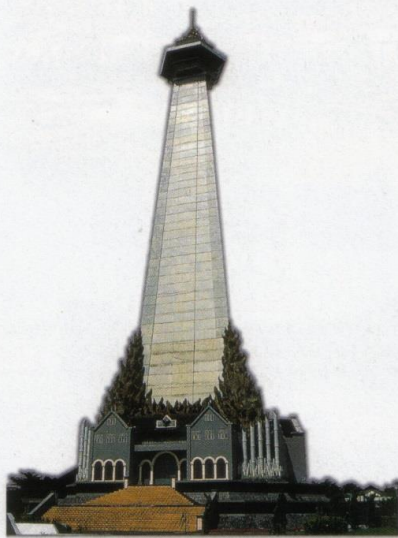
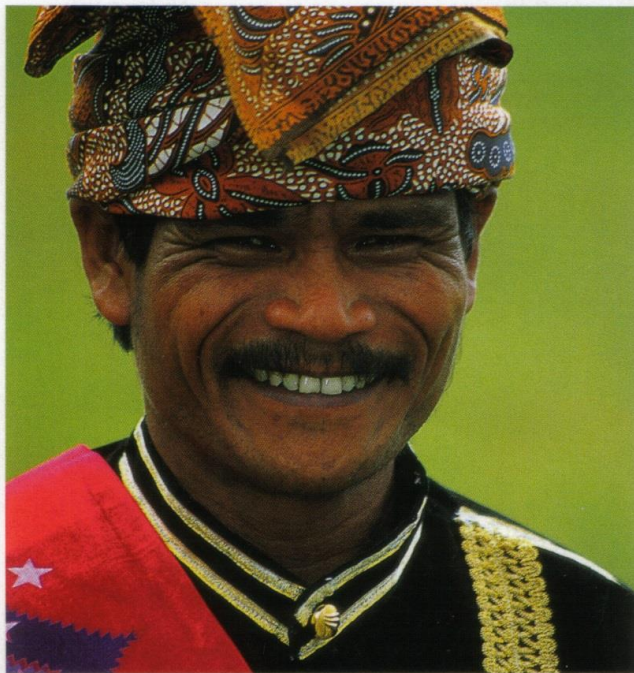


# Sulawesi



Sulawesi is one of the most unique islands in the world. Geographically it represents a collision from both sides of the Wallace line and therefore contains many species of plants and animals that can be found nowhere else on earth. South Sulawesi's diverse and rich cultural traditions are full of surprises. Its variety and contrasts make it one of the most fascinating destinations in Indonesia where, with each turn of the road, a new and equally beautiful scene comes within sight.



## South

South Sulawesi comprises the south-western leg of one of the world's most uniquely shaped islands. Its capital Makassar, has for centuries been the gateway to eastern Indonesia and the famous Spice Islands. Ujung Pandang Fort is a historic landmark of the kingdom of Gowa along with its warrior sultans who waged fierce battles to keep out foreign invaders in search of the spice trade.

The Makassarese and the Buginese are famous for being daring seafarers. The exploits of these seafarers and their tall-masted Phinisi schooners brought fear into the hearts of the spice traders. The schooners of the Bugis and Makassarese ply the seas, trading between the islands, the vessels are still built as they have been for centuries - without any nails and with wooden hulls that ride high over the waves. The people of South Sulawesi are sailors who are proud of their heritage. Their ancestors have left them one of the last remaining sailing fleets in the world and a historic lineage of kings from former kingdoms of Gowa and Bone. The southern part of this province holds the mysteries of this glorious past. Through Gowa passed the Arabs, the Portuguese and the Dutch, either in peaceful trade or in war. The sea is still the life of the people of the coastal regions who reap its rich harvest in sailing boats and provide some of the best seafood to be found in the country.





Other inhabitants of the province are the people of Tana Toraja who live in the mountainous north of the province of South Sulawesi. Situated around 300 km north of Makassar, Torajan culture is a complex blend of ancestor worship and animistic beliefs where rituals for the dead are colorful festivals to pave the way for the soul's entry into the hereafter. This unique culture, the scenic beauty, cool climate and gentle people are the main reasons that Toraja is gaining popularity as a tourist destination in spite of its distance from any major airport and the long journey that has to be made to see it.

The people of Tana Toraja are believed to have settled in the area several centuries ago. According to Torajan folklore, the ancestors are celestial beings who descended from heaven on mountain peaks and spread through the beautiful valleys and mountains. The people of this fascinating land still believe in measuring time by the moon and the market day occurs every six days. For many visitors, Toraja will linger in their mind as a land steeped in mystery, magic and ancient traditions. It is one of the world's rare cultural treasures.

Symbolised in mythology as the land of heavenly kings, its boat-shaped houses face north in honour of the deities. Their traditional house called *tongkonan* are related to the settlers who converted their boats into houses, and set the pattern of present-day community life.

There is a belief that early settlers came by boats and converted the boats into houses. The houses are beautifully decorated with carvings and geometric designs. The number of buffalo horns hanging in front of the house indicate the status and wealth of the owner. Though Christianity and Islam have found converts here and modern trends have made inroads, traditional rituals remain strong, especially that of funeral rites. The teachings of the ancestors, "Alluk Todolo", are still strictly adhered to by the people of Toraja in spite of foreign influences. Today half of the population of Tana Toraja have converted to Christianity, but many of the ancient traditions and social system still prevail to this day.

The most spectacular of Torajan rituals are the funerals. For Torajans, a funeral is the single most important ceremony in the life cycle. It is based on a strong belief that the soul of the deceased travels to the land of the south and in this land of eternity, he will need all the requisites of everyday life in the hereafter just like when he was alive in this world. Funeral ceremonies are festivals lasting as long as ten days with much feasting and entertainment. Animal sacrifices are made to ensure eternal life in the afterlife and to safeguard the descendants.

A funeral is a festive event for every member of the society. When the funeral is held by noble families then the ceremony will usually involve great fanfare. Buffaloes and pigs are sacrificed as an indication of status and as repayment for gifts received. This ceremony may take days, weeks or months after the actual death and the deceased is referred to as a sick man until he is buried.

Various types of graves are located in cliffside caves, mountain ledges or in special houses reserved for the dead. The graves in Tana Toraja are made in huge rocks because of their strength and relative safety from animals and thieves. There are many of these graves in the different mountains. And some are well guarded by life-size wooden statues of the persons buried.

### North

The northern peninsula of Sulawesi is the land of the Minahasa people. The provincial capital of Manado is home to several ethnic groups from the neighbouring areas of Tondano, Tonsea, Toosawang, Bantik, Bentenan and the Ponosakan, many of which originate from Cambodia and Vietnam.

Sprawling over low hills, Manado is one of Indonesia's rapidly expanding cities, yet it still retains a small town charm. Attractions include the Ba Hian Kong temple, one of the oldest temples of Eastern Indonesia, there's also a small museum displaying artifacts found in North Sulawesi and a panoply of stylised churches. For a culinary thrill,



sample some of the spicy fish dishes for which Manado is famous.

Perhaps the best known of all of North Sulawesi's attractions are the diving areas which lie off the coastal beaches northwest of Manado. These dive sites include the island of Manadotua, said to have been the site of the ancient city of Manado and the legendary island of Bunaken with its sea gardens and incredible reef formations. On the opposite coast near Bitung, are equally spectacular diving sites and snorkelling areas where large pelagics such as whale sharks have been seen.

Manado's road network makes travelling into the spectacular Minahasa countryside a pleasure. The roadsides winding through groves of nutmeg, coconut palms and clove plantations are often lined with flowers. Bamboo carts, heavily laden with copra or rattan are drawn along by Brahma cattle, and make way for the brightly coloured bendi, traditional horsecarts, minibuses, trucks and other public transportation which ply their way along the only major road in northern Sulawesi. As one climbs higher out of Manado, into the Minahasa region, panoramic views of the bay showing the off-shore islands of Manadotua, Bunaken and other smaller islands, make a landscape photographers dream location. Other historical sites include an ancient graveyard near Sawangan. Inside stand 5-foot rectangular stone sarcophagi with their four-sided pointed roofs bearing ornately carved reliefs or topped with stone statues. The graves are said to be between 400 and 600 years old.

For nature lovers and hikers, one of Indonesia's lesser known wildlife reserves lies only three hours drive to the northeast of Manado. The Tankok-Batuangus-Dua Saudara Reserve is home to the Macaque monkey, and Tarsius Spectrum, the world's smallest





primate. It is also home to the wild Sulawesi buffalo, the Anoa. Hornbills are many varieties of bird life as well as other small exotic animals inhabit the reserve, and warrant at least a short stay in the guest houses situated along the northeastern edge of the reserve.

### Gorontalo

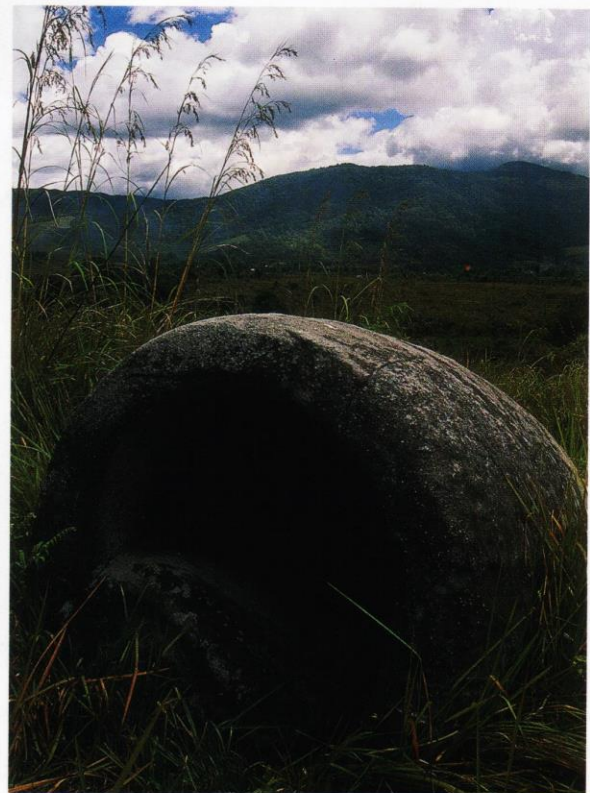
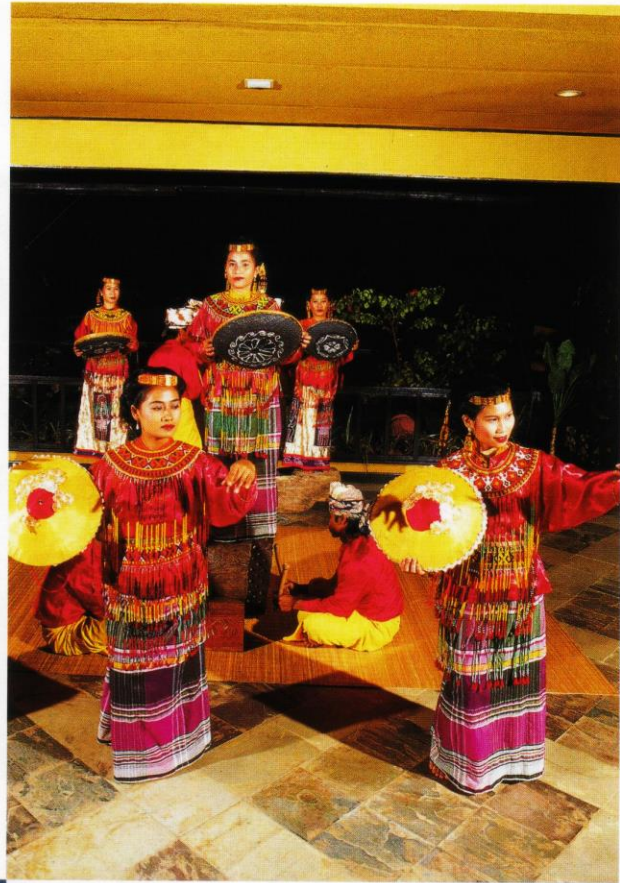
The region of Gorontalo located along the southern coastline of the northern tip of Sulawesi recently became Indonesia's 32nd province. Consisting of two regencies and a municipality, the newly declared province was previously contained within the province of North Sulawesi, and contributed roughly 50% of the income of that province. It covers some 12,864 square kilometres with a predominantly Muslim population.

Agriculture is the main industry in Gorontalo, although it also has some plantations and forestry. With spectacular natural heritage including mountains, forest, and kaleidoscopic underwater gardens at Boalemo, that some say eclipse even the legendary Bunaken dive sites. Unfortunately at present, Gorontalo's port facilities are limited. The airport can only service small commuter aircraft, and Merpati is the only airline with two regularly scheduled weekly flights. The seaport is also quite small.

### Central

Even though Central Sulawesi's tourism industry is still relatively in its infancy, it has great potential for growth. Apart from the colourful culture, the province also offers breathtaking scenery. This unknown province is also home to a myriad of endemic species such as the maleo bird, the anoa, the black monkey, and the babi rusa.

The province offers all kinds of scenery, archeological sites and ancient rituals that form the basis for a very successful tourism industry. Megaliths contained in the Napa and Besoa valleys are perhaps the province's most fascinating attractions, which are shrouded in mystery







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and some say date back thousands of years. Also not to be missed are the Lore Lindu National Park, Morowali, Lake Poso and Tomori Bay.

Central Sulawesi is the largest province on this oddly shaped island. But most of the area consists of steep mountains that stretch down to the coast. With a population of more than 1.6 million living mostly concentrated on the coastlines, the areas for productive and habitation purposes are limited.

It is surprising that a culture as rich and diverse as that of Central Sulawesi gets little attention from tourists foreign and domestic alike. The number of tourists visiting the area is still small compared to that of other tourist sites in the country or even compared to that of South Sulawesi. But the number has been growing steadily over the past few years. The major problem seems to be transportation, which is currently in the process of being upgraded.

One area that has gained a modest reputation with tourists is the Bada Valley, in the South Lore District. This site boasts giant megalithic statues, which have captivated visitors and baffled scientists for years. The quickest way to reach Bada is by plane from Tontona, on the shore of Lake Poso.

Central Sulawesi is famous for its rich ikat woven fabrics. The ikat technique involves tying the threads together in such a way that only certain sections absorb dye. The ikat fabric of Donggala plays an important role in Central Sulawesi society, particularly the ones used in Kaili and Pamona. As a result of a strong Islamic influence in the region, the patterns of the ikats are mostly derived from the world of flora and fauna. Nevertheless, the intricate designs are very beautiful.