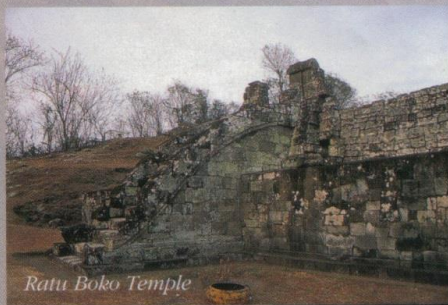


# Blast GARUDA *Travel Java* from the Past


## Central Java's Classic Temples

Text by Perry Morgan Photos by Jan Dekker & Adam Fenton



*Ratu Boko Temple*



A photograph showing the silhouettes of two traditional Indonesian temple roofs against a bright, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise. The roofs are dark and feature ornate, tiered finials. The sky transitions from a pale blue at the top to a warm orange and yellow near the horizon. The overall mood is serene and historical.

**J**ava, a short ride to the west of Bali, is a geographical masterpiece of imposing volcanic peaks, winding valleys and lush green plains. Throughout the history of this region Java has been at the centre of empires to rival the might of ancient Rome, has seen the rise and fall of dynasties the likes of which China never knew, and has a culture and ruins to rival the aesthetic majesty of ancient Egypt. In short, Java is a microcosm of the universe, steeped in history and beauty, and offers a richly rewarding adventure for any visitor.

Scattered throughout the rugged volcanic landscapes of Central Java are hundreds of stone temples and ruins; an enduring testament to the early classical period of Javanese civilization. Most remarkable of all is Borobudur, the largest Buddhist monument in existence, and one of the remaining seven wonders of the ancient world. Work on the enormous Borobudur temple probably began around 780 AD and lasted for about 50 years. In more recent times the temple was 'discovered' (the local inhabitants were well

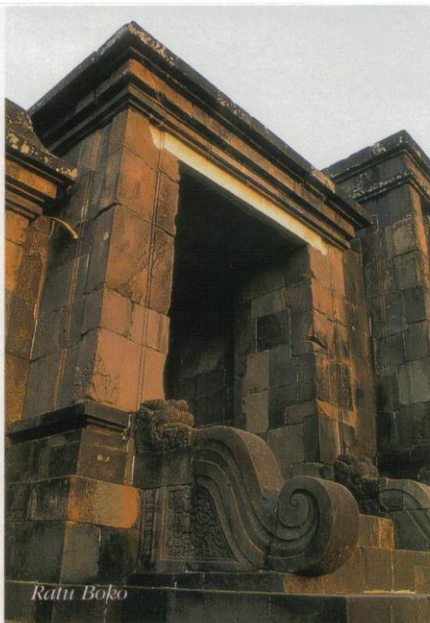
aware of its existence) by Stamford Raffles during his period as the governor of Java. Over the following century various efforts were made to maintain the temple until 1975 when a complete stone-by-stone restoration was undertaken over nine years to restore the temple to its former glory. Today it is one of the most fascinating and spiritual destinations in Central Java.

The Prambanan plain, east of Yogyakarta contains the highest density of ancient ruins in all Indonesia. In all, about 50 different sites have been discovered beneath the layers of volcanic soil, and no doubt many more lay undiscovered beneath the earth. Some of the temples are Buddhist monuments and some Hindu - a stone reminder of the wars between rival Hindu and Buddhist kings which once engulfed the region. The largest is the Loro Jonggrang complex with an awesome 47 metre high central temple dedicated to the goddess Siva. The temple was completed in 856 AD when a Hindu king, Rakai Pikatan, is said to have defeated his Buddhist enemy.



High on a mountainside about three kilometres to the south of Prambanan, the temple of Ratu Boko, provides spectacular vistas of the Prambanan plain. To this day it is still unknown who discovered Ratu Boko or who named it. Inscriptions dating from the mid 700s say that it was a dormitory for monks. There are several ruins, including a well preserved arena which was used as a hall for royal audiences. Some legends say that it was also used as a venue for tests of mortal combat. A series of circular plunge pools carved into the limestone were used as the royal baths. But most spectacular of all, is the entrance gate. With two separate gateways set on different levels the entrance gate contains some elaborate stone facings.

Lying to the northwest of Yogyakarta is



Ratu Boko

man-made wonders will also be the setting for special celebrations on the millennium eve. A 'Ruwatan' ceremony, will be held at the ancient temple to cleanse the world and all life within it from the dangers of war, disease, pollution and destruction. Guests are invited to come and witness the last sunset of the second millennium, and join the cleansing celebrations in a blessing of the new age.

## Essential Info

Budget accommodation in Yogyakarta is mainly around the Pasar Kembang area around the train station. There is a wide range of small hotels and *losmen* to choose from and prices start from as little as US\$2 a night. Moving up the scale the *Jogja Village Inn* is a charming boutique style hotel on Jalan Menukan 5 (tel: 0274-373031) with beautiful gardens and ambient atmosphere. With only 24 rooms, bookings are advised. Other hotels include the magnificent *Sheraton Mustika Resort and Spa* (tel: 0274-511 588) and the *Melia Purosani* (tel: 0274-589 521/3) a "cultural sanctuary for the senses". A little further out of town, the *Hyatt Regency* (tel: 0274-869 123) is a magnificent resort hotel with a 'Borobudur' theme and its own nine hole golf course.

For a funky night out, Yoga's best bet is the *Djogja Kafe* on Jl. Kyai Mojo (tel: 0274-560 124) known for its cocktails and live music. For more information about the Millennium eve celebrations at Borobudur temple contact: The Organizing Committee of BOROBODUR 2000 Millennium Eve (tel: 62-274 586715 fax: 62-274 562803 email: boro2000@indo.net.id or online registration: [www.borobudur2000.co.id](http://www.borobudur2000.co.id)).

Garuda flies to Yogyakarta five times a day.



Borobudur

the Dieng Plateau. At 2000m above sea level and set in the caldera of an enormous volcano, the atmosphere, with gaseous clouds of sulphuric vapour and steaming fumeroles, is a surreal combination of a moon-scape and a mountain retreat. Over the centuries the area has, not surprisingly, become associated with the supernatural and it's believed to be an abode of the gods. It is here that the oldest of the Javanese ruins can be found. Of the hundreds of stone temples that once graced this surreal landscape, now only a few remain.

With the dawning of the new millennium, the enduring splendour of the ancient world takes on a renewed significance. Millennium celebrations at the pyramids in Egypt have long since been booked by travellers eager to usher in the new age in an ancient setting. Borobudur, as one of Earth's greatest



Prambanan