

The Distinct Islands of Indonesia

The world's fourth most populace country-240 million and counting, is a sultry kaleidoscope that runs along the equator for 5000 km. it may well be the last great adventure on Earth. From the western tip of Sumatra to the eastern edge of Papua is a nation that defies homogenization. A land of many cultures, animals, customs, plants, features and artworks. Its position on the trade routes has produced a rich and diverse culture influenced by animist, Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim traditions. The capital, Jakarta, is a teeming megalopolis whose central business and financial district has all the trappings of twenty first century global enterprise, but whose culture does not necessarily conform to that of the U.S.A and Europe. Over time deep and rich cultures have evolved, from the mysteries of the spiritual Balinese to the utterly non-Western belief system of the Asmat people of Papua. Venturing through the island of Indonesia you will see a land as diverse and unusual as those living upon it. Dramatic sights are a norm. There is the sight of the sublime, an orangutan lounging in a tree, a Balinese dancer executing precise moves, the view of the idyllic, a deserted stretch of blinding white sand on Sumbawa set off by azure water, a woman bent double with a load of firewood on Sumatra and the quiet magnificence of Borobudur.

The language of Bahasa helps unify this sprawling, chaotic collection of peoples with a past that has had more drama than a picnic in Krakatau. Destructive colonialism, revolution, mass slaughter, ethnic warfare, dictatorship and more have been part of daily life in Indonesia in just the past 100 years. There are some three hundred ethnic groups in Indonesia, the product of centuries of migration and settlement. The languages spoken today in a region stretching from Taiwan, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia to the Cham-speaking areas of Vietnam are related and are distinct from the languages spoken on the mainland. 70 percent of the population lives on Java, an island about the size of England. Java has a volcanic spine and fertile volcanic soils producing coffee, sugar, and rice. The intensive rice and culture of central Java supported substantial Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms, which have left significant architectural remains similar to those found on the mainland of Southeast Asia. Early Indonesian histories are relayed through objects made of stone and of metal, which represent solutions people produced long ago to the practical problems posed by Indonesian landscapes of rain forest and waterways. Objects explain how life was sustained, how humans struggled to acquire and preserve food, how they tried to protect physical and mental health, these discoveries reveal the skills of a community at specific times in history, and their ability to foster wants, desires, knowledge, and a sense of others.

Reading Test:

Fluency: ____/5 Pronunciation: ____/5 Understanding: ____/5 Meaning: ____/5

Comments: _____

Q. Write and learn the spellings of the underlined words in the text.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 11. _____ | 12. _____ |

Q. Write the meanings of the following words in the spaces provided.

- | | |
|-------------------|-------|
| a. sultry | _____ |
| b. homogenization | _____ |
| c. sublime | _____ |
| d. idyllic | _____ |
| e. revolution | _____ |
| f. defy | _____ |

Q. Answer the following questions to the text 'The Distinct Islands of Indonesia' in full sentences.

a. How has Indonesia been able to form such diverse cultures?

b. How does the writer depict Jakarta?

c. What other aspects about Indonesia are also diverse?

d. Which one similar quality unifies the people of Indonesia and how?

e. How has Indonesia faced radical changes in the past century?

f. Why is Java considered a significant area?

g. What does the lifestyle of inhabitants in history reveal about their means and method of survival?
