

Java



Of all the 17,000 islands that make up Indonesia, Java is king. It may not have the beaches of Bali, the jungles of Kalimantan, or the remoteness of Papua, but it's the heart of the country, a heart with more drive and energy than any other island in this vast archipelago. With 120 million people crammed into an area half the size of Great Britain, Java is one populated place. And with such unfathomable human resources, it's no wonder that the nation's political and economic past, present and future are decided within its shores. For many, Indonesia quite simply begins and ends with Java.

Jakarta, the capital, is a colossal metropolis with all the problems of a city vastly overstretched; it won't grab your attention for long unless you're a mad shopper or über-urbanite. But the rest of the island has offerings that shouldn't be ignored.

A string of volcanoes lace the island like fiery rubies. Some are docile giants, while others blow their top at the drop of a Javanese fez; Gunung Bromo is a must for any visitor. Pounding the southern coast is the Indian Ocean; a magical sight, but it can be dangerous for swimming. There are, however, some fine beach enclaves, such as Pangandaran, Java's premier beach resort, and world-class surf breaks at Ujung Kulon and Alas Purwo National Parks. Java's calmer northern side hides less-developed tropical islands. Inspired by such natural beauty, and influenced by Hindu-Buddhist, Muslim and Western invaders, the Javanese have over the centuries created temples and *kraton* (palaces) of unique splendour. The Buddhist temple Borobudur is an architectural wonder and its nearby Hindu counterpart, Prambanan, shines almost as brightly. Cultural Yogyakarta and Solo are perfect places to sample Javanese art.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Catching the sunrise at **Borobudur** (p167), Indonesia's eternal Buddhist temple
- Climbing 253 steps to **Bromo's** (p244) summit for unearthly vistas
- Overnighting at a coffee plantation before climbing sulphur-belching **Kawah Ijen** (p249)
- Time-travelling to Java's golden age in the cultural capitals of **Yogyakarta** (p171) and **Solo** (p194)
- Discovering Java's untouched corners at **Ujung Kulon** (p128), **Meru Betiri** (p252), **Alas Purwo** (p261) and **Baluran** (p264) National Parks



■ POPULATION: 120 MILLION

■ LAND AREA: 132,007 SQ KM

■ HIGHEST PEAK: GUNUNG SEMERU (3676M)

HISTORY

Java has a history of epic proportions and a record of human habitation that extends back 1.7 million years to when 'Java Man' (p204) roamed the river banks of Sungai Bengawan Solo in Central Java. Waves of migrants followed, moving down through Southeast Asia.

Early Javanese Kingdoms

The island's exceptional fertility allowed the development of an intensive *sawah* (wet rice) agriculture, which in turn required close cooperation between villages. Out of village alliances, small kingdoms developed, including that of King Purnawarman of Taruma (p134), but the first major principality was that of King Sanjaya, who founded the Mataram kingdom at the beginning of the 8th century. Mataram's religion centred on the Hindu god Shiva, and produced some of Java's earliest Hindu temples on the Dieng Plateau (p165).

The Sailendra dynasty followed, overseeing Buddhism's heyday and the building of Borobudur (p167). But Hinduism and Buddhism continued to coexist and the massive Hindu Prambanan complex (p190) was constructed within a century of Borobudur.

Mataram eventually fell, perhaps at the hands of the Sumatra-based Sriwijaya kingdom, which invaded Java in the 11th century. However, Javanese power began its revival in 1019 under King Airlangga, a semi-legendary figure who formed the first royal link between the island and Bali. Despite his role as a unifier, Airlangga later split the kingdom between his two sons, creating Janggala to the east and Kediri to the west.

It was only a matter of time before the balance of power was to change once again. Early in the 13th century the commoner Ken Angrok usurped the throne of Singosari (a part of the Janggala kingdom), defeated Kediri and brought Janggala under his control. The new kingdom ended in 1292 with the murder of its last king, Kertanegara, but in its short 70 years Javanese culture flourished and some of the island's most striking temples were built (p236). Shivaism and Buddhism evolved during this time into the new religion Shiva-Buddhism, which is still worshipped in Java and Bali today.

Majapahit Kingdom

The fall of the Singosari kingdom made room for one of Java's most famous early kingdoms, the Majapahit kingdom. Ruling from its capital at Trowulan (p226), it established the first Javanese commercial empire by taking control of ports and shipping lanes. Its rulers skilfully brokered trading relations with Cambodia, Siam, Burma and Vietnam – and even sent missions to China – and claimed sovereignty over the entire Indonesian archipelago (which probably amounted to Java, Madura and Bali).

As the Majapahit kingdom went into decline in the late 1300s, Islam moved to fill the vacuum.

Islamic Kingdoms

Islam broke over Java like a wave, converting many among the island's elite, and by the 15th and 16th centuries the Islamic kingdoms such as Demak (p213), Cirebon (p157) and Banten (p121) were on the ascent.

The Muslim state of Demak was the first to make military inroads into Java, raiding much of East Java and forcing many Hindu-Buddhists eastwards to Bali. Some, however, stayed put; the Tengerese people of Bromo (p246) can trace their history back to Majapahit. Soon Demak was flexing its muscles in West Java, and in 1524 it took the port of Banten and then Sunda Kelapa (now Jakarta), before later overrunning Cirebon.

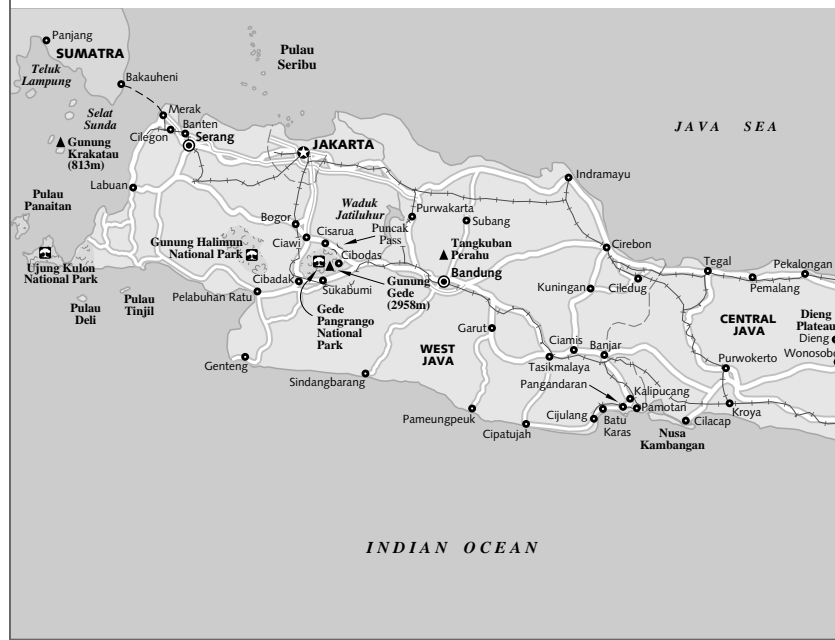
Demak's rule was not to last long. By the end of the 16th century the Muslim kingdom of Mataram (p176) had risen to take control of huge swathes of Central and East Java. Banten still remained independent, however, and grew to become a powerful maritime capital holding sway over much of West Java. By the 17th century, Mataram and Banten were the only two powers in Java left to face the arrival of the Dutch.

Dutch Period

The arrival of the Dutch and their eventual domination of Java is summarised in the History chapter (p38); a snapshot of Javanese resistance to the new invaders (and the royal houses' internal bickering) follows.

As the Dutch set up camp in what was to become Jakarta, Banten remained a powerful ruling house and a harbour for foreign competitors. An impressive trading network was set up under Banten's greatest

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ruler, Sultan Agung, but unfortunately civil war within the house led to Dutch intervention and its eventual collapse.

The Mataram kingdom was another matter. As the power of the Dutch grew, the empire began to disintegrate, and by the 18th century infighting was taking its toll. The first two Javanese Wars of Succession were fought but fortunately resolved by the treaty of 1743; the ruler Pakubuwono II was restored to his battered court, but the price of concessions to the colonial power was high.

Obviously needing a fresh start, Pakubuwono II abandoned his old capital at Kartosuro and established a new court at Solo (Surakarta; p194). However, rivalry within the court soon reared its ugly head again, resulting in the Third Javanese War of Succession in 1746. The Dutch rapidly lost patience and split the kingdom in three, creating the royal houses of Solo and Yogyakarta (p172), and the smaller domain of Mangkunegaran (p197) within Solo.

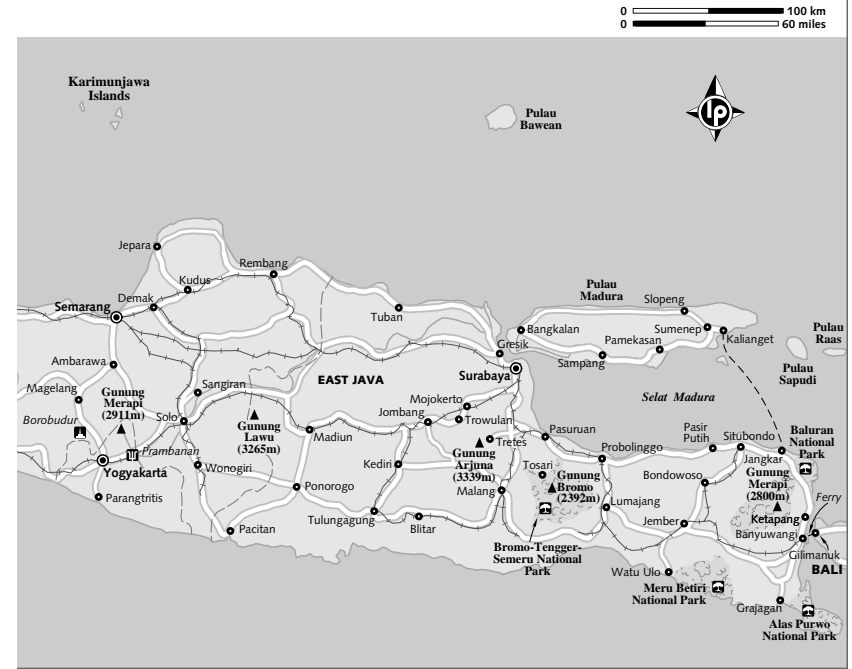
Yogyakarta's founder, Hamengkubuwono I, was a most able ruler, but within 40 years of his death his successor had all but soured

relations with the Dutch and his rivals in Solo. In 1812 European troops, supported by the sultan's ambitious brother and Mangkunegara, plundered the court of Yogyakarta and the sultan was exiled to Penang, to be replaced by his son.

Into this turbulent picture stepped one of the most famous figures of Indonesian history, Prince Pangeran Diponegoro, who subsequently launched the anti-Dutch Java War of 1825–30. At the end of this guerilla war, the Dutch held sway over all the royal courts, which soon became ritual establishments with a Dutch *residen* (head of a residency during colonial administration) exercising control. With no real room or will for political manoeuvre, the courts turned their energies to traditional court ceremonies and artistic patronage, thus creating the rich cultural cities we see today.

Java Today

For Java's, and Indonesia's, struggle for independence from the Dutch and its subsequent growing pains, see the History chapter (p38).



Java still rules the roost when it comes to political and economic life in Indonesia. It has the bulk of the country's industry, is easily the most developed island in Indonesia, and has over the years received the lion's share of foreign investment.

That doesn't mean it comes up smelling of roses, though. The economic crisis of the late '90s hit hard, and huge numbers of urban workers lost their jobs. Rising prices have caused unrest across the island, and disturbances, although sporadic, have remained a constant threat. The year 1998 saw the worst riots in the country's recent history, with Chinese communities targeted in Solo (p194) and Jakarta (p99).

In the current century, terrorist targeting of foreign investments in Jakarta (p99) and the Bali bombings of 2002 and 2005 have left Indonesia's leading island reeling. Tourism is struggling to survive, and the capture of suspected terrorist Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Ba'asyir from a Solo hospital in 2002, and the killing of Jemaah Islamiyah member Azahari Husin in Batu in 2005, has raised questions about the island's links with radical Islam.

But as the seat of government and with the bulk of the nation's resources behind it, Java will also be one of the first islands to recover.

CULTURE

Java has three main ethnic groups, each speaking their own language: the Javanese of Central and East Java; the Sundanese of West Java; and the Madurese from Pulau Madura. In general the Central and East Javanese are more refined than their Maduran cousins, who are known for their blunt, proud demeanour. The Sundanese are a more relaxed people. The divisions, however, are blurred – the Madurese have settled across East Java and further afield, and Indonesians from all over the archipelago have come to seek work in the cities. Smaller pockets of pre-Islamic peoples also remain, and even metropolitan Jakarta identifies its own polyglot tradition in the Betawi, the name for the original inhabitants of the city.

Today, the Javanese are Muslim, and the stronghold of Islam can be found along the