

Wakatobi

Indonesia

TRAVEL GUIDE

Tripomatic



Overview

Wakatobi is a remote island chain in Southeast Sulawesi. The name comes from its four main islands: Wangi-Wangi, Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko. The whole regency is inside Wakatobi National Park, which protects about 1.4 million hectares of sea and islands. Coral reefs cover a large part of that area.

The trip suits divers and snorkelers first. It also suits travelers who like slow island days, stilt villages and old coral-stone forts. Facilities are simple and distances between islands are real, so plan more days than you think you need. Most visitors stay on one or two islands.

When to visit

Roughly June to October is the easiest time for boat trips and beach days. December to March is the wetter season. Rain and wind can delay boats then, so keep a spare day before any flight home.

The sea is warm all year, so diving and snorkeling are possible in every month.

MONTH	CONDITIONS	DAY °C avg / max	NIGHT °C avg / min	
January	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	28° / 29° Feels like 31°	27° / 26°	29 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 11 (Extreme)
February	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	28° / 29° Feels like 31°	27° / 26°	26 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 11 (Extreme)
March	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	28° / 29° Feels like 32°	27° / 26°	27 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 11 (Extreme)
April	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	29° / 29° Feels like 32°	27° / 26°	25 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 11 (Extreme)
May	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	28° / 29°	27° / 26°	23 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 9 (Very high)
June	Fair Fair for wildlife watching	28° / 29°	27° / 26°	21 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 8 (Very high)
July	Good Good for wildlife watching	27° / 28°	26° / 25°	16 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 9 (Very high)
August	Great Great for watersports	27° / 28°	26° / 25°	20 sunny days · Oppressive humidity · UV 11 (Extreme)
September	Great Great for watersports	27° / 28°	26° / 25°	22 sunny days · Oppressive humidity · UV 12 (Extreme)
October	Great Great for watersports	28° / 29°	27° / 26°	23 sunny days · Oppressive humidity · UV 12 (Extreme)
November	Fair Fair for watersports	29° / 30° Feels like 33°	27° / 26°	19 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · Calm winds · UV 11 (Extreme)
December	Poor Poor for wildlife watching	29° / 30° Feels like 32°	27° / 26°	28 rainy days · Oppressive humidity · UV 10 (Very high)

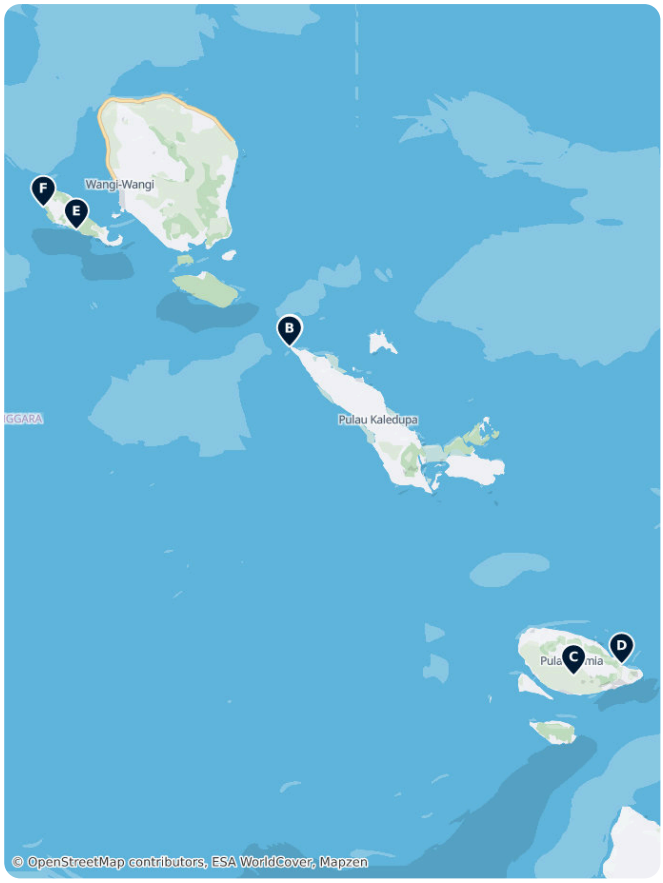
Best months: August

Climate data: NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5; NASA POWER + Copernicus ERA5-Land and ERA5 · 1996–2025

Top sights

The best sights here are in the water. Most dive sites are reached by boat from a resort or dive center, and snorkeling is easy from several jetties and beaches. The places below are on land.

- A Pantai Sombano is a sandy beach on Kaledupa. Good for a swim and a quiet afternoon.
- B Pantai Cemara is next to it on the same stretch of coast.
- C Tomia Hill is a viewpoint on Tomia. Go late in the day for the view over the reef and islands.
- D Pantai Teetimu is a sandy beach on the east side of Tomia, near Kulati village.
- E Pantai Oawolio is a sandy beach on Wangi-Wangi, close to the main town of Wanci.
- F Pantai Kolovova is a beach on the west side of Wangi-Wangi.



Other places worth knowing:

- Hoga Island: A small island off Kaledupa with two dive resorts and a marine research station. About 22 dive sites are within 30 minutes by boat.
- Sampela: A Bajo village built on stilts over the sea on Kaledupa.
- Bajo Mola: The largest Bajo settlement on Wangi-Wangi. Dolphin-watching trips leave from here.
- Liya Togo: A traditional village about 15 kilometers from Wanci. It has stilt houses and old stone fortifications.

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What to experience

- Diving and snorkeling: Tomia has more than 40 mapped dive sites, and Hoga has around 22. Dive centers run daily boat trips. Binongko is known for turtles.
- Dolphin watching: Trips leave from Bajo Mola on Wangi-Wangi. Dolphins are often seen near Kapota Island.
- Stay in a stilt village: Ask a local guide to arrange a visit to a Bajo village such as Sampela. Visit with a guide and ask before taking photos.
- Watch the blacksmiths: On Binongko, the workshops make knives and parang blades by hand. This craft gave the islands the name Tukang Besi, which means ironworkers.
- Local festivals: Several islands hold dance and culture festivals, often after Idul Fitri. Dates move each year, so ask locally.
- Mangrove cruise: On Kaledupa, boat trips visit the mangroves near Limbo Langgae, where you can try sea grapes.

Getting there

The usual entry point is Wangi-Wangi, the island with the main town, Wanci.

- By air: Matahora Airport (WNI) on Wangi-Wangi has scheduled flights from Kendari and Makassar. Some seasonal flights come from Bali. Routes and airlines change, so check current schedules before you book. Flights do not run every day.
- By sea: Ferries run from the ports of Kendari and Baubau to Wanci. Schedules change often. Confirm days and departure times locally, and arrive at the port early.
- Resort packages: Wakatobi Dive Resort on Tomia has its own airstrip, and its packages include flights from Bali.

Most international visitors reach Kendari or Makassar through Jakarta or Bali. Allow extra days for connections.

Getting around

Islands are linked by boat. Distances on each island are short, but sea crossings take time.

- Public boats: Wooden boats run from Wangi-Wangi to Kaledupa, Tomia and Binongko. Departure times are early in the morning for some routes, and some run only on certain days. Confirm times at the port.
- Chartered boats: Speedboats do not run on a fixed timetable. Owners set the price, and you can negotiate. Dive centers and guesthouses can arrange them.
- On land: Motorcycle taxis (ojek) are the common local transport. Ask your guesthouse or dive operator about airport and port transfers.
- Dive trips: Binongko has no dive operator, so divers usually rent a boat from Tomia and bring their own equipment.

Getting around on foot & by bike

WALKABILITY

Low

Distances on each island are short, but there are few sidewalks and most trips need a boat or a motorcycle taxi.

CYCLING INFRASTRUCTURE

Low

Cycling is not a common way to get around the islands.

Driving

- Car worth it: No. The islands are small and have few visitors by car. Boats and local drivers cover most trips.
- Side of the road: Traffic in Indonesia drives on the left.
- Scooters: If you ride one, wear a helmet and ask the guesthouse about road conditions first.

Food & drink

Seafood is the main food on the islands. Grilled fish with rice and chili sauce is a normal meal in a small warung. Sea grapes, a green seaweed, are a local snack on Kaledupa.

Eat in warungs near the market and port in Wanci, or at your guesthouse. Resorts serve set meals. Alcohol is hard to find outside the resorts, as most people on the islands are Muslim.

What to eat & drink

LUNCH

Gado-Gado · gado-gado
A vegetable salad with tofu and tempeh, dressed in peanut sauce.

Padang rice · nasi padang
A dozen or more small dishes brought to the table at once; you pay only for what you eat.

SNACKS & STREET FOOD

Krupuk · kerupuk
Deep-fried prawn or fish crackers, a common side at nearly every meal.

SWEETS & DESSERTS

Martabak · martabak manis
A thick, folded pancake filled with chocolate, cheese, or nuts, sold from street carts in the evening.

DRINKS

Kopi Tubruk · kopi tubruk
Coarsely ground coffee steeped directly in the cup, Indonesia's everyday way of drinking coffee.

SIGNATURE DISHES

Nasi Goreng · nasi goreng
Indonesia's everyday fried rice, usually with egg, chicken, and a fried cracker on the side.

Satay · sate
Skewered, grilled meat served with a peanut or sweet soy sauce.

Rendang · rendang
Slow-cooked beef in coconut milk and spices, originally from West Sumatra.

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Safety & health

Wakatobi is a safe place for tourists. Petty crime is rare, and the main risks are at sea and on the reef.

- Water: Tap water is not safe to drink. Use bottled or filtered water.
- Medical care: Clinics on the islands are basic. Divers should carry insurance that covers dive accidents and medical evacuation.
- Sea: Weather can delay or cancel boats. Use only boats with life jackets, and tell someone your plans.
- Reef rules: The reef is protected. Do not touch or stand on coral and do not take shells or coral.
- Dress and manners: Dress modestly in villages. Ask before photographing people.

History

The islands are called the Tukang Besi Islands because of the blacksmith tradition on Binongko. For a long time they were part of the Sultanate of Buton. Old coral-stone forts on several islands, including Liya Togo on Wangi-Wangi and Patua on Tomia, come from that period.

The Bajo, a people of the sea, have long lived in stilt villages on the reef flats. Their way of life depends on fishing.

Wakatobi was part of Buton Regency until the early 2000s, when it became its own regency. The marine area was made a protected zone in 1996, and it became a national park in 2002. In 2012 it joined the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves.

Country facts

Quick practical facts for Indonesia at a glance:

CURRENCY
IDR Rp

EMERGENCY
112

ELECTRICITY

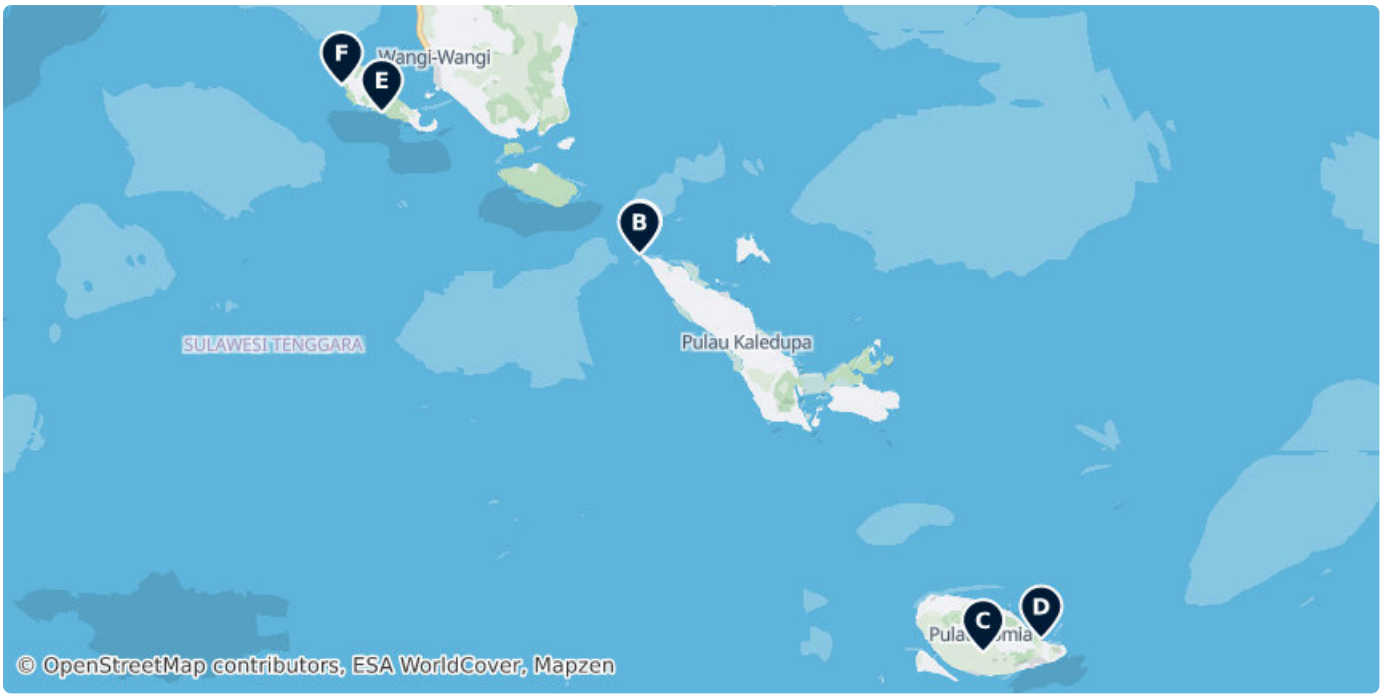


Type C / Type F
230 V · 50 Hz

LANGUAGES
Indonesian

TAP WATER
Not safe to drink

Top sights



A Pantai Sombano

(-5.46964, 123.69070)

B Pantai Cemara

(-5.47047, 123.69000)

C Tomia Hill

(-5.76263, 123.94350)

D Pantai Teetimu

(-5.75248, 123.98636)

E Pantai Oawolio

(-5.36622, 123.49986)

F Pantai Kolovova

(-5.34609, 123.47039)

DATA SOURCES

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