



# Brunei Darussalam

673 / POP 420,000

## Includes ➔

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## Best Places to Eat

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- ➔ Pasar Malam Gadong (p62)

## Best Architecture

- ➔ Kampung Ayer (p59)
- ➔ Jame'Asr Hassanil Bolkiah Mosque (p59)
- ➔ Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque (p59)

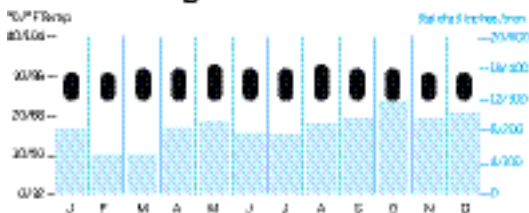
## Why Go?

The tiny sultanate of Brunei, last remnant of a naval empire that once ruled all of Borneo and much of the Philippines, is best known for its oil wealth. This quiet *darussalam* (Arabic for 'abode of peace') has the largest oilfields in Southeast Asia, and thanks to the money they've generated, Brunei hasn't turned its rainforests into oil palm plantations. Old-growth greenery abounds, especially in verdant Ulu Temburong National Park.

The citizens of the capital, Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB), are mad for food and shopping (booze is banned). Here magnificent mosques contrast with the charmingly haphazard water village, while the nearby mangrove forest is home to proboscis monkeys and crocodiles. This tranquil (sometimes somnolent) nation is the realisation of a particular vision: a strict, socially controlled religious state where happiness is found in pious worship and mass consumption. Visit and judge the results for yourself.

## When to Go

### Bandar Seri Begawan



**Feb–Mar** These are the driest months. National Day is celebrated on 23 February.

**Jun** The biggest holiday of the year is for Hari Raya Aidil (6 July 2016, 26 June 2017, 15 June 2018).

**Jul** It's *hot*. The sultan's birthday (15 July) is marked with festivities.

## Don't Miss

Spending time surrounded by the rustling, buzzing, chirping rainforests of Ulu Temburong National Park is one of the highlights of a visit to Brunei Darussalam – and the journey there is part of the adventure. After whizzing along palm-lined waterways on a speedboat from BSB, you board a *temuai* (shallow-draft Iban longboat), dodging submerged boulders and hanging vines as you make your way upriver. A steep, slippery climb through virgin jungle takes you to a towering wall of scaffolding: the park's famous canopy walk. Held steady by guy wires, the structure creaks as you make your way up into the jungle canopy for breathtaking views across the virgin rainforest.

## ITINERARIES

### Two Days

Spend your first day exploring BSB: visit the water village of Kampong Ayer in the morning then explore central BSB, including the splendid Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque and the Royal Regalia Museum. Take a water-taxi excursion at sunset before checking out the night market in Gadong. Spend your second day on a tour of Ulu Temburong National Park.

### Five Days

Take a second day in BSB, visiting the Brunei Museum and more excellent food stalls, followed by a day soaking up the gilded atmosphere of the Empire Hotel & Country Club or diving Brunei's reefs and wrecks. Allow two days for Ulu Temburong, staying overnight in the jungle and doing the canopy walk at dawn.

## Essential Food & Drink

**Ambuyat** This gelatinous porridge-like goo made from the ground pith of the sago tree and dipped in spicy sauces is Brunei's unofficial national dish.

**Kueh** Garishly coloured and fiendishly sweet local cakes are sold at markets and street stalls.

**Ayam Penyet** A classic Indonesian dish of fried then smashed chicken served with sambal; it is popular in Brunei.

**Teh Tarik** Tea and condensed milk poured into the cup from a height; a spectacle not to be missed.

## AT A GLANCE

**Currencies** Brunei dollar (B\$), Singapore dollar (S\$)

**Language** Bahasa Malaysia, English

**Money** ATMs easy to find in towns, but not in Temburong District

**Visas** Granted on arrival to most nationalities. Free for most nationalities, except Australians.

**Mobile phones** Prepay local SIM B\$30

## Fast Facts

**Area** 5765 sq km

**Capital** Bandar Seri Begawan (BSB)

**Emergency** Ambulance ☑ 991, police ☑ 993, fire ☑ 995

## Exchange Rates

Australia	A\$1	B\$1.00
Euro	€1	B\$1.54
Malaysia	RM10	B\$3.26
Singapore	S\$1	B\$1.00
UK	UK£1	B\$2.16
USA	US\$1	B\$1.40

## Daily Costs

**Dorm bed** B\$10–25

**Food-stall meal** from B\$1

**Museum admission** free

**Coffee** B\$3–4

## Entering the Country

Daily buses link Sabah (KK) and Sarawak (Miri) with BSB. Ferries connect Pulau Labuan with Brunei (Muara).