



## *Budget Travel Trends in Yogyakarta from a Backpacker Style Perspective*

**Moch Nur Syamsu<sup>1\*</sup>, Agung yuliyanto Nugroho<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Sekolah Tinggi Pariwisata Ambarrukmo Yogyakarta, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Cendekia Mitra Indonesia, Indonesia

[nsyamsu@stipram.ac.id](mailto:nsyamsu@stipram.ac.id) <sup>1\*</sup>, [agungboiler11@gmail.com](mailto:agungboiler11@gmail.com) <sup>2</sup>

Alamat: Jl. Ngeksigondo No.60, Prenggan, Kec. Kotagede, Kota Yogyakarta, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55172

Korespondensi penulis: [nsyamsu@stipram.ac.id](mailto:nsyamsu@stipram.ac.id)

**Abstract:** *The backpacker tourism trend in Indonesia, especially in Yogyakarta, has grown rapidly in recent years, with Yogyakarta becoming one of the main destinations for tourists with a fairly limited budget. This research aims to identify the factors that make Yogyakarta a favorite destination for backpackers in the region. The research methodology includes literature analysis, interviews with backpackers, and tourism statistics. The results show that the combination of natural beauty, cultural diversity, affordable living costs, good tourism infrastructure, and easy access to various tourist attractions are the main factors that attract backpackers. Apart from that, Yogyakarta's image as a friendly, safe and open area for foreign tourists also contributes to its popularity. This study also compares Yogyakarta with regional regions such as Bandung, Malang and Bali to understand Yogyakarta's competitive advantages. These findings provide insight for the government and tourism industry players in developing sustainable strategies to maintain and increase the attractiveness of destinations for the backpacker tourism segment*

**Keywords:** *Backpacker tourism, Indonesia, Natural beauty*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Backpacker tourism is one of the rapidly growing segments of tourism in Indonesia. With affordable travel costs and increasingly accessible options, this region has become a major attraction for budget travelers from around the world. The trend of backpacker tourism has been driven by the rise of low-cost airlines, the advancement of digital technology that facilitates travel information, and travelers' interest in exploring authentic cultures and experiences in a more free and flexible manner.

Among the various regions in Indonesia, Yogyakarta has long been recognized as a favorite destination for backpackers. This area offers a unique blend of stunning natural landscapes, rich cultural heritage, delicious local cuisine, and relatively affordable living costs. Additionally, good tourism infrastructure and ease of obtaining visas further facilitate backpackers in exploring the numerous attractions in Yogyakarta. As a result, Yogyakarta is often considered a gateway for many travelers to begin their adventures in Indonesia.

However, despite Yogyakarta's clear advantages in attracting backpacker tourists, there is stiff competition from other regions such as Malang, Bandung, and Bali. Therefore, this research aims to explore the key factors that make Yogyakarta a favored destination for

backpackers and how the country can maintain its competitive edge amid regional competition. By understanding these factors, it is hoped that the government and tourism industry stakeholders can develop sustainable strategies to enhance the destination's appeal and increase the tourism sector's contribution to the local economy.

Furthermore, this study also provides insights into the social and cultural impacts of the backpacker tourism trend in Yogyakarta, as well as potential challenges such as environmental impacts and overtourism. Through this approach, it is hoped that the research not only identifies Yogyakarta's strengths as a backpacker destination but also offers input for developing more inclusive and sustainable tourism practices.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This study will focus on understanding the motivations of backpacker tourists, the characteristics of tourist destinations that appeal to this segment, and the factors influencing the popularity of Yogyakarta as a primary tourist destination in the region. Backpacker tourism is a form of independent travel typically undertaken by budget-conscious tourists, who prefer local experiences and adventure. Hampton (2013) notes that backpacker tourists are attracted to authentic experiences, flexibility in travel, and interactions with local cultures. Southeast Asia has become a key area for backpacker tourism due to its combination of natural beauty, cultural diversity, and affordable prices (Cohen, 2003). In this context, Yogyakarta has become a hub for backpackers, with famous routes including Borobudur Temple, Malioboro, and the beaches in Gunung Kidul.

Popular backpacker destinations typically have several key factors: low living costs, a friendly environment, and easy accessibility. Yogyakarta meets all these criteria, offering affordable accommodations, available and inexpensive transportation, and a welcoming attitude from the local community. The well-organized tourism infrastructure in Yogyakarta includes hostels, buses, and budget tours that make travel for backpackers easier and more comfortable.

Although Yogyakarta is a primary destination, other areas like Bali, Bandung, and Malang also offer similar experiences. Bandung and Bali have begun to show increased popularity among backpackers by providing unique natural landscapes and relatively lower costs compared to Yogyakarta. Meanwhile, Malang, particularly the Bromo Tengger Semeru region, has become a major destination for backpacker tourists due to its beautiful mountains and unique culture (Picard, 1996). Nonetheless, Yogyakarta retains an advantage in terms of connectivity and more developed infrastructure.

Research by Richards and Wilson (2004) indicates that the main motivations of

backpacker tourists include seeking authentic experiences, meeting new people, and gaining adventurous experiences. Yogyakarta, with its diverse attractions ranging from temples and night markets to beach parties, offers a wide variety of experiences that align with backpackers' expectations. Additionally, the backpacker lifestyle is further supported by easy access to digital information, including destination reviews and travel routes available on various online platforms (O'Reilly, 2006).

Backpacker tourists have both positive and negative impacts on tourist destinations. According to Hampton and Hamzah (2010), backpackers contribute to the local economy, especially in the informal sector, such as small accommodations and local eateries. However, Cohen (2011) states that backpacker tourism also has significant environmental and social impacts, including pollution, environmental degradation, and effects on local culture. Yogyakarta faces similar challenges, particularly in crowded tourist spots like Borobudur and Malioboro, which experience increased waste and infrastructure issues due to rising tourist numbers.

In response to the challenges of mass tourism, the concept of sustainable tourism is being adopted in various destinations, including Yogyakarta. According to Goodwin (2011), sustainable tourism emphasizes the importance of balancing economic growth, environmental preservation, and the welfare of local communities. Yogyakarta has initiated several programs to promote more responsible tourism, such as nature conservation in national parks and waste management in popular tourist areas.

This literature review indicates that Yogyakarta possesses many factors that make it a favorite destination for backpacker tourists, including affordable costs, cultural diversity, and adequate infrastructure. However, there are also challenges that need to be addressed, particularly concerning the environmental and social impacts caused by high tourist flows. A deep understanding of these attractive factors and impacts is expected to provide insights for developing more sustainable tourism strategies in Yogyakarta and other regions.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This research employs a qualitative approach aimed at understanding the factors that make Yogyakarta a favorite destination for backpacker tourists in Indonesia. The methods used include the collection of both primary and secondary data to provide a comprehensive overview of the research topic.

#### **Primary Data Collection**

- a. In-Depth Interviews: This study involves in-depth interviews with 20 backpacker

tourists who have visited Yogyakarta and other regions in Indonesia. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques, with criteria including a minimum of one month's experience in Yogyakarta and previous backpacking trips to neighboring countries such as Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. The interviews aimed to identify their motivations, experiences, and perceptions of Indonesia as a backpacker destination.

- b. Participatory Observation: The researcher also conducted participatory observations at several backpacker tourist sites in Yogyakarta, such as Malioboro in the city center, Tugu Jogja, and beaches in Gunung Kidul like Indryanti Beach. This observation aimed to understand the interactions between tourists and local communities, as well as to directly assess the facilities and conditions provided for backpackers.

### **Secondary Data Collection**

- a. Literature Review: Secondary data was collected from various sources, including academic journals, reports from tourism organizations, books, and online articles discussing backpacker tourism trends, Yogyakarta's attractions, and sustainability issues in tourism. This literature review was utilized to understand the broader context of backpacker tourism trends in Southeast Asia.
- b. Statistical Data: Statistical data regarding the number of backpacker tourists, visitation patterns, and the contribution of tourism to Yogyakarta's economy were gathered from official sources such as the Yogyakarta Ministry of Tourism and Sports and the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). This data was analyzed to provide a more concrete context regarding Yogyakarta's popularity among backpacker tourists.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic Analysis: Data from in-depth interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, which aimed to identify key themes related to the motivations and preferences of backpacker tourists in choosing Yogyakarta as a destination. Emerging themes, such as low living costs, cultural diversity, and the friendliness of the local community, were used to explain the attractive factors of Yogyakarta.

This qualitative approach, utilizing interviews, observations, and literature studies, allows the research to provide a deeper understanding of backpacker tourists' preferences and the factors that make Yogyakarta their favored destination in Indonesia.

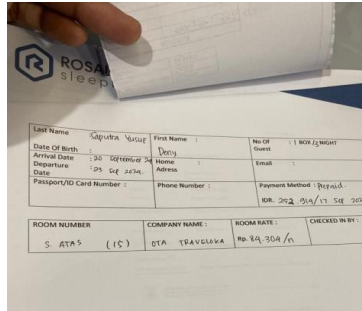
### **Results**

The findings of this research indicate that several key factors contribute to Yogyakarta being a favorite destination for backpacker tourists in Indonesia. These factors include affordable travel costs, cultural diversity, good infrastructure, the friendliness of the local community, and

easy access to various tourist attractions.

### Affordable Costs

Backpacker tourists perceive Yogyakarta as a highly budget-friendly destination. Based on the interviews, the majority of backpackers reported that the cost of living in Yogyakarta, including accommodation, food, and transportation, is more affordable compared to other areas in the region. Accommodation prices, particularly for hostels, sleep boxes, and guesthouses, are very competitive, and the abundance of street food options allows travelers to save on daily expenses.



Last Name : <u>Captain Gede</u>		First Name : <u></u>		No of Guests : <u>1 BOX / 2 NIGHT</u>	
Date Of Birth : <u>30 SEPTEMBER 2004</u>		Domicile : <u></u>		Email : <u></u>	
Arrival Date : <u>29 SEP 2024</u>		Departure Date : <u>30 SEP 2024</u>		Address : <u></u>	
Passport/ID Card Number : <u></u>		Phone Number : <u></u>		Payment Method : <u>Bayar di Tempat</u>	
ROOM NUMBER : <u>S. ATAS (15)</u>		COMPANY NAME : <u>OTA TRAVELERS</u>		ROOM RATE : <u>Rp 14.500 / 15</u>	
CHECKED IN BY : <u></u>					

**Figure 1.** Capsule Hotel Accommodation Prices Source : Writer, 2024

### Cultural Diversity and Tourist Attractions

Yogyakarta offers a rich variety of tourism experiences, ranging from the bustling yet serene nightlife of the city to the mountainous areas to the north, such as Kaliurang, known for its views of Mount Merapi, and the beaches in Gunung Kidul, like Indrayanti and Wediombo. Backpackers are drawn to this diversity, as it allows them to experience different types of adventures within a single region.

The culture of Yogyakarta, including festivals like Sekaten and the Yogyakarta Arts Festival, also serves as a unique attraction for tourists. These cultural events provide backpackers with opportunities to engage with local traditions and immerse themselves in the vibrant atmosphere of the city.



**Figure 2.** Festival Pasar Kangen Source : Writer, 2024

### **Good Tourism Infrastructure**

The tourism infrastructure in Yogyakarta is highly supportive of backpacker travelers. The availability of an efficient transportation system, including TransJogja buses, trains, online motorcycle taxis, and motorized rickshaws (becak motor), facilitates easy movement between various attractions.

Additionally, Yogyakarta boasts numerous travel agencies offering affordable tours, which are particularly popular among backpackers for exploring key attractions like Malioboro and Parangtritis Beach. This well-developed infrastructure not only enhances the overall travel experience but also ensures that backpackers can navigate the city and its surroundings with ease.



***Figure 3. Good Infrastructure***

*Source : Writer 2024*

### **Friendliness and Openness of the Local Community**

The backpackers interviewed described the people of Yogyakarta as friendly, helpful, and very open to foreign tourists. This positive attitude enhances the comfort and sense of safety for backpackers while in Yogyakarta. Many backpackers noted that the warmth of the local community made them feel welcomed, and interactions with residents added significant value to their overall experience. This welcoming environment not only fosters a sense of belonging

but also encourages cultural exchange, allowing backpackers to gain deeper insights into local



traditions and lifestyles.

**Figure 4.** Comfort in Buying Souvenirs and the Openness of the Local Community

*Source : Writer 2024*

### **Ease of Transportation Tickets and Accessibility**

The ease of obtaining transportation and attraction tickets is another reason why Yogyakarta stands out compared to other regions. Many areas offer free or low entrance fees, making it easier for backpacker tourists to plan their trips without facing significant administrative hurdles. Additionally, the abundance of low-cost flights to and from Yogyakarta makes it a popular starting point for backpackers exploring the region.

### **Comparison with Other Destinations in Indonesia**

Based on comparisons with Malang, Bandung, and Bali, Yogyakarta excels in connectivity and ease of access. While Bali and Malang can still be relatively expensive for backpacker transportation, Yogyakarta remains the top choice due to its more established infrastructure, proximity to the capital city of Jakarta, and a wider variety of easily accessible tourist destinations. Bali, particularly in areas like Denpasar, Canggu, and Nusa Penida, competes with Yogyakarta in terms of natural beauty; however, challenges related to accessibility and less integrated infrastructure give Yogyakarta an edge among backpackers.

### **Social and Environmental Impacts**

Participatory observations indicate significant social and environmental impacts at popular tourist destinations frequented by backpackers, such as Borobudur Temple and Malioboro. The increasing number of tourists has led to heightened waste production and pressure on local infrastructure. While the local community benefits economically from the rise in tourism, they also face challenges related to environmental degradation and cultural

preservation. For instance, overtourism in Malioboro has resulted in traffic congestion, both for pedestrians and vehicles, as well as increased waste volume.

The results of this study reveal that Yogyakarta has successfully become a favorite destination for backpacker tourists due to a combination of affordable costs, cultural diversity, good infrastructure, and the friendliness of the local community. However, the negative impacts of increased tourism on the environment and local society pose challenges that need to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of tourism in Yogyakarta.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The results of this research indicate that Yogyakarta has successfully positioned itself as a top destination for backpacker tourists in Indonesia due to various factors, such as affordable costs, cultural diversity, adequate infrastructure, the friendliness of the local community, and ease of access. In this discussion, we will examine the implications of these factors, the challenges faced by Yogyakarta, and provide a comparative perspective with neighboring countries.

### **Competitive Advantages of Yogyakarta as a Backpacker Destination**

Yogyakarta clearly excels in terms of affordable living costs. This aligns with Cohen's (2003) research, which identifies the main appeal for backpacker tourists as their ability to manage expenses and save on travel budgets. The presence of many inexpensive accommodations, efficient transportation, and low-cost street food options allows Yogyakarta to maintain its position as a popular destination.

The cultural diversity and tourist attractions in Yogyakarta provide backpackers with opportunities to experience a range of adventures in one location, from the nightlife in Malioboro to outdoor activities in Kaliurang. This contributes to the perception of Yogyakarta as a "complete" destination for backpackers seeking varied experiences, consistent with Hampton's (2013) findings that authentic experiences and destination diversity are key attractions for backpackers.

### **The Role of Good Tourism Infrastructure**

Well-developed tourism infrastructure is a crucial factor in Yogyakarta's success as a backpacker destination. An efficient transportation system and low-cost flights facilitate tourist mobility. Hutchison (2016) also emphasizes that ease of transportation plays a significant role in influencing backpacker preferences. In contrast, while Bali and Malang offer compelling attractions, issues related to accessibility and underdeveloped infrastructure often present challenges.



The availability of numerous travel agencies and affordable tour options also enables backpackers to easily access popular attractions in Yogyakarta. This infrastructure allows for well-planned yet flexible travel, catering to the spontaneous and independent nature of backpackers.

### **Comparison with Neighboring Countries in Southeast Asia**

While Vietnam and Thailand offer similar natural beauty and cultural experiences, Indonesia, particularly Yogyakarta, still holds an advantage in terms of connectivity and tourism facilities. Easy accessibility through various transportation options, both domestic and international, makes Indonesia an attractive starting point for many backpackers. This is further supported by the ease of visa acquisition provided by the Indonesian government, simplifying entry compared to some neighboring countries.

However, competition from neighboring countries like Vietnam and Thailand remains a challenge for Yogyakarta. Vietnam, with lower costs and increasingly popular attractions, serves as an alternative for backpackers seeking similar experiences at more affordable prices. Thailand, particularly Phuket, offers unique beach and cultural attractions; however, less integrated infrastructure poses challenges in attracting backpackers.

### **Social and Environmental Impacts**

The increasing number of backpackers generates positive economic impacts for the local community, particularly in informal sectors such as hostels, food stalls, and transportation services. However, the social and environmental repercussions arising from mass tourism are pressing issues that need attention. Observations indicate that areas like Koh Phi Phi face significant environmental stress, with rising waste levels and coral reef degradation due to overtourism. This aligns with Cohen's (2011) findings that, although low-cost, backpacker tourism can lead to serious environmental impacts if not well managed.

In addition to environmental challenges, social issues such as cultural shifts and potential conflicts between tourists and local communities arise. The presence of large numbers of backpackers can alter social and economic values in local communities, which may not always be prepared to adapt to rapid changes brought about by tourism. Addressing these challenges requires effective management efforts, including stricter regulations on tourist numbers and education about responsible tourism.

### **Implications for Sustainable Tourism Development**

To maintain tourism sustainability in Yogyakarta, strategies focused on environmental preservation and community empowerment need to be adopted. Sustainable tourism

development can involve measures such as limiting tourist numbers in specific areas, implementing conservation fees to support environmental maintenance, and involving local communities in tourism management. According to Goodwin (2011), balancing economic growth, environmental preservation, and community well-being is key to ensuring that tourism can deliver long-term benefits.

### **Management Strategies and Innovations for Future Tourism**

Yogyakarta should develop innovations in tourism that not only focus on increasing tourist numbers but also enhance the quality of tourist experiences. This includes introducing community-based tourism programs, where travelers can engage more deeply with local cultural activities and contribute directly to the local economy.

Additionally, leveraging technology to enhance the backpacker experience is essential, such as developing travel information apps that help backpackers access information about sustainable destinations, eco-friendly accommodation options, and alternative quieter travel routes.

Overall, Yogyakarta has successfully built its image as a favorite destination for backpackers through a combination of affordable costs, cultural diversity, and good infrastructure. However, to sustain its position and address existing challenges, a more sustainable approach to tourism management is necessary. The government and stakeholders must collaborate to ensure that tourism, including the backpacker segment, delivers long-term benefits for both the community and the environment without compromising the attractions that make Yogyakarta popular on a global scale.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This research found that Thailand has become a favorite destination for backpackers in Southeast Asia due to a combination of supporting factors such as affordable costs, cultural diversity, good tourism infrastructure, local hospitality, and ease of access. These factors allow backpackers to experience authentic and varied adventures within a budget, making Thailand a highly attractive choice compared to its neighboring countries.

The good infrastructure, particularly in terms of transportation and accommodation, facilitates backpackers in exploring various tourist attractions in Thailand. Additionally, the diversity of attractions, ranging from major cities to mountainous regions and beautiful beaches, enables travelers to enjoy a wide range of activities. Support from the friendly local community also plays a crucial role in creating a pleasant experience for tourists.

However, this research also identified challenges related to the social and environmental

impacts of the increasing number of backpacker tourists. Popular destinations such as Koh Phi Phi face environmental issues, such as pollution and coral reef degradation, due to mass tourism. Furthermore, the social and economic changes brought about by tourism also exert pressure on local communities.

To ensure sustainable tourism in Thailand, a more responsible approach focused on environmental conservation and community well-being is needed. Measures such as limiting the number of tourists in certain destinations, better waste management, and involving local communities in tourism management should be adopted. Community-based tourism and the promotion of more sustainable tourism practices also need to be developed to ensure that the economic benefits are felt evenly and do not compromise Thailand's natural and cultural attractions.

With appropriate management strategies, Thailand can continue to maintain its position as a favorite destination for backpackers while ensuring that tourism remains sustainable and provides long-term benefits to local communities and the environment.

#### DAFTAR PUSTAKA

- Cohen, E. (2003). Backpacking in Southeast Asia: A history of travel and tourism in Thailand and Vietnam. *Tourism Management*, 24(5), 609–621. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(03\)00039-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(03)00039-3)
- Cohen, E. (2011). Backpacking: A new form of adventure tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 38(2), 397–401. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2010.11.006>
- Goodwin, H. (2011). *Taking responsibility for tourism*. Responsible Tourism Partnership. <https://responsibletourismpartnership.org/>
- Hampton, M. P. (2013). Backpacking tourism: An emerging form of adventure tourism. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 15(1), 15–25. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jtr.882>
- Hutchison, N. (2016). The backpacker experience: A study of Australian backpackers in Thailand. *Tourism Analysis*, 21(3), 345–359. <https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14751427564004>
- O'Reilly, K. (2006). Placing backpacker tourism: The role of space and place in the backpacking experience. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(4), 942–959. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2006.06.005>
- Picard, M. (1996). Cultural tourism in Bali: The new tourism in Asia. *Tourism Management*, 17(1), 31–39. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177\(95\)00038-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0261-5177(95)00038-2)
- Richards, G., & Wilson, J. (2004). The global nomad: Backpacker travel in theory and practice. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 2(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14766820408550180>

- Scheyvens, R. (2002). Backpacker tourism and sustainable development. *Tourism and Development: Concepts, Issues and Practices*, 1(1), 3–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1108/978178635163-0011>
- Teo, P., & Leong, L. (2006). Tourism development in Vietnam: An emerging destination for backpackers. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 6(2), 110–124.  
<https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.thr.6040050>