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Volcanic islands in the Banda Sea, Maluku, Indonesia Banda IslandsBanda Besar island seen from Fort BelgicaGeographyLocationSoutheast AsiaCoordinates4°35′S 129°55′E / 4.583°S 129.917°E / -4.583; 129.917ArchipelagoMaluku IslandsTotal islands11 (7 inhabited)Major islandsBanda Besar, Neira, Banda Api, Pulau Hatta, Pulau Ay, Pulau RhunArea172 km2 (66 sq mi)Highest elevation641 m (2103 ft)[1]Highest pointGunung ApiAdministrationIndonesiaProvinceMalukuDemographicsPopulation21,902 (mid 2023)Pop. density127.3/km2 (329.7/sq mi) Location of the Banda Islands in the center of the Maluku Islands Map of the Banda Islands The Banda Islands (Indonesian: Kepulauan Banda) are a volcanic group of ten small volcanic islands in the Banda Sea, about 140 km (87 mi) south of Seram Island and about 2,000 km (1,243 mi) east of Java, and constitute an administrative district (kecamatan) within the Central Maluku Regency in the Indonesian province of Maluku. The islands rise out of 4-to-6-kilometre (2.5 to 3.7 mi) deep ocean and have a total land area of approximately 172 square kilometres (66 sq mi); with associated maritime area this reaches 736.3 square kilometres (284.3 sq mi). They had a population of 18,544 at the 2010 Census[2] and 20,924 at the 2020 Census;[3] the official estimate as of mid-2023 was 21,902.[4] Until the mid-19th century the Banda Islands were the world's only source of the spices nutmeg and mace, produced from the nutmeg tree. The islands are also popular destinations for scuba diving and snorkeling. The main town and administrative centre is Banda Neira, located on the island of the same name. There are seven inhabited islands and several that are uninhabited. The inhabited islands are: The active volcano Banda Api in the Banda Islands The main island, Banda Neira (centre) viewed from the peak of Gunung Api volcano. In the background is Lontar Island (Banda Besar). Main group (formed from the drowned caldera of a former volcano, with Bandaneira and still-smoking Guning Api islands at the centre of the crater, and the crescent-shaped Lonthair, Pulau Pisang and Batu Kapal being the surviving above-water parts of the volcanic rim): Bandaneira, or Naira, the island with the administrative capital and a small airfield (which stretches across the whole island, splitting the southern third from the northern two-thirds) as well as accommodation for visitors. It contains six villages (desa), from south to north being Nusantara (that part not on Gunung Api Island, and containing the district administration), Kampung Baru, Dwiwarna, Rajawali, Tanah Rata and Merdeka. Present on Banda Neira is Fort Belgica, one of the largest remaining Dutch forts that are still intact in Indonesia, and Fort Nassau. Banda Api, an active volcano (Gunung Api) with a peak of about 650 m. It forms most of the land area of the desa of Nusantara. Banda Besar, also called Lontar or Lonthoir, is the largest island (Indonesian besar, big), 12 km (7 mi) long and 3 km (2 mi) wide. It has three main settlements, Lonthoir (in the west of the island), Selamon (which includes Pulau Pisang, and which with Cumbir Kaisastoren, Walling Spanciby and Boiyauw villages faces the islands in the centre of the caldera) and Waer (which with Dender to its north and Lautang and Uring-Tutra to its west face away from the caldera). The residual former Dutch fortifications of Fort Hollandia and Fort Concordia are on this island. Some distance to the west: Pulau Ay (formerly spelt Pulau Ai), 12 km from Bandaneira, and containing the remains of the former Dutch Fort Revenge. Pulau Rhun (formerly spelt Run), another 8 km further west again. In the 17th century, this island was involved in an exchange between the British and the Dutch, when it was exchanged for the island of Manhattan in New York. To the north of Banda Besar: Pulau Pisang (Banana Island), also known as Syahrir. To the southeast: Pulau Hatta (formerly Rosengain or Rozengain), 19 km from Bandaneira, with its single village (of the same name) at its northern tip. Others, all small and/or uninhabited, are: Naijalaka, a short distance northeast of Pulau Rhun Batu Kapal, a small island northwest of Pulau Pisang Manuk, an active volcano Pulau Keraka or Pulau Karaka (Crab Island), a short distance north of Banda Api Manukang or Suanggi, to the northwest of the main group Skaru Reef, a short distance south of Pulau Hatta The islands are part of the Banda Sea Islands moist deciduous forests ecoregion. The Banda Islands District (kecamatan) is sub-divided into eighteen administrative villages (desa), listed below with their areas and their officially-estimated populations as at mid 2002.[5] All share the postcode of 97586. Kode Wilayah Name of kelurahan Area in km2 Populationmid 2022estimate 61.01.09.2001 Nusantara 13.30 1,993 61.01.09.2002 Dwiwarna 1.40 947 61.01.09.2003 Merdeka 3.44 814 61.01.09.2004 Rajawali 2.95 824 61.01.09.2005 Kampung Baru 5.70 3,050 61.01.09.2006 Pulau Hatta 15.88 683 61.01.09.2007 Selamon 28.97 1,991 61.01.09.2008 Lonthoir 16.07 2,972 61.01.09.2009 Pulau Ay 15.19 1,577 61.01.09.2010 Pulau Rhun 13.16 1,572 61.01.09.2011 Tanah Rata 2.20 874 61.01.09.2012 Waer 7.99 1,407 61.01.09.2013 Boiyauw 7.15 625 61.01.09.2014 Dender 3.40 164 61.01.09.2015 Lautang 4.70 233 61.01.09.2016 Uring-Tutra 7.50 313 61.01.09.2017 Walling Spanciby 14.00 893 61.01.09.2018 Combir Kaisastoren 9.00 493 61.01.09 Totals 736.30 21,425 (a) Notes: (a) comprising 10,723 males and 10,702 females. The first documented human presence in the Banda Islands comes from a rock shelter site on Pulau Ay that was in use at least 8,000 years ago.[6] The earliest mention of the Banda Islands is found in Chinese records dating as far back as 200 BCE[7] though there is speculation that it is mentioned in earlier Indian sources. The Srivijaya Kingdom had extensive trade contacts with the Banda Islands. Also during this period (from the late 13th century and onwards) Islam arrived in the region. It soon became established in the area.[8] Before the arrival of Europeans, Banda had an oligarchic form of government led by orang kaya ('rich men') and the Bandanese had an active and independent role in trade throughout the archipelago.[9]:24 Banda was the world's only source of nutmeg and mace, spices used as flavourings, medicines, and preserving agents that were at the time highly valued in European markets. They were sold by Arab traders to the Venetians for exorbitant prices. The traders did not divulge the exact location of their source and no European was able to deduce their location. The first written accounts of Banda are in Suma Oriental, a book written by the Portuguese apothecary Tomé Pires who was based in Malacca from 1512 to 1515 but visited Banda several times. On his first visit, he interviewed the Portuguese and the far more knowledgeable Malay sailors in Malacca. He estimated the early sixteenth century population to be 2500–3000. He reported the Bandanese as being part of an Indonesia-wide trading network and the only native Malukan long-range traders taking cargo to Malacca, although shipments from Banda were also being made by Javanese traders. In addition to the production of nutmeg and mace, Banda maintained significant entrepôt trade; goods that moved through Banda included cloves from Ternate and Tidore in the north, bird-of-paradise feathers from the Aru Islands and Western New Guinea, and massoi bark for traditional medicines and salves. In exchange, Banda predominantly received rice and cloth; namely light cotton batik from Java, calicoes from India and ikat from the Lesser Sundas. In 1603, an average quality sarong-sized cloth traded for eighteen kilograms of nutmeg. Some of these textiles were then sold on, ending up in Halmahera and New Guinea. Coarser ikat from the Lesser Sundas was traded for sago from the Kei Islands, Aru and Seram. In August 1511, on behalf of the king of Portugal, Afonso de Albuquerque conquered Malacca, which at the time was a major hub of Asian trade. In November of that year, after having secured Malacca and learned of the Banda Islands' location, Albuquerque sent an expedition of three ships led by his good friend António de Abreu to find them. Malay pilots, either recruited or forcibly conscripted, guided them via Java, the Lesser Sundas and Ambon to Banda, arriving in early 1512.[10]:7[11]:5,7 The first Europeans to reach the Banda Islands, the expedition remained in Banda for about one month, purchasing and filling their ships with Banda's nutmeg, mace, and cloves, in which Banda had a thriving entrepôt trade.[10]:7 D'Abreu sailed through Ambon and Seram while his second in command Francisco Serrão went ahead towards the Maluku islands, was shipwrecked and ended up in Ternate.[9]:25 Distracted by hostilities elsewhere in the archipelago, such as Ambon and Ternate, the Portuguese did not return to the Banda Islands until 1529, when Portuguese trader Captain Garcia Henriques landed troops. Five of the Banda islands were within gunshot of each other and Henriques realised that a fort on the main island Neira would give him full control of the group. The Bandanese were, however, hostile to such a plan, and their warlike behavior was both costly and tiresome to Garcia whose men were attacked when they attempted to build a fort. From then on, the Portuguese were infrequent visitors to the islands, preferring to buy their nutmeg from traders in Malacca.[11]:5,7 Unlike inhabitants of other eastern Indonesian islands visited by the Portuguese, such as Ambon, Solor, Ternate and Morotai, the Bandanese displayed no enthusiasm for Christianity or the Europeans who brought it in the sixteenth century, and no serious attempt was made to Christianise the Bandanese.[9]:25 Maintaining their independence, the Bandanese never allowed the Portuguese to build a fort or permanent post in the islands. Ironically, it was this lack of presence which attracted the Dutch to trade in Banda instead of the clove-producing islands of Ternate and Tidore. Main article: Governorate of the Banda Islands Fort Nassau in 1646 The Dutch followed the Portuguese to Banda but were to have a much more dominating and lasting presence. Dutch–Bandanese relations were mutually resentful from the outset, with Holland's first merchants complaining of Bandanese reneging on agreed deliveries and price, and cheating on quantity and quality. For the Bandanese, on the other hand, although they welcomed another competitor purchaser for their spices, the items of trade offered by the Dutch—heavy woolens, and damasks, unwanted manufactured goods, for example—were usually unsuitable in comparison to traditional trade products. The Javanese, Arab and Indian, and Portuguese traders for example brought indispensable items along with steel knives, copper, medicines, and prized Chinese porcelain.[citation needed] As much as the Dutch disliked dealing with the Bandanese, the trade was a highly profitable one with spices selling for 300 times the purchase price in Banda. This amply justified the expense and risk in shipping them to Europe. The allure of such profits saw an increasing number of Dutch expeditions; it was soon seen that in trade with the East Indies, competition from each would eat into all their profits. Thus the competitors united to form the Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) (the United East India Company, referred to in English as the Dutch East India Company) in 1602.[10] Until the early seventeenth century the Bandas were ruled by a group of leading citizens, the orang kaya (literally 'rich men'); each of these was head of a district. At the time nutmeg was one of the "fine spices" kept expensive in Europe by disciplined manipulation of the market, but a desirable commodity for Dutch traders in the ports of India as well; economic historian Fernand Braudel notes that India consumed twice as much as Europe.[12] A number of Banda's orang kaya were persuaded by the Dutch to sign a treaty granting the Dutch a monopoly on spice purchases. Even though the Bandanese had little understanding of the significance of the treaty known as 'The Eternal Compact',[citation needed] or that not all Bandanese leaders had signed, it would later be used to justify Dutch troops being brought in to defend their monopoly. In April 1609, Admiral Pieter Willemsz. Verhoeff arrived at Banda Neira with a request by Maurice, Prince of Orange to build a fort on the island (the eventual Fort Nassau). The Bandanese were not excited about this idea. On 22 May, before building of the fort had started, the orang kaya called a meeting with the Dutch admiral, purportedly to negotiate prices. Instead, they led Verhoeff and two high-ranked men into an ambush and decapitated them and subsequently killed 46 of the Dutch visitors. Jan Pietersz Coen, who was a lower-ranked merchant on the expedition, managed to escape, but the traumatic event likely influenced his future attitude towards the Bandanese.[13]:95–98 Fort Belgica in 1824 While Portuguese and Spanish activity in the region had weakened, the English had built fortified trading posts on tiny Ai and Run islands, ten to twenty kilometres from the main Banda Islands. With the English paying higher prices, they were significantly undermining Dutch aims for a monopoly. As Anglo-Dutch tensions increased in 1611 the Dutch built the larger and more strategic Fort Belgica above Fort Nassau. In 1615, the Dutch invaded Ai with 900 men, whereupon the English retreated to Run where they regrouped. Japanese mercenaries served in the Dutch forces.[14] That same night, the English launched a surprise counter-attack on Ai, retaking the island and killing 200 Dutchmen. A year later, a much stronger Dutch force attacked Ai. This time the defenders were able to hold off the attack with cannon fire, but after a month of siege they ran out of ammunition. The Dutch killed the defenders, and afterwards strengthened the fort, renaming it 'Fort Revenge'. Colonial soldiers standing guard next to the statue of King Willem III of the Netherlands, representing Dutch dominance on Banda. Main article: Dutch conquest of the Banda Islands Newly appointed VOC governor-general Jan Pieterszoon Coen set about enforcing Dutch monopoly over the Banda's spice trade. In 1621 well-armed soldiers were landed on Bandaneira Island and within a few days they had also occupied neighbouring and larger Lontar. The orang kaya were forced at gunpoint to sign an unfeasibly arduous treaty, one that was in fact impossible to keep, thus providing Coen an excuse to use superior Dutch force against the Bandanese.[10] The Dutch quickly noted a number of alleged violations of the new treaty, in response to which Coen launched a punitive massacre. Japanese mercenaries were hired to deal with the orang kaya,[15] forty of whom were beheaded with their heads impaled and displayed on bamboo spears.[16] The butchering and beheadings were carried out by the Japanese for the Dutch.[17] The islanders were tortured and their villages destroyed by the Dutch.[18][19] The Bandanese chiefs were also tortured by the Dutch and Japanese.[20][21] The Dutch carved 68 parcels out of the islands after the enslavement and slaughter of the natives.[22][23] The population of the Banda Islands prior to Dutch conquest is generally estimated to have been around 13,000–15,000 people, some of whom were Malay and Javanese traders, as well as Chinese and Arabs. The actual numbers of Bandanese who were killed, forcibly expelled or fled the islands in 1621 remain uncertain. But readings of historical sources suggest around one thousand Bandanese likely survived in the islands, and were spread throughout the nutmeg groves as forced labourers.[10]:54[24]:18[25][26] The Dutch subsequently re-settled the islands with imported slaves, convicts and indentured labourers (to work the nutmeg plantations), as well as immigrants from elsewhere in Indonesia. Most survivors fled as refugees to the islands of their trading partners, in particular Keffing and Guli Guli in the Seram Laut chain and Kei Besar,[10] where, in the case of the latter, the Wandan people are descended from the original people of the Banda Islands.[27] Shipments of surviving Bandanese were also sent to Batavia (Jakarta) to work as slaves in developing the city and its fortress. Some 530 of these individuals were later returned to the islands because of their much-needed expertise in nutmeg cultivation (something sorely lacking among newly arrived Dutch settlers).[10]:55[24]:24 Whereas up until this point the Dutch presence had been simply as traders, that was sometimes treaty-based, the Banda conquest marked the start of the first overt colonial rule in Indonesia, albeit under the auspices of the VOC. Banda Neira in 1724 Having nearly eradicated the islands' native population, Coen divided the productive land of approximately half a million nutmeg trees into sixty-eight 1.2-hectare perken. These land parcels were then handed to Dutch planters known as perkeniers of which 34 were on Lontar, 31 on Ai and 3 on Neira. With few Bandanese left to work them, slaves from elsewhere were brought in.[28] Now enjoying control of the nutmeg production, the VOC paid the perkeniers 1⁄122nd of the Dutch market price for nutmeg; however, the perkeniers still profited immensely, building substantial villas with opulent imported European decorations.[citation needed] The outlying island of Run was harder for the VOC to control and they exterminated all nutmeg trees there. The production and export of nutmeg was a VOC monopoly for almost two hundred years. Fort Belgica, one of many forts built by the Dutch East India Company, is one of the largest remaining European forts in Indonesia.[29] Further information: Invasion of the Spice Islands Though not physically present at the Banda Islands, the English claimed the small island of Run until 1667 when, under the Treaty of Breda, the Dutch and English agreed to maintain the colonial status quo and relinquish their respective claims. View of the Island of Banda-Neira captured by the British on 9 August 1810 In 1810, the Kingdom of Holland was a vassal of Napoleonic France and hence in conflict with Britain. The French and British were each seeking to control lucrative Indian Ocean trade routes. On 10 May 1810, a squadron consisting of the 36-gun frigate HMS Caroline, HMS Piedmontaise (formerly a French frigate), 18-gun sloop HMS Barracouta, and the 12-gun transport HMS Mandarin left Madras with money, supplies and troops to support the garrison at Amboyna, recently captured from the Dutch. The frigates and sloop carried a hundred officers and men of the Madras European Regiment, while the Mandarin carried supplies. The squadron was commanded by Captain Christopher Cole, with Captain Charles Foote on the Piedmontaise and Captain Richard Kenah aboard the Barracouta. After departing from Madras, Cole informed Foote and Kenah of Cole's plan to capture the Bandas; Foote and Kenah agreed. In Singapore, Captain Spencer informed Cole that over 700 regular Dutch troops may have been located in the Bandas.[30][31] The squadron took a circuitous route to avoid alerting the Dutch. On 9 August 1810, the British appeared at Banda Neira. They quickly stormed the island and attacked Belgica Castle at sunrise. The battle was over within hours, with the Dutch surrendering Fort Nassau – after some subterfuge – and within days the remainder of the Banda Islands. After the Dutch surrender, Captain Charles Foote (of the Piedmontaise) was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the Banda Islands. This action was a prelude to Britain's invasion of Java in 1811.[30] Before the Dutch retook control of the islands, the British removed many nutmeg trees and transplanted them to Ceylon and other British colonies. The competition largely destroyed the value of the Banda Islands to the Dutch.[32] In the late 1990s, violence between Christians and Muslims spilled over from intercommunal conflict in Ambon. The disturbance and resulting deaths damaged the previously prosperous tourism industry.[33] See also: Banda language (Maluku) Bandanese speak Banda Malay, which has several features distinguishing it from Ambonese Malay, a Malay dialect that is a lingua franca in central and southern Maluku alongside Indonesian. Banda Malay is famous in the region for its unique, lilting accent, but it also has a number of locally identifying words in its lexicon, many of them borrowings or loanwords from Dutch. Examples: fork: forok (Dutch vork) ant: mir (Dutch mier) spoon: lepe (Dutch lepel) difficult: lastek (Dutch lastig) floor: plur (Dutch vloer) porch: stup (Dutch stoep) Banda Malay shares many Portuguese loanwords with Ambonese Malay not appearing in the national language, Indonesian. But it has comparatively fewer, and they differ in pronunciation. Examples: turtle: tetaruga (Banda Malay); totoruga (Ambonese Malay) (from Portuguese tartaruga) throat: gargontong (Banda Malay); gargangtang (Ambonese Malay) (from Portuguese garganta) Finally, and most noticeably, Banda Malay uses some distinct pronouns. The most immediately distinguishing is that of the second person singular familiar form of address: pané. The descendants of some of the Bandanese who fled Dutch conquest in the seventeenth century live in the Kai Islands (Kepulauan Kei) to the east of the Banda group, where a version of the original Banda language is still spoken in the villages of Banda Eli and Banda Elat on Kai Besar Island. While long integrated into Kei Island society, residents of these settlements continue to value the historical origins of their ancestors. Most of the present-day inhabitants of the Banda Islands are descended from migrants and plantation labourers from various parts of Indonesia, as well as from indigenous Bandanese. They have inherited aspects of pre-colonial ritual practices in the Banda Islands that are highly valued and still performed, giving them a distinct and very local cultural identity.[34] Indonesia portalIslands portal 1938 Banda Sea earthquake Dutch East India Company in Indonesia History of Indonesia List of earthquakes in Indonesia List of volcanoes in Indonesia § Banda Sea Maluku Islands Ghosh, Amitav (2021). The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis. University of Chicago Press. ISBN 1529369479. Giles Milton. Nathaniel's Nutmeg: How One Man's Courage Changed the Course of History (Sceptre books, Hodder and Stoughton, London) ^ "G. Banda Api". Badan Geologi. Archived from the original on 28 January 2022. 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ISBN 978-0-14-311392-8. ^ "Sir Christopher Cole, K.C.B.". The Annual biography and obituary. Vol. 21. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown. 1837. pp. 114–123. ^ Milne, Peter (16 January 2011). "Banda, the nutmeg treasure islands". The Jakarta Post. Retrieved 28 January 2022. But the economic importance of the Bandas was only fleeting. With the Napoleonic wars raging across Europe, the English returned to the Bandas in the early 19th century, temporarily taking over control from the Dutch. This gave the English an opportunity to uproot hundreds of valuable nutmeg seedlings and transport them to their own colonies in Ceylon and Singapore, breaking forever the Dutch monopoly and consigning the Bandas to economic decline and irrelevance. ^ Witton, Patrick; Elliott, Mark; Greenway, Paul; Jealous, Virginia (2003). Indonesia. Melbourne: Lonely Planet. ISBN 9781740591546. ^ Winn, Phillip (2010). "Slavery and cultural creativity in the Banda Islands". 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Capture of Banda Neira by the British Royal Navy 1810[usurped] "Banda Sea Islands moist deciduous forests". Terrestrial Ecoregions. World Wildlife Fund. Forts of the Spice Islands Retrieved from " The tiny Banda Islands were long the world's only source of nutmeg. The archipelago's importance in the English–Dutch struggle to control the spice trade is evidenced in its remaining forts on islands like Bandaneira. Old nutmeg smokehouses line trails through fragrant nutmeg groves here and the islands are dotted with huge mango and kanari trees, coffee and other exotic plants. Energetic souls may want to climb Gunung Api, an active volcano directly opposite Bandaneira, for spectacular views. Banda's islands, like the majority of Maluku's fertile waters, offer excellent diving opportunities. Snorkelling is also possible within Banda's natural harbour. The Banda Islands were tapped into global trade networks since at least the Roman era, but the locals remained in control of their own economy until the Portuguese arrived in 1512, followed by the Dutch a century later, to set up a spice monopoly. Soon, however, spices were increasingly produced elsewhere and the nine Banda islands faded into obscurity. A military headquarters until 1860, Benteng Belgica was restored in the early 20th century and dominates Bandaneira, the major island of the archipelago. Closer to the sea, Benteng Nassau, important during VOC governor-general Jan Pieterszoon Coen's efforts to control Banda in 1621, crumbles in neglect. The string of forts continues on neighbouring Banda Besar island with Benteng Concordia and Benteng Hollandia, built by Coen high on a ridge to command the surrounding seas, and destroyed by earthquake in 1743. Benteng Revingil (Revenge) rises from the ocean on Ai island. In Bandaneira, the Museum Rumah Budaya holds many historical artefacts. Other sites include a church dating from 1852, its interior stone slab graves inscribed with the names of Dutch colonialists, and the Istana Mini, the old governor's mansion, which has the former resident's suicide note carved on one of the window panes. Benteng Belgica © ShutterstockThe best things to do in the Banda Islands are either historical or natural. From former military headquarters and colonial mansions to mountain climbing and scuba diving, these remote islands have more going on than you might expect.#1 Visit former military headquarters like Benteng Belgica A military headquarters until 1860, Benteng Belgica was restored in the early 20th century and dominates Bandaneira. Closer to the sea, Benteng Nassau, important during VOC governor-general Jan Pieterszoon Coen's efforts to control Banda in 1621, crumbles in neglect. The string of forts continues on neighbouring Banda Besar island with Benteng Concordia and Benteng Hollandia, built by Coen high on a ridge to command the surrounding seas, and destroyed by earthquake in 1743. Benteng Revingil (Revenge) rises from the ocean on Ai island.#2 Climb Gunung ApiEnergetic souls may want to climb Gunung Api, an active volcano directly opposite Bandaneira. The last major eruption was in 1988, but fortunately, almost all of the lava and ash fell on the side away from the town. The view from the summit is spectacular. Attempt this with a guide and get an early start to beat the heat of the day. To catch the sunrise atop Gunung Api at Banda, and the breathtaking views before early-morning cloud cover forms, start your ascent at 5.30am. The climb should take 1.5 hours, but check on conditions first, as this is an active volcano.Gunung Api volcano, Banda islands, Indonesia © ShutterstockIn Bandaneira, the Museum Rumah Budaya holds many historical artefacts. Other sites include a church dating from 1852, its interior stone slab graves inscribed with the names of Dutch colonialists, and the Mesjid Hatta-Syahrir. Museum Muhammad Hatta and the Museum Sjahrir contain memorabilia of Indonesia's top nationalist leaders who were exiled in Bandaneira in the mid-1930s. The Museum Captain Cole was named after the British leader who captured Banda from the Dutch in 1811.#4 See former VOC outpostsThe Istana Mini, the old governor's mansion, has the former resident's suicide note carved on one of the window panes. Next door is the former VOC headquarters, which has a statue of King Willem III, the great-grandfather of the present Dutch queen.#5 Go diving or snorkellingBanda's fertile waters offer excellent diving opportunities. Snorkelling is also possible on sites within Banda's huge natural harbour. One special site, Lava Flow, situated upon the lava from Gunung Api's 1988 eruption, has been identified as having the world's fastest-growing table corals, with layer upon layer reaching a span of 3 or 4 metres (10–13ft). Sharks and pelagic species patrol deeper waters, while a myriad of colourful fish swarm coral-encrusted walls. Banda has a unique mandarin fish; every evening divers can observe and photograph its mating ritual. In April and October, the seas are calm and visibility excellent. Istana Mini in Banda Naira Island, Central Maluku, Indonesia © ShutterstockMost of the accommodation on the Banda Islands is simple guesthouses or homestays but the choice is slowly starting to grow. Bandaneira and Hatta have the lion's share, but it is possible to stay on any of the six main islands listed below. Here's where to stay:BandaneiraWith a liberal sprinkling of guesthouses and homestays, Bandaneira offers the most choice of accommodation. Most places to stay are located to the southwest of the island. They tend to be basic, though there are a couple of midrange hotels in former colonial buildings, too.Hatta IslandHatta has an increasing number of places to stay on the island. Most of its homestays line the north coast beaches, and there is a simple beach hotel on the west coast. All stays are basic.Ai IslandAi has five homestays on the island, each dotted along the north coast.Gunung Api IslandThere is only one guesthouse on Gunung Api Island on the east coast.Run IslandOn Run, you can choose from two homestays or a brightly-painted guesthouse.Banda Besar IslandThere are three simple places to stay on Banda Besar, all on the north coast beaches.Best restaurants and barsThe Banda Islands don't have any restaurants. Only Bandaneira has a handful of very simple Indonesian restaurants. All of the islands offer food as part of your stay. This usually means three meals a day. On Banda Besar Island and Hatta Island, you will find local food markets and small barbecue stalls.Nightlife is also non-existent on the Banda Islands. Diver, cabbage coral in Banda, Indonesia © ShutterstockGetting to the Banda Islands should be easy: you either arrive by plane or boat. However, rough seas, the rainy season and frequent flight cancellations mean you should give yourself a few days on either side of your visit to account for any delays.By planeThere is an airport on Bandaneira which receives regular flights from Ambon. However, these are often delayed or cancelled.By boatThere are two boat services between Ambon and Bandaneira. The Express Bahari 2B boat takes six to seven hours but doesn't run during rough seas or the rainy season. Larger Pelni boats take nine hours and often run when The Express Bahari 2B doesn't.Find out the best ways to get to Indonesia.How many days do you need hereYou should aim to spend at least five days in the Banda Islands, longer if you're diving. Exploring the best museums, a couple of colonial forts and visit a nutmeg plantation will take around three days, but you'll also want to visit more than one island. This is possible on a day trip, but it's worth spending a couple of nights on the more remote islands like Run, so give yourself at least three days. If you're scuba diving or snorkeling, you might want to spend around 5-7 days in Banda Islands, and up to 10 days to do everything.Looking for inspiration for your trip? Talk to our Indonesia travel experts. Fort Belgica With Banda Neira ocean, Indonesia © ShutterstockBoats shuttle regularly between the major islands, though you may need to charter a boat (or have your homestay host charter one for you) to reach some of the smaller islands like Gunung Api.By footAll the islands are small and walkable.By ojekThere are ojeks that run across Bandaneira, but they are usually only helpful for airport runs.By boatTo reach some of the smaller islands, hire a boat at the jetty or have your accommodation sort one for you.Best time to visit the Banda IslandsThe best time to visit Banda Islands is between October and April, which is the dry season. During this time, the weather is generally sunny and dry, making it perfect for outdoor activities such as scuba diving, snorkeling, and island hopping. The water is also calm and clear, offering excellent visibility for underwater exploration.There can be heavy rainfall and rough seas during the wet season (May to September), making it difficult to access some of the islands. The fast boats won't run in July or August, nor will they go during bad seas.Find out more about the best time to visit Indonesia. Classic Guides For travelers seeking the most comprehensive insights. These guides provide in-depth insights for your trips, helping you explore destinations deeply for unforgettable experiences, whether popular or off the beaten path. Experience Guides For travelers looking to design a trip that feels unique. Experience guides offer travelers innovative ways to discover iconic destinations, featuring unique adventures and trip-building tools for personalized journeys. Language Guides For travelers looking to immerse themselves in local culture and language essentials. Language Guides help to let no barriers - language or culture - get in your way. Epic Guides From hikes to bike rides and surf breaks, discover the most epic adventures across the world to inspire your next trip. Epic Guides provide inspiration and first-person stories for a lifetime of unforgettable travel experiences. Pocket Guides For travelers on a short trip that want to make the most of their time exploring. Pocket Guides are compact guides for short trips that offer the best local experiences. Maps Durable and waterproof, with a handy slipcase and an easy-fold format, Lonely Planet's country maps are designed to let you explore with ease. The Banda Islands, a little archipelago in the middle of the Deep Banda Sea in East Indonesia spoiled us with its breathtaking beauty, tragic history and pristine underwater world. Even though the islands are often omitted from maps, Banda was a secret place which Europeans desperately tried to reach during the 15th century. Find out when is the best time to visit the almost forgotten paradise, where t0 stay and the best dive and snorkel spots. When is the Best Time to Visit the Banda Islands? We researched online for quite a long time and still didn't really know when it is the best time to visit the lovely archipelago. Now we know the best time to visit is October, November and March, April. During these months you have calm seas and sunshine every day. But also it is more crowded on the islands and as there are only a limited amount of guesthouses and dive shops you should book in advance. During the shoulder season like September, December, February and May the weather conditions are uncertain. We visited in May and had a mix of sunny and cloudy days. It rained almost every day, but mostly only very short showers. The sea was quite rough during our visit so on some days we couldn't access all snorkelling and dive sites. But 5 out of 9 days were fine. If you want to see schools of hammer heads you need to come in October/November when the water is a little bit cooler. During the warmer water months, the hammer heads stay deeper so you have no chance to see them. If you are curious how to get to this incredible place check out our post and click here. Where to Stay in Banda Neira? We spend time at The Nutmeg Tree Hotel & Dive as well as at Cilu Bintang Estate and we absolutely loved both places. Cilu Bintang is a beautiful newly build house lovely decorated in colonial style. It is full of artefacts from the colonial time. We had the best vegan almond pancakes here with fresh cinnamon and homemade nutmeg jam. The Nutmeg Tree Hotel & Dive is in a lovely renovated colonial house in vintage style with access to the sea. From here you can directly jump into the water and snorkel to find the Mandarin fish. The owner Reza is really lovely and fun to hang out with. He helped us to arrange Everything, whatever we wanted to do. We loved relaxing in the garden with view on Gunung Api or just talk about the latest gossip in town. We really felt like home at Reza's place and had a hard time leaving. Check the prices here. What to do on the Banda Islands? You

board or cook dinners by arrangement. Getting to the Banda Islands The easiest way to reach the Banda Islands is to first go to Ambon. Ambon is the capital city of Ambon island, located 132 kilometers north of the Bandas. To get to Ambon you can fly either directly from Denpasar-Bali, or transit in Ujung Pandang. Garuda Indonesia flies from Jakarta (CGK) transiting in Hasanuddin-Makassar airport, or Denpasar- Bali (DPS) transiting in Ujung Pandang (UPG) to Ambon's Pattimura Airport (AMQ). Other flights are from Langur-Central Maluku (LUV), Juanda-Surabaya (SUB), and Jeffman-Sorong, Papua (SOQ). Lion Air, Batavia Air, and Mandala Airlines serve Ambon-Jakarta, with transit in Makassar or Surabaya. From Ambon, you can get to the Banda Islands either by a chartered small plane or using Merpati Airlines flying to Banda Neira. There is no round-trip flight available. Reservations for flights from Ambon to Banda can only be made in Ambon. The returning flight must be reserved in Banda Neira. The flight operates once a week or every two weeks. This limited accessibility means that one you do get there, you won't see many other tourists around. Hence, it is an ideal hideaway. Alternatively, you can cross the Banda Sea by ferry. Pelni provides a twice weekly ferry by KM Ciremai liner from Ambon to Banda Neira. Make sure you double check the schedule for and unforeseen changes. There is a bimonthly boat that travels between Jakarta, Surabaya, Ujungpandang, Bau Bau, Ambon and Banda. The Merpati flights are often sporadic. You should keep reconfirming, as flights are often cancelled due to bad weather, engine problems, and other unforeseen circumstances. Crossing the Banda Sea by ferry takes about 7 hours from Ambon to the Banda islands, but once again, these voyages are extremely unpredictable The Banda Islands are also a popular destination for cruise ships, and can be accessed via various cruise companies as well. Live-board often begin their trip some distance from the Banda Islands Sights in the Banda Islands Diving is the main attraction in the Banda Islands. There are more than 25 dive sites.Some of the most popular ones are Pulau Ai (beware during rough sea), Batu Kapal, Hatta Reef (Karang Hatta), Pulau Keraka, and Nusa Laut. Sailing is an activity that draws people to the Bandas. Sail Banda is a big event. It attracts sailors from around the world, attracted by Banda's challenging conditions and winds. For Cool off with a relaxing swim at the beaches on the south coast of Banda Besar or on the tiny Pulau Nailaka. It is possible to climb to the summit of Gunung Api. Scaling this active volcano is a challenging 90 minute hike and guides are available. Other hiking trips can be booked at the Maulana Hotel to explore other attractions like traditional villages, and four-century old nutmeg groves. In Banda Neira, most people get around on foot as most tourist essentials are in the town and within walking distance. Alternatively, ojek and becak are available for a longer daytrip. To get from one island to another you will need to hire a boat. The price may vary depending on the distance but normally ranges from IDR 120,000 to IDR 500,000. Pulau Run, or Run Island is one of the smaller Banda islands, measuring only about 3 x 1 kilometers, yet it is sometimes considered to be Indonesia's "most valuable real estate." Multiple European powers had battled for control of the islands for many years until the signging of the Treaty of Breda in 1667. The British traded the tiny island of Run with the Dutch for an equally tiny island on the other side of the world, thus giving the Dutch full monopoly of the Banda islands which they maintained for almost two hundred years. The island across the globe traded to the British still goes by its Dutch name: Manhattan, in New York, USA. Banda Beser is the largest island in the Banda Islands and regarded as the most beautiful of all the Spice islands. An early mariner once wrote: "from far out at sea, we could detect the scent of paradise wafting from the hills of Banda." Only about 15,000 people live in Banda. Much of the world's nutmeg, mace and cloves were grown here and the neighboring island Lontar on plantations that are now largely overgrown. Lonthair is the largest town on Banda Besar. It is a sleepy place with a number of attractive colonial buildings. Beteng Hollandia, built in 1604, is one of the biggest fortress in Indonesia. Around Kelly Plantation there nutmeg trees are protected by towering centuries-old kenari trees A large part of the 17-square-mile island is covered by a 2,200 foot high, still active and often smoking, volcano. Diving and Snorkeling in Banda Islands The Banda Islands are home to some of the best snorkeling and diving in Indonesia — if not the world. There are excellent drop offs at Hatta, Air and Run islands and exceptionally clear water. There is also a large variety of colorful tropical fish and exotic shells in the beautiful coral gardens. There are 250 to 300 different kinds of coral, compared to 30 species in Hawaii. Divers see colored crinoids and starfish, angelfish, triggerfish, parrotfish, barrel sponges, soft corals with tentacles, hard corals. There is also good deep sea fishing. The reefs in the Banda Sea around Ai Island are particularly good for snorkelers because the reefs are located in water less 9 meters deep. The island is also easily accessible from the main Banda islands. here at also kor kora oats, nutmeg plantation and a fort on the islands. Hatta boasts spectacularly clear water with awesome coral holes and a spectacular drop off. It is harder to get to. Pulau Run is the tiny islet that was traded way by the British for Manhattan in 1667. There is specular drop off around 100 meters off the northwest coast. There are great white sand beaches and good snorkeling at the small island of Pulau Neilaka and shallow lagoon between Banda Neira and Gunung Api. Scuba diving is still relatively new here, but pioneering divers didn't have to work hard to find a thrill. The undersea world around Ambon and the nearby island of Saparua have top-rate dive sites. As you explore beneath the surface you'll see everything from sharks, enormous turtles, schools of Napoleon Wrasse, giant groupers, dogtooth tuna, mobula rays, redtooth triggerfish, various species of whales, spinner dolphins, and huge lobsters - neighbors to generous schools of reef fish and endemic Ambon scorpionfish. Diving is possible all year round, but during the monsoon season (July — September) you may be restricted in your choice of dive sites. Beginner divers are recommended to pay strict attention to their safety since the current can be strong in several spots. Diving is usually comfortable, with good visibility (15-30 meters) and calm waters, however some dive sites are only suitable for experienced divers so check with your dive master. Depths of the diving spots range from 5 meters to over 40 meters, with temperatures from 26 to 29 degree Celcius. Try to hire diving and snorkeling equipment from larger firms as these tend to be more reliable, but remember the responsibility of checking the equipment is ultimately yours. Major Banda Islands Dive Sites: There are 22 available dive spots in the waters surrounding Banda Neira, each with their own unique splendor and charm — and many more are still being discovered. The crystal clear waters are almost overgrown in numerous types of corals and inhabited by hundreds of species of fish and other marine life. Large schools of fish patrol the seas together with a mesmerizing array of surgeonfish, bannerfish, jacks and barracuda. Even schooling sharks and mobula rays are frequently sighted in the deeper waters. Other large species found roaming the waters include tuna, hammerhead sharks and several species of rays. The nearby island of Banda Gunung Api is an island consisting entirely of a volcano. Its last major eruption was in 1988. Molten, hot lava flowed across the island and into the ocean, destroying all corals and marine life in its path. But when cooled, a spectacular phenomenon occurred. The hardened andesitic flow created so fertile a ground that in just a few short years, it supported a higher diversity and abundance of corals and ocean life than the adjacent reefs, not covered by lava. Now, 30 years later, coral growth around Gunung Api Banda not only matches, but exceeds the development that normally takes coral formations over 70 years to achieve, making it the most rapid growing coral in the world. Sonegat: The nearest site for a decent dive is just five minutes by boat from most hotels. It is in the sonegat-sea arm- between Banda Neira and Gunung Api, just offshore from a Des Alwi's little seaside house. The drop off here is steep and the wall extends down 25 meters to a grey, sandy bottom. There are plenty of good sized dogtooth tuna cruising by and some beautiful blue girdled and emperor angelfish. Keraka Island: Pulau Keraka or Crab Island is just a few minutes further out, and protects the north entrance of the Neira - Gunung Api sea passage. A nice sandy stretch on the north coast is perfect for a picnic. At the south shore, 18 meters down you will find a mini-wall covered with hundreds of large blue-and-yellow tunicates. To the east shore, there are a good assortment of reef fish and a school of half meter long barracudas. Sjahrir Island and Batu Kapal: Sjahrir Island, formerly known as Pisang Island (Banana Island) and Batu Kapal (Boat Stone) are just 20 minutes by boat from Banda Neira. These two sites combine well for a morning dive, a picnic on the beach, and an afternoon dive. Lontar Island: The outer edge of Lontar Island, which represents part of the rim of a sunken caldera, offers several good dive sites. Batu Belanda: On this site, you will find many barrel and tube sponges and small caves and cracks. The fish are varied and plentiful, including a school of snappers, large emperor and blue-girdled angelfish, wrasses, a large pinnate bat-fish and numerous bannerfish. Ai Island: Together with Hatta Island, this island offers Bandas best diving. Both the north coast and the southwest of Ai are ringed with flawless coral walls, which are rugged and full of caves, the kind of habitat that harbors fish. Hatta Island: This island is about 25 kilometers by sea from Banda Neira. Skaru atoll, is a barely submerged reef a few hundred meters off the southern point of Hatta. On a coral outcrop, watch the passing parade of Unicornfish, Fusiliers, Jack Fish and Rainbow Runners, Whitetip Sharks (almost 2 meters long) and Dogtoothed Tuna, Napolean Wrasse, and Hawksbill Turtles. Palau Gunung Api Palau Gunung Api (on Banda Neira island) is the 656-meter-high volcano in the center of Banda Neira island that periodically erupts with devastating effect. During a 1988 eruption three people were killed and 300 houses were destroyed and layers of ash covered much of the Banda islands. The hike to the top of the volcano passes through a lovely cinnamon plantation on the volcano's eastern slope. On the other side of the volcano are some nutmeg and mace fields. Elsewhere you can see tropical almond trees giant ferns and cockatoos. The shallow waters at the foot of Gunung Api Banda are an internationally recognized dive spot. Multi-coloured corals contrast starkly with the blackened volcanic sea bed, housing a rich marine life, high in number and species diversity, despite the small total area. Gunung Api was designated as a National Park by the Ministry of Forestry in 1992. Banda Volcano is a perfectly conical mountain that is about three kilometers wide. .Due to its key location in the spice trade, Banda Volcano ranks among the best documented volcanoes in Indonesia. Historical eruptions have been recorded since the late 1500s, and have been relatively low-level, though there have been the occasional larger eruptions, with lava flow reaching the coast. On May 9, 1988, after 97 years of dormancy, a violent eruption shook the Banda islands. A column of ash billowed three kilometers into the air, and earthquakes were felt every few minutes. Two days prior to the eruption, 1,800 residents of the island were evacuated to nearby Neira and Lonthor, both of which are remnants of volcanic activity. On the day of the eruption, people began moving to further islands, and eventually to locations as distant as Sulawesi. About 10,000 people of the 16,000 population living in the Banda islands were evacuated during the 1988 eruption, which finally ended in August, 1988. This powerful eruption had a devastating impact on what was once an integral part of the famed "Maluku Sea Gardens." Molten lava oozed across 70,000 square meters of well-developed fringing reef, destroying everything in its path. But even volcanic clouds have a silver lining, and this seemingly catastrophic event led to a remarkable discovery. Hardened lava, once broken down, provides some of the most fertile soil on earth. This is because it is rich in minerals and nutrients brought up from within the earth. Therefore, the plant growth affected by volcanoes can recover quickly. But does the same hold true for coral growth? Prior to the Banda eruption of 1988, this idea received scant attention, but scientists were now provided with a unique opportunity. Coral colonization was monitored on 3 locations, and in just five short years, the hardened andesitic flow supported over 120 species of coral. A higher diversity and abundance than the adjacent reef not covered by lava. Now, 30 years later, coral growth around Gunung Api Banda not only matches, but exceeds the development that normally takes coral formations over 70 years to achieve, making it the most rapid growing coral in the world. As for climbing Gunung Api, the mountain is not too tall, yet it is a rough, but rewarding climb. The climb is a continuous, steep ascent for about 2 hours, so be sure to bring plenty of water. The trail is unmarked, but fairly difficult to miss. The path is are mainly sand or gravel but can be slippery, so good climbing shoes are advisable as well. If climbers set out with the first light of dawn, you should be back down on the shore by 11 am or 12:00pm. On the trek up the mountain, you can observe the various plant life, such as the orchids and the nutmeg trees, which produce the fragrant spices men once crossed the ocean for. If you're quiet, you may even see flocks of colorful birds perched high in the treetops or soaring in the skies above. 23 species of bird inhabit this island, many of which are endemic to Banda Region. If you set out early enough, you should make it to the summit in time to witness the dramatic dawn over the panoramic view of the sparkling blue sea, and the surrounding rocky islets. The Sonegat Sea Arm is located between GunungApi and Banda Neira, and is the site of the lava flow where the eruption of 1988 destroyed almost all corals and marine life. The Sonegat Arm lava flow is one of the most popular dive spots in the area and one of the many "must-see" dive spots in Indonesia. After just over 20 years of rehabilitation, table corals and other hard corals have grown at an impressively rapid rate, rarely seen elsewhere in the world. Four seamounts harbour a huge amount of ocean life including yellow fin tuna, banded sea snakes, the beautiful Mandarin fish, and the rare Napoleon fish. Ecological studies in 2001 and 2002 showed tremendous biodiversity with 310 species of reef-building coral, 871 species of fish, and high populations of grouper and shark. Image Sources: Wikimedia Commons Text Sources: Indonesia Tourism website (indonesia.travel), Indonesia government websites, UNESCO, Wikipedia, Lonely Planet guides, New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, National Geographic, The New Yorker, Bloomberg, Reuters, Associated Press, AFP, Japan News, Yomiuri Shimbun, Compton's Encyclopedia and various books and other publications. Updated in August 2020 Tell us details of your holiday plan. After you submit the form, one of our travel experts will get back to you with customised holiday package based on your requirement, within 24 hours. Grab the deal and start packing your bags for an indelible holiday with Tour My India. Call Us for details +91-9212777225 Request a Quote The Banda Islands (Kepulauan Banda) are an archipelago in South Maluku (Moluccas), Indonesia. View of a small village on Run Island '"`UNIQ--maplink-00000001-QINU`"'Map of Banda Islands Once known as the Spice Islands, an epithet also applied to the entire Maluku area, the Bandas were famous as a source of spices, especially nutmeg (buah pala). First colonized by the Portuguese, the Dutch soon wrested control of the islands and fought the Spice Wars with the British. In the Treaty of Breda in 1667, the British agreed to withdraw and gave up Pulau Run to the Dutch, partly in exchange for one small island on the other side of the world: New Amsterdam, now better known as Manhattan. Since 2017, the local government is arranging a yearly 'Banda Folks Festival' in the month of November. Accommodation booking will be very tough for this period, and the past couple of years there were violent disagreement over the competitions results. There is a traditional boat race in Banda called Manggurebe Belang has been held every year. Belang (traditional Banda wooden boat) The Bandas were really off the beaten track, but transport offers (from Ambon) are increasing and making it easier to access these islands. Flight or boat cancellations are very frequent, and therefore you should only go to Banda Islands while having plenty of time (i.e. not having a visa expiring soon, or booked flights). Transport offers and schedules are highly subject to changes, so check schedule when arriving in Ambon. The Banda Islands are served by the small -4.52166129.903881 Bandaneira Airport (or Banda Neira, NDA IATA). SAM Air serves the flight to Banda Neira. It uses a very small propeller plane (12 people capacity). You may book the ticket from the agent in Ambon. In addition, since there are regular airlines (Wings and Garuda) flying between Kei islands and Ambon, going to/from Ambon through Karel Sadsuitubun Airport (LUV IATA) in the Kei Islands can also be an option, if everything else is cancelled. A fast boat (6 hours) goes from Ambon (Tulehu Harbour) to Banda Neira twice a week, on Tuesday and Saturday. The boat returns the next day from Banda to Ambon and costs Rp 410,000 as of Feb 2016. Note that the fast boat can be cancelled if the weather is bad! For example, there was no service in January 2017. PELNI[dead link]'s ship runs twice monthly from Ambon, stops in Banda Neira, and continues to Kei Islands. Though uncomfortable and inconvenient, this is the cheapest option. The regular PELNI ship KM. Nggapulu and KM. Pangrango serve the passenger to Bandaneira. Check the schedule at the PELNI office in Ambon or by the PELNI app. Getting around on Bandaneira is either by foot, ojek (motorbike taxi) or becak (cycle rickshaw). The furthermost village in the north is a 45-minute walk. However, most places of interest to tourists (airport, harbour, market, colonial houses, Pelni office) are within quicker walking distance or within the town of Banda Neira. Other Banda islands (Ai, Run, Banda Besar, Hatta) can be by accessed by public boat on the Southwest of the Neira Island (near the market). There is no fixed inter-island system, as you will be tagging along with the locals. If you ask different locals, you will get different information. In general, there is one boat per day from each island. Boat to Hatta Island sometime is going every two days. The boats arrive in the Neira Island the morning to buy things in the market, and then return to the other Banda Islands around 11:00-12:00 after they are done with shopping or until their boat is filled with passengers. The rate is about Rp30,000-50,000 depending on destinations and boat owners (as of Oct 2018). Public boats do not run on Fridays. All boats can be cancelled randomly for various reasons. Chartered boats can be used to reach other islands. Day trips by chartered boats: Pulau Hatta Rp600,000/day; Pulau Pisang + Batu Kapal Rp350,000/day; half-day tour to the Lava Stream north of Gunung Api Rp120,000. Fort Belgica When you come to the spice island, you have to visit nutmeg plantations in Banda Besar or Run Island. Besides that, you may see a lot of historical sites in Banda Neira, structures from Dutch colonization, also buildings during the struggle for Indonesian independence, the stars are Fort Belgica and Mohammad Hatta Exile House. Banda Volcano (Gunung Api Banda) A lionfish in the sponge in the waters of Banda Islands Snorkeling. Day-trips can be arranged through guest houses in Banda Neira or locals owning boats. Great drop-offs include Pulau Hatta, Pulau Pisang, Batu Kapal, Pulau Ai and the northern shore of Pulau Gunung Api just off the cold lava stream. Make sure that your boat captain knows the sites and make arrangements for lunch as there are no warungs on most islands! If you're staying in Pulau Ai or Hatta, you can go snorkelling straight out of your room. Diving. There are two dive operators: Naira Dive Resort is on Hatta Island, and Dive Bluemotion is on Banda Neira. Climb Gunung Api. Climbing the highest peak of the Bandas (667 m above sea level) offers great views. The trail starts at the few houses on the eastern shore and although it is unmarked almost impossible to miss. Bring plenty of water as the trail is steep, taking about 2 hours. Hiking boots are advisable as the path is stony and slippery. Guide recommended if going alone. The fare for boat transport from Bandaneira to Gunung Api is Rp10,000 each way. Island Walk. Stroll around the island to explore smaller villages in the north and the runway of the airport. There is an ATM in the Banda Neira that accepts MasterCard and Visa. It doesn't have the Visa logo on the ATM but it works. The local BRI branch will not change any money. You might be able to change US dollars to rupiah at some guesthouses and shops, at an unfavorable rate. Therefore, come prepared and bring sufficient cash from Ambon or Tual. Manisan Pala Typical Bandanese cuisine includes: Grilled fish (ikan bakar) of barracuda and tuna, served in guesthouses and rumah makan (restaurants). However, you might need to inform the guesthouse if you intend to eat there. Most rumah makan do not store fish as freezers are uncommon and fresh fish can be bought every morning. Therefore you might need to order fish one day in advance or join the chef to the market and buy the fish yourself. Nutmeg products: Nutmeg jam (available in guesthouses and small stores in Banda Neira) and Manisan Pala (candied nutmeg). Dishes use nutmeg: Sambal Pala (nutmeg sambal) and Ikan Kuah Asam Pala or famous as ikan kuah pala Banda (fish in nutmeg sour soup). The fish soup dish without using turmeric, is different from ikan kuah kuning. Fishball (bakso ikan), similar to regular meatballs (bakso). Kue manto, fish roll doused with thick coconut milk and sprinkled with celery and fried shallot. Popular places to eat: Harbor market. Upon the arrival of the PELNI ships, the harbor area comes to life with dozens of street stalls selling fresh grilled fish and vegetable dishes. Try spicy tuna on a stick with sambal. Rumah Makan Nusantara. A well-established restaurant to get decent local dishes. Wi-Fi available. Rp30,000-50,000. Belgica Cafe (within a short walk from the entrance to Fort Belgica). The availability of alcoholic drinks in Banda Neira is a bit limited. Some guesthouses have chilled beer (Rp35,000-50,000 per big bottle of Bintang) and fresh fruit juices (Rp15,000). Jus Pala, a juice made from nutmeg. Kopi Pala, a nutmeg coffee drink. Sirup Pala, a nutmeg syrup drink. There are numerous guesthouses in Banda Islands. For the details, see each island page. Bandaneira is generally a safe place for tourists, however there are reports of pickpocketing at the ferry terminal or in the Pelni ferry (especially during boarding and disembarkation). The jostle upon arrival of the big Pelni boat is an ideal place to remove the wallet out of your pocket or to cut your money belt. Pay attention and store your valuables safely! Indonesian ferries have generally low safety standards. In particular, overloaded small boats, for example to Pulau Ai, might be hazardous during rough seas. All islands are relatively isolated, and you can not find even simple medications on Pulau Ai or Hatta. Dengue fever is common there. Guesthouses have good free Wi-Fi. Only Telkomsel is operating in Banda Islands (XL ceased operation in the islands around 2016). Mobile phone reception, including data, is better on Neira Island. Top-ups can be bought in Neira Island. Reception on Pulau Ai is only available at the jetty. Data will not work on Pulau Ai. (as of Oct 2018). Ambon: back to the Gateway of Maluku. If you want to fly to Ambon, you can only buy a ticket in Banda. Get the agent's phone number from your accommodation as it sometimes changes (as of Oct 2018). Kai Islands: other gorgeous islands, go there with the PELNI ship. This region travel guide to Banda Islands is a usable article. It gives a good overview of the region, its sights, and how to get in, as well as links to the main destinations, whose articles are similarly well developed. An adventurous person could use this article, but please feel free to improve it by editing the page.