Why Go?

If you're seeking white sand, azure bays, hot springs and hidden traditional villages, Nusa Tenggara is your wonderland. Here's an arc of islands that is lush and jungle-green in the north, and more arid savannah in the south. In-between are some of the world's best diving spots, limitless surf breaks and technicolour volcanic lakes. It's a land of pink-sand beaches, schooling sharks and rays, and swaggering dragons.

You'll also find a cultural diversity that is unmatched elsewhere in Indonesia. Animist rituals and tribal traditions still thrive alongside the countless minarets, temples, convents and chapels, and though Bahasa Indonesia is a unifying tongue, each main island has at least one native language, which is often subdivided into dialects. Whether your wish is to drop into the easy, tourist-ready life of a car-free Gili island, or you crave something, somewhere less comfortable, more challenging and a shade deeper, you're exactly where you're supposed to be.

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Best Resorts

- Pearl Beach (p309)
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Best Beaches

- Pantai Segar (p322)
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- Nemberala (p392)
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When to Go

Mataram

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<th>Temp</th>
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Apr–Sep The dry season brings great diving visibility; travellers flock to Komodo and other locales.

May & Oct Epic waves and thin crowds in Rote and Sumbawa.

Oct–Mar Sumba's spectacular Pasola festival, in February, is reason enough to visit in the wetter months.
Nusa Tenggara Highlights

1. Seeing dragons on land, then snorkelling or diving with underwater critters in Komodo National Park (p352).
2. Trekking up the slopes of the sacred volcano that dominates northern Lombok, Gunung Rinjani (p315).
3. Exploring Flores from one end to another – a world of ancient cultures, volcanoes, rainforests and beaches such as Pantai Naga (p375).
4. Discovering the remote villages of West Timor, characterised by their beehive-shaped clan houses, such as otherworldly Temkessi (p390).
5. Diving on the Alor Archipelago (p378), which feels like one stop before the end of the world.
6. Plunging into watery pleasures by day, and then choosing between many at night, on Gili Trawangan (p326).
7. Bouncing between one sensational beach and the next in West Sumba, then pausing at the ancient village of Ratenggaro (p406).