

SEE YOU LATER, COOL CRATER

火山秘境，下次再會

How the most destructive volcanic eruption in human history created a Scandinavian kind of landscape in the heart of Sumatra. PAUL KAY uncovers Lake Toba's secrets

人類有史以來破壞力最強的火山爆發，在蘇門答臘中部形成一片酷似北歐的地貌。Paul Kay為你揭開多峇湖的秘密

PHOTOGRAPHY MATTHEW WILLIAM SELLIS

If destruction, as the novelist Graham Greene once wrote, truly is a form of creation, then there can be few better examples on Earth than Lake Toba.

As picturesque and tranquil a spot as one could ever hope to stumble upon, this vast body of water in the northern part of the Indonesian island of Sumatra is the result of a colossal supervolcano eruption around 75,000 years ago, an event so cataclysmic that it not only drastically altered the island's topography but may also have threatened the very survival of the human race.

For that eruption is widely believed to be the largest of the past 2.5 million years. Toba spewed out more than 2,800 cubic kilometres of magma, billowing clouds of volcanic ash at least as far as Malawi (7,500 kilometres away in east Africa) and causing a global volcanic winter that may have lasted for up to a decade. Filled with rain and river water over the ensuing centuries, the 100 kilometre by 30 kilometre caldera left behind became the world's biggest crater lake, with an area of 1,130 square kilometres (20 square kilometres larger than all the islands and territories of Hong Kong), while subsequent volcanic

activity caused Samosir, an island almost the size of Singapore, to rise up into the middle of Lake Toba from the magma chamber below.

Fast-forward to the present day and it's hard to connect such Earth-shaking tumult and fiery destruction with Lake Toba's placid waters, cool climate and laidback lifestyle. Set at an altitude of 900 metres and surrounded on all sides by the lush vegetation that carpets the towering slopes, the lake offers views reminiscent of the epic glacier-carved landscapes of Scandinavia or New Zealand, while the low-lying clouds of mist that roll across the water from time to time lend the place an almost mystical air.

And yet, despite its breathtaking natural beauty, the area has remained largely under the radar in terms of mainstream tourism, especially during low season when it can often feel like you've got the place all to yourself.

Like most visitors to Lake Toba, I make my way to Parapat, a small town around four hours' drive from Medan's Kualanamu International Airport, to catch the brightly painted wooden ferry to Tuk-Tuk. Located on a small, kidney-shaped peninsula on the northeast coast of Samosir, Tuk-Tuk

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說家Graham Greene曾經寫道，破壞其實是創造的一種形式。若真是如此，那麼世上其中一個上佳例子可能就是多峇湖。這個位於印尼蘇門答臘北部的巨大湖泊，如今是一片寧靜、風光如畫的世外桃源，但這其實是75,000年前一場大規模火山爆發後的產物。那是一次災難性的巨變，不僅徹底改變了島嶼的地貌，更幾乎威脅到人類存亡。

那次火山爆發相信是過去250萬年來最厲害的一次，多峇火山噴出超過2,800立方公里的岩漿；火山灰形成厚厚的雲層，飄至7,500公里外的東非，即今日的馬拉威一帶，導致全球步向火山冬天，估計長達十年。在往後的悠悠歲月中，雨水和河水逐漸把這個100公里乘30公里的巨型火山口填滿，形成全球最大的火山口湖，面積達1,130平方公里（比香港所有陸地加起來還要大20平方公里）。隨後的火山活動亦令湖底中央的岩漿庫湧出大量熔岩，在湖心形成一個露出水面的小島，名為沙摩西島，面積與新加坡相若。

看著多峇湖今日波平如鏡的湖水，清涼的氣候與優悠的生活節奏，很難想像這裡曾經發生天崩地裂的大災難。多峇湖位於海拔900米高處，四周高聳的山坡蒼鬱蒼翠，湖畔風景教人聯想起北歐和新西蘭被冰川斧鑿而成的地貌，而湖上不時泛起繚繞的雲霧，令這地方更添幾分神秘感。





Lake placid
Explore Lake Toba's serene villages by motorbike, including traditional Batak houses (right)

寧謐湖畔
駕電單車漫遊多峇湖一帶
寧靜的村莊，參觀傳統的
巴塔克房子(右圖)



is the epicentre of Lake Toba's tourism industry, though its clutch of modest waterfront guesthouses and smattering of low-key restaurants and bars make it seem more like a half-forgotten backwater than a holiday hotspot.

It's the kind of endearingly shabby place that you can imagine booming with the first wave of tourism to Lake Toba, then slowly waning as the wave receded – though I'm told it's a different story at the height of summer, when Germans and the Dutch visit in their droves; and at Lunar New Year, when Chinese tour groups descend en masse, sending accommodation prices skyrocketing. For now, though, it's practically a ghost town, and for less than HK\$100 a night I get my own traditional Batak-style house with a wooden deck overhanging the lake.

While the lake views, tranquil vibe and epic skies are reason enough to visit Samosir, the island has more than its fair share of natural wonders and intriguing cultural sites to explore, too. Given Samosir's size and the distance between its most compelling attractions, it's best to rent a motorbike to get around, though the condition of the roads and number of blind corners means that you have to keep your wits about you. ☺

“**LAKE VIEWS, TRANQUIL VIBES AND EPIC SKIES ARE REASON ENOUGH TO VISIT SAMOSIR**
迷人的湖景、恬靜的氛圍和遼闊的天空，是吸引人到訪沙摩西島的原因

然而，儘管這裡擁有令人歎為觀止的天然美景，多峇湖卻不是熱門旅遊景點，特別是淡季的時候，這裡有如你的私人度假勝地。

我跟許多前往多峇湖的旅客一樣，在抵達棉蘭的瓜拉納穆國際機場後，再花四小時乘車前往Parapat小鎮，然後跳上顏色鮮艷的木製渡輪前往Tuk-Tuk區。該區位於沙摩西島東北岸一個細小的腰果形半島上，是多峇湖區的旅遊業重鎮，但湖畔只見聚著幾家不起眼的賓館，還有幾家其貌不揚的餐廳和酒吧，看上去一點也不像旅遊熱點，倒像是個人跡罕至的小鎮。

多峇湖是一個簡陋但令人感到舒適自在的地方，你可以想像旅遊業在這裡曾經風光一時，後來熱潮退卻，於是整個地方逐漸失色；但我聽說夏季時這裡是另一番光景，來自德國和荷蘭的旅客絡繹於途。☺

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I MOTOR MY WAY
TO A FASCINATING
OLD VILLAGE WITH A
MACABRE HISTORY OF
GRISLY TRIBAL
JUSTICE

我騎電單車到一條
迷人的古老村落去，
那裡曾施行令人
毛骨悚然的部落刑法

To gain an insight into the local Batak culture, I motor my way carefully to Ambarita, a fascinating old village with a macabre history of grisly tribal justice and ritual cannibalism. Here, I'm greeted by a collection of traditional Batak houses that have stood for close to two centuries; notable for their distinctive high, pointed roofs, they offer a glimpse into how the Batak people lived until relatively recently. Hiring a guide at Ambarita is essential if you want to properly understand the many curious features of the houses, from the sets of breast-like domes that were believed to boost fertility to the geckos symbolising family and gargoyles warding off evil spirits.

Even more intriguing, however, is the circle of small stone chairs that sits under a solitary tree in the centre of the village. This is where the tribal council would meet to discuss village matters – and occasionally to torture and execute criminals. As my guide recounts with a storyteller's flair, criminals would be lashed to a stone here and tortured for hours to make sure they didn't possess black magic powers. The gruesome ritual concluded with the poor prisoner being beheaded so that the king could drink blood from his skull, before eating a gruesome dish made of the deceased's organs diced up with lemon and spices. ☹



令這裡非常熱鬧。至於農曆新年期間，則有大批中國遊客隨團蜂擁而至，令酒店房價直線上升。不過，現在這個小城一片冷清，我入住位於湖畔的傳統巴塔克式木屋，附設伸展至湖上的露台，一晚費用不足100港元。

沙摩西島有迷人的湖景、恬靜的氛圍和遼闊的天空，但除了自然風光，你亦可以探索島上其他引人入勝的文化景點。由於沙摩西島的面積頗大，加上各個景點之間有相當的距離，最好租一輛電單車來代步。不過島上路面並不平坦，還有許多不易看見的彎角，因此駕駛時務必小心謹慎。

我想知道當地的巴塔克文化，於是騎電單車到一條古老村落Ambarita，那裡曾施行令人毛骨悚然的部落刑法，更有食人祭典。抵達這條村時，迎面見到的是多座傳統巴塔克房屋，全都有高而尖的屋

Sights of Samosir

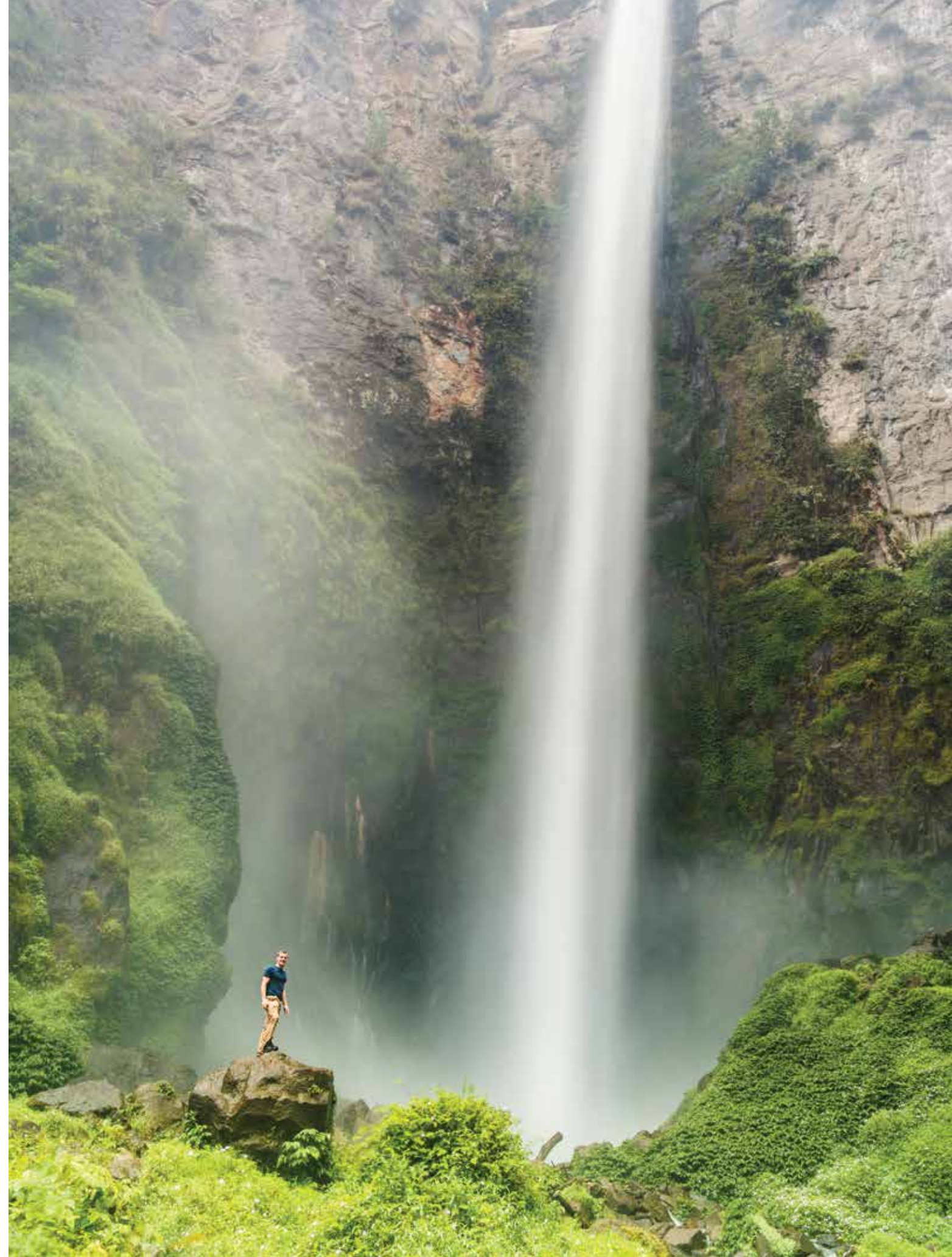
Stone chairs of Ambarita's old tribal council (top); water buffalo in Tuk-Tuk (above); Sipisopiso waterfall (right)

沙摩西風物誌

Ambarita村內供商討部族事務的石椅(最上圖); Tuk-Tuk區的水牛(上圖); Sipisopiso瀑布(右圖)

頂，在當地已屹立超過兩個世紀，從中可以窺見巴塔克人的傳統生活方式。如果你想深入了解整座房子各個古怪特色背後的意義，就必需聘請當地導遊，聽他們娓娓道來，才會明白原來那些看似女性乳房的圓拱頂，有促進子孫昌盛的意思，而壁虎和怪獸裝飾則分別代表家庭和用作驅邪鎮宅。

不過，更耐人尋味的是村中央單 ☹



Other cultural sites worth investigating are Simanindo, where traditional Batak dances are performed each morning; and Tomok, where the Tomb of King Sidabutar is the main draw amid an assortment of other weather-beaten sarcophagi. Also worth visiting are Lake Sidihoni, which holds the strange distinction of being a lake inside an island inside a lake inside a volcano inside an island; and the spectacular waterfall in the mountains just above Tuk-Tuk, which offers a secluded spot for swimming.

For those with a penchant for exploration of a different kind, Lake Toba is also famous for another natural wonder: magic mushrooms. The fantastical fungi grow freely on Samosir, and – curiously for a country that's notorious for its hard line on recreational drug use – are sold openly by shops and restaurants throughout Tuk-Tuk. Apparently best consumed in an omelette, they offer the opportunity to see the lake – and presumably the world – in a whole new light.

The greatest pleasures of Lake Toba, however, are the simplest ones, and my fondest memories all involve sitting by the water reading, writing or just staring

out across the rippling waves that lap gently at the shore. It's a serenity so profound that I want to share it with the world and tell everyone I know why they have to experience it; but there's a nagging part of me that wants to keep it utterly secret so I can have it all to myself again next time. ■

獨有一棵大樹，樹下有圍成圓圈的小石椅。這是村委商討部族事務的地方，有時亦會在此施刑和處死罪犯。我的導遊以說書人的口吻憶述，罪犯會被綁在一塊大石上，然後對他們不停施以酷刑，確保他們沒有施展黑巫術的能力。這個可怕的習俗以斬去罪犯的首級作結，然後國王用他的頭骨盛載其鮮血來飲用，再將死者的內臟切碎，加入檸檬和香料煮成一道駭人的菜式吃掉。

其他值得參觀的文化景點包括每天早上都有傳統巴塔克舞蹈表演的Simanindo，和King Sidabutar國王陵墓的所在地Tomok：那裡除了最吸引人的皇陵外，還有許多已經風化的石棺。Lake Sidihoni湖亦值得一遊，因為它是島上火山內一個湖中島內的湖泊，而Tuk-Tuk區山間有個偏僻而壯觀的瀑布，亦不失為一個游泳好去處。

如果你喜歡探索新奇事物，多峇湖

亦以另一種自然珍寶而聞名，那就是迷幻蘑菇。雖然印尼對使用消閒性迷幻藥物有非常嚴苛的法例，但迷幻蘑菇卻在沙摩西島自由生長，更在Tuk-Tuk區商店和餐廳公開出售。食用迷幻蘑菇最好的方法是加進奄列內品嚐，享用後你眼前的湖泊，以至整個世界，都會變得不一樣。

然而，多峇湖令人感到最美妙的享受，亦是我最喜歡的回憶，其實非常簡單，就是坐在湖邊看書、寫作或靜看粼粼碧波拍岸。寧靜致遠的感覺令人印象深刻，令我想與全世界分享，並告訴大家一定要親身到訪。不過我心中同時卻又渴望保守秘密，好讓我下次到訪時能繼續獨享這片人間仙境。■



DISCOVER LAKE TOBA

Cathay Dragon flies to Medan from Hong Kong three times a week

探索多峇湖

國泰龍航空設有由香港飛往棉蘭的航班，每周有三班

