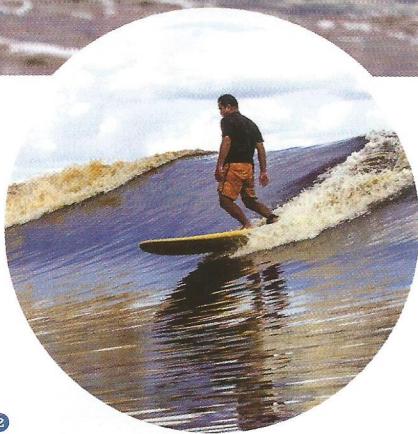




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## Seven Ghosts

Words by Matt George

1 hour 40 minutes from Jakarta  
(to Pekanbaru)

Sumatra's phenomenal tidal bore calls to the world of surfing. The tidal forces on Earth are generated by the intensity of the Moon's gravitational pull on the Earth as the Moon orbits around it.

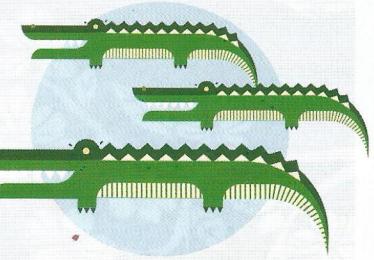
This same force is also what generates a phenomenon known as tidal bores: powerful waves that move with the power of the celestial heavens, up rivers in the opposite direction of the river's flow.

The most famous tidal bore in Indonesia is in Sumatra, named the **Seven Ghosts** by locals and located somewhere on a remote curve of the winding **Kampar River**, supposedly near **Pekanbaru**. Its exact location is a well-kept insider's secret among surfers and you'll have to gain some respect with the right crowd before you can expect to get there yourself. The bores are so called not only for the river spirits believed in by locals, but also because of the unique pattern that emerges when this tidal surge crosses their traditional fishing grounds in the sandy shallows of their village. Resembling a

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sound wave you can actually see, seven different pulsing bores, each of diminishing intensity, march up the river in perfect equilibrium, perfect symmetry, driven by gravitational powers.

Adventurous surfers, always on the lookout for new thrills, have actually sought out and ridden these waves, a rare freshwater experience for what is conventionally considered a strictly saltwater sport. Surfing these waves is quite literally a cosmic experience, and a harrowing one, even for skilled surfers. Be warned, the bores roar upriver with tree-snapping power.



➊ Ombak pasang Sumatera nan fenomenal memanggil dunia selancar. Kekuatan pasang surut di laut berasal dari intensitas gaya tarik bulan terhadap bumi saat bulan bergerak mengelilingi bumi.

Gaya ini pulalah yang memunculkan fenomena ombak pasang, yakni *tidal bore* (atau dikenal dengan nama Bono): ombak sungai berkekuatan sangat besar, yang bergerak berlawanan arah dengan arus sungai.

Ombak Bono yang paling terkenal di Indonesia ini bisa didapati di Pulau Sumatera, penduduk setempat menyebutnya Tujuh Hantu dan ombak ini bisa ditemukan di Sungai Kampar. Dinamakan demikian, tak hanya karena roh sungai yang diyakini ada oleh penduduk setempat, tetapi juga karena pola unik yang muncul ketika gelombang pasang ini menyapu area pemancingan tradisional setempat di perairan dangkal. Menyerupai gelombang suara namun nyata terlihat, tujuh ombak Bono ini, masing-masing dengan tenaganya yang berkekuatan besar, meng gulung Sungai Kampar dengan sapuan sempurna hasil gaya gravitasi.

Para peselancar berjiwa petualang yang mendambakan sensasi baru memang mencari dan berusaha mengendarai ombak Bono ini, pengalaman langka yang mengubah pandangan mengenai selancar sebagai olahraga yang selalu di laut. Berselancar dengan ombak sejenis ini boleh dibilang merupakan pengalaman kosmik serta mengejutkan, bahkan bagi seorang peselancar andal. Bersiaplah menghadapi gelombang pasang yang mengaum ke hulu sungai dengan kekuatan yang mampu menumbangkan sebatang pohon.



➌ In a dramatic clash of surfing cultures, Balinese champion Marlon Gerber drops into the Seven Ghosts tidal bore at speed, intent on sharing the wave with the colourful villagers of Sumatra's Kampar River.

➍ Arya, elder statesman of Javanese surfing, deals with the great celestial powers that create this wave known as 'Water from the Moon.'

➎ Visiting surfers are astonished when one of these fishing boats plummets down

the river, disappearing in the distance, riding the power of this celestial wave for miles on end.

➏ A discovery as astonishing as the Seven Ghosts tidal bore itself, is the toys that the children have adapted for themselves.

➐ 12-year-old Balinese surfer, Varun Tandjung, runs wild with anticipation on the massive sandbank that will, in moments, be covered by nine feet of surging tidal bore.

➋ Due to the remote location of this site, the small local village offers not much more than its unique dishes, wrested from the jungle and the river. Crocodile, which is common in this region and a constant menace, is considered a delicacy. The flying fox, one of the world's largest bats, is also cooked in many forms in a rich black sauce. Not only for the brave, these bats feed primarily on fruit, so the meat is quite tender and sweet. On some nights, if you're lucky, you might be invited to watch a wrestling match between the strongest of the young male villagers. The winner's prize is spiritual protection against the crocodiles. Other than that, bring a headlamp and plenty of reading to be enjoyed under your mosquito net. Surfing the Seven Ghosts is for the determined few only.

➌ Karena letaknya yang terpencil, tak banyak jenis kuliner yang tersedia, selain hidangan unik yang bersumber dari hutan dan sungai. Buaya, yang lazimnya menjadi ancaman di sini dianggap sebagai hidangan mewah. Kalong, juga dimasak dengan kuah kental berwarna hitam. Makanan utama spesies ini adalah buah sehingga dagingnya terbilang lembut dan manis. Pada malam-malam tertentu, jika beruntung, Anda bisa saja diundang menonton pertandingan gulat di antara para pemuda setempat. Hadiah bagi sang pemenang merupakan perlindungan spiritual dari ancaman buaya. Di samping itu, bawalah senter besar (*headlamp*) dan sejumlah buku yang bisa Anda baca di atas ranjang berkelambu. Berselancar di atas gelombang pasang Tujuh Hantu hanyalah untuk segelintir orang yang bermental baja.