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THE CROCODILE MYTH

One day, a boy came across a baby crocodile struggling to make his way from the lagoon to the sea. As he was very weak, the boy took pity on him and carried him in his arms to the sea. The crocodile was very grateful and promised to remember the boy’s kindness. He told the boy that should he ever want to travel, he should come to the sea and call, and the crocodile would help him. After a while, the boy remembered the crocodile’s promise, and went to the edge of the sea and called out to the crocodile three times. When the crocodile appeared, they were both very happy to see one another. The crocodile told the boy to sit on his back, and over the years he carried the boy on many, many journeys.

But, although the crocodile and the boy were friends, the crocodile was still a crocodile, and felt an irresistible urge to eat the boy. However, this bothered him, and he decided to ask the other animals for advice. He asked the whale, the tiger, the buffalo and many other animals, who all said, ‘The boy was kind to you, you can’t eat him’. Finally, he went to see the wise monkey. After hearing the story, the monkey swore at the crocodile and then vanished.

The crocodile felt ashamed, and decided not to eat the boy. Instead, he took the boy on his back and together they travelled until the crocodile grew very old. The crocodile felt he would never be able to repay the boy’s kindness, and said to the boy, ‘Soon I’m going to die, and will form a land for you and all your descendants’. The crocodile then became the island of Timor, which still has the shape of the crocodile. The boy had many descendants, who inherited his qualities of kindness, friendliness and a sense of justice. Today, the people of Timor call the crocodile ‘grandfather’, and whenever they cross a river, always call out, ‘Crocodile, I’m your grandchild – don’t eat me!’
Welcome to East Timor – the world’s newest emerging nation, spread across the eastern half of the island of Timor, the enclave of Oe-Cussé, and the offshore islands of Atauro and Jaco. Although small, it has many different indigenous peoples and languages. And as a result of its long and complicated history, Indonesian and Portuguese have also been added to the list of languages spoken in the country.

One language, Tetun, is more widely understood and spoken throughout East Timor than any other native language. Originally spoken on the south coast of Timor, a form of Tetun was brought to Dili by the Portuguese in the late 18th century. Although Portuguese was nominated East Timor’s official language after East Timor gained independence, Tetun became the national language, with the intention of making it co-official with Portuguese.

Tetun is a living language, used mainly as an oral medium, with no historical tradition of writing to help standardise it. While there’s some variation in the Tetun language, the variety spoken in Dili (also known as Tetun-Dili or Tetun-Prasa) is the most widespread – and is also the focus of this phrasebook. The other indigenous languages of East Timor haven’t suffered as a result of the spread of Tetun. People continue to speak their local languages, but in most of East Timor, some form of Tetun is used as a second language. The use of Tetun is strongly preferred when people from different parts of the country come together – in the workplace, at the market or on buses.

The most common way for people in East Timor to refer to their country is simply Timór. Longer versions like Timór Lorosae and Timor-Leste are still pretty much new in everyday conversation. Indonesians refer to East Timor as Timor Timur, abbreviated to Tim-Tim.
Some form of Tetun is the first language of about 20 percent of the East Timorese population in Dili, in and around Viqueque, and in Suai and much of the East-West Timor border area. The only two areas where Tetun hasn’t traditionally been used as a second language is the Oe-Cussé enclave to the west and the Fataluku-speaking area stretching mostly from Lospalos to Tutuala in the extreme east. But even here, the use of Tetun is catching on—especially among younger people and people who have lived and/or worked in Dili.

Portuguese and Indonesian can also be used to communicate in East Timor. Since many visitors to East Timor might also spend time in Indonesia, they’re advised to purchase Lonely Planet’s Indonesian Phrasebook. We’ve included a short chapter on Portuguese for use in East Timor, as well as a chapter on three indigenous East Timor languages—Fataluku, Makasae and Kemak. (See pages 177 to 180 for the basics in these languages.)

There’s no doubt that being able to use even basic Tetun will help make your experience in East Timor something really special, and people will respond with tremendous enthusiasm to those who give Tetun a try.

**TETUN OR TETUM?**

While the Tetun language is spelled with an n in Tetun, in Portuguese it’s spelled Tetum with an -m, and this spelling is commonly used in English. The final -m is never pronounced ‘m’ in Portuguese. It’s merely a convention to show the final vowel is nasal.
SPELLING
As the East Timorese are yet to agree on a standard orthography for Tetun, the authors have sometimes had to make difficult decisions about the specifics of Tetun. The spelling system adopted here is simple and easy to use, but keep in mind that you might come across other spelling systems while in East Timor. In addition, because native speakers of Tetun often rely on Portuguese (and Indonesian) to fill in gaps in their language, there is great variation for some words. We’ve tried to cover this kind of variation by listing Portuguese and Indonesian words alongside their Tetun equivalents.

PORTUGUESE INFLUENCE
After centuries of colonial contact, Tetun is characterised by an abundance of Portuguese borrowings, such as adeus, ‘goodbye’, grupu, ‘group’, governu, ‘government’ and farmásia, ‘pharmacy’. These loanwords can be a tremendous help to speakers of English, French, Italian and Spanish, since they’re often the same or similar in each of these languages. When in doubt, use a Portuguese or Indonesian word, and you’ll generally be understood.

LEARNING TETUN
Overall, Tetun is a great language for a beginner – verbs are easy, obvious grammatical inconsistencies are relatively few and pronunciation presents no great problems. In addition, the spelling system used here is easy to read. However, like any language, Tetun has its own irregularities, and people may speak very quickly, take short cuts, and mix the language with their own local language variety.

When in doubt, take the initiative and don’t be afraid to ask, as often as you need:

Favóir ida bele repeti? Could you repeat that please?
or:
Favóir ida koalia neineik? Could you speak slowly please?

Your East Timorese listener is likely to be only too happy to oblige.
The type of Tetun used in this phrasebook is sometimes called Tetun-Dili (or Tetun-Prasa) to distinguish it from Tetun-Terik, the traditional rural variety spoken mainly along the south coast and near the border between East and West Timor. Speakers of Tetun-Terik have had much less contact with speakers of Portuguese, and as a result the language shows much less Portuguese influence – in both vocabulary and grammatical structure.

Pronunciation differences aren’t too marked. The most important thing to note is the frequent presence of the glottal stop (ʼ) the sound you hear between the words in ‘un-oH’, or the ‘t’ in Cockney ‘bottle’ – in rural Tetun, and its complete absence in Tetun-Dili. (For other variations, see Pronunciation, pages 19 to 22.)

**TETUN-DILI & TETUN-TERIK**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Tetun-Dili</th>
<th>Tetun-Terik</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>hau</td>
<td>ha’u</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go up</td>
<td>sae</td>
<td>sa’e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>angry</td>
<td>hirus</td>
<td>krakat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dirty</td>
<td>foer</td>
<td>kador</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fish</td>
<td>ikan</td>
<td>na’an tasi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>far</td>
<td>dok</td>
<td>kdk ok</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>ba</td>
<td>bodik</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hate</td>
<td>odi</td>
<td>aran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>many</td>
<td>barak</td>
<td>wa’in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medicine</td>
<td>aminoruk</td>
<td>alahan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>lae</td>
<td>lale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
<td>sira</td>
<td>sia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very</td>
<td>los</td>
<td>basu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>want</td>
<td>hakarok</td>
<td>ber/hakora</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>sin/los</td>
<td>he’e</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Malae is the Tetun word for any foreigner. Melayu is the Indonesian/Malay word for Malay. To avoid using the word ‘Indonesian’, many locals now prefer to refer to the Indonesian language as Melayu or Bahasa Melayu.
ARThUR OR MARThA?
Tetun words borrowed from Portuguese may have both masculine and feminine forms. Where the feminine form differs from that of the masculine, the endings are separated with a slash:

engineer   enjinheiru/a (m/f)

This means that the masculine form is enjinheiru while the feminine form is enjinheira.

If the masculine and feminine forms of a word do not follow this pattern, both forms are given in full:

doctor   dotór/dotora (m/f)
Portuguese man/woman   Portugés/Portugesa

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THIS PHRASEBOOK
adj adjective   lit literally
enm emphasis   m masculine
excl exclusive   n noun
f feminine   pl plural
incl inclusive   pol polite
ind Indonesian   Port Portuguese
inf informal   sg singular