

Lombok



If you're weary of Bali's crowds, traffic and beach braids, feel free to exhale and stretch out a little. You're on Lombok now, Bali's much less renowned neighbour to the east, an island rich in white-sand beaches, epic surf and spectacular diving. Oh, and you'll probably notice mighty Gunung Rinjani, Indonesia's second-highest volcano. Rivers and waterfalls gush down its fissured slopes and feed the island's crops (chiefly rice, cashews, coffee and tobacco), while its summit – complete with hot springs and a dazzling crater lake – lures international trekkers, local Balinese Hindu (who once colonised Lombok), and indigenous Sasak Muslim pilgrims hungry for divine blessings.

You won't want to miss the fabled Gili Islands – three exquisite droplets of white sand, sprinkled with coconut palms, surrounded by coral reefs teeming with marine life. On the islands, you'll nest in mod beach huts and feast on everything from humble *nasi campur* to the fresh daily selection of grilled seafood to melt-in-your-mouth sashimi. You can happily burn the daylight hours diving, snorkelling or chilling by the sea, and if you're nocturnal, you'll love Gili Trawangan's bar scene.

Lombok's dramatic south coast is a labyrinth of turquoise bays, white sand, world-class surf breaks, undulating tobacco fields and massive headlands. Given its drop-dead good looks, it's no surprise that it also happens to be the vortex of Lombok's on-rushing US\$800 million metamorphosis.

Thankfully, that transformation will take some time. So get Zen, forget about the future and enjoy Lombok's sweet, spacious and wild present.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Trekking the lush and majestic slopes of **Gunung Rinjani** (p314) to its sacred summit
- Plunging into the deep waters of the **Gili Islands** (p295), where mantas, sharks and sea turtles converge to offer terrific snorkelling and scuba diving
- Grooving under the coconut palms at midnight in sweet **Gili Trawangan** (p304)
- Exploring the beautiful sandy coves and spectacular coastline east and west of **Kuta** (p321), a region that has some of Lombok's best surf and is due for some major development in the near future
- Searching for the perfect beach in the thinly populated **Southeastern Peninsula** (p320), a rugged region with an enormous and pristine bay that resembles Bali's Bukit 30 years ago



