

Nusa Tenggara



Indonesia's dazzling arc of eastern islands that stretches towards northern Australia is perhaps the most varied and rewarding part of the nation to explore. There are few regions of the world that can compete with Nusa Tenggara for sheer diversity – east of Hindu Bali are the largely Islamic islands of Lombok and Sumbawa, followed by predominantly Catholic Flores with its Portuguese heritage, while Timor and the Alor and Solor Archipelagos have Protestant majorities. On all of these islands, animist rituals and tribal traditions continue alongside the minarets, temples and chapels, particularly in rural areas. Though Bahasa Indonesia is a unifying tongue, each main island has at least one native language, which is often subdivided into dialects.

The spectacular terrain is almost as diverse: the fecund volcanic slopes and shimmering rice paddies of western Lombok contrast sharply with the arid hillsides of Komodo and Sumba, which turn dusty brown at the end of the long dry season.

If you've a thirst for adventure or nature, or if you surf, snorkel, hike or dive, the opportunities in Nusa Tenggara are almost limitless. Of the dozens of volcanoes, the sublime cone of Kelimutu – its summit crowned by three crater lakes of different hues – has to be the region's prime draw, though Lombok's towering Rinjani is a much more challenging ascent.

The cities and towns in this region are generally not places to linger long – with little in the way of cultural appeal and an excess of fumes, heat, noise and urban grime – though they are rarely threatening or dangerous; personal safety is not normally a great concern.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Gazing at the lunarlike landscape atop **Gunung Kelimutu** (p561), with its three astonishing crater lakes, each a different colour
- Trekking up the lush slopes of **Gunung Rinjani** (p519), the sacred volcano that dominates northern Lombok
- Coming face-to-face with the mother of all lizards in **Komodo** (p541) or **Rinca** (p543)
- Exploring the villages of **Sumba** (p590), characterised by their extraordinary rocket-roofed clan houses, and marvelling at the island's unique tribal culture, tombs and textiles
- Snorkelling or diving in coral reefs teeming with marine life around the **Gili Islands** (p511), **Labuanbajo** (p546) and **Komodo National Park** (p546)



■ POPULATION: 8.2 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 68,053 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: GUNUNG RINJANI (3726M)

HISTORY

The region of Nusa Tenggara has always been, and remains, remote. Before the 15th century, virtually the only external contact these islands had were sporadic visits from Chinese and Arab traders in search of sandalwood, spices and tortoiseshell. In 1512 the Portuguese first landed in (and named) Flores; they also named Timor and Solor and brought Christianity to all three islands soon after their arrival.

The Dutch began to muscle in on the region in the 17th century, taking control of Kupang in 1653 and later shunting the Portuguese off to East Timor. But, with few resources to tempt them, they devoted little attention to Nusa Tenggara, only really establishing firm control over the area in the 20th century by forming alliances with tribal rajahs.

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

Today there remains very little industry in the region (apart from a colossal mine in Sumbawa), and many Nusa Tenggaraans are forced to move to Java, Bali or Malaysia in search of work. It's also quite common for women to work as maids in the Gulf states, Singapore and Hong Kong. The potential for tourism remains vast, but, due to political instability, poor infrastructure and transport links, and low educational standards, Nusa Tenggara looks unlikely to profit much from this sector for some time yet.

WILDLIFE

The region's real trump card is the Komodo dragon (see p542), the world's largest lizard, which can easily be spotted on the islands of Komodo and Rinca. Small numbers also exist in western Flores.

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

CLIMATE

On the islands east of Bali, seasonal differences are more pronounced. The driest months are August and September, and the wettest months are between November and February. However, the duration of the seasons varies from island to island. The seasons in Lombok are more like those in Bali, with a dry season from April to September and a wet season from October to March. Much the same applies to both Sumbawa and Flores. The duration of the dry season increases the closer you get to Australia – the rusty landscapes of Sumba and Timor contrast strongly with well-vegetated Flores. See also the climate chart for Kupang, p848.

At almost 10°S latitude, Timor is also the only island in Indonesia that is far enough from the equator to experience typhoons (cyclones), but these are rare. Nearby northern Australia is not so lucky.

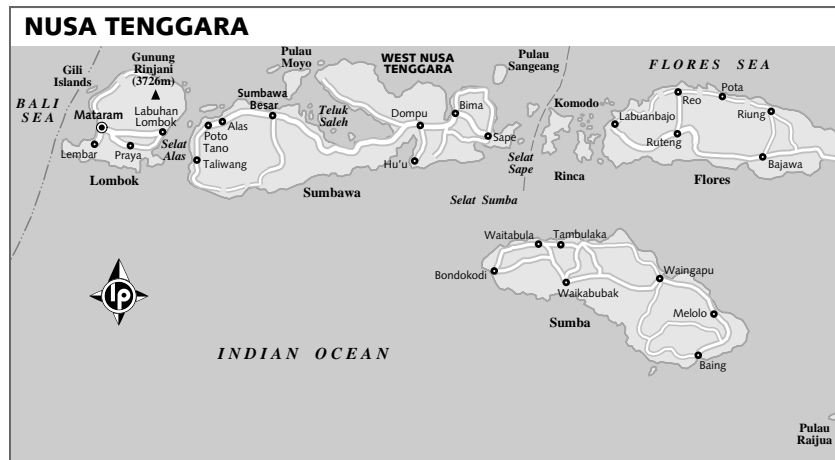
GETTING THERE & AROUND

Overland travel is very arduous in many parts of mountainous Nusa Tenggara, particularly in Flores. Lombok, Sumbawa and Timor have fairly decent surfaced main roads and some comfortable bus services. Get off the highways and things slow down considerably, however. Ferry services have actually worsened in recent years, partly due to the downturn in tourism (and several sinkings). Fortunately, several airlines now cover the main inter-island routes, as few travellers who have endured the punishing long haul across Nusa Tenggara by surface transport are willing to repeat the experience.

Air

There are twice-weekly flights between Darwin in Australia and Kupang, jointly operated by Air North and Merpati (Merpati Nusantara Airlines). Mataram has the only other international airport in Nusa Tenggara, with twice-weekly connections to Singapore on Silk Air and daily connections to Kuala Lumpur (KL) on Merpati. Most visitors use Bali as the international gateway to Nusa Tenggara, as there are so many more connections available.

Several airlines operate within Nusa Tenggara, but the main two are Merpati and Transnusa (which mainly operates



between the eastern islands). Other airlines, including Adam Air, GT Air, Lion Air, Batavia Air and Wings Air, concentrate on the main routes to/from Mataram and Kupang.

With Merpati, the delays or cancellations remain an inconvenience; however, it remains the best-connected airline in Nusa Tenggara. Transnusa is generally more reliable and punctual, but flight cancellations are common on all routes in Nusa Tenggara, particularly on the less popular (and less profitable) ones.

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

It's wise to book early, and reservations are essential in the peak August tourist season. The most popular routes are to/from Bali and Flores (particularly Maumere–Denpasar). Overbooking often occurs, so make sure your booking is confirmed when buying the ticket, and always reconfirm. If a flight is 'full', it is worth going to the airport before departure, as there are often 'no-shows', which means last-minute seats are available.

Bicycle

Many people hire bicycles to get around the Gili Islands, but they are not a popular form of transport anywhere else in Nusa Tenggara. Long-distance cycling is an option on Lombok (though the roads are narrow

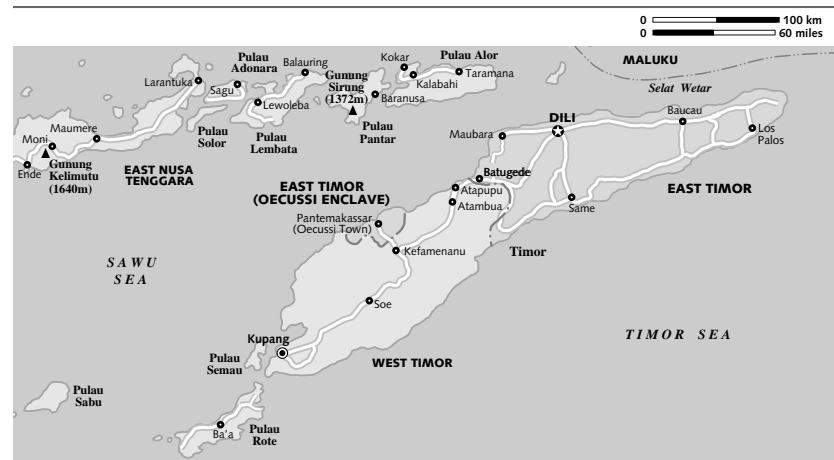
and traffic can be quite heavy) and across the undulating terrain of Sumba and western Sumbawa. Cycling on volcanic Flores or mountainous Timor requires Tour de France levels of endurance, though some riders do travel across both islands using buses to get their bikes up the steepest inclines and freewheeling downhill.

Boat

Pelni's *Awu*, *Dobonsolo*, *Dorolonda*, *Kelimitu*, *Sirimau*, *Tatamailau*, *Pangrango* and *Tilongkabila* ferries all service Nusa Tenggara. Schedules are provided under individual town entries in this chapter. Pelni's more basic Perintis cargo ships cover many routes and are an option if you get stuck. Ask at the office of the *syahbandar* (harbour master) or at the shipping offices. Conditions are primitive, but you can often negotiate to rent a cabin.

Somewhat dilapidated, slow ferries also connect many of the islands. There are very regular sailings between Bali and Lombok, and Lombok and Sumbawa. Between Sumbawa and Flores there's a daily ferry, but it does not stop at Komodo.

Other ferry connections include twice-weekly services between both Kupang and Lantuka (Flores) and Kupang and Kalabahi (Alor). Boats also connect Ende (Flores) with Waingapu (Sumba); Lantuka (Flores) with Lembata and Kalabahi; and Kupang with Rote. There are plenty of other possibilities; see the relevant sec-



tions of individual town entries for more details.

A popular way of travelling between Lombok and Flores or vice versa is on a boat tour, stopping at Komodo and other islands along the way. See p516 for more information.

Bus

Travelling by bus is generally uncomfortable, hot and slow in Nusa Tenggara despite most main roads being sealed. However, some of the main cross-island truck routes are covered by air-con express coaches: Mataram–Labuhan Lombok; the trans-Sumbawa journey as far as Bima; and Kupang–Dili in Timor.

Elsewhere expect an oven-hot bus with near-zero legroom, betel-nut gobbling passengers, and an excess of clucking chickens and dried fish. Buses constantly stop to drop off and pick up passengers. In remote parts be prepared for endless loops around town at the beginning and end of each journey as the driver searches for, and later drops off, passengers – a maddening local practice called *keliling* that provokes curses and vitriol from many a traveller. Even if the road is sealed, it is usually narrow and winding, and there are usually sections under repair that will rattle the fillings. Don't underestimate journey times – a trip of only 100km may take up to four hours.

Flores' interminable switchbacks and mountain ranges mean that there is no

comfortable way to cross the island by land unless you have all the time in the world and the patience of a saint.

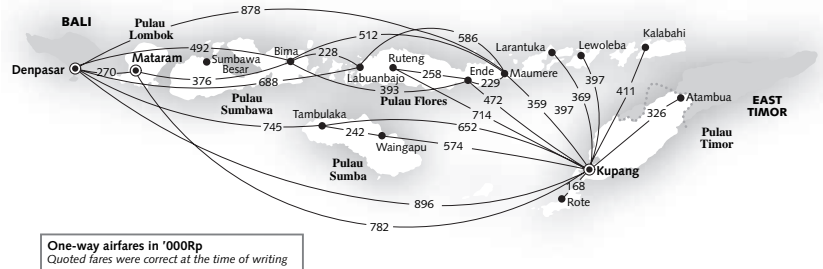
Most buses leave in the morning between 6am and 8am, so be prepared for early starts. Where buses leave later in the day, they are less patronised, so they often spend longer looking for passengers. There are also night buses between Mataram and Bima. Long-distance buses usually meet the main ferries for those planning to travel straight through to other destinations.

Buying bus tickets for the right price can be a real hassle in Nusa Tenggara as foreigners routinely get overcharged. Touts are always around hotels and bus terminals, willing to 'assist', but this gets even more expensive. The same goes for many travel agents. The right price is only really available if buying from the actual bus company office or by finding out the correct tariff from fellow passengers. Good luck!

Car & Motorcycle

Self-drive cars can be found at very reasonable rates in Senggigi, Lombok (from 150,000Rp a day for a 4WD), though remember to inspect the car thoroughly first, as insurance is often extremely basic, and you'll usually have to pay for any damage. Consider hiring a car with a driver from 300,000Rp, including petrol. Elsewhere it's much more difficult and expensive to rent a car. Hotels are good contact points, but expect to pay 350,000Rp to 500,000Rp a

NUSA TENGGARA AIRFARES



day, including driver and petrol. Bemos can be chartered for shorter trips.

If you are an experienced rider, motorcycling is great way to see Nusa Tenggara, and you can transport your bike on ferries between most of the islands. It's best to bring your own machine. Short-term hires are possible virtually anywhere (around 35,000-60,000Rp a day), though this usually amounts to a casual agreement between you and the bike owner and there is no paperwork involved. It's difficult to convince anyone to let you take their bike to another island.

Traffic is relatively light, even on the main highways, but the usual hazards of villages crowded with pedestrians, chickens and goats apply. Driving at night is not recommended, as many vehicles do not have lights.

LOMBOK

Lombok is the most popular destination in Nusa Tenggara, with the fabled Gili Islands drawing visitors for action both in and out of the water, mighty Gunung Rinjani luring trekkers, and the big breaks on the south coast a magnet for surfers.

The island of Lombok shapes up at about 80km from east to west and about the same from north to south, with lush evergreen landscapes and parts which are chronically dry. Droughts, particularly in the south and

east, can last for months, causing crop failure and famine – though recent improvements in water management have made life in Lombok less precarious.

Rice is an important crop, though yields are lower here than on neighbouring islands. Tobacco, coconuts, coffee, kapok and cotton are also important crops, while cloves, vanilla, pineapple and pepper have also been introduced.

The indigenous Sasak (around 90% of the population) are Muslims but have a culture and language unique to Lombok. There's also a significant Hindu Balinese minority – a legacy of the time when Bali controlled Lombok.

History

In the early 17th century Lombok's Sasak princedoms were usurped by the Balinese, who took control of western Lombok, and the Makassar, who invaded eastern Lombok. By 1750 the whole island was in Balinese hands.

In western Lombok, relations between the Balinese and the Sasaks were relatively harmonious, but in eastern Lombok the Balinese had to maintain control from garrisoned forts, and peasant rebellions were common.

The Dutch intervened in the late 19th century, and, after an initial defeat that cost 100 lives, overran Cakranegara. Here the last rajah families surrendered by *perang poepoetan* – men, women and children in

white clothing throwing themselves at the perplexed Dutch, who kept shooting.

In the following years, the Dutch were able to maintain the support of the surviving Balinese and the Sasak aristocracy, and they controlled more than 500,000 people with no more than 250 troops.

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

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

Tourism took off in the 1980s but was mostly developed by outside investors and speculators. As Indonesia descended into economic crisis and political turmoil in the late '90s, Lombok began to feel the pinch.

On 17 January 2000, serious riots engulfed Mataram. Christians and Chinese were the primary victims, but the agitators and provocateurs were from outside Lombok. Ultimately all Lombok suffered, and tourism has yet to recover, the situation compounded by the Bali bombs of 2002 and 2005.

AVOIDING OFFENCE

Most of Lombok is culturally conservative, and immodest dress and public displays of affection between couples can cause offence. Both men and women should dress appropriately away from Senggigi and the Gili Islands. Nude or topless bathing anywhere is very offensive.

Islamic law forbids drinking alcohol and, though booze is widely available throughout Lombok, public drunkenness is quite definitely frowned upon. It is particularly offensive to drink near a mosque. Ramadan is a time to be particularly sensitive about local cultural sensibilities – during this time there are no parties in Gili Trawangan.

Today Lombok's tourism potential remains strong, particularly with work starting on a new international airport in 2006. But with many Sasaks adopting a stricter practice of Islam, the cultural gulf between conservative Islamic and liberal Western values is acute.

Culture

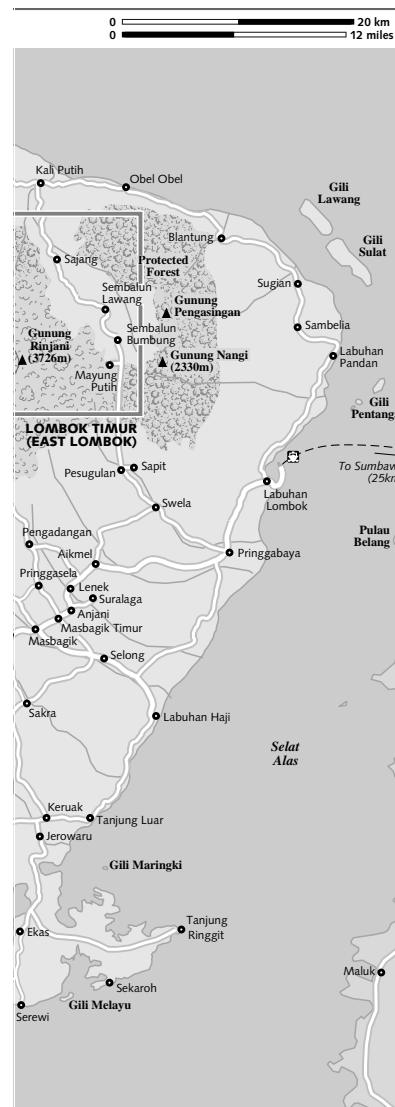
Lombok has a population of just over three million. Almost 90% of the people are Sasak, about 10% are Balinese, and there are small numbers of Chinese, Javanese, Bugis and Arabs.

Originally hill people, the Sasaks are now spread all over Lombok and are generally much poorer than the Balinese minority. Virtually all Sasaks are Muslims, but many retain much less orthodox *Wektu Telu* beliefs (see p492) and ancient animist rituals. *Adat* (traditional law) is still fundamental to their way of life, particularly customs relating to birth, circumcision, courtship and marriage.

Sasaks show a fascination with heroic trials of strength, physical prowess and one-on-one contests. *Peresehan*, sometimes misleadingly called 'Sasak boxing', is a fight between two men using long rattan staves and small rectangular shields made of cowhide. *Lanca*, originally from Sumbawa, is another trial of strength, this time between men who use their knees to strike each other.

Most of Lombok's Chinese population lives in Ampanen or Cakranegara. The Chinese first came to Lombok with the Dutch as a cheap labour force, but after independence most stayed on and started businesses. In the aftermath of the 1965 purge, many of Lombok's Chinese were murdered en masse, along with the thousands that were killed throughout the country. Racism and economic jealousy resurfaced in early 1998 and January 2000, when the Chinese bore the brunt of protests and riots in Mataram.

Lombok's Balinese are concentrated in the Mataram region and the west of the island. Before the arrival of Islam in the 15th century, Hindu-Balinese culture dominated Lombok, alongside indigenous animist rituals. Today, the Balinese are a disproportionately powerful minority, particularly in the business and tourism sectors.



DANCE

Lombok has an indigenous music style and a number of traditional dances that are performed during seasonal or life-cycle ceremonies. Many are also performed during the Senggigi festival (held annually in late July).

The popular Cupak Gerantang, which originated in Java, tells the story of Panji, a

romantic hero. A version of the Panji story, the Kayak Sando, in which the dancers wear masks is found only in central and eastern Lombok.

The Gandrung is about love and courtship, a social dance, usually performed by the young men and women of villages in Narmada, Lenek and Praya.

MUSIC

The Tandak Gerok is an eastern Lombok performance which combines dance, theatre and singing to music played on bamboo flutes and on the two-stringed bowed lute called a *rebab*. A unique feature of the Tandak Gerok is that the vocalists imitate the sound of the gamelan (traditional Javanese and Balinese orchestra) instruments. It's usually performed after harvesting or other hard physical labour, but it's also staged at traditional ceremonies.

The Genggong involves seven musicians using a simple set of instruments, including a bamboo flute and a *rebab*; they accompany their music with dance movements and stylised hand gestures.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are daily flights to/from Denpasar and Mataram on Merpati (seven daily), Wings Air (four daily) and GT Air (two daily). Merpati also has limited flights to Sumbawa Besar (from Mataram) and to Bima on Sumbawa (from Denpasar and Mataram).

Lion Air and Garuda both operate daily flights to Surabaya with connections to Jakarta. Silk Air has two flights a week to/from Singapore, and Merpati has daily flights to/from KL.

The departure tax is 10,000Rp for domestic flights and 100,000Rp for international flights.

Offices for the airlines currently represented in Lombok:

Garuda (Garuda Indonesia; % 0370-638259; www.garuda-indonesia.com; Hotel Lombok Raya, Mataram)

GT Air (% 0370-634935) At the airport.

Lion Air (% 0370-629111; www.lionair.co.id; Hotel Sahid Legi, Mataram)

Merpati (% 0370621111; www.merpati.co.id; Jl Pejanggik 69, Mataram)

Silk Air (% 0370628254; www.silkair.com; Hotel Lombok Raya, Mataram)

Wings Air See Lion Air.

BOAT

Lombok has very regular boat connections with Sumbawa and Bali, and by Pelnis ship to/from elsewhere in Indonesia.

Bali

Ferries travel between Padangbai (Bali) and Lembar (Lombok) every 90 minutes

WEKTU TELU

Believed to have originated in the northern village of Bayan, Wektu Telu (or Wetu Telu) is an indigenous religion unique to Lombok – though it bears many similarities to Agami Jawi, the Javanese Islamic syncretism. Officially the number of Wektu adherents is quite small (less than 30,000), although this is almost certainly a conservative figure as it is not an ‘officially recognised’ religion, and Wektu traditions and rituals continue under the unifying code of Islam. Nevertheless, numbers have been steadily declining as more young people adhere to orthodox Islam.

In the Sasak language, *wektu* means ‘result’ and *telu* means ‘three’. The name probably denotes the complex mixture of Hindu, Islamic and animist influences that make up this religion; and the concept of a trinity is embodied in many Wektu Telu beliefs, such as the sun, moon and stars (representing heaven, earth and water), and the head, body and limbs (representing creativity, sensitivity and control). Wektu laws are based on the three principles of religion, custom and governance.

The Wektu Telu observe only three days of fasting during Ramadan. They do not pray five times a day as laid down by Islamic law, they do not build mosques and some have no objection to eating pork. Their dead are buried with their heads facing Mecca, but Wektu Telu do not make pilgrimages there. In fact, the only fundamental tenets of Islam to which the Wektu Telu seem to hold firmly are the belief in Allah, and that Muhammed is Allah’s prophet.

For the Wektu, death does not signify the end of a person’s soul, and they believe that the departed return on important days in the calendar to provide ritual blessings. For this reason, much respect is paid to Wektu ancestors. Three rituals – the reading of sacred mantras, the offering of betel nut, and the placement of a bowl of spring water – are performed when the Wektu wish to invite their ancestors to a ceremony.

Most of the Wektu Telu religious festivals take place at the beginning of the rainy season (from October to December), or at harvest time (April to May), with celebrations in villages all over the island. Many of these ceremonies and rituals are annual events, but, as they do not fall on specific days, getting to see one is a matter of luck and word of mouth.

around the clock. Fares for foot passengers are 21,000Rp, for motorcycles 65,000Rp and for cars 450,000Rp. The trip takes four to five hours.

The luxury catamaran *Mabua Express* (9% Lombok 0370-681225, Bali 0361-721212) connects the Pelni port at Lembar with Pelabuhan Bena (Bali) but has a reputation for cancelling, and as the fare (from US\$28) exceeds the price of many flights between the islands it’s not popular. It’s scheduled to depart Bali at 8.30am and Lombok at 2.30pm, and takes 2½ hours to complete the trip.

There’s also a Perama shuttle bus and boat service (185,000Rp) from Padangbai, which now stops at all the Gili Islands (four to five hours) before heading on to Senggigi (five to six hours).

Sumbawa

Ferries travel between Labuhan Lombok and Poto Tano on Sumbawa every 45 minutes (passenger 12,500Rp, motorcycle 32,000Rp, car 253,000Rp). They run 24 hours a day and the trip takes 1½ hours.

Other Islands

Pelni ships link Lembar with other parts of Indonesia. The *Awu* heads to Waingapu, Ende, Kupang and Kalabahi; the *Kelimutu* goes to Bima, Makassar and Papua; and the *Tilongkabila* goes to Bima, Labuanbajo and Sulawesi. Tickets can be bought at the Pelni office (Map p495; 9% 0370-637212; Jl Industri 1; 11–8am–noon & 1–3.30pm Mon–Thu & Sat, 8–11am Fri) in Mataram.

PUBLIC BUS

Mandalika terminal in Mataram is the departure point for the major cities in Sumbawa, Bali and Java, via inter-island ferries. For long-distance services, book tickets a day or two ahead at the terminal, or from a travel agency along Jl Pejanggal/Selaparang in Mataram. If you get to the terminal before 8am, there may be a spare seat on a bus going in your direction, but this is by no means a certainty.

Sample fares are Bima (economy/luxury 110,000/135,000Rp, 12 hours), Denpasar (luxury 110,000Rp, seven hours), Sumbawa

Besar (economy/luxury 60,000/77,000Rp, six hours), Jakarta (luxury 375,000Rp, 38 hours), Surabaya (luxury 179,000Rp, 20 hours) and Yogyakarta (luxury 272,000Rp, 30 hours).

TOURIST SHUTTLE BUS/BOAT

The Bali-based company *Perama* (www.perama.tour.com) has tourist shuttle bus/boat services between the main tourist centres in Lombok (Senggigi, the Gili Islands and Kuta) and most tourist centres in Bali (Ubud, Sanur and the Kuta region). A few other companies offer similar services at similar prices. Tickets can be booked directly, or at any travel agency in Lombok or Bali, and include ferry charges.

Getting Around

There is a good road across the middle of the island, between Mataram and Labuhan Lombok. The Mataram–Praya–Kuta and Mataram–Senggigi–Anyar routes are also pretty decent sealed roads, though they’re on the narrow side. Public transport is generally restricted to the main routes; away from these, you need to charter a bemo, *cidomo* (horse-drawn cart) or *ojek* (motorcycle taxi) – or walk. During the wet season, remote roads are often flooded or washed away, particularly around the foothills of Rinjani, and others become impassable because of fallen rocks and rubble.

BUS & BEMO

The main terminal, Mandalika, is at Bertais, 6km southeast of central Mataram; other regional terminals are in Praya, Anyar and Pancor (near Selong). You may have to go via one or more of these terminals to get from one part of Lombok to another. For main routes, fares are fixed by the provincial government, and a list should be displayed at the terminals. The bus and bemo drivers will still try to overcharge and touts will hassle endlessly. Most public transport becomes scarce in the afternoon and normally ceases after dark, often earlier in more remote areas.

Chartering a bemo can be convenient and reasonably cheap – about 175,000Rp per bemo per day (including petrol), depending on distance and road conditions. Some bemos are restricted to certain routes or areas – the yellow bemos that shuttle

around Mataram cannot be chartered for a trip to Lembar.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

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

Jeep-style vehicles are best for Lombok’s roads. Suzuki Jimnys cost from 150,000Rp per day, and Toyota Kijangs cost about 225,000Rp, excluding petrol. Discounts are offered for longer periods. Hiring a car with a driver is a very sensible and popular option as you won’t be liable for any damage – expect to pay about 325,000Rp per day.

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

It’s important to have an International Driving Licence – your rental agency may not request it, but police checks have become far more common in recent years, and you can expect a fine if you don’t possess one.

Check your insurance arrangements carefully. Some small places do not offer any form of cover at all, and other agencies will only offer very basic cover – another good reason for hiring a car with a driver.

Bringing a vehicle from Bali is not very straightforward any more due to new insurance regulations. It is better to proceed to Lombok and arrange a rental in Senggigi.

If you’d rather someone else did the driving, contact *Ido Ado Dalmin* (9% 0813-3956-2129), a reliable driver-guide who speaks fair English. He charges around 350,000Rp per day for a 4WD car (including petrol) and his services.

TOURIST SHUTTLE BUS

Lombok’s main tourist centres are linked by a shuttle bus service. There’s a two-person minimum for the bus to run. Currently, this service only links Mataram with Kuta, Senggigi, Bangsal and Tetebatu – so you can’t travel from Kuta to Bangsal without changing shuttle buses in Mataram, but you can normally connect on the same day. From Senggigi there are also shuttle boats to the Gili Islands. *Perama* (www.peramatour.com) is the

most established operator, with the widest network.

MATARAM

☎ 0370 / pop 320,000

The capital, and main city on Lombok is Mataram, although it's actually a conglomeration of several towns – Ampenan (port); Mataram (administrative centre); Cakranegara (business centre), which is often shortened to 'Cakra'; and Bertais-Sweta to the east, home to the bus terminal. It's not an unattractive city and it has some broad tree-lined avenues, but, as sights are thin on the ground and there are beaches close by at Senggigi, very few travellers choose to stay here.

Orientation

The four towns are spread along one main road that starts as Jl Pabean in Ampenan, quickly becomes Jl Yos Sudarso, then Jl Pejanggi and finally travels through Sweta to Bertais as Jl Selaparang. It's a one-way street all the way, running west to east. A parallel one-way road, Jl Tumpang Sari–Jl Panca Usaha–Jl Pancawarga–Jl Caturwarga–Jl Pendidikan, brings traffic back towards the coast.

Information

EMERGENCY

Police station (☎ 631225; Jl Langko) In an emergency, dial ☎ 110.

Rumah Sakit Umum (☎ 622254; Jl Pejanggi 6; 7am–noon special service for tourists) The best hospital in Lombok and has English-speaking doctors.

IMMIGRATION

Kantor Imigrasi (☎ 632520; Jl Udayana 2; 7am–2pm Mon–Thu, to 11am Fri, to 12.30pm Sat)

INTERNET ACCESS

Most cybercafés are in the streets around Mataram Mall.

Daddy's (Mataram Mall; per hr 6000Rp; 7am–9pm)

MONEY

You'll find plenty of banks with ATMs scattered along Cakra's main drag; most of them will change cash and travellers cheques. Mataram Mall and the airport also have ATMs and moneychangers (which open longer than the banks).

POST

Main post office (Jl Sriwijaya 37, Mataram) Inconveniently located, but has internet and poste restante services.
Sub-post office (Jl Langko, Ampenan) Near the Nitour Hotel.

TELEPHONE

There are wartel on Jl Pejanggi and at the airport.

Telkom (☎ 633333; Jl Pendidikan 23, Mataram; 24hr) Offers phone and fax services.

TOURIST INFORMATION

West Lombok tourist office (☎ 621658; Jl Suprato 20; 7.30am–2pm Mon–Thu, to 11am Fri, 8am–1pm Sat) Has some maps and leaflets, but it's not a particularly informative office.

West Nusa Tenggara tourist office (☎ 634800; Jl Singosari 2; 8am–2pm Mon–Thu, to 11am Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Offers limited information on Lombok, but has better details and maps about Sumbawa.

Sights

MUSEUM NEGERI NUSA TENGGARA BARAT

This modern museum (☎ 632519; Jl Panji Tilar Negara 6; admission 1500Rp; 7am–2pm Tue–Thu & Sat & Sun, to 11am Fri) has exhibits on the geology, history and culture of Lombok and Sumbawa. If you intend to buy antiques or handicrafts, take a look at the kris, *songket* (silver- or gold-threaded cloth), basketware and masks for comparison.

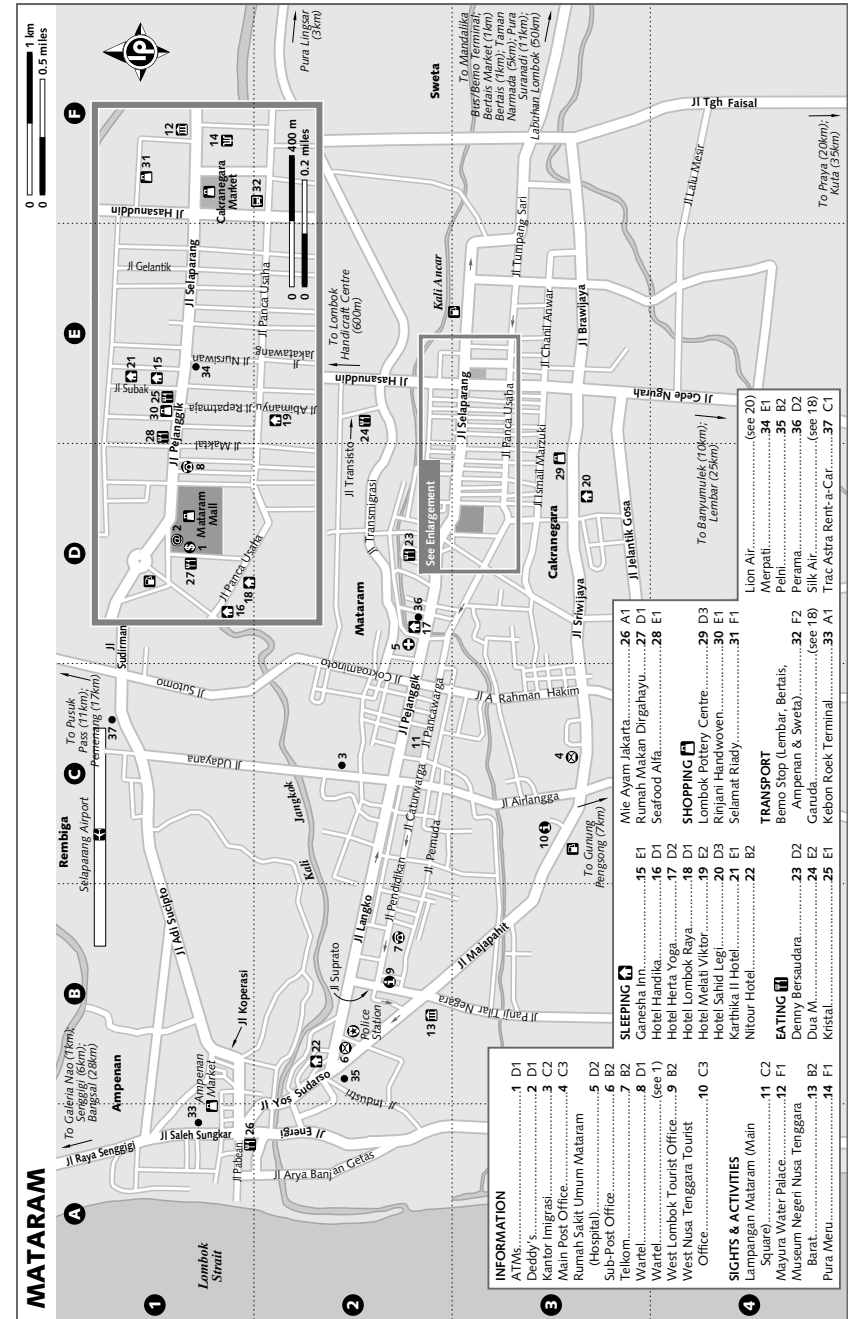
MAYURA WATER PALACE

Built in 1744 this palace (Jl Selaparang; admission if requested 1000Rp; 7am–7.30pm) was once part of the Balinese kingdom's royal court in Lombok. It's a pleasant retreat, popular with fishermen (for its lake) and families, but in 1894 it was the site of bloody battles between the Dutch and Balinese. The complex contains a large artificial lake, with a modest replica of a *bale kambang* (floating pavilion) in its centre. The original pavilion was a court of justice.

The entrance to the walled enclosure of the palace is on the western side, just off Jl Selaparang.

PURA MERU

Opposite the water palace, this temple (admission by donation; 7am–5pm) is the largest in Lombok. Built in 1720 by a Balinese prince in an attempt to unite Lombok, it's



dedicated to the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

The outer courtyard has a hall housing the wooden drums that are beaten to call believers to ceremonies (the June full moon is the most important of these). The inner court has one large and 33 small shrines, as well as three *meru* (multiroofed shrines), which are in a line: the central *meru*, with 11 tiers, is Shiva's house; the *meru* to the north, with nine tiers, is Vishnu's; and the seven-tiered *meru* to the south is Brahma's. The *meru* are also said to represent the three great mountains: Rinjani, Agung (Bali) and Bromo (Java).

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

Activities

Away from the traffic-heavy main roads, Lombok is ideal for bicycle touring. Two interesting routes are Mataram to Banyuwlek and back via Gunung Pengsong, and along the coastal road from Mataram to Pemenang via Senggigi – if you feel energetic, return via the steep road through Pusuk Pass.

Sleeping

Most visitors find Cakranegara the most convenient and pleasant place to stay.

BUDGET

Hotel Herta Yoga (☎ 621775; Jl Pejanggik 64, Mataram; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp, with air-con 80,000/85,000Rp; a) This is a new place with pleasant, spotless air-con rooms, with good mattresses, clothes rails and private showers/*mandis* (Indonesian-style water-dunking baths). The fan-only rooms are much rougher. Breakfast is included.

Karthika II Hotel (☎ 641776; Jl Subak 1, Cakra; r with fan/air-con 70,000/90,000Rp; a) Built like a Balinese temple compound, this excellent-value place has squeaky clean, if slightly garishly presented, rooms with modern bathrooms; all have verandas.

Hotel Handika (☎ 633578; fax 635049; Jl Panca Usaha 3, Cakra; s/d with fan 55,000/60,000Rp, s with air-con 85,000-130,000Rp, d with air-con 95,000-145,000Rp; a) Behind Mataram Mall, this hotel has an array of idiosyncratic rooms, some with slightly alarming carved-eagle bed frames, in five price categories. Breakfast is included.

Or consider:

Ganesha Inn (☎ 624878; Jl Subak 2, Cakra; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) Guesthouse with well-presented, good-value rooms.

Hotel Melati Viktor (☎ 633830; Jl Abimanyu 1, Cakra; s/d 45,000/50,000Rp, with hot water & air-con 75,000/100,000Rp; a) Smart and clean tiled rooms with bathrooms.

MIDRANGE

Nitour Hotel (☎ 623780; fax 625328; Jl Yos Sudarso 4; s/d from 200,000/250,000Rp) Welcoming, but the accommodation, scattered amongst random patches of garden, is looking a bit worn. Breakfast is included.

Hotel Sahid Legi (☎ 636282; sahid@mataram.wasantara.net; Jl Sriwijaya 81; r/deluxe r 365,000/580,000Rp; a s) Swish hotel that marries modern and Indonesian design influences. It offers the most comfortable base in town, with well appointed rooms, three restaurants and a circular pool surrounded by lush gardens and expansive lawns.

Hotel Lombok Raya (☎ 632305; lora@mataram.wasantara.net; Jl Panca Usaha 11, Cakra; s/d from 390,000/525,000Rp plus 21% tax; a s) This centrally situated hotel has spacious, comfortable rooms, their décor on the bland side of beige but all with balconies and mod cons, such as multichannel TV. Escape the city heat in the large pool or spa.

Eating

You'll find plenty of Western fast-food outlets and Indonesian staples in Mataram Mall.

Seafood Alfa (☎ 660-0088; Jl Pejanggik 34, Cakra; dishes 8000-25,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner) A bright, clean and welcoming place; perch yourself on one of the coloured stools and tuck into fresh fish like *gurami asam manis* (freshwater fish with sweet sauce) or inexpensive local dishes.

Rumah Makan Dirgahayu (☎ 637559; Jl Cilinaya 19; mains 8000-30,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner; a) Huge, popular Makassar place with an extensive menu that includes veggie choices such as fried spinach and tofu, and delicious fried carp (20,000Rp).

Denny Bersaudra (☎ 633619; Jl Pelikan 6; dishes 10,000-27,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner) Agreeable, airy and welcoming place that specialises in Sasak cuisine. Look for the sign near the roundabout along western Jl Pejanggik.

Dua M (☎ 622914; Jl Transisto 99, Mataram; dishes 12,500-20,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner) Authentic Sasak food, including terrific *ayam goreng Taliwang* (Sumbawa-style spicy chicken). Try to bag the low table facing the garden and pond.

Other recommendations:

Kristal (☎ 627564; Jl Pejanggik 22, Cakra; dishes 6000-20,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner) Head here for Chinese cuisine and seafood.

Mie Ayam Jakarta (Jl Pabean; dishes 5000-12,000Rp; r breakfast, lunch & dinner) Scores for tasty, inexpensive Javanese food.

Shopping

For handicrafts try the many stores on Jl Raya Senggigi, the road heading north from Ampenan. At Sayang Sayang (2km north of Cakra) the Lombok Handicraft Centre has a wide range of crafts from across Lombok and Nusa Tenggara.

Galeria Nao (☎ 626835; Jl Raya Senggigi 234, Meninting) Beautifully finished contemporary wooden furniture and artefacts that wouldn't look out of place in *Wallpaper* magazine.

Lombok Pottery Centre (☎ 640351; Jl Sriwijaya 111, Cakra) Offers a vast range of Lombok pottery, and prices here can be reasonably competitive.

Rinjani Handwoven (☎ 633169; Jl Pejanggik 44) You can see weavers in action at this workshop and buy their handiwork.

Selamat Riady (☎ 631196; Jl Tanun 10) Offers textiles, including ikat from Lombok, Flores and Sumba, and a few other crafts.

Getting There & Away

The sprawling, dusty Mandalika bus terminal in Bertais is the main bus and bemo terminal for the entire island and also for long-distance buses to Sumbawa, Bali and Java (see p487).

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

Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan has a bemo to Bertais (1500Rp) and services to Senggigi (3000Rp).

Perama (☎ 635928; www.peramatour.com; Jl Pejanggik 66) operates shuttle buses to popular

destinations in Lombok (including Bangsal, Kuta and Tetebatu) and to Bali.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Lombok's Selaparang airport is on the northern side of the city 5km from Cakra. A taxi desk sells prepaid tickets: 17,500Rp to anywhere in Mataram, 48,000Rp to Senggigi, 98,000Rp to Bangsal and Lembar, and 145,000Rp to Kuta. Alternatively, walk out of the airport to Jl Adi Sucipto and take one of the number seven bemos that run frequently to Ampenan.

BEMO

Mataram is *veryspread* out, so don't plan on walking from place to place. Yellow bemos constantly shuttle between Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan and Mandalika terminal in Bertais (10km away). These terminals are good places to charter bemos. Outside the market in Cakra is a handy bemo stop for services to Bertais, Ampenan, Sweta and Lembar. The standard fare is 1500Rp.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Most hotels can arrange rentals, but you'll almost certainly find a much better deal in Senggigi. Six hours' hire of a Toyota Kijang, including petrol and driver, is 425,000Rp through Trac Astra Rent-a-Car (☎ 626363; www.trac.astra.co.id; Jl Adi Sucipto 5, Rembiga Mataram). Self-drive costs 385,000Rp per day.

TAXI

For a metered taxi, call Lombok Taksi (☎ 627000).

AROUND MATARAM

☎ 0370

East of Mataram are some gorgeous areas with villages, rice fields and temples; they're reminiscent of some of the best landscapes and scenery that Bali has to offer.

Taman Narmada

Apparently designed as a scaled-down version of the summit of Gunung Rinjani and its crater lake, this park (Map pp490-1; admission 5000Rp; r 7am-6pm) was built in 1805. Though the rectangular main pool and manicured terraced gardens hardly look like a volcanic cone, the extensive grounds are a pleasant enough place to spend an hour or two

(except perhaps on Sunday, when it gets packed). The temple, **Pura Kalasa**, is still in use, and the Balinese Pujawali celebration is held here every year (in November or December) in honour of the god Batara, who is said to dwell on Gunung Rinjani. There's also a large swimming pool (2000Rp extra) in the grounds.

Narmada is 6km east of Bertais, 100m south of Lombok's main east-west highway. Frequent bemos from Mandalika run to Narmada market, which is directly opposite the entrance to the gardens.

Pura Lingsar

This large temple compound (Map pp490-1; donation requested; 17am-6pm), built in 1714, is the holiest in Lombok. It combines the Bali Hindu and Wektu Telu religions in one complex. The compound was designed in two separate sections and built on two different levels: the Hindu temple in the northern half is higher than the Wektu Telu temple in the southern section.

The Wektu Telu temple is noted for its small enclosed pond devoted to Lord Vishnu and for the holy eels that can be enticed from their hiding places with hard-boiled eggs (available at stalls outside). You will be expected to rent a sash and/or sarong (or bring your own) to enter the temple, but not to enter the outer buildings.

A huge ritual battle, **Perang Topat**, is held here every year in mid-December. After a costumed parade, Hindus and Wektu pelt each other with *ketupat* (sticky rice in coconut leaves).

Pura Lingsar is 9km northeast of Mandalika. Take a bemo from the terminal to Narmada (2000Rp) and then another to Lingsar (2000Rp). Ask to be dropped off near the entrance to the temple complex, which is 300m down a well-marked path from the main road.

Pura Surandi

Set amidst gorgeous countryside, this Hindu temple (Map pp490-1; donation requested; 17 7.30am-6pm) is one of the holiest in Lombok. It's worth a visit for its lovely gardens, which have a bubbling, icy cold natural spring and restored baths with ornate Balinese carvings (plus the obligatory holy eels).

Just above the temple, **Losmen Jati** (96606437; r 30,000Rp) is a friendly and well-

kept place, while the once-wonderful colonial atmosphere of the **Suranadi Hotel** (96636411; fax 635630; r from 195,000Rp; 5) still has some faded charm, as well as a pool and tennis courts.

Several smart restaurants are dotted along the main road close to the temple, and there are plenty of cheap warungs in the neighbouring village of Suranadi. The temple is 6km northwest of Narmada and served by frequent public bemos. Failing that, charter one.

Sesaot & Around

Some 4km northeast of Suranadi is Sesaot, a charming market town on the edge of a forest. There are some gorgeous picnic spots and you can swim in the river. The water is very cool and is considered holy, as it comes straight from Gunung Rinjani. There is regular transport from Narmada, and bites are available at the warungs along the main street.

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

Gunung Pengsong

This Balinese hilltop temple (Map pp490-1; admission by donation; 17 7am-6pm), 9km south of Mataram, has spectacular views across a green ocean of rice fields towards distant volcanoes and the sea. Japanese soldiers hid here towards the end of WWII, and remnants of cannons can be found, as well as plenty of pesky monkeys. It's a 15-minute walk up to the top of the temple complex from the entrance. Very little direct public transport comes here, so it's best visited with your own wheels.

Banyumulek

This is one of the main pottery centres in Lombok, specialising in decorated pots and pots with a woven fibre covering, as well as more traditional urns and water flasks. It's close to Mataram: head south of Sweta on the main road to Lembar, and after 6km take the turn-off on the right to Banyumulek, a couple of kilometres to the west.

LEMBAR & THE SOUTHWESTERN PENINSULA

Lembar

960370

Lombok's main port for Bali and Peln ships is Lembar. Though the harbour itself, with azure inlets ringed by soaring green hills, has to be one of Indonesia's most beautiful, there's no reason to stay the night here given the transport connections with Mataram and Senggigi. But if you do somehow get stuck or need a bite to eat, the clean and very hospitable **Losmen Tidar** (96681444; Jl Raya Pelabuhan; s/d with bathroom from 40,000Rp) 1km north of the ferry port is an excellent deal. It has neat rooms and cottages, one with its very own fish pond, and offers very hearty Indonesian meals (dishes from 8000Rp to 17000Rp). The rate includes breakfast.

Plenty of bemos shuttle between Lembar and the Mandalika terminal in Bertais (3500Rp), or you can catch one at the market stop in Cakra. See p491 for details of ferries and boats between Bali and Lembar.

Southwestern Peninsula

960370

The corrugated, beach-blessed coastline and tiny offshore islands west of Sekotong have long been hyped as Lombok's next big tourism destination, but while the odd pocket of development is ongoing here, for now it remains a tranquil, highly scenic region. The hump-shaped inland hills form rich pastureland in the rainy season; visit the area at this time and you'll hear cowbells clanking. The road that hugs the coast, passing white sandy coves, is narrow but sealed until Selegang. A track continues to the west past Bangko Bangko to Tanjung Desert, one of Asia's legendary surf breaks. There's no accommodation at Desert Point, so you'll need to bring camping gear.

Only a few of the beautiful offshore islands, fringed with coconut palm-studded sandy beaches and offering fine snorkelling, are inhabited. Currently, Gili Nanggu and Gili Gede have accommodation. The latter island has some Bugis villages, where locals make a living from boat building, and also some offshore pearl farms.

SLEEPING & EATING

Places to stay and restaurants are thin on the ground in this region, and some close

in the rainy season. At the time of research, **Sundancer** (www.sundancerresort.com), a huge new hotel and resort with a PADI diving centre, was due to open in late 2006 just west of Pandanan.

Mainland

Putri Doyang (9608123752459; Jl Raya Pelangangi, Tembawang; s/d 25,000/50,000Rp) Simple, clean rooms and hospitable owners make this losmen, 2km north of Pelangan, a budget option worth considering.

Sekotong Indah Beach Cottages (966601921; r without/with air-con 55,000/85,000Rp; a) Basic, tiled and cleanish rooms with a great location opposite a sandy beach 2km west of Taun. There's also a restaurant (dishes 5000Rp to 20,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Bola Bola Paradis (96623783; batuapi99@hotmail.com; Jl Raya Bangko-Bangko; r 160,000-280,000Rp; a) Just west of Pelangan, this attractive place set on a fine stretch of sand has funky octagonal bungalows and comfortable air-con rooms. There is also a good restaurant (mains 20,000Rp to 55,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) and a chic lounge area.

Nirvana Roemah Air (96640107; www.lombokandbeyond.com/lombokhotels/nirvana.html; Jl Raya Medang, Sekotong Barat; villas US\$150-250; a) Billing itself as a floating island resort, this luxurious place in a secluded mangrove-fringed location has stylish wood-panelled villas. Book online for substantial discounts in the quiet season. Prices include airport transfers.

Islands

Gili Nanggu Cottages (96623783; www.gilinangu.com; cottages s/d 100,000/120,000Rp, bungalows 225,000/275,000Rp; a) A great choice, this island resort has a beachfront location and rustic two-storey *lumbung* (rice barn) cottages, plus less attractive but comfortable air-con bungalows. There is also a decent seafood restaurant (dishes 16,000Rp to 27,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) here. Lifts from Lembar can also be organised.

Secret Island Resort (966613579; www.secretislandresort.com; r 200,000Rp, bungalows 250,000Rp, two bedroom villas 1,000,000Rp; a) This new resort on Gili Gede offers spacious, modern accommodation with CD players and fridges. All rooms have terraces and fine sea or

mountain views. The bar-restaurant rustles up great seafood and barbecued meats. Check out the hot tub, and a spa, plunge pool and pool are planned. Kayak, snorkel and dive trips can be arranged.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

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

To reach Gili Nanggu, a return charter on a *prahu* (outrigger fishing boat) from Tuan costs 150,000Rp. Public boats connect Tembawang with Gili Gede and Gili Ringit (both 8,000Rp one way), leaving from Putri Doyong losmen, 2km north of Pelangan. Alternatively, you can charter boats here for about 60,000Rp one way or arrange a day trip around the islands for about 225,000Rp.

SENGGIGI

☎ 0370

Superbly positioned along a stretch of sweeping bays, Senggigi is Lombok's prin-

cipal beach resort. Accommodation here is generally excellent value for money, as luxury hotels have slashed rates in an attempt to draw in tourists following several tough years. Unless you visit in peak season, expect quiet restaurants and empty shopping malls but plenty of attention from the street hawkers.

Senggigi has fine sandy beaches, and as the sun sinks all eyes turn west to take in the blood-red sunsets over Bali that can be enjoyed from one of the seafrost restaurants. As it gets dark, the fishing fleet lines up offshore, its bright lanterns glinting like a floating village against the night sky.

North of Senggigi there is a succession of wonderful, near-deserted coves, where you can pretty much guarantee to have a beach to yourself, bar the odd fisherman and his net.

Orientation

The Senggigi area spans about 10km of coastal road. Most of the shops and other facilities, and a fair concentration of hotels, are on the main road, Jl Raya Senggigi,

which starts about 6km north of Ampenan. Street numbers are not used.

Information

EMERGENCY

The nearest hospitals are in Mataram. Police station (☎ 110) Next to the Pasar Seni (Art Market).

Senggigi Medical Clinic (☎ 693856) Based at the Senggigi Beach Hotel.

Tourist Police (☎ 632733)

INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONES

Most internet cafés on the main strip also double as wartels.

Millennium Internet Café (☎ 693860; Jl Raya Senggigi; per min 300Rp; ☎ 24hr)

Superstar (Senggigi Plaza A2; per min 300Rp; ☎ 24hr)

MONEY

There are several ATMs in central Senggigi. Bank Central Asia (BCA) and Bank Negara Indonesia (BNI) have branches on Jl Raya Senggigi where you can change cash and travellers cheques.

POST

Post office (Jl Raya Senggigi)

Sights

PURA BATU BOLONG

The small pagodas of this modest Balinese temple (admission by donation; ☎ 7am-7pm) cling to a rocky volcanic outcrop that juts into the sea

about 2km south of central Senggigi. Crabs scuttle over statues, and families come here to snack and cool off at the beach below. It's oriented towards Gunung Agung, Bali's holiest mountain, and is a favoured spot to watch sunsets. The rock underneath the temple has a natural hole that gives it its name – *batu bolong* (literally, 'rock with hole'). For temple etiquette, see the boxed text, p489.

Activities

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

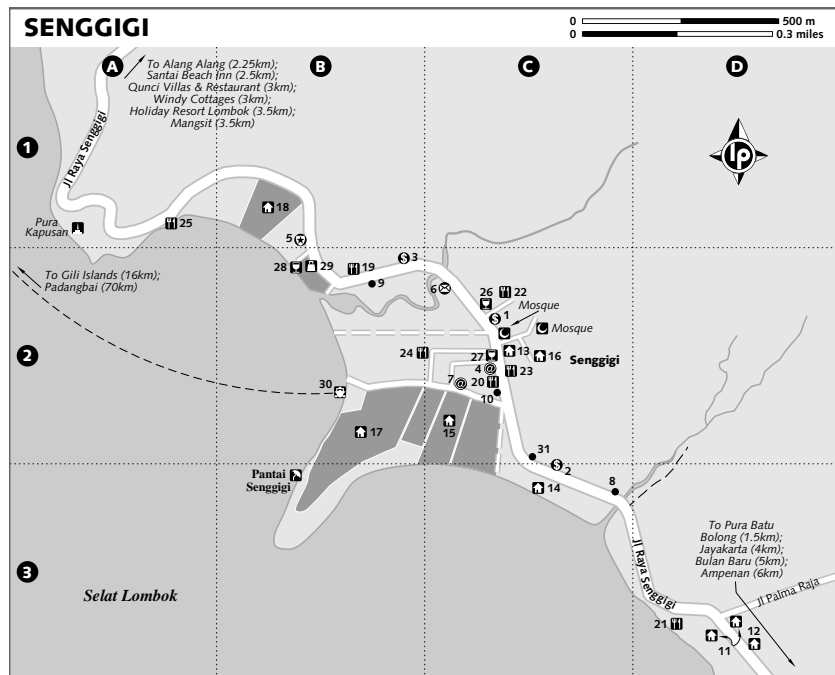
Diving trips from Senggigi normally visit the Gili Islands, so you may want to consider basing yourself there. Professional dive centres:

Blue Marlin Dive Centre (☎ 692003; www.dive-indo.com; Jl Raya Senggigi & Holiday Resort Lombok)

Dive Indonesia (☎ 639367; www.diveindonesiaonline.com; Galeria Mall, Jl Raya Senggigi)

Dream Divers (☎ 692047; www.dreamdivers.com; Jl Raya Senggigi)

If you're thinking of hiking Gunung Rinjani, you could drop by the local office of the Rinjani Trek Club (☎ 693202; rtc.senggigi@gmail.com; Jl Raya Senggigi) for information about routes and conditions.



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SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

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Sleeping

Virtually everything is located on or just off the main drag, Jl Raya Senggigi.

BUDGET Senggigi

Hotel Elen (☎ 693014; r without/with air-con 50,000/75,000Rp; a) A quadrangle of cheap if not very cheerful rooms. Prime yourself for an early morning wake-up call from the two very local mosques.

Raja's Bungalows (☎ 081 23770138; rajas22@yahoo.com; s/d 60,000/75,000Rp) A welcoming, bohemian guesthouse that's popular with travellers. Raja's has inviting, spotless rooms with high ceilings, bamboo furniture and zany outdoor bathrooms – this place has bathrooms with both *mandis* and showers. There's plenty of communal chilling space too.

Lina Cottages (☎ 693237; r with fan/air-con/sea view 60,000/75,000/150,000Rp; a) Occupying pole position right on the beach, Lina's is a good choice with a variety of rooms, the cheapies on the small side and fan only. There's an adjoining Indo-Chinese restaurant.

Café Wayan (☎ 693098; s/d incl breakfast 100,000/150,000Rp) At the rear of the café, these four stylish rooms, tastefully furnished with beautiful ikat fabrics and Balinese artefacts and with large bathtubs, enjoy a peaceful location overlooking a blossom-filled garden.

Mangsit

Santai Beach Inn (☎ 693038; www.santaibeachinn.com; lumbung s/d incl breakfast 70,000/80,000Rp, bungalows 95,000-200,000Rp) Set in a lush garden by the beach, this unusual place has a selection of rustic *lumbung* and spacious bungalows, constructed from local wood and bamboo. Inexpensive, healthy veggie and fish dishes (15,000/25,000Rp lunch/dinner) are eaten communally in a pleasant pavilion, and there's a book exchange.

Windy Cottages (☎ 693191; lidya@mataram.wasara.net.id; cottages with cold/hot water 110,000/150,000Rp, r 140,000Rp; a) Charming, popular beachside place with decent snorkelling offshore (you can hire gear here for 15,000Rp per day). The attractive thatched cottages have verandas, many with sea views. Also has some air-con rooms and a restaurant (dishes 14,000Rp to 30,000Rp).

Bulan Baru (New Moon Hotel; ☎ 693786; r incl breakfast 200,000Rp; a s) Set in a lovely gar-

den and a short walk from a fine sandy beach, this welcoming hotel has spacious, well-furnished rooms, all with minibars, air-con and bathrooms with hot water. The friendly Australian owners, and staff, are a mine of information about Lombok and local culture. Children aren't allowed.

MIDRANGE Senggigi

Batu Bolong Cottages (☎ 693065; bbcoresort_lombok@yahoo.com; inland/beachside bungalows 125,000/260,000Rp; a) This place has good-value, spacious rooms with fridges facing a lawned beachfront plot, with the waves just beyond. Its cheaper digs are looking a little tired, however. Breakfast is included.

Mascot Cottages (☎ 693365; fax 693236; bungalows s/d 200,000/275,000Rp; a) Undergoing renovation at the time of research, this place has air-con bungalows set in a garden that extends towards the beach.

Jayakarta (☎ 693048; www.indo.com/hotels/jayakartalombok; r US\$38-43, ste from US\$63; a s) This Indonesian chain hotel, in a beachfront setting 5km south of central Senggigi, offers competitive rates on its comfortable air-con rooms with sea views. There's also a large pool.

Mangsit

Holiday Resort Lombok (☎ 693444; fax 693092; holiday resort lombok; Jl Raya Senggigi; r from US\$68, bungalows from US\$140; a s) A well-designed luxury hotel with the full gamut of accommodation options, from rooms to large private bungalows. Also has a fine spa and scuba school, and a playground and day nursery for children aged two to 11.

TOP END

Senggigi and Mangsit have an excess of luxury hotels, so discounts on the rack rates listed here are usually available.

Senggigi

Senggigi Beach Hotel (☎ 693210; www.senggigi.beach.aerowisata.com; r US\$97, beach bungalows US\$121-194 plus 21% tax; a s) These classy detached bungalows with spacious, comfortable rooms enjoy a beautiful setting in lush gardens set back from the beach, though only 105 and 106 have uninterrupted sea views. There's a large pool, a spa and tennis courts in the complex.

Sheraton Senggigi Hotel (☎ 693333; www.sheraton.com; r from US\$178) Just north of the centre, this fine hotel has commodious rooms, most with timber floors, huge beds and decorative textiles, and a well-regarded spa and health club. Discounts can drop rates to around US\$80 a night.

Mangsit

Qunci Villas (☎ 693800; www.quncivillas.com; garden/ocean-view r US\$85/109 plus 21% tax; a s) Lombok's hippest hotel, combining textbook minimalist design with Balinese and Japanese influence. The rooms are undeniably gorgeous (book room eight for the best sea view) and popular with moneyed Europeans and rich kids from Jakarta. There is a small pool at the ocean's edge and a very fine restaurant (see right). You'll find the staff are extremely well trained and welcoming. For the seriously wealthy, up in the hills behind the hotel are two villas (from US\$325 a night) that come close to defining Lombok luxe.

Alang Alang (☎ 693518; www.alang-alang-villas.com; s/d bungalows US\$80/110) Stylish bungalows, most are semidetached with commodious beds and Balinese wood furniture, but only bungalows 101 to 110 have decent sea views. The beach here consists of a narrow stretch of sand, and the pool is small.

Eating

Central Senggigi is an excellent place to eat out, there being a glut of cosmopolitan restaurants. Many offer free transport for evening diners – phone for a ride.

For authentic Indonesian street food, head to the hillside warungs on the route north to Mangsit, where sate sizzles and pots of noodles bubble.

SENGGIGI

Café Wayan (☎ 693098; dishes 9000-45,000Rp) Stylish Balinese-run place with an extensive menu of soups and salads, pizza, pasta dishes, seafood, and yummy freshly baked breads and cakes.

Bumbu (☎ 692236; mains 18,000-30,000Rp) Deservedly popular little restaurant on the main strip, come here for inexpensive Thai curries and Indo cooking served up on a narrow terrace. There's always a daily special.

Sugar Café (☎ 6194000; Plaza Senggigi; mains 22,000-44,000Rp; a) Perhaps the most modern

place in town, this chic little lounge bar-resto is highly atmospheric, with candlelit tables and creative, beautifully presented Indonesian and Asian fusion cuisine.

English Tea Room (☎ 692085; Blok A4, Senggigi Sq; dishes 21,000-65,000Rp; H breakfast, lunch & dinner; a) A civilised air-con retreat, this delightful place, located in a shopping plaza, offers a wide choice of salads and sandwiches as well as terrific cakes. The teas include Ceylon and Indonesian green and you'll find some interesting coffees too. There's a terrace table upstairs.

Papaya Café (☎ 693616; mains 28,000-50,000Rp; a) Invitingly decorated, with rattan sofas and exposed stone walls, this enjoyable place has a tempting menu of Indonesian, Chinese and Japanese dishes and some of the best cocktails in town.

Café Alberto (☎ 693313; mains 30,000-85,000Rp) Occupying a large beachfront plot away from the road, feast on Italian (pizza and pasta) or Indonesian cuisine (the usual suspects in generous portions) at this enjoyable restaurant. Lunch at a table on the sand and then snooze it off on one of the sunloungers.

Asmara (☎ 693619; www.asmara-group.com; mains 18,000-75,000Rp; a s) Consistently recommended by expats, this comfortable, spacious and airy two-storey thatched restaurant offers fine European cuisine (try the Mediterranean herb-crusted fish fillet) plus Indonesian and international favourites. Children are well catered for, and there's a small pool and play area.

MANGSIT

Bulan Baru (☎ 693786; mains 24,000-48,000Rp) Head to this hotel restaurant for comfort food – think meaty bangers and creamy mash, or a juicy imported steak.

Qunci (☎ 693800; www.quncivillas.com; mains 46,000-64,000Rp) Abutting the beach, this terrific hotel restaurant (see left) has a modern menu with both Asian and European – think tuna balsamico and seafood risotto – dishes. Arrive before sunset and get the party started with two-for-one cocktails during happy hour (4pm to 7pm).

Drinking & Entertainment

Senggigi's after-dark action is pretty middle of the road, revolving around a handful of bars and a disco or two. All bars are on Jl

Raya Senggigi except one, and they close around 1am, or earlier if it's very quiet.

Happy Café (☎ 693984) This slightly staid but popular bar has a resident cover band playing reggae or pop tunes.

Papaya Café (☎ 693616) It's hardly cutting edge, but the Papaya also has live music of the *muzak* variety every night and is fine for a relaxed drink. Happy hour is from 4pm to 8pm.

Office (☎ 693162) Beachside bar with fine sunset views, a pool table and live sports events on the TV. Office is popular with middle-aged expats.

Sugar Café (☎ 081 23962206; Senggigi Plaza) Hip place with electronica and lounge music and a mixed gay and straight clientele. Also serves fine food.

Club Tropicana (☎ 693432; admission 25,000Rp; 11pm-2am) Old skool-style disco with slightly cheesy DJs.

Shopping

Senggigi's shopping malls are woefully under-occupied – many stores are vacant. The Pasar Seni (Art Market) has some handicraft stalls, and **Asmara Collection** (☎ 693619; Jl Raya Senggigi), in front of the restaurant, has fine weavings, tribal art and furniture.

The warehouses and craft shops along the main road to Ampenan are also worth a look.

Getting There & Away

BOAT

Perama (☎ 693007; Jl Raya Senggigi) operates a daily boat to the Gili Islands at 9am for 70,000Rp, which means you avoid having to deal with Bangsal. The dive schools (see p501) also operate speedboat shuttles (from 120,000Rp) to the Gilis most days; contact them in advance.

BUS

Regular bemos travel to Senggigi from the Kebon Roek terminal in Ampenan (3000Rp), some continuing north as far as Pemenang and Bayan. Overcharging tourists is common on this route.

Perama has several tourist shuttle bus and boat services daily between Senggigi and Bali, including Kuta, Bali/Bali airport (160,000Rp) and Ubud (160,000Rp), and other places within Lombok, including Tetebatu (80,000Rp) and Kuta (80,000Rp).

Getting Around

A prepaid taxi from the airport to Senggigi costs 48,000Rp. Very efficient and prompt **Bluebird taxis** (☎ 627000) will whisk you around the Senggigi area and beyond. Remember that many restaurants offer free lifts for diners; call for a ride.

Cars and motorcycles are readily available for hire in Senggigi; ask at any hotel or travel agent. **Kotasi** (☎ 693804; Jl Raya Senggigi) has motorcycles from 40,000Rp per day and jeeps from 175,000Rp per day (its insurance covers you for a maximum charge of US\$500 in case of damage).

GILI ISLANDS

☎ 0370

Just off the northwestern coast of Lombok is a vision of tropical paradise – a trio of tiny coral-fringed islands, each with white sandy beaches and pellucid water teeming with a kaleidoscopic array of reef fish. For years the islands of Gili Air, Gili Meno and Gili Trawangan were a budget-priced stopover for travellers on the Asian trail, but in recent years accommodation options have diversified and now there are luxury villas and rustic-chic bungalows dotted between the simple bamboo-and-thatch huts for rent.

Delightfully free of cars and motorcycles, the Gilis are home to just the tinkling *cidomo* and the odd bicycle. Each island has professional scuba-diving centres, and the snorkelling is excellent too.

Each Gili has its own charm and character – Trawangan has a big party scene, Meno is very mellow and Air's atmosphere falls somewhere between the two. Note that, in most places in the Gili Islands, the water comes from wells and is a bit saline.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

There are no police on any of the Gilis, so report any theft to the island *kepala desa* (village head), or, if you are on Gili

GILI ISLANDS CURRENTS: WARNING

Currents between the Gili Islands are very strong. Take care when snorkelling offshore, and do not attempt to swim between the islands – this goes double after a night on the ale.

SURVIVING BANGSAL

Bangsals, a squalid little port, is the gateway for public boats to the Gilis. Frankly, it's a hole and has become so overrun with persistent small-time hustlers and would-be scammers that it's best to completely ignore anything that you're told here about boats being cancelled, or other tall tales. Keep calm, and head straight for the ramshackle boat terminal to get your ticket.

Public bemos to Bangsal actually stop in Pemenang on the main road, 1km from the port. Hiring a *cidamo* (around 3000Rp) to the port is money well spent as it'll save you an ear-bending from the hustlers on your way to the terminal.

It's quite possible to avoid Bangsal altogether by using the Perama boat service between Senggigi and the Gilis, or by booking a speedboat transfer (from US\$12, 15 minutes) to/from Lombok via the Gili dive schools – these use the serene little bay of Teluk Nare to the south.

Trawangan, notify Satgas, the community organisation that runs island affairs via your hotel or dive centre. Satgas uses its community contacts to resolve problems or track down stolen property with a minimum of fuss.

Incidents are rare, but several foreign women have experienced sexual harassment and even assault while on the Gilis – it's best to walk home in pairs to the quieter parts of the islands. Each island has a gaggle of local gigolos who compete to impress and seduce visiting Western women, and they can get very territorial with other males that they see as competition.

Jellyfish are common when strong winds blow from the mainland, and they can leave a painful rash. See p885 for the best ways of treating jellyfish stings.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Bali, most people either use the Perama shuttle bus/boat service (185,000Rp, five hours from Padangbai), which now stops at all the Gili Islands before heading on to Senggigi, or fly to Mataram and travel on from there.

Coming from other parts of Lombok, you can travel via Senggigi (from where there is a direct Perama boat service to the Gilis) or Bangsal (the cheapest route). Alternatively, you can book a shuttle bus or speedboat: Blue Marlin and Manta Dive (p512) on Gili Trawangan can arrange transfers (125,000Rp to 250,000Rp per person, depending on destination and passenger numbers), which leave from the idyllic harbour of Teluk Nare, south of Bangsal.

Coming by public transport, catch a bus or bemo to Pemenang, from where it's

about 1km by *cidomo* (3000Rp) to Bangsal harbour. Bangsal is a headache; see the boxed text, above for how best to deal with the inevitable hassle there. Boat tickets are sold at the Koperasi harbour office, where prices are displayed, but the public boats (roughly 8am to 5pm) don't leave until full (about 18 people). While it can take hours for the boat to Gili Meno to fill up, you shouldn't have to wait more than an hour for the other two islands. One-way fares are 5500Rp to Gili Air, 6800Rp to Gili Meno and 8800Rp to Gili Trawangan. Special charters can also be organised in Bangsal.

All boats pull up on the beach when they get to the Gilis, so you'll have to wade ashore with your luggage.

Island-Hopping

There's a twice-daily boat service that loops between all three islands, meaning you can spend the day snorkelling and exploring Meno and get back to Air or Trawangan for a sunset drink.

The morning boat leaves Air at 8.30am, stops by Meno at 8.45am, Trawangan at 9.30am and Meno again at 9.45am, and returns to Air at 10am. In the afternoons the boat leaves Air at 3pm, Meno at 3.15pm, Trawangan at 3.30pm, Meno at 4.15pm (having stopped there for half an hour) and gets back to Air at 4.30pm. Check the latest timetable at the islands' dock.

GETTING AROUND

The Gilis are flat and easy enough to get around on foot or by bicycle. For longer trips, hiring a *cidomo* for a clip-clop around an island is a great way to explore the terrain; a short trip costs around 7000Rp, or pay about 20,000Rp for a two-hour jaunt.

Gili Air

pop 1800

Closest to the mainland, Gili Air's easy-going appeal contrasts with party-boy Gili Trawangan and sedate Gili Meno. The island retains a distinctly rural character, its coconut grove-filled, flat landscape juxtaposed with dramatic views of Gunung Rinjani and, on a clear day, Gunung Agung in Bali. Its narrow white-sand beaches, turquoise water and laid-back atmosphere are the main draw, but in the high season the bar scene can get quite lively.

ORIENTATION

Boats stop at the southern end of the island, near the jetty, and the Koperasi harbour office (7-8am-5.30pm) has a hut here with prices marked clearly outside. Virtually all accommodation and restaurants are on the eastern and southern coasts, which have the best beaches for swimming. The network of dirt tracks that crisscrosses the island can get quite confusing at times. To explore Air it's simplest to follow the coastal path around the island – it's a lovely walk that takes about an hour and a half.

INFORMATION

There's a small Perama office (96 637816) close to the Gili Indah Hotel. Ozzy's Shop (96 622179; per min 400Rp; 7-8am-8pm) has pedestrian-paced internet access and a wartel and will change money, as will Hotel Gili Air, but exchange rates are poor. Blue Marlin charge 7% for

cash advances on credit cards. There's a clinic in the village for medical services.

ACTIVITIES

Cycling

Ozzy's Shop has bikes for hire for 20,000Rp a day. Exploring the island by bike is a delight, though sandy tracks can make the going a bit tough, and you're sure to end up in someone's backyard at times due to the unmarked trails.

Snorkelling & Diving

You'll find diverse marine life snorkelling off the east coast, and easy beach access; gear can be hired from Ozzy's Shop for 15,000Rp a day. Check with dive centres first about currents, as sometimes they can be extremely strong. Ozzy's Shop also operates glass-bottomed boat tours (per person 40,000Rp, minimum four people) around all three islands.

There are several good scuba diving sites a short boat ride away. See the boxed text, p511 for more information. Gili Air has two

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dive schools, Blue Marlin Dive Centre (96 634387; www.diveindo.com) and Dream Divers (96 634547; www.dreamdivers.com).

SLEEPING

Prices quoted here are high-season rates – expect a discount of about 25% in low season. Breakfast is included in all the hotels listed, except Lucky's.

Budget

Gili Air Santay (96 641022; giliair_santay@yahoo.com; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp) Set back from the beach in a quiet coconut grove, these spacious bamboo-and-timber huts are just above the bog-standard category. All come with hammocks and fairly modern bathrooms.

Abdi Fantastik (96 636421; bungalows 75,000-80,000Rp) Enjoying unobstructed sea vistas, these neat – rather than 'fantastik' – thatched bungalows are just a few metres from the shore. They have verandas, and a hammock to swing in.

Sunrise Cottages & Restaurant (96 642370; s 50,000-75,000Rp, d 80,000-100,000Rp) A class above the real cheapies, this efficiently run place has rustic two-storey *lumbung*-style bungalows with bathrooms and separate living areas (with a day bed and hammock). The accommodation is well spaced apart and is at the rear of a pretty garden. There's a safe for valuables and a great beachside café-restaurant.

Kira Kira (96 641021; kirakira@mataram.wasantara.net.id; s 70,000-110,000Rp, d 80,000-125,000Rp) Stylish, well-presented thatched cottages, with rattan furniture, large ceiling fans, decent beds and hammocks, overlooking a small garden. The restaurant (open from 7am to 9pm) serves Japanese dishes such as tempura.

Coconut Cottages (96 635365; www.coconuts-giliair.com; r 110,000-180,000Rp) A delightful, welcoming Indo-Scottish owned place with a selection of atmospheric accommodation spread around a fecund, well-tended garden. Some of the well-maintained cottages have shell-inlaid decorative detailing, and all have good-quality mattresses, bamboo furniture and bedside reading lights. There's a fine restaurant here too (see right).

Also worth considering:

Gusung Indah (96 081 23789054; r 70,000-100,000Rp) Facing a good stretch of beach, these simple bungalows with verandas are decent value. You pay more for a sea view.

Lucky's (96 081 23782156; bungalows 45,000Rp) Run by a friendly family, these basic bungalows enjoy a quiet location.

Nusa Tiga Bungalows (r 40,000-50,000Rp) Basic bamboo bungalows set in a coconut grove, inland from the east coast.

Pino Cottages (96 639304; r 60,000-80,000Rp) Set back from the beach, Pino has well-maintained and clean thatched cottages with hammocks.

Pondok Sandi (s/d 50,000/100,000Rp) Facing the sea, these spacious huts come with bathrooms.

Midrange

Gili Indah Hotel (96 637328; gili_indah@mataram.wasantara.net.id; bungalows 200,000-350,000Rp; a) Conveniently close to the jetty, the well-run Gili Indah has a variety of good, well-constructed bungalows. The best have air-con and huge front decks with expansive sea views.

Hotel Gili Air (96 634435; www.hotelgiliair.com; r US\$17, with hot water US\$33, with hot water & TV US\$43-63; a s) Setting itself up as the island's 'proper' hotel, this place offers four classes of digs – from rustic-but-comfy huts to international hotel chain-style rooms, with marble bath and attractive wooden furniture; however, the pool is small and the gardens look neglected.

EATING

Dining out in Gili Air is a treat, with an array of simple places serving Indonesian and Western dishes, many located right by the sea – there's nothing fancy, though. Beware: service can be slow.

Abdi Fantastik (96 636421; dishes 10,000-25,000Rp) Come here for some of the best Sasak food on the island at fair prices; try the *kangkung pelecing* (spicy water spinach).

Santay (96 641022; dishes 12,000-20,000Rp) Perch yourself on a beachside table, soak up the views of Gunung Rinjani and tuck into dishes that include good pumpkin-and-coconut curry, or sate.

Gecko Café (96 641014; dishes 10,000-25,000Rp, Wed dinner from 35,000Rp; 7-11 lunch & dinner) This friendly café is good for sandwiches, cake and coffee, or Indonesian snacks. The Wednesday night dinners – such as roast beef followed by apple crumble – are an island institution for homesick Divemasters.

Coconut Cottages (96 635365; dishes 10,000-28,000Rp) An inventively prepared menu that combines Western and Indonesian dishes;

you'll dine well in this pleasant hotel restaurant. Try the fantastic Sasak buffet, served every Wednesday night (40,000Rp per person) during the high season.

Blue Marlin (☎ 634387; dishes 15,000-35,000Rp) The best bet for Western food, the kitchen here serves up a mean burger, as well as pasta, sandwiches and stick-to-ye-ribs breakfasts.

Hotel Gili Air (☎ 634435; dishes 15,000-56,000Rp) Recommended by resident foreigners as the best venue for pizza and pasta on the island. It also serves Indonesian dishes and steaks. The service here is prompt.

Or try:

Munchies (dishes 7500-26,000Rp; 11-12am lunch & dinner) Serves fine curries, fish and overflowing sandwiches.

Sasak Warung (mains 12,000-28,000Rp) Dine well here by the waves under pretty shell lanterns.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Except for the odd party, Gili Air is generally pretty quiet at night.

Star Bar (11-12am-1am Thu-Tue) Next to the Blue Marlin, this little bar's trump card is Azam, its charismatic trickster barman.

Chill Out Bar (11-12am) Popular with visitors and locals, and has a good selection of spirits and cocktails.

Gita Gili (11-1am) A friendly bar, where on request you can watch a DVD while you sink a cold one.

Legend Pub (10am-11.30pm Thu-Tue, happy hour 5-7pm, party 10pm-2am Wed) Wednesday night is the big one here, especially in high season, with speakers bumpin' to (mainly) reggae bass lines.

Gili Meno

pop 300

Gili Meno is the quietest of the three islands, and it has the best beaches. With such a small permanent population, it's not hard to play Robinson Crusoe, should you so desire, along Meno's isolated shores.

ORIENTATION

Most accommodation is strung out along the eastern coast, near the widest and most picturesque beach. Inland you'll find homesteads, coconut plantations and a shallow lake that produces salt in the dry season.

INFORMATION

There are a couple of minimarkets by the boat landing, so you will be able to locate most basic supplies. Internet access (per min 750Rp) and a wartel are available near the boat landing. Money can be exchanged at hotels, including the Gazebo Meno and Kontiki Meno, at poor rates. For tours and shuttle bus or boat tickets, the travel agent **Perama** (☎ 632824) is based at Kontiki Meno bungalows. The medical clinic (thegilim enoclinic@hotmail.com), near the bird park, has a resident nurse. Doctors are also on call in Mataram.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

About 300m inland from the boat landing, the **Taman Burung Bird Park** (☎ 642321; admission 30,000Rp; 11-5pm) has an impressive and well-cared-for collection of 300 or so exotic species from Asia and Australasia, as well as three kangaroos and a baby Komodo dragon. The birds are let out of their cages for three hours a day, when they fly around a large expanse covered by netting. Feeding times are also held. There's a bar, and accommodation is available (see p510).

Snorkelling trips (40,000Rp per person, minimum four people), sometimes in glass-bottomed boats, leave from the jetty – ask the fishermen there. There's good snorkelling off the northeast coast near the Amber House huts, on the west coast near Good Heart and also around the jetty of the (abandoned) Bounty Resort – gear is available for 20,000Rp per day (ask at your accommodation). Always ask about the state of the currents – Blue Marlin is the best place to go for this. **Blue Marlin Dive Centre** (☎ 639979; www.diveindo.com) offers fun dives and courses from Discover Scuba to Divemaster. For more on snorkelling and diving, see the boxed text, p511.

SLEEPING

Budget

Basic places are generally more expensive than equivalent lodgings on the other Gilis, and rates don't usually include breakfast. Prices quoted are high season – reductions of up to 25% are possible the rest of the year. In theory, all places have 24-hour power, but this is not very reliable.

Tao Kombo (☎ 081 23722174; tao_kombo@yahoo.com; platforms/bungalows 25,000/90,000Rp) About

200m inland, this mellow place has attractive, individually decorated bungalows scattered around a large garden, and some bamboo sleeping platforms (with mattresses, mosquito nets and safety boxes). There's a generator for 24-hour power, a chill out lounge and a bar-restaurant (see p510).

Biru Meno (☎ 081 33657322; bungalows 80,000-100,000Rp) A very welcoming place located in a tranquil spot south of the main strip. It has a selection of spacious sea-facing bungalows; the most expensive have big windows and coral walls. There's also a restaurant serving inexpensive local food.

Kontiki Meno (☎ 632824; bungalows with fan/air-con 90,000/150,000Rp; a) Clean breeze-block bungalows, some with elaborately carved doorways. Book 1 or 2 for an uninterrupted sea view.

Malia's Child (☎ 622007; www.gilimeno-mallias.com; r 150,000Rp) Facing the sea, these attractive, orderly bamboo-and-thatch bungalows with fans, mosquito nets and Western toilets sit pretty on a well-raked stretch of sandy beach.

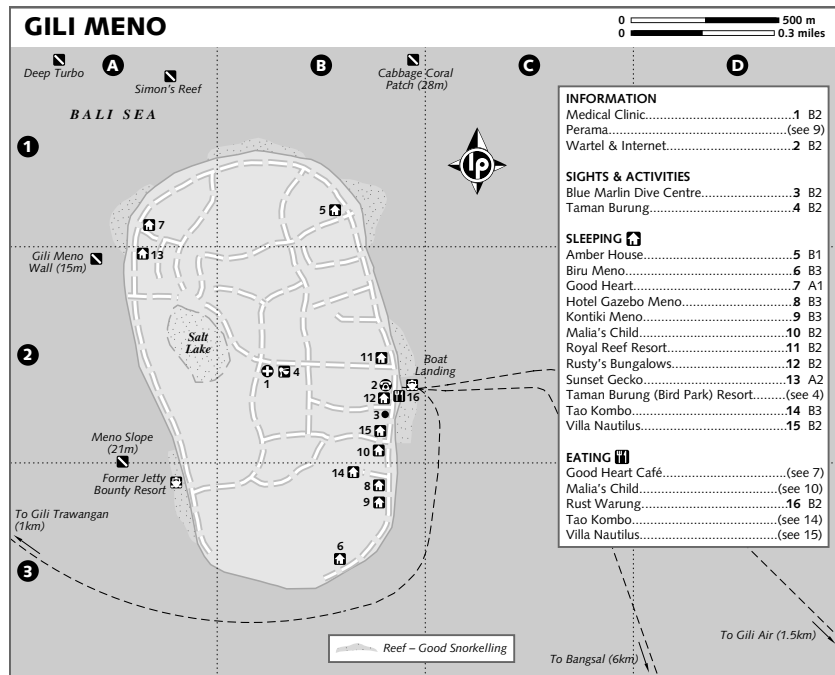
Good Heart (☎ 081 339556976; bungalows 150,000Rp) This excellent, friendly Balinese-owned place has a row of superb, newly-built twin-deck *lumbung*-like bungalows with coconut-wood roofs and beautiful freshwater bathrooms. Good Hart is opposite a narrow stretch of beach that faces Trawangan, and there's also a book exchange and a good restaurant (see p510). Discounts of around 40% are offered in the low season.

Sunset Gecko (081 5766418; firefrog11@hotmail.com; bungalows/house 150,000/350,000Rp) This new place, built by a multinational team to high ecostandards, has gorgeous A-frame bungalows and a stunning two-bedroom timber house – enjoy the best views on the island from its upper deck. All accommodation has excellent ventilation and plenty of natural light. It's in an isolated spot but next to a tranquil beach with some snorkelling. A restaurant serving Japanese, Indonesian and Western food is planned. Rates drop substantially off peak.

Other recommendations:

Amber House (☎ 643676; amber_house02@hotmail.com; s/d from 30,000/40,000Rp) Attractive bamboo bungalows in a flourishing garden with sea aspects.

Royal Reef Resort (☎ 642340; r 150,000Rp) Large and orderly bungalows overlooking the sea.



Rusty's Bungalows (Pondok Wisata; ☎ 642324; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) Bog-standard but acceptable huts behind the boat landing.

Midrange

Taman Burung (Bird Park) Resort (☎ 642321; www.balipvbgroup.com; dm/deluxe r 30,000/300,000Rp; a) This place offers four comfortable air-con rooms with TV/DVD players and basic self-catering equipment, as well as a funky dormitory with three bunk beds. Check out the restaurant and Beatles-themed bar too.

Hotel Gazebo Meno (☎ /fax 635795; r with fan/air-con US\$30/65; a s) Classy, spacious and stylish bungalows set in a coconut grove just off the beach. Bungalows with air-con have a distinctly colonial feel with parquet floors, desks and chaise lounges. There's a small saltwater swimming pool.

Top End

Villa Nautilus (☎ 642143; www.villanautilus.com; r US\$75; a) Deluxe detached villas, beautifully finished in contemporary style with natural wood, marble and limestone. The design allows plenty of natural light to flood the lounge level, which has doors opening on to a decked terrace – book villa 1, 2 or 3 for sea views. Steps lead up to the bedroom/dressing room and down to the shower.

EATING & DRINKING

The beachfront restaurants near the boat landing all offer fine views for your meal, which is just as well as service can be slow.

Rust Warung (☎ 642324; mains 6000-28,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Simple *beruga* with low tables and a menu of Indonesian and Western favourites.

Good Heart Café (☎ 081 339556976; mains 7500-20,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner, happy hour 6-8pm) Perfectly primed for the sunset, Good Heart has a relaxed atmosphere, which is aided by bamboo wind chimes and shells decorating the trees. BBQs are held regularly and the bar has a variety of cocktails.

Tao Kombo (☎ 081 23722174; mains 9000-24,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Popular bar run by Frenchman Bob. It has a chilled vibe, lounge tunes, cocktails and a pool table. Tuck into fine Italian and Indonesian cuisine here too.

Villa Nautilus (☎ 642143; mains 15,000-27,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Come here for break-

fast, a sandwich, pasta or a pizza from the wood-fired oven.

Malia's Child (☎ 622007; dishes 15,000-28,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) You'll eat well here, with tasty Indonesian food and pizza served either on an upper level with fine views or on one of the seaside *berugas*.

Gili Trawangan

pop 1500

Trawangan has a reputation as a party island, a Shangri La for backpackers and hedonistic Indonesians that's awash with budget-priced digs and dive centres. Shoe-string ravers do still flock here, but the island's increasingly upmarket facilities – a mushrooming lux-fest of lounge bars, sushi restaurants and boutique hotels – has meant that Jakartan hipsters and weekend-ing Singaporeans are almost as common as rupiah-lite gap-year students. It's the one corner of Nusa Tenggara where tourism is really vibrant, and while there are still plenty of tranquil corners, the island's main strip buzzes every night until the early hours.

Unfortunately, environmental management has yet to catch up with the pace of development, and discarded garbage blots the landscape, particularly in the village just inland from the beach.

Diving is so critical to the local economy that the island's fishermen are paid by the scuba schools *not* to fish on Trawangan's reefs, a pioneering initiative that has resulted in greatly increased diversity, with turtles and top predators such as reef sharks frequently spotted here. Culturally, this moratorium is not without its difficulties, however, as the islanders are descended from Bugis fishermen who arrived in Trawangan 55 years ago.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

Boats dock on the eastern side of the island, which is also home to virtually all of Trawangan's accommodation and restaurants. The **Koperasi harbour office** (h 8am-5.30pm) has a hut at the boat landing, with prices clearly marked outside. The best stretch of beach is just north of the dock.

Several places will change cash or travellers cheques, but rates are poor. Dive shops give cash advances on credit cards for a hefty 7% commission.

There is no post office, but stamps and postcards are sold in the wartel and Pasar Seni (Art Market).

Emergency

Satgas A community organisation which controls security on the island. Contact it via your hotel or dive school.
Villa Ombak Clinic (h 9am-5pm) Just south of Hotel Villa Ombak.

Internet Access & Telephone

You'll find various places spread along the eastern waterfront. One option is **Lighten-**

ing (internet access per minute 400Rp), which also has a wartel.

Travel Agencies

Perama (☎ 638514; www.peramatour.com) Located just north of the jetty.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Boat Trips & Snorkelling

Glass-bottomed boat trips (40,000Rp per person, including snorkelling equipment) to coral reefs can be booked at many stores on the main strip.

UNDERWATER GILIS

The Gili Islands are a terrific dive destination. Though coral life above 18m is not generally in good condition – years of fish bombing and the El Niño phenomenon, which caused 'heatstroke' damage to the temperature-sensitive reefs back in the 1990s, have taken their toll – you'll find that marine life is plentiful and varied. Turtles and black- and white-tip reef sharks are common, and the macro life is excellent, with seahorses, pipe fish and lots of crustaceans. Around full moon, large schools of bumphead parrotfish appear to feast on coral spawns, while at other times of the year manta rays glide by dive sites.

Safety standards are high in the Gilis – there are no dodgy dive schools, and instructors and training are professional. Rates are fixed (no matter who you dive with) at US\$25 a dive, with discounts for a package of 10 dives. A PADI Open Water course costs US\$300, the Advanced course is US\$225, Divemaster starts at US\$650, and Nitrox and Trimix dives are offered by some schools. For contact details of dive schools, see individual island entries.

The Gili Eco Trust, a partnership between dive operators and the local community, aims to improve the condition of the reefs. All divers help fund the trust by paying a one-off fee of 30,000Rp with their first dive. Another initiative has seen the establishment of several reef growth accelerators called 'Biorock' – these use electrical currents to stimulate coral development. Two Biorock installations are located directly opposite Hotel Villa Ombak at a depth of 8m. For more information, consult www.biorock.net.

Surrounded by coral reefs and with easy beach access, the Gilis are superb for snorkelling too. Masks, snorkels and fins can be hired for as little as 20,000Rp per day. On Trawangan try the area right off the main beach, where turtles are often seen. Around Gili Meno, the pier by the (closed) Bounty Resort has prolific marine life, while over on Air the walls off the east coast are good.

Some of the best dive sites:

Deep Halik The canyonlike profile of this site is ideally suited to drift diving. Black- and white-tip sharks can often be seen at 28m to 30m.

Deep Turbo At around 30m, this site is ideal for Nitrox diving. It has impressive sea fans and catches the prevailing currents, so anything can come out of the big blue (including, very occasionally, mantas or even whale sharks).

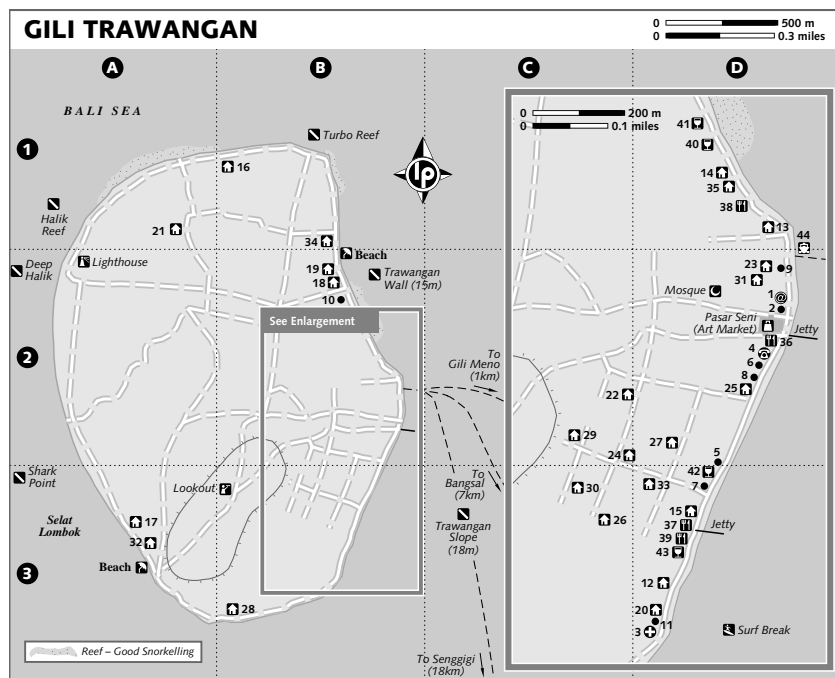
Hans Reef Off the northeast coast of Gili Air. Great for macro life (small stuff), including frogfish, ghostfish, seahorses and pipe fish.

Japanese Wreck For experienced divers only (as it lies at 45m), this shipwreck of a Japanese patrol boat is another site ideal for Nitrox divers. Soft coral is prolific, and there are lots of nudibranchs, lionfish and frogfish.

Shark Point Perhaps the most exhilarating dive in the Gilis: reef sharks and turtles are spotted very regularly, as well as schools of bumphead parrot fish and mantas. Look out too for cuttlefish and octopuses. At shallow depths there can be a strong surge.

Simon's Reef The reef here is in excellent condition, schools of trevally can be seen and occasionally great barracuda and leopard sharks.

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



There's fair snorkelling off the beach north of the jetty, though there's plenty of coral damage in evidence here. Beware of strong currents further out from the shoreline. The reef is in better shape close to the lighthouse off the northwest coast, but you'll have to scramble over some low coral to access it.

Snorkel gear can be hired for around 20,000Rp per day from shacks near the jetty.

Diving

Trawangan is a veritable diver's delight with seven established scuba schools, no cowboys and inexpensive prices. For more information, see the boxed text, p511.

Professional dive centres operating from Gili Trawangan:

Big Bubble (% 625020; www.bigbubblediving.com)

Blue Marlin Dive Centre (% 632424; www.diveindo.com)

Dive Indonesia (% 642289; www.diveindonesianonline.com)

Dream Divers (% 634496; www.dreamdivers.com)

Manta Dive (% 643649; www.manta-dive.com)

Trawangan Diving (% 649220; www.trawangandive.com)

Villa Ombak Diving Academy (% 638531; gillidive@mataram.wasantara.net.id)

Surfing & Water Sports

Trawangan's fast right-hand wave breaks over a coral outcrop that isn't sharp. It's best at high tide and can be surfed all year long. You'll find it just south of Villa Ombok. **Fun Ferrari** (% 081 23756138; Horizontal Bar; water sports per 15 min incl tuition 150,000Rp, fishing US\$50) offers water-skiing, parasailing, wakeboarding and sports fishing.

Walking & Cycling

Trawangan is perfect for exploring on foot or by bike. You can walk around the whole island in a couple of hours – if you finish your walk at the hill on the southwestern corner (which has the remains of an old Japanese gun placement) as the sun is setting, you'll have a terrific view of Bali's Gunung Agung.

Bikes can be hired from 15,000Rp a day from just south of the jetty.

INFORMATION		Blue Marlin.....(see 6)		Trawangan Cottages.....33 D3	
Lightening.....1 D2	Creatif Satu.....15 D3	Villa Almarik.....34 B1	Warna.....35 D1		
Perama.....2 D2	Desa Dunia Beda.....16 B1	Dewi Sri.....17 A3	Wartel.....4 D2	Dream Village.....18 B2	EATING
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Good Heart.....19 B2		Anna's.....36 D2	
Big Bubble.....5 D2	Hotel Villa Ombak.....20 D3	(see 41)		Beach House.....(see 12)	
Blue Marlin Dive Centre.....6 D2	Kelapa Villas.....21 A1	H Rooms.....(see 41)		Blue Marlin.....(see 6)	
Dive Indonesia.....7 D3	Lisa Homestay.....22 C2	Horizontal.....(see 41)		Horizontal.....(see 41)	
Dream Divers.....8 D2	Manta.....23 D2	Kayangan.....37 D3		Recy Living Room.....38 D1	
Fun Ferrari.....(see 41)	Martas.....24 C2	Ryoshi.....39 D3		Tir Na Nog.....(see 43)	
Manta Dive.....9 D2	Pak Majid.....25 D2	Tir Na Nog.....(see 43)			
Trawangan Diving.....10 B2	Pandian Wangi Cottages.....26 C3	DRINKING			
Villa Ombak Diving Academy.....11 D3	Pondok Lita.....27 D2	Café Wayan.....40 D1			
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Beach House.....12 D3	Pondok Sederhana.....29 C2	Rudy's Pub.....42 D3		Tir Na Nog.....43 D3	
Beach Wind Bungalows.....13 D1	Puri Hondje.....30 C3	Tir Na Nog.....43 D3			
Big Bubble.....(see 5)	Sama Sama Bungalows.....31 D2	TRANSPORT			
Blue Beach Cottages.....14 D1	Sunset Cottages.....32 A3	Boat Landing & Koperasi.....44 D1			
	Tir Na Nog.....(see 43)				

SLEEPING

There are approaching a hundred places to stay in Gili Trawangan, from simple beach huts to private villas. Most of the very cheapest accommodation is in the village, and you'll pay more for a beachside address. Perhaps the hottest real estate is the area north of the harbour, where you can stumble out of your bungalow and flop on the beach, neutralising those (perhaps inevitable) hangovers with a morning dip.

Rates quoted are high-season prices, which drop by about 30% off peak. Breakfast is included unless stated otherwise.

Budget

Pandian Wangi Cottages (s/d 40,000/75,000Rp) Friendly place with simple, clean rooms with fans and mossie nets.

Sunset Cottages (% 081 23785290; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) Friendly place on the southwest coast, opposite a little beach, with traditional-style huts that catch the afternoon breeze.

Pak Majid (r 60,000Rp) In the thick of the action, this place has clean concrete bungalows with plain furnishings. Breakfast is not included.

Pondok Sederhana (% 081 338609964; r 60,000Rp) Run by a house-proud and friendly Balinese lady, the spotless rooms here face a neat little garden.

Pondok Santai (s/d 60,000/70,000Rp) On the south coast, yet only a five-minute walk from the main strip, these simple, secluded thatched huts all have two beds and an attached *mandi*.

Dewi Sri (% 081 933145164; r 60,000Rp & 100,000Rp) A family-owned place with two classes of well-built bungalows scattered around a spacious beachside plot. There's good home cooking available.

Lisa Homestay (% 081 339523364; r 75,000Rp) Very friendly little place with light and airy tiled rooms that look over a garden.

Beach Wind Bungalows (% 081 23764347; s/d with fan 75,000/85,000Rp, with air-con 120,000/150,000Rp; a) Excellent-value, stylish, spacious rooms in a row just off the beach. All rooms have handsome bamboo-framed beds and a veranda; those with air-con have two beds. There's also ping pong, a book exchange and snorkel gear for hire.

Creatif Satu (% 634861; r with fan/air-con 75,000/125,000Rp; a) Right by the jetty, this place has large, clean, acceptable rooms.

Pondok Lita (r 80,000-100,000Rp) Nine good rooms around a garden, all with two beds, tiled floors and a clean bathroom. Also has a book exchange and laundry service.

Trawangan Cottages (% 623582; r without/with air-con 140,000/100,000Rp; a) Well-kept rooms with private bathrooms and verandas with nice seating. It's on the main strip.

Warna (% 623859; r 140,000Rp) Four well-priced, tasteful bungalows with large beds and attractive wooden furniture are ranged along a gorgeous narrow garden. It's just off the beach.

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

Blue Beach Cottages (% 623538; bbc@indo.net.18; r with fan/air-con 170,000/250,000Rp; a) Representing good value for money, these attractive huts have high ceilings, rattan furniture, ikat wall hangings, hot water and reading lights. The huts are set alongside a blooming garden. But, best of all, you're just off the beach.

Midrange

Big Bubble (% 625020; www.bigbubblediving.com; r with fan/air-con US\$22/30; a s) Right behind the diving school is this row of very stylish modern rooms, facing a beautiful garden. Built from natural materials, each room comes with hammocks and a front terrace. There's a wonderful pool and decked area out the front.

Blue Marlin (% 632424; www.diveindo.com; r US\$25; a s) Decent air-con rooms, all with wardrobes and desks, hot water and baths, TVs and air-con, are set behind the Blue Marlin dive school.

Tir Na Nog (% 639463; tirnanog@mataram.wasara.net.id; r US\$25, villa US\$125; a) At the rear of this bar on the main strip, these huge rooms have been thoughtfully designed and decorated; most have spacious private terraces and swanky modern bathrooms. For real luxury, book the private villa which even comes with its own chef.

Sama Sama Bungalows (% 081 23763650; r with fan/air-con 250,000/350,000Rp; a) Combining natural materials (logwood bed frames, timber flooring and coconut-wood furniture) with mod cons, including TV/DVD players, these rooms make a comfortable base. The place is set back a little from the beach.

Martas (% 08123722777; martas_trawangan@yahoo.com; r/f 250,000/400,000Rp; a) Representing exceptional value for money, these sumptuous detached two-storey air-con bungalows, owned by a helpful and welcoming English-Indonesian couple, are grouped around a lush garden and decorated in calming creams and beige. The family rooms sleep four.

Manta (% 643649; www.manta-dive.com; r 380,000Rp; a s) Eight delightful modern *lumbung*-style bungalows, each with twin or king-size beds, a safe, a fridge and wonderful screened outdoor bathrooms, with volcanic stone floor tiles. Prices are flexible during the low season.

Beach House (% 642352; www.beachhousegilit.com; r 300,000-400,000Rp, villas 2,500,000Rp; a s) Competitive pricing and the simple elegance of these understated modern rooms mean that this place is busy all year round. There's a freshwater plunge pool at the rear (and also a four-bedroom villa with its own pool).

Good Heart (% 081 22395170; r 100,000Rp, bungalows 350,000-500,000Rp; a) A great choice with superb-value budget rooms, each with large beds, and a couple of very stylish thatched A-frame bungalows – these have all the mod cons, and pebble-floored open-air bathrooms.

Dream Village (% 081 8546591; 500,000Rp; a) A wonderful new place with contemporary *lumbung* bungalows, each extremely well finished, with teak floors and rattan chairs, fridges and gorgeous outdoor bathrooms. An Italian restaurant, a spa room and a small pool are in the pipeline.

Top End

Villa Almarik (% 638520; www.almarik-lombok.com; r US\$70-75; a s) Huge, light, airy high-ceilinged bungalows with dining/living room area and contemporary bathrooms, TVs and minibars. The swimming pool is modestly sized though.

Hotel Villa Ombak (% 642336; www.hotelombak.com; r US\$75-135 plus 21% tax; a s) Just south of the main drag, this very attractive resort occupies a leafy garden plot partly shaded by yuccas and palms. The faux-traditional two-storey A-frame bungalows are not that large for the price but do have real character, while the stunning superior rooms are more minimalist in design. Ombak has a great pool, a spa, a diving academy, a restaurant and a beach bar too.

Desa Dunia Bada (% 641575; www.desaduniabada.com; US\$110 plus 21% tax; a s) Out on their own in the north of the island, these absolutely astonishing Javanese Joglo bungalows command the biggest wow factor on Trawangan. Each has been decorated with classy furniture and boasts a four-poster bed, writing desk, sofa and back-to-nature open-air bathroom. The pool is smallish, though, and it is isolated up here.

Kelapa Villas (% 632424; www.kelapavillas.com; US\$150-410 plus 21% tax; a s) Between the

coasts, surrounded by coconut groves, these beautifully finished luxury villas boast full catering facilities, private pools and all the comforts of home, including TVs and DVD players and freshwater bathrooms.

EATING

It's easy to munch your way around the world in Trawangan, which belies its size and offers everything from sushi to Irish stew.

Anna's (dishes 5000-8000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tiny, friendly little warung with a very small menu. It serves up a mean *nasi campur* (rice with a choice of side dishes) and *soto ayam* (chicken soup).

Kayangan (dishes 7500-15,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) It may look a bit grubby, but the inexpensive Chinese and Indonesian dishes here are executed well.

Café Wayan (dishes 17,000-35,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Hygiene standards are high, so this is a great venue for salads (try the papaya and chicken), as well as pasta and Thai and Indo faves. Leave room for the cakes, including death-by-chocolate and carrot.

Ryoshi (% 639463; dishes 17,000-48,000Rp, set menus from 37,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Authentic, super-fresh sushi and sashimi at moderate prices served on Nippon-style low tables (though you can also eat your Eastern treats next door at the 'Irish bar' too).

Beach House (% 642352; dishes 17,000-50,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Boasts one of the best beachside terraces and a menu that takes in everything from tasty baguettes through the usual Indonesian suspects to chargrilled sirloin steaks.

Tir Na Nog (% 639463; dishes 21,000-37,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ideal for enormous portions of comfort food like Irish stew and fish and chips, and puds such as banoffi pie.

Horizontal (% 639248; dishes 25,000-65,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) An achingly contemporary design which marries sexy seating with modish lighting, this place has an eclectic, to-die-for menu of pan-Asian and mod-European food.

Other recommendations:
Blue Marlin (mains 9000-35,000Rp) Offering mainly Western food, this place serves up some of the finest fish

and seafood in Trawangan – choose yours from the iced streetside display.

Reccy Living Room (dishes 12,000-23,000Rp) Friendly place with *beruga* overlooking the beach that offers good Western food such as lasagna. Order the house special 'rice table' a day in advance.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Despite its size, Trawangan punches way above its weight in the party stakes. Its rotating parties fire up around 11pm and go on until 4am or so (except during Ramadan). DJs from Bali and beyond mix techno, trance and house music, while Rudy's Pub (Friday) has a more eclectic musical policy.

Tir Na Nog (% 639463; h 7am-2am Wed-Mon, 7am-4am Tue) Known to one and all as the 'Irish bar', it combines a sociable barn-like main room, where you can catch live sport on a big screen and play table soccer, and a superb beachside terrace. Snacks and meals can be ordered from Ryoshi restaurant next door. The big night here is Tuesday.

Horizontal (% 639248; www.horizontalbar.com; h 10am-2am) Adjacent to a gorgeous stretch of beach, this place offers a more sophisticated vibe than the usual drinking spots in Trawangan. Primarily a chill-out lounge, it's decorated in a contemporary style, with luxe scarlet lounges, decked floors and lots of funky details. Fantastic cocktails (try the raspberry margarita), a full menu (see left), Italian coffees and occasional DJ events.

Rudy's Pub (h 8am-4am Fri, 8am-11pm Sat-Thu) Run by the inimitable Joko, this bar is the best locally-owned place in town, and it hosts a terrific Friday-night party.

NORTH & CENTRAL LOMBOK

% 0370
The sparsely populated northern part of Lombok is remarkably beautiful, with a variety of landscapes, few tourists and even fewer facilities. Public transport is not frequent, nor does it detour from the main road. With a set of wheels, however, you can go and explore the shore, waterfalls and inland villages. The main coastal road here is narrow, but it's sealed and in good condition.

Towering Gunung Rinjani is unquestionably the region's main attraction. But

BOAT TOURS BETWEEN LOMBOK & FLORES

Travelling by sea between Lombok and Labuanbajo is a popular way to get to Flores, as you get to see far more of the region's spectacular coastline and dodge some seriously lengthy bus journeys and nonentity towns. Typical itineraries from Lombok take in snorkelling at Pulau Satonda off the coast of Sumbawa, a dragon-spotting hike on Komodo, and other stops for swimming and partying along the way. From Labuanbajo it's a similar story but usually with stops at Rinca and Pulau Moyo.

However, be aware that this kind of trip is no luxury cruise – a lot depends on the boat, the crew and your fellow travellers, whom you are stuck with for the duration. Some shifty operators have reneged on 'all-inclusive' agreements deals en route, and others operate decrepit old tugs without lifejackets or radio. The seas in this part of Indonesia can be extremely hazardous, especially during the rainy season when trips can be cancelled – and this journey is certainly not one to embark upon with some dodgy set-up.

For the safety concerns mentioned above, the well-organised tours on decent boats run by Perama (see Gili Trawangan, Mataram or Senggigi for contact details) are recommended. Current charges for cabin/deck are 1,500,000/1,050,000Rp for the three-day trip to Labuanbajo, and 1,000,000/700,000Rp for the two-day Labuanbajo–Lombok journey.

even if you don't attempt the cone itself, the southern slopes are well watered and lush, and offer scenic walks through rice fields and forest. Most villages in central Lombok are traditional Sasak settlements, and several of them are known for their handicrafts.

Bangsai to Bayan

The road from Senggigi to Bangsal is very scenic, slaloming around the contours of a succession of cove beaches. North of Bangsal public transport is less frequent. Several minibuses a day go from Mandalika terminal in Bertais (Mataram) to Bayan, but you may have to get connections in Pemenang and/or Anyar.

SIRA

This peninsula has a glorious sweeping white-sand beach, some snorkelling and Lombok's most luxurious hotel, the **Oberoi Lombok** (☎ 638444; www.oberoihotels.com; pavilions from US\$240, villas from US\$350 plus 21% tax; a s). The villas and pavilions here are beyond commodious, with lashings of marble, teak floors and astonishing garden-bathrooms with sunken bathtubs.

Close by, signposted on the road south to Bangsal, is the **Lombok Golf Kosaido Country Club** (☎ 640137; US\$80 per round), an attractive 18-hole, 72 par course by the sea – **Manta Dive** (☎ 643649; www.manta-dive.com) in Gili Trawangan can organise discounted rates here.

GONDANG & AROUND

Just northeast of Gondang village, a 6km trail heads inland to **Air Terjun Tiu Pupas**, a 30m waterfall that's only really impressive in the wet season. Trails continue from here to other waterfalls, including **Air Terjun Gangga**, the most beautiful of all. A guide is useful to navigate the confusing trails in these parts. Speak to the owners of **Pondok Pantai** (☎ 081 23752632; bungalows 50,000-90,000Rp), a welcoming Dutch- and Indonesian-run beachside guesthouse with lovely thatched bungalows and tip-top food (dishes 9000Rp to 22,000Rp), 2km north of Gondang.

BAYAN

This northernmost part of Lombok is the birthplace of the **Wektu Telu** religion and also has some venerable mosques. One very fine example, located 2km east of Bayan, on the road to Laloan, is said to be the oldest in Lombok, dating from 1634. Built on a square platform of river stones, the structure has a pagoda-like upper section and inside the mosque you'll find a huge old drum.

Batu Koq & Senaru

These picturesque villages, merging into one another along a ridge with sweeping views to the east and south, are the main starting points for climbing Gunung Rinjani. If you've not got your volcano-climbing head on, they are still worth visit-

ing, as there are some fine walking trails and dramatic waterfalls.

INFORMATION & ORIENTATION

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

At the southern end of **Senaru** village, **Rinjani Trek Centre** (RTC; ☎ satellite 086812104132; www.info2lombok.com) has good information on Rinjani and the surrounding area.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Definitely visit **Air Terjun Sindang Gila** (2000Rp), a spectacular set of falls 20 minutes' walk from **Senaru**. The walk is partly through forest and partly alongside an irrigation canal that follows the contour of the hill, occasionally disappearing into tunnels where the cliffs are too steep.

A further 50 minutes or so up the hill is **Air Terjun Tiu Kelep**, another waterfall, where you can go swimming. The track is steep and tough at times, so it's a good idea to take a guide (15,000Rp).

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

Community tourism activities that can be arranged through most guesthouses (such as **Pondok Senaru**) are a rice terraces and waterfalls walk (35,000Rp), which includes **Sindang Gila**, some stunning vistas and a bemo ride back, and the **Senaru Panorama Walk** (45,000Rp), which is led by female guides and takes in local lifestyles.

Head to **Emy Café** for a post-hike massage (25,000Rp).

SLEEPING & EATING

A few more comfortable rooms have been built in recent years, but most of the dozen or so lodges have basic rooms and shared cold-water *mandis*. As the climate is cooler here you won't need a fan. All these places are dotted along the road from Bayan to **Senaru**.

Bukit Senaru Cottages (r 40,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Shortly before **Dusun Senaru**, this place has four well-constructed semi-detached bungalows situated overlooking a leafy garden. The bungalows have verandas,

and bathrooms equipped with Western-style toilets.

Pondok Indah & Restaurant (☎ 081 75788018; s/d 80,000/100,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) A well-run, friendly place with spacious accommodation in two blocks 3km south of Bayan. Many rooms share a communal balcony and have well-scrubbed showers and Western toilets. There's parking and a good restaurant (dishes 7000Rp to 18,000Rp).

Pondok Senaru & Restaurant (☎ 622868, 086812104141; r 150,000-300,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Well set-up place 4km from Bayan with great easterly views of the valley from its recommended restaurant (dishes 11,000Rp to 21,000Rp) and a choice of spacious, spotless rooms – a little overpriced, but the most comfortable digs in town. The superior rooms have a TV, a minibar and a hot shower.

Also worth considering:

Bale Bayan (☎ 081 75792943; r 40,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Opposite **Dusun Senaru** village, this place has rustic bungalows and a restaurant in a nice garden.

Pondok Segara Anak (☎ 081 75754551; r 40,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Panoramic views and neat, clean, good-value rooms. It's 3km from Bayan.

Rinjani Homestay (☎ 081 75750889; s/d 35,000/40,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) A little further uphill, this place has plain, clean rooms and a restaurant with Western and Indonesian food (dishes 7000Rp to 25,000Rp).

Emy Café (dishes 5000-12,500Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) and **Galang Ijo** (dishes 5000-8000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner), both midway between **Batu Koq** and **Senaru**, do simple food and some Sasak specials.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Mandalika terminal in Mataram, catch a bus to Anyar (12,500Rp, 2½ hours). Bemos leave Anyar for **Senaru** (4000Rp) about every 20 minutes until 4.30pm. If you're coming from, or going to, eastern Lombok, get off at the junction near Bayan (your driver will know it), from where bemos go to **Senaru**.

Semalun Lawang & Semalun Bumbang

☎ 0376

High on the eastern side of Gunung Rinjani is the beautiful **Semalun Valley**, whose

inhabitants are descended from the Hindu Javanese. Sembalun Lawang is the other main point of departure for treks up Gunung Rinjani. The statue of an enormous garlic bulb in the village is indicative of the area's main crop, which is harvested in October.

Sembalun Bumbung, 3km south of Sembalun Lawang and just off the main road, is a sprawling and relatively wealthy village. It's often referred to simply as 'Sembalun'; 'Bumbung' is used to differentiate it from Sembalun Lawang. The latter is the more convenient place to stay for organising treks.

INFORMATION & ACTIVITIES

The staff at the Rinjani Information Centre (RIC; 11 6am-6pm; Sembalun Lawang) are well informed about hiking in the area and can arrange treks, including a not-too-demanding four-hour **village walk** (per person 100,000Rp, minimum 2 people). The more strenuous **wildflower walk** (per person for 2 people, incl guide, porters, meals & all camping gear 560,000Rp) is a delightful two-day trek inside Rinjani's National Park (Taman Nasional Gunung Rinjani), through flower-filled grasslands; costs decrease if there are more of you.

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

SLEEPING & EATING

Accommodation is more expensive in Sembalun Lawang than Senaru or Batu Koj, but the vistas here are more impressive.

Bale Galeng (s/d with shared bathroom 30,000/45,000Rp) These basic but serviceable *lumbung* cottages with shared *mandi*-style bathrooms are set in a rambling garden rich in shrubs and medicinal herbs. It's about 1km from the RIC.

Maria Guesthouse (r 50,000Rp) Homestay with two basic rooms and shared bathroom; rates include breakfast and dinner.

Losmen Lembah Rinjani (% 081 803620918; s/d with shared bathroom 60,000/80,000Rp, s/d 130,000/160,000Rp) Head down a side road near the information centre to find this well-run place. The more expensive rooms have Western-style shower and toilet; the cheaper rooms have less impressive volcano views. There is also a restaurant on site (dishes 8000Rp

to 14,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Sembalun Nauli (% 081 8362040; sembalunnauli@lycos.com; Sembalun Lawang; r 120,000Rp) These smart, spacious rooms with wonderful views of Rinjani are 3km before Sembalun Lawang on the road from Senaru. You can get good local food here (dishes 6000Rp to 17,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Mandalika bus terminal, take a bus to Aikmel (8000Rp) and change there for Sembalun Lawang (9000Rp). Hourly pickups connect Lawang and Bumbung.

There's no public transport between Sembalun Lawang and Senaru, you'll have to charter an *ojek*, or a bemo for around 100,000Rp.

Roads to Sembalun are sometimes closed in the wet season due to landslides.

SAPIT

% 0376

On the southeastern slopes of Gunung Rinjani, Sapit is a tiny, very relaxed village with views across to Sumbawa. Tobacco-drying *open* (red-brick towers) loom above the beautifully lush landscape, and 'baccy' can be bought in blocks in the market.

Sights

Between Swela and Sapit, a side road leads you to **Taman Lemor** (Lemor Park; admission 1500Rp; 11 8am-4pm), where there is a refreshing spring-fed swimming pool and some monkeys. Further towards Pringgabaya, **Makam Selaparang** is the burial place of ancient Selaparang kings.

You can also visit some small waterfalls and hot-water springs near Sapit. Ask either homestay (following) for directions.

Sleeping & Eating

Hati Suci Homestay (% 081 8545655; www.hatisuci.tk; s 40,000-45,000Rp, d 75,000-85,000Rp) An efficiently run place with excellent budget bungalows in a fragrant garden. The accommodation and restaurant (dishes 8000Rp to 18,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) both have stunning views of Sumbawa. Hikes to Rinjani can be organised here.

Balelangga B&B (% 22197; s/d with shared bathroom 30,000/50,000Rp) Offers simple, clean rooms with *mandi*-style shared bathroom

and good home cooking (dishes 6000Rp to 18,000Rp; meals available breakfast, lunch and dinner). It's sometimes closed during the low season.

Getting There & Away

To reach Sapit, first catch a bus to Pringgabaya from the Mandalika bus terminal (13,000Rp) and then a bemo to Sapit (6000Rp). Occasional bemos also go to Sapit from the Sembalun Valley in the north.

GUNUNG RINJANI

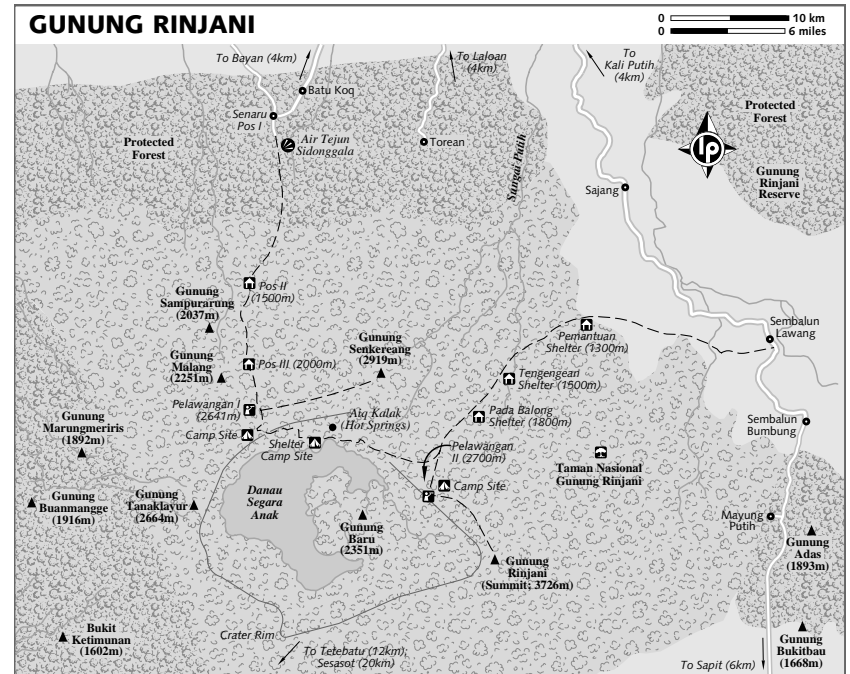
Towering over the entire northern part of the island, the mighty Rinjani volcano is of immense cultural (and climatic) importance for Lombok's people, while climbing the peak is one of Indonesia's most exhilarating experiences. The great cone, which reaches 3726m, and its upper slopes were declared a national park in 1997.

Gunung Rinjani is the highest mountain in Lombok and the second highest in Indonesia. Its caldera contains a cobalt crescent-shaped lake, **Danu Segara Anak** (Child of the Sea), which is about 6km across at its widest

point. The crater has a series of natural hot springs known as **Air Kalak**, whose waters locals take to blend with herbs to make medicinal treatments, particularly for skin diseases. The lake is 600m below the crater rim, and rising from its waters is a minor, newer cone, **Gunung Baru** (or **Gunung Barujari**), which only emerged a couple of hundred years ago. This ominously grey, highly active scarred peak erupted as recently as October 2004.

Both the Balinese and Sasaks revere Rinjani. To the Balinese, it is equal to Gunung Agung (p333), a seat of the gods, and many Balinese make an annual pilgrimage here. In a ceremony called *pekelan*, people throw jewellery into the lake and make offerings to the mountain spirit. Some Sasaks make several pilgrimages a year to the crater lake – full moon is their favourite time for paying respect to the mountain and curing their ailments by bathing in the hot springs.

The climb to the crater lake is not to be taken lightly and should only be undertaken as part of an organised trek, due to the active status of Gunung Baru and, sadly,



CLIMBING GUNUNG RINJANI

The most popular ways to climb Gunung Rinjani are the four- or five-day hiking expeditions (described below) that start at Senaru and finish at Sembalun Lawang, or a strenuous dash from Senaru to the crater rim and back. Independent hiking is not recommended at any time, due to safety and security concerns, but a guide is essential from the hot springs to Sembalun Lawang, as the path is indistinct. These treks are outlined on the Gunung Rinjani map (p519). Another good map is the one from the Rinjani Trek Centre – it is large, in full colour, glossy and easy to follow.

It's *often not possible* to climb Rinjani during the rainy season, particularly after heavy rainfall, when the trail around the lake is very dangerous due to the hazard of falling rocks.

Day 1: Senaru to Pos III (4½ to five hours)

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

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

Day 2: Pos III to Segara Anak & Hot Springs (four hours)

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

It takes about two hours to descend to Danau Segara Anak and around to the hot springs (Aiq Kalak). The first hour is a very steep descent and involves low-grade rock climbing in parts. From the bottom of the crater wall it's an easy 30-minute walk across undulating terrain around the lake's edge. There are several places to camp, but most locals prefer to be near the hot springs to soak their weary bodies and recuperate. There are also some caves nearby, which are interesting but not used for shelter. The nicest camp sites are at the lake's edge, and fresh water can be gathered from a spring near the hot springs. Some hikers spend two nights or even more at the lake, but most who are returning to Senaru from here head back the next day. The climb back up the rim is certainly taxing – allow at least three hours and start early to make it back to Senaru in one day. Allow five hours from the rim down to Senaru. Instead of retracing your steps, the best option is to complete the Rinjani trek by continuing to Sembalun Lawang and arranging transport back to Senaru (see p518).

Day 3: Hot Springs to Pelawangan II (three to four hours)

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

Day 4: Pelawangan II to Rinjani Summit (five to six hours return)

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

It takes about 45 minutes to clamber up a steep, slippery and indistinct trail to the ridge that leads to Rinjani. Once on the ridge, it's a relatively easy walk uphill. After about an hour heading towards what looks like the peak, the real summit of Rinjani looms behind and towers above you.

The trail then gets steeper and steeper. About 350m before the summit, the scree is composed of loose, fist-sized rocks – it's easier to scramble on all fours. This section can take about an hour. The views from the top are truly magnificent on a clear day. The descent is much easier, but again, take it easy on the scree. In total it takes three hours or more to reach the summit, and two to get back down.

Day 5: Pelawangan II to Sembalun Lawang (five to six hours)

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

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

Variations

Possible variations to the routes described above are outlined here:

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

because there have been (very) occasional attacks on hikers (see below). Climbing Rinjani during the wet season (November to March), when the tracks are often treacherously slippery and there's a real risk of landslides, is not at all advisable – the national park office usually forbids access to Rinjani for the first three months of the year. June to August is the only time you are guaranteed (well, almost) no rain or cloud, but it can still get *very* cold at the summit.

Senaru has the best services for trekkers, so most start their treks there. Those who want the fastest summit climb, however, should start from Sembalun Lawang on the eastern side.

Organised Treks

The best and most inexpensive way to organise a trip is to head to either the RTC (☎ satellite 086812104132; www.info2lombok.com) in Senaru or the RIC (🕒 6am–6pm) in Sembalun Lawang. Anyone passing through Senggigi can first contact the **Rinjani Trek Club** (☎ 693202; rtc.senggigi@gmail.com; Jl Raya Senggigi) office there. Funded by the New Zealand government, the centres use a rotation system so that all local trekking organisers get a slice of the hiking pie.

Whether you book through your losmen, or directly at the RTC, the RIC or the Rinjani Trek Club, the same trek packages (at the same prices) are offered. The most popular are four- or five-day treks from Senaru to Sembalun Lawang via the summit and include food, equipment, guide, porters, park fee and transport back to Senaru. The four-day trek costs 1,250,000Rp for two to four hikers and 1,050,000Rp for more than five. The deals are cheaper the more of you there are.

GUNUNG RINJANI SECURITY WARNING

Although there were incidents of armed robbery on Rinjani in 2000, in recent years safety was not an issue until a group was attacked in July 2005. While this is believed to be an isolated incident, we recommend that you seek safety advice locally before you set out.

There are plans to post police and mountain security guards inside the crater.

A number of agencies in Mataram, Senggigi and the Gili Islands can organise all-inclusive treks. Prices usually include everything outlined above, plus return transport from the point of origin. For example, **Perama** (www.peramatour.com), with offices in all of these locations, has a trekking package that leaves from any of the places above and goes via Senaru using RTC official guides for 1,600,000Rp per person (minimum of two people).

Guides & Porters

Hiking independently is not recommended, due to security and safety concerns; see the boxed text, left for more details.

If you don't want to do an all-inclusive trekking package with the RTC or the RIC, you can hire guides (100,000Rp per day) and porters (80,000Rp) from them independently, but make sure that you take a radio (10,000Rp per day). Contract your guides and porters directly from the centres in Senaru and Sembalun Lawang, as they are licensed for your security. Guides are knowledgeable and informative, but they won't carry anything for you, so take at least one porter. You also have to provide food, water and transport for them, and probably cigarettes as well.

Entrance Fee & Equipment

The entrance fee for the Rinjani National Park is 27,000Rp – register and pay at the RTC in Senaru or the RIC in Sembalun Lawang before you start your trek.

Sleeping bags and tents are essential and can be hired at either RTC or RIC. You'll also need solid footwear, layers of warm clothing, wet-weather gear, cooking equipment and a torch (flashlight), but these can also be hired from the RTC. Expect to pay about 50,000Rp a head per day for all your equipment.

Take a stove so you don't need to deplete the limited supply of firewood. Carry all rubbish out with you and make sure others in your party do the same.

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

Food & Supplies

Trek organisers at RTC and RIC can arrange food, or you can take your own. It's better to buy most supplies in Mataram

or Senggigi, where it's cheaper and there's more choice, but some provisions are available in Senaru. Take plenty of water and a lighter.

Getting There & Away

For transport options from Sembalun Lawang to Senaru, see p518. If you've purchased a trekking package, transport back to the point of origin is usually included.

TETEBATU

☎ 0376

Tetebatu, nestling in the lower slopes of Gunung Rinjani, is an attractive rural retreat at an elevation just high enough (400m) to make the climate a tad more refreshing than down on the sticky coast. There are magnificent views across tobacco fields and rice paddies towards southern Lombok, east to the sea and north to Rinjani. The *open* that dot the landscape are used for drying tobacco, the major crop here. Tetebatu makes a fine setting for a few days' hiking to nearby waterfalls or visiting the surrounding handicraft villages.

Tetebatu is quite spread out, with facilities on roads north and east (nicknamed 'Waterfall Rd') of the *ojek* stop in the centre of the village. There's a wartel (🕒 9am–9pm) next to Salabuse Café.

Sights & Activities

A shady 4km track leading from the main road just north of the mosque heads into **Taman Wisata Tetebatu** (Monkey Forest) with black monkeys and waterfalls – you will need a guide to find them (ask at your losmen). Alternatively, you could take an *ojek* from the turn-off.

On the southern slopes of Gunung Rinjani National Park are two waterfalls. Both are accessible only by private transport or on a lovely 1½-hour walk (one way) through the rice fields from Tetebatu. If walking, even in a group, *be sure* to hire a reputable guide (ask at your losmen).

Locals believe that water from **Air Terjun Jukut** (Jeruk Manis, Air Temer; admission 2000Rp) will increase hair growth. The falls are a steep 2km walk from the car park at the end of the road.

Northwest of Tetebatu, **Air Terjun Joben** (Otak Kokok Gading; admission 2000Rp) is more of a public swimming pool, so it's less alluring.

Bicycles can be hired at Pondok Tetebatu, as well as other losmen, for 15,000Rp per day. The narrow country lanes around Tetebatu are a delight to explore by bike, particularly if you try to stick to east–west routes, which are far less challenging than the steep north–south inclines.

Sleeping & Eating

Most accommodation in Tetebatu has a rustic charm. Losmen on Waterfall Rd tend to be more funky.

Pondok Tetebatu (☎ 632572; s/d 30,000/45,000Rp) Just north of the intersection, this is a good choice. The two rows of neat, spotless rooms that face a pretty garden have Western toilets. There is also a simple roadside restaurant here offering tasty local food (dishes 8000Rp to 35,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) here.

Losmen Hakiki (☎ 018 0803737407; cottages 50,000–70,000Rp) With a lovely aspect over rice fields, about 1km east of the intersection, this place has charming little *lumbung* with yellow window frames and serves tasty Indonesian and Sasak cuisine (dishes 7000Rp to 18,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Cendrawasih Cottages (☎ 081 803726709; r 65,000Rp) Four gorgeous little *lumbung* cottages, with bamboo walls and showers/*mandis*, facing a pond and garden. The elevated octagonal lounge and eating area (dishes 7000Rp to 22,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner) has sweeping views of the surrounding region. It's about 500m east of the intersection.

Wisma Soedjono (☎ 21309; r 75,000–150,000Rp, cottages 125,000Rp; ☹) About 2km north of the intersection, these slightly soulless but functional rooms and lovely two-storey chalet-style cottages (with balconies and verandas) are scattered around a rambling family home. The large swimming pool is infrequently cleaned, however. There's also a fair restaurant serving local and Western food (dishes 10,000Rp to 28,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Salabuse Café (☎ 081 75731143; dishes 6000–17,500Rp; 🕒 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Cheery, cheap place serving Western, Indonesian and Sasak meals.

Getting There & Around

Buses go from Mandalika to Pomotong (7000Rp), which is on the main east–west

highway. From there take a bemo to Kotaraja (2000Rp), then an *ojek* (3000Rp) or *cidomo* (4000Rp) to Tetebatu.

Motorcycles can be rented at Pondok Tetebatu, as well as other losmen, for 50,000Rp per day.

SOUTH OF TETEBATU

☞ 0376

It's best to rent or charter private transport from Tetebatu to visit the craft villages in the area.

The nearest market town to Tetebatu is Kotaraja, which is also the transport hub of the area. It's known for its skilled blacksmiths. There's a market on Monday and Wednesday morning.

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

Masbagik is a large town on Lombok's east-west highway with a daily morning market, a huge cattle market on Monday afternoon, and an imposing new mosque with elegant minarets. There's an ATM opposite the mosque. Masbagik Timur, which is 1km east, is a centre for black-clay pottery and ceramic production.

Lendang Nangka is a Sasak village surrounded by picturesque countryside, 3km north of the highway. In and around the village you can see blacksmiths make knives, hoes and other tools using traditional techniques. A few silversmiths are also based here, and there's an excellent homestay, Radiah's (☞ 0376631463; per person incl meals 50,000Rp) run by English-speaker Radiah and his wife, Sannah, who make Western visitors very welcome and will explain Sasak traditions and all about local agriculture. Everyone knows their house in the village.

Pringgasela is a centre for traditional weaving on simple looms; the local textiles produced here feature coloured stripes. You can watch the weavers in action and buy sarongs and throws.

SOUTH LOMBOK

☞ 0370

South Lombok is blessed with the island's best beaches, from dramatic cliff-backed coves to oceanic expanses that catch world-class waves. The region is noticeably drier than the rest of Lombok and more sparsely

populated, with limited roads and public transport. Most visitors head for Kuta – the antithesis of its Balinese namesake – a tranquil, relaxed base for exploring the terrific southern coastline.

Praya

pop 35,000

Praya is the south's main town. It's a very spread out place, with tree-lined streets and a few old Dutch buildings. There's nothing of much interest to visitors here, however, except perhaps a couple of ATMs on Jl Jend Sudirman, but by 2008 Lombok's new international airport should open close by, boosting the local economy. Meanwhile, the bemo terminal, on the northwestern side of town, is the transport hub for the region.

Just up from the market, the Dienda Hayu Hotel (☞ 654319; Jl Untung Surapati 28; r 50,000-80,000Rp; ☎) has rooms with cold-water facilities that are in fair shape.

Around Praya SUKARARA

The main street here is given over to touristy, commercial craft shops, but you may want to put up with the sales speak in order to see the various styles of weaving and see the weavers at work. Darnia Setia Artshop (r 7am-6pm) has the widest range of textiles, some coming from Sumba and elsewhere in Flores.

To reach Sukarara, take a bemo to Puyung (1500Rp) along the main road. From there, hire a *cidomo* (approximately 2500Rp) or walk the 2km to Sukarara.

Penujak

Penujak is well known for its traditional *gerabah* pottery, made from a local clay with the simplest of techniques. The pots are up to 1m high, and there are also various kitchen vessels and decorative figurines. The traditional pottery is a rich terracotta colour and hand burnished.

Penujak is on the main road from Praya to the south coast; any bemo to Sengkol or Kuta will drop you off (fares are approximately 2000Rp).

Rembitan & Sade

The area from Sengkol down to Kuta is a centre for traditional Sasak culture. Regular bemos cover this route.

Rembitan is on a hill just west of the main road. It's a slightly sanitised 'traditional' Sasak village but still boasts an authentic cluster of thatched houses and *lumbung*. On top of the hill is Masjid Kuno, an ancient thatched-roof mosque that's a place of pilgrimage for Lombok's Muslims, as one of the founding fathers of Islam in Indonesia is said to be buried here.

On the road between Rembitan and Sade are stores selling Javanese-style batik paintings (albeit painted by locals).

A little further south is Sade, another traditional, picturesque village that has been extensively renovated. It has informative guides who'll tell you about Sasak houses and village life. Donations are 'requested' by guides at both villages – 3000Rp to 7000Rp is enough, and expect to pay for photos too.

Kuta

Lombok's Kuta beach is a magnificent stretch of white sand and turquoise sea with rugged hills rising around it. Surfers are drawn here by the world-class waves, but the village has a languid charm of its own with some delightful hotels and a succession of dramatic bite-shaped bays nearby.

Despite long-slatted plans for a succession of five-star resorts, these have failed to materialise, and this superb coast is still all but undeveloped, with far, far fewer facilities than the (in)famous Kuta Beach in Bali. Kuta comes alive during the annual Nyale Fishing Festival (in February or March; see right) and during the main tourist season (August), but for the rest of the year it's very quiet.

Tourism dominates the local economy, but locals also harvest seaweed for the cosmetic industry in the dry season.

INFORMATION & ORIENTATION

Several places change money, including Kuta Indah Hotel and Segare Anak Cottages, which is also a postal agency.

There's a small wartel in town and the Kuta Corner Internet café next to Matahari Inn also buys, sells and rents second-hand books. The local market fires up on Sunday and Wednesday at 7am. Perama (☞ 654846), based at Segare Anak Cottages, runs tourist shuttle buses to Mataram (75,000Rp) with connections to Senggigi and elsewhere.

NYALE FESTIVAL

On the 19th day of the 10th month in the Sasak calendar – generally February or March – hundreds of Sasaks gather on the beach at Kuta, Lombok. When night falls, fires are built and young people sit around competing with each other in rhyming couplets called *pantun*. At dawn the next day, the first *nyale* (wormlike fish) are caught, after which it's time for the teenagers to have fun. In a colourful procession, boys and girls sail out to sea – in different boats – and chase one another with lots of noise and laughter. The *nyale* are eaten raw or grilled, and are believed to have aphrodisiac properties. A good catch is a sign that the rice harvest will also be good.

Virtually everything in Kuta is on a single road that runs parallel to the beach, either east or west of the junction where the road from Praya hits town.

ACTIVITIES

Cycling

The guesthouse Mimpi Manis rents out bicycles for 20,000Rp a day. Pedal to the east to the Novotel and Pantai Segar. Westwards, there's an extremely steep hill leading to the Ashtari restaurant.

Surfing

Plenty of good waves break on the reefs, including 'lefts' and 'rights', in the bay in front of Kuta, and some more on the reefs east of Tanjung Aan. As the waves break a long way from shore, use local boatmen to tow you out for around 50,000Rp. About 7km east of Kuta is the fishing village of Gerupak, where there are several breaks on the reefs at the entrance of Teluk Gerupak (Gerupak Bay). There are plenty of breaks further out, but nearly all need a boat; the current charter rate is a negotiable 200,000Rp per day. Mawi also offers consistent surf.

Drop by the friendly Kimen Surf (☞ 655064; kimensurf@yahoo.com), just west of the junction, for swell forecasts, tips and information. Boards can be rented here (30,000Rp per day), repairs are undertaken, lessons are offered (310,000Rp for four hours), and day trips to Gerupak (240,000Rp) and Bangko Bangko (950,000Rp) are organised.

SLEEPING

Breakfast is included at all the places listed below. All accommodation is virtually on or just behind the beach, except one.

Budget

Segare Anak Cottages (☎ 654846; segareanakbungalows@yahoo.co.id; r 35,000-65,000Rp) Overlooking a pretty garden, the basic huts here have seen better days, but the newer concrete bungalows are a good deal and worth paying the extra for. Segare is around 800m east of the junction; it's also home to a moneychanger and the Perama office.

Melon Homestay (☎ 081 7367892; angela_granne_mann@web.de; r 50,000Rp, apt 65,000Rp) A terrific deal, this place has two gorgeous apartments with lounges and self-catering facilities; one has sea views from its balcony. There are also a couple of smaller modern rooms with verandas and bathrooms. It's about 400m east of the junction.

Mimpi Manis (☎ 081 8369950; www.mimpimanis.com; s 50,000-90,000Rp, d 65,000-105,000Rp) An extremely welcoming English- and Balinese-owned guesthouse with two spotless, bright rooms and a two-storey house, each with a shower room and TV/DVD player. There's home-cooked Balinese and Western food (dishes 9000-22,000Rp), a darts board and plenty of good books to flick through. It's 2km inland from the beach, but the owners offer a free drop-off service.

Rinjani Bungalows (☎ 654849; s/d with fan 80,000/95,000Rp, with air-con 200,000/250,000Rp; a) Looking good, this well-run place is about 1km east of the junction. It has very clean bamboo bungalows with ikat bedspreads and bathrooms with Western toilets, and spanking-new spacious concrete bungalows, each with two double beds, hot water and hardwood furniture.

Surfers Inn (☎ 655582; www.lombok-surfersinn.com; r with fan 100,000-160,000Rp, with air con 180,000-500,000Rp; a s) A very smart, stylish and orderly place with five classes of modern rooms, each with huge windows and large beds, and some with sofas. The inn is about 600m east of the junction. Book ahead, as it's very popular.

Also recommended:

G'day Inn (☎ 655432; s/d 40,000/60,000Rp) This friendly, family-run place offers clean, recently renovated rooms, some with hot water, and a café. Located about 300m east of the junction.

Ketapang Bungalows (☎ 655194; s/d 30,000/40,000Rp) Has simple thatched-roof bungalows with verandas; it's 500m east of the junction.

Lamancha (☎ 655186; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp) Four simple but spotless semidetached huts with *mandis* and showers; it's 400m east of the junction.

Midrange

Matahari Inn (☎ 655000; www.matahariinn.com; r 180,000-550,000Rp; a s) This Balinese-themed hotel has an array of baroque rooms, each suffering somewhat from gaudy artefact overkill and an excess of reclining Buddhas and the like. Nevertheless, the garden, shaded by bamboo and palm trees, is gorgeous. It's just west of the junction.

Kuta Indah Hotel (☎ 653781; kutaindah@indonet.id; r US\$17-30; a s) Set around a well-tended garden with a clipped lawn, these cottages are spacious but slightly tired-looking, though the pool's nice. It's about 400m west of the junction.

Tastura Beach Resort (☎ 655540; tastura@mataram.wasantara.net.id; bungalows US\$25-30; a s) Bland government-owned hotel with 20 distinctly average bungalows in expansive grounds 600m east of the junction. Rooms could be much cleaner.

Top End

Novotel Lombok (☎ 653333; www.novotel-lombok.com; r without/with terrace US\$120/140, villas US\$235 plus 21% tax; a s) This attractive resort 3km east of the junction has contemporary-styled rooms with coconut-wood flooring and furniture and lovely thatched Sasak-style villas. The two pools face a superb beach, and there's a wonderful spa and a plethora of activities on offer, including catamaran sailing, fishing, scuba diving and even archery classes.

EATING & DRINKING

In addition to the places reviewed below, there are warungs along the esplanade.

Family Cafe (☎ 653748; mains 6000-30,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Large thatched restaurant with a tempting menu, including delicious *sate pusut* (served with coconut and chilli) and *urap urap* (mixed vegetables with sambal and coconut). It's just west of the junction. It also serves cocktails.

Astari (dishes 8000-22,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Perched on a mountain top

2km west of town on the road to Mawan, this remarkable, mainly vegetarian lounge-restaurant has a to-die-for healthy menu that takes in winsome breakfasts, focaccia sandwiches and creatively assembled mains; there's always a daily special too. The view matches the cuisine, and it's easy to lose hours up here daydreaming, enjoying the music, browsing through magazines, playing backgammon and gazing out over Kuta's low hump-backed hills to the distant ocean rollers.

Ilalang (dishes 11,000-35,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right on the beach, this ramshackle-looking place scores for its fresh seafood.

Cafe Lombok Lounge (☎ 655542; dishes 12,000-30,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Inexpensive Indonesian food, including *cumi cumi* (squid), and Western dishes like omelettes.

Mascot Pub (dishes 12,000-38,000Rp; h 11-2am) This pub offers the only nightlife in town. Come here to see local bands most Friday and Saturday nights. Also serves Indonesian food.

Empat Ikan (Novotel Lombok; mains 75,000-175,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) For something more fancy, this beachside hotel restaurant is strong on fish and seafood.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Kuta is a hassle to reach by public transport. From Mandalika terminal in Mataram you'll have to go via Praya (5000Rp), then to Sengkol (3000Rp) and finally to Kuta (2000Rp). You'll usually have to change buses at all these places. Many people opt for the Perama shuttle bus option from Senggigi or the Gili Islands to Kuta.

GETTING AROUND

Ojeks congregate around the main junction as you enter Kuta. Bemos go east of Kuta to Awang and Tanjung Aan (2500Rp), and west to Selong Blanak (3000Rp), or can be chartered to nearby beaches. The guesthouse Mimpi Manis rents motorcycles for 35,000Rp a day.

Around Kuta

Quite good roads traverse the coast to the east, passing a series of beautiful bays punctuated by headlands. There's public transport, but it's much easier by motorcycle.

Pantai Segar is about 2km east around the first headland, within walking distance

SOUTH LOMBOK SECURITY WARNING

Tourists have been threatened and robbed at knife-point on the back roads of south Lombok, in particular around Mawi. Ask around about the latest situation and do not leave vehicles unattended – find a local to watch it for a tip.

of the town. The enormous rock of Batu Kotak, 2km further on, divides two glorious white-sand beaches. Continuing east, Tanjung Aan is a very fine beach with chalk-white powdery sand. Due to a spate of problems with stealing, there's a security guard keeping an eye on the place – even so, it's best not to bring valuables to the beach. The road continues another 2km to the fishing village and surfer's fave Gerupak, where there's a market on Tuesday and a restaurant on the beach. Alternatively, turn northeast just before Tanjung Aan and go to Awang, a busy fishing village with a sideline in seaweed harvesting. You could take a boat from Awang across to Ekas (a charter costs around 120,000Rp) or to some of the other not-so-secret surf spots in this bay.

West of Kuta are a succession of outstanding beaches that all have superb surf when conditions are right. It's possible that this region may eventually be developed when the new airport is completed near Praya, but for now it remains near-pristine and all but deserted. The road, which is potholed and very steep in places, doesn't follow the coast closely, so you'll need to detour slightly to find the beaches. Mawan (parking motorcycle/car 2000/4000Rp) is the most impressive, a bite-shaped bay backed by steep green hills with a fine sandy beach below. Tampa is similar but a little wilder – you will need to drive through rice fields along a grassy road and past a tiny village to get there. Mawi (parking motorcycle/car 2000/4000Rp), 16km from Kuta, is an absolutely stunning beach and surfing stronghold with a legendary barrel wave, but there can be a very strong riptide, so be extra careful. Sadly, thefts have been reported here. Selong Blanak is another wonderfully expansive stretch of sand.

From Pengantap, the road climbs across a headland to descend to another superb

bay; follow this around for about 1km, then look out for the turn-off west to **Blongas**, a sheltered bay with relatively calm water and fine swimming. The road to reach it is very steep, rough and winding, but it has breathtaking scenery.

EAST LOMBOK

☎ 0376
All that most travellers see of the east coast is Labuhan Lombok, the port for ferries to Sumbawa, but the road around the north-eastern coast is in fair shape, and a round-the-island trip is quite feasible. Similarly, the once-remote southeastern peninsula is becoming more accessible, particularly to those with their own transport.

Labuhan Lombok

Labuhan Lombok, also known as Labuhan Kayangan, is the port for ferries and boats to Sumbawa. The town centre of Labuhan Lombok, 3km west of the ferry terminal, is a scruffy place but has great views of Gunung Rinjani.

Try to avoid staying overnight, as there's only one decent place, **Losmen Lima Tiga** (☎ 23316; Jl Raya Kayangan; r 55,000Rp). About 2.5km inland from the port on the main road, this is very clean family-run place with neat little rooms and spotless shared bathrooms. There are warungs in the town and around the ferry terminal.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Bus & Bemo

Frequent buses and bemos travel between Labuhan Lombok and Mandalika terminal in Mataram (11,000Rp, two hours), and also head north from Labuhan Lombok to Anyar. Note that public transport to and from Labuhan Lombok is often marked 'Labuhan Kayangan' or 'Tanjung Kayangan'. Buses and bemos that don't go directly to Labuhan Lombok but just travel the main road along the east coast will only drop you off at the port entrance, from where you'll have to catch another bemo to the ferry terminal. Don't walk; it's too far.

Ferry

See p492 for details of ferry connections between Lombok and Sumbawa, and p497 for bus connections between Mataram and Sumbawa.

North of Labuhan Lombok

This road has limited public transport and becomes very steep and windy as you near Anyar. There are isolated black-sand beaches along the way, particularly at Obel Obel.

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

Just before the village of Labuhan Pandan, 15km from Labuhan Lombok, the Swiss-run **Matahari Inn** (☎ 081 23749915; www.pondok-matahari.com; s/d 90,000/120,000Rp) is a beautifully peaceful place with clean, comfortable bungalows right on the beach and two rooms inland. There's good food (dishes 7000Rp to 26,000Rp), snorkelling and fun dives (US\$31 per dive), and scuba-diving courses are offered by the instructor owners.

South of Labuhan Lombok

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

On the coast is **Labuhan Haji**, where the black sand is a bit grubby, but the water is OK for swimming. The basic, isolated bungalows at **Melewi's Beach Hotel** (☎ 621241; r 40,000Rp) are almost on the beach and have great views across to Sumbawa.

Tanjung Luar is one of Lombok's main fishing ports and has lots of Bugis-style houses on stilts. From there, the road swings west to **Keruak**, where wooden boats are built, and continues past the turn-off to **Sukaraja**, a traditional Sasak village where you can buy woodcarvings. Just west of Keruak a road leads south to **Jerowaru** and the south-eastern peninsula. You'll need your own transport; be warned that it's easy to lose your way and the roads go from bad to worse.

A sealed road branches off west past Jerowaru – it gets pretty rough but eventually reaches **Ekas**, from where you can charter a boat to Awang across the bay.

The only accommodation in this remote part of Lombok is the spectacularly sited **Heaven on the Planet** (☎ 081 23705393; www.heavenontheplanet.co.nz; basic chalets 100,000-150,000Rp, villas 300,000-500,000Rp; Ⓢ), an ideal base for activity junkies, with surfing, diving and abseiling facilities. There are two restaurants and a well-stocked bar. The road here is terrible, so it's best to contact the hotel and get them to pick you up, or charter a boat from Awang (around 120,000Rp).

SUMBAWA

The rugged land mass of Sumbawa looms large between Lombok and Flores, separated from each by a narrow strait. Larger than Bali and Lombok combined, Sumbawa is a sprawling island of twisted and jutting peninsulas, with a coast fringed by precipitous hills and angular bights, and a mountain line of weathered volcanic stumps stretching along its length.

Though Sumbawa is an extremely scenic island, it's a poor one, and health and education is very much at the development stage in most parts. Few Western travellers venture here other than wave-seekers – there are surf camps at Sekongkang and Hu'u. Transport connections off the well-served cross-island road are infrequent and uncomfortable, so to explore the countryside it's best to charter transport or rent a motorcycle.

Culture

Sumbawa is roughly divided between two linguistically and, to some extent, ethnically distinct peoples: the Sumbawanesse speakers, who probably reached the west of the island from Lombok, and the Bimanesse speakers, who independently occupied the Tambora Peninsula and the east. The squatter, darker-skinned Bimanesse are more closely related to the people of Flores, while the western Sumbawanesse are closer to the Sasaks of Lombok. Both languages have considerable variation in dialect.

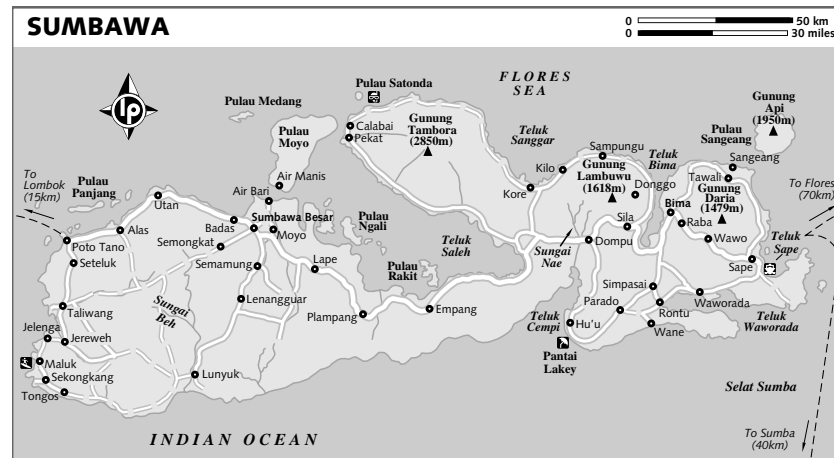
Sumbawa is an overwhelmingly Islamic island; Christian missionaries didn't even bother to try here. But in remote parts *adat* (traditional indigenous and animist traditions) thrive under the veneer of Islam.

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

History

Before the 17th century, Sumbawa had been subject to both Javanese Hindu and Islamic cultural influences, but the expansionist Makassarese states of Sulawesi gained control of the island by force and, by 1625, Sumbawa's rulers had converted to Islam.

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



with the Balinese during the 18th century. Barely had the wars finished when Gunung Tambora in Sumbawa exploded in April 1815, killing tens of thousands. One of the most cataclysmic eruptions of modern times, it reduced a 4200m peak to approximately 2850m and devastated agricultural land. All around the globe, the following year was known as 'the year without a summer', due to the amount of volcanic ash in the atmosphere.

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

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

Dangers & Annoyances

Most Sumbawans are incredibly friendly and hospitable, but you may encounter a degree of resentment against Western influence. Protestors destroyed a remote exploration camp belonging to mining giant Newmount in March 2006.

Getting Around

Sumbawa's main highway runs all the way from Taliwang (near the west coast) through Sumbawa Besar, Dompu and Bima to Sape (on the east coast). It's surfaced all the way and in generally good shape. Fleets of buses, some of them luxurious by Nusa Tenggara standards, link all the towns on this road as far east as Bima. Those simply transiting Sumbawa are much better off booking a seat on one of the long-distance buses crossing the island, as local buses stop everywhere.

Car hire is possible through hotels in Sumbawa Besar or Bima, but prices are higher than in Bali or Lombok at about 400,000Rp per day, excluding petrol, but including a driver. Motorcycles are a cheaper option at 50,000Rp a day.

WEST SUMBAWA

☎ 0372

This relatively arid region is very sparsely populated, with the oceanic rollers of Maluku and Sekongkang drawing just a trickle of visitors.

At one time the name Sumbawa only applied to the western half of the island, which fell under the sway of the sultan of Sumbawa; the eastern half of the island was known as Bima.

Poto Tano

Poto Tano is the main port for ferries to/ from Lombok, but there's absolutely no reason to loiter.

Ferries run every 45 minutes, 24 hours a day, between Labuhan Lombok and Poto Tano (12,500Rp, 1½ hours). The through buses from Mataram to Sumbawa Besar, Taliwang or Bima include the ferry fare.

Buses also meet the ferry and go to Taliwang (5000Rp, one hour) and Sumbawa Besar (9000Rp, two hours).

Taliwang

Though it's the regional capital, Taliwang is little more than an oversized village, 30km south of Poto Tano down a good, if narrow sealed road. It's a conservative place with a merchant class of Indonesians of Arab descent. The sale of alcohol is forbidden here.

If you need a bite to eat, head to **Rumah Makan Totang Raja** (☎ 81263; Jl Jendral Sudirman; dishes 6000-15,000Rp), where you can tuck into *ayam taliwang*, the spicy regional speciality. **Hotel Andi Graha** (☎ 81319; Jl Jendral Sudirman; 50,000-75,000Rp; a) has very spacious and clean but bare rooms that have bathtubs and TVs.

Regular buses go from Taliwang to Poto Tano (5000Rp). Six buses a day head for Mataram (45,000Rp, six hours, last one at 1.30pm), and around 30 a day go to Sumbawa Besar (17,000Rp, three hours). For Maluku there are two daily buses (7000Rp, two hours) and regular bemos.

Around Taliwang

Lebok Taliwang, a lake close to the Poto Tano road near Taliwang, is quite a picture when covered in water lilies. **Poto Batu**, 6km from Taliwang, is a local sea resort with a cave/blow hole and a decent beach. **Labuhan-balat**, a Bugis stilt fishing community of just eight

houses on a very pretty bay, is 7km from Taliwang; take a truck or bemo here.

From Taliwang, bemos and trucks run 11km south over a good sealed road to Jereweh, from where it is 6km to the beach at Jelenga, popular with surfers for the off-shore 'left' Scar Reef. **Jelenga Beach Bungalows** (bungalows 35,000Rp) has very basic accommodation that fronts the beach.

Maluk & Sekongkang

A key surfing destination, Maluku village is 30km south of Taliwang down a (mainly) sealed but potholed road. The superb beach has white sand framing turquoise-and-deep-blue waters. Its isolation had kept the number of visitors to a trickle, but a massive mining project near Maluku has driven a wave of development.

The open-cut gold mine about 30km inland is the biggest thing to hit Sumbawa since Islam. The Newmont mine employs about 4000 workers, extracting copper and gold, and though this had a huge impact on Maluku when it first opened, the expats and bars have now shifted to Townside, a nearby gated private enclave. Maluku has since reverted to type as a provincial, if prospering and bustling little place. There's a BNI bank with ATM on Jl Raya Maluku, and Wartel Jaya just off it has (pedestrian) internet access.

Fifteen kilometres further south, the spread out settlement of **Sekongkang** also has a fine surf beach and a scattering of upmarket accommodation options geared to attract the high rollers from the Newmont mine. The beach is at **Sekongkang Bawah**, 2km downhill from **Sekongkang Atas**, where some buses stop.

Of the famous surf spots, **Supersuck** is a powerful 'left' reef break near Maluku that can give 100m rides; **Yo Yo's** in **Sekongkang Bawah** offers two reliably consistent 'right' reef breaks.

SLEEPING & EATING

Kiwi Maluku (☎ 635166; Jl Pasir Putih, Maluku; r with fan/air-con 85,000/200,000Rp; a) A surfers' inn where the fan-only rooms are pretty rough around the edges. The air-con options are clean and comfortable with good beds and bathtubs with hot water. The barnlike bar has a darts board and serves inexpensive Western and Indonesian faves (dishes

10,000Rp to 32,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Hotel Trophy (☎ 635119; fax 635130; Jl Raya Maluku, Maluku; r incl breakfast 180,000-432,000Rp; a s) Offers four classes of rooms, quite excellent by Sumbawan standards. All are spotless and nicely designed, with big beds, reading lights and wardrobes, and some have sofas and minibars; however, the restaurant is pricey (mains 30,000Rp to 40,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Yo Yo Resort (☎ 081 23951899; Sekongkang; r US\$24-48; a) Formerly a surf camp, this badly-run place has poor-value rooms – some even lack windows.

Tropical Beach Resort & Spa (☎ 289104; www.tropicalbeachresort.com; Sekongkang; r US\$60-95, villas US\$125; s) On a fine sandy cove, this place has a huge pool. The rooms – quite elegant, though overpriced – are kitted out with quality wooden furniture, some with four-poster beds.

Rantung (Sekongkang; dishes 30,000-70,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) This expensive beach bar-restaurant has Western food, including club sandwiches and steaks, and it also serves some Chinese and Mexican dishes.

Masakan Padang (Jl Raya Maluku, Maluku; meals 8000-18,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Has good, cheap Padang food and cold beer.

There are plenty of warungs along Jl Raya Maluku that serve up delicious *ikan bakar* (grilled fish).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Two buses a day travel between Taliwang and Maluku (7000Rp, 1½ hours), but bemos cover the route hourly. Two buses leave Maluku for Sumbawa Besar (22,000Rp, 7½ hours) at 7am and 8.30am daily.

SUMBAWA BESAR

☎ 0371 / pop 55,000

Sumbawa Besar, often shortened to just 'Sumbawa' by locals, is the principal town of the western half of the island. It's a resolutely provincial, unexceptional place where horse carts called *benhur* still hold their own with bemos, and there are no attractions except for the old palace. A trip out to Pulau Moyo or to nearby villages can be rewarding, but they can be difficult to reach. For most travellers, Sumbawa Besar is just a rest stop on the journey across the island.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are two flights a week with Merpati (☎ 22002; Jl Yos Sudarso 16) to/from Mataram, with connections to Denpasar. Departure tax is 6000Rp.

BOAT

Pelni's *Tilongkabila* calls in at the small port of Badas, 9km west of Sumbawa Besar, every month en route to Lombok, Bali, and Sampit, Kalimantan. The *Tatamailau* links Badas with Flores, Alor, Timor and Papua. The Pelni office is at Labuhan Sumbawa, the fishing port, 3km west of town on the Poto Tano road.

BUS

Sumbawa Besar's main long-distance bus terminal is the Sumur Payung terminal at Karang Dima, 5.5km northwest of town on the highway, although some morning buses to Bima leave from the Brang Bara Terminal (Jl Kaharuddin). Routes include Bima (45,000Rp, seven hours via Dompu, six daily between 7am and 8pm); Poto Tano (12,000Rp, two hours, very regularly until 5pm); Mataram (70,000Rp including ferry, seven hours, four daily between 7am and 10am); Denpasar (180,000Rp including ferries, around 12 hours, two daily). You can book tickets at Tiara Mas (☎ 21241; Jl Yos Sudarso). Cheaper buses without air-con leave for Mataram (55,000Rp) throughout the day.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

It's easy to walk into town from the airport, which is only 500m from Hotel Tambora. Turn to your right as you exit the airport terminal and cross the bridge. Alternatively, take a yellow bemo (1000Rp) or an *ojek* (2000Rp).

BEMO

The streets here, apart from the bemo speedway along Jl Hasanuddin, are relatively stress-free. Bemos and *benhur* cost 1000Rp for trips anywhere around town.

The local Seketeng bemo terminal (Jl Setiabudi) is in front of the *pesar* (market). For trips to villages around Sumbawa Besar, there are public bemos. Start early, as there are often only one or two bemos daily; after that it's necessary to charter.

CAR & MOTORCYCLES

One of the few places offering rental is Kabeki Motor (☎ 22710; Hotel Cirebon, Jl Kebayan 4). A Kijang is 350,000Rp per day, or 400,000Rp with a driver. Speak to the staff at Hotel Tamora, who can often fix you up with a motorcycle for 40,000Rp a day.

AROUND SUMBAWA BESAR

All these attractions are tricky to reach by public transport. Ask at Hotel Tambora if you want to hire a local guide, which is a good idea – they will arrange transport.

Pulau Moyo

Most of Pulau Moyo, an island off the coast just north of Sumbawa Besar, is a nature reserve, with coral reefs teeming with fish. Moyo rises to 648m; its centre is composed mainly of savannah with stands of forest. Moyo is inhabited by wild cattle and pigs, barking deer, and bird life that includes megapodes.

Accommodation on the island is limited to one basic operation and one indulgent resort. It is possible, but difficult, to visit Moyo independently on a day trip.

For transport, you may be able to hitch a ride with PHKA in Sumbawa Besar, which has good info and a map of Moyo. If not, head to Air Bari, which is on the coast north of Sumbawa Besar. Public bemos (5000Rp, one hour) run to Air Bari three or four times daily to no fixed schedule, starting at around 7am. They leave from the turn-off to Air Bari, at the far end of Jl Sudirman. Otherwise, charter a bemo.

From Air Bari, speedboats cost 60,000Rp per person (fishing boats and outriggers about half that) to the south coast of the island (3km away). Ask for Pak Lahi if you are having problems finding a boat. The boats can take you to snorkelling spots Air Manis, and Tanjung Pasir (the better of the two). Good reefs with a plunging wall can be found all around the island if you are prepared to charter a boat. Just northeast of Pulau Moyo is small Pulau Satonda, which also has good beaches, snorkelling and a saltwater lake in the middle of the island. It is three hours by boat from Air Bari.

If you want to dive Pulau Moyo, contact the Laguna Biru Resort (☎ 23777; laguna_biru@telkom.net), who run day trips for US\$80 for two dives, including all gear. Blue Mar-

lin (☎ 632424; www.diveindo.com), based in Gili Trawangan, operates a five-day live-aboard trip to Moyo from Lombok that costs from US\$550 per person. Some of the best diving is around Pulau Medang, off the northwest coast.

The seas around Moyo can get turbulent from December to March, so if the boat operators don't want to go to sea, they may have a good reason.

SLEEPING

Amanwana Resort (☎ 22233; www.amanresorts.com; all-inclusive jungle tents s/d US\$725/800, ocean tents US\$825/900 plus 21% tax; a) On Moyo's western side, Amanwana is the ultimate island hideaway. Famous former guests include Princess Di and Bill Gates. The luxurious tents are seriously lavish, though they don't have bathtubs. Pamper yourself with a 'jungle cove massage' or savour a bottle of wine in the Music Pavilion. There's a dive school here too. Most guests arrive by seaplane from Bali (US\$550 return). Definitely nice, but what a price!

A forestry worker offers basic bungalows (per night incl simple meals 45,000Rp) in the south of Moyo. Arrange the return journey from Moyo with whoever takes you there. There are also four PHKA guard posts on Moyo – one at the southern end and the others in villages – where it should be possible to stay overnight for a donation, but take your own food and water.

Other Sights & Activities

Some of the best *songket* sarongs are made in Poto village, 12km east of Sumbawa Besar and 2km from the small town of Moyo. Traditional designs include the *prahu* (outrigger boat) and ancestor head motif. Modern Balinese-style ikat is also woven on handlooms; head to the village across from the football field and ask to see it being made.

The hills south of Sumbawa Besar are home to a number of traditional villages and offer hiking possibilities. One of the more interesting villages is Tegel, from where horses can be hired to venture higher into the forest.

Near Batu Tering are megalithic sarcophagi, carved with low-relief crocodile and human figures, believed to be the 2000-year-old tombs of ancient chiefs. Footprints in the stones are said to be those of the

gods. Batu Tering is about 30km by bemo from Sumbawa Besar, via Semamung. Hire a guide in the village to visit the sarcophagi, which are 4km away.

Air Beling is a pretty waterfall in the southern mountains. Take the road south through Semamung a further 8km to Brangrea and then the turn-off to the falls, from where it is 6km along a rough road with many forks. It is nigh on impossible to find without a guide.

EAST SUMBAWA

☎ 0373

The contorted eastern half of Sumbawa has always been linguistically and culturally distinct from the west.

A trickle of travellers pass through this region bound for Komodo and Flores, but virtually no-one stays longer than a night or so, except in Hu'u, an attractive surf beach on the south coast.

Gunung Tambora

Looming over central Sumbawa is the 2850m volcano Gunung Tambora. Its 6km-wide caldera contains a two-coloured lake, and there are views as far as Gunung Rinjani (Lombok). It can be climbed from the western side: the base for ascents is the village of Pancasila near the town of Calabai, which is five hours by a very crowded bus from Dompu or an hour by speedboat from Sumbawa Besar. Guides can be arranged in Pancasila, but few people make the climb because it is a hard two-day trip, and there's the excruciating bus journey getting there and away. But at least you won't be bumping into fellow climbers on the summit.

Tambora's peak was obliterated in one of the greatest volcanic explosions of modern times, the eruption of April 1815 (see p530), but since then all has been quiet. The eruption buried the entire population of the state of Tambora. In 2004 investigations by University of Rhode Island and Indonesian vulcanologists unearthed bronze bowls and ceramic pots in a Pompeii-like buried village that indicate that the region had strong trading links with Vietnam and Cambodia.

Dompu

The seat of one of Sumbawa's former independent states, Dompu is now the third-biggest town on the island. There's a

colourful market snaking through its back streets, but otherwise it's just a stopover with few lingerers.

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

The best hotel is the hospitable **Wisma Samada** (☎ 21417; Jl Gajah Mada 18; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp, with air-con 60,000/80,000Rp; a) , which has plenty of really decent, spacious rooms with attractive wooden beds and desks. Bathrooms have Western toilets and *mandis*. You'll enjoy your meal at **Rumah Makan Rinjani** (☎ 21445; Jl Sudirman; mains 5000-14,000Rp), a spotless, very orderly restaurant right opposite the main mosque where a terrific *nasi campur* is just 5000Rp.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Daily buses run from Ginte main bus terminal, 2km from the centre, to Bima (9000Rp, two hours), Sape (15,000Rp, four hours) and Sumbawa Besar (35,000Rp, five hours). You can also get an air-con bus and ferry combined ticket through to Mataram (110,000Rp), but availability can make this difficult – several travel in convoy from Bima, passing by the terminal at 9pm.

Two buses leave the Lepardi local bus terminal on the southern side of town for Hu'u (7000Rp, 1½ hours) at 7am and 11am daily. At other times you'll have to charter a bemo or taxi.

Hu'u & Lakey Beach

Hu'u is best known as a stronghold of surf culture, and wave addicts come from around the world to take on Lakey Peak and pipe. Several attractive new and renovated places are now grouped on Lakey beach, 3km from Hu'u, and the sweeping stretch of sand makes a great beach destination even if you've no interest in riding the rollers – though swimming is only possible at high tide. The best surf is between June and August, though inexperienced surfers might find conditions intimidating as the waves break over a sharp, shallow reef.

INFORMATION

Most hotels will change US and Australian dollars at poor rates; it's best to bring enough rupiah with you or use the ATM in Dompou. There's a wartel at Balumba but currently no internet access in the area.

SLEEPING & EATING

Lakey's accommodation is mostly wedged together adjacent to the main surf breaks. Most places have their own restaurants – Aman Gati and Mona Lisa are two good choices. Prices do fluctuate a little depending on the season. Options are listed below in the order you reach them from Dompou.

Mona Lisa Bungalows (r with fan 35,000-50,000Rp, with air-con 90,000-100,000Rp; a) A popular, long-running choice with 22 rooms, from economy options with outside shared or private *mandi* to comfortable bungalows in a verdant garden. Safety deposit boxes are available, and there's a good restaurant (open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Balumba (☎ 21682; s/d 50,000/75,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/150,000Rp; a) The cheaper rooms with simple private bathrooms are perfectly serviceable and set around a garden, while the air-con bungalows all have two beds but cold-water bathrooms. There's a store where you can buy beer and play ping pong, and a wartel.

Amy Lestari (☎ 21684; r with fan 60,000Rp, bungalow with air-con 100,000-150,000Rp; a) Offers a choice of clean, good-value accommodation, from simple rooms to very spacious bungalows with hot water. A large new restaurant was about to open when we visited. Rates include breakfast.

Alamanda Bungalows (☎ 623519; s/d 90,000/110,000Rp) An excellent choice, with dinky little detached cottages in grassy grounds, all with direct sea views, tasteful bamboo furnishings, verandas and smart bathrooms.

Hotel Aman Gati (☎ 623031; www.amangati.com; s/d with fan US\$18/25, air-con US\$30/40, high-season supplement US\$10; a s) Well-run place in lovely grounds with plenty of tropical greenery right opposite Lakey Peak. Offers 10 slightly spartan but spotless fan-only rooms with Western-style bathrooms, and smart air-con rooms and bungalows with TVs and hot-water showers. The beachfront restaurant (open breakfast, lunch and dinner) has fine sea views and offers tasty Indonesian and Western food, including vegetarian choices.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The 43km road from Dongu is sealed and in good condition.

From Dompou's Ginte main bus terminal take a bemo (1000Rp) or *benhur* to

the Lepardi local terminal on the southern outskirts, from where there are two (slow) buses in the morning as far as Hu'u (7000Rp, 1½ hours). There are more frequent buses to Rasabau (5000Rp), from where you'll have to take a crowded bemo to the beach (2000Rp).

Try doing this with a surfboard and you'll soon see why so many people take a taxi from Bima airport (around 350,000Rp). Leaving Hu'u, there's one early-morning bus or infrequent bemos to Rasabau, or any of the hotels can arrange a taxi (200,000Rp to Dongu, 350,000Rp to Bima).

Donggo

From Sila, on the Dompou-Bima road, infrequent buses run to the village of Donggo. It is 4km along a good road, and then 10km on a rough road up the mountain. It may be possible to stay with the *kepala desa* in Donggo. The village has a few traditional houses and superb views. The Dou Donggo (Mountain People) living in these highlands speak an archaic form of the Bima language and may be descended from the original inhabitants of Sumbawa. Numbering about 20,000, they've adopted Islam and Christianity over their traditional beliefs in the last few decades, with varying degrees of enthusiasm; they're being absorbed into Bimanese culture and will probably disappear as a distinct group. The most traditional village is Mbawa where, at least until a few years ago, people still wore distinctive black clothes, and a few *uma leme* (traditional houses whose design was intimately connected with the traditional region) still stood.

BIMA & RABA

☎ 0374 / pop 70,000

Bima and Raba together form the major town in the eastern half of Sumbawa. Bima, Sumbawa's chief port, is a grubby run-down place that becomes mud-bound in the wet season and frazzled in the dry. You'll want to get out sharpish. Raba, a few kilometres east, is the much more orderly but dull administrative centre.

The Bima region has been known since the 14th century for its sturdy horses, which were exported to Java. Today, Bima is a conservative Islamic place with one mediocre sight – the former sultan's palace –

though the *pasar malam* (night market) on Jl Flores is worth a wander.

Virtually everyone is here to take the ferry (or a flight if they're lucky) to Labuanbajo in Flores; they then head to Rinca or Komodo for a dragon-spotting session. Remember one thing: the ferry between Sumbawa and Flores no longer stops at Komodo, no matter what some hustlers may claim.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Komodo Explorer (Jl Sumbawa; per hr 11,000Rp)

MONEY

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Sultan Hasanuddin; 𠄎 8am-2pm Mon-Fri) Has an ATM and changes foreign currency and travellers cheques. If you're heading east, this is the last ATM before Ruteng.

POST

Main post office (Jl Sultan Hasanuddin) A little way out.

TELEPHONE

Telkom office (Jl Soekarno Hatta; 𠄎 24hr) Adjacent to the tourist office and has the best rates for international calls.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Dinas Pariwisata (☎ 44331; Jl Soekarno Hatta; 𠄎 7am-3pm Mon-Fri, to 7am noon Sat) This visitor information office is next to the Kantor Bupati in Raba, about 2km from Bima. There are some keen and helpful English-speaking staff here.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

It's best to organise trips to Komodo and Rinca in Labuanbajo (Flores), but these operators may be able to hook you up with a boat heading east:

Doro Parewa Makmur (☎ 43440; Jl Sumbawa 16) Helpful Merpati and Pelnis agent in the centre of town with some English-speaking staff.

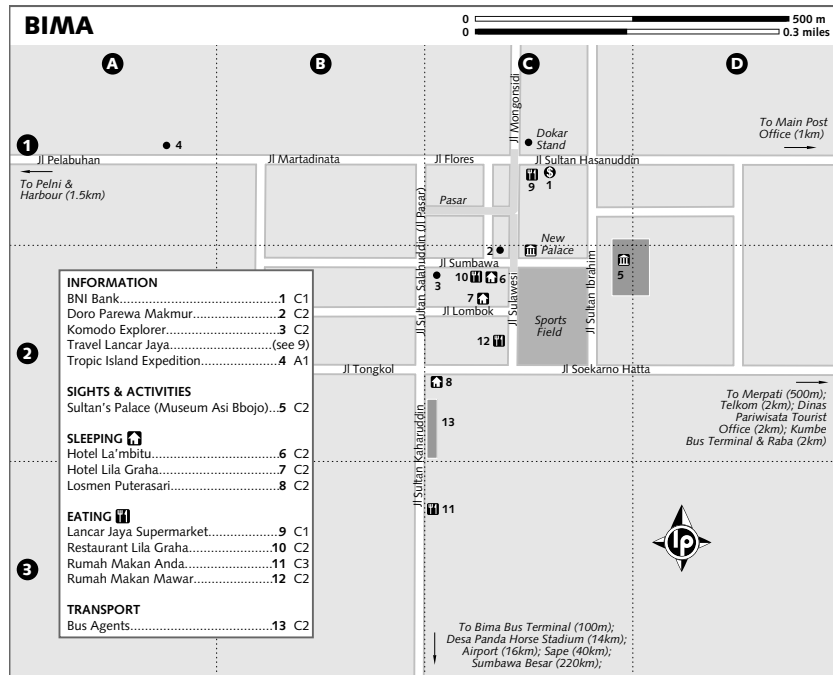
Travel Lancar Jaya (☎ 43737; Jl Sultan Hasanuddin)

Tropic Island Expedition (☎ 43666; Jl Martidinata 59) Local outfit that operates regular trips to Komodo and further east.

Sights

SULTAN'S PALACE

The former home of Bima's rulers is now partly a museum (Jl Sultan Ibrahim; tourist admission 5000Rp; 𠄎 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) with a grab-bag of dusty curios, including a royal crown, sedan chairs, battle flags and weapons. Built



in 1927, the palace had fallen into complete disrepair by the late 1950s but has since been restored. Look out for the royal bed-chamber and photos of the tombs of some early Bima rulers; the tombs still stand in the hills outside town.

Activities

Horse racing is held every Sunday throughout the dry season (May to October) at the Desa Panda horse stadium, 14km from town on the airport road. There's a large grandstand, a gaggle of warungs and plenty of cheering as boys on horses thunder around a dusty track. The height of the racing season is 17 August as independence fever kicks in.

Sleeping

Bima is compact, and most hotels are in the middle of town. There also a few very grotty, insecure cheapies.

Losmen Puterasari (Jl Soekarno Hatta 7; s/d 25,000/30,000Rp) No frills at all, so look before you (s)leep.

Hotel La'mbitu (% 42222; fax 42304; Jl Sumbawa 4; r with fan & hot water 50,000Rp, with air-con & hot

water 75,000-105,000Rp; a) This is as good as it gets in Bima. There's a choice of clean, well-appointed rooms on several floors that are bright and airy. Rates include a small breakfast.

Hotel Lila Graha (% 42740; fax 44705; Jl Lombok 6; s/d with fan 60,000-100,000Rp, with air-con 100,000-175,000Rp plus 10% tax; a) A bizarre warren-like hotel with a staggering array of rooms. The economy rooms are poky, while some of those in the new wing have two beds, phones and hot water.

Eating

Rumah Makan Mawar (% 42272; Jl Sulawesi 28, mains 7000-19,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) A good choice for Indonesian food, including a mighty fine *nasi campur*.

Restaurant Lila Graha (Jl Sumbawa; mains 8000-22,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Attached to the hotel of the same name, this is the best in town. It serves seafood and Chinese and Indonesian cuisine, with a few Western dishes thrown in.

Rumah Makan Anda (Jl Sultan Kaharuddin; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) is also worth a look,

and the *pasar* (market) has stalls selling interesting snacks. Self-caterers should scout the aisles at Lancar Jaya Supermarket (Jl Sultan Hasanuddin).

Getting There & Away

AIR

You can fly to Bima with **Merpati** (% 42697; Jl Soekarno Hatta 60), which has five flights a week to/from Denpasar and regular connections to Mataram, Ende and Maumere. The flight to Labuanbajo leaves on Monday only. Services to Tambulaka (Sumba) and Kupang may resume in the future. Note that some Sumbawa-bound planes from Lombok and elsewhere will not accept surfboards; always phone to check first.

Departure tax from Bima is 6000Rp.

BOAT

Travel agencies in town can organise tickets, since the **Pelni office** (% 42625; Jl Kesatria 2) is at Bima port. There are currently no fast ferries leaving Bima. *Tatamailau* travels monthly from Bima via Maumere and Timor to ports in West Papua, while the monthly *Kelimutu* connects Bima with Larantuka, Timor and Papua. *Tilongkabila* goes to Labuanbajo and Sulawesi one way, and Lembar and Benoa the other.

BUS

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

The majority of buses heading west to Lombok leave in convoy (7pm to 7.30pm), but there are some daytime services too. Fares to Mataram range from 78,000Rp for normal services (without air-con) to 118,000Rp for the luxury, air-con buses that take about 11 hours. Tiara Mas has the best buses. Many continue to Denpasar, arriving at 11am the next morning, then Surabaya and Jakarta.

Destinations in Sumbawa are mostly serviced by smaller crowded buses that stop anywhere and everywhere. They run between 6am and 5pm. Destinations from Bima include Dompu (9000Rp, two hours) and Sumbawa Besar (45,000Rp, seven hours).

Buses east to Sape go from Kumbe bus terminal in Raba, a 20-minute (1500Rp) bemo ride east of Bima. Pick up a yellow bemo on Jl Sultan Kaharuddin or Jl Soekarno Hatta. Buses leave Kumbe terminal for Sape (9000Rp, two hours) from about 6am until 5pm. If you leave at 6am sharp you *may* just make it to Sape for the 8am ferry to Flores, which usually leaves a little late, but don't count on it. It's much safer to charter a bemo which will do the run in 1½ hours and cost around 130,000Rp.

Getting Around

The airport sits amid salt pans by the highway about 17km from the centre. You can walk out to the main road about 100m in front of the terminal and catch a passing bus there, though most will be very crowded. Alternatively, taxis meet arrivals, charging 60,000Rp to Bima or 350,000Rp to Hu'u.

A bemo around town costs 1000Rp per person; *benhur* are 2000Rp.

As there are no official rental agencies, try hiring a motorcycle through your hotel or one of the travel agencies; expect to pay around 60,000Rp per day.

Around Bima

On the main highway between Bima and Sape, the Wawo area is noted for its traditional houses, *uma lengge*. There are fine examples at the 'traditional' village of Maria, just off the highway – they can be seen from the bus on the way to Sape – and even more impressive three-storey houses at neighbouring Sambori.

The Wera region extends northeast of Bima and includes some impressive scenery of rice terraces, gorges and views of the active Gunung Api (1950m). In the Bugis village of Sageang, 10km north of Tawali, schooners are still built. Public transport is limited here and renting a motorcycle in Bima is the best way to explore the area.

SAPE

% 0374

Not a pretty place, Sape is a shambolic little port of tottering wooden houses, with a distinct odour caused by squid and cuttlefish drying under locals' houses and the extensive salt pans nearby. It has a reputation for being quite a hassle for travellers, though many of the hustlers seem to have

moved on these days due to the downturn in tourism in Nusa Tenggara.

Sape has an excess of *benhur* – jingling buggies that don't look very much like Roman chariots, drawn by skinny, pom-pomed horses – and the drivers obviously think they're Charlton Heston as they race each other along the main street after dark.

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

Luckily, there's one decent place to stay, *Losmen Mutiara* (☎ 71337; economy r 25,000Rp, standard 65,000Rp, with air-con 100,000Rp; ☎), which is right next to the port gates and has tidy, clean rooms. It's nothing special but far better than the other squalid options in this town. Eat next door in the clean *Rumah Makan Arema* (☎ 71015; dishes 7000-12,000Rp), located inside a clothes store, which has good *kare* (curry) and rustles up a filling omelette for brekkie.

Getting There & Around

BUS

The ferries arriving at Sape are always met by buses, usually express services direct to Lombok or Bali.

For most destinations in Sumbawa it is necessary to get to Bima for an onward bus. Buses leave every half hour for Raba (9000Rp, two hours) until around 5pm. From Raba take a bemo to Bima (1500Rp, 20 minutes). Some buses also run straight through to Bima. Taxi drivers will no doubt claim buses have stopped running and you must charter their vehicle to Bima – ignore them.

BOAT

Regular breakdowns and heavy storms disrupt ferry services – always double-check the latest schedules first in Bima and Sape. The most reliable places to go for this information in Bima are *Dinas Pariwisata* (see p537), hotels and travel agencies; anyone in Sape should be able to point you in the right direction.

The ferries running to Labuanbajo (27,000Rp per person, 58,000Rp per motorcycle, eight to nine hours) no longer stop at Komodo. Ferries leave at 8am daily Wednesday to Monday and on Tuesday at 3pm. Tickets can be purchased at the pier about one hour before departure.

The rusty, ancient ferries blare out Indo metal from the top deck and screen kung fu movies inside.

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

There is also a ferry service connecting Sape with Waikelo (32,000Rp, seven hours) in West Sumba. It leaves Sape at 5pm on Monday and returns from Waikelo on Tuesday at 9am.

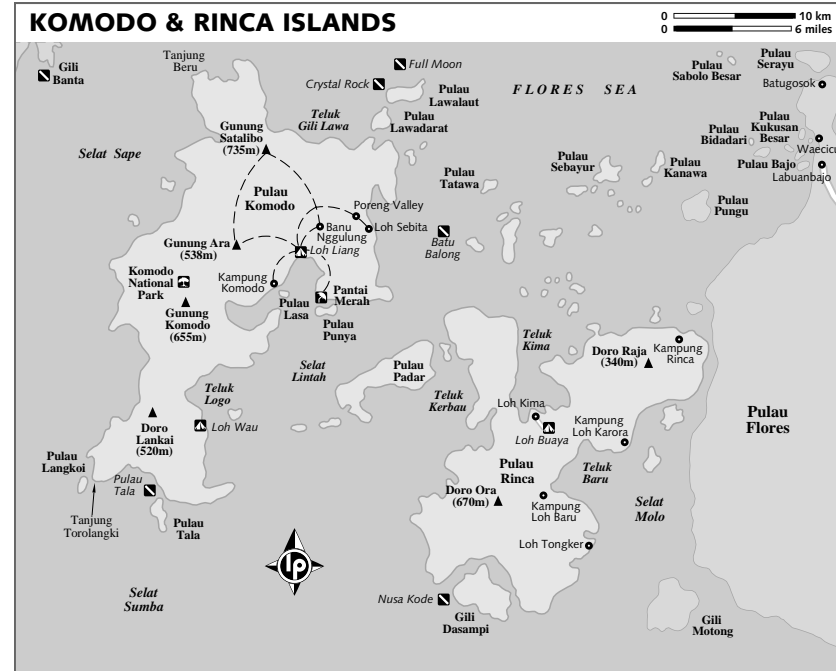
KOMODO & RINCA ISLANDS

Komodo and Rinca are hilly and desolate yet beautiful islands, sandwiched between Flores and Sumbawa, that are home to gargantuan reptiles – the legendary Komodo dragon. The world's largest lizard, known locally as *ora*, it can reach over 3m in length, weigh up to 100kg and feed on animals as large as deer and buffalo.

These isolated islands are surrounded by some of the most tempestuous waters in Indonesia, fraught with riptides and whirlpools. From the sea they look a far more fitting habitat for monstrous reptiles than for the few hundred fishermen and their families who eke out a living in these parched lands.

Rinca receives just as many visitors as Komodo because it's nearest to the port of Labuanbajo in Flores – the main jumping-off point for trips to the Komodo National Park. A steady stream of visitors make their way here these days, but to understand how far off the beaten track it used to be, read *Zoo Quest for a Dragon* by naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough, who filmed the dragons in 1956. Dragons also inhabit Pulau Padar and coastal areas of northwestern Flores.

Though there are hiking trails, it's not permitted to walk them without a guide as dragons have very occasionally attacked (and killed) humans – two villagers have died in the last twenty years. Dragons are



a docile bunch for the most part, but they could snap your leg as fast as they'll cut a goat's throat.

You're pretty much guaranteed to see dragons whichever island you visit, as they have an extremely keen sense of smell and there's usually one or two sniffing around the kitchens at the visitor camps.

Visiting Komodo National Park

This national park (www.komodonationalpark.org), a World Heritage site, encompasses Komodo, Rinca and several neighbouring islands, and their incredibly rich surrounding coral reefs, mangroves and seas.

The 40,000Rp park entrance fee and the conservation fee (US\$15 for adults and US\$7.50 for under 16s), collected on arrival by rangers, buy a three-day permit for both Komodo and Rinca.

Hiring a guide (30,000Rp) is both mandatory and very useful, as all speak some English and are very knowledgeable about the islands' flora and fauna. And they carry a big stick. A camera permit is another 25,000Rp.

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

KOMODO

Rugged Komodo, its gully-ridden hillsides frazzled by the sun and drying winds to a deep rusty red for most of the year, is the largest of the islands in the national park. The accommodation camp of Loh Liang, run by PHKA, is on the east coast of the island. Various treks around the island can be organised with the PHKA office located here.

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

Activities

DRAGON SPOTTING

You're likely to see dragons all year at Banu Nggulung, a dry river bed about a half-hour

KOMODO DRAGONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

The villagers of the region have never hunted Komodos, as they weren't as good to eat as the numerous wild pigs on the island – and for other reasons not too hard to imagine! Today the *ora* is a protected species.

walk from Loh Liang. The organised feeding of goats to dragons is a thing of the past, and dragons are now only fed here when the PHKA wants to do a head count. Banu Nggulung still attracts dragons, but since the feeding stopped fewer dragons are turning up.

A little 'grandstand' overlooks the river bed where the dragons gather. Spectators are fenced off from the dragons – don't expect to walk up to the dragons and have them say 'cheese'. A telephoto lens is handy but not essential. It is possible to spot dragons on some of the other walks, and a few 'pen-

sioner' dragons (and lazy ones) can often be seen around the camp looking for food.

HIKING

Most visitors stay one night at Komodo and only visit Banu Nggulung, but Komodo has a number of other hikes on offer. All hikers must hire a guide to accompany them.

Walks from Loh Liang include the climb to Gunung Ara (538m), around 3½ hours return. The chances of seeing a dragon are slim, but there are expansive views from the top. Poreng Valley, 5.5km from Loh Liang, is another favourite dragon haunt and has

a more out-in-the-wild feeling than Banu Nggulung; the trail continues to Loh Sebita. Even if you do not spot dragons, there's plenty of other wildlife, such as buffaloes, wild boar and some of Komodo's bird life.

SNORKELLING

Snorkelling can be arranged from Loh Liang; equipment costs about 50,000Rp and boat rental is 225,000Rp for four people. Good snorkelling can be found at Pantai Merah (Red Beach) and the small island of Pulau Lasa near Kampung Komodo.

RINCA

Rinca is slightly smaller than Komodo but nearer to Labuanbajo. Boats arrive at the sheltered dock of Koh Kima, where you'll probably find a dragon or two lurking. It's a five-minute walk to the PHKA camp at Loh Buaya, which has a ticket office and information centre, guides' office, wooden bungalows and a café. There's plenty of interesting material in the camp about the islands and their wildlife. Again, keep the entrance ticket if you're heading to Komodo.

Several guided walks are offered across Rinca. As temperatures will inevitably be furnace-hot, most people opt for an hour or so exploring the area close to the camp. But for those with the stamina, four-hour circular hikes can be organised.

There are no set dragon-feeding places on Rinca, but there are often a few monitors on the fringes of the camp at Loh Buaya. Finding dragons in the bush is not so easy, but the guides know spots where Komodos sun themselves. They'll show you dragon nests (the females dig huge burrows to lay their eggs, which they then guard for three months), cacti that have been ravaged by termites, and perhaps the huge webs of the nephilia spider, which can reach 15cm across and are strong enough to trap small birds. As wildlife is much more abundant than on Komodo, you may encounter long-tailed macaques, wild water buffaloes, Timor deer, horses or even wild boar. Bird life includes spangled drongos, fish eagles, bee eaters, megapodes and the orange-footed scrub fowl.

Sleeping & Eating

Both Komodo and Rinca PHKA camps (per person per night 45,000Rp) have large wooden cabins

on stilts with balconies. Each cabin contains spartan rooms with well-weathered mattresses, a sitting area and a *mandi*. During the peak tourist season – around July–August – the rooms may be full, but extra mattresses will be rustled up so everyone is accommodated.

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

Getting There & Away

Ferries travelling between Sape and Labuanbajo have not been stopping at Komodo for several years now, so the only way here is by some sort of charter. One of the most popular ways to arrive is on a boat tour between Lombok and Flores – these stop at Komodo for a night or two. See the boxed text, p516, for the pros and cons of such trips.

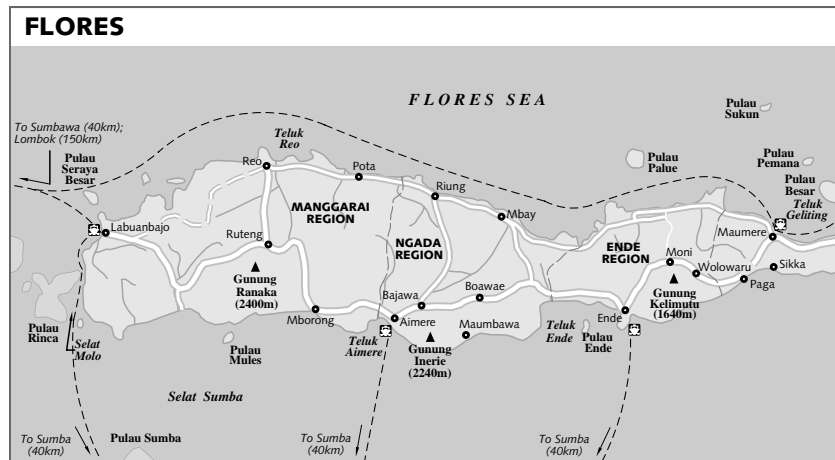
Other than the boat tours, Labuanbajo is the main jumping-off point for Komodo and Rinca. It is possible to charter boats from Sape (see p540) in Sumbawa to Komodo, but be extremely cautious, as many boats here are barely seaworthy.

Chartering a boat to Rinca costs between 225,000Rp and 600,000Rp return from Labuanbajo, depending on the vessel. Boats usually leave at about 8am for the two-hour journey to the island and then return via snorkelling spots. You can book through your hotel or an agency, or start speaking to captains directly at the harbour, which will cut out the commission. Captain Rudy (☎ 085239054859) charges 500,000Rp for a well-organised trip on a twin-engined boat that can accommodate 10 people. Whoever you sail with, remember to check that the vessel has a radio and life jackets.

Komodo day trips start at around 600,000Rp from Labuanbajo, but as the journey takes about four hours each way the island is probably better suited to a longer trip. Two-day charter boat rates begin at around 1,200,000Rp for up to six people.

FLORES

A fascinating, mountainous and remarkably beautiful island, Flores has a volcanic topography that has long shaped its destiny. A chain of cones stretches the length of this verdant island, provoking a



complicated relief of V-shaped valleys and knife-edged ridges – terrain that was near-impenetrable until recent years and that has separated the island into many distinct ethnic groups. Today, though Flores is overwhelmingly Catholic, rich indigenous cultures continue to thrive alongside mainstream religious beliefs.

Flores has the most remarkable sight in Nusa Tenggara – the sublime multihued crater lakes of Kelimutu – terrific beaches around Labuanbajo and east of Maumere, and idyllic offshore islands with fine snorkelling. The island attracts a steady flow of travellers but has nothing like the tourist scene in Bali or parts of Lombok.

The rugged nature of the island makes road construction difficult, and Flores' serpentine east-west road is impossible to traverse quickly, so you'll need to draw on extra reserves of patience when the going slows – though fortunately you'll always have remarkable natural beauty to wonder at along the way.

History

A startling recent find near Ruteng appears to indicate that a unique species of dwarf hominid lived in Flores until around 12,000 years ago (see the boxed text, p552), though the evidence for the existence of a unique species of 'Flores man' has not yet been accepted by all scientists.

Flores owes its name to the Portuguese, who called the island's easternmost cape

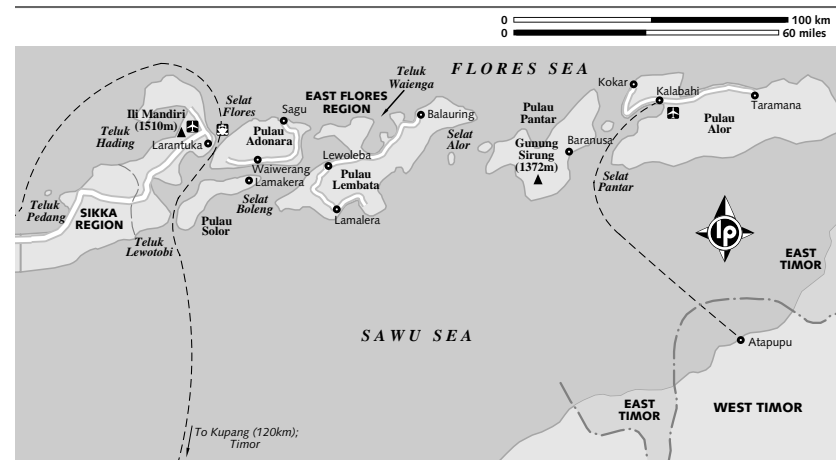
Cabo das Flores, meaning 'Cape of Flowers'. It's thought that the island's diverse cultures developed from a common ancestry. Long before Europeans arrived in the 16th century, much of coastal Flores was firmly in the hands of the Makassarese and Bugis from southern Sulawesi. They brought gold, elephant tusks (used as currency), linen and copperware, and left with rubber, sea products, sandalwood, cinnamon, cotton and fabric. Bugis and Makassarese slave raids on the coasts of Flores were a common problem, forcing people to retreat inland. Eastern Flores came under the sway of Ternate in Maluku during the 15th and 16th centuries.

As early as 1512, Flores was sighted by the Portuguese navigator Antonio de Abreu. The Portuguese, drawn by the lucrative sandalwood trade, built fortresses on Pulau Solor and at Ende. Christianity was a successful import, and today a church is the centrepiece of almost every village.

In the 17th century, the Dutch kicked the Portuguese out of most of Flores, and by 1850 they had purchased Portugal's remaining enclaves in the area, including Larantuka.

The Dutch were near-constantly confronted with rebellions and inter-tribal wars. Unrest continued until a major military campaign in 1907 subdued most of the tribes of central and western Flores. Missionaries moved into the isolated western hills in the 1920s.

Today Flores is holding its breath for provincial status. This will be a huge de-



velopment for the island, as it is currently under the jurisdiction of Kupang and has only limited control over its own affairs.

Culture

The island's 1.8 million people are divided into five main linguistic and cultural groups. From west to east, these are the Manggarai (main town Ruteng), the Ngada (Bajawa), the closely related Ende and Lio peoples (Ende), the Sikkane (Maumere), and the Lamaholot (Larantuka). In the more remote areas, some older people don't speak a word of Bahasa Indonesia, and their parents grew up in purely animist societies.

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

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

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

Getting Around

What one Indonesian tourist leaflet charitably calls the 'Trans-Flores Hwy' spirals,

twists and tumbles nearly 700km from Labuanbajo to Larantuka, at the eastern end of the island. It's sealed all the way, but buses are invariably small, cramped and overcrowded, and the road is narrow and tortuously winding. Floods and landslides in the rainy season are common. On the other hand, the stunning scenery certainly helps compensate.

It is best to break a trans-island journey at regular intervals so as not to get the bus passenger's version of road rage. Be warned that all the twists and turns make a lot of people sick on the buses – it isn't much fun sniffing the country air on a long ride.

Work started on an alternative route, the so-called 'Trans-Northern Hwy' between Reo and Mbay, years ago but many sections are in a deplorable state these days.

For those with more money than time, car rental is available in Labuanbajo or Maumere. The trans-island rate is 450,000-500,000Rp per day, including driver and petrol. This is becoming a very popular option for small groups, as you can stop where you like to take in remote attractions or take a photo. See p549 and p567 for reliable transport fixers in the main arrival points of Labuanbajo and Maumere, respectively.

Motorcycling across the island is fantastic with the combination of roads and scenery, but it's only for experienced bikers, due to tough conditions and blind bends. A few superhuman cyclists with legs of steel manage to traverse the island too, using

DIVING & SNORKELLING AROUND KOMODO & LABUANBAJO

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

Bomb- and cyanide-fishing previously did some damage to the reefs in the national park, but its waters are now patrolled by navy vessels and the coral is recovering well. Fishermen are being encouraged to farm fish, including tiger grouper and sea bass (some pens can be seen in the bay just offshore from Labuanbajo), and pelagic fish aggregating devices have been established in deep waters in an attempt to provide an alternative source of income.

Due to the strength of the currents in the region, it's best to 'tune-up' to local conditions first at sites such as Sebayur and the Sabolo islands, which have shallow coral plateaus sloping down to sandy bottoms at around 10m. Both also have nice coral bommies and lots of marine life; they're ideal for inexperienced or ocean-rusty divers. Once you've got your buoyancy and confidence sorted, there are over 50 more sites in the Komodo region.

Crystal Rock and the sea mount Full Moon on the north side of Komodo offer nudibranchs and seahorses, batfish and reef sharks. Dozens of mantas can sometimes be seen at Lankoi Bay and Pulau Tala (September to January is the best season), while whale sharks are occasionally spotted at Nusa Kode off the southern coast of Rinca.

For a real adrenalin surge, Gili Banta can throw up absolutely anything from huge schools of barracuda to hammerhead, bull and grey sharks. Batu Balong has long been a favourite with divers, but the currents can be ferocious here; sharks, Napoleon wrasse and turtles are seen regularly.

See opposite for recommended Labuanbajo-based dive schools. Several live-aboards from Bali and Lombok also pass through this area.

local buses to get up the worst hills and freewheeling down, but the topography of the island rules out cycling for all but Tour-de-France trainees.

LABUANBAJO

☎ 0385

A picturesque fishing community clinging to the western tip of Flores, Labuanbajo has an agreeably weathered, slightly ramshackle charm. It's the main jumping-off point for Komodo and Rinca, and with dozens of world-class dive sites and fine snorkelling nearby there's every reason to spend a few days here. The attractive harbour is scattered with outrigger fishing boats and is sheltered by the islands, giving the impression that you're standing on the shores of a vast lake.

Though there aren't any readily accessible walk-on-and-flop beaches, some of the small islands nearby have blissful white-sand bays and bungalow-style accommodation.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS

Prundi (per hr 5000Rp) It's quite a hike east of the centre.

MONEY

The one ATM in Labuanbajo at the time of writing only accepted local cards; the nearest alternatives are in Ruteng (or in Bima if you're heading west). Moneychangers will offer similar rates to the banks. Banks that accept travellers cheques and change dollars:

BNI (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Yos Sudarso; h 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) Also offers credit-card cash advances.

BRI (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Yos Sudarso; h 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

POST

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

TELEPHONE

The Telkom office is 1km west of town but offers the best rates. The wartel near the waterfront just seems to pick high prices out of the air.

TOURIST INFORMATION

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

PHKA information booth (☎ 41005; Inkomodo@indosat.net.id; Jl Yos Sudarso; h 8am-2.30pm Mon-Thu, to 11am Fri) PHKA administers the Komodo National Park, provides helpful, practical information for Komodo and Rinca islands, and has a small gift shop.

Sights & Activities

ISLANDS

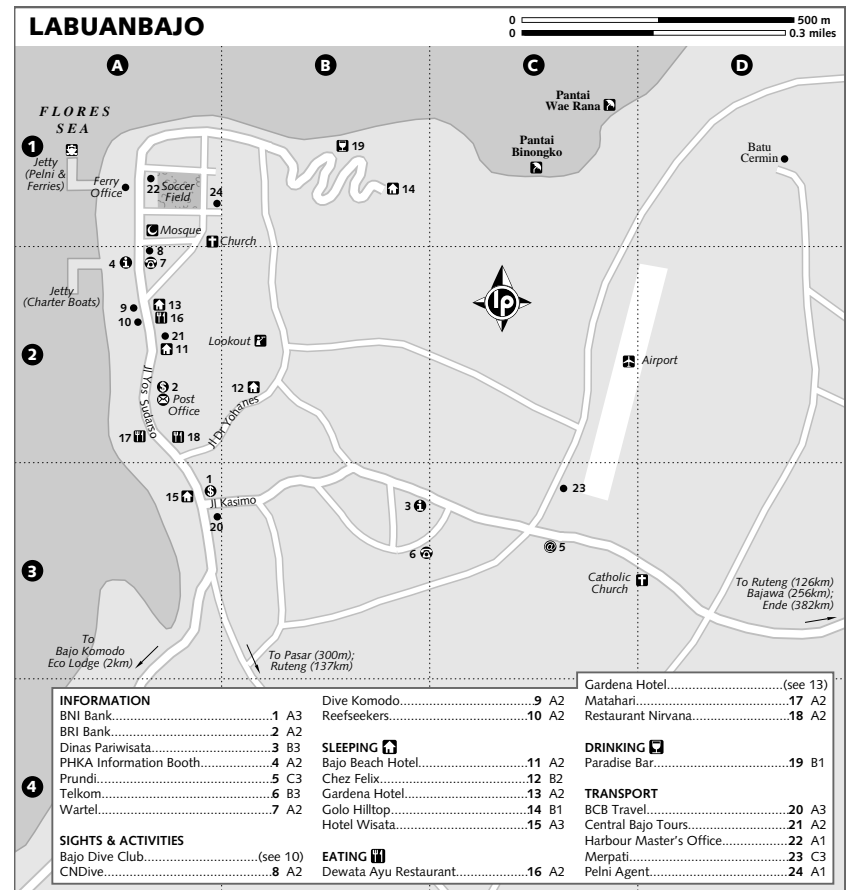
Boat trips to nearby islands make great day trips, offering the chance to snorkel or crash out on a deserted beach. Most hotels will offer to set you up with a boat to the uninhabited island of your choice, or you can get down to the dock and put your bargaining head on. A half-day trip to Pulau Bidadari, where there's coral and clear water, costs around 60,000Rp per person with four or

more. Beaches worth lounging on are Pantai Waecicu, where the bungalows are now closed but there's snorkelling around the tiny off-shore island of Kukusan Kecil, Pulau Serayu and Pulau Kanawa – the last two have accommodation and offer free transport if you stay there. Most boats leave from the shoreline at the northern end of the main street.

DIVING & SNORKELLING

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

Local dive operators have their offices strung out along the seafront road:



Bajo Dive Club (☎ 41503; www.komododiver.com)
CNDive (☎ 41159)
Dive Komodo (☎ 41354; www.divekomodo.com)
Reefseekers (☎ 41443; www.reefseekers.net)

It's best to have a chat with all the dive schools first and ask about their equipment and boats before you decide who to dive with. Reefseekers is very well informed about local conditions and has speedboats for fast transfer times. Condo of CNDive offers a 'manta guarantee'. Two dives cost between US\$48 and US\$75, including all gear and lunch; the further away the site is – say the northern side of Komodo – the higher the price.

Based in Labuanbajo, the **Feliana** (☎ 03617420995; emilbeie@indo.net.id) is a beautiful teak sailing boat that operates as a dive live-aboard. A three-day return trip to Komodo costs US\$170 per person, or US\$320 including two dives a day.

Dive operators will rent out equipment for snorkelling, as will some hotels, but take care not to damage it, as some travellers have been hit with heavy bills.

BATU LERMIN

This limestone outcrop (admission 10,000Rp; 11 8am-5pm), also known as Mirror Rock, includes a series of caves located about 4km east of town. The main cave is in the centre of the outcrop – take the ladder walkway up and around into the longest canyon, then proceed through a series of chambers to where the cave opens into a towering, narrow canyon. This is the 'mirror rock' that gives the outcrop its name; between 9am and 10am, depending on the time of year, the sun shines into the canyon and reflects off the walls, but it's hardly spectacular. The fee includes a guide, though navigation is not difficult.

Sleeping

Most places will offer small discounts when it's quiet. All hotel rates include breakfast.

CENTRAL AREA

Hotel Wisata (☎ 41020; s/d with shower & fan 35,000/45,000Rp, larger r 60,000/75,000Rp) Offers a choice of rooms, from bog standard but serviceable to smart and modern, although it is in a less appealing stretch of town.

Gardena Hotel (☎ 41258; Jl Yos Sudarso; bungalows 40,000-70,000Rp) This well-run hotel, the most

popular place in town, offers neat, well-spaced wooden bungalows. The bungalows are dotted around a leafy hillside plot and most have fine harbour views from their verandas. The restaurant here is excellent.

Bajo Beach Hotel (☎ 41008; r with fan & shower 65,000Rp) Set back off the road, these plain, tiled rooms have ceiling fans and bathrooms with Western toilets.

Chez Felix (☎ 41032; Jl Dr Yohanes; r 60,000-90,000Rp) Set in a quiet location above the bay and run by a friendly family who all speak good English, this is a good option, with neat, clean and comfortable rooms. Also has a restaurant.

Golo Hilltop (☎ 41337; s/d with fan 75,000/85,000Rp, with air-con 150,000Rp) Dutch-run place that enjoys a terrific location high above Labuanbajo Bay. The unlovely-looking concrete rooms are functional and well kept, and there's a restaurant.

BY THE BEACH

Bajo Komodo Eco Lodge (☎ 41391; www.ecolodgesindonesia.com; r US\$55; ☎) This place exudes class and has a whiff of colonial style. Located in expansive grassy grounds, the imposing house has eight light, airy and spacious rooms with stylish pebble-floored bathrooms. There's a lovely lounge with rattan seating and books to browse through, and a pool not far from the so-so beach. Five more cottages are planned. Free airport transports are available.

ISLAND HOTELS

You will need to take a boat ride – free for guests – to get to the following hotels from Labuanbajo.

Serayu Island Bungalows (☎ 41258; www.serayaisland.com; s/d with fan & mosquito net 80,000/100,000Rp) Get-away-from-it-all bliss on Pulau Serayu, an hour from Labuanbajo. Offers simple bamboo lodgings with *mandis* set on a white-sand beach, and there's offshore snorkelling. Food prices here are not much more than on the mainland. There's a minimum two-night stay; contact the Gardena Hotel to get here.

Kanawa Island Bungalows (bungalows s/d 60,000/75,000Rp) On Pulau Kanawa, which you can walk around in a couple of hours, 45 minutes by boat from Labuanbajo. The beach and snorkelling are excellent, and there's basic bungalow accommodation, a

few hammocks and a restaurant. Contact the Kanawa office opposite the Gardena Hotel for a free ride.

Eating & Drinking

Labuanbajo has some extremely good-value restaurants, with fresh seafood and sizzling hot plates something of a local speciality; both are available at very reasonable prices.

Matahari (☎ 41083; Jl Yos Sudarso; dishes 10,000-23,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Terrific views from the port-facing deck, particularly at sunset, and a menu that includes sandwiches, soups and hot plates.

Gardena Hotel (☎ 41258; Jl Yos Sudarso; mains 12,000-23,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This enjoyable and very popular hotel restaurant is just high enough above the street to offer fine views of the bay. It's open-sided to catch the sea breeze and the portions are huge; gorge yourself on the house special, snapper hot plate (20,000Rp).

Dewata Ayu Restaurant (☎ 41304; Jl Yos Sudarso; mains 12,000-25,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Intimate little restaurant with friendly staff and fine hot plates – try the beef steak or tuna.

Restaurant Nirvana (Jl Yos Sudarso; mains 13,000-28,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) It's looking a bit under-patronised these days, but this place, with panoramic harbour views, has tasty dishes such as tuna cooked with butter and garlic.

There's no real bar scene in Labuanbajo and most people are content to enjoy a beer or two with their meal. But at weekends the **Paradise Bar** (11 6pm-2am Fri & Sat), up a steep hill on the northern side of town, has live music and sells mixed spirit-based drinks.

Getting There & Away

AIR
 Merpati has flights between Labuanbajo and Denpasar four days a week. The Merpati office (☎ 41177) is between Labuanbajo and the airport, about 1.5km from town.

GT Air has four direct flights per week between Denpasar and Labuanbajo. Its ticket agent is BCB Travel (☎ 41088; Jl Kasimo). At the time this book went to press, Transnusa had begun flying to Maumere (586,000Rp, four times a week).

Departure tax from Labuanbajo is 6000Rp.

BOAT

No ferries stop at Komodo. The ferry from Labuanbajo to Sape (27,000Rp, eight to nine hours) leaves at 8am daily. On Monday and Thursday it travels via Weikelo in west Sumba, making the journey time to Sape about 17 hours. Tickets for Sape can be purchased at the harbour master's office (in front of the pier) one hour before the vessel's departure. See p540 for Sape boat schedules.

The **Pelni agent** (☎ 41106) is easy to miss, tucked away in a side street in the north-east of town. The monthly Pelni ship *Ti-longkabila* heads to Makassar and the east coast of Sulawesi, or to Bima, Lembar and Benoa. *Tatamailau* also travels monthly from Labuanbajo to Maumere, Timor and ports in West Papua.

Many travellers choose to take a boat trip between Flores and Lombok, stopping at Komodo and Sumbawa along the way for snorkelling and exploration. For more on this option, see p516. The local Perama boat contact is Central Bajo Tours (☎ 41289; fax 41490; Jl Yos Sudarso).

BUS & TRUCK

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

There are buses to Ruteng (30,000Rp, four hours) every two hours, one to Bajawa (70,000Rp, 10 hours) at 6am daily, and three weekly to Ende (105,000Rp, 15 hours). Additional buses meet arriving ferries.

Passenger trucks also ply the route to Ruteng. If you travel this way, it's imperative to get a seat in front of the rear axle; the positions behind are good approximations of ejector seats.

Getting Around

The air field is about 1.5km from the town. Hotel reps meet flights and offer free lifts, or a private taxi is 10,000Rp to town.

Speak to transport supremo Tarsi (☎ 41649) about renting a Kijang (450,000Rp a day, including driver and fuel) or a 10-seater minibus (750,000Rp) for trips across Flores. Motorcycle rental is also possible; speak to your hotel.

RUTENG

☎ 0385 / pop 35,000

A market town and meeting point for the hill people of western Flores, Ruteng is the heart of Manggarai country, which extends to the west coast from north of Aimere. The town is surrounded by rice fields on gentle slopes beneath a line of volcanic hills.

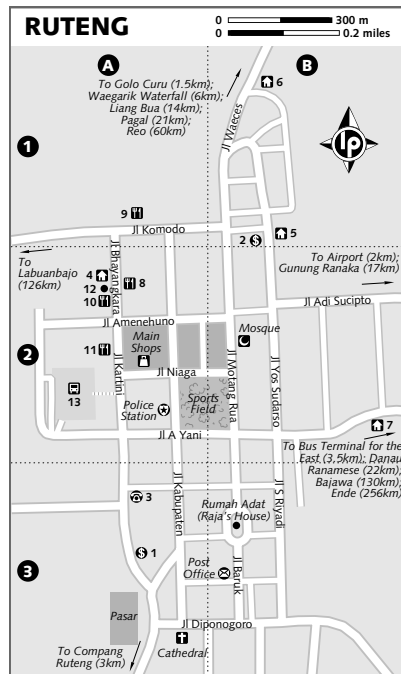
Ruteng is a pleasantly cool town of broad streets, but it's spread out and not particularly atmospheric, though there are some interesting sights in the vicinity. Most people just spend a night here, stopping to break the interminable bus journey.

Ruteng's lively, sprawling pasar (Jl Kartini) is a meeting place for people from the surrounding hills.

Information

For information, the Merlin restaurant has good noticeboards. There's no internet access; go to Bajawa or Labuanbajo for a cyberfix.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Kartini; 7am-3.30pm Mon-Sat) Changes cash and travellers cheques and has an ATM, though poor satellite connections mean that this can't be relied upon.



BRI bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Yos Sudarso;

7.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8am-1pm Sat) The ATM has a 500,000Rp withdrawal limit. The bank also changes US dollars.

Post office (Jl Baruk 6; 7am-2pm Mon-Sat)

Telkom office (Jl Kartini; 24hr)

Sleeping

Rima Hotel (☎ 22196; Jl A Yani 14; economy s/d/tr 50,000/60,000/75,000Rp, s/d/tr with bathroom 60,000/75,000/90,000Rp) This excellent little wooden hotel is a dead ringer for a Swiss chalet, and the service is pretty efficient and welcoming too. All the rooms are neat and tidy, some with bunk beds and the more expensive options with showers (the shared bathrooms have Western-style facilities). There's also a restaurant and bar area, and motorcycle hire can often be arranged through them.

Losmen Agung (☎ 21080; Jl Waeces 10; r 70,000Rp) It's a bit of a hike from the centre, but the rustic location, around rice paddies, is appealing, and the clean, well-maintained rooms have bathrooms.

Hotel Sindha (☎ 21197; Jl Yos Sudarso 26; economy r 40,000Rp, standard r 100,000Rp, VIP r 150,000Rp) Initial impressions are terrible here, with a real air of decay about the reception and corridors; however, the standard rooms at the rear are reasonable and have natural light, and the VIP rooms have hot-water showers. Avoid the economy options at all costs.

Hotel Dahlia (☎ 21377; Jl Bhayangkara; r 75,000-125,000Rp, VIP r 175,000-200,000Rp) There are four classes of rooms, none good value for money. The VIP rooms are spacious, if plain, and have hot water.

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THE MANGGARAI

The Manggarai hill people are perhaps the best known and most interesting of the many 'traditional' ethnic groups in Flores. They tend to be shy but friendly – you'll see many around Ruteng in their distinctive black sarongs, trailing black-haired pigs into market or herding beautiful miniature horses. The Manggarai language is unintelligible to the other people of Flores.

Christianity now predominates among the upland Manggarai; traditional animist practices linger but are dwindling. In some villages you can still find the *compang*, a ring of flat stones on which offerings were placed, or you may be shown ritual paraphernalia used during sacrificial ceremonies.

The *penti* ceremony, held during August between the rice harvest and the next planting, is the most important Manggarai event. It's a cleansing ceremony that honours the ancestors and involves the slaughter of buffalo and pigs. Trials of strength take place at this time, including *caci* fights between combatants wearing wooden masks like uptilted welder's helmets. One carries a rawhide oval shield and a 1m-long whip, and the other has a short, springy stick and a thick cloth wrapped around his forearm.

Eating

Warungs around the market serve Padang food, meatball soup and sate.

Agape Café (☎ 22561; Jl Bhayangkara 6-8; dishes 8000-30,000Rp; 7am breakfast, lunch & dinner) A very welcome new café, with friendly service, an espresso machine and cakes. It also serves breakfasts, Western and Indonesian cuisine, and Guinness and Bintang. Speak to the owner, Timotius, and he'll show you the substantial gas-fired coffee bean roasting machines at the rear. Local coffee is for sale here too.

Lestari (☎ 21393; Jl Komodo 2; dishes 10,000-15,000Rp; 7am breakfast, lunch & dinner) Head to this log cabin-styled resto for well-priced Indonesian food, including shrimp and fish dishes.

Restaurant Merlin (☎ 22475; Jl Bhayangkara 32B; mains 13,000-30,000Rp; 7am breakfast, lunch & dinner) Offers an extensive menu of Chinese – try the chicken with chilli sauce – and Indo dishes, though Merlin sure is pricey for the provinces.

Ruteng also has the biggest supermarket (Jl Kartini) between Bima and Ende.

Getting There & Away

AIR
The airport is 2km southeast of town, and flights are usually met by hotel reps offering free rides.

At the time of research Transnusa (☎ Kupang office 0380881256) was about to start flights from Ruteng to Kupang (four weekly) all via Ende. Check at your hotel or call Kupang for the latest schedule. Merpati offers two

weekly flights to Kupang via Ende, though cancellations are frequent on this route.

BUS

The bus terminal for eastern destinations is located inconveniently 3.5km out of town. Bemos run here for 1000Rp. Local buses, trucks and those heading west still run from the central bus/bemo terminal near the police station.

There are regular buses and bemos to Reo, so these are an option if you're heading to Pagal (6000Rp, every 1½ hours). It's best to leave early from Ruteng and aim to be out of Pagal by 3pm. Buena Mas buses going to Bajawa (40,000Rp, five hours) and Ende (70,000Rp, nine hours) depart at 7.30am; there are also a couple of later services to each town. Buy your ticket in advance at **Agen Bus** (☎ 21302; Jl Bhayangkara 4) or your hotel. Buses to Labuanbajo leave about every two hours (30,000Rp, four hours) from the central bus/bemo terminal.

Getting Around

Bemos cost 1000Rp around town. Contact Rima hotel about motorcycle rental.

AROUND RUTENG

Compang Ruteng, a 'traditional' village 3km from Ruteng has a *compang*, a traditional ancestor altar composed of a raised stone burial platform of rocks and a couple of renovated *rumah adat* (traditional houses). One is the Mbaru Gendrang, a ceremonial meeting house that contains heirlooms, including a gold-and-silver *panggal*, the mask

THE FLORES 'HOBBIT'

The Manggarai have long told folktales of *ebo gogo* – hairy little people with flat foreheads who roamed the jungles during the times of their recent ancestors. No-one paid them much attention until September 2003, when archaeologists made a stunning find.

Excavating the limestone cave at Liang Bua, they unearthed at a depth of 6m a skeleton that was the size of a three-year-old child but had the worn-down teeth and bone structure of an adult. Six more remains appeared to confirm that the team had unearthed a new species of human, *Homo floresiensis*, which reached around 1m in height and was inevitably nicknamed the 'hobbit'.

Lab tests brought another surprise. The hominid with the nutcracker jaw and gangly, chimplike arms lived until 12,000 years ago, practically yesterday in evolutionary terms, when a cataclysmic volcanic eruption is thought to have wiped out the little people and devastated the island of Flores.

It seems that *Homo floresiensis* could represent the first ever example of human dwarfism, an evolutionary phenomenon that has been well documented in the animal world, particularly on islands. In Jersey, one of the British Channel Islands, red deer shrank to a sixth of their normal European size in just 6000 years, while California's Channel Islands were once home to the ultimate oxymoron of the animal world – a pygmy mammoth.

Flores is particularly rich in these evolutionary quirks of nature. It had mini elephants called 'stegodon' as well as examples of gigantism (which tend to occur in the same locations as dwarfism), such as colossal rats and Komodo dragons.

But not all scientists are convinced about the origins of the Flores find. The prevailing school of thought argues that the Flores hominids are descendants of *Homo erectus*, a species that fled Africa around two million years ago and spread throughout Asia – though no DNA has yet been extracted to confirm this. Until recently it was thought that the arrival of *Homo sapiens* in Asia put paid to *Homo erectus* around 50,000 years ago, though Flores humans could indicate that the species survived in isolated places.

Anthropologists opposed to this suggest that the Flores find could represent *Homo sapiens* (who were known to be travelling between Australia and New Guinea 35,000 years ago) that suffered from microcephaly – a neurological disorder causing stunted head growth, and often dwarfism, that runs in families.

But the momentum still seems to be with the original theory, given that in 2005 a second large jawbone was found, of broadly similar dimensions to the first discovery. And with tools very similar to those found in Liang Bua reportedly unearthed in Timor, and possibly in Sulawesi, more little people could yet emerge from the evolutionary backwoods.

For details about visiting Liang Bua, see below.

shaped like a buffalo horn and used in ceremonial *caci* (a martial art in which participants duel with whips and shields).

Visitors are asked to sign in and make a sizable donation (about 15,000Rp). Ask around Ruteng for information on the ceremonies that are held further afield.

Golo Curu, a hill to the north of Ruteng, offers spectacular early-morning views of the hills, valleys, rice paddies, terraced slopes and distant mountain valleys. Walk down the Reo road and, when you're 20 minutes past the Hotel Karya, turn right at the small bridge. There's a derelict shrine on the hilltop with a statue of the Virgin Mary on a pedestal. Further north, 6km

from Ruteng, near Cancar, is the **Waegarik waterfall**.

Manggarai sarongs are black with pretty embroidered patterns. They are sold in the main Ruteng market, or visit the weaving village of **Pagal**, 21km north of Ruteng on the main road to Reo. See p551 for transport information.

The 2400m **Gunung Ranaka**, an active volcano that erupted in 1987, can be reached by road from the 8km mark east of town past the airport. Views from the mountain are obscured by 3m regrowth – you'll be better off saving energy for a volcano climb elsewhere.

The limestone cave of **Liang Bua**, where the Flores 'hobbit' was found (see above),

is about 14km north of Ruteng, down a very rough dirt track that is often not passable after periods of heavy rain. Archaeologists believe that the lip along the entrance permitted sediments to build up steadily as water flowed through the cave over millennia, sealing the remains of the humans and animals who lived and died there. There is not much to see at the 30m-wide cave, although some sticks mark the place where the little folk were found. It's best to travel here with a local guide, as the Liang Bua cave is considered sacred to locals – speak to the owners of the Dahlia or Rima hotels or the Agape Café about organising a trip here.

Danau Ranamese, a circular aquamarine lake 22km from Ruteng, is right next to the main Bajawa road. There are picnic spots here, and a couple of waterfalls tumble from the rear of the crater, flooding the rice paddies below. Trails loop around the lake and visitors centre, where you may be charged a 10,000Rp entrance fee. Any bus on the Bajawa–Ruteng route passes by the lake, and all will stop.

BAJAWA

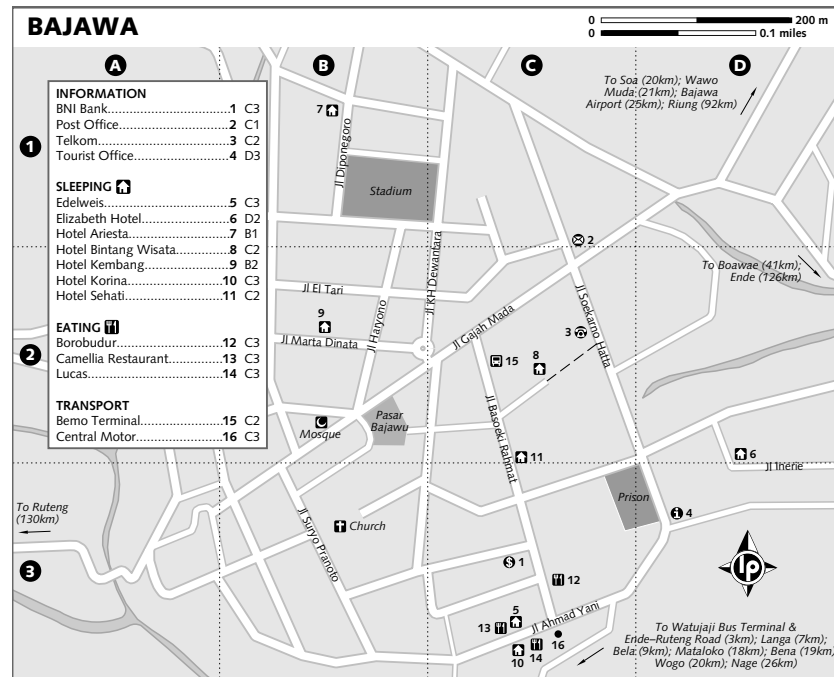
☎ 0384

The attractive, relaxed hill town of Bajawa sits at an altitude of 1100m and is surrounded by forested volcanic hills, with Gunung Inerie (2245m) looming large to the south. It's something of an overgrown village with well-tended gardens bursting with blooms, its suburbs fusing gently with corn fields. The climate is mild and there's a good range of restaurants and accommodation, making it a popular place to spend a few days exploring the countryside.

Bajawa is the main trading centre of the Ngada people, one of the most traditional groups in Flores. Forays to visit Ngada villages or nearby hot springs (for many, their only hot shower in Flores!) are the original attractions, but the recently emerged volcano of Wawo Muda, with its Kelimutu-esque lakes, is also proving a hit.

Information

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Pierre Tendean; 11–8am–3pm Mon–Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Has an ATM and exchanges dollars and travellers cheques.



Post office (Jl Soekarno Hatta; 𠄎 8am-2pm Mon-Sat)
Telkom Office (Jl Soekarno Hatta; per hr 12,000Rp; 𠄎 24hr, internet 8am-6pm) The cheapest place for international calls.

Tourist office (☎ 21554; Jl Soekarno Hatta; 𠄎 8.30am-3pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-1pm Sat) Has a few yellowing leaflets but not much practical advice.

Sleeping

There's a good choice of budget digs in Bajawa, though very little above this price bracket. All prices include breakfast.

Hotel Korina (☎ 21162; Jl Ahmad Yani 81; s/d 50,000/60,000Rp) A very tidy family-run place with large, clean rooms with decent mattresses and attached bathrooms with Western toilets and *mandis*.

Hotel Ariesta (☎ 21292; Jl Diponegoro; s/d with mandi 60,000/75,000Rp) A deservedly popular family guesthouse in the north of town with bright, clean rooms at the front or around the pleasant courtyard area at the back.

Edelweis (☎ 21345; Jl Ahmad Yani 76; s/d 65,000/75,000Rp) Opposite the Korina, this is another excellent family-owned place. It has clean, homely rooms with frilly bedding and pleasant light, airy living areas. It gets booked up with Dutch tour groups in high season.

Hotel Kembang (☎ 21072; Jl Marta Dinata; r 95,000Rp) It's overpriced, as it's used by tour groups, and some of the rooms have not seen the decorators for a while, but it's clean enough and the staff are helpful.

Hotel Bintang Wisata (☎ 21744; Jl Palapa 4; standard r 135,000Rp, VIP r 240,000-285,000Rp) This new place has modern rooms, from plain-but-clean 'standard' class to 'VIP' rooms with TVs and shared balconies that have views of the volcano. All are overpriced, however.

Or try:

Elizabeth Hotel (☎ 21223; Jl Inerie; r 85,000Rp) West of the centre, this well-run hotel has spacious rooms with bathrooms and mosquito nets.

Hotel Sehati (☎ 21431; Jl Basoeki Rahmat; s/d 40,000/50,000Rp, with mandi 60,000/70,000Rp) A homestay with a healthy choice of rooms, some with sprung beds.

Eating

For a small town, Bajawa has a good range of restaurants, including several tiny Padang places around the market.

Lucas (☎ 21340; Ahmad Yani 6; mains 10,000-15,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Run by a friendly English-speaking team, this simply

furnished tin-roofed place serves up fine pork sate and other local faves, including a fearsome if not unpalatable *arak*. Along with the Camellia, it's a good place to meet other travellers and local guides.

Camellia Restaurant (☎ 21458; Jl Ahmad Yani 74; most mains 15,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) A large, well-established Chinese-run place with a wide choice of local and Western dishes on the menu, including sandwiches and Swiss rosti.

Borobudur (☎ 21894; Jl Basoeki Rahmat; mains 10,000-23,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Located in the front room of a suburban house, this clean place has steak, seafood, and Chinese and Indonesian grub.

Shopping

Big, busy and colourful, Pasar Bajawu (Bajawa Market) sells plentiful fruit that's of good quality. Lots of the local women wear ikat cloth, some of which is for sale.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Bajawa no longer has a reliable air service, but it's possible that Mepati may resume flights to Kupang – contact its office in Kupang or ask at your hotel.

BEMO & TRUCK

Regular bemos travel from the terminal (Jl Basoeki Rahmat) to Soa, Mangulewa, Mataloko, Langa and Boawae. Bemos to Bena run two or three times a day but not to a regular schedule. There is also at least one truck a day that runs to Jerebuu, passing through Bena. The bemos roam around town a lot, so you can also pick them up on the street.

BOAT

The ASDP fairly fast ferry *Perum* runs from Aimere, on the coast near Bajawa, to Waingapu (48,000Rp) in Sumba, leaving on Monday at 4pm. It returns to Aimere overnight and then leaves for Kupang (62,000Rp) on Tuesday morning at around 9am. Take a bemo from the Watujaji bus terminal to Aimere (8000Rp) and buy the ticket on the ferry. Ask for the latest schedule at hotels in Bajawa, as changes are common.

BUS

Most buses will pick up from hotels if you book a ticket in advance, but you'll prob-

THE NGADA

Over 60,000 Ngada people inhabit the upland Bajawa plateau and the slopes around Gunung Inerie. They were subdued by the Dutch in 1907, and Christian missionaries arrived in about 1920. Older animistic beliefs remain strong, and most Ngada practise a fusion of animism and Christianity.

The most evident symbols of continuing Ngada tradition are the pairs of *ngadhu* and *bhaga*. The *ngadhu* is a parasol-like structure about 3m-high, consisting of a carved wooden pole and thatched 'roof', and the *bhaga* is like a miniature thatched-roof house. You'll see groups of them standing in most Ngada villages, though in the less traditional ones some of the *bhaga* have disappeared.

The functions and meanings of *ngadhu* are multiple, but basically they symbolise the continuing presence of ancestors. The *ngadhu* is 'male' and the *bhaga* is 'female', and each pair is associated with a particular family group within a village. Some are said to have been built to commemorate people killed in long-past battles over land disputes, and they may be more than 100 years old. Periodically, on instruction from ancestors in dreams, a pair of *ngadhu* and *bhaga* is remade according to a fixed pattern, accompanied by ceremonies that may involve buffalo sacrifices.

The traditional Ngada village layout is two rows of high-roofed houses on low stilts. These face each other across an open space that contains *ngadhu* and *bhaga* and groups of human-sized vertical and horizontal stone slabs. The latter, which appear to be graves of important ancestors, have led to some exotic theories about the Ngada's origins.

Traditionally, the Ngada believe themselves to have come from Java and they may have settled here three centuries ago. But similar stone structures (megaliths) crop up in other remote parts of Indonesia – among them Pulau Nias, Sumatra's Batak highlands, parts of Sulawesi, Sumba and Tanimbar – as well as in Malaysia and Laos. The common thread is thought to be the Dongson culture, which arose in southern China and northern Vietnam about 2700 years ago, then migrated to Indonesia. Megaliths survived only in isolated areas that weren't in contact with later cultural changes.

In addition to *ngadhu*, *bhaga* and the ancestor worship that goes with them, agricultural fertility rites continue (sometimes involving gory buffalo sacrifices), as well as ceremonies marking birth, marriage, death and house building. The major annual festival is the six-day Reba ceremony at Bena, 19km from Bajawa, held in late December or early January, which includes dancing, singing, buffalo sacrifices and the wearing of special black ikat costumes. The highest god in traditional Ngada belief is Gae Dewa, who unites Dewa Zeta (the heavens) and Nitu Sale (the earth).

ably have to endure endless loops around town before the bus finally leaves from the main Watujaji terminal, 3km south of the centre just off the Ende–Ruteng road.

The bus to Labuanbajo (70,000Rp, 10 hours) leaves at 7am; buses to Ruteng (40,000Rp, five hours) are at 7am, 11am and noon; and buses to Ende (44,000Rp, five hours) go at 7am and noon. There are also buses to Riung (18,000Rp, three hours), along a tough, winding road, at 8am and noon.

You will pay a commission if you book your ticket through a hotel.

Getting Around

Yellow bemos (1000Rp) cruise around town, but it is easy to walk almost everywhere except the bus terminals. *Treks* (trucks) also

serve remote routes, most leaving the villages in the morning and returning in the afternoon.

Motorcycles cost 75,000Rp a day, or a Kijang (with driver) is 350,000Rp at Central Motor (☎ 21242; Jl Ahmad Yani).

The airport (Map p556) is 25km from Bajawa and about 6km outside Soa. Bemos from the Pasar Bajawu cost 6000Rp, but don't get stranded in Soa.

AROUND BAJAWA

The main attraction of Bajawa is the chance to get out into the countryside and explore the traditional villages. It is certainly possible to visit the area alone, but you'll learn a lot more about the culture and customs (like the caste system) with a good guide, and some will organise meals in their home

Information

The PHKA office on the main drag has information about the Riung area and accredited guides. Before going to the islands you must sign in and pay 10,000Rp per person (plus 5000Rp boat fee) at a separate booth by the dock.

There's a BNI bank, but it didn't offer any exchange facilities when we visited. Come with enough cash, or one of the guides may exchange greenbacks for rupiah. At the time of research a new phone mast was due to become operational in late 2006, providing mobile phone access to the village. Electricity is normally restricted to between 6pm and 8pm only.

Sights & Activities

Guides will appear at your hotel offering to organise boat trips to several of the islands, though there are few people in town outside the July–August high season, so sharing a boat is not easy. A day trip costs 250,000Rp (for up to six, not including lunch) if you use a guide, or perhaps 175,000Rp if you negotiate directly with the boat owners in the harbour. Renting snorkel gear is usually extra. Three or four islands are usually included in the boat trip, including Pulau Ontoloe, which has a massive colony of flying foxes. (These huge fruit bats blacken the sky around Riung at sunset as they head inland to feed).

It's also possible to go diving in the islands with Awing Muhammed, an experienced Divemaster who trained in Timor. Two dives cost 600,000Rp to 750,000Rp, including all gear. You'll find Awing in the Bugis village at a former hotel known as Nur Iklas.

On the shore around Riung giant iguanas with yellow markings used to be an attraction, though they are now very rare indeed. Komodo dragons can still be seen occasionally. Hike up to Watujapi Hill, about 3km from Riung, for a magnificent view of the coast and the Seventeen Islands Marine Park.

Sleeping & Eating

There are several homestays scattered around town, though unfortunately standards have slipped with the downturn in tourism.

Hotel Florida (s/d 25,000/35,000Rp, with mandi 50,000/60,000Rp) The first place on the road into

town. Its best days were many moons ago and there's an air of decay setting in, though the staff are informative about the region.

Homestay Madona (r 35,000Rp) Seven very basic rooms with *mandis* and verandas in a family house. A friendly old couple run the place and cook meals on request.

Liberty Homestay (r 40,000Rp) On the same stretch as Homestay Madona, Liberty has a nice balcony area and large rooms, plus the owners speak some English.

Nivana (bungalows 75,000Rp) A new place with six well-constructed detached bamboo bungalows with open-air bathrooms. It's jointly owned by a Swiss woman and her somewhat self-obsessed local partner.

Pondok SVD (s/d 90,000/150,000Rp, superior 275,000/300,000Rp) Clean as a whistle, this missionary-run place has absolutely spotless rooms with desks, reading lights and Western toilets. The superior-class rooms have an additional living area with a sofa and a TV. The staff couldn't be more friendly, but the food here is very pricey (dishes 15,000Rp to 20,000Rp, set meals 40,000Rp).

There are only a few eating places in Riung: **Rumah Makan Murah Muriah** (mains 10,000–20,000Rp, large beer 15,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Behind the market, this friendly place with gingham tablecloths offers tasty local grub and sells beer.

Rumah Soto Sate (dishes 6000–14,000Rp; h breakfast, lunch & dinner) Small Javanese-style place that has good sate.

Getting There & Away

From Ndao terminal in Ende (26,000Rp, four hours), a bus leaves every morning at 6am. The only alternative is to take a bus at 1pm to Mbay and then a bemo to Riung. The road to Ende is narrow and bumpy but sealed. Buses from Bajawa (18,000Rp, three hours) leave at 8am and noon, and the wildly winding road is reasonable. The Riung–Ende bus leaves at 7am, and buses to Bajawa depart at 5am and 11.30am.

ENDE

☎ 0381 / pop 80,000

The port town of Ende is an important transport hub, with good sea and air connections to the other islands in Nusa Tenggara, though there's little to see in the town itself. Nevertheless, some fine mountain

scenery surrounds the town, including the cones of Gunung Meja (661m) near the airport and larger Gunung Iya, occupying a promontory to the south.

The people gathered in south-central Flores, in and around Ende, have a mix of Malay and Melanesian features. The aristocratic families of Ende link their ancestors through mythical exploits and magical events to the Hindu Majapahit kingdom of Java. Today the population of Ende is evenly split between Christians and Muslims.

Orientation

Ende is at the neck of a peninsula jutting south into the sea. The old port and most of the shops are on the western side of the

neck. The main port, Pelabuhan Ipi, is on the eastern side.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS & TELEPHONE

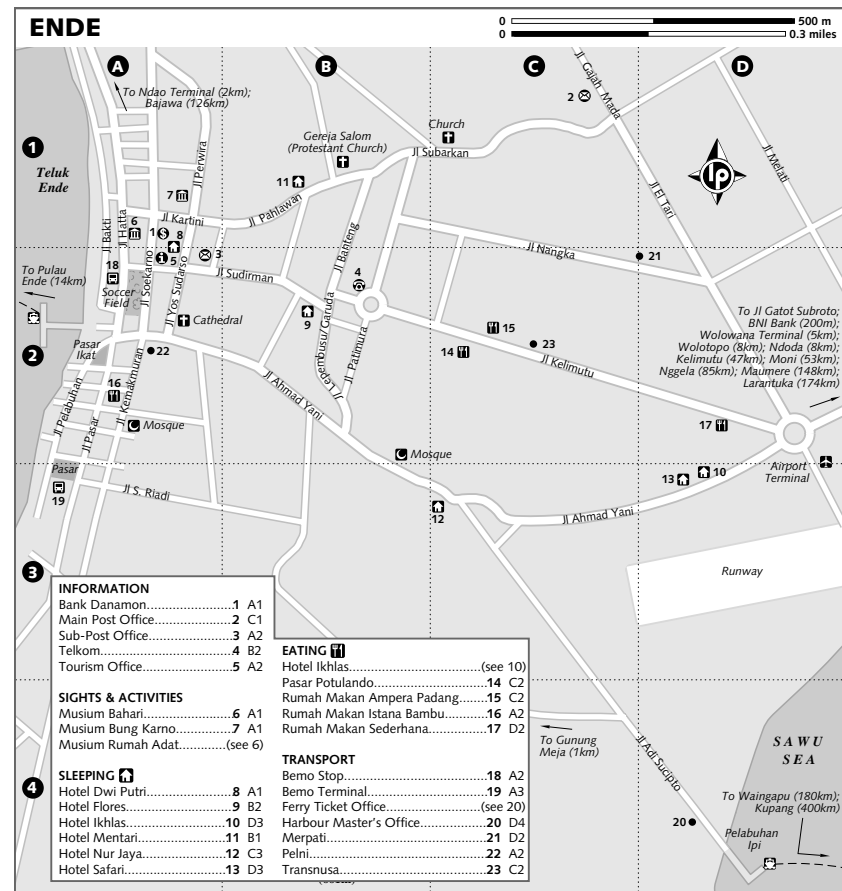
Telkom Office (Jl Kelimutu; h 24hr) Has cheap international calls and also offers internet access (10,000Rp per hour).

MONEY

Hotel Ikhlas will exchange money after hours.

Bank Danamon (Jl Soekarno; h 8am–3.30pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat) Has an ATM and offers larger credit-card withdrawals.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Gatot Subroto) Near the airport, this bank offers the best rates and has an ATM.



TOURIST INFORMATION

The owners of Hotel Ikhlas are very well informed about the latest transportation schedules.

Tourism Office (☎ 21303; Jl Soekarno 4) Dispenses up-to-date information and has enthusiastic staff.

POST

Main post office (Jl Gajah Mada) Out in the northeast-ern part of town.

Sub-post office (Jl Yos Sudarso) Sells stamps; it's opposite Hotel Dwi Putri.

Sights

Ende has a few sights of passing interest. The ramshackle **waterfront market** (Jl Pasar) is not a bad place to poke around, with pyramids of fruit, food, tea and clothes for sale and a startling fish section of giant tuna and probably a shark or two. There is also an **ikat market** (cnr Jl Pabean & Jl Pasar; 𠄎 7am-4pm) that sells weavings from Flores and Sumba.

In 1933 Soekarno was exiled to Ende by the Dutch and his former house is now the **Musium Bung Karno** (Jl Perwira; admission free; 𠄎 7am-noon Mon-Sat). Most of the original period furnishings remain, and this is where he wrote plays, including *Doctor Satan*, based on *Frankenstein*.

The **Musium Bahari** (Maritime Museum; Jl Hatta; admission 1000Rp; 𠄎 7am-8pm) has a large collection of seashells but little else. Next door, the **Musium Rumah Adat** (admission 1000Rp; 𠄎 8am-2pm Mon-Sat) is a large, traditional house with a stylised village compound in front of it that has a *tubu musu* (sacrificial stone altar).

The Ende area has its own style of ikat weaving, mostly using abstract motifs. Some of the best local stuff comes from the village of Ndonga. 8km east of Ende. There are some bemos to Ndonga from Ende, but it might be quicker to go to Wolowana (5km) and take another bemo from there to Ndonga.

Wolotopo is approximately 8km east of Ende and has traditional houses built on several levels. Bemos run from Ende about twice a day. Otherwise, it's a 45-minute walk from Wolowana along the black-sand beach of Nanga Nesa.

Sleeping

Accommodation is spread all over town, but frequent bemos make it easy to get around.

Hotel Ikhlas (☎ 21695; fax 22555; Jl Ahmad Yani; s 25,000-50,000Rp, d 40,000-60,000Rp) Almost a role

model for budget hotels, this very well-run place has plenty of tidy, neat little rooms at moderate prices – those at the rear around a sunny courtyard are the most desirable. The friendly, well-informed staff and management can provide travel information, and the food is great value (see below).

Hotel Safari (☎ 21997; Jl Ahmad Yani 65; economy s/d 50,000/60,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/150,000Rp; a) Right next door to Hotel Ikhlas, this is a step upmarket and has a choice of spacious rooms, each with two beds and, from economy class to 'VIP', all overlooking a peaceful rear courtyard. Breakfast is included.

Hotel Dwi Putri (☎ 21685; Jl Yos Sudarso; r with fan 65,000-95,000Rp, with air-con 125,000-200,000Rp; a) This almost elegant looking modern hotel has a classy façade but is under-patronised. There are several classes of rooms; check into a VIP and you'll get two beds, a bath tub and hot water.

Hotel Mentari (☎ 21802; Jl Pahlawan 19; r 150,000-250,000Rp; a) These excellent light, airy air-con rooms with tiled floors and wardrobes really have a sparkle about them. The standard class are quite sufficient unless you need a fridge and a TV. The hotel also has a restaurant.

Or try:

Hotel Flores (☎ 21075; Jl Sudirman 28; economy r 50,000Rp, with air-con & TV 100,000Rp, VIP r 175,000Rp; a) Unlovely place with five classes of rooms – the cheaper options are scruffy and the air-con doubles are overpriced – but it's worth considering.

Hotel Nur Jaya (☎ 21252; Jl Ahmad Yani 20; r with shared mandi 25,000Rp) Simple but serviceable family-run place that is always kept pretty clean.

Eating

The waterfront market area has the biggest concentration of warungs, while **Pasar Potulando** (Jl Kelimutu) is a night market that sells snacks, fruit and vegetables.

Hotel Ikhlas (☎ 21695; fax 22555; Jl Ahmad Yani; dishes 3500-12,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This hotel restaurant has bargain-priced Indonesian and Western food – rice with veggies is just 3500Rp, and the fish and chips here is among the best you'll find this side of Grimsby.

Rumah Makan Istana Bambu (Jl Kemakmuran 30A; mains 7000-18,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Ranks as one of the best places in town, with filling portions of Indonesian and Chinese food, freshly baked bread and cakes, and freshly squeezed juices.

Good Padang restaurants:

Rumah Makan Ampera Padang (Jl Kelimutu 31; most dishes 5000-8000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Rumah Makan Sederhana (☎ 24481; Jl Kelimutu; dishes 4500-10,000Rp; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner)

Getting There & Away

AIR

Schedules change every few months in eastern Nusa Tenggara, so always check flight information in advance. At the time of research, **Transnusa** (☎ 24222; fax 23592; Jl Kelimutu 37) was very well connected, offering flights to Kupang (11 weekly, some via Maumere) with connections to destinations such as Waingapu and Alor. **Merpati** (☎ 21355; Jl Nangka) has three weekly flights to Kupang and two weekly to Bima.

Departure tax is 6000Rp.

BOAT

Ende is the major port for southern Flores and is well connected to other islands. Ships dock at Pelabuhan Ipi, which is the main port, 2.5km southeast from the town centre.

The following schedules change frequently. **ASDP** (☎ 22007) ferries to Waingapu (42,500Rp, six hours) leave Ende on Thursday night, before looping back again and heading to Kupang. Buy tickets at the harbour. There are also twice-weekly services to Kupang (58,000Rp, seven hours) on a small fast ferry, but this stops when conditions are rough.

Pelni's *Awu* and *Pangrango* stop in Ende every two weeks. *Awu* sails west to Waingapu, Lembur and Benoa, and east to Kupang, Kalabahi and Larantuka. The *Pangrango* sails from Ende to Waingapu, Badas and Surabaya and on the return route east to Sabu and Kupang. Visit the helpful Pelni office (☎ 21043; Jl Cathedral 2; 𠄎 8am-noon & 2-4pm Mon-Sat).

Dharma Lautan Utama (☎ 21927; Jl Adi Sucipto) operates *Kirana II* between Kupang and Surabaya, calling at Ende. It runs roughly to a weekly schedule, but the day it leaves is impossible to define.

Other boats sail irregularly to these and other destinations; for details, ask at the harbour master's office at Pelabuhan Ipi.

BUS & KIJANG

It's about 5km from town to Wolowana terminal, where you catch buses for east-

ern Flores. Buses to Moni (14,000Rp, two hours) operate from 6am to 2pm. Buses to Maumere (37,000Rp, five hours) leave at 7am, 9am and 4pm. Maumere buses will drop you in Moni but charge the full fare through to Maumere. A bus to Nggela leaves at 7am, and a through bus to Larantuka leaves at 7am (nine hours).

Buses heading west leave from the Ndao terminal, 2km north of town on the beach road. Departures from Ende are to Ruteng (70,000Rp, nine hours) at 7.30am; Labuanbajo (105,000Rp, 15 hours) at 7am; Bajawa (44,000Rp, five hours) at 7am and 11am; and Riung (26,000Rp, four hours) at 6am.

Kijang jeeps that operate as shared taxis also leave Ende for Maumere (front/rear seat 60,000/50,000Rp, 4½ hours). There's at least one every day operated by Simpati (☎ 23777); call them first for a pick-up.

Getting Around

The airport is just east of the centre. Those planning on staying at hotels such as the Ikhlas and Safari can walk, but others heading further into town should take a taxi for around 15,000Rp.

Bemo run frequently to just about everywhere in town (even Pelabuhan Ipi) for a flat rate of 1000Rp. You can easily flag a bemo on the street; if not, pick one up at the bemo stop on Jl Hatta (near the old port).

KELIMUTU

Set in plunging craters at the summit of a volcano, the coloured lakes of Kelimutu are undoubtedly the most spectacular sight in Nusa Tenggara. Astonishingly, the lakes periodically change hue – on our visit the largest was an iridescent turquoise, its neighbour chocolate brown and the third lake dark green. A few years ago the colours were blue, maroon and black, while back in the 1960s the lakes were blue, red-brown and *café au lait*.

It's thought that the lakes' colours are in constant flux due to dissolving minerals, a process that can accelerate in the rainy season. The moonscape around the summit gives Kelimutu an ethereal atmosphere, especially when clouds billow across the craters and sun shafts add luminescent pinpoints to the lakes.

Kelimutu is sacred to local people, and legend has it that the souls of the dead

go to these lakes: young people's souls go to the warmth of Tiwu Nuwa Muri Koo Fai (Turquoise Lake), old people's to the cold of Tiwi Ata Mbupu (Brown Lake) and those of the wicked to Tiwi Ata Polo (Black Lake).

The volcano has attracted sightseers since Dutch times, and today there's a sealed road up to the lakes from Moni, 13.5km away at the base of the mountain. Kelimutu's relative isolation means that surprisingly few visitors make it here outside of the July–August high season, and even then it's not too hard to find a peaceful spot to enjoy this natural wonder. Visit in the rainy season or in the afternoon and you may even have Kelimutu, in silence, to yourself.

There's a staircase up to the highest lookout, Inspiration Point, from where all three lakes are visible. It's not at all advisable to scramble around the fringes of the craters – the scree is loose and a couple of hikers perished here recently.

Pray for a sunny day – sunrise is stunning and the turquoise lake reaches its full brilliance in the sunlight. If the weather

is not good, come back the next day – Kelimutu is really worth seeing at its best.

Enterprising locals sell coffee and snacks here.

Getting There & Away

Moni is the usual base for visiting Kelimutu. It's normally best to view the lakes in the early morning before the clouds move in. Local transport is timed to reflect this, with trucks or minibuses picking you up at 4am from your hotel; a ride can be arranged anywhere in Moni and costs 15,000Rp return per person. There's a PHKA post half-way up, where you have to pay 2000Rp per person. From the car park it's a 15-minute walk to the first of the crater lakes. The return journey to Moni is at 7am, which is too little time to see the sun bring out the lakes' full beauty – the rusty-red hues around the fringes of the brown lake and the startling turquoise of the biggest lake – so some prefer to linger and walk down later.

If the skies look particularly clear and you have, or hire, your own transport, it's well worth considering a trip to Kelimutu later in

the day when everyone has gone – the silence of the mountain returns and the natural spectacle becomes even more moving.

The walk down takes about 2½ hours and isn't too taxing. A *jalan potong* (shortcut) leaves the road back to Moni at the PHKA post and reaches the highway about 750m from the centre of Moni. This cuts about 6km off the journey.

Another path branches off the shortcut at Kuposili and goes via the villages of Mboti and Pome, reaching the Kelimutu road near the 8km marker, about 5.5km from the summit. This path is no shorter, but it passes through villages where locals serve drinks and breakfast.

MONI

Moni is a pretty village, nestled among soaring peaks, which serves as the gateway to Flores' main tourist attraction, Kelimutu. It is scenic, cooler than the lowlands and a good place for walks.

The village is strung alongside the Ende–Mauere road in the heart of the Lio region, which extends from east of Ende to beyond Wolowaru. Lio people speak a dialect of the Ende language and are renowned for their ikat weaving; pieces adorned with bands of blue and rusty-red. A colourful market spreads over the playing field in front of Moni's church every Monday morning. Cloth from the Nggela and Mauere regions can be bought here. You'll also find a few stalls along Moni's main street, as well as at the parking area for Kelimutu.

Information

There are no banks in Moni and the exchange rates on offer are appalling – come with cash. There's a wartel at Arwanti Homestay, but the rates are extortionate. Otherwise there are no phones in Moni.

Apart from the guesthouses, one of the best sources of information in the area is the Woloaru Bookshop, 1.5km from the centre of Moni. Dutch owner Mark leads birding trips and guided walks around the area from 50,000Rp per person, and sells and exchanges used books as well as Kelimutu postcards.

Sights & Activities

In the *kampung* (village) opposite the market, the high-thatched *rumah adat* serves

as a cultural centre of sorts. Traditional dance performances (20,000Rp) are held in front of it during the peak season of July and August. Ask around at other times.

Apart from the trek to/from Kelimutu there are several other walks from Moni. About 750m along the Ende road from the centre of Moni, paths lead down to a 10m air terjun (waterfall), with a pool big enough for swimming and *mata air panas* (hot springs). This is the village *mandi* and visitors can also bathe here – men in the left pool, and women in the right. Another short walk is south past the church to Potu and Woloara (about 2.5km from Moni). From Woloara, continue on through several villages to Jopu (about 5km). Energetic types could walk on to Wolojita and Nggela or loop back to Wolowaru and catch a bus or truck back to Moni.

Sleeping

The downturn in tourist numbers in recent years has hit Moni hard, and prices are very reasonable. Accommodation is virtually all in the budget category and quite spread out along the highway. These places are listed in the order you approach them from Ende.

Sao Ria Wisata (small bungalows 75,000Rp, larger bungalows 125,000Rp) Government-owned place perched in splendid isolation on the hillside above Moni. It has well-maintained if overpriced detached bungalows with verandas; hot water is planned.

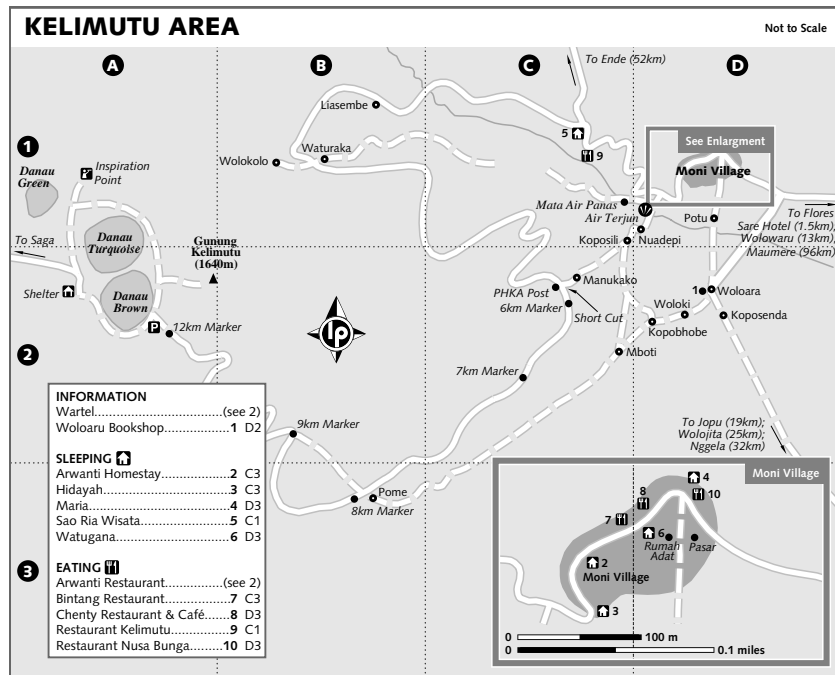
Hidayah (s/d 40,000/50,000Rp) Ramshackle bamboo huts next to a burbling brook and pretty rice fields.

Arwanti Homestay (s/d 75,000/100,000Rp) This place has three attractive spacious bungalows, each equipped with bamboo furnishings, two bedrooms, a sitting room, a bathroom with shower and a front veranda. Unfortunately, they could be cleaner, and the staff could certainly be a little more helpful.

Watugana (s/d 40,000/60,000Rp) Simple, clean rooms with big beds, mossie nets and a bathroom make this a popular place. Banana pancakes or fruit salad is the staple breakfast.

Maria (r 50,000Rp, bungalows 75,000Rp) Rooms and bungalows, some with attached bathrooms and Western toilets, are basic but clean. Breakfast is thrown in.

Flores Sare Hotel (% 038121075; r 100,000 & 165,000Rp) Viewed from the road it looks



like a half-finished building site, but if you pass through the large adjoining restaurant there are some very spacious and surprisingly orderly rooms with high ceilings and big beds. Granny would lurve the flowery bedspreads.

Eating

The choice of restaurants is pretty good for such a tiny place.

Chenty Restaurant & Café (dishes 6000-17,000Rp; ₪ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Long-running, popular place above the main road in the centre of the village with a good selection of Indonesian food. The noise and action often gravitates here when Moni is busy.

Bintang Restaurant (dishes 6000-15,000Rp; ₪ breakfast, lunch & dinner) With an engaging owner and well-priced menu of the usual Indo suspects, this is probably the best place to eat in town. It's perched above the road in central Moni and has good views.

Restaurant Nusa Bunga (dishes 5000-15,000Rp; ₪ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Tiny place with cheap and cheerful Indonesian and Western food. Try the Moni cakes, a sort of spicy bubble and squeak.

Arwanti Restaurant (mains 11,000-18,000Rp; ₪ breakfast, lunch & dinner) It certainly looks the part, with stylish décor and a tempting menu, but the food is very plain, the service is slow and the staff are distracted.

Restaurant Kelimutu (dishes 9000-20,000Rp; ₪ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right next door to Sao Ria Wisata, this attractive place with a thatched roof has Indo and Western food – though speedy the service ain't.

Getting There & Away

Moni is 53km northeast of Ende and 98km west of Maumere. For Ende (14,000Rp, two hours), buses start at around 7am, and there's a bus all the way to Labuanbajo at noon. Many additional buses and trucks leave on Monday, Moni's market day.

For Maumere (23,000Rp, three hours), the first buses from Ende start coming through at around 9am or 10am and then later in the evening at around 7pm.

As most of the buses stop midroute in Moni they can be crowded, and it's first come, first served for a seat. Sometimes you'll be sitting in the aisle on a sack of rice or even on a pig if you're lucky. Some of the homestays make 'bookings', which

usually means they will hail a bus for you and charge you extra.

AROUND MONI

Wolowaru

The village of Wolowaru, straggling along the Maumere road just 13km southeast of Moni, is a handy base for the ikat-weaving villages of Wolojita and Nggela. There's a daily morning market that winds down at around 9am, except on Saturday, the main market day.

The **Hotel Kelimutu** (☎ 41020; s/d 10,000/15,000Rp) has simple rooms with shared facilities for ablutions. For authentic local food, **Rumah Makan Jawa Timur** (mains 6000-13,000Rp) is a popular place and is right next to Hotel Kelimutu.

All Maumere–Ende buses stop in Wolowaru. A few morning buses originate here – check schedules at the Jawa Timur – and most buses stop at this restaurant for a meal break.

The road to the following villages branches off from the main road in Wolowaru.

Nggela & Wolojita

Beautiful ikat sarongs and shawls can be found in these and other villages between Wolowaru and the south coast. Impromptu stalls often spring up before your eyes as you approach the villages.

Nggela is worth a visit for its hilltop position above the coast, but the chief attraction is the weaving, usually done by hand and still using many natural dyes. The weaving is among the finest in Flores, and you'll be able to watch the artisans at their work. In former times the size, colour and pattern of the ikat shawls of this region indicated the status of the wearer. Nggela ikat typically has black or rich dark brown backgrounds, with patterns in earthy red, brown or orange. Bargain hard and watch out for brighter synthetic dyes, which are becoming more common (you should pay less if the dyes aren't natural).

Homestay Nggela Permai (s/d 20,000/30,000Rp) is in Nggela for those visitors who want more of the authentic village experience than can be found in Moni.

Wolojita is about 7km inland from Nggela and has weavings of a similar quality, but not Nggela's fine location.

A road branches off the Ende–Maumere road at Wolowaru and heads to Wolojita

(12km) and Nggela (19km). One bus per day leaves Ende at 6am for Nggela, passing Moni at about 9am and then Wolojita. Otherwise, it's a good half-day's walk to Nggela from Wolowaru. It's only 2km or 3km further from Moni via Woloara, so you could just as easily start from there. The volcano-studded scenery is beautiful, particularly on the downhill stretch of the road as it runs into Nggela.

From Wolojita to Nggela, either follow the road or take a short cut past the hot springs (ask for the *jalan potong ke Nggela*). It would be pushing it to do the return walk on the same day, but there might be a truck going back to Wolowaru.

MAUMERE

☎ 0382 / pop 50,000

The seaport of Maumere is a pretty forlorn place, but as it's one of the main gateways to Flores, and well connected with Bali and Timor, you may well end up here for a night. Its crumbling concrete buildings and air of decay brutally betray its recent history – in 1992 an earthquake and resulting 20m

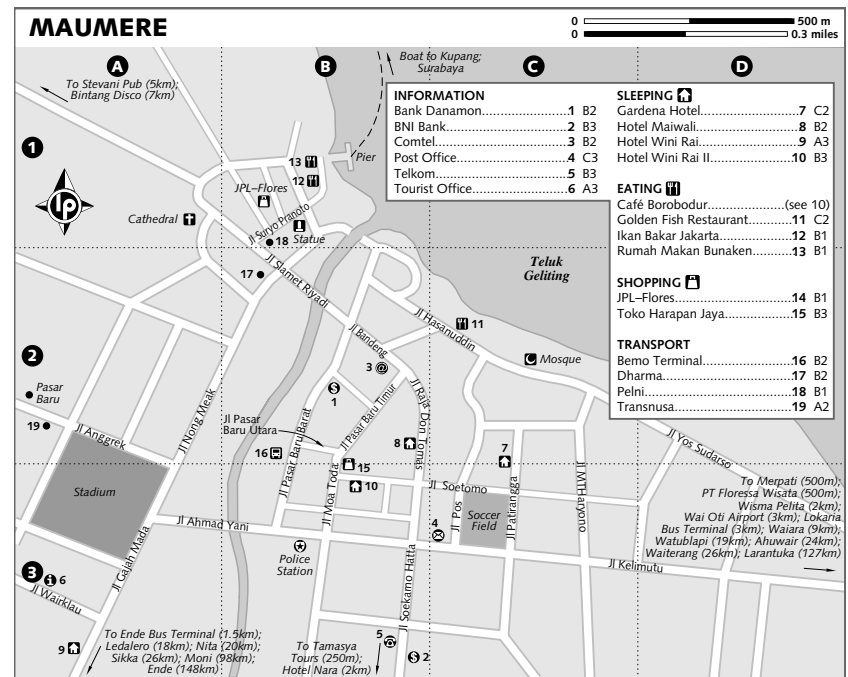
tsunami killed thousands here. The city authorities appear to have done little to help the town's recovery, however: mounds of rubbish line the streets, nibbled by marauding pigs and goats, which only compounds the postapocalyptic air that lingers on.

The town is the major centre of the Sikkane language and culture, which extends east between central Flores and Larantuka. This area has been one of the chief centres of Catholic activity and missions in Flores since Portuguese Dominicans arrived some 400 years ago.

Some interesting trips can be made out of town to ikat-weaving villages and east to the once-legendary Maumere sea gardens, coral reefs which are steadily recovering after the tsunami. A string of beach bungalow resorts also line this coast, offering a temptingly accessible alternative to staying in town.

Information

Several travel agencies offer up-to-date transport information and can arrange car rental, tailor trip itineraries or just make bookings for planes and boats.



INTERNET ACCESS

Comtel (Jl Bandung 1; per hr 10,000Rp; ☎) The best internet connection in Flores, this place has a useful noticeboard too.

MONEY

Bank Danamon (Jl Pasar Baru Barat) Has an ATM and, with some persuasion, the staff will do credit-card cash advances – up to 5,000,000Rp with a 50,000Rp charge. **BNI bank** (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Soekarno Hatta) Has the best rates in town an ATM.

POST

Post office (Jl Pos) Next to the soccer field.

TELEPHONE

Telkom office (Jl Soekarno Hatta; ☎ 24hr) Opposite BNI. Internet access is also available here.

TRAVEL AGENCIES

PT Floressa Wisata (% 22281; Jl Yani 50; www.floressa-bali.com) Next to the Merpati office, this efficient company can book boat and airline tickets and offers organised tours.

Tamasya Tours (% 21796; ignas_maumere@yahoo.com; Jl Tubin 35A) Run by the irrepressible Ignas, this is a reliable travel agency.

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (% 21652; Jl Wairklau) Well out of the way, this has limited literature and practical information.

Tours

Contact **PT Floressa Wisata** (% 22281; www.floressa-bali.com; Jl Yani 50) about organised tours in Flores. Fully inclusive seven-day trips across the island cost around 6,000,000Rp per person.

Sleeping

There's a fairly good budget selection in Maumere, though little else. For a really chilled beach base, there are several good places along the road to Lantuka in Waiara and Waiterang (see p568).

Hotel Maiwali (% 21220; fax 22977; Jl Raja Don Tomas 40; s/d with fan 41,000/46,000Rp, with air-con from 78,000/98,000Rp; ☎) A fair option; rooms cover a wide range of budgets and some have hot-water bathtubs.

Hotel Wini Rai (% 21388; Jl Gajah Mada 50; s/d 33,000-220,000/49,000-275,000Rp; ☎) About 1km from the centre but a pretty decent choice. There are five classes of rooms; those at the bottom end are extremely simple, while the

best rooms are well appointed and spacious. It's close to the Ende (west) bus terminal. A second branch in the centre, the **Hotel Wini Rai II** (% 21362; Jl Soetomo) has near-identical room categories and prices.

Gardena Hotel (% 22644; Jl Patirangga; s/d with fan 50,000/60,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/120,000Rp; ☎) First choice in central Ende, the Gardena is a very well run and hospitable place in a quiet street close to the centre. Even the fan-only rooms have sprung mattresses, and the en-suite bathrooms are clean and have Western-style bogs. English-speaking staff will help out with travel connections, and rates include breakfast.

Hotel Nara (% 22001; s/d with fan 50,000/60,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/120,000Rp; ☎) Under the same efficient management as the Gardena, this new place has absolutely bargain-priced and very spacious rooms with good beds, wardrobes and TVs. The drawback is that it's about 2.5km from the centre, though *ojeks* and bemos pass by regularly. At the time of research a restaurant was under construction.

Wisma Pelita (% 21732; Jl Sudirman 33; s 175,000-215,000Rp, d 250,000-290,000Rp; ☎) Near the airport, 2km from the centre, these comfortable air-con motel-style rooms are comfortable enough, if a little anonymous in design. Wisma enjoys a seafront location, though the beach is not of the tropical paradise variety. Breakfast is included.

Eating

The most enjoyable place to eat is down by the harbour, where you'll find a row of inexpensive restaurants serving fresh seafood and Indonesian staples.

Ikan Bakar Jakarta (% 081 23795559; most dishes 9000-12,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Right by the port, this excellent, inexpensive Javanese place serves huge portions of squid, shrimp and chicken cooked in a variety of styles – though all dishes are generously dosed-up with chilli. It doesn't sell beer, but you're welcome to bring your own.

Rumah Makan Bunaken (% 081 33948814; mains 10,000-18,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Slightly more pricey than its neighbour, this is another good, casual waterfront choice for seafood – though again the chilli factor is beyond serious. It also offers specials like *ayam bakar* (grilled chicken) and sells Bintang.

Café Borobodur (% 22858; Jl Soetomo 5; dishes 10,000-20,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Simple if scruffy place that's fairly well geared to Western tastes, with breakfasts (15,000Rp), jaffles, sandwiches, and Indonesian and Indo-Italian food. Diners might even linger for a coffee if management ever gets round to installing a fan. The café is next door to the Hotel Wini Rai II.

Golden Fish Restaurant (Jl Hasanuddin; large fish 35,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Pricey place that's famous for its fish and crab – choose your victim from the tank. It's on the coast, but the view is far from spectacular.

Entertainment

There's one disco in town, though it's usually empty, even on Saturday. Most nightlife is of the karaoke and imported Java girls variety.

Stevani Pub (☎ 8pm-2am) The original karaoke place, this has some grooving most nights after midnight. It's 5km west of town, on the seafront.

Bintang Disco (☎ 7pm-2am) Come here if you like dancing on your own, though the karaoke section next door is popular and it sells imported whisky. It's 7km west of town.

Shopping

Toko Harapan Jaya (Jl Pasar Baru Timur) Has a good stock of weavings, including some ikat from Flores, Sumba and other islands. Carvings and other artefacts are also on sale here, but bargain hard, as prices start high.

Getting There & Away**AIR**

Maumere has good air connections. Merpati (% 21342; Jl Sudirman) has five flights a week to/from Kupang, four to/from Labuanbajo and five to/from Denpasar with connections to Jakarta. The signposted office is just off the main road to the airport.

Transnusa (% 21393; Jl Angrek 2), by the stadium, has daily flights to Kupang; three days a week this flight goes via Ende (229,000Rp).

Departure tax is 6000Rp.

BOAT

Pelni's *Awu* sails fortnightly from Maumere to Makassar and Kalimantan to the west, Lantuka and Kalabahi to the east, and

Kupang to the southeast. Pelni (% 21013; Jl Suryo Pranoto) is near the entrance to the port.

Dharma (% 21091; Jl Nong Meak 2) operates the fairly smart *Kirana* ship that connects Maumere with Surabaya (301,000Rp) and Kupang (115,000Rp). The day of departure depends on sea conditions, but there's usually one trip to each destination per week.

BUS & KIJANG

There are two bus terminals in Maumere. The departure times given below are certainly not precise – be prepared to wait around until there are sufficient passengers and the baggage has been loaded.

Buses to Lantuka (32,000Rp, four hours), and buses and bemos to Geliting, Waiara, Ipir and Wodong leave from the Lokaria (or Timur) terminal, approximately 3km east of town, at 7.30am and 3pm. Kijang shared taxis also leave from here to Lantuka (60,000Rp, three hours) at 7.30am, and sometimes later in the day too.

The Ende (or Barat) terminal 1.5km southwest of town is the place for buses west to Moni (23,000Rp, three hours) and Ende (37,000Rp, five hours), both at 7am and 3pm. Buses to destinations such as Sikka and Ledalero also depart from here. Kijang shared taxis also leave this terminal for Ende (50,000Rp per person, 4½ hours) at around 7.30am.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

Maumere's Wai Oti airport is 3km from town, 800m off the Maumere–Lantuka road. A taxi to/from town is 12,000Rp, or 50,000Rp from the beach hotels in Waiterang. It's about a 1km walk out of the airport to the Maumere–Lantuka road to pick up a bemo (1000Rp) into town.

BEMO

Bemos cost 1000Rp and run around town regularly.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Renting a car costs around 500,000Rp per day, including driver and fuel for trips around the Maumere region. Those organising road trips to Moni and further west should agree on an itinerary and a schedule of staggered payments before

departure. The travel agency PT Floressa Wisata and the Gardena Hotel can both organise rental cars. Motorcycles (around 50,000Rp per day) can usually be arranged by your hotel.

AROUND MAUMERE

Ledalero & Nita

Many Florinese priests studied at the Roman Catholic seminary in Ledalero, which is 18km from Maumere on the Ende road. The chief attraction here is the museum (admission free), which houses a collection of historic stone implements and Florinese ikat, with designs and natural dyes that are either rare or no longer produced, including softly textured, pastel-coloured old Jopu sarongs. It's a good place to try to piece together the jigsaw of Florinese culture. It is customary to leave a donation.

Nita is 2km beyond Ledalero on the main road and has a Thursday market, where you should be able to purchase some extremely good-quality local ikat, made with imported cotton. A weavers' group, Kelompok Sentra Tenun Ikat Lepo Lorun, has helped improve and regulate standards here with help from INFID (International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development). Bemos to Ledalero and Nita leave from Maumere's Ende terminal.

Sikka & Lela

On the south coast 26km from Maumere, Sikka was one of the first Portuguese settlements in Flores. Its kings dominated the Maumere region until the 20th century. Today it's interesting mainly as the home of Sikkinese weaving; be prepared to be pounced on by a small army of lady ikat-wallahs as soon as you enter town. Sikka's beautiful church dates from 1899.

The road to Sikka leaves the Ende road 20km from Maumere. Regular bemos (3000Rp) run from Maumere to Sikka.

About 4km before Sikka is Lela, another weaving centre, which has a Catholic population. It has a few colonial buildings and a long and rocky black-sand beach.

Watublapi

Watublapi is in the hills 19km southeast of Maumere and is a large Catholic mission. From here, it is a pleasant walk to Ohe, for views over both coasts of Flores. Bola is a

large village 6km from Watublapi, and 2km further on is the traditional coastal weaving village of Ipir. Market day in Ipir is Monday and bemos go there from Maumere (5000Rp, 1½ hours). On other days bemos usually finish at Bola. It may be possible to stay with villagers or the *kepala desa* in Bola or Ipir.

Waiara

Waiara is the jumping-off point for the Maumere 'sea gardens'. Once regarded as one of Asia's finest dive destinations, the 1992 earthquake and tidal wave destroyed many of the reefs. Though Mother Nature has been doing her bit, the marine life and reefs around Pulau Pemana and Pulau Besar are still in recovery mode.

Just off the Larantuka road 9km east of Maumere, Waiara has two resorts. The well-run Flores Sao Resort (☎ 21555; fax 21666; s 75,000-250,000Rp, d 100,000-350,000Rp; a s) has helpful staff, but the rooms, though clean, are looking dated – think 1970s sitcom décor. All accommodation is air-con and spacious: standard rooms are a bit bare, superior rooms have huge verandas, and deluxe rooms are built in a chalet style. The beach is so-so. Breakfast is included, and diving costs US\$75 for two dives, including all gear. The attractive Sea World Club (Pondok Dunia Laut; ☎ 21570; www.sea-world-club.com; s/d from US\$15/20, with air-con from US\$20/25; a) is run by missionaries. Standard rooms have nice ikat bedspreads and good comfort levels for the price, while the beach houses, some with two bedrooms, front the sandy beach and have big verandas. There's a good restaurant and scuba diving (US\$50 for two dives including hire of scuba gear) here too.

To get to the hotels, catch any Talibura- or Larantuka-bound bus from Maumere to Waiara (2000Rp). Both hotels are signposted from the highway; Flores Sao Resort is about 500m further along the road. For a fee, the resorts can arrange drop-offs or pick-ups for guests from Maumere.

Ahuwair & Waiterang

Offering a wonderfully tranquil and relaxed alternative to staying in Ende, the narrow, coconut tree-shaded beaches Ahuwair and Waiterang are 24km to 26km east of Maumere, close to Wodong village. Three simple bungalow operations – all well set

up for backpackers and one with a scuba school – make this a great base to seriously chill and hammock-swing away the bruising memories of road travel in Flores.

The variety of dive and snorkelling sites is impressive here, with plenty of marine life around Pulau Babi and Pulau Pangabaton, a Japanese wreck, and the 'muck' (shallow mud-flats) to explore. Mantas, reef sharks and fascinating macro life proliferate around dozens of dive sites in this region, but the snorkelling just off the beach in Waiterang is not that impressive. All the hotels can organise snorkelling trips to the islands for around 75,000Rp per person, including lunch and equipment, with a minimum of three people. Happy Dive, based at Ankermi, charges US\$55 for two dives, including all gear and boat transfers. In November whale-watching trips are also offered.

All the following places are signposted from the highway and down side tracks 200m to 500m from the road; they are listed in the order you approach them from Maumere. There's no tourist trail in these parts, so it's normally very tranquil. Rates include breakfast.

Sunset Cottages (sunsetcottages@yahoo.co.uk; Maumere–Larantuka rd km25; bungalows with mandi 40,000Rp) Extremely hospitable place managed by local villager Henry, who is very helpful, speaks good English and is switched on to travellers' needs. There are six simple, attractive bamboo-and-coconut-wood bungalows right on the beach, and great, imaginatively prepared food is served – order ahead for fresh fish. Snorkel gear is available for hire.

Wodong Beach Cottages (s/d bungalow with mandi 35,000/40,000Rp) Next up, 2km further on, these 10 simple wood-and-thatch bungalows with attached *mandis* are run by the friendly couple Siska and Sino, and there's a nice bar-restaurant area.

Ankermi (ankermi@yahoo.com; s/d 30,000/35,000Rp, two-storey bungalow 45,000Rp) A little further on, this Swiss- and Indonesian-owned place has simple, traditional wood-and-bamboo bungalows set back from the beach, safety boxes, excellent food, a library, the Happy Dive scuba school and lots of information about nearby attractions.

Wodong is on the Maumere–Larantuka road. Take any Talibura, Nangahale or

Larantuka bemo or bus from the Lokaria terminal in Maumere (3000Rp). A bemo from Wodong to Waiterang costs 1000Rp. A taxi or chartered bemo from Maumere is around 50,000Rp. Through buses to Larantuka passing by are often hopelessly crowded; to get a seat it is better to first go to Maumere.

Around Waiterang

Nangahale, around 10km northeast of Wodong, is an interesting boat-building village that was settled by survivors from Pulau Babi after the 1992 earthquake. It's easily reached by bemo or bus from Waiterang. On the way to Nangahale, the road passes Patiahu, 33km from Maumere, which has the best white-sand beach on this stretch of coast.

The landscape southwest of Waiterang is dominated by smoking Gunung Egon (1703m). This active volcano can be climbed from Blidit in around three hours, slightly less coming down. There is little shade, so start early to avoid the heat of the day. It is a relatively easy climb apart from the final scramble to the top. Blidit is 6km from Waiterang – 25,000Rp by chartered bemo. Guides to take you up Egon can be arranged in Waiterang.

LARANTUKA

☎ 0383

A busy little port of rusting tin-roofed houses at the eastern end of Flores, Larantuka nestles around the base of Gunung Ili Mandiri, separated by a narrow strait from Pulau Solor and Pulau Adonara. Most folk choose not to linger here and quickly depart for the Solor Archipelago or Kupang by boat.

This corner of Indonesia, though always isolated, was one of the first to attract European interest, as it lay on sea routes used by the Portuguese seeking sandalwood from Timor. Forts and more than 20 Dominican missions were built by 1575. Portugal maintained a presence in Larantuka until the mid-19th century, and their descendants, called 'Topasses', are still a significant community in Larantuka today.

Easter is a particularly good time to be in town, when there are huge processions of penitents and cross-bearers.

and interested in you and where you're from.

Food quality and general hygiene are not great away from the urban centres of Kalabahi and Lewoleba (Lembata). Bring plenty of money – there's only one ATM (in Kalabahi), and banks and moneychangers offer poor rates.

There's not much to see on the island of Solor itself. Most travellers in this region come to visit Lamalera village on Lembata, and dive the rich coral reefs off Alor.

History

European contact was made as early as 1522 when the only remaining ship of the explorer Magellan's fleet sailed through Selat Alor (Lembata-Pantar Strait). By the middle of the century, the Dominican Portuguese friar Antonio Taveira had landed on Solor to set about spreading Catholicism. The Solor mission became the base for extending Christianity to mainland Flores, and a fort was built to protect the converts from Muslim raids. The Portuguese were eventually forced out of Solor by the Dutch, but until the mid-19th century Portugal held on to Wurek (Adonara) and Pamakaja (Solor).

Getting Around

Alor and Lembata both have some bemos and ancient buses, but most of the islands have only one decent road, and transport to more isolated areas is limited to a few trucks per week.

ADONARA

Adonara was known as the 'Island of Murderers' because of a feud between two clans. The feud apparently ran for hundreds of years, with people in the hills being killed and houses burned – it was very likely a case of ritual conflict between the Demon and Paji groups (see the boxed text, p570). Though extremes of animism have died out, traditional ways remain extremely influential in villages in the hinterland, where Christianity and Islam have fairly loose footholds. One traveller even reported placing her hands on a sacred rock above one village and being unable to remove them. The chief settlements are Wailebe (on the west coast) and Waiwerang (on the south coast). A few bemos link the main villages.

Waiwerang

Waiwerang's markets on Monday and Thursday attract villagers from throughout the island and from Solor. Waiwerang has a post office, a wartel and a bank, but money cannot be changed.

Places to stay include Hotel Ile Boleng (Jl Pasar Baru), the best in town, where English is spoken and meals can be arranged. Rooms at the back have great views over the water. Hotel Asri is the second choice.

All the boats from Larantuka to Lewoleba (7000Rp, two hours) on Lembata call in at Waiwerang. Passenger ferries dock at the main wharf in the centre of town, but at low tide they may dock at the car-ferry port 1km west of town. The boat to Lamalera leaves on Friday evening at around 11pm.

Small boats run between Waiwerang and the towns of northern Solor (Lamakera, Menanga and Lahayong) on Monday and Thursday. Otherwise you can charter a boat to Solor for up to six people for around 200,000Rp.

LEMBATA

Lembata is a fascinating island that attracts a trickle of travellers – around 200 a year according to government stats. It's best known for the whaling village of Lamalera and for the volcano Ili Api, which towers over the main town of Lewoleba. As in the rest of the Lamaholot region, many Lembata villagers still use the slash-and-burn method of clearing land. Corn, bananas, papayas and coconuts are grown, but most rice is imported.

Lewoleba

☎ 0383

Despite the ominous smoking cone of Ili Api in the background, Lewoleba, the chief settlement on Lembata, is a relaxed little town. A couple of larger government buildings and a Telkom office are all that distinguishes it from any other scruffy village on these islands.

Boats stop at the pier, which is a 10-minute walk west of town – take a *mikrolet* (small taxi) or becak (bicycle-rickshaw) for 1000Rp. Below town is a Bajo stilt village built out over the water. Some of its people are pearl divers and you can arrange to go out with them on diving trips. Have a good look at the pearls you're offered in town as

many are just shells. Locals can take you out by sampan to a sandbank off Lewoleba – it's the closest place to town for a swim, with beautifully clear water.

ORIENTATION & INFORMATION

The centre of Lewoleba is the market place, which comes alive every Monday, though there's not much of interest – unless you're a portrait photographer, that is.

The post office is off the main street near the southern side of the market. If you are stuck for cash, the Flores Jaya shop opposite the post office will change US dollars at dreadful rates. The Telkom office (☎ 7am-11pm) is 1km west of town.

SLEEPING & EATING

Lile Ile (s/d 30,000/45,000Rp) Long-running homestay owned by a Dutch-Indonesian called Jim. It has a row of simple but serviceable rooms with stunning views of Ili Api across the water. It's a popular place, as Jim is a mine of information about Lembata and has the best DVD collection this side of Bangkok's Khao San Rd. Home-cooked meals are served on a huge open deck.

Losmen Rejeki (☎ 41028; s/d 35,000/45,000Rp, with air-con 60,000/75,000Rp; a) Opposite the market, this is run by the extremely hospitable Pak Tanto and has comfortable rooms, some with very efficient air-con. Generous portions of food are served up, including fresh fish, and there's a fridge full of Bintang. Pak provides good local info and can arrange a 4WD to Lamalera and elsewhere.

Hotel Lewoleba (☎ 41012; Jl Awololong 15; s/d 28,000/38,000Rp, with mandi 45,000/60,000Rp, with air-con 75,000/95,000Rp; a) The upmarket lobby, complete with sofas, sets the tone in this fairly slick place. It has a selection of rooms – the cheapest are a tad rough, but those with air-con are a treat for this part of the world. It's down the road opposite the Losmen Rejeki, past the post office.

You'll find some simple warungs close to the market.

Rumah Makan Bandung (dishes 5000-7500Rp) Spicy Javanese-style cuisine.

Rumah Makan Hosana (meals 9000Rp) OK Padang food.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Merpati operates one flight a week from Kupang every Tuesday, but it's a 12-seater plane, so book early.

Boat schedules in this part of Indonesia are subject to very frequent changes and cancellations. See p570 for boat connections from Larantuka, and p577 for connections from Kalabahi.

GETTING AROUND

Mikrolet run around town and to the ferry dock, and there are a few becak, which cost 1000Rp anywhere around Lewoleba.

There are no longer any ferries between Lewoleba and Lamalera; trucks (12,000Rp, 3½ hours) cover this route, leaving daily at around noon. The road is sealed for the most part but extremely rough, rutted and potholed. If you've missed the noon connection you could consider heading to Bota, which is served by more regular transport, and walking from there (it's about 2½ hours, mainly downhill, to Lamalera). Alternatively, consider chartering a ride in Losmen Rejeki's Kijang.

Buses to the east run to Hadakewa (5000Rp, 45 minutes) and direct to Balauring (12,000Rp, two hours). Infrequent trucks ply some of the rough back roads. Buses terminate next to the ferry dock, or you can find them in Lewoleba in front of the market.

Hiring a motorbike from a local costs around 75,000Rp per day. This is best arranged through your guest house.

Around Lewoleba

Lembata's best ikat, recognisable by its burgundy base and highly detailed patterning, comes from the villages on the slopes of Ili Api, 15km to 20km from Lewoleba. On the north coast, Atawatun and Mawa are two sources of fine weaving. At Jontona, on the eastern side of a deep inlet on Lembata's north coast, it's possible to stay with the *kepala desa*. An hour's walk from Jontona towards Ili Api is the Kampung Lama (Old Village), with many traditional houses. These contain sacred and prized objects, including a huge number of elephant tusks, but are occupied by villagers only for ceremonies such as the *kacang* (bean) festival in late September or early October. It is possible to climb Ili Api from Lama; it takes a full day to go up and down and is easiest with a guide (best arranged in Jontona).

Regular bemos from Lewoleba head to Waipukang (30 minutes), from where you

can walk to Jontona in an hour. Infrequent bemos also run to Atawatun, Mawa and Lamagute, though this region is best explored with your own wheels.

Lembata has some good beaches. Take a *mikrolet* to Tagawiti and walk for 2km to the beach, where there's reasonable snorkelling out on the reef. The eastern bay on the way to Hadakewa also has some good snorkelling closer to shore. Sunbathing is difficult – the crowds of kids block out the sunlight. It certainly pays to be able to speak some Bahasa Indonesia if venturing further afield.

Lamalera

pop 1800

Like characters from *Moby Dick*, the men of Lamalera village on the south coast of Lembata hunt whales using nothing more than spears, wooden boats and a prayer to their ancestors. Because of the small numbers of whales taken – around 15 to 25 a year – these hunters have been deemed exempt from the international ban on whaling, and their extremely tough and hazardous livelihood continues. The whaling season is mainly from May to October, when the seas aren't too rough.

Lamalera itself is a tiny, fascinating, poor yet extremely welcoming little village that rises up steeply from a small volcanic sand cove. You won't find any phones, internet, or banks. There is electricity between 6pm and 9pm only. There's no escaping how the people live here – huge bones sit atop the shoreside boat shelters, giant ribs are littered in gardens, and if there's been a

recent kill bits of whale meat hang from houses. There's some snorkelling in a little bay west of the village, or don a mask and snorkel and you'll come across discarded whale bones in the harbour.

On Saturday there's an interesting barter-only market at Wulandoni, about a 1½-hour walk along the coast from Lamalera. Another nice walk along the coast is to *Tapabali*, where you can see local weaving – the *ikat* has motifs of whales and mantas.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are four small homestays in Lamalera. Rates include all meals.

Guru Ben's (r 40,000Rp) A deservedly popular place, this schoolteacher's homestay has been welcoming travellers for over a decade. It's above the village, perched on a ridge overlooking the shoreline. Pak Ben speaks good English and is a gracious host.

White House (r 40,000Rp) Owned by Baba Yosef, this rental house is right on the point at the end of the beach directly above the shore. Someone will come in to cook meals on request.

Mama Maria's Homestay (r 40,000Rp) Just behind the main square, Maria Dasion and her daughter are terrific, very welcoming hosts. They are both good cooks and you'll have plenty of opportunity to practise your Bahasa Indonesia with them.

Abel Beding (r 40,000Rp) On the main path through the village, past the town square, this is another popular and enjoyable place to stay. Abel speaks some English, and will help with local information.

LAMALERA'S HERITAGE

Lamalera's inhabitants are thought to have originally fled from Lapan Batan, a island near Pantar, after it was devastated by a volcanic eruption. The villagers believe that their ancestors arrived in wooden boats that each clan has kept as the model for all future vessels – though one clan's folklore has it that they reached Lamalera on the back of a blue whale, which are never hunted for that reason. Though the original boats (called *tena*) have been repaired and extended over generations, the villagers consider them to be living beings and a physical link to their ancestors and the ancestral home.

The loss of a *tena* means the loss of an important part of their heritage. In March 1993 two boats from Lamalera sank after being dragged almost to Timor by a wounded whale. The crew of was later picked up by a third boat from the village, and the 36 men then drifted for several days before being rescued by a cruise ship.

The loss of the boats sent the village into a two-month mourning period during which no whaling was allowed. When the mourning period finished, a ceremony took place to 'let the boats go'.

LAMALERA'S WHALERS

'*Baleo, Baled*' the shout goes when potential targets are spotted in the waters off Lamalera. This is the last village on earth where humans still regularly hunt whales by hand, using bamboo-shafted harpoons. It's a hazardous, savage way of life that takes around 15 to 25 sperm whales from the ocean in an average year, a subsistence livelihood that conservation groups have determined does not threaten sperm whale numbers (estimated at over a million worldwide).

Be warned that if you accompany the whalers on a hunting trip it can be an extremely harrowing and bloody experience that can drag on for hours. However, your chances of seeing a whale hunt or the bloody business of butchering a whale are quite small. Note that, if a whale has been speared but is not dead, the hunters will not necessarily want to head for home as night approaches so you can get your evening meal – their food supply for the next few weeks is on the other end of the line.

The wooden whaling boats (called *tena*) are around 10m long and held together with wooden dowels and lashed twine. Some engine-powered boats are now being used in Lamalera for hunting dolphins and manta rays, but virtually all whaling vessels still carry a mast, a sail made from palm leaves and a crew who row furiously to bear down on a whale when one is spotted. As the gap between the boat and the whale narrows, the harpooner – balanced on a protruding plank – takes a harpoon and attempts to leap onto the back of the whale (using the force of his weight to drive home the harpoon). An injured whale will try to dive, dragging the boat with it, but cannot escape since it has to resurface. Often the whale will need to be speared with several harpoons before it weakens, the ocean becoming a blood bath as the hunters prod the great mammal with knives, attempting to speed up its death.

Every part of the sperm whale is used. The dark meat is shared according to traditional dictates, with most being reserved for the crew and portions going to virtually every family in the village. Spermacetu oil from the head (which was particularly prized by 19th-century whalers and used to burn lamps) is used for cooking. Innards are traded for fruit and vegetables in a barter-only market in the hills. Tourists buy the teeth.

The sperm whale is particularly prized, though other toothed whales (pilots and orcas) are occasionally taken. Baleen whales (plankton-eaters with sievelike feeding mechanisms) are never touched; see the boxed text, opposite. Mantas, dolphins, sharks (mainly hammerheads but also the odd whale shark) are hunted throughout the year – all are also caught using harpoons.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Lewoleba, a daily truck is scheduled to leave the market at noon (12,000Rp, 3½ hours) bound for Lamalera, though it's usually late and sometimes cancelled because of mechanical problems. Pak Tanto, the owner of Losmen Rejeki, also offers transport in his jeep. There's additional transport on market day (Monday), sometimes by boat – check at the harbour. Returning to Lewoleba, a daily truck leaves at 5am.

Balauring

This small town is predominantly Islamic and is on the peninsula at the eastern end of Lembata. Ferries linking Alor and Lembata call here, but there's no pressing reason to stay. There are wonderful views of Gunung Ili Api as you come into town.

Small buses (12,000Rp, two hours) run the 53km from Balauring over the

sealed road to Lewoleba. Buses also run to Wairiang on the far eastern coast, a 45-minute journey.

ALOR

The final link of the island chain that stretches east of Java, Alor is a stunning volcanic island of remarkable cultural diversity. It's an extremely rugged place, the nature of the terrain and lack of roads serving to isolate the 170,000 inhabitants into some 50 tribes, and 14 languages are spoken (most of the Papuan family). The nearby island of Pantar is about as remote as it gets in the archipelago.

Although the Dutch installed local rajahs along the coastal regions after 1908, they had little influence over the interior, where people were still taking heads in the 1950s. The tribes had little contact with each other except during raids.

Alor today is around 75% Protestant and 20% Muslim (most of the latter live on the coast). However, indigenous animist traditions endure. Most islanders survive on subsistence farming (particularly of corn) but new cash crops, including vanilla, turmeric, candlenuts and cloves, are being grown, and the export of seaweed is increasing.

Though a network of roads now crosses the island, boats are still a common form of transport. Very few visitors make it here, but those who do are seduced by the warmth of the people, and the landscape. The diving can be world-class, with plenty of pelagics, including hammerheads, dog-tooth tuna and Mola-Mola, as well as superb macro life.

Kalabahi

☎ 0386 / pop 42,000

Kalabahi is the chief town on Alor and is located at the end of a long and spectacular palm-fringed bay on the west coast. It's a clichéd tropical port – slow-moving and lazy, where the punishing heat is alleviated by occasional but very welcoming sea breezes.

Kalabahi is relatively prosperous, but outside the town living conditions are poor. There are a few interesting villages and beautiful beaches nearby, some with spectacular snorkelling and diving, but also with strong currents.

It's worth strolling around the Pasar Inpres, which has a huge variety of fruit as well as women weaving bamboo mats.

INFORMATION

It's best to bring plenty of cash to Alor as rates for US dollars and travellers cheques are poor, and the ATM at BRI bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Sutoyo; 7.30am–2pm), 300m east and 300 north of the harbour, is prone to tropical tantrums and accepts Mastercard/Cirrus cards only. The Toko Ombai shop on the road a block to the east will change foreign currencies, including US dollars, outside banking hours and often at better rates. There's a Telkom (Jl Soetomo; 7 24hr) and an internet connection at Kantor PDE (per hr 8000Rp), about 2km north of town.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Kalabahi's modest museum (Jl Diponegoro; 7 8am–3.30pm Mon–Sat), just west of the mar-

ket, has some fine ikat, *moko* and assorted artefacts.

Scuba diving in Alor can be exceptional. La Petite Kepa (see p578) offers two dives for US\$65, including all gear. Other scuba schools offering dives around the island include Dive Alor (www.divealor.com), based in Kupang, West Timor, and Grand Komodo Tours (www.komodoalordive.com), which runs live-aboards here from Bali.

SLEEPING

The most popular place to stay on Alor is La Petite Kepa Homestay (p578) on Pulau Kepa, near Alor Kecil.

Hotel Adi Dharma (☎ 21280; Jl Martadinata 12; r with fan & bathroom 35,000/50,000Rp, with TV & air-con 60,000/75,000Rp; a) A popular place with fine port views. The helpful owner, Ibu Inang, speaks English, has good travel information and can arrange transport. The hotel is about 200m west of the harbour, on the waterfront.

Hotel Melati (☎ 21073; Jl Soetomo; r 45,000Rp, with air-con 75,000Rp; a) Just west of the harbour, this place has functional clean rooms and a shady garden.

Hotel Pelangi Indah (☎ 21251; Jl Diponegoro 100; economy s/d 20,000/30,000Rp, r with air-con & shower 110,000/135,000Rp, ste 200,000; a) Out near the bus terminal, Pelangi Indah has five types of rooms, from claustrophobic economy-class cells through decent air-con rooms with *mandi* and veranda, to very spacious suites.

Hotel Nusa Kenari Indah (☎ 21119; Jl Diponegoro 11; r with fan & mandi 30,000Rp, with air-con 75,000Rp, ste 250,000Rp; a) Has clean and fairly comfortable air-con rooms; the suites here are modern and smart, with tiled floors and fancy furnishings. It's near the Pelangi Indah.

EATING

At night streetside warungs and *kaki lima* (food carts) set up near the harbour. Sate, *soto ayam* and other Javanese fare are on offer. This meagre collection is the closest thing to nightlife in Kalabahi, which otherwise closes down at around 8pm. Look out for *jagung ketama* (corn with green peas), a local speciality.

Rumah Makan Kediri (☎ 21146; Jl Martadinata; dishes 5000–8000Rp; 7 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Centrally located near the pier on the waterfront, this popular Javanese-owned place serves the best *nasi campur* in town.

MOKO

Alor's chief fame lies in its mysterious *moko* – bronze drums about 50cm high and 33cm across, tapered in the middle like an hourglass and with four ear-shaped handles around the circumference. They sound a bit like a bongo when thumped. Thousands of them are scattered around the island – the Alorese apparently found them buried in the ground and believed them to be gifts from the gods, though they were probably brought by traders from India, China or Makassar.

Most *moko* have decorations similar to those on bronze utensils made in Java in the 13th- and 14th-century Majapahit era, but others resemble earlier Southeast Asian designs and may be connected with the Dongson culture that developed in Vietnam and China around 700 BC and then pushed its influence into Indonesia. Later *moko* even have English- or Dutch-influenced decorations.

Today, *moko* have acquired enormous value among the Alorese, and families devote great time and energy to amassing collections of them, along with pigs and land. *Moko* form an essential part of a bride's *belis* (dowry). In former times, whole villages would sometimes go to war in an attempt to win possession of a prized *moko*. The export of *moko* is restricted by the government.

There's a good collection in Kalabahi's museum.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The airport is 9km from town. Transport schedules are subject to very frequent changes in this part of the nation.

Merpati (☎ 21041) has four flights a week to/from Kupang, some on a 12-seater Cassa plane that fills up quickly, so book ahead. The office is east of the harbour and up the road on the western bank of the river. **Transnusa** (☎ 21039; Jl Sudirman 100) flies the same route four times a week on a newer 48-seater plane.

Kalabahi is linked by passenger/car ferries to Kupang and Atapupu in Timor and Lantantuka (Flores) via Baranusa (Pantar), Balauring, Lewoleba (Lembata) and Waiwerang (Adonara). These ferries leave from the ferry terminal 1km southwest of the town centre, a 10-minute walk or 1500Rp bemo ride.

To Kupang, ferries leave on Wednesday and Sunday at noon (42,000Rp, around 16 hours). For Atapupu, close to the border with East Timor, there's a Tuesday ferry at 8pm (22,700Rp, eight hours). It travels back from Atapupu on Monday at 10am.

Ferries depart Kalabahi for Lantantuka (42,500Rp, around 20 hours) on Sunday and Thursday at 8am, passing through Baranusa, Balauring and Lewoleba (33,000Rp, 14 hours). For Lantantuka departures, see p570. Bring plenty of food and water.

Pelni (☎ 21195) ships leave from the main pier in the centre of town (the Penli office is opposite the pier). The *Awu* sails every two

weeks between Kalabahi and Kupang, Ende, Waingapu, Lombok and Bali, or Lantantuka and Sulawesi. In addition, the monthly *Tatamailau* sails to Kupang; ports in Papua, including Timika; and on to Ambon. Finally, the *Sirimau* connects Kalabahi with Kupang and Makassar.

Other small boats from the central wharf make their way to remote islands of the Alor Archipelago.

GETTING AROUND

Transport around town is by red bemo (1500Rp). It's possible to rent a motorcycle through the Hotel Adi Dharma for around 50,000Rp per day; for a car, speak to Pak Kris (☎ 21030). Jeeps called *pansars* leave from the Pasar Inpres to most parts of central Alor.

Around Kalabahi

Takpala is a traditional village about 13km east of Kalabahi. To get there take a Mabu bus (2000Rp) from the terminal at Kalabahi market. From where the bus drops you, walk about 1km uphill on a sealed road. There are several traditional high-roofed houses, and the view over the Flores Sea from the village is stunning. Bring some gifts of basic foodstuffs if you plan on exploring.

Nearby the villages of Alor Kecil and Alor Besar are good beaches with excellent snorkelling. The water here is wonderfully cool, but the currents are strong. Alor Kecil is the jumping-off point for Pulau Kepa, an

offshore islet with a terrific place to stay, **La Petite Kepa** (☎ 081 338200479; www.la-petite-kepa.com; bungalows incl meals per person 75,000Rp), a French-run place in an idyllic spot with views of Alor and Pantar. It's well set up for travellers, with eight good bamboo-and-coconut-wood bungalows and fine, communally eaten local meals. Solar power provides night-time electricity. The owners offer scuba diving (US\$65 for two dives, including equipment), and there's snorkelling on the western side of Pulau Kepa.

Buses and blue bemos to Alor Kecil (3000Rp, 30 minutes) and Alor Besar leave from the Kalabahi Pasar Inpres, or catch them on the harbourfront road. If you're heading to Kepa, stop by the pier and Pak Sere will ferry you across for a small fee.

Near the airport, at the northernmost tip of the island, is Mali, a lovely white-sand beach with good snorkelling. It's possible to rent a boat for a tour of the area and when the tide allows you can walk to Pulau Suki, off the beach at Mali. There's an old grave there, said to be that of a sultan from Sulawesi. It is usually possible to arrange to stay with a family in Mali.

Pantar

☎ 0386

The second-largest island of the Alor group, Pantar is about as far off the beaten track

as you can get. Ferries between Larantuka and Alor stop at **Baranusa**; though it's the island's main town, it's a sleepy little place with a stragggle of coconut palms and a couple of general stores.

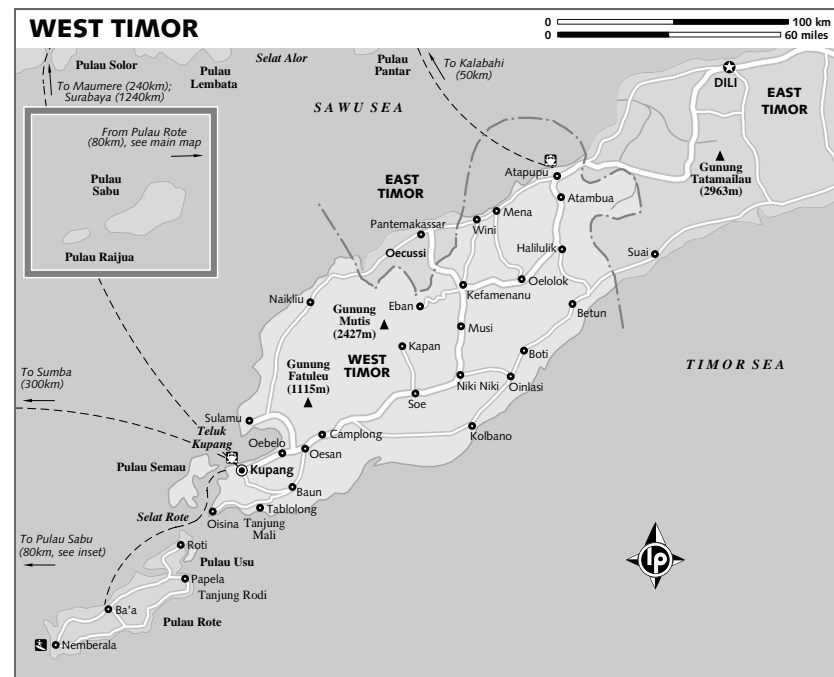
Homestay Burhan (r 20,000Rp), Baranusa's only accommodation, is a friendly place with just three rooms; the price includes meals.

The main reason to visit Pantar is to climb **Gunung Sirung**, which is an active volcano with a huge and impressive smouldering crater. From Baranusa take a truck to Kakamauta, from where it is a three-hour walk to Sirung's crater. Bring water from Baranusa and stay with the *kepala desa* in Kakamauta.

The only other island of note is the sparsely populated **Pulau Pura**, sandwiched between Pantar and Alor. It is dominated by a towering, forested peak topped by a small crater lake.

WEST TIMOR

West Timor has never been much of a tourist destination, although it is very scenic, with rugged countryside and traditional villages that are well worth exploring. The combination of Indonesia's recent crises, visa restrictions, East Timor's harrowing struggle



for independence and transport issues all but wiped West Timor from the tourism map for many years. But with twice-weekly Kupang–Darwin connections now back in operation and the proximity of East Timor offering an inexpensive visa run, visitor numbers are slowly increasing again.

Kupang is the main city and is very Indonesian, with its buzzing bemos and honking horns. Beyond Kupang, West Timor's landscape is captivating, with its spiky lontar palms, rocky soils and central hills dotted with villages of beehive-shaped huts. It also has some fantastic coastline, though there are no resorts, just empty beaches.

Aggravated by dry winds from northern Australia, the dry season is prolonged and results in food and water shortages. Maize is the staple crop, but coffee and dry rice are important.

Christianity is widespread, though in some rural areas animistic traditions endure. Many villagers still defer to their traditional chiefs, wear ikat, munch betel nut and down *tuak* (palm-sap liquor) with relish. Around 14 languages are spoken on

the island, both Malay and Papuan types, though the native Tetum is understood in most parts. The population of West Timor is about 1.6 million.

West Timor offers excellent travel connections to other parts of Nusa Tenggara and Bali by boat and plane, including the remote islands of Alor and Rote.

History

The Tetum of central Timor are one of the largest ethnic groups on the island. Before Portuguese and Dutch colonisation, they were fragmented into dozens of small states. Conflict was all too common, with head-hunting a popular pastime, although when peace was restored the captured heads were thoughtfully returned to the kingdom from which they came.

The first Europeans in Timor were the Portuguese, who prized its sandalwood trees. In the mid-17th century the Dutch occupied Kupang, beginning a long conflict for control of the sandalwood trade and leading to the Portuguese being pushed back to eastern Timor. The division of the

EAST TIMOR VISA RUN

Hitting Dili in East Timor is an inexpensive way to renew your Indonesian visa from Nusa Tenggara. This visa run has generally been working smoothly for the last few years, though unrest in Dili did close the Indonesian consulate for a while in 2006 – check the current political situation before you cross the border. If you decide to go, be aware that East Timor is considerably more expensive than Indonesia and the return trip normally takes over a week by the time you've got to Dili, hung around for your visa and travelled back to West Timor.

Starting in Kupang, West Timor, book a **Timor Travel** (☎ 881543) bus from Kupang to Dili which will take you to the border at Motoain (150,000Rp, seven hours). Expect a bag search on both sides of the border, but travellers have not reported any extra hassles from customs or immigration officials. Once over the border, get your East Timor visa (available at the border for US\$30) and you'll find your onward bus waiting for the 2½ hour trip to Dili. It's also possible to make your own way to the border from Atambua in West Timor; see p588).

Once in Dili, head to the Indonesian consulate for your visa (US\$35), which all passport holders must have to re-enter West Timor. The consulate is near the Pertamina office on the western outskirts of Dili. Travellers have been issued with 60-day visas here on application, though 30 days is more usual. The visa takes five working days to issue, though some persuasive visitors have received theirs in just three days. Enjoy the delights of Dili and then run the route in reverse. You can buy your bus ticket for the return trip from **Ifau Travel** (☎ 7260019; quenero@yahoo.com; Rua Bemori, Culuhum).

island between the two colonial powers, worked out in agreements between 1859 and 1913, gave Portugal the eastern half plus the enclave of Oecussi.

Neither European power penetrated far into the interior until around the 1920s, and the island's political structure was left largely intact, with both colonisers ruling through the native aristocracy. When Indonesia won independence in 1949 the Dutch left West Timor, but the Portuguese still held East Timor, setting the stage for the tragedy that continued until the East's full independence in 2002.

During August 1999, in a UN-sponsored referendum, the people of East Timor voted in favour of independence. Pro-Jakarta militias, backed by the Indonesian military, went on a murderous rampage in East Timor, destroying buildings and infrastructure before peacekeepers intervened. Back in West Timor, the militias were responsible for the lynching of three UN workers in Atambua in 2000, leaving West Timor a pariah in international eyes.

By 2006, though there had been occasional outbreaks of tension close to the border between the two Timors, relations seemed to be stabilising and transport links by road and air were thriving. Kupang and most areas of West Timor are very safe and always have been.

KUPANG

% 0380 / pop 300,000

Kupang is all energy and commerce, a bustling city that's the capital of East Nusa Tenggara province (NTT), which includes West Timor, Rote, Sabu, the Solor and Alor Archipelagos, Sumba, Flores and Komodo. The city centre is scruffy and noisy, with streets patrolled by squadrons of Indonesia's most outrageous bemos, each kitted out with a bombastic sound system. Though Kupang is virtually bereft of cultural or architectural attractions, it's not a threatening or intimidating place. It's a reasonable base to linger for a few days if you're waiting for a flight or boat – English naval officer Captain William Bligh did after being cast adrift by the mutinous crew of the *Bounty* in 1789.

With the resumption of flights between Darwin and Kupang, a trickle of travellers have started to visit the city again.

Orientation

Kupang is a sprawling city, and you'll need to take bemos or *ojeks* to get around. Two main streets, Jl Ahmad Yani (which runs parallel to the waterfront) and Jl Mohammad Hatta/Sudirman to the south both have hotels, internet connections, banks and restaurants. The downtown district, centred on the bemo terminal of Kota Kupang (or simply Terminal), is run-down and squalid, its waterfront lined with crumbling buildings. Heading east of here along the seafront things gradually improve, with a couple of hotels on Jl Sumatera and some upmarket options further east by uninspiring Pantai Taman Ria (nicknamed Tim Tim Beach). El Tari airport is 15km east of town; Tenau and Bolok harbours are 10km and 13km west, respectively.

Information

INTERNET ACCESS, POST & TELEPHONE

Internet connections are much more reliable here than anywhere else in East Nusa Tenggara.

Flash Internet (Jl Sudirman 100A; per hr 9000Rp; 12hr 24hr)

Main post office (Jl Palapa 1) Take bemo 5. Poste restante mail comes here.

Telkom office (Jl Urip Sumohardjo 11; 12hr 24hr) Also has an ATM and offers internet connections between 8am and midnight at 8000Rp per hour.

MONEY

Kupang has plenty of banks and ATMs; however, they are not open on Saturday morning.

Bank Danamon (Jl Sumatera) Equipped with an ATM and offers cash advances of up to 5,000,000Rp.

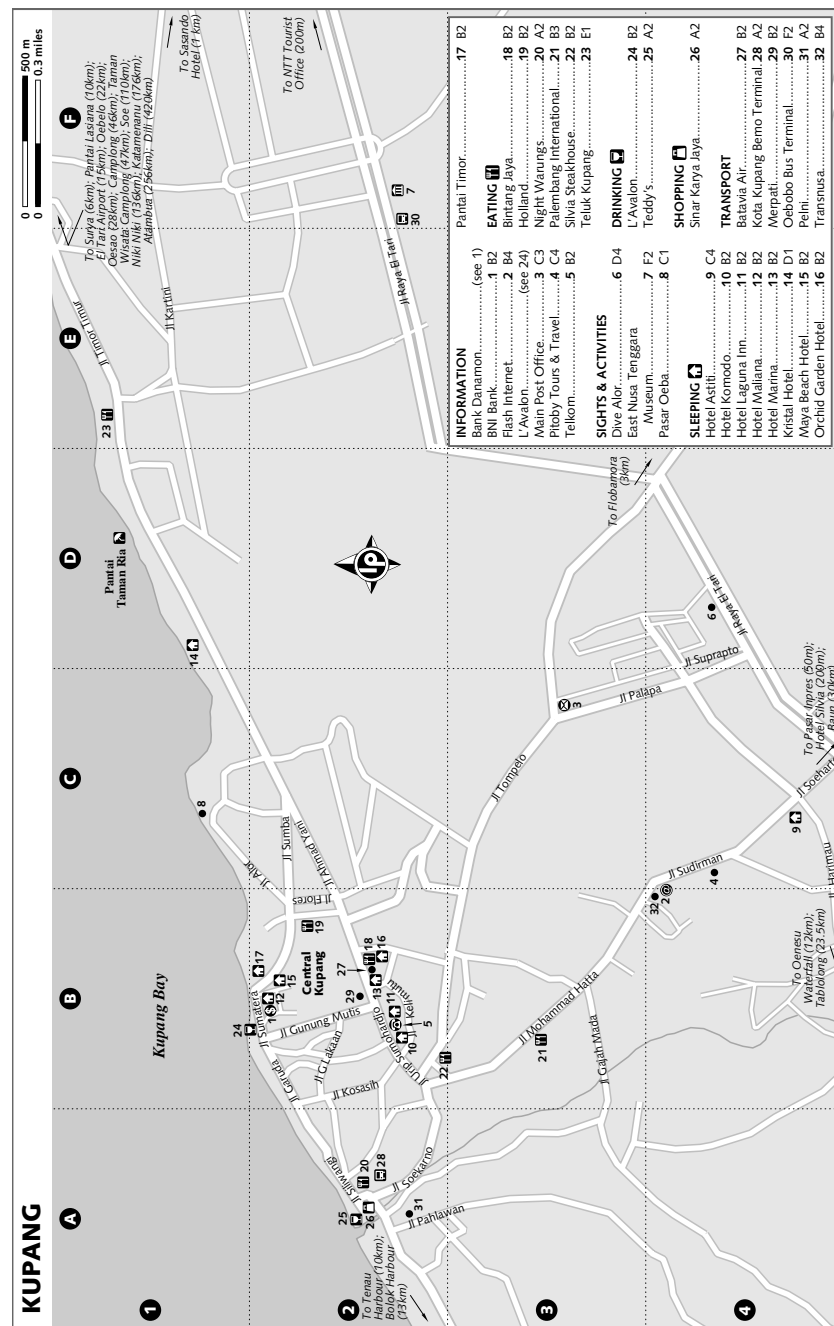
BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Sumatera) Has an ATM, as well as fair rates.

TOURIST INFORMATION

L'Avalon (Jl Sumatera) The bar looked on its last legs when we visited, but if it's open the ever-helpful owner Edwin Lerrick is extremely well informed about Timor and NTT.

NTT Tourist Office (% 21540; 12hr 7am–3pm Mon–Thu) Has maps and a few brochures, but little else. It's about 4km east of the centre; take bemo 10 or 7, get off at Jl Raya El Tari at the SMP5 secondary school and walk 200m east.

Pitoby Tours & Travel (% 832700; Jl Sudirman 136) You can check schedules and purchase flight and ferry tickets here.



Sights & Activities

The East Nusa Tenggara Museum (admission free; 11am-3.30pm Mon-Sat), near the tourist office, houses a collection of arts, crafts and artefacts from all over the province. Aurora Arby is an anthropologist who will be happy to show you around. To get there, take bemo 10 from the Kota Kupang Terminal.

The main market is the rambling **Pasar Inpres** (11am-4pm) off Jl Soeharto in the south of the city. To get there, take bemo 1 or 2 and follow the crowd when you get off. It's mostly fruit and vegetables, but some crafts and ikat can be found. The smaller **Pasar Oeba** (Jl Alor) is 2km east of town.

EXPLORING TIMOR

Timor has many fascinating traditional villages, pockets of rainforest, and remote regions. But Bahasa Indonesia – let alone English – is often not spoken, so a local guide is very advisable. **Pae Nope** (081 339479670) is a highly recommended English-speaking guide who organises superb ethnological, trekking and bird-watching trips around the island (and to East Timor). A two-day tour costs 1,100,000Rp per person (minimum of two people), including all accommodation and meals.

DIVE TRIPS

Nearby Alor has some of Indonesia's best diving. **Kupang-based Dive Alor** (0821154; www.divealor.com; Jl Raya El Tari 19), run by Australians Graeme and Donovan Whitford, is a highly experienced scuba outfit that arranges trips to the island.

Sleeping

Hotels are spread around the city, with a concentration of good options on the waterfront on Jl Sumatera and another group just off Jl Ahmad Yani/Jl Urip Sumohardjo.

BUDGET

Hotel Maliana (0821879; Jl Sumatera 35; r with fan 60,000Rp, with air-con 110,000Rp; a) The motel-like low-rise Maliana has well-scrubbed rooms set back from the seafront. Breakfast is included, and the staff are welcoming and can help with travel info.

Pantai Timor (0831651; Jl Sumatera; economy s/d 75,000/100,000Rp, standard r 160,000Rp, deluxe 220,000Rp; a) Landmark seafront hotel with renovated rooms that offer good value: the cheapest are

quite acceptable and have air-con, while the standard class and above are all large, with two double beds and quality furnishings. The restaurant has panoramic sea views.

Maya Beach Hotel (0832169; Jl Sumatera 31; standard r with air-con & TV 115,000Rp, with hot water 135,000Rp; a) A decent choice, this large concrete hotel has plenty of inoffensive, well-kept if slightly bland tiled rooms at fair prices, some with sea views.

Hotel Marina (0822566; Jl Ahmad Yani 79; r with fan 55,000Rp, s/d with air-con & bathroom 110,000/137,500Rp; a) The economy rooms only have shared bathrooms, but the air-con options here are pretty decent, with wardrobes and reading lights.

Orchid Garden Hotel (0833707; fax 831339; Jl Gunung Fateleu 2; s/d from 175,000/250,000Rp; a s) It could be an absolutely first-class deal with some more maintenance, but as long as you expect a leaky tap or two this remains a great place to stay for the price. The Orchid enjoys a tranquil location, and the very spacious bungalows are grouped around a garden and large pool.

Or try these:

Hotel Laguna Inn (0833559; Jl Kelimutu 36; s/d 30,000/35,000Rp, with mandi 37,500/45,000Rp, r with air-con & TV 80,000Rp; a) A selection of spartan rooms at fair rates.

Hotel Komodo (0821913; Jl Kelimutu 38-40; s/d with fan & bathroom 53,000/65,000Rp, with air-con 70,000/82,000Rp; a) Large place with plenty of choice.

MIDRANGE

Hotel Silvia (0825191; Jl Soeharto 51-53; standard 275,000Rp, superior 350,000Rp; a) This place has immaculate, squeaky-clean rooms with gorgeous teak floors and stylish modern furniture – even the standard class have two huge beds. There's a fancy, overpriced in-house café-restaurant, but not much else within walking distance.

Kristal Hotel (0825100; kristal@kupang.wasantara.net.id; Jl Timor Timur 59; s/d from 508,200/580,800Rp, ste from 1,452,000Rp; a s) By the beach 2km east of the centre, this hotel has well-appointed rooms – the cheaper standard class are identical but on the lower level. The in-house restaurant is far from good.

Hotel Astiti (0821810; fax 831278; Jl Sudirman; s 165,000-275,000Rp, d 220,000-400,000Rp) The rooms here are looking dated, but that's Kupang all over. There's an ATM, and brekkie is included.

Eating

Despite the town's size there aren't very many enjoyable places to eat in Kupang, expect fluorescent stripights and zero effort on the atmosphere front. Culinary standards are decidedly average.

Bintang Jaya (Jl Ahmad Yani; meals 8000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The cleanest and best of several similar restaurants on this street, pick 'n' mix yourself a plateful of spicy Javan food from the large bowls in the window. Also sells beer.

Palembang International (0822784; Jl Mohamad Hatta 54; dishes 6000-26,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) A busy, shabby-looking place with an inexpensive menu that includes mustard greens with chicken (8000Rp), noodles, and seafood specials, including giant prawns.

Silvia Steakhouse (Jl Beringin 3; dishes 12,000-29,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) This almost-stylish place with gingham tablecloths offers a long menu of Western dishes, including cognac steak and fish and chips. It also serves breakfast and fresh juices.

Teluk Kupang (0833985; Jl Timor Timur; most dishes 15,000-38,000Rp; 11 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Vast, kitsch, garishly decorated beachside place specialising in northern Sulawesi food – *ikan waku* (spicy fish) is the house special.

Holland (0833367; Jl Irian Jaya 8; martabak 15,000-40,000Rp; 11 dinner) Take-away place offering the gigantic *martabak*, the best in town.

Night warungs are located around the Terminal, try the *bubur kacang* (mung beans and black rice in coconut milk). Some of these warungs sell *rw* (dog meat).

Drinking

Gone are the days when the harbourfront was crammed with backpackers bound for Australia.

L'Avalon (Jl Sumatera) A rickety-looking shack above the 'beach' that was looking a spent force when we last called in. But, as the owner, Edwin, is quite a character and the best source of info in town, it may be worth stopping by to see if it's open.

Teddy's (Jl Siliwangi; 11 noon-11pm) Open-sided place where the bar stools have great waterfront views, but it tends to be achingly empty these days.

Entertainment

Kupang's nightspots are uniformly seedy; most are little more than sleazy karaoke

bars. **Surya** (11 6pm-2am), 6km east of town on the beach, and the bar at the **Sasando Hotel** (Jl Kartini 1; admission 25,000Rp; 11 7pm-1am) are dark places fitting this bill.

Shopping

For ikat and handicrafts there are some stores near the Terminal, and you may find ikat at the Pasar Inpres. Bizarre *tifi langga* (conical hats) from Rote make a fun purchase, but try fitting one in your backpack.

Kupang's main shopping mall is the **Flobamora** (Jl Lamamentik) 3km southeast of town, take bemo 6 from the roundabout at Jl Beringin.

Sinar Karya Jaya (0831473; Jl Siliwangi 94C) One of several places around here that sells artefacts and ikat.

Dive Alor (0821154; www.divealor.com; Jl Raya El Tari 19) Has a huge selection of high-quality carvings and weavings from around Nusa Tenggara and some Chinese ceramics.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Kupang is the most important hub for air travel in Nusa Tenggara. **Merpati** (0833833; Jl Ahmad Yani 66) flies to Denpasar (daily), Mataram (daily), Kalabahi (four times weekly), Waingapu (three weekly), Maumere (five weekly), Ende (three times weekly), Laran-tuka (three weekly), Lewoleba (one weekly), Atambua (two weekly) and Rote (Friday). Merpati/Air North fly to Darwin (Tuesday and Saturday).

Transnusa (0822555; fax 832573; Jl Sudirman 68) has more modern planes, and flies to Denpasar (twice weekly), Kalabahi (four times weekly), Ende (four times weekly), Maumere (daily), Ruteng (four times weekly) and Waingapu (four times weekly).

Batavia Air (0830555; Jl Ahmad Yani 73) flies daily to Surabaya and on to Jakarta. **Lion Air** (0882119; El Tari airport) flies exactly the same route. Both operate flexi-fares, depending on how early you book.

Departure tax is 10,000Rp for domestic flights and 50,000Rp for international flights.

BOAT

Pelni ships depart from Tenau Harbour, 10km southwest of Kupang (4000Rp, bemo 12); ferries from Bolok Harbour, 13km

southwest of Kupang (4000Rp, bemo 13). Expect to pay approximately 12,000Rp for a hotel drop when coming into town by bemo.

Boats are routinely late and schedules are regularly changed, particularly during the rainy season, when the seas are much rougher.

Pelni (☎ 824357; Jl Pahlawan 3; 8.30am–3pm Mon–Sat, 9–11am Sun) is near the waterfront. Pelni's *Dobonsolo* runs every two weeks directly from Bali to Kupang, and on to Kota Ambon and Papua. The fortnightly *Awu* sails from Kupang to Ende, Waingapu, Lombok and Bali, or Kalabahi, Larantuka and Sulawesi. The fortnightly *Sirimau* sails between Kupang, Alor and Makassar. The fortnightly *Pangrango* sails from Kupang to Surabaya via Ende, Waingapu and Bima. The *Tatamailau* connects Kupang with Maumere, Bima, and Benoa, and on the return trip heads to Saumlake and Tual. The monthly *Kelimutu* links Kupang with Ende, Waingapu, Bima and Surabaya to the west, and Papua to the east. Finally, the monthly *Dorolonda* links Sulawesi and Papua via Kupang.

Two other ferries provide links to Surabaya: *Kirana II* (leaving Monday) via Maumere (125,000Rp), and *Dharma* (leaving Thursday) via Ende (115,000Rp). Book your tickets and check schedules first via a travel agent.

From Bolok Harbour, ferries sail to Larantuka (twice weekly), Kalabahi (Tuesday and Sunday at 2pm) and Ende on Wednesday. The Ende ferry continues on to Wainapu. There's also a weekly boat to Aimere in Flores on Thursday. For details of boats to Rote, see p590.

BUS & BEMO

Long-distance buses depart from Oebobo terminal on the eastern side of town – catch bemo 10. Daily departures include Soe (22,000Rp, three hours) and Niki Niki (25,000Rp, 3½ hours) every hour or so from 5am to 6pm; Kefamenanu (36,000Rp, 5½ hours) and Atambua (52,000Rp, eight hours) at 7am, 9am, noon and 5pm.

Daily direct buses (150,000Rp one way, 11 hours) to Dili are operated by Timor Travel (☎ 881543). Call for a hotel pick-up, or they also pass by Oebobo terminal at 7am.

Bemos to villages around Kupang go from the central terminal, Kota Kupang.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Kupang's El Tari airport is 15km east of the town centre. Taxis from the airport to town cost a fixed 50,000Rp. For public transport, turn left out of the terminal and walk 1km to the junction with the main highway, from where bemos to town cost 3000Rp. Going to the airport, take bemo 14 or 15 to the junction and then walk.

BEMO

A ride in one of Kupang's unique bemos (1500Rp) is one of the city's essential experiences. Windscreens are festooned with girly silhouette stickers, Jesus of Nazareth and English Premiership football stars, the bodywork is of the go-faster technicolour paint job, while banks of subwoofers unleash Indo rock, techno and hip-hop from beneath your seat. They stop running by about 9pm.

Kupang is too spread out to do much walking. The hub of bemo routes is the Kota Kupang terminal, usually just called Terminal. Useful bemo routes:

- 1 & 2 Kuanino–Oepura; passing many popular hotels.
- 5 Oebobo–Airona–Bakunase; passing the main post office.
- 6 Goes to the Flobamora shopping mall.
- 10 Kelapa Lima–Walikota; from Terminal to the tourist information office and Oebobo bus terminal.
- 12 Tenau Harbour.
- 13 Bolok Harbour.
- 14 & 15 Penfui (useful for the airport).

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

It's possible to rent a car with a driver from 300,000Rp per day. Motorcycles cost around 50,000Rp per day. Ask at your hotel or a travel agent.

AROUND KUPANG ISLANDS

Pulau Semau to the west of Kupang has some decent sandy beaches and snorkelling. Irregular local boats go from Namosaen village, west of Kupang.

Pulau Kera (Monkey Island) is the blob of trees and sand that is visible from Kupang. This small, uninhabited island has sandy beaches and clear water. Access is by chartered boat only.

Beaches

Kupang's beaches are grubby and flotsam-strewn. **Pantai Lasiana**, about 10km east of

town by bemo 17, is a fine sandy beach and a busy picnic spot at weekends, when food stalls and litter are the order of the day.

There are great beaches near Tablolong, 27km southwest of Kupang. From the village, head southwest around the headland and find your own deserted stretch of white sand, such as **Air Cina** – down a dirt track off the main road 3km before Tablolong. Bring plenty of food and water, and check when the last bemo goes back to Kupang.

Oenesu

This waterfall lies off the Kupang–Tablolong road. The turn-off is 13km from Kupang near Tapa village, which is serviced by regular bemos from Tabun. From the main road it's a 2.5km walk to the falls. Take the road to Sumlili; past the Imanuel church is the turn to the falls, which is 800m away along a rough road.

Baun

A small village 30km southeast of Kupang in the hilly Amarasi district, Baun is an ikat-weaving centre with a few Dutch buildings. You can visit the *rumah rajah*, the last rajah's house, which is now occupied by his widow. Market day in Baun is Saturday. From Baun to the south coast is a solid day's hike; there's a good surf beach down there.

To get to Baun, take a bemo from Kupang's bus terminal or Pasar Inpres.

Oebelo & Oesao

Oebelo, 22km from Kupang on the Soe road, has an interesting workshop (☎ 081 339242307) run by Pak Pah and his family – look for the faded Home Industri Sasando sign. Traditional 20-stringed Rotenese instruments, the *sasando* (featured on the 5000Rp note), are made here, along with electrified versions and the Rotenese lontar-leaf hat, *ti'i langga*. The family may treat you to a melodious singsong of Beatles tunes.

Oesau is another 6km down the road and has a war memorial dedicated to the 2/40th Australian Infantry Battalion.

CAMPLONG

A quiet hill town 46km from Kupang, Camplong has a small forest reserve, **Taman Wisata Camplong**, with some caves and a spring-fed swimming pool along with a caged Komodo

dragon and a small croc. It's a tough 7km walk from here to **Gunung Fatuleu** (1115m), which attracts botanists interested in the unique montane flora found on its slopes.

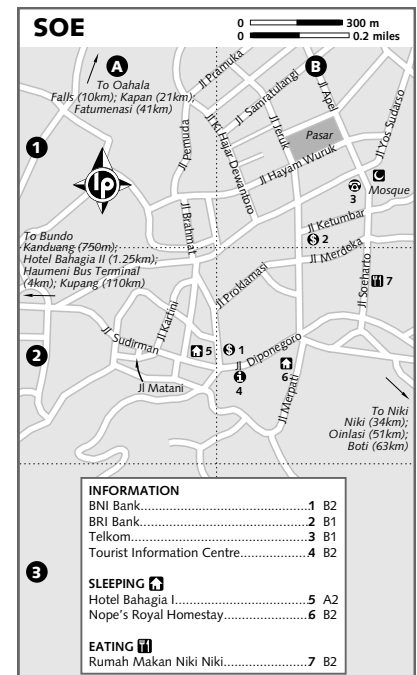
Regular buses operate from Kupang's Oebobo terminal to Camplong (6000Rp, one hour) and on to Soe.

SOE

☎ 0388 / pop: 30,000

Soe, an important market town in central Timor, sits at 800m – nights are markedly less steamy here than on the coast. The town itself is a dull sprawl of modern houses, but it makes an excellent base for trips to traditional villages around the area.

Beyond Soe you'll see the beehive-shaped houses (*ume kebubu*, or *lopo*) that give the region its distinctive character. With no windows and only a 1m-high doorway, *lopo* are small and smoky, and the authorities have instituted a programme to replace them. The locals, however, consider their new houses unhealthy, as they're cold, so they construct new *lopo* behind the approved houses.



Information

The **tourist information centre** (☎ 21149; Jl Diponegoro) has good detail on the surrounding area and can arrange guides. Both **BNI** (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Diponegoro) and **BRI** (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Hatta) banks have ATMs, but exchange rates for cash and travellers cheques are poor.

Sleeping

Nope's Royal Homestay (☎ 21711; Jl Merpati 8; bungalows incl breakfast 75,000Rp) One very spruce and comfortable little bungalow with *mandi* in the grounds of the family home of a local rajah. Pae Nope. Pae speaks fluent English, is Timor's best guide, and lived in Darwin for years. More bungalows are planned.

Hotel Bahagia II (☎ 21095; Jl Gajah Mada 55; r 95,000-155,000Rp, cottages 210,000-397,000Rp) An excellent deal, this orderly, well-run hotel has a good range of rooms with ikat adorning the walls, and some with wrought-iron beds. It's 2km west of the centre.

Hotel Bahagia I (☎ 21015; Jl Diponegoro 72) The owners were planning to upgrade this place in the centre of town at the time of research. Should be backpacker-friendly and budget priced.

Eating

There are three inexpensive *rumah makan* (eating houses) on Jl Soeharto and a couple of places just west of the market on Jl Hayam Wuruk.

Bundo Kanduang (☎ 22079; Jl Gajah Mada; dishes 4000-18,000Rp; 1 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Always busy, this is the cleanest place and serves the tastiest food in town, in true chilli-heavy Padang style. *Nasi sayur* (rice with vegetables) is a steal at 4000Rp. It's 1.5km west of the centre.

Rumah Makan Niki Niki (Jl Soeharto; dishes 5000-13,500Rp; 1 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The best of the bunch on this street. Serves up Sumatra's finest.

Getting There & Away

The Haumeni bus terminal is 4km west of town (1000Rp by bemo). Regular buses go from Soe to Kupang (22,000Rp, three hours), Kefamenanu (17,000Rp, 2½ hours) and Oinlasi (9000Rp, 1½ hours), while bemos cover Niki Niki (5000Rp) and Kapan (2500Rp).

AROUND SOE Oinlasi

Regular buses from Soe make the 51km trip along a winding mountain road to Oinlasi in around 1½ hours. Its Tuesday market is one of the biggest and best in West Timor and attracts villagers from the surrounding hill districts, many wearing their traditional ikat. Weavings, carvings, masks and elaborately carved betel-nut containers can be found, but get there early. The market starts early in the morning and continues until 2pm, but it's at its best before 10am. A direct bus from Kupang makes the trip in about four hours.

Boti

In an isolated mountain valley, 12km from Oinlasi along a recently improved mountain road, the traditional village of Boti is presided over by a charismatic young *kepala suku* (chief) called Benu, the youngest son of an elderly chief who died in 2005. Benu has vowed to maintain the strict laws of *adat*.

Only clothes made from locally grown cotton may be worn, and the villagers wear very special shirts, ikat sarongs and shawls made from handspun thread and coloured with natural dyes. Boti is one of the last remaining villages in Timor where men let their hair grow long (this is only after they are married). Indonesian education is largely shunned, and Boti's 300 or so villagers still follow ancient animist religious rituals, though another 700 neighbouring families who live in Boti's geographical realm of influence have adopted Protestantism.

The adherence to tradition has knock-on benefits, for the village attracts a trickle of visitors, including the occasional truck group, providing an additional source of income.

On arrival you will be led to the rajah's house, where, traditionally, betel nut should be placed in the tray on the table as a gift. It's possible to stay with the rajah in his house with all meals provided for 50,000Rp per person. Day trippers are also expected to contribute a sizable donation (about 15,000Rp).

The new chief will probably show you a treasure-trove of name cards and photos given to his father over the years. If you want to add to the collection, a business card or telephone card will suffice.

The Boti chief requests that you do not visit independently; bring a guide conversant with local *adat*. Soe is the best place to find a guide.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

From Oinlasi, take a bus south on the main road for 2km to the turn-off to Boti. It is then 9km on a rocky, hilly road that's passable by motorcycle or car – or it's a three-hour walk.

The road passes through the seven gates of Bele village. The system of gates and fences is designed to keep the animals in, for in these parts if a farmer catches an animal eating his crops he has the right to kill it. The amount of crop damage is then assessed, meat is distributed to the farmer as compensation, and the owner of the animal keeps the rest.

Bring water from Soe. A bemo charter from Soe is around 170,000Rp for a full-day trip to Boti.

Niki Niki

Niki Niki is 34km east of Soe along the Soe–Kefamenanu road and is the site of some old royal graves and two palaces, one imposing structure belonging to Rajah Nope. The village has a busy Wednesday market and a couple of restaurants, but no accommodation. Regular buses and bemos link Niki Niki and Soe.

Kapan

Kapan is 21km north of Soe and has an interesting market on Thursday, when the roads are blocked with stalls. The village is situated on steep slopes from where you can see Gunung Mutis (2470m). From Kapan, some trucks run to Fatumasi, which is 20km away and has even more spectacular alpine scenery, or you can take a bemo there from Soe. Mattheus Anin has a **homestay** (per person incl all meals 50,000Rp) here and leads guided walks up Gunung Mutis, pointing out plants and animals along the way.

On the way to Kapan are the **Oahala Falls**, 10km from Soe. The Kapan buses will drop you on the highway, from where it is a 2.5km walk to the falls.

Kolbano

The village of Kolbano is on the southern coast of the island 110km from Soe and has

white-sand beaches and good surf between May and August. The easiest access is by bus from Noilmina on the Kupang–Soe road (about six hours over a decent road). From Soe, there are regular buses to Se'i along a twisting, dipping road that goes through isolated communities. Se'i buses sometimes continue to Kolbano.

KEFAMENANU

☎ 0388 / pop 30,000

Kefamenanu is a quiet hill town with some pleasant walks in the surrounding hills. The town was once a Portuguese stronghold; it remains devoutly Catholic and has a couple of impressive churches. Known locally as Kefa, it lies at the heart of an important weaving region and locals sometimes bring ikat to the hotels for visitors to haggle over.

Orientation & Information

Kefa is a sprawling place. It centres on the old market, *pasar lama*, which is around 2.5km north of the bus terminal.

Dinas Pariwisata (☎ 21520; Jl Sudirman) The tourist office is opposite the playing field north of the highway, and can help you find a guide.

Post office (Jl Imam Bonjol) Opposite the market.

Telkom office (Jl Sudirman; 17 7am-midnight)

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Ariesta (☎ 31007; Jl Basuki Rachmat; r 45,000Rp, with bathroom 70,000Rp, with air-con 90,000Rp; a) Well-run place that has good-value, clean accommodation and a decent restaurant (dishes 6000Rp to 18,000Rp; open breakfast, lunch and dinner).

Hotel Cendana (☎ 31168; Jl Sonbay; r with mandi & fan 40,000Rp, with air-con 95,000-150,000Rp; a) The most comfortable hotel in town, this welcoming place has good rooms and enjoys a quiet location. Staff can help you charter bemos and find a guide; they also rent out motorcycles.

Litani (Jl El Tari; dishes 8000-23,000Rp; 1 breakfast, lunch & dinner) The best in Kefa, a clean place with fresh seafood and Chinese delicacies.

Getting There & Away

Terminal Bus Kefa is a few kilometres south of the town centre. From here there are regular buses to Kupang (36,000Rp, 5½ hours) from 6am until about 4pm, and another at 8pm that leaves from the Rumah Makan

Minang Jaya, near the Hotel Cendana. Regular buses run to/from Soe (17,000Rp, 2½ hours) and Atambua (13,000Rp, two hours). Going to the enclave of Oecussi is now a pain, as an Indonesian visa is required to come back to West Timor – it's easier to visit Dili.

AROUND KEFAMENANU Oelolok

Oelolok is a weaving village 26km from Kefa by bus and a further 3km by bemo. It has a Tuesday market. The Istana Rajah Taolin in Oelolok is a fine Dutch bungalow that served as the 'palace' of the local rajah.

Temkessi

A traditional village around 50km north-east of Kefa, Temkessi sees few travellers because of its isolation. Sitting high on a hilltop, its only entrance is a small passage between two huge rocks. The rajah's house sits on top of rocks overlooking the village. There's lots of weaving, but little Bahasa Indonesia is spoken, so a guide is very useful.

Regular buses run from Kefa to Manufui, about 8km from Temkessi. On market day in Manufui (Saturday), trucks or buses should run through to Temkessi. Otherwise, charter a bemo in Manufui.

ATAMBUA & AROUND

☎ 0389 / pop 36,500

Atambua is an anonymous-looking, scruffy town close to the border with East Timor that has hit the headlines for all the wrong reasons in the past few years. Large numbers of pro-Jakarta refugees and militias from East Timor – some with blood on their hands – settled around here, while three UN workers were murdered in Atambua in 2000. As there are now direct Dili–Kupang buses there's no reason to visit at all. If you do find yourself stuck here, be aware that though most locals are perfectly friendly you may encounter some anti-Western resentment; this is particularly true for Australians.

Atapupu is the port for Atambua, 25km north, but there's only one weekly ferry to Kalabahi, Alor (25,600Rp, seven hours), on Monday at 7am. Betun is a prosperous town 60km south, near the coast, which has a couple of hotels, including the recommended Cinta Dama (r 90,000Rp), and restau-

rants. A few intrepid travellers have visited the nearby villages of Kletek, Kamanasa and Bolan – you can see flying foxes and watch the sun set over the mountains at Kletek.

Information

There's a brochure-free tourist office (☎ 21483; Jl Basuki Rahmat 2) and a branch of BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; 𠄎 8.30am–3.30pm Mon–Fri), which exchanges foreign currencies.

Sleeping & Eating

Hotel Kalpataru (☎ 21351; Jl Gatot Subroto 3; s/d 25,000/40,000Rp) A centrally located colonial-style house which has simple, well-kept rooms. The owner, Pak Manik, speaks English and Dutch.

Hotel Nusantara Dua (☎ 21773; Jl Kasimo; r with bathroom 75,000Rp, with air-con 110,000Rp; a) The best in town, with comfortable rooms. It's close to the bus terminal but a fair walk from the centre.

Tuck in here:

Rumah Makan Estry (Jl Merdeka 11; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Good for Chinese food.

Padang Raya (Jl Soekarno; 𠄎 breakfast, lunch & dinner) For a point-and-eat spicy meal.

Getting There & Away

Merpati has two flights a week between Atambua and Kupang.

The bus terminal is 1km north of town (1000Rp by mikrolet 3 or 4). Destinations include Kupang (52,000Rp, eight hours) and Atapupu (4000Rp, 40 minutes). Bemos to the Motoain border with East Timor cost 5000Rp (40 minutes). Buses for Dili (USS3) leave from the other side when full. For more details about the trip over the border, see the boxed text, p578.

ROTE

The small, rain-starved island of Rote, between Timor and Sumba, is little visited but has a successful economy based on the majestic and nutritious lontar palm (see the boxed text, p590). There are some interesting indigenous cultures, a few beautiful coastal villages and some of Nusa Tenggara's best surf.

The slightly built Rotenese speak a language similar to the Tetum of Timor, though Bahasa Indonesia is almost universally understood.

In the late 17th century, after a bloody campaign, Rote became the source of slaves and supplies for the Dutch. Later the Rotenese began taking advantage of the Dutch presence, gradually adopted Christianity and, with Dutch support, established a school system that eventually turned them into the region's elite.

The Rotenese are open to outside influences, though there are still areas where people adhere to the old traditions. Ikat weaving on Rote today uses mainly chemical dyes, but the designs are complex: floral and *patola* (traditional geometric ikat design) motifs are typical. One tradition that hasn't disappeared is the wearing of the wide-brimmed lontar hat, *ti'i langga*, which has a curious spike sticking up near the front like a unicorn's horn (perhaps representing a lontar palm, or a Portuguese helmet or mast). Rotenese also love music and dancing; the traditional Rotenese 20-stringed instrument, the *sasando*, features on the 5000Rp note.

In recent years the island has become an important base for shark-fin fishermen who use speedboats to illegally fish in Australian waters just to the south.

Ba'a

Ba'a, Rote's main town, doesn't have a lot to offer travellers, though some houses have curious boat-shaped thatched roofs with carvings, which are connected with traditional ancestor cults. The coast from the ferry port at Pantai Baru to Ba'a is sparsely populated and has some superb coral beaches. Bring plenty of cash from Kupang, as exchanging money is difficult.

Just off Jl Pabean, **Pondok Wisata Karya** (Jl Kartini 1; per person 20,000Rp) has basic budget rooms. The manager speaks good English and changes money at ugly rates for the desperate.

Hotel Ricky (☎ 871045; Jl Gereja; s/d with fan 55,000/80,000Rp, with air-con 100,000/125,000Rp; a) is Ba'a's best hotel. It offers a variety of rooms, all with bathrooms, and has the best restaurant in town. Car hire at high rates can be arranged.

Both near the town centre, **Rumah Makan Karya** (Jl Pabean) and **Warung Makan Lumayah** (Jl Pabean) serve basic meals.

Shops sell the local delicacy, *susu goreng*, made from buffalo milk that's cooked until

it becomes a brown powder. It doesn't look much, but it is sweet and very tasty.

Papela

This Muslim Bugis fishing village in the far east of Rote is set on a beautiful harbour. Every Saturday it hosts the biggest market on the island. There is one hotel, the **Wisma Karya** (Jl Lorong Asem), but a day trip is a better bet. Buses go to Papela from Ba'a and Pantai Baru over the best road on the island.

Nemberala

A surfers' secret for many years, Nemberala is a wonderful, relaxed little coastal village with white-sand beaches and a legendary 'left' between May and October, earning it the moniker T-land. Nemberala has some good accommodation and is the only real tourist centre on the island.

SLEEPING & EATING

Nemberala has a small selection of simple homestays. The prices quoted below rise a little in high season.

Mr Tomas Homestay (per person incl meals 35,000–50,000Rp) This popular place is run by a slightly eccentric, elderly and amusing ex-schoolmaster. It has worn rooms in the original house and a block of better rooms with shared *mandi*. As you come into Nemberala, the road swings around to the left; the homestay's near the corner.

Tirosa (per person incl meals 35,000–50,000Rp) Right near the beach. If you turn right at the corner near Mr Tomas and head north along the dirt road for 500m you'll reach it. Run by the *kepala desa* and his family, who speak good English.

Losmen Anugrah (☎ satellite 086812108916; rotisurf@yahoo.com; per person incl meals 35,000–50,000Rp) This surfers' favourite has cold beer and rooms with and without *mandi*. It's set back from the beach, but close to the main surf break.

Nemberala Beach Resort (www.nemberala.beachresort.com; a s) Right on the ocean, this newly renovated, tasteful resort has luxury stone-and-timber villas with porches and outdoor bathrooms. The restaurant specialises in seafood, including sashimi and lobster, with chocolate cake to round things off. A speedboat can whisk you out to other nearby surf breaks, and fishing trips for dog-toothed tuna and other fish

LONTAR PALM

With a dry season that's more pronounced than in other parts of Nusa Tenggara, and high population density, Rote is extraordinarily dependent on the drought-resistant lontar palm. The palm is extremely versatile; its tough yet flexible leaves are woven to make sacks and bags, hats and sandals, roofs, and dividing walls. Lontar wood is fashioned into furniture and floorboards. But it's the milky, frothy *nirah* (sap) tapped from the *tankai* (orange-stemmed inflorescences) that grow from the crown of the lontar that nourishes the islanders. Drunk straight from the tree the *nirah* is a refreshing, nutritious and energy-giving source of liquid (up to 600L can be tapped from one tree annually). If the *nirah* is left to ferment for hours it becomes *laru* (a palm wine), which is hawked around the lanes of Rote. With a further distillation the juice is distilled into a ginlike *sopi* – the power behind many a local fiesta.

can be arranged. Prices were not available at the time of going to press. Consult the website to make arrangements.

Around Nemberala

About 8km from Nemberala, Bo'a has a spectacular white-sand beach and good surf. It is possible to rent a motorcycle to Bo'a from Nemberala. Further east, Oeseli also has a superb beach but is more easily approached from Tudameda to the east.

The island of Pulau Ndana can be reached by boat from Nemberala. Legend has it that the island is uninhabited because the entire population was murdered in a revenge act in the 17th century and the small lake on the island turned red with victims' blood. Ndana has wild deer and a wide variety of birds. Its beaches are prime turtle-nesting territory.

Boni is about 15km from Nemberala, near the northern coast, and is one of the last villages on Rote where traditional religion is still followed. Market day is Thursday. To get here, rent a motorcycle in Nemberala.

Pulau Ndao is another ikat-weaving and lontar-tapping island, 10km west of Nemberala. The people here speak a language related to Sabunese and are renowned gold and silversmiths. It's possible to charter a boat to Ndao in Nemberala.

Getting There & Away

Merpati has a Friday connection between Rote and Kupang.

The Rote–Kupang ferry sank in 2006, with the loss of many lives. At the time of research the *Kandari Express* was the only regular link with Kupang (32,000Rp, 1½ hours), leaving Kupang at 8am daily and returning at noon. The service is sometimes cancelled due to rough seas.

Getting Around

A pack of buses and bemos greet boats at Pantai Baru and run to Ba'a (1½ hours), Nemberala (3½ hours) and other towns. Most bus transport around the island relies on the ferry timetable. Buses leave Ba'a for Pantai Baru around 10am to meet the ferry; otherwise connections around the island are limited.

Regular bemos run from Ba'a to Busalangga, and at least one bemo runs to Papela in the morning, while trucks service more remote locations. Otherwise *ojeks* will take you anywhere, including Nemberala.

The Hotel Ricky in Ba'a and the Nemberala Beach Resort in Nemberala can arrange a car and driver, but this will cost around 400,000Rp a day. Chartering a bemo is less, perhaps 180,000Rp. Motorcycle hire is also possible in Ba'a or Nemberala.

SUMBA

The dry, undulating island of Sumba has the richest tribal culture in Nusa Tenggara, centred on a religious tradition called *marapu*. It's one of the poorest but most fascinating islands to visit, with a decidedly off-the-beaten-track appeal courtesy of its thatched clan houses, colossal carved megalith tombs, outstanding hand-spun ikat and bloody sacrificial funerals.

Physically it looks quite different from the volcanic islands to the north, its countryside characterised by low limestone hills and fields of maize and cassava. Sumba's extensive grasslands made it one of Indonesia's leading horse-breeding islands. Horses are still used as transport in more rugged regions; they are a symbol of wealth and

status and have traditionally been used as part of the bride-price.

Sumba's traditions remain particularly strong in its wetter, more fertile and more remote western half, which is home to about two-thirds of the island's 540,000 people. Though most islanders are now officially Protestant, *marapu* traditions and old conflicts are recalled every year at western Sumba's terrific, often-violent Pasola festivals, which involve ritual battles between teams of mounted horse riders.

These battles hint at deep-rooted tribal tensions, which periodically erupt between rival princedoms. As recently as 1998 around 3000 tribesmen clashed in Waikabubak, a battle that claimed 26 lives according to official figures (though many locals put the true number at over 100).

While some Bahasa Indonesia is spoken everywhere, Sumba has six main languages. Few travellers make it here, but it's a deeply rewarding place to explore and has fairly good transport connections with the rest of the region.

History

According to local legend a great ladder once connected heaven and earth. Down it clambered the first people on earth to Sumba, and they settled at Tanjung Sasar, on the northern tip of the island.

Fourteenth-century Javanese chronicles place Sumba under the control of the Majapahits. But Sumbanese history is more a saga of internal wars over land and trading rights between a great number of petty kingdoms.

Despite their mutual hostility, princedoms often depended on each other economically. The inland regions produced horses, timber, betel nut, rice, fruit and dyewoods, while coastal people concentrated on ikat production and trade with other islands.

The Dutch initially paid little attention to Sumba because it lacked commercial possibilities except some sandalwood trade. But in the early 20th century they finally decided to bring Sumba under their control and invaded the island.

In 1913 a civilian administration was set up, although the Sumbanese nobility continued to reign and the Dutch ruled through them. When the Indonesian re-

public ceased to recognise the native rulers' authority, many of them became government officials, so their families continued to exert influence. Today these ruling clans continue to exert hegemony by monopolising local government appointments.

The 1998 Waikabubak riots developed into a full-scale tribal conflict. The riots were initially sparked by demonstrations against the nepotism that saw applicants with the right connections getting local government jobs regardless of college grades.

Culture

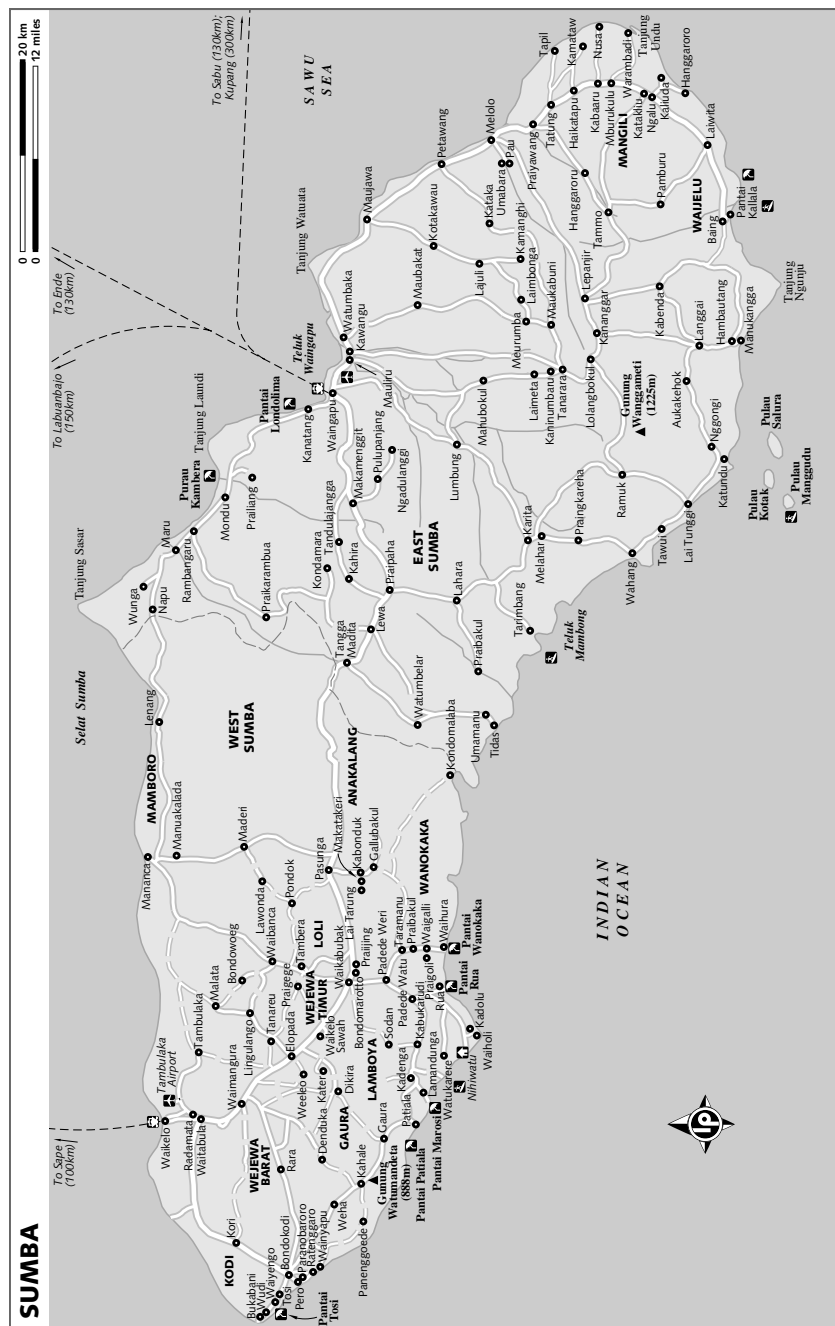
IKAT

Sumbanese ikat is the most dramatic, and arguably best-executed in Indonesia. It's very highly prized by collectors, as natural dyes still predominate: earthy orange-red from the *kombu* tree bark, indigo blue, and yellow hues derived from *loba* leaves. Motifs form a pictorial history: a record of tribal wars and an age that ended with the coming of the Dutch – the skulls of vanquished enemies dangle off trees and mounted riders wield spears. A huge variety of animals and mythical creatures are also depicted.

Traditionally, ikat cloth was used only on special occasions; for example, to mark harvest rituals. Less than 90 years ago, only members of Sumba's highest clans and their personal attendants could make or wear it. The most impressive use of the cloth was at royal funerals, where dancers and the guards of the corpse were dressed in richly decorated costumes. The deceased was dressed in the finest textiles, then bound with dozens – sometimes hundreds – more, so that the corpse resembled a huge mound before burial.

The Dutch conquest broke the Sumbanese nobility's monopoly on the production of ikat and opened up a large external market, which in turn increased production. From the late 19th century ikat was collected by Dutch ethnographers and museums (the Rotterdam and Basel museums have fine collections), and by the 1920s visitors were already noting the introduction of nontraditional designs, such as lions, from the Dutch coat-of-arms.

A Sumbanese woman's ikat sarong is known as a *lau*. A *hinggi* is a large rectangular cloth used by men as a sarong or shawl.



SUMABANESE TRADITIONS

Old beliefs fade, customs die and rituals change: the Sumbanese still make textiles but no longer hunt heads; 25 years ago the bride-price may have been coloured beads and buffaloes – today it might include a bicycle. Certainly, though, the bride dowry can still be high, and many Sumbanese men migrate just to find wives who don't expect a dowry.

Many Sumbanese men still carry their long-bladed knife in a wooden sheath tucked into their waistband. They wear scarves as turbans and wrap their brightly coloured sarongs to expose the lower two-thirds of their legs, with a long piece of cloth hanging down in front. A woman may have her legs tattooed after the birth of her first child as a mark of status; often it will be the same motifs that adorn her sarong. Another custom, teeth filing, has all but died out, but some older people have short brown teeth from the time when jagged white teeth were considered ugly.

Churches are now a common sight, and though in some areas traditions are dying, they continue to thrive in the west.

VILLAGES

A traditional Sumba village usually consists of two parallel rows of houses facing each other, with a square between. In the middle of the square is a stone with another flat stone on top of it, on which offerings are made to the village's protective *marapu* (spiritual forces). These structures, spirit stones or *kateda*, can also be found in the fields around the village and are used for offerings to the agricultural *marapu* when planting or harvesting.

The village square also contains the stone-slab tombs of important ancestors, usually finely carved, but nowadays virtually always made of cement. In former times the heads of slain enemies would be hung on a dead tree in the village square while ceremonies and feasts took place. These skull trees, called *andung*, can still be seen in some villages today and are a popular motif on Sumbanese ikat.

A traditional Sumbanese dwelling is a large rectangular structure raised on piles; it houses an extended family. The thatched (or nowadays often corrugated-iron) roof slopes gently upwards from all four sides before abruptly rising to a peak. In the loft

are placed *marapu maluri* objects. For more details, see below.

Rituals accompanying the building of a house include an offering, at the time of planting the first pillar, to find out if the *marapu* agree with the location; one method is to cut open a chicken and examine its liver. Many houses are decked with buffalo horns or pigs' jaws from past sacrifices.

RELIGION

The basis of traditional Sumbanese religion is *marapu*, a collective term for all the spiritual forces, including gods, spirits and ancestors. At death the deceased join the invisible world, from where they can influence the world of the living. *Marapu mameti* is the collective name for all dead people. The living can appeal to them for help, especially their own relatives, though the dead can be harmful if irritated. The *marapu maluri* are the original people placed on earth by god; their power is concentrated in certain places or objects, much like the Javanese idea of *semangata*.

DEATH CEREMONIES

On the day of burial, horses or buffaloes are ceremonially killed and ornaments and a *sirih* (betel nut) bag are buried with the body. The living must bury their dead as richly as possible to avoid being reprimanded by the *marapu mameti* and to ensure the dead can enter the invisible world – which, some say, is accessed via a ladder from Tanjung Sasar.

Funerals may be delayed for up to 10 years (the body of the deceased sometimes stored in the loft of the family's house or given a temporary burial) until enough wealth has been accumulated for a full ceremonial funeral, accompanied by the erection of a massive stone-slab tomb. Often the dragging of the tombstone from outside the village is an important part of the procedure. Sometimes hundreds are needed to move the block of stone, and the family of the deceased feed them all.

When the Indonesian republic was founded, the government introduced a slaughter tax in an attempt to stop the destruction of hundreds of livestock. This reduced the number of animals killed, but it didn't alter basic attitudes. The Sumbanese believe you *can* take it with you.

VISITING VILLAGES

Many Sumbanese villagers are now accustomed to tourists, but many still have difficulty understanding the strange custom of Westerners who simply want to observe an 'exotic' culture. If you're interested in their weavings or other artefacts, the villagers put you down as a potential trader. If all you want to do is chat and look around, they may be puzzled about why you've come; and if you simply turn up with a camera and start putting it in their faces, they're likely to be offended.

On Sumba, giving *sirih pinang* (betel nut) is the traditional way of greeting guests or hosts. You can buy it at most markets in Sumba, or a few cigarettes will always be welcome. Offer your gifts to the *kepala desa* and to other village elders.

Many places also keep a visitors' book, which villagers will produce for you to sign, and you should donate a few thousand rupiah. Whatever the circumstances, taking a guide, at least to isolated villages, is a big help and some protection from getting into the wrong situation. A guide smooths over any language difficulties, and they will likely teach you enough about the behaviour expected of guests for you to feel confident visiting villages alone. No matter where you go, taking the time to chat with the villagers helps them to treat you more as a guest than a customer or alien. Remember that, when you enter a village, you're in effect walking into a home.

WAINGAPU

☎ 0387 / pop 50,000

Waingapu is an enjoyable, dusty, spread-out town: urban enough to boast a few modest hotels and warungs, but so close to the countryside in spirit and location that roosters put paid to any chance of a lie in. It became an administrative centre after the Dutch military 'pacified' the island in 1906 and has long been Sumba's main trading post for textiles, much-prized Sumbanese horses, dyewoods and lumber.

Waingapu is the main entry point to Sumba by air or sea, but the island's principal attractions lie in the west and southeast. The town has a few ikat shops and workshops, and traders with bundles of textiles and carvings hang around hotels or walk the streets touting for custom.

Orientation & Information

Waingapu stretches between its small harbour in the north of town and the main centre, which is 1.5km southeast around the market and bus terminal. Freelance tour guides surface at hotels and are a useful bridge to traditional village life in Sumba – **Daniel Lanjamana** (☎ 62950) speaks English and is recommended.

At the time of research there was no internet access on Sumba, though rumour had it that a cybercafé was to open in the streets west of the market.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Ampera) Has an ATM that accepts most cards in theory, though it's often not functioning. Usually has the best rates.

BRI bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Ahmad Yani) The ATM here only accepts Mastercard/Cirrus.

Post office (Jl Hasanuddin; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) Close to the harbour.

Telkom office (Jl Tjut Nya Dien; ☎ 24hr)

Sleeping

Breakfast is included at all these places.

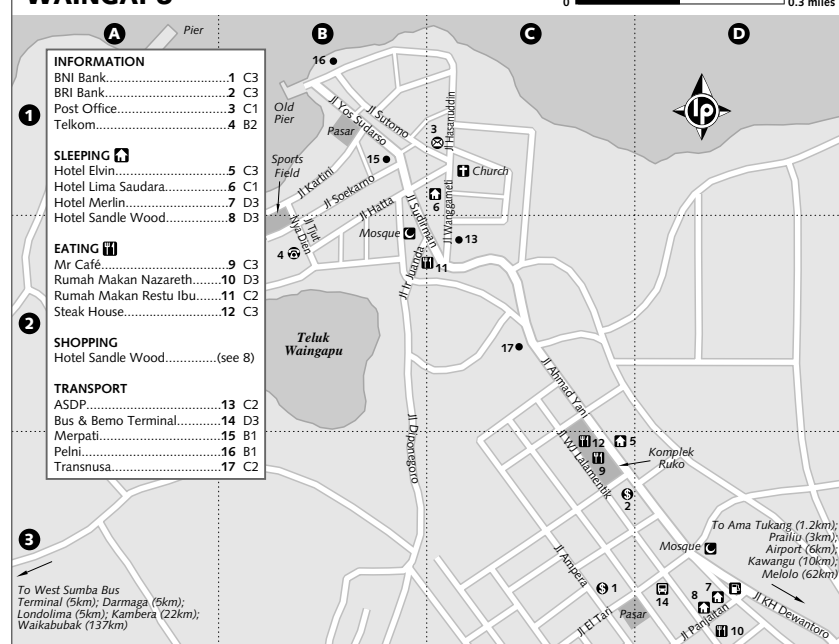
Hotel Lima Saudara (☎ 61083; Jl Wanggameti 2; s 25,000-50,000Rp, d 35,000-60,000Rp) Near the harbour, these slightly tired-looking rooms with *mandis* have little front porches.

Hotel Sandle Wood (☎ 61199; Jl Panjaitan 23; s/d 44,000/66,000Rp, with mandi 77,000/121,000Rp, with air-con from 121,000/143,000Rp; a) Offers a variety of pretty spartan rooms, some in need of a little more love and attention, but the location's quiet and the staff, aside from the owner, are friendly and helpful.

Hotel Elvin (☎ 61462; Jl Ahmad Yani 73; s/d with mandi 55,000/66,000Rp, with air-con 140,000/200,000Rp; a) A total renovation of one wing was nearly complete when we visited, meaning the blue-roofed Elvin should provide the best air-con rooms, all with verandas, in town. An older wing with much cheaper, spacious rooms with wardrobes and bathrooms is worth considering too.

Hotel Merlin (☎ 61300; Jl Panjaitan 25; s/d with fan 88,000/110,000Rp, with air-con & TV 110,000/132,000Rp, ste with hot water 154,000/176,000Rp; a) The rooms here are smart, clean and tiled, but most are directly opposite a fuel station on the noisiest street in Sumba. Your complimentary brekkie is served up on the 4th floor, from where Flores can be seen on clear days; access to the 4th floor is by some stairs built for a mythical breed of gigantic tourists.

WAINGAPU



Eating

The new Komplek Ruko is an Indonesian-style food court with a row of inexpensive warungs – pick 'n' mix a dish or two.

Mr. Café (☎ 62256; Komplek Ruko, dishes 7000-17,500Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Serves good sate and wonderful fresh mango juice.

Rumah Makan Restu Ibu (Jl Ir Juanda 1, dishes 8000-18,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Long-running place with a good-value line-up of Indonesian favourites.

Steak House (☎ 61751; Komplek Ruko; dishes 8000-25,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A great choice, with everything from T-bone steak and fish and chips to regular *nasi goreng*, roti and the like. Also has cappuccino and 'vodka' – though not of the triple-distilled variety.

Rumah Makan Nazareth (Jl WY Lalamentik; mains 13,000-24,000Rp; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A varied menu of Chinese and Indonesian dishes, complemented by a few Western favourites.

Shopping

Waingapu has a few 'art shops' selling Sumbanese ikat and artefacts. Vendors also set

up impromptu stalls in front of the hotels – some will squat there patiently all day. Prices in town can actually be very fair, and there's far more choice here than in the countryside.

Ama Tukang (☎ 62414; Jl Hawan Waruk) A good ikat workshop where you can see weavers in action, have the dying process explained and browse the extensive high-quality pieces for sale. To get there, head south of the bridge on the southern side of Waingapu and turn left after 400m into Jl Hawan Waruk. It's on the left about 800m along this road.

Hotel Sandle Wood (☎ 61199; Jl Panjaitan 23) Has a huge collection of ikat tucked away in a musty back room.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Merpati (☎ 61323; Jl Soekarno 4) has three flights a week to/from Kupang. There are more services to Denpasar from Tambulaka in West Sumba.

Transnusa (☎ 61489; Jl Ahmad Yani) has four flights a week to Kupang, two to Denpasar and one to Tambulaka.

BOAT

Waingapu is quite well serviced by ASDP ferries, all departing from the old pier in the centre of town. One ferry departs from Ende for Waingapu on Thursday at midnight, returning to Ende (30,800Rp, seven hours) and on to Kupang at 7pm on Friday. There's also a connection to Aimere in Flores (Monday at around midnight) and a regular service to Pulau Sabu. Schedules are subject to change – check them at the ASDP office (☎ 61533; Jl Wanggameti 3).

Pelni (☎ 61665; Jl Hasanuddin) ships leave from the newer Darmaga dock to the west of town. Don't try and walk, as it is further than it looks; bemos charge 2500Rp per person. The *Pangrano* calls in every two weeks at 8pm on Friday on its way to Ende and Kupang. The *Awu* sails for Ende and on to Larantuka and Alor, and on the return trip to Benoa in Bali.

BUS

The terminal for buses going east is in the southern part of town, close to the market. The new West Sumba terminal is about 5km west of town. Buses to Waikabubak (28,000Rp, four hours) depart at around 7am, 8am, noon and 3pm from the latter. The road is sealed but windy, and bridges are occasionally washed away in the wet season.

Buses head southeast to Melolo, Rende and Baing. Several travel through the morning and afternoon to Melolo, with a few continuing on to Rende, Ngalu and Baing. Most return to Waingapu on the same day.

There are also daily buses northwest to Prailiang and southwest to Tarimbang.

Getting Around**TO/FROM THE AIRPORT**

The airport is 6km south of town on the Melolo road. A taxi into town costs about 15,000Rp, but the Merlin, Sandle Wood and Elvin hotels offer a free pick-up and drop-off service for guests.

BEMO

It's 1000Rp for a bemo ride to any destination around town, and 2500Rp to the western bus terminal.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Sumba has the highest car-hire rates in Nusa Tenggara. Even after bargaining, 450,000Rp

is a good price per day, including driver and petrol. Try the Elvin or Sandle Wood hotels; don't bother with the Merlin.

Virtually any hotel worker can sort you out with a motorcycle (from 60,000Rp per day).

AROUND WAINGAPU

Londolima is a fine beach about 7km northwest of town. It's a narrow stretch of sand, but the sea has a real sparkle here. It's virtually empty except on Sunday. There's little shade and no facilities, except a tiny store on the road that sells fizzy drinks and snacks. Bemos from Terminal Kota (the local name for the West Sumba bus terminal) pass by regularly. To get here under your own steam head west out of town to the petrol station, 1km along Jl Diponegoro, where you take the second right down a steep hill and follow the road to the shore. Continue along this road and you'll reach an even better beach, *Kambara*, and then come to *Maru*, about 35km from Waingapu, which has some fine traditional houses. Three daily buses (5000Rp) go to/from Waingapu and Maru.

Three kilometres southeast of Waingapu, Prailiu is an ikat-weaving centre that's worth a quick look. Alongside some traditional thatched houses are some concrete tombs bearing carvings of crocodiles and turtles as well as empty graves that will be filled when the deceased's family can afford the funeral (see p593). Visitors to the village are asked for a cash donation. Bemos to Prailiu run from Waingapu's main bus and bemo terminal. Continuing southeast, it's a further 7km to *Kawangu*, which has some stone-slab tombs, located about 300m off the road to Melolo.

EAST SUMBA

Southeast of Waingapu are several traditional villages, some with striking stone ancestor tombs. The area produces some of Sumba's best ikat. Most villages are quite used to tourists – expect to have to pay to visit, and be prepared for plenty of attention from ikat vendors.

Melolo

The small town of Melolo, 62km southeast of Waingapu, is close to some interesting villages. There's no longer a losmen here,

but resident Sony speaks some English and will put up guests for 25,000Rp per person. A short walk through mangroves from the village is a long, sandy beach, although the water is a bit murky.

The market is about 3km out of town on a lonely, dusty hill; Friday is the main market day, when some good textiles show up. Bemos run regularly from town to the market (1000Rp).

Buses to Melolo from Waingapu (8000Rp, 1½ hours) run hourly until around 4pm along a good sealed road.

Rende

Praiyawang is a traditional compound of Sumbanese houses and is the ceremonial focus of the village of Rende, located 7km south of Melolo. It has an imposing line-up of big stone-slab tombs and makes fine-quality ikat. You'll be shown some magnificent pieces, but the prices are high. Though Rende still has a rajah, other traditions have declined due to the cost of ceremonies and the breakdown of the *marapu* religion.

The largest tomb at Praiyawang is that of a former chief. It consists of four stone pillars 2m high, supporting a monstrous slab of stone about 5m long by 2.5m wide and 1m thick. Two stone tablets stand atop the main slab, carved with figures. A massive Sumbanese house with concrete pillars faces the tombs, along with a number of older *rumah adat*. It's possible to stay, but remember that these are members of a royal family, not hotel staff. Act accordingly!

Several buses go from Waingapu to Rende (9000Rp), starting at about 7am; otherwise, take a bus to Melolo, from where bemos and trucks run throughout the day. The last buses back to Waingapu leave at around 3pm.

Umabara & Pau

Like Rende, these two villages, about 4km southwest of Melolo, have traditional Sumbanese houses, stone tombs and weavings. At Umabara, the largest tombs, carved with images of crocodiles and turtles in deep relief, are for relatives of the present rajah, who speaks some English and is quite friendly. Villagers here will eagerly try to offload some ikat on you.

The turn-off to the villages is on the main Waingapu–Melolo road, from where you

head 1.5km down a side road until you come to a horse statue; here you can fork right for Umabara or left for Pau, both just a few minutes further on. A trail also links the two villages.

Mangili

The Mangili district, centred on the villages of Ngalu and Kaliuda, is famed for its fine weaving. Kaliuda ikat is reputedly the best in Indonesia and is noted for its rich natural colours and the fine lines of its motifs. Much of the best stuff has been made to order for traders and gets shipped off to Bali (and beyond), though you may see some ikat-weaving in action. Kaliuda also has some fine stone-slab tombs and a gaudy modern grave painted red, yellow and blue and decorated with animal figures and Christian crosses. Seven buses a day head here from Waingapu (12,500Rp; 2¾ hours), passing through Melolo and Ngalu. Kaliuda is a 3km walk from Ngalu towards the coast.

Baing

Thanks to the nearby beach of Kallala, Baing has emerged as the surf capital of east Sumba. Baing is the main village of the Waijelu district, 124km from Waingapu, but has little of interest. Kallala, 2km away on the coast, has a wide white-sand beach and big surf.

The renowned Mr David (as he is referred to throughout east Sumba) has lived in Sumba for over 30 years, is a mine of information and has set up two resorts in the region. Mr David's (fax 0387 61333; www.eastsumba.com; all-inclusive bungalows US\$35), the Kallala resort, has simple, attractive beach bungalows that mostly attract surfers and a bar-resto with satellite TV. Game- and spear-fishing trips can also be arranged here.

The second resort is on the idyllic isle Pulau Manggudu, whose exquisite white-sand beaches are regularly visited by nesting sea turtles. The *Manggudu Island Resort* (fax 0387 61333; www.manggudu.com; all-inclusive bungalows US\$35) has just four bungalows, superb surfing, snorkelling (mantas are common) and world-class fishing. Its remoteness simply adds to the appeal – contact Mr David first about travel to the island, which is a four-hour drive from Waingapu and then 40 minutes by boat.

Four buses a day go to Baing (28,000Rp, four hours), leaving Waingapu between 7am and 8am, and then again at around 11am and 1pm. The road is sealed all the way but is bumpy past Melolo. A dirt track with many branches runs from Baing to Kallala, but buses will drop you off at the beach if you ask.

SOUTH-CENTRAL SUMBA

This part of the island is little explored and difficult to access. Although there are daily buses from Waingapu to Tarimbang and trucks to Praingkareha, getting around may require a 4WD or motorcycle and, often, some hiking.

If you're looking for uncrowded waves, check out Tarimbang, around 88km southwest of Waingapu, where the gorgeous cove beach has terrific surf, some snorkelling, and rustic accommodation at Marthen's Homestay and the *kepala desa's* six-room place. Both charge 50,000Rp per person including meals, but expect basic conditions and a repetitive diet. Daily buses to Tarimbang leave Waingapu in the morning (15,000Rp, four hours).

Praingkareha, 26km east of Tarimbang, has a majestic wet-season waterfall, the 100m-high Air Terjun Laputi. There's a pond with eels above the falls and a beautiful pool at its base. Tradition forbids women to look into the pool, but an exception is made for

foreigners. The falls are about 3km from the village. If you walk via the valley, locals will offer to guide you there (this is recommended). Otherwise, follow the main road to a fork, take the old road to the left and walk down a steep path to the falls.

WAIKABUBAK

☎ 0387 / pop 18,000

A juxtaposition of thatched clan houses and a typical high street of concrete stores, administrative buildings and houses bristling with satellite dishes, Waikabubak is an odd but fascinating place. At about 600m above sea level, it's a little cooler than the east and a good base for exploring the traditional villages of western Sumba.

Though it seems an extremely tranquil place today, serious inter-tribal rioting occurred here in 1998; see p591 for details.

Information

There's no internet access.

BNI bank (Bank Negara Indonesia; Jl Ahmad Yani; 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri) Changes most major currencies and has the best rates.

BRI bank (Bank Rakyat Indonesia; Jl Gajah Mada) Its ATM only accepts Mastercard/Cirrus cards.

Post office (Jl Sudirman; 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

Telkom office (8am-24hr)

Tourist office (☎ 21240; Jl Teratai 1; 8am-3pm Mon-Sat) On the outskirts of town, but the staff are helpful and informative about forthcoming funerals and cultural events.

BETEL NUT – THE PEACEKEEPER & PACEMAKER

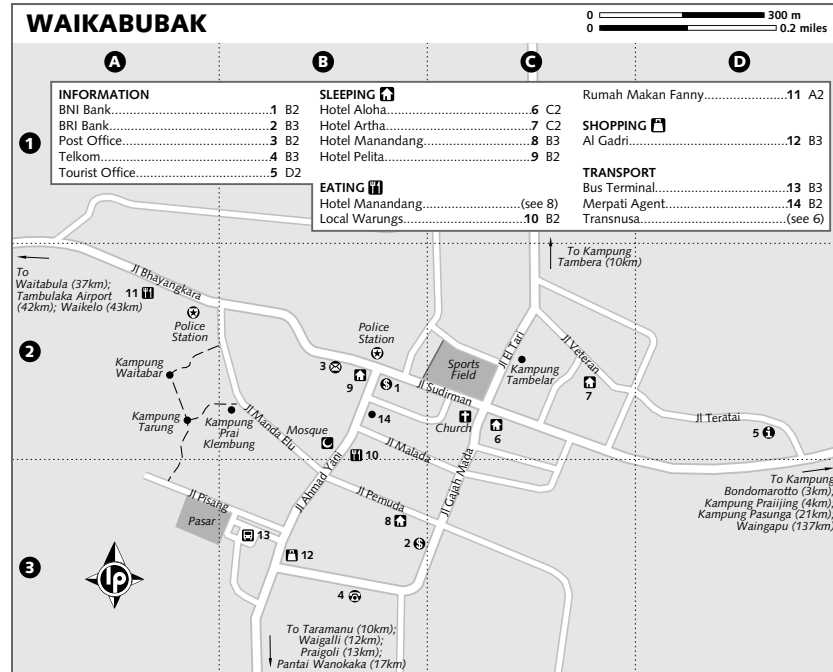
Travel through Sumba and Timor and you can't avoid the random splodges of red residue that liberally decorate the pavements and bus aisles of this region, or the villagers' foaming, scarlet mouths. The substance behind the stain is betel nut, or *sirih pinang*, a mildly intoxicating stimulant that provides a nicotine-like or espresso-esque buzz and suppresses appetite. It's also carcinogenic – levels of mouth cancer are very high in societies that use the gear. The nut itself, which is large and oval-shaped, is actually the seed of the graceful betel palm tree.

Chewing betel is a statement of adulthood, and the three parts that make up the 'mix' that are chewed together have symbolic meaning. The green stalk of the *sirih* represents the male, the nut or *pinang* the female ovaries, and the lime (*kapor*) the sperm. It's the lime that causes the characteristic flood of red saliva in the mouth.

Betel nut traditionally played an important role in negotiation and discussion between different clans, and would always be offered to visitors as a gesture of welcome.

If you're offered betel nut, it's best not to refuse it – just put a little in your pocket, or give it a go. Unless you've been masticating *sirih* for years, it's highly likely you'll find it absolutely vile: its flavour is very bitter and its consistency gritty. Betel nut also creates an amazing amount of saliva, so get your gobbing head on as it's certainly not something that you'll want to swallow.

If you do make an effort, you'll find that *sirih*-chewing is a great way to interact with the locals, and you're sure to elicit cackles of delight from the old ladies.



Sights

TOMBS & TRADITIONAL KAMPUNG

Within the town are very traditional *kampung* with stone-slab tombs and thatched houses. Experienced guides are harder to find than in Waingapu, but you can probably get someone to go with you for about 40,000Rp per day.

Kampung Tambelar, just off Jl Sudirman, has very impressive tombs, but the most interesting *kampung* are on the western edge of town. It's only a short stroll from most hotels to Prai Klembung and then up the ridge to Tarung and Waitabar.

Kampung Tarung, reached by a path off Jl Manda Elu, is the scene of an important month-long ritual sequence, the *Wula Podhu*, each November. This is an austere period when even weeping for the dead is prohibited. Rites consist mainly of offerings to the spirits (the day before it ends, hundreds of chickens are sacrificed), and people sing and dance for the entire final day. Tarung's fine stone tombs are under official protection.

Other interesting *kampung* occupying ridge or hilltop positions outside town in-

clude Praijijing and Bondomarotto. Kampung Praijijing is especially scenic, perched on a hilltop about 4km from town, where there are five neat rows of traditional houses and large stone tombs. Kampung Prairami and Kampung Primkateti are also beautifully located on adjacent hilltops. You can take a bemo to the turn-off for Praijijing (1500Rp).

Another major *kampung* that is worth visiting is Tambera, 10km north on the road to Mamboro. It's serviced by the occasional bemo (4000Rp).

It is customary to give a cash donation (about 5000Rp to 8000 Rp), and you may be invited to chew betel nut.

Sleeping

Hotel Pelita (☎ 21104; Jl Ahmad Yani; economy s/d 30,000/35,000, superior 55,000/70,000Rp) Offers modern, clean, renovated rooms with bathrooms and some depressing last-resort economy options.

Hotel Aloha (☎ 21245; Jl Sudirman 26; r with mandi 45,000Rp, with TV 55,000Rp) Well-run with neat, clean rooms, good food and information. It

moonlights as the Transnusa airlines agency and the town's wedding-cake supplier.

Hotel Artha (☎ 21112; Jl Veteran 11; s/d with mandi 30,000/60,000Rp, with fan & shower 60,000/80,000Rp) A tranquil spot with rooms set around a courtyard garden. The management is really on the ball here and can help out with anything from transport to information, making it a good choice.

Hotel Manandang (☎ 21197; fax 21292; Jl Pemuda 4; s/d 50,000/85,000Rp, s/d with bathroom 95,000/135,000Rp, with air-con 235,000/285,000Rp; ☎) This is another friendly place where the good-quality rooms overlook a peaceful garden, but it's overpriced. Some rooms have shared bathroom.

Eating

The choice is very limited. For cheap and cheerful basics, there are a few worthwhile warungs on the main road opposite the mosque.

Rumah Makan Fanny (☎ 21389; Jl Bhayangkara 55; dishes 10,000-20,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Justifiably the most popular place in town, this clean little eatery has gingham tablecloths and a winsome menu of tasty local grub, including *udang saos tiram* (prawns in oyster sauce) and *bakwan ikan* (Chinese-style fish soup).

Hotel Manandang (Jl Pemuda 4; meals 17,000-25,000Rp; 🍽 breakfast, lunch & dinner) Has a large, proper dining room and an extensive, though pricey, menu.

Shopping

Traders gather at hotels with ikat cloth from eastern Sumba, locally made bone, wood, horn and stone carvings, and jewellery.

Al Gadri (Jl Ahmad Yani) Souvenirs, including carvings and some ikat. The good stuff is hidden away at the back.

Getting There & Away

AIR

The Merpati agent (☎ 21051; Jl Ahmad Yani 11) is above a shop. The airline has two flights weekly from Tambulaka airport (42km northwest of Waikabubak) to Kupang and one to Denpasar. There's also the odd connection to Waingapu for those in a rush.

Transnusa (☎ 21245; Hotel Aloha, Jl Sudirman 26) Operates one weekly flight to Kupang and one to Denpasar.

Departure tax is 6000Rp.

BUS

The terminal in Waikabubak is central. Five daily buses run to Waingapu (28,000Rp, four hours) and throughout the day to Waitabula (4000Rp, one hour). There are frequent bemos to Anakalang, Wanokaka and Lamboya, and less frequent and less certain minibuses and trucks to other villages. To Kodi district, take a bus to Waitabula and catch a truck or bemo from there.

Getting Around

TO/FROM THE AIRPORT

Tambulaka, 42km northwest of Waikabubak, is the closest airport. The Bumi Indah bus is supposed to connect with flights, but it's not reliable. A bus to Waitabula and a bemo or *ojek* from there is the cheapest way for those with time. Most people get a taxi or charter a bemo (around 100,000Rp). Try checking flight lists at Merpati/Transnusa the day before; find out who is going and where they are staying and arrange to split the cost.

BUS

Bemos, trucks and minibuses service most other towns and villages in western Sumba; for details, see individual village entries. Generally, it's best to get them early, when they tend to fill up and depart more quickly.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

Waikabubak is the place to rent a motorcycle for exploring west Sumba – you can expect to pay 60,000Rp a day. For car rental (around 450,000Rp with a driver), contact Hotel Manandang.

WEST SUMBA

☎ 0387

The traditional village culture of western Sumba is one of the most unblemished in Indonesia. *Kampung* of high-roofed houses are still clustered on their hilltops (a place of defence in times past), surrounding the large stone tombs of their important ancestors. Away from the towns, old women with filed teeth still go bare breasted, and men in the traditional turban and short sarong can be seen on horseback. The agricultural cycle turns up rituals, often involving animal sacrifices, almost year-round, and cer-

emonies for events like house building and marriage can take place at any time. Some *kampung* are unaccustomed to foreigners; taking betel nut and cigarettes is a good way to get a friendly reception.

Give yourself at least a few days around western Sumba. Once you have learned some basic manners as a guest arriving in a village – hopefully armed with some Bahasa Indonesia – it's possible to do without a guide.

Anakalang Villages

The Anakalang district east of Waikabubak has some exceptional stone megaliths and interesting traditional villages. Right beside the main road to Waingapu, 22km east of Waikabubak, *Kampung Pasunga* boasts one of Sumba's most impressive arrays of tombs. The grave of particular interest consists of an upright stone slab carved with images of a chief and his wife with their hands on their hips. This monument dates from 1926 and took six months to carve; 150 buffalo were sacrificed for the funeral ceremony. It is visible from the road. Pasunga's *kepala desa*, whose house has racks of buffalo horns, is friendly if you share some *sirih* or cigs with him. He will ask you to sign the visitors' book and may or may not ask for a donation. The village also has a huge drum 500m east of the tomb.

There are more interesting villages south of Pasunga. Cross the highway and you'll soon pass a market place (markets are held here on Wednesday and Saturday until about 1pm or 2pm); the road then continues to Kabonduk, home to Sumba's heaviest tomb, weighing in at 70 tonnes. It is said that 2000 workers took three years to chisel the tomb out of a hillside and drag it to the site.

From Kabonduk it is a very pleasant 15-minute walk across the fields and up the hill to Makatakeri and, five minutes further on, to Lai Tarung, the original ancestral village for the area, which has stunning views over the surrounding countryside to the coast and several tombs scattered around. There's also a government-built 'showroom' traditional house and some *marapu* houses. Lai Tarung comes alive for the Purungu Takadonga Ratu, a festival honouring the ancestors that's held every two years (in odd-numbered years), starting on July 10 and culminating on July 26.

At Gallubakul, 2.5km down the road from Kabonduk, the Uмба Sawola tomb is a single piece of carved stone about 5m long, 4m wide and nearly 1m thick. At its eastern end is a separate upright slab with carvings of a rajah and queen, as well as buffalo and cockerel motifs. The grumpy *kepala desa* lives right by the tomb and will ask you to sign in and pay to take photos.

Regular minibuses run between Waikabubak and Anakalang (fewer after 1pm), or buses to Waingapu can drop you on the highway.

South of Waikabubak

The Wanokaka district south of Waikabubak has stunning scenery and several very traditional *kampung*. It's a very beautiful trip out of Waikabubak, taking a sealed but narrow road that splits after 6km at Pedede Weri junction, from where an azure ocean forms the distant horizon. After taking the left turn here, the road passes through the riverside settlement of Taramanu 4km further on, and then it's 2km or so downhill to Waigalli, which has fine tombs and is the scene of one of the March Pasola events (see p603). Just up a side road on the western side of valley from Waigalli, the Watu Kajiwa tomb in the deeply traditional and isolated village of Praigoli is one of the best in Sumba, with a striking symbol like the fleur-de-lys.

Returning to the Pedede Weri junction and heading southwest, you're not far from some very fine beaches. After 5km there's a side track south to Rua, with a wonderful stretch of sand, good surf and basic accommodation. Heading west again, the road passes through the villages of Kabukarudi and Kadenga before there's another turn-off south to the idyllic white sands of Pantai Marosi, 32km from Waikabubak, where you'll find a luxury resort.

The world-class surf spot known as Occy's Left that featured in the film *The Green Iguana* is on Pantai Nihiwatu east of Marosi. Surfers who have tried to ride the legendary waves here have been forced out of the sea by the luxury resort's security men.

SLEEPING & EATING

Along Homestay (r incl all meals 50,000Rp) Basic isolated beachside place in Rua popular with surfers.

Homestay Mete Bulu (r incl all meals 50,000Rp) Simple concrete rooms at Watukarere. Surfers should note that there's no longer any access to Pantai Nihiwatu, 1.5km away.

Sumba Nautil (☎ 038721806; www.sumbanautilresort.com; bungalows US\$77-99, villas US\$415, plus 21% tax; a s) Very stylish resort hotel set back from the shoreline on Pantai Marosi with beautiful ocean-facing accommodation and very fine cuisine (meals US\$10 to US\$13). The menu is overseen by the French owners. Dive trips and village visits can be organised. Rates include breakfast.

Nihiwatu Resort (www.nihiwatu.com; bungalows s/d US\$200/300, villas from US\$840, plus 21% tax; a s) Luxury hotel in extensive grounds, perched above idyllic Pantai Nihiwatu. The American hotel owner has restricted access to the beach itself, allowing only guests, tour groups and a few locals. Seven air-con bungalows and three villas all face the ocean and are fully equipped with modern amenities. Plenty of activities – fishing, surfing, diving, horse riding and mountain biking – are offered for additional costs. The minimum stay is five nights.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Two daily buses run southeast to Waigalli from Waikabubak. Lamboya district buses cover the southwest towns and run through Padede Watu to Kabukarudi, Kadenga and Walakaka, but they don't usually run to the beaches. Buses leave roughly every hour throughout the day from Waikabubak.

By far the best way to visit the area is by car or motorcycle. Most roads are sealed and traffic is light. The hills south of Waikabubak are a very taxing ride for cyclists.

Kodi

Kodi is the westernmost region of Sumba, and the small town of Bondokodi, about 2km from the coast, is the centre of this district. The Kodi area offers plenty of attractions: villages with incredible high-peaked houses and unusual megalithic tombs; long white-sand beaches, with waves pounding over coral reefs; and the opportunity to see or buy some fascinating local wood, bone and horn carvings. If you're on foot you won't see much of the region unless you stick around for a few days.

The region's biggest market (held every Wednesday) is at Kori village; to get here,

people from around the region hang off any vehicle they can get hold of, so it must be good. A couple of buses run from Bondokodi in the morning, before 8am. Watch out for pickpockets in the throng.

Kodi is a region with a reputation for lawlessness, and Sumbanese from other districts of the island are wary of Kodi people. Exploring with a guide is probably safest.

Pero

Pero is a friendly coastal village situated on spectacular coastline just a few kilometres from Bondokodi. It's a charming little place, which has a wonderfully end-of-the-earth appeal – west of here you won't hit land until Africa. There's a couple of surf breaks just offshore. The long-running **Homestay Stori** (per person incl all meals 50,000Rp) is run by a very hospitable family and has neat little rooms and absolutely delicious local food. At night an impromptu art shop of local bone, horn and wood carvings may be set up on the front porch. To visit traditional *kampung*, go north or south along the coastline.

To reach **Ratenggaro**, first cross the freshwater pool that runs to the coast below Pero. At low tide you can wade across; otherwise, locals will get you across in canoes for about 3000Rp per person. From the other side it's about 3km along Pantai Radukapal, a long stretch of white-sand beach, until you come to the fenced *kampung* of Ratenggaro. It is possible to stay with the *kepala desa* for a fee, and often visitors are asked for a hefty 20,000Rp just for visiting – to build toilets, allegedly.

The view from Ratenggaro along the coastline is breathtaking – coconut palms fringe the shoreline and the high roofs of Wainyapu peep out above the trees across the river. On the near side of the river mouth unusual stone tombs occupy a small headland. To get to Wainyapu, you'll probably have to wade across the river at low tide. The village chief here is locally famous for having 12 wives.

On the way to Ratenggaro, look out for the roofs of **Kampung Paranobaroro** through the trees, about 1km inland. The houses here have even higher roofs and stone statues, and there is an elaborate example with pig jaws and numerous buffalo horns hanging from its veranda. During the day only women and

children are in the village – women are often weaving and happy to chat.

To reach Tosi, about 6km north and the scene of the Kodi Pasola in February, head north from Bondokodi market along the sealed road. Coming from Pero, it's a simple left at the T-junction. About 1km further on is a track on the left: follow it for 5km, past a series of tombs. Many people have reported aggression here, so bypass the village itself by taking a short walk to the beach, from where a track runs back to Pero.

From Waikabubak there are direct buses to Waitabula and frequent bemos and trucks from there to Pero.

Waitabula

☎ 0387

This sleepy market town, on the main highway between Tambulaka airport and Waikabubak, is a useful transport hub with frequent connections to Bondokodi/Pero, Waikelo and Waikabubak.

Project Hope – Sumba (☎ 24159) is a local organisation helping impoverished communities in the region. Visitors are welcome, and staff may be able to point you in the direction of knowledgeable local guides.

Hotel Ongko Cimpu (☎ 24055; s/d from 45,000/60,000Rp) is a well-kept and friendly place

where the large rooms have attached *mandis*. Airport pick-ups and drop-offs can be arranged.

The alternative, **Losmen Anggrek** (s/d from 20,000/30,000Rp), was looking very run-down on our last visit.

Daily direct buses make the run all the way to Waingapu. Bemos or *ojeks* to the airport are 2000Rp.

Waikelo

☎ 0387

This small and predominantly Muslim town north of Waitabula is the main port for west Sumba and has a weekly connection with Sumbawa. The town has a superb beach and you can find relative solitude if you walk west around the bay.

Newa Sumba Resort (☎ 0215229117; www.newasumbaresort.com; s US\$45, d US\$60) is an upmarket resort with fine timber *kampung*-style bungalows on a spectacular white-sand beach. Meals cost about 48,000Rp. Regular buses and bemos travel between Waikelo and Waitabula, and a few continue to Waikabubak.

There is a weekly ferry service between Waikelo and Sape (Sumbawa). It departs from Sape for Waikelo on Monday at 5pm and returns to Sape (32,000Rp) at 9am on Tuesday, taking about seven hours.

PASOLA: LET THE BATTLES COMMENCE

A riotous tournament between two teams of spear-wielding, ikat-clad horsemen, the Pasola has to be one of the most extravagant, and bloodiest, harvest festivals in Asia. Held annually in February and March, it takes the form of a ritual battle – not so much a quarrel between opposing forces as a need for human blood to be spilt to keep the spirits happy and bring a good harvest. Despite the blunt spears that the combatants now use and the efforts of Indonesian authorities to supervise the events, few holds are barred; blood is spilt and sometimes deaths still occur.

The Pasola is part of a series of traditions connected with the beginning of the planting season. It takes place in four areas, its exact timing determined by the arrival on nearby coasts of a certain type of sea worm called *nyale*. Two days before the main events brutal boxing matches called *pajura* are held, the combatants' fists bound in razor-sharp local grasses.

Before the Pasola can begin, priests in full ceremonial dress must first wade into the ocean to examine the worms at dawn; they're usually found on the eighth or ninth day after a full moon. A prediction is then made as to how good the year's harvest will be, from the numbers and appearance of the *nyale*. Fighting begins on the beach and, later the same day, continues further inland, the opposing 'armies' drawn from coastal and inland dwellers. The riders gallop at each other, hurling their *holas* (spears) at rival riders (it's not permitted to use a spear as a lance).

In February, Pasola is celebrated in the Kodi area (centred on Kampung Tosi) and the Lamboya area (Kampung Sodan); in March it's in the Wanokaka area (Kampung Waigalli) and the remote Gaura area west of Lamboya (Kampung Ubu Olehka). Call hotels in Waingapu or Waikabubak to find out the approximate dates before travelling to Sumba, or contact a travel agent in Bali, Flores or Timor.

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