



# Maluku

POP 2.1 MILLION

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## Best Places to Eat

- » Floridas (p407)
- » Mutiara Guesthouse (p433)
- » Delfika (p434)
- » Savana Cottages (p439)
- » Rumah Makan Nifia (p419)

## Best Places to Stay

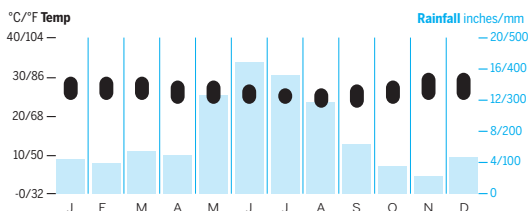
- » Mutiara Guesthouse (p433)
- » CDS Bungalow (p437)
- » Bela International Hotel (p406)

## Why Go?

Welcome to the original Spice Islands. Back in the 16th century when nutmeg, cloves and mace were global commodities that grew nowhere else, money really did 'grow on trees'. It was the search for Maluku's valuable spices that kick-started European colonisation and, thanks to a series of wrong turns and one auspicious land swap, shaped the modern world. Today, spices have minimal economic clout and Maluku (formerly called the Moluccas) has dropped out of global consciousness. What remains is a scattering of idyllic islands where the complex web of cultures envelops visitors with an effusive welcome and an almost Polynesian charm. While transport can prove infuriatingly inconvenient, with flexibility and patience you can explore pristine reefs, stroll empty stretches of powdery white sand, book idyllic over-water bungalows, scale 16th-century fort walls, snap endless photos of perfectly formed volcanoes, and revel in a tropical discovery that seems almost too good to be true.

## When to Go

### Ambon



**Nov–Mar** The dry season is the best time to visit, with consistently spectacular diving.

**Apr–May, Sep–Oct** The shoulder seasons are a good time for the Banda and Kei Islands.

**Jun–Aug** Monsoons prevail, upsetting transport schedules and shuttering dive shops.



## Maluku Highlights

- 1 Snorkelling and diving among some of the world's finest accessible coral gardens in the historically fascinating **Banda Islands** (p429)
- 2 Unwinding at **Ohoidertawun** (p439) or **Pasir Panjang** (p441) in the Kei Islands, two stunning yet

- virtually undiscovered sweeps of the purest white sand
- 3 Finding a beachside homestay and indulging in your own village retreat on **Pulau Ai** (p436)
  - 4 Staying at one of the offbeat getaways on **Pulau Saparua** (p425) before mainstream tourism discovers

- the island's white-sand beaches, friendly villages and extensive diving potential
- 5 Plunging into the muck with **Maluku Divers** (p424), Pulau Ambon's finest dive operator and most appealing resort