Labuan Bajo

Six days, five nights

Three nights at AYANA, then two on a boat: that was the shape of my Labuan Bajo plan. Coming from cold Aussie mornings, the resort part needed very little convincing. Then there was Padar, with those bays opening out below the ridge. I'd keep the same split for a return trip - time to settle in first, then time for the islands.

The route at a glance

Day 1	Fly in and settle at the resort
Day 2	Resort time and a town outing
Day 3	An easy day and the boat handover
Day 4-5	Two nights aboard, with Padar as the priority
Day 6	Return ashore

Full guide, photographs and latest updates

A printable companion to the online guide. Prices retain their original check date; confirm access, fares and bookings for your own travel dates.

Before you go

Carry rupiah in smaller notes for local food, entrances and drivers. Cards are useful at many hotels and larger restaurants, but check acceptance and surcharges before ordering.

A QRIS sign does not guarantee your overseas payment app is supported. Keep cash or a card option available until you have confirmed compatibility.

Grab and Gojek are useful where service and pickup rules allow. For boat trips, remote accommodation and longer drives, arrange the actual transfer and return with the operator.

Save the accommodation pin and written address. On islands, a short distance on the map can still involve a slow road or a separate boat connection.

Download an Indonesian translation pack. ‘Terima kasih’ means thank you; ‘tolong’ means please/help. Simple place-name screenshots help with pickup arrangements.

Buy a visitor SIM or compatible eSIM with the right coverage and registration. Do not rely on continuous mobile reception while sailing; save boarding and return details offline.

Your route

This route follows the three resort nights and two boat nights in my travel notes. Padar is the stop I'd build the sailing around.

Day 1 - get to Labuan Bajo and settle in

The journey in my planner went through Bali. Leave this day for the flights and transfer to your accommodation. Connections can use more of the day than the short flight into Labuan Bajo suggests, especially if you need to collect bags and check in again.

Once you've arrived, keep dinner easy. If staying outside town, work out the return transport before heading out for a meal. Leave the first evening open in case the connections take longer.

Day 2 - keep the day ashore

Leave today for the accommodation you've chosen: a swim if conditions suit, lunch and an afternoon with nothing booked.

For a change of scene, head into Labuan Bajo for a late-afternoon waterfront walk and dinner, with transport back arranged. Keep it to one outing. Booking a long island day trip here would repeat the sort of travel you're about to do overnight, while taking away the quieter part of the holiday.

Labuan Bajo is the harbour gateway to the islands of Komodo National Park, so the town and the sailing days have different rhythms. I would keep the first shore days easy before changing pace on the boat.

Dinner in town: La Cucina

Day 3 - an easy day before changing pace

Keep the morning free, then use a small part of the afternoon to sort the boat handover. Confirm where you're meeting, when you need to be there and whether the operator collects you from the accommodation. Resort checkout and boat boarding are separate arrangements.

Pack what you'll need first into a small accessible bag: water, sun protection, swimwear and walking shoes. Check towel, meal and snorkelling-equipment inclusions, and ask what happens to your larger luggage. These details are easier to settle ashore than at the harbour with your bags beside you.

Have dinner close to your accommodation tonight, ready for the move to the boat tomorrow.

Optional town dinner before the boat trip: Baccalà Bajo

Days 4-5 - make room for Padar, then let the sailing work

Board at the agreed meeting point and let the crew's route determine the sequence. Two nights on a boat don't necessarily give you three full days of activities; compare embarkation and return times as well as the advertised number of nights.

Padar's folded ridges separate bays with strikingly different shorelines; the wide view is what makes the climb worth the effort. It was the island I wanted to make room for when planning the sailing.

Komodo National Park protects the habitat of the Komodo dragon as well as a rich marine environment. I would choose a trip with time for the ranger's explanation instead of making the

wildlife stop a quick photograph.

At Padar, the appeal is the shape of the land: bays curve away on different sides of the ridge, with the hills continuing behind them. Give yourself time to look around as you go, not only when you reach the main photo spot.

Ask your operator to allow enough time for the climb, rests, photographs and descent together. Discuss an allowance of roughly one to two hours ashore, adjusted for your pace and the crew's landing arrangements. An earlier visit can reduce the heat, but the crew needs to decide what is workable for the sailing. Wear shoes with grip and keep the path clear when stopping for photos.

For another kind of stop, ask whether the route can include a ranger-led visit on Komodo or Rinca, or a beach and snorkelling stop such as Pink Beach. Choose these for what you want to experience: wildlife and a guided walk, or more time near the water. These are optional additions to discuss when choosing a sailing.

The pink colour comes from small red fragments mixed through the pale sand, and its intensity changes with the light and where you look. I would photograph some sand and water together rather than expect the entire beach to look bright pink.

Ask which stops fit comfortably into the sailing and what would need to come out if you add a wildlife walk. Follow the crew's advice on swimming conditions; you can stay aboard if you prefer. Wildlife sightings aren't guaranteed.

The official Komodo National Park overview is useful for comparing the islands. Your operator still needs to confirm current access, ranger arrangements and which stops your actual vessel can make.

official Komodo National Park overview

Day 6 - back to shore, then the next decision

My notes paired a midday boat return with a late-afternoon flight to Bali. That leaves limited room for a delayed return. Allow for disembarking, collecting luggage, reaching the airport and the airline's check-in deadline.

Adding a night in Labuan Bajo after the boat is the simplest way to reduce that pressure. It turns this into seven days and six nights, with departure the following day. If you keep the same-day flight, confirm the return arrangements before booking it and leave out any extra sightseeing between the harbour and airport.

Choose the boat before filling the map

Compare the actual vessel, cabin layout, safety arrangements, included meals and water, park charges, transfers and cancellation terms. Ask how the operator changes the programme when conditions change. A named boat and a clear answer are more useful than a long list of possible islands.

If a sailing is cancelled, stay ashore and rework the trip with the operator. A town meal or another quiet day at the accommodation can fill the time; a different boat is only an alternative if conditions and the operator's advice support it. Keep your onward Bali plans flexible enough to handle that decision.

Food and photographs

I’ve eaten at both of these and loved the food. They’re two places I’d happily recommend for this trip.

La Cucina

Italian cooking and homemade dishes. I’d include this in the town outing during the three nights at AYANA, with the return transfer arranged before dinner.

Baccalà Bajo

Italian and seafood-focused, and a lovely option for a slower dinner before the boat trip. Keep it on an evening ashore so you can enjoy the meal without watching the clock.

A few photo tips

At Padar, use the marked viewpoints to include the curves of several bays. Early light is gentler, but the boat schedule and permitted landing time decide what is possible.

For beach photographs, let the shore run diagonally through the frame; look for the sand colour close to the water rather than heavily increasing saturation.

From the boat, photograph the islands in the first or last softer light of the day. A fast shutter helps with movement; keep equipment dry during transfers.

Budget and backup plans

What to budget

Prices checked September 2026. Published examples below are for the named ticket or service; check your travel date and inclusions before paying.

Shared speedboat day-trip example: IDR 1,500,000 per person - Pirate Journey’s Elisa listing; compare the current inclusions and park charges before booking. This is a day-trip benchmark, not the price of the two-night sailing. Price source

Price source

For a simple meal, I’d allow IDR 50,000-150,000 per person. This is a planning allowance, not a checked restaurant quote; drinks, tasting menus and resort dining can cost more. Price the actual transfers separately, especially private drivers, boats and airport journeys.

If the weather changes

Ask the skipper which sheltered route is actually suitable rather than substituting another exposed island. If sailing is cancelled, stay ashore for a town meal and a quiet resort day; keep enough flexibility that a missed boat day does not force a rushed airport connection.

The final day and your flight

Morning flight: return to Labuan Bajo and sleep ashore the night before. Arrange the transfer to Komodo Airport after checkout.

Afternoon flight: use the morning for breakfast and luggage, with only a nearby shore walk if time allows. Do not rely on a same-day sailing return; weather, docking and disembarkation all need a buffer.

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