

TIMOR-LESTE ASEAN ACCESSION

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Government of
Timor-Leste

Kuala Lumpur
October 2025

A Message from His Excellency José Ramos-Horta

President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

On Timor-Leste's Accession to ASEAN

My fellow citizens of Timor-Leste, distinguished leaders of ASEAN member states, and friends of our beloved nation in the region and elsewhere.

October 26, 2025, marks a momentous milestone in the history of our young nation and the broader Southeast Asian region. As Timor-Leste officially becomes the eleventh member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, we witness the culmination of a journey that began with our people's unwavering determination for sovereignty and dignity, many centuries ago.

This historic achievement represents far more than diplomatic recognition; it embodies the fulfillment of our nation's aspirations to stand as equals among our regional neighbors, to contribute meaningfully to peace and prosperity, and to secure a brighter future for generations to come.

Personally, this is the final chapter of half a century of life dedicated to the dignified, combative, proud people of Timor-Leste. My many flaws and limitations are what might have prevented me from doing more.

These words reflect not only my personal journey but the profound humility I feel as we reach this extraordinary moment. While I acknowledge my own shortcomings, I am filled with immense pride in what we have collectively achieved.

This ASEAN membership belongs not to any individual, but to every Timorese who sacrificed for our independence, who rebuilt our nation from ashes, and who never ceased believing in our rightful place in this region.

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PRESIDÊNCIA DA REPÚBLICA

To our ASEAN partners, I extend our deepest gratitude for your patience, guidance, and ultimately, your trust in welcoming us into this family of nations. Your support throughout our accession process demonstrates the true spirit of regional solidarity and shared prosperity that defines ASEAN.

To the people of Timor-Leste, this achievement is yours. From the mountains of the sacred heart of our country, to the world's richest biodiverse coral reefs and seas that touch our shores, from our coffee farmers in Ermera to our youth in universities across the nation - this moment belongs to each of you.

You have shown the world that a small nation, born from struggle, can rise to take its place among equals through determination, peaceful diplomacy, and unwavering hope.

As we embark on this new chapter as ASEAN's eleventh member, we carry with us the lessons of our past and the dreams of our future. We pledge to contribute meaningfully to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. We will share our unique perspectives while learning from the wisdom of our neighbors. Together, we will build a stronger, more inclusive Southeast Asia.

Let us remember those who are no longer with us to witness this day - our statesmen and women, heroes of the resistance, our men, women and children, our leaders who laid the foundation for this moment, and our citizens who dreamed of this achievement. Their sacrifices have made possible what we celebrate today.

May this membership in ASEAN be a source of new opportunities for our people, greater integration with our region, and continued progress toward the peaceful, prosperous future that all Southeast Asians deserve.

With profound gratitude and renewed hope for our shared future,

José Ramos-Horta
President of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

A Message from His Excellency Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão

Prime-Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

On Timor-Leste's Accession to ASEAN

Distinguished leaders of ASEAN member states and ASEAN External Partners, friends of our beloved nation in the region and beyond, and my dear people of Timor-Leste.

The accession of Timor-Leste as the eleventh member of ASEAN marks a new chapter in our nation's history and in the story of Southeast Asia.

For Timor-Leste, membership represents both an achievement and a responsibility. It reflects our enduring commitment to regional cooperation, good governance and peaceful relations among nations. It also calls upon us to contribute actively to ASEAN's shared goals of stability, prosperity and inclusiveness.

Since applying for membership in 2011, Timor-Leste has worked closely with ASEAN Member States and partners to prepare our institutions and policies for integration. Throughout this journey we have been guided by ASEAN's founding values of mutual respect, peaceful cooperation and unity in diversity.

We are honoured to join this community of nations at a time when regional and global cooperation is more necessary than ever. Timor-Leste will play its part in strengthening ASEAN centrality, advancing sustainable development and ensuring that progress in our region leaves no one behind.

On behalf of the Government and people of Timor-Leste I extend sincere appreciation to all ASEAN members and partners for their steadfast support and friendship.

Together we look forward to building a peaceful, connected and resilient Southeast Asia united in purpose and shared destiny.



October 2025

On October 26, 2025, at the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Timor-Leste officially becomes the 11th member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, culminating a remarkable 23-year journey since independence, 14 years since its formal membership application and three years after being granted observer status.

This historic milestone represents not only Timor-Leste's integration into Southeast Asia's premier regional organization but also a testament to the power of multilateralism, democratic resilience, and regional unity.

Key Significance

First 21st Century Member: Timor-Leste becomes the first country to join ASEAN in the 21st century.

Democratic Success Story: From conflict-affected nation to stable democracy in two decades.

Regional Bridge: Strategic position connecting Southeast Asia with the Pacific.

Economic Opportunity: Access to a \$3.8 trillion ASEAN economy & 680 million people.

Multilateral Triumph: Demonstrates effectiveness of patient diplomacy and regional cooperation.

Youth Potential: One of the youngest democracies in the world with a significant youth population.



Regional Strategic Value

Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN represents a significant milestone in regional integration. Located strategically between Indonesia and Australia, Timor-Leste serves as a natural bridge between Southeast Asia and the Pacific, enhancing ASEAN's connectivity and influence in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Timor-Leste Brings to ASEAN

Peacebuilding Experience

Successful post-conflict transformation model

Democratic Resilience

Young democracy with a full commitment to strong governance and institutions

Cultural Diversity

Unique cultural heritage enriching ASEAN's cultural tapestry

Maritime Resources

Sustainable ocean management and fisheries

Youth Engagement

Young population driving innovation and connectivity

Climate Action

Renewable energy and environmental sustainability

Historic Achievement Overview



October 26, 2025: Timor-Leste becomes ASEAN's 11th member



23 years since restoration of independence, **14 years** since formal application



Access to **680+ million people** and **\$3.8 trillion economy**



Key benefits: Market access, diplomatic influence, security cooperation, investment flows

ASEAN Member States



Indonesia

1967



Malaysia

1967



Philippines

1967



Singapore

1967



Thailand

1967



Brunei

1984



Vietnam

1995



Laos

1997



Myanmar

1997



Cambodia

1999



Timor-Leste

2025

NEWEST MEMBER

TOTAL POPULATION

680+ Million

COMBINED GDP

\$3.8 Trillion

ASEAN Formation

Founded August 8, 1967 in Bangkok by five founding members. Expanded to 11 members over 58 years.

Regional Integration

Timor-Leste is located between Indonesia and Australia. It shares land and maritime boundaries with Indonesia, and maritime boundaries with Australia in the Timor Sea.

Strategic Value & National Profile

POPULATION

1.520.586

GDP

\$1.9 Billion

PETROLEUM FUND

\$18.74 Billion



Strategic location: Bridge between Southeast Asia and the Pacific



Democratic success story: From conflict to stable democracy in 20 years

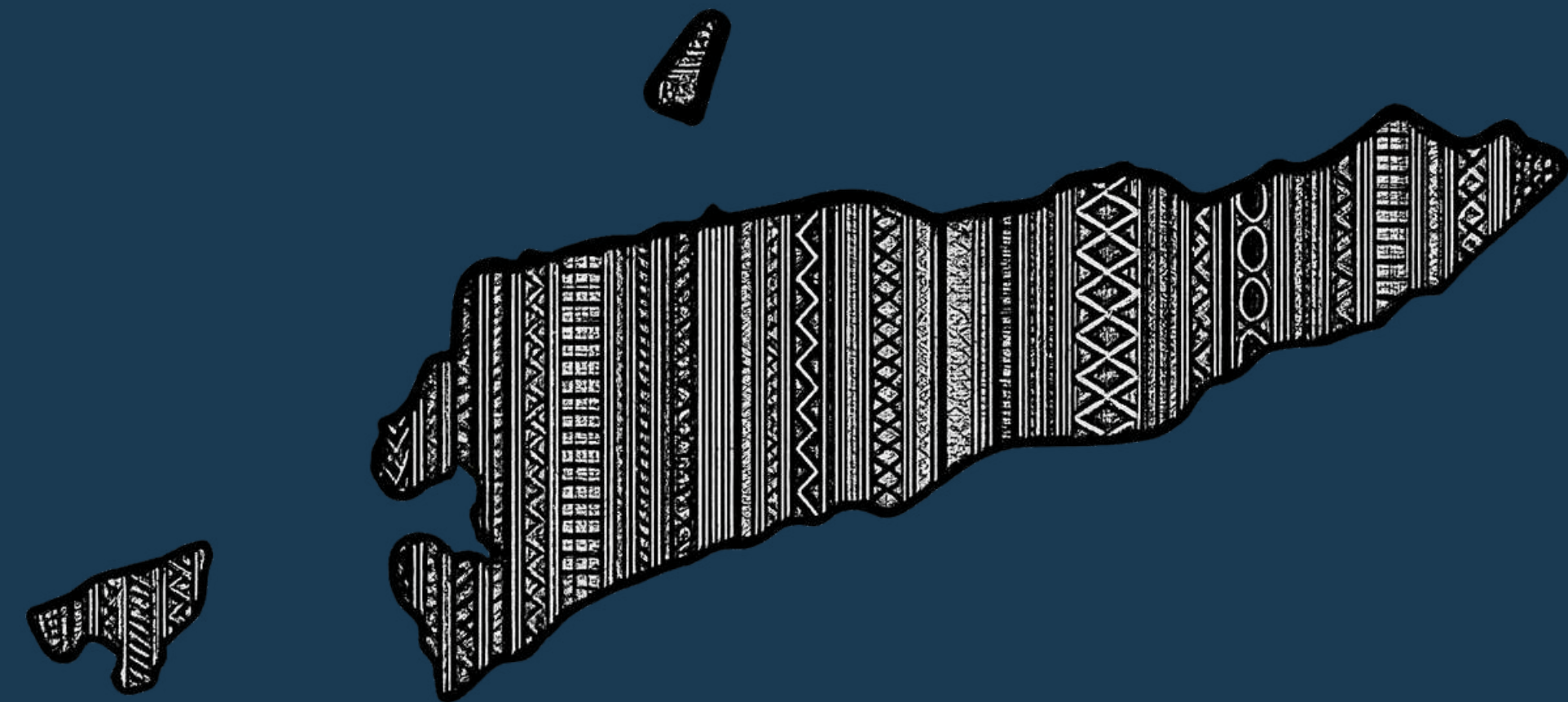


Unique contributions: Peacebuilding, maritime resources, youth engagement (70% under 35), climate action



Timorese heritage: Enriching ASEAN's cultural diversity

Timor-Leste's Strategic Location



GEOGRAPHIC COORDINATES

8.8742° S, 125.7275° E

TOTAL AREA

14,870 km²

Major Cities

- Dili (CAPITAL)
- Baucau
- Maliana
- Suai
- Lospalos

Neighboring Countries

Timor-Leste is located between Indonesia and Australia. It shares land and maritime boundaries with Indonesia, and maritime boundaries with Australia in the Timor Sea.

TIMOR-LESTE'S JOURNEY A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

A journey of resilience and nationhood tracing the path from colonization through resistance, independence, and regional integration.



Portuguese Timor: Early Origins (1515-1859)

1515

1859

1515: First Portuguese Contact

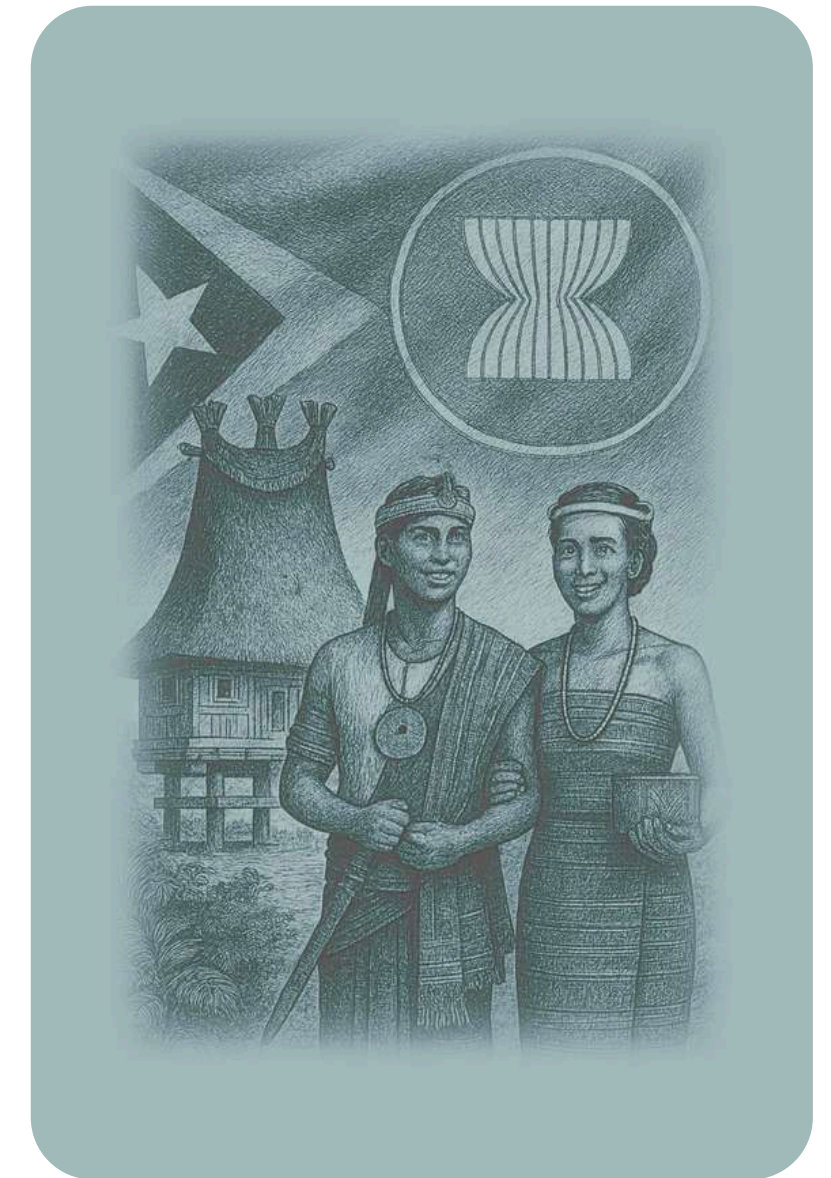
Portuguese traders and missionaries reached the coast of Timor, beginning 450 years of colonial influence. The island was organized in small regions, ruled by local kingdoms, who practiced animism.

16th–19th Centuries: Cultural Development

Timor-Leste developed distinctly from neighboring islands, with animist kingdoms resisting the spread of Islam and Buddhism. The first Portuguese Dominican priests arrived in the third quarter of the 16th century, establishing a progressive religious influence as Portuguese domination was being settled.

1651-1859: Colonial Division

In 1859, a treaty between Portugal and the Netherlands, which was complemented by the 1904 Convention, established the border between Portuguese Timor (present-day Timor-Leste) and Dutch Timor (Western Timor).



1942

Period of Japanese Presence

In 1942, Japanese forces invaded Timor during their southward advance in the Pacific War. The war brought significant hardship to the Timorese people.

1943

Allied and Timorese Resistance

Australian commandos conducted a guerrilla campaign against Japanese forces with crucial support from Timorese fighters. This alliance formed a significant bond between Australia and Timor-Leste that continues to this day.

1960

UN Recognition of Self-Determination Rights

The United Nations General Assembly, through Resolution 1514 (XV), formally recognized Timor-Leste as a non-autonomous territory under Portuguese administration. This resolution affirmed Timor-Leste's right to self-determination, setting the stage for future independence movements.



1974

The Carnation Revolution in Portugal

On April 25, 1974, a military coup in Portugal overthrew the authoritarian Estado Novo regime, restoring democracy and recognizing the right to self-determination of Portuguese colonies. This pivotal event opened the path for Timor-Leste's decolonization process.

Political Awakening

In 1975, three main political parties emerged: UDT, FRETILIN, and APODETI.

First Democratic Steps

Local elections in the Lautem district in early 1975 showed overwhelming support for independence.

1975

1975

Period of Indonesian Presence

On November 28, 1975, FRETILIN declared Timor-Leste's independence. Days later, on December 7, Indonesia occupied Timor-Leste.

1981

National Resistance Consolidation

Under Xanana Gusmão's leadership, the Timorese resistance transformed into a unified national movement. FALINTIL (Armed Forces of National Liberation of Timor-Leste) conducted guerrilla operations while the Clandestine Front worked within occupied areas. The Diplomatic Front, led by José Ramos-Horta, advocated internationally for Timor-Leste's independence.

1999

UN-Sponsored Referendum

On August 30, 1999, under the auspices of the United Nations, Timor-Leste held its historic popular consultation. With over 90% turnout, 78.5% of East Timorese voted decisively for independence.

Nobel Peace Prize

In 1996, José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Carlos Ximenes Belo were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their work toward a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in East Timor.

First Constitutional Assembly

2001

In 2001, democratic elections were held for Timor-Leste's first Constitutional Assembly. This body was tasked with drafting the nation's constitution, establishing the framework for the new democratic state and determining the future governmental structure.

May 20, 2002: Restoration of Independence

2002

On this historic day, Timor-Leste's restored its independence, becoming the first new sovereign state of the 21st century.

Historic Milestone

After 450 years of Portuguese colonization, 24 years of Indonesian occupation, and 3 years of UN transitional administration, Timor-Leste finally restored its independence and obtained international recognition.

First Leaders - Post Restoration of Independence

Xanana Gusmão was elected as the country's first President, and Mari Alkatiri became the first Prime Minister of the independent nation.

Global Recognition

Shortly after Timor-Leste became member of the United Nations and began establishing diplomatic relations with countries around the world.

Consolidation and ASEAN Accession (2010-2025)

2011

2025

2011: Formal Application to ASEAN

Timor-Leste submitted its formal application to join the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), marking the beginning of a 14-year journey toward regional integration. As the youngest nation in Asia, this step demonstrated Timor-Leste's commitment to regional cooperation and diplomatic engagement.

2023–2025: Accelerated Reforms

Under Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão's leadership, and with support provided by ASEAN member states, ASEAN Secretariat, and development partners, Timor-Leste implemented comprehensive economic, political, and legal reforms to meet ASEAN requirements. Major milestones included reforms of domestic laws and regulations to meet ASEAN standards, preparations to join the key ASEAN economic agreements. Also visa waiver agreements were signed with most ASEAN member states to strengthening regional connectivity and people-to-people exchange within the ASEAN.

October 2025: Historic Accession

Following the 46th ASEAN Summit Decision in Kuala Lumpur in May 2025, Timor-Leste completes the formal accession process to become ASEAN's 11th member state during the 47th ASEAN Summit. This milestone marks the culmination of sustained efforts and significant progress made under the ASEAN Accession Roadmap since 2023, with recognized reforms and achievements paving the way for new opportunities in regional integration, trade, investment, and private sector development, economic diversification, and international cooperation.

TIMOR-LESTE'S PATH TO ASEAN

A brief timeline of Timor-Leste's diplomatic journey towards full ASEAN membership, highlighting key milestones, legal processes, and the nation's unwavering commitment to regional integration



Early Diplomacy and ASEAN Engagement (2002-2011)

2002

2011

2002-2005: Initial Regional Engagement

Following the restoration of its independence in 2002, Timor-Leste began establishing diplomatic relations with ASEAN member states. The country initiated its ASEAN engagement strategy and joining the ASEAN Regional Forum in 2005, while focusing on post-conflict reconstruction and institutional development.

2006-2010: Building Regional Relationships

Timor-Leste expanded participation in ASEAN Regional Forum activities and strengthened bilateral ties with individual member states. In 2007, Timor-Leste acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia. The government established a dedicated ASEAN Affairs department within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to coordinate regional integration efforts.

2011: Official Application and Dialogue Status

In March 2011, Timor-Leste formally submitted its application to join ASEAN during the Indonesian Chairmanship, beginning the long journey toward full membership.

2012

Strengthening ASEAN Diplomatic Relations

Following the 2011 application, the country continues establishing dedicated diplomatic missions in ASEAN capitals and creates internal working groups to align national policies with ASEAN standards.

2019

Mobilization Program

Timor-Leste launches its ASEAN Mobilization Program (TLAMP), a blueprint document outlining programs and initiatives for the accession of Timor-Leste into ASEAN. The document identified key ministries and activities to kick start programs under three ASEAN pillars namely political-security, economic, and socio-cultural communities.

2020

Critical Elements for Accession

Timor-Leste implements comprehensive government-wide reforms to meet ASEAN criteria across the three pillars. These include strengthening legal frameworks, improving economic policies, enhancing institutional capacity, and developing human resources across key sectors to prepare for integration.

Fact Finding Missions

In 2019, 2021 and 2022, ASEAN Fact-Finding Missions to Timor-Leste were conducted successfully across the 3 pillars.

International Support

ASEAN member states provided technical assistance and capacity-building support to facilitate Timor-Leste's preparation process. ASEAN Dialogue Partners and Development partners provided further support.

2020

Structural Reforms and Legal Harmonization

From 2020-2025, Timor-Leste embarked on extensive legal, economic, and technical adjustments to align with ASEAN standards. The government established dedicated teams for each ASEAN pillar, revising over 30 laws and regulations to ensure compliance with regional frameworks. The Council of Ministers established the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on ASEAN Accession to coordinate national efforts and institutional readiness.

2022

Observer Status

During the 40th and 41st ASEAN Summits in Cambodia, ASEAN Leaders agreed in-principle to admit Timor-Leste to be the 11th member of ASEAN and grant an observer status, allowing its participation in all ASEAN Meetings including at the Summit plenaries, following a comprehensive and successful fact-finding mission across the three pillars conducted by the ASEAN Member States and the ASEAN Secretariat.

2023

Adoption of the Roadmap

During the 42nd ASEAN Summit in Labuan Bajo, Indonesia, the Roadmap for Timor-Leste's Full Membership in ASEAN was adopted .

2024

Key ASEAN Agreement Alignments

Timor-Leste successfully fulfilled the requirements and milestones outlined in the Roadmap, demonstrating its readiness for full membership. Among others, the country completed preparations for major economic agreements critical for ASEAN integration.

MAY

46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur

On May 26th, 2025, the 46th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur decided to officially formalized Timor-Leste's full membership during the 47th ASEAN Summit in Kuala Lumpur, culminating years of diplomatic engagement and technical preparations. The decision acknowledged Timor-Leste's fulfillment of essential membership criteria.

JUL

Timor-Leste's Final Preparations

Following the Summit's decision, Timor-Leste's Government accelerated the implementation of the remaining milestones defined in its Roadmap, especially Point 2 on Timor-Leste's accession to ASEAN legal instruments. From July – October 2025, Timor-Leste undertook the domestic process to accede to the 65 ASEAN legal instruments.

Negotiations of key economic agreements

Substantive progress was made on the negotiations of the key economic agreements, leading to the conclusion of the negotiations on Timor-Leste's accession - ATIGA, AFAS, MNP, and ACIA - before the 47th ASEAN Summit.

New Era of Regional Integration

ASEAN membership ushers Timor-Leste into a new chapter of regional cooperation and integration, opening avenues for enhanced trade, investment, security cooperation, and cultural exchange with the region's 680 million people. As Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão stated, "This achievement represents not just our persistence, but our commitment to Timor-Leste's future as part of the Southeast Asian community."

2011

2025

Timor-Leste's Full Membership: A milestone for the Region:

On 26 October Timor-Leste's official entry as the 11th member state of ASEAN stands as a historic moment for Timor-Leste and a testament to ASEAN's shared vision of unity and cooperation.

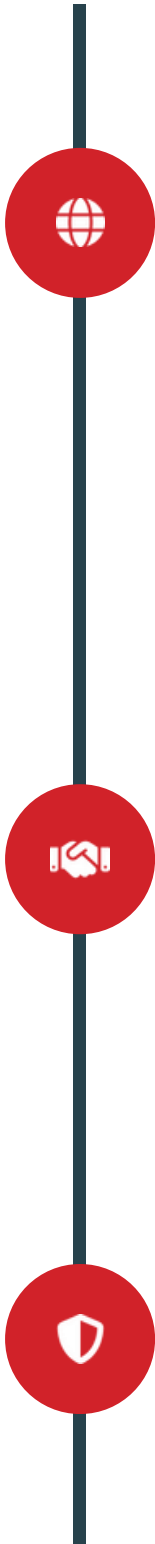
A Decade of Determined Diplomacy

This achievement represents the culmination of more than 14 years of persistent diplomacy, institutional reforms, and regional engagement since Timor-Leste's initial application in 2011. Through comprehensive capacity-building programs and technical assistance, Timor-Leste has successfully aligned its governance, economic structures, and legal frameworks with ASEAN standards.

OPPORTUNITIES: TIMOR-LESTE IN ASEAN

A visionary statement outlining Timor-Leste's aspirations for full ASEAN integration: economic development, regional security, a future of shared prosperity and enhanced people to people connection.





Cross-Border Integration

Timor-Leste aims to foster dynamic economic corridors, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people connections throughout the region. As ASEAN's newest member, Timor-Leste brings unique perspectives and opportunities to strengthen the association's collective vision.

Key Partnership Opportunities

 Infrastructure Development	 Digital Economy	 Climate Resilience
 Maritime Security	 Inclusive Growth	 Education Exchange
 Human Capital	 Private Sector Development	

Regional Stability and Connectivity

Timor-Leste is committed to advancing regional stability and economic connectivity, forging stronger ties with ASEAN member states and ASEAN’s external partners.

Strategic Alignment with Global & Regional Goals

Timor-Leste has fully aligned its national development strategy with the UN Sustainable Development Goals and ASEAN Vision 2025 and now integrating into the new vision of ASEAN 2045. As the newest ASEAN member, Timor-Leste brings fresh perspectives on resilient nation-building while committing to regional prosperity.

- Quality Education
- Gender Equality
- Clean Energy
- Economic Growth
- Climate Action

Focus Areas for National Development

Timor-Leste is prioritizing investments in human capital development, infrastructure connectivity, digital transformation, and institutional strengthening. ASEAN membership provides new pathways for accelerating these development priorities.

Youth & Women's Empowerment

With over 70% of the population under 35 years old, Timor-Leste is investing in youth programs and women's leadership initiatives to harness its demographic dividend.

Environmental Sustainability

Timor-Leste has committed to reduce carbon emissions by 33% by 2030 and protect 70% of its coastal and marine ecosystems as part of its blue economy vision.

Potential Sectors for Collaboration

As we integrate into regional value chains, we are exploring potential areas for collaboration, including:

-  Energy
-  Agriculture

-  Eco-Tourism
-  Innovation & Technology

SDGs

2025

2030

MY SEA, MY TIMOR THE BLUE ECONOMY

Marine territory represents 87% of Timor-Leste's total extent — At the heart of the Coral Triangle

Timor- Leste's Marine Assets

The Blue Economy

**Heart of the Coral
Triangle:**

Located in the "Amazon of the Seas" - the global epicenter of marine biodiversity

Marine Territory:

Approximately 87% of Timor-Leste's total territorial extent

Cetaceans:

30 of the world's 90 species including whales, dolphins, orcas, and sperm whales

Coral Reefs:

Over 1,200 reef fish species and 400+ coral-building species

Biodiversity:

Six sea turtle species, endemic species, and ongoing new discoveries



Blue Economy Sectors & Development

Marine Eco-Tourism: Primary driver of economic diversification, leveraging world-class diving and pristine marine environments

Sustainable Fishing & Aquaculture: FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries compliance, supporting food security and sustainable economic growth

Seaweed Cultivation & Production: Promising new sector with growing international demand, significant livelihood potential for coastal communities

Salt Production: Expansion of small-scale production with improved techniques and exploration of export markets

Ocean Conservation: Coral reef protection, biodiversity safeguarding, and marine protected area expansion

Policy Framework: Comprehensive Blue Economy Policy and Action Plan currently in development to guide sustainable marine resource utilization



Blue Economy Strategic Framework

Leadership Structure

Led by Prime Minister Kay Rala Xanana Gusmão with coordination by the Land and Maritime Boundary Office, ensuring comprehensive government-wide commitment to ocean stewardship

30x30 Conservation Target

30% of Timor-Leste's marine areas designated for conservation by 2030, aligned with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Key Strategic Initiatives



Ataúro National Park



Marine Investigation Education Centre on Ataúro



Expansion of Marine Protected Areas



Mangrove restoration and expansion programs



Comprehensive marine spatial planning

TIMOR-LESTE COUNTRY PROFILE 2025

A concise overview of Timor-Leste for international audiences:
geography, demographics, economy, and national identity as the nation joins
ASEAN as its 11th member





Location & Size

Timor-Leste occupies the eastern half of Timor Island in Maritime Southeast Asia, with a total area of 14,870 km². The country shares a 228 km land border with Indonesia to the west and is surrounded by the Timor Sea to the south, the Wetar Strait to the north, and the Banda Sea to the northeast.



Topography & Climate

The terrain is predominantly mountainous, with its highest peak reaching 2,963 meters (Mount Ramelau). The climate is tropical with distinct wet and dry seasons. The rugged central mountain range divides the country into northern and southern coastal plains, creating diverse microclimates and ecosystems.

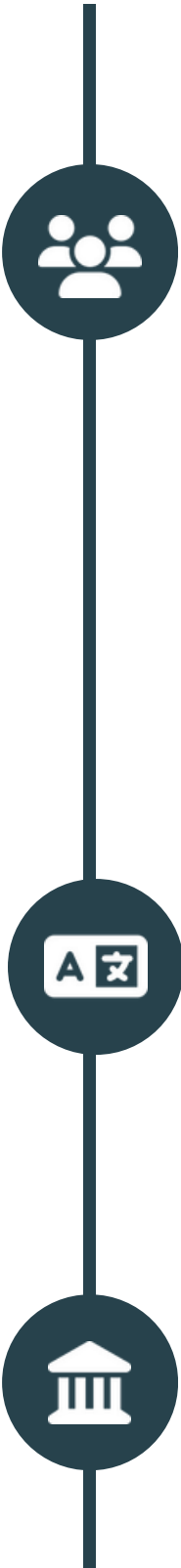


Capital City: Dili

Located on the northern coast, Dili serves as the administrative, commercial, and cultural center of Timor-Leste, with a population of approximately 250,000 people.

Natural Resources

The country possesses significant petroleum reserves in the Timor Sea, rich marine biodiversity, arable land suitable for coffee cultivation, and untapped tourism potential with pristine beaches and coral reefs.



Population Statistics (2025)

Timor-Leste continues to be one of the youngest nations demographically in Southeast Asia, with rapid population growth and an increasingly urban population.

Total Population 1.52 million people	Population Density 95 people/km²
Urban Population ~32% of total population	Median Age 20.8 years

Language & Cultural Identity

Timor-Leste's diverse linguistic landscape reflects its complex colonial history and rich cultural heritage.

Languages Official: Tetum and Portuguese Working languages: Indonesian and English Local dialects: 5 indigenous languages from Austronesian and Papuan language families
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Religion & Ethnicity

Timorese society is characterized by strong religious traditions and diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Demographics Religion: Predominantly Roman Catholic (97%), with Protestant and Muslim minorities Major ethnic groups: Mix of Austronesian and Papuan ancestries Youth population: 33% under age 15
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Economic Overview

Timor-Leste is a developing economy with strong petroleum resources and growing diversification across multiple sectors. The country faces both challenges and opportunities as it integrates into ASEAN as the 11th member.



GDP (Nominal, 2025)

US\$1.9 billion (non-petroleum)

GDP Per Capita

US\$1368 (2024)



Currency

US Dollar (USD)

Human Development Index Rank

142nd (UNDP)

Financial Stability

The nation's financial sector shows significant growth with strong banking indicators and strategic petroleum fund management.



Petroleum Fund Assets (Aug 2025)

US\$18.74 billion

Equivalent to 10x GDP or US\$13,985 per capita (based on 2022 census)

Total Bank & Microfinance Assets

US\$2.68 billion

As of April 2025



Key Economic Sectors

Energy & Minerals

Petroleum and critical mineral resources and significant renewable energy potential



Agriculture

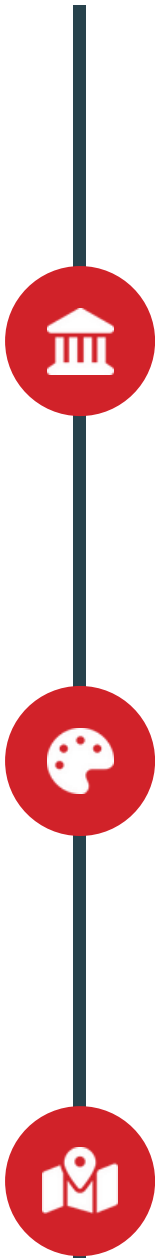
Coffee exports, farming, agriculture value chain, agribusiness potential, and emerging cash crops



Tourism

Growing hospitality sector with ecotourism and cultural attractions





Cultural Heritage

Timor-Leste possesses a diverse cultural tapestry formed through centuries of Austronesian, Portuguese, and indigenous influences. This unique fusion is reflected in the nation's traditions, language, architecture, and daily life.

Traditional Arts

The cultural identity of Timor-Leste is expressed through various art forms that have been preserved through generations:

Tais Weaving

Intricate traditional textiles with symbolic patterns unique to different regions and clans.

Music & Dance

Ceremonial performances featuring traditional instruments and rhythms that tell stories of the land and its people.

Oral Traditions

Poetry, storytelling, and resistance narratives that maintain cultural memory and historical identity.

Crafts

Woodcarving, pottery, and basket weaving represent traditional skills passed down through generations.

Notable Cultural Sites

Key cultural landmarks across Timor-Leste include Cristo Rei statue overlooking Dili, the pristine beaches of Atauro Island, the sacred mountain of Ramelau, the Resistance Museum documenting the independence struggle, and numerous colonial-era buildings that tell the story of the nation's complex history.

As Timor-Leste prepares to join ASEAN in October 2025, the nation presents a strong profile of growth and development across key indicators. The following data highlights Timor-Leste's current socioeconomic landscape based on official statistics and financial sector developments.

2025

Demographics & Development

Population

1.52 million

Annual growth rate: 2.2%

Literacy Rate

72.4%

Significant improvement from 58% in 2015

Youth Population

65%

Population under 30 years of age

Data

Economy & Finance

GDP (2025 est.)

\$1.9 billion

GDP per capita: \$1,368

Total Credit (Q2 2025)

\$653.3 million

Annual growth: 25.9%

ECONOMIC INDICATORS TIMOR-LESTE 2025

An overview of key financial metrics illustrating the country's economic landscape, banking development, and digital transformation as Timor-Leste prepares to join ASEAN



2025

Credit Growth & Key Ratios

\$653.3 million

Total credit from banks & microfinance (March 2025)

+25.9% annual growth

32.2%

Loan-to-GDP ratio (2025 forecast)

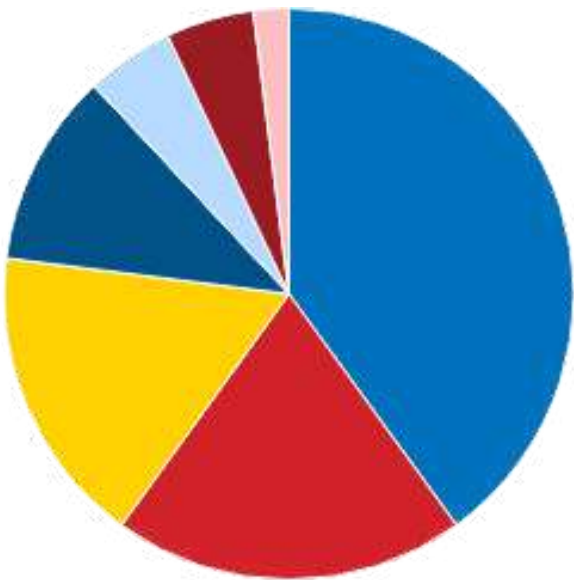
52.8%

Loan-to-Deposit Ratio

2.4%

Non-performing loan ratio

Sectoral Distribution of Credit (2025)



- Individuals: 40%
- Trade & Finance: 20%
- Transport & Comms: 17%
- Construction: 11%
- Manufacturing: 5%
- Tourism: 5%
- Agriculture: 2%

Q1

Q1

2025

+16%

Q1 2025: Digital Transformation Milestone

Digital payment transactions in Timor-Leste exceeded 5 million in Q1 2025, representing significant progress in the nation's financial digitalization journey ahead of ASEAN accession.

Payment Method	Transactions	Value (USD)
R-Timor	325,256	\$2,429,430
P24	1,811,625	\$165,254
E-Wallet	2,848,252	\$18,209
Cross-border (SWIFT)	1,223	\$610,538

Annual Growth & Financial Inclusion

Annual Growth (Q1 2025 vs Q1 2024)

Transaction value: +16% Transaction volume: +12% Cross-border incoming transfers: +78%

TOURISM IN TIMOR-LESTE DISCOVER SOUTHEAST ASIA'S HIDDEN GEM

Tourism in Timor-Leste offers an authentic journey into Southeast Asia's least-visited nation, where pristine coastal landscapes meet rugged mountains and ancient traditions. Unspoiled by mass tourism, Timor-Leste invites inquisitive travelers seeking genuine cultural experiences and natural wonders





Atauro Island

Only 25km north of Dili, Atauro Island boasts some of the most biodiverse marine ecosystems in the world. The crystal-clear waters offer exceptional visibility, making it a haven for divers and snorkelers. Explore pristine coral reefs, encounter diverse marine life, and experience the traditional village life of the island's communities.

Diving

Snorkeling

Eco-Tourism



Jaco Island

This uninhabited paradise at Timor-Leste's easternmost point is considered sacred by locals. With powdery white sand beaches and turquoise waters, Jaco Island is a protected nature reserve. While no overnight stays are permitted on the island itself, visitors can enjoy day trips, swimming, and picnics on this pristine natural wonder.

Pristine Beaches

Nature Reserve

Day Trips



Cristo Rei of Dili

This iconic 27-meter-high statue of Jesus stands on a globe at Cape Fatucama, just east of Dili. Built in 1996, it's one of the tallest such statues in the world. The 570-step climb offers breathtaking panoramic views of the surrounding bays and coastline. Beautiful, secluded beaches lie at the base, perfect for swimming and relaxing.

Cultural

Panoramic Views

Beaches



Mount Ramelau

Standing at 2,986 meters, Mount Ramelau (locally known as Tatamailau) is Timor-Leste's highest peak. The popular pre-dawn trek rewards hikers with spectacular sunrises above the clouds. At the summit stands a statue of the Virgin Mary. The surrounding landscapes offer stunning vistas of central Timor-Leste.

Trekking

Sunrise Views

Cultural Site

CRAFT



Tais Weaving UNESCO LISTED

This traditional cloth, handcrafted by women using backstrap looms, is central to Timorese cultural identity. Tais weaving represents an unbroken tradition passed through generations of women. Each region has distinctive motifs and techniques that tell stories of clan identity, social status, and spiritual beliefs. Traditionally used in ceremonies, tais now features in modern fashion and home decor.

SACRED



Uma Lulik (Sacred Houses)

These traditional raised wooden structures serve as spiritual anchors for Timorese communities. Uma Lulik houses store sacred heirlooms and serve as gathering places for rituals and ceremonies. The architectural style varies by region, with distinctive steep roofs and intricate wood carvings. These sacred buildings embody the connection between Timorese people, their ancestors, and the spiritual world.

HISTORY



Timor-Leste Resistance Museum

Located in Dili, this museum documents the 24-year struggle for independence through photographs, documents, and artifacts. The Archives & Museum of East Timorese Resistance (AMRT) preserves the collective memory of the resistance movement. The Chega! Exhibition further explores the human rights aspects of the occupation period, creating spaces for reflection and reconciliation.

CUISINE



Portuguese-Timorese Cuisine

Timorese cuisine blends Portuguese colonial influences with indigenous ingredients and techniques. Signature dishes include tukir (meat cooked inside bamboo), ikan saboko (fish wrapped in palm leaves), batar daan (corn with beans and pumpkin), and koto (red bean stew). The country's renowned organic coffee represents an important cultural and economic heritage. Markets and restaurants in Dili showcase this unique culinary tradition.

FESTIVE



Vibrant Festivals & Celebrations

Throughout the year, Timor-Leste celebrates a rich calendar of cultural and religious festivals. Independence Day (May 20) features colorful parades and performances nationwide. Traditional harvest ceremonies in rural areas maintain ancient agricultural rituals. Catholic influences are evident in Christmas and Easter celebrations, while the Festival of Culture showcases music, dance, and traditional crafts from all 13 municipalities.



🌊 Pristine Coral Reefs & Biodiversity

Timor-Leste is home to some of the most pristine coral reefs in the world, with extraordinary marine biodiversity. The waters around Atauro Island are scientifically documented to have the highest reef fish biodiversity in the world, making it a paradise for underwater enthusiasts. With visibility regularly exceeding 30 meters and water temperatures between 26-30°C year-round, conditions are perfect for both beginners and experienced divers.



🐟 Marine Life Encounters

Divers and snorkelers can experience extraordinary marine life including:



⚓ Premier Diving Destinations

Timor-Leste offers diverse diving environments from gentle coral slopes to dramatic drop-offs and underwater caves.



Practical Information

Atauro Island

- Adara - Vertical wall dive with exceptional biodiversity
- Manta Cove - Seasonal manta ray cleaning station
- Visibility regularly exceeding 40 meters
- Accessible by daily boat trips from Dili

Dili & East Coast

- Dili Rock - Convenient shore dive with abundant life
- Pertamina Pier - Macro photography paradise
- K41 - WWII Japanese wreck with intact artifacts
- Jaco Island - Pristine remote diving experience

Coral Species

- Over 400 species of reef-building corals
- Vibrant soft corals and giant sea fans
- Extensive coral gardens in pristine condition
- Endemic coral species found nowhere else

Marine Mammals & Megafauna

- Dugongs and dolphin pods year-round
- Migrating whales (October-December)
- Six species of sea turtles
- Reef sharks and occasional pelagics



Best Season

- Year-round diving possible
- April-November: Peak season with calmest seas
- December-March: Occasional rough conditions

Dive Operators

- Multiple PADI and SSI certified dive centers in Dili
- Eco-resorts on Atauro Island with house reefs
- Courses from Discover Scuba to Divemaster
- Specialized marine biology and conservation programs



Mount Ramelau: The Highest Peak

Standing at 2,986 meters, Mount Ramelau (Tetum: Foho Tatamailau) is Timor-Leste's highest peak and a symbol of national pride. The mountain offers spectacular hiking opportunities with panoramic views stretching across the island and, on clear days, all the way to the northern and southern coasts.

The Sunrise Experience: The most popular trek begins pre-dawn from the village of Hatu-Builico, reaching the summit for sunrise. Pilgrims and tourists alike witness the breathtaking spectacle as the sun rises over the Timor Sea, illuminating the statue of the Virgin Mary at the summit.



Popular Hiking Trails & Destinations

Matebian Mountain Trails
Cultural significance as a sacred mountain with moderate to challenging trails. Known for cloud forests and historical importance during the resistance period.

Mundo Perdido Trek
A multi-day adventure through "Lost World" landscapes, featuring remote villages, wild forests, and extensive biodiversity in central Timor-Leste.

Tutuala to Jaco Coastal Trail
Stunning coastal hike through Nino Konis Santana National Park leading to Jaco Island, with traditional villages and pristine beaches.

Dili to Dare Mountain Path
Accessible day hike from the capital, following historical paths used during resistance with panoramic views of Dili and Atauro Island.



Essential Hiking Tips

- Best Season: May to November (dry season) offers ideal hiking conditions
- Local Guides: Highly recommended for safety, cultural context, and navigating remote areas
- Preparation: Bring sun protection, sufficient water, and appropriate footwear
- Community Respect: Many trails pass through traditional lands; respect local customs and obtain permissions where needed

Local tour operators in Dili can arrange guided treks with transport, accommodation in mountain villages, and cultural experiences, creating authentic connections with Timor-Leste's highland communities.





Birdwatching: Endemic Species & Prime Locations

Timor-Leste is home to numerous endemic and rare bird species, making it an emerging destination for international birdwatchers seeking species found nowhere else on Earth. With 250+ recorded species and 29 endemic to the Timor island group, the country offers pristine habitats for bird observation.

Notable Endemic Species

- Timor Green Pigeon (*Treron psittaceus*) - Found in forest canopies
- Timor Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula cineracea*) - In mountain forests
- Timor Sparrow (*Lonchura fuscata*) - Endemic to Timor island
- Timor Blue-Flycatcher (*Cyornis hyacinthinus*) - Distinctive blue plumage

Prime Birdwatching Locations

- Nino Konis Santana National Park - Eastern tip, diverse habitats
- Mount Ramelau - High altitude species in cloud forests
- Lore - Rich biodiversity area with excellent trail access
- Atauro Island - Coastal and sea birds in pristine conditions



Eco-Tourism: Sustainable & Community-Based Experiences

Timor-Leste's developing eco-tourism sector emphasizes sustainability, minimal environmental impact, and community benefits. Travelers can immerse themselves in pristine ecosystems while supporting local conservation and economic development initiatives.

Community-Based Tourism

- Village Homestays - Authentic cultural immersion with local families
- Community-Led Tours - Local guides sharing traditional knowledge
- Craft Workshops - Learn traditional skills like tais weaving
- Agricultural Tours - Experience coffee harvesting and processing

Eco-Friendly Accommodations

- Barry's Place, Atauro - Solar-powered beachfront eco-resort
- Balibo Fort Hotel - Heritage accommodation with eco-practices
- Com Beach Resort - Sustainable coastal lodging
- Eco-Lodges - Various locations with minimal environmental footprint



When to Visit

Best Time: May to November (dry season)
Sunny weather with minimal rainfall
Ideal for outdoor activities and island hopping
Perfect conditions for diving and snorkeling
Mountain trekking at its best

Essential Information

Currency: US Dollar (USD)
Languages: Tetum, Portuguese (official); Indonesian, English (working languages)
Time Zone: GMT+9 (Timor-Leste Time)
Voltage: 220V, Type C, E, F plugs
Internet: 4G coverage in major areas
Health: No mandatory vaccinations required

Getting There

Main Gateway: Presidente Nicolau Lobato International Airport (DIL)
Direct flights from: Denpasar, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore and Darwin
Land Border with: Indonesia
Visas: ASEAN citizens enjoy visa-free entry.
Tourist visas available on arrival for most nationalities (30-day validity, USD \$30).

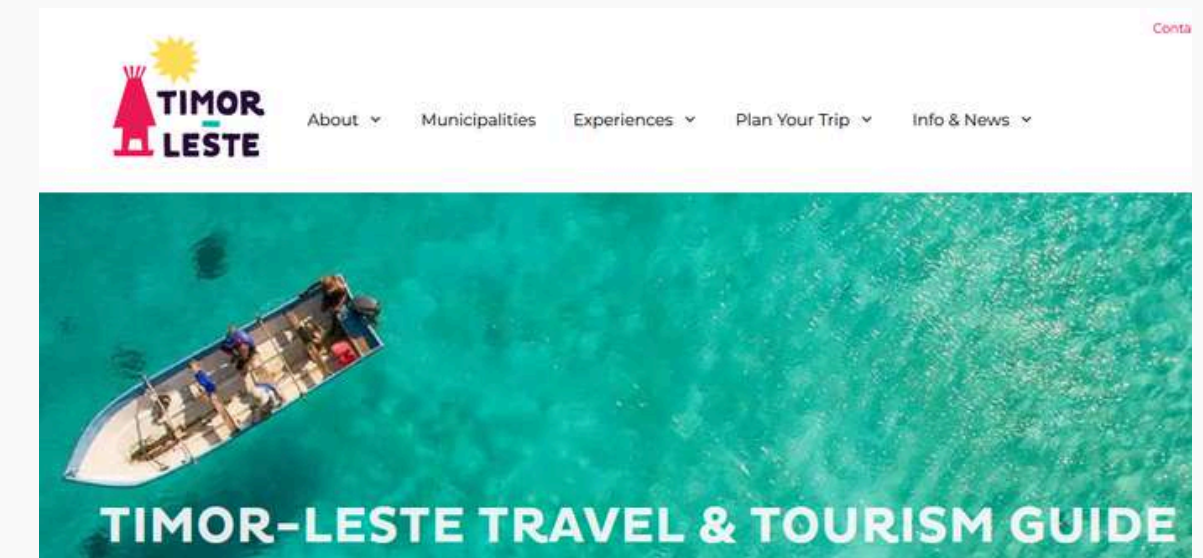


Useful Links

Official Travel & Tourism

<https://www.timorleste.tl/>

The official travel and tourism guide with maps, itineraries, activities, and accommodation information



Exploring Timor-Leste

<https://exploringtimor.com/>

Alternative website with extensive information on Timor-Leste

Visit Ataúro

<https://ataurotourism.org/>

Website with information on Ataúro Island

Immigration & Visa Information

<https://www.migracao.gov.tl/html/sub0301.php>

Immigration Service of Timor-Leste - Tourist Visa

Tourism Investment Opportunities

<https://www.tradeinvest.tl/node/21>

Tourism investment opportunities in Timor-Leste

COFFEE IN TIMOR-LESTE A NATIONAL TREASURE

Coffee is Timor-Leste's largest non-oil export and vital to rural livelihoods. The country's mountainous terrain and favorable climate create ideal conditions for growing exceptional coffee. Timor-Leste's traditional, organic cultivation practices have made its coffee increasingly prized in global specialty markets.

TOGETHER
WE RISE



Top Non-Oil Export

Coffee ranks as Timor-Leste's largest non-petroleum export, representing approximately 24% of the country's total non-oil exports. Since petroleum reserves are finite, coffee production provides critical economic diversification and long-term sustainability for the national economy.

Population Livelihood Support

Coffee cultivation directly supports approximately 35% of Timor-Leste's population (over 480,000 people). For many rural households, coffee provides up to 90% of their annual income, making it the primary means of livelihood in mountainous regions where alternative employment is limited.

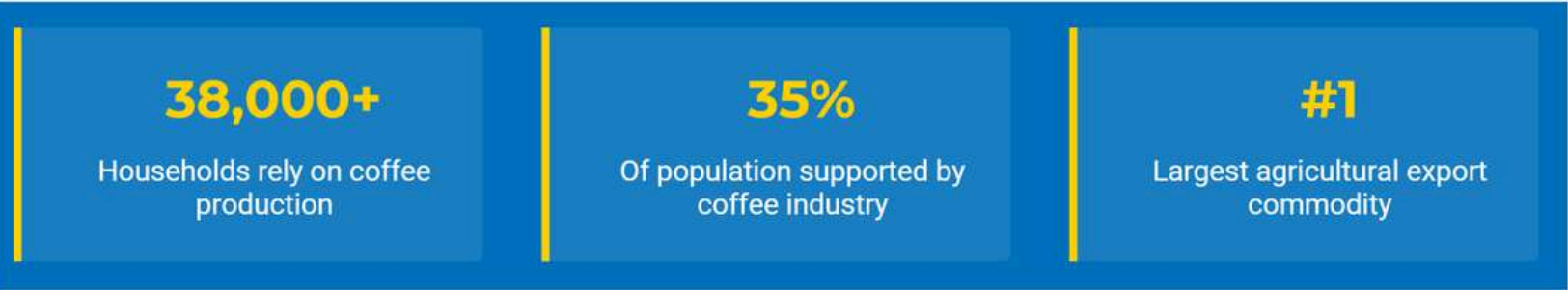
Global Export Markets

United States Primary market for specialty grade organic beans, particularly from Ermera and Ainaro regions	Europe Strong demand in Portugal, Netherlands, Germany, and Italy for high-quality Arabica and Timor Hybrid varieties
Australia/NZ Growing market for Timor-Leste's premium single-origin coffees, enhanced by regional partnerships	Asia-Pacific Expanding markets in Japan, South Korea, and ASEAN neighbors, particularly for specialty grade exports



Sustainable Development Impact

- Coffee farms preserve native forest cover, protecting watersheds and preventing soil erosion
- Over 60% of Timor-Leste coffee is certified organic, supporting ecological balance
- Coffee cooperatives fund community health clinics, schools, and infrastructure
- Women-led coffee initiatives promote gender equality in rural communities
- Specialty coffee commands premium prices, increasing farmer incomes by 30-45%



1920s

A Remarkable Natural Hybrid

The Timor Hybrid (Híbrido de Timor) is a unique naturally occurring cross between *Coffea arabica* and *Coffea canephora* (Robusta) discovered in the dense forests of Timor-Leste in the 1920s. This spontaneous hybrid combines the superior cup quality of Arabica with the disease resistance of Robusta, making it one of the most important coffee varieties in global cultivation history.

"The Timor Hybrid represents nature's solution to coffee's greatest vulnerability. Its discovery in Timor-Leste's forests changed the future of coffee production worldwide."



1940s

Disease Resistance & Global Impact

The Hybrid's most valuable trait is its complete resistance to coffee leaf rust (*Hemileia vastatrix*), inherited from its Robusta parent. By the 1940s, researchers recognized its potential, and by the 1970s, it became the foundation for breeding numerous disease-resistant coffee varieties worldwide, including Catimor, Sarchimor, and Colombia varieties. Today, an estimated 80% of cultivated Arabica varieties contain some genetic material from the Timor Hybrid.

 44 chromosomes (like Arabica)  Thrives at 1000-1600m elevation  Complete leaf rust resistance  Medium body, low acidity profile

1970s

2025



Genetic Marvel

The Timor Hybrid possesses 4 chromosome pairs from Robusta while maintaining Arabica's overall structure. This unique genetic composition makes it exceptional for coffee breeding programs targeting disease resistance.

Timor-Leste's Living Heritage

Original Timor Hybrid populations continue to grow wild in Timor-Leste's forests, representing a crucial genetic reservoir for global coffee sustainability. The country maintains special conservation areas to protect this valuable resource.

Tour



Immersive Coffee Tourism Experiences

Timor-Leste offers visitors unique opportunities to experience its rich coffee heritage firsthand. From terraced mountain farms to traditional processing methods, visitors gain insight into every stage of production while supporting local communities and sustainable practices.



Professional Tasting Sessions

Guided cupping experiences with certified Q-graders

Exploration of Timor Hybrid's distinctive flavor profile

Regional taste comparisons across different growing regions

Barista workshops in Dili's emerging specialty coffee scene



Mountain Farm Tours

Guided walks through mountainside coffee plantations in Ermera, Aileu, and Ainaro

Hands-on harvesting experiences during peak season (May-August)

Traditional processing demonstrations from cherry green bean

Organic cultivation and shade-grown techniques showcased



"Timor-Leste's coffee tourism connects visitors directly with farming communities, creating cultural exchange while supporting sustainable livelihoods in our mountain regions."

Timor-Leste Coffee Association

Taste



Village Stays & Cultural Immersion

Experience the heart of Timor-Leste's coffee culture through homestays in traditional coffee-growing communities. Visitors can participate in the entire coffee production process from harvest to cup while learning directly from multi-generational farming families.

Authentic Coffee Experiences

- ☕ Harvest participation during peak season (May-August)
- 🏠 Traditional Uma housing accommodations
- 🍴 Family meals featuring local ingredients
- 👉 Hand-processing demonstrations

Specialty Coffee Recognition

Timor-Leste's single-origin, organic coffee is gaining international recognition for its distinctive profile. The country's beans are now featured in specialty cafés worldwide and have earned prestigious industry awards for their unique characteristics.

International Accolades

- 🏆 Cup of Excellence finalist status (2023)
- ★ 90+ cupping scores from SCA professionals
- 🌿 Organic and Fair-Trade certifications
- 📺 Featured in premium roasteries globally

Upcoming Coffee Tourism Initiatives

As Timor-Leste joins ASEAN, the government is launching several initiatives to expand coffee tourism and strengthen its position in the specialty market. These programs aim to create sustainable livelihoods while preserving traditional knowledge.

- Annual Coffee Festival - To showcase local producers
- Coffee Heritage Trail - Development of marked routes through historic plantations
- Barista Training Center - Education facility to develop local talent
- ASEAN Coffee Alliance - Regional partnership for knowledge exchange



TAIS: WOVEN HERITAGE OF TIMOR-LESTE

Inscribed in 2021 on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent
Safeguarding

Tais - Timor-Leste's Cultural Heritage

-  **Inscribed in 2021** on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding
-  **Definition:** Traditional handwoven textile created by women using backstrap looms, passed through generations
-  **Cultural Significance:** Expresses identity, used in ceremonies, indicates social status, embodies spiritual beliefs
-  **Production:** Made from cotton dyed with natural plants using traditional techniques and simple equipment
-  **Knowledge Transmission:** Skills and patterns passed from mother to daughter through generations



Cultural Significance and Uses



Ceremonial Importance:

Welcoming newborns, marriage traditions (barlake / bride wealth exchanges), funeral rites, traditional ceremonies and festivals



Social Identity:

Each of 13 municipalities has distinctive patterns and colors. Specific designs indicate clan affiliation and cultural pride



Diplomatic Symbol:

Gifts for visiting dignitaries, representing Timor-Leste's unique heritage within ASEAN cultural diversity



Production Time:

A single traditional Tais takes 1 week to several months to complete, depending on size and pattern complexity



Regional Variations:

Oecusse (bold geometric patterns), Lospalos (delicate motifs with crocodile symbols), Bobonaro (ikat techniques), Suai (fine weaving), Viqueque (traditional red and black)



Preserving the Heritage



Preservation & Modernization

-  **Government programs:**
Promoting Tais in schools and government offices nationwide
-  **Alola Foundation training:**
Programs for young women in traditional weaving techniques
-  **Tourism integration:**
Authentic souvenir promotion and cultural attraction experiences
-  **Modern applications:**
Fashion, home décor, corporate gifts, and contemporary design



Impact & ASEAN Contribution

-  **Economic empowerment:**
Income for rural women through fair trade initiatives and direct markets
-  **Sustainability model:**
Traditional, environmentally sustainable production methods
-  **Timorese heritage:**
Unique cultural contribution enriching ASEAN's diversity and identity
-  **Heritage expertise:**
Experience in safeguarding endangered intangible cultural practices



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Presidency of the Republic:
presidenciarepublica.tl

Government of Timor-Leste:
timor-leste.gov.tl

Statistics: inetl-ip.gov.tl
Investment: tradeinvest.tl

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TIMOR-LESTE ASEAN ACCESSION

OFFICIAL MEDIA KIT

OBRIGADO!



**Government of
Timor-Leste**

**Kuala Lumpur
October 2025**