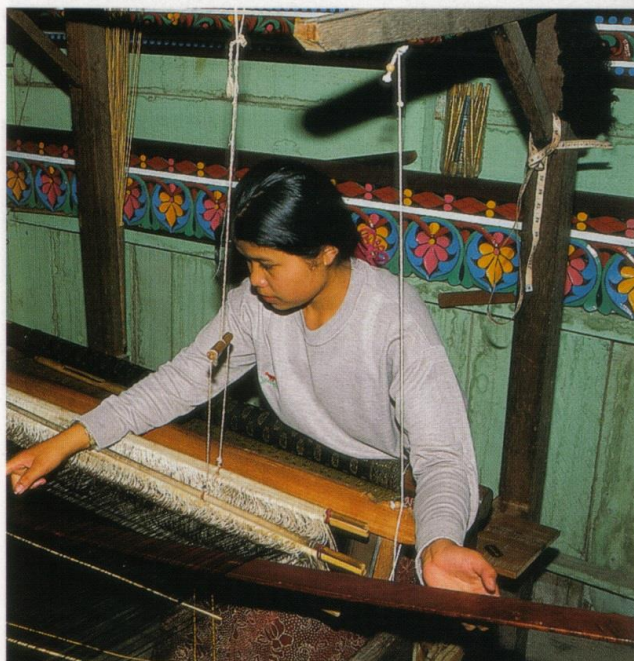


The Island of Sumatra



While the island of Sumatra is not perhaps quite as famous as its neighbour Java—which is one quarter the size of Sumatra and has four times its population—it is nevertheless an amazingly exciting and interesting place to visit.

Roughly the same size as California in the USA and extending more than 1,600 kilometres, this amazing island accounts for more than 25 percent of the entire landmass of Indonesia. Sumatra has a veritable wealth of natural resources and wildlife—including the endangered Sumatran tiger and Sumatran rhino—and is home to some of Indonesia's most fascinating and extraordinary cultures.

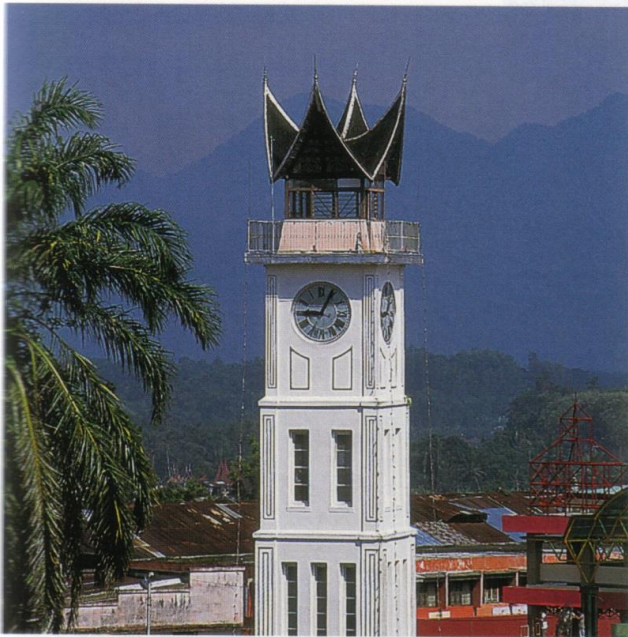


The history of the special territory of Aceh, at the northernmost tip of Sumatra, is one of the most fascinating in Indonesia, with chronicles dating back to the sixth century. More than 500 years later, in 1292, Marco Polo even paid a visit to Aceh, which was then an Islamic kingdom named Perlak. Sights to see in Bandar Aceh include the Masjid Raya—constructed out of wood without a single nail—and the Rumoh Aceh Awe Gentah Museum.

Today, one of Aceh's most popular tourist attractions is the Gunung Leuser National Park, the largest in Indonesia, which is one of the only two places in the archipelago—Kalimantan is the other—where the orang-utan still exists in the wild. Indonesia's Orang-utan Rehabilitation Centre is based in the park, which also has its own extensive facilities for studying insects, birds and mammals.

Medan, the capital city of the province of North Sumatra, is the largest city on Sumatra and, with over two million inhabitants—an amazing historical amalgam of Arab, Batak, Chinese, Indian, Javanese and Malay cultures—also the fourth largest municipality in all of Indonesia. Well worth a visit are the majestic Masjid Raya, the imposing sultan's palace Istana Maimum, and Vihara Gunung Timur, Indonesia's largest Chinese temple.

For many people, Medan is the starting point for journeying throughout the island Sumatra and is well served by airlines, trains and



buses.

Travellers often journey the 70 kilometres from Medan to visit the hill resort and market town of Berastagi—with a pleasant, cool climate, being 1,300 metres above sea level—in the Karo Highlands, overlooked by the Gunung Sinabung and Gunung Sibayak volcanoes.

Next is the magnificent Lake Toba, referred to by many as one of the seven wonders of Indonesia, 160 kilometres south of Medan and an essential stop on any travellers' itinerary. Apparently created during a volcanic eruption in prehistoric times, the 1,707 square kilometre Lake Toba is the largest land-locked body of water in Southeast Asia and at 900 metres one of the highest as well as the deepest (450 metres) in the world. In the middle of this enormous legendary lake is the spellbinding island of Samosir, regarded by many as the original home of the indigenous Bataks, and a wonderful place to visit.

About 100 kilometres off the West coast of Sumatra is the Megalithic age island of Nias, home to one of Southeast Asia's most unique cultures as well as the intriguing sport of jumping over 1.5 metre high stone columns. Today, Lagundri Beach on Nias is renowned as one of the world's best surfing destinations. Southeast of Nias are the intriguing Mentawai islands, that date back to the Pleistocene age when the islands—in fact submerged mountain



peaks—were separated from Sumatra.

West Sumatra is the home of the matrilineal Minangkabau who still today live in the striking Minang traditional building with their peaked roofs that resemble the horns of a water buffalo.

Padang, the centre of Minangkabau society, is not only the provincial capital of West Sumatra but also the originator of Indonesia's first "fast-food" Nasi Padang, now available throughout the archipelago. The museum of Padang has an interesting display of historical Minangkabau artifacts and traditional items.

The highland city of Bukittinggi—home to perhaps the friendliest people you'll ever meet—in West Sumatra is another Minangkabau centre where a full range of local handicrafts is available, in particular the weavings and filigree jewellery of Kota Gadang, as well as antiques and souvenirs. At 920 metres above sea level, Bukittinggi's climate is much cooler than that of Padang. Well worth a visit is the Rumah Adat Baandjuang Museum—the highest point of the town—as well as the Dutch-built Fort de Kock, dating back to 1825.

To the south of Padang is the Kerinci Seblat National Park—an amazing 1.5 million hectares in size—where elephants, tigers and rhinos roam in a protected environment. The second largest national park in Indonesia, Kerinci Seblat is in the heart of the Bukit Barisan mountain range and abuts nine regencies in four provinces, namely, Jambi, Bengkulu, South Sumatra and West Sumatra. The centerpiece of the park is the active volcano, Kerinci Mountain, the second highest peak in Indonesia.

The Riau archipelago consists of around 1,000 islands, including the beach resort and duty free port of Batam—only 60 minutes by ferry from Singapore—and the tourist haven of Bintan. Riau has two capitals, Tanjung Pinang on Bintan as well



the administrative centre, Pekanbaru.

Sumatra's second largest city is Palembang, which was the major trade centre of Indonesia up until the 13th century. Its very varied history—from being a trade emporium to a spiritual centre for Mahayana monks—is reflected in the centuries-old collection of statues, sculpture and weaponry in the Rumah Bari Museum.

Sir Stamford Raffles—the founder of Singapore—was the governor of Bengkulu from 1818 to 1823 and the giant Rafflesia flower was named in his honour. This extraordinary botanical bloom can be seen in Bengkulu at the Dendam Taksuda Botanical Gardens. Also worth a visit is the splendid Fort Marlborough, built in 1762.

Lampung, Sumatra's southernmost province, overlooks the Sunda Straits, and what remains of Krakatau—site of one of the world's largest-ever volcanic eruptions—is about 30 kilometres off the southern shore. The provincial capital is Bandar Lampung, Sumatra's ferry link to the neighbouring island of Java.



Hotel Mutiara Merdeka

Jl. Yos Sudarso 12 A P.O. Box : 1129
Phone : (0761) 31272, 32526
 Fax: (0761) 32959, E-mail: merdeka@indo.net.id
PEKANBARU - RIAU

Bridge to Successful Business



Exclusive Touch for Your Comfortable Stay 140 Rooms, Swimming Pool, Kuantan Coffee Shop, Bandarioh Bar with Live Music and Karaoke

Convention Facilities :

Sultan Ballroom (1000 pax), Hang Tuah Room (150 pax), Siak Room (100 pax), Kampar Room (75 pax), Indragiri Room (30 pax), Senapelan Room (30 pax), Bintan Room - VIP (10 pax).

All rooms have centralized air-conditioner, wall-to-wall carpet, private bathroom with shower, bath tub, cold and hot water, AM/FM stereo radio and musics, 8-channel color TV and Video program, telephone and mini - bar / refrigerator

Other Facilities :

Drugstore, Airline Office, Business Centre, IDD Telephone and Fax Service, Safe Deposit Box, Laundry, Taxi service, fitness centre.