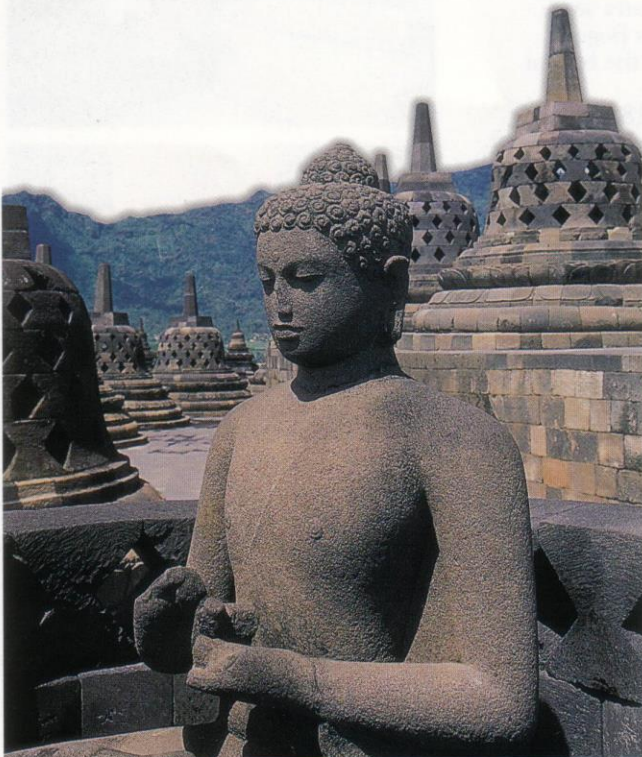
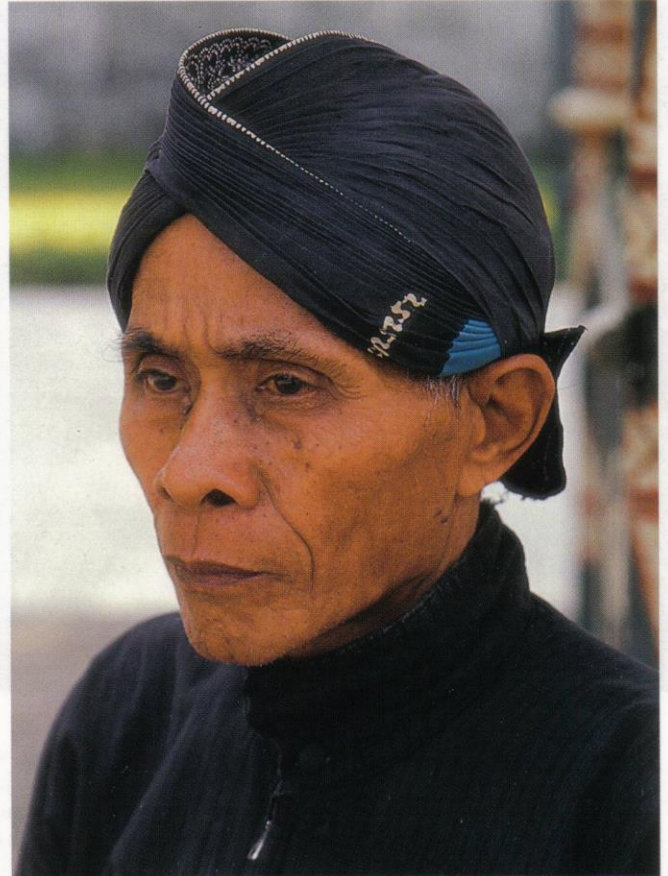


# Central Java and Yogyakarta



Central Java is the heartland of Java - an ancient land of terraced rice paddies and spectacular mountains which has seen the rise and fall of mighty empires, the construction of some of the world's most ambitious and awe-inspiring temples, and the most sophisticated of Java's arts and culture. Here, too, is an agrarian society scarcely changed in centuries, with bamboo villages and mountain slopes sculpted into rice terraces by generations of farmers. Brooding volcanoes and verdant ricefields. Regal splendour and captivating dance. An endless tropical garden on the shore of an azure sea. These are the romantic depictions by generations of writers who have visited the island of Java. These impressions are also accurate. Java is an incredible mosaic of sights, sounds and impressions: a pleasurable form of sensory overload.



**T**he largest man-made object in the Southern Hemisphere, the massive Buddhist temple of Borobudur, the eerie temple complex on the Dieng Plateau and the more than 50 Hindu and Buddhist temples scattered over the Prambanan Plain draw visitors from all over the world. But Central Java's attraction lies not only in dead stone. The great traditional art forms: court dance, gamelan music and wayang shadow puppetry, are as vibrant now in the cities of Yogyakarta and Surakarta as in centuries past.

The gamelan bronze gong orchestra is as much a part of Java as rice fields and volcanoes. An ancient, sophisticated and complex musical form, the gamelan accompanies every ceremonial occasion, from the coronation of the Sultan to the arrival of a tourist group in a hotel lobby. And no art form captures the essence of Java better than the wayang, the shadow puppet theatre which summons forth omniscient gods, heavenly nymphs, monstrous ogres, noble kings and skillful warriors, in a magical, flickering display.

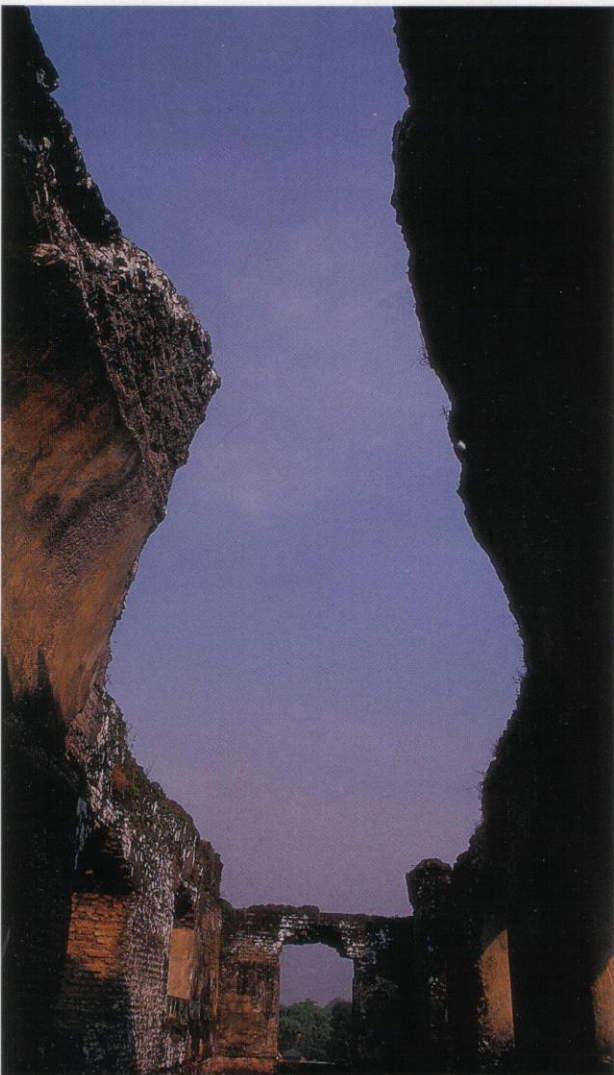
Although the modern world has come to Java, bringing with it efficient transportation and comfortable accommodation, it has not conquered the Garden of the East. A few steps away from any hotel lies all the charm and enchantment of a profoundly exotic land and culture. A journey to Central Java can be the trip of a lifetime; more than a feast for the eyes, it is food for the soul.





### Welcome to Yogyakarta

With a still-functioning royal palace in the center of town, the surrounding hillsides and plains scattered with awe-inspiring stone temples, and a thriving artistic community, Yogyakarta is the undisputed cultural capital of Java. Home of Gadjah Mada University and the country's premier Fine Arts Academy, Yogya is a centre of dance, music, painting and batik. The slow pace and compact size of this quintessential Javanese town makes Yogyakarta easy to explore on foot. Most areas of interest centre around Jalan Malioboro, whose wide, canopied sidewalks offer shelter from the mid-afternoon heat and by night turn into a colourful street market where you can buy leathers, textiles, batiks, wayang puppets and much more. Delicious food in many styles and cuisines is available throughout Yogya but the city is most famous for lesehan - meals of local delicacies taken sitting on straw mats in simple restaurants or directly on the sidewalk. Close to the extraordinary monuments of Borobudur and Prambanan, the silversmiths' village of Kota Gede and the beaches at Parangtritis, Yogyakarta offers a feast of culture and history plus nature in all her majesty, from rumbling volcanoes to pounding surf. Yogyakarta is well served by a wide selection of accommodation, suitable for anyone from a Head of State to a young backpacker.







### Keraton

The Javanese regard Java as the center of the world, and the keraton (royal palace) as its heart. The Yogya keraton, home of the current Sultan, Hamengkubuwono X, is open to the public and is the city's premier tourist attraction. Entering the palace is like stepping back in time, into a place where a moment of past glory is preserved like a butterfly caught in amber. The layout of the royal complex, with open courtyards surrounding low pavilions and the keraton at the center, is a microcosmic representation of the world. Every component of the structure or grounds is charged with mystic significance. The Javanese believe that by arranging the keraton's components in harmony, the order and harmony of the universe could be maintained. Attached to the keraton complex is Taman Sari, a two-century-old water palace and pleasure garden built by Yogyakarta's first Sultan for his wives and concubines. The narrow alleys near the keraton walls which once housed the families of palace retainers, now support a vibrant colony of batik artists and artisans.





### Silver city

Virtually untouched by modernity, the silver trade is still thriving in the picturesque centre of Kota Gede, just seven kilometres out of the city centre. Silver workshops have existed here since the 16th century, and to the present day not much has changed in production methods.

Most of the small showrooms have a workshop attached. This is where craftsmen and women apply their expertise in producing jewelry, ornaments and household cutlery, a process consisting of six separate stages. First the pure silver beads, usually mined in West Java, are melted and mixed with copper and set in bars. The bar is then hammered to the correct thickness for the intended product. It is then forged into shape. The shaped piece is then carved and engraved with traditional motifs and designs, and all different parts are subsequently assembled into the final design. The object is then roughened with sandpaper, washed in warm alum water and polished until it achieves the desired shine. The finished object is then dried in the sun covered by sawdust to avoid damage.

Being so close to Yogya the silver shops at Kota Gede are definitely worth a visit. Quite apart from being a museum of living local history, you will also find some superb souvenirs and gifts at out-of-town prices.

### Out of town

Parangtritis, 30 kilometres south of Yogyakarta, is a place to experience the power of the natural and supernatural, where the thundering rage of the Indian Ocean beats against the jagged



volcanic cliffs of the south coast, and the legend of Roro Kidul burns strong. Accommodation is scarce, but the Queen of the South Resort is a great place from which to explore the region as they can direct you to all the best sites.

The trip to the Maria Tritis cave, an important Catholic shrine, provides a great morning or afternoon outing. The walk takes you through woods and past a number of small shrines which feature stone carvings depicting the life of Christ. The cave itself is open with an altar for small services and two large statues of Jesus and the Virgin Mary.

Cerme provides a more adventurous cave experience. After a rigorous climb with incredible views of Java below, you clamber down into an enormous complex of caves and make your way through a complex of under ground caverns. Wading through waist deep water, crouching under stalagmites and stalactites and squeezing through narrow passages, you notice the air is beautifully cool and silent. You emerge an hour later in thick woods on the other side of the mountain. It is quite a rigorous trip but highly recommended if you are fit and have a decent pair of walking boots.





**Around Yogyakarta**

In addition to the Dieng Plateau, the area around Yogyakarta is rich in places of interest:

**Merapi**

To the North East of Yogyakarta is the famous Merapi, one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes. Safety allowing, the energetic may wish to try the guided night climb from Kaliurang resort. It takes a few hours, and arriving in the early hours will offer views of the sunrise over the smoking caldera. The Volcano Observation post in Irakah, near Selo, is the best place to observe the spewing beast from a safe distance. Going beyond this point is often not an option for safety reasons. Occasionally the volcano belches a large cloud of super-hot sulphurous gas which literally roasts villages.

**Museum of Indonesian fine arts**

Yogyakarta is well-known as one of Indonesia's art centres, and within an hour's drive from the city lies the impressive Haji Widayat Museum, with over 3,000m of space devoted to the subject. It is located at Sawitan, in the town of Mungkid just a few km from Borobudur. The Museum opens daily (not Monday) from 9.00 am - 4.00 pm.

**Temples at Prambanan**

Situated in Klaten, on the road between Yogyakarta and Solo, these Hindu temples were built by the Sanjaya Dynasty in the ninth century. There are three temples, representing the Hindu trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. Particularly interesting are the Ramayana performances which take place on full moon from May to October.



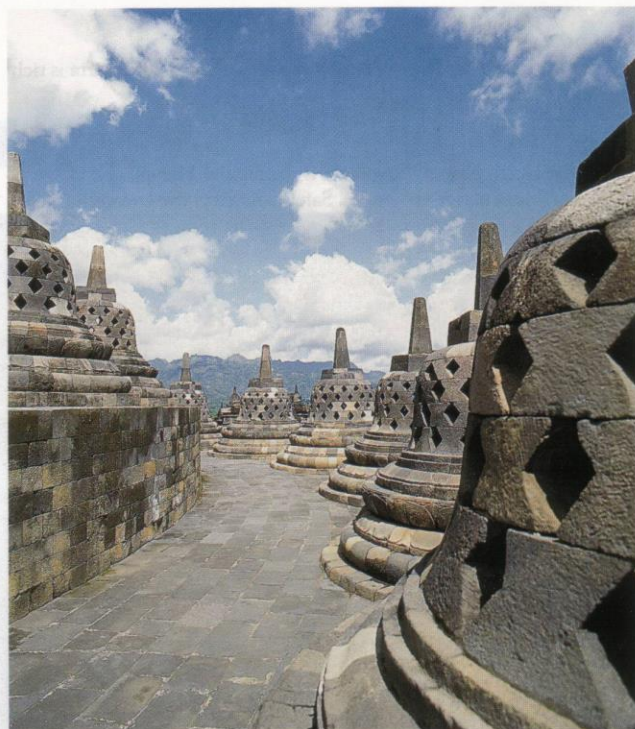


**Borobudur temple**

Built during the 9th century by the rulers of the Syailendra dynasty, this massive stupa is the largest Buddhist monument in the world. It was left to ruin as the dynasty fell apart, and only recognised as a global treasure by Stamford Raffles in 1814. It has subsequently been restored to its former glory - its 10 exquisitely carved levels reaching 42 m in height. Borobudur's 40km North West of Yogyakarta, near Mungkid in the Magelang regency. Two Hindu temples - Candi Mendut and Candi Pawon - are also conveniently on route from Yogyakarta to Borobudur

**Solo**

Surakarta, or Solo, is the second city of the Javanese cultural heartland. Although smaller than Yogyakarta, Solo is a centre of the arts and home to two keraton, or royal palaces. The larger, Keraton Kasunanan, is a large and fascinating complex which easily deserves a full day visit. The junior branch of the Solo royal family occupies Pura Mangkunegaran, an attractive, more intimate complex which blends European elegance with Javanese architectural styles. In Solo you'll also find a huge textile market, a bird market and flea market, plus a choice of dance and cultural performances.







### Around Solo

In addition to the town of Solo itself, there are a number of places worth visiting out of town.

### Candi Sukuh

This temple is quite different in style from many of the other Hindu shrines in Central Java. Dating from the 15th or 16th century, it more resembles the architecture of the Incas. Candi Sukuh is situated on the slopes of Mount Lawu, over 900m above sea level. To get there, head East to Karangpandan. From there it is easy enough to get to Candi Sukuh.

### Tawangmangu mountain resort

Just a few kilometres to the South of Candi Sukuh, this resort offers a cool and refreshing escape from Solo city life. Try the walk from here to the temple; it takes about 2 1/2 hours and takes you through monkey-inhabited, forested hills past the impressive Grojogan Sewu waterfall. Horseback riding is also available in the area.

### Sangiran fossils

Less than 20 kilometers to the North East of Solo is one of the world's richest beds of prehistoric fossils, at Sangiran. Human, animal and plant fossils dating back hundreds of thousands of years can be found lying around the area in great abundance; for a more orderly viewing of preserved ancestors, check out the Sangiran museum.

### Gajah Mungkur reservoir

In the early 1980's the Gajah Mungkur Dam was built, forming a reservoir that sank 51 villages. Fortunately the population of 60,000 had been previously re-located to West Sumatra. The reservoir today is a great place to indulge in all sorts of watersports: boating, swimming, waterskiing - and hang-gliding from the top of the hill near the dam.

### Handicraft manufacture

Around 15km to the South of Solo, the Sukoharjo region is a good place to explore some of the local cottage industries fabricating Javanese culture. Worthy of note are

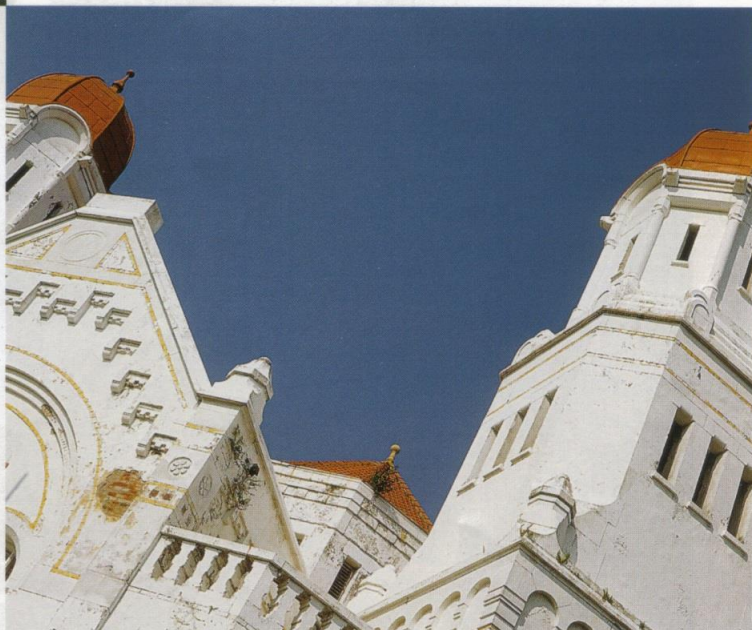
- Gamelan making in Wirin village
- Leather goods and puppets in Madegondo village
- Rattan manufacture in Trangsang-Gatak
- Bonsai cultivation in Laban village.

### Batu Seribu pools

Located around 13 km to the South of Sukoharjo in Genteng village, this bathing place offers some excellent fresh air and scenery. The volcanic springs pour forth waters which are believed to have revitalising properties, especially for skin.

### Semarang

Situated at the mouth of the Semarang River, the port of Semarang was visited by the Chinese in the 15th century and then became an Islamic settlement until it was taken over by the Dutch in the 17th century. It became a thriving commercial centre, handling the transportation of agricultural produce grown in the hinterlands. Historic sites worth a visit in Semarang include the harbour district with its old warehouses and the Dutch-built Blenduk church. Chinese influence is still very much apparent in Semarang as a walk through the Chinatown district will reveal. Tay Kak Sie, in



Chinatown, is the city's largest Chinese temple while the Gedung Batu temple is the oldest. In the vicinity of Semarang, visit a traditional jamu herbal medicine factory, the temple complex of Gedung Songo, the Railway Museum at Ambarawa and the relaxing hill resort of Bandungan.



### Experience the Heart of Java

The Association of 4 and 5 star hotels Yogyakarta and Central Java (Casa Grande) together with the local government tourism offices and Yogya Promo have entered into an aggressive marketing campaign to promote their beautiful destination through a program called "Experience the Heart of Java"

This concentrates on seven major areas of interest to international visitors as follows:

**MEETING, INCENTIVES, CONVENTIONS AND EXHIBITION** With meeting facilities for up to 1,000 delegates, Central Java and Yogya can host International conferences and conventions with audio and video capability in convention halls and conference centres of the highest standards.

Backed up by international standard hotels and professional organizers this is truly wonderful place for a meeting.

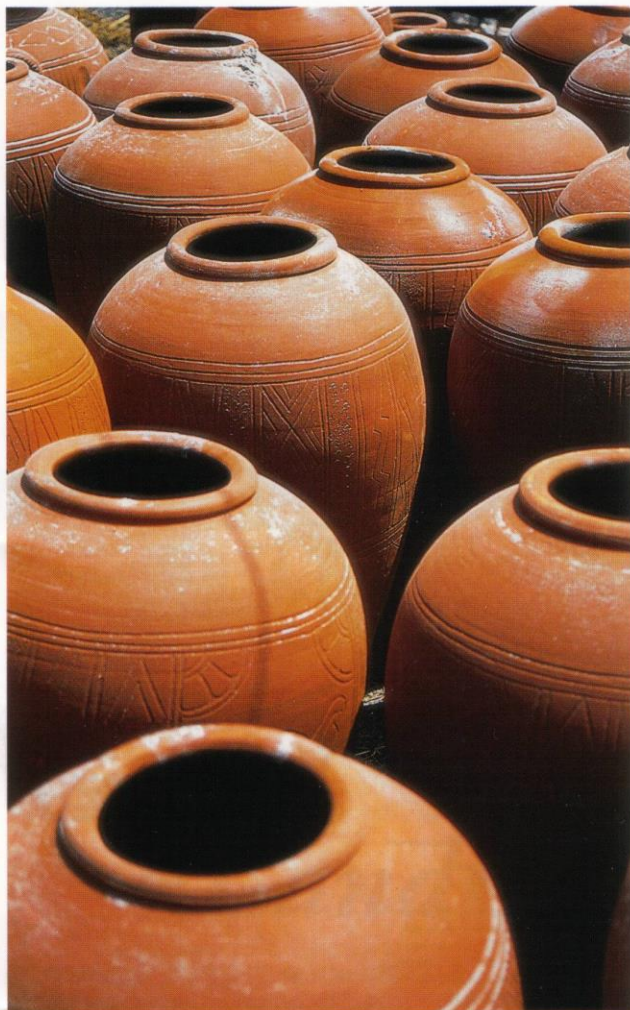
**SPORT** a huge variety of sporting experiences awaits the energetic visitors including 5 golf courses, mountain trekking, white water rafting, mountain biking, motor cross tennis and badminton centres, horse riding, diving at Karimunjawa Island, and the fun of sailing on traditional fishing boats.

**NATURE** The whole area is blessed with some of the most spectacular natural wonders in Indonesia including: Mount Merapi's active volcano, Parang Tritis, Tawanmangu, Waterfall, hot springs at Guci and Gonohardjo, Dieng Plateau and the wonderful island of Karimunjawa and Nusakambangan.

**FOOD** The traditional foods of Central Java prove an endless attraction to those eager to have a culinary adventure. Try the 'lesehan' traditional street restaurants and the food bazaars, savour some Gudeg and steamed chicken dish with steward sweet jackfruit, try the fame of the 'tukang sate', and don't stop until you've enjoyed soto bangkong, lumpia Semarang, Swi Kee, Tahu Gimbal and a host of others!







**SHOPPING** Visitors always end up going home loaded with irresistible handicrafts and objects d'art from the traditional markets such as Malioboro in the heart of Yogya. There's also Kasongan Pottery, Silver, Batik, Bamboo and Wood Craft, Carved Stones and Leather, Brass and Embroidery, all available at a myriad of art and souvenir shops, shopping mall and markets throughout the region. Hard to resist for most visitors!

**CULTURE** It is impossible to separate Central Java and Yogyakarta from culture where it is deeply rooted in the life and traditions of the people.

The palaces of Yogya and Solo, The Taman Sari, the museums of art, trains book and batik are must - see destinations, but so are the performances of traditional dances, the Ramayana Ballet, the wayang puppet shows which weaves a magical aura over every visit.

**TEMPLES** "Awe-inspiring", 'magnificent', 'stunning', are some of the words used to describe the Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist temple. By far the greatest reason for visiting the region, it provides a focal point for a visit but with the Prambanan close by and Dieng Plateau a short drive away you can be sure of a continuous spectacle of temples.

With a list like this to contemplate it's not just a one in day "whistle stop" destination but a serious but relaxed three days of wandering and wondering that awaits you.

Oh and by the way there are some fantastic hotels to stay at as well! Contact any of the companies over to make sure your visit to Central Java and Yogyakarta is an outstanding one.

Come soon to 'Experience the Heart of Java'.

