



Indonesia

Thousands of green islands along the equator, ancient temples, smoking volcanoes, rich spicy food and a friendly 'selamat pagi' to start the day.

AT A GLANCE

Facts to know

CAPITAL

Jakarta

PLANNED NEW CAPITAL

Nusantara, in East Kalimantan on Borneo, still being built; as of 2026 Jakarta remains the capital until a presidential decree makes the move official

POPULATION

About 285 million (2025 survey)

OFFICIAL LANGUAGE

Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia)

CURRENCY

Indonesian rupiah (Rp)

AREA

About 1.9 million km²

ISLANDS

About 17,000 (17,380 named islands in the official 2024 count)

GOVERNMENT

Presidential republic with an elected parliament, made up of 38 provinces

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN

Puncak Jaya, 4,884 m, on the island of New Guinea

LONGEST RIVER

The Kapuas, about 1,143 km, on Borneo

NEIGHBOURS

Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste. Across the sea: Singapore, the Philippines, Australia, Palau, Vietnam, Thailand and India

DRIVES ON THE

Left

CALLING CODE

+62

A 45-minute trip to Indonesia

Everything you need is in this pack. No preparation beyond printing. Adapt the timing to your group.

- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| 0 to 5 min | Welcome. Show the map page and find Indonesia together. Ask: who has been there, or knows someone from there? |
| 5 to 15 min | Read the facts at a glance, then three moments from the story: AD 671: A Chinese monk visits Srivijaya; 1942: Japan occupies the Dutch East Indies; 2022: A law for a new capital. |
| 15 to 25 min | At the table: talk about Nasi goreng and Rendang. Idea: bring a small taste (bread, cheese, fruit, tea) if your kitchen can help. |
| 25 to 30 min | Say it like a local: practise "Selamat pagi" (Good morning), "Selamat siang" (Good day), "Selamat sore" (Good afternoon). Everyone says them together. |
| 30 to 40 min | Quiz: read the questions aloud, or play the big-screen version at https://worldstroll.com/countries/indonesia/group . No scores needed. |
| 40 to 45 min | Talk about it (questions page), then stamp or sign everyone's passport page. |

You will need

- This printed pack (one per table, or one each)
- Pens for the quiz
- Optional: a world map or globe, a small tasting, music from the country

Indonesia and its cities



- Medan (North Sumatra): The gateway to Lake Toba, Its mix of peoples and food, Its history as a plantation city
- Bukittinggi (West Sumatra): The Jam Gadang clock tower, Minangkabau food and culture, Cool mountain air
- Palembang (South Sumatra): The Musi River, The history of Srivijaya, The Ampera Bridge across the Musi
- Jakarta (Northwest coast of Java): The National Monument (Monas), The Istiqlal Mosque, The old Dutch town of Kota Tua, Heavy traffic
- Bandung (West Java): The 1955 Asian-African Conference, Art deco buildings, Tea plantations and volcanoes nearby
- Yogyakarta (Special Region of Yogyakarta, Central Java): The Sultan's Palace (Kraton), Borobudur and Prambanan nearby, Batik and gudeg
- Surabaya (East Java): The City of Heroes, A great port, Rawon and other East Javanese food
- Malang (East Java): A cool, mild climate, Dutch colonial buildings, Trips to Mount Bromo
- Denpasar (Bali): Bali's main city and airport area, Hindu temples and ceremonies, Nearby Tanah Lot

- Labuan Bajo (West end of Flores, East Nusa Tenggara): Boats to Komodo National Park, Snorkelling and diving, Sunsets over the islands
- Makassar (South Sulawesi): Fort Rotterdam, A long history as a trading port, Coto Makassar soup and Losari Beach
- Manado (North Sulawesi): Diving at Bunaken, Big Christmas celebrations, Tinutuan porridge and smoked skipjack tuna

A short history of Indonesia

People have lived on these islands for a very long time: fossils of early humans have been found on Java, and cave paintings on Sulawesi are among the oldest known. Trade by sea brought Indian ideas, Hinduism and Buddhism, and later Islam. Great kingdoms such as Srivijaya on Sumatra and Majapahit on Java grew rich on that trade. From the 1600s the Dutch slowly took control of the islands. The 20th century brought a national movement, Japanese occupation, independence and a difficult road to today's democracy.

AD 671 **A Chinese monk visits Srivijaya**

The Chinese Buddhist monk Yijing stayed for six months in Srivijaya, a kingdom based near today's Palembang in southern Sumatra. Srivijaya grew into a great sea-trading power and a centre of Buddhist learning, and it dominated the trade routes of the region for several centuries.

AD 780 **Work begins on Borobudur**

Under the Sailendra dynasty in Central Java, work on the huge Buddhist monument of Borobudur began around 780 and went on in several stages for about fifty years. It is decorated with 2,672 relief panels and originally held 504 statues of the Buddha.

AD 856 **Prambanan's great Shiva temple is dedicated**

According to an inscription dated 856, a great temple compound for the Hindu god Shiva was inaugurated in Central Java that year. Today it is known as Prambanan, the largest Hindu temple site in Indonesia, with a main tower 47 metres high.

1293 **The Majapahit kingdom is founded**

After a Mongol army sent by Kublai Khan landed on Java, the prince Raden Wijaya used the confusion to take power and then drove the Mongols out. He was crowned in 1293 as the first king of Majapahit, which became one of the greatest kingdoms in the history of the islands.

1619 **The Dutch found Batavia**

The Dutch East India Company (VOC), founded in 1602 to trade in spices, destroyed the port town of Jayakarta on Java and built its own fortified town, Batavia, in its place. Batavia became the centre of Dutch

power in Asia and is today's Jakarta.

1825 The Java War begins

Prince Diponegoro of Yogyakarta led a great rebellion against Dutch rule in central and eastern Java. The war lasted until 1830 and had disastrous consequences for Java. It ended when Diponegoro was captured during an attempt at peace talks and exiled to Sulawesi, where he died in 1855. He is honoured today as a national hero.

1883 Krakatoa erupts

The volcanic island of Krakatoa, between Java and Sumatra, blew apart in one of the deadliest eruptions ever recorded. The explosion was heard about 4,800 km away, and the eruption and its tsunamis killed at least 36,417 people.

1928 The Youth Pledge

On 28 October 1928, a congress of young nationalists in Batavia pledged themselves to one motherland, one nation and one unifying language: Indonesian. The song 'Indonesia Raya', which later became the national anthem, was played at the congress.

1942 Japan occupies the Dutch East Indies

During the Second World War, Japanese forces invaded the colony, and the Dutch surrendered in March 1942. The occupation lasted until 1945 and brought great hardship: millions of Indonesians were made to do forced labour, and together with famine it cost millions of lives.

1945 Independence is proclaimed

On 17 August 1945, two days after Japan surrendered, Sukarno and Mohammad Hatta read the Proclamation of Indonesian Independence in Jakarta. The next day they were appointed the first president and vice president. 17 August is Independence Day.

1949 The Netherlands transfers sovereignty

The Dutch tried to take back control, and four years of fighting and negotiation followed. Under international pressure, a conference in The Hague agreed the transfer, and on 27 December 1949 the Netherlands formally handed over sovereignty. In 2023 the Netherlands also recognised 17 August 1945 as Indonesia's independence day.

1955

The Bandung Conference

In April 1955, Indonesia hosted leaders of 29 Asian and African countries in the city of Bandung. They spoke for cooperation among newly independent nations and against colonialism, and the meeting was a step towards the Non-Aligned Movement.

1965

The 1965 coup attempt and mass killings

After a failed coup attempt by a group calling itself the 30 September Movement, the army under General Suharto blamed the Communist Party and led a violent purge. In 1965 and 1966 the army and its allies killed at least half a million people, and most estimates range from 500,000 to 1 million. Suharto took over from Sukarno and ruled for more than thirty years. These events are still painful and rarely discussed in Indonesia.

1998

Suharto resigns

During the Asian financial crisis, prices soared and protests and riots spread. On 21 May 1998 Suharto resigned after 32 years in power. The period of reform that followed, called Reformasi, brought free elections, a free press and more power for the regions.

2004

The Indian Ocean tsunami

On 26 December 2004 a huge undersea earthquake off Aceh, in northern Sumatra, set off a tsunami across the Indian Ocean. Indonesia was the worst hit country, with around 170,000 people killed. In the aftermath, the government and the rebel movement in Aceh returned to talks and signed a peace agreement in 2005.

2022

A law for a new capital

In January 2022 parliament passed a law to move the capital from crowded, sinking Jakarta to a new city, Nusantara, being built in East Kalimantan on Borneo. The law says Jakarta stays the capital until the president signs a decree making the move official.

What people eat in Indonesia

An Indonesian meal has no separate courses. Steamed rice sits in the middle of the table, surrounded by a few dishes to share: meat or fish, a vegetable dish, often a soup, and always a small bowl of sambal, the chilli sauce found on every Indonesian table. People usually eat with a spoon in the right hand and a fork in the left, and there are no knives, because the food is already cut into small pieces. Cooking differs from island to island: rich, spicy coconut dishes from the Minangkabau of West Sumatra, sweeter food in Central Java, and pork dishes in Hindu Bali, while the long history of trade shows in dishes brought by Chinese, Indian, Arab and Dutch influences. In 2018 the tourism ministry promoted five national dishes: soto, satay, nasi goreng, rendang and gado-gado.

Nasi goreng

All over Indonesia, shaped by Chinese stir-frying

Fried rice, the everyday dish of Indonesia. Cooked rice (often from the day before) is stir-fried with shallots, garlic, chilli and kecap manis, a thick, sweet soy sauce, and topped with a fried egg, crispy fried shallots, cucumber and prawn crackers. People eat it for breakfast, lunch or a late supper from a street cart.

Rendang

The Minangkabau people of West Sumatra (also loved in Malaysia and Singapore)

Beef slowly cooked for hours in coconut milk with ginger, galangal, lemongrass, turmeric and chilli, until the liquid has gone and the dark, spicy paste clings to the meat. Traditional rendang is almost dry, which helped it keep for a long time; it is served at weddings, festivals and Eid.

Satay (sate)

Port cities of Java and Sumatra, now everywhere in Indonesia

Small pieces of marinated chicken, goat or beef threaded on bamboo skewers and grilled over charcoal, usually served with a peanut sauce, rice cakes and sliced shallots. Satay sellers fan the glowing coals on their street carts in the evening. Sate Madura, from the island of Madura, is one of the best known styles.

Gado-gado

West Java and Jakarta (Sundanese and Betawi cooking), now all over Indonesia

A warm salad of lightly boiled vegetables such as long beans, cabbage, bean sprouts and spinach, with potato, hard-boiled egg, fried tofu, tempeh and rice cake, all covered with a rich peanut sauce and topped with crispy crackers.

Soto ayam

Java, with many regional versions across Indonesia

A fragrant yellow chicken soup coloured with turmeric and flavoured with lemongrass, ginger and lime leaves, served with shredded chicken, rice noodles, bean sprouts, boiled egg and fried shallots. Almost every region has its own soto, some clear, some with coconut milk.

Tempeh (tempe)

Java

A firm cake of whole soybeans, fermented with a mould that binds them together. It has a nutty, earthy taste and is sliced and fried, simmered in sweet soy sauce or added to curries. Tempeh is an everyday source of protein across Java and a favourite of vegetarians around the world.

Sambal

All over Indonesia

A chilli sauce or paste, usually ground by hand in a stone mortar with shallots, garlic, salt and often lime juice or tomato. Sambal terasi adds fried shrimp paste. There is a small dish of sambal on almost every Indonesian table, and people add as much as they like.

Nasi Padang

West Sumatra (Minangkabau cooking)

Rice served with a choice of rich, spicy Minangkabau dishes such as rendang, curried chicken, fish and cassava leaves. In Padang restaurants the dishes are stacked high in the front window.

Gudeg

Yogyakarta, Central Java

Young, unripe jackfruit stewed for several hours with palm sugar, coconut milk and spices until soft, sweet and brown. It is served with rice, chicken, egg and a spicy stew of beef skin.

Rawon

East Java

A beef soup made almost black by keluak, the seed of a tropical tree, which gives it a deep, nutty flavour. It is served with rice, bean sprouts, salted egg and prawn crackers.

Bakso

Chinese Indonesian, now all over Indonesia

Soft, springy beef meatballs served in a clear hot broth, often with noodles, tofu and fried shallots. Bakso sellers push their carts through towns and villages, and many

people enjoy it as an afternoon snack.

Tumpeng

Java

A tall cone of rice, often yellow with turmeric, set on a round bamboo tray and surrounded by vegetables, chicken, egg and other dishes. It is made for celebrations such as birthdays and parties, and for the slametan, a traditional communal feast.

Cendol (cendol or dawet)

Java and much of Southeast Asia

Soft green jelly strands flavoured with pandan leaf, served in coconut milk with palm sugar syrup and shaved ice. It is a favourite cold drink and dessert on a hot afternoon.

Klepon

Traditional markets across Indonesia (also Malaysia and Singapore)

Small green balls of glutinous rice flour, coloured with pandan, filled with palm sugar and rolled in grated coconut. When you bite one, the melted sugar bursts in your mouth. They are soft and sticky, so older people and young children should take small bites and chew well.

Kopi luwak

Java, Sumatra, Bali and Sulawesi

One of the most expensive coffees in the world, made from coffee cherries that have been eaten and passed by the Asian palm civet, a small wild animal. Once the beans were gathered from the droppings of wild civets. Today most kopi luwak comes from civets kept in small cages and force-fed coffee cherries, which raises serious animal welfare concerns. Investigations have also found coffee from caged animals sold as 'wild', so many visitors now choose to skip it and drink ordinary Indonesian coffee instead.

GOOD MANNERS

At the table

- Use your right hand to eat, pass food and hand over money; the left hand is traditionally used for washing and is considered unclean.
- Most meals are eaten with a spoon in the right hand and a fork in the left, used to push food onto the spoon. Knives are not normally used at the table.
- When eating with your hand, as many people do in Padang restaurants and at home, use only your right hand; a bowl of water with lime is provided for washing your fingers.

- Take food from the shared dishes with the serving spoon, not your own hand or spoon.
- Many Indonesians are Muslim and do not eat pork or drink alcohol. During the fasting month of Ramadan, try not to eat or drink in front of people who are fasting during the day.

Nasi goreng

Fried rice, the everyday dish of Indonesia. Cooked rice (often from the day before) is stir-fried with shallots, garlic, chilli and kecap manis, a thick, sweet soy sauce, and topped with a fried egg, crispy fried shallots, cucumber and prawn crackers. People eat it for breakfast, lunch or a late supper from a street cart.

Ingredients

- 400 g cooked long-grain rice, cold (cooked the day before, cooled within an hour and kept covered in the fridge)
- 3 shallots and 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 red chilli, finely chopped (more or less to taste)
- 1 teaspoon shrimp paste (optional)
- 2 tablespoons kecap manis (sweet soy sauce) and 1 teaspoon salty soy sauce
- 150 g chicken breast or peeled prawns, cut small
- 3 tablespoons oil
- 2 eggs
- To serve: cucumber and tomato slices, crispy fried shallots and prawn crackers

Method

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a wok or large frying pan. Fry the shallots, garlic, chilli and shrimp paste for 2 minutes, until soft and fragrant.
2. Add the chicken or prawns and stir-fry for 3 to 4 minutes, until cooked through.
3. Add the rice and break up any lumps. Stir in the kecap manis and soy sauce and stir-fry over high heat for 3 to 4 minutes, until the rice is hot and evenly coloured.
4. In a separate pan, fry the eggs in the rest of the oil. Cook them until the white is set and the yolk is as firm as you like; for pregnant women, young children, older people or anyone with a weak immune system, cook the yolk until firm.

5. Serve the rice with a fried egg on top, with cucumber, tomato, fried shallots and prawn crackers on the side.

Rendang

Beef slowly cooked for hours in coconut milk with ginger, galangal, lemongrass, turmeric and chilli, until the liquid has gone and the dark, spicy paste clings to the meat. Traditional rendang is almost dry, which helped it keep for a long time; it is served at weddings, festivals and Eid.

Ingredients

- 1 kg stewing beef (chuck or brisket), cut into 4 cm pieces
- For the spice paste: 8 shallots, 5 cloves garlic, a 5 cm piece each of ginger and galangal, a 3 cm piece of fresh turmeric (or 1 teaspoon ground), 6 to 10 dried red chillies (soaked) or fresh chillies
- 2 stalks lemongrass, bruised
- 4 makrut (kaffir) lime leaves and 1 turmeric leaf or bay leaf
- 800 ml coconut milk
- 4 tablespoons desiccated coconut, toasted in a dry pan until golden, then pounded or blended
- 1 tablespoon palm sugar or brown sugar and 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons oil

Method

1. Blend all the spice paste ingredients with a splash of water until smooth.
2. Heat the oil in a heavy pot and fry the paste for 5 minutes, stirring, until fragrant.
3. Add the beef, lemongrass and leaves and stir well to coat the meat. Pour in the coconut milk and bring to the boil.
4. Turn the heat down and simmer uncovered for about 2 hours, stirring from time to time, until the sauce has thickened and the meat is tender.
5. Add the toasted coconut, sugar and salt. Keep cooking over low heat for 1 to 1.5 hours more, stirring often so it does not stick, until the sauce is thick, dark brown and the oil starts to separate. Serve with steamed rice.

Satay

Small pieces of marinated chicken, goat or beef threaded on bamboo skewers and grilled over charcoal, usually served with a peanut sauce, rice cakes and sliced shallots. Satay sellers fan the glowing coals on their street carts in the evening. Sate Madura, from the island of Madura, is one of the best known styles.

Ingredients

- 600 g boneless chicken thighs, cut into 2 cm pieces
- For the marinade: 3 tablespoons kecap manis, 2 cloves garlic (crushed), 1 teaspoon ground coriander and 1 tablespoon oil
- Bamboo skewers, soaked in water for 30 minutes
- For the peanut sauce: 150 g roasted unsalted peanuts, 2 cloves garlic, 1 red chilli, 2 tablespoons kecap manis, 1 teaspoon palm or brown sugar, juice of 1 lime and about 250 ml water
- To serve: sliced shallots, cucumber and rice cakes or rice

Method

1. Mix the chicken with the marinade and leave in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.
2. For the sauce, blend the peanuts, garlic and chilli to a coarse paste. Simmer it in a small pan with the kecap manis, sugar and water for 5 to 8 minutes, stirring, until thick. Add the lime juice and a pinch of salt. Peanuts cause serious allergies, so warn your guests.
3. Thread the chicken onto the skewers, 4 or 5 pieces each.
4. Grill over charcoal or under a hot grill for 8 to 10 minutes, turning often, until browned and cooked through with no pink left.
5. Serve hot with the peanut sauce poured over or on the side, with shallots, cucumber and rice cakes.

Gado-gado

A warm salad of lightly boiled vegetables such as long beans, cabbage, bean sprouts and spinach, with potato, hard-boiled egg, fried tofu, tempeh and rice cake, all covered with a rich peanut sauce and topped with crispy crackers.

Ingredients

- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and cut into chunks
- 4 eggs
- 200 g long beans or green beans, cut into 4 cm lengths
- A quarter of a small white cabbage, shredded
- 150 g bean sprouts and 150 g spinach
- 200 g firm tofu and 200 g tempeh, cut into slices
- Oil for frying and 1 cucumber, sliced
- For the sauce: 200 g roasted unsalted peanuts, 2 cloves garlic, 1 or 2 red chillies, 2 tablespoons palm or brown sugar, 1 tablespoon kecap manis, juice of 1 lime, a pinch of salt and about 300 ml warm water
- To serve: prawn crackers and crispy fried shallots

Method

1. Boil the potatoes for 12 to 15 minutes until tender. Boil the eggs for 10 minutes, cool them in cold water, peel and cut into quarters.
2. Blanch the beans for 3 minutes, the cabbage for 2 minutes, and the bean sprouts and spinach for 1 minute. Drain well. For older people, pregnant women, young children or anyone with a weak immune system, cook the bean sprouts until steaming hot or leave them out.
3. Fry the tofu and tempeh slices in hot oil for 3 to 4 minutes, until golden. Drain on kitchen paper.
4. For the sauce, blend the peanuts, garlic, chillies, sugar, kecap manis and salt with the warm water until thick and fairly smooth. Stir in the lime juice. Peanuts cause serious allergies, so warn your guests.
5. Arrange the vegetables, potatoes, tofu, tempeh, egg and cucumber on plates, pour the sauce over them and top with crackers and fried shallots.

Soto ayam

A fragrant yellow chicken soup coloured with turmeric and flavoured with lemongrass, ginger and lime leaves, served with shredded chicken, rice noodles, bean sprouts, boiled egg and fried shallots. Almost every region has its own soto, some clear, some with coconut milk.

Ingredients

- 4 chicken legs (about 1 kg)
- 2 litres water
- For the paste: 5 shallots, 3 cloves garlic, 3 cm fresh turmeric (or 1 teaspoon ground), 3 cm ginger, 3 candlenuts or macadamia nuts, 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 2 stalks lemongrass, bruised, 4 makrut (kaffir) lime leaves and 2 bay leaves
- 1 tablespoon oil and salt to taste
- 150 g rice vermicelli, soaked in hot water
- 150 g bean sprouts, 4 hard-boiled eggs, crispy fried shallots, celery leaves and lime wedges to serve

Method

1. Put the chicken in a large pot with the water, bring to the boil, skim off the foam and simmer for 20 minutes.
2. Meanwhile blend the paste ingredients until smooth and fry the paste in the oil for 3 to 4 minutes, until fragrant.
3. Add the paste, lemongrass and leaves to the pot and simmer for 30 minutes more, until the chicken is cooked through and tender. Season with salt.
4. Lift out the chicken, remove the skin and bones and shred the meat.
5. Put noodles, bean sprouts (blanched for 1 minute in boiling water), chicken and half an egg in each bowl, ladle the hot soup over and top with fried shallots and celery leaves. Serve with lime and sambal. For older people, pregnant women, young children or anyone with a weak immune system, cook the bean sprouts until steaming hot or leave them out.

Useful phrases

Selamat pagi

suh-LAH-maht PAH-gee · Good morning

Selamat siang

suh-LAH-maht SEE-yahng · Good day

Selamat sore

suh-LAH-maht SOH-ray · Good afternoon

Selamat malam

suh-LAH-maht MAH-lahm · Good evening

Apa kabar?

AH-pah KAH-bar · How are you?

Baik, terima kasih

bah-EEK, tuh-REE-mah KAH-see · Fine, thank you

Nama saya ...

NAH-mah SAH-yah ... · My name is ...

Permisi

puhr-MEE-see · Excuse me

Tolong

TOH-long · Please (help me) / Help!

Berapa harganya?

buh-RAH-pah HAR-gah-nyah · How much is it?

Terlalu mahal

tuhr-LAH-loo mah-HAHL · That's too expensive

Tidak pedas

TEE-dah puh-DAHS · Not spicy

Saya tidak makan babi

SAH-yah TEE-dah MAH-kahn BAH-bee · I don't eat pork

Enak sekali!

EH-nah suh-KAH-lee · Very delicious!

Minta bon

MIN-tah bon · The bill, please

Di mana kamar kecil?

dee MAH-nah KAH-mar kuh-CHEEL · Where is the toilet?

Saya tidak mengerti

SAH-yah TEE-dah muh-NGUHR-tee · I don't understand

Sampai jumpa

SAHM-pie JOOM-pah · See you

Things you might not know

1. Indonesia's official count found 17,380 named islands in 2024, up from 17,374 in 2023, as surveyors keep finding and naming more. The usual round figure is about 17,000.
2. Java is the most populous island in the world. As of the latest estimates it is home to about 159 million people, more than half of all Indonesians, on only 7 percent of the country's land.
3. More than 700 languages are spoken in Indonesia, about a tenth of all the languages in the world. The one most people speak at home is Javanese, but everyone learns Indonesian at school.
4. The Komodo dragon, found only on a few Indonesian islands, is the largest living lizard. Males can grow to about 3 m long, and wild adults usually weigh around 70 kg.
5. Rafflesia, which grows in the rainforests of Sumatra and Borneo, has some of the largest single flowers on Earth, often about 1 m across. It smells of rotting meat, which is why it is also called the corpse flower.
6. The national motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, means 'unity in diversity'. It comes from a poem written in Old Javanese in the 14th century, in the time of Majapahit.
7. In 1815 Mount Tambora, on the island of Sumbawa, erupted in the largest eruption in recorded history. Its ash cooled the whole planet, and 1816 became known in Europe and North America as the 'Year Without a Summer'.
8. The third blast of Krakatoa, on 27 August 1883, is thought to be the loudest sound in recorded history. It was heard on the island of Rodrigues near Mauritius, about 4,800 km away.
9. Indonesia has more Muslims than any other country. About 87 percent of Indonesians are Muslim, but Bali is mostly Hindu, and there are large Christian communities in places such as North Sulawesi.
10. Wild orangutans live only on two islands: Sumatra, and Borneo, which Indonesia shares with Malaysia and Brunei.
11. Indonesia is the country that straddles the greatest length of the equator, counting both land and sea.

12. UNESCO recognised Indonesian batik, the art of dyeing cloth with wax patterns, in October 2009. Since then Indonesia has celebrated National Batik Day every year on 2 October.
13. Borobudur's carvings of farmers show that rice has been grown on Java for well over a thousand years. Rice is still the heart of almost every meal: 'nasi' means cooked rice.

TALK ABOUT IT

Questions for the group

- Have you ever been to Indonesia, or has someone in your family? What do you remember?
- Have you ever tasted Nasi goreng or Rendang? What is a dish you remember from a trip?
- The 1965 coup attempt and mass killings (1965). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Suharto resigns (1998). Do you remember hearing about it? Where were you then?
- Have you seen Borobudur, in person or in pictures? Which famous place would you most like to see?
- If you could spend one day in any city of Indonesia, which would it be and why?

QUIZ

How well do you know Indonesia?

Circle the right answer. The answers are on the last page.

1. What is kecap manis, used in nasi goreng?

- A) A chilli paste
- B) A thick, sweet soy sauce
- C) A coconut drink
- D) A peanut sauce

2. Most kopi luwak sold today comes from wild civets living freely in the forest.

- A) True
- B) False

3. The Mongol army sent to Java by Kublai Khan in 1293 conquered the island and ruled it for a century.

- A) True
- B) False

4. 'Selamat malam' is the greeting for the morning.

- A) True
- B) False

5. Rafflesia, a plant of the rainforests of Sumatra and Borneo, has some of the largest single flowers on Earth, often about 1 m across.

- A) True
- B) False

6. About how many islands make up Indonesia?

- A) About 170
- B) About 17,000
- C) About 1,700
- D) About 170,000

7. Yogyakarta served as the capital of the young Republic of Indonesia during the struggle for independence.

- A) True
- B) False

8. On which island is Nusantara, the planned new capital, being built?

- A) Borneo
- B) Sulawesi
- C) Sumatra
- D) Java

9. Mount Bromo is the highest mountain in Indonesia.

- A) True
- B) False

10. In Indonesia, traffic drives on the left side of the road.

- A) True
- B) False

11. What does Indonesia's motto, Bhinneka Tunggal Ika, mean?

- A) One people, one faith
- B) Freedom or death
- C) Land of many islands
- D) Unity in diversity

12. What does 'pulau' mean?

- A) Mountain
- B) Island
- C) Sea
- D) Beach

Quiz answers

1. B) A thick, sweet soy sauce

Kecap manis is a thick, sweet soy sauce made with palm sugar. It gives nasi goreng its dark colour.

2. False

False. Most kopi luwak now comes from civets kept in small cages and force-fed coffee cherries, which raises serious animal welfare concerns.

3. False

False. Raden Wijaya first used the Mongol army against a rival king, then turned on it, and the Mongols had to withdraw. He then founded Majapahit.

4. False

False. 'Selamat malam' is good evening, used after dark. In the morning you say 'selamat pagi'.

5. True

True. Rafflesia flowers can be about 1 m across, and they smell of rotting meat.

6. B) About 17,000

About 17,000. The official survey agency counted 17,380 named islands in 2024.

7. True

True. The government moved to Yogyakarta in January 1946, when Jakarta was held by the Dutch, and stayed until the struggle ended in 1949.

8. A) Borneo

Nusantara is being built in East Kalimantan, the Indonesian part of Borneo, far from crowded and sinking Jakarta on Java.

9. False

False. Bromo is 2,329 m high. The highest mountain in Indonesia is Puncak Jaya, 4,884 m, on New Guinea.

10. True

True. Indonesia drives on the left, a habit kept from colonial times, even though the Netherlands itself drives on the right.

11. D) Unity in diversity

It means 'unity in diversity' and comes from a 14th-century Old Javanese poem.

12. B) Island

'Pulau' means island. Mountain is 'gunung', beach 'pantai' and sea 'laut'.

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