

WORLD STUDENT INDONESIA



Visiting Indonesia for the first time:
a guide for students, teachers and tour leaders



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Visiting Indonesia for the First Time

You will be visiting a country that is changing at great speed. The size – of the population, of the country itself – can be confronting. Your experiences will be quite different depending on where you travel to in Indonesia. Being informed about the country, its peoples and traditions will enable you to not only gain a greater appreciation but will enhance your visit enormously.

This guide gives you some tips for your journey. It is designed for teachers and students visiting Indonesia for the first time. Core activities may include a visit to a sister school in Indonesia, tourism or a study tour experience for teachers.

Preparation

Tour Leader

[The overseas learning experiences for students ebook or PDF](#) provides great advice and planning documents to support a school visit to Indonesia.

Participant Guide

Consider preparing a guide for all participants, including:

- group leader contact details, participant list and mobile phone numbers
- itinerary and program
- hotel and accommodation details including international phone codes
- basic words and phrases
- details of the Australian Embassy in Jakarta and the Australian Consulate General in Bali
- expenses record
- notes pages.





Itinerary

If you are planning an itinerary for a school group, consider the following.

- Provide downtime as well as opportunities to reflect and debrief as a group and individually.
- Useful information about short in-country experiences can be found in [Learning from short term sojourns in China](#). While the focus is on China, there are useful considerations that apply to any in-country experience, regardless of the destination.
- Activities such as school visits and homestay require the most energy but potentially provide the most rewards.

The principle of gradual scaffolding is the primary learning rule for planning sojourn activities. Thus whether on tour or visiting a school, learning will be enhanced if students have the chance to repeat an experience and gradually increase their independence within the one environment. (Orton J & Mansell D 2011)

Teachers

You'll get more out of visiting Indonesia if you know something about the country before you go. Here are some good resources:

- [Asia Education Foundation Indonesia](#)
- [Indonesia country brief](#) on the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) website.
- DFAT's [Smartraveller](#)
- BBC's [Indonesia profile](#)
- [Wonderful Indonesia](#) [*] is Indonesia's official tourism website.
- [The Jakarta Post](#) [*] is Indonesia's largest English-language daily newspaper.
- [Tempo](#) [*] is a daily Indonesian newspaper, available in English and Indonesian.
- [Inside Indonesia](#) [*] is a quarterly magazine in English for general readers on the people of Indonesia – their culture, politics, economy and environment.

Students

You'll get more out of visiting Indonesia if you know something about the country before you go. Here are some good resources:

- [Indonesia: a study abroad experience](#) [*] is about Sarrah Bates, an Ohio student who studied in Surabaya for five months. It provides insights into challenges, expectations, cultural norms and other aspects of living in Indonesia.
- DFAT's [Smartraveller](#)
- Lonely Planet's [Indonesia](#) [*]
- [Wonderful Indonesia](#) [*] is Indonesia's official tourism website; it includes travel information, destinations, activities and language tips.
- ABC Radio Australia's [Bahasa Indonesia](#)
- [Bridge to understanding](#) [*] is an account of the Bridge project between Heathmont College in Australia and SMP N1 Karangmojo in Indonesia.
- Warung Sinema: Indonesian Language Project contains 20 multimedia listening comprehension lessons for students of Indonesian.
- [Ini Oke](#) [*] is an Indonesian media site for teenagers.
- [Gramedia Majalah Shelf](#) [*] is an e-book reader with a store and lots of free books. (Available on iTunes.)
- *Shadow princess: an Indonesian story* (2011) by Cindy Marvell and Tamara Fielding is a young adult novel about the tragedy of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami, seen through the eyes of an adolescent girl, Tumbuh, who finds herself experiencing things that are usually forbidden to females, including the ancient art of Wayang Kulit.
- *Ada apa dengan Cinta?* (*What's up with love?*, 2002) is a contemporary Indonesian teenage film about love and values with elements of classical culture and politics.

Read your way to Indonesia

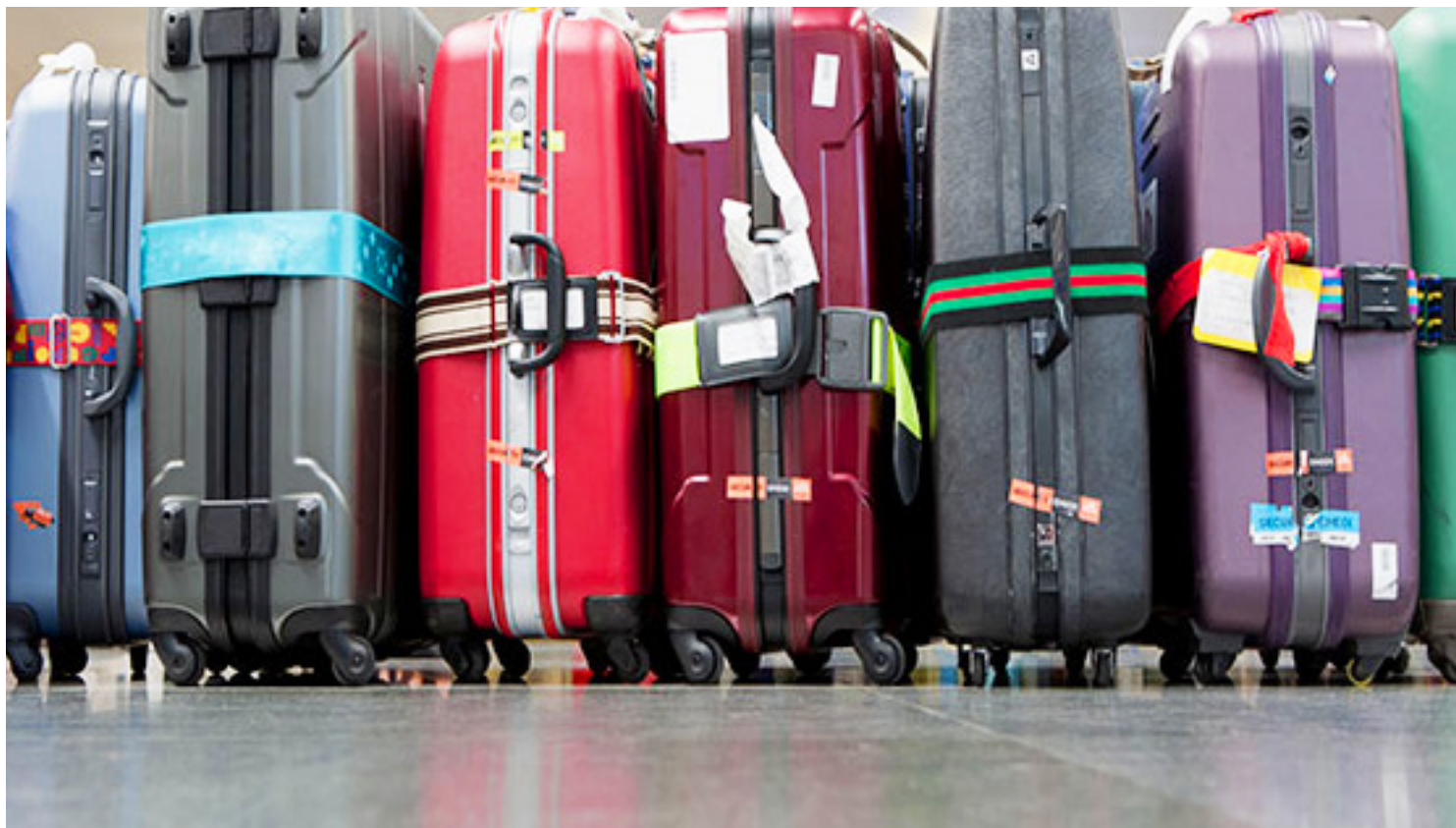
Books

- *This earth of mankind* (1980): Pramoedya Ananta Toer's first novel in the classic 'Buru quartet' is set at the end of the Dutch colonial rule. The book was written while Pramoedya was imprisoned in eastern Indonesia.
- *The rainbow troops* (2005): Andrea Hirata's autobiographical novel and Indonesia's biggest selling book focuses on two village teachers and their motley crew of students. It has been adapted into an Indonesian film, *Laskar Pelangi*.
- *Love and death in Bali* (2000, first published 1937): Vicki Baum's historical novel is set against the backdrop of the Dutch invasion of Bali in 1906, and the subsequent mass ritual suicide of Balinese royalty.
- *Krakatoa: the day the world exploded* (2003): Simon Winchester blends history, geology and politics to explore the 1883 eruption of Krakatoa.
- *Indonesia: peoples and histories* (2003): Jean Gelman Taylor retells Indonesian history from both an Indonesian and an outsider's perspectives.
- *Sustenance* (2010): Simone Lazaroo's novel explores the ironies of modern tourism in Bali from a range of perspectives.
- *The year of living dangerously* (1978): Christopher Koch's novel is the dramatic tale of an Australian journalist and Indonesian journalists in Sukarno's Indonesia of 1965. It has been adapted into a film.

Film

- *Don't forget to remember me. A day in the life of Indonesia* [*] (2008) is a documentary that provides glimpses of everyday life across the Indonesian archipelago.
- *Jalanan* [*] (2013) is a music documentary about Jakarta's bus musicians and street buskers, and their struggle for survival.
- *The raid: redemption* (2001) is a contemporary Indonesian martial arts action film that showcases Indonesia's traditional martial arts, 'pencak silat'.
- *Denias, senandung di atas awan (Denias, singing on a cloud*, 2006) is an award-winning film about a young boy, Denias, living in a remote village in West Papua.
- *Daun di atas bantal* [*] (*Leaf on a pillow*, 1998) is an award-winning film that follows three street children in Yogyakarta who aspire to rise above poverty and hope to receive an education.
- *Rumah Maida (released internationally as Maida's house*, 2009) focuses on a woman's struggle to save a historic house from a developer. The film deals with the importance of education, history, and pluralism.
- *Green*: follow the devastating journey of Green, an orangutan, as her home is destroyed by logging, forest clearing and the choking haze of rainforest fires.





What to pack

Pack lightly. There may be times when you'll need to carry your luggage up and down stairs – for instance in some hotels. You can buy most things in Indonesia if you need them.

- Clothing – check the weather predictions for the places listed in your itinerary. Indonesia is a big country; the weather can be quite different in the north-western islands compared with the eastern islands on the same day, although generally it is hot and dry, or wet, depending on the season. A raincoat is an essential item in Indonesia, as downpours can occur at any time. Light cotton clothing is also recommended due to the high temperatures and humidity.
- Earplugs (useful if there is nightly karaoke on the first floor of the hotel or if your hotel is next door to a mosque and you don't want to be woken by the call to prayer in the early hours of the morning).
- Favourite toiletries that may not be easy to find in Indonesia.
- Personal medications and hand sanitiser.
- Copies of your passport and other documents, such as credit card numbers, embassy contact details and travel insurance information (also saved on a USB and your email account).
- A small torch or book light for when jetlag strikes.
- A few small gifts for people that you meet along the way – gifts of toy koalas and kangaroos are always welcomed, as is an Australiana calendar, book or similar gift.
- A flip photo book or pictures on your phone of your school, home and family. This can be very useful if you spend time with Indonesian students, a host family or others.
- Mobile phone/tablet charger.

Leave some room in your bags for gifts, shopping and souvenirs that you will acquire while in Indonesia.

Power adaptors

Most hotels have two-prong power points, so bring adaptors with you.

Travel insurance

Don't leave home without it!

Recording your details

Ensure you leave copies of your passport details, airline tickets, insurance policy, itinerary and credit card details at home with your family, just in case your bag or wallet is lost. Emailing copies of these documents to your own email address can also be useful.

Business cards

Prepare and take business cards to present to school staff and other officials who you will meet.





In Indonesia

Language

The national language is bahasa Indonesia. However, there are more than 500 ethnic groups in Indonesia and as many dialects spoken across the archipelago, so you will hear different blends of languages depending on where you are. When travelling abroad, it is always valuable to learn a few phrases to use during general greetings and conversation.

Here are great online resources to assist you in learning some words and phrases.

- [Language Learning Space](#)
- [Learning Indonesian](#) is one of the largest repositories of online Indonesian audio lessons available online.
- [SEAsite Indonesia](#) [*] contains materials about Indonesian language, culture and news.
- [YouTube](#)

There are also some great smart phone apps. These are not only handy for learning language but also for use while you travel. One of the most popular is *Innovative Languages – Indonesian*. You may also want to pack a phrase book for quick reference.

Pronunciation

Bahasa Indonesia is phonetic, meaning that most words are pronounced just as they are written, but there are some interesting exceptions:

- c is pronounced ch, for example *cinta* (love)
- ny is pronounced like the ny in the word banyan, for example *Nyoman* (Balinese name) and *senyum* (smile)
- ng is pronounced as one sound, like in ring, for example *tangan* (hand) and *senang* (happy)
- Also watch out for ngg, as in *tanggal* (date) and the slang word for *tidak* – *enggak* (no).

Etiquette

Understanding the culture's etiquette is an important part of ensuring your interactions with Indonesian people are positive. Consider the following when travelling in Indonesia.

- Indonesian people don't have a strong sense of personal space. As the country is highly populated in major cities, Indonesians are quite used to living in close proximity to others. Indonesians will have no problem with squashing up against you on a crowded bus.
- Most Indonesian people are happy to shake your hand when greeting you.
- If seated when being introduced to someone, stand up and remain standing for a little while to show respect.
- Greet people using an honorific and their first name, eg Pak Anton or Bu Ani.
- When eating, receiving or giving something, always use your right hand, as the left hand is considered unclean. The exception is when you use both hands to give something to someone; this is considered respectful.
- If you need to point to a place, item or person, use your right thumb with your remaining fingers tucked under to be more polite; never use your index finger. Also, pointing to something on the ground with your foot is extremely rude.
- If you need to call attention to someone, beckon him or her to come by extending your hand and, with palm facing down, make a downward wave.
- Avoid touching people on the head. The soul is believed to reside in one's head, making it off limits for people to touch.
- Business cards are important. Provide your business cards to people you meet in schools etc. Present it using both hands or using your right hand.
- Dress and act modestly, particularly when visiting schools and going out for formal dinners. Modest dress includes covering shoulders and upper arms, wearing long pants or skirt, or at the very least, knee-length shorts or skirt.
- Dress appropriately when visiting places of worship. For Hindu temples, you must wear a sarung to cover the legs and a selendang (scarf) around the waist. For Islamic mosques, you must be fully covered from head to foot; you may be given a special gown to wear inside the mosque if you don't have the appropriate attire.
- Shoes must be removed before entering a house or place of worship like a mosque or temple.
- Respect signs that say 'no photos'.
- Use discretion when taking photos, just as you might at home. Ask permission to take close-ups of people, even if you have to mime the action. Try to take photos of ordinary life as well as the more exotic aspects of Indonesia.
- Quiet persistence is a better strategy if you are upset or unhappy with a situation. Public displays of anger are frowned upon in Indonesian culture.
- Indonesian people also frown upon public displays of affection between people of the opposite sex. Hugging, holding hands and kissing people of the opposite sex are not appropriate in public spaces. However, it is common for Indonesian friends of the same sex to walk down the street with arms around each other or holding hands. These are gestures of friendship.



Visiting schools

Teachers

Visiting Indonesia is a great opportunity to meet principals, teachers and students. Indonesian schools tend to be larger than Australian schools, although this depends on where you are visiting in Indonesia. Take business cards to present to people you meet.

Gifts are important. Don't forget to take a couple of gifts, and be prepared to accept gifts from your host school/s. Wrap your gifts. Presents might include Australiana, items that reflect your school, or books and calendars. It is poor taste to offer only one person a gift in front of everyone else, so if you have only prepared one gift, you should give it to the most senior person.

Consider what you may talk about if you're asked to present a lesson to a group of students. Perhaps take some resources such as photos, picture story books or maps as stimulus materials.

You may be surprised at the effort that Indonesian schools will go to when you arrive. Your visit may be the highlight of the month! Students and teachers will be excited to meet you and to try out their English, so give them time for a reasonable meet and greet.

Teachers and principals are very highly regarded in Indonesia so you will be treated with great respect. It is important to understand that while Australians might enjoy some free time in the evenings, many Indonesian people believe that a host must be extremely attentive to guests at all times. Do not be surprised if, when you visit your partner school, you are accompanied by a member of staff at most times during every day and every evening (at least for dinner) of your visit.

Learn to love sweet tea or 'teh botol', a variant of iced tea in a bottle; you'll be offered it at most greetings and events.



Students

This is a great opportunity to meet Indonesian students and to experience a different type of school system. Take cards with your name and contact details so that you can stay in contact with some of the people you meet. Contact details could include; name, home address and online accounts such as email, Facebook and Twitter. (Indonesia is the world's third-largest market for Facebook and Jakarta is the most active city in the world for Twitter!) A flip book of photos could also help to break the ice.

Eating out

You may be hosted by Indonesian people to share in a meal. Be gracious and accept with thanks. Be careful about drinking alcohol. Many Indonesian people are Muslim and refrain from drinking alcohol. Of course, this differs from place to place and between different people that you meet.

- Enjoy the cuisine and try new foods. There is a lot of regional variation in Indonesia and you will encounter some great food on your travels.
- Indonesians traditionally eat with the fingertips of the right hand; however, today Indonesians generally use a spoon and a fork. An exception is eating Chinese-style foods such as soupy noodles, when chopsticks are used. Indonesians believe that food tastes better when eaten with the hand. You should give it a go!
- Indonesian food is generally hot and spicy; you will almost always find sambal, an Indonesian chilli sauce, on your table. If you don't have a high tolerance for chilli, try a little at a time and your tolerance will improve – then you will be able to try even more traditional Indonesian dishes.
- Your host may put some food onto your plate for you to try. Enjoy!
- If hosted for dinner, leave something on your plate at the end of the meal. This shows the host that ample food has been provided. Turning your spoon and fork over on the plate and crossing them is a polite way to show that you have finished eating.
- Night markets are a great place to try different foods. As a general rule, only eat hot, freshly cooked foods at markets.
- Don't split the bill; sort it out later!
- Drink bottled water.

Health and safety

Bring all required medication in original packaging and ensure you have a letter from your doctor to cover all prescription medication. Keep all essential medication in your hand luggage just in case your suitcase goes missing. Check vaccination requirements with your doctor and leave sufficient time to get a full course of injections if required.

You will need to drink bottled water and lots of it to ensure good hydration. This is important due to the high humidity in Indonesia.

Personal safety is not generally an issue; however, sometimes tourists can be targeted by pickpockets and thieves. Always keep your bags with you and don't accept any offers to take your bags for you at airports, unless pre-arranged. If travelling as a group it is worthwhile putting a bright wide ribbon on all handles of suitcases owned by group participants to make it easier to collect luggage at busy airport carousels. Put name tags on the outside of your luggage and inside as well.

Hotels are generally very safe; however, always ensure that your door is locked. You may wish to use hotel safes, if provided, to keep your valuables safe. Be cautious and keep your belongings safe and money well hidden.

Apps

At the time of writing, the following sites provide good advice.

- *Indo Surf Life* has an article titled: [7 essential apps travellers must have when visiting Indonesia](#) [*]
- [Indonesia travel guide by Triposo](#)
- [Travel to East Java](#) [*]
- [Top 10 apps for Jakarta map](#) [*]
- [TransJakarta](#): Busway app and timetable for Jakarta
- [The world's 50 best travel apps](#) [*]



Homestay

The homestay experience is usually one of the most daunting but ultimately memorable and unique experiences you can have when you travel. It is normal to be nervous prior to this experience. Here are some tips that will help.

- Try out your Indonesian language skills on your hosts; they will appreciate your efforts.
- Don't drink from the tap.
- Space is limited. If you are a secondary student, it is likely that you will have to share a room with your Indonesian peer.
- The bathroom and hot water scenario may be different to the one you have at home. Although you will sometimes find a shower or bath in Indonesia, it is more common to find traditional bathrooms that have a bak mandi filled with cold water. Never get inside the bak mandi; stand next to it and use the gayung, a plastic bucket or scoop, to scoop the water out and pour it over yourself. Bathing in cold water in Indonesia is very refreshing because the weather is so hot. You will also come across both Western-style and squat toilets.
- When a meal is served, wait for the older people to begin eating before serving yourself some food and/or wait until your host has invited you to start eating by saying; 'Silahkan makan!' or 'Silahkan makan dulu!'
- Indonesian hosts are generous. They will keep giving you food until you are more than full. You may need to politely refuse further offers of food several times before a meal ends.
- Take a gift for your host family such as an Australian souvenir, book or calendar.

Culture shock

Many people experience mild or significant culture shock when visiting foreign countries. You will experience some significant differences in social practices and cultural perspectives when you visit Indonesia. It is important to recognise these differences, be flexible when travelling and take the opportunity to debrief with your fellow tour participants. Symptoms of culture shock include homesickness, disorientation, loneliness, physical symptoms including headaches, insecurity, irregular sleep patterns and general anxiety. It is important to ask for help and support from your tour leaders if you experience any of these symptoms. Culture shock is a very natural response to new and foreign environments, so don't be afraid to ask for help. A recommended read is: *Culture shock: Indonesia* (1991) written by Cathie Draine and Barbara Hall.

Teachers and students

Issues that commonly crop up when visiting Indonesia:

- Coping with unfamiliar food. This is most likely to occur in more remote areas of Indonesia and/or at breakfast time in some places.
- Being overwhelmed. The size and heat of Indonesia can be exhausting. The formality of school visits and associated social activities can be tiring.
- Shopping craziness. This can include managing bargaining, aggressive sales people in markets and tourist places, and buying too much.
- Expecting greater use of English by Indonesian people than is encountered in more remote areas of Indonesia when negotiating transport and menus etc.
- Managing a different environment, which might include air pollution levels, non-Western toilets in some places, crossing the roads, and habits such as spitting.



Pole climbing contest to celebrate Indonesian Independence Day 17th August.



Tour leader

Make sure that there are regular opportunities to debrief tour participants and track how they are travelling. Debriefing can include asking participants to do:

- a quick PMI (positive/minus/interesting) either on paper or in discussion over dinner
- headlines – if you were to create a headline about your day's experiences that captured the most important aspect, what would that headline be? Discuss how that might differ from what you would have said yesterday.

(Adapted from Visible thinking, Headlines routine © President and Fellows of Harvard College on behalf of Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.)

The U or W curve of culture shock?

The jury is out about whether culture shock can be said to fall into a U or W pattern, but it can be useful to acknowledge the potential stages of response and adjustment to being in a new culture. The stages loosely move from the 'Honeymoon' stage where you are excited to be travelling and to be encountering new and interesting situations and people, then to a 'Distress or negotiation' stage where you may feel homesick or you have encountered something challenging. You are encountering a different culture as well as possibly negotiating the different personalities in the group you are travelling with. Then it is common to build some in-country skills; you have learnt a little language, know how to negotiate a fare on a bajaj or a becak or have become a master-bargainer. Sometimes, the curve can continue on return home as you meet varied responses or indifference to the impact of your time in-country.

The following sites provide more information:

- [Culture shock: a challenge of international travel experiences](#) [*]
- [Cross-cultural adaptation](#) [*]



Shopping

Enjoy the shopping at markets and stores. Many Indonesian retailers are happy to haggle over prices and most are likely to knock their initial price down by at least 50%. This is more likely to happen in markets than in department stores or mainstream shops where the prices are set. There are some good tips about bargaining on the websites [Expat: living in Indonesia – bargaining tips, or how to be a success at bargaining in Indonesia](#) [*] and Lonely Planet's [Indonesia shopping](#) [*] tips. Virtual Tourist's [Indonesia shopping](#) [*] also has great advice about shopping in Indonesia. Haggling at markets is expected and can be lots of fun once you become used to it.

Be careful about the items you bring home; Australian customs regulations are quite strict. You may wish to check which items you can and cannot bring back into Australia.

Money

Indonesian money is called Indonesian rupiah – IDR or Rp. Exchange money at your hotel or a bank. Avoid on-the-street exchange shops.

You'll be able to use your credit cards in Indonesia, but carry cash because some stores and small shops won't accept plastic. There are ATMs in airports, hotels and large department stores where you can use your Australian credit card to withdraw cash. Some ATMs will only accept local Indonesian credit cards. Be aware that if you travel to remote areas of Indonesia there may not be any ATMs, making carrying cash essential.

Telephones

Check with your mobile phone provider to see if it can be used internationally and in Indonesia. You may need to request it can be used overseas. Check phone and roaming charges before you leave as these can be very costly. Another option is to get your phone unlocked and buy a SIM card when you arrive.

Transport

Blue Bird Taxis are the most highly recommended taxi company throughout Indonesia. You will find them in most big cities. They provide professional service and use a meter, so no haggling is required. Always get a hotel card and keep it handy to show the taxi driver your correct address – that way, you will never get lost!

If you have time, catch a local bus or train, or a traditional form of transport such as a bajaj in Jakarta or a becak in Yogyakarta (be prepared to bargain for these forms of transport). This can be a great experience and can give you an insight into travelling as a local.

If you travel on an overnight train, opt for a sleeper rather than a seat in the general carriage where possible. When travelling in Indonesia be prepared for delays in travel. Trains, buses and boats can often be delayed or cancelled. For example, boats are often cancelled due to bad weather conditions and rough water. Patience is important when travelling throughout the Indonesian archipelago.

When you return home

Here is an activity to try once you return home.

Connect, extend, challenge

This is a routine for connecting new ideas to prior knowledge.

- CONNECT:** How did the experience of visiting Indonesia connect to what you already knew?
- EXTEND:** What new ideas did you get that extended or pushed your thinking in new directions?
- CHALLENGE:** What is still challenging or confusing for you to get your mind around? What questions, wonderings or puzzles do you now have about Indonesia?

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