



Gili Islands

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Adeng Adeng (p296)
- ➔ Scallywags (p300)
- ➔ Kayu Café (p290)
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Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Kai's Beachouse (p299)
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Why Go?

Picture three minuscule desert islands, fringed by white-sand beaches and coconut palms, sitting in a turquoise sea: the Gilis are a vision of paradise. These islets have exploded in popularity, and are booming like nowhere else in Indonesia – speedboats now zip visitors direct from Bali and a hip new hotel opens practically every month.

It's not hard to understand the Gilis' unique appeal, for a serenity endures (no motorbikes or dogs!) and a green consciousness is growing. Development has been more tasteful than rapacious and there are few concrete eyesores.

Each island has its own special character. Trawangan (universally known as Gili T) is by far the most cosmopolitan, its bar and party scene vibrant, its accommodation and restaurants close to definitive tropical chic. Gili Air has the strongest local character, but also a perfect mix of buzz and languor. Meno is simply a desert-island getaway.

When to Go

- ➔ The wet season is approximately late October until late March. But even in the height of the rainy season, when it's lashing it down in Mataram or Bali, the Gilis can be dry and sunny.
- ➔ High season is between June and late August, when rooms are very hard to find and prices can double (though great weather is almost guaranteed).
- ➔ The perfect months to visit are May and September.
- ➔ There's no cyclone season to worry about.

i Getting There & Away

FROM BALI

Fast boats advertise swift connections (about two hours) between Bali and Gili Trawangan. They leave from several departure points in Bali, including Benoa Harbour, Sanur, Padangbai and Amed. Some go via Nusa Lembangan. Many dock at Teluk Nare/Teluk Kade on Lombok north of Senggigi before continuing onto Air and Trawangan (you'll have to transfer for Meno).

The website **Gili Bookings** (www.gilibookings.com) presents a range of boat operators and prices to your booking request. It's useful for getting an idea of the services offered, but it is not comprehensive and you may get a better price by buying direct from the operator.

Other considerations:

- ✦ Fares are not fixed, especially in quiet times, you should be able to get discounts on published fares.
- ✦ If you don't need transport to/from the boat, ask for a discount.
- ✦ The advertised times are illusionary. Boats are cancelled, unplanned stops are made or they simply run very late.
- ✦ Book ahead in July and August.

- ✦ The sea between Bali and Lombok can get very rough (particularly during rainy season).
- ✦ The fast boats are unregulated and operating and safety standards vary widely. There have been some major accidents and boats have sunk (see p373).

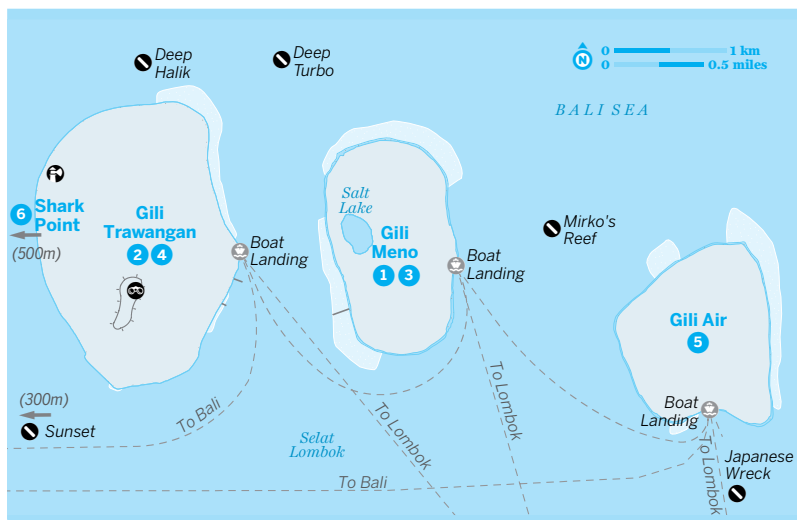
Amed Sea Express (☎ 0878 6306 4799; www.gili-sea-express.com; per person from 300,000Rp) Makes 75-minute crossings to Amed on a large speedboat. This makes many interesting itineraries possible.

Blue Water Express (☎ 0361-895 1111; www.bluewater-express.com; one-way from 500,000Rp) From Serangan and Padangbai, Bali to Teluk Kade, Gili T and Gili Air.

Bali Brio (www.balibrio.com; adult/child 550,000/450,000Rp) Boats from Sanur to Nusa Lembangan and on to Bangsal and the Gilis.

Gili Cat (☎ 0361-271680; www.gilicat.com; adult/child 700,000/550,000Rp) A well-established company linking Padangbai, Gili T and Teluk Kade.

Perama (☎ 0361-750808; www.peramatour.com; per person 275,000Rp) Links Padangbai, the Gilis and Senggigi by a not-so-fast boat.



Gili Islands Highlights

- 1 Snorkelling with hawksbill and green sea turtles off **Gili Meno** (p294).
- 2 Dancing all night at one of **Gili Trawangan's** (in)famous parties (p291).

- 3 Finding serenity on **Gili Meno's** west coast (p293).
- 4 Learning to freedive on **Gili T** (p289).
- 5 Spending a day walking

- around **Gili Air**, pausing frequently for swims and refreshments (p297).
- 6 Diving with reef sharks at **Shark Point** (p287).