



Gili Islands

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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Sasak Cafe (p313)
- ➔ Kayu Café (p307)
- ➔ Pituq Café (p307)
- ➔ Ruby's (p317)
- ➔ Kokomo (p307)

Best Places to Sleep

- ➔ Adeng Adeng (p312)
- ➔ Kebun Kupu Kupu (p312)
- ➔ Indigo Bungalows (p303)
- ➔ Pondok Santi Estate (p306)
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- ➔ Biba Beach Village (p316)

Why Go?

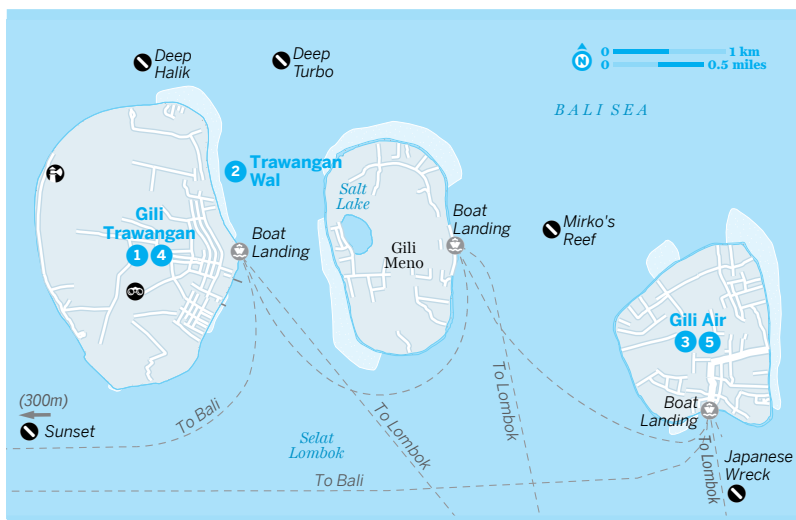
Picture three minuscule desert islands, fringed by white-sand beaches and coconut palms, sitting in a turquoise sea: the Gilis are a vision of paradise. These islets have exploded in popularity, and are booming like nowhere else in Indonesia – speedboats zip visitors direct from Bali and hip new hotels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

It's not hard to understand the Gilis' unique appeal, for a serenity endures (no motorbikes or dogs!) and a palm-shaded languor. Still, despite a growing green conscience, all three islands are seeing a lot of development and, in peak season, can feel mobbed.

Each island has its own special character. Gili Trawangan (universally known as Gili T) is by far the most cosmopolitan; its bar and party scene is vibrant, its accommodation and restaurants are close to definitive tropical chic. Gili Air has the strongest local character, but also a perfect mix of buzz and bliss. Gili Meno is flirting with shoreline gentrification.

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 on Lombok or Bali, the Gilis can be dry and sunny.
- ➔ High season is between June and late August and again at Christmas, when rooms are very hard to find and prices surge (though great weather is almost guaranteed).
- ➔ The perfect months to visit are May and September. It's fairly dry, the crowds have abated and there's no cyclone season to worry about. Still, with the Gilis' popularity growing so quickly, it's always a good idea to book a room in advance.



Gili Islands Highlights

- 1 Partying till Dawn** (p309) Celebrating at Gili T's legendary raves and parties, which happen several nights a week at venues like Tir na Nog.
- 2 Trawangan Wall** (p301) Swimming with all manner of

fish at this popular dive spot near Gili T.

- 3 Gili Air** (p314) Circling the island looking for your favourite beach.

- 4 Freediving** (p301) Plumbing the depths on one breath, especially after

you've taken lessons at one of Asia's best schools, Freedive Gili.

- 5 Great Eats** (p318) Wandering the backstreets of Gili Air where you'll find excellent food, including Pura Vida.

i Getting Around

CIDOMO

We cannot recommend using *cidomo* (horse-drawn carts) due to the significant questions about the treatment of the horses.

ISLAND-HOPPING

Recently introduced, public fast boats run almost hourly in daytime on a route linking Gili T, Gili Meno, Gili Air and Bangsal; they cost 85,000Rp. This makes it easy to hop from one Gili to another.

There's also a slow daily island-hopping boat service that loops between all three islands (15,000Rp to 50,000Rp). Check the latest timetable at the islands' docks. You can always charter boats between the islands (350,000Rp to 400,000Rp).

WALKING & CYCLING

The Gilis are flat and easy enough to get around by foot. Bicycles, available for hire on all three islands (per day 50,000Rp to 70,000Rp), can be a fun way to get around, but sandy stretches of path mean that you will spend time pushing your bike in the hot sun.

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 Lembongan. Many dock at Teluk Nare/Teluk Kade on Lombok north of Senggigi before continuing on to 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 in response 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.