



MAKASSAR

WHERE SULAWESI'S JOURNEYS BEGIN



Makassar sits on the crossroads of some of Indonesia's wildest journeys.

Most travellers land here with their eyes already set elsewhere - into the highlands of Tana Toraja with its remarkable ancient cultural ceremonies, the pristine beaches of the Togeang Islands, or the remote Banggai Islands scattered across Sulawesi's eastern seas. The city has long played the role of departure point. Yet, spend a little time here and another side emerges. It often begins by the sea.

Morning unfolds at Paotere harbour, where the sea greets the day before the streets begin to stir. Traditional two masted wooden *phinisi* sailing vessels glide into the docks after a night at sea, their tall masts rising above a dense cluster of fishing boats - a scene that has unfolded here for centuries.

Makassar has always been shaped by the sea. Bugis sailors of South Sulawesi navigated the waters aboard these vessels, trading spices, timber and textiles across the archipelago before modern shipping routes connected the islands. These wooden vessels still sail until today - working, crossing these waters, returning to this harbour as they have for generations.

From the docks, the city spills outward. The streets quickly fill with the movement of morning - market stalls opening, scooters weaving through narrow lanes, fishmongers rinse their catch in shallow tubs while the scent of chilli, lime and charcoal drifts through the air. The city's appetite soon becomes impossible to ignore.

The Taste of Makassar

Any honest account of Makassar must place food at its centre, because that is exactly where the city places it. *Coto* Makassar is the opening act - a broth made dark and complex with beef, offal, peanuts, and a blend of spices simmered for hours. It arrives with *ketupat*, rice parcels wrapped in banana leaf, and it is eaten at all hours - breakfast, midnight, whenever the pull is felt. No particular hour that makes it more correct - just the bowl, the broth, and the decision to sit down.

From there the options multiply. *Konro* is a spice broth infused with nutmeg and coriander, the bones slow cooked until the meat yields completely. The broth is dark and rich. Then there is *jalangkote*, deep-

fried pastry, stuffed with vegetables and potatoes, served with a vinegar sauce that has just enough bite to keep you reaching for the next one.

As the evening arrives, the action moves to Pantai Losari, the city's waterfront strip, where *ikan bakar* (grilled fish) comes fresh off charcoal and families spread out along the esplanade to watch the sun drop over the Makassar Strait. The sunset here is rarely subtle - orange and red spilling across the water while the scent of smoke and grilled fish drifts through the crowd. End the evening with *pisang epe*, grilled flattened banana drizzled with palm sugar, best eaten warm while the street is still busy. Makassar's cuisine is bold and satisfying, shaped by generations of home cooking and street-side stalls.

In this spread, Makassar is introduced through the striking domes of Masjid 99 Kubah; Glimpses of local markets; Traditional crafts that reflect everyday life; Street food such as pisang epe.





Old Walls, New Domes

Just inland from the shoreline stands Fort Rotterdam, its thick stone walls holding the memory of centuries.

Rebuilt by the Dutch in the seventeenth century, the fortress once guarded the spice routes that drew merchants toward these shores. The La Galigo Museum inside holds one of the longest epic manuscripts ever recorded - a Bugis literary work so immense it makes most of the world's great texts look brief.

Makassar has never remained fixed in time.

Along the edge of the Makassar Strait, the skyline rises into something altogether more contemporary. The colourful ninety domes of Masjid 99 Kubah unfold across the waterfront, their bold forms reflecting against the sea. The structure of this mosque brings a striking modern presence to the city's shoreline.

Makassar rewards those who resist the instinct to move on immediately.

EXPLORATION

In this spread,
The destination expands from city to surrounding parts; Waterfront views of Rammang-Rammang; Forest trails and vibrant marine life just offshore.



Into the Limestone Kingdom

About forty kilometres north, Rammang-Rammang opens into one of the world's largest karst regions - towers of ancient limestone rising from flat rice paddies and mangrove waterways, small Bugis villages settled at their feet.

The only way in is by wooden boat along a narrow river, overhanging trees brushing the surface, the stone walls rising on either side. The local community runs the boats and the guesthouses. There are caves to enter, walls covered in prehistoric hand stencils pressed in ochre by people who stood in this same place tens of thousands of years ago.



Bantimurung

Beyond Rammang Rammang, the road winds into the karst hills until the sound of rushing water begins to echo through the trees. Here lies Bantimurung National Park, where a wide waterfall spills into a cool emerald pool.

A quieter path leads deeper into the park, where butterflies drift through the warm air in remarkable numbers as the crowds begin to thin. Many visitors only stop at the waterfall. Those who continue find the trail following the river inland, karst walls rising on either side, butterflies flickering through shafts of light. A nineteenth century British naturalist who passed through called it "the kingdom of butterflies." The name has endured.

Follow the path far enough and it pulls you underground, into Gua Batu, where daylight fades, stalactites hang in formations shaped over millennia, and the cave swallows the noise of the outside world. Further on, the limestone opens to Kassi Kebo Lake, ringed by rock and fed by small waterfalls, a narrow curve of white sand resting along its edge.

Bantimurung and Rammang-Rammang sit close enough to cover in a single day, two faces of the same ancient geology, each one impossible to explain until you are standing inside it.





Islands Offshore

Kodingareng Keke lies about forty-five minutes by boat - a sandbar island ringed by coral where the water runs clear green over the shallows. Bring snorkelling gear. The reef is intact and the visibility is generous.

For those with more days to spend, Pulau Samalona sits closer to shore, its clear waters and simple guesthouses making it an easy overnight. Push further south and Pulau Selayar and the Taka Bonerate atoll - one of the largest atolls in the world - with diving in waters that see a fraction of the traffic of more prominent Indonesian sites.

Between Departure Gates

Makassar rewards those who resist the instinct to move on immediately. It is a city with its own appetite - for trade, for conversation, for food served at any hour, for the sea that connects the wider world. Come through on the way to Toraja, to Togean or Benggai. The story here is worth hearing before the next journey begins.

 Fly with Batik Air to Makassar, Indonesia 6 times a week

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