

KOMODO AND FLORES



A TRAVELFISH.ORG TRAVEL GUIDE

FLORES AND KOMODO: A PRIMER



ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide to the Indonesian region of Flores and Komodo was researched on the ground by Travelfish.org researchers in two trips through April 2013. During those trips we visited all the destinations covered in this guide.

A further trip, planned for May 2013, will cover the additional destinations of Riung, Maumere, Larantuka and Solor Island after which this guide will be updated.

All destinations in this guide were visited, in person, by a Travelfish.org researcher and all research was undertaken independently. Travelfish.org always pays its way. No exceptions.

ABOUT TRAVELFISH.ORG

Travelfish.org is an independent travel planning website that covers a substantial part of Southeast Asia. Launched in 2004, the website now includes coverage for Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

COPYRIGHT

All text © Travelfish Pty Ltd. Photos © photographers.

Maps © OpenStreetMap contributors. Licensed under the Open Data Commons Open database License. Mapbox <http://mapbox.com/about/maps/>

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission from the publisher with the exception of brief excerpts for review purposes.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Stuart McDonald

Stuart McDonald is a co-founder of Travelfish.org. He previously lived in Thailand and Cambodia for around eight years between them, where he worked as an underpaid, under-skilled language teacher, an embassy staffer, a newspaper website developer and various other stuff. Before all those non-travel jobs he authored two travel guides, one to Vietnam and one to Thailand. He still spends a lot of time travelling and can sleep anywhere, anytime -- even on the old road to Bokor. His favourite read is *The Art of Travel* by Alain de Botton. He lives in Bali, Indonesia.

<http://www.travelfish.org/>

Faine Greenwood

Faine Greenwood is a journalist and photographer who's been based out of Cambodia since 2010, writing about politics, human rights, technology and the tireless pursuit of excellent food. A nature and science aficionado, she's shifting gears to Indonesia this year to visit the more remote parts of this fascinating archipelago. She's learning to scuba-dive and is enjoying discovering the culinary delights of Indonesia, especially Bali's *babi guling* (roasted suckling pig). When not working, you can find her on social media pretty much all the time.

<http://fainegreenwood.com/>



FLORES

Flores takes its name from the Portuguese for "flowers" and while it isn't particularly known for its flora it is nevertheless a beautiful place and one that should absolutely be on the itinerary of any traveller to the country who has the time to allow for it.

Dotted by volcanoes that are often surrounded by rice terraced valleys and ringed by glorious beaches, the island of Flores is a fabulous destination for independent travellers happy to endure a little discomfort. Despite this, outside of July and August, Flores is devoid of big numbers of tourists and so you can have large portions of it as a traveller mostly to yourself.

The western reach of the island is the heart of the tourist scene as it is here, from the port town of Labuan Bajo, people



Flores and Komodo offer highlights such as great diving and snorkelling, breathtaking mountain scenery and fascinating traditional villages.

can visit both Komodo National Park and a number of other islands, including Kanawa Island and Seraya Island. Many people -- especially divers -- visit on live-aboard boats, which is one reason the tourism infrastructure here remains relatively poorly developed.

Heading east, highlights include the remote and traditional village of Wae Rebo, the "hobbit cave" outside Ruteng and the Ngada village of Bena outside Bajawa, which offers spectacular views of one of the island's most beautiful peaks, Gunung Inerie.

Further east again takes visitors to Ende, with its volcanic backdrop and beautiful green stone beach and east again to the impressive three-lake peak of Kelimutu, which is best accessed from the village of Moni.

That's as far east as we've been so far, but we'll be returning a little later in 2013 to explore the northern islands at Riung and further east to Maumere, Laran-tuka and Solor Island.

Yes we're just getting started!



ORIENTATION

If you're already familiar with travel in Lombok or Bali, **expect fewer creature comforts** in Flores. Outside of the fancy digs in the far west of the island, accommodation is generally quite simple and basic. Very few places can be booked online, but when travelling in high season (July and August) bookings in advance are a good idea when possible. Travel agents in Labuan Bajo can assist in this regard.

The island has the Trans-Flores Highway running from west to east. We've only travelled it as far as Moni, but it's generally of a pretty good standard (save a few rough patches). If self-driving, especially by motor-bike, watch out -- there are many blind corners, no shoulders, precipitous cliffs with poor railings (if any) and Floresian drivers do seem to be a little mad.

Public transport is limited with local buses small, uncomfortable and not always running at the most convenient times. A step up in price and quality are "travel cars", Kijangs (an Indonesian version of a Toyota more or less) that you can hire entirely or just buy a seat in. For groups and families consider hiring a car with driver. The cost is not unreasonable and it will give you a lot more flexibility in your travels. Rates start at around 600,000 rupiah per day.

Labuan Bajo, Ruteng, Bajawa, Ende and Maumere all have **airports** -- in high season reserve your flights as early as possible. Many choose to fly into Labuan Bajo and out of Ende or Maumere as it removes the need to drive the Trans-Flores Highway twice. You'll find **ATMs** in all the main towns along with limited internet. In the countryside, Telkomsel has a patchy 3G signal -- this should improve with time.

Lastly, the distances may look small, but **travel in Flores is time consuming**. Most drivers consider Labuan Bajo to Ruteng, Ruteng to Bajawa and Bajawa to Moni to be one day drives. You could conceivably drive Labuan Bajo to Bajawa in a day, but we wouldn't advise it. Don't drive long distances at night if you can help it.

Views over the Bay of Bajo from the aptly named Waecicu Eden Beach Resort, a short boatride from Labuan Bajo.



Local buses in Flores are cheap but get quite crowded. The winding road conditions can also play havoc with stomachs.

HOW LONG IN FLORES & KOMODO?

Getting around in Flores is time consuming, and, if you're travelling by public transport, quite uncomfortable.

5 days or less

With five days, flying in and out of Labuan Bajo, you would have enough time to visit one of the islands such as Kanawa or Seraya for three nights and head to Komodo National Park on a long day trip from one of those two islands. You could also base yourself in Labuan Bajo, but either of the islands -- or Wae-cicu Beach -- are preferable.

6-10 days

With six to 10 days you could consider heading inland. Remember drivers consider Labuan Bajo to Ruteng, Ruteng to Bajawa and

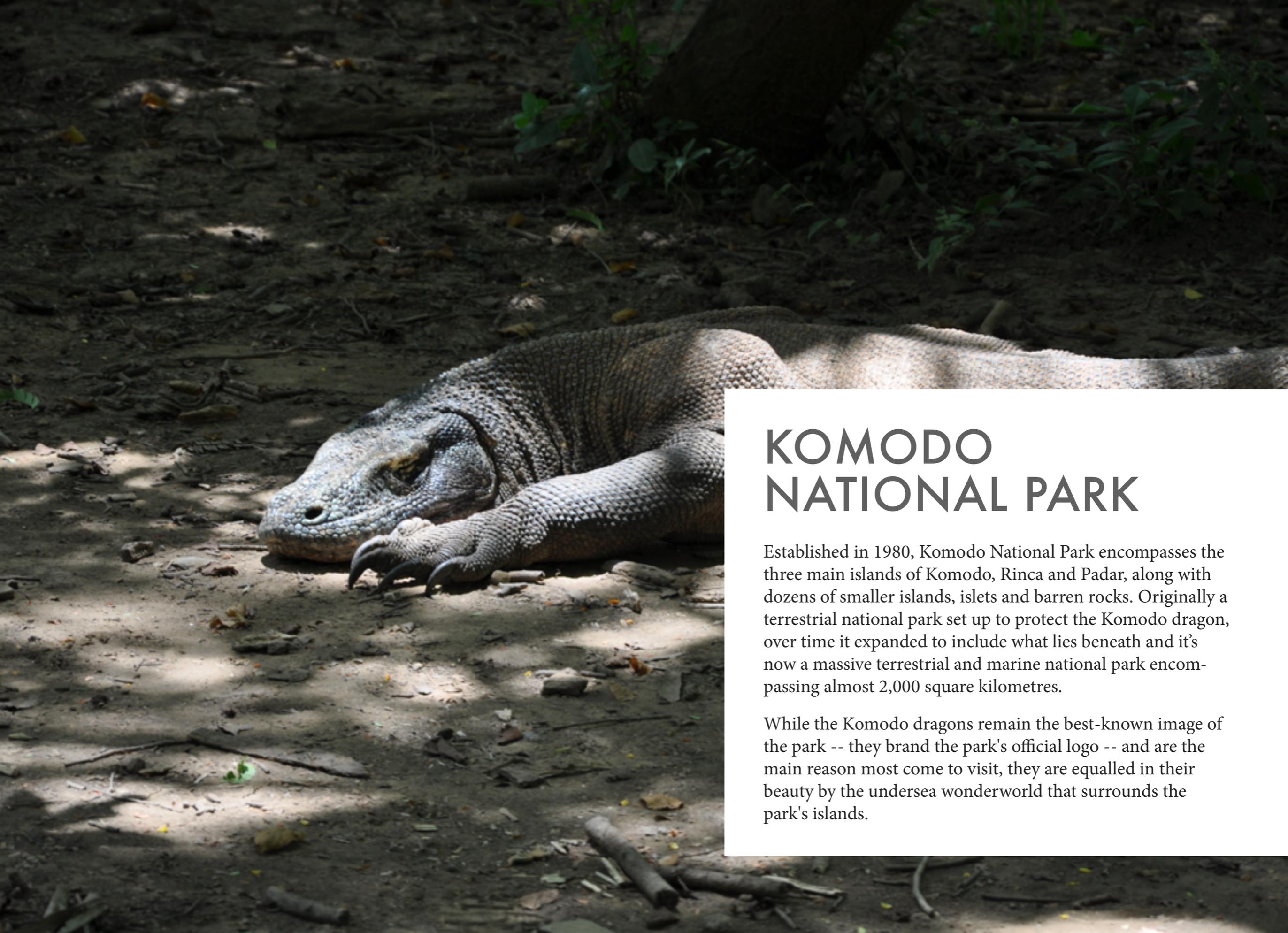
Bajawa to Ende or Moni to each be one-day drives. Trying to drive longer in one hit isn't generally a good idea.

If you're planning on going to Ende or Moni, book onwards flights out of Ende or Maumere so you don't need to drive the Trans-Flores Highway twice.

A typical 10-day itinerary would be three nights around Labuan Bajo and Komodo, then Ruteng and Bajawa for a night each, two nights in Ende and two nights in Moni, with you flying out from either Ende or Maumere.

11-15 days

With another four days, consider side trips to Riung, pushing on to Larantuka (from Maumere) or visiting Wae Rebo (from Labuan Bajo). Accommodation is also available at the small coastal towns of Borong and Aimere for those looking to get more off the beaten track.

A Komodo dragon is shown resting on the ground in a forest setting. The dragon is the central focus, lying on its side with its head down. Its skin is a mottled grey and brown color, and its large, scaly body is clearly visible. The background is a dense forest with sunlight filtering through the trees, creating dappled light on the ground. The ground is covered in dirt, small rocks, and some dry leaves. The overall scene is a natural, undisturbed habitat for the Komodo dragon.

KOMODO NATIONAL PARK

Established in 1980, Komodo National Park encompasses the three main islands of Komodo, Rinca and Padar, along with dozens of smaller islands, islets and barren rocks. Originally a terrestrial national park set up to protect the Komodo dragon, over time it expanded to include what lies beneath and it's now a massive terrestrial and marine national park encompassing almost 2,000 square kilometres.

While the Komodo dragons remain the best-known image of the park -- they brand the park's official logo -- and are the main reason most come to visit, they are equalled in their beauty by the undersea wonderworld that surrounds the park's islands.

Within the park's boundaries, visitors will be able to experience some of the best snorkelling and diving in the entire Indonesian archipelago and enjoy a rugged, stunning landscape that is truly an experience to behold.

Relatively easily visited from Labuan Bajo or one of the islands in the Flores Sea such as Kanawa on either a daytrip or overnight liveaboard, the majority of visitors approach the park to see both the dragons and to enjoy the beaches and snorkelling. Few come just to see the dragons -- once you get underwater you'll see why.

As with many national parks in Indonesia, it hasn't been plain sailing for Komodo National Park. The fishing boats you see -- even the small one- and two-person sampans -- are fishing illegally and unfortunately unsustainable practices continue whenever the dive and tourist boats are out of sight. As for outside the park boundaries, in the words of one dive operator in Labuan Bajo, "it's a free for all and fabulous example of unsustainable and profoundly damaging fishing practices at work."

Many dive enthusiasts believe that the situation has worsened in the last few years since the US-based Nature Conservancy was pulled out of managing the national park after a dispute with the Indonesian government over where funds should be directed. While there is a system in place for dive boats to photograph trespassing boats and report them to the authorities, it appears to have less than perfect results.



While some of the fishermen have come from other Indonesian islands, others have fished these waters for generations -- well before the establishment of the national park -- it was not clear what programmes are in place to provide alternatives for the fishing communities.

Protection and development issues aside, the main decision a first-time visitor needs to make is should they visit Komodo or Rinca (or both...)? Both are home to dragons, though those on Komodo are thought to be larger (more deer to munch on), while those on Rinca are seen to be more aggressive (as our researcher found out). The trip to Komodo is also a lot longer than one to Rinca if you're coming from Labuan Bajo.

In both cases, outside of mating season, you're pretty sure to see at least a few Komodo dragons -- perhaps not capturing and eating a buffalo but rather hanging around a park kitchen waiting for scraps. But really, it doesn't matter where you see them -- as, unless they're chasing you down the path, they'll most likely be laying there doing little other than watching you with their very beady little eyes.

Komodo Island

Komodo is the largest of the islands in Komodo National Park and it's also the furthest from the port town of Labuan Bajo. Because of the distance, it's typical for a trip to Komodo to include a number of snorkelling stops. In our case we stopped at Batu Bolong (snorkelling) and Makassar Reef (snorkelling with manta rays) on the way to the park and at Pink Beach (a pink

beach + snorkelling) and Mesa Island (a fishing village island) on the way back. From Kanawa that was close to 12 hours all told. It's a long day.

On the island itself, there are three trekking options -- short, medium or long. As we had young kids with us we did the short trek and it took about 45 minutes. Our travel companions did the medium trip which took them about an hour and a half. In both cases we saw seven dragons in total -- most of them around the park restaurant -- they're stupid, but not that stupid!

The short trek takes you to a waterhole where we saw two dragons and it's here that the medium trek diverts, taking in a viewpoint over the bay. Regardless of which trail you take, taking a guide is mandatory. They carry a pronged stick should the dragons decide to cause some dramas.

Komodo's topography is impressive and slowly cruising by that was as memorable as encountering the dragons.

Rinca Island

Rinca is closer to Labuan Bajo than better-known Komodo, and is considered to be a better bet for a dragon sighting to boot.

On our visit, we had to run from a dragon on a forest trail, which added a certain amount of adrenaline to the experience. We also spotted a beautiful "and deadly" green tree viper, a long-tailed macaque, and many birds, including the curious mound-building megapod. Nature here is beautiful, but it certainly isn't harmless.

Spottings of seemingly stuffed dragons are almost a certainty most times of the year, as they like to doze under the park headquarters, likely attracted by

the smell of food from the cafeteria. However, seeing a Komodo in the forest is not guaranteed, especially during the mating season. Sleepy dragons, it should be emphasised, are by no means harmless dragons.

You will have a choice of a short, a medium or a long trek from the Loh Buaya landing site. The medium trek takes about an hour and a half and is the default option for most dive trips incorporating a Rinca visit.

As on Komodo, guides are armed with big, forked sticks, but are not otherwise enabled to stop an attack, which do happen at times. The Komodos of Rinca are reported to be a bit more bitey than their Komodo counterparts, which translates into a more interesting but potentially heart-pounding visit. (We were briefly chased by one of the carnivorous reptiles, which was certainly memorable).

Stick with your guide, don't touch the animals, and you should seriously reconsider bringing small children along for the ride (though we did take ours and neither was eaten). This is definitely not your innocuous local zoo, and people do get hurt if they're not paying attention -- or are even just unlucky.

Many dive operations will include a quick Rinca visit as part of a package scuba and snorkelling day trip. Make sure to establish with your dive operator which fees they have already taken care of. Finding non-diving or snorkelling trips to Rinca, which will allow for a longer visit, can be difficult. The truly dragon obsessed may consider shelling out for a private charter instead. Prices vary, but remember: in many ways, you do get what you pay for.



Komodo National Park visitors must pay for an entrance fee, a camera fee, and a guide fee -- guides are non-optional, a reality you will quickly appreciate upon seeing the size of these sometimes not-so-lethargic giant reptiles.



LABUAN BAJO

Labuan Bajo will be the first port of call for most first-time visitors to Flores, whether arriving by boat or plane. And like many port towns in the world, we want to love it, but it just isn't very lovable.

Most near anywhere else in Flores is more lovable than Labuan Bajo, and most travellers will stay here just a night or two as they come and go.

During low season, Labuan Bajo seems to have a fair range of accommodation, but in high season, in the words of one diving instructor we talked to, it is "a veritable madhouse where the hotels are packed and every soul wants to get the hell out of dodge". Even in low season, we had to try three hotels before finding a hotel with a spare room that was decent, so if you're visiting Labuan Bajo in July or August, book in ad-

vance if you can. Most of the better establishments are happy to let you book online or over the phone, and won't require a deposit.

The port is the jumping off point for Rinca and Komodo islands along with a handful of other islands in the Bay of Bajo that have accommodation such as Kanawa and Seraya. Any diving or liveaboard operation with a presence in Komodo will have an office in Labuan Bajo, and there are plenty of dive operators to choose from.

Labuan Bajo also marks the completion (or starting) point of the popular Lombok-Sumbawa-Komodo-Flores boat trips.

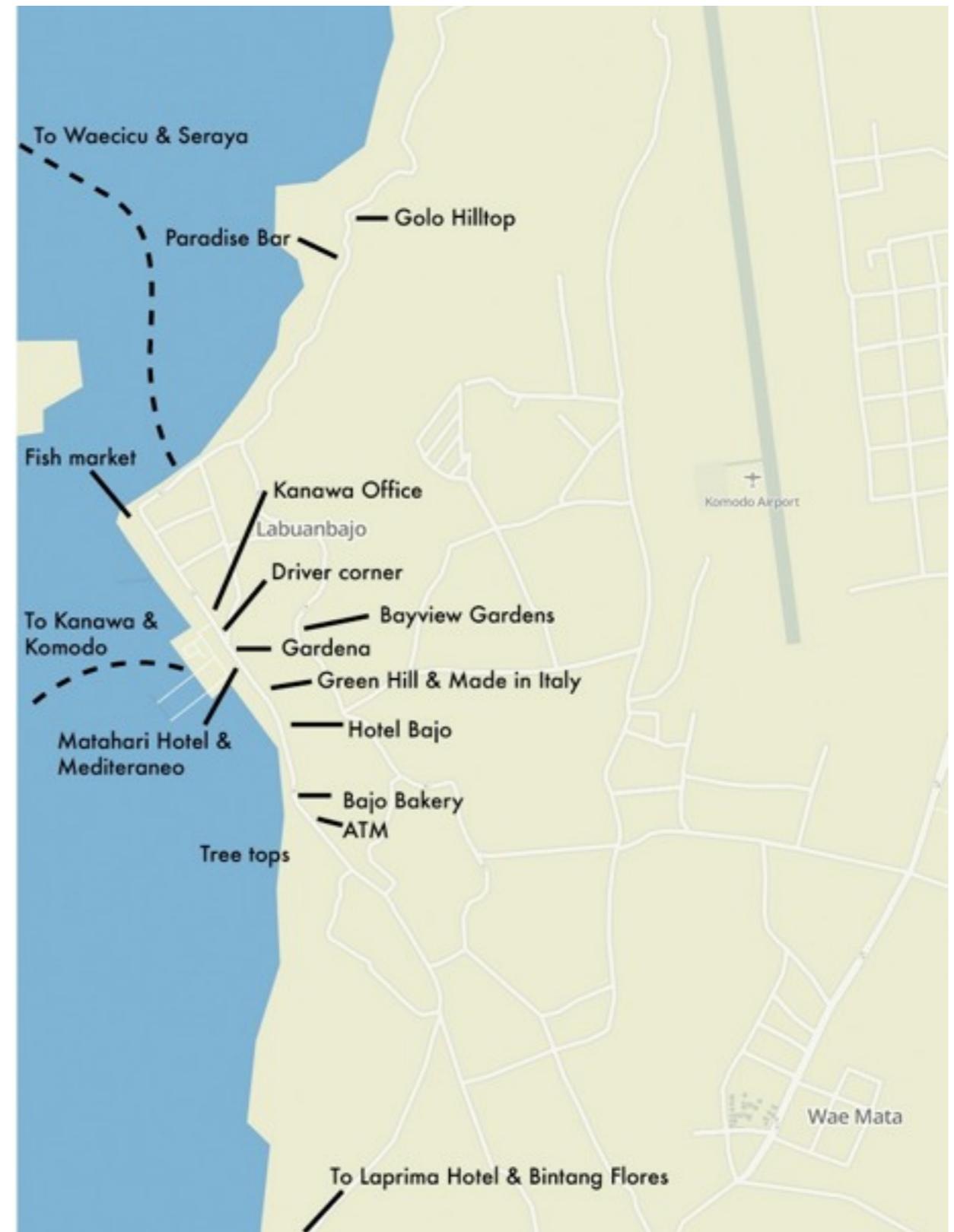
Lastly, Labuan Bajo houses an airport, which is soon to be upgraded to an international one, and is the western terminus of all transport along the Trans-Flores Highway (which runs from Maumere in the east through Ende, Bajawa (almost) and Ruteng on the way to Labuan Bajo).

So it can be a pretty busy place.

The downtown waterside area is home to some of the more convenient hotels, plenty of tourist-orientated eateries, more bars than the rest of Flores combined (so about four) and a gaggle of travel agents, clothes shops, laundries, minimarts and so on. It's really your one-stop-shop for all your traveling needs in Flores. Western-style food, toiletries and other modern conveniences all become rather thin on the ground after you leave here for the Flores interior or out to the islands.

ORIENTATION

The waterfront of Labuan Bajo is sort of capital I-shaped with a fish market worthy of an early morning browse in the centre. To the northern end, there are boats to the headland (for Waecicu) and Seraya Island, while the main port (to the south) runs boats to Kanawa, Rinca and Komodo. This isn't a strict rule though, and you could probably charter a boat to anywhere from anywhere here.



If you're heading to Kanawa, Seraya or Bidadari, go to their booking office along the main drag in Labuan Bajo and they'll walk you to wherever the regular boat is going from at the right time.

BNI have an international access ATM up near Treetops, which is open late. There's a larger bank of BNI ATMs further down the road out of town, heading right and facing away from the ocean. Many of the restaurants advertise free WiFi, though in our experience it doesn't always work -- you'll likely have to check around until you find something reliable.

Drivers can be hired from the kiosk opposite (but on the same side of the road) as Gardena or try at any travel agent. Be prepared to bargain. See the transport section for contact details for specific individuals we have used.

If you're looking for specific info on Flores, NGO SwissContact has put out a series of three guidebooks, covering culture, trekking, and diving and snorkelling respectively. It's a shame they didn't release them as a single guide, and while it's now getting a touch out of date in parts -- though more so that places have opened than places have closed -- it's got some excellent information tucked away.

The Belgian-born Gaelie and Flores native Heri Anu Due at Flores Remo Travel offer distinctive cultural and nature-oriented package tours of Flores and surroundings, including Komodo, Rinca, Kelimutu and points further afield. Everything is customisable -- contact them for details and scheduling. They're a good choice for remote or custom adventures, especially for those unable or just plain uninterested in arranging their own back-of-beyond adventure travel.

ACCOMMODATION

Labuan Bajo

The town of Labuan Bajo has an adequate selection of places to stay but in high season (July and August) reservations are highly recommended.

Bayview Gardens

Green accommodation for a good price 9/10

Jl Ande Bole, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 41 549;(0856) 383 9067

bayviewgardens@gmail.com

<http://www.bayview-gardens.com/>

350,000-450,000 rupiah

This exceptionally private and relatively new series of bungalows is built into the side of a hill with great views of Bajo Bay, about five minutes' from the centre of town uphill. And we're not kidding about privacy: you'll rarely see another soul at Bayview Gardens, which makes it fabulous for the romantic and the merely antisocial. (Party types may wish to look elsewhere.) Bungalows feature porches and two bedrooms, and include a made-to-order breakfast and an afternoon snack, as well as lots of instant coffee and tea. Hot water is actually hot and stays that way. There's pretty fast WiFi in the restaurant area, and it's also accessible on the porches of some bungalows. The restaurant serves fixed dinners from 19:30 for 50,000 rupiah, and can be booked for classy Indonesian meals overlooking the view if you talk to front-desk management. It's a rather idyllic place to spend a quiet couple of days. There's a lot of native wildlife living in the garden, and you'll likely see interesting insects, birds and reptiles right on your porch. The property tries to be environmentally conscious, and there's a serene feeling of integration with nature. Bayview Gardens is located a bit outside of the town centre, and getting back here will require the services of an ojek (5,000 rupiah) or your own rented motorbike in the evening. It's an easy downhill walk on the road to town in the daytime.

Green Hill

Flashpacker choice 8/10

Behind Made in Italy, Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 41 289

info@greenhillboutiquehotel.com

<http://www.greenhillboutiquehotel.com/contact.php>

400,000-500,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)



Green Hill, set immediately behind and above Italian restaurant *Made in Italy*, offers comfortable and clean lodgings for flashpackers.

If you can afford to spend a little more, this place up the hill behind *Made in Italy* restaurant is worth the extra money, offering clean and almost sparkling rooms in a longhouse setup at flashpacker prices. The view and proximity to very good Italian food is thrown in for free. The reception is at street level, the small travel agent immediately below the restaurant. Reservations essential, especially in high season.

Golo Hilltop

Hilltop accommodation with pool 8/10
Northern end of town, Labuan Bajo
T: (0385) 41 337;(0813) 3925 5535

golohilltophotel@gmail.com

<http://www.golohilltop.com>

325,000-450,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)

A colorfully painted collection of 10 separate bungalows on the top of a hill overlooking Labuan Bajo and the sea, this popular Dutch-run hotel is often full, although the brightly painted rooms aren't quite as nice as Bayview, which is in the same price range. Rooms are a bit tired but pleasant enough and quite spacious, with porches overlooking the bay, canopied beds, and great views. It's a good alternate choice for those not interested in the total privacy Bayview Gardens spe-



cialises in, and the lovely on-site pool (with views) will help to encourage a bit of socialising among travellers. There's also a small restaurant, a laundry service and WiFi, as well as the usual chilled Bintang and menu of fruity beverages of the alcoholic and virgin varieties -- hey, it's the tropics. Book ahead, as the place does fill up, even in the off-season. Golo Hilltop is located past Paradise on the hilltop a kilometre outside of town, and will require an ojek ride (5,000 rupiah) to get back to in the evening hours. They can help you sort out motorbike hire if you'd prefer to get around Labuan Bajo under your own steam.

Gardena

Backpacker crashpad 7/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 41 258; (081) 339 495 244

hello@gardenahotelflores.com

<http://www.gardenaflores.com/>

120,000-300,000 rupiah

Gardena is a bit of a backpacker crashpad with plenty of rooms and plenty of pricelines. Rooms are adequate, though tired, and we found the staff to be helpful and friendly. The location is central -- close to the action -- and there is a shaded garden that is okay for escaping the midday heat (if not the nearby call to prayer). If you can afford to spend a bit more, we'd suggest elsewhere, but at the budget end this struck us as far better value than Matahari across the road. They offer a wide variety of rates with singles starting at 120,000 rupiah through to family rooms for 300,000 rupiah. Gardena also looks after the reservations for accommodation on Seraya Island. Reservations best made by telephone rather than email.

Laprima Hotel

Newish luxury option 7/10

While it's getting a bit long in the tooth, backpacker crashpad Gardena remains a popular option for those on a budget.

Pantai Pede, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 244 3700

reservation@hotellaprima.com

<http://laprimahotel.indonesiaroom.com/>

650,000-2,500,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)

This 88-room, four-star resort hotel was Labuan Bajo's first international luxury accommodation option, and feels like a dedicated effort at imitating the Hilton chain in the wilder climes of Flores. Rooms are soulless in the international business hotel tradition of things, but pleasant enough. Curiously, there's no WiFi in the rooms -- you'll have to go to the lobby. What's really worth it here are the tremendous views over Bajo Bay for forward-facing rooms, which are the only ones worth spending the extra to stay for. Rooms on the left side of the hotel feature views over a grown-over area where poorer people have set up camps, a rather incongruous view for a luxury lodging. Suites are expensive, but offer 360-degree views of the sea and the mountains from the master bedroom, as well as a pleasant sitting area and even a microwave -- making them a good family choice. There's a large swimming pool with a swim-up bar downstairs, as well as an on-site dive shop that offers dive training and scuba/snorkelling trips in the area. The hotel looks out upon a rocky and not particularly pleasant beach that's usually covered with fishing vessels, although a popular (if less than clean) public beach is right next door. Laprima offers free airport transfer every 30 minutes, though rumours that it's a mere five-minute walk to downtown Labuan Bajo are definitely exaggerated. Regular ojek and bemos pass by the road outside the Laprima if you wish to use private transportation, and the hotel offers town transfers by means of a shuttle for 50,000 rupiah.

Hotel Bajo

Good for budget divers 6/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0852) 3917 6152; (0385) 41 008

150,000-275,000 rupiah

This quiet place on Labuan Bajo's main strip offers acceptable white-washed ground level rooms, overlooking a garden-set sitting and eating area. Check out the rooms, as some are cleaner and newer than others -- consistency is

not exactly one of Labuan Bajo's accommodation strengths. It's a reasonably clean and quiet step up from some of the nearby backpacker holes, and it's green, open and cleaner than most. Hotel Bajo is a convenient walk to the dive shops and the docks from here, which makes it a good choice for the scuba-focused and budget-minded.

Bintang Flores

International standards, prices to match /10

Jl Pantai Pede Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 244 3755

<http://www.bintangfloreshotel.com/>

900,000-1,150,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)

The newest luxury option in Labuan Bajo, the four-star Bintang Flores offers a bit more character in both rooms and public areas than Laprima, as well as a very nice chill-out pool and beach area. If you're looking for international standards of luxury on your Flores holiday, this is the best bet in Labuan Bajo -- and, probably, on the entire island. Rooms offer all the modern conveniences (TV, mini-fridge and air-con) with understated local design touches, and most have great views of the Bajo Bay and the green and manicured grounds of the hotel. There's a coffee shop and restaurant abutting a koi pond, a sixth-floor lounge, and a small but pleasant enough, trash-cleared private-beach -- although the winding swimming pool, popular with locals, seemed rather more appealing for a quick dip and a cold beverage. There's also a fitness centre and a resident dive shop, as well as WiFi in the lobby area. It's a way from town, although you can use a shuttle service (50,000 rupiah) to reach downtown Labuan Bajo -- or a much cheaper bemo or ojek if you're feeling adventurous. Rates vary depending on the season -- check and see if you can access lower prices. The "internet rate" advertised on the website is considerably lower than the "published" rate and presents a rather good deal at this time, outside of the July and August high season.

Matahari Hotel

When all else fails 5/10

Under Mediteraneo, Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

100,000-150,000 rupiah



Running up the hillside on Waecicu beach, Waecicu Eden Beach is an enjoyable hideaway for those wanting beachside lodgings away from the hustle and bustle.

Located below Mediteranneo, this basic establishment is poor value when compared to nearby Gardena, but will do at a pinch for a night if you're struggling for a room as we imagine this will be one of the last places in Labuan Bajo to fill up! Lodgings are cleanish but with the restaurant up top and low ceilings, it has a bit of an "I'm staying in a car-parking complex" feel to it. Rates, especially in low season, are very negotiable.

Hotel Komodo Indah

Grungy 5/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

100,000-250,000 rupiah

This is a true backpacker hole, a little off the main action on Labuan Bajo's main street, with inflated prices and distinctly grungy accommodation with cold-water bathrooms. There's no real reason to stay here, unless you're entirely shut out from more palatable options -- a lack of WiFi, a restaurant, and other perceptible amenities is a problem. Be especially choosy with the rooms, as some are more emotionally distressing than others. The owner speaks a little English. We didn't spot any bedbugs, but we certainly wouldn't rule them out.

Outside Labuan Bajo

There are a couple of options along the peninsula running to the north of Labuan Bajo. While in theory it's possible to walk or ride here, a boat is preferable.

Waecicu Eden Beach Hotel

A great hideaway 8/10

Pantai Waecicu, Labuan Bajo

T: (0813) 3918 3065; (0821) 4444 0789

contact@waecicu.com

<http://www.waecicu.com>

250,000-450,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)

Reached by a 10-minute boat ride from Labuan Bajo, French/Indonesian run Waecicu Eden Beach sits out on the promontory to the north of Labuan Bajo, which protects the inner islands from the Flores Sea. Waecicu sits on a narrow strip of beachfront with rooms running up the hillside behind. On offer is a good mix of fan and "prepped-for-air-con" rooms, with just about all of them taking in terrific sea views. We'd definitely angle for a fan-cooled room as the air-con ones have windows that cannot be opened and at least when we stayed the air-con wasn't yet working. Once the fans were off when the power was



switched off at night it got hot -- extremely hot. There's a ground floor restaurant and the food swings between outstanding and mediocre. Our first dinner of barbecued fish was fabulous but when we ordered it again the next night, not so much. The salads were consistent and excellent; one of the owners learned to cook in France, and it shows. Order your three meals for the day at breakfast, as time from ordering to eating can be excessive -- try two hours. The hosts are very obliging, friendly and knowledgeable about the surrounds. The beach has a few hammocks slung up where you can easily while away an afternoon and watch one of the stunning sunsets. Grab a canoe and paddle across the bay for a snorkel (though it doesn't compare to the islands), and trips further afield can be arranged. If you have a few slow days in Flores and don't want to go to an island, we'd definitely recommend a stay here -- just order your meals well in advance!

EAT AND MEET

Labuan Bajo has by far the widest selection of restaurants bars and warungs in all of Flores.

Arto Moro Restaurant

Nothing fancy but affordable 7/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

This upstairs and aggressively green-painted warung is located above street level, and offers simple fried fish, squid and chicken dishes, as well as the inevitable nasi goreng. Nothing fancy, but prices can dip as low as 15,000 for a solid feed, and fried fish lalapan (with vegetables and sambal) goes for a mere 25,000. It's very popular with locals. Flores-style sambal is made with tomato and chili, and is rather reminiscent of a good Mexican salsa -- including the fiery chilli kick.

Buoyed by the tourist trade, Labuan Bajo has a solid range of eateries, with Italian especially well represented.

Bajo Bakery

Breakfast treats 8/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

This Swiss-owned bakery features fresh baked bread, sandwiches, brownies, quiche, good coffee and other European delicacies, as well as fresh butter. Tasty morning scrambled eggs and bacon on a fresh-baked roll, as well as real European cappuccino with a fluffy top and chocolate grated on it -- ah, the taste of home. There's also a breakfast burger with fresh pesto and cheese for those ravenous pre-scuba mornings.

Mediterraneo

Excellent, well presented Italian cuisine 8/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 42 218

<http://www.mediterraneoinn.com>

High-end Italian cuisine is on offer at Mediterraneo, in a pleasingly airy building on Labuan Bajo's main drag, creatively built from various repurposed ship parts. There's house-made pasta from an Italian-born chef on offer from 50,000 rupiah, while thin-crust authentic pizzas are around 70,000 to 80,000 rupiah. There's also steaks, fresh fish options (Western and Asian), some creative Indonesian food, and a variety of elegant-looking and chocolate-intensive desserts. Excellent bolognese sauce ladled over ravioli (58,000 rupiah) surprised for such an outpost, and a refreshing and very large organic rucola salad with parmesan cheese and tomato (38,000 rupiah) really hits the spot after days of less-than-fresh warung or dive boat cuisine. The chef even makes an effort at plating, a rather pleasant touch. Mediterraneo is also a swell place for a sundowner cocktail overlooking Bajo Bay and the harbour, and there's fresh-squeezed juices on offer, as well as wine, mixed drinks, and the ubiquitous chilled bottles of Bintang. Big bean bags at the upper top of the restaurant and zippy free WiFi make this a popular e-mail check-in point, and a pretty good place to meet up with other travellers.

Pantai Indah

A friendly spot with simple good fare 7/10

Jl Mutiana, Labuan Bajo

Expect stir-fried squid, fried chicken, coconut milk stews, nasi rendang, fried spicy chicken and fried fish, among other typical Padang items -- you'll pay around 16,000 to 20,000 rupiah per dish. It's located near the water and is a good place for a cheap, spicy and authentic warung meal. Don't be put off by the pre-cooked food here and at similar warung eateries -- Indonesians have mastered the art of preserving food without spoilage at room temperature, thanks to slow-cooking and the use of spices. There's coffee and tea as well, and a friendly orange kitten. Don't forget the sambal -- not that it's easy to in these parts.

Paradise

Popular hilltop bar and restaurant 8/10

Kampung Ujung, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 41 733;(0813) 3935 4854

flores@indo.net.id

Paradise is a beloved local hangout with inexpensive Bintang, top-shelf spirits and arak cocktails alike, and pretty good barbecue fish, served with local tomato sambal. There's also Western food on the menu if you're dying for some French fries or a simple sandwich. Ojek drivers know where this place is, and will often assume all tourists and Westerners are headed there in lieu of evidence otherwise, especially in the evening. Paradise can also arrange a seafood buffet or a group dinner with some advance notice. It's a great place for post-dive sundowners with an exceptionally commanding view of the sun slipping below the water, and is likely the finest bar in Flores, not that there's a ton of competition in the category. If you're looking to connect with locals, guides or fellow travellers, Paradise is a great place to hang out for a while and work yourself into a sufficiently chilled-out island frame of mind. Saturdays especially can go rather late, as the town turns out to celebrate another successfully lived week. If you arrive at around 21:00 on Friday and particularly Saturday, you're early for the party -- perhaps the only place in Flores where this is the case.

The Corner Restaurant

Scuba dive and local favourite for casual eats 7/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0812) 3775 9159

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Corner-Labuan-Bajo-Komodo/140997269249772>

Cheap Bintang beer, hot plates of chicken, squid, and tuna (a Flores favorite), beef rendang, nasi goreng, and rather well executed French fries are all on offer here, served with the usual sambal. Try ordering your rendang as a sandwich for an interesting cross-cultural lunch. There are even tasty mashed potatoes. A large-screen TV in the centre of the eatery plays either football or overwrought Indonesian soap operas for your dining entertainment. There's also free WiFi -- although it remains unclear where the "organic" part of the sign outside comes in. One of the better places in town to knock back a few beers without breaking the bank.

The Lounge

Popular hangout 8/10

Jl Soekarno Hatta, Labuan Bajo

T: (0385) 41962

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/The-Lounge-Flores/164858797202>

This funky, red-hued restaurant is a popular hangout for chatty locals and tourists alike, and offers comfort food in both Western and Indonesian varieties, as well as oven-fired, thin-crust pizzas. Burgers go for 52,000 rupiah, while hot plates are 55,000 rupiah and pizzas 58,000 rupiah. There's even an avocado salad when the juicy green wonders are in season. Shisha smoking is available on big, squashy cushions. There's creative and very tasty arak cocktails for 25,000 rupiah, as well as cocktails for 57,000 and house wine for 45,000. Music ranges from Rick James to chill-out vibes. The owner will be opening rooms above the main restaurant sometime in June, which look to feature hanging beds and interesting interiors for about 300,000 rupiah.

SIGHTS AND ACTIVITIES

Diving Komodo

One of the main attractions 9/10

We tried a Discover Diving trip with DiveKomodo (1,400,000 rupiah for two dives), and felt extremely safe and competently supervised during the experience. It's a great way for those curious about diving to see if they want to pursue certification.

DiveKomodo struck us as being a very professional and safety-oriented dive outfit providing scuba trips in Komodo National Park, as well as PADI dive courses from Discover Diving orientation trips all the way up to Divemaster. This outfit is owned by an Australian-Swiss couple, and advertises a diver to guide ratio of four-to-six to one, depending on diver experience. They've been here in Komodo for a long time, and know the park intimately -- something you particularly want in an area known for its dangerous currents.

If you like what you see in the watery depths of Komodo -- and who wouldn't? -- PADI Open Water course start at 3,500,000 rupiah for three to four days of instruction.

Day trips are 800,000 rupiah for all points within Komodo National Park, and include water, food (lunch and snacks) and equipment rentals. There's a 5 percent discount if you bring your own equipment. This doesn't include park fees. Guided dragon tours and snorkelling are both 250,000 rupiah.

Liveaboard trips include a number of options, including three-day and five-to seven-day safari cruises. The popular three-day option costs 4,500,000 rupiah per person and visits a variety of Komodo dive sites -- check ahead for scheduling and what's specifically offered. Extended diving safaris start at 1,500,000 rupiah per day, and can be privately chartered for groups.

DiveKomodo

T: (0385) 41 862

<http://divekomodo.com/>

Bajo Dive Club

T: (0813) 3945 8706

<http://www.komododiver.com>

Wicked Diving Komodo

T: (0812) 3961 6264

<http://wickeddiving.com/komodo>

As is the case with all Labuan Bajo dive shops, schedules change daily and is often posted outside on a whiteboard the day before -- check around in case you're after something specific.



GETTING THERE AND AWAY

Air

Labuan Bajo's airport is located on the outskirts of town -- you could walk it if you really had to but a bemo should take you for 10,000 rupiah. There are regular flights from Labuan Bajo to Ende and Maumere along with Bali and other destinations across the region. Air Wings, Merpati, Sky Aviation and Trans Nusa all fly to Labuan Bajo.

In high season if flying from or to Bali it is essential you book your flights as soon as possible as they fill up fast.

Air Wings (Lion Air)

<http://www.lionair.co.id/>

Merpati

<http://www.merpati.co.id/>

Sky Aviation

<http://www.sky-aviation.co.id/>

Trans Nusa

<http://www.transnusa.co.id/>

Bus

The public transport system out of Labuan Bajo is a little fluid so double check times and prices on arrival. Any travel agent or hotel can arrange this for you -- you'll be picked up at your hotel. Sample fares include Ruteng 70,000 (four departures daily), Bajawa 150,000 and Ende 220,000.

Escaping the sun under the wing
of a flight to Bali.

Boat

Labuan Bajo is the western port for Flores. According to the Pelni website both the the Tilongkabila and the Wilis berth at Labuan Bajo.

Wilis

(roughly a 12 day circuit)

Makassar - Bima - Labuan Bajo - Waingapu - Ende - Kupang - Ende - Waingapu - Labuan Bajo - Bima - Makassar - Marapokot - Larantuka - Kupang - Larantuka - Marapokot - Makassar

Tilongkabila

(roughly a 13 day circuit)

Benoa - Lembar - Bima - Labuan Bajo - Makassar - Bau Bau - Raha - Kendari - Kolonedale - Luwuk - Gorontalo - Bitung - Gorontalo - Luwuk - Kolonedale - Kendari - Raha - Bau-Bau - Makassar - Labuan Bajo = Bima - Lembar - Benoa

Check the Pelni website for detailed schedules and bear in mind these may change due to weather and other random conditions.

There is a daily ferry service from Labuan Bajo to Sape in Sumbawa.

This is also the end- or start-point for the Flores-Sumbawa-Lombok boat services run by Perama and others.

<http://www.pelni.co.id/>

<http://www.peramatour.com/>

Car hire and drivers

If you're in a group or looking for more comfort, hiring a driver is a good option. Costs vary a little depending on vehicle and where you want to go, but expect to pay in the range of 600,000 to 700,000 rupiah per day. That should include the driver, vehicle, petrol and the driver's meals and accommodation. Suggested drivers and guides for Labuan Bajo and surroundings include:

Loys

T: (0813) 3945 9148

Veteran Flores-local guide who seems to know just about everybody. If he's busy, he can help you connect with other guides and drivers -- and can confidently answer many of your travel questions.

Jimmy

T: (0813) 3969 8563

Friendly young guide and excellent driver who can take you to Wae Rebo, the Cunca Rami waterfall, and other hot areas in western Flores and further afield. He's full of interesting information, and can explain the production of arak, Manggarai houses, and tree species with equal aplomb (among other topics).

Getting around

Ojeks or motorcycle taxis ply Labuan Bajo, and 5,000 rupiah will get you most places in (and a bit out) of town. Many ojek drivers will offer you their phone number if you're looking for a regular bet.

Bemos are small vans with seats in them that look dodgy, but are an accepted technique of transport around LBJ and further afield. Not suggested for long haul travel, but will do for getting around town. 5,000 rupiah is also a good benchmark for most bemo fares.



WAE REBO

The remarkable Manggarai village of Wae Rebo, some 108 kilometres from Labuan Bajo, is nestled in the cloud forests of western Flores and centres around seven cone-shaped traditional houses, which are built from bamboo, wood and grass and function as a remarkable piece of Flores' living history.

Thanks to grants from a Jakarta benefactor and the government, one house was built new in 2009, and another guesthouse in the same style was constructed in 2011. A visit here is a unique chance to witness traditional Manggarai village life, and to check out the interesting fauna and flora that has fostered life here for generations.

The friendly locals are happy to chat about their lives (with the aid of a guide) and will show you their homes and farms if you ask. This is the heart of Manggarai culture in many respects, and even hip Labuan Bajo natives admit to feeling touched by a visit here.

A few hundred tourists, largely from Indonesia and Europe, make the trek here every year -- but odds are good you'll have the place to yourself, especially in the low season, which is really everything but June through August.

Staying for the night at Wae Rebo, including food, costs 350,000 rupiah. You may be tempted to buy some lovely rainbow-coloured hand woven sarongs as well, which go for 450,000 to 500,000 rupiah.

Wae Rebo is generally done over the course of three days: one day for the steep car ride to the town of Denge, which serves as the trailhead, one day to trek up and spend the day and night with the locals at the village of Wae Rebo, and one half day to have breakfast in Wae Rebo and make the much easier walk down. Discuss with your guide if you'd like to take more time in Wae Rebo. Less time isn't really advisable.

Guides are a requirement here, and can be hired for around 150,000 rupiah a day. Further, a guide will usually speak at least some Manggarai, as well as Indonesian, and can help you converse with the non-English speaking Wae Rebo people, who are usually very interested in foreign guests. Blasius Monta can arrange them for you at the Denge Homestay, and you can also connect with a Wae Rebo guide in Labuan Bajo.

Trekking

The trek to Wae Rebo is about seven kilometres long and is very decidedly uphill, meaning that this is an endeavour best left to the physically fit. Think twice about bringing kids along, as the trail is steep and a bit hard to follow, and often quite slippery when rain falls. And try not to be discouraged as friendly Wae Rebo natives in their late 70s sprint past you on the trail, barefoot, and carrying huge loads on their heads.

You'll be rewarded with amazing views of the sea below and perfectly triangular Gunung Inerie, as well as diverse jungle foliage and frequent sightings of tropical butterflies, birds and monkeys. Nearer to Wae Rebo, you can see for-

est plantings of cassava, taro, coffee, and cacao beans in the misty cloud forest surrounding the village.

Be sure to use sunscreen, and bring plenty of water and rain gear -- it's often damp here. Remember not to take photos of Wae Rebo before you approach. All visitors need to undergo a welcoming ceremony at the main drumhouse to placate the spirits before they can start snapping away. It's a basic politeness.

ACCOMMODATION

Denge Home Stay

Meet Blasius Monta 8/10

Next door to the Visitor's Centre, Denge

T: (0813) 3935 0775

250,000 rupiah

This friendly homestay is run by schoolteacher and Wae Rebo expert Blasius Monta, who offers simple but clean rooms in his home for aspirant Wae Rebo trekkers. It's only a few steps away from the trailhead to Wae Rebo, making it easy to get an early start after a typical rice and instant noodles breakfast. As a schoolteacher, Blasius likes to read and would appreciate it if you left a magazine or two behind. Price is 250,000 rupiah per night, including breakfast, lunch and dinner. Blasius is proud of the locally-grown and nutty tasting red rice (*nasi merah*) served in his house, as well as a potent sambal made from tiny green chilli peppers. You can also ask him to open up the Wae Rebo visitor's centre, located next door, which features photos of the 2009 building of a new Manggarai house, and a collection of books. If Blasius is full up -- an unlikely event -- there's another homestay near the church in Denge. Denge's market day is on Monday if you're interested in a look at lowland Manggarai culture.



RUTENG

Ruteng is the first town of any size you'll reach once you head inland from Labuan Bajo. Save a fair-sized church, Ruteng has few points of interest downtown, but it serves as a convenient base to explore some of the surrounds.

A small town, you can walk around the heart of it in about 30 minutes. Most of the restaurants and warungs are found around the southern part of town. Somewhat inconveniently, both of the decent hotels are some way out of town, around a 15 minute walk from the centre of the action. This presents a problem after nightfall, when ojek become almost impossible to flag down and a long dark walk back to your lodging becomes all but inevitable -- it's a good thing Flores is relatively

safe. Some ojek drivers may hang around Agape restaurant downtown if you're in dire straits.

Arguably the biggest highlight near Ruteng is the "hobbit cave", a 30-minute motorbike ride or car drive to the south of town. It was here that archaeologists discovered exceptionally small humanoid remains that have shattered some notions of the lineage of humankind. Set within a well-sized cave, and attached to an interesting museum, this is worth visiting for the cave alone, but as an added bonus, the scenery along the way is just breathtaking.

Ruteng is also famous for "spider-web" ricefields located to the west of town (again easily reachable by motorbike or car). Best viewed from a hillock beside a telecommunications tower (any driver or rider worth their mettle will know where it is), the fields are both impressive, expansive and very photogenic. It's well worth the time to reach from Ruteng. If you're arriving by car from Labuan Bajo, be sure to ask to see them on the way to avoid needing to backtrack to see them.

Other points of interest include a large waterfall to the west of town, which time allowing can be combined with a visit to the hobbit cave.

To the east, about 20 kilometres along the way to Bajawa, is a large crater lake, which again is worth a look if you have your own transport, though it probably isn't worth getting off the bus for.

ORIENTATION

The centre of Ruteng is quite small, easy to walk around in half an hour, but both of our recommended lodgings are out to the east of centre on Jalan Ahmed Yani. A gaggle of eateries (excepting Cha-cha) is at the northern end of town near the ATMs.

International access ATMs are scattered across the northern end of town, including a branch of BNI. Telkomsel offer a patchy Edge connection and Agape restaurant offers free WiFi. The Rima Hotel offers pretty fast Wifi in its upstairs lounge area.

If you're looking for a guide, try Rima Hotel or Rikard Magur on (0812) 374 08484 -- we used him to visit the hobbit cave and found him very helpful and eager. For a dependable ojek driver to some of the sights near Ruteng, try Fery, who can be contacted on (0852) 5351 8334. He doesn't speak much English, but is a good driver and is happy to squire tourists around -- and offer impromptu Bahasa lessons.



ACCOMMODATION

Ruteng has one standout accommodation option -- a nunnery -- and it is arguably the cleanest place in Flores.

Susteran St Maria Berdukacita

We'd never woken to a nuns' choir before 9/10

Jl Ahmed Yani 45, Ruteng

T: (0385) 22 834; (0385) 22 279; (081) 353 763 129

130,000-300,000 rupiah

Known to locals as MBC (we kept thinking they were saying Embassy, but it is actually the acronym of the place) Susteran St Maria Berdukacita has, with-



out doubt, the most spotless, well kept lodgings in Ruteng and arguably the cleanest rooms in Flores. MBC is a convent by day but offers very solid rooms as an evening sideline, with the only real downside being you're a solid 15-minute walk from the centre of town. Rooms are immaculate with hot water bathrooms and comfortable beds. There's a family room with two bedrooms and bathrooms, as well as singles through to triples (one single, one double) on offer. Given all the pristine floor tiling, it can get a touch noisy if people are talking in the corridors or modest lounge/lobby area. A simple breakfast of eggs, bread, rice and bananas comes with the deal. Best of all, about 30 minutes after the mosque quiets down after its first call of the day, the nuns get going singing. We'd never woken to a nuns' choir before. Recommended.

Rima Hotel

Backpacker value 6/10

Jl Ahmed Yani 14, Ruteng

T: (0385) 22 196

rimahotel@rocketmail.com

100,000-250,000 rupiah

Slightly closer to town than MBC, Rima Hotel is the best backpacker value in Ruteng and if you're travelling on a tight budget, look no further. Rima is a 10-minute walk from the centre of town, but that's really the only downside to this solid backpacker pad. Much of the hotel is wooden and the cheapest rooms are upstairs. They're functional affairs, with aged mattresses and enough room to swing a pack, but that is about it. Some rooms are considerably nicer than others, so look around first. It also may pay to inspect your blankets and bedding for cleanliness. They upstairs rooms don't have private bathrooms -- that's downstairs -- which isn't ideal. If you're after something (slightly) fancier, there are ground floor rooms with private bathrooms. Showers do get hot, though only briefly -- and the running water sometimes shorts out without warning.

Susteran St Maria Berdukacita has the cleanest rooms in Ruteng, and quite possibly Flores as well.

There are a couple of common areas, a simple noticeboard and a few lounges that were obviously swiped from a Thunderbirds set. Rounding out the deal, a couple of upper floor verandas overlook the main road. We liked this place, and while we wouldn't want to live here, it was fine for a night or two. The Rima gets very noisy during the day and in the early morning, as a family lives here and numerous youngsters from the area come to use the neighbouring internet cafe and to hang out chatting at night -- an issue that paper thin walls don't do much to help with. Staff are friendly and speak some English, but are not well-versed when it comes to local guides and attractions. They can book minibus tickets for you to other destinations. Motorcycle hire is on offer, while ojek to most attractions can be hailed from outside during the daytime. There's also a pretty good WiFi that only works reliably in the upstairs common area. Breakfast of a pancake and coffee is included.

EAT AND MEET

The southern end of Ruteng town has a gaggle of simple rumah makan joints that will fill a hole in the tummy. Expect beef rendang, *ayam goreng* (fried chicken), *cap cay* (stir-fried vegetables) and exceptionally low prices. Zippy green chilli sambal is a particular specialty out here and worth sampling if you're a spice addict. Ruteng rolls up its streets promptly after 19:30, and finding ojek transport near the restaurant area if you're without a private car can be difficult.

If you're staying out at Rima or MBC (not that there are many other options) there is a simple warung about 50 metres past MBC that is fine for one-plate meals.

If you're travelling with kids who are about to mount a coup if spaghetti isn't delivered, head straight to Agape which does simple Western dishes along with a few local plates in a comfortable, though smoke-filled, setting. Free WiFi too.

A very good Balinese owned restaurant with coconut milk-rich specialities from the island, as well as inexpensive beer and a rather funky wood and sea-shells interior, is Rumah Makan ChaCha at Jalan Diponegoro, Number 12. Friendly owner and computer teacher Yayuk Widianita speaks flawless English, and she's happy to chat about Ruteng and offer local advice. It's located

near Ruteng's red-and-white cathedral, which is useful information as we noticed no ojek drivers had much inkling of where this place is. Sweet and sour crab goes for 30,000 rupiah, *soto ayam* for 25,000, and special nasi goreng for 20,000, among other menu items, including water spinach with *belacan* (shrimp paste). There's also french fries, tempeh and tofu on the menu for vegetarians, as well as well-chilled Bintang and Guinness at 25,000 for a small bottle. Recommended.

SIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS

Spider web fields

Worth a look 7/10

17km west of Ruteng

Traditionally related to communal land-use practices, segments of the "pie chart" were farmed by particular families within the community -- we were told the bigger the family and therefore labour supply, the bigger the segment they'd be given to work.

While you'll see examples of spider web fields as you travel from Labuan Bajo to Ruteng, one of the best examples is an Cancar, around 17 kilometres west of Ruteng. Any driver or guide will know where they are and there is a viewpoint beside a telecoms tower that offers an excellent view over the fields. If you have your own transport, be sure to stop before you get to Ruteng to avoid needing to backtrack.

Liang Bua (Hobbit cave)

Well worth a visit 8/10

At only 106 centimetres in height, the adult female skeleton was dated back to only 18,000 years ago while being far similar in stature and development to fossils dating back over 3 million years. This discovery challenged long-held theories surrounding the history of human development and the jury is still out on exactly how Homo Floresiensis came to be. One theory is that this humanoid was related to Homo erectus -- ancient African exports that fell to the bigger brains of Homo sapiens -- but that the isolation of Flores allowed them to survive far longer.

What isn't up for discussion though is what ended their existence -- a giant volcanic eruption brought their time on Earth to an end. Though do note, our guide offered to take us to another village to meet one of the "Hobbit's" direct descendants.

There is a small museum on site and while the displays are only in Indonesian, they're easy to make sense of. The cave itself, hobbits aside, is impressive and the scenery along the way is just beautiful.

For more information, see:

<http://humanorigins.si.edu/research/asian-research/hobbits>

The vast cave at Liang Bua -- home to Flores' very own "Hobbit".



The easiest way to reach the cave is by ojek -- the road is all weather and in good condition -- the trips takes about 30 minutes each way and allow for 30 minutes to an hour at the cave.

Ranamese Lake

Scenic 7/10

Around 18km east of Ruteng

The lake reaches an impressive depth of 43 metres and resembles the sort of spot tailor-made for a good Loch Ness Monster-type myth.

The crater lake has two viewpoints, the first is indicated by a large concrete wall (we assume there to obscure view to passing traffic) and the second

about 700 metres further down the road via a dilapidated series of government bungalows. The crater lake is believed to be a magical place and the home of lost spirits -- as such swimming is not recommended. We have heard however about plans to add a rescue team, canoeing, a flying fox and even scuba diving, though the currently abandoned bungalows and lost spirits suggest perhaps that this is a bit ambitious.

Get to the lake by walking past a series of out-of-use bungalows, through a forest trail with a lot of trees -- be sure to follow the trail around the lake's rim to the left to reach the viewing platform. It's a lovely place to sit and relax, and watch enormous tropical butterflies flit by.

Campsites are set to open near here soon, and a new guesthouse in the town of Robo will offer rides to the lake for backpackers. It's tentatively set to open in June of 2013. If you're looking for more information about Ranamese Lake and the planned tourism development there, try new manager Yorie, who can be contacted at sangpedang@yahoo.com, or on (0853) 2956 4412. He speaks English, is very excited about the potential of the area, and can fill you in on the latest information.

Todo

Fascinating 8/10

36 km from Ruteng

Both men and women have to don an ikat sarong to enter this site. Once you're appropriately dressed, a local guide (who likely won't speak much English) will show you around the house, and point out the impressive carved wooden slabs that represent the symbols of Todo. The Todo clan ruled Manggarai's south prior to the arrival of the Dutch, and built nine *mbaru niang* or drumhouses in their royal village.

The house you see today, built of palm and wood, was reconstructed in 1992, and is likely due for another once-over. Stop to admire the five impressive wooden carvings over the door, which feature womb motifs. The most interesting aspect of Todo likely is the mysterious *gendang tutung* drum that's secretly stored here -- reportedly crafted from the skin of a young girl, who was either killed by jealous suitors or by her own studying-abroad father (depending on which version you get). It only emerges on special occasions,

though rumour has it that a big enough cash gift can induce the Todo guide to bring it out -- we didn't try this.

The lovely *waringin* tree at the front of the old stone pathways in front of the surviving drumhouse makes for striking photographs, and you'll also see some ageing British cannons. If you can't make it all the way up to Wae Rebo, this is a fascinating introduction to the traditional Manggarai method of architecture.

It's located 36 kilometres from Ruteng and it takes about two hours to reach from there. It's an easy detour from the road to or from Wae Rebo to get here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Located out of town to the east, Ruteng airport has flights with TransNusa to Kupang three times a week.

Trans Nusa

<http://www.transnusa.co.id/>

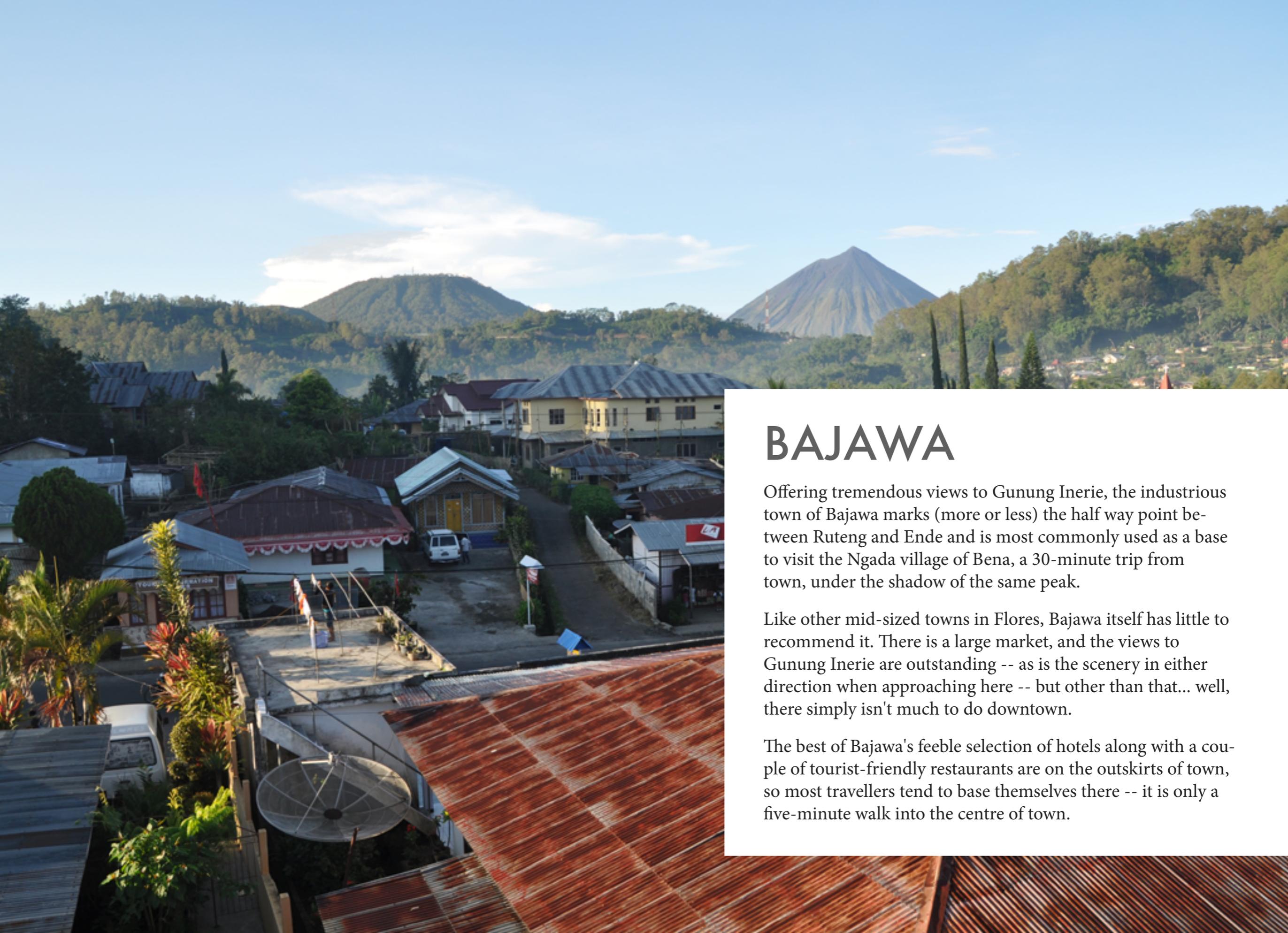
Bus

Minibus transport to most major destinations in Flores can be arranged through your hotel, though try to book early as they do fill up.

Sample fares include Labuan Bajo 70,000 rupiah, Bajawa 70,000 rupiah, Ende 140,000 rupiah, (with early morning (07:00) and afternoon departures) and Maumere 220,000 rupiah.

Getting around

Rima Hotel can arrange car hire at 600,000 rupiah per day (including driver) and motorbike hire for 120,000 rupiah per day.



BAJAWA

Offering tremendous views to Gunung Inerie, the industrious town of Bajawa marks (more or less) the half way point between Ruteng and Ende and is most commonly used as a base to visit the Ngada village of Bena, a 30-minute trip from town, under the shadow of the same peak.

Like other mid-sized towns in Flores, Bajawa itself has little to recommend it. There is a large market, and the views to Gunung Inerie are outstanding -- as is the scenery in either direction when approaching here -- but other than that... well, there simply isn't much to do downtown.

The best of Bajawa's feeble selection of hotels along with a couple of tourist-friendly restaurants are on the outskirts of town, so most travellers tend to base themselves there -- it is only a five-minute walk into the centre of town.

The main two attractions of Bajawa (aside from it being a comfortable and sensible spot to break the journey) are actually outside town at Bena and at some hot springs. Both are well worth visiting.

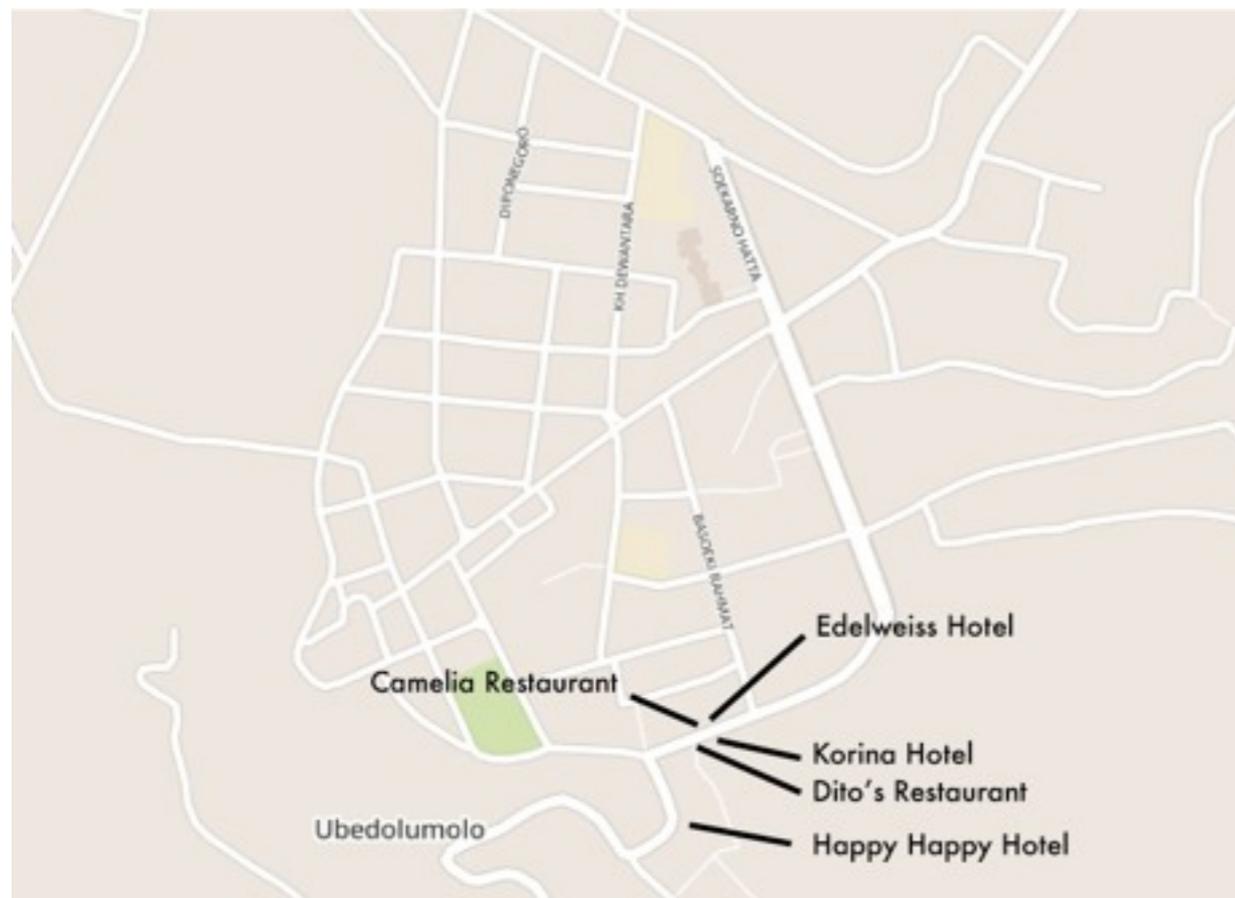
Regardless of if you're travelling to Ruteng or Ende, the scenery is magnificent.

ORIENTATION

Bajawa is located a little off the main Trans-Flores Highway, so unless you're heading to Riung you'll come and go via Jalan Ahmed Yani at the southern end of town -- this will quickly take you past the main "tourist strip" till you turn left and meet Jalan Gajah Mada.

This is the main road through town which hosts the ATMs, Bajawa central market, and, facing one another, the central mosque and church.

Edeilweiss, Happy Happy Hotel and Korina all advertise free WiFi and Telkomsel offer a patchy EDGE connection.



ACCOMMODATION

While there are hotels scattered further afield, a cluster of hotels on the main road into town see most travellers overnight.

Happy Happy Hotel

Clean and well kept 8/10

Jl Sudirman, Bajawa

T: (0384) 21 763; (0853) 3370 4455

hotel.happy.happy@gmail.com

<http://www.hotelhappyhappy.com>

250,000-300,000 rupiah

[Compare rates at Agoda.com](#)

Down the road from Edelweiss and Korina this homely establishment is a good second option should Edelweiss be full. Rooms are clean and well kept, there is a small deck out front and a comfortable common area within. The hotel is by the main road into town and we'd guess the rooms would get a bit of traffic noise, more so perhaps than Edelweiss or Korina, so try for a room towards the rear away from the road. Friendly and popular, Happy Happy was full on both days we visited -- always a good sign. WiFi advertised. A short walk from nearby restaurants and 15 minutes on foot from the centre of town.

Hotel Edelweiss

Best in downtown Bajawa 7/10

Jl Yani 76, Bajawa

T: (0384) 21 345; (0813) 3845 6444

ivan_bth@yahoo.com

150,000-350,000 rupiah

It would be fair to say Edelweiss appears to have grown "organically" with a variety of rooms on offer across multiple floors (and we guess) multiple stages of construction. By Bajawa standards, the rooms are good. They're clean and of a decent size and the more expensive rooms come with hot water bathrooms, though the bathrooms, especially the drains, could do with a good sandblasting. We did like the different tile pattern on every surface though -- well, it woke us up in the mornings, anyway. Staff are switched on and helpful. Breakfast is entirely forgettable. Free WiFi is advertised -- when



Locals bathing at the Mangeruda hot springs outside Bajawa. The waters from a hot spring combine with a waterfall to provide a variety of temperatures to cool off (or warm up) in.

it works it is great, but it doesn't always work. Economy rooms are ground floor, standards and superiors upper rear area.

Korina Hotel

Edelweiss' poor cousin 6/10

Jl Yani, Bajawa

125,000-250,000 rupiah

This may be your best bet in high season when you arrive later in the afternoon and everything else is full. Compared to Edelweiss this is poorer value at each price point, but rooms are at least adequate. In comparison to Edelweiss across the road, in the fan-

cier rooms the TVs are older, in the cheaper rooms the bathrooms are grottier, but that's about all. It's fine for a night. It has WiFi and the staff are helpful and friendly, though not as sharp as those at Edelweiss.

EAT AND MEET

There are two restaurants opposite each other beside the Edelweiss. The Camelia restaurant beside the hotel does a range of Chinese and Indonesian dishes at reasonable standards -- by all the tour agent stickers on the walls it must do a roaring trade in high season. Their pork dishes are, well, very porkish -- we had a



nasi goreng babi and it tasted like the rice had been boiled in pork fat, which is not necessarily a bad thing.

Across the road is Dito's, which also does a mix of Chinese and Indonesian dishes but with a few Western standards thrown in as well. This was our preferred spot for dinner and it had a cosier, more homely atmosphere than Camelia. Go for the guacamole with *krupuk* -- it was possibly the best dish we had on mainland Flores.

Both of these places are very popular with tourists and their drivers -- if you're looking for a more local feel, or want to get off the tourist strip, there are a bunch of Padang places near the sprawling central market.

SIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS

Mangeruda hotsprings

Well worth a soak 8/10

30 minutes to the east of Bajawa

What makes Mangeruda so great is that the hotspring combines with a cold-water waterfall, meaning that depending on where you sit the water is scalding hot and still, rushing and cold or somewhere in between. The cold water tumbles down a smooth rock surface and combines with the hot water waterfall underneath a sagging tree. It is excellent!

Note the water can be extremely hot in places, so do dip in a toe before cannon-balling in.

On weekends it can be quite busy, while on weekdays crowds would be far lower. There are changerooms on site along with a small playground for the kids to play in once they tire of the hot water.

Sitting in the shadow on Gunung Inerie, the Ngada village of Bena is a highlight of a visit to Bajawa.

Bena

A classic example of Ngada culture 8/10

17km from Bajawa

The village comprises two rows of traditional houses facing one another across an open area dotted with *ngadhu* totems and *bhaga* shrines. Upon arrival you'll be hustled across to a reception where you're asked to make a donation and sign the guestbook. You then walk up the right side, climb the stairs to the viewpoint and walk back down along the left side.

As you walk up note the buffalo horns and pig jaws that have been tied to the sides of some of the houses. Women will be weaving traditional fabric (available for purchase should you be interested) on their verandas or selling local produce including vanilla beans and candlenuts. You can also ask to look inside a house; just ask first, and of course always ask before taking a person's photograph.

At the top of the village is a shrine to the Virgin Mary and behind that a viewpoint that offers an impressive panorama across the surrounds.

As you make your way down the left side look to the centre and you'll see a series of three objects repeated on the way down -- the *ngadhu* totems (kind of like umbrellas), the *bhaga* shrines (little houses), platforms of flat stones which are known as *lenggi* and lastly megaliths.

The *ngadhu* totems are built to symbolise the male clan ancestor. The trunk is decoratively carved while the exterior of the roof is tightly wrapped. The

bhaga shrine represents the female side of the clan and is apparently big enough to contain just two small men -- yes, when the rituals are held within the *bhaga* shrine, they are only ever undertaken by men. The *lenggi* are used as a court to settle disputes within the village.

The village is a fascinating place to visit and we suggest trying to get there early as in high season it can get busy. We arrived a little before 09:00 during April and were the only ones there.



Bena village. Note the *ngadhu* totems and *bhaga* shrines running down the centre.

The village is around 17 kilometres from Bajawa and is easily visited by car, bemo or motor-bike -- regardless of your means of transport, have them wait as there is little passing traffic.

TRANSPORT

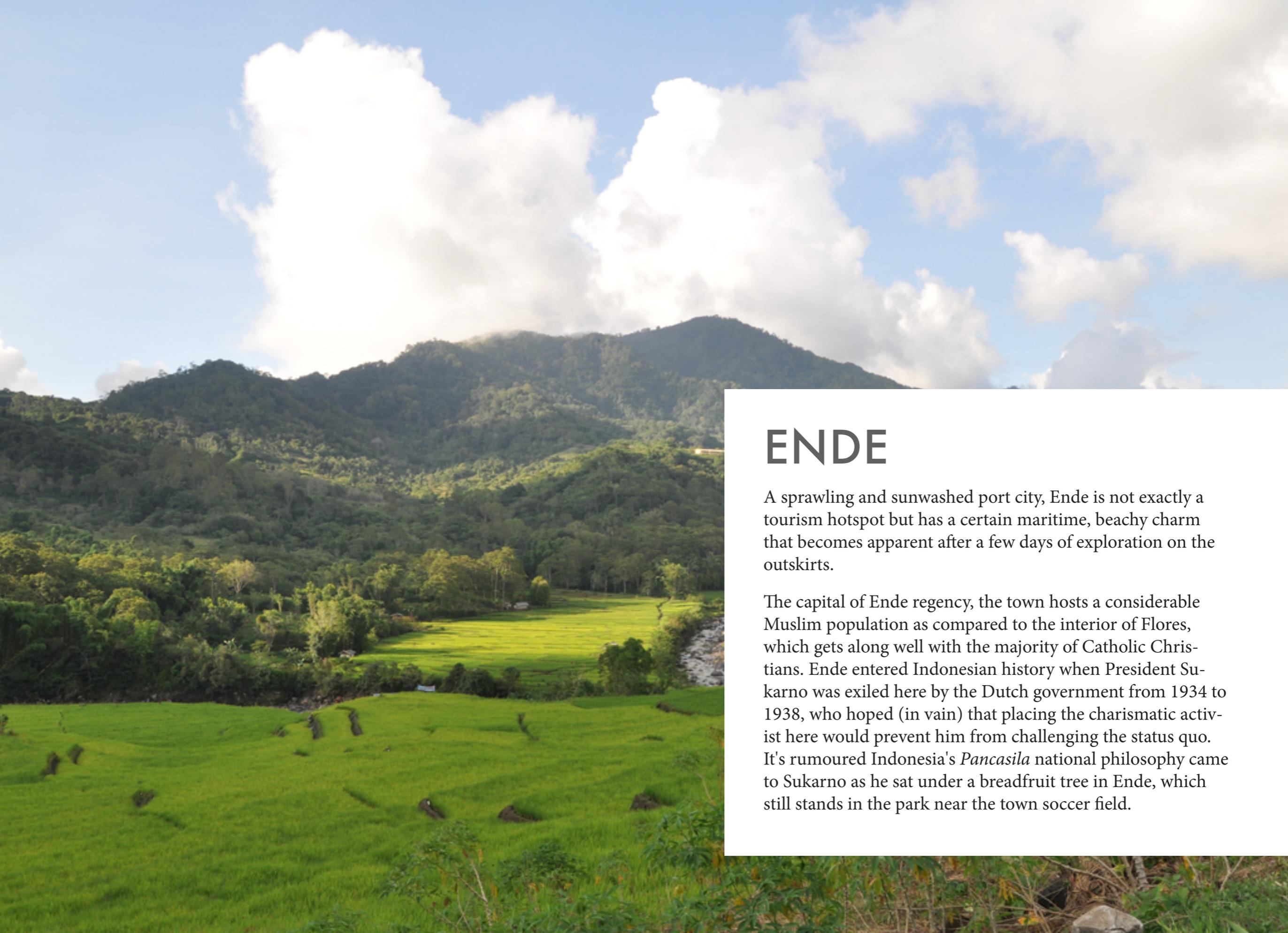
Bus

Minibus transport to most major destinations can be arranged through your hotel or via the tourist office opposite Hotel Edelweiss.

Sample fares include Labuan Bajo 70,000 rupiah, Bajawa 70,000 rupiah and Moni 100,000 rupiah.

Boat

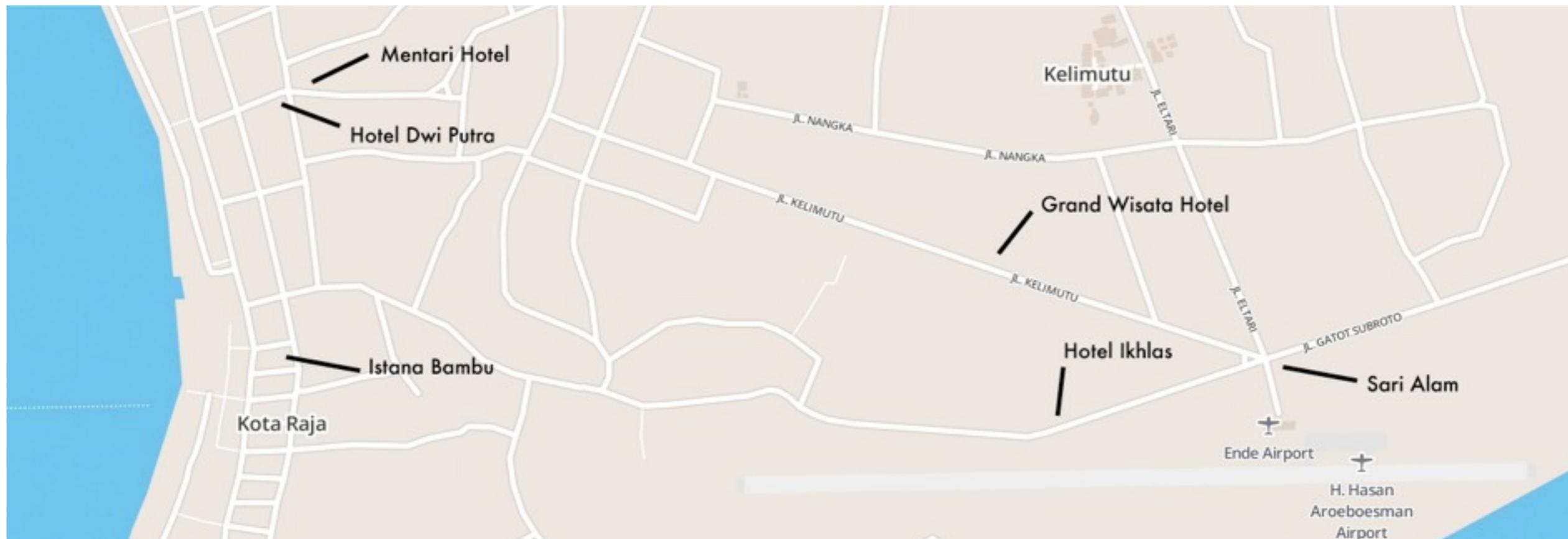
The closest port to Bajawa is Aimere from where there is a weekly ferry service to Kupang.



ENDE

A sprawling and sunwashed port city, Ende is not exactly a tourism hotspot but has a certain maritime, beachy charm that becomes apparent after a few days of exploration on the outskirts.

The capital of Ende regency, the town hosts a considerable Muslim population as compared to the interior of Flores, which gets along well with the majority of Catholic Christians. Ende entered Indonesian history when President Sukarno was exiled here by the Dutch government from 1934 to 1938, who hoped (in vain) that placing the charismatic activist here would prevent him from challenging the status quo. It's rumoured Indonesia's *Pancasila* national philosophy came to Sukarno as he sat under a breadfruit tree in Ende, which still stands in the park near the town soccer field.



Accommodation choices are limited here, but Ende and its surrounding areas make for a lovely motorbike holiday, with black sand beaches, friendly small villages, and jaw-droppingly gorgeous jungle and mountain scenery all within easy reach.

Most visitors blow through here on the way to Kelimutu, Moni or Bajawa, but it's well worth a couple of days of exploration. Spread out and scenic with little in the way of traffic, this is one Flores town that really rewards those who rent a motorbike.

ORIENTATION

Ende is backed by the Savu Sea on both its east and west sides with the distinctive twin volcanoes of Gunung Meja and Gunung Iya to the south. Jalan Ahmad Yani is the main drag through town and connects the east coast and the west. The airport is towards the east coast and the harbour to the west.

ATMS are plentiful and cover major Indonesian banks, and regional air carriers have offices at the airport here, allowing you to easily purchase tickets to

points onward. The small airport sees flights head to Denpasar, Labuan Bajo and Kupang, among other destinations, via Merpati, TransNusa and Lion. Check with an agent for the latest schedule.

WiFi access is available at the Mentari Hotel and the Grand Wisata but is frustratingly slow, making Ende a rather poor choice for telecommuting tourists. The rundown-looking internet cafe and laundry across the street from the Safari Hotel offers by far the fastest speeds in town -- but be aware, there's no bathroom there.

Guides and travel agencies

Flores Tour and Travel Service

T: (0813) 3923 9783

flores_travel@yahoo.com

This local tour and travel company run by the rather bombastic and fluently English-speaking Vincent offers car hire to Kelimutu and surrounding areas, day tours to cassava plantations, Wolotopo, Blue Stone Beach, and Maumere.

Vincent can also sort out package tours, and is a talkative source of useful information on the area. He works out of his home and prefers to meet with you at your hotel or at a restaurant.

Ifan

T: (0852) 3925 4778

Suggested Ende guide for the city and points beyond.

Sri Wahyuni

T: (0813) 5317 9577

Very professional young female guide who speaks good English and knows the Ende area well. Wolotopo, Ende Beach, Kelimutu, and other points further afield are all possible. Sri is a student of local culture and enjoys explaining motifs and architectural styles.

Roland Tour and Travel

Jl Garuda No 39 (Wisma Amika), Ende

T: (0381) 23214; (0812) 3793 0888

<http://rolandtravel.co.id>

We didn't try this outfit, but they came suggested at the Grand Wisata Hotel as one of Ende's limited travel agency options.

ACCOMMODATION

Hotel Ikhlas

Pleasant backpacker digs 8/10

Jalan Ahmad Yani, Ende

T: (0381) 21 695

40,000-200,000 rupiah

This backpacker standard doesn't look like much from the outside, but it's actually a rather large property, with room choices ranging from grungy (and cheap) singles to very nice air-con rooms with garden-facing patios. The better rooms are very clean for a backpacker place, though the cheap rooms are suitably depressing -- some more than others, so ask to look around. For often overpriced Flores, these are great rates. The Hotel Ikhlas also has a common area with a TV and offers quite a few useful travel agent

services for both sea and overland travel, making it a good choice for solo travellers hoping to meet others. We didn't try the restaurant, but we heard it's serviceable. There's WiFi on offer -- if that's not fast enough, true digital natives can nip across the street, where an internet cafe-cum-laundromat hosts the best connection in Ende. It's close to the airport, and you can easily walk to some of the better area restaurants. Prices go down in the slow spring-time off season. We were quoted a very reasonable 120,000 rupiah for a pleasantly spacious room with a private bathroom, TV and a garden porch. Recommended.

Hotel Dwi Putra

Less-than-excellent rooms, good location 7/10

Jl Yos Sudarso, 27-29, Ende

T: (0381) 21 685

137,000-220,000 rupiah

This impressive from the outside relic has been hosting tourists for decades, and the wear-and-tear of all those years of use certainly shows. Staff are friendly and keys appear to be kept in the pocketbook of the family matriarch. Rooms are distinctly depressing, but reasonably clean and catch a bit of breeze from the ocean nearby -- take a look at a few different options before you make your final selection. A small restaurant on the second floor features a cardboard statue of a Japanese giant robot for reasons known only to management. WiFi is available in the lobby.

Grand Wisata Hotel

The only luxury game in Ende 7/10

Jl Kelimutu, No 32, Ende

T: (0381) 24 010; (0381) 22 974

grandwisataende@gmail.com

<http://www.grandwisatahotel-ende.co.cc>

500,000-700,000 rupiah

The only luxury game in Ende, this hotel looks a bit like a strip mall from the outside but has nice and clean rooms with large, squashy beds and all the modern conveniences -- although windows appear to be something of a luxury in the cheaper set-ups. There's little perceptible difference between the standard and superior rooms, and all come equipped with hot water, air-con, and a TV and minibar. There's an okay swimming pool outside and a pretty



Coffee beans for sale by the jar at the market in Ende.

good attached restaurant and coffee shop (Edelweiss), as well as a travel agent's office that can book flights and arrange some overland travel. Front desk staff speak English, and can suggest guides and tours in the area.

Merpati Hotel

Could be a good budget option 7/10

Jl Ahmad Yani, Ende

T: (0381) 22 535

75,000 rupiah

All the rooms were full so we weren't allowed to peek into one, although this brightly painted orange place

seemed pleasant enough from the exterior. After-school study classes take place in the middle of the building, an interesting dual-business approach. You'll find the Merpati down an alleyway off a main Ende thoroughfare, which features a collection of small family homes and numerous fighting roosters making the rounds.

Mentari Hotel and Restaurant

Overpriced 6/10

Jl Pahlawan, Ende

T: (0813) 8055 5774

250,000-350,000 rupiah

The Mentari has whitewashed rooms that are clean and reasonably quiet while more expensive options come with TVs and air-con. Accessible outlets appear to have been deemed frivolous by whoever set up the rooms. Staff speaks no English and largely have a service style that can be described as "surly". Its inclusion as a top choice in a certain popular guidebook may explain the problem. There's WiFi, but it's incredibly slow and is sold only in inconvenient four-hour chunks, internet access being curiously hard to find in this largeish port town. Hot water here is actually hot and stays that way, a rare commodity in Indonesian hotels. Checkout time is noon, and a simple breakfast upstairs is included. There's no real reason to stay here, as it's rather overpriced for what you get, and both the Safari and the Hotel Ikhlas offer about the same quality for much lower prices, in a more convenient part of town. The restaurant upstairs has hilly ocean views (nice at sunset and sunrise) and offers the usual Ende assortment of seafood, fried rice and noodles, and chicken specialities, as well as sate and *gado gado* plus cold Bintang. If you want to eat elsewhere, you're in for a long walk or an ojek ride -- this isn't exactly the most exciting neighbourhood.

EAT AND MEET

Beachside cafes

Catch the sunset 8/10

Near the soccer field, Ende

Ende doesn't have anything you're likely to confuse with a bar, but this small strip of open-air cafes near the soccer field and port is a great place to catch the sunset and sip cold drinks. There's also simple fried snacks and the very popular *bakso*, Indonesia's riff on Southeast Asia's favourite rice noodle soup. A particular favorite with young Ende locals, the soundtrack here is American country and rock music -- Rhett Akins was big on the night we visited. Kids play pickup games of volleyball on the black sand beach, and you can watch fishing boats return from a day out as you relax. How to get here? Head to the soccer field down Jalan Sudirman, then make a right on Jalan Panterae. Look for the big park sign and the commotion. Only active during the evenings and around sundown, especially on the weekends.

Istana Bambu Restaurant

Local-style Chinese fish house 8/10

Jl Kemurah 30A, Ende

T: (0381) 21 921

This local-style Chinese fish house may have suffered from guidebook exposure, but it still serves up okay and moderately priced fare. Hungry travellers can pick up shrimp, fish and chicken dishes as well as numerous incarnations of fried rice and noodles, plus *soto ayam* for 25,000 rupiah. A bit unusually for predominantly Muslim Ende, there are many pork specialties on the menu, including sate, fried rice and sweet-and-sour stir-fried pork. Just about every main on the menu is priced at 50,000 rupiah, which is at the least a way to keep calculations simple. Large bottles of Bintang go for 30,000 rupiah, while there's even a banana pancake to soothe your inner backpacker for 25,000. As is always the case in Ende, try to go early -- the door gets locked around 20:30. They stock a dizzying array of Popsicles and other mass-market ice cream treats if you're feeling a bit parched.

Sari Alam

Inexpensive and authentic 8/10

Jl Ahmad Yani, Ende

The Sari Alam features Padang food in one of Ende's more upmarket interiors, and is a good bet for inexpensive and authentic Indonesian eats. We paid 56,000 rupiah for a hefty lunch for two, including beef rendang, tasty chilli-fried shrimp, coconut milk stew, eggplant and much more. There's plenty of selections from fish to chicken to vegetarian specialties, and you can opt to eat inside a pleasant air-con area, complete with a very modern fountain window. It's popular for lunchtime with locals -- no beer, but plenty of soft drink selections. An easy walk from the Ikhlas and Safari hotels -- coming out of the hotel and facing the street, walk left until you see the sign. Open for lunch and dinner.

Warung Bangkalan Ende

An airy lunch spot 7/10

Jl Ahmad Yani, Ende

This pleasant and airy lunch spot serves up excellent chicken and goat (better than it sounds) sate, drenched in a rich and dark peanut sauce. Flores lo-



cals enjoy eating goat -- a reality you may have guessed at by the profusion of the beasts browsing on seemingly every patch of available land in Ende. You can also try a tasty coconut milk and goat meat soup here, as well as the usual *soto ayam*, *nasi goreng* and *nasi campur*, plus fried fish. Vegetarians and those not interested in sampling the cute horned beasties can try spicy fried tempeh cubes and stir-fried mixed vegetables. There's chilled iced tea in glass bottles in the fridge. They're only open early mornings and for lunch, and there's another venue in the east of town that serves the same menu items.

SIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS

Wolotopo

A beautiful hillside village 8/10

12 east of Ende

This beautiful hillside village is reached by a pleasant motorbike ride through steep and electric green canyons 12 kilometres east of Ende following the coast, a scenic journey that takes about 25 minutes give or take. Wolotopo is known for its traditional and lovingly maintained adat (traditional) houses, which visitors are eagerly ushered into for a token 20,000 rupiah donation.

We toured the *sao ata laki*, a house that's currently home to six boisterous families, many of whose members are proud descendants of the earliest residents of Wolotopo. You'll notice wooden carvings of youthful and distinctly elderly pairs of breasts on the sides of the entry door -- this house is meant to symbolise a female body, all the way down to the curious *pusu ate*, a wooden carving that hangs from the centre of the home and symbolises the heart and liver. The family pours milk on this object to "feed" the ancestors during special occasions.

You can also check out the dramatically positioned *keda kanga*, a stilted wooden structure that holds the bones of Wolotopo ancestors. The horse

Goat satay (*satay gamping*) from Warung Bangkalan Ende on Jl Ahmad Yani.

on the central boat symbolises the Lio people's fondness for these animals -- the blue fruits hanging from all four corners of the wooden box are known as *seko*, and symbolise abundance. There's more to Wolotopo than local culture: views of the exuberantly colourful village tumbling into the sea over green hills make for impressive photo ops.

Check out the immense banyan tree in the centre of town, which is flanked by ancient stone graves. There's also a creepy wooden suspension bridge, a banana plantation, and a lovely rust-red and cream church with stained glass windows and a koi pond. You'll likely be invited inside somebody's home for a cup of tea or coffee with a breathtaking view over the water.

Best enjoyed with a guide, who can take you here by means of a motorbike or a car. If you'd rather go it alone, head to the Wolowona market east out of town and turn right at the roundabout. You'll eventually find yourself on the coastal road to Wolotopo. Locals will help steer you if you get confused. You can park your bike in a designated spot at the bottom of the Wolotopo hill.

Harbour and Market

An interesting wander 6/10

West coast of Ende

The small Ende harbour isn't exactly a tourist attraction, but it's interesting to wander out onto the pier and ask the boats where they're heading. Makassar, Bali and the Moluccas -- the answers are as exotic as Flores itself. You'll see mid-sized container ships idling in the harbour as well as the occasional ferry and passenger ship. Kids play in the clear waters, and it's a great place to watch one of Ende's typically overwrought and gorgeous sunsets.

You'll find the harbour on Ende's west coast -- walk to the beach, head south and just keep going.

Ende's local market

Well worth an early morning visit 7/10

Jalan Pasar, Ende

Located to the west of the harbour and running alongside the ocean, this market is an especially vibrant place to visit in the early morning, as locals hawk their wares of cassava, ikat cloths, red hot chilli peppers, fresh coffee and much more. It's an interesting place to take photographs and chat with

the ever-talkative Flores locals -- you are guaranteed to encounter fruits and vegetables you've never seen before. Come before 08:00 for the most interesting experience. Unmissable is the fish market, where local fishermen and hawkers trade in epic and delicious looking slabs of tuna, swordfish and more -- from tiny silver pomfrets to eels and squid.

Blue Stone Beach

Striking 6/10

25km west of Ende

This striking beach is composed almost entirely of unusual turquoise, pastel blue, and reddish stones, a geological marvel. The attractive 25 kilometre drive northwest from Ende on the road to Bajawa takes about 30 or 40 minutes, and passes by green canyons tumbling into the sea, gorgeous black-and-strips of sand, and colourful villages occupying space that would be taken up with overpriced beach resorts in most other parts of the world.

You'll see the Blue Stone Beach from the road before you get there: make a left off the main road to reach the water, where you'll likely be approached by friendly and somewhat bored kids and teens if you come after school hours. Swimming here is fine, although it's likely best if you keep some clothes on to avoid offending local sensibilities.

The stones make a unique rattling sound as the tide washes over them -- huge blue-greenish cliffs reaching the sea here hint at their origin. You can view the green and often misty mountains of Bajawa to your right, facing the ocean. Ende locals feel their blue stones will someday become something of an international commodity, but as for now, this gorgeous strip is all yours.

Ende Beach

The local strip 8/10

East of Ende

This attractive strip of black sand and electric blue water, located east of Ende on the road out to Wolotopo, would attract pricey condominiums almost anywhere else in the world.

Here, it's the sole domain of crabs and the occasional group of local teens -- but only in the afternoons. A known local swimming spot, you can take shelter from the sun in a sandy cliffside area that boasts a large tree and some



Ende's coastline is lined with hidden away little beaches, often totally undeveloped, making it an excellent destination for beach wanderers.

small tide pools. A great place to bring a snack and a book, and vegetate. Pack out your trash and pick up any other rubbish items you see -- at least if you remotely value your karma. Swimming near Flores can be a rough and current-heavy business, so be careful and don't swim alone.

Bung Karno Museum

A modest arrangement 6/10

Jl Perwira, located near Ende's western coast. A rather empty free museum built into Sukarno's former Ende home, where the exiled political icon wrote a Frankenstein knockoff, sat under trees having deep political thoughts, and painted nicely executed pictures of local rituals. There's not much here beyond some dusty beds, plates, and a few paintings, but the modest home gives some idea of the origins of Indonesia's founding political father.

Go around the back to look at the old and very deep artesian well, built in the 1930s.

TRANSPORT

Air

Ende Airport is located quite centrally, and offers flights on regional carriers to Kupang, Labuan Bajo, Bali (by means of Labuan Bajo) and other destinations. Carriers include Merpati, Wings and Transnusa. Check with an

agent for schedules, as they're nothing if not fluid in this part of the world. In high season book these flights as early as possible.

You're encouraged to arrive a somewhat over-cautious two hours before your flight to check in at this tiny regional airport. Once you go through security, there's nowhere to buy food or snacks in the aggressively air-con waiting lounge -- plan accordingly.

Air Wings (Lion Air)

<http://www.lionair.co.id/>

Merpati

<http://www.merpati.co.id/>

Trans Nusa

<http://www.transnusa.co.id/>

Bus

Semi-comfortable air-con minibuses depart regularly for Bajawa, Maumere, Moni and other points further afield, usually in the morning. Your hotel or an agent can help sort out tickets for you. The ride from Ruteng to Ende takes about seven to eight hours depending on the roads.

Boat

Inquire at your hotel or an agent for specifics, as things do change regularly. At the time of



Many of the beaches surrounding Ende are covered with smooth pale blue stones. The waves make a distinctive sound as they roll in over them.

writing there were ferry departures to Sumba (Saturday morning) and Kupang (Mondays).

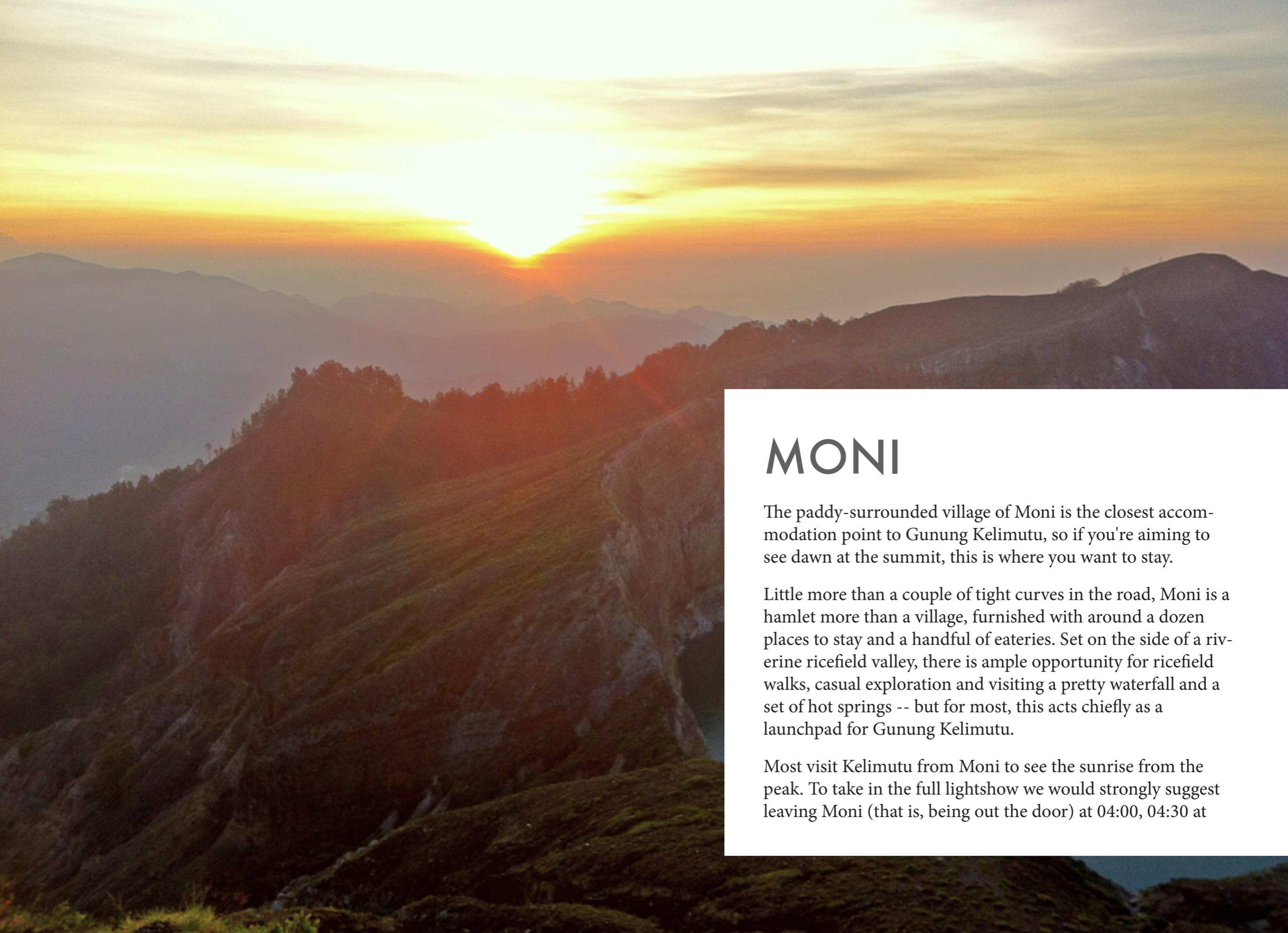
<http://www.pelni.co.id/>

Car and motorbike hire

Car hire to Kelimutu and surroundings can be arranged by travel agents for around 500,000 rupiah a day. Travel agents can also help you rent a motorbike, a good option for sprawling Ende.

Getting around

Ojeks are somewhat common in town, although they do dry up at night. Expect to pay around 5,000 rupiah for most destinations around town. The same goes for bemos, which often congregate at Jalan Hatta, located near the soccer field.



MONI

The paddy-surrounded village of Moni is the closest accommodation point to Gunung Kelimutu, so if you're aiming to see dawn at the summit, this is where you want to stay.

Little more than a couple of tight curves in the road, Moni is a hamlet more than a village, furnished with around a dozen places to stay and a handful of eateries. Set on the side of a riverine ricefield valley, there is ample opportunity for ricefield walks, casual exploration and visiting a pretty waterfall and a set of hot springs -- but for most, this acts chiefly as a launchpad for Gunung Kelimutu.

Most visit Kelimutu from Moni to see the sunrise from the peak. To take in the full lightshow we would strongly suggest leaving Moni (that is, being out the door) at 04:00, 04:30 at



The viewing point from Kelimutu isn't actually the summit, but the views, both down into the crater lakes and across to the horizon, are spectacular.

the absolute latest. This is because much of the beauty of the peak is in the early light playing through the clouds and down onto the peak -- if you're not there till 07:00 you'll miss much of the show.

If the early morning proves to be cloudy, you can often catch some lovely morning light around 09:00 -- though clouds often rolls in not soon after. From Moni it takes 30 to 45 minutes to reach the carpark by car, then another 20 to 30 minutes to walk to the peak. The walk is straightforward and those of even a moderate level of fitness will have few problems. You can glance into the turquoise and brown craters from

off-trail viewpoints, although exercise caution and adhere to signs -- hikers have been killed here before.

Aside from the peak, at the Kelimutu end of town sits Rainbow Cafe and opposite it is a small trail, which leads to Murundao waterfall. This is well worth a look. Check out the collapsed wall from when the swimming pool wall gave in (you can still swim there apparently, we didn't try) and a smoothly carved canyon where the water rushes on. There are also (according to the lady at Rainbow) hot springs above the falls, but we didn't have a chance to check them out.

From the far side of the falls one can trek through a village and eventually to the Kelimutu carpark. We like the idea of driving up and walking back rather than the reverse. The walk back up from Moni, all the way to the Kelimutu car park is both extremely steep and totally unsignposted -- do not do this without a guide. It's a much better idea to do this the other way around, all downhill.

Down the hill from the car park is a steep and verdant arboretum with labelled plants that feels a bit like stepping into the Lost World -- keep an eye out for unusual tropical birds.

Aside from the couple of guesthouses in Moni that offer food, there are a few warungs in the centre of the village and nightly traditional dance shows -- just follow the drums, you'll find it.

ORIENTATION

There are no ATMs or money-changing facilities in Moni. The closest ATM is in Ende. 3G internet with Telkomsel works in Moni and a cafe next door to Bintang advertises internet services.

ACCOMMODATION

Moni has a fairly small selection of places to stay. In low season this means rates are highly negotiable but in high season everything is full. In peak season late arriving guests may end up sleeping in their car or on a restaurant floor.

Bintang Lodge by Tobias

Should be your first port of call 8/10

Moni village

T: (0852) 3790 6259; (0812) 3761 6940

cafe.bintang@ymail.com

<http://www.bintang-lodge.com>

100,000-350,000 rupiah

The flashpacker favourite in town, Bintang Lodge has very solid and clean rooms in a couple of configurations. Rooms are a good size, the hot water

works and the comfortable beds come adorned with good quality mosquito nets. The in-house restaurant offers mostly average Western food, but the beers are iced and the staff very helpful. We found their advice on what to see and do in the surrounds both useful and accurate. Recommended.

Kelimutu Ecolodge

The fanciest digs in Moni 8/10

Desa Koanara

T: (081) 339 776 232; (0361) 747 4205

reservation@ecolodgesindonesia.com

<http://www.ecolodgesindonesia.com>

700,000-1,050,000 rupiah

Kelimutu Ecolodge is easily the flashiest accommodation in Moni, situated on the road out of the village on the way to Maumere. Accommodation is of a high standard, reminiscent of Bali, with thatched roofs and limited rice terrace views. Lodgings are available in either hotel rooms or freestanding bungalows with the latter costing more, but being the better option. Regardless of which you choose, prices are high given the options in the surrounds, but this is a professionally run operation (they also have a property on the outskirts of Labuan Bajo). Rooms are spotless, light and airy, with clean bathrooms and are mostly very well appointed. If you're looking for something more upmarket, this is your only option in Moni and it's a good one.

Arwaty Homestay

Solid bungalows 7/10

Moni village

300,000 rupiah

Set on the right, just after Moni Smille Warung, Arwaty offers freestanding thatch and wooden bungalows clustered around a small restaurant and carpark. The huts have cold water showers only and the staff were quite abrupt when we visited, but if you're looking for a freestanding bungalow, this is your only option in the village. Definitely negotiate the rate downwards as the rate they quoted us (300,000 rupiah) was overpriced compared to elsewhere.

Watugana Bungalows

Cute 7/10

Moni village

200,000 rupiah

With just two rooms, this gets our vote for the cutest place in town, with two yellow-roofed adjoining rooms overlooking an equally small restaurant. Cute and clean, with a shared veranda with two chair and table settings, this is a good option. Get in early though as with two rooms it is generally either full or empty! It's on the downward sloping side of the road so the huts should block some of the noise from passing traffic.

Pondok Wisata Hidayah Homestay

Simple and clean 6/10

Moni village

200,000 rupiah

This is the first place you'll hit in the village proper, on the right side when coming from Ende. The four rooms are in a pale blue concrete longhouse set-up and are a good size within. They all share the one common terrace area, each with their own deck setting and there is a small restaurant next door. When we asked the rate, the owner obviously had to have a think about it, so, as with most places in Moni, rates are very negotiable. Bathrooms are cold water only. If full, try Christin Lodge (in a house) or Sylvester (longhouse) both down the road on the right side, with similar offerings.



A lower cascade of Murandao waterfall, near the southern edge of Moni village.



SIGHTS AND ATTRACTIONS

Pemo village trek

A walk in the woods 8/10

If you're looking for a more exuberant way to return to Moni from Kelimutu, or are just in a mood for some further communing with nature, consider walking via Pemo. There's a somewhat overgrown and very downhill forest trek that leads through remote villages, hillside plantations, and striking scenery all the way to Moni. If you don't feel like walking that far, it's possible to take a very bumpy ojek ride from Pemo either back to Kelimutu, or all the way back to Moni. The choice is yours.

The six-kilometre long trek to Pemo, which takes 40 minutes to two hours depending on your fondness for downhill sprinting through the jungle, begins at the Kelimutu parking lot. There, you can hire a guide who will take you through the hard-to-navigate forest down the hill. We went with Markos Hawa, a small, friendly, and extremely loud Pemo village native who charges 300,000 rupiah for what will likely be one of the more unusual hikes of your life. Make sure to wear comfortable shoes, and bring some water and snacks.

Markos will lead you through the prehistoric jungles surrounding Kelimutu to his native village of Pemo, which features a traditional house, some betel-nut chewing ikat weavers, interesting Catholic graves, and stunning views of the sea and villages below. Enter a traditional house and check out the hanging wooden "heart" of the domicile, which is built to resemble a human body -- including the carved wooden human breasts mounted on one wall, meant to represent female ancestors.

Included in a hike with Markos: fresh guavas, carrots from the ground (cleaned with a machete) and numerous walking sticks if you show any sign of slipping, which are made on-the-spot with a few effectual slashes.

A traditional house in the village of Pemo. Note the carved breasts in the wall.

Watch out for enormous bird-wing butterflies, tropical birds, hillside plantations of cassava and corn, and the occasional horse.

You can choose to continue the trek all the way to Moni, viewing waterfalls and a few more small villages along the way. If you'd prefer to return to Moni by motor, or to the Kelimutu parking lot to meet your transport, remember that cell phone reception at Kelimutu can be very patchy, so make any pickup plans in advance.

Marcos and other guides can rustle up an ojek who will take you back to the main road by means of a bumpy switchback, from various points on the hill to Pemo.

GETTING THERE AND AWAY

Bus

For onwards travel, sample fares include Maumere 50,000, Ende 30,000 (bemo) or 35,000 rupiah (bus), Bajawa 100,000 rupiah and Ruteng 150,000 rupiah.

Ask at your accommodation for assistance -- as you'll need to flag down the correct transport as it passes.

To Kelimutu

Assuming you don't have your own transport, there are two main ways to reach the summit. You can hire a bemo for 200,000 rupiah (for two passengers, price increases incrementally if you have more than two) for the trip there and back or an ojek will take a single passenger there and back for 100,000 rupiah. Expect the trip to take around 45 minutes to the carpark and then it is another 20-30 minute walk to the viewpoint.

If you're coming from Ende, it's about two and a half to three hours to arrive at Kelimutu, by way of some of the most jaw-dropping tropical scenery in Southeast Asia. It's an extremely steep road with a lot of switchbacks, and you definitely don't want to encourage your driver to hurry it up.





KANAWA ISLAND

A beautiful island about one and a half hours by boat more or less due west of Labuan Bajo, Kanawa Island is a bit of a go-to location for backpackers and flashpackers looking for some downtime.

The island is surrounded by a reef in extremely good condition with an impressive range of sealife, from soft coral through to sting rays, sharks and turtles -- and it's easy swimming distance from the beach. The beach itself is also very attractive, with ample shade, and you're never too far from the sole restaurant on the island (unless you walk around the island of course).

It is possible to walk all the way around the island or you can walk over the top of the island and down onto the back beach

to continue on your way. The rustic but photogenic pier was destroyed (along with some of the reef) by a storm in early 2013, but a new pier was on the way and we've been told the reef is showing encouraging signs of regeneration.

A series of viewpoints can be reached by a relatively easy climb and the views, especially at sunset, will take your breath away. Be sure to follow the trail all the way to the simple hut on the peak -- absolutely lovely -- and watch out for the goats!

There is just a single place to stay on the island, and while it has picked up its act from a few years ago, it still badly misses its potential. While the staff you'll be dealing with on a daily basis are friendly and try hard, one hopes management will either improve or change.

The sunset views from the furthest of Kanawa's hilltop viewpoints are just breathtaking.

While Kanawa isn't a particularly cheap island (the cost of food in particular adds up!), should time and your budget allow, we strongly recommend a visit. Reservations are a very good idea year round and should be considered essential in high season.

ORIENTATION

There are no ATMs on the island -- bring enough cash with you.

There is no WiFi, though a very very patchy Telkomsel 3G signal can be picked up.

Water is limited on the island and services such as laundry are done back in Labuan Bajo.



Kanawa is a little over an hour from Labuan Bajo by boat. Boat transfers both ways are included in the cost of accommodation. Turn up at their office (just down the road from Gardena Bungalows) beforehand and they'll walk you to the boat.

ACCOMMODATION

This is the most popular "budgetish" island to stay on from Labuan Bajo -- the snorkelling is glorious, the accommodation less so.



Bale bales at Kanawa Resort.

Kanawa Island

Stunning snorkelling and scenery 8/10

Kanawa Island

T: (0385) 41 252; (0857) 3850 6180

info@kanawaresort.com

<http://www.kanawaresort.com>

175,000-550,000 rupiah

Let's start with the good bits. Kanawa has off the beach snorkelling to die for. Despite the reef getting a solid beating by a storm in early 2013 that also washed away their old pier, it's a glorious reef. We saw turtles, sharks, sea snakes, a bazillion fish and a remarkable array of soft corals -- something amazing just about every time we went out. The island also has a couple of viewpoints that offer tremendous views across the bay ; at sunset it can be utterly breathtaking. Kanawa is very popular and reservations are strongly recommended. Because of the regular crowd, they're able to offer a multitude of snorkelling and sightseeing trips daily at quite reasonable rates.

Moving on from the good bits, the rooms are variable, power is only on in the evenings, and the bungalows, both old and new, get incredibly hot with no fans -- we slept in the hammock on more than one occasion because of the heat. It's worth stumping up extra for the newer bungalows, simply for the day bed out on the deck. They do though have some more affordable bales, with four walls that can be rolled up, which may be a little cooler, though with shared facilities and no security these won't appeal to all. Camping is also available.

The big issue we had at Kanawa was the overall management of the place, in particular the restaurant. Food delivery was regularly wrong and dishes sometimes took a ridiculous amount of time to arrive. They're known for their pizzas, and if you've just done weeks in the interior on nothing but nasi goreng and cap cay, they're just what the doctor ordered. We found the staff at all times to be very friendly and helpful (big cheer for Hero) but still, when you've waited two hours for dinner and get the wrong dish, it's a bit frustrating. Complaints weren't isolated to just us. That said, would we return? Yes, absolutely -- that is how good the snorkelling and beautiful the scenery is.



SERAYA ISLAND

Set north of Labuan Bajo, about an hour away by boat, Seraya Island has an excellent offshore reef and drop-off and a good beach for lazing on.

The reef is in very good condition and the volume and variety of fish (as least to snorkelling amateurs like us) appeared to be even more varied than at Kanawa. Expect to see sharks off the north point and turtles straight off the centre of the reef.

There is a channel, more or less right in front of the restaurant that you're encouraged to swim out via to minimise the risk of coming into direct contact with the rest of the reef.

Unlike Kanawa there is a fishing village on the island, on the far southeastern point and it is a fairly straightforward walk



Seraya Island Bungalows as seen from the headland.

from Seraya Bungalows to the village. If you do decide to visit, please remember to dress conservatively.

Also off the beach, the resort is backed by a series of lookouts that run along the ridge behind it. While not as spectacular as those at Kanawa, they're still well worth the effort to reach and are not all that taxing.

Accommodation here is more basic than at Kanawa and the management is rather lacking in the initiative department -- yes, they're even worse here. The bungalows are extremely basic with grotty bucket bathrooms and some, seemingly those close to the kitchen, come with complimentary rats -- do not bring food into the bungalow!

Food options are extremely limited, and even with such an abbreviated menu, some items will not be available. Expect to eat fried rice and perhaps fish in the evenings -- the fish we had was excellent.

Nevertheless, Seraya does retain a certain rustic, old-school charm.

ORIENTATION

There are no ATMs on the island -- bring enough cash with you.

There is no WiFi, though a very very patchy Telkomsel 3G signal can be picked up.

Water is limited on the island and services such as laundry are done in Labuan Bajo.

Seraya is a around an hour from Labuan Bajo by boat. Boat transfers both ways are included in the cost of accommodation. Turn up at their office at Gardena Bungalows beforehand and they'll walk you to the boat.

ACCOMMODATION

Your other budget option offshore from Labuan Bajo, Seraya has a certain clapped out appeal that will appeal to some.

Seraya Island Bungalows

Rustic 7/10

Seraya Island

T: (0813) 3949 5244

fransisoan@yahoo.com

<http://www.serayaisland.com/>

175,000-300,000 rupiah

Seraya Island is Kanawa's poorer sister, with a row of seriously rustic bungalows overlooking an attractive beach with an excellent reef offshore. In every way that Kanawa is proactive in organising activities, Seraya is the opposite. The management are not unfriendly, but to say they are completely nonchalant about whatever the hell you do while you're there is



At Seraya Bungalows everyone gets a beachfront bungalow.

a massive understatement. And as with Kanawa, the restaurant service is mind-bendingly slow and the menu here is far, far more limited than at Kanawa. Bungalows are in very variable states, none have fans (the only electricity is during early evenings, until 22:00) and all are saltwater flush toilets (you fill your own bucket from the ocean). The standard is best described as very basic. Hammocks can be rented, and do rent one -- swinging on the veranda is a lovely pastime to indulge in here. Overall, Seraya does have an old school, clapped out charm to it and we would return, with a battery-operated fan to get us through the nights -- that's how hot it gets in the rooms. There are two viewpoints you can walk to and the snorkelling is fabu-

lous. Sunrises are also amazing to watch -- we could see ours from our bed, as we had to leave our door open to catch any breeze we could. You can organise boat trips from here to Solobo Island (highly recommended) and the two offshore islets along with longer haul trips to Komodo and Rinca, but you're better off doing the latter two from Kanawa. In high season management told us they host up to 80 guests, which really defies credulity -- we assume you have to order dinner a month in advance.



SABOLO BESAR ISLAND

A popular day trip from Labuan Bajo or Seraya Island, Sabolo Besar is the larger of two islands more or less directly north of Komodo National Park.

The island has a brilliantly white sand and broken coral pinnacle on its east coast that juts out into the water and, when it isn't covered in flotsam, offers picture-postcard white sand beaches and amazing turquoise waters.

The best snorkelling is off the south side of the pinnacle -- walk as far along the sand as you can then just swim out. There is a nice dropoff (not too deep), plenty of coral and we

saw multiple turtles here. The reef is a bit beaten up in places and isn't as good as Kanawa or Seraya, but it is still definitely worth getting wet for.

When we visited, there was a quite strong west to east current so you could walk down, jump in, drift back up, get out and repeat the process. The boatman warned against trying to snorkel around the island -- partly because it is quite big, but also because the currents are stronger on the backside of the island.

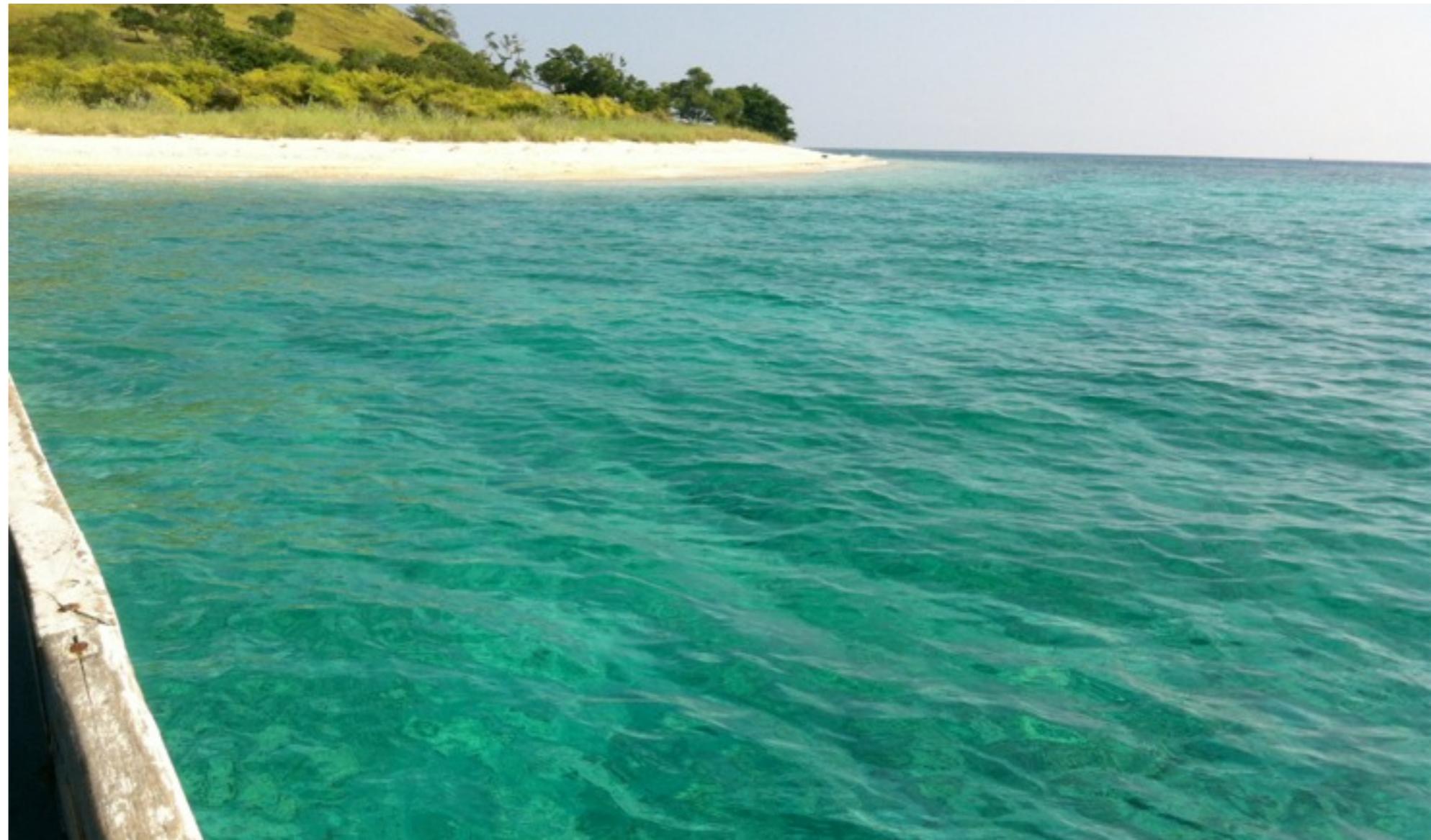
There is no accommodation here and as such the beaches are not cleaned regularly. When we visited the amount of trash at the high water mark was substantial, but the water was crystal clear with no rubbish to speak of.

Sabolo Besar is uninhabited, which means if you arrive early, you'll have the entire beach to yourself.

The beach has little shade and the white sand and broken coral really reflects the light, so bring lots of sunscreen and plenty of water. Lastly, this is a popular spot for daytrippers, so try to get here early.

ORIENTATION

Sabola can be reached at least from Labuan Bajo, Kanawa and Seraya -- we visited from the latter with a boat costing 300,000 rupiah for a half day -- best try and rustle up a few people to bring the costs down.





BIDADARI ISLAND

Bidadari Island is another popular daytrip destination for those heading out of Labuan Bajo or Wae Cicu and the white sand beach certainly doesn't disappoint.

If you're visiting on a daytrip, expect to be dropped on a sandy stretch on the northeast coast of the island. The reef is right offshore and has a good drop off. This spot was particularly notable for the volume of fish and we also saw a seasnake here which was a great surprise. The beach is very attractive and is fairly well looked after, though did have a fair amount of high tide trash.

The snorkelling at Kanawa or Seraya is better than here, in part because there are a lot of boats coming and going drop-



Crystal waters and soft white sand make Bidadari Island a favourite for daytrippers from Labuan Bajo.

ping people off for a few hours of snorkelling -- they anchor right on the beach unfortunately.

The beach has limited shade, but as long as it isn't too busy you'll find some shelter. As with the other islands, pack plenty of sunscreen and water.

There is a upper-range resort on the far side of the island, Angel Island Resort but daytrippers are not permitted to stop there nor seemingly set foot on their beach -- when we tried to walk through the brush to have a look at the resort and were told in no uncertain terms not to proceed.

If you're looking to stay here, rates start at around 100 euros per night -- contact them via their office in Labuan Bajo at Reefseekers (on the main road through town).

Because this is quite a hike from Kanawa or Seraya, you're more likely to visit here from Labuan Bajo or Waecicu -- both are about 30 minutes away by boat.

FURTHER READING



Here are a few online resources to help you further your planning.

FLORES AND KOMODO

Travelfish.org

The Travelfish.org website contains additional useful resources for planning a trip to Flores and Komodo, such as our busy forum. There is also coverage of many points across Southeast Asia.

<http://www.travelfish.org/>

Flores Tourism

Flores Tourism is a Destination Management Organisation working to promote Flores as a destination. Their website is useful and they publish three handy guidebooks to the region.

<http://www.florestourism.com/>

Komodo National Park

The official website for Komodo National Park. While the site doesn't appear to have been updated in years, it retains some useful background information related to the park.

<http://www.komodonationalpark.org/>

UNESCO on Komodo National Park

As the national park is a World Heritage site, there is some interesting coverage of it on the UNESCO website.

<http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/609>

Nature Conservancy on Komodo National Park

While the Nature Conservancy is no longer involved in the management of the park, their website contains useful information regarding the challenges the park faces.

<http://www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/asiaandthepacific/indonesia/placesweprotect/komodo-national-park.xml>

Diving Komodo National Park

Quite a good video covering a 10-day dive trip in Komodo National Park.

<http://vimeo.com/30640931>

Hobbits on Flores, Indonesia

The Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History has this interesting write-up regarding the "hobbit cave" near Ruteng.

<http://humanorigins.si.edu/research/asian-research/hobbits>

Tsunami 1992

Photos of the devastation following a tsunami triggered by a 7.8 earthquake in 1992. More than 18,000 houses were destroyed.

<http://www.usc.edu/dept/tsunamis/indonesia/flores/>

Gunung Bagging on Flores and Komodo

Mountain climbing website Gunung Bagging has detailed coverage of many of the peaks across Flores and Komodo.

<http://www.gunungbagging.com/province/nusa-tenggara-timur/>