with fish, chicken and *nasi goreng* choices, and oddly successful decor of dangling plastic leaves.

**Excelso Café** (☎ 534 450; Jl Percetakan 38; coffee, cakes & snacks 22,000-55,000Rp; ♿ ♿) Recline in large easy chairs and choose from a range of Indonesian and international coffees (hot or iced), sandwiches, ice cream and serious Black Forest gâteau!

**Hotel Yasmin** (☎ 533 222; Jl Percetakan 8; mains 30,000-130,000Rp; ☒ 24hr; ♿ ♿) The lobby restaurant here has about the best prepared and presented food downtown, from good *nasi*

*goreng istimewa* (special fried rice) to steaks, fish and American breakfasts. It'll serve you a cold beer too – and it never closes.

## Entertainment

Jayapura's soccer team, Persipura (nicknamed Mutiara Hitam – the Black Pearls), were champions of the Indonesia Super League in 2005 and 2009 – a big source of Papuan pride! Stadion Mandala is 3km northeast of the centre, reachable by 'Base G' *taksi* from Jl Sam Ratulangi. Check www.bli-online.com for fixtures.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Jayapura airport** (☎ 591 809), actually at Sentani, 36km west, is the hub of Papuan aviation and many people's first point of arrival in Papua. If you do much travelling around Papua you'll probably pass through here a few times. Tickets are available in the airport departures hall and at travel agencies and the airlines' offices. The airport desks require cash payment and usually close when their flights are finished for the day.

**Aviastar** Flies to Wamena four times daily (tickets sold at check-in counter).

**Batavia Air** airport (☎ 591 745); Jayapura (☎ 550 666; Blok B 3A, Jl Pasifik Permai) Flies to Manokwari, Makassar and Jakarta four times weekly.

**Expressair** Jayapura (☎ 550 444; Blok G 10/2, Jl Pasifik Permai) Flies to Manokwari, Sorong, Makassar and Jakarta daily; connections in Sorong for Manado, Ambon and Ternate.

**Garuda** airport (☎ 594 111); Jayapura (☎ 522 221/2; Jl Yani 5-7; ☒ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-3pm Sat & Sun) Flies to Biak, Timika, Denpasar, Makassar and Jakarta daily.

**Lion Air** (☎ 594 042/3, 594 576/7) At the airport. Flies to Makassar and Jakarta daily.

**Merpati** airport (☎ 591 288); Jayapura (☎ 533 111; Jl Yani 15; ☒ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat & Sun) Flies to Biak, Timika, Merauke, Makassar and Jakarta daily, and to Manokwari and Manado three times weekly.

**Trigana Air** airport (☎ 594 592); Sentani (Map p792; ☎ 594 383/4; Komplek Ruko Multijaya No 266, Jl Raya Kemiri) Flies to Wamena four or more times daily.

### BOAT

Five Pelni liners leave here every two weeks bound for Sorong (1st/economy class 950,000/315,000Rp, two days) via selections of the intermediate ports – including Biak (495,000/174,000Rp), Serui and Manokwari (685,000/230,000Rp) – and then on to Maluku

and/or Sulawesi. The **port** (Jl Koti) is accessible by any *taksi* heading to Hamadi or Entrop. Tickets for all major boats are available there or at agencies including PT Kuwera Jaya (p790).

Perintis boats also head along the coast, putting in at smaller ports too and even heading to villages up rivers such as the Mamberamo. They normally leave from the **APO port** (Jl Sam Ratulangi) and typically take about a week to reach Sorong, with fares of around 75,000Rp to Biak, 100,000Rp to Manokwari and 110,000Rp to Sorong.

## Getting Around

Official airport taxis from Sentani airport to central Jayapura cost a hefty 200,000Rp. Outside the airport gate you can charter one for 100,000Rp to 120,000Rp with bargaining. Going by public *taksi* from Sentani to Jayapura involves three changes and takes about 1½ hours. It's less bad than it sounds, as each change is just a hop into another vehicle waiting at the same stop. First get one from Sentani (outside the airport gate or heading to the right along the main road 400m straight ahead) to Waena (4000Rp, 20

to 30 minutes). The other stages are Waena to Abepura (3000Rp, 10 minutes), Abepura to Entrop (3500Rp, 20 minutes) and Entrop to Jayapura (2500Rp, 20 to 30 minutes).

Heading back south from Jayapura, go through the same routine in reverse. You can pick up Entrop-bound *taksi* on Jl Percetakan or at **Terminal Mesran** (Jl Koti).

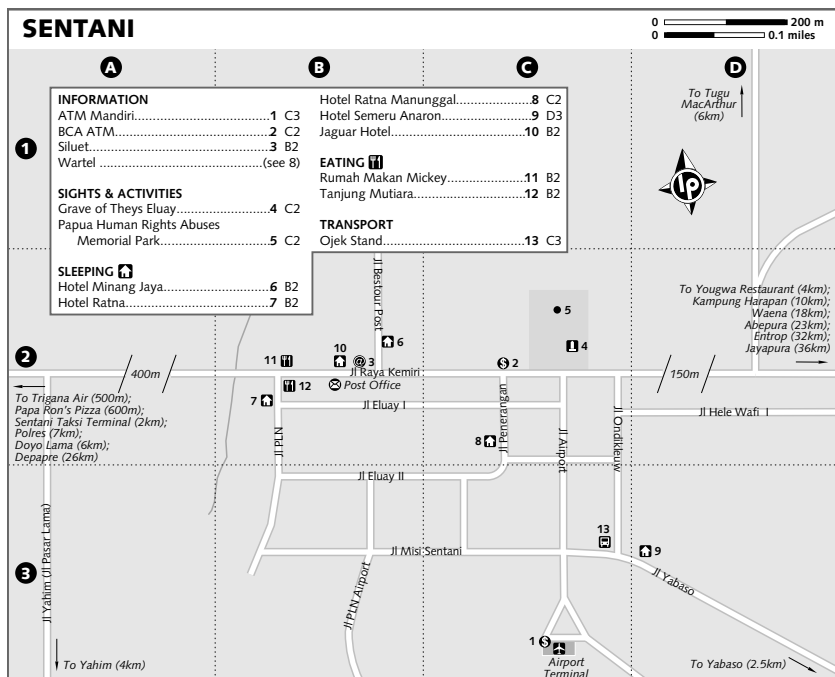
## SENTANI

☎ 0967

Sentani, the growing airport town 36km west of Jayapura, is a place you'll almost certainly pass through on your Papuan travels and also an interesting spot to base yourself for a couple of days. Set between the forested Pegunungan Cyclop and beautiful Danau Sentani, it's quieter, cooler and more convenient than Jayapura and has most of the facilities you'll need.

## Orientation & Information

The older area, near the airport, has wide, tree-lined streets. West along very busy Jl Raya Kemiri is the much busier part of town where most of the inhabitants and local com-





## THEYS ELUAY

Right by the junction of Jl Airport and the main road in Sentani, where no arriving visitor can miss it, a former football field is now the **Papua Human Rights Abuses Memorial Park** (Jl Raya Kemiri). This contains nothing but the grave and memorial of the Papuan independence leader Theys Eluay, a Danau Sentani tribal chief, who was murdered in November 2001 by members of the Indonesian army's Kopassus special forces. Eluay was chairman of the Papua Council Presidium, which had been delegated by the Papua People's Congress of mid-2000 to seek a UN-sponsored referendum on Papuan independence. He was strangled while travelling in a car with Kopassus soldiers, who later received light sentences for the crime (3½ years' jail for their leader). The death triggered riots in Sentani, and thousands attended Eluay's funeral here.

dollars are found. If you need to change cash locally, you must go to Jayapura.

**ATM Mandiri** (airport) Outside the arrivals hall, this dispenses convenient cash to Visa and Plus cards.

**BCA ATM** (Bank Central Asia; Jl Raya Kemiri) Good for Visa, Plus, MasterCard and Cirrus.

**Polres** (☎ 591 110; Jl Yowanibi, Doyo Baru; ✉ officially 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) This police station 5km west of Sentani takes about an hour to issue a *surat jalan* for the Baliem Valley area. An *ojek* from Sentani costs around 10,000Rp.

**Siluet** (Jl Raya Kemiri 60; internet access per hr 8000Rp; ✉ 8am-10pm) Has four computers.

**Wartel** (Hotel Ratna Manunggal, Jl Penerangan;

✉ 7am-1am) Convenient spot to make phone calls.

## Festivals

The **Lake Sentani Cultural & Art Festival**, for a few days around 20 June, was only inaugurated in 2008 but promises to be well worth attending. Music, dance, art and crafts of the lake peoples and nearby coastal communities are featured.

## Sleeping

**Hotel Minang Jaya** (☎ 591 919; Jl Bestour Post 2; r 120,000-140,000Rp; ⚠) Rooms are rather dark and far past their prime, but the hotel is kept reasonably clean. The cheapest rooms share *mandis*; the most expensive have air-con. A small breakfast is included.

**Hotel Semeru Anaron** (☎ 591 447; Jl Yabaso 10; r 150,000-250,000Rp; ⚠) The best-value cheapie, and very convenient to the airport. Rooms are slightly worn, but clean and comfortable. Breakfast is do-and-brew yourself.

**Hotel Ratna Manunggal** (☎ 592 277; fax 582 340; Jl Penerangan 2; s/d incl breakfast from 225,000/275,000Rp; ⚠) A decently kept and run, if rather soulless hotel, this has big, blue, clean, air-con rooms, with *mandis* and sit-down toilets.

**our pick Hotel Ratna** (Hotel Ratna Keyko; ☎ 591 119; fax 594 449; Jl PLN 1; s/d incl breakfast 250,000/280,000Rp;

⚠) The Ratna's rooms are very clean and comfortable and mostly good-sized, with cable TV and homey touches. Most of the efficient, friendly staff speak English, and the standard is the best in Sentani for the price, though the showers aren't heated. Dinners (20,000Rp to 35,000Rp) are available and airport drop-offs are free.

**Jaguar Hotel** (☎ 510 0201; Jl Raya Kemiri; r 250,000-350,000Rp; ⚠) A friendly new place with just six freshly painted rooms, all equipped with air-con, hot showers and TV. Cake-and-tea breakfast included.

**Yougwa Restaurant** (Map p795; ☎ 571 570; Jl Raya Kemiri; r incl breakfast 262,000-523,000Rp; ⚠) This excellent lakeside restaurant (below) has four sparkling guest rooms, with their own bathrooms and balconies over the lake.

## Eating

**Tanjung Mutiara** (Jl Raya Kemiri; mains 10,000-25,000Rp; ✉ 7am-7pm) Tasty Padang *nasi campur* in clean premises under cooling fans. You can easily fill up for 25,000Rp.

**Rumah Makan Mickey** (☎ 591 339; Jl Raya Kemiri 49; mains 12,000-40,000Rp; ✉ 9am-2.30pm & 5-9.30pm) Brightly painted, diner-style Mickey remains the most popular place for travellers and expats. The big range of Indonesian, Chinese and Western-style dishes is good on quantity but ordinary on flavour.

**our pick Yougwa Restaurant** (Map p795; ☎ 571 570; Jl Raya Kemiri; mains 30,000-45,000Rp; ✉ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat, 11am-5pm Sun & holidays) Sentani's most charming dining is on the Yougwa's breezy wooden terraces over the lakeside 4km east of town. Try the *ikan gabus* (snakehead), a lake fish that doesn't fill your mouth with little bones. While here you can take a trip in the Yougwa's sturdy motorboat (holding half a dozen passengers) with a knowledgeable driver-cum-guide, for a reasonable 200,000Rp per hour.



**Papa Ron's Pizza** (☎ 591 944; Sentani City Square Mall, Jl Raya Kemiri 286; medium pizzas 45,000-70,000Rp; 🕒 10am-10pm) Wouldn't mind a familiar feed after trekking in the mountains? You might just have to head to this unashamedly Western-style joint inside Papua's glitziest mall. No pig products among the toppings, but there are plenty of tempting options – and a decent salad bar (23,000Rp).

### Getting There & Around

See p791 for information on flights from Sentani and p792 for transport between Sentani, Jayapura and intermediate points.

A taxi from the airport to most Sentani hotels costs 20,000Rp, but you can easily walk or hop an *ojek* (5000Rp).

Public *taksi* (3000 Rp) marked 'Trm Sentani-Hawai' shuttle up and down Jl Raya Kemiri between their terminal at the western end of town and the Hawai area out east.

### AROUND JAYAPURA & SENTANI

☎ 0967

Several interesting places around Jayapura and Sentani can be easily visited on day trips from either town. For details on transport along the Sentani–Jayapura road, see p792.

### Pantai Base G

Base G Beach (also known as Pantai Tanjung Ria) is nearly 3km long and desolate – except on Sunday, when locals come in droves for a picnic and walk. It's the best beach easily accessible from Jayapura. Here was established the administrative HQ of the American forces in 1944. Frequent 'Base G' *taksi* start from Jl Sam Ratulangi in Jayapura for the 5km trip to Tanjung Ria; the beach is a 10-minute walk down the hill.

### Hamadi

Hamadi, 3km south of central Jayapura, has several specialist **Papuan craft shops** (🕒 daily) along its main street, Jl Pasar Hamadi. The drums, statues, shields, stone axes, arrows, bark paintings and penis gourds – some mass-produced for a tourist market – are from many parts of Papua and even PNG. Hamadi's daily **fish market** is down a side street 300m further south.

**Pantai Hamadi**, site of one of the US amphibious landings on 22 April 1944, is another 2km south. The beach is long, sweeping and picturesque, but it's far from secluded and

fairly dirty. The remains of two landing craft and one tank sit on pedestals at its near end. It's 500m off the Hamadi–Entrop road, along a side road starting beside a large navy barracks (where you may have to show a copy of your *surat jalan*).

*Taksi* head to Hamadi (2500Rp) from Jl Koti in Jayapura every few seconds; you can also catch one from the terminal at Entrop. From Hamadi to the barracks, take an Entrop-bound *taksi* or an *ojek*.

### Temples

Halfway along the road between Entrop and Abepura, it's worth stopping for a look around two huge temples – if mainly for the magnificent views of Teluk Yotefa. The Balinese Hindu **Pura Agung Surya Bhuvana** (admission free; 🕒 daylight hours), on the inland side of the road, is architecturally nothing special, but the vistas are more than enough reason to visit. About 300m further down the road towards Abepura, the Buddhist **Vihara Arya Dharma** is signposted to the left at a sharp right turn. Again, it wasn't built in any special style, but the setting and views are worth the steep 400m walk up from the road.

### Museum Loka Budaya

Cenderawasih University's **Cultural Museum** (☎ 581 227; Jl Abepura, Abepura; admission 5000Rp; 🕒 8am-3pm Sun-Fri) contains a fascinating range of Papuan artefacts between 80 and 300 years old, including the best collection of Asmat carvings and 'devil-dance' costumes outside Agats, plus fine crafts from several other areas, historical photos and musical instruments. With luck you'll be guided round by an English-speaking staff member and learn a lot about Papuan culture. The museum is 250m west of the main-road *taksi* stop in Abepura.

### Danau Sentani

You get a bird's-eye view of 96.5 sq km Danau Sentani, snaking its way between picturesque green hills, if you fly in or out of Sentani. Down at water level, this beautiful lake, with its 19 islands and numerous Papuan fishing villages of wooden stilt houses, is well worth a day or two of your time. A visit to any of the islands or villages is quite a change of pace – in fact, it's a bit like travelling back in time.



### PULAU ASEI

Asei Island is the main centre for Sentani bark paintings. Originally done only on bark clothing for women of chiefs' families, bark paintings are now a Sentani art form. To reach Asei, take a *taksi* to Kampung Harapan, then an *ojek* 2km south to the lake, where you can get a boat to the island – 20,000Rp per person if there's one going anyway, or 150,000Rp for a round-trip charter.

### YABASO

An inexpensive way to explore the lake is to stroll 3km southeast along Jl Yabaso from the airport gate in Sentani. The road (then path) goes through Yabaso village and continues around the lake past several villages.

### BABRONGKO

Babrongko village's woodcarvers produce beautifully worked knives, dishes, masks and drums. At the western end of the village you'll find the **Sanggar Kegiatan** (Craft Workshop) where locals learn the carving art and sell some work: you can pick up a nice piece for 100,000Rp to 200,000Rp.

From Sentani, take an *ojek* (5000Rp) or *bemo* (4000Rp) south along Jl Yahim to Yahim (4km), where boatmen will take you across to Babrongko for around 250,000Rp round-trip (about 30 minutes each way plus waiting time).

### DOYO LAMA

This village sits on its own bay 6km west of Sentani. On the right as you enter Doyo Lama you'll see the entrance to **Situs Megalitik Tutari** (Tutari Megalithic Site; admission free). This mysterious hillside site comprises various arrangements of rocks and stones and dozens of rock paintings of fish, turtles, crocodiles and lizards, all of uncertain age but still considered sacred by the villagers. The stones and paintings are in six different fenced areas, all reached by a good 1km concrete path. Try to recruit a local to show you everything and explain some of its significance.

Public *taksi* to Doyo Lama (5000Rp) go infrequently from the terminal in Sentani. *Ojek* riders charge 6000Rp to 8000Rp one way.

## Tugu MacArthur

For breathtaking views of Danau Sentani, head up to the **MacArthur Monument** (admission 5000Rp) on the flank of Gunung Ifar. This was where General Douglas MacArthur set up his headquarters after his US forces took Jayapura (then called Hollandia) in April 1944. According to legend, the view of the Sentani islands inspired his island-hopping strategy to reconquer the southwest Pacific. Today the site is occupied by a small monument and a room with displays on the American and Japanese participation in the fighting.

The 6km road up to the monument starts from the Jayapura road, 700m east of Jl Airport in Sentani. Public *taksi* may go up on Sunday, but otherwise you need to charter a *taksi* from Sentani, or an *ojek* (30,000Rp roundtrip) from the bottom of the access road. Halfway up, you must show your *surat jalan* or passport at a military checkpoint.

## Depapre

Set on Teluk Tanah Merah about 26km west of Sentani, under the dramatic, jungle-clad hills of Pegunungan Cyclop, this fishing village gives access to probably the best beach in the area. **Pantai Harlem**, about a 30-minute boat ride out along the bay, has beautiful white sands backed by jungle, and a coral reef good for snorkelling. It gets a few visitors at weekends but is never anything like crowded. Boats from Depapre's pier will carry you there for around 250,000Rp return. **Pantai Amai**, nearer to Depapre, is cheaper to reach but less appealing, with grey sand and a concrete boardwalk.

Public *taksi* to Depapre (5000Rp, 45 minutes) leave when full from the *taksi* terminal in western Sentani. It's a pretty ride.

## PULAU BIAK

☎ 0981

Sitting in the north of the broad Teluk Cenderawasih, Biak (1898 sq km) is one of Papua's biggest offshore islands. It's a relaxed place to chill out for a few days with, even by Papuan standards, exceptionally friendly people, and has good beaches and snorkelling spots. The coral reefs and beautiful beaches of the offshore Padaido Islands provide diving and further snorkelling opportunities.

Biak was the scene of fierce fighting in WWII, with over 6000 Japanese and nearly 500 Americans killed in the month-long Battle of Biak in 1944.

## Kota Biak

pop 42,000

This main town is the obvious base from which to explore the island, with all the facilities you'll require.

### ORIENTATION

A lot of what you'll need is in a fairly compact area within a long block either side of the main street, Jl Imam Bonjol, which has plenty of eateries, banks and supermarkets. The road in from the airport, starting as Jl Prof M Yamin then becoming Jl Yani, intersects with Jl Imam Bonjol after 3km.

### INFORMATION

**Bank Mandiri** (cnr Jl Imam Bonjol & Jl Yani; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) Will exchange US\$100 notes and has an ATM for Visa and Plus cards.

**Biak Paradise Tours & Travel** (☎ 23196; www.discoverpapua.com; Hotel Arumbai, Jl Selat Makassar 3; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) This efficient, well-established tour agency can set up just about any trip you want, not only around Biak but throughout Papua. Manager Benny Lesomar speaks excellent English and is a valuable source of information.

**BNI bank** (Jl Imam Bonjol 23; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Changes US\$100 notes and the ATM accepts most international cards.

**DiBiak.com** (Jl Sudirman 4; internet access per hr 9000Rp; ☎ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 4-9pm Sun) Popular internet centre with quite speedy connections in heavenly air-con comfort.

**Janggi Prima Tours & Travel** (☎ 22973; cme\_pino@yahoo.co.id; Jl Pramuka 5) This experienced one-man show can take you on a range of trips around Biak and Yapen islands, including snorkelling and birdwatching.

**Police station** (☎ 21294; Jl Diponegoro 3; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) *Surat jalan* are issued in an hour or so here. For Biak you only need one if you stay on an offshore island or go to neighbouring Pulau Supiori.

**Tourist office** (☎ 21663; Jl Prof M Yamin 56; ☎ 7.30am-2pm Mon-Fri) Two kilometres from the centre along the airport road. It has a brochure and staff do their best to answer queries.

### ACTIVITIES

Though Biak has been overshadowed by the Raja Ampat islands as a scuba destination, there is still some good **diving** and **snorkelling** to be done here. In general you'll see the biggest numbers of fish in May, June and July. Some fishermen don't help by continuing to practise dynamite and cyanide fishing.



and cold showers, while superior rooms have bathtubs, hot water, carpets and carved wood furniture. The air-con leaves many rooms in need of a good breath of fresh air.

**Padaido Hotel** (☎ 22144; Jl Monginsidi 16; s/d 250,000/270,000Rp; 🏠) Has just five immaculate, cheery little rooms with their own terraces overlooking a small harbour.

**Intsia Beach Hotel** (☎ 21891; Jl Monginsidi 7; s 250,000-300,000Rp, d 350,000-400,000Rp; 🏠) Rates at this ocean-front spot include three home-cooked meals per day. All rooms have hot showers and air-con, but the 'deluxe' ones, set round grassy gardens, are much nicer.

## EATING

Apart from hotel meals, you have the choice of half a dozen *rumah makan* (eating houses) along Jl Imam Bonjol, plus scattered other options.

**our pick** **Rumah Makan Jawa Timur** (☎ 22544; Jl Imam Bonjol 37; mains 12,000-30,000Rp; 🏠) The pick of the Imam Bonjol joints, this place serves excellent Javanese food. It's hard to beat the options that combine rice, *pecel* (a spicy peanut sauce with spinach and bean sprouts) with

fish, chicken or prawns. You can dine in the large air-con room for an extra 25% to 30% on the prices.

**Furama Restaurant** (☎ 22022; Jl Yani 22; mains 25,000-70,000Rp; 🏠) This slightly more upmarket place on the eastern side of town offers Chinese as well as Indonesian dishes and has an air-con room and outdoor cafe as well as the regular dining room.

**Rumah Makan Cinta Rasa Baru** (Jl Yani; fish dishes 40,000Rp) The *ikan bakar*, grilled over red-hot embers outside the door, goes down very well and comes with rice and spicy sauces.

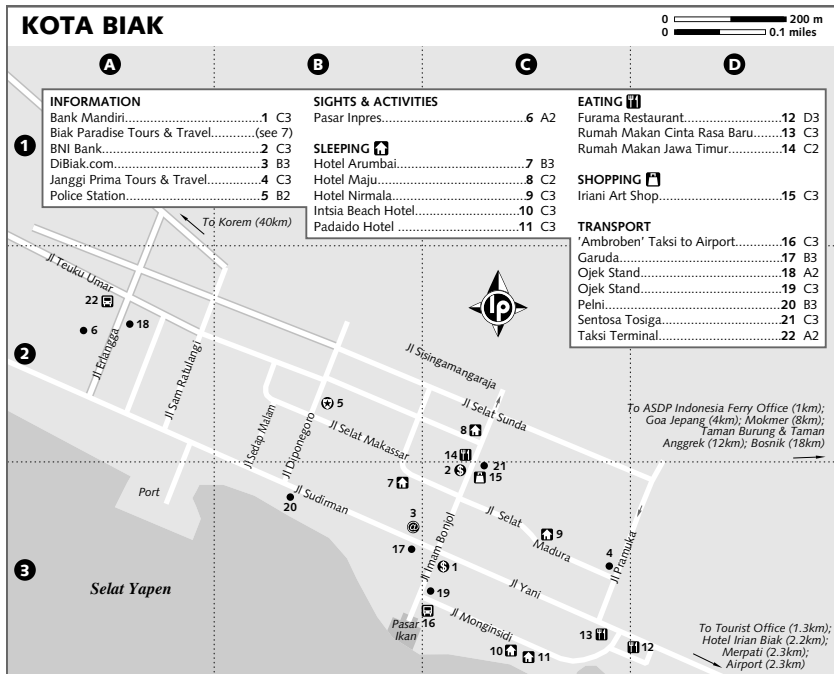
## SHOPPING

**Iriani Art Shop** (☎ 21457; Jl Imam Bonjol 40; 🕒 8am-2pm & 5-9pm) This enticing shop carries a good selection of Papuan drums and carvings – some of them produced locally on Biak or Yapen – at reasonable fixed prices.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

### Air

**Garuda** (☎ 25737; Jl Sudirman 3; 🕒 7.30am-9pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon & 5-9pm Sat & Sun) flies daily to Jayapura, Makassar and Jakarta and has an appealingly



air-conditioned, computerised downtown office. **Merpati** (☎ 24900; Jl Prof M Yamin; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10-2pm Sat & Sun) flies daily to Jayapura and Makassar, four times a week to Jakarta and twice weekly to Manokwari. Its office is opposite the airport, so you may find it easier to use one of the town-centre ticket agencies. Susi Air flies every morning to Serui (900,000Rp): buy tickets at **Sentosa Tosiga** (☎ 21398; Jl Imam Bonjol 42; ☎ 8am-8pm Mon-Sat, 8am-noon & 5-8pm Sun).

## Boat

**Pelni** (☎ 23255/6; Jl Sudirman 37; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) has three liners serving Biak. The *Sinabung* (every two weeks) and *Gunung Dempo* (every four weeks) head to Jayapura (1st/economy class 495,000/174,000Rp), via Serui in the *Sinabung*'s case. Westbound, both ships, as well as the *Nggapulu* (every two weeks), go to Sorong (820,000/263,000Rp) – *Gunung Dempo* direct, *Sinabung* via Manokwari (300,000/110,000Rp), and *Nggapulu* via Serui, Nabire and Manokwari – and then on to Maluku.

Two ships of **ASDP Indonesia Ferry** (☎ 22577; Jl Bosnik Raya 38; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) make weekly trips from Biak to ports around Teluk Cenderawasih. The *Gutilla* sails to Serui (economy/business class 58,000/82,000Rp) and beyond, usually departing on Friday afternoon. The *Teluk Cenderawasih II* leaves on Tuesday afternoon for Pulau Numfor and Manokwari (88,000Rp). The office is on the eastern edge of Kota Biak, but the boats leave from Mokmer, about 8km east.

## Taksi

Public *taksi* to places around the island leave from the terminal on Jl Erlangga, next to Pasar Inpres. On most routes service winds down in the afternoon. Blue *taksi* to Bosnik (5000Rp, 30 to 40 minutes), passing Mokmer and Taman Burung, normally go every few minutes. *Taksi* to Anggaduber (9000Rp, one hour) normally go at least hourly. There are also *taksi* up Biak's east coast to Warsa (10,000Rp, two hours) via Korem.

## GETTING AROUND

Yellow public *taksi* (2500Rp) going to the right (west) outside the airport terminal head to the town centre. Returning, take one marked 'Ambroben' from the corner of Jl Imam Bonjol and Jl Monginsidi or heading east along Jl Yani. *Ojek* drivers charge 5000Rp for rides in town.

## Around Pulau Biak & Nearby Islands

Many interesting places are dotted around Pulau Biak, and roads circle the island. Public *taksi* and buses (left) reach most places, but you can make things easier by chartering a car or *ojek*, or taking a trip with Janggi Prima (p796) or Biak Paradise (p796). A three-person outing to the main sites east of Kota Biak as far as Anggaduber with Janggi Prima will cost approximately 600,000Rp to 750,000Rp.

Remember that villages on the island may look biggish on a map, but most are little more than a handful of huts, with no accommodation or food for travellers.

## GOA JEPANG

The **Japanese Cave** (☎ 26641; Jl Goa Jepang 47; admission incl museum 20,000Rp; ☎ 7am-5pm), 4km north-east of Kota Biak, was used as a base and hideout in WWII by thousands of Japanese soldiers. A tunnel from the cave is said to lead 3km to the coast at Parai, another Japanese base. In 1944, an estimated 3000 Japanese died when US forces located the cave, dropped petrol drums into it and then bombarded it from above.

From the end of a concrete walkway, steps lead down into the biggest cave, with a small tunnel off one chamber that led to the officers' quarters below. In and around the ticket office, and in a small museum over the road, is a remarkable collection of Japanese and US weapons, equipment and photos.

An *ojek* from town costs 10,000Rp. Sumberker-bound public *taksi* from the Inpres terminal (2500Rp) can drop you at the cave, or you can take a more frequent Bosnik *taksi* and ask to be dropped at the unsigned road that leads 700m up to the cave. At the top of a steepish uphill bit after 300m, you pass a Japanese gun emplacement overlooking the airport, which was the focus of all the fighting.

## TAMAN BURUNG & TAMAN ANGGREK

At Ibdi, 12km east of downtown Kota Biak, the **Bird & Orchid Garden** (Jl Raya Bosnik km 12; admission 10,000Rp; ☎ 7am-6pm) contains a sizeable collection of (caged) Papuan birds, including strikingly coloured lorries, hornbills, cockatoos and birds of paradise, as well as dozens of types of orchid. Several semi-tame cassowaries roam freely, so keep your eyes peeled.



**BOSNIK**

Bosnik, 18km from Kota Biak, is a laid-back village strung along the coast for 2km, where you could happily base yourself for a relaxing few days. The site of the US landing in 1944, today Bosnik holds a busy little morning **market** every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. The best section of the beach is **Pantai Segara Indah** at the eastern end, with good sand, shelters (30,000Rp per day) and some coloured coral offshore. It's virtually empty weekdays.

**Guest House Beach Bosnik** (☎ 81078; Jl Bosnik Raya; s 100,000Rp, d 150,000-250,000Rp; ♿), about 500m east of the market, has half a dozen spotless upstairs rooms, four of them air-conditioned and two with private bathroom, in a sturdy brick-and-ironwood house facing the sea. Owner Agustina speaks English, rates include breakfast and other meals are available.

About 100m further east, little **Warung Pareke** (mains 10,000-30,000Rp) will do you good noodle or rice dishes or *ikan bakar*, and has homemade doughnuts for breakfast.

**EAST OF BOSNIK**

The road turns inland just before Opiaref, 3km east of Bosnik, but you can continue on foot 6km along the coast through Opiaref to Marau, Saba and Wadibu, where a road heads about 500m inland to rejoin the Anggaduber road. **Pantai Marau** is overlooked by the shell of a large luxury hotel built by 'Tommy' Suharto in the early 1990s. The hotel closed when Garuda's Los Angeles-Biak-Jakarta flights ceased in 1997. It continues to disintegrate by the day as villagers strip it of all usable materials. The coral and fish in front of the beach make for good snorkelling and diving, as do the rocky islets in front of and beyond the next village east, **Saba**.

Bosnik-route *taksi* from Kota Biak usually go as far as the Opiaref turning. Or you could take an Anggaduber *taksi* and walk 1km down to Marau or Saba from the main road.

**Anggaduber**, 3km beyond Wadibu, is an attractive village with grass-lawned houses and a good, palm-lined, sandy beach. The snorkelling is good along the first, western, part from where the road hits the coast.

**PADAIDO ISLANDS**

This lovely cluster of 36 reefs and islands (only 13 of them inhabited) makes for a great day trip from Kota Biak or Bosnik, and you

can stay over on some islands. Virtually all the islands have jungle-backed, white-sand beaches with crystal-clear waters, coral reefs and plenty of marine life. The best **snorkelling** spots include Pulau Wundi, which has particularly good coral and many fish near the surface; the eastern side of unpopulated Pulau Rurbas Kecil; Pulau Meoswarek; and Pulau Nusi. Top **diving** sites include the western end of Pulau Owi, with good coral and big fish; Pulau Rurbas Besar for coral, sharks, turtles, sea fans and more big fish; Pulau Wundi, with a cave, a long wall and good coral; and Barracuda Point, south of Pulau Meoswarek.

You can charter a boat from Bosnik for around 300,000Rp to 400,000Rp round-trip to Owi (just 2km from Bosnik), or 500,000Rp to Auki (5km), the two nearest and most populated islands. You can also find boats in Kota Biak, but they take longer and cost about twice as much.

Erick Farwas (p797) offers diving trips and also sightseeing-and-snorkelling trips, which are an attractive way for nondivers to explore the islands. In addition, Farwas has a basic three-room **guest house** (r incl meals 150,000Rp) on Pulau Wundi.

If you plan to stay on the islands, the cheapest way to get there is from Bosnik on Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday, when islanders are returning from Bosnik market about 3pm or 4pm and you should be able to get a place in a boat for the local price of 30,000Rp to 50,000Rp. You can normally find accommodation in a village house or by asking the local churchkeeper – bring food and expect to pay 20,000Rp to 50,000Rp per night.

**KOREM**

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

**PULAU YAPEN**

☎ 0983

This elongated, mountainous, rainforest-covered island, south of Pulau Biak, offers the chance to see **birds of paradise** and superb



**snorkelling** in several spots. The only town of any size is the regency capital, Serui (population 25,000). A *surat jalan* for Yapen can be easily obtained in Kota Biak.

The lesser bird of paradise dwells near **Aikakoba** village, a 45-minute boat ride from Poom near the western end of the north coast. A trip by boat from Serui with a local guide and an overnight village stay should cost 1,000,000Rp to 1,500,000Rp for a small group. Alternatively, go by boat from Biak through one of Kota Biak's two travel agencies (p796). Another site for the lesser bird of paradise is **Barawai** in eastern Yapen. Around both places you should see a good number of other interesting birds such as hornbills, cockatoos and lorikeets.

Less than one hour south of Serui (you'll have to charter a boat), **Pulau Ambai** offers wonderful **snorkelling** (bring your own gear) among coral reefs and dolphins, and is home to thousands of cockatoos and hornbills.

Yapen's only hotels are in Serui:

**Bersaudara Hotel** (☎ 31123; Jl Sudirman 56; r 150,000Rp) Offers basic but clean rooms, without air-con.

**Hotel Merpati** (☎ 31154; Jl Yos Sudarso 8; r incl breakfast 180,000-300,000Rp; 🚻) Serui's best: staff are clued about transport arrangements, all rooms are air-conditioned, and lunch and dinner are available.

Susi Air flies daily between Biak and Serui, and ASDP Indonesia Ferry's *Gutilla* sails weekly from Biak to Serui and back (see p799 for further information). Pelni's *Sinabung* sails from Sorong to Jayapura via Manokwari, Biak and Serui, and vice versa, every two weeks. The *Dorolonda* and *Nggapulu* also call at Serui.

## THE BALIEM VALLEY

The Baliem Valley (Lembah Baliem in Bahasa Indonesia) is the most popular destination in Papua and the most accessible place in the interior. The Dani people who live here were still dependent on tools of stone, bone and wood when the first white men (a natural-history expedition led by American Richard Archbold) chanced upon the valley in 1938. The Dani have since adopted various modern ways and new beliefs, but the valley remains one of the world's last truly fascinating, traditional areas.

The valley is about 60km long and 16km wide and bounded by high mountains on all

sides. Wamena sits at its centre at an altitude of 1550m. The powerful Sungai Baliem running through the valley escapes through a narrow gorge at the southern end, then drops about 1500m in less than 50km on its way to Papua's southern coast. Amid this spectacular scenery, the majority of the Dani still live close to nature, tending their vegetable plots and pigs, around villages composed of circular thatched huts called *honai*.

The first Christian missionaries arrived in 1954 (missionary activity is still a big feature of highland life today), and a Dutch government post was established in Wamena in 1956. These days, Indonesia has added its own brand of colonialism, bringing schools, police, soldiers, shops, motor vehicles and becaks to the valley, though the local culture has in many ways proved resilient. Tensions between Papuans and non-Papuans sometimes erupt into violence – notably during a large-scale highland uprising in 1977 and again in 2000 when clashes led to a temporary exodus of non-Papuans.

### Climate & When To Go

In the drier months from May to November, most days are fine and warm and the evenings cool. From December to April you can still trek, but more mud and rain can make it harder work. At all times of year, you should be prepared for rain, and always take cold-weather gear for higher areas, such as Danau Habbema. During the busiest tourism season, July and August, the Baliem Valley can be quite busy with groups of tourists and trekkers.

### Travel Permit

You must have a *surat jalan* (p778) for Wamena and the Baliem Valley. If you're going beyond the main Baliem Valley (for example to Danau Habbema or the Yali or Lani country) make sure your *surat jalan* covers this. You can obtain your *surat jalan* at Sentani (p793) or Jayapura (p790). The Wamena police (p803) will also issue one if you haven't already got it. If you already have a *surat jalan* when you arrive in Wamena you must report to the police there within 24 hours.

In the countryside, you should show your *surat jalan* to police stations or village authorities if you *stay* (ie not visit on a day trip) anywhere outside Wamena.



valley. The population is a mix of Papuans and non-Papuans and there's little that's traditional about it. Penis gourds are no longer banned here, as they were during Indonesia's 'Operasi Koteka' in the 1970s, but rarely will you see one being worn.

Wamena is expensive by Indonesian standards, since almost everything has been flown in from Sentani, and much of it has been shipped to Jayapura first.

## Information

No banks exchange foreign cash or travellers cheques, but two ATMs accept international cards. Wartel are dotted along Jl Trikora.

**Bank Mandiri** (Jl Trikora 92) ATM for Visa, Visa Electron and Plus.

**BRI bank** (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; cnr Jl Yos Sudarso & Jl Trikora) The ATM accepts MasterCard, Maestro and Cirrus.

**Papua.com** (☎ /fax 34488; fuj0627@yahoo.co.jp; Jl Ahmad Yani 49; internet access per hr 15,000Rp; ☎ 9am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 1-8.30pm Sun) Busy, efficient internet cafe that also functions as an informal tourist-information centre. Owner Kazutaka 'Fuji' Fujiwara is a highly experienced Papua traveller and a willing mine of information.

**Police station** (☎ 31972; Jl Safrir Darwin; ☎ 9am-3pm Mon-Sat, 3-5pm Sun) For reporting on arrival or issuing a *surat jalan*, they can often attend you outside regular hours.

**Rumah Sakit Umum** (☎ 31152; Jl Trikora 9) If you need a hospital you'll get a minimum of care here.

**Tourist office** (☎ 31365; Jl Yos Sudarso 73; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) About 2.5km from central Wamena; staff have little on-the-ground knowledge of the area.

## THE DANI

Several groups in the Baliem Valley come under the umbrella name 'Dani', a partly pejorative term given by neighbouring tribes. The Dani are friendly but can be shy. Long handshakes allowing time to really feel the other's hand are common.

Most Dani speak Bahasa Indonesia but appreciate a greeting in their own language. Around Wamena, the general greeting is *la'uk* to one person, and *la'uk nyak* to more than one – except that men say *nyak* to one other man and *nyak lak* to more than one man.

Many Dani men still wear a penis sheath (*horin* in Dani, *koteka* in Bahasa Indonesia), made from a cultivated gourd and held upright by a thread looped around the waist or chest. These guys generally wear little else apart from a few neck, head or arm adornments made from feathers, shells or bones. Other Dani men now prefer T-shirts and trousers or shorts. Very few women now go bare-breasted, though some still sport the traditional skirts of grass for unmarried women or fibre coils for married women. Women often carry string bags around their heads, often heavily laden with vegetables, babies or even pigs. Some Dani wear pig fat in their hair and cover their bodies in pig fat and soot for warmth. Most men, and some women, are enthusiastic smokers.

Many Dani now consider themselves Christian and one traditional pastime that has gone out of the window is village warfare. Dani villages used to go to war with each other over land disputes, wife stealing and even pig stealing, with combat taking place in brief, semi-ritualised clashes (with deaths and woundings nevertheless). Today such quarrels are settled by other, usually legal means. (The last village conflict took place in 1988–89 over a land dispute between Wouma and Walesi.)

Villages are still mostly composed of extended-family compounds each containing a few *honai* (circular thatched-roof huts). The men sleep apart from the women and children in a dedicated men's hut, visiting the women's huts only for sex. After a birth, sex is taboo for the mother for two to five years, apparently to give the child exclusive use of her milk. Perhaps because of this, many Dani are still polygamous – a man may have as many wives as he can afford the standard bride price of four or five pigs for, and his social status is measured partly by the number of wives and pigs he has. Dani life expectancy is around 60 years, relatively high among traditional people.

One of the more unusual (and now prohibited) Dani customs is to amputate one or two joints of a woman's finger when a close relative dies – you'll see many older women with fingers missing up to their second joint.

One thing that hasn't changed and probably never will is the Dani's love for the sweet potato, grown on extensive plots and terraces all over the valley.



**Hotel Wamena** (☎ 31292; fax 32715; Jl Homhom 61; r incl breakfast 300,000-350,000Rp) Worth considering for some seclusion, 1km north of Jl Patimura. The rooms around the little central garden are clean and decent, though their bathrooms need some work.

**Baliem Pilamo Hotel** (☎ 31043; fax 31798; Jl Trikora 114; r incl breakfast 350,000-460,000Rp) The efficiently run Pilamo makes an effort towards charm with a couple of pretty garden-courtyards. The more expensive rooms have surprising garden-style bathrooms too! The cheaper, TV-less rooms are still a reasonable deal, with hot showers. The restaurant (mains 25,000Rp to 95,000Rp) is one of the best in Wamena, and the included breakfast is an excellent buffet-style affair.

**Baliem Valley Resort** (www.baliem-valley-resort.de; s/d €100/110) This surprising hotel occupies a gorgeous position in the eastern hills, about a 15km drive from Wamena, with 14 large, rustic-style but very comfortable guest cottages in picturesque grounds. A superb collection of Papuan (especially Asmat) art adorns the semi-open-air dining hall. The German owner has a wealth of Papua expertise, and a variety of excursions and expeditions are on offer. Meals are €8 to €10.

## Eating

The local delicacies are goldfish (*ikan mas* in Bahasa Indonesia) – far larger than the variety found in your goldfish bowl – and prawns (*udang*), which are more like crayfish. Both are expensive and sometimes in short supply, however.

**Restaurant Mas Budi** (☎ 31214; Jl Patimura 32; mains 20,000-80,000Rp) The food and service are commendable, and the place is deservedly popular, though the menu is fairly standard, ranging from rice and noodle dishes to chicken and fish.

**Rumah Makan Remuja** (☎ 34400; Jl Safri Darwin; mains 25,000-35,000Rp) One of the best cheaper places, with duck on offer as well as chicken, fish and *nasi goreng*.

**Restoran Blambangan** (☎ 32444; Jl Trikora 99; mains 25,000-150,000Rp) Has a pleasant ambience and a typical Indonesian-Chinese menu of reasonably well-done dishes, from inexpensive fried rice to expensive fish or prawns. It serves beer.

## Entertainment

Unbelievably, little, remote Wamena's Persiwa soccer team regularly occupies high placings in the Indonesia Super League. They are

almost unbeatable in their home games at **Stadion Pendidikan** (Jl Panjaitan) – partly thanks to Wamena's altitude!

## Shopping

Though they aren't woodcarvers, the Dani are still fine craftspeople, especially in the arts of body adornment. Generally, it's cheaper to buy in the villages, but it's also worth checking out prices at Pasar Jibama (Pasar Baru) or the handful of craft shops on Jl Trikora north of Jl Ambon. Traders also hang around the doorways of hotels and restaurants. Bargaining is expected.

The cost of stone axe blades (*kapak* in the Dani language) can vary from 45,000Rp to 500,000Rp or more, depending on the size and the labour involved; bluestone is considered the finest material and is more expensive. *Noken*, costing from about 25,000Rp to 100,000Rp, are string bags made from the inner bark of certain trees and shrubs, which is dried, shredded and then rolled into thread. The bags are coloured with vegetable dyes, resulting in a strong smell.

Other handicrafts include necklaces, pectorals and armbands (*mikak*) of cowrie shells, carved stone, feathers, bone or pig tusks; grass skirts (*jogal* and *thali*); carved spears and arrows; and assorted head decorations (*suale*), which may be made of cassowary feathers and topped off with the tusks of a wild pig. Asmat and PNG artefacts are also available in the souvenir shops.

Of course, the most popular souvenir is the penis gourd. These cost from 5000Rp to 60,000Rp depending on size, materials and negotiation!

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

Flights are often heavily booked, especially in August. Always allow a couple of days' leeway for possible flight delays due to poor weather or other causes.

The main carriers between Jayapura (Sentani) and Wamena are **Trigana Air** (☎ 31611; airport) and **Aviastar** (☎ 34872; airport). Both normally fly four or more times daily each way, charging 825,000Rp from Jayapura to Wamena but less than half that going 'downhill', when they carry much less cargo.

Aviastar also makes four or five daily scheduled flights to Dekai (1,200,000Rp), on Sungai Brazza about 100km southeast of Wamena.

**Merpati** (☎ 33707; Jl Trikora 104) flies once a week to Karubaga, Tiom and Mulia, northwest of Wamena; you need to book about a week ahead for these flights. **Susi Air** (☎ 32226; Jl Gatot Subroto) goes daily to Dekai (1,300,000Rp) and some days to Mulia.

Airlines frequently change schedules and add or cancel destinations – Merpati has at times flown between Wamena and Merauke, for example – so it's always worth checking the latest possibilities.

The mission airlines **AMA** (☎ 32400; Jl Gatot Subroto) and **MAF** (Jl Gatot Subroto) fly small planes to many small highland airstrips. Tourists are not their priority but they may carry tourists if seats are available. Contact them as soon as you reach Wamena if you're interested. There is generally more chance of seats flying back to Wamena from villages than for outbound flights. As a rule MAF doesn't carry tourists outbound at all. AMA's one-way fare to Angguruk, for example, is around 2,000,000Rp. But fares from Angguruk to Wamena can be as low as 450,000Rp.

Charter flights are another possibility. Avistar does charters to places such as Merauke, Bokondini, Mulia and Karubaga. AMA and Merpati also sometimes do charters. You pay around 12,000,000Rp from Wamena to Angguruk or Kosarek for six or seven passengers.

### PUBLIC BEMO

Overcrowded bemos head out along the main roads from several starting points around Wamena. Most don't have schedules; they just leave when they are full. They get scarce after 3pm and are less plentiful on Sunday. Few villages or attractions are signposted, so ask your driver (or guide) to let you know where to get off.

Most bemos are coded with numbers and/or letters:

**Baliem Valley – northeast** These bemos leave from Terminal Jibama (right): 'MM' to Aikima (5000Rp, 15 minutes), 'KL' to Jiwika (7000Rp, 30 minutes), 'WL' to Wosilimo (13,000Rp, 40 minutes), 'TM' to Meagaima (20,000Rp, one hour), Manda (20,000Rp, one hour) and Wolo (25,000Rp, 1½ hours), and 'BT' to Bolokme (25,000Rp, 1½ hours) and Tagime (25,000Rp, 1¾ hours) at around 9am and 2pm. Bemos to Pass Valley (150,000Rp), Kelila (80,000Rp), Bokondini (130,000Rp) and Karubaga (250,000Rp) go some days from outside Bank Mandiri in the early morning (around 5am) – ask at least one day ahead about what is going and when.

**Baliem Valley – northwest** Bemos marked 'KMP' go to Kimbim (15,000Rp, 50 minutes) and Pyramid (20,000Rp, one hour) from Terminal Jibama. From the street opposite the market in Sinatma, bemos depart for Makki and Tiom as early as 3am (rarely later than 5am), and for Ibele (10,000Rp, one hour) until about noon.

**Baliem Valley – south** 'SG' bemos go to Sugokmo (15,000Rp, 30 minutes) from Terminal Misi (Jl Yani).

### CHARTERED BEMO

It is well worth considering chartering a bemo for about 100,000/600,000Rp per hour/day (probably more for remote and rougher roads) in order to avoid the public sardine-cans-on-wheels or to reach more remote places.

### OJEK

Typical one-way *ojek* prices for out-of-town destinations include 50,000Rp to Jiwika, 60,000Rp to Ibele, 80,000Rp to Wosilimo, 150,000Rp to Kimbim or Manda, and 250,000Rp to Bolokme.

### Getting Around

For longer trips around town, you can ride an *ojek* (10,000Rp) or a becak (3000Rp to 5000Rp). Becak don't run at night (or when it rains!) and they're not allowed along Jl Yos Sudarso at any time.

Bemos marked 'A2' (4000Rp) go along Jl Irian and up Jl Trikora to Terminal Jibama, 2km north of town beside Pasar Jibama (Pasar Baru) market. This is the main departure point for bemos up the eastern side of the Baliem Valley (see left).

### AROUND WAMENA

#### Wesaput

This pleasant little village is just across the airport runway from Wamena. Bemos marked 'A3' (4000Rp) run from Jl Timor in Wamena.

At the end of Jl Musium, 1.2km from the airport fence, is the **Palimo Adat Museum**. It's dusty and decrepit and has no regular opening hours, but if you arrive by about noon, Monday to Saturday, someone should be able to open it, show you round and make it very interesting. The collection covers the Dani, Lani and Yali peoples and ranges from skulls of tribal-war victims to penis gourds, stone axes, musical instruments, rattan armour and specialised arrows for hunting different types of prey. Give a donation.



At the back of the museum is the nearest **hanging bridge** to Wamena. Strung across Sungai Baliem, it's 90m long.

## Pugima

The mostly flat trail beyond the Wesaput bridge leads in one hour, past Dani farms and villages, to Pugima, which has a few Dani compounds (past the huge church). The scenery is magnificent and halfway along, behind a small lake, **Gua Pugima** is an eerie cave.

## Sinatma

At the end of Jl Yos Sudarso, about 3.5km west of central Wamena, Sinatma village has a busy daily **market**. Bemos marked 'A1' run to Sinatma (3000Rp) from Jl Timor in Wamena.

Facing back to Wamena from the crossroads by the market, take the street to the right and easy **walking trails** lead to the raging Sungai Wamena, some pretty Dani compounds and dense woodlands. A **hanging bridge** crosses the river near the small hydroelectric station further up the hill.

## BALIEM VALLEY – SOUTH

South of Wamena, the valley narrows and Sungai Baliem becomes a ferociously raging torrent known as the Baliem Falls. The dramatic scenery and traditional lifestyle of many villages down here make this the best trekking area, for anything up to a week's walking. Walking times in what follows are based on an average 'tourist pace', including a few stops.

The paved road ends at **Sugokmo**, a sizeable village 16km from Wamena with some traditional *honai*. It's a 20-minute walk from Sugokmo down to a hanging bridge over

the raging Baliem, beside which is a small **memorial** to a Japanese tourist and his Dani guide who drowned when a previous, less solid bridge collapsed. From the bridge a path leads along the east bank to the neat village of **Seima** (about two hours from Sugokmo), then climbs gradually to **Ugem** (two hours from Seima). Here the path turns east along the flank of the beautiful Mugi valley to **Hitugi**, about three hours from Ugem. You will meet groups of Yali heading to or from Wamena along this path.

Below Seima you can return to the west bank by another hanging bridge at **Kurima**, a pleasant, largish village with a police station, and accommodation in houses at the southern end of the village. There's a guest house at **Polimo**, a mission base on the hill just above Kurima.

Several trails fan out from Kurima. One follows the Baliem downstream to a hanging bridge, across which the trail veers into the Mugi valley and crosses Sungai Mugi on a fabulous hanging bridge constructed entirely of wood and natural twine. From this bridge you can continue to little **Syokosimo** (three to four hours from Kurima), which has two guest houses. Another route from Kurima (four to five hours) leads southwest over forested hills and down to **Tangma** in a deep side-valley, where you can stay in a church house (ask for Tinus Hese gem) or mission building. Or you can head one hour uphill south from Kurima to **Kilise**, a *honai* village with glorious views.

**our pick** **Alberth Elopore's guest house** in Kilise is one of the best in the area, with cosy *honai*-style huts and a wonderful grotto-like *kamar mandi*. Alberth is Kilise's *kepala desa*.

From Kilise it's half an hour south to Ibiroma, where you can descend to the Baliem bridge downstream of Kurima and continue to Syokosimo, or continue south to **Wamerek** in the lower Tangma valley (with accommodation), or cross over to Tangma itself. All these are about half a day's walk from Kilise.

A hanging bridge over Sungai Baliem below Wamerek leads to **Wesagalep**, high on the east bank, from which you can head north on an up-and-down trail to **Wuserem**. Both these stages are half-day to one-day walks and there is school or teacher-house accommodation in both villages. From Wuserem it's two to three hours round to Syokosimo, or five hours back to Kurima.

### HIGHLAND MARKETS

Highland markets can be good places to mingle with locals in a relaxed, quotidian setting. You can find souvenirs like the colourful *noken* (bark-string bags) that women sling over their foreheads, or pick up bundles of veggies for your trek.

There are daily markets at Sinatma and Pasar Jibama, both just outside Wamena. Markets in villages happen as and when people have stuff to sell and buy. Those in Jiwika and Kimbim usually happen every day, with bigger gatherings on Sunday and Saturday respectively.



## HIKING & TREKKING IN THE BALIEM VALLEY

You can see some sights without straying far from the main roads, but getting out along the paths brings you closer to the traditional Dani lifestyle. You'll find most of the people extraordinarily friendly. In a day you can climb narrow rainforest trails, stroll well-graded paths past sweet-potato terraces, wend through villages of thatched-roof *honai*, traverse hillsides where the only sounds are birds, wind and water far below, and cross rivers on hanging footbridges held together by natural twine.

The classic trekking area is in the south of the valley (p807), from Sugokmo down, with the branch valleys to the east and west. Beyond the reach of roads, Dani life here is still pretty traditional, the scenery gorgeous and the walking varied, and there's a good scattering of villages. This is also the jumping-off point for more demanding treks into the Yali country (p812). Another lightly trekked area is the Wedanku valley (p810). The Wolo Valley (p811) has beautiful scenery and pretty villages, though its culture is no longer very traditional. It's a similar case with the northwestern area around Bokondini and Karubaga, and the Lani country (p811) further west, though these are still good walking areas. The hike to or from Danau Habbema (p811) is another wonderful route.

A handful of maps is sometimes available in Wamena, but none is very detailed or more than partly accurate. Don't use them as substitutes for a knowledgeable guide.

### What to Bring

You'll need a sleeping bag and torch (flashlight); a mosquito net can be useful. Bring warm clothes, and something waterproof for when it rains. Cooking equipment will be provided by most guides. Villages can normally supply firewood for 10,000Rp. If you'll be camping, bring your own tent.

You have to carry at least some food with you from Wamena, where you can stock up at Pasar Misi or Pasar Jibama. Larger villages have kiosks selling basics like biscuits, noodles and rice (the final reliable supplies are at Manda and Kimbim in the north and Kurima in the south). You can obtain some other foods, such as sweet potatoes, other vegetables, fruit and eggs, locally. Start with a couple of bottles of drinking water before you get down to boiling the local stuff.

### Accommodation

Accommodation is available in just about every village. Some have dedicated guest houses, which could be in a mission building, or Dani-style huts erected by a local family. In other villages you can often stay in the teacher's house, the school or other houses. If necessary, ask the village police or the *kepala desa* where you can stay. You'll usually be asked between 50,000Rp and 80,000Rp per person. Blankets and a mat to go under your sleeping bag will probably be provided, and your hosts can boil water for drinking. Sleeping on the floor of a Dani *honai* can be cheaper but is a last resort, as they are insect havens. Make sure you've been invited before entering a compound or hut. If you have to overnight between villages, there are a few basic shelters on some routes, but you'll be cold without a tent.

### Guides & Porters

For hiking off the main roads or paths, a guide is essential. Guides can help you decide where to go, facilitate communication with locals, find places to stay, and explain the local customs and ecology – and you'll get to know a local person.

Finding a reliable guide may be the biggest challenge of trekking in the Baliem Valley. Guides will often latch on to you as soon as you step off the plane in Wamena and it can be hard to shake them off. Most are clever bargainers: there's no such thing as a standard price in the Baliem trekking world.

Tricks played by unscrupulous guides include pocketing some of the money you've given them to get supplies (to avoid this, go with them or get the supplies yourself); sending a junior replacement guide at the last minute; using public bemos to the trek starting point when you have paid for a charter; asking for more money along the way and refusing to finish the trek unless they get it; or disappearing partway into the trek and leaving you in the hands of an unpaid porter.

Fortunately, there are ways to find a reliable guide. Ask advice from other travellers or anyone else you trust. A good source of recommendations in Wamena is Papua.com (p803), and hotels can put you in touch with guides. You can also ask to see a guide's badge (*tanda pramuwisata*). Authorised senior guides have undergone six weeks' training in Jayapura and have a badge stamped by the

provincial governor; authorised junior guides have done four weeks at Jayapura and have a badge stamped by the local *bupati*. We can recommend **Papua/Irian Jaya Adventure** (☎ 0852-4413 1512; justinus\_daby@yahoo.com; Jl Gatot Subroto 15), which is run using authorised guides by Justinus Daby, an English-speaking Dani who has been guiding since the year dot and heads the local branch of the Indonesian Tourist Guide Association. His house/office is identifiable by the bamboo tree in front of it.

For more on hiring guides, see the boxed text, p823.

Allow a few days in Wamena to arrange things, and bargain hard. Perhaps try out a guide on a day trip before committing to anything longer. For an experienced, English-speaking guide who knows the area, expect to pay around 250,000Rp to 400,000Rp per day.

In addition to a guide, porters are a good idea and cost 50,000Rp to 100,000Rp per day, depending partly on the toughness of the trek. On longer treks you may need two porters per trekker: one for a backpack and another for camping and cooking gear and food. A cook costs another 75,000Rp to 150,000Rp per day – porters and guides can double as cooks if you're looking to cut costs. You'll have to provide enough food for the whole team (this might amount to 30,000Rp to 40,000Rp each per day), and probably cigarettes for them and for your village hosts. A 10% tip at the end of a trek is also expected for each member of staff. If you're willing to chance it, in the more frequented trekking areas you can head off alone and ask the way as you go, or pick up a local porter-cum-guide for 50,000Rp to 100,000Rp a day.

For transport to/from the start and end points of the trek, chartering a vehicle is more comfortable than squeezing into a public bemo. You can charter a bemo to Sugokmo, for instance, for 200,000Rp one way.

### Day Hikes Without a Guide

Following paths and/or roads, you can easily enjoy these short hikes without a guide.

- Aikima–Suroba–Dugum–Mulima (three hours) – follow the foothills from Aikima to Dugum, then head back to the main road
- Elagaima–Ibele (three hours) – follow the main road, and take a bemo one way
- Kimbim–Pummo (three hours) – mostly flat countryside, but only possible in the dry season when Sungai Baliem isn't too high

### Short Hikes With a Guide

For these hikes, a guide can help you find the best paths. Only some of the many possibilities are listed. Some require an overnight stop.

- Bolokme–Tagime–Kelila (seven hours) – consider staying in Kelila
- Kurima–Hitugi (five hours) – down the Baliem Valley then up the Mugi valley
- Kurima–Tangma (five hours) – up one valley and down into another
- Meagaima–Manda–Bugi–Wolo (four hours)
- Meagaima–Manda–Munak–Pyramid (four hours) – can be combined with Pyramid–Pummo–Meagaima (3½ hours)
- Sugokmo–Seima–Kurima–Kilise (four hours) – follow Sungai Baliem, crossing it twice on hanging bridges, then climb to picturesque Kilise
- Wolo–Ilugua (three hours) – two-thirds of the way, a track leads around a sinkhole and down to Gua Yogolok and Goundal, a village on the floor of a canyon

### Tour Agencies

Depending on the number of trekkers in your group and the company you deal with, using an agency may not cost much more than setting up a trek yourself. Budget trekking companies in Wamena have trouble staying afloat, but the operators listed on p779 can set up treks for you. Some also offer non-trekking Baliem tours, visiting the main sights and arranging special events like pig feasts.

## BALIEM VALLEY – NORTHEAST

Daily public transport along the paved road up the eastern side of the valley reaches as far as Tagime. Several interesting places along here are within day-trip reach from Wamena, and some side-valleys offer good hiking. Several villages have *honai*-style guest huts.

### Aikima

Just east of the Jiwika road about 8km from Wamena, nondescript Aikima is famous for its 270-year-old **Werapak Elosak mummy** (admission 30,000Rp; ☒ daylight hours), though the mummy at Sumpaima (below) is in better condition.

### Suroba & Dugum

Just off the main road, the pretty villages of Suroba and Dugum are worth exploring. Ask the bemo driver to let you off at the nearest spot to Suroba along the main road. Then walk 1km along the path through pretty scenery, crossing a flimsy wooden hanging bridge over a small river. At a clearing near the bridge, traditional **pig feasts** and **warrior dances** (based on traditional Dani warfare) are sometimes staged for around 1,000,000Rp each, mainly for tour groups. Both villages have basic tourist accommodation in *honai*-style huts.

### Jiwika

Jiwika (pronounced Yiwika) is a local administrative centre and an inexpensive base for exploring the northeastern Baliem Valley. This is another place where prearranged **warrior dances** and **pig feasts** (around 1,000,000Rp each) can be staged for tourists. If you are staying you should report to the Kurulu district police station by the roadside just south of the village.

At Iluwe, about 1½ hours up a steep path from Jiwika (with some scrambling at the top), are some **saltwater wells** (admission 5000Rp; ☒ daylight hours). To extract the salt, banana stems are beaten dry and put in a pool to soak up the brine. The stem is then dried and burned, and the ashes are used as salt. Ask a local boy in Jiwika to show you the way and to find out if anyone is working at the wells. Start the hike from Jiwika before 10am.

**Sumpaima**, just north of Jiwika (look for the blue 'Mumi' sign), is home to the **Wimontok Mabel mummy** (admission 30,000Rp; ☒ daylight hours). Wimontok Mabel was a powerful chief here in the 18th century and his blackened corpse is the best and most accessible of its kind near Wamena.

## SLEEPING

**Lauk Inn** (r 80,000Rp) Opposite the turn-off to Iluwe is this pleasant spot with basic but clean rooms (as opposed to Dani-style huts). Basic dinners (15,000Rp) are available, but it's still best to bring some of your own food.

**Wiyok Huts** (per person 80,000Rp) This *honai*-style place is about 200m south of the police station – you can contact Justinus Daby (see the boxed text, p808) in Wamena to make arrangements.

## Gua Kotilola

The road between Jiwika and Wosilimo is flanked by rocky hills in which some of the valley's 50 listed **caves** are located. **Gua Kotilola** (admission 10,000Rp; ☒ 8am-4pm) is a sizeable cavern up a short, pretty path behind a Dani compound near Waga Waga, about 5km north of Sumpaima. It contains the bones of past tribal-war victims – though they don't show these to outsiders.

## Wosilimo

Wosilimo (or 'Wosi') is a relatively major village with a couple of shops. Here, **Gua Wikuda** (admission incl tour 10,000Rp; ☒ 8am-4pm) is said to be several kilometres long, with an underground river that reaches Danau Anegerak, but disappearing only the first 100m or so of the cave may be open for visits.

One hour southwest from Wosi on foot, along a small path behind a church and over a hanging bridge, is **Danau Anegerak**. During the wet season the path may be impassable, but otherwise this is a delightful area for **hiking**, and locals rent out basic fishing gear. There's accommodation in a Dani-style **hut**.

## Pass Valley

A rough road heads up over the hills from Wosilimo to Pass Valley, then descends to Elelim, about 60km from Wosi (one day, this road is planned to reach Jayapura). The small **Wedanku valley** between Wosilimo and Pass Valley still retains a strong, traditional Dani culture. Wedanku village's Catholic mission can provide accommodation, and from there you can hike one day up through the forest to **Ikipelekma**, then on the next day to Jiwika via the Iluwe wells (left). From **Dombomi**, between Pass Valley and Landikma, you can hike to **Sumpuleh**, with a waterfall and good birding (the yellow bird of paradise is one to look

### BALIEM VALLEY FESTIVAL

To coincide with the busiest time for tourism, a festival is held in the Baliem Valley between about 7 and 12 August each year. The highlight is mock 'tribal fighting', where village men dress up in full traditional regalia and enact an old-fashioned tribal battle and accompanying rituals. The festival also features plenty of traditional dancing, and Dani music on instruments such as the *pikon*, a kind of mouth harp. Pig races are fun, too – if not for the pigs, which usually end up roasted on a spit. Other goings-on include spear-throwing contests and archery exhibitions.

In recent years the main events have taken place at Wosilimo and at Muliama between Kimbim and Araboda. Although the festival is set up for tourists, it's still a magical (and very photogenic) time to visit.

for). All the mentioned villages can provide accommodation in local houses. At Dombomi ask for Yakob Endama.

### Manda

This enticing village has a shop and market, as well as friendly people and wonderful landscapes to hike around. Ask if the **honai-style huts**, behind the market, are open. There's also *honai*-style accommodation in Meagaima, a few kilometres before Manda (ask for Isaak Aut).

### Wolo Valley

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

### BALIEM VALLEY – NORTHWEST

The western side of the valley is less scenic or interesting. **Kimbim** is a pleasant administrative centre with a few shops and a busy **market**. About one hour away on foot (ask directions), **Araboda** is home to the 250-year-old **Alongga Huby mummy** (admission 10,000-20,000Rp; ☎ erratic hours). About 7km past Kimbim is **Pyramid**, a graceful mission village with a theological college and sloping airstrip.

### DANAU HABBEMA

This beautiful lake, 30km west of Wamena as the crow flies, sits amid alpine grasslands at about 3400m above sea level, with dramatic, snow-capped mountains in view (4700m Gunung Trikora rises to the south). The fauna and flora are a big draw for nature-lovers. Visitors need a permit from the Wamena office of **Lorentz National Park** (Taman Nasional Lorentz; Map p804; ☎/fax 0969-34098; Jl Patimura 47): just show them your *surat jalan* with its Wamena stamp and pay a fee of about 20,000Rp.

It's possible to visit the lake in a day trip from Wamena – the drive is around two hours each way. You can rent a car and driver in Wamena for around 2,500,000/3,000,000Rp one way/return, or go by motorbike for about 800,000/1,000,000Rp. The road is paved as far as Napua, 7km from Wamena, where the military post may charge you 200,000Rp or so to proceed.

The ideal way to visit Habbema is to drive there and trek back (three to four days), for which you will need to hire a guide. Much of the route is through rainforest. The usual route starting from the lake is via Yobogima (a forest clearing) and then through a spectacular gorge to Daela village and on to Pilia and Ibele. En route you stand a fairly good chance of seeing cuscus, three birds of paradise (MacGregor's, King of Saxony and superb) and, if you're lucky, tree kangaroos. Ibele is connected to Wamena by public transport.

An alternative, more southerly route back on foot (four days) goes via Babilolo, Walaek and Walesi. It's also possible to walk back down the motor road in one very long day.

### LANI COUNTRY

Up the Baliem Valley west from Pyramid is the home of the Western Dani, or Lani. Though the nearer areas are no longer particularly traditional, the Lani are by and large friendly folk and the walking here is easier than in the Yali country to the east. Makki, Pitt River and Tiom, 25km to 50km west of Pyramid, mark the beginning of Lani country and are accessible by public transport from Wamena. It's possible to fly to Tiom or to Mulia or Ilaga, further west beyond the Baliem watershed. The OPM is active in the western Lani area, and Ilaga in particular is often off-limits for foreigners.

## FREEPORT INDONESIA

No business in Papua, and few if any in Indonesia, matches the Freeport mine for size, profitability or controversy. At an elevation of 4000m, a few kilometres from 5030m Carstensz Pyramid (Puncak Jaya), **PT Freeport Indonesia** ([www.ptfi.co.id](http://www.ptfi.co.id)), a local affiliate of US-based **Freeport McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc** ([www.fx.com](http://www.fx.com)), is mining the world's largest gold reserve and largest recoverable copper reserve.

Freeport signed its original contract for the site with the Suharto government back in 1967, and the initial Ertsberg site, where mining started in 1972, was mined out by the mid-1980s. Only then were even greater gold deposits discovered at the nearby Grasberg site, which is still being mined today. The large lowland town of Timika, about 80km southwest of the mine, was founded in the early 1970s as Freeport's logistics base. Visiting the mine or the mine town of Tembagapura ('Copper City' in Bahasa Indonesia) requires a permit from the company, but if you fly over you might spot Grasberg, a gigantic hole in the ground.

Freeport employs some 20,000 people directly and in contracting and service companies, the great majority of them Indonesian but only about a quarter of them Papuan. Its output accounts for 40% of Papua province's GDP and over 1.3% of Indonesia's. The company is one of Indonesia's biggest taxpayers, contributing more than 2% of the national budget (it paid a total of over US\$8 billion in taxes, dividends and royalties to the Indonesian government from 1992 to 2008).

While people who work for Freeport generally love the company, Papuans critical of Indonesian rule see it as a symbol of Jakarta's exploitation of Papua's people, resources and environment. The company itself stresses its value to the local economy and support for local communities.

Opponents' grievance No 1 is over land rights and local communities, principally the highland Amungme and lowland Kamoro peoples, whose traditional lands the mine operations use. After locals rioted against Freeport in 1996, the company pledged to commit 1% of its gross revenue

## YALI COUNTRY & BEYOND

Over the eastern walls of the Baliem Valley, amid scenery that is often as stunning, lies the home of the Yali people. They have a shorter history of contact with outsiders than the Dani, and are one of the more traditional highland peoples, although traditional dress is now seen a lot less than it was 10 years ago. The men may wear 'skirts' of rattan hoops, with penis gourds protruding from underneath. Missionaries provide much of the infrastructure here, such as schools and transport.

Yali country is a great destination for more adventurous trekkers who have enough time. The most direct route from the Baliem Valley runs from Sugokmo to Ugem, then up the lovely Mugi valley to Hitugi, Yuarima, Yogosen, Kiroma and Wonggol (a forest shelter), over 3000m-plus Gunung Elit, and down to Piliam and Pronggoli in Yali country. Nights are typically spent at Hitugi, Yogosen or Kiroma, Wonggol, and Piliam if you don't make it as far as Pronggoli on day four. The section over Gunung Elit involves several hours of steep ascent. From Pronggoli to Angguruk, the biggest Yali village, with a large market twice a week, takes another day.

An easier but longer option – about six days from Sugokmo to Angguruk and still with plenty of up and down – is the southern loop via Kurima, Wesagalep, Soba and Ninia.

Once in Yali country, accommodation and local guides can be cheaper than in the Baliem proper. You might be able to get a mission flight back to Wamena (see p805), but you can't count on it unless it's organised in advance. Villages with airstrips include Angguruk, Pronggoli and Kosarek in Yali country; Nipsan, Endoman, Nalca and Eipomek in Mek country (east of the Yali); and Langda in Una country (south of the Mek).

An onward route of four to six days from Angguruk, with mountainous and rainforest sections, goes northeast to Helariki, Membahan, Telambela, Pimohon, Serkasi and Kosarek. The mission village of Kosarek is near the border of the next tribal people, the Mek – similarly small in stature to the Yali. From Kosarek you can trek several days southeast to Nipsan, Endoman and Eipomek. You can also reach Eipomek from Angguruk, via the chief Mek settlement, Nalca. If you're still hankering for more, from Nalca or Eipomek it's possible to cross Papua's north-south watershed, probably camping out at least one night,

to health, education and economic development of local indigenous communities through the Amungme & Kamoro Community Development Organisation. By 2008 the company had paid nearly US\$329 million to this fund. In total the company says it has invested over US\$600 million in social infrastructure of direct benefit to local people (such as schools, hospitals and business development) since 1992. Grievance No 2 is 'Where does all the Freeport money go?' Even though the 2001 Special Autonomy law for Papua stipulated that 80% of government revenues from mining in the province were to be returned to Papua, Papuans claim they have still to see much evidence of the money being spent on the ground.

Grievance No 3 is that the mine uses the Indonesian military as part of its security force, despite the military's notoriously heavy-handed treatment of indigenous Papuans. For 2007, Freeport Indonesia reported that it contributed US\$9.4 million towards the costs of the 2100 personnel of 'government-provided security'. Some Papuans argue that the army provokes violent incidents to bolster its claims that the mine needs its protection.

Grievance No 4 is the mine's environmental record. In 2008 this led the government of Norway to sell all its shares in the mining company Rio Tinto, which is a partner in Freeport Indonesia. The principal concern is over the large amounts of mine tailings (finely ground rock residue) that are dumped into Sungai Aikwa, which flows through Timika to the Arafura Sea. The company argues that local conditions make this the best available option for tailings disposal.

Freeport is the subject of many protests locally and in Jayapura, and has been the object of OPM attacks – most infamously in 1977 when the mine's slurry line was bombed, leading to Indonesian military reprisals against the Amungme, reportedly including aerial attacks on villages.

But such is Freeport's importance to Indonesia, some analysts believe, that it alone makes Papuan independence unthinkable.

to Langda, main village of the Una people (considered pygmies!), where there's a mission guest house.

## THE SOUTH

Relatively few travellers make it to the low-lying, river-strewn south, but Wasur National Park near Merauke is one of the best wildlife destinations in Papua (albeit for only a few months a year), while the hard-to-reach Asmat region is famed for its headhunting past and marvellous woodcarving artisanship.

### MERAUKE

☎ 0971 / pop 55,000

Merauke is a reasonably prosperous and orderly town of wide, straight streets, renowned as the most southeasterly settlement in Indonesia. The Merauke area and its hinterland, as far north as Tanahmerah, have one of the most extensive collections of transmigrant settlements in Papua, and a heavy military presence. The best reason to visit is nearby Wasur National Park (p814), which is like a small slice of Australian bush in Indonesia, wallabies and all.

### Information

It's 6km from the airport at the southeastern end of town to the port on Sungai Maro at the northwestern end. The main street, running almost the whole way, is Jl Raya Mandala.

**BNI bank** (Jl Raya Mandala 173) Close to the Megaria and Nakoro hotels, with an ATM for Visa, Visa Electron, MasterCard, Cirrus, Maestro and Plus.

**Police station** (☎ 371 716; Jl Brawijaya 27) Opposite the main market; come here if you need a *surat jalan*.

**Tourist office** (☎ 324 738; Jl Yos Sudarso 14;

☎ 8.10am-2.30pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri, to 1pm Sat)

About 100m from the port gate; staff are willing but have limited material to hand out.

### Sights

Merauke's beach, **Pantai Lampu Satu**, is named after its lighthouse. Motorbike or horse races are held here some afternoons. The beach is 3km along Jl Nowari, off the northwestern end of Jl Raya Mandala.

Several buildings from Merauke's Dutch days survive in the older part of town near the port, notably the Hotel Asmat and a quaint 1920 **post office** (Jl Sabang).

Wildlife enthusiasts may find Merauke's main market, **Pasar Baru** (Jl Pembangunan), 2.5km north of the airport, grimly instructive.



Venison, wallaby meat and wild pork from Wasur National Park are all sold here – recognise the wallaby meat (around 30,000Rp a chunk) by their little heads sitting in a row beside it. About 7am bat, bandicoot, snake and lizard meat (if that's what you call it) are sold by the road at the market's southeastern end.

## Sleeping & Eating

**Hotel Nakoro** (☎ 322 287; Jl Ermasu 96; r 200,000-250,000Rp; 🏠) You'll feel at home in the friendly, relaxed atmosphere in this sweet spot on a quiet street, roughly halfway between airport and port. All rooms have good air-conditioning and private *mandi*, and the slightly cheaper, smaller ones upstairs get more breeze. Prices include snack breakfast.

**Hotel Megaria** (☎ 321 932; Jl Raya Mandala 166; r 248,000-325,000; 🏠) Along a short lane from about the halfway point of Jl Raya Mandala, the Megaria was under renovation at research time but has a good selection of large, well-furnished rooms with bathrooms. The most expensive have hot water. Breakfast snack included.

**Hotel Asmat** (☎ 321 065; Jl Trikora 3; s 363,000-451,000Rp, d 418,000-506,000Rp; 🏠) Hotel Asmat offers comfortable, quiet rooms, all with their own little front patios, breakfast and amenities like satellite TV, as well as excellent service. It's just off the northwestern end of Jl Raya Mandala.

**Rumah Makan Serumpun Indah** (☎ 325 364; Jl TMP Trikora; meals from 25,000Rp; 🍽 5am-10pm) Though a bit out of the way on the inland edge of town, this big, clean, busy eating hall is well worth a ride. Check the offerings at the counter and they'll bring your meal to your table. A brilliant *nasi campur* with prawns, egg, *sambal* and coconut sauce will cost you 32,000Rp.

## Shopping

If you can't get to the Asmat region, visit Merauke's own Asmat woodcarver. **Andreas Puer** (☎ 0813 8082 6281; Jl Gudang Arang) has been here since 1970 and carves some original pieces, which he sells at reasonable prices. His house is on the northern edge of town.

## Getting There & Away

**Merpati** (☎ 321 242; Jl Raya Mandala 257; 🕒 8am-4.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun) flies daily to and from Jayapura, Makassar and Jakarta. You need to reconfirm your outbound flight *and* check in

good and early. Merpati also flies to several southern Papua airports including Ewer (for Agats).

Every two weeks Pelni's *Tatamailau* sails from Merauke to Agats (1st/economy class 182,000/566,000Rp), Timika, Fak-Fak and Sorong (392,000/1,240,000Rp). The *Kelimutu* links Merauke with Agats, Timika and Maluku every four weeks. Smaller boats run up and down the coast to Kimam (Pulau Yos Sudarso), Bade, Agats and as far inland as Tanahmerah.

**PT Bima Suci Irja** port area (☎ 325 726; Jl Sabang) midtown (☎ 321 948; Jl Raya Mandala) sells tickets for both Pelni and Merpati. The midtown office is next to BNI bank.

## Getting Around

An airport taxi costs 50,000Rp into town. An *ojek* is 5000Rp or so. Walk 300m to Jl Raya Mandala and you can climb into one of the public *taksi* (3000Rp) that bustle up and down it every nanosecond.

## WASUR NATIONAL PARK

The 4130-sq-km Taman Nasional Wasur, stretching between Merauke and the PNG border, will fascinate anyone with an interest in wildlife, especially birds and marsupials. But come in the later part of the dry season (August to November), otherwise most of Wasur's tracks will be impassable and the only wallabies you'll see will be the concrete ones that welcome you at Merauke port and airport.

To naturalists, Wasur is part of the region known as the Trans-Fly, which straddles the Indonesia-PNG border (the name comes from PNG's Fly River). It's a flat, low-lying area of savannas, swamps, forests and slow-moving rivers that inundate much of the land during the wet season. Wasur's wildlife includes at least three species of wallaby (locals call them all *kangguru*) and nocturnal cuscuses, sugar gliders and bandicoots. Deer and wild pigs have been introduced. Among the 400 birds are cassowaries, kookaburras, palm cockatoos, brolgas, magpie geese, gorgeously coloured rainbow lorikeets and two types of bird of paradise. Wasur's wetlands attract migratory birds from Australia (July to October) and even Siberia (October to March).

The southern part of the park is the best for wildlife spotting as it has more open grasslands and coastal areas. In the dry season

you can see a reasonable amount of the park (and probably reach the observation tower on the plains at Ukra) in a long day trip, but better is to spend a night or two camping, or staying in a village for around 100,000Rp per person (take food). A good route around the park is to head south from Merauke via the small villages of Ndalir, Kuler, Onggaya, Tomer and Tomerau, then head northeast to Ukra and the indigenous villages of Rawa Biru and/or Yanggandur. From either of these you can return to Merauke via the paved 'Trans-Irian Hwy' – a total trip of around 150km for which you need a 4WD vehicle or at least a motorbike.

The park office, **Balai Taman Nasional Wasur** (☎ 0971-324 532; Jl Garuda Leproseri 3; ☎ 8.10am-2pm Mon-Thu & Sat, to noon Fri), 4km southeast of Merauke airport on the road towards the park's Wasur village entrance, may be able to help you set up a trip. Alternatively, contact Lea Kanisia Mekiuw of the local NGO **Yapsel** (☎ 0971-323 204, 0971-321 688; lkanisia@yahoo.co.id; Jl Missi, Merauke), who can arrange an airport pickup and put you in touch with a good, English-speaking, Papuan guide. Or call the guide, **Bony Kondahon** (☎ 0813 4458 3646), direct. You'll probably pay 700,000Rp per day for vehicle, guide and driver, plus food, drinks and any accommodation costs.

It's also possible to charter a *taksi* or even an *ojek* from Merauke to park villages. Carry your passport, *surat jalan* and photocopies to show to military posts in the villages.

## THE ASMAT REGION

The Asmat region is a massive, remote, low-lying area of hundreds of muddy, snaking rivers, mangrove forests and tidal swamps. The Asmat people, formerly feared for their headhunting and cannibalism, are now most celebrated for their woodcarvings – the most spectacular of Papuan art.

To appreciate what the Asmat region has to offer requires a *lot* of time, money and patience. Most visitors who make it here come on organised tours or with experienced guides from elsewhere, and spend time boating to carving villages, and maybe seeing a traditional dance performance or demo of the uses of the sago palm. Sizeable areas have been deforested: many Asmat were subjected to forced logging labour in their own forests in the 1970s.

The one time when more than a handful of visitors appears here is during the annual **Asmat Art & Culture Festival**, or 'Asmat Show', an early-October festival of traditional dance and dress, canoe races and woodcarving, with Agats as the main venue. Most of the agencies listed on p779 offer trips to the Asmat region; expect to pay about US\$200 per person per day, plus airfares.

### Agats

☎ 0902 / pop 1400

The capital of the region is the small town of Agats, on the Aswetsj estuary. Agats has two hotels, limited electricity and limited fresh water. Due to the extraordinary tides and

## THE ASMAT PEOPLE

The Asmat traditionally believe that no person, except the very young and very old, dies from any cause other than tribal fighting or magic. So every family member's death must be 'avenged' so that the dead can rest in the spiritual world known as *safan*. Not long ago, 'avenging' took the form of headhunting raids. Today, though more ceremonial, 'avenging' is still taken seriously.

The centre of Asmat traditional belief is the figure of Fumeripitjij, who 'created' the first Asmat people by carving them from wood. The Asmat remain in contact with their ancestors through their carvings. Each village appoints a *wow ipits* (woodcarver) based on his skills. Carvings were originally made only for ritual use, but today there is also strong tourist and collector demand, which has encouraged new forms and designs in Asmat carving.

The famous phallic *bis* poles of interlocked human and animal figures are carved from mangrove trees and can be 6m or more tall. Traditionally they were carved as objects where the spirits of slain warriors could reside until they were liberated by the killing and eating of enemies. Decorated shields used in funeral ceremonies also represent and avenge dead relatives. Other ceremonial items include rattan 'devil' costumes used in dances to drive out evil spirits, lizard-skin drums, paddles and horns that were once used to herald the return of headhunting raids.

Asmat people revere their dead ancestors and may still keep their skulls as sources of spiritual strength.

location, it is traversed on raised (and often broken) wooden walkways – watch your step! Report to the police station (er, hut) with your *surat jalan* when you arrive.

The **Museum Kebudayaan & Kemajuan** (Museum of Culture & Progress; admission by donation; ☎ about 8am–1pm Mon–Sat), one ‘block’ behind (south of) the mosque, has a very worthwhile collection of traditional and modern Asmat art and artefacts, from *bis* poles and skulls to full-body dance outfits. Try to recruit an English-speaking guide as there is little interpretative information.

The **Pusat Asmat & Pusat Pendidikan Asmat** (Asmat Education Centre & Asmat Centre; Jl Yos Sudarso; admission free; ☎ erratic hours), 400m northeast of the mosque, is an impressive group of traditional architecture.

## SLEEPING & EATING

**Losmen Pada Elo** (☎ 31038; Jl Kompas Agats; r 150,000–200,000Rp) Near the dock where boats from the airstrip arrive, this guest house offers acceptable rooms and friendly, helpful service. Rooms share *mandis*. You can order meals for around 30,000Rp.

There are a couple of *rumah makan* near the waterfront and reportedly a second, recently opened hotel.

## GETTING THERE & AWAY

Agats’ airfield is a grass strip at Ewer, a 20-minute boat ride north. Merpati normally flies several times weekly from both Timika and Merauke, but flights can be cancelled in the wet season if the airstrip is waterlogged. It’s also possible to charter a small plane from Timika, Wamena or Merauke, for 20,000,000Rp to 35,000,000Rp one way (maybe less from Timika) for seven to 10 passengers.

Pelni’s *Tatamailau* leaves Agats every two weeks for Merauke (1st class/economy 566,000/182,000Rp) southbound, and Timika, Fak-Fak and Sorong northbound. The *Kelimutu* comes every four weeks, to Merauke southbound and Timika and Maluku northbound. It’s possible to charter a boat for the two- to three-day river trip from Dekai (served by scheduled flights from Wamena) for 6,000,000Rp or 7,000,000Rp per day for up to six or seven passengers.

Longboats are the only form of transport to the surrounding area. A sturdy boat from Agats with a reputable driver costs about 6,000,000Rp per day. You might get cheaper rates in Sjuru village, a 10-minute walk southwest of Agats.

## Around the Asmat Region

If you’re not on an organised tour, in addition to the expensive boat hire, you’ll need a guide (250,000Rp or more per day) and probably a porter or cook (100,000Rp or more). And take all your own supplies (shops in Agats sell basic items). Don’t forget the mosquito repellent and be ready for a lot of mud!

A few villages such as Atsy and Senggo have basic guest houses with rooms for 100,000Rp to 200,000Rp. Elsewhere you can usually sleep at missions, teachers’ houses or schools (around 50,000Rp to 70,000Rp per person).

Villages you might visit for their carving include **Owus**, **Biwar Laut** and **Atsy**, respectively about 35km, 60km and 80km by boat south of Agats. Biwar Laut, Atsy, and **Omandesep**, a couple of hours further south, are places where traditional Asmat performances can be laid on (2,500,000Rp or more). From Atsy it’s about 50km southward to **Ocenep**, reputed to hold the skull of Michael Rockefeller, ethnologist and son to a former US vice-president, who disappeared nearby in 1961 when headhunting was still a living tradition among the Asmat.

## KOROWAI & KOMBAI REGIONS

Inland from the Asmat in the region of the Dairam rivers is the territory of the Korowai and Kombai tribes, seminomadic dwellers in tree houses perched 10m to 30m high as refuges against animals, enemies, floods and mosquitoes. The Korowai and Kombai were not contacted by missionaries until the 1970s and many still live their traditional way of life most of the time, wearing few clothes and employing stone and bone tools. It’s thought headhunting and cannibalism might persist in some remoter parts of the area.

Several of the agencies listed on p779 offer challenging and expensive tours to the Kombai and Korowai areas, which normally start by flying to the mission settlement of Yaniruma, boating upriver from Agats to Yaniruma or Basman (beyond Senggo), or boating down Sungai Brazza from Dekai. This last can be the least expensive as you may reach the northern edge of Korowai territory in one day (6,000,000Rp to 7,000,000Rp). From these starting points you typically spend several days walking into the Korowai and/or Kombai zones, often along muddy trails through hot, swampy forests, sleeping in tents, huts or tree houses, and witnessing tribal life. It’s best to avoid the wettest season, January to March.

© 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.'