



# INDONESIA

An everyday guide to expatriate life and work.

Together, all the way.®



# INDONESIA COUNTRY GUIDE

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### Quick Facts\*

**Capital:** Jakarta

**Population:** About 263 million

**Major languages:** Indonesian and Javanese

**Major religions:** Islam and Christianity

**Currency:** Indonesian rupiah (IDR)

**Time zone:** GMT +7, GMT +8, GMT +9

**Emergency numbers:** Police: 110; Ambulance: 118/119; Fire: 113

**Electricity:** 230V, 50 Hz. Plugs are either European-style with two round pins or UK-style with three flat blades.

**Drive on the:** Left

\*<http://www.expatarrivals.com/indonesia/essential-info-for-indonesia>

## Overview



Indonesia has a lot to offer expats, including beautiful white beaches, warm tropical weather and an array of exciting local cuisine. While the capital, Jakarta, and the island of Bali are where most expats head, there are well over 17,000 islands to explore across the archipelago.\*

The tropical islands that make up Indonesia offer exciting work opportunities for those with the right skills and can be an excellent place to retire. Those who love to travel will enjoy Indonesia's position as a base for visiting some of Southeast Asia's most vibrant destinations like Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia. Australia is also just a short flight away.

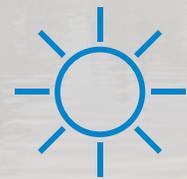
This guide contains information on all aspects of life in Indonesia, from culture and climate to business, banking, and more.

\*<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/id.html>



## Getting Started

### Climate and Weather



The weather in Indonesia stays humid and hot throughout the year, never straying far from the 82°F (28°C) mark. Though temperature doesn't change much from month to month, the seasons are marked by rainfall, with the dry season being from June to September and the wet season from December to March. The latter can bring monsoons and tropical storms to the region, while the dry season is generally considered the best time of the year in Indonesia.\* The warm waters and sunny days offer the perfect opportunity to enjoy the region's many islands and beaches.

\*<https://www.worldtravelguide.net/guides/asia/indonesia/weather-climate-geography/>

## Visas

Nationals of a number of countries may visit Indonesia for up to 30 days visa-free. However, those from countries not on the visa-free list will either have to obtain a visa at the border or apply for one in advance of their trip.\*

Expats intending a longer stay to take up work in Indonesia face a somewhat trickier process. First, they'll need to secure a job so that they have an employer to act as a guarantor for the visa application. Before entering the country, a limited stay or semi-permanent residence visa (known as a VITAS) is needed. Once in Indonesia, the VITAS is converted to a KITAS, which is a temporary residence permit that will need to be renewed periodically. After three consecutive years of living in Indonesia, expats can apply for a permanent residency permit (KITAP), which is renewable once every five years.\*\*

\*<http://www.imigrasi.go.id/index.php/en/public-services/visit-visa>

\*\* <http://www.imigrasi.go.id/index.php/en/public-services/limited-stay-visa>

## Accommodation

Expats in Indonesia usually rent rather than buy accommodation. The type of housing available mostly depends on where one plans to live. In big cities like Jakarta, apartments are most common and often come furnished. Luxury serviced apartments are particularly popular with expats because they offer Western-style living with plenty of amenities. In smaller outlying islands, houses are the norm, either in the form of townhouses or freestanding properties. Western-style complexes are also available and usually come with shared facilities like pools, clubhouses and tennis courts.\*

The best way to find accommodation is to use a real estate agent, preferably one who's worked with expats before. An agent can recommend areas of the city and should be able to help bridge any communication gaps.

A standard lease in Indonesia is two or three years long, with rent paid upfront for either the entire lease period or, in rare cases, advance of one year at a time. Deposits are usually the equivalent of one month's rent and utilities are typically not included in the rental cost.\*\*

\*<http://www.expats.or.id/info/info.html#Housing>

\*\*<http://www.expatarivals.com/indonesia/accommodation-in-indonesia>





## Culture

Though freedom of religion is enshrined in Indonesia's constitution, more than 80% of the population is Muslim.\* As a result, Indonesian culture is conservative. Locals are often soft-spoken but usually very friendly, so it should be relatively easy to make local friends.

## Language

There are an estimated 700 languages spoken throughout Indonesia, dozens of which are in danger of dying out.\*\* The official language is Indonesian, a variant of Malay also known as Bahasa Indonesia. While this is the general language of commerce, media and education, Javanese is more widely spoken as a first language. In some tourist areas, like Jakarta, English is more common but proficiency may be limited. If expats want to integrate into Indonesian society, they'll likely need to learn a local language.

\*<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/guides/guide-to-indonesia-etiquette-customs-culture-business/>

\*\*<https://www.ethnologue.com/country/ID>

## Social Etiquette & Cultural Faux Pas

When moving to a new country, it can be all too easy to make a cultural misstep or social blunder. The key to living peacefully in Indonesia is learning about and respecting local customs. Here are a few tips on navigating the local culture.

- › “Face” is an intangible quality relating to honor and dignity, and is highly valued by Indonesians. It’s especially important that one does not cause another person to lose face, and expats should never confront, contradict or embarrass a local in public as this would cause them to lose face.
- › To avoid offending anyone, Indonesians communicate in a very indirect way, and they might not always say what they mean. A positive answer like “yes” might not necessarily indicate agreement – in some cases, it’s just an acknowledgment that they’ve heard what someone’s said.
- › Many Indonesians have a somewhat flexible approach to time, known as “jam karet” (“rubber time”), so expats shouldn’t be surprised if Indonesians are late for social appointments. But this doesn’t mean that expats should make a habit of being late themselves.
- › A handshake is an acceptable form of greeting. Some Indonesian women prefer not to shake hands with men, though, so it’s best to either wait for them to extend a hand or simply greet them with a nod of acknowledgment.
- › Expats should always respect Muslim values by dressing modestly
- › Don’t give alcohol or pork products to locals as gifts, as they’re against Muslim beliefs.\*

<http://www.traveletiquette.co.uk/indonesianetiquette.html>

## Eating

Foodies moving to Indonesia are in for a treat. The diversity of the country has resulted in a rich mix of flavors, and eating is a multisensory experience in Indonesia. Much of the cuisine is centered on rice, the country’s staple food. Some of the best-loved traditional Indonesian dishes are satay, rending and nasi goreng.\*

Those craving Western-style fast food will find plenty of familiar international chains in Indonesia

Expats dining in Indonesia may be surprised when they’re given only a fork and spoon to eat with – this is common, and in traditional Muslim restaurants, there may be no utensils at all. Eat only with the right hand, as the left hand is considered dirty in the Islamic culture.\*\*

\*<http://edition.cnn.com/travel/article/40-indonesian-foods/index.html>

\*\*<https://etiquette.knoji.com/social-eating-etiquette-and-faux-pas-in-indonesia/>

## Drinking

As Indonesia is mostly a Muslim country, drinking alcohol is largely taboo. For Muslims, religious beliefs don’t permit alcohol consumption and the government also imposes high taxes on alcohol to deter drinking in general.\*

\*<http://www.whatsnewjakarta.com/where-to-get-alcohol-in-jakarta/>

## Education

Indonesia has one of the world’s largest education sectors. Despite this, the quality of public schools is generally low, and teaching is entirely in Indonesian, so expat parents often prefer to avoid them. Parents that do decide to send their children to a local public school will have two choices: national schools, which teach Indonesia’s national curriculum, and “national plus” schools, which go beyond the national curriculum’s requirements. Some “national plus” schools teach partly in English.

International schools are a good alternative to Indonesia’s local schools, and luckily there are plenty to choose from. Children at these schools can continue with their home curriculum (or pursue another internationally recognized curriculum), often in their home language. There’s a range of international schools in Indonesia, most of which are based in the major cities of Jakarta, Bandung and Surabaya. These teach various curricula, including British, American and the International Baccalaureate. Although these schools offer a good standard of education, they’re often expensive and the demand for seats can outstrip the availability of spaces, so it’s best to apply as far in advance as possible.\*

<https://www.pressreader.com/indonesia/indonesia/expat/20170301/281526520830254>

## Transport

The various public transport systems in Indonesia complement each other and are well-connected, but can sometimes be slow. Most expats prefer to use either their own car or they get around using taxis.

Apart from taxi cabs in the form of cars, other taxi options include cycle rickshaws (becak), autorickshaws (bajaj) and motorcycle taxis (obeks) – but these are often dangerous and aren’t recommended.

Buses come in various forms, and those living in Jakarta will have access to the city’s bus rapid transport system. Throughout Indonesia, expats will also see minibuses, known locally as angkut. They tend to be operated on a shared basis, so it’s not uncommon to wait around as the minibus slowly fills up.

For long-distance travel, trains can be used in some cases – otherwise, domestic flights or ferries are the way to go. It’s also possible to hop over to nearby countries like Singapore and Malaysia via a short flight or ferry trip.\*

\*[https://www.travelfish.org/getting\\_there/indonesia](https://www.travelfish.org/getting_there/indonesia)

## Getting in Touch

The vast size of Indonesia makes it difficult to generalize the availability, dependability and quality of telecommunications services. Telkom Indonesia, the majority of which is owned by the state, is at the forefront of the telecoms industry, providing cellphone, internet and cable television services. There are also a number of smaller competing companies.\*

\*<https://www.budde.com.au/Research/Indonesia-Telecoms-Infrastructure-Operators-Regulations-Statistics-and-Analyses>

### Telephone

Landlines are still used in Indonesia for phone calls as well as internet access. If a house or apartment doesn't come with a telephone line, expats should enquire with Telkom Indonesia about having one installed.

Mobile phones (known locally as "hand phones") are becoming increasingly popular. Reception for cellphones can be patchy in rural areas, though. XL, Indosat and Telkomsel are popular mobile service providers, and there are several other smaller providers on the market, too.\*

\*<https://www.digitalnewsasia.com/business/indonesia%E2%80%99s-big-3-telcos-look-win-big-data>

### Internet

Though broadband is becoming more common, many internet users in Indonesia still use dial-up. Around half of Indonesia's population has internet access. As the country is made up of thousands of islands – some large and others very small – the availability and speed of the internet can differ greatly from place to place. Generally, larger cities will have better infrastructure and more reliable internet service than outlying islands.\*

\*<https://www.devex.com/news/how-do-you-connect-a-country-of-17-000-islands-to-the-internet-85790>

### Postal Services

Pos Indonesia is owned by the state and manages the postal service across the archipelago. Though the company once had a reputation for slow delivery and losing parcels, their quality of service has improved greatly over the last few years. But for particularly important packages (especially those sent internationally) it's best to use one of the international postal services available, such as DHL or FedEx.\*

<http://www.indonesiainquiry.com/travel-living/mail-and-ship-ping/>



# Employment

## The Job Market

Indonesia has a steadily growing economy and is a G20 country – a group of major world economies.\* Most of the archipelago’s GDP comes from agriculture, but other thriving industries include the service sector, mining, electronics and tourism.\*\* There are also opportunities for teaching English. It might be difficult for expats looking for work in Indonesia to find a job, though, due to strict visa requirements. For this reason, expats planning to emigrate should rather secure a job beforehand.

\*<https://www.g20.org/Content/EN/StatischeSeiten/G20/Laender/2016-12-01-indonesia-en.html?nn=2186548>

\*\*<https://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/indonesia/economy>

## Income Tax

Income tax is charged progressively, though the amount differs by region. For instance, salaries in Jakarta are taxed on a sliding scale of 10% to 40%, depending on the size of one’s salary. Those present in Indonesia for at least 183 days in any 12-month period are classified as residents for tax purposes.\*

\*<https://globaleledge.msu.edu/countries/indonesia/economy>

## Retirement

Retiring in Indonesia is an appealing prospect for lovers of sun, sand and sea, with Bali being an especially popular retirement destination. For those intending to retire, a special visa is available. Only certain nationalities are eligible for the Indonesian retirement visa, and applicants must be at least 55 years old. They must also have adequate health and life insurance. Working while on a retirement visa isn’t allowed.\*

\*<https://emerhub.com/indonesia/retirement-visa-indonesia-guide/>

## Business Etiquette

Indonesia’s growing economy offers plenty of business opportunities for entrepreneurial expats. The center of business is Jakarta, though Surabaya and Bandung are also notable business hubs.

Though Indonesia is an exciting place to do business, there are certain drawbacks, one of which is the seemingly endless bureaucracy. Regulations often change, and it isn’t always easy to keep track.

Indonesian business people often speak English, especially in Jakarta. There are exceptions, though, so it can be useful to have an interpreter on hand or learn some key phrases in Indonesian. Being able to at least greet in Indonesian is a good way of showing respect for locals.\*

Dress is conservative – suits are a good option, and women should take particular care to dress neatly and not expose too much skin.

Expats will notice that Indonesians are friendly people and enjoy hosting guests. Harmony is important in relationships with Indonesians, in business or otherwise. To this end, it’s vital to understand the concept of “saving face”, which involves respecting the reputation and honor of others by not shaming them in public.\*\*

It can take several meetings for decisions to be made as Indonesians like to build a relationship with business partners first. Expats should always exude a calm demeanor and it’s vital to speak politely and respectfully during meetings. Trying to go for a “hard sell” or putting on pressure will likely jeopardize the chance of doing business.

That said, the emphasis on harmony in relationships makes doing business in Indonesia a pleasant experience overall, and the dynamic and growing economy is ripe for investment.\*\*\*

\*<http://www.commisceo-global.com/country-guides/indonesia-guide>

\*\*<https://www.communicaid.com/country/indonesia/>

\*\*\*<http://www.expatarrivals.com/indonesia/doing-business-in-indonesia>





## Finance

### Currency

The official currency is the Indonesian rupiah (IDR), which is subdivided in 100 sen. Sen have become obsolete due to inflation. The rupiah is commonly referred to as “perak” by locals.

Money is available in the following denominations:

- > Notes: 1,000, 2,000, 5,000, 10,000, 20,000, 50,000 and 100,000 IDR
- > Coins: 100, 200, 500, and 1,000 IDR

### Cost of living

The cost of living in Indonesia is low in some respects and very high in others. The biggest expenses for expats are likely to be accommodation, healthcare and, if sending children to international schools, tuition. Meanwhile, expats can save on the grocery bill by shopping at markets, and domestic help is an affordable luxury.

## Banking

Managing finances in Indonesia can take some time to progress. There are reputable local banks available, though expats who already have an account with an international bank might prefer to simply maintain that account rather than open a new one.

Expats will need their passport, residence permit and proof of address to open an account. Staff at most banks should be able to speak English, though the websites of some local banks are only available in Indonesian.\*

\*<http://www.expat.or.id/info/banking.html>

## Health

Despite recent healthcare reforms, the quality of medical treatment in Indonesia remains low and the standard of care is unlikely to be up to Western standards. Public hospitals are overcrowded, with long waiting times, and most public-sector doctors don't speak English. Though private healthcare in Indonesia is expensive, it's the best option for expats seeking better facilities and English-speaking medical staff.\*

### Private medical insurance

Expats aren't covered by public health insurance in Indonesia. By law, any expats in the country on a working or retirement visa will need to have comprehensive private health insurance.\* Companies often provide this for their expat employees.

Expats should be mindful of what their health insurance does or doesn't cover - in particular, they should ensure they're funded for medical evacuation and treatment, so that in an emergency, they can be taken to a nearby region with better resources, such as Singapore.

## Pharmacies

Pharmacies in Indonesia's major cities are easily found, and are often located in shopping malls or on main roads. There's usually a wide range of over-the-counter and prescription medications available. If unsure of anything, there's usually a pharmacist available to assist, though bear in mind that they may only speak Indonesian.\*

\*<https://www.globalhealthandtravel.com/en/article/149/Indonesia%27s-healthcare-system-struggles-to-modernise>

\*\*<http://www.expat.or.id/medical/pharmacies.html>

## Health Risks

Indonesia's tropical climate carries a risk for malaria, though it's more commonly found in rural areas than large cities. Those in areas at risk of malaria should take precautions in the form of preventative medication and by using a mosquito net.\*

The quality of tap water in Indonesia is low, so bottled or filtered water should be substituted for cooking, drinking and brushing teeth.

## Vaccinations

There aren't any vaccination requirements for entering Indonesia, but it's recommended that all routine vaccinations are kept up to date. This includes vaccinations for mumps, measles, rubella, hepatitis A and B, polio and tetanus.\*\*

## Emergencies

Because of Indonesia's unique geographic structure, emergency medical services vary from region to region. With no centralized service, it can be difficult to know which number to call for help in an emergency. Expats in large cities can try dialing 118, 119 or 112, but these numbers may not work in all regions. It's usually quicker to arrange one's own transport either by taxi or private ambulance. Most hospitals have their own ambulances, so it's a good idea to get the relevant contact numbers in advance in case they're needed.

\*<https://www.lonelyplanet.com/indonesia/health>

\*\*<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/traveler/none/Indonesia/>