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Balinese Bliss

Bali, 1 Day

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Guide Description

AUTHOR NOTE: There's a lot of ways to live lushly in Bali; escaping city bustle and immersing yourself in local culture is certainly one of the best. This guide takes you away from tourist- and traffic-clogged South Bali and elevates you to the gentle foothills of genteel Ubud. Aside from boasting some of the best arts and crafts on the island, Ubud is home to a host of high-end resorts and spas, as well as one of the best restaurants in Southeast Asia. No wonder celebrities in the know choose Ubud as their preferred paradise. Hey, you may even rub shoulders with some as you soak in the splendor of Bali.

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Itinerary Overview

things to do
restaurants
hotels
nightlife

Day 1 - Bali

DAY NOTE: You'll wake to the sun slanting through the windows of your private villa at Amandari. Maybe you'll take a dip in your private pool, or sip coffee on your private terrace. You could do just fine letting the expert concierge book customized tours for you, or you could have them arrange a car for you and hit the sights yourself. Head into the center of Ubud for some of the best shopping on the island. Browse through galleries like Toko, Toko East and Okrakartini for pieces to bring home; these high-end boutiques are more than happy to ship purchases internationally.

Next you'll cruise over to another excellent resort, the Four Seasons Sayan, for a relaxed lunch at their Ayung Terrace restaurant, enjoying the river view as you lazily feast. No extravagant day would be complete without some primo pampering, and Nur Salon is the preferred place to get it. Get a Balinese massage, healing treatment or soak in a milk bath. For a little of nature's lushness, your next stop in the Botanic Gardens, where you can leisurely stroll through a tropical wonderland.

As far as first-rate meals go, you can't do better than Mozaic. Hailed by critics as the best restaurant in Southeast Asia, you'll languidly lavish in French, Asian and fusion delights in an upscale casual atmosphere. At the end of your epic dining experience, retire back to your villa. If all this luxury has worn you out, you can take a relaxing soak in your sunken marble bathtub. Ah…

Amandari
Modern Balinese Accommodation in the Middle of the Jungle

Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan
Lush Resort by the River

Nur Salon
Massages, Balinese style

Botanic Garden
Green Part of Bali

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Day 1 - Bali

QUICK NOTE

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contact:
tel: +62 361 97 5333
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http://www.amanresorts.com

location:
Kedewatan, Ubud
Bali 80571

1 Amandari

DESCRIPTION: Amandari means Peaceful Spirits, and the location of this luxurious resort will undoubtedly help guests attain such state. Deep in the highland hills of Ubud, this tranquil resort overlooks the Ayung River gorge, terraced rice paddies and the panoramic rainforest. The decor is earth-toned traditional Balinese, with 30 free-standing suites each boasting their own private garden courtyard and or swimming pool. A two-storey restaurant offers Western and Indonesian dishes for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Facilities include a tennis court, a library, outdoor patio and bali, as well as spa, beauty room, sauna and marble steam room. © NileGuide

editor

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http://www.fourseasons.com/sayan/

location:
Sayan Ubud Gianyar
Ubud 80361

2 Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan

DESCRIPTION: This resort 35 kilometers northeast of the Ngurah Rai Airport lies on luxuriant terraced rice slopes. To enter the main resort, guests cross a solid teak bridge over a dramatic gorge to an elliptical lotus pond, which rests on the roof of the resort's three-level central building. Overlooking the Ayung River, the beautifully-appointed accommodation includes large suites in the main building, one- and two-bedroom private villas and the Royal Villa with three large bedrooms. All 36 free-standing villas feature spacious gardens and a private diving pool. © wcities.com

photo courtesy of Four Seasons

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contact:
tel: +62 361 97 5352
fax: +62 361 97 4622

location:
Jalan Hanoman No 28
Bali 80571

hours:
8a-8p daily. (Appointments necessary).

3 Nur Salon

DESCRIPTION: Look for plants with eggshells on them at the entrance of this Balinese-style haven. Aside from haircuts, cream baths and facials, you can get a mandi lulur or herbal massage. After an hour's massage with oil, the nimble-fingered masseurs rub you down with herbs and yogurt to exfoliate the skin. Lastly, relax in a tub of warm water with flower petals floating everywhere. All for a mere IDR95,000! © wcities.com

contact:
tel: +62 361 97 0951
fax: +62 361 97 1165
http://www.botanicgardenbali.com/

location:
Kutuh Kaja
Bali 80571

hours:
Daily 8a-6p

4 Botanic Garden

DESCRIPTION: The Botanic Garden at bali offers a beautiful, natural attraction for the Island visitors. Along with the abundant tropical flora and fauna, the garden also includes the fern garden, bamboo grove, the labyrinth maze, water lily pond and much more. One can try organic food at the cafe. The garden is an ideal get-away from the hustle and bustle of the city life. You can just wander around for hours or practice yoga in the meditation court, just being here is refreshing enough. The garden's amphitheater is rented out for weddings and other special events as well. © wcities.com

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Bali Snapshot

Local Info

Bali, the famed Island of the Gods, is one of the most popular tourist destinations on the planet. It has something for everybody – from lush rice-paddies, sandy white beaches and great surfs to mesmerizing dance performances, rocking nightlife and some of the most beautiful sunsets ever seen. With such a varied landscape and colorful culture, it's no wonder why more than 2.7 millions(2009 figure) travelers flock to Bali every year.

Start in the south of Bali, where tourism and developments are largely concentrated. The area of Kuta is bustling with backpacker accommodations and bars serving cheap beer. Just around the corner, the manic whirl of Kuta transforms into the affordable luxury of Seminyak, where hip night clubs sit next to posh restaurants serving gourmet treats at surprisingly affordable prices.

A little further south is the Nusa Dua, Pecatu and Jimbaran area, home to numerous resorts and luxurious private villas. Spend the day enjoying the sandy white beach of Dreamland in Pecatu, followed by a relaxing dinner of grilled seafood served right by the beach at Jimbaran. Along the way, be sure to indulge in a massage by the beach or a rejuvenating spa session. The area is also home to one of the most spectacular temple in all of Bali, Pula Luhur Uluwatu, which is perched majestically on the edge of a steep cliff.

Travelers looking to experience the natural and cultural charms of Bali would enjoy the hilly landscape of Ubud. Here, ancient temples and natural beauty are the main attractions, as well as some of Bali's most popular restaurants serving gourmet treats amidst the backdrop of lush rice paddies and volcanic mountains. Adrenaline seekers can try whitewater rafting down the River Ayung or Telaga Waja, or even a hike to the top of Mount Agung, passing by the Besakih Mother Temple on the way.

On the northern coast of Bali is Lovina, a small resort-style area where developments has stalled. They are a good three to four hours away from the main tourism area, but well worth a visit for their famed dolphin trips. Along the way you can also see other natural attractions such as Lake Batur, Lake Bratan and Buleleng National Park. The Kintamani area is not far off, a highland area featuring an active volcano and serene Lake Batur. Here you can enjoy a relaxing soak in a natural hot-springs at various affordable resorts, or pay a visit to Pura Ulun Danu Batur, one of the six most important temples in Bali.

Bali also has a number of small, pristine islands worth a visit, such as Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan. Day tours can be booked through your hotel and usually include hotel pick-up and return trip, buffet lunch and a host of water-based activities.

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History

Bali's fascinating and spiritual culture began thousands of years ago and remains authentic and vibrant today, even with the influx of a burgeoning tourist industry. As much as can be determined, the indigenous people, calledBali Aga, practiced animism. Today, the residents of Tenganan Pegringsingan, Trunyan Village and the few other remainingBali Aga villages still preserve their age-old beliefs, lending visitors a glimpse into the past.

The oldest artifacts unearthed on Bali originate from around 1000 BCE. Other pieces indicate that the Bronze Age here started sometime before 300 BCE. Bedulu Archaeological Museum displays so me obscure early Balinese history, while the stupendous 11th-century rock carvings at Gunung Kawi and Goa Gaja remain to capture the imagination from another time. The Yeh Pulu showcases some of Bali's largest relics, many from the 14th century.

Hinduism began its influence in Bali when Airlangga(1019-1042) took the throne on nearby Java. Airlangga's mother lived in Bali at the time, cultivating a strong connection between the two islands and an exchange that resulted in the blending of Hindism, Javanese shamanism and the animistic religion then practiced in Bali.

In 1343, the Majapahit Empire, lead by Gajah Mada, first invaded Bali after being driven out of Java by the Muslims. This event roughly coincided with the construction of Pura Masopahit. The great King Dalem Bedaulu and his mighty minister Kebo Iwa were then ruling from a base known today as the simple village of Bedulu, east of Ubud. The Kebo Iwa Statue now rests within Pura Gaduh.

After ousting King Dalem, Gajah Mada reigned and became a revered holy man. Scholars, dancers, artists and many others immigrated from Java, leading to a massive influx of Javanese Hindu culture to the small remote island.

By 1710, Bali was governed by the mighty Gelgel Kingdom, whose seat of power had moved to Klungkung. Kerta Gosa, or the hall of justice, Klungkung Royal Palace and Pura Dasar stand as silent testimony to the kingdom's glorious past. Pura Penataran Jero Agung, the most sacred temple in the area, occupies the grounds of a former Gelgel Palace.

In 1846, the Dutch military invaded the island from the north, near present-day Singaraja. Much later in 1906, they landed on the southern coast, near Sanur Beach, and moved into Denpasar. On 20 September 1906, the three princes of Badung realized they would be defeated. Instead of surrendering, they opted for apuputan, a suicidal fight to the end. Dressed in their finest clothes and jewelry, wielding gold krises, the rajah and his court ran out to face an honorable death. Puputan Square in the center of Denpasar co mmemorates this clash, where 4,000 Balinese lost their lives.

The Dutch then marched to Tabanan, and kingdom after kingdom fell to their hands. The final battle in April 1908 resulted in anotherpuputan, this time with the mighty rajah of Klungkung and the island yielded completely to Dutch rule. Museum Semarajaya recounts this 1908puputan and holds other artifacts from this turbulent period in Bali's history. The Dutch dominion over Bali lasted until Indonesia succumbed to Japanese control in World War II.

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The early 1900s brought another, more benign invasion: tourism. Bali's exotic beauty and culture began to draw people to the island as Dutch colonialism took hold. Some, including German painter Walter Spies, whose home now forms part of Hotel Tjampuhan Ubu d, decided to settle here. Spies and other foreign artists helped spur the growth of Balinese art, which was originally produced mainly to decorate temples and palaces.

Local artists began to realize that paintings were an individual art form that could be produced and sold. The Museum of Fine Arts houses many works representing this new era in Balinese painting. Unfortunately, the beginnings of tourism stalled with the onset of World War II and the Japanese takeover. Goa Jepang and the Japanese shipwreck off the coast of Amed offer insight into life during the Japanese occupation.

On August 17, 1945, following the end of the war, modern Indonesia's founding father, Soekarno, declared the country's independence. The Dutch initially refused to recognize Indonesia as a sovereign nation, inciting yet anotherpuputan. A Balinese resistance group, armed only with sharpened bamboo poles, was utterly destroyed by the Dutch in the battle of Marga on 20 November 1946. The Margarana Monument and Museum, standing on the site of this devastating combat, honors the fighters who sacrificed their lives. Ngurah Rai Airport was named after their fearless leader.

Even after gaining independence, Bali remained an unsettled land. The violent eruption of Mount Agung in 1963 killed thousands, wiped out large areas and gave many Balinese little choice but to move to other parts of the country. Then in 1965, following an attempted communist coup, Bali witnessed some of the most brutal anti-communist killings in the country. With independence, the island also had to conform to the government's decree that all Indonesians must worship one God. Pura Jagatnatha, dedicated to the supreme god, provided an answer to this order.

The second Indonesian president, Suharto, saw Bali as a potential travel destination and reopened it to tourism in the late 1960s. One of the first big hotels built was The Grand Bali Beach in Sanur. The influx of tourists and their money helped pay for vast improvements to infrastructure, including better roads, schools and health care. Artists flocked to Ubud to study traditional Balinese art forms, backpackers came to explore the natural beauty, and surfers began to recognize the island's many world-class surf breaks, such as Uluwatu and Padang-Padang.

Modern Bali continues to attract all kinds of travelers. Some of the world's greatest hotels and resorts lie on the island. Its people continue to struggle over the choices between modernization and tourism and their rich cultural traditions. Although it has suffered some adverse social and environmental effects of tourism and rapid development, Bali's cultural heritage has withstood the test of time and remains little changed today.

Text by Darren Fuller and Teresa Serangeli
Photo by Leonardo Wisnoe Marmanto
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Hotel Insights

The seemingly endless spectrum of holiday options in Bali indirectly translates to a vast assortment of accommodations. Family hotels with recreational facilities for children, first-class resort properties, secluded villas with private pools and low-end guest houses cover every preference, need and budget. One common characteristic lies in the attention to outdoor areas and beautifully landscaped gardens, which even the smallest and cheapest establishments take pride in. Furthermore, as nearly every place features a swimming pool, beach front location need not necessarily be a deciding factor.

South Bali

South Bali, the tourist hotbed, comprises several areas: Jimbaran, Tuban, Kuta, Legain, Seminyak, Canggu, Kerobokan and Tanah Lot to the west, Ulu watu to the south, and Sanur, Tanjong Benoa, Nusa Dua and Candidasa to the east.

In Jimbaran, The Four Seasons Resort Bali excels in the design, decor and privacy of its elegant villas. Ritz Carlton Bali, with its impressive cliff-top setting. The coastal Bali Inter-Continental boasts the bells and whistles of a five-star resort. Families on smaller budgets tend to favor the Keraton Bali, also facing the sapphire sea. Yet more beach front hotels dot the Tuban coast. Holiday Inn Resort Balihai and Kartika Plaza Beach Hotel are among the choices that cater to large groups. With its smaller rooms, Hotel Santika Beach gears more to coupl es. At the end of Tuban next to Kuta Square stands the lovely Kuta Paradiso, with several swimming pools, including a lap pool, that are linked by waterfalls. If it's more your speed, LTI-Patra Jasa serves backpackers just fine.

Kuta, although primarily an area where the younger folk gravitate, provides a myriad of charming hotels suitable for all types of travelers. Jet set types check in at Hard Rock Hotel Bali, while families head for Bali Dynasty Resort, Ramada Bintang Bali and Alam Kul Kul. Sahid Bali Hotel and The White Rose make excellent choices for visitors on an intermediate budget.

Skirting the Legian shoreline, Bali Intan Cottages has been enjoying regular patronage for many years. Other recommended establishments in the area include Mastapa Garden, with shopping and restaurants at its doorstep, Casa Padma, a more placid alternative near the beach, and the Mabisa Beachside Hotel, which offers very modest rates.

Seminyak brings together some exceptional hotels. Situated close to plush restaurants, The Oberoi, a longtime favorite, and The Legian, a relatively new competitor, live up to their deluxe status, flaunting well-appointed, sea-facing rooms. Farther west lies Balisani Suites, a moderately-priced property fashioned after a typical Balinese village. The Hotel Vila Lumbung sports a similar design against a backdrop of verdant rice paddies and, like Villa Rumah Manis, makes for a peaceful retreat. In

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Canggu, Hotel Tugu Bali stands out by furnishing uniquely decorated rooms with authentic antiques, while Villa Seri in Kerobokan is a more affordable option.

Le Meridian Nirwana Golf and Spa Resort sits on the palisades at the southwest coast, commanding an awesome panorama of the Indian Ocean and Pura Tanah Lot. Visitors may choose between private rooms and bungalows as they enjoy the golf course, hydrotherapy spa and more.

On the southern tip not far from Pura Luhur Uluwatu temple, the Bali Cliff Resort beckons visitors to escape the main tourist areas and the rest of the island.

Sanur is home to two of Bali's most exclusive hotel complexes, Radisson Suites Bali and Waka Maya. On a slightly lower rung, Bali Hyatt Hotel, Puri Santrian, The Grand Bali Beach and La Taverna all provide top-notch amenities. Tamu Kami, Sativa Sanur Cottages and Natour Sindhu Beach supply less extravagant units, while basic lodgings such as Puri Kelapa Garden and Griya Santrian maintain reasonably clean and comfortable rooms, coupled with friendly service.

Nusa Dua and Tanjong Benoa play host to the splendor and luxury of the crème de la crème: Grand Hyatt, Novotel Benoa, Nusa Dua Beach Hotel and Spa, Sheraton Nusa Indah Resort, Sheraton Laguna Nusa Dua and Amanusa. Delivering perhaps better value, Melia Bali Villas, Aston Bali Resort, Bali Desa Suites, Bali Hilton, and Nikko Bali Resort also enjoy numerous accolades. Hotel Putri Bali and Melia Benoa are in the medium price bracket.

Candidasa, gateway to east Bali, embraces several opulent accommodations, such as Amankila and The Serai. If money poses an issue, opt for Kubu Bali Candidasa in the mid-range or Hotel Rama Candidasa for even lower prices.

A more unique option within the region of Karangasem in Sidemen village is the wonderful, relaxing, and eco-friendly Sacred Mountain Sanctuary.

Central Bali

Overlooking the Ayung River, The Chedi in Payan gan and the Four Seasons Resort in Sayan pride themselves in their idyllic environs and world-class deluxe standards. Within and around Ubud, the luxurious Amandari, Pita Maha, Champlung Sari and Waka di Ume take up a significant slice of the upscale market, while Hotel Tjampuhan is it slightly easier on the pocket. For a mid-scale hotel, Puri Padi Resort is a good bet, but those on a shoestring budget should try Taman Sakti, Pertiwi Bungalows.

Close to Lake Bratan at Bedugul, the affordable Pacung Mountain Resort is nestled in pleasant and cool surroundings with sweeping mountain views.

North of Bali, Lovina Beach and its trademark black sand has become a perennial haunt for many. Here, the midrange Hotel Aneka Lovina provides the perfect escape from the city bustle.

Luxury Villas

Discerning, well-heeled vacationers make private villas their ultimate home, at least temporarily. One of the most delightful is Begawan Giri Estate at Payagan. Fronting the Ayung River, Begawan encom passes five lavish units secluded in eight hectares of garden. Other prominent villas include Wantilan Golf Villas at Nusa Dua, The Pavilions at Sanur and The Villas at Seminyak.

Island Retreats

Nusa Lembongan lies about 20 kilometers across the Badung Strait. On this island, one can choose either Nusa Lembongan Resort- on a headland with 180-degree views- or the more modest Waka Nusa Resort.

Text by Catherine Burge Photo by Leonardo Wisnoe Marmanto
©

Restaurants Insights

Dining in Bali often kindles a desire for cultural immersion. Food aside, one should consider the crowd, setting and atmosphere for a truly exotic experience. Furthermore, the variety of spices and different methods of food preparation reflect the richness of Balinese culinary heritage.

Among the island's traditional delights, the roast suckling pig ranks as the most celebrated. Known asguling celeng orbabi guling, this delicacy is prepared by stuffing a young pig with chopped herbs and ground spices before putting it on a spit.Betutu bebek, another signature dish, also proves popular with foreign taste buds. The locals, however, generally reserve this spicy broiled duck for ritual feasts.

Kuta, Legian& Seminyak

Kuta and the surrounding areas provide plenteous opportunities to graze the world via a bold palate. Sample Japanese fare at Ryoshi or Take, excellent vegetarian food in lush surroundings at Aromas, authentic Indian flavors at Gateway of India, top-notch Thai cuisine at Kin Khao, and Chinese kitchen at Bale-Bali. The menu at TJ's leans toward California-style Mexican food, while Mamma Lucia Ristorante whips up good Italian meals in an old-world atmosphere.

Ku De Ta for their diverse selections from around the world or Bali Qui for a less upscale alternative. The classy Kori Restaurant features a fusion of Western and Balinese cuisine. For Indonesian fare, few in the area can hold a candle to Made's Warung. Alternatively, venture into the smaller eateries to sample everyday options at affordable prices. One can easily recognize Padang food by the prepared dishes displayed in the window fronts. For light snacks over a good cup of coffee, drop by Moka Patisserie Francais, Krakatau or Kopi Pot in Kuta.

The Seminyak/Legian area has made itself a name in Bali's night life scene, sporting a more fashionable and vibrant flair than South Kuta. Teeming with flashy expatriates, Goa 2001 is a case in point. Cafe Luna and Cafe Del Mar, a psychedelic groove bar with a Latin accent, are among the highly-acclaimed drinking spots. Q Bar and Cafe, the island's alternative bar, are two of many watering holes concentrated along Jalan Double Six and Jalan Dhyana Pura(better known as Jalan Gado Gado). In

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Kuta, Macaroni Club or the classy nearby Nero make for some good wine-sipping and people-watching.

The Beat, published biweekly and distributed free in bars and restaurants across South Bali, contains a treasure trove of information on dining and nightlife entertainment.

The kaleidoscope of haute cuisine in Sanur extends to independent restaurants, providing nourishment for tourists and affluent Bali residents alike. Mezzanine Restaurant& Bar and Spago Restaurant& Bar specialize in Mediterranean cuisine, while Village Ristorante Italiano serves up Italian meals. Another branch of Mamma Lucia Ristorante sits along Jalan Danau Tamblingan. Long-surviving favorite Cafe Batujimbar presents a hearty international menu with some local specialties, as does Balimoon. Beachside options include Bonsai Cafe and Mango Bar& Restaurant, which provides nightly live music.

For some budget repast, try Ketut's Warung on Jalan Danau Poso and neighboring Warung Blanjong, which serve up classic Indonesian dishes with a smattering of international flavors.

Jimbaran

Holding one of Bali's oldest fishing villages, the Jimbaran area at the southern tip of the island enthralls even the most persnickety of seafood connoisseurs. Slip into comfortable clothing and footwear, then step into the sand-floored traditional food stalls. Fukutaro 4, Kafe Bagus, Cenggiling Cafe and Kafe Menega on Muaya Beach, and Cafe Roma and Ramayana Cafe on Kedonganan Beach all carry a menu of grilled fish, prawns, squid, clams and lobsters, complemented by spicy sautéed water spinach calledplecing kangkung. Be there early for dinner to catch the exhilarating sunset!

Ubud

Restaurants in Ubud tend to function also as hangouts for regulars. There is no rush to order, to pay, or to serve. Casa Luna imparts a casual ambiance, enabling patrons to appreciate Balinese artworks and the eclectic menu it offers. Doubling also as an art gallery, the Three Monkeys features a good mix of international and local cuisine.

Other establishments provide a feast along with enchanting natural views as visual desserts. Indus slants toward spicy Asian dishes and is sought for its magnificent views, whereas Tepi Sawah in Peliatan and the secluded Kampung Cafe in Tegalalang watch over spectacular rice fields.

Plenty of other established names in the area gratify discriminating diners. Sink your teeth into fusion delights at the elegant Ary's Warung, or dine in a picturesque setting with gamelan music at Cafe Lotus, just opposite. Then head on to Jazz Cafe farther up the road for some cocktails, billiards and live music.

A delectable selection of Balinese home cooking awaits at Batan Waru.Betutu bebek and other good finds can be relished at Dirty Duck Diner or Murni's Warung. The latter, in particular, with its lush view of the Campuhan Gorge and scrumptious food, has received great commendation since its inauguration in the mid-1970s.

Nusa Dua& Tanjung Benoa

Many esteemed restaurants in Nusa Dua are housed within hotels, the area being one of Bali's most exclusive tourist enclaves. Salsa Verde at Grand Hyatt scores for Mediterranean cuisine and Sorrento at Melia Bali for Italian. Matsuri, at the Galeria Nusa Dua shopping complex, makes brisk business with offerings of sushi, noodles and sashimi. Get away from the hotels by savoring tasty Mexican food in festive surroundings at Poco Loco.

On Jalan Pratama in Tanjung Benoa, Bumbu Bali showcases a refreshing approach to dining: guests get to shop for raw materials at the local-produce and fish market and try their hand at native cooking. Renowned chef Heinz von Holzen leads these interesting classes, taking participants behind the restaurant scene into the Balinese kitchen.
©

Nightlife Insights

No one leaves Bali without hearing the euphoria in its music and glimpsing the elaborate sense of history surrounding its culture. From the very basic sound of thekulkul, a bamboo percussion instrument used to call for a village meeting, to the elaborate tones of thegamelan, the air reverberates with traditional entertainment.

Balinese Dance

In every Balinese cultural or spiritual ceremony, dancing serves to balance the order of the cosmos and act as a bridge between man and god.Barong, portraying a victorious battle of good against evil, illustrates the opposing forces in the Balinese religious sphere.

Ramayana ballet, one of Bali's most famous dances, r eenacts the kidnap and rescue of the beautiful Sita, with forest animals prancing about in a display of emotion and frantic energy. Langit Theater at The Ritz-Carlton, Pasar Senggol at the Grand Hyatt and most other hotel restaurants stage similar performances to accompany lavish buffet dinners.

Legong, a quintessential demonstration of Balinese femininity and grace, andbaris, its masculine equivalent, have also garnered worldwide interest. Inkebyar duduk, the dancer sits cross-legged almost throughout, emphasizing hand, wrist and torso movements and powerful facial expressions. Apart from most major hotels, independent restaurants such as Canangsari Restaurant in Sanur, Angsa Putih Restaurant in Nusa Dua and Bumbu Bali in Tanjung Benoa also present an opportunity for gastronomic indulgence and artistic appreciation of these dances at one place.

Kecak, originally part of the sacredsanghyang dance, involves some 100 performers dramatizing the fight between Rawana and Hanoman from theRamayana epic. Tourists enjoy this fascinating show at cultural centers within villages such as Batubulan or, on some evenings, along Jalan Bypass Ngurah Rai Sanur.

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Dances also grace ritual festivals in temples. Drop by Pura Desa and Pura Puseh Batuan on the first or 15th of the month to catch the ancientgambuh dance drama or Pura Taman Pule for the rarewayang wong mask dance on every Kuningan holiday. To gain a sense of Balinese cultural arts beyond an introductory performance, sign up for courses on traditional dance and music at the Language and Culture Center or Cudamani.

Art Museums

Previously serving only ritual functions and as adornment for temples and palaces, Balinese art has today gained a rightful place in the international arena. Agung Rai Museum of Art houses a remarkable private collection of works by Balinese, Javanese and foreign artists, including the highly acclaimed Walter Spies. The well-established Museum of Fine Arts and Neka Museum, Ubud's cultural landmark, feature unique settings and distinctive collections that truly reflect their individuality.

On a more modest scale, Museum Rudana showcases a laudable selection of paintings, ranging from 19th century pieces to contemporary ones. Seniwati Gallery displays artwork by women from Indonesia and beyond. Time permitting, one can also make a day trip to the villages of Batuan and Mas to observe native painters, woodcarvers and mask-makers at work.

Culture enthusiasts should make a point to drop by the Taman Werdi Budaya. This commodious art center houses several quality galleries and provides an outlet of expression for various art forms. It also hosts the annual Bali Arts Festival.

Wayang Kulit

The celebratedwayang kulit, Indonesia's oldest performing art, retells the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. Thedalang(puppeteer) sits cross-legged, maneuvering brightly painted puppets that appear as silhouettes against a screen lit from behind by a lamp. Oka Kartini's and Wayang Calon Arang hold regularwayang kulit, as does the Pura Jagatnatha twice a month on full and new moons.

Night Life

The pulsating party scene runs every night in southern Bali, concentrating in Kuta and Seminyak. The quieter areas of Ubud, Sanur and Nusa Dua convey a more sedate atmosphere for a drink and some small talk.

Night life in the heart of Kuta undoubtedly begins with the ever-popular Hard Rock Cafe Bali. As the night rolls on, the party-goers gravitate toward Jalan Legian, where the longtime favorite Peanuts and Sari Club rock with blaring music. The Irish pub Paddy's also turns into a discotheque at night, while the Apache Reggae Bar(near Miller Time Cafe) pulses with live reggae music. Espresso Bar and Pizzeria and the relatively new Bounty One lie among the many other nightclubs strewn across the area.

Seminyak contains a cluster of trendy nightspots frequented by tourists and locals alike. Down Jalan Double Six, toward the beach, the disk jockey at Loco Bar, known for its cool cocktails, spins nightly. At the end of the road facing the ocean, Double Six dance club beckons, flaunting the biggest open-air dance floor in Bali, a swimming pool and even bungee-jumping facilities. On Jalan Seminyak, Jaya Pub blares out live rock music, while a Seminyak classic plays a selectio n of rhythmic music, offering inexpensive drinks and a spot for meeting new faces. Casa Luna, across the street, is another regular haunt with live music and DJs. Several other bars continue the frenzy well into the morning, Santa Fe Bar and Grill, for instance, features cover bands four nights a week and is open around the clock.

In Nusa Dua, most hotels accommodate in-house bars, each imparting a different atmosphere. Notable nightclubs here include Club Tabuh in the Nusa Dua Beach Hotel, Lila Cita Fun Pub in the Grand Hyatt, Quinn's Bar in the Sheraton Laguna, Octopus in the Bali Hilton and Bali Boulevard, which features cabaret shows nightly, in Melia Bali.

Ubud presents an interesting night life because the gentle hill town sleeps so early. Jazz Cafe and the Funky Monkey, a hopping cocktail joint with good music and a lively atmosphere, make good places to start an eveing around town. The Putra Bar, where live bands entertain regularly, ranks arguably as the oldest and most popular hotspot, right on Monkey Forest Road within walking distance of central hotels.

Evening entertainment in Sanur is confined to a handful of places. Planet Sanur and Jazz Bar& Grill rank among the more upbeat drinking spots, while Janger, Sanur's only dance club, pumps techno beats until the wee hours.
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Things to Do Insights

Bali's reputation as a paradise on earth was not earned without merit. The island's wondrous tropical retreat is resplendent with natural attractions, theme parks, nightspots, shopping opportunities, inland adventure and water sports. The fascinating indigenous culture and warm, gracious people make a holiday here all the more interesting and pleasant. The island promises a little something for everyone.

Kuta-Legian

A day spent in Kuta can cover a whole range of activities. Often a major destination for shopping, bargain hunting on summer apparel, ethnic arts and crafts, jewelry and more can be found at Kuta Center. If you seek something more adrenaline-inducing, go head over to A.J. Hackett to experience bungee jumping Balinese style. Afterwards, you may need to calm down, so head for Kuta Beach for some sun and calming ocean views. While you are at the beach, stop in at Wave to enjoy the open air dech, the diner, or the dance floor. An evening of entertainment can be found at The Legian Arcade which features not only plenty of shopping and dining but also offers nightly performances of Balinese dance and local contemporary music.

Bali Bird Park& the Village of Ubud

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As home to the rare and beautiful Bali Starling, the Bali Bird Park is most active in t he early morning, when the birds first begin to sing. Next head over to Goa Gajah to see the ancient elephant cave with its serene pools of water and elaborate carvings. From here the village of Ubud is only a ten minute car ride away. Stop in at Ary's Warang with its menu that covers traditional Indonesian dishes yet also supplies home style comfort food for Western travelers. Explore Ubud's Shopping District even if you are not interested in purchasing curios. The art galleries, traditional craft shops and markets are a feast for the eyes, and lead you to Forest Monkey Road and the Sacred Monkey Forest Sanctuary, home to the descendents of Hanuman t he Monkey General as well as a temple and several statues and fountains. Next stop in at Cafe Lotus for a refreshinglassi by the lotus pond before finishing your day.

Sanur Beach

Heading down Jalan Puptuan towards the boardwalk and beach, make sure to stop at Indico Wines to sample some of Bali's native grapes. Wine tours can also be arranged at their store here. Next stop is Sanur Beach with its white sands, shops, snack stands, and plenty of water and beach activities. Take a break from the sun in the Inna Grand Beach second floor cafe, or head to Apa Kabar for a more extensive meal. Clothing and fun accessories with a Balinese flavor can be found at nearby Mama& Leon Threadworks. Finally end your day in the sun over a refreshing drink at the Bonsai Cafe.

Puputan Square& Downtown Denpasar

Full of small alleys, markets and color, downtown Denpasar can be explored mostly on foot. Start out at the fresh flower market at Pasar Kembang. Pick up a gardenia to take with you on your journey. Next head two blocks north to Puputan Square, the cultural and historical center of Denpasar. Facing one side of the square is the former Dutch governor's mansion, where events for the Bali Arts Festival are held in June and July. Also facing the square is the Pura Jagatnatha temple complex, recently opened to the public. Next take a short walk over to the Museum Semarajaya, the museum established in 1932 to preserve and explain traditional Balinese arts. Not far from the museum and Puputan Square is Jalan Sulawesi, a street full of fabric shops and tailors. Whether you are searching out the services of a tailor or an excellent location to snap some photos, the cottons, silks and woven fabircs here are certain to please. Afterwards take a short cab ride to Jalan Teuku Umar Barat, Denpasar's main street, find a warang to refresh yourself with some traditional lo cal snacks, then head northwest along the main street to see what the stores have on offer.

Mount Batur

Some companies combine a morning hike or cycling excursion with afternoon rafting. A trek up Mount Batur takes about three hours and rewards climbers with a panoramic vista of hot springs, lava rocks, farms and Lake Bratan within the caldera. Lying at the rim of this volcano, Kintamani village serves as an excellent vantage point for viewing the crater lake; you can also book nature hikes here. Mount Agung, Bali's highest peak, challenges serious trekkers and cyclists with more arduous routes.

As you venture through exo tic Bali be sure not to miss out on all the art and culture that Bali upholds.

Bus Tours

City Discovery(+1 419 244 6440/http://www.city-discovery.com/bali/tour.php?id=177)

Adventure Tours

Bali Adventure Tours(+62 361 72 1480/http://www.baliadventuretours.com/) Waterworld(+62 361 77 2781) Bali Bungy Company(+62 361 75 2658) A.J. Hackett(+62 361 73 1144/http://ajhackett.com/bali/) Bali Sling Shot(+62 361 75 8838) Dhyana Putri Adventures(+62 361 742 7977)

Bike Tours

Mulia Tour(+62 361 22 3747/http://www.muliatours.com/) Sobek(+62 361 28 7059/http://www.balisobek.com/)

Cruise Tours

Waterworld(+62 361 77 2781) Bali Hai Cruises(+62 361 72 0331/http://www.balihaicruises.com/) SongLine Cruises(+62 361 28 3192/http://www.songlinecruises.com/) SailSensations(+62 361 72 5864/http://www.sailsensa tions.com/) Waka Louka Land Cruise(+62 361 42 6972) Starlight Dinner Cruise(+62 361 73 2603) Bounty Cruises(+62 361 72 6666/http://www.balibountycruises.com/) Island Explorer Cruises(+62 361 72 8088/http://www.bali-activities.com/)

Dance Tours

Kecak Dance Tour(+62 361 727800/http://www.penjortour.co.id/tour.html) Barong Dance and Bird Park Tour(+62 361 727800/http://www.penjortour.co.id/tour.html)

Temple Tours

Besakih Temple Tour(http://www.penjortour.co.id/besakih_temple.html) Bedugul Tour(http://www.penjortour.co.id/bedugul_tour_bali.html)

River Rafting Tours

Sobek(+62 361 28 7059/http://www.balisobek.com/) Bali Adventure Tours(+62 361 72 1480/http://www.baliadventuretours.com/) Bali Safari Rafting(+62 361 23 5196)
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Travel Tips

Getting There

By Air

The Ngurah Rai Airport(DPS)(+62 361 751 011http://www.angkasapura1.co.id) lies 13 kilometers(eight miles) south of Denpasar between Kuta and Sanur(do not look for Bali on airline information flight boards for it is listed as Denpasar). Its two terminals accept the following major airlines:

Air Asia(+603 8660 4343/http://www.airasia.com)

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Air France(+1 800 237 2747/http://www.airfrance.com)

Cathay Pacific(+1 800 231 0856/http://www.cathaypacific.com)

China Air(+1 800 227 5118/http://www.china-airlines.com)

Continental(+1 800 221 1212/http://www.continental.com)

Garuda International Airways(+1 800 342 7832/http://www.garuda-indonesia.com)

Singapore Air(+1 800 742 3333/http://www.singaporeair.com)

Public transportation options f rom the airport are limited. Your best bet is to arrange to be picked up by your hotel in advance. You can also reserve a taxi through the official taxi window(+62 361 751 011, extension 1155) near customs. They charge set rates to most of the island's main tourist centers. Use every ounce of common sense to avoid taxi drivers that directly solicit you at the gate. They are cheap, smiling swindlers who navigate a living from scamming tourists with overpriced cab fares. Rides to Kuta and Sanur last 15 minutes while a trip to Ubud could be 55.

Rental Cars

Blue Bird(+62 361 701 111/http://www.bluebirdgroup.com)

Hertz(+1 800 654 3131/http://www.hertz.com)

Toyota Rental Car(+62 361 753 744)

Be aware that in order to rent a car an international driver's license is required.

If all else fails and your baggage is light, Kuta is but a 1.6-mile walk along the beach.

By Sea

Boats from Ketapang in Java to Gilimanuk in northwestern Bali connect daily. Rides take 35 minutes. And from Bali's eastern side, out of Padang Bai, ferries usher passengers every few hours around the clock to Lembar on Lombok's west coast.

Getting Around

Renting a car is not suggested because the roads are poorly marked and local driving culture can be overly assertive. Plus, regardless of fault, you will probably be held responsible for all damages in the event of an accident.

Blue and brown vans known as"bemos" serve as the island's bus system. They hold up to 10 passengers and provide a true feel for the island. Sharing a seat with a local's farm animal is not uncommon. Fares can be sketchy and subject to the driver's mood. The stops are unmarked and seemingl y only locals who swore with vows of blood to keep their exact locations secret are privy to this knowledge.
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Fun Facts

Bali

Country: Indonesia

Bali by the Numbers:

Population: 3,151,000

Average Winter Temperature: 27° C/ 80° F

Average Summer Temperature: 27°C/ 80°F

Most Precipitation: 711 mm/ 28 inches

Highest point: Mount Agung at 3,142 m/ 10,308 feet

Quick Facts:

Electricity: 220 volts, 50Hz, rounded two-pin plugs

Time Zone: GMT+ 8

Country Dialing Code: 62 Area Code: 361

Did You Know?

Bali is one of 17,508 islands that make up Indonesia.

The island of Bali is home to six volcanoes and lies on two tectonic plates.
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