



Maluku

POP 2.6 MILLION

Includes ➔

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Banda Islands.....	435
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Pulau Ai.....	443
Kei Islands.....	444
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Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Floridas (p415)
- ➔ Cilu Bintang Estate (p440)
- ➔ Delfika Cafe (p440)
- ➔ Savana Cottages (p448)
- ➔ Beta Rumah (p426)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Cilu Bintang Estate (p440)
- ➔ CDS Bungalow (p443)
- ➔ Bela International Hotel (p413)
- ➔ Coaster Cottages (p448)
- ➔ Maluku Divers (p431)

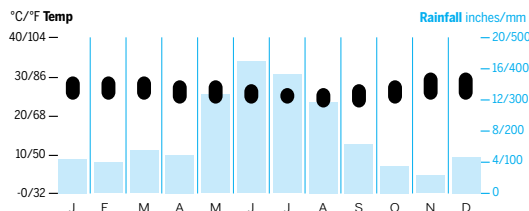
Why Go?

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 the Moluccas' (Maluku's) valuable spices that kick-started European colonialism and, thanks to a series of wrong turns and one auspicious land swap, shaped the modern world. When the islands' monopoly on cloves and nutmeg was broken in the 18th century, Maluku settled into gentle obscurity.

What remains is a scattering of idyllic islands where the complex web of cultures envelops visitors with an effusive, 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 overwater 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 alternative, especially for the Banda and Kei Islands.

Jun–Aug Monsoons prevail during the wet season, upsetting transport and shuttering dive shops.



Maluku Highlights

① Snorkelling and diving some of the world's finest accessible coral gardens in the historically fascinating **Banda Islands** (p437).

② Unwinding at **Ohoidertawun** (p447) or **Pasir Panjang** (p448) in the Kei Islands, two stunning

sweeps of the purest white sand.

③ Finding a beachside homestay with coral at your doorstep on **Pulau Hatta** (p442).

④ Staying at one of the offbeat getaways on **Pulau Saparua** (p431) before

mainstream tourism discovers the island's white-sand beaches, friendly villages and extensive diving potential.

⑤ Plunging into the muck with **Maluku Divers** (p431), Pulau Ambon's finest dive operator and most appealing resort.