

# Timor-Leste



Timor-Leste, also known as East Timor, is a small country made up of the eastern half of Timor and some small nearby islands. The country is surrounded by Indonesian islands to the north, east and west and Australia to the south. It is part of South-East Asia.

Timor-Leste has a dry tropical climate with moderate rainfall. The main island is rugged and mountainous. Mount Tatamailau (Tata Mailau or Mount Ramelau) sits at 2,963 metres above sea level at the centre of a high plateau. Fragrant sandalwood is abundant in the hills, while lowlands are covered in scrub, coconut palms and eucalyptus trees. Native animals include spotted cuscus, monkeys, deer and civets (wild cats).

Timor-Leste was colonised by the Portuguese in 1702. Portugal maintained control until 1975 when the Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor (Fretilin) declared Timor-Leste an independent territory. Nine days later, the country was invaded and occupied by the Indonesian military. Indonesia occupied Timor-Leste for over 20 years, this was a difficult time for the Timorese people. The United Nations sent peacekeeping forces to Timor in 1999 and controlled the administration until 20<sup>th</sup> May 2002, when Timor-Leste was declared an independent country.

The capital city is Dili which is the largest city in Timor-Leste. The population is 1.3 million (2019). The majority of Timorese people are of Papuan, Malay and Polynesian ancestry. There are many indigenous groups, each with its own unique culture and language. Tetun is the dominant group, making up 25% of the population. The dominant language is Tetum, but many people speak Portuguese, Indonesian and English. There are 15 indigenous languages. More than 90% of Timorese people are Roman Catholic.





70% of the population of Timor-Leste live in rural areas. Maize (corn), rice, sweet potato, coconut and coffee are the primary industries produced for export. The manufacturing of textiles is also an important industry. Hydrocarbon production is the most valuable commodity and is produced from offshore gas deposits. The currency of Timor-Leste is the US dollar.



The staple food in Timor-Leste is rice, and food is heavily influenced by Portuguese and Indonesian cuisine. Popular dishes include Ikan Sabuko (fish with tamarind and basil) and Caril (chicken curry).

The culture of Timor-Leste is a mix of indigenous traditions with Portuguese and Indonesian influence. Family, community and religion are central to daily life. The most well-known dance is the likurai dance, which women perform to welcome men home after the war. Handicrafts include Tai, an intricate hand-woven textile, basket weaving and wood carving.

