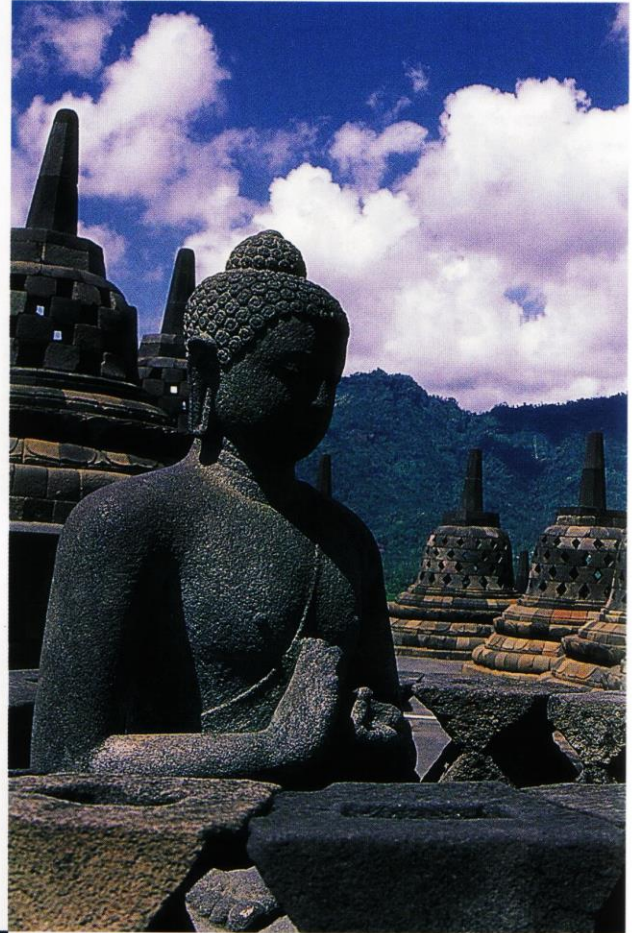


# *The Wonders of Indonesia*



Welcome to Indonesia. The more than 17,000 islands that make up the Indonesian archipelago are home to an ethnic tapestry made up of over 300 distinct groups, each with their own customs, beliefs, art forms and rituals. Indonesia also possesses amazingly diverse flora and fauna, and is, all in all, a true treasure house of wonders. Let's take a quick trip through this wonderful tourist destination that is wider than the distance between the West and East coasts of the United States.



Our journey begins at the most western part of the Indonesian archipelago, Sabang on Weh Island, just off the coast of Aceh on Sumatra. Near here is the Gunung Leuser National Park, the largest in Indonesia. Just outside Medan, the largest city on Sumatra, is Indonesia's largest crocodile farm. Then there's the magnificent Lake Toba, the largest land-locked body of water in Southeast Asia as well as one of the highest and the deepest in the world. And if you fancy surfing, you'll find some of the best surf off the Island of Nias. Visit the Dendam Taksuda Botanical Gardens in Bengkulu for a glimpse of the giant Rafflesia flower, named after Sir Stamford Raffles. And look over at Krakatau, the site of one of the largest-ever volcanic eruptions the world has ever seen, from the safety of Bandar Lampung.

Across the Sunda Straits and over to Indonesia's capital of Jakarta on Java, where the original inhabitants, the Betawi, are



still to be found. Originally called the "Paris of Java," Bandung in West Java is thought to have more art deco style architecture than any city in the world except Miami in the United States. The ancient Buddhist monument of Borobudur—near Yogyakarta, the cultural heart of Java—is one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The longest river on Java is the Bengawan Solo, also the name of perhaps the most beloved song in the entire archipelago. The extraordinary sea of sand at Mount Bromo in East Java has to be experienced in order to be believed.

Next to Java is Bali, perhaps the world's most celebrated tourist destination, a haven for holidaymakers of all nationalities, where there is literally something for everyone.

Lombok in Nusa Tenggara—or the Lesser Sundas as opposed to the Greater Sundas of Sumatra, Java and Borneo—is lorded over by the fabulous Mount Rinjani. Here is the starting point of the Wallace Line separating Bali and Borneo from Lombok and the rest of Eastern Indonesia. Also part of Nusa Tenggara is Komodo where the world's only prehistoric "dragons" roam. Sumba, another of the remote islands east of Bali, is the scene of the Pasola, a colourful and often violent mock battle held on horseback.

Kalimantan is the immense Indonesian part of the island of Borneo, the third largest island in the world. Banjarmasin, in the south, is referred to as the "Venice of Indonesia" with thousands of watercraft

plying through the city's rivers and canals.

The northernmost part of the somewhat unusually shaped island of Sulawesi—originally called the Celebes because early explorers thought the island was in fact a group of islands—has the largest concentration of coconut trees in Indonesia. And some of the best diving in Indonesia is to be had in the coral reefs of Bunaken Island, off North Sulawesi. Sulawesi is also home to the highland Torajans and the seafaring Bugis.

The fabled Spice Islands are referred to as the Moluccas and there are a total of 999 islands in today's province of Maluku. Much of the islands' history can still be seen today, in particular at Fort Victoria in Ambon City, on the island of Ambon.

Irian Jaya—the Indonesian part of the island of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world after Greenland—is Indonesia's last frontier and more than 100 distinct languages are spoken here. At 12,000 metres, Mount Jaya is the province's tallest peak. Irian Jaya is home to an incredibly diverse variety of flora and fauna, some unique to the province, such as the tree kangaroo and the bird of paradise. Our journey ends at Merauke, the Indonesian archipelago's easternmost town.

So come visit and enjoy the many wonders of Indonesia, but be warned, it'll take you a lifetime to visit them all.

