

Indonesia

Visas

As of March 2016, citizens of the United States and 168 other countries with a passport with at least six months' validity are eligible travel to Indonesia Tourist Visa Free. Tourist Visa Free status is valid for 30 days, is non-extendable, and cannot be transferred to another type of stay permit. It can be used for tourism, family visit, social visit, art and cultural travel, government duty, etc. If this non-extendable 30-day Visa Free status is insufficient, visitors may apply for Visa on Arrival (VOA), which is issued for an initial 30 days but may be extended for another 30. VOA are available to nationals of 61 countries, cost \$35, and can be obtained at designated entry air and sea ports.

One-year business or research visas can be issued for people with work/research authorization and permission from the Ministry of Manpower or Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Technology. The fee is \$105.

Since procedures and requirements change frequently, it is advisable to check online for further details. See <http://www.indonesia.travel/en/travel-guidance/visa-and-immigration>. For details on research visas, see http://www.embassyofindonesia.org/wordpress/?page_id=3459.

Climate

The climate in Indonesia varies depending on elevation, but most of the country is considered tropical or subtropical. The driest weather occurs from June to September (still with occasional rainstorms), while the main rains come December to March. Higher regions are cooler, but temperatures average between 73° F and 82° F throughout the year. It tends to be consistently humid, with humidity levels varying from 70% to 90%.

Peak time for tourists is June through August, when prices will be higher; those traveling in May and September could get lucky with both weather and prices.

Clothing

With generally high temperatures, lightweight cotton and linen clothing is recommended for most of the year; warmer clothes may be needed for cool evenings and upland areas. Even outside the rainy season there can be occasional downpours, so it is advisable to pack a light raincoat. It is regarded inappropriate to wear sportswear anywhere other than the beach or sports facilities. Women should observe dress code in Muslim areas, which requires shoulders and legs to be kept covered. Rural areas generally tend to be more conservative, but in Jakarta and Bali it is acceptable to dress in a more Western fashion.

Budgeting

Accommodations and Food

Traveling in Indonesia can be very inexpensive. Budget-friendly hostels cost around \$10 per person for a shared room and \$25 for a double private room. Most hotels begin at \$30 per night for a double room. The most prestigious hotels in Jakarta can reach \$350 per night. Dining is generally very affordable, as street food starts at about 50 cents, and a full local meal runs about \$1-\$3. Western food is more expensive, but still affordable at around \$9 for a meal and drink. Tap water is not safe to drink, but bottled water costs around 50 cents per 1.5-liter bottle.

Transportation

As a chain of islands, Indonesia sometimes presents a challenge when it comes to transportation. Ferries between major islands start around 50 cents (the least expensive ticket from East Java to West Bali). Plane tickets between islands can also be affordable, starting around \$40 for a one-way ticket between Jakarta (West Java) and Denpasar (Bali). Be aware that the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration has assessed the Indonesian Directorate General of Civil Aviation as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for oversight of Indonesian air carrier operations. The U.S. State Department encourages U.S. citizens traveling to and from Indonesia to fly directly to their destinations on international carriers from countries whose civil aviation authorities meet international safety standards.

In traveling over land, economy bus prices vary from region to region and with the condition of the road. Daytime buses that depart early in the morning—carrying chickens and goats—are the cheapest; an eight-hour trip will cost \$4-\$6. Economy buses stop frequently, can be hot and cramped, and will have little to no room for luggage. Express buses (also known as patas) are the next class up. They often have air conditioning, and do not make frequent stops. Luxury air-conditioned buses, the highest class, have a variety of price categories depending on the facilities. A trip on a luxury overnight bus will cost \$11-\$15 and will include luggage space. Overnight trips are generally preferable as the traffic is much lighter.

Train travel is another good option, especially on Java, where the rail network is best. It can be the best choice for enjoying the scenery if you are not in a hurry, and may even be cheaper than a bus. Be sure to compare prices! There are a number of train classes that differ in cost, comfort, and efficiency. Check availability online at <https://tiket.kereta-api.co.id/>. Ticket supply will generally not be a problem outside of peak seasons (the end of Ramadan, or during the Christmas / New Year's seasons). Note: all train passengers must present ID, so tourists must at minimum have a photo copy of your passport page.

Within cities, bemos (regulated public mini buses) are one of the cheapest modes of local transport, ranging from around 40 cents to a bit more than \$1. Prices are often negotiable. All official bemos have large yellow number plates, so beware of rogues. Simply flag a bemo down as you would a taxi.

In using taxis, when possible, shop around to see which company provides better service and order by phone. When hailing a taxi on the street, try to spot one from a known and reliable taxi company. Don't rely on the color of the car; look for the company name on the side of the vehicle or its crown light. If the driver tries to bargain instead of using the meter, or claims the meter is broken, find another taxi. At the airport, never accept transportation from brokers who approach you as you exit baggage claim or customs. These are illegal transportation operators and can be risky for a variety of reasons. For more information on taxi safety in Indonesia, visit <http://www.expatriat.or.id/info/taxisafety.html>.

In all public transportation, be aware of your belongings at all times and avoid keeping valuables in back pockets. Pick-pockets are common.

Tipping

Tipping a set percentage is not expected, but if the service is good, you can leave 5,000Rp or 10% or more (this is expected in Bali). Most mid-range hotels and restaurants, and all top-end ones, add 21% to the bill for tax and service (known as "plus plus"). Feel free to hand cash directly to individuals if you think they deserve recognition for their service. Tip good taxi drivers, porters, people giving you a massage or fetching you a beer on the beach, etc.—5,000Rp to 10,000Rp is generous.

Currency

The rupiah (Rp) is the official currency of Indonesia, with a current exchange rate of between 13,000Rp and 14,000Rp to one USD. Coins in current circulation range from 50Rp to 1,000Rp, and notes in denominations from 2,000Rp to 100,000Rp. Try to carry a fair amount of money in bills of 20,000Rp and under as getting change for larger bills can be a problem. All businesses are required to price goods and services in rupiah, but many tourist outfits such as hotels and souvenir shops may price in USD or Euros to avoid currency fluctuations.

Check the official exchange rate at www.xe.com to have an idea of what a realistic rate should be. If a rate on offer at a money changing booth is higher than at XE.COM, it is most likely a scam. Take care when changing money, since it is easy to be tricked when you aren't used to working in hundreds of thousands and millions.

IMPORTANT NOTE! Be aware that when changing money at banks and money changers, US dollar notes must be in PERFECT CONDITION. Blemishes of any kind – creases, marks, folds, etc. – will likely result in a far worse rate of exchange or may not

be accepted at all. Pre-2007 bills may also not be accepted. \$100 bills will get the best rate, and smaller bills will trade at a discount (not posted). If a bank won't take an imperfect bill, a money changer may, but will likely extract a discount. Pay close attention during money changing, especially outside of banks. For more tips on how to avoid scams, see: <https://www.tripadvisor.com/Travel-g294225-s601/Indonesia:Banks.And.Money.html>

ATMs are common in cities. Be aware of fees, and check with your bank before you travel. A foreign exchange fee can be up to \$8, with a matching additional withdrawal fee, so you may pay \$20 for a \$50 withdrawal. ATM machines dispense in 50,000Rp or 100,000Rp (it will say on the outside of the machine). The maximum amount per transaction is usually two million Rp.

Telecommunications

Mobile Phones

If you don't want to pay for temporary roaming while visiting Indonesia, you may want to bring your unlocked mobile phone with you. You can buy prepaid SIM cards and recharge vouchers from almost any shop or street stands throughout Indonesia

There are several telecom providers in Indonesia that use GSM/UMTS or CDMA technology:

- Telkomsel: GSM/GPRS/3G/HSPA. www.telkomel.com
- Indosat: GSM/GPRS/3G/HSPA. www.indosat.com
- XL Axiata: GSM/GPRS/3G/HSPA. www.xl.co.id
- Hutchison 3 Indonesia: GSM/GPRS/3G/HSPA. www.tri.co.id
- Smartfren: CDMA/EVDO. www.smartfren.com

Prepaid SIM cards cost around 10,000Rp (<\$1) or less, and calls generally cost 500-1,000Rp per minute or less, depending on which kind of line (other-network, landline, or same-network) you are calling. SMS service is cheap and popular, with local SMS at 50-150Rp, and international SMS at 400-1,500Rp.

Land Lines

Phone cards are available, and can be used at manned telephone booths (*wartel*) on the street as well as private or public phones at hotels. Pay phones are becoming increasingly rare in Indonesia, especially in bigger cities, as many people prefer mobile phones in recent years. It may be easier to use Internet-based communications such as Skype.

Internet

There are manned Internet booths (*warnet*), which feature Internet-connected PCs. Prices vary, and you tend to get what you pay for, but rates will likely be around

5,000Rp per hour. In large cities, there are free hotspots in certain malls and chain restaurants/shops. Some hotels also provide free hotspots in their lobbies and/or restaurants.

If you have GSM/WCDMA mobile phones, you can use them for Internet connections with most prepaid cards with the major operators. Packet-based and unlimited monthly/weekly/daily packages are available. To find out about available deals and combinations, visit operators' websites or ask dealers selling SIM cards.

For more detailed information about Internet, especially useful for people staying in Indonesia for extended periods and requiring personal Internet access, see:

<http://www.expats.or.id/info/internetaccess.html>.

Electricity

Electrical outlets in Indonesia are 220-240 Volts (the United States' are 120 Volts), and electrical sockets are plug Types C, F, and G; some sockets take multiple plug types. It is advisable to take a universal adaptor that fits a variety of socket types.

Voltage can fluctuate quite a bit, and there are regular power cuts that last a few minutes. These are more common in remote areas, and especially during high season when electricity is needed for air conditioners. Large hotels have backup generators, and smaller hotels will advise you to shut down AC while they run on a backup generator. Consider bringing a small flashlight.

Vaccinations and Medical Care

Always consult a doctor or travel clinic before traveling to Indonesia – do so about eight weeks before your trip. UM affiliates can visit the University Health Service's travel website (<https://www.uhs.umich.edu/travelhealth>) for more information, travel precautions, and contact information to make an appointment. They will advise you about appropriate vaccinations and disease prevention precautions you should take.

If you take regular medication, you should make sure to have enough for your entire stay. Ask your doctor ahead of time about prescription-strength medication to treat traveler's diarrhea, and how you should plan to rehydrate if/when you experience symptoms. (Be sure to carry prescription medications in their original marked bottles with a copy of the prescription in case of questioning at customs.)

You should use DEET insect repellent outside of major cities. Tap water is not potable, and it is highly recommended for visitors to consume only boiled or bottled water for drinking and when brushing their teeth.

The local Indonesian healthcare system is not up to western standards. However, a short term stay in an Indonesian hospital or medical center for simple health problems is not markedly different from a western facility. In case of serious injury or illness, travel

health insurance that includes medical evacuation back to your home country is recommended.

Safety and Security

Crime in Indonesia is mostly non-violent, but robbery, theft, and pickpocketing are common, especially in markets, public transport, and pedestrian overpasses.

Items to be aware of:

- Do not accept drinks from strangers.
- In staunchly Islamic areas such as Aceh, alcohol is banned, and those caught with alcohol can be caned.
- Choose taxis carefully in cities (see notes on taxis in Budgeting section above).
- Lock doors when inside.
- Avoid using phones or MP3 players at traffic lights or in traffic jams.
- Do not leave valuable items in an empty hotel room; use the hotel's safe deposit box instead of the in-room safe.
- Do not draw large amounts of cash from banks or ATMs. Consider carrying a money clip instead of a wallet.
- Use your credit card wisely. Indonesia does not have effective regulations in place to protect your personal data, so when using your card online, consider checking the company's reputation on review platforms such as www.trustedcompany.com/id.

Corruption

Officials may ask for bribes, tips, or "gifts"; pretending you do not understand may work to sidestep these. Generally, smiling and being polite and asking for an official receipt for any "fees" you are asked to pay will avoid any problems.

Drugs

Be aware that penalties for drug offences are extremely severe in Indonesia. The death penalty is mandatory for those convicted of possessing, trafficking, manufacturing, or transporting certain amounts of many drugs, and heavy fines and long jail times are usual for those convicted of consumption. It is highly advisable to steer well clear of any signs of drug trade and consumption.

Women Traveling Alone

Women travelling on their own or in pairs are unlikely to encounter any problems. However, women traveling alone may receive unwanted attention. Some considerations:

- Dress modestly, especially in conservative Muslim areas. In Aceh, women are expected to wear head scarves and cover their arms, whether they are Muslim or not.

- If you're a solo female and you hire a care with a driver for several days, it is not culturally appropriate for a male Muslim driver to travel alone with you. A third party will come along as a chaperone.

LGBTQ+ Travelers

Attitudes toward homosexuality vary vastly. Cosmopolitan Jakarta and Bali boast gay nightclubs, and *bencong* (transvestites and transsexuals) have a special place in Indonesian culture. In general, same-sex friends are physically close with one another in Indonesia, and so holding hands and other similar gestures of intimacy are common. LGBTQ+ travelers should follow the same precautions as straight travelers: avoid more explicit public displays of affection. This is especially important in conservative areas such as Aceh.

Disabled Travelers

Individuals with disabilities may find accessibility and accommodation very different from in the United States. Most public places and transportation facilities are not accessible. Walkways, road crossings, restrooms, and tourist and other areas are not equipped with features to accommodate people with physical disabilities.

Language

Indonesian is the official language of Indonesia. Most Indonesians are also often fluent in another regional language, but most formal education, and nearly all national media, are conducted in Indonesian. For access to polite and useful phrases, including audio pronunciation guides, see:

http://www.seasite.niu.edu/indonesian/percakapan/indonesia7days/indo7days_fs.htm

Most businesspeople and government officials in Jakarta are able to speak conversational English. English is also very widely spoken in Bali due to the strong tourist trade.

Cultural Differences

There is no one unified Indonesian culture, but the Hindu practices of the former Majapahit empire provides a framework for many of the traditions found across the central islands. Indonesia is culturally intertwined with Malaysia, and Arabic culture has also been adopted to some degree thanks to Islam.

Some things to keep in mind:

- Often all it takes to follow proper etiquette in Indonesia is a smile and a humble demeanor. Using a few words of Indonesian will be much appreciated.
- Indonesians do not like conflict. Friendly, outgoing, and peaceful are the norms for interactions. Avoid raising your voice or making accusations, as these will

bring embarrassment. Problems are treated as issues to be solved along with others, and ego-based or emotional outbursts are inappropriate.

- Certain gestures should be avoided. Never touch the head of an older Indonesian. Kissing and embracing in public, as well as other displays of affection, should be kept to a minimum. In general, physical contact should be minimized between people of different genders and ages, although it is common to touch a stranger or friend of the same sex while in conversation. The traditional greeting is a nod of the head and a gracious smile; a soft handshake is also common.
- The use of the left hand for eating or passing things to others should be avoided. Pointing with an index finger is typically considered rude; it will be considered most polite if you use your right thumb to point at things.
- When entering a mosque, men should wear long slacks and shirts that cover their arms. Women should similarly cover their legs and arms, and should bring a kerchief or shawl to cover their hair.
- A man should never shake hands with a Muslim woman unless she extends her hand first.
- Patience is a virtue in Indonesia, where trains may not run on time, and where shopkeepers may not understand the notion of "hurry up."
- Remove your shoes or sandals outside before entering a house. Do not put your feet up while sitting and avoid showing the bottom of your feet to others.
- When food or drink is served, it should not be touched until the host invites the guest to do so. Some people might take offense at a guest's refusal of food or drink; at the same time, it appears "greedy" if you finish food or drink completely. Leave a little in your dish or glass to indicate that your host has been generous to you.
- Eating with your hand (rather than utensils) is very common. The basic rule of never using your left hand especially applies, as the left hand is the one used to clean yourself in the toilet. It is wise to wash your hands well before and after eating. Eating by hand is frowned upon in some "classier" places, so if you are provided with cutlery and no one else seems to be eating by hand, follow suit.

Other Useful Information

Embassies

The U.S. Embassy (and all foreign embassies) is in Jakarta:

U.S. Embassy Jakarta

Jl. Medan Merdeka Selatan No. 3 - 5

Jakarta 10110, Indonesia

Telephone: +(62)(21) 3435-9000

Emergency After-Hours Telephone: +(62) (21) 3435-9000 ext. 0 (operator)

Email: jakconsul@state.gov

Website: <http://jakarta.usembassy.gov/>

Business Hours and Public Holidays

Business hours can vary, but in general the following apply:

- Banks: Monday to Friday 8am to 3pm
- Business office hours: Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm or 9am to 5pm; lunch break usually occurs between 12pm and 1pm; most offices closed on Saturday

Public holidays (2016)

January 1st – New Year's Day

February 8th – Chinese Lunar New Year's Day

March 9th – Bali's Day of Silence and Hindu New Year

March 25th – Good Friday

March 27th – Easter Sunday

May 1st – Labor Day

May 5th – Ascension Day of Jesus Christ

May 6th – Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad

May 22nd – Waisak Day (Buddha's birthday)

August 17th – Indonesian Independence Day

September 12th – Muslim Day of Sacrifice

October 2nd – Muharram/Islamic New Year

October 30th – Diwali/Deepavali

December 12th – The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday

December 25th – Christmas Day

Indonesia's Time Zones

The Indonesian archipelago geographically stretches across four time zones, but the Indonesian government only recognizes three time zones within its territory:

- Indonesia Western Time: UTC/GMT +7
- Indonesia Central Time: UTC/GMT +8
- Indonesia Eastern Time: UTC GMT +9

Due to its tropical location, daylight saving time is not currently observed in almost all of Indonesia. The only unofficial exceptions are Muara Teweh and Maurainu, which unofficially use Western Indonesian Daylight Time.