

Dili



Stay two days in Dili and you may be anxious to leave; stay longer and you may never want to leave. That's the conundrum of Dili, the scruffy capital of East Timor that's always in the news for the wrong reasons. It wears scars from years of occupation by the Portuguese, the Indonesians, the UN, refugees and more, and is where the independent nation of East Timor's messy birth is most on display.

But it's also a place of great hope, where East Timorese and people from around the world want to shed the decades of tragic legacy and become known for something good, something positive.

Yes, the drive in from the airport is grim. And really, there's not much to drive around and see that will have you thinking 'postcard'. But just as you're obsessing about dodging a rock, you'll come face to face with a goat blithely munching a shrub on some quiet street and you'll pause and realise that, for all its reputation, Dili is actually a surprisingly mellow place. Everybody hears about riots but nobody hears about the simple pace of everyday life. A rhythm of family and friends that soon draws you into this welcoming place. Just slow down and go with the flow.

Dili will play an important role in your East Timor trip no matter what your plans. This is the only place with any choice of sleeping and eating options. It's where you'll make all your plans for seeing the country and where you'll buy anything you might need for your stay – if you can't get it here, you can't get it anywhere in East Timor. And it's where you tap into the local ju-ju to find out what's really going on here and in the rest of the country. You may feel more than ready to leave town, but you'll also feel oddly compelled to return.

DILI HIGHLIGHTS

Start with a waterfront walk as outlined on p40. Take in some of the neighbourhoods near the sea and just keep adjusting your pace down until you seem in tune with those around you. Head east to the great beaches on the road to Cape Fatucama and take a kayak or snorkelling mask out into the water. Late in the day get yourself a sunset drink at one of the waterside bars and make some friends. Dili has one of the most welcoming populations of locals and expats alike and you may soon have your own circle of friends. If nothing else, you'll get the latest on the locals.

HISTORY

There had been a Portuguese settlement in Dili for more than a century by the time the Portuguese moved their centre of government there from Lifau in 1769. Dili was always a sleepy colonial town in a sleepy and remote colony and what little press it got wasn't good.

The town was never a jewel in the crown of the Portuguese colonial empire, and it lacks lavish public buildings. When the English scientist Alfred Russel Wallace spent several months here in 1861, he described Dili as:

...a most miserable place compared with even the poorest of Dutch towns... After three hundred years of occupation there has not been a mile of road made beyond the town, and there is not a solitary European resident anywhere in the interior. All the government officials oppress and rob the natives as much as they can, and yet there is no care taken to render the town defensible should the Timorese attempt to attack it.

The Japanese occupation in WWII made Dili a bombing target for Australian RAAF flights out of Darwin, but that was virtually the only appearance Dili would make in the history books until 1975. As Portuguese rule crumbled after the 1974 revolution back in Portugal, Dili became the focus for the power struggle between the rival Timorese political parties. On 11 August 1975 the Timorese Democratic Union (UDT) party staged a coup in Dili, and the Portuguese administration withdrew to Atauro Island to watch what happened from a safe distance. Fretilin won the brief civil war and on 28 November declared that the Democratic Republic of East Timor was an independent country.

It was a brief independence. On 7 December Indonesian paratroopers descended on Dili, quickly followed by a landing fleet. Summary executions took place on the Dili wharf soon after the invasion. Among those shot and pushed into the sea were the Australian Roger East, the only foreign journalist remaining in Dili, and Isobel Lobato, the wife of Fretilin's prime minister, Nicolau Lobato. Lobato would lead the guerrilla struggle against the Indonesian invaders until his death in 1978. Today a main

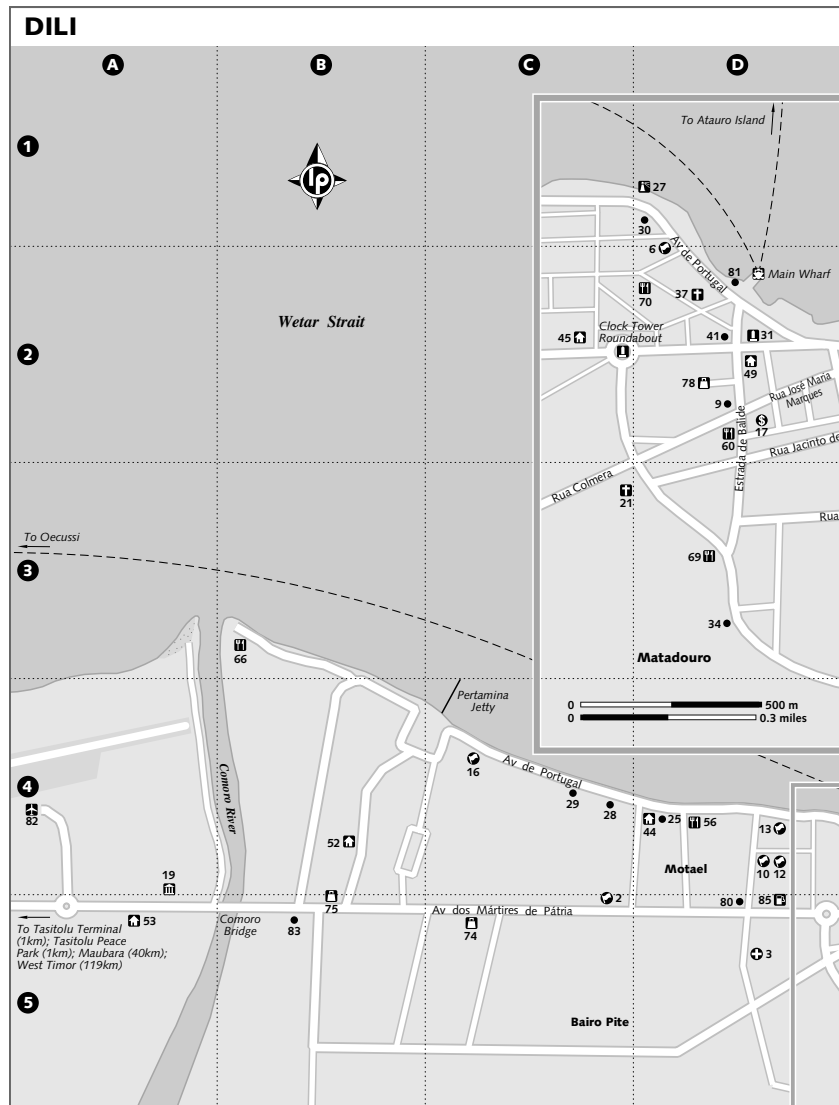
street in Dili and the international airport are named after him.

For the first couple of years after the invasion, Falantil, the military arm of Fretilin, made occasional incursions into Dili, but Indonesian military superiority eventually pushed them back into the central mountains and forests. Nevertheless Dili remained a focus for the independence struggle, and the massacre at the city's Santa Cruz cemetery on 12 November 1991 became a turning point in the long campaign for independence. A peaceful student protest at the cemetery became a bloodbath when Indonesian troops opened fire on the demonstrators. It is believed that more than 100 were killed. This time there were international observers on the scene and the death of a bystander from New Zealand meant that it could not be swept under the carpet as a purely domestic affair.

Just over a year later, on 20 November 1992, Falantil leader Xanana Gusmão was captured while making a clandestine visit to Dili. But far from sidelining him, Gusmão's subsequent imprisonment in Jakarta brought international attention to the plight of East Timor. Still more interest was generated when José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Carlos Belo were jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1996. See p17 and p14 for more on these two.

In 1999 Dili was once more on the front pages of newspapers around the world as the Indonesian military stood to one side while pro-Indonesian militias tried to intimidate independence supporters in the run-up to the independence referendum. The announcement of the result on 4 September, with nearly 80% of voters opting for independence, triggered an orgy of destruction in Dili. On 20 September the UN's InterFET peacekeeping force began deployment in Dili and quickly brought the situation under control. By 1 November the last Indonesian troops had left, and on 20 May 2002 the UN Secretary General Kofi Annan was in Dili to attend the formal birth of the new country.

Since then various upheavals, especially in 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007, have led to minor riots in which buildings have been torched and cars stoned. Meanwhile, thousands of refugees from rural unrest have chosen to take shelter in the relative 'safety' of numerous impromptu camps found throughout Dili.



ORIENTATION

Dili sprawls along the waterfront from the airport on the western edge to the Christ statue at the eastern end of the bay. The central area is reasonably compact, stretching back a few parallel blocks from the waterfront. Most of this inner-city area is confined within the ring road, sometimes referred to as Rua

Circunvalacao, starting with Estrada de Balide on the western side of the centre and ending with Estrada de Bidau on the eastern side. The Portuguese-built government buildings, fronted by the monument to Prince Henry the Navigator, form the very centre of the town. You can walk to most places in central Dili in under 15 minutes. Street numbers and signs



are theoretical concepts, and the half-dozen stoplights are purely for show, although the new network of one-way streets has given many a reason to grumble.

Av dos Mártires de Pátria, the road running past the airport and right into the centre, is the address for many businesses and offices, including the Australian Embassy.

Many other diplomatic offices are in the Motael district, between this important road and the waterfront, close to the centre. The beaches along the road east of the centre are everybody's favourite escape. South of Dili the green hills rise steeply, hemming the city in against the sea and hinting at the natural beauty beyond.

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Walk the waterfront and see what's there or head east to the lovely beaches a couple of minutes from town and take the time to meet some folks. You'll discover the kind of small-town openness that people fantasise about but rarely experience. And you'll understand why two days is too many but three days is too few.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

If you want to read, bring books from home. There are no sources of new English-language publications in East Timor. You'll see the odd book exchange in expat hangouts in Dili where you can choose from novels pulpy in both content and form (the tropical climate makes short work of paperbacks). Castaway Bar and One More Bar (see p48 and p47) have decent selections. But your best bet is the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (see p40),

which has a great selection of used books to trade (US\$1) or buy, plus new phrasebooks.

Emergency

Ambulance (☎ 723 3212)

Fire (☎ 723 0686)

Police (☎ 112, 723 0686, Unpol 723 0365)

Internet Access

'Fast' internet connections in Dili are quite slow, and don't count on printers having ink. Of the oft-changing line-up of Dili internet joints, the following two are the best. Two other places to try are the Timor Telecom office (see opposite) and the Xanana Gusmão Reading Room.

Global Net (Rua Jacinto de Candido; per hr US\$6; ☹ 8am-9pm) Photo downloads and CD-burning capabilities.

Internet Cafe (cnr Ruas Presidente Nicolau Lobato & Belarmino Lobo; per hr US\$6; ☹ 8.30am-8.30pm) Across from ANZ Bank. Its orchid collection is more interesting than its name.

Libraries

Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (☎ 332 2831; Rua Belarmino Lobo; ☹ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat) Loans and sells books, has exhibits and offers internet access (per min US\$5). See p40 for more details.

Medical Services

Medical services in East Timor are limited; serious cases may require evacuation to Darwin. However, you can make an appointment with a physician at the Australian embassy (US\$35; see p88). If you're not an Australian citizen, also contact your own embassy (p88) as there may be a number of options available among the local NGOs and UN.

Bairo Pite Clinic (☎ 332 4118; www.bairopiteclinic.tripod.com/index.html; Bairo Pite; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) A legendary local clinic serving the scores of under-served locals. It treats malaria more effectively than anywhere else in town. Unlike locals, you should pay for your treatment. See below for more.

Dili Nacional Hospital (☎ 331 1008; Rua Cicade Viana do Castelo) Just east of Estrada de Bidau; a cadre of Western volunteers assist locals at this teeming place.

Foho Osan Mean Farmacia (☎ 725 6978; Rua Quinze de Outubro; ☹ 8am-9pm Mon-Sat, 8am-1pm Sun) Offers simple consultations and full range of pharmaceuticals.

Money

Banks are generally open between 9am and 3.30pm Monday to Friday.

ANZ (☎ 332 4800; www.anz.com/timorleste; cnr Ruas Presidente Nicolau Lobato & Belarmino Lobo) Full-service banking; the ATM dispenses US dollars but often runs dry on weekends. There's a second and sometimes-working ATM in the Leader Store on the Airport Rd; see p49 for details.

Banco Nacional da Ultramarino (BNU; ☎ 332 4301; Rua José Maria Marques) A Portuguese bank that at times has a deer grazing out the front (!).

LOCAL HEROES

It's simply hard to imagine what would happen to the 300-plus people seen each day for free at the **Bairo Pite Clinic** (☎ 332 4118; www.bairopiteclinic.tripod.com/index.html; Bairo Pite; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Sat) if it didn't exist. Located in the impoverished part of town bearing the same name, it got its start in 1999 when a doctor from Kansas in the USA started treating people in the smoking ruins of the aftermath of the Indonesian departure. He's never stopped.

With a staff of more than 30 East Timorese and medical students and volunteers from around the world, the clinic provides some of the best healthcare available in East Timor. Each month more than 100 babies are delivered. It's an amazing operation and it's always in need of money to meet its US\$10,000-a-month budget (a paltry sum given the work accomplished). If you'd like to help, see the website above.

Bank Mandiri (☎ 3317 777; Rua José Maria Marques) An Indonesian bank with exchange services.

Western Union (☎ 332 1586; Rua José Maria Marques) Transfers funds internationally.

Post & Telephone

Both the following share a building east of the Palacio de Governo. For an express service, there's a DHL agent at Harvey World Travel (see below).

Post office (Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato; ☹ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Timor Telecom (☎ 332 2245; www.timortelecom.tp; Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato; ☹ 8am-6pm Mon-Sat) You can make international and local calls, access the internet and purchase SIM cards.

Tourist Information

There's no tourist office; however, locals and expats alike are very helpful in telling you what's open and what's closed, what's thriving and what's been torched. Otherwise check out the websites listed on p7. The *Guide Post* is aimed at English-speaking expats in Dili and has useful service listings and maps.

Travel Agencies

Harvey World Travel (☎ 331 1140; www.harveydili.com; cnr Rua Colmera & Estrada de Balide) Full-service agency.

JJ International Travel (☎ 723 3710; jimjitravel@yahoo.com.au; Rua Belarmino Lobo) Jim here is a wizard with airline travel.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

Although some reports make Dili and East Timor sound like a war zone, in fact the city generally feels OK. There have been some assaults and thefts involving foreigners, and cars are often broken into, particularly if mobile (cell) phones are left on view inside. Visitors

are advised to avoid dark streets at night and not to wander on the beach after sunset, and it's also wise to avoid political rallies or demonstrations. Women should take particular care at night.

Like everything else here, locals and expats can quickly appraise you of areas like Bairro Pite that are more prone to rock throwing and other mayhem. If you have a local mobile phone, ask around about getting on message trees for security-alert SMSs.

Scores of street vendors prowl Dili's streets desperate for you to buy phonecards, oranges, dubious DVDs and even porn (satisfaction is not guaranteed). It is considered good form, though, to buy your water etc from vendor carts as the money supports many families.

SIGHTS

You can easily see all that Dili has to offer in a couple of days. Amid the burned-out buildings, reconstruction and internally displaced people (IDP) camps are mannered old Portuguese colonial buildings. Many streets near the centre in Lecidere and Motael are quiet and shaded by palm and frangipani trees. For a good introduction to Dili, walk along the waterfront heading west from the Hotel Turismo, dropping down to check out some of the government buildings.

International People's Park

The land along the waterfront by the Hotel Turismo and Bishop's residence was officially inaugurated as a park on East Timor's Independence Day in 2002. It's not very manicured but it's a good place to catch evening breezes and sunsets. Vendors with small stalls here sell fish (best viewed and smelled in the morning), fruits and vegetables. Christened in 2005, the **Memorial Da Paz** (Memorial of Peace) is a simple plaza on the water with a mosaic of a dove over an outline of East Timor.

Bishop's Residence

This modest but pretty house was the home of Bishop Carlos Belo during his many years leading the local Catholic Church during and after the Indonesian occupation. It was a sanctuary for those seeking refuge from the military, and on Sundays the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Belo celebrated mass out the front for thousands of the faithful.

Just west of the residence, a marble **Virgin Mary statue** stands in a garden square. The inscription 'Comemoracao do Ano Mariano 1954' notes that it was erected in commemoration of the Marian Year of 1953–54, which was proclaimed by Pope Pius XII. This is still a place for huge open-air Masses on special religious days.

Chinese Chamber of Commerce

The old Chinese Chamber of Commerce is a formerly delightful Portuguese villa facing the sea from the waterfront road. Dili once had a large Chinese population, and Chinese merchants conducted much of the city's trade. Although many fled in 1975, there's been a fresh influx of shopkeepers since independence. The building has high arches and pillars, decorated in hues of pink and crimson. The scalloped roof tiles around the eaves are typical of Dili's Portuguese architecture. The entire compound has been taken over by refugees.

Xanana Gusmão Reading Room

Part museum, part library, part cultural centre, the **Reading Room** (☎ 332 2831; Rua Belarmino Lobo; ☎ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, 9am–3pm Sat) is a must-visit. The foyer of this old colonial building displays photos and information dedicated to President Xanana Gusmão, who is also an author and poet. Various fan-cooled rooms hold a decent selection of titles. Make time to watch a video about East Timor from the Reading Room's comprehensive collection. You can watch videos about East Timor, including gripping coverage of the Santa Cruz Cemetery massacre.

East Timorese Cultural Centre

In the centre of Dili the old Portuguese Garrison building dates from 1627 and has massive, thick walls and heavy, wooden-shuttered windows. It was badly damaged during the 1999 violence and rebuilt as the East Timorese Cultural Centre. (It's also known as Uma Fukun Timor; *uma fukun* is Tetun for 'traditional house'.) Sadly it's been trashed again several times. Should a period of calm bless Dili, the centre is meant to house galleries and cultural groups. Across the road on the waterfront, a couple of rusting old Portuguese cannons face out to sea.

Government Buildings

The most imposing buildings in Dili are the government buildings in the centre of the

city's waterfront. They date from as recently as 1960 and, although the modern lines are plain, they are built in early colonial style with wide, arched verandas. The **Palacio de Governo** (Government Palace) dominates the centre of the compound. In front is the monument to **Prince Henry the Navigator**, also erected in 1960 to commemorate the Portuguese presence in Asia and Henry's role in opening up the sea lanes some 500 years earlier. It is one of the few memorials to the Portuguese presence still standing in Dili.

Resistance Museum

The 24-year struggle against the Indonesians is commemorated in the well-designed, new **Resistance Museum** (Rua Formosa; admission US\$1; ☎ 9.30am–5.30pm Tue–Sat, 1.30–5.30pm Sun). There's a good timeline in English, plus photos, maps and exhibits of the gear used by Falantil while hiding in the hills (satellite phones are the tools of the modern revolution). The catalogue (US\$10) is impressive.

The institutional buildings surrounding the museum are the Univeridade Nacional Timor Lorosáe (National University of East Timor), which has over 5000 students.

Liceu Dr Francisco Machado

Near the Resistance Museum is the solid, neoclassical Liceu Dr Francisco Machado, a former school and now government offices. It has been restored and prettily painted in pink with red and white trim. On the opposite corner are the old *godowns* (warehouses) and offices of the former Sociedade Agricola Pátria e Trabacho (SAPT). Similar *godowns* can be seen around town.

Integration Monument

In front of the Hotel Timor and across from the Dili port entrance, the Integration Monument is a memorial to Indonesian rule. A Timorese in traditional costume breaks the chains of colonialism, in much the same tacky style as the Free Irian monument in Jakarta. It's remarkable that the monument has survived East Timor's independence. Perhaps it's because the Indonesians thoughtfully placed it atop a 10m-high pedestal. The dishevelled park where the monument stands is probably a more accurate indication of local feelings, although refugees at a nearby camp find it a handy drying rack for laundry.

Rumah Adat Lospalos

Across from the monument is the Rumah Adat Lospalos, a traditional Fataluku-style house from the Lospalos region at the eastern end of the island. These high buildings on stilts are iconic symbols of East Timorese architecture. No doubt many of the IDPs living around it would prefer a house like this to their leaky NGO-supplied tent.

Motael Church

From the town centre the waterfront boulevard leads west past the tidy Motael Church (Igreja Motael), which was rebuilt in 1955 but retains its old Portuguese style. This is the oldest Catholic church in Timor, fronted by two statues; the one of Joseph, Mary and the infant Jesus being markedly more cartoonish than the other of a priest carrying a child.

Memorials & the Lighthouse

The road past the church (Av de Portugal) runs along the beachside park and is lined with shady banyan trees. A curious circular **monument** commemorates the 13 regions of independent East Timor. Just past the monument is a **statue** of the Portuguese surveyor and cartographer Arturo do Canto Rezende, who was accused of aiding the Australians during WWII and who, after suffering severely at the hands of the Japanese, died on the island of Alor just a few months before the war ended. The statue notes that he died 'during the hard years of the Japanese occupation'.

The road continues past more whitewashed villas to the old but now solar-powered **Farol Lighthouse**. The waterfront Av de Portugal then passes several embassies and hotels before eventually ending at the Pertamina Jetty with its large oil-storage tanks. Midway there, you won't miss the vast new **Foreign Ministry**, a gift from the Chinese government and a sure sign that even little East Timor is on the radar of the Asian superpower. Should any aquatically minded delegations drop by, they can be entertained by the enormous swimming pool.

Independence Memorial Hall

This ceremonial reception building across from the lighthouse has a gallery in the back for the **Timor-Leste Photographers' Association** (☎ 723 3982), which displays the works of members that are often beautiful, moving

or both. The photographers hail from across the country and often have amazing stories. Ze'sopol Caminha got his start at age 23 when he smuggled a camera into the Jakarta prison where Xanana Gusmão was being held. The resulting shots were published worldwide.

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception

This huge and weathered white cathedral is claimed to be the largest in Southeast Asia. It was opened by President Soeharto in 1988 and in October 1989 was blessed by Pope John Paul II. His visit to Dili was said to have attracted more than 250,000 onlookers.

Arte Moris

Set in the vast remains of an Indonesian-era museum, **Arte Moris** (☎ 723 3507; Av dos Mártires da Pátria, Comoro; 🕒 9am-6pm Mon-Sat) encompasses everything weird and wonderful about Dili. Art students live here while they train in a variety of mediums; some of the best results grace a funky sculpture garden or are on display in a gallery. Although at times whimsical, many of the works address the ongoing tragedy of life in East Timor. Many local artists are in residence, including **Bibi Bulak** (www.bibibulak.org), an inventive acting troupe that performs on stage and screen. Much of its work is grounded in bringing social justice to the masses.

There's a regular schedule of performances and events; this should be high on your list of sights. Travelling west from town, the compound is over the Comoro bridge, just before the airport.

Chinese Temple

Dili's Chinese temple is an indication of the city's influential Chinese community. After many years of decline the city's Chinese population is once again on the increase. There were probably between 12,000 and 18,000 Chinese in East Timor at the time of the Indonesian invasion in 1975. They dominated commerce in East Timor and, as a result, were not always popular. But in the brief period of independence before the invasion, Fretilin promised they would be given full citizenship rights in the new country. In the early years of the occupation the Chinese suffered particular discrimination and violence at the hands of the Indonesians and, as a result, many fled.

Nevertheless the only time the temple closed was during the chaotic final convulsions of the occupation in 1999. The temple was repainted and refurbished before East Timor's independence in 2002. The temple's **Buddha statue** was brought to Timor from China in 1926. Although the temple is often locked, you might see Timorese Catholics having their fortunes read here.

Other Portuguese Buildings

Other Portuguese buildings include the simply styled **Matadouro** (Estrada de Balide, Matadouro), which until recently still functioned as the city abattoir. It's about 1km from the waterfront. One of Dili's finest colonial edifices is the **Gedung Negara** to the south of town, not far past the former Balide bus and *bemo* (minibus) terminal. This former Portuguese governor's residence features jutting bay windows, solid walls and ancient fan palms in the gardens. The Pope stayed here on his visit to Timor in 1989. The **Balide Church** is another Portuguese construction.

Santa Cruz Cemetery

On 12 November 1991 a peaceful protest at the Santa Cruz Cemetery was fired upon by Indonesian soldiers. More than 100 civilians died. Unfortunately for the Indonesian army, one of the people they killed was Kamal Bamadhaj, a 20-year-old New Zealand citizen, two of the many people they beat up turned out to be American journalists (Allan Nairn was on assignment for the *New Yorker*), and the bloody attack was filmed by the British journalist Max Stahl. The massacre at the Santa Cruz Cemetery is cited as a turning point in the independence struggle. There's a memorial to the victims at the cemetery, and National Youth Day, a public holiday in East Timor, commemorates the massacre.

Beaches

One of Dili's charms is that it's got a number of excellent beaches within minutes of the centre. On weekends and before and after work, expats and local families head east along the waterfront road for an escape that's barely a five-minute drive away. Ignore the unexciting stretch of beach a couple of kilometres east of the centre, fronting a string of beachfront restaurants. About 4km east of town things improve markedly: **Areia Branca**

beach, known as Pasir Putih (White Sand) in Indonesian, has clear water and sweeping views of the harbour and the hills to the south. The beach feels like a low-key resort, with its small thatched shelters and cafés. Look for a chap behind the Café Sol E Mar who rents **kayaks** (per hr US\$1-2).

A road branches inland from Areia Branca, running by **José Ramos-Horta's house**, just a stone's throw from the waterfront. This was where Ramos-Horta was nearly killed during the coup attempt in February 2008. The road then climbs steeply up into the hills and skirts inland from Cape Fatucama before dropping back to the coastline. There's good diving just off the headland at Cape Fatucama, 1km north of Areia Branca, and there is an excellent, and less crowded, beach beyond the headland, known as the 'Jesus Backside Beach' (see below for the reason this name is appropriate). The best way here is to take the path of Christ partway and then veer down the hill.

Further to the east, the coast is fringed with lagoons and mangrove swamps said to still be inhabited by East Timor's small saltwater crocodile population. Beaches start again from about 30km east of Dili. This is a good alternate route out of town for those travelling east as it avoids some IDP trouble spots.

There are good beaches west of Dili as well. The narrow strip along Av de Portugal is not a place to laze or swim, but in the evening it's lined with barbecue stalls selling fish, chicken and corn cobs, while at low tide people scour the fringing reef. On the way to the airport, take a small dirt track immediately west of the Comoro Bridge down to a lovely and secluded beach near a small cemetery. Further out from Dili, past the airport, there's a better beach at **Tasitolu** (see right), where there's also good diving around Dili Rock.

Cape Fatucama & the Christ Statue

At the eastern end of the bay, about 1km past Areia Branca, Cape Fatucama is topped by a parting gift from the Indonesians. Styled after Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer, a massive statue of Christ occupies the hilltop headland and can be seen from all around the harbour. This extravagance was a contentious project during the waning years of Indonesian rule. At 27m, its height symbolised the 27 provinces of Indonesia, which at that time included East Timor. Soeharto officially un-

veiled the statue during his 1988 visit and Pope John Paul II blessed the statue during his 1989 visit.

The walk to the top, from where there are magnificent views across Dili and to the nearby island of Atauro, is lined by the 14 Stations of the Cross.

Tasitolu Peace Park

Its name literally meaning 'three seas' in Tetun, this group of three salt lakes is being established as a park and preserve. This is a great place to see birds, including migratory birds fleeing Russia's harsh winter. The site also has important cultural value. The bodies of many victims of the Indonesian military regime were brought here for disposal. It's hard to imagine this horrible legacy today as the park provides a quiet escape from Dili's noise and is particularly beautiful in the cool of morning or late afternoon, when you can watch the surrounding eucalypt-peace hills change colour.

Tasitolu Peace Park is about 8km west of Dili on the main Dili-Kupang road, a little past Tasitolu village. From Dili you can catch a taxi (US\$5, 15 minutes). At the traditional house (built for Pope John Paul II's visit) walk south for around 400m through a small plantation and degraded grassland to the central lake. From the Tasitolu bus depot, which is about 500m north of the eastern lake, it's a five- to 10-minute walk.

ACTIVITIES

Scuba Diving & Snorkelling

The fringing reef along the entire north coast of East Timor provides spectacular diving and snorkelling opportunities. Many sites, including the legendary K41 east of Dili, are easily accessed by walking in from the beach, with dramatic drop-offs just 10m offshore in parts. One of the reasons that many people become enchanted with Dili is the opportunity for world-class diving in the morning, evening or any other time the mood hits. Some expats dive daily before work. See p66, p60, p80 and p86 for more on East Timor's incredible diving.

The main dive operators are located in Dili and arrange trips throughout the country and to Atauro. Both offer trips for snorkellers.

Free Flow (☎ 723 4614; www.freeflowdiving.com; Av de Portugal) offers guided shore dives, including transport, for US\$40 per dive. Many trips include delicious lunches. There's also a full

range of PADI courses from US\$300. Owners Wayne Lovell and Ann Turner are locally beloved and delightful characters to boot.

Dive Timor Lorosae (☎ 723 7092; www.divetimor.com; Av de Portugal) offers day-trip diving around Atauro, including two dives from US\$125 per person (minimum four people). Shore dives around Dili (including two dives) cost from US\$75. PADI courses cost from US\$300.

CHRISTO REI

Also known as Jesus 1, this dive site is near the Christ Statue on Cape Fatucama, about 6km east of Dili. The entry point is midway between the two car-park entry points for the Christ Statue. At low tide it can be a long walk across broken coral before reaching deeper water. The reef has small-to-medium coral and a variety of marine life, including blue moray eels and black-tip reef sharks. Take care of the currents close to the headland, although they fade as you move south.

CHRISTO REI EAST

Also known as Jesus 2, this site is reached from the small cove with the white-sand beach between the two larger beaches to the east of the Christ Statue. It's a steep descent from the road to the beach and then a long walk out until the water gets deep enough. The gradual slope eventually steepens considerably before dropping off into the deep from 18m to 20m. There's a good coral garden at just 4m to 5m.

DILI ROCK

A bit less than 10km west of Dili, past the airport and just after the monument marking where the Pope spoke during his 1989 visit to East Timor, is this site, marked by big rocks at the entry point. From there the sandy bottom slopes away to the westwards-running reef and drops to 20m. A wide variety of reef fish, including lionfish, puffer fish and stonefish, are regularly encountered, as well as moray eels. A further 200m west is **Dili Rock West**. This can be a challenging dive, as the currents can be strong, and swirling sand can sometimes affect visibility.

TOURS

A tour can transport you to places not easily accessible by public transport, and a guide can bridge the language barrier while taking you to little-known places. It's cost effective if you can rustle up a few friends to join you.

Eco Discovery (☎ 332 2454; www.ecodiscovery-easttimor.com; Landmark Plaza, Av dos Mártires de Pátria) Manny Napoleão's knowledge of East Timor is encyclopaedic. He knows places others think are myths and has them all plotted on his own version of Google Earth. Custom tours plunge deep and rates vary accordingly.

Harmonia Eco Tours (☎ 728 5611; www.timorvillagehotels.com; Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato) Next to the Central Hotel and affiliated with the Timor Village Hotel south of Ossu. Multiday trips to the east and south start from US\$100 per person per day.

Mega Tours (☎ 723 5199; timormegatours@netscape.net; Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato) Long-established; organises tours across the country. Two-day trips to Mt Ramelau (up to four people US\$280) are popular. Custom trips to places like Jaco Island cost from US\$150 per day for one to four people. The company is Portuguese owned; local staff are charmers.

SLEEPING

The constant influx of UN personnel and NGO types means that Dili's many hotels are often full. It also means that standards can stay low while prices remain comparatively high. In all too many cases your money gets you a moth-eaten room where you could be eaten by mosquitos. You might not even get a window.

But don't despair yet as there are some good choices at all price levels. It's hard to go wrong if you're on Dili's pretty waterfront – although there are fine alternatives elsewhere. It's recommended that you line up a place to stay before you arrive, at least for a few nights. Then, as you learn Dili, you can contemplate a move. If you're staying for a while – say as part of an assignment – then your best bet is to line up a room for a few nights and then network with others. There are all manner of private rooms and homes for rent plus many of the hotels have *long-term* rates (some guests don't check out for years).

Unless you can confirm otherwise, don't expect your hotel to accept credit cards (and if it does there will be a 5% surcharge). If the foreign crowd in Dili ever diminishes, expect the rates in the following section to fall by 25% or more.

Budget

In the early '70s, when East Timor was Portuguese Timor and Dili was still firmly on the Asia Overland 'hippy trail' from London to Australia, the open beachfront shed known as the Hippy Hilton was the place to unroll

your sleeping bag for less than a dollar a night. It's long gone, although Timorese still fondly remember the old 'beach house'.

Besides the budget places listed below, note that many more expensive places often have a few cheap rooms.

East Timor Backpackers (☎ 723 8121; Av Almirante Americo Tomas; dm US\$10; 📶) Dili's one hostel has 11 beds in three small rooms. The savvy owners are especially helpful to adventure travellers of all kinds. A self-contained apartment goes for US\$20 per night. Out the back, there's a delightful café-bar, 'The Smokehouse', which is often a real traveller's scene. Up front there's a cheap and cheerful Indian place (see p47).

Vila Harmonia (☎ 723 8265; vilaharmonia@hotmail.com; Av Liberdade Empresa 418, Becora; r per person US\$10) About 3km from town, this reliable old-timer has been here for over a decade. The 10 basic rooms, with bathrooms attached, line up to form an 'L' around the garden. Guests are free to use the kitchen.

Rocella (☎ 723 7993; Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato 18; r US\$20-25; 📶) There's a bit of a Kuta-guesthouse feel at this eight-room compound. There's satellite TV and sprightly décor to add life to the diminutive rooms. At night it's often a gregarious place and is perfectly located for official Dili-dom.

Timor Lodge Hotel (☎ 332 4227, 723 0827; Comoro Rd; r US\$20-40; 📶 📺) You may want to make like James Garner and scrounge for potatoes, or start bouncing a baseball off the wall like Steve McQueen or, better yet, just get Charles Bronson and start digging. Double rows of high fencing give this compound an atmosphere of *The Great Escape* and, indeed, in a previous incarnation it was a police camp. Strictly for emergencies, there's always room in one of its 303 cells...er, rooms (with the locally popular container motif). It does boast Dili's biggest pool so you can literally drown your sorrows. It's about 5km out of Dili, just past the Comoro Bridge and just before the airport turn-off.

Venture Hotel (☎ 331 3276; venture_hotel@hotmail.com; Rua Filomena de Camera, Lecidere; r US\$23-33; 📶 📺) Lots of plants, a vibrant bar and an alluring pool help overcome architecture that's familiar to anyone who's worked in a remote mining camp. The spartan rooms don't have TV; the cheapest share bathrooms (but you can clean up at the occasional foam parties thrown by the bon vivant owner). The hotel is in quiet and shady Lecidere.

Midrange

The bulk of Dili's accommodation falls into the midrange category. It's fairly easy to sub-classify them as 'crap' and 'not crap'. We list the latter. And beware of some of the 'hotels' that are little more than – we kid you not – collections of packing containers. Many of these are suitable only for those who want to live the fantasy of a cut-rate DVD player venturing forth from China to the world.

Note that there is a mostly undistinguished crop of hotels lining Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato.

Hotel Turismo (☎ 331 0555; hotelturismo_04@yahoo.com; Av dos Direitos Humanos, Lecidere; r US\$25-65; 📶) Step back in time at this genteel veteran of the 1970s. The rooms are a bit faded, but you won't notice from the balconies of the best ones where you can enjoy views of Atauro Island, the sound of the surf and the smells of the fish vendors' stalls. There's a certain *South Pacific* charm here and, although much of the hotel dates from the days when that musical was big, many people stay for months on end.

Hotel Dili (☎ 331 3958; reservation@hoteldili.com; Av dos Direitos Humanos; r US\$32-100; 📶 📺) A rambling place of disparate buildings served by a great staff, this is the best choice for business travellers to Dili. The cheapest rooms share bathrooms; all have high-speed (by local standards) internet and satellite TV. The hotel is really a collection of rooms that range from tiny singles to large units in older single-storey buildings (the best value), to really large units in converted portable containers, which are actually nice. The common grounds have lots of potted plants and you'll often see a local mover and shaker or two having a drink.

Hotel Audian (☎ 332 3080; enquiries@hotelaudian.com; Rua Quinze de Outubro, Bemori; r US\$35-70; 📶) Several blocks back from the waterfront, this is one of the better midrange hotels. The 41 rooms are reasonably spacious and airy, and have attached bathroom and TV and fridge. The upstairs rooms open onto a balcony over the street, which is a busy commercial strip by day.

Dili Beach Hotel (☎ 331 0493; dilibeachtimor@yahoo.com; Ave de Portugal; r US\$40-85; 📶 📺 📺) A good and affordable option on the water, west of the centre. The 14 rooms are sizable and have desks and broadband internet. Most have no views to speak of but do have fridge and satellite TV – so you can view bad cable shows

rather than the surf. There's a medium-sized pool (the green comes from the tile).

Farol Hotel (☎ 723 4218; farolhotel@yahoo.com; Rua Governador Cesa; r US\$50-120; 🍷 📺 📺) Directly opposite former prime minister Mari Alkatiri's house and next door to the Indonesian embassy, this 20-room place is well located for excitement. In contrast, the rooms are in what seems like a large house on shady grounds, and have satellite TV, DVD player and fridge, and so on. The restaurant features Chinese and Western food, and there are laundry facilities and a business centre.

Top End

Sagres Garden (☎ 726 1666; www.groupesagres@yahoo.com.br; Comoro; r from US\$65; 🍷 📺 📺) Set well back from a side road near the airport, the compound is centred around the gracious old house once used by the manager of the ANZ Bank. The corporate bean counters would never approve today. There's a superb restaurant (see p48) in the main house and, out the back, dogs snooze around a nice pool with its own beach. The two-room units have comfy sitting areas and dark bedrooms.

Hotel Timor (☎ 332 4502; hoteltimor@foriente.minihub.org; Rua Mártires da Pátria, Colmera; r from US\$80; 🍷 📺 📺) During the Indonesian era, this large hotel was the nicest place to stay in town. Now, like Dili itself, it's a bit rough around the edges. The 88 rooms are close to government offices, the port and several refugee camps. The staff always seem to be looking over your shoulder should President Soeharto make an appearance. The lobby café is abuzz with intrigue.

Hotel California (☎ 332 2928; californiahotel.becari@hotmail.com; r US\$80-150; 🍷 📺 📺) It really was all Eagles all the time at the opening of this lovely place on the road to Cape Fatucama. The 18 rooms are well appointed and are spread across one- and two-storey blocks and bungalows. Should you want verandas, broadband internet, stylish décor, huge walk-in showers or kitchenettes, you can find it here. The 2nd-storey bar has some of Dili's best sunset views.

Casa Minha (☎ 331 0252; casaminhahotel@mail.timor.telecom.tp; Av de Portugal; r from US\$90; 🍷 📺 📺) An unassuming compound set back from the shore road with a serene pool area and 15 rooms. If you're looking for a single room, the cabanas here are the nicest in town. The rooms are bright and airy and have good kitchens. But inexplicably, there is only one

single bed in each cabana. Double rooms are very large but are very dark. No matter your choice, the pool is lushly planted and the restaurant is always a solid choice.

Hotel Espanada (☎ 331 3088; www.hotelesplanada.com; Av de Portugal, Fatu Hada; r from US\$90; 🍷 📺 📺) The one place to stay in Dili that actually garners the high praise of 'nice', the Espanada has a great location right on the water and an excellent restaurant that makes the most of the views. Two-storey blocks surround a pleasant pool at this modern and vaguely stylish compound at a usually quiet end of the waterfront. After lounging about the spacious grounds, head up to the bar-restaurant for a cool drink as the sun sets over the sea.

EATING & DRINKING

Thanks to the influx of foreigners, Dili has a vast range of restaurants that you wouldn't expect to find in the capital of Asia's poorest nation. From seaside seafood joints to rather posh old-world Portuguese places, you can eat well.

Prices, however, are often not cheap. Still, when you're watching the sunset with a plate of tasty fare, it's easy to go along for the ride. Away from the water, prices are moderate. You'll find modest restaurants and cafés catering to a diverse crowd of locals and expats alike. Cheaper yet are the Padang storefronts, the standard Indonesian restaurants specialising in fresh and often spicy Sumatran-style food.

Most places are good for just a drink, (One More Bar, opposite; Castaway Bar, p48; and Caz Bar, p48 are always popular). However, in times of security worries the paucity of after-dark transport means that many places are all but empty by 9pm.

For self-catering information, see p49.

Centre

Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato, formerly known as Rua Dr Antonio de Carvalho, is probably Dili's restaurant centre, although there are places all around town. If things are slow some places may skip opening on Sunday.

Gelados Que Bom (☎ 723 6369; Ave Presidente Nicolau Lobato; treats US\$0c-52; ☺ noon-8pm) There you are thinking about both the temperature and your odds of finding the ANZ Bank ATM, when you see this cute little ice-cream

parlour as if in a vision. Well it isn't. Wrap your tongue around any of 10 flavours.

Depot Mie Bakso (Rua Formosa; meals from US\$1.25; ☺ 11am-9pm) Popularity translates into quick turnover and very fresh food at this open-air pavilion. Fried chicken, spicy beef rendang and silky potato cakes are usually among the offerings.

FM41 (Rua Colmera; meals from US\$1.25; ☺ erratic) This barebones shopfront near the commercial corner of Estrada de Balide draws a loyal crowd for its fresh and tasty Padang-style fare.

Sun Restaurant (☎ 723 3925; meals US\$2-4; ☺ 11am-8pm) Right out the front of East Timor Backpackers, this cheap and cheerful open-air Indian joint has excellent breads plus various curries with lamb and chicken. The vegetarian options are many.

Tropical Boutique Bakery (☎ 723 6627; cnr Rua Comoro & Estrada de Balide; dishes US\$3-6; ☺ 7am-8pm) One of Dili's best cafés, the bakery here has consistently creative food. There are many savoury pies as well as sweeter treats such as the sinful fried banana split. Enjoy salads, pastas, burgers and more on the breezy veranda.

Kebab Club (☎ 726 3642; Rua Belarmino Lobo; mains US\$3-6) Darn authentic Turkish fare, including velvety hummus, is on offer in a place where the charm of the owners manages to outshine the tasty food. Try dousing the excellent chicken kebabs with the pickled vegetables – remember the smaller the pepper the hotter the garlic, or maybe it's the reverse...

City Café (☎ 332 4646; Rua Presidente Nicolau Lobato; dishes US\$3-9; ☺ 8am-9pm) Much better than the hotel it fronts, this is a busy sidewalk café and restaurant. Libations range from paw-paw juice to banana smoothies to perfectly tart gin-and-tonics. There's breakfast plus a long menu of pizzas, sandwiches, Asian meals and steaks on offer throughout the day. It's also known for its baked goods – ask one of the uniformed waiters for a custard tart or passionfruit cheesecake.

Terrace Café (☎ 725 9100; Rua Formosa; meals from US\$4) Join government workers and students on the breezy terrace of this popular place. Food is served up Padang style: choose your fare from the day's fresh offerings behind the counter. The avocado-chocolate shake is fresh, frothy and oddly addictive. The shady terrace is the place to nab a table.

Erli Restaurant (Rua Formosa; meals from US\$4; ☺ 11am-8pm) Next door to the Terrace Café, you can have a little Bali break without braving the

Merpati flight. Lunchtime crowds line up for the *saté babi* (little skewers of tender, young pork). Other more-Indonesian fare includes excellent spicy *ayam goreng* (fried chicken). The screened patio is always crowded.

Indian Megha (☎ 723 4433; Rua Belarmino Lobo; mains US\$4-6; ☺ 11am-8pm) The only colour in the spare dining room here comes from the pink walls but no matter, the real attraction is the long menu of authentic Indian dishes. If you're having naan of that, try the spicy, garlicky seafood specials.

Smokehouse (☎ 723 8121; Av Almirante Americo Tomas; meals US\$4-6; ☺ 11am-late) All the meats are house-smoked in a proper smoker, as opposed to the patrons who are smoked – or smoking – in the colourfully lit bar area. Enjoy specials like a half-smoked chicken or ribs. Many people are just here for a drink and the fun often extends well into the night. Many crash (intentionally or not) in the hostel at the front.

One More Bar (☎ 725 9720; Rua Governador Filomena da Camara, Lecidere; mains US\$4-9) One More Bar has a fine 2nd-storey position on the waterfront behind the Mary statue. Lobster specials are popular and fresh seafood highlights a menu of pizza, burgers and Asian stir-fries. There are darts, a pool table and live music some nights. Many come here just for a few drinks at the long bar or on the rattan furniture.

Golden Star Restaurant (☎ 723 3838, 723 3836; Rua Quinze de Outubro; dishes US\$4-9; ☺ 11am-10pm) Across from Hotel Audian, the Golden Star is the best Chinese restaurant in town. Slice into the excellent steamed fresh fish with garlic while relaxing in the air-con dining room. There's a modest wine list.

Gion (☎ 332 2038; Rua Belarmino Lobo 2E; meals US\$5-15; ☺ 11am-2pm & 5-10pm) Poke your head under the traditional Japanese cloth covering the door and you're transported to Tokyo, if not Nagasaki. The air-con dining room features a burbling fountain and is a restful place to enjoy sushi, sashimi, tempura and more. Various noodle dishes satisfy the simple-minded and, if you get lost, just ponder the pictures on the menu.

Café Brasil (☎ 728 6759; Rua Formosa; mains US\$6-12; ☺ 9am-11pm) A bright café area adjoins a darker and more moody dining room. There's comfy wicker seating throughout, which is good as you'll want to settle back and peruse the creative menu. Specials include penne with spinach and pumpkin, prawn-stuffed fish and spicy, crispy steak.

Vasco da Gama (☎ 723 1803; Rua Governador César Maria Serpa Lote; meals US\$8-16; 🕒 noon-3pm & 5-9pm) You could easily be in a cosy little traditional restaurant in Porto or Lisbon at this gracious air-con eatery on a quiet Motael street. Many of the meats are grilled over charcoal and there's a range of Portuguese specialties, from rice to seafood. Service is polished and the wine list long (by local standards).

East

There are a number of beachfront places to the east of town that are popular with people heading to the beach. Most are very basic affairs with a thatched roof and a simple menu of seafood and Asian mains that you enjoy while you feel the sand between your toes.

Caz Bar (☎ 723 3961; Areia Branca; dishes US\$4-8) Settle back in your chair right on the beach at this popular place that caps the line-up of beachside joints east of town. Breakfast and sunset are popular times here. Watch for full-moon parties. It's nearly as long running as the cute kid belonging to the truly charming owners.

Little Pataya (mains US\$5-6; 🕒 11am-9pm) The most inviting of the beachside joints, this no-frills place still manages to have clever décor (a dugout canoe serves as the bar) and excellent Thai food. There's tom yum seafood soup, various shades of curry, and fried fish in three-flavour sauce.

West

West of the centre there's a string of restaurants along the coast road Av de Portugal, beyond the Farol Lighthouse.

Castaway Bar (☎ 723 5449; Av de Portugal; mains US\$4-12) A very popular 2nd-storey joint overlooking the western waterfront. Crowds enjoy typical pizza-sandwich-Asian fare while taking in the cool breezes and plotting ways to foil the diabolical pool table. This is one of the best places in the west for a drink, although you may lose count of the number of times you hear 'My Sharona'.

Beach Café (☎ 723 6383; Av de Portugal; dishes US\$5-8) Enjoy the complex flavours and spices of Burmese food while the sounds of the surf calm you. It's a simple yet attractive place with candlelit tables; the perfect spot for a budget-conscious tête-à-tête.

Oceanview Beach Restaurant (☎ 723 6041; Comoro; US\$6-12; 🕒 noon-8pm) Follow a little track out to the sea past the oil depot and then head

west along the beach until you come to this cute little outpost, which has some of Dili's best seafood. The grilled calamari is succulent and the prawns divine. Opt for a table on the platform out on the beach and enjoy a sunset view of three islands.

Hotel Esplanada (☎ 3313 088; Av de Portugal; meals US\$6-20) The most upscale of the 2nd-storey waterfront places, the restaurant here continues the hotel's stylish mix of colourful fabrics and dark wood. This is the place to enjoy a glass of wine that doesn't come out of a box, or a cocktail with recognisable heritage. The creative menu has many specials; the fusion fare takes its cues from Asia and Europe.

Sagres Garden (☎ 726 1666; Comoro; meals US\$8-14; 🕒 11am-9pm) The dining room at the hotel is in the old Portuguese mansion. Book one of the private dining rooms so you can make all the happy noises you want enjoying the excellent Portuguese rice, seafood and pork dishes. The clams and *bacalao* (cod) fritters are amazing.

ENTERTAINMENT

When security is a bit tense, there's limited fun later at night, or shall we say limited public fun. Still there's a lot of pent-up energy; keep alert for full-moon parties on the beach and foam raves in hotel pools. The UN publishes a map of 'off-limits' dodgy local dives.

Exotica (beach road; 🕒 8pm-5am) A couple of kilometres east of town by the beach, this place never keeps the same name for longer than a year but its allure doesn't change: hot music and vast crowds until dawn. Foreign soldiers, local hotties, dance-hungry expats and more mix in an unpredictable brew. Men pay a US\$5 admission.

AJ Bar (☎ 732 4066; Av Bispo de Medeiros; 🕒 noon-4am) A legendary 2nd-floor dive where locals and expats alike cram the close quarters for hot music, mixed metaphors yelled over the din and conflict over rugby. On karaoke nights brace yourself for Tracey Morgans.

SHOPPING

Dili has two main areas of shops where locals buy everything from electrical goods to designer sunglasses of dubious authenticity: the corner of Rua Colmera and Estrade de Balide and the strip along Rua Quinze de Outubro.

Markets are often the targets of raging mobs, so locations can change. Still, these are colourful places where you can see what's produced in the rich countryside. Ubiquitous or-

anges, rarer tropical fruits, pumpkin and more are on offer. You'll also see a range of betel nuts and various little prepared snacks like cookies, and there are likely to be *tais* (woven cloth) vendors. The huge **Taibessi market** seems immune to immolation. Stalls can also be found out the front of the Hotel Turismo.

Supermarkets

There are several supermarkets that sell everything from Tim Tams to bug repellent (essential) to fishing tackle. These are the places where you'll get everything you need for excursions into the countryside, and are also good sources of packages of East Timor's prized coffee.

Landmark (☎ 723 1313; Av dos Mártires de Pátria, Comoro) Large complex of shops on the airport road. The selection includes Ikea furniture you can order from Singapore in case you decide to stick around.

Leader (☎ 332 2384; Av dos Mártires de Pátria, Comoro) Good for cheap furniture and the adventure that comes from wondering if the ANZ ATM will grant you cash. Probably the largest selection of imported foods, and the piped-in music sometimes includes some mighty fine blues.

Lita (Av dos Direitos Humanos, Leçidere) Near the Hotel Turismo. Goods include the little plastic couple for the top of your wedding cake.

Arts & Crafts

Tais (see p21) are the thing to buy in Dili to take home and there are several good outlets.

The self-explanatory **Tais Mercado** (Rua Sebastiao da Costa) has two dozen stalls. You can buy anything from a sash for a couple of dollars to large traditional pieces, or have your name woven into a small piece. You can identify the region that the older-looking, if not actually old, designs come from, as there are distinct styles of *tais* from Suai, Lospalos, Ermera, Bobonaro, Oecussi and other areas of East Timor. A traditional *tais* might cost anything from US\$20 to US\$50. Note that quality varies greatly here, so it pays to take your time and resist the sellers' exhortations.

The best place to buy *tais* and other handicrafts may be the **Alola Foundation** (☎ 332 3855; www.alolafoundation.org; Av Bispo de Medeiros; 🕒 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat). The shop of the revered local charity (see p19) has *tais* and other crafts from around the country. Quality is high and prices are low. There's a small workshop in the back, and displays show how *tais* are made.

DEPARTURE TAX

There's a departure tax of US\$10 when leaving Dili's airport.

Other good places to buy *tais* include the charity *tais* shop off the lobby of the Hotel Timor (p46) and Xanana Gusmão Reading Room (p40).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

See p92 for details on reaching East Timor from other countries, including Indonesia.

Air

Dili's **Nicolau Lobato International Airport** (DIL) is not an impressive entry to the country nor a fitting memorial to the great man. Dirty toilets, busted light bulbs and just plain dirt are its hallmarks. There are no luggage carts but there is a large refugee camp next to the parking lot. The only liquid refreshments available in the departure lounge are large bottles of booze from the duty-free stall. This may be fitting.

Of the two airlines serving Dili, **Air North** (www.airnorth.com.au) only has a ticket desk at the airport. **Merpati** (☎ 332 1880; www.merpati.co.id; Landmark Plaza, Av dos Mártires de Pátria) has a large and helpful office closer to town.

Boat

The **Nakroma ferry office** (☎ 728 09638; Av de Portugal; 🕒 9am-5pm) is in the large building at the port. Buy your tickets in advance. Ferries for Oecussi (12 hours) leave at around 5pm Monday and Thursday. The Atauro service runs Saturdays (see p80 for details).

Bus

Dili's bus terminals (really little more than shabby shelters) are served by taxis and *mikrolets* (minibuses). Buses run most often in the mornings.

Tasitolu terminal, west of the airport, is the hub for destinations to the west of the country. Travelling to the east (Baucau, Lospalos, Viqueque etc), buses go from the simple **Bidau terminal** (Av dos Direitos Humanos, Leçidere) on the waterfront near the Hotel Turismo. The **Taibessi terminal**, at the huge Taibessi market near the hills behind town, is the stop for transport to Maubisse and beyond.

GETTING AROUND

Dili is compact and you'll be able to reach most places on foot or taxi. See p94 for the limited car- and motorcycle-rental options. If you need petrol, the best place to get it (that actually has petrol) is **Tiger Fuel** (☎ 732 4099; Ave dos Mártires de Pátria; 🕒 24hr), which could be a large petrol station anywhere in the world. There's even a large selection of salty snacks.

To/From the Airport

There are usually a few battered taxis at Nicolau Lobato International Airport, which is only 6km from the centre of Dili. To get almost anywhere in Dili will cost a standard US\$5, although given that the standard fare around town is only US\$1 to US\$2, that's actually costly. Don't ever ask what the fare will be as you'll be told US\$10; rather, get in, go to your destination and sweetly hand over a Lincoln. Alternatively, you could walk the few hundred metres past the refugee camp out to the main road and hail a *mikrolet* for around US25¢.

Bicycle

Rentals are hard to find but you can buy a decent Chinese mountain bike for about

US\$175 at **Mali Lait** (Ave dos Mártires de Pátria), a bike and parts shop across from the UN helicopter base.

Bus

Mikrolets buzz about on designated routes during daylight hours (US25¢). They stop frequently over relatively short distances, often making a taxi a more efficient option.

Taxi

There are loads of clapped-out unmetered taxis beeping their way around Dili. Almost anywhere around town costs a standard US\$1, rising to US\$2 for a longer journey. One major problem is that, following the 2006 riots, taxis stopped operating at night. Until this changes, going out at night means setting up rides or sticking close to your lodging. There is a huge opportunity for the first person who sets up a mobile-phone dispatched taxi company that offers reliable and safe service after dark (microlending NGOs, are you listening?).

Drivers actually do a pretty good job considering that many cars lack the luxuries of windshields or springs and shocks.