

# Jambi Malay of Indonesia

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## Who are the Jambi Malay?

Most of the 800,000 Jambi Malay live in the sparsely-inhabited Jambi Province of eastern Sumatra, Indonesia. Jambi Province is home to a diverse mixture of Malay, Minangkabau, Arab, Chinese, Banjar, Bugis and Javanese people. Many of these people have been resettled in Sumatra as part of an Indonesian government program to ease the overpopulation of Java Island and other areas. Several such “transmigration” areas have been located among Jambi villages.

## Languages

Most Jambi Malay speak a dialect of Malay known as *Bahasa Jambi* in their homes and villages. At other times, they use *Bahasa Indonesia*, the Indonesian national language.

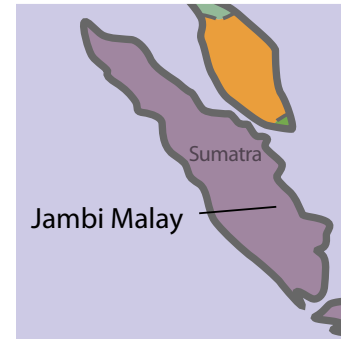
## Livelihood

More than half of the Jambi are farmers, although only 30% of the province’s income is provided by agriculture. The government is working to develop the Jambi farming industry and to increase foreign investment. Major agricultural products include timber, plywood, rubber, palm oil, coffee and tea. Many Jambi also support themselves by fishing in the rivers near their villages, often using traditional equipment.

The Jambi are very poor, and many seem uninterested in pursuing the modernization and development needed to improve their economic situation. Many Jambi seem satisfied with a simple lifestyle. Although some Jambi pursue higher education, the number is minimal. Many Jambi have little formal education at all, preferring to stick to traditional ideas and methods rather than seek modern knowledge and technical expertise.

## Culture

The Jambi love *batik*. In Jambi villages, talented women use wax to create intricate designs on fabric, applying colorful dyes made from plants and berries. Many women wear batik sarongs on a daily basis and use the fabric to tie their babies



Population: 800,000  
Location: Eastern Sumatra, Indonesia  
Languages: Jambi, Bahasa Indonesia



a people loved



**Pray** for God to send followers of Jesus to serve the Jambi people.

**Pray** that followers of Jesus from other Indonesian ethnic groups would reach out to the Jambi Malay, despite the persecution they may face in doing so.

**Pray** that God's love will penetrate the barriers that prevent the Jambi from considering and accepting the Good News.

**Pray** for the Jambi Malay who follow Jesus, that they would boldly share the Good News with their own people group. Pray that they would meet together, worshipping God in a way suited to their own unique culture. Pray that a movement to follow Jesus would begin among the Jambi Malay.

to them as they go about their daily tasks. Exceptionally beautiful fabric is reserved for weddings.

Before a Jambi wedding, friends and neighbors gather together to help with preparations. Helping each other is a daily facet of Jambi life. The wedding is an all-day affair with amazing sights, smells and sounds. As the day begins, the groom parades to the bride's house accompanied by a band playing *kompangan*, a traditional Jambi hand drum. It ends with the playing of the *gambus*, an Arab instrument similar to a guitar, as well as singing and dancing.

While the Jambi retain much of their traditional culture, they are open to outside influences. Shopping malls, Pizza Hut and jeans are increasingly common, especially in cities. Jambi, the former city center of the Jambi sultanate has been transformed into a modern provincial capital. Telanaipura, a new administrative center, lies just to the west.

## Beliefs

The Jambi Malay are known for their strong commitment to Islam. Islam was established among the Jambi in the 16th century when Arab traders arrived in Sumatra. Today, every Jambi village and nearly every Jambi neighborhood has a building for worship and a training place for the practice and teaching of Islam, complete with at least one Islamic teacher.

The Jambi Malay are proud that their villages are 100% Muslim. Yet the Jambi retain many traditional spiritual practices. Just as each village or neighborhood has an elected Islamic leader, there is usually also a *dukun*, a traditional healer. The dukun intercedes on behalf of his patient with pleas to Allah or to the spirits for healing. Religious leaders also provide mothers with amulets to protect their young children from evil spirits.

Very few Jambi Malay follow Jesus.