

INDONESIA**Sumatra, Java & Bali****14 days**

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Day 1 Arrive in Medan

Today we arrive in Medan, the main city in northern Sumatra.

North Sumatra is a land of great mountains, waterfalls, lakes, a mixture of cultural groups, plantations of rubber, tobacco, palm oil, and coffee.

Overnight in Medan.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Medan - Samosir Island, Lake Toba

After breakfast we depart for a brief city tour of Medan. We stop to see the Maimoon Palace, recently renovated from its original founding in 1888 by the Sultan of Deli. We will also stop to visit the Grand Mosque, built in the Moroccan style. Before leaving Medan, we'll also visit Tjong a Fie Mansion. Often referred to as a "historical jewel," the 35-room, 2-storey mansion was built in 1895 by the Hakka merchant who came to own much of the land in Medan through his plantations while contributing to the building of the island's railway.

Afterwards we travel southwards by road from Medan to Lake Toba, where we take a ferry across the lake to Samosir Island. At 630 sq km, Samosir is notable as being the largest island within an island, and the fifth largest lake island in the world. This is a full day of travel with stops for rest and points of interest.

Overnight on Samosir Island or Parapat.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 3 Samosir Island, Lake Toba

The island is the centre of Batak culture, and has several villages of historical interest. Here, traditional houses are made of wood with high roofs; the main posts, walls, and gable ends carry carved decorations of buffalo horns.

We will learn about the animist culture of the Batak people with visits to the cultural centre and some unusual houses, with roofs shaped like boats. The Batak were formerly head-hunters and cannibals, and due to their isolation in the high mountains, they have retained many of the ancient proto-Malay cultural traditions. According to tradition, all Bataks are descendants of Si Raja Batak, a hero-ancestor of super-natural parentage born on a holy mountain adjacent to Lake Toba. Today they maintain a tight-knit and distinctive culture.

Our stops today include a visit to the King Sidabutar Tomb in Tomok, a stop at the 300-year old stone chairs, site of village discussions and decisions, and we explore the museum at Simanindo, converted from a traditional house lived in by Rajah Simalungun, a Batak king. We will enjoy the view from one of the highest points on the island where we can begin to appreciate the massive volcanic explosion that formed both Samosir Island and Lake Toba.

We continue back to our hotel on Samosir Island for the night. We usually have some free time in the afternoon to enjoy our resort and/or swim in the lake.

Overnight on Samosir Island or Parapat.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Samosir Island - Berastagi

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This morning we take a long, leisurely drive toward Berastagi, starting across the narrow land bridge that connects the "island" to the mainland. This region of North Sumatra is volcanic in nature and many sulfurous hot springs are to be found. At the northern end of Lake Toba we stop to see the impressive 120 m (394 ft) high Si Piso-Piso Waterfalls. From the viewpoint at the top of the falls there is a 360-degree panoramic view over Lake Toba and the surrounding countryside.

The area to the north of Lake Toba is known as Karoland, or the Karo Highlands, as it is where the Karo Batak tribal people live. The five Karo Batak clans and 83 subclans inhabit a high, lush plateau of mountain slopes and rich volcanic valleys in the area between Lake Toba and Medan. There are many volcanoes in the area, some of them still steaming. Gunung Sibayak at 2070 m (6,790 ft) and Gunung Sinabung at 2417 m (7,930 ft) are the highest and can be seen from many locations as we explore the area. We will have the opportunity to stop in Dokan, a Karo Batak village.

Overnight in Berastagi.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 5 Berastagi - Medan (Sumatra) - Yogyakarta (Java)

This morning we drive from Berastagi to Medan (2-3 hours with stops) and fly to Yogyakarta, Java's cultural heart. Located at the foot of the volcano Merapi, the fertile plain of Yogyakarta was, in the 16th and 17th century, the seat of the mighty Javanese empire of Mataram.

NOTE: Our flight from Medan to Yogyakarta will likely transit through Jakarta.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Yogyakarta - Prambanan - Yogyakarta: City Tour

Today we visit the most extensive Hindu temple site in Indonesia -- Prambanan.

Prambanan is the largest Hindu temple compound in Indonesia, located approximately 18 km east of Yogyakarta. The temple is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is one of the largest Hindu temples in Southeast Asia. It is characterised by its tall and pointed architecture, typical of Hindu temple architecture, and by the 47m (154 ft) high central building inside a large complex of individual temples. It was built around AD 850 by either Rakai Pikatan, king of the second Mataram dynasty, or Balitung Maha Sambu, during the Sanjaya Dynasty. Not long after its construction, the temple was abandoned and began to deteriorate.

After our comprehensive guided tour, we return to Yogyakarta. This afternoon's sightseeing includes the Sultan's palace, the Kraton, a vast complex of courtyards, halls and pavilions in Javanese traditional style. The most important structure is the Golden Pavillion; ornately carved, and heavily gilded, its graceful roof is supported by finely carved wooden beams. Here the Sultan used to receive royal guests and hold balls and banquets.

We also visit the nearby Taman Sari (Water Castle), the ruins, pools, arches and underground passages of the former pleasure gardens. It was built in 1758 by Sultan Hamengkubuwono I as a rest house and pleasure park for the Royal Family.

At some point during our stay in Yogyakarta we hope to attend a performance of the Ramayana ballet, a dance based on ancient Hindu folklore.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner

Day 7 Yogyakarta - Borobudur - Yogyakarta

From Yogyakarta we drive north to the largest stupa-style Buddhist monument in the world -- Borobudur. This incredible monument, built

and decorated before AD 800, should be on anybody's list of the ten greatest art-complexes in the world for its size, quality, sophistication and excellent state of preservation.

Borobudur was built in three tiers: a pyramidal base with five concentric square terraces, the trunk of a cone with three circular platforms and, at the top, a monumental stupa. The walls and balustrades are decorated with fine low reliefs, covering a total surface area of 2500 sq m. Around the circular platforms are 72 openwork stupas, each containing a statue of the Buddha. The monument was restored with UNESCO's help in the 1970s.

After a guided site tour, we return to Yogyakarta. Your afternoon is free. Wandering in the narrow streets of the markets you will see many beautiful crafts for sale, including the famous wayang wooden and leather puppets, but especially the batik. Yogyakarta is famous for its batik.

Overnight in Yogyakarta.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Yogyakarta (Java) - Denpasar (Bali) - Candidasa

Today we fly from Yogyakarta to Denpasar (possibly via another connecting point) on the island of Bali and transfer to our hotel at Candidasa.

Bali is home to the vast majority of Indonesia's small Hindu minority. 93.18% of Bali's population adheres to Balinese Hinduism, while most of the remainder follow Islam. It is also the largest tourist destination in the country and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including dance, sculpture, painting, leather, metalworking and music.

On arrival at Denpasar airport, we travel by road through verdant Balinese countryside to the east coast town of Candidasa, a tranquil coastal area nestled between the Lombok Strait to the east and mountains to the west. Candidasa is within close proximity to many historical landmarks of Bali. En route we'll make a stop in Tenganan, a symmetrically laid out Bali Aga village with walled homes and unique crafts. Bali Aga was the original inhabitant of Bali, before the arrival of Hindu Javanese. Tenganan retains its ancient pre-Hindu customs through a strong code of non-fraternization with outsiders, further enforced by the protection of its surrounding walls.

After our sightseeing we'll transfer to our hotel in Candidasa.

Overnight in Candidasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 9 Candidasa: Eastern Bali Touring

Our day begins at the enchanting Taman Ujung, a former royal retreat nestled amidst lush tropical gardens. This exquisite Water Palace, with its intricate Balinese architecture and serene ponds, offers a glimpse into the opulent lifestyle of Bali's royalty. As we wander through the sprawling complex, we'll admire the stunning traditional carvings, ornate pavilions, and breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape.

Next, we'll journey to the historic Taman Tirta Gangga, a water palace that once served as a sacred bathing site for the Balinese royalty. The complex boasts a series of cascading pools, ornamental ponds, and stunning statues, creating a tranquil and picturesque setting.

For the adventurous, an optional snorkeling excursion to the US Liberty Wreck awaits. This iconic shipwreck, resting just off the coast, has transformed into an artificial reef teeming with marine life. As we descend into the underwater world, we'll encounter a diverse array of colourful fish, corals, and other fascinating creatures.

To conclude our day, we'll unwind on the pristine sands of Virgin Beach. This idyllic beach offers crystal-clear waters, gentle waves, and a serene atmosphere, perfect for sunbathing, swimming, or simply relaxing.

As the sun begins to set, we'll return to our hotel in Candidasa.

Overnight in Candidasa.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Besakih - Penglipuran - Kanto Lampo - Transfer To Ubud

Our first stop today is Bali's most important temple, Besakih, and sacred Mount Agung. This volcano is to the Balinese what Mount Olympus was to the ancient Greeks. Steps over 1,000 years old ascend through split gates to the main courtyard where there are many shrines. This temple was built on a site where animist rites, ceremonies and feasts once took place. The structure incorporates the holy triad of temples venerating the Hindu trinity. Every district of the island maintains its own temple within the complex.

We proceed to Penglipuran village, well-known for its tidy row of traditional Balinese entrance gates and its unique architectural traditions. The village has also succeeded in preserving its 75-hectare bamboo forest located in the northern part of the village.

Our last stop of the day will be Kanto Lampo Waterfall, a hidden gem in Bali, offering a peaceful escape surrounded by lush greenery. Its double-tiered cascades and crystal-clear pool provide a refreshing swimming spot. Hiking trails lead to the waterfall, offering opportunities for exploration and photography.

We continue to Ubud, a remarkable town located in the middle of the island. For more than a century, it has been the island's preeminent centre for fine arts, dance and music. While it once was a haven for scruffy backpackers, cosmic seekers, artists and bohemians, Ubud is now a hot spot for literati, glitterati, art collectors and connoisseurs.

Overnight in Ubud.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 11 Cooking Class & Ubud Surrounding Tour

Get hands-on and find out the culinary secrets of authentic Balinese cooking. Starting at 7 am, we'll head to Ubud's Traditional Market and barter with the locals to buy our ingredients to make our meal. We proceed to a fully-equipped community kitchen and utilize traditional ingredients and preparation methods to make an authentic local dish under step by-step instruction from a Balinese chef. Afterwards, sit down with your fellow chefs and enjoy your meal!

We then proceed to Candi Gunung Kawi Tampaksiring. Located on the cliffs of the Pakerisan River, this temple complex consists of several shrines carved directly into the rock face. A visit here involves descending hundreds of steps to reach the temple complex. Admire the ancient architectural beauty and enjoy the peaceful atmosphere amidst the lush surroundings.

We then visit the holy spring of Tirta Empul, which is surrounded by a large shrine to honour the God Indra. There are bathing pools which are believed to have strong curative powers at this site. On the hill behind this temple is a presidential guest house built by the late President Sukarno. We can also join the purification ritual at additional cost.

In the end of the day, we will visit a coffee plantation. Our guide will lead us through the plantation, explaining how coffee is grown and processed. Relax amidst the lush greenery and learn about the unique process of making Luwak coffee, from planting to roasting.

Overnight in Ubud.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Barong Dance & Ubud Tour

Our day begins with an enchanting performance of the traditional Barong dance. This mesmerizing spectacle pits good against evil, with the mythical Barong representing the forces of righteousness and the demonic Rangda embodying darkness.

We then venture into the mystical Ubud Monkey Forest. Home to hundreds of playful macaques, this sacred sanctuary offers a unique opportunity to observe these intelligent creatures in their natural habitat. As we wander through the lush forest, we'll encounter ancient

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temples and serene ponds, creating a truly magical experience.

Afterward, we'll immerse ourselves in the vibrant atmosphere of Ubud Market. Here, we can haggle with local vendors for colorful textiles, intricate carvings, and delicious local delicacies.

To delve deeper into Ubud's royal history, we'll visit Puri Saren Agung, the former palace of the Ubud royal family. This magnificent complex showcases traditional Balinese architecture and offers a glimpse into the opulent lifestyle of the island's nobility.

The remainder of the day is free to explore Ubud at your own pace. You might choose to wander through the charming art galleries, indulge in a rejuvenating spa treatment, or simply relax by the pool.

Overnight in Ubud.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Turtle Center - Padang Padang Beach - Uluwatu Temple - Transfer To South Bali

Our day begins with a visit to the Turtle Conservation and Education Centre (TCEC) on Serangan Island. Here, we'll learn about the critical importance of turtle conservation and witness firsthand the efforts being made to protect these endangered creatures. We can also contribute to this noble cause by making a donation to support the center's work.

Next, we'll head to the stunning Padang-Padang Beach. This secluded paradise, nestled between dramatic cliffs, offers crystal-clear waters, perfect waves, and a serene atmosphere.

Our cultural exploration continues at the majestic Uluwatu Temple. Perched on a clifftop, this ancient Hindu temple offers breathtaking panoramic views of the Indian Ocean. As we wander through the temple complex, we'll witness traditional Balinese dance performances and soak in the spiritual ambiance.

To conclude our day, we'll indulge in a delicious seafood barbecue dinner at a local restaurant in Jimbaran. As we savor the fresh seafood and stunning sunset views, we'll reflect on the day's experiences and look forward to the next adventure.

Transfer to our hotel in South Bali for dinner and overnight.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 14 Departure from Denpasar

Departure from Denpasar.

Official check-out at 12h00; you can keep the luggage at the hotel's luggage store until the pick-up time.

Please note that this airport transfer is approximate 1 hour 20 min and is included only if you have booked air with Adventures Abroad (your Tour Leader can make arrangements for those who do not have included transfers).

BON VOYAGE!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast