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## TIMOR-LESTE: LAND OF DISCOVERY

Daniel J. Groshong / Tayo Photo Group Ltd.



Hong Kong-based photographer Daniel J. Groshong spent two years traveling around Timor-Leste relying on the hospitality of its people and photographing the beautiful scenery of this Southeast Asian island. The resulting photographs have been compiled in this beautiful book. Divided into Sea, Coastal, Inland and Mountains sections, the work encompasses the full breadth of Timor-Leste's dramatic landscape and its amazingly resilient population.



The book clearly reflects Groshong's personal relationship with Timor-Leste (also known as East Timor). Groshong first traveled to the former Portuguese colony in 1999 while it was under siege from the Indonesian army and its supporters. He was there to photograph the referendum on autonomy from Indonesia, and its violent aftermath, but found the beauty of the region and its people so compelling that he spent several years afterward exploring and photographing the area. Timor-Leste lies 400km north of Darwin, Australia, and on its northwest side is bordered by Indonesia's West Timor. Since decolonization in 1974, the Indonesian army and local guerilla forces have been fighting over the tiny island. Now the world's newest democracy, with the world's lowest GDP, at press time Timor-Leste was facing yet another leadership challenge and a crucial ballot. Groshong, a veteran war photographer, has captured the island's ongoing struggles but has provided a hopeful perspective.

The book features an introduction by President Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao as well as text by former US President Bill Clinton and Timor-Leste's exiled resistance leader (and 1996 Nobel Peace Prize winner) Jose Ramos-Horta, all of which provides useful background on the nation's political history. While the book at times seems to veer somewhat toward the tourist pamphlet – "Visit Timor-Leste!" – it is Groshong's passionate commitment to these people and their struggle for democracy that earns it serious consideration beyond its pictures of sunny, sandy beaches. "Land of Discovery" is a valuable book providing insight into a little-known and often misunderstood nation. – Alexandra Carroll