

Maluku



Formerly known as ‘the Moluccas’, these petite little morsels of paradise are a dream-come-true for seekers of superb snorkelling and picture-perfect white-sand beaches. Protected from mass tourism by distance and a (now outdated) reputation for civil unrest, this is one corner of the world where dreamy desert islands remain remarkably hospitable and inexpensive. In Maluku everything still moves delightfully slowly, except perhaps the lilting sound of Poco Poco, the home-grown answer to line dancing. With rustic but acceptable facilities and not another tourist for miles, this is somewhere to wind down a few gears, to learn Bahasa Indonesia and to revel in a tropical discovery that seems almost too good to be true.

Maluku also offers a thrill for history buffs. The Moluccas were the original ‘Spice Islands’. Indian, Chinese, Arab and, later, European adventurers all came here in search of cloves and nutmeg. Until the 16th century such spices were worth their weight in gold and grew nowhere else. Thus in Maluku money literally ‘grew on trees’. Today it’s incredible to reflect that the search for this wealth began the whole process of European colonialism.

Maluku is remote and timetables aren’t always convenient. Nonetheless, with regular flights into the region, and some flexibility and planning once here, it’s possible to snorkel the brilliant Bandas, explore the beach strewn Kei Islands, survey North Maluku’s mesmerising volcano-islands and explore ruined Dutch fortresses all within the limits of a one-month visa.

HIGHLIGHTS

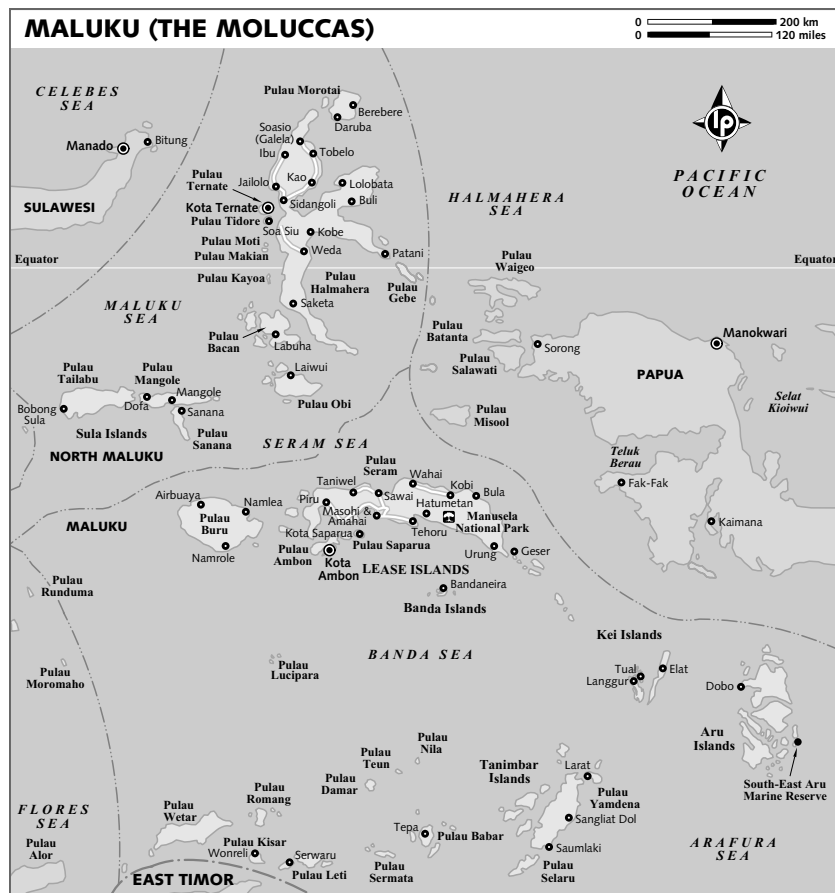
- Snorkelling some of the world’s finest accessible coral gardens in the historically fascinating **Banda Islands** (p765)
- Unwinding at **Ohoidertawun** (p777) or **Pasir Panjang** (p778), two stunning yet virtually undiscovered sweeps of the purest white sand
- Dining at **Floridas** or **Teratai** (p786) on Pulau Ternate as the sunset burnishes golden highlights onto the jungle-furred volcanic cone of neighbouring **Pulau Tidore** (p787)
- Being amongst the first tourists for a decade to explore the sleepy villages of the **Lease Islands** (p760) or **northern Seram** (p764)
- Discovering a desert island all for yourself off **Tobelo** (p789) on Halmahera



■ POPULATION: 2 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 85,728 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: GUNUNG BINAYA (3027M)



HISTORY

Precolonial Times

The name Maluku probably originated as *Jazirat-al-Muluk* (Land of Many Kings). The 'kings' in question ruled Ternate, Tidore, Bacan and other Maluku 'spice islands'. Their majestic fleets of *kora-kora* war-canoes policed empires that sometimes extended as far afield as Sulawesi and Papua. Their fabulous wealth came from a global monopoly of clove and other spice production. Spices preserved food in a world without refrigerators. And they complemented leeches to offer the best available medical hope against an array of medieval ailments. By the 1st century AD, Maluku spices were reaching Europe via tortuous

and risky caravan routes through India and the Persian Gulf. This made them vastly expensive. Eventually Europeans figured out that they could save money by seeking the source of the spices for themselves.

The Portuguese

The Portuguese showed up in 1510. Their intercontinental expedition incurred awful losses of lives and ships but still managed to prove financially profitable. The Portuguese cheekily tried to reduce their costs by demanding a trade monopoly. Without any intention to respect such terms, Ternate's sultan agreed to a Portuguese clove monopoly in return for help against arch-enemy Tidore. Tidore responded by

enlisting Spanish military assistance. Consistently committing cultural blunders, the Europeans soon overstayed their welcome and, having failed to monopolise the local clove trade, the Portuguese 'retired' south to trade from Ambon, Seram and the Banda Islands after 1795.

The Dutch

In the late 16th century the Dutch arrived with better guns and greater financial backing. Their bigger ships could use faster, direct sea routes from South Africa that were operable year round. This trumped their Hispanic competitors who stuck to slower, seasonal coastal routes via India. While seeing off new English rivals, the Dutch repeated many of the same cultural faux pas that had brought down the Portuguese. However, their determination to control a spice monopoly was brutally enforced, most infamously in the Banda Islands where uncooperative islanders were simply massacred. They were replaced by more compliant Dutch-owned slaves.

Fights to subjugate Ternate and Ambon took longer but, by the 1660s, the Dutch had wiped out all local opposition to their rule in Maluku and had evicted the last Spanish garrisons from Ternate and Tidore. The spice monopoly made a fortune for Holland over the next century. However, without competition, the operation became increasingly inefficient. It eventually collapsed into bankruptcy in 1795 and the Dutch East

India Company (VOC) was nationalised. A year later, with Holland suffering the aftermath of the French Revolution, the British occupied Maluku. Politically this was a short episode. But commercially it spelt disaster for the Moluccas. The British smuggled out precious spice-tree seedlings to plant in their colonies in Malaya (Malaysia) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Within decades Maluku was becoming economically irrelevant as its spices could now be produced cheaply elsewhere.

After Independence

After WWII it soon became apparent that Indonesia was heading for independence as a unified single republic. This would inevitably be mainly Muslim and Javanese controlled. Predominantly Christian southern Maluku panicked and tried to break away in 1950 by proclaiming the Republik Maluku Selatan (RMS). Indonesian republican troops steadily retook the islands and by November the RMS 'government' had fled Ambon. However in the Seram jungles, armed RMS opposition rumbled on until the mid-1960s.

Christian Ambonese and Kei Islanders had been a major element in the Royal Netherlands Indies Army (KNIL). Several thousand KNIL troops in Java had stayed loyal to the Dutch during the independence tussles. Once the Dutch decided (under American pressure) to accept Indonesian independence, some 12,000 Malukans were

SPICY CENGKEH & PALA

Cloves were the ancient world's cure for toothache, halitosis and sexual disinterest. Today they're popular in mulled wine and cooking, and used in the manufacture of chewing gum, perfumes, toothpaste and distinctive Indonesian *kretek* cigarettes. They're the unopened flower buds of the *cengkeh* tree, originally native to Ternate, Tidore and Bacan. Today, however, cloves are also grown on Seram and Ambon and as far afield as Tanzania, Malaysia and Sri Lanka.

Nutmeg (*pala*) was once unique to the Banda Islands. It too has 'escaped' around the world and is now so important in Grenada that it features on that island's national flag. Nutmeg trees thrive in slightly elevated locations near the sea, especially when shaded by canopies of towering *kenari* trees which themselves produce a delicious almond-like nut.

The globular, pale-yellow nutmeg fruits split in half upon ripening to reveal a brown-black nut wrapped in surreally brilliant 'flames' of scarlet filigree. When dried and processed these nuts yield nutmeg spice, which was historically used as a hypnotic medicine – it shares a common chemical ingredient with the rave drug ecstasy. The dried, discoloured filigree is known as mace.

Today, both nutmeg and mace are used mostly in fruitcakes, seafood sauces and liqueurs. Nutmeg fruits are popular locally despite an aroma that is mildly reminiscent of parquet-floor cleaner.

resettled 'temporarily' in the Netherlands while tempers cooled. However as most were RMS sympathisers, sending them back to Maluku later proved unacceptable: it might have led to their massacre. So the Malukans stayed and today around 40,000 of their descendants remain in Holland. The dream of an independent 'South Moluccas' lived on in the Netherlands, culminating in two Maluku-related train hijacks there in the mid-1970s. However, after that there was negligible RMS activity...at least until 1999.

The Troubles

The year 1999 was one of unique tensions. Indonesia's economy was in tatters, elements of the army were disaffected with the new democratic government, and people were no longer afraid to speak their minds after the Soeharto years of terror-inspired silence. On top of this, Christmas and Idul Fitri (end of Ramadan) happened to coincide. Meanwhile the unexpected breakaway of East Timor may have rekindled the hopes of RMS agitators. And there was more. Maluku was to be split into two separate provinces, each with augmented regional powers. Especially in Ambon, where the Muslim-Christian ratio was finely balanced, each religious community could see the political benefits of frightening away members of the other. The area was ready to explode.

The spark was a petty dispute between a Christian bus driver and a Muslim youth. It rapidly spilled over into intercommunal riots. Ironically, Maluku society had long been a model of peaceful Christian-Muslim coexistence, strengthened by *pela gandong*, a unique form of inter-village bonding that predates religious affiliations. Muslim and Christian 'brothers' famously used to help each other even in building churches and mosques. Yet in the madness of 1999, these brothers were set against each other as riots turned to massacres.

Almost every island suffered some disturbances with villagers killed, buildings burnt and atrocities committed by both sides. In Tobelo (Halmahera) and Ambon, Muslims were widely perceived to be the initial victims. In response, Laskar Jihad, a fundamentalist Islamic group, set sail from Java to 'protect' these local Muslim

minorities. However, their 'holy war' soon appeared to degenerate into thinly disguised revenge attacks on Christian communities, particularly against perceived RMS sympathisers. Fighting spiralled ever further out of control, especially on Ambon. Churches, mosques and thousands of houses were torched, with whole villages displaced and hundreds of thousands left homeless. When attempts at reconciliation were made, Laskar Jihad activists rushed to threaten negotiators whom they denounced as traitors.

Maluku Today

Tempers began to cool in February 2002 with the Malino II agreement which called for mutual respect and disarmament. Things improved markedly in October when Laskar Jihad suddenly disbanded and left Ambon. This was probably thanks to pressure on Indonesia as part of America's anti-terrorism sabre-rattling following the 11 September 2001 New York attacks. Although a few riots re-erupted during 2004 in Kota Ambon, recovery has been remarkably swift. Pockets of wrecked buildings are still visible but reconstruction is in full swing. The economy is booming with reconstruction funds creating an unprecedented air of optimism. Some refugees have returned home though some regions are now de facto segregated into distinct Christian and Muslim areas. With the dust settled, locals wonder how they were ever duped into the destructive spiral. Both sides

MALUKU TRAVEL WARNINGS & REALITIES

Some websites and even certain Indonesian embassies claim that you need a special permit to visit Maluku. In our experience this is totally untrue. Local tourist offices confirm that there are no longer any general travel restrictions. The only permits still required are for exploring parts of Seram (p763). Nonetheless you'd probably be prudent *not* to mention any plans to visit Maluku when applying for your Indonesian visa. To keep up to date, www.maluku2000.org carries news reports while www.websitesrcg.com/ambon has lots of background on 'the accident'.

believe that the bloodbath was deliberately stirred by outside *agents provocateurs*, and with poignant understatement the troubles are now commonly labelled 'the accident'.

CULTURE

Maluku's people have very mixed blood. To Malay and Melanesian precursors have been added Indian, Arab, Chinese and Portuguese genes, with more recent additions of Bugis (from Sulawesi seafarers) and Javanese (from transmigrants). Melanesian features are strongest on the Kei Islands. Tribal communities of Nua-ulu still inhabit the interior of Seram. But unlike in neighbouring Papua, you won't see people in Maluku wearing tribal garb. Only their red, bandana-like headscarves distinguish Nua-ulu men from other Malukans and their head-hunting antics are graciously now relegated to folklore. Not all thatched, primitive villages that you see are 'traditional' – you might be looking at the make-do dwellings of those whose 'real' homes were burnt in 1999. Incredibly the region has over 130 distinct traditional languages, though some have now blended with Bahasa Indonesia to form the pidgin dialect of Ambonese Malay (lingua franca in central Maluku). Learning key words in each regional tongue is a great way to break the ice.

Muslims are more numerous in most of north Maluku. Christians form majorities in some central and southern areas.

GETTING THERE & AWAY Air

Ambon and Ternate are the region's air hubs. Both have twice-daily connections to Jakarta via Surabaya, Makassar and/or Manado (Sulawesi). There are limited connections to Papua from Ambon and Langgur (Kei Islands). See map on p752.

Sea

Several Pelni liners stop in Maluku. Every two weeks *Bukit Siguntang* and *Ciremai* link Surabaya, Makassar and Bau Bau (Sulawesi) to Tual (Kei Islands) via the Banda Islands and Ambon. *Bukit Siguntang* returns via Kupang (Timor). *Lambelu* links Ternate to Ambon, Bau Bau and Makassar continuing to Surabaya and Tanjung Priok. Returning it loops to Bitung (Sulawesi) between Ambon and Ternate. *Sinabung* and

TOP BUDGET CHILLOUTS

Watch the waves and unwind at these delightful, yet very inexpensive, little Maluku retreats:

- Savana Cottages, Ohoidertawun, Kei Islands (p777)
- Vita Guest House, Bandaneira (p769)
- Penginapan Seroja, Tidore (p787)
- Penginapan Lisar Bahari, Sawai (p764)
- Penginapan Lease Indah, Kota Saparua (p761)

Nggapulu both stop in Ternate between Bitung and Sorong on their odysseys between Jakarta and northern Papua.

The infamously variable *Kelimutu* and *Tatamailau* often serve Malukan ports on monthly loops and the relatively small *Sangiang* circles from Bitung to Ternate around Halmahera then back to Bitung (or vice versa) somewhat irregularly.

Non-Pelni vehicular ferries or slow 'motor' boats from North Sulawesi (Bitung or Manado) run to Ternate, Tobelo (Halmahera) and Sanana (Sula Islands). Highly uncomfortable Perintis cargo ships run between several Papua and Maluku ports and arc down to Kupang in Timor once every three weeks.

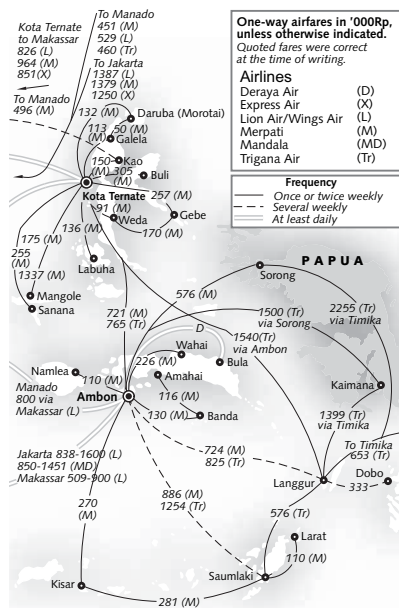
GETTING AROUND Air

Merpati and Trigana Air weave a surprisingly impressive web of regional flights around Maluku. However with only four little planes between them for the whole network, engine trouble, bad weather or one-off charters can (and will) throw out the schedules for days. You can generally buy only one-way tickets booked from the departure point. Getting the return can be hit and miss: call the local airline agent or try asking a hotel to make a booking for you. Then pay on arrival. Smaller planes have 10kg baggage limits. See the map on p752 for price and route details.

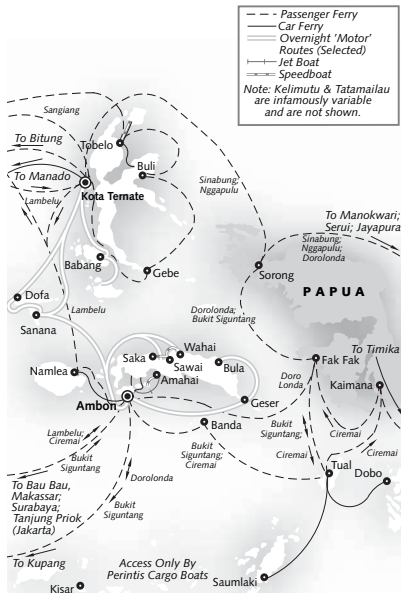
Bus, Kijang, Bemo & Ojek

Maluku is mountainous and relatively undeveloped. The few roads that do exist are often potholed and narrow. The only

MALUKU AIRFARES



MALUKU FERRIES



long-distance buses are on Seram or Ambon-Seram routes. Especially on Halmaehera and in rural Seram, shared Kijangs (fancy seven-seater overgrown Toyotas) are more common and comparatively pricey. Shorter routes are operated by bemo usually known as *mobil*. Renting an *ojek* (motorbike taxi) is usually very reasonable and the most pleasant way to travel if the rain holds off.

Boat

Pelni services *within* Maluku are patchy and the only direct boat link from Ternate to Ambon is its fortnightly *Lambelu* (south-bound only). Some medium-range hops are served by uncomfortable ASDP ferries or by wooden boats known as *motor*. The latter have limited sweaty, wooden-board 'bed' spaces but tickets aren't always numbered so to secure one you might need to arrive many hours before departure. Perintis cargo boats are bigger but not designed with passengers in mind. Bring waterproofs. They generally run on roughly three-weekly loops via a string of smaller intermediate ports that are way off any tourist route. Ask at relevant harbours

for departure details and always be prepared for uncertainty and rough conditions.

Speedboats link nearby islands and road-less villages. Locals use very specific terms for boat types: so don't be immediately put off if told that there isn't a *spid* (covered multi-engine speedboat) to your destination. There might still be a *Johnson* (outboard-powered longboat) or a *ketinting* or *lape-lape* (smaller, short-hop motorised canoes). Speedboats generally depart when there are sufficient passengers, usually very early in the morning when seas are calmest. Choice is better on major market days. In several cases chartering your own boat is worth considering: smaller or diesel powered boats will be much cheaper than multi-engined petrol ones.

PULAU AMBON

Manageably small yet offering plenty of contrasts, Maluku's most prominent island is lush and gently mountainous, indented with two great hoops of bay. Close to Kota Ambon, the main town, villages merge into

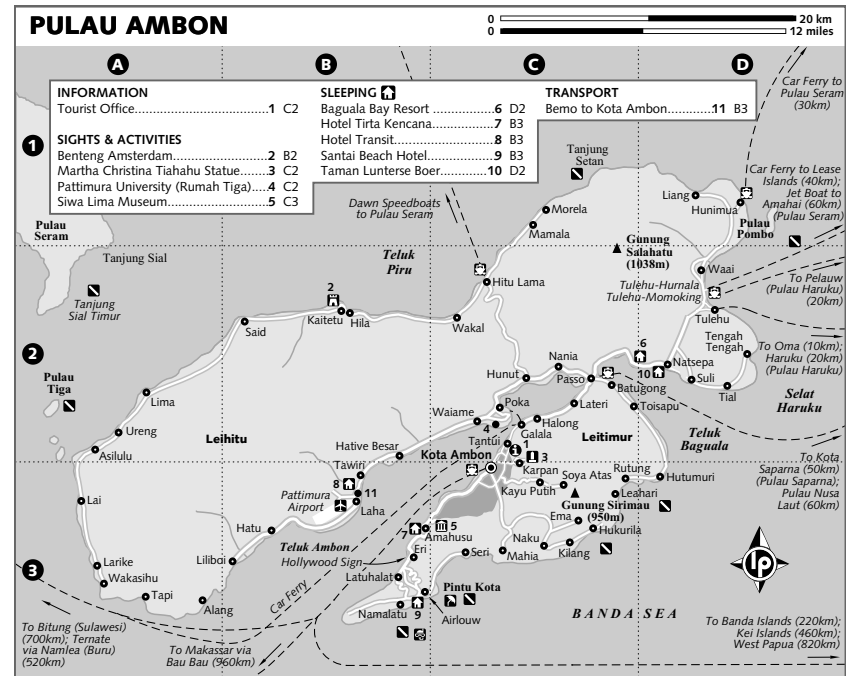
a long suburban ribbon but further out light sparkles brilliantly through alluring flower gardens and swaying tropical foliage. Religiously divided, the island was the epicentre of the 1999-2002 troubles. But recovery has been amazingly swift. Don't be fooled by old reports of dangers or civil unrest: Ambon is back in business and is now the ideal hub for visiting some of Indonesia's most delightful yet utterly undiscovered gems: the Lease, Banda and Kei Islands.

History

Until 1512 Ambon was ruled by Ternate. The sultans brought the civilising force of Islam to the island's north coast and developed Hitu Lama as a major spice-trading entrepôt. The Ternateans were later displaced by the Portuguese who found the less developed, un-Islamicised south more receptive to Christianity and developed a fortress around which Kota Ambon would eventually evolve. In 1599 the Dutch renamed this fort *Victoria* and made Kota Ambon their spice-trade base. Despite a 1817 uprising in the Lease Islands (see

the boxed text, p761), Dutch rule survived until WWII, when Kota Ambon became a Japanese military headquarters and prisoner-of-war camp. The result was extensive Allied bombing which destroyed most of its once-attractive colonial architecture. In 1950 Ambon was briefly the centre of the South Malukan independence movement. This was extinguished within a few months by Indonesian military force with a last stand at Passo village.

From 1999 until mid-2002, Ambon was ripped apart by Christian-Muslim inter-communal violence. In Kota Ambon the first wave of attacks came in January 1999 with a largely Christian mob assault on the city's main markets. A July 1999 reprisal torched predominantly Chinese businesses in the city centre. Island and city alike became polarised into Muslim and Christian zones. By late 2001, battered Kota Ambon looked like 1980s Beirut. During 2002 things improved markedly and the last significant disturbances were riots in 2004, though occasional provocations continue, including occasional sniping between police and army



MALUKU

forces. Some burnt-out ruins remain, notably around Pattimura University in Rumah Tiga, but these are rapidly being rebuilt or swallowed by insatiable tropical weeds. By 2006 the island seemed gripped with a great optimism and visible economic resurgence. It's as though everyone suddenly awoke from a bad dream to find themselves back in their busy little south-sea paradise.

KOTA AMBON

☎ 0911 / pop 368,000

By the region's dreamy tropical standards, Maluku's capital is a dusty, throbbing metropolis. But compared to 'real' cities elsewhere, Kota Ambon retains a languid charm emphasised by a perfect arc of bay and its lushly mountainous backdrop. Sights are minimal and architecture wins no prizes but the scars of the 1999–2002 civil war are quickly healing and the town has regained its role as the regional transport hub.

Orientation

Almost all public road transportation emanates from the traffic-clogged markets of Mardika and Batu Merah. Jl Dr Sam Ratulangi, Jl Said Perintah and Jl AY Patty (still partly bombed out) are recovering their roles as major commercial streets. Busy Jl Sultan Babullah comes cacophonously to life after dusk, with snack trolleys and dozens of CD salesmen blaring their wares.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

@stindo (Jl AY Patty; per hr 8000Rp; ☎ 9am-midnight) Sweaty because of the poor air-con, but with the most reliable connection.

Post Office Internet room (GPO, Jl Raya Pattimura; per hr 8000Rp; ☎ 9am-8pm Mon-Sat) Grindingly slow connection.

Warnet Worm (Jl AM Sangaji; per hr 3500-5000Rp) Isn't always open 24 hours despite claiming to be.

Wartel Aladin (Jl Sultan Babullah; per hr 6000Rp; ☎ 8am-midnight) Best air-conditioning, variable line.

MONEY

The banks listed here have 24-hour ATMs; maximum withdrawal is 1,250,000Rp.

Bank Mandiri (Jl Pantai Mardika) Can offer better US-dollar rates than the other two banks listed here, but only for sums over \$200 and dependent on approval.

BCA (Bank Central Asia; Jl Sultan Hairun 24) Poor rates for euros and US dollars.

BNI (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Said Perintah 12) Near BCA; same poor rates.

Souvenir Asmat (☎ 349069; Jl Dr Sam Ratulangi) Friendly; a tiny, eccentric everything-shop run by an English-speaking ex-mariner who can sometimes change money at decent rates given a few phone calls.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Likes Tour (☎ 310296; Jl Tulukabessy; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Sat) Staff speak English and offer free, basic city maps. They coordinate very occasional group eco-tours to northern Seram (www.indonesia-parrot-project.org).

Souvenir Asmat (☎ 349069; Jl Dr Sam Ratulangi) Ask for Marwizar Bahri, an English-speaking helper, fixer and collector of almost anything.

Tourist Office (Maluku Provincial Tourist Bureau; Map p753; Dinas Parawisata; ☎ 312300; Jl Jenderal Sudirman, Tantui; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Offers fistfuls of colourful free brochures but the decent city map (20,000Rp) is cheaper bought from Abdullalie Hotel. The office has lovely bay views but getting here by vehicle requires a 4km one-way loop (use Tantui bemos passing the Commonwealth War Graves then doubling back). Getting back to town is less than 1km.

Yoh Syaranamual (☎ 351765; Gang da Silva 99) Experienced if ponderously slow-moving tour-guide speaking English and Dutch. Can arrange diving equipment given plenty of advance notice.

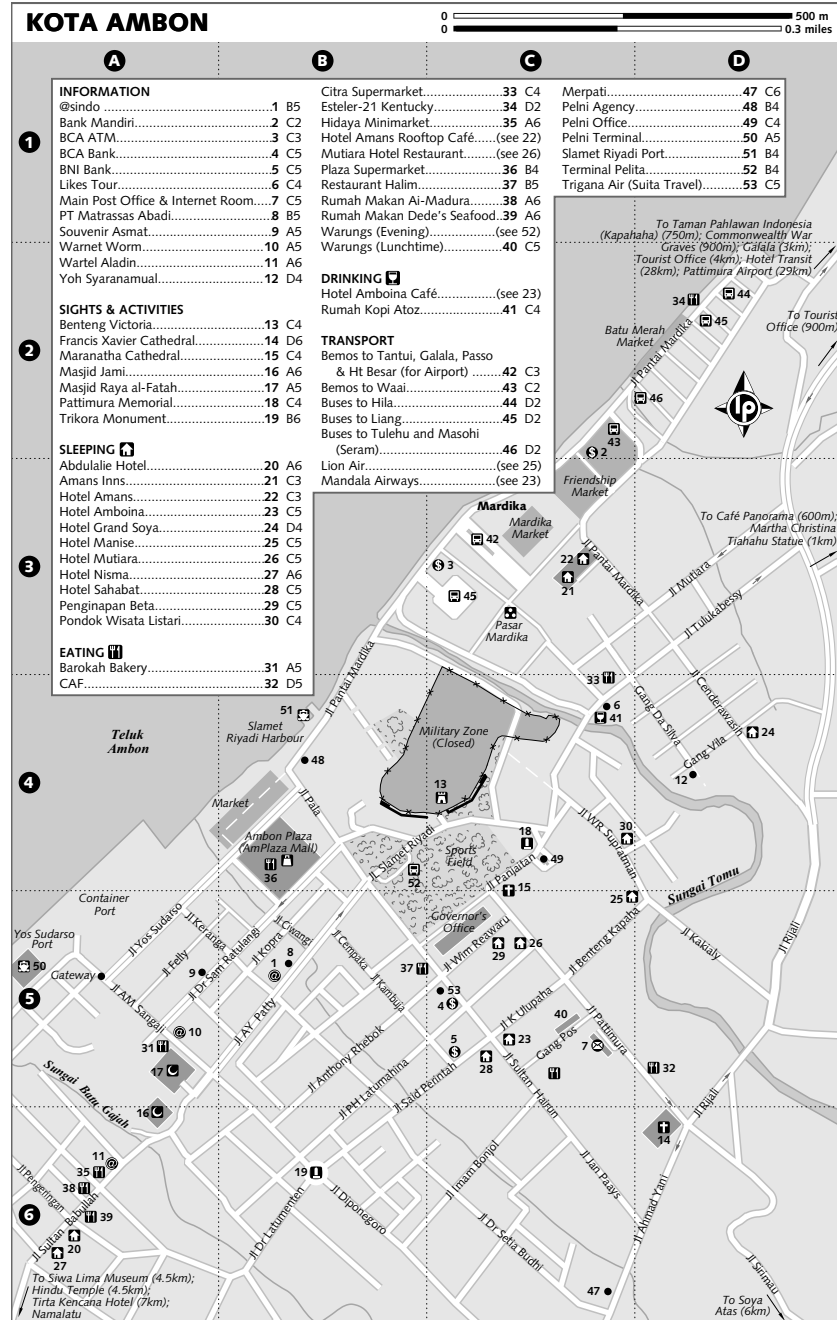
Sights

CENTRE & KARPAN

The town's biggest mosque, **Masjid Raya al-Fatah** (Jl Sultan Babullah) is a modern concrete affair with UFO-shaped dome. Next door the fanciful **Mesjid Jami** (Jl Sultan Babullah) is much more photogenic. The **Maranatha Cathedral** (Jl Raya Pattimura) has a staid if iconic tower. The recently rebuilt **Francis Xavier Cathedral** (Jl Raya Pattimura) has silver-strut steeples which glimmer mysteriously when seen from Jl Sirimau (take Kayu Putih bemos). The main Dutch fortress, **Benteng Victoria**, remains occupied by the army. Nearby is an amusingly hideous **Pattimura Memorial**. The **Martha Christina Tiahahu statue** (a tribute to Pattimura's contemporary; see the boxed text, p761) is more accomplished and worth the 7000Rp *ojek*-ride if only for the wonderful views. Stop at the delightful Panorama Café en route for more such views.

SOUTHERN SUBURBS

The **Siwa Lima Museum** (Map p753; admission 3000Rp; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) displays Maluku's foremost collection of regional and colonial



artefacts. It comprises two main buildings separated by 500m of road snaking beautifully up through steep, lovingly tended gardens. Air Salobar bemos terminate near the gardens' ornate gateway but as entry is from the upper section, consider using an *ojek* (10,000Rp) to save a sweaty climb. The upper rear terrace offers some of Ambon's most inspiring bay views and a stairway continuing from the top car park leads to a prettily flower-decked little **Hindu Temple**.

About 2km further south in **Amahusu**, the bayside **Tirta Kencana Hotel Café** (fresh *sirsak* juice 10,000Rp) is the ideal place from which to watch fishermen bobbing on the crystal clear waters.

NORTHERN SUBURBS

Any bemo heading northeast (bound for Passo, Stain, Waai etc) passes two immaculately maintained graveyards in the Tantui district (outbound only). The **Taman Makam Pahlawan Indonesia** (Kapahaha; Indonesian Heroes Cemetery) is dedicated to Indonesian servicemen killed fighting Maluku rebels during the 1950s and 1960s. Just beyond are the **Commonwealth War Graves** entombing allied servicemen who died in WWII. Remarkably both cemeteries survived rioting in 2000 which devastated the nearby police arsenal. Tantui bemos loop back to the city centre passing the tourist office en route.

Sleeping

BUDGET

Abdulie Hotel (☎ 352057; Jl Sultan Babullah; tw with fan/air-con from 40,000/80,000Rp, with hot water from 125,000Rp; ♿) Well run and eternally popular with local petty salesmen the rooms are reasonably neat albeit with plentiful mosquitoes.

Hotel Nisma (☎ 343246; Jl Sultan Babullah 34 & 22; tw with fan/air-con from 55,000/90,000Rp; ♿) Wood panelling and stained glass in the 'hotel' section's reception area can exaggerate your expectations but rooms are OK if you can ever find a vacancy. For fan rooms walk across the street to the *penginapan* (lodging house) section.

Penginapan Beta (☎ 353463; Jl Wim Reawaru; s/tw with fan 60,000/75,000Rp, tw with air-con 110,000; ♿) Longterm backpacker standby with English-speaking owners, lashings of pink-peach paint and linen featuring daisies or

Winnie the Pooh. Though fairly basic it's the best of three side-by-side options facing the big new Governor's Office.

Hotel Sahabat (☎ 352642; Jl Said Perintah 5; tw with shared/private mandi 60,000/70,000Rp, tw with air-con 95,000-145,000; ♿) The cheapest rooms are clean and bright by local standards and a good deal if you don't mind the sweaty climb up four flights of stairs.

Pondok Wisata Listari (☎ 355596; Jl WR Supratman 18; d with fan/air-con 100,000/125,000Rp; ♿) Central yet peaceful, this welcoming family homestay is Ambon's most appealing budget option. It has comfy rooms, airy communal spaces, complimentary breakfast and an owner who speaks fluent Dutch and English.

AmansInns (☎ 353888; silver/gold/balcony 130,000/150,000/180,000Rp; ♿) Hidden behind the main building, this is the Hotel Amans' unpublishised ugly sister. For accepting cigarette-singed carpet and a few cockroaches, your bargain-priced 'gold' room offers hot-water showers, high-powered air-con, multilingual TV and many other top-end trimmings. The English-speaking staff are delightfully helpful. Be sure to avoid the horrible 'silver' rooms.

Within three blocks of Mardika market there are half a dozen other hotels ranging from drab to dreadful.

MIDRANGE

Ambon's better hotels are all air-conditioned, bathrooms have hot showers and at least some staff speak English (except at the Tirta Kencana). Minimal bargaining is usually enough to get 'discount rates' and maybe a free breakfast.

Hotel Tirta Kencana (Map p753; ☎ 351867; fax 354841; Jl Raya, Amahusu; cottage r/deluxe/ste 121,000/244,000/336,000Rp; ♿) This surprisingly excellent bayside hotel attracts mainly amorous local couples but the cottage rooms are a phenomenal bargain with hot water, new beds and strong air-con (if no views). The best feature is the open-air waterfront café. It's 7km southwest of the centre of Ambon, 2km beyond the Siwa Lima Museum by Amahusu bemo.

Hotel Mutiara (☎ 353873; fax 352171; Jl Raya Pattimura 12; discounted d/tw 171,000/216,000Rp, full-rate from 228,000/288,000; ♿) Behind a dainty curtain of tropical foliage, this is by far Ambon's most appealing central hotel. It's

cosy, tastefully executed and has a welcoming European atmosphere spiced with framed ikat (cloth in which the pattern is produced by dyeing the individual threads before weaving) and local fabrics. Rooms are to international standards with blindingly clean bathrooms. Keeping the new carpets as clean will be a challenge.

Hotel Amans (Ambon Manise; ☎ 353888; fax 354492; Jl Pantai Mardika 53A; tw from 200,000Rp; ♿) Ideally placed for public transport, the Amans is undergoing major reconstruction. Sensibly they've started with the guest rooms which are vastly better than you'd guess from the tired-looking corridors. Discounted 'deluxe rooms' at 240,000Rp are good value.

Hotel Grand Soya (☎ 312095; Jl Cendrawasih 20; discount/full-rate tw from 203,000/290,000; ♿) Locals adore the chintzy décor and *faux* marble. Rooms are slightly less tacky but already show signs of wear.

Hotel Amboina (☎ 355515; fax 355723; Jl Kapitan Ulupaha; d standard/executive/ste from 250,000/305,000/400,000Rp; ♿) Reception is stylishly minimalist and a soothing cream colour scheme prevails. However, most standard rooms are windowless while the much more attractive suites tend to suffer from oppressive road noise.

Hotel Manise (☎ 354144; fax 341054; Jl WR Supratman; discounted d/tw from 336,000/384,000Rp; ♿) Quite undeservedly considered Ambon's top hotel, the Manise has surprisingly unimpressive rooms, many windowless and some with ripped carpets. Credit cards accepted.

Airport

Hotel Transit (☎ 315095; d 275,000Rp; ♿) The airport is nearly an hour's drive from Kota Ambon but just 1.3km from this rather ragged hotel. The Transit is steeply overpriced with dodgy plumbing but those afraid to miss early flights seem prepared to stump up the cash.

Eating

Cheap warungs abound especially near Batu Merah market, on Jl Ahmad Yani, along Gang Pos (beside the post office, mainly lunchtimes) and on Jl Sultan Babullah and at Terminal Pelita (evenings).

Rumah Makan Ai-Madura (Jl Sultan Babullah 34/1; meals 6,000-12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Dowdy but clean local eatery with excellent

nasi ikan (rice and fish set meal) and good *gado-gado* (vegetables with peanut sauce). Great value despite un-priced menus.

Café Panorama (☎ 351884; Jl CM Tiahahu; mains 12,000-45,000Rp, fruit juices 9000Rp, beer 20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Open-sided terrace café with ethnic designs, fabulous views and a few Western menu options. Karpan bemos drive past.

Restaurant Halim (☎ 352177; Jl Sultan Hairun; mains 22,000-55,000Rp plus rice; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat; ♿) Partially decorated with varnished sago-stem walls and Nua-ulu artefacts, this long-standing favourite remains a-tinkle with old-fashioned oyster-shell lamps and serves beautifully cooked Chinese seafood meals.

Rumah Makan Dede's Seafood (☎ 356188; Jl Sultan Babullah; meals 25,000Rp; ☎ 5pm-10pm Mon-Sat) Bustling, efficient, brightly unsophisticated place serving Ambon's best *ikan bakar*. Choose your fish and it arrives accompanied by five great sauces, dips, rice and salad. Sometimes opens midday.

For Western food try the quiet **Hotel Amans rooftop café** (meals 15,000-40,000Rp; ☎ 7am-9pm) or the very pleasant **Hotel Mutiara Restaurant** (meals 22,000-55,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner). **CAF** (Jl Raya Pattimura; meals from 11,700Rp; ☎ 9am-9pm) is Ambon's best-known place for fast food, but similar fried chicken tastes better for half the price at **Esteler-21 Kentucky** (Istana Gizi; Jl Pantai Mardika), an ultrasimple waterfront shack.

SELF-CATERING

Mardika and Batu Merah are vast markets. Useful stores:

Barokah Bakery (Jl AM Sangaji; ☎ 6.30am-6pm) Try the great cheese buns (*roti keju*) here.

Citra supermarket (Jl Tulukabessy; ☎ 8.30am-8.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-6pm Sun)

Hidaya Minimarket (Jl Sultan Babullah)

Plaza supermarket (Ambon Plaza Mall, Jl Yos Sudarso; ☎ 8am-8pm)

Drinking

Hotel Amboina Café (Jl Kapitan Ulupaha; beers 25,000Rp; ☎ 24hr) Jazz themes and some deep-cushioned settees make for Ambon's most convivial informal meeting place.

Rumah Kopi Atoz (Jl Tulukabessy; coffee from 2500Rp; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) Simple coffee house occupying the only traditional-style pavilion for miles around.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Mandala (☎ 344206; www.mandalaair.com; Hotel Amboina, Jl Kapitan Ulupaha; ✈ 8am–5pm Mon–Fri, 8am–2pm Sat & Sun) flies to Jakarta daily via Makassar. Bookings are possible online: you don't pay till you collect the tickets (at least four hours before departure) and there's no penalty for cancelling. **Lion Air** (☎ 342566; Hotel Manise, Jl WR Supratman; ✈ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat & Sun) has two flights daily to Jakarta via Makassar and/or Surabaya with connections to Manado and beyond to Ternate. Prices vary wildly according to demand. If you trust their 'City check-in' (2pm the day before flying), you can head to the airport without baggage. Their midnight flight from Jakarta arrives at 7am due to stops and time-zone changes. **Trigana Air** (☎ 355797; Suita Travel, Jl Anthony Rhebok) offers five weekly connections to Langgur (Kei Islands) and one weekly direct hop to Ternate. Ironically this leaves the same day (out Tuesday, back Wednesday) as the weekly Ambon–Ternate flights with **Merpati** (☎ 352481; fax 353272; Jl Ahmad Yani 19; ✈ 8am–noon & 1pm–4.30pm Mon–Fri, 9am–2pm Sat, Sun & public holidays) who operate a whole web of local weekly hopper flights (see the airfares map on p752). **Deraya Air** (☎ 323802; Pattimura Airport) flights to Bula (Seram) are normally limited to oil-company employees. AdamAir has proposed but not yet started Ambon services.

PT Matrassas Abadi (☎ 311111; Jl AY Patty; ✈ 8am–7pm) is Ambon's best-organised travel agency for domestic tickets (bookings stop at 5pm). Some English is spoken.

BOAT

Pelni

From Yos Sudarso harbour *Lambelu* heads to Bitung (northern Sulawesi; 172,000Rp, 22 hours) via Namlea (Buru, 56,000Rp) returning via Ternate (115,000Rp). *Ciremai* and *Bukit Siguntang* head east to Papua via Bandaneira (Banda Islands; 70,000Rp, seven hours) and Tual (Kei Islands; 177,000Rp). *Dorolonda* and the westbound *Bukit Siguntang* link to Surabaya via Kupang (28 hours). Other westbound boats head for Surabaya via Makassar (Sulawesi; 262,000Rp, 36 to 48 hours) and Bau Bau (Pulau Buton; 205,000Rp). The *Kelimutu* sometimes heads to Tual (233,000Rp) via Saumlaki (Tanimbar Islands, 182,000Rp)

but its timetables are being revised. The glass-faced office of **Pelni** (☎ 348219; ✈ 8am–noon) is opposite the Pattimura Memorial: head down, around the back then upstairs again to buy tickets. Alternatively use one of many agencies around the port (minimal commission). One such handy agency faces Slamet Riyadi Harbour.

Other boats

Much less comfortable boats from **Slamet Riyadi Harbour** serve north and east Seram, Sanana (Sula Islands) and far southeast Maluku. From the ferry jetty in **Galala**, north of Tantai, the KMP *Danaurana* car ferry departs daily to Namlea (Buru) at 5pm (adult/child 55,000/40,000Rp, nine hours). Services to the Lease Islands and southern Seram use Passo, Tulehu or Hunimua ports (opposite).

BUS & BEMO

Frequent bemos and most of the rare buses start from a variety of points along Jl Pantai Mardika in Mardika and Batu Merah markets. However buses for just a few destinations in Seram depart from **Terminal Pelita** (Jl Slamet Riyadi), a lay-by beside the central sports field. These include 5am **Jaya Saka** (☎ 345507) and **Mulia Express** (☎ 341805) buses to Saka (for Sawai).

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

From Pattimura Airport central Kota Ambon is 30km around the bay. Chartered bemos are sometimes cheaper than taxis (150,000Rp, 45 minutes). With minimal luggage you can take an *ojek* from the airport gate (3000Rp, 1km) to the east end of the runway and continue by regular Ht Besar bemo to Kota Ambon (5000Rp, one hour). If ferry departures oblige it is sometimes faster to take an *ojek* to the Poka jetty in Rumah Tiga (20,000Rp, 15 minutes) then cross by ferry to Galala (1500Rp, eight minutes, up to four per hour, from 6am to 6pm). From Galala take any bemo into town (2000Rp, 10 minutes).

BEMO

For the city centre ultra-frequent LinIII bemos (*mobils*) usefully head southwest from Pasar Mardika down Jl Pantai Mardika and Jl Dr Sam Ratulangi or Jl AY Patty,

swinging around the Trikora monument onto Jl Dr Latumentenri. After 2km they loop back again via Jl Sultan Babullah and Jl Yos Sudarso. For any bemo ride consider getting on/off at least 200m away from the main market where vehicles typically jostle for ages through chaotic traffic jams.

AROUND PULAU AMBON

Soya Atas

An easy *ojek* trip to escape from the heat of Kota Ambon takes you to **Soya Atas** village, sitting way up on the high slopes of **Gunung Sirimau** (950m). The convincingly rebuilt **Soya Atas church** has risen from the ashes after being torched during the intercommunal strife of 2002. Across the road a tacky **St Francis Xavier statue** recalls the original Jesuit's Christianising mission here in 1546. A quick scramble beside the statue brings you to a quietly attractive viewpoint. A series of much longer steep footpaths lead to Ema and other villages beyond.

Southern Leitimur

Some of Ambon's most appealing coastal scenery is along the very accessible road southwest of Amahusu. Look for the amusing **Hollywood sign** painted in giant letters on the sea-defences at **Eri**. Thereafter the road wiggles across a pass from Latuhalat to **Namalatu**, a 'resort' of rock-pools that's famous for its **musical becaks**, each pedal-trishaw competing to blast its customers with a few decibels more than his competitor. Around 3km east, backing a less than idyllic pay-beach (admission 2000Rp) the **Pantai 'Santai Beach' Hotel** (Map p753; ☎ 323109; d 150,000Rp; 🍷) offers eight sea-facing rooms with king-sized beds, comical toilets and curtained parking so that amorous couples can maintain anonymity. Further east are two attractive **Pintu Kota** 'recreation parks', perched atop attractive meadows which end in cliffs plunging towards the crashing waves below. Beyond a limpid bay, the increasingly bumpy road finally dead-ends at the forgotten little fishing village of **Seri** where outriggers and drying cloves lie quietly beneath the giant *ketapang* trees.

ACTIVITIES

Ambon offers some terrific **scuba diving** possibilities. Professional, American-owned **Maluku Divers** (☎ 323882; www.unexploredadven

tures.com) in Namalatu specialise in live-aboard odysseys but also offer one-day options with three dives. The standard cost per person is US\$120 plus \$30 for equipment rental, based on groups of five. However one traveller (without group) reports bargaining this to \$110 for two boat-dives including equipment and accommodation (the company has a quietly stylish private guesthouse albeit with shared bathrooms). Although snorkelling is possible off Namalatu, there's much more underwater action around **Pulau Tiga** (which makes a brilliant lunch stop) and **Tanjung Sial Timur** (superb shoals of black snapper and surgeon fish). **Pinta Kota** is somewhat overhyped but the **Hukurila** underwater archway is a marvel if you can handle depths of more than 40m.

Eastern Leihitu

The market town of **Passo** is one of Ambon's busiest. Beyond at Waitatiri is **Baguala Bay Resort** (Map p753; ☎ 362717; fax 362716; www.BagualaBayResort.com; Jl Raya; deluxe/cottage/ste 363,000/423,000/726,000Rp; 🍷 🍷), set in a lovely waterfront palm-garden. There's no beach but it's the only hotel on the whole island to have a decent swimming pool. The traditionally styled but fully equipped 'cottage' rooms are the best option. Although 17km east of central Kota Ambon, this could make a good alternative to staying in Kota Ambon with Waai bemos passing right outside every few minutes till mid-evening. The resort's **Waterside Café** (juice 8000Rp, snacks from 10,000Rp) serves good-value Western and local food including curious imitations of pizza.

A cheaper accommodation alternative with its own idyllic beach is the comfortable if slightly degenerating **Taman Luterse Boer** (Map p753; ☎ 361366; d 150,000Rp; 🍷). It's on the main road yet easy to miss, just 300m west of the over-busy **Natsepa pay-beach** (admission 2000Rp, parking 2000Rp).

Tulehu has a trio of useful ports. Use the jetties behind Tulehu market for speedboats to Haruku village. Use Tulehu-Momoking jetty for speedboats to Pelauw (Haruku Island) and Saparua Island. Use Tulehu-Hurnal for bigger ferries to the Lease Islands and Amahai (Seram).

Waai is famous for its 'lucky' **Bulut** (Moray eels). Spotting them supposedly augurs

good luck. The cost of this good fortune is 10,000Rp paid to a waiting gentleman who will tempt the eels out of their dark recesses by feeding them raw eggs. The concrete **car pond** (Jl Air Waysilaka) in which the eels lurk doubles oddly as the village washing pool. The experience is not exactly dramatic yet somehow it's intriguingly off-beat enough to amuse. Take a Waai bemo, get off just before the 'Margreet Salon' sign and walk two blocks inland to find the pond.

A spur off the main Liang road leads to **Hunimua** which has some pretty, uncommercialised **beaches** and is the departure jetty for car-ferries to Waipirit (near Kairatu, Seram), departing every two to three hours.

Bemos are very frequent till mid-evening on the Kota Ambon-Natsepa-Waai route (per hop 2000Rp). Liang buses are rare.

Northern Leihitu

The north coast is peaceful and little visited though several sleepy village stalls sell smoked fish to occasional passing *ojeks*. **Hitu Lama** has a rather scenic setting and a dawn speedboat service to western Seram. But the nearest thing to a tourist attraction is the 1649 **Benteng Amsterdam** in quietly attractive **Hila**. That Hila should be renowned for a Dutch fort is somewhat ironic considering it was originally the power base of anticolonial Ambon. The four-sided waterfront fort has a uniquely complete central keep, though the tiled roof is getting a little

dilapidated. Five minutes' walk inland from the fort, then across a school football field, seek out Kaitetu's pretty little thatch-roofed **Mesjid Wapauae**. Originally built in 1414 on nearby Gunung Wawane, the mosque was transferred to the present site in 1664. According to a local legend, supernatural powers did the moving.

Hila is reached from Hunut by relatively rare bemo (5000Rp) or by *ojek* (30,000Rp). Continue on foot for five minutes beyond the eye-catching **Mesjid Besar** to find the fort.

LEASE, SERAM & BURU

LEASE ISLANDS

☎ 0931

Pronounced 'leh-a-say', these conveniently accessible yet delightfully calm islands have a scattering of fascinating olde-worlde villages, lovely bays and snorkelling possibilities (bring your own equipment). Sleepy Kota Saparua makes the most convenient base.

Most access is by speedboat from Tulehu or Passo on Pulau Ambon. Additionally, five days weekly the 9am *Layur* car ferry from Tulehu-Hurnala (☎ 0911-361435) visits Wae Riang (near Kabauw, Haruku, 5000Rp), Pulau (Haruku, 9000Rp), Ume Putih (near Kulur, Saparua, 13,000Rp) and finally Wae Rae (Seram). It returns the same afternoon.

PATTIMURA & TIAHAHU

In 1817 the Dutch faced a small but emotionally charged uprising led by Thomas Matulesy, who briefly managed to gain control of Saparua's Benteng Duurstede. He killed all the fortress defenders but spared a six-year-old Dutch boy. For this minor 'mercy' Matulesy was popularly dubbed Pattimura ('big hearted'). The rebels were rapidly defeated and dispatched to the gallows but have since been immortalised as symbols of anticolonial resistance. Today their statues dot the whole of Maluku and Pattimura even features on Indonesia's 1000Rp banknotes. A much-romanticised heroine of the same saga is Martha Christine Tiahahu, whose father supported Pattimura. After daddy's execution on Nusa Laut, Martha was put on a ship to Java but grief-stricken she starved herself to death. Her remains were thrown into the sea but her memory lingers on.

Pulau Haruku

Pulau Haruku has no formal accommodation so visits are easiest as day trips from Ambon or in linking Ambon with Pulau Saparua. The Christian village of **Haruku** is famous for its November **Sasi Lompa festival**, marking the end of the annual prohibition (see boxed text, p777) on catching *lompa* flying-fish. The village is quietly quaint and relatively isolated down 8km of narrow bike-track from bigger **Rohomoni** where you'll spot Maluku's most impressive **thatch-roofed mosque**.

Pelauw, Pulau Haruku's main village, has a tacky **Cakalele monument** celebrating the island's other major festival. About 300m east of the port the one-wall ruin of **New Hoorn fort** is barely worth stopping to see. A relatively lonely road leads to the village of **Hulaliu** at the western end of which is **Pantai Iyanaen**, a narrow, sandy beach with some lovely sweeps of view towards Saparua and Seram.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Speedboats leave when full (regularly till afternoon) from behind Tulehu market to Haruku and Oma villages (10,000Rp, 15 minutes), and from Tulehu-Momoking jetty for Pelauw (15,000Rp, 25 minutes). From Hulaliu it's relatively easy to charter a speedboat to Haria (Saparua) for 100,000Rp and continue by *ojek* (5000Rp) or bemo (3000Rp) to Kota Saparua. The car ferry from Pelauw to Ume Putih (Kulur) departs around 11am. Returning to Tulehu-Hurnala via Wae Riang it departs at around 2.30pm. No service on Tuesdays or Fridays.

GETTING AROUND

Rare bemos run between Pelauw and Kailolo. *Ojeks* from Kailolo cost 5000Rp to Rohomoni but a whopping 40,000Rp to

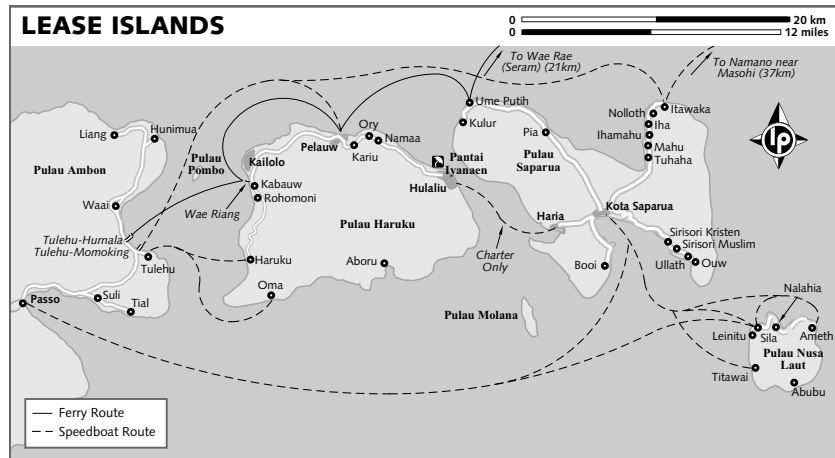
Haruku. Pelauw to Hulaliu *ojeks* charge 20,000Rp.

Pulau Saparua KOTA SAPARUA

The island's main village hosts the 1676 **Benteng Duurstede**, famously besieged by Pattimura in 1817 (see boxed text, above). The outer walls are renovated with mouldering grey concrete showing its original form and displaying several old cannons. When the gate appears locked, just pushing it open often works! Opposite the entrance a seemingly abandoned museum still displays models depicting Pattimura's exploits, but bring a torch as there's no light inside. Behind the museum is a popular sandy swimming beach backed by **Penginapan Duurstede** (☎ 21099; d 50,000Rp) with seven clean but fan-less rooms. The more comfortable **Penginapan Lease Indah** (☎ 21040; Jl Muka Pasar; unrenovated/renovated d 60,000/70,000Rp; ☎) has a pleasant garden culminating in a pair of bay-view seats amid bougainvillea. Further along Jl Muka Pasar are a few *rumah makan* (eating houses), the market and a Telkom building, directly behind which (on parallel Jl Belakang) is the small bemo terminal.

SOUTHEAST SAPARUA

A twisting lane leads through war-battered **Sirisori Kristen** and photogenic **Sirisori Muslim** to **Ullath** where the traditional-style *bailau* (meeting pavilion; see boxed text, p790) is overshadowed by the tall Protestant church tower. Beyond this, the road dead-ends at **Ouw**, famous for its elegantly simple **pottery (sempe)**. None is obviously on show, but ask any local and you'll usually be led to a workshop where 5000Rp is a reasonable donation to watch the artist build up a typical bowl on an unpowered spindle device.



NORTHEAST SAPARUA

Arguably Saparua's most intriguing village is **Nolloth**, which retains a uniquely impressive traditional *baileu* and a fine 1860 church with an extraordinary chalice-shaped wooden pulpit. A curious selection of colourfully gaudy new Christian statuettes dot the town. Nolloth merges into **Itawaka**, where the village chief, known in Lease as *raja* (king) rather than *kepala desa* (village head), is building the five-room *Penginapan Toholau Indah* on a beach 10 minutes' walk around the headland. There's supposedly excellent snorkelling offshore here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

At 5am the **Satu Nusa speedboat** (☎ 0852 18344222) leaves Kota Saparua for Passo on Ambon, returning at around 9am (40,000Rp, one hour). From Itawaka, 5am speedboats run to both Tulehu (Ambon) and to a muddy beach at Namano near Masohi (Seram, 35,000Rp), returning at around 7.30am.

GETTING AROUND

Bemos from Kota Saparua run occasionally to Haria (3000Rp) and Itawaka (5000Rp), very rarely to Owu (5000Rp) and Kulur (8000Rp). *Ojeks* cost twice the bemo fare but are much more pleasant for sightseeing.

Pulau Nusa Laut

Sila village is the closest to Pulau Saparua. Its attractive **Ebenhaezer Church** is the oldest in Maluku (1719). Nearby is the small, overgrown but reasonably well preserved ruin of 1654 Dutch fort **Benteng Beverwyk**. Between the two, the friendly local English teacher offers a no-frills family **home-stay** (House 15; 50,000Rp; ☎ from 3pm). Nusa Laut has no roads but there's an easy-to-follow trail from Sila to Ameth (1½ hours' walk) via picturesque **Nalahia**, where you descend a staircase to a sweep of opalescent bay. **Ameth** has an unusual if not especially beautiful octagonal church and some very fine coral gardens 300m offshore. Their marine life is 'protected' by a *sasi* (see boxed text, p777) and before snorkelling here you'll need to pay 100,000Rp to the village *raja*. Ameth's brand new **Penginapan Pari Musar** (☎ 21499; Jl Pendidikan; s/d 50,000/70,000Rp) has en suite bucket *mandis* and clean squat toilets.

It's the bright pink house just beyond the tiny wartel booth facing the football pitch at Ameth's easternmost end.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

On Wednesday and Saturday public speedboats from each Nusa Laut village shuttle across to Kota Saparua market (20,000Rp each way), returning around lunchtime. At other times you'll usually need to charter: *from* Nusa Laut that's easy enough and cheapest if you head for Owu (ex-Sila from 100,000Rp, ex-Ameth 150,000Rp). *To* Nusa Laut, however, finding a suitably powerful boat for the choppy seas can be very tough and relatively expensive as no such boats are moored in Owu. Your best hope is to keep asking around at Kota Saparua market. Most Tuesdays and Friday mornings direct speedboats head from Ameth and Sila to Passo on Ambon (50,000Rp to 75,000Rp) returning next morning.

PULAU SERAM

☎ 0914

Some Malukans call Seram 'Nusa Ina' (Mother Island), believing that all life sprang from 'Nunusaku', a mythical peak ambiguously located somewhere in the island's western mountains. The best known of Seram's indigenous minority tribes, the Nua-ulu ('upper-river') or Alifuro people, sport red bandana headgear and were head-hunters as recently as the 1940s. Seram's capital and main town is Masohi-Amahai, but the greatest attraction is Teluk Sawai on the northern coast. Seram's wild, mountainous interior has thick forests alive with cockatoos and colourful parrots but seeing them usually requires a punishingly masochistic trek into the remote Manusela National Park for which you'll need guides and extra permits.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

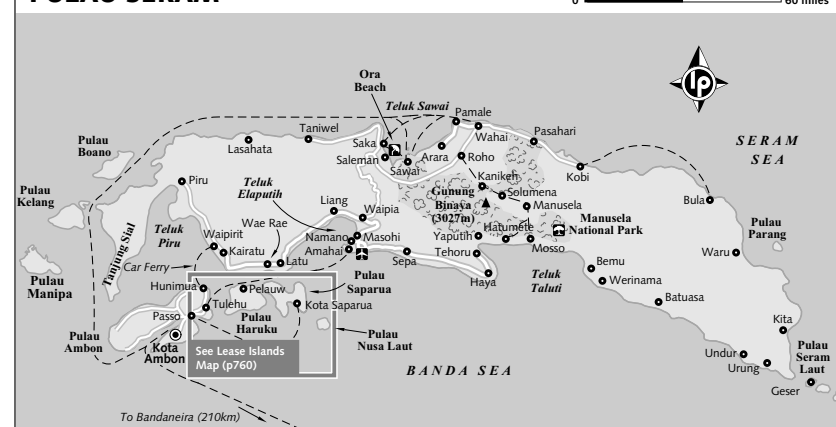
Air

From Amahai, **Merpati** (☎ 22231; Jl Martha Tiahahu) flies to Ambon via Banda on Mondays. Ambon-Wahai flights operate on Thursdays.

Boat

From Tulehu-Hurnala (Ambon) to Amahai, comfortable jet-boats (75,000Rp, 2½ hours) run daily except Sundays at 8am

PULAU SERAM



and 4pm, returning at 8am and 2pm. On Sundays there's a morning speedboat from Masohi instead. Car ferries link Waipirit (near Kairatu) to Hunimua (Ambon) six times daily (adult/child 11,500/8500Rp, 1½ hours) and Wae Rae to Ume Putih (near Kulur, Pulau Saparua) five days weekly. Daily speedboats from Namano cross to Itawaka (Saparua) at around 7.30am, returning at 5am (35,000Rp, 1¼ hours).

Bus

Cramped, direct buses perfumed with durian and sweat operate from Kota Ambon to various Seram towns. They use the Hunimua-Waipirit ferry for which you might have to wait a couple of hours. Generally it's more comfortable to take the jet-boat to/from Amahai and continue from Masohi.

GETTING AROUND

Masohi is Seram's main road-transport hub. Bemos are hyper-frequent on the Masohi-Amahai run. Buses or Kijangs to other destinations are rare especially after noon. By 10am you've probably missed the last service north to Saka for Sawai.

Masohi, Namano & Amahai

Predominantly Muslim Masohi is the spacious purpose-built capital of Central Maluku. Its wide streets are pleasant, and though there's not much to do it's not a bad place to wait out an almost inevitable day of missed connections and bureaucracy –

technically signing in with the police here remains an obligation. The main street of Jl Souliisa heads southwest from the terminal/market/Masohi Plaza shopping mall. It becomes Jl Martha Tiahahu in the Christian suburbs, continuing for 6km through Namano village into predominantly Christian Amahai. Here, just before the main port, the larger road turns 90 degrees, passing the museum and dinky airport a kilometre beyond.

INFORMATION

Local police still require tourists to register in Masohi before travelling around Seram. Bring several photocopies of your visa and passport to police headquarters. Laboriously typing out your Surat Tanda Melapur (STM letter, 20,000Rp) takes an hour or two. On Saturdays ask the tourist office.

BRI ATM (Masohi Plaza shopping mall) More convenient than the banks strung along Jl Souliisa.

Central Maluku Tourist Office (Dinas Kebudayaan & Parawisata; ☎ 21462; Jl Imam Bonjol; ☎ 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) Near the steep-roofed *Bupati* office in Masohi. Some staff members speak English, but while friendly they are of minimal practical help.

Police HQ (Jl Dr Siwabessy; ☎ 9am-2.30pm Mon-Fri) **SuperOjek** (☎ 0813 43063684) Max Dopeng is an obliging English-speaking guide cum *ojek*-driver.

Telkom (Jl Geser 2; ☎ 24hr) Beside the *Bupati* office.

SIGHTS

The minuscule **Sanggar Budaya Seram Museum** (☎ 22102; Soahuku; admission/photo-permit 10,000/10,000Rp; ☎ 8am-8pm, hours vary) is opposite

Amahai's Ebenhaezer church (300m after the bemo route from Masohi turns east). The highlight of a visit is hearing the aged, one-eared curator Nus Tamaela play the *totobuan* (bell-gamelan) or tell stories in easy Bahasa Indonesia about traditional Nua-ulu/Alifuro ceremonies. Most involve severed heads.

An alternative little-used Amahai-Masohi lane, via a tall hilltop radio mast, offers beautiful **bay views**.

For a cooling dip, **Pantai Kuako** is a pebbly headland 1.5km beyond Amahai port. It's somewhat marred by litter but is currently undergoing a major facelift.

SLEEPING

Penginapan Lelemuku (☎ 21581; Jl Martha Tiahahu; tw from 55,000Rp) At first glance this clean, older family house in southern Masohi appears basic and somewhat jerry-built. However, the new VIP rooms behind (twin rooms are 137,000Rp) are vastly nicer with rattan seats facing a garden that's a curious blend of real and artificial foliage.

Penginapan Irene (☎ 21238; Jl Martha Tiahahu; s/d/tw with fan from 45,000/66,000/88,000Rp, with air-con from 100,000/110,000/125,000Rp; 🍷) Friendly, quiet and good value, the best rooms are 'cottages' (130,000Rp) at the rear with balcony seats facing a little ornamental garden. Pronounced 'ee-reh-neh', the *penginapan* is at the southern end of Masohi at the first bend beyond the petrol station: easily accessible by Amahai-bound bemos.

Lounusa Beach (☎ 21379; main road, Namano; d 100,000-150,000Rp; 🍷) Owners speak Dutch and limited English and plan to construct two stilt rooms and a waterfront restaurant on their patch of mangrove bank (despite the name, there's no beach). Hopefully these will improve upon the somewhat lacklustre existing accommodation.

Hotel Tiara (☎ 22354; Jl Souliassa; d with fan/air con 77,000/125,000Rp; 🍷) Tiara is excellent value with clean new rooms, 400m east of Masohi Plaza.

Hotel-Restaurant Isabella (☎ 22637; fax 21542; Jl Manusela 17; s/d from 80,000/185,000Rp; 🍷) The two 'executive' rooms (265,000Rp) are Masohi's best options with hot-water showers, king-sized beds and Guns'n'Roses posters. However, other rooms are very disappointing, especially the windowless 'deluxe' (230,000Rp) and space-wasting 'presidential' (375,000Rp) ones.

EATING

There are several cheap warungs around Masohi market and terminal.

Warung Makan Madura (Jl Souliassa; meals 5000-9000Rp; 🍷 7am-11pm) Reliable, bargain-value local servery.

Rumah Makan Sari Guri (☎ 22809; Jl Martha Tiahahu; mains 15,000-30,000Rp; 🍷 10.30am-2pm & 5.30pm-11pm) Simple but highly regarded for Chinese and seafood dishes. It's just beyond Penginapan Lelemuku.

Northern Seram

Seram's most accessible scenic highlight is **Teluk Sawai**, a beautiful wide bay dramatically backed by cliffs and rugged, forested peaks. **Saleman**, its most picturesque village, is famed for flocks of bat-like **Lusiala birds**. These emerge at dusk from a cave above the village, supposedly bearing the souls of human ancestors. Saleman has no accommodation but, across the bay, tempting **Ora Beach** has marvellous spongy, white sand where the stilt bungalows and pavilion restaurant of **Ora Beach Hotel** are currently under reconstruction: for details check with Ambon's Baguala Bay Resort (p759).

Further round the bay is the photogenic stilt-house village of **Sawai**. It's a possible base for jungle hikes and *lape-lape* rides to Pulau Raja where bats (*kelelawar/uniki*) appear at sunset. There's great snorkelling in the offshore coral gardens (bring your own gear). The only hotel, **Penginapan Lisar Bahari** (Ali's Place; per person 150,000Rp) has creaky bamboo walls and very dim lamps but the terrace is idyllic for watching moonlight on the bay and doing nothing much of anything. Being perched over the water, rooms are predictably somewhat damp (bring a sleeping mat) and showers in the basic en suite bathrooms are rather salty. Costs include brilliant fish dinners, assorted snacks and endless tea.

East of Sawai, lethargic little **Wahai** was once Seram's main Dutch fort but a small, cannon-topped mound of stones is all that remains. There's inexpensive accommodation but little reason to visit.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tickets for the weekly Wahai-Ambon flight are only sold from Wahai airfield (no telephone). Masohi-Wahai buses (155,000Rp, five hours) bypass Sawai completely. Until the road extension to Saleman is finished, all

access to Teluk Sawai is by boat from the tiny port of **Saka**. From here Kijangs to Masohi (50,000Rp, two hours) and two buses to Ambon (125,000Rp, seven to nine hours) all depart around 8.30am. Chartering longboats from Saka to Ora Beach/Sawai costs about 100,000/200,000Rp. Every morning boats from Sawai's central jetty depart to Wahai at 6.30am (45,000Rp) and Saka at 7am (20,000Rp, 40 minutes), though the Penginapan Lisar Bahari might claim otherwise, hoping you'll charter their longboat. Twice a week an uncomfortable slow boat runs from Sawai to Ambon (235,000Rp, 30 hours).

PULAU BURU

☎ 0913

Following the political chaos of 1965, this large island west of Ambon became the home-in-exile of communist suspects making it a sort of Indonesian anti-Siberia. Authorities remain somewhat suspicious of visitors. Despite tales of giant eels and 'flowers of longevity', mystical mountain lake **Danu Rana** is rather underwhelming, with boggy banks that don't offer ideal hiking conditions.

BANDA ISLANDS

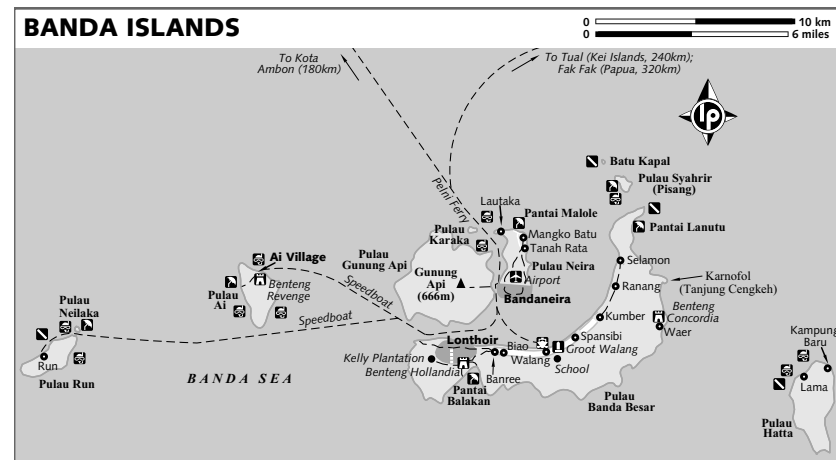
☎ 0910

This tiny and historically fascinating cluster of 10 picturesque islands is Maluku's most tempting travel destination. Particularly impressive undersea drop-offs are vibrantly

plastered with multicoloured coral gardens offering superlative snorkelling. Outlying Hatta, Ai and Neilaka each have utterly undeveloped picture-postcard beaches. And the central main islands, Pulau Neira (with the capital Bandaneira) and Pulau Banda Besar (the great nutmeg island) curl in picturesque crescents around a pocket-sized tropical Mt Fuji (Gunung Api). Were they more accessible, the Bandas might be one of the world's top tourist spots. Yet for now you'll have these wonderful islands almost entirely to yourself. Hurry – this can't last!

History

In the 15th century, the Banda Islands supplied all the world's quality nutmeg, then in great global demand (see boxed text, p749). Producing nutmeg takes knowledge but minimal effort so the drudgery of manual labour was virtually unknown here. Food, cloth and all necessities of life could be easily traded for spices with the Arab, Chinese, Javanese and Bugis merchants who queued up to do business. Things started to go wrong when the Europeans arrived, the Portuguese in 1512, then the Dutch from 1599. These strange barbarians had no foodstuffs to trade, just knives, impractical woollens and useless trinkets of mere novelty value. So when they started demanding a trade monopoly, the notion was laughable nonsense. However, since the Dutch were dangerously armed, some *orang kaya* (elders) signed a 'contract' to keep them quiet. Nobody took



it at all seriously. The Dutch disappeared in their ships and were promptly forgotten. But a few years later they were back, furious to find the English merrily trading nutmeg in Pulau Run and Pulau Ai. Entrenching themselves by force, the dominant Dutch played cat and mouse with the deliberately provocative English, while trying ever unsuccessfully to enforce their mythical monopoly on the locals. Jan Pieterszoon Coen, the ruthless new governor general of the VOC (Dutch East India Company), reacted in 1621 by ordering the virtual genocide of the Bandanese. Just a few hundred survivors escaped to the Kei Islands.

Coen returned to Batavia (now Jakarta) and announced that the VOC would accept applications for land grants in the Bandas. The odd-ball Dutch applicants were provided with slaves, but had to settle permanently on the islands and produce spices exclusively for the company at fixed prices. They became known as *perkeniers*, from the Dutch word *perk* ('ground' or 'garden'). Nearly 70 plantations were established, mostly on Banda Besar and Ai.

This system survived for almost 200 years, but corruption and gross mismanagement meant that the monopoly was never as profitable as it might have been. By the 1930s Bandaneira was a place of genteel exile for better-behaved, anti-Dutch dissidents, and during WWII the islands were largely ignored by the Japanese.

In April 1999 there was a brief flare-up of violence when churches were burnt and at least five were killed at Walang including the 'last *perkenier*', Wim de Broeke. Most of the Christian minority fled to Seram where they remain. The islands have been entirely calm since then.

Activities

SNORKELLING & DIVING

Crystal-clear seas, shallow-water drop-offs and soft corals teeming with multicoloured reef life: the choice of pristine snorkelling sites is phenomenal. Coral gardens off **Pulau Hatta**, eastern **Banda Besar** and **Run** are stunning and absolutely justify chartering a boat and boatman. Even those right in front of **Ai village** (on Pulau Ai) are magnificent. Some Bandaneira homestays, including the following, rent fins/snorkels to guests: Vita (p769; 10,000/10,000Rp per day), Mutiara Guest-

house (p769; 15,000/15,000Rp) and Delfika (p769; 25,000/25,000Rp). Bandaneira's Hotel Maulana is the Bandas' only diving operation but charges US\$90 to US\$110 per double dive and has relatively aged equipment.

SWIMMING

There are beaches on the south coast of Banda Besar near **Lonthoir**, but for superb stretches of white sand the best places are **Ai**, tiny **Pulau Neilaka** (beware of currents) and especially the north coast of **Hatta** though shallow coral can impede swimming at low tide.

PULAU NEIRA & BANDANEIRA

Little Bandaneira has always been the Bandas' main port and administrative centre. In the Dutch era, the townsfolk virtually bankrupted themselves maintaining a European lifestyle and competing with their neighbours to build and furnish their spacious mansions – and to rebuild them every time Gunung Api's billows of volcanic ash burnt them down again. Today Bandaneira is a charmingly friendly place with many late-colonial houses still standing. The sleepy, flower-filled streets are so quiet that two becak count as a traffic jam.

Information

There's no tourist office but several guesthouses have helpful English-speaking owners. Delfika (p769) gives its guests a free, basic island map and a souvenir video-CD (VCD): it hopes to have internet access eventually. For great historical background, read *Indonesian Banda* by Willard A Hanna. It costs 75,000Rp from some souvenir shops, much more from the Rumah Budaya.

There are several wartel including one which doubles as the Merpati reservations desk. There's only the BRI Bank in town; sometimes guesthouses can exchange US dollars cash (try the Mutiara Guesthouse, p769) but play it safe and bring ample rupiah from Ambon.

BRI Bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Kujali) It doesn't have an ATM and won't change money.

Post office (☎ 8am-12.30pm Mon-Thu, 8am-11pm Fri) Dinky.

Telkom office (Jl Asidiqin; ☎ 24hr) Modern.

Sights

Bandaneira is ideal for wandering aimlessly to admire the gently attractive old

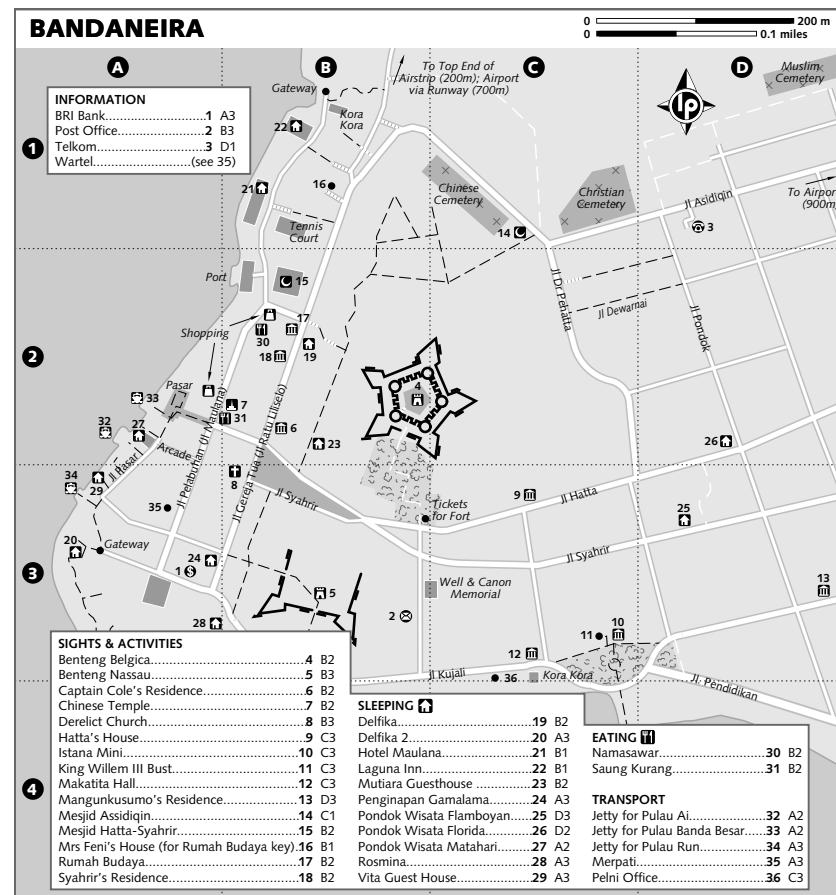
villas, ponder various mouldering ruins and count up the historic cannons that still lie as though dropped casually at random. It's lovely to just gaze at the cloudscapes and watch the sunset colours changing over Gunung Api.

FORTRESSES

In 1608, Dutch Admiral Verhoeven ordered the building of **Benteng Nassau** on foundations abandoned by the Portuguese in 1529. This was against the most express wishes of local island leaders and triggered a spiral of violent hostilities. The Bandanese were so incensed that they ambushed and executed some 40 Dutch 'negotiators' including Verhoeven himself. The Dutch retaliated

in 1621 with the infamous beheading and quartering of 44 *orang kaya* within the fortress followed by the virtual genocide of the Bandanese population.

Ironically, the fort was in an indefensible lowland position and had to be augmented three years later by the more commanding **Benteng Belgica** (admission by 'donation' 20,000Rp), built at massive expense on the hill above. Named Belgica for Governor General Pieter Both's native Flanders, it's a five-pointed star fort in classic Vauban style. The massive cannon-deflecting bastions, over-engineered for the relatively easy task of keeping out lightly armed villager-intruders, were clearly designed to withstand English naval bombardment. Thus in 1796 it caused quite a scandal



in Holland when the Brits managed to seize it (albeit briefly) without firing a shot.

From the 1860s both fortresses lapsed into ruin. Benteng Nassau remains largely overgrown, but Benteng Belgica was extensively restored in the 1990s. To reach the upper ramparts (great views) take the second arch on the left from the central courtyard.

HISTORIC HOUSES

Several historically significant Dutch-era buildings have been restored, a few hosting mini-museums. If you manage to gain access at all (knock and hope!) much of the fun of a visit is hearing the fascinating life stories of the septuagenarian caretakers, assuming your Bahasa Indonesia is up to the task. Donations are appropriate.

The **Rumah Budaya** (Jl Gereja Tua; admission 10,000Rp) houses Bandaneira's main museum. Several of the lurid paintings, maps and photos have English captions and there are antique mini-cannons by the dozen. Mrs Feni who lives about 200m further north, keeps the key; opening hours are by arrangement.

Of three early-20th-century 'exile houses' (see boxed text, below), **Mangunkusumo's Residence** (Jl Kujali) has the grandest portico but is empty. **Syahrir's Residence** (Jl Gereja Tua) has a few mementoes of only specialist interest, but **Hatta's House** (Jl Hatta) is much more appealing. His distinctive spectacles and neatly folded suit are in the cupboard, his modest bed still has its mosquito nets and behind is the little schoolhouse that he ran in the late 1930s.

Captain Cole's Residence (Jl Gereja Tua) is the supposed lodgings of the British Marine commander who recaptured Benteng Belgica in 1810. This was just after they'd handed it

back to the Dutch having grabbed it in 1796! Closed to the public.

The grand but eerily empty 1820s **Istana Mini** (Jl Kujali) was a later residence for the Bandas' Dutch governors. It's usually unlocked. A haughty, medal-spangled bust of Dutch King Willem III rusts quietly in the side-garden.

Also empty is **Makatita Hall** (Jl Kujali) on the site of the former Harmonie Club (aka 'the Soc'), which once boasted seven snooker tables and was the focus of colonial-era social events. It is still used for special occasions. Lively caretaker Paman Bahalwan has plenty of WWII yarns to spin.

RELIGIOUS BUILDINGS

Behind the main port is the eye-catching **Mesjid Hatta-Syahrir**. Some locals claim this was converted into a mosque from the mansion that first accommodated Hatta and Syahrir on their arrival from Papuan exile. There's also a rarely used, 300-year-old **Chinese Temple** (Jl Pelabuhan) and a quaint but perilously derelict 1852 **church** (Jl Gereja Tua) with an antique tomb-stoned floor. Separate Chinese, Christian and Muslim cemeteries are ranged around **Mesjid Assidiqin** in the Merdeka area.

Activities

Bandaneira has **snorkelling** (although it isn't Banda's best). There are some pleasant coral gardens at the southern end of Tanah Rata village, off the eastern end of the airstrip and just off **Pantai Malole**, a beach on the island's north coast, an hour's stroll from town.

Sleeping

Apart from homestays on Ai and a dormant bungalow on Syahrir (Pisang) all Banda's

accommodation is in Bandaneira. Over a dozen family homes offer simple but clean rooms. Homestay prices here are roughly standardised at 60,000Rp for a single room and 75,000Rp for a double (both with fan). Typically add around 40,000Rp for air con (where available) should you choose to use it. Less popular places might knock off 10,000Rp, while you can expect to pay 10,000Rp to 20,000Rp extra for views or bigger rooms. Prices usually include frequent cups of tea and a light breakfast.

Vita Guest House (☎ 21332; Jl Pasar; 🍷) Four comfortable rooms face a waterfront garden whose wonderful wooden jetty area is ideal for admiring the cone of Gunung Api over a cold beer (20,000Rp). Alan, the English-speaking owner, is very obliging and can arrange boat rentals at competitive rates. There's a useful communal kitchen and fridge.

Mutiara Guesthouse (☎ 21344; 🍷) The Mutiara has superb-value new rooms and classically styled wooden furniture. Elements suggest nouveau riche suburban America, but the curious mélange includes parrots, an artificial waterfall, a luridly colourful fish-tank, a spice garden and a veritable museum of local collectables. Enthusiastic English-speaking owner 'Abba' also sells pearls. Bicycle rental is 40,000Rp per day.

Delfika 2 (☎ 21127) Four neat rooms with *mandis* of which two have glimpses of volcano-view (best from room 101). The quiet roof terrace offers one of Bandaneira's best all-round viewpoints. When unstaffed, enquire at Delfika.

Delfika (☎ 21027; Jl Gereja Tua; 🍷) Entered through an old-world sitting room with bags of atmosphere, most rooms are recently renovated and accessed off a lovely courtyard garden. Bahri speaks English.

Pondok Wisata Matahari (☎ 21050; Jl Pasar) Three of the slightly lacklustre rooms look out across the water towards Gunung Api.

Pondok Wisata Flamboyan (☎ 21233; Jl Syahrir) Fairly ordinary rooms around a central *jambu* tree, but renowned for good home cooking.

Penginapan Gamalama (☎ 21053; Jl Gereja Tua; 🍷) Functional, relatively large rooms beyond some gratuitous tree-effect concrete pillars.

Pondok Wisata Florida (☎ 21086; Jl Hatta) This atmospherically ageing old home is full of old ceramics and lamps. Guest rooms have

antique bedsteads but are somewhat basic and underlit.

Rosmina (☎ 21145; Jl Kujali) Rather basic with small if clean rooms, though the unkempt yard behind has great potential. Manager 'Bob' speaks rather frenetic English.

Hotel Maulana (☎ 21022; fax 21024; standard/deluxe/ste US\$50/60/75; 🍷) The strong point of this pseudo-colonial-style palace hotel is its lovely veranda overlooking the waterfront between palms and shaggy *ketapang* trees. Top-floor suites have the best views (no elevators). However, windows don't appear to be regularly washed and although there is hot water (unique in Banda), bathrooms show signs of rust and wear. Laguna Inn, the Maulana's cheaper annex on Jl Pelabuhan, shares similar pros and cons but you might be able to bargain them down to US\$25 plus tax for fundamentally similar rooms.

Eating

Several homestays offer inclusive full-board deals or cook dinner by arrangement (typically 20,000Rp to 30,000Rp according to ingredients). This is the best way to taste Banda specialities like eggplant stuffed with *kenari*-almond paste or fish in nutmeg-fruit sauce. Especially when ships are in port, vendors sell dried nutmeg fruit slices and *kenari*-almond cakes. In December try *anggur* fruit, which look like black olives but taste like mildly astringent grapes.

Half a dozen eateries lie a bone's throw from Bandaneira's port and market. **Rumah makan Saung Kurang** (Jl Pasar; meals 5000Rp) is a basic shack serving decent *nasi ikan* at lunchtime. **Namasawar** (Jl Pelabuhan; gado-gado 10,000Rp, nasi ayam 15,000Rp) has good food and the nicest décor. **Delfika** (Jl Gereja Tua) serves seasonal fruit juices (7500Rp), disappointing ice cream (10,000Rp) and better banana pancakes (7500Rp). Only **Vita Guest House** (Jl Pasar) appears to serve beer (normally to guests only).

Shopping

Several souvenir shops on Jl Pelabuhan sell a small variety of souvenirs, postcards, 'antiques', pearls, contrived artefacts and genuine local snacks.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Merpati (☎ 21060; Jl Pelabuhan) flies from Bandaneira's cute little airport to both Ambon

HATTA & SYAHRIR

Until 1936 Indonesian anti-Dutch nationalist leaders Mohammed Hatta and Sultan Syahrir languished in the malarial hellhole of Papua's Boven Digul prison. Then they were mysteriously transferred to the laid-back paradise of the Banda Islands. Still unrepentant, they were forced to accept a generous stipend allowing them to live in considerable comfort in sizable mansions. Unperturbed by such incongruities, the pair set about organising a school for independence-minded youths, thus inspiring a whole generation of anticolonial followers. In 1942 the Dutch dragged them back to Java vainly hoping for help in resisting the advancing Japanese. Instead, Hatta worked with Soekarno in the pro-Japanese puppet regime and in the first nationalist government that emerged from it as WWII ended. Hatta became the national vice president. Syahrir later became prime minister.

and Amahai (Seram) on Mondays. The Bandaneira office is in a wartel. Book well ahead or ask your guesthouse to book for you. Be aware that the flight sometimes gets cancelled.

BOAT

Pelni's *Ciremai* and *Bukit Siguntang* arrive at Bandaneira from Makassar (from 268,000Rp, 47 hours) via Bau Bau (Sulawesi) and Ambon (70,000Rp, seven hours). Both continue to Tual (Kei Islands; 96,000Rp, 11 hours) and Papua. On the way back both return to Ambon but the *Bukit Siguntang* then loops south via Kupang (Timor) to Surabaya, missing Bau Bau and Makassar.

The **Pelni office** (☎ 21122; Jl Kujali; ☎ 8am-1pm Mon-Sat) occupies a picturesque if bizarrely inconvenient location near Istana Mini.

Perintis cargo ships cross to southeastern Seram roughly every three weeks.

Getting Around

The island is walkable small but *ojeks* and becaks save sweat at 2000Rp per hop, 5000Rp to the airport or 15,000Rp to Malole Beach (*ojek* only). A couple of guesthouses rent bicycles and several offer free airport pick-ups.

PULAU GUNUNG API

This devilish little 666m volcano has always been a threat to Bandaneira, Lonthoir and anyone attempting to farm its fertile slopes. Its most recent eruption in 1988 killed three people, destroyed over 300 houses and filled the sky with ash for days. Gunung Api's historical eruptions have often proved to be spookily accurate omens of approaching intruders.

The volcano can be climbed for awesome sunrise views, but the 'recommended' route (around 90 minutes up) is surprisingly arduous and involves a scramble up frighteningly loose scree. Take much more drinking water than you expect to need, stashing some halfway for your return. Easier routes exist but are 'closed' due to the possibility of poisonous gas vents. Guides (from 50,000Rp) are prepared to accompany hikers: reassuring, though not strictly necessary.

Around Gunung Api are several attractive coral gardens, home to lurid purple-and-orange sea squirts. Good for snorkelling

are the submerged north-coast lava flows and areas off little Pulau Karaka's handkerchief of beach. A motorised outrigger from Bandaneira should cost from 50,000Rp per short-day charter with various stops.

PULAU BANDA BESAR

pop 6000

The largest island of the group, Banda Besar was the most important historical source of nutmeg. It's more hilly than Neira and every bit as charming.

Walang, Biao and Lonthoir

Boats shuttle regularly from Bandaneira to **Walang** (to charter 3000Rp, or 15,000Rp, 15 minutes) where the school's friendly English teacher is keen for volunteer travellers to meet her students. Around 1km east of the jetty, the de Broeke family's **Groot Waling** estate was the last intact *perkenier* plantation house. However, its old nutmeg-drying barns are all that survived a murderous attack during the 1999 troubles. *Ojeks* (5000Rp) run via **Biao** village (home to a comical if scraggy pet cassowary) to **Banree**. From here coastal and ridge-climbing footpaths lead swiftly to **Lonthoir**, the island's sleepy main village. Lonthoir is steeply layered from waterfront to ridge-top through lush tropical foliage. Of several beautiful glimpsed views, the most idyllic is from **Benteng Hollandia**. Built in 1624, this was once one of the biggest Dutch fortresses in the Indies. Until shattered by a devastating 1743 earthquake, it covered most of the hilltop. Walking west along the ridge from here you'll pass a dinky green-and-white *masholah* (mosque), hidden behind which a newly concreted path descends steeply to **Pantai Balakan** (aka Laerkoey Beach), a pleasant sandy bay dotted with fishing boats. Alternatively continue west along the ridge-top past a 1884 Dutch grave towards **Kelly Plantation**. Here centuries-old, buttressed *kenari* trees still tower protectively over the nutmeg grove.

Eastern Banda Besar

The Biao-Walang road becomes a narrow path at Kumber and peters out after Selamon. Points beyond are only accessible by boat. Charters are often cheapest from Bandaneira. **Waer** village on the east coast, is fronted by **Benteng Concordia**, an unre-

constructed but impressive star fortress with three of its four corner bastions intact. **Karnofol** (aka Tanjung Cengkeh) offers snorkellers very rich sea life, including reef sharks, though the visibility is somewhat poorer than at Hatta or Ai. **Pantai Lanutu** towards the island's diveable northeastern tip is a pleasant beach stop should you be passing, though not worth a special journey.

PULAU SYAHRIR (PISANG)

pop 40

This chunk of uplifted limestone has almost sheer, undercut 'walls' and a single sandy bay on the southwestern coast. The sunset views towards Gunung Api are better than the snorkelling here which, while good, is unexceptional by Banda's elevated standards thanks to extensive anchor scarring. Nearby **Batu Kapal** ('ship rock') does indeed look a little like a shipwrecked hulk, but heavy currents make diving around it a little overexciting. Some of its purple 'coral' formations look more like a Klingon skin disease.

Homestay Mailena is a simple, bougainvillea-draped cottage complex that could offer a magical do-nothing getaway. It's currently dormant but might be prepared to open by arrangement for longer stays. Ask at your guesthouse.

A chartered boat from Bandaneira costs from 100,000Rp (40 minutes), though a stop in Pisang is easy to tack onto your wish list for a multistop day of snorkelling.

PULAU HATTA

pop 800

Formerly known as Rozengain, this isolated island had no nutmeg. Thus its only historical relevance was a comical episode where eccentric English Captain Courthope raised a flag merely to enrage the Dutch. Today there are two small settlements with no facilities whatever. Yet Hatta has Banda's clearest waters and richest reefs, with coral holes and utterly splendid white-sand beaches lining its northern coast. One of the most eye-boggling, coral-crusting vertical drop-offs anywhere sits mere metres off tiny Lama village. Even if you can't find anyone else to share the cost, it's worth chartering a stable, covered craft from Bandaneira (diesel/petrol boat per day from 300,000/600,000Rp). Smaller boats are too

slow or vulnerable in case of bad weather. Charters will usually allow several stops en route, including Pisang and Karnofol.

PULAU AI

pop 1000

Accessible Ai ('Ay') has brilliant snorkelling with pristine coral and great drop-offs just a flipper's flap from attractive beaches and rustic homestays. It was here that English agents trained local fighters to resist a 1615 Dutch attack. The islanders stunned the astonished Dutch with an unexpected counter-attack, inflicting some 200 casualties. A year later the humiliated Dutch prepared to make a revenge attack. A small British fleet appeared in the nick of time apparently prepared to defend their Ai comrades. But after a few volleys of cannon fire the English commander changed tactics. Instead he invited his Dutch opponent for a cup of tea. After a little chat the Dutch offered the Brits nominal trading rights and sovereignty in Pulau Run. Suitably bribed, the duplicitous Brits sloped off to Seram. When they returned almost all the Ai islanders had been massacred or had fled. The Dutch repopulated the island with slaves and prisoners.

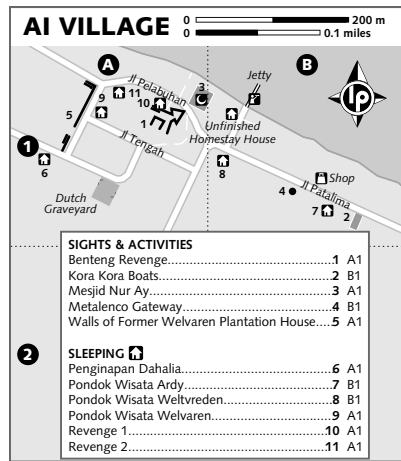
Sights & Activities

From the main jetty a concrete path leads 50m up to Jl Pelabuhan. Turn left to see the underwhelming 1875 **Matalenco Gateway** and a pair of champion **kora kora boats** used each December for the *Pertandingan* races. Or turn right, past the **Mesjid Nur Ay**, to find the four-pointed star fortress **Benteng Revenge**. Originally built by the English, it was captured in 1616 and renamed by the blood-thirsty Dutch conquerors in 'revenge' for their humiliating defeat the previous year.

Just beyond are a few remnant walls of the **Welvaren plantation house**, whose nutmeg *perken* once covered almost one-third of the island. A stepped underwater drop-off, about 50m offshore roughly opposite this point offers some of the best snorkelling in Banda. A little inland is a ruinous **Dutch graveyard**.

Sleeping & Eating

None of the six homestays have signs. All prices are per person including three meals. Please be very careful not to waste water: Ai has no springs and all needs are provided



by collecting rainwater, or by laboriously transporting purchased water from Bandaneira when supplies run out. There are no restaurants here.

Revenge 2 (Jl Pelabuhan; 75,000Rp) Two rooms in a new house, with an enthusiastic English-speaking young owner and excellent food.

Penginapan Dahalia (75,000Rp) Pink and yellow house with shared squat toilet in the covered yard. Toy plane and machine gun above one bed.

Pondok Wisata Ardy (Jl Patalina; 100,000Rp) Marginally Ai's most comfortable option with clean, tiled floors and one room that even has a private rainwater-shower. Lacks the family atmosphere of some homestays.

Other options:

Pondok Wisata Weltvreden (75,000Rp) Near the jetty.

Pondok Wisata Welvaren (75,000Rp) Behind the rarely functioning wartel window.

Revenge 1 (75,000Rp) Creaky.

Getting There & Away

Two or three passenger longboats (10,000Rp, one hour) leave Ai daily when full, generally departing between 6am and 7am. They return from Bandaneira between 10.30am and 1pm. If you want to do a day trip from Bandaneira you'll have to charter (diesel/petrol boat 200,000/300,000Rp, 90/50 minutes).

PULAU RUN (RHUN)

pop 1000

The main attraction here is diving or possibly snorkelling the deeper-water drop-off

which runs 70m to 150m off the island's northwestern coast (access by boat). Alternatively beach yourself briefly on the picture-perfect islet of Neilaka.

After the 1616 Dutch ravaging of Ai, the English initially rushed to defend their trading post on Run and built an 'impregnable' fort on the tiny, waterless islet of Neilaka, where they became increasingly besieged. The same eccentric Captain Courthouse, who had taunted the Dutch on Rozengain (now Hatta), put honour above death in a preposterously futile last stand, refusing even the most reasonable offers to leave. Somehow British sovereignty was maintained even after the 1621 Dutch atrocities, during which all of Run's nutmeg trees were systematically destroyed. That left the English with an economically worthless scrap of land, which they finally swapped with Holland in 1667 for a then equally useless North American island. That island was Manhattan – not a bad deal, as it turned out.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Most mornings there's a single public boat (15,000Rp, two hours) running from Run to Bandaneira, returning around noon. However, since there's no accommodation in Run you're better off chartering a boat from Ai (from 250,000Rp per day) or even Bandaneira. You'll need a boat anyway to reach Neilaka and Run's best drop-offs.

Run Village

Today Run village is an appealing little network of steps and floral concrete paths backed by vine-draped limestone cliffs. No identifiable historic buildings remain but there are nice views from between the tamarind trees at a probable castle site at the top of Jl Eldorado (which becomes Jl Rumalatur as the steps degenerate into a muddy scramble).

Pulau Neilaka

Some of Banda's finest white sand encircles picturesque Neilaka, an isle so small you can saunter around it in 10 minutes. All that's left of the English fort are a few scattered coral pebbles hidden within a pandanus thicket in the islet's centre. Swimming is safest from the eastern shore, while snorkelling is better off the northern point, but currents there are treacherous.

KEI ISLANDS & BEYOND

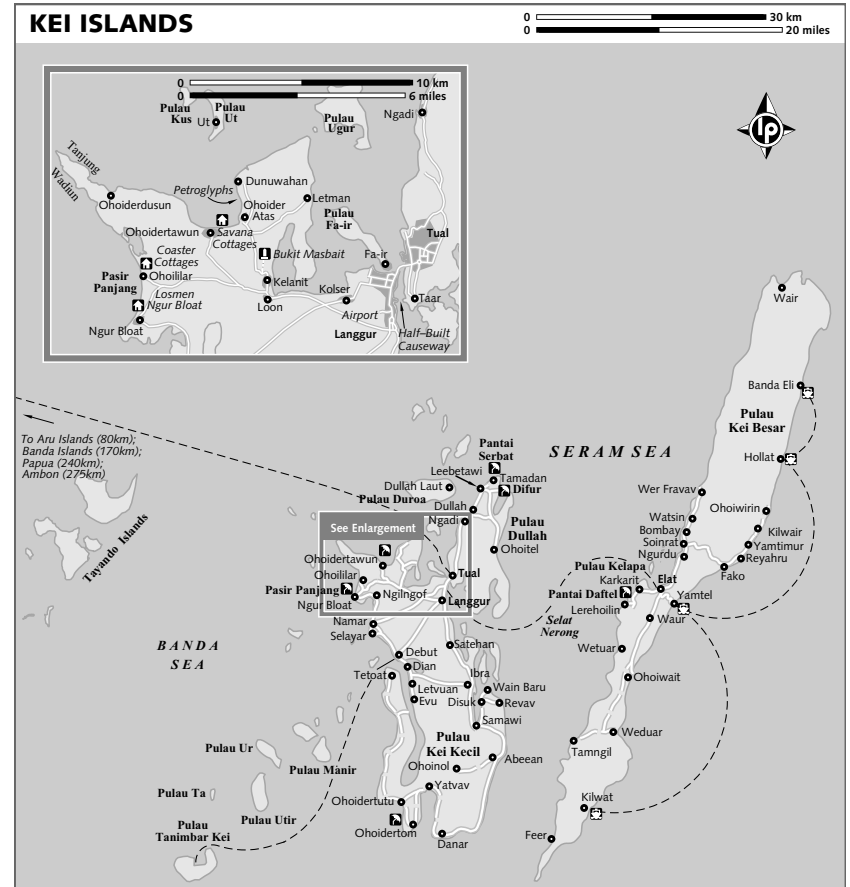
☎ 0916

Stunning white-sand beaches and extraordinary if mostly invisible cultural traditions make the Kei Islands one of Indonesia's most under-rated gems. Fortunately for those who adore the islands' genuine hospitality and complete lack of commercialism, they remain way off the tourist radar. Access is through the twin towns of Langgur (with the airport) and Tual (with the Pelni port). Although they're on separate islands (Pulau Kei Kecil and Pulau Dullah respectively), they're linked by a bridge into a single unit. Accommodation is available

in either, plus on a couple of beaches. You could also stay in Elat on Pulau Kei Besar, a bigger, more attractively rugged island that locals call Nuhu Yut. In the unique Kei language *bokbok* means good. *Hanarun* (li) means (very) beautiful.

TUAL & LANGGUR

These twin towns hold almost all the Kei Islands facilities. While pleasant enough, neither has any real sights. Tual's most atmospheric quarter is **Kyonbawa**, a semi-island with narrow lanes, some stilt houses and a small raised **graveyard** with views across to Pulau Fa-ir. The **Un Tower** (not UN) at Tual's highest point looks like a white minaret balanced on a pile of dishes. Tual's



KEI CULTURE & MARRIAGE

Kei culture is vibrant and distinctive (see 'Sasi Savvy' boxed text, p777), but can make finding a life partner rather awkward. Kei islanders should marry within their caste. There are only three castes and the rule's no sweat for the majority who belong to the middle *renren* group. It's much more awkward for *melmel* (top caste) or *iri* (who were traditionally their servants) whose numbers are relatively tiny.

As with other Maluku islands, a *pela* system links pairs of villages into a virtual family to help one another at times of shortage. However marriage between *pela* families is a taboo considered akin to incest.

Once a potential partner has been found, the next hurdle is the thorny question of the bride-price. This a groom must pay in *lela* (*zad-zad*). A *lela* isn't a sum of money but a distinctive and highly expensive ceremonial minicannon. These are supposedly of 16th-century Portuguese origin. In fact, some believe that *lela* are being quietly and profitably produced by the smithies of Banda Eli.

Not surprisingly there are quite a few frustrated bachelors.

bustling centre is the area around the **Mesjid Agung** (Jl Pattimura). Tidy Langgur is bracketed by a pair of **Lusiap monuments**: concrete eagles grabbing bog-eyed fish. **Mesjid Muharjirin** (Jl Soekarno-Hatta) is a stylish new mosque built to a traditional design, while the similarly modern **Anugerah Church** (Jl Soekarno-Hatta) has a bell tower shaped like a spaceship.

Information

BNI Bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Jenderal Sudirman; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) Good rates and the only reliable currency exchange; 24-hour ATM.

BRI Bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Jenderal Sudirman; ☎ 8am-3pm Mon-Fri) ATM but no exchange.

Post office (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; ☎ 7am-2pm Mon-Sat)

Ronevan Computer (☎ 21371; Jl Dr Leimana; per hr 11,000Rp; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Sat) Internet access; hidden away in a steeply descending back alley.

Telkom (Jl Cempaka; ☎ 24hr)

Tourist office (Dinas Parawisata; ☎ 24063; Jl Jenderal Sudirman; ☎ 7.30am-2.30pm Mon-Sat, 7.30am-noon Fri) Friendly, English-speaking Vicky (male) dispenses glossy, passingly informative brochures from a sweaty government office beside Pasar Ohoijang. No town maps as yet.

Wartel (Jl Hotel Langgur) Internet due to open soon.

Sleeping

See p777 for beachside options.

TUAL

Losmen Amelia (☎ 21387; Jl Fidnang Armau; s 30,000Rp) Cleanest of the rock-bottom cheapies. It's not especially friendly but is quieter than several dreary alternatives on Jl Pattimura.

Penginapan Asnolia (☎ 22106; Jl Mayor Abdullah; tw with fan 55,000Rp; tw & d with shower, toilet & air-con 93,500-137,500Rp; ☎) This smartly well-kept place is good value and sparkling clean though showers spray straight onto the floor of the toilet. Rooms at 93,500Rp have older, less efficient air-con. Deluxe rooms (137,000Rp) have great beds, if mismatched sheets.

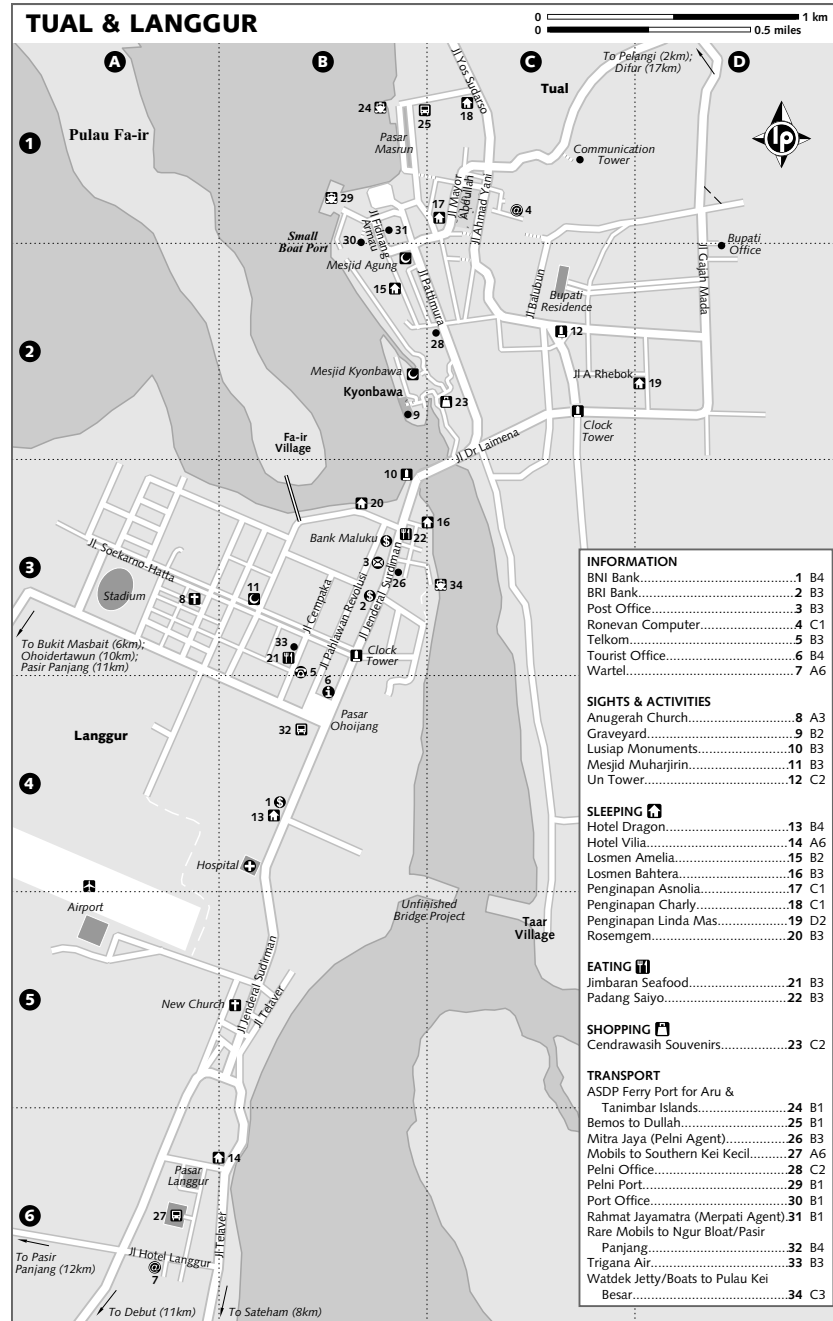
Penginapan Linda Mas (☎ 21271; Jl A Rhebok; tw with fan/air-con 93,500Rp/165,000; ☎) This overgrown homestay in a quiet suburban setting still has a rocking chair on its upper veranda, but seems to have gone slightly to seed. Floors are clean but walls and mattresses less so.

Penginapan Charly (☎ 21923; Jl Yos Sudarso; d from 100,000Rp; ☎) Vibrant if sometimes jarring colours add life to the décor of this rapidly expanding hotel. The attached toilet/*mandi* is small but each room has a VCD player and good air-con. Some beds are king size. There's a pool table and sitting room upstairs.

LANGGUR

Losmen Bahtera (☎ 21973; Jl Kayu Hitam; d 55,000Rp) Somewhat cramped but unusually clean and fresh for the price range with comfortable spring mattresses and private mini-*mandis*. There's a harbour view from the rear, common balcony.

Rosemgem (☎ 21775; Jl Merdeka 50; d with/without air-con 100,000/80,000Rp; ☎) Rooms are acceptable with toilet, *mandi* and good new beds. However, the high-ceilinged upper corridor has horror-movie splotches of living damp and the atmosphere is eerily morose.



Hotel Dragon (☎ 21812; fax 22082; Jl Jenderal Sudirman 154; s/tw with shared bathroom 110,000/122,000Rp, with private bathroom 148,000-176,000/171,000-198,000Rp; 🍽️) The only hotel with English-speaking staff, the Dragon is super-clean and faultlessly obliging. Rooms are spacious and well equipped with desk, wardrobe, towels, soap and shampoo (but no toilet paper or top sheet). All rooms have air-con units: some are powerful but others feeble so they're worth testing. Road noise might disturb light sleepers, especially in front-facing rooms. Rates include breakfast.

Hotel Vilia (☎ 21878; Jl Telaver 1; d or tw with mandi/shower/hot shower 150,000/200,000/250,000Rp; 🍽️) Clean and airy, this hotel's best mangrove views are from the shared balcony on the top floor. It's quieter than the Dragon but less personable.

Eating

Several unremarkable warungs are strung along Langgur's Jl Jenderal Sudirman, more huddle near Tual's Pasar Masrun and food stalls appear near the main bridge at night. Hotels Vilia and Dragon cook good Chinese food but this is best served in-room as their dining areas are uninspired. The local mainstay *enbal* (cassava) rarely appears in restaurants.

Padang Saiyo (☎ 21951; Jl Jenderal Sudirman; mains 15,000-20,000Rp; 🍷 8am-5am) Tempting but highly spiced precooked dishes available almost around the clock.

Jimbaran Seafood (☎ 22620; Jl Cempaka; mains 16,000-22,000Rp, beer 16,000Rp; 🍷 10am-3pm & 4.30-10pm) Good Chinese-style food cooked to order though the simple, bright décor lacks atmosphere.

Pelangi (☎ 22802; mains 17,500-37,500Rp, beer 27,000Rp; 🍷 7am-midnight) Often considered Tual's best restaurant, this curious open-sided barn of a place sits on stilts above what should be a pond 3km north of Tual on the Dullah road. There are Chinese, pseudo-Thai and local menu options plus live music from around 9pm. Consider pre-ordering an *ojek* to get home at night.

Shopping

Several 'souvenir' shops are predominantly purveyors of local pearls.

Cendrawasih Souvenirs (☎ 22608; Jl Mohammad Amir Tamher) One such shop; run by a delight-

ful gentleman from Aru who speaks the odd word of English.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The airport is a mere 300m stroll from Langgur's main street, Jl Jenderal Sudirman, along which bemos shuttle to Tual (2000Rp) with quite extraordinary frequency. However a new airport is planned 12km south beyond Satehan. **Trigana Air** (☎ 22780; Jl Cempaka; 🍷 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) has several local routings including five flights weekly to Ambon (875,000Rp, 1½ hours) offering beautiful views of Tayando and Banda en route. On Tuesday the Ambon flight continues to Ternate, Manado, Luwuk and ultimately Makassar, returning on Wednesdays. Baggage limit is just 10kg. **Merpati** (Agent Rahmat Jayamatra; ☎ 21376; Jl Fidnang Armau) flies thrice weekly to Ambon and Dobo (Aru).

BOAT

Pelni (☎ 22520; Jl Pattimura; 🍷 8am-2pm) liners *Bukit Siguntang* and *Ciremai* link Tual to Ambon (177,000Rp, 18 hours) via Bandaneira (128,000Rp, 10 hours). Eastbound both continue to Fak-Fak in Papua. In Langgur, Pelni agencies include **Mitra Jaya** (☎ 22392; Jl Jenderal Sudirman; 🍷 8am-4pm Mon-Sat).

For details of the complex Perintis cargo- shipping routes ask at the **port office** (☎ 22475).

An uncomfortable overnight car-ferry departs from behind Pasar Masrun on Fridays to Dobo (Aru) and Mondays to Saumlaki (Tanimbar Islands).

BEMO (MOBIL) & OJEK

Bemos (*mobils*) for southern Kei Kecil operate from a station near Pasar Langgur. Destinations include Debut (3000Rp) and Disuk (5000Rp). Bemos for Dullah (3000Rp, fairly frequent) and Difur Beach (Sunday only) leave from near Tual's clogged Pasar Masrun. At Langgur's Pasar Ohoijang there's a pick-up point for *mobils* to Ngur Bloat (for Pasir Panjang) but departures are impractically rare. It's much wiser to take an *ojek* (15,000Rp, 25 minutes).

Getting Around

Bemos (2000Rp per hop) are so common they form a virtual conveyer belt along Jl Jenderal Sudirman to Tual, many wind-

SASI SAVVY

Call it 'magic' or 'earth knowledge', Maluku experiences many hidden undercurrents of almost voodoo-esque beliefs, beautifully described in Lyall Watson's book *Gifts of Unexpected Things*. And the Kei group with its three castes, its gun-for-dowry customs and its holy trees is particularly rich in powerful superstition.

There's widespread Malukan belief in the idea of *sasi* as a 'prohibition' – a kind of 'spell' to protect property and prevent trespass. Physically the only barrier is a *janur* palm frond. But few would dare to break a *sasi* for fear of unknown 'effects'. For countless generations *sasi* have worked very well to prevent the theft of coconuts or to ensure that fish aren't caught during the breeding season. However, recently Kei Islanders have been using *sasi* as a cunning economic weapon. During late 2003, traditional landowners decided to put a *sasi* on the Tual-Langgur bridge, the only road link between the two towns. All bemo traffic stopped. Nobody dared to walk across. The result was a bonanza for boatmen. This silly situation lasted months till the authorities paid for a *sasi* removal ceremony. Other jokers made a *sasi* across the access route to the government offices so workers couldn't get to work. The 21st-century *sasi* seems to have become a unique version of the protection racket.

ing around via the Un Tower. Southbound from Tual, 'Langgur' bemos pass Hotel Vilia and terminate at Pasar Langgur. 'Perumnas' bemos divert to the area around the Anugerah church.

Ojeks cost 5000Rp per hop but renting per hour (15,000Rp) or day (50,000Rp) is remarkably good value. Folks at Hotel Dragon can organise self-drive *ojek*-bikes for similar rates.

PULAU KEI KECIL & PULAU DULLAH Northern Kei Kecil

BUKIT MASBAIT

With great views over Langgur, the island's highest point is an important Easter pilgrimage site especially for Catholics. It's dominated by an open-armed Christ statue topping a globe and tower, surrounded by various scenes from the crucifixion. Notice the strikingly Asian features of the Roman centurion. Access up steps takes 10 minutes from an unmarked pass on the road to Letman just beyond Kelanit village.

OHOIDERTAWUN

The charming village of **Ohoiertawun** surveys a lovely bay that becomes a vast white sand flat at low tide. Craftsmen sit in the palm shade carving out canoes with adzes. An elfin Elim Church and pyramidal mosque coexist harmoniously. A footpath through the beachfront coconut grove passes Savana Cottages, a highly recommended four-room traveller retreat. The path continues to a stairway that leads up

to Ohoier Atas village. But at low tide you can strike out across the sand from beside the bottom of the steps. Splashing through streams you pass small caves cut in the limestone cliffs, some containing human bones. And after around 25 minutes you'll find a series of red and orange **petroglyphs** painted on the cliff-faces. Although some designs look new, many are antique and their origin baffles archaeologists.

Sleeping

Savana Cottages (☎ SMS only 0813 43083856; d 100,000Rp) For pure narcotic serenity, few budget guesthouses in Indonesia can beat Savana Cottages. Watch the changing moods of nature, the swooping curlews and the tide retreating in the moonlight while sipping an ice-cold beer or swinging from the hammock between sighing casuarinas. Locals believe that a particular holy tree beside the Savana Cottages has the power to enforce peace or bind relationships. And it seems to work an intangible magic on guests who are frequently mesmerised by this wonderful place's simple charms. Airy double-bedded cottage-style rooms come with rattan balcony chairs and towels for the shared bathrooms. There's a sweet little four-table café with tinkling wind-chimes (dinner 25,000Rp). When not away in Holland, English-speaking owner Gerson offers a variety of interesting excursions and explanations to some of the bizarre intricacies of Kei social life. Mosquito nets available on request.

PASIR PANJANG

The Kei Islands' most famous tourist draw is **Pasir Panjang**, 3km of white sand so powdery it feels like flour. Coconut palms curve across it obligingly for your photographic delectation. Yet despite the brochure-cover beauty, the beach is almost entirely deserted except at weekends. Amid the palms around 400m north of Ngur Bloat (aka Pasir Panjang village) are a handful of Saturday-night karaoke shacks, two offering accommodation.

The basic but more reputable **Losmen Ngur Bloat** (d incl breakfast 60,000Rp) has four rooms. Two have narrow new beds, the other have bigger but off-puttingly aged mattresses. There are private *mandis* and some beds have mosquito nets (essential here). You can hear but not see the waves from the rickety terrace. Keys are available from Evelyn Dresubun whose house is near the main junction in Ngur Bloat village.

There's nicer accommodation at the beach's reputedly haunted north end, 700m beyond Ohoililar village. **Coaster Cottages** (tw/apt 75,000/200,000Rp) has two slightly ageing rooms with a lovely porch plus a brand new apartment in a swish new house with double bed, big sitting room and curious scalloped *mandi*. Keys are available from Pedro Letsoin in Ohoililar village. Just beyond, the unmarked **Wisata Café** (meals 12,000-25,000Rp) is as yet little more than a house but the owners will cook for you on request and sometimes rent out one of their dishevelled rooms (150,000Rp).

Southern Kei Kecil

From **Debut** outrigger ferries cross to Tetoat from which a rough road continues to the impressive **Ohoidertutu Beach**. Also from Debut, daily speedboats cross to **Pulau Tan-imbar Kei**, the most traditional and isolated of all the islands. There's no way back till next morning (unless you charter at around 2,000,000Rp!) and with no formal accommodation you'll have to arrange a bed through the *kepala desa*.

About 4km south of Debut between Dian and Letvuan, an unmarked track to the right leads down steps to **Gua Lian Hawan** – a pair of cave pools with ice-blue water and lots of butterflies. The road ends at **Evu**, source of Kei Kecil's fresh water and an unexpectedly popular weekend picnic spot thanks to its artificial splashing pool

behind a monument displaying a *lela* (mini-cannon). In Evu's upper village, the older of two **St Antonius churches** is a photogenically ramshackle Dutch-era chapel.

Pulau Dullah

Dullah is famous as the starting point for October **Belang Races** using traditional *korakora* rowing boats. The races haven't run since 1998 but were slated to restart in 2006. A potholed kilometre beyond Tamadan is a beachless headland called **Pantai Serbat** with attractive distant views across limpid turquoise waters towards Kei Besar. For blind-ing white sand visit **Difur** which is idyllic on weekdays but over-run by strollers, motor-bikes and food vendors on Sundays.

PULAU KEI BESAR

Scenic Kei Besar is a long ridge of lush, steep hills dotted with several picture-perfect beaches (better for photos than for swimming) and some of Maluku's most picturesque villages. Expect intense curiosity from locals and take your best *kamus* (dictionary) as nobody speaks English.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Two daily passenger boats between Watdek (Langgur) and Elat (15,000Rp, 2½ hours) leave at 10.30am and 2.30pm in either direction, passing a series of *bagang* (fishing platforms). When demand is high, faster speedboats (25,000Rp, 80 minutes) occasionally double the routes, departing at the same times.

GETTING AROUND

Mobil are very rare; most road transport is by *ojek*. Be sure to book a return ride; Elat is the only place that you can reliably find an *ojek* and it's easy to get stranded in traffic-less outer villages.

Roadless settlements on the east coast are served by two multistop *Johnson* long-boats. These depart daily from Yamtel around 1.30pm, awaiting passengers off the 10.30am ferry from Langgur. The long-boats return next morning from Bandar Eli and Kilwat respectively, so day trips from Yamtel are impossible unless you charter (hugely expensive). Take sandals for wading through rock-pools to the boats. Sunscreen and rain protection are also important as the craft are uncovered.

Elat & Around

Kei Besar's main village and port is Elat, attractively set on a bay facing a handful of islets. Tempting **Pulau Kelapa** has a sandy beach just 10 minutes away by motor-canoë. There's a fine vista on the mountain-road descent towards Elat from the picturesque village of **Yamtel**.

An easy *ojek*-ride up the west coast north of Elat are several charming villages with island glimpses, bay views, stone stairways and rocky terraces. Most notable are **Ngurdu** (3km from Elat), **Soinrat** (4km), curiously named **Bombay** (7km) and **Watsin** (8km). Beyond, settlements are newer and less attractive. At **Wer Fravav** (12km) the road ends, but adventurous hikers could follow a (usually dry) riverbed through cacophonously exotic birdsong to a relatively intact stand of mountain forest.

SLEEPING & EATING

Elat has Kei Besar's only accommodation. Neither of these places have signs or fans. Both have shared toilets and *mandis*.

Penginapan Sanohi (☎ 23013; Jl Pelabuhan; r per person 20,000Rp) Sanohi has new sheets on very aged mattresses and some damp patches on the walls. The location is odd – the two floors above the BRI bank office. To get the key find Mrs Sanohi at the shop three doors back towards the port.

Penginapan Sederhana (Jl Uver; s/tw 30,000/40,000Rp) This is the neater option with cleanly tiled if rather stuffy rooms. It's the white-colonnaded bungalow with red trim at the northern end of the tiny park, one house uphill from the market on the road towards Yamtel.

Elat has a market and three rice-and-fish *rumah makan*. All close by dusk, so eat early or snack on biscuits from the few tiny evening shops.

Pantai Daftel

Southwest of Elat a steep, super-narrow road passes **St Josef's**, an unusual half-timbered hospital with lovely bay views glimpsed through palm fronds and bougainvillea. **Pantai Daftel**, a superb white-sand beach starts where the road reaches the coast (6km from Elat) at minuscule **Karkarit**. It stretches 1.8km to **Lerehoilin**, where a tiny waterside mosque faces a tidal island topped with ancient graves. The main access point is be-

tween these two hamlets at Daftel where there's a handful of picnic shelters on the beach behind a rusty Dalek-shaped mosque. The waving palms are superbly photogenic though the water is generally too shallow for swimming. You'll probably have it all to yourself except on Sundays when snack stalls open to cater to local picnickers.

Ojeks ask 20,000Rp return from Elat.

South of Elat

The main road south roller-coasters down the island's central spine and is asphalted as far as **Ohoiwait**. Though there are few glimpses of sea, it's worth venturing at least as far as **Waur** (6km from Elat). A Lourdes-style Madonna lurks in a grotto behind Waur's oversized wooden church, the 1927 **Gereja Hati Kudus Jesus**. Two hundred metres beyond, a **VOC cannon** points curiously at the church's front door from beside the **woma** (see boxed text, below).

East Coast

The eastern coastline has attractive tidal rock-pools but no beaches. Villages are comparatively isolated, steeped in superstitious traditions and tend to speak the local Kei language rather than Bahasa Indonesia. From Elat it takes at least an hour to reach Kilwair (21km away) via **Reyahru**, within whose high forests is hidden a mysterious **batu kapal** (stone boat). Straight-faced locals will assure you this was once a Portuguese shipwreck that somehow became petrified and ran up the mountain! Some 10 minutes' walk along the beach from **Kilwair**, Anderius Uwaubun is happy to show off his private turtle pool. Walk five minutes further to find the triple-arched **Kuel Rock**, site of local fairy tales in which a woman turned into a Kuel fish.

Well beyond the road's end, **Banda Eli** is home to many Bandanese. These are the

WOMA

The spiritual centre of every Kei village is marked by an open-air shrine known as a *woma*, into whose offering dish superstitious people drop coins for good luck. Many modern *woma* are tackily painted concrete monstrosities. But in Waur you can find a rare original one in the form of an unembellished five-legged stone altar.

descendants of survivors who fled the Banda Islands during the Dutch-led massacres of 1621 (see p765). The Bandanese language, now extinct in the Banda Islands, is still spoken here and the people are renowned for goldsmithing.

SOUTHERN MALUKU

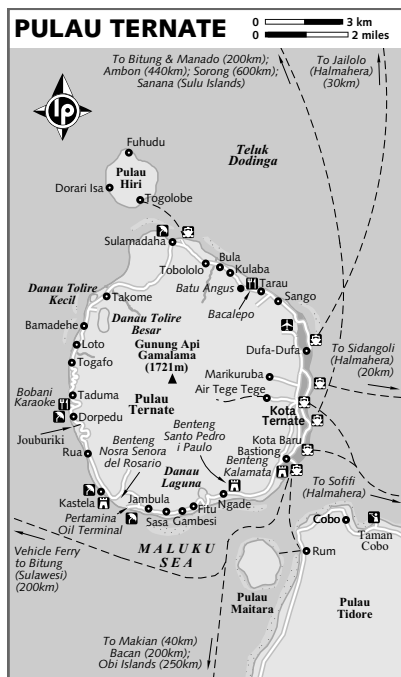
Of many very isolated island Maluku island groups, perhaps the most interesting are the **Tanimbars** (Saumlaki is the capital). Known for wild orchids, their one real tourist attraction is at **Sangliat Dol**, around 1½ uncomfortable hours from Saumlaki. Here a 30m-high staircase leads up from the beach to an intricately carved 18m-long boat-shaped stone platform. The mostly flat **Aru** island group (Dobo is the capital) is famed for its pearls. Both capitals are served by flights from Langgur and by weekly ferries from Tual. A comparatively arid arc of southern islands swings back around towards Timor. These are of much more interest to geologists than to tourists and most are accessible only by rare Perintis cargo boats, though little **Pulau Kisar** has an airport. In early 2006 the Maluku government announced plans to develop infrastructure on **Pulau Wetar** hoping one day to develop transport links to East Timor, just 56km to the south.

PULAU TERNATE

☎ 0921

A string of perfect volcanic cone islands lurk off the western coast of crazy-K shaped Pulau Halmahera. Of these, Pulau Ternate and its neighbour Pulau Tidore are the most populous, visually dramatic and historically significant. Both islands are ancient Islamic sultanates with a long history of bitter rivalry. As the world's only major producers of a globally important product (cloves), their sultans became the most powerful rulers in the medieval Indies, wasting much of their wealth fighting each other. At certain times both sultans could claim nominal influence that spread as far afield as Ambon, Sulawesi and Papua.

In 1511 the Portuguese were the first Europeans to settle in Ternate. Tidore's then ruler quickly responded by inviting in the Spaniards. Both sultans found their



hospitality rapidly exhausted as the Europeans tried to dominate the islands, corner the spice market and preach Christianity. Ternate's Muslim population, already offended by the European's imported pigs and heavy-handed 'justice', were driven to rebel when Sultan Hairun (Khairun) was executed and his head exhibited on a pike in February 1570. The besieged Portuguese held out in their castle till 1575 when the new Ternatean sultan took it over as his palace. Five years later he entertained the English pirate-adventurer Francis Drake. After an amicable meeting, Drake asstounded his host by his almost total disinterest in buying cloves. In fact, Drake's ship *Golden Hind* was so full of stolen Spanish-American gold that he simply couldn't carry any cloves.

The Spaniards and Dutch were the next to make themselves unpopular. In a history that is as fascinating as it is complicated and Machiavellian, they played Ternate off against Tidore as well as confronting one another for control of an elusive clove monopoly. The Dutch prevailed eventually,

though the sultanates continued almost uninterrupted for most of the period and remain well-respected institutions today.

Ternate saw some violence in 1999–2000, but is now rebounding with major construction programmes. A proposed geothermal power station between Kastela and Rua should one day end the island's regular power cuts, but as yet there's only a collapsed signboard at the site.

KOTA TERNATE

Clinging to the volcanic cone of dramatic Gamalama, Kota Ternate offers some lovely glimpses of neighbouring islands but is mainly useful as a base for exploring North Maluku. There are a couple of partly restored forts and a palace to visit. For now most other architecture looks rather drab and haphazard, spiced painfully in some suburbs by occasional ruins of churches gutted in 1999. However a massive land-reclamation and building programme seems set to transform the city over coming years. Several fine new mosques are already under construction.

Orientation

Areas within the city are still called 'villages' but in reality, Kota Ternate is one long sprawl stretching around 10km from the airport to beyond Bastiong port. The commercial centre is on and around Jl Pahlawan Revolusi, known at its southern end as 'Swering', an eternally popular promenade for afternoon strolls and evening snacking. The main north–south through-road has different names at different points: Jl Sultan Khairun, Jl Merdeka, Jl Mononutu, Jl Hasan Esa and eventually Jl Raya Bastiong.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Chamber Internet (Jl Hasan Esa; per hr 10,000Rp)

Sporadic opening hours.

Muara C@feNet (☎ 328412; Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎ 8am–midnight) Decent connection and a great central location but subject to power cuts and mosquitoes. It's in the Muara Hotel lobby, upstairs above the Nirwana Elish Hotel.

Warnet Gamalama.net (Jl Pattimura; per hr 8,000Rp; ☎ 24hr; ☎) Comfy chairs, air-con, power-supply backup and OK connection. Within the Telkom Building.

Warung Internet Anteronet (Jl Sultan Khairun 125; per hr 6000Rp) Sporadic opening hours.

MONEY

Bank Mandiri (Jl Nukila) ATM for Visa and Delta but not MasterCard; withdrawals of up to 1,250,000Rp. There's also a branch on Jl Mononutu.

BNI Bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; ☎ 7.30am–3pm Mon–Thu, 7.30–noon Fri) The only bank to change money: only US-dollar cash with a minimum \$100 exchange.

Danamon Bank (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi) ATM is 24-hour and allows withdrawals up to 1,500,000Rp on most cards.

TELEPHONE

Strangely Ternate phone numbers can have five, six or seven digits. Expect rationalisation in coming years.

Telkom (Jl Pattimura & Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; ☎ 24hr)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Despite ample ranks of under-employed staff and reasonable spoken English these offices seem to serve little useful purpose. Between them they can't even muster an accurate map of Ternate City.

North Maluku Tourist Office (☎ 327396; Jl Kamboja 14; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Fri) Some passingly informative brochures are available if the boss hasn't walked off with the store-room key.

Ternate City Tourist Office (☎ 22760; Jl Kamaluddin 7; ☎ 8am–2pm Mon–Fri) Friendly staff can help you find a guide to climb Gamalama. Possibly.

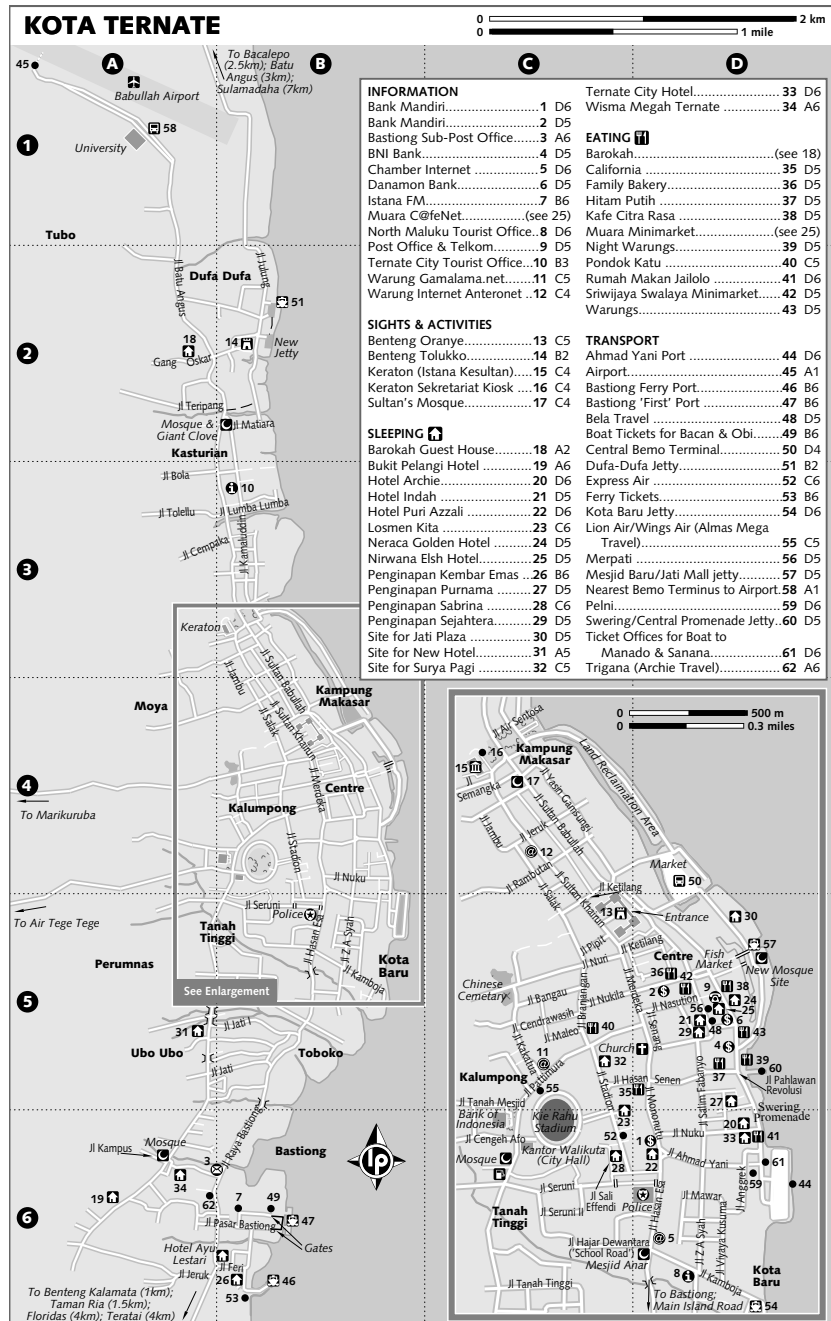
Sights

KERATAN (ISTANA KESULTAN)

Built in 1796 and restored in semi-colonial style, the Sultan's Palace is still a family home. However there is a **museum section** (donation) containing a small but interesting collection of Portuguese and Dutch helmets, various swords and armour, plus memorabilia from the reigns of past sultans. Notice the genealogy of the Ternatean royal family dating back to 1257. The airy veranda offers wide views towards Halmahera. First step in a visit is signing in at the **Sekretariat kiosk**

HELLO MISTER

Few places in Indonesia have so many ultra keen English-language students desperate to help tourists in return for conversation practice. They pop up everywhere. This can result in delightful friendships or infuriating feelings of being pestered, depending on your outlook (and good fortune).



(☎ 21166; ☎ 6am-6pm) to find when a guide is available. If you're lucky you might even be granted an audience with the sultan's enchanting sister Ibu Rini, and hear tales (in fluent English) of the royal family's amazing life sagas.

Only groups with the Sultan's permission (arranged well ahead) may see the **mahkota** (royal crown). Topped with cassowary feathers, it's worn only at coronations and supposedly has magical powers including growing 'hair', which needs periodic cutting. Some claim it has the more impressive ability to stop Gamalama from erupting.

All northbound bemos pass the grassy square that the Keraton overlooks.

SULTAN'S MOSQUE

Just south of the palace, the royal mosque has a traditional multi-tiered pyramid form. Beneath the corrugated red roof the heavy interior timberwork is impressive. There are big expansion plans. The mosque is the focus of *Laila Tulqadr* celebrations on the 27th evening of Ramadan when a mass of flaming torches welcomes the Sultan's procession.

BENTENG ORANYE

Almost hidden in the market-melee right at the centre of town are three re-concreted walls and four cannon-topped bastions. That's all that remains a massive 1607 fort that was headquarters of the entire Dutch VOC operation before it moved to Batavia (Jakarta) in around 1619. The fort later became the residence of the Dutch governors in Ternate.

BENTENG TOLUKKO

Built by the Portuguese in 1512 and restored by the Dutch in 1610, this dinky little 'womb-shaped' fort (also known as Benteng Hollandia) was the first European stronghold on Ternate. For a donation the lady living beside the entrance can let you in and show you photos of the extensive 1996 renovations. Take any bemo bound for Dufa-Dufa (2000Rp, 3km from town centre).

BENTENG KALAMATA

At the southernmost end of town, this small, heavy-handedly renovated fort is about 1km south of Bastiong. Once known

as Benteng Kayu Merah (Red Wood Fort), it was built in 1540 by the Portuguese, and rebuilt by the Dutch in 1610. Waves lap right up to its angled walls and there are great views across to Tidore. Take a Rua, Sasa or Jambula bemo (2000Rp).

GUNUNG API GALAMAMA

This 1721m volcano is Pulau Ternate. Gamalama erupted in 1840, destroying almost every house on the island. Although it has blown its fiery nose as recently as 1980, 1983 and 1994 it is not considered imminently dangerous. A volcanology unit keeps careful watch from Marikuruba village. There are pleasant, short, clove-grove hikes from Air Tege Tege village (near the transmitter tower). The going is very steep and climbing above the tree line is both strenuous and hazardous. Reaching the often cloud-shrouded summit takes around five hours and requires a guide. At least two foreign visitors have disappeared in the attempt; some claim this was because they broke taboos (eg not urinating above a certain elevation) or failed to say requisite prayers en route. The tourist offices can help locate guides.

Sleeping

You'll probably value a powerful new air conditioner given the oppressive heat and sauna-like humidity. Even the nicest existing places often have a little peeling paint, damp patches, a slimy *mandi* and a hint of dysfunction. However at least five great-looking new hotels are under construction, including the almost-finished Surya Pagi (Jl Stadion), what looks a major construction in Ubo Ubo and the three-star waterfront Jati Plaza, part of the big new mall development.

BUDGET

Budget accommodation under 150,000Rp is plentiful but very often abysmal, notably between Ahmad Yani Port and Jl Kamboja. There are a few exceptions.

Taman Ria (☎ 22124; d 75,000-100,000Rp) Set in a waterfront garden 4km south of the centre beyond Benteng Kalamata, the best room (8A) is new and very pleasant with views of Tidore. Others are high-ceilinged boxes.

Penginapan Sabrina (☎ 25896; Jl Sali Effendi; s/d with fan 65,000/90,000Rp, d with air-con 150,000Rp; ☎)

Friendly, relatively clean family homestay in a quiet backstreet.

Hotel Indah (☎ 21334; Jl Bosoiri 3; s/tw with fan 66,000/77,000Rp, with air-con 93,500/110,000Rp, with air-con & hot water 137,500/154,000; 🍷) Modest but eternally popular.

Nirwana Elsh Hotel (☎ 23257; Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; tw/ste 115,000-170,000/275,000Rp; 🍷) Perfectly central, this is a rambling warren of acceptable all-air-con rooms. Though none is especially charming, they're recently renovated and reasonable value. From 170,000Rp you get hot water, at least when there's electricity (there isn't a generator).

Neraca Golden Hotel (☎ 21668; Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; s/tw from 99,000/126,500Rp; 🍷) Once considered Ternate's best hotel, today the Neraca is looking pretty worn. Rooms are dreary and even the 165,000Rp junior suites have bucket *mandis* and non-flushing loos. However a crucial plus is that air-con rooms stay cool during inevitable city power-cuts thanks to the Neraca's earth-shaking generator. Supercentral.

Losmen Kita (☎ 21950; Jl Stadion; tw with cold/hot showers 150,000/200,000Rp; 🍷) Rambling low-rise bed-factory with nearly 50 clean, bland rooms.

Ternate City Hotel (☎ 22555; fax 22630; Jl Nuku 1; standard s/d 143,000/187,000Rp, superior s/d 198,000/242,000Rp; 🍷) All rooms are air-conditioned and most are reasonably bright though some are windowless and showing signs of wear. Superior rooms are similar but with hot water and fewer stairs to climb.

If money-saving is all that matters:

Penginapan Kembar Emas (☎ 3110750; Jl Feri, Bastiong; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp, d with fan 70,000Rp) Good value, clean cheapie facing Bastiong ferry port from behind a low wall. Clientele mostly male.

Penginapan Purnama (☎ 24297; Mohajarin Falajawa; per person 30,000Rp) Four survivable rooms without fan or bathroom in a slightly grubby family home with lots of old Chinese porcelain.

Penginapan Sejahtera (☎ 21139; Jl Salim Fabanyo 298; s/d from 38,000/70,000Rp) Tiny, very basic box-rooms but comparatively clean and repainted.

MIDRANGE

Barokah Guest House (☎ 23120; Gang Oskar; d/tw 175,000-220,000/220,000Rp; 🍷) Well-appointed air-con rooms with minibar, TV, VCD-player and hot-water shower are ranged above the eccentric Barokah restaurant.

Bridge-balconies have decent views of Gamalama. Some new doubles have amusing tiger-striped linen.

Wisma Megah Ternate (☎ 327989; Jl Raya Bastiong Dusun; s/d 150,000/250,000Rp; 🍷) Creamy-coloured new air-con rooms have good beds and satellite TV in a nouveau-riche suburban house. Contemplate lovely wide views from bamboo chairs on the 3rd-floor terrace.

Bukit Pelangi Hotel (☎ 22180; fax 327077; Jl Jati Selatan 338; executive d from 330,000Rp; 🍷) The Bukit Pelangi rises like a minor colonial palace high above Bastiong. Its best features are a terrace with a wonderful view and the big, sparse sitting room with grandfather clock. Rooms are comfortable but stylistically a very mixed bag. Most are painted in sickly pastel colours: look at several before choosing. There are a couple of cheaper options under 300,000Rp but those are particularly disappointing.

Hotel Archie (☎ 3110555; Jl Nuku 6; s from 258,000-286,000, tw from 286,000-313,500, d from 286,000-357,500Rp; 🍷) Modern, floral rooms and attentive service, partly in English. Some better rooms have bathtubs entered between theatrical columns.

Hotel Puri Azzali (☎ 21959; Jl Mononutu 275; d 385,000, ste 440,000-495,000Rp; 🍷) Bright, stylishly minimalist mini-hotel tastefully appointed with orchids and framed fabrics. Strangely, given the pricing, the small bathrooms don't have hot water, but otherwise the bedrooms were the most agreeable in Ternate at the time of research.

Eating

For cheap eats there's an almost limitless number of warungs, notably around the markets and on the 'Swering' promenade (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi).

The island's most appealing upmarket eateries are outside the city in Terau and Ngade (see p786).

Rumah Makan Jailolo (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi 7; meals 6,000-10,000Rp; 🍷 10am-10pm) Bright, reliable place for inexpensive point-and-pick rice-and-fish meals.

Hitam Putih (☎ 327423; Jl Hasan Senen; snack meals 6,600-11,000Rp, fresh juices 7700Rp; 🍷 7.30am-6pm & 7.30pm-11pm) Decent light snacks and excellent juices in a hoedown taverna with fish tanks and dinky lanterns. There's karaoke but the atmosphere is oriented towards

couples and families, unlike many buy-a-girl places around town.

Kafe Citra Rasa (☎ 328420; Jl Pahlawan Revolusi; mains 8500-13,000Rp; 🍷 9am-10pm) Looks dowdy by day but at night it's fairly charming in the swaying wicker lamplight. Popular with couples and very affordable despite unpriced menus.

Barokah (☎ 23120; Gang Oskar; mains 14,300-66,000Rp; 🍷 breakfast, lunch & dinner) An artificial goblin glade serving Japanese, European and local dishes that are tasty if somewhat greasy. The live music is relatively mellow.

California (☎ 311 0076; Jl Hasan Senen; burgers 10,200Rp, meals from 16,000Rp; 🍷 10am-10pm) Ternate's chicken fast food palace struggles valiantly with power cuts to produce very tasty 'chicken steaks' (9700Rp) as well as bird-burgers and Kentucky-style drumsticks.

Pondok Katu (☎ 327332; Jl Branjangan 28; mains 25,000-37,000Rp; 🍷 10am-10pm) This refreshingly air-conditioned oasis has high-beamed ceilings and is popular for seafood lunches and good Chinese food.

For self-catering try the **Sriwijaya Swalaya** (Jl Bosoiri) or **Muara** (Jl Pahlawan Revolusi) mini-markets. **Family Bakery** (Jl Nukila; 🍷 8am-7pm) has a selection of fresh bread and pastries.

Entertainment

In Ternate most entertainment revolves around dining or karaoke. Alternatively a couple of days per month you could turn out to cheer for Persiter, Ternate's major-league football team who play at the often overfull, unshaded Kie Rahu stadium. For afternoon games bring plenty of water, sun protection and a fan.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Lion Air/Wings Air (Almas Mega Travel; ☎ 55555; Jl Pattimura; 🍷 8am-8pm) flies twice daily to Manado with connections to Makassar, Jakarta and Surabaya. Prices are load-weighted so book ahead.

Express Air (☎ 328484; Jl Stadion; 🍷 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat & Sun) flies three times weekly to Jakarta via Makassar using a relatively fast Boeing 747, taking only five hours.

Trigana Air (Archie Travel; ☎ 328484; Jl Raya Bastiong; 🍷 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) provides a useful Ternate-Ambon-Tual link (out Wednesdays, returning Tuesdays) and hops once weekly to Makassar via Manado and Luwuk.

Merpati (☎ 21651; Jl Bosoiri; 🍷 8am-4pm Mon-Sat, 9am-noon Sun) flies daily except Mondays to Jakarta via Makassar, four times weekly to Manado and three times weekly to Yogyakarta via Makassar. It also operates two small planes buzzing to a wealth of North Maluku destinations. See the map on p752.

Bela Travel (☎ 25470; fax 25364; Jl Bosoiri; 🍷 9am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) can book various onward flights ex Manado or Jakarta.

BOAT

Ternate is the shipping hub for North Maluku. Ahmad Yani port is the passenger harbour for **Pelni** (☎ 21434; 🍷 8am-4pm Mon-Sat) liners. The irregular **Sangiang** loops round Halmahera. **Nggapulu** and **Sinabung** both stop at Ternate between Sorong (Papua; 137,500Rp, 14 to 16 hours) and Bitung (northern Sulawesi, 97,500Rp, seven hours). The **Lambelu** links Ternate with Ambon (115,000Rp, 19 hours) via Namlea (Buru) eastbound only.

Non-Pelni slow boats **RM Theodora/Intim Teratai** both sail to Manado (145,000Rp, 21 hours) on Saturdays/Thursdays and to Sanana (Sula Islands, 210,000Rp, up to two days) on Tuesdays/Thursdays.

Other jetties:

Bastiong ferry port Vehicle ferries daily to Rum (Tidore, 3800Rp, 7am) and Sidangoli (Halmahera; 14,900Rp, 8am) and overnight to Bitung (North Sulawesi, 66,000Rp, 10am Wednesdays and 5pm Saturdays).

Bastiong 'first' port Speedboats to Rum (Tidore), and all boat services to Makian, Bacan (80,000Rp, 8pm) and Obi.

Dufa-Dufa jetty Speedboats to Jailolo (Halmahera).

Kota Baru jetty Twice daily speedboats to Sofifi (Halmahera) from where *mobils* connect to Weda.

Mesjid Baru/Jati Mall jetty Speedboats to Sidangoli (Halmahera).

Swering/Central Promenade jetty Daily speedboats to Goto (Tidore, 10,000Rp, 4pm) and to Sofifi (Halmahera, 30,000Rp, 10am).

Getting Around

Taxis want an outrageous 35,000Rp for the 6km hop from Babullah Airport into the centre of town. Sometimes *ojeks* will accept 15,000Rp from just beyond the gate. Alternatively walk 10 minutes to the university from where very frequent bemos cost 2000Rp to the central bemo terminal. Bemos continue from here in all directions (2000Rp) but within the centre, *ojeks*

(3000Rp per short hop) are much more convenient.

AROUND PULAU TERNATE

The places in this section are covered anticlockwise from Kota Ternate.

Facing the crashing waves in Terau, **Bacalepo** (☎ 21724; mains 25,000-90,000Rp, juices 13,800-16,500; ☎ 10am-midnight) is one of Ternate's most appealing cafés, with a hint of Balinese style and a stepped waterfront terrace. Just beyond, **Batu Angus** (Burnt Rock) is a spiky 3000-year-old lava flow, not a type of steak.

At the top of the island, **Sulamadaha** has a popular if somewhat scruffy black-sand beach just beyond the simple but acceptable **Hotel Pantai Indah** (d with fan 50,000Rp). From a cove some 800m east, occasional public long-boats (3000Rp per person) buzz across to the offshore volcanic cone of **Pulau Hiri**. Hiri was last step of the Sultan's family's 1945 *Sound of Music*-style escape from Ternate. Snorkelling off Hiri is relatively good by Ternate standards and there are plans for a dive-shop in Sulamadaha – ask Riko at **Istana FM** (☎ 0812 4450304) near Bastiong 'First' port.

Beyond some nutmeg plantations and the village of **Takome**, the main road returns to the coast beside small, muddy Danau Tolire Kecil. Less than a kilometre further, a paved side-lane (2000Rp fee) climbs to the rim of **Danau Tolire Besar**. Startlingly sheer cliffs plummet down to the lugubriously green, crocodile-infested waters of this deep crater lake. Local children offer guide services should you want to descend (1½ hours return on foot).

Jouburiki beach, reached by a footpath from the southern edge of **Dorpedu**, was the spot where Ternate's very first sultan was supposedly crowned in 1257. More picturesque black-sand beaches are found at **Rua** and at **Kastela**. The latter village is named for the 1522 Portuguese fort of **Benteng Nosra Senora del Rosario**, whose ruins have recently received some ham-fisted partial renovations. Beside it, topped with a giant clove, a concrete monument graphically reminds you that the Portuguese murdered Sultan Hairun in 1570 then got their comeuppance five years later.

At Ngade the stubby fort remnant of **Benteng Santo Pedro i Paulo** was once Ternate's main line of defence against a 1606 Spanish attack.

Floridas (☎ 24430; mains 11,000-250,000; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Across the road from the fort, Floridas is a terraced restaurant with splendid views across the bay to the superimposed cones of Tidore and Maitara. They serve quite outstanding *ikan woku kenari* (fish in hot almond sauce roasted in a banana leaf).

Teratai (☎ 327445; mains 16,500-300,000; ☎ 8am-11pm) Near Floridas, Teratai has similarly lovely views shared by two comfortable **guest rooms** (d 250,000Rp, ☎). Teratai's terrace has slightly more atmosphere than Floridas' but suffers more from karaoke noise.

Danau Laguna, a pleasant, spring-fed bowl-lake with a lushly forested perimeter is the last green space before reaching Kota Ternate again near **Benteng Kalamata**.

Getting Around

Most of the paved round-island road is served by public bemos from Kota Ternate's central terminal. They are remarkably frequent as far as Sulamadaha (3000Rp anticlockwise) and Kastela (2000Rp clockwise). Although no single bemo goes right around, some north-route vehicles drive as far as Togafo (4000Rp). From there it's a pleasantly windy 2km walk to Taduma, where the longest south-route bemos start.

A better alternative is to charter an *ojek* for the afternoon (around 30,000Rp per hour, negotiable).

SADDAM & OSAMA Mark Elliott

'Saddam is hero of the World' says a Bush-bashing signboard in Ternate. In Sidangoli the old Iraqi dictator's face co-decorates a public bench seat along with Osama bin Laden. There are plenty more like these. And Osama features widely on popular T-shirts. But don't assume that this implies deep-seated radical Islam. It's rather like a Che Guevara poster on a British student's wall: a trendy image that's highly unlikely to imply actual involvement with revolutionary communism. 'So who is this Osama chap on your chest?' I asked one bin Laden shirt wearer. She giggled embarrassedly. After consulting with some friends she finally replied: 'He's a friendly Arab who likes to help the poor'.

PULAU TIDORE

☎ 0921

Charming Tidore makes a refreshing contrast to the bustle of Ternate, its neighbour and implacable historical enemy. Tidore, also a great spice producer, was an independent Islamic sultanate from 1109 until abolished in the Soekarno era. The 36th sultan was reinstated in 1999. The island's proud volcanic profile looks magnificent viewed from Bastiong in Ternate, while the finest views of Ternate are from the Maftutu–Rum and Gurabunga–Lada-Ake roads on Tidore.

Getting There & Away

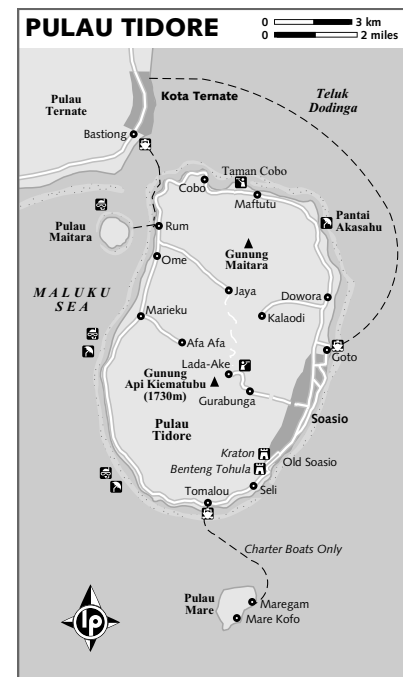
Twelve-seater speedboats from Bastiong 'First' port in Ternate depart very frequently until dusk (6000Rp, seven minutes). These arrive at Rum from where bemos run to Tidore's capital Soasio (7500Rp, 30 minutes) via the south coast road. There's also a Bastiong–Rum car ferry (3800Rp, 7am), and one direct speedboat from Goto to Kota Ternate's 'Swering' jetty at 7am.

Getting Around

Bemos shuttle very frequently from Goto market terminal to old Soasio (2000Rp, 10 minutes), with most continuing to Tomalou (4000Rp) and some to Rum (7500Rp, 30 minutes). On the northern road no bemo goes beyond Maftutu from Soasio/Goto. Bemos to Gurabunga (8500Rp) leave infrequently except for busy Tuesday, Friday and Sunday market mornings. *Ojeks* want 50,000Rp return from Soasio to Lada-Ake via Gurabunga and a similar fee for the rough but appealing Soasio–Maftutu–Rum run.

SOASIO

Tidore's very modest historical heart is at the southernmost edge of Soasio, overlooked by **Benteng Tohula**. The overgrown remnants of this 17th-century Spanish fort sit on a low ridge reached by a new stairway. Barely a minute's walk north is the flower-decked Penginapan Saroja where it's worth having a gritty coffee (2000Rp) on the idyllic rear waterfront terrace even if you don't stay the night. Just beyond is the **Sonyine Malige Sultan's Memorial Museum**, displaying the sultan's sedan chair and giant spittoons, plus the royal crown topped with



cassowary feathers. The crown is considered as magical as the Ternate equivalent. Opening hours are by arrangement; finding the museum's curator, Umar Muhammad, can be an amusing palaver: mornings try the DIKNAS office in the Dinas Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan building, 2km north. Or try his home in the Gamatufgange area. Umar has been known to demand rather outrageous fees (up to 100,000Rp!) and isn't always keen to bargain.

One block inland from the museum, all that remains of the original **kraton** royal citadel (Istana Sultan) are the sturdy if overgrown whitewashed-base bastions. However, a new blue-roofed palace-villa is slowly taking shape here which might one day be rather grand.

Helpful English teacher **Muhlis Sehe** (☎ 0813 56027457) is ultra keen to meet English speakers.

Sleeping & Eating

Penginapan Saroja (☎ 61456; Jl Sultan Hassanudin; s/tw 75,000/150,000Rp ☎) By far Soasio's most picturesque accommodation option,

the Seroja has a lovely little orchid garden and an idyllic waterfront terrace with jetty-sitting room on stilts above the clear waters. Rooms are clean and very basic, beds are hard and the *mandis* have a few mosquitoes, but the twin-rooms have air-con. Full board costs double.

Penginapan Sibü (☎ 62413; Jl Sultan Hassanudin) Incredibly basic bare-board rooms cost only 150,000Rp *per month*. Daily rates by negotiation. It's unmarked right beside the two tall radio-masts.

Pondok Eky (☎ 61168; Jl Tana-apa) An appealing-looking café but opens only sporadically.

There's also a selection of curious local delicacies at the main market beside Goto terminal.

AROUND TIDORE

The most picturesque village in Tidore is tiny **Lada-Ake**. Set high up a disconcertingly steep road, the village retains a few traditional homes made of split bamboo set on mossy dry-stone bases. Curious *guwige* basket-poles offer nests to chickens and many women use traditional *salo*i (conical back-baskets) when foraging in the lush surrounding forest. Locals use the traditional Tidorean language in which *sukur dofu* means 'thank you', *saki* means 'delicious' and *sterek (lau)* means '(very) good'. Glimpsed views of Ternate are inspiring from the approach road.

The nicest coastal views are between Maftutu and Cobo where **Taman Cobo** is a popular little park with a two-room hut-hotel under construction.

Most other Tidorean villages are simply strips of homes on either side of the round-island coast road. None of these are outstanding, though several have small ribbons of beach. **Pantai Akasahu** north of Dowara is popular if underwhelming and a little grubby: notice its natural hot-water pool. From here to **Rum** the road is quiet and beautiful (best anticlockwise) but poorly maintained. A three-minute speedboat hop from Rum is **Pulau Maitara**, with clear blue waters for snorkelling and swimming, better than anything Ternate or Tidore proper can offer.

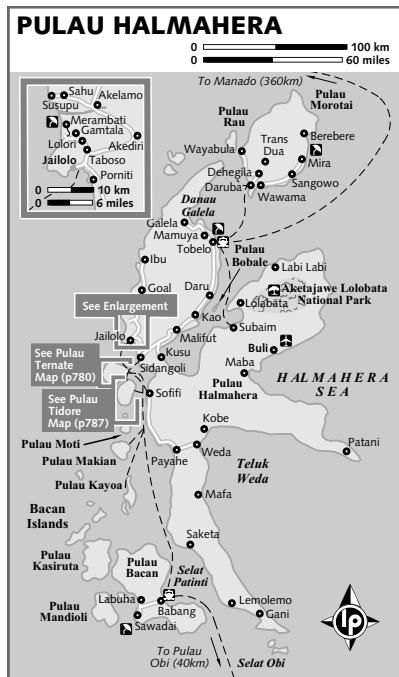
In **Tomalou**, just beyond the blue house-like **Mesjid Darussalam**, there is a jetty where you could attempt to charter a boat across to **Pulau Mare**, famed for its attractive, no-frills pottery.

OTHER ISLANDS OF NORTH MALUKU

None of these islands has any real history of tourism so visits will be often prove something of an adventure.

PULAU HALMAHERA

Maluku's biggest island is eccentrically shaped with four mountainous peninsulas, several volcanoes and dozens of offshore islands. Sparsely populated and hard to get around, its history has been largely shaped by events over in tiny but dominant Ternate. Although usually subservient to Ternate, Jailolo would occasionally break away as an independent sultanate, generally ruled by a deposed or renegade branch of the Ternate (or sometimes Tidore) royal family, or by loyalists regrouping to resist European incursions on Ternate. Religiously, the island is predominantly Muslim, although there are Christian majority villages in several areas of the more developed northern pen-



insula. Halmahera suffered severely from fighting in 1999–2002 and although now peaceful, many shockingly ruined churches remain visible especially in Galela and Sidangoli. Halmahera has few roads but a building programme currently underway, along with several new air routes and various boat links, means there are now several areas where you could be the first foreigner to visit in generations. One such place might be the remote new Aketajawe Loloabata National Park, which offers a slight hope of spotting the exceedingly rare Wallace's standard-wing bird of paradise, known locally as *burung bidadari*.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati has air links to Kao (for Tobelo), Bacan, the gold-mining town of Buli, Gebe via Weda and Morotai via Galela. Peln's *Sangiang* loops around Halmahera once or twice a month from Ternate and/or Bitung (Sulawesi). There's also a weekly Tobelo–Manado boat. But by far the most popular access is by speedboat from Ternate. For the northwestern coast head for Jailolo. For Tobelo, Galela and the east cross initially to Sidangoli. For Weda take a speedboat to Sofifi from either Kota Ternate or from Goto in Tidore (25,000Rp, twice daily).

Jailolo

☎ 0922

Famed for its fragrant durians, attractive little Jailolo port steams gently amid the mangroves at the base of a lush volcanic cone. Before being incorporated by Ternate, Jailolo was an independent sultanate, though be aware that medieval historians used the term Jailolo (Gilolo) to refer to the whole island of Halmahera. Today, not even a stone remains of Jailolo's former *kra-ton* (palace), abandoned in the 1730s. However with two simple but acceptable hotels, Jailolo is a possible base for exploring some traditional villages in the surrounding area. **Penginapan Camar** (☎ 21100; Jl Gufasa; d 60,000–87,500Rp) is clean with shared *mandis*. The recently renovated **Penginapan Nusantara** (☎ 21305; d with fan/air-con 82,500/137,500Rp; ♿) has private bathrooms in some rooms. Both are just beyond the market, five minutes' walk from the long jetty where regular morning speedboats arrive from Dufa Dufa in Ternate (27,000Rp, one hour).

Around Jailolo

An easy but very pleasant *ojek* excursion takes you to **Merambati**, a long black-sand beach. En route are some distinctive churches and the floral villages of **Taboso**, **Lolori** and **Gamtala**. Each maintains its traditionally thatched *rumah adat* meeting hall (see p790). At the calmer, far-northern end of Merambati beach **Susupu** is a picturesque volcano-backed village that's reached via Akelamo on a longer, entirely different road.

Just 3.5km east of Jailolo, **Porniti** village has another traditional *rumah adat*. It's beside the narrow, partly potholed roller-coaster road to Sidangoli (50,000Rp, one hour by *ojek*).

Sidangoli

☎ 0921

Speedboats pulling in from Ternate (15,000Rp, 40 minutes, frequent before 11am) are met by a comical melee of porters and transport touts trying to lure you to their Tobelo-bound Kijangs (75,000Rp, three hours). These depart when (nearly) full from a 'terminal' just three minutes' walk away from the jetty. However, with no queuing system, guessing which car will be first to leave is very hit and miss. Most have finally departed by 11.30am.

You can see Sidangoli's few vaguely picturesque stilt houses and dramatically ruined church in five minutes. However, if rough water makes speedboat passage back to Ternate unsafe, **Penginapan Handayani** (☎ 328 471; Jl Cendan; d 60,000Rp) is quiet and friendly, 300m northwest of the terminal. In the opposite direction, the bearable **Penginapan Sidangoli Indah** (☎ 0813 4034905; s/d with fan & mandi 70,000/80,000Rp) has tiled floors and a peaceful if viewless terrace.

Tobelo

☎ 0924

Surrounded by coconut palms and fronted by a jigsaw of islands, Tobelo is northern Halmahera's only 'town', although it's little more than the one main Kao–Galela road (Jl Kemakmuran, also called Jl H Simange). That's roughly bisected just north of the market/terminal by Jl Pelabuhan (aka Jl Haven) which leads quickly to the main port. In contrast to most of North Maluku, Tobelo is majority Christian, so you can

RUMAH ADAT

Known as a *baileu* in the Lease Islands, a *rumah adat* is the nearest a Malukan village is likely to come to having a 'traditional' building. The most attractive are airy open-sided thatched structures doubling as village meeting places and general hang-outs. Some even have a communal TV. Many have disappeared, perhaps burnt in the 1999–2002 troubles or tastelessly modernised. However, in the Christian villages north of Jailolo, many fine thatched examples still stand, some dating from the villages' foundation (1910 at Lolori). In this area, each *rumah adat* displays a pair of *sasadu*, hairy balls hung from palm pennants at the end of an elongated apex beam. Rather than crude innuendo, their intended symbolism is as the 'feet' (representing stability) of the community. Tucked away into the palm-woven beams you may spot a *sie-sie* (bamboo pipe-cup). *Segera* (distilled palm wine) is quaffed from these cups, but only on special occasions.

get lunch, and even beer, during Ramadan (Muslim month of fasting). Just don't drink it in public.

INFORMATION

BNI Bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Kemakmuran; ☎ 7.30am–2pm) Opposite the market; 24-hour ATM but no currency exchange.

SLEEPING & EATING

Penginapan Asean Jaya (☎ 21051; Jl Pelabuhan; s/tw with fan 40,000/65,000Rp) Basic but neat and well kept by Anis, the delightful English-speaking owner.

Penginapan Alfa Mas (☎ 21543; Jl Kemakmuran; no fan/fan/air-con d 55,000/66,000/110,000Rp ☹) Hidden in an off-road garden; cheap rooms are rather rough and the staff are comically camp.

Penginapan Meraksi Flower (☎ 22449; Jl Bhayangkara; d & tw with fan 66,000, with air-con 110,000–135,000Rp ☹) The best rooms in the new section of this family homestay are Tobelo's top option. The building is 50m inland from the very over-rated Hotel President.

Villa Hermosa II (☎ 21887; Jl Parahyangan; d with air-con 150,000Rp; ☹) Half of the rooms are excellent and brand new, albeit with screamingly gaudy pink sheets. The peaceful, semi-rural setting is 1.5km southwest of the centre, accessed by a track from near the petrol station.

Wisma Siasabila (☎ 22389; Jl Kemakmuran; d 150,000–200,000Rp; ☹) Lemon-and-lime rooms around a narrow pond. Clean, fresh and friendlier than the next door **Penginapan Regina** (☎ 21149; Jl Kemakmuran; d with fan/air-con 95,000/165,000Rp; ☹).

Rumah Makan Orion (☎ 21520; Jl Kemakmuran; meals 7500–12,500Rp; ☎ 9.30am–10pm Mon–Sat) Its theatrical *kangkung* hotplate (10,000Rp)

has subtle tangs of garlic and ginger. It's diagonally opposite the Hotel President.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tobelo has no airport but **Merpati** (☎ 21167; fax 22322; Jl Kemakmuran; ☎ 8am–4pm Mon–Sat) flies three times weekly from both Ternate and Manado to Kao, linked with road transfers to/from Tobelo (35,000Rp, 70 minutes).

The *KM Elisabet II* sails to Manado (265,000Rp, 21 hours) on Wednesdays, returning Mondays. Pelni's *Sangiang* loops round Halmahera from Bitung (Sulawesi) on a Ternate–Babang (Bacan)–Gebe–Buli–Tobelo–Bitung route, or the same in reverse. The schedule is somewhat variable. Tobelo–Bacan costs 62,000Rp, Tobelo–Bitung 91,000Rp.

For Morotai there are daily speedboats (30,000Rp, two hours) from the main port. On Monday and Wednesday mornings the *Inerie* ferry (15,000Rp, four hours) also serves Morotai from Pelabuhan Penyebangan, 6km north of Tobelo.

Virtually all Kijangs to Sidangoli (75,000Rp, three hours) leave antisocially between 3.30am and 4am. Book ahead and they'll pick you up at your hotel. Bemos are fairly frequent to Galela (15,000Rp, one hour) but relatively rare to Kao.

Tobelo's Offshore Islands

Picturesque and with snorkelling potential, **Pulau Kumo** is just a 10-minute ride by shared outrigger (2000Rp) from Tobelo port. With a chartered boat you can head for an uninhabited coral-fringed island all of your own. Most have golden sandy beaches, but you'll need your own drinking water. Don't steal the coconuts! Sandy **Pulau Bobale Island**, accessed from **Daru**, is reputed to have great

snorkelling and diving. Tobelo's Villa Hermosa II lends snorkels without charge, but only to guests.

Galela Area

☎ 0924

With a lush volcanic backdrop, plenty of bullock carts and fishermen on bamboo rafts, **Danau Galela** (Danau Duma) is the main attraction of the gently attractive Galela area. It's 25km north of Tobelo, 1.5km beyond Soasio (aka Galela town). The Galela district suffered especially during the 1999–2002 troubles, but today the road blocks have mostly gone and quick-growing tropical foliage has softened the ruins of burnt out churches and mosques. A 16km loop of asphalt road goes right around the lake but the best views are along the 4km of north-bank road nearest Soasio. On the south bank, **Penginapan Talaga Maloha** (☎ 611349; Jl Raya Soakonora; d 100,000Rp) is a three-room family homestay behind the Wartel Dua Putera 150m east of the oddly bulbous domed Iqobul Mosque. Its narrow rear terrace looks directly out over the lake.

There's also acceptable accommodation in central Soasio, where **Penginapan Daloha** (☎ 611221; tw fan/air-con 100,000/150,000; ☹) is the unmarked pink house opposite Sumbar Baru shop.

Galela has its own language in which *daloha* means 'good', *sukur dala dala* means 'thank you' and *to-tagi tagi* rather than *jalan jalan* is the ideal answer to the eternal question, 'Where are you going?'

Merpati (☎ 611008) has bargain Wednesday flights to Morotai (50,000Rp) and Ternate (113,800Rp) from Galala's airfield. The Merpati lady lives in a totally unmarked house in central Soasio, just off the main road where it swings inland towards the lake.

PULAU MOROTAI

☎ 0923

Off Halmahera's northern tip, this sparsely populated island became a minor Japanese base during WWII. It leapt to importance when it was captured by the Allies and used to bomb Manila to bits – the sad fulfilment of General MacArthur's 'I will return' pledge to retake the Philippines. Among the Japanese defenders that retreated to Morotai's crumpled mountain hinterland

was the famous Private Nakamura: only in 1973 did he discover that the war was over. Bunkers and rusty bullet-cases are visible on overgrown WWII battle sites near **Trans Dua**. That's 35 muddy minutes by *ojek* from Morotai's village capital **Daruba** where a rusting US amphibious lander (*amfibi*) lies hidden in a coconut plantation. Daruba fishing smacks can take you to **Pulau Sum Sum**, a beautiful desert island that was MacArthur's temporary WWII command base. It has delightful spongy, white sand and is littered with giant clam shells and the odd WWII bullet.

Berebere, famous for its lobsters (per kilogram from 50,000Rp), has surfing potential but there's no road from Daruba and boats from Tobelo are sporadic.

Daruba has two simple *penginapan* and six sometimes-open *rumah makan*. Tourists are very rare.

Getting There & Away

Merpati (☎ 21063, Daruba) operates flights between Ternate and Daruba via Galela. Otherwise access is by ferry or speedboat from Tobelo. Ferries to Tobelo (12,500Rp, four hours) depart Tuesday and Thursday. Twice a day, overloaded minibuses stagger along the rough roads to Mira and Wayabula but *ojeks* are much more comfortable for exploring.

PULAU MAKIAN

Moored off Halmahera's west coast, spiky-topped **Pulau Makian** is an impressive, 1357m volcano with a photogenically huge gash in the cone's northern flank. Its eruptions are rare but deadly, killing over 2000 people in 1960 and causing a full-scale evacuation in 1988. Although now resettled, Pulau Makian has no formal accommodation and many Makian islanders remain in Kota Ternate, where they're reckoned to be disproportionately powerful in the administration. Speedboats leave daily to Bastiong in Ternate (45,000Rp, two hours), returning the next morning.

PULAU KAYOA & PULAU GURAICI

The low-slung, reptilian ridge of **Pulau Kayoa** is not especially impressive above water. However it reportedly has some of North Maluku's best snorkelling, notably off the small islet of **Pulau Guraici** where the *kepala*

desa reputedly maintains two basic cottages in case visitors show up.

PULAU BACAN

☎ 0927

Pleasant **Pulau Bacan**, whose laid-back capital **Labuha** curls almost imperceptibly around a languid west-facing bay, is a sleepy getaway from Ternate. It has a selection of modest guesthouses and features a small, exaggeratedly fortified Portuguese-Dutch fort, **Benteng Barnevald**, lying overgrown behind a stagnant moat.

The island's sights are fairly pitiful, but offer excuses to go wandering. **Air Panas** is a patch of ferric-orange pebbles discoloured by volcanic bubbling. The site is in sea shallows off **Kupal** village, in an achingly beautiful bay of fishing boats and swaying palms. It's 15 minutes by *ojek* from Labuha. The best place for a swim is the pebble beach off picturesque **Sawadai** village, 35 minutes by bemo from Labuha. Locals reckon **Air Belanda** (Dutch Water) is a tourist attraction. However viewing this small 'waterfall' is about as exciting as watching your *mandi* overflow.

Sleeping & Eating

Penginapan Borero Indah (☎ 21024; Jl Pasar 2; s/d with bathroom 50,000/100,000Rp; 🍽️) Near Labuha's central market, this clean, bright place has an orchid garden and staff so obliging

they compete to bring you tea. Some of the doubles have air-con.

Pondok Indah (☎ 21048; Jl Oesman Syah; s/d with fan 55,000/77,000Rp; d with air-con 100,000Rp; 🍽️) In a family home, this is also pleasant, if slightly more dingy.

Half a dozen miniature *rumah makan* serve simple rice-and-fish dinners.

Getting There & Away

Labuha's airport is 4km east of town. **Merpati** (☎ 21603) has weekly flights to Ternate. Overnight boats (80,000Rp, eight hours) run daily from Bastiong (Ternate) to Babang, 16km east of Labuha. These arrive antisocially early (around 4am) but bemos await. Although boats continue to Jikotamu (near Laiwui, Obi Islands) there is no regular onward connection to Ambon without backtracking to Ternate.

SULA ISLANDS

Southwest of the Bacan Islands, the **Sula Islands** are remote, forested and sparsely populated. **Sanana** has a basic *penginapan* and a decrepit Dutch fort near the port. Twice-weekly flights or boats from Ternate to Sanana could be combined with the slow Sanana–Ambon boat as an adventurous way to link north and central Maluku. But seas are rough, boats very slow and the area is infamous for treacherous whirlpools.

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