

Republic of Indonesia



Location: Asia

Capital City: Jakarta

Main Cities: Surabaya, Bandung, Medan

Population: 247,000,000

Government: Constitutional and presidential system

Area: 1,922,570 km²

Currency: Indonesian Rupiah (IDR)

Languages: Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, Dutch, English

Religions: Islam (86%), Protestant Christianity (8%), Roman Catholic (3%), Hindu (2%), Buddhist (1%), Others (1%)

GDP Per Capita: USD 3,100

Life Expectancy: 68

Literacy level: 90%

Calling code: +62

Drive on the left

Made up of a block of main land and many islands scattered beautifully in the blue, tropical seas, there is everything to love about Indonesia for travelers from any part of the world. An amazing legacy of tradition, culture, custom and people invites exploration and so do the towering mountain peaks and volcanoes. There is a little of everything. For example, the towering volcanoes, some dormant and others active, the lush green country sides, the blue waters, the heavy rain forest cover and the pristine sandy beaches make this a complete travel destination on its own.

The location of this country makes it warm throughout the year, thus anytime is good for visiting Indonesia. It sits across the equator, and at the same time, it is somewhere between the Indian and Pacific oceans. Going by its marketing slogan “Wonderful Indonesia” When travelers get there, they agree that indeed, this country is wonderful in the true definition of that word. As the fourth most populous country in the world, with more than 246 million people, this population is made up of more than 80% Muslims, the others Christians, Buddhists and others. This mix-pot of cultures and religions makes it even more interesting, and one of the places that you must visit in your lifetime.

Best time to go

Before traveling to Indonesia, it is important to first understand the climate. Indonesia has two seasons that are attributed to the tropical climate. The perfect time to visit Indonesia is during the dry season that starts in April and stretches to October. If you miss this, fret not because the monsoon season that begins from November through to March is also an ideal time to visit

Indonesia. If you intend to have a quiet time as you tour the country, then the Monsoon season will be the ideal time for you because it is considered the low peak season. This means that it is quieter than the dry season, which is considered peak season.

General Information

Indonesia is without doubt a beautiful country and naturally, it attracts thousands of tourists regularly. This has made the government to be very proactive in boosting the country's image online and offline internationally by using the slogan "Wonderful Indonesia". This has seen the number of tourists from all parts of the world grow. Recently, Indonesia's government introduced a tourism plan that is share-based in order to increase the traffic and flow of both domestic and foreign tourists.

Tourists from EU nations automatically enjoy a subsidized rate and at times free medical treatment according to the Reciprocal Medical Treatment Treaty between Indonesia and the EU. Tourists are advised to get 6-month vaccinations prior to their visit. Indonesian's tourism offices are located on Bali Island. The Indonesia time Zone is known as WITA and is normally 8 hours ahead of the Greenwich Mean Time.

Passport and visa

Indonesia has strict laws as far as entry regulations are concerned. These regulations are so strict such that violation leads to jail term and hefty fines. Visitors and tourists are required to apply for a visa either prior to or immediately upon arrival at the international airports. Normally, visitors are issued with a non-extendable visa for not less than three to thirty days depending on the agreement. Visa procession normally charges a fee not exceeding \$25.00 depending on the number of days. Once the visa expires, visitors are required to exit the country for at least a fortnight. Travelers intending to apply for a visa for business purposes are required to fetch a recommendation from their employer or sponsor. The same requirements apply for visitors intending to stay more than 30 days. Both the single entry and the multiple entry visas are processed within three business days.

When you are ready to visit this country, find out whether you are required to have a visa. You will need to acquire the visa beforehand from the Indonesian missions abroad. It is also possible to acquire the visa at the port of entry, although that one may be a bit costlier.

Money

The official currency is Indonesian Rupee, which is abbreviated as IDR. This currency is often traded against the USD. Once you land at the international airport, you will notice a number of exchange bureaus. Most tourist spots in Indonesia are also points for exchanging foreign currency, bank notes and traveler's check. Apart from the IDR, other acceptable means of payment include credit cards with the MasterCard or Visa logo. For convenience purposes, it is important to have loose and ready IDR with you especially when accessing the interior parts of Indonesia.

Post and telecommunications

There is no better way than a good postcard to show the people you love that you have been to Indonesia. You can easily send this from any of the post offices scattered in Bali, Jakarta and many other towns in the country. Calling abroad is easy but expensive. Internet access is available in all major tourist places and you will find WiFi in most cafes.

Transportation

Thankfully, most parts of Indonesia can be accessed on foot unlike in many countries. Alternatively, you could opt for the public means of transport such as taxis, trains and buses. Tourists who opt to drive are required to have their International Driver's License but most importantly, it is important to always keep left. This can be a tad tricky for those used to driving on the right lane. The roads in Indonesia are very narrow and motorists should always be careful not to hit pedestrians and motorcyclists who seem to jam the already congested roads. Driving in Indonesia calls for more patience and grace because Indonesian motorists are notorious for overlapping and reckless driving. The road networks are not well developed either and therefore, caution is advised especially if you do not have a guide who knows the roads well.

From one Island to another, you can go by ship. Pelnis shipping lines has comfortable air-conditioned ships. They will stop for about 4 hours in every port of call, therefore giving you enough time to go on land, eat, look around and shoot pictures.

If you are getting around by car, please hire a driver because this is not the place to learn where to drive. The roads are just crazy, the drivers crazier with everyone claiming ownership of the road.

Health and Safety

Climate

The temperature in Indonesia ranges between 25C - 30C annually. Winter and summer temperatures range differently from one Island to another. Generally, the climate in Indonesia is tropical and this means that the weather can be classified as hot to humid. The wet season starts in November and stretches through to March. It is important to note that even during the dry season, it still rains occasionally.

Health and wellbeing

The local Indonesian health care system is not up to western standards. While a short term stay in an Indonesian hospital or medical center for simple health problems is probably not markedly different to a western facility, serious and critical medical emergencies will stretch the system to the limit. However, be aware that it can be expensive. Each traveller is responsible for his or her own health. First and foremost, make sure that you have travel insurance for your trip.

Vaccinations

Before travelling to Indonesia, please ensure you have adequate protection against disease. Contact your doctor for the latest medical advice on the vaccinations you need, no less than two months before your departure.

Travel insurance (compulsory)

We do everything possible to ensure a safe and enjoyable trip. However, travel inevitably involves some risk and this should be recognised by holidaymakers. Travel insurance is a cost effective way of protecting yourself and your equipment should any problems occur such as cancelled trips, delays, medical emergencies, baggage loss or damage. It also gives you peace of mind. Please make sure your travel insurance covers all activities planned on your trip.

Culture & Customs

Etiquette and cultural differences

With more than 300 autonomous ethnic groups making up the population of this great country, the cultures have evolved into a big Indonesian identity but at the same time, there is some individuality in tradition and customs. There is a touch of European, with Indonesia having been a colony of the Dutch, a touch of Japanese, Chinese, Arab and many others in different aspects. Most of these can be seen in the architecture. In most cases, cuisine consists of rice, fish, chicken and others. Sports will mostly be male orientated, but that does not mean that you will not catch the world cup there if you visit in the summer of 2014.

Indonesians are very keen on individual respect and as such, they meet you with greetings and respectful salutations. The majority of the people here are Muslim and therefore you had better choose your attire carefully so that your dressing isn't deemed inappropriate. Be disciplined and learn a few words of Bahasa Indonesia so that you can answer salutations.

Food and drink

The staple food here is rice, which is normally accompanied by other accompaniments such as vegetables, beans and meats. Speaking of meats, it is important to note that since Indonesia is an Islamic nation, pork is a no-no. Spices are also very common and so is coconut milk. When it comes to drinks, Indonesians are not very keen on alcoholic drinks because of their religious views. However, drinks such as fresh juices and camel milk are very common among the locals.

Water

It is not advisable to drink tap water in Indonesia. Bottled water is recommended but do check the expiry date before opening. Ice is widely used and is produced with treated water.

Public holidays

New Year's day- 1 January

Birthday of Prophet Muhammad- 14 of January

Good Friday - 18 April

Labor Day - 1 May

Buddha's Birthday - 15 May

Eid-al-Fitr - varies
Independence Day - 17 August
Islamic New Year - 25 October
Christmas Day - 25 December

Helpful tips

Donations and gift giving

Although there is poverty in certain areas of Indonesia, please read the following points about donations and gift giving.

Do not give money to people begging, especially children. This reinforces the belief that begging is an acceptable way to make a living. If children make money from begging, their parents are less likely to send them to school. Children working on the streets are also vulnerable to abuse. Giving money and goods to beggars can accentuate an unequal relationship between locals and visitors, with tourists being seen as purely money givers.

Do not give sweets to children in villages that we visit.

Do not feel that you necessarily have to give material things. Sometimes, giving your friendship, time and interest to locals can be the best gift of all.

Pre-departure checklist

Travel insurance
Passport with at least six months validity from date of entry
Photocopy of passport
Visa or visa on arrival
Vaccinations
ATM cards/travellers cheques
All relevant tickets
Reconfirmed flights
Lightweight clothing
Long-sleeved shirts and trousers (recommended for evenings)
Electrical adaptor: 220V, 50Hz; 2 pin plugs
A small bag/backpack for day and overnight trips
Appropriate shoes for trekking, cycling and walking
Insect repellent
Sunscreen
Medication/first aid kit

Please note: Domestic airlines impose restrictions on baggage, so travel lightly where possible. Also be aware that train and boat cabins have limited space.