



Village Life in Flores



The beauty of village life in Flores, the people and their powerful connection to the land and ocean is the foundation of family, community, industry and the spiritual beliefs of the region. Each village has its own distinct character, from coastal-dwelling communities, to the inland farming villages, and the untouched wonder of some very remote villages.

Family members are all expected to contribute to their household, either with an income or by working in the garden or home, creating a productive and harmonious community. The villagers take pride in their homes, and their lush gardens are some of the most spectacular in Indonesia. In some villages, the gardens feature an enormous and meticulously cared for grave, belonging to a beloved family member.

The grave and the surrounding gardens are immaculately maintained, and have the unique addition of tiles carefully laid around the gravesite. On special occasions the family gather around the grave to sit on the tiles and share a meal, as if the deceased family member or at least their spirit is joining with the family. The grave becomes a place of both reverence and celebration, allowing the memories and spirit of their lost loved ones to continue on in their daily lives.

When visitors picture Flores villages they imagine the brightly coloured houses, commonly on stilts, that were traditionally built from bamboo. Although more frequently made of concrete now, the tradition of the colourful houses is one that carries on, with great pride taken in maintaining the colours. Weaving patterns into the bamboo is another beautiful building technique that combined with the bright colours of the houses, makes for incredible photo opportunities for visitors.

Flores is mostly Catholic, although there are also Muslim groups who live along the coastline, and a smaller population of Buddhists and Hindus. Unlike Balinese culture, where people are 'born' into a religious calling, people of Flores can opt into a life with the church. Church studies are common throughout school and family life, and once children leave high school they can choose whether to go onto a seminary or to become a nun. There is a university in Ende, as well as colleges and higher learning centres, however this is not accessible to everyone.



Remote villages have limited access to schooling and health care, and daily life is more about farming and the provision of food for their families and for market. As little as 10-15 years ago, some villages were still using rice as a form of currency, trading it for other food products or goods, living a relatively unchanged way of rural life.

Bigger villages or towns like Labuan Bajo are experiencing the first flourish of tourism and the impacts of this on their local economy. As business across Flores continues to develop and the government encourages growth and improved infrastructure, this wave of tourism will reach more villages. Village life won't necessarily change but access to health care and education will improve, farming methods will develop, and coastal villages will see an increase in demand for their fish and seafood across Flores and wider Indonesia.

There is no way to do justice to all of the stunning villages across Flores and the islands in just one article, the culture is rich and the people are proud of their heritage. We need your help to tell the story of Flores and to portray the beauty of the people and their lives.