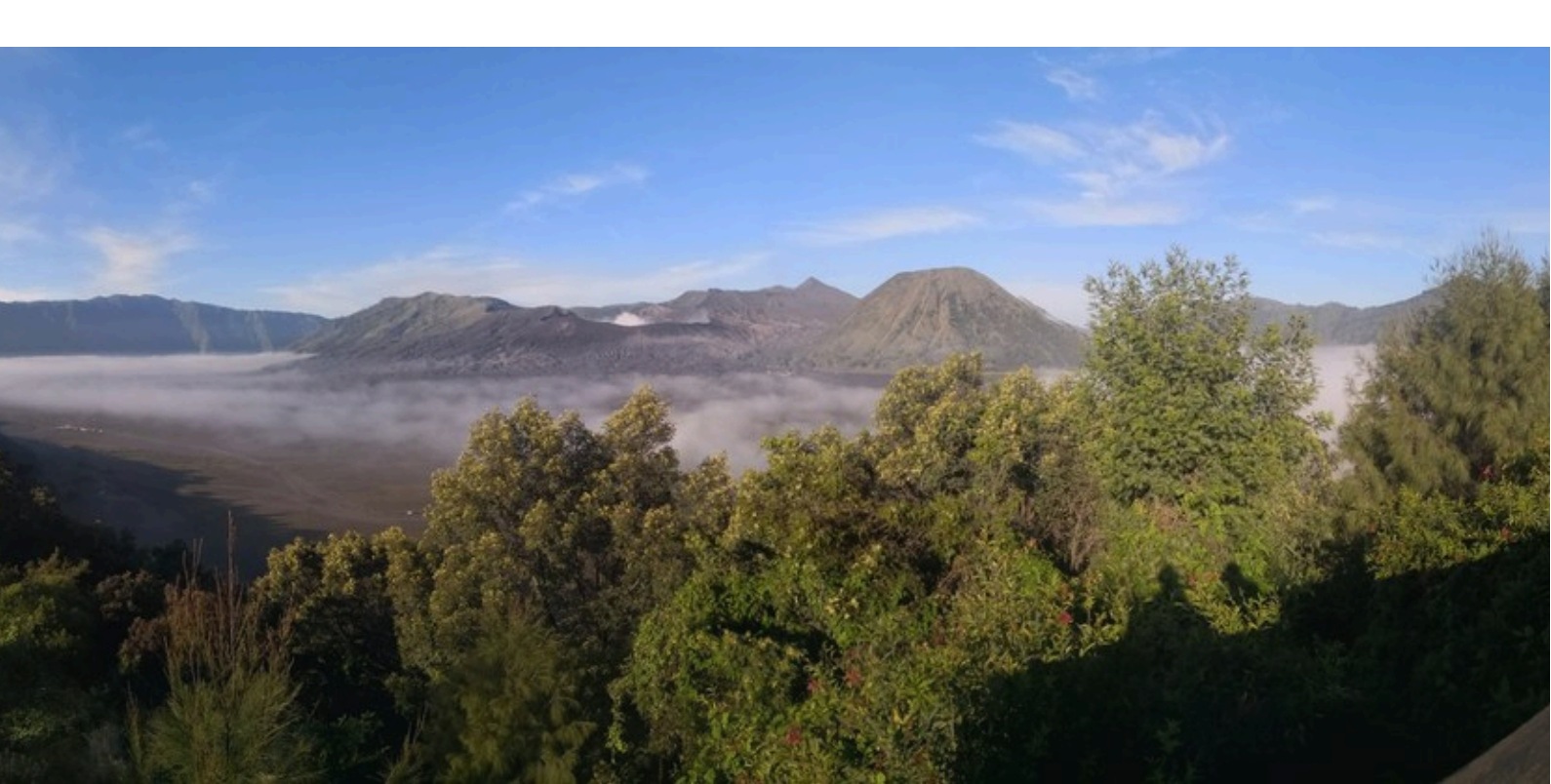




NOT ONLY BALI

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# *Fall for Indonesia*

East Java

English Edition for travellers from the Netherlands • SAMPLE • selected excerpts

By Klaudia • followthewiatr



FOLLOWTHEWIATR • GUIDE



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# Why East Java



Four in the morning. You're standing on the rim of a crater, in the dark and the cold, because yes, Indonesia can be cold, and nobody warns you about that beforehand. Below you a sea of clouds, and out of that sea rise three volcanoes. To the left, active Bromo breathes. To the right, far off on the horizon, the heavy bulk of Semeru, the highest peak on the island. And nobody is elbowing in for a selfie, because there's no queue here and no crowd. You're almost alone.

This is East Java. This is the moment you come here for.

I remember that cold on my own skin. I stood in exactly this spot a few years ago, and I couldn't believe you could freeze this badly this close to the equator. To this day, when someone asks me about Java, that image comes back first: the silence, my breath fogging in the air, and a volcano breathing somewhere down below.

## Three places you won't find anywhere else

There's no second Borobudur. The largest Buddhist temple in the world (2,672 relief panels, 504 statues of the Buddha, a view over a ring of volcanoes all around) has stood here since the ninth century and it still knocks you flat.

No replica and no photo will prepare you for it. Especially at eight in the morning, when the mist is only just starting to lift.

There's no second Bromo: a sea of black volcanic sand on the floor of an active caldera, 249 steps to the crater's edge, and a panorama you remember for the rest of your life.

I know, it sounds like a line from a brochure. And yet, when you finally reach the top, after all those stairs in the dark, your head goes quiet. No photo captures what you feel watching the sun come up from behind the clouds.

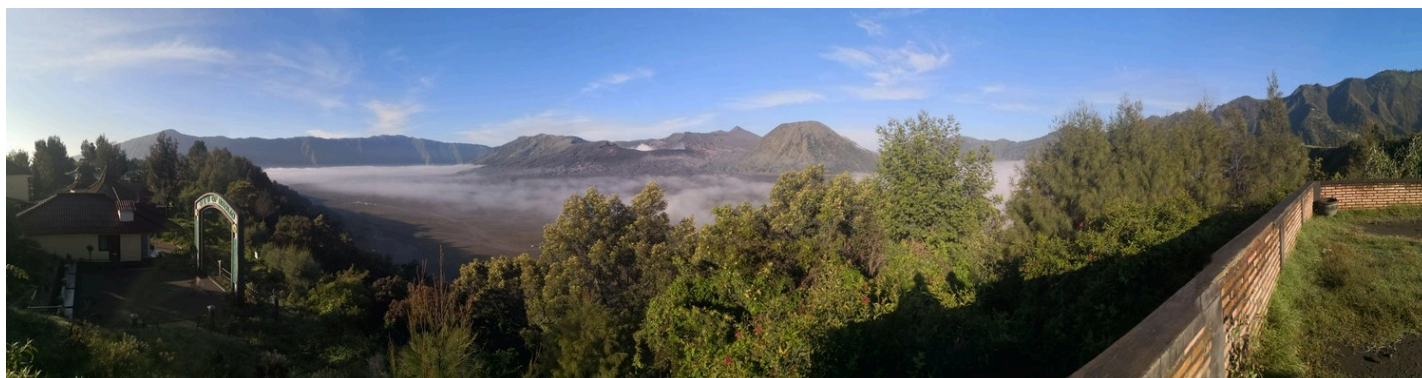
And there's no second Ijen: the only place in the world where you'll see blue sulfur flames. Electric blue, visible only before dawn, in the middle of the night, on the edge of an active crater.

The smell of sulfur hits you before you even see the fire, and honestly? That first breath on the crater's edge stays with you for years. It's not a special effect, just the thermal oxidation of hydrogen sulfide, but it looks like a shot from another planet.

The best part is that all three sit on one line. Yogyakarta → Bromo → Banyuwangi (Ijen): a classic overland run of 7–15 days that you can cover by train and local transport. No travel agency. No renting a car.

#### ✦ TIP

Why is Java so special? Because you get a huge amount for very little, and it's all on the route already. Admission to Borobudur runs 412,500 IDR (~24 USD) and is the single biggest expense of the day. Nasi goreng (fried rice) at a warung costs 8,000–12,000 IDR (~0.45–0.70 USD). A hostel bed near Bromo runs 100,000–300,000 IDR a night (~5.70–17 USD), often cheaper than a bed at one of the region's more popular resorts. You save the rest of your budget for what you actually came here for.



*Bromo at dawn – a sea of clouds over the Tengger caldera*

#### ① GOOD TO KNOW

**For a while, you'll be a celebrity.** In a lot of places on Java, a foreigner is still a rare sight: people wave from across the street, smile for no reason, and ask if they can take a photo with you. I went through this in 2019 and was sure it was a one-off. In 2025, in plenty of the same places, it was happening again, exactly the same way. There's nothing malicious in it, just plain curiosity. Smile and let them take the photo. The conversation that sometimes follows can be the best part of the day.



*A shared photo with fellow passengers in a KAI train car*

# An island that gives you more than it promises

Java doesn't sell itself with a postcard. There's no single iconic shot you already know by heart before you even step off the plane. That's its greatest strength: almost everything you see, you'll see for the first time.

Culture here isn't decoration on top of the landscape. The Kraton in Yogyakarta still functions as a royal court, batik is made in workshops behind the street, and you can hear **gamelan** from a courtyard in the evening. Food is a reason to come on its own: gudeg in Yogyakarta, rawon in Surabaya, street-side warungs open late.

There's also an argument almost nobody brings up: logistics. From the Netherlands, start by comparing flights into Jakarta (CGK) and Denpasar (DPS), including any stopover and the total travel time. If your trip is about Java, arriving in Jakarta can put you closer to the first leg of the route; a ticket to Bali may add another flight or a long overland transfer. Check the current schedules from your own departure airport before you book.

Once you're there, it gets even easier. Java has the best public transport in all of Indonesia: trains between cities, an app on your phone in town, a jeep wherever the pavement ends. Everything this book describes sits along that network.

## ▲ NOTE

Don't listen to people who say "Java is dangerous" or "there's nothing to see there." Most of them have never been. Java has its challenges (the chaos of Jakarta, the language barrier outside Yogya), but ordinary travel awareness is more than enough here. Scams aimed specifically at tourists are rare. The exception: the jeep brokers in Probolinggo near Bromo, but that has its own chapter.

## ✦ TIP

**Take the train instead of renting a car.** The cheapest and most convenient way to get around East Java is the train. The KAI Eksekutif Yogyakarta → Surabaya service runs 290,000–340,000 IDR (~17–19 USD) and takes 4–5 hours in a comfortable, air-conditioned car. From Surabaya to Probolinggo (the Bromo base): 30,000–50,000 IDR (~1.70–2.85 USD), 2 hours. From Banyuwangi, the ferry to Bali costs 10,600 IDR (~0.60 USD), 30 minutes. Book tickets through [tiket.com](https://www.tiket.com) 1–2 weeks before you travel.

# Who this book is for

For you, if:

- ▶ You're heading to Asia on your own for the first time, and you want to know what, where, and for how much.
- ▶ You're afraid you can't manage without a travel agency: you can, and this book shows you how, step by step.
- ▶ You want to see something that isn't in a package-tour brochure: a sea of clouds at dawn, blue fire in a crater, a temple from 12 centuries ago with no crowd at the entrance.
- ▶ You have a budget, but you don't want to blow it on things you can get for a fifth of the price.

You don't have to be a seasoned traveler. You just have to want to get on that plane. The rest is in this book.



*A morning trail near Bromo – silence and mist before sunrise*

## What you'll find in this guide

Ready-made routes for 7 and 15 days, with specific stops, travel times, and ticket prices. Yogyakarta and Prambanan, with tips on how to dodge the priciest traps. The logistics of Bromo: from picking a base to booking a jeep, and how not to get fleeced along the way. Ijen laid out hour by hour. Plus food, transport, health, SIM, and money, all in one place.

### ① GOOD TO KNOW

**Honestly, before we start.** Bromo, Ijen, and Tumpak Sewu I know in my legs and in my memory. A few places in this volume I haven't seen with my own eyes yet, because I ran out of time — Karimunjawa, Solo, the Dieng Plateau with Sikunir, and a few others. They're here because I dug through blogs, traveler accounts, and verified sources. I put together the prices, the routes, and the opening hours myself. This is exactly how I'd plan this route if I were going back to Java, so this is exactly how I'm laying it out for you.

### → MORE IN THE SERIES

*This is the first volume of the series "Not only Bali — Fall for Indonesia." If you've finished this route and want more, head back to my shop and pick the next volume. Link to the shop: <https://followthewiatr.com/en/sklep>*

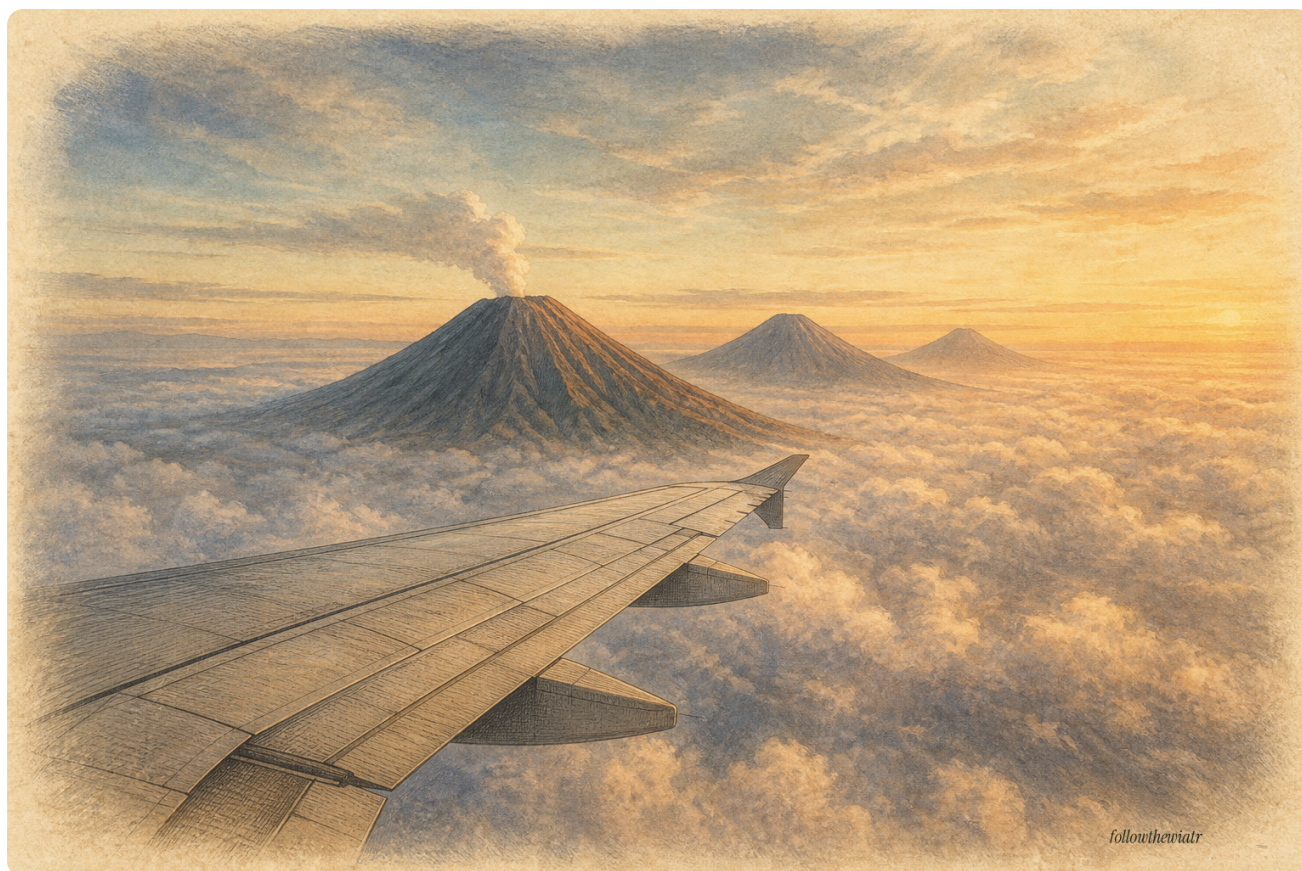
Ready? Let's fly.

# Flights and a Sample Budget

You look up ticket prices and figure someone is joking. That much, just to get there? You close the tab and think: maybe next year. And next year it's the same story, or worse.

I know that feeling. The number on the screen can kill the whole idea before you have added up anything else.

Almost nobody counts past the ticket price. And that's only half the bill.



*followthewiatr*

## What Java Really Costs for 14 Days

This trip is two bills, and they behave nothing alike.

The first one this book can price to the rupiah. Field data from Java puts a budget traveler at 220,000–450,000 IDR a day, everything in: bed, food, transport, tickets. Multiply that by 14 days on the ground and you get 3,080,000–6,300,000 IDR (~175–359 USD). The breakdown sits at the end of this chapter, category by category.

The second bill is the airfare, and here is the one number this chapter cannot give you.

Airfares change with dates, availability, baggage and connections. A figure printed here would be a snapshot, not a dependable budget for your trip. Compare current itineraries for your own dates and departure point; the chapter leaves the airfare out on purpose.

So price it yourself, and price it more than once. Open Google Flights, put your own city in the box, and read the price calendar across the month you are considering. Check two or three of the hubs in the table below instead of settling on the first routing that appears. Then look again a week later and see which way it moved.

A fare read months before departure is a moment, not a fact. A figure printed in a book would be stale before the ink dried and wrong for most readers on the day they looked it up. That line stays blank on purpose.

Set the rupiah total beside what a comparable two-week trip costs you at home. Add the local airfare quote separately, then remember the Java figure covers 14 days on the ground.

The flight is the biggest line in this budget and the only genuinely painful part of the planning. After you land, if you don't go wild, Java is cheap.

## How to Buy a Flight to Indonesia

From the Netherlands, Amsterdam is the main departure point to check first. Garuda Indonesia's published 2026 schedule lists a nonstop Amsterdam–Jakarta service; the same schedule lists some KLM-marketed Amsterdam–Jakarta itineraries via Kuala Lumpur. Flight schedules change by season, so check the airline's live booking page for your dates and confirm whether an itinerary is nonstop or includes a stop. If you live elsewhere in the Netherlands, include the cost and time of reaching Schiphol when comparing routes. No airfare is printed here: fares depend on dates, availability and departure point, so compare live quotes in euros on the day you plan to book.

Where to land: **Jakarta** (CGK) or **Bali** (DPS). For an East Java route, Jakarta can work as an arrival point before you travel east across the island; for a trip that ends in Banyuwangi, compare the cost and time of returning west to Jakarta with flying out from a closer airport. Your ticket's arrival and departure airports shape the route, so read chapters 18, 19 and 22 before choosing an open-jaw itinerary.

A long-haul journey from the Netherlands usually takes most of a day once connections are included. Check the timetable for the exact journey you are considering, including connection time and the local arrival date. Leave enough time for immigration, baggage and any onward domestic flight, especially when separate tickets are involved.

Search engines: **Google Flights**, **Kayak** and **Skyscanner**. Use the price calendar to compare nearby dates. Check **each direction separately**: shifting a departure by one day can change the fare.

Compare a few dates and read the fare conditions before you decide. Search results can omit baggage, seat or payment costs until later in the booking.

### ✦ TIP

Keep checking dates and routes before booking. There is no single fare that applies to every Dutch departure or travel date. Compare the outbound and return separately, check more than one arrival airport, and read the baggage and connection conditions before you pay. Use the airline or a reputable flight-search tool for a current euro quote; this chapter does not estimate one.

### ▲ NOTE

**Have proof of onward travel ready.** Indonesia's official e-VOA requirements include a return or onward ticket. Check the requirements for the visa you are applying for and the airline's document checks before departure; keep your ticket details accessible at check-in and on arrival.

## Jakarta → Yogyakarta: Train or Plane?

After you land in Jakarta there are two main ways to reach Yogyakarta, the heart of Java and probably your first base.

**Eksekutif-class train:** 355,000–620,000 IDR (~20–35 USD), about 6 hours on the rails. Air conditioning, reclining seats, USB sockets. Long views over the rice fields. Tickets through **tiket.com**: English interface and foreign cards. One source has it working with a foreign card, and a newer 2026 source says it requires an Indonesian phone number and will not serve a foreigner at all, sending them to [tiket.com/en](https://www.tiket.com/en) or [12go.asia](https://12go.asia) instead. Nothing settles which is right, so keep one of those two open as a fallback. Buy ahead either way, especially for weekends and holidays (full train guide: chapter 9).

**A flight on a domestic carrier:** from 300,000 IDR (~17 USD), about 50 minutes in the air. Here is the paradox, and it's genuinely worth knowing: **a domestic flight can come in cheaper than the train**. Especially booked early. Search on **Traveloka** or **Tiket.com**.

### ✦ TIP

Don't assume the train is cheaper. Price both for the same day. A Jakarta–Yogyakarta flight at 300,000 IDR (~17 USD) is 50 minutes in the air instead of 7–8 hours in a carriage. Got time? The train gives you the views and the quiet. Don't? Check Citilink.

## Arriving on Java from Another Island — Bali and the Rest of the Archipelago

Not everyone starts in Jakarta. Coming in from Bali or another island, you don't have to detour through the capital: you can fly or sail straight into Yogyakarta or Surabaya.

**Bali (DPS) to Yogyakarta (YIA):** direct, about 1 hour 30 minutes. Super Air Jet, Lion Air, Citilink, Batik Air and Garuda Indonesia all fly it.

- ▶ **Off season:** 400,000–600,000 IDR (~23–34 USD) one way
- ▶ **Peak:** 700,000–1,200,000 IDR (~40–68 USD)
- ▶ **YIA airport into central Yogyakarta:** the train, at 20,000 IDR (~1.15 USD)

**Bali (DPS) to Surabaya (SUB):** about 1 hour, on Lion Air, Garuda Indonesia and Super Air Jet. One way from **544,000 IDR** (~31 USD), and at the peak as much as 2,368,000 IDR (~135 USD). Tuesdays and Wednesdays, early in the morning, come out cheapest. Tickets for both flights: **Traveloka** or **Tiket.com**.

**The ferry from Bali to Java:** Gilimanuk on Bali's western tip across to Ketapang, just outside Banyuwangi. A foot passenger pays **10,600 IDR** (~0.60 USD), the crossing takes 30 minutes, and boats run around the clock every 15 to 30 minutes. It is the cheapest way between the two islands. From Ketapang you carry on west by train: 5–6 hours to Surabaya, 7–9 to Yogyakarta (tickets on [tiket.com](https://www.tiket.com)).

The full domestic network is in chapter 9 (transport) and chapter 22.

## What You'll Spend Per Day — Broken Down

Field data (Yogyakarta, Central Java, as of 2026):

*Daily budget per person — Java*

| CATEGORY         | BUDGET                                          | COMFORT                                           |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Accommodation    | 100,000–350,000 IDR<br>~5.70–20 USD             | 250,000–700,000 IDR<br>~14–40 USD                 |
| Food (3 meals)   | 50,000–100,000 IDR<br>~2.85–5.70 USD            | 100,000–200,000 IDR<br>~5.70–11 USD               |
| Local transport  | 20,000–50,000 IDR<br>~1.15–2.85 USD             | 50,000–120,000 IDR<br>~2.85–6.85 USD              |
| Attractions      | 50,000–100,000 IDR<br>~2.85–5.70 USD            | 100,000–350,000 IDR<br>~5.70–20 USD               |
| <b>TOTAL/day</b> | <b>220,000–450,000 IDR</b><br><b>~13–26 USD</b> | <b>500,000–1,070,000 IDR</b><br><b>~28–61 USD</b> |

**Accommodation:** A hostel or a dorm bed in Yogyakarta sits at the bottom of that accommodation row, and Yogya is the cheapest bed on the whole route. On Dieng, in Karimunjawa, at Cemorolawang and under Ijen the cheapest bed starts higher, so don't plan a whole trip at Prawirorejo rates. A guesthouse with its own bathroom lands where the comfort column begins; a 3-star with a pool sits at the top of it. The best neighborhood to base yourself in is **Prawirorejo**: 10 minutes from Malioboro, half the price, none of the tourist chaos.

**Food:** A meal at a warung (a local eatery) is about a third of that food row, so three of them a day is the row itself. Nasi goreng (fried rice) is a classic, and honestly, one of the best cheap meals I know. A restaurant aimed at tourists charges for a single dish roughly what a whole day of warung eating costs.

**Attractions:** This is the only category where you can spend a lot in one day. Tickets to the three loudest places around Yogyakarta (Borobudur, Prambanan and Jomblang Cave) each cost about what two nights in a hostel do, and each one on its own overruns the entire attractions row. The exact prices, and what you get for them, are in chapter 12. Everything else is cheap or free: a walk down Malioboro, the Yogyakarta Kraton for a few thousand rupiah, a TransJogja bus for **3,500 IDR** (~0.20 USD).

**Transport:** Grab works right across Java and it's cheap. The run out to Borobudur is the exception, and it won't fit inside the local-transport row. The Solo–Yogyakarta train, the Prameks, is **8,000 IDR** (~0.45 USD) for an hour's ride, the best transport deal on the island.

**The flight is the biggest cost; the rest is surprisingly cheap.** Once you have landed, and you aren't spending in places built specifically to pry money out of you, Java is absurdly affordable, and honestly, that's one of the reasons I keep talking about it.

# When to Go

Java works all year round, but not every week is equally convenient. Two things decide your dates: the weather and the holiday calendar. The first tells you whether you'll see the sunrise. The second, whether you'll get a train ticket at all.

## Weather — Dry Season and Wet Season

The dry season runs from May to October; the driest months are July–September. The wet season, November to March, mainly means afternoon downpours lasting 1–4 hours. Mornings are usually fine and the route is doable year-round.

June–August guarantees dry weather but is peak season: Borobudur can see 2,000+ visitors a day, accommodation prices rise. January–February is the peak of rainfall, and I wouldn't recommend it for a first visit.

If Karimunjawa is on your list, the window narrows further: the ferries run only in the dry season (April–August), and between November and March they are often suspended (full description: chapter 15).

### ✦ TIP

The first choice is **May or September**. Dry season, fewer crowds than July–August, accommodation prices 15–30% lower. May has one extra bonus: the morning mist over Borobudur is still thick, which gives you the best classic shots, the temple crown emerging from a sea of mist with Merapi in the background.

### ▲ NOTE

Java is not uniformly warm. Volcano Bromo (~2,300 m above sea level) sits at 5–10°C at night, and with strong wind it can feel even colder. Yogya and Solo are 28–32°C, a completely different category. For sunrise over the caldera you pack a warm layer, even if you spend the rest of the week in flip-flops.



*The Tengger Caldera in the dry season – clear skies and a smoking Bromo in the background*

## Culture and Holidays — Ramadan, Lebaran, and Mudik

Ramadan and the Lebaran (Idul Fitri) that ends it are lunar holidays, so each year they fall about 11 days earlier in our calendar and can shift by a whole month against the previous season.

**Ramadan** (the month of fasting) changes the rhythm of the whole island, and I'll say it plainly, because I went through it myself: it has its downsides. Plenty of local places are closed from the morning on, so finding breakfast can be a challenge. Many warungs stand closed or with their entrances curtained off until around 15:00–17:00. And dinner? Sometimes a nightmare: you pick the restaurant with the highest Google rating, show up, and get turned away at the door because everything is booked out for the evening feast a week in advance. Your daytime lifeline is restaurants in hotels and malls, which run as normal. In the evening after sunset (iftar, around 18:00) culinary life erupts: street Ramadan markets full of dishes to try — just reserve a seat ahead of time. Bonus: tourist attractions (Borobudur, Prambanan) are far less crowded during this period than in high season.

**Lebaran / Idul Fitri** ends Ramadan and is Indonesia's biggest holiday. It triggers a phenomenon called **mudik**: an estimated 150 million-plus people move across the archipelago at once. Java is the epicenter. National roads jammed for 8–10 hours, trains sold out 2–3 months ahead, hotel prices rising 2–3 times.

### ✦ TIP

Check the dates of the movable holidays, above all Ramadan and the Lebaran (Idul Fitri) that ends it, before you buy tickets. One glance at the calendar saves you a lot of grief.

### ▲ NOTE

**The week around Lebaran is a time better avoided on the road.** If you're planning to travel on exactly those days, transport will be paralysis: trains and buses booked out well in advance. Finish your trip a few days before the holiday or start a good week after it. If you're already there, stay in Yogya and watch the mudik from the side: it's an extraordinary thing to see in itself.

A few things that **don't apply to Java**: Nyepi (Bali's Day of Silence) is Bali only, no effect on Java. Galungan and Kuningan are also Bali only. Java has its own rituals and calendar, but none of the other holidays paralyzes the route in this volume.