



TRAVELOGUE

Wakatobi Islands – Acronym like no other

Indonesia is a country where acronyms abound. If a title is too long, acronym it.

In politics, there is Capres (Calon President) – Presidential Candidate and Wapres (Wakil President) – Vice President!

In transport, there is Kopaja (Koperasi Angutan Jakarta) — a popular bus service in Jakarta. An Indonesian citizen becomes a WNI (Warga Negara Indonesia), and a foreign citizen, a WNA (Warga Negara Asing). When residing there, one has to carry a KTP (Kartu Tanda Penduduk), or identity card. Place names are also abbreviated, like NTT stands for Nusa Tenggara Timur, a province of Indonesia. So, when I was informed I was travelling with a group of friends to Wakatobi, I assumed it was just one island by that name. Only later did it dawn on me that Wakatobi was also an acronym!

It is an abbreviation of the collective names for a string of islands that lie southeast of Sulawesi, also referred to as the Tukang Besi Islands.

Sulawesi itself forms part of the archipelago of Indonesia.

It lies towards its eastern fringes and is said to be shaped like an orchid. Sulawesi holds within it flora and fauna that are unique, endemic and different from the rest of Indonesia. The seas surrounding it also abound in unique and beautiful marine life and colourful



coral. These characteristics are also reflected in the Wakatobi Islands.

The islands comprising Wakatobi are —

Wangi Wangi Island - Wa
Kaledupa Island - Ka
Tomia Island - To

Binongko Island - Bi

Wakatobi is a marine national park that forms a barrier reef, second only to Australia's Great Barrier Reef. The clear and clean seawater that surround the islands hold the highest number of reef and fish species in the world. The islands are also home to a diverse habitat of wetlands, mangroves, and forests.

Going to Wakatobi means island hopping is a must, although, it depends on ferry services that are not always reliable and the caprices of weather and ocean currents.

For us, the first stop was Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia. From there, we took a flight to Kendari, a city in the mainland of Sulawesi. From Kendari onwards, it was a case of travelling through a series of places with beautiful and exotic names.

From Kendari, we flew to the first island, Wangi-Wangi, which literally translates into 'nice smell-nice smell.' This was the WA of Wakatobi. Here, we stayed at the Patuno Bay Resort, a large hotel straddling the beach and the Flores Sea. The resort itself is run down since we last visited it, but still okay for just two nights.

