

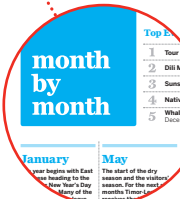
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# PLAN YOUR TRIP

YOUR PLANNING TOOL KIT

Photos, itineraries, lists and suggestions to help you put together your perfect trip

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<p><b>Dili</b></p> <p>Events ✓✓ Diving ✓✓ Diving ✓</p>	<p><b>East of Dili</b></p> <p>Beaches ✓✓ Diving ✓✓ Trekking ✓✓</p>
<p><b>Events</b></p> <p>Dili hosts, or is the start and finish line, for all of Timor-Leste's events, including the Dili Marathon and Tour de Timor. Its not all hard work; you can also have a night out at the Sunset Fair.</p> <p><b>Diving</b></p> <p>Some of Timor-Leste's best diving is right in Dili, overlooked by Embaery Row. You don't have to go far to see an</p>	<p><b>Beaches</b></p> <p>The white sandy beaches on the north coast that lie east of Dili are amazing, and most of the time you will have them to yourself. For a real slice of paradise, head to Tomali's beach.</p> <p><b>Diving</b></p> <p>Some of Timor-Leste's most renowned dive sites can be found within an hour or so from Dili. Rock walls, schools of</p>

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# UNDERSTAND TIMOR-LESTE

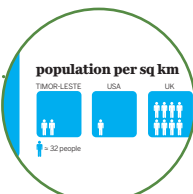
GET MORE FROM YOUR TRIP

Learn about the big picture, so you can make sense of what you see

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**13th century**  
Chinese and Javanese traders visit the island in search of sandalwood and beeswax, although it could have been as early as the 7th century.

**14th**  
The Te immigrants (they are to have Malaka or Penins in the



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...s health experts  
doctors may expect pay-  
ment in cash.

**Recommended Vaccinations**

Specialised travel-medicine clinics are your best source of information; they stock all available vaccines and will be able to give specific recommendations for you and your trip. The doctors will take into account such factors as past vaccination history, the length of your trip, activities you are undertaking and...

THIS EDITION WRITTEN AND RESEARCHED BY

**Rodney Cocks**

# Timor-Leste



## Atauro Island

Escape from Dili and relax at an eco-resort (p89)

## Dili

Enjoy delicious seafood on the beachfront (p50)

## Oecussi

Explore mountains and mud volcanoes (p93)

## Mt Ramelau

See the sunrise from Timor-Leste's highest peak (p84)

# Top Experiences >



# Foreword

Timor-Leste is fortunate to now be one of the safest countries in the world. Increasing numbers of intrepid travellers are being drawn to Timor-Leste for its beautiful seas, majestic mountains, native forests and rich cultures, as well as to partake in a range of adventurous international events. I am pleased to launch the 3rd edition of the Lonely Planet guide for Timor-Leste, which will serve for many as an authoritative reference to experience the boundless wonders of this rare country.

Timor-Leste will delight visitors with its fascinating mix of history, culture and natural beauty. Our beaches, reefs, coffee plantations, forests and mountains, all in a pristine untouched natural state, will astound you. Travellers visiting now will share in a unique and historical moment, experiencing a country that is stepping into a peaceful and democratic reality.

The 'Dili, City of Peace' campaign has used a series of international sporting and cultural events since 2009 to promote peace in Timor-Leste. Two such annual events, the Tour de Timor and the Dili 'City of Peace' Marathon, encourage people to visit Timor-Leste and build bridges between nations. However, the most important effect is to offer hope, opportunity and experience for everyone that encounters these exciting events. They showcase the nation and allow everyone to see Timor-Leste in ways not possible before.

I invite you to discover Timor-Leste. You will find the Timorese people both welcoming and generous. While in Dili, the 'City of Peace', you are most welcome to visit my Presidential Palace, which I have specifically designed for the people with free wi-fi internet, a library, museum displays and playgrounds for the children.

I hope you thoroughly enjoy your time in Timor-Leste and we look forward to your return journey to our shores in the future.

*José Ramos-Horta*

*President of the Republic*

*Timor-Leste*

# On the Road

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# itineraries

Whether you have six days or 60, these itineraries provide a starting point for the trip of a lifetime. Want more inspiration? Head online to [lonelyplanet.com/thorntree](http://lonelyplanet.com/thorntree) to chat with other travellers.



10 Days

## A Taste of Timor-Leste

Spend a couple of days exploring the delights of **Dili**, and climb up to the iconic **Christ Statue** on Cape Fatucama. Head east along the coast via **Manatuto** to laid-back **Baucau**. This place has real Portuguese flavour, particularly if you stay at the fine old *pousada*. The next day, continue east through **Lautem** to **Tutuala**, perched on a cliff top up at the island's easternmost end. The amazing beach offers a choice of two eco-resorts, where you can take an outrigger to **Jaco Island**. Head west again with an overnight stop at the beach at **Com**.

The next day drive back to **Dili** and up into the central mountains for a night at **Maubisse**, where you can relax at a Portuguese *pousada*. From here you can take a day trek up to the summit of **Mt Ramelau**, the highest mountain in Timor-Leste. Alternatively, stay overnight in **Hatubuilico** and make the trek in the early hours to be at the top for sunrise. Return to Dili for the night and the next day head out to **Ataura Island** for a night or two. This trip may take longer using public transport.



One Week

## The South & West Loop

Travelling south or west of **Dili** gives you a plethora of options. Heading west you can head up into the mountains and Timor coffee country through **Gleno** and **Ermera**, eventually arriving at **Maliana**. Alternatively, take the coast road to the west passing through the coastal towns of **Liqueiça** and **Maubara** with its impressive fort. At **Batugade** head for the hills and onto **Balibo** and **Maliana**.

Then head south from Maliana to **Bobonaro**. The drive to **Zumlai** is probably the most spectacular in the country. Overnight in **Suai** before heading east to either **Ainaro** or **Same**. Going via Same will allow you to explore **Betano** and its WWII history. Stop at the small village of **Hatubuilico** for a night, rising early the next day to see the sunrise from **Mt Ramelau**. Meander back down the central mountains through **Maubisse** and **Dare** and its Australian War memorial, and into Dili.

Three to Four Weeks

## Timor-Leste Explorer

With three to four weeks, it's possible to visit almost everywhere, especially if you have your own wheels. Start with a couple of days in **Dili** and then head west to **Batugade**, close to the Indonesian border. Turn inland to **Balibo** for a slice of history, and on to **Maliana**, overlooking the verdant Nanura Plains. The next day head south via **Bobonaro** to **Suai**, with its pretty villages and beach, then turn east and head back into the mountains via either **Ainaro** or **Same** to **Hatubuilico** to climb **Mt Ramelau**. Next stop is **Maubisse** with its old Portuguese *pousada*, then on to Dili.

From Dili it's off to the eastern end of the island, stopping along the spectacular coast before overnighting in **Baucau**. Use Baucau as a base for multiday trips to the colonial relic of **Venilale** and the eco-resort at **Loi Hunu**, where you can venture into the 'Lost World' of **Mundo Perdido**. Bagaia can also be reached from Baucau, gateway to the former resistance stronghold of **Mt Matebian**. Further east, explore **Com**, **Lospalos**, the stunning beach of **Tutuala**, and **Jaco Island**. Return to Dili and cap off your trip by heading out to **Atauro Island** for a few nights.





# Diving & Snorkelling

## Best Dive Sites

**Tasitolu** (p45) An array of fish and critters to be seen.

**Dirt Track** (p71) A spectacular wall dive with an abundance of marine life.

**Manta Cove** (p91) Swim among rays and massive groupers at this steep drop-off.

## Best Type of Diving

**Boat** You will need to do boat dives to reach nearly all Atauro Island dive sites.

**Shore** Nearly all of the diving on the north coast is accessible from the beach.

## Courses

A full range of PADI courses is available, from basic open-water through to instructor courses. Courses start at US\$255 and are conducted in Dili by several operators (p22).

## Costs

**Dive Safaris** Dive operators can design a bespoke dive safari for you ranging from hundreds of dollars up to thousands.

**Diving** Single shore dives start at US\$40.

**Snorkelling** Free, unless you go with one of the dive operators (from US\$20).

## Websites

[www.compassadventuretours.com](http://www.compassadventuretours.com)  
[www.divetimor.com](http://www.divetimor.com)  
[www.freeflowdiving.blogspot.com](http://www.freeflowdiving.blogspot.com)  
[www.timordiver.net](http://www.timordiver.net)

## Planning Your Diving & Snorkelling Trip

### When to Go

Diving is possible year-round, although the conditions are smoother and the water clearer during the May to November dry season when visibility is typically 20m to 35m. During the wet season, from December to April, the visibility is still 15m to 20m. February is probably the worst month for visibility with some sites affected, to varying degrees, by silt run-off from the swollen rivers coming from the torrential downpours. It picks up again by mid- to late March, and in April visibility is once again excellent. September is great for manta rays and, if you are lucky, whale sharks. Some dive sites can experience strong currents and are more suitable for advanced, experienced divers. The water temperatures fluctuates between 26°C and 28°C year-round.

### Why is the Diving So Good?

The diving in Timor-Leste is world class, thanks to a perfect mix of cool, deep water; undamaged reefs; underfished marine life and its prime location in the Coral Triangle. Ocean trenches that reach several kilometres deep yield cool thermoclimes that reju-

## RESPONSIBLE DIVING

Please consider the following tips when diving, and help preserve the ecology and beauty of Timor-Leste's largely untouched reefs;

- » Avoid touching or standing on living marine organisms or dragging equipment across the reef.
- » Be conscious of your fins. Even without contact, the surge from fin strokes near the reef can damage delicate organisms. Take care not to kick up clouds of sand, which can smother organisms.
- » Practise and maintain proper buoyancy control. Major damage can be done by divers descending too fast and colliding with the reef.
- » Resist the temptation to collect or buy coral or shells, or to loot marine archaeological sites.
- » Ensure that you take home all your rubbish and any litter you may find as well. Plastics in particular are a serious threat to marine life.
- » Do not feed fish.
- » Minimise your disturbance of marine animals. *Never* ride on the backs of turtles.

Responsible diving also means safe diving. Those planning in diving in East Timor must ensure that have adequate insurance coverage, and should consider bespoke coverage such as DAN insurance ([www.diversalertnetwork.org](http://www.diversalertnetwork.org)).

The dive operators in East Timor are not only highly experienced divers, but also have been diving in East Timor for over a decade. They know the sites extremely well and the hazards associated with them, such as strong currents. If you are planning to dive independently, it is worth diving the site first with one of the local operators to familiarise yourself first before going it alone.

venate the coral life, which is also relatively untouched compared with Timor-Leste's neighbours, such as Indonesia and the Philippines. The practice of dynamite fishing never caught on because explosives were so tightly controlled during the Indonesian occupation.

The sea life is as plentiful as it is diverse, from nudibranchs to turtles to schooling trevally. Scientists travel halfway around the world to see one or two of the species of fish or sponge that are so plentiful in Timor-Leste. Large-scale commercial fishing has not started around any of the dive sites, and supplies are currently in equilibrium with what the locals eat and sell to foreigners in Dili's restaurants.

This perfect mix treats divers to a colourful array of hard and soft corals as well as a vivid assortment of reef fish. Pelagics (open-water species such as tuna, bonito and mackerel) are regularly encountered, along with harmless reef sharks, manta rays, dolphins and dugongs. The coral reef runs close to the shore along much of the north coast, and divers have only to wade in and swim a few strokes to reach spectacular drop-offs.

## The Coral Triangle

Timor-Leste lies in the southwest corner of the pristine Coral Triangle, which also includes the tropical marine waters of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Scientists believe that each eco-region contains at least 500 species of reef-building corals. The Triangle encompasses portions of two biogeographic regions: the Indonesian-Philippines Region (where Timor-Leste lies) and the Far Southwestern Pacific Region. The Coral Triangle is recognised as the global epicentre of marine biodiversity and has the highest coral diversity in the world, with 76% of the world's 805 coral species found there. Moreover, 37% of the world's coral-reef fish can also be found in the Triangle, which is the highest diversity of coral-reef fish in the world.

## Accessible Diving & Dive Safaris

Timor-Leste's diving is not only spectacular but also very accessible. The bulk of the regularly visited dive sites are located either in

## DILI DIVE OPERATORS

There are three dive operators in Dili. All have excellent safety records, and are run by friendly people who have experience in running courses and diving in Timor-Leste. Do your research and contact them for what you are after. They will be able to tailor any trip, down to requests to see certain species of fish.

**Compass Charters** (Map p38; ☎723 0966; info@compassadventurtours.com; Av dos Mártires de Pátria) Next to Tiger Fuel.

**Dive Timor Lorosae** (Map p42; ☎723 7092; www.divetimor.com; Av de Portugal)

**Free Flow** (Map p42; ☎723 4614; www.freeflowdiving.blogspot.com; Av de Portugal)

Dili or near Maubara in the west. The drive out to the sites to the east of Dili is part of the adventure, as you rise above the sea before descending to the dive sites. All of these sites can be accessed from the shore. Drive up to the beach, unload in the shade, gear up and walk into the water. Within minutes, schools of fish, colourful corals, marine critters and dugongs surround you. The diving is not deep either, so more time is spent seeing marine activity rather than decompressing.

Boat dives can access the sites in and around Dili, in addition to the underwater paradise of Atauro Island. If you can get a group of six or eight divers together, these boat dives are similarly priced to those from the shore.

Further along the east coast, the Dili dive operators can arrange dive safaris to sites around Com, Tutuala and Jaco Island. This can be done by vehicle or boat, or you can go by car and meet the boat there. The expense increases for these trips, but the dive sites are well worth the effort for their rich coral and sea life.

Those who want to learn to dive in East Timor will find a full suite of PADI courses on offer in Dili. Courses start at US\$255 and include dives at some of the country's best sites. Discuss your requirements with the dive operators who will be able to put together a package that will cater for your needs and budget.

## Easy Snorkelling

Everyone who comes to Timor-Leste should go snorkelling, and a mask and snorkel is every season's must-have accessory. It is always good to bring your own mask and snorkel with you. Although the dive operators can supply them, a well-fitting mask is essential and it also means you can go snorkelling at any time.

There are two ways you are going to be able to go snorkelling: either under your own steam or with one of the dive operators. Going independent is easy, particularly if you have a vehicle. As the reef hugs the north coast, pulling over on one of the deserted beaches for a look can prove to be an underwater paradise. There is also good snorkelling to be had at the existing dive sites. Ask around where you are staying, as most people are happy to share their favourite spots with you. Just like with diving, keep your buddy close and be careful of currents.

One of the great things about diving in Timor-Leste is that with the prevalence of shore diving, your nondiving family and friends can join you snorkelling. All the dive operators are comfortable taking nondivers on the trips to the dive sites for a reduced fee. Snorkellers can still have an amazing experience, as a lot of the coral and marine life is also accessible to them.



## OUR STORY

A beat-up old car, a few dollars in the pocket and a sense of adventure. In 1972 that's all Tony and Maureen Wheeler needed for the trip of a lifetime – across Europe and Asia overland to Australia. It took several months, and at the end – broke but inspired – they sat at their kitchen table writing and stapling together their first travel guide, *Across Asia on the Cheap*. Within a week they'd sold 1500 copies. Lonely Planet was born.

Today, Lonely Planet has offices in Melbourne, London and Oakland, with more than 600 staff and writers. We share Tony's belief that 'a great guidebook should do three things: inform, educate and amuse'.

## OUR WRITERS



### Rodney Cocks

As a boy growing up in Melbourne, Rodney saw 'Free East Timor' graffitied on a railway bridge and wondered what it was all about. Nearly 20 years later he arrived in a liberated country just after independence in 2002, as an Australian Army Officer in the UN Peacekeeping Force. Rodney later helped raise funds and implement several charitable projects in some of the poorer districts. Researching this book again confirmed the advice he gives to all people travelling to East

Timor: get out of Dili and explore! He has been to one-quarter of the countries in the world and East Timor remains one of his favourites. He has also worked on Lonely Planet titles *Afghanistan* and *Pakistan & the Karakorum Highway*.

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