

# Bali

For other places with the same name, see [Bali \(disambiguation\)](#).

**Bali**, the famed "Island of the Gods", is the most visited part of [Indonesia](#). Its diverse landscape of mountainous terrain, rugged coastlines and sandy beaches, lush rice terraces and barren volcanic hillsides provide a picturesque backdrop to its colourful, spiritual and unique culture. Five rice terraces and their water temples have been inscribed on the [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) under the name "Cultural Landscape of Bali Province: the *Subak* System as a Manifestation of the *Tri Hita Karana* Philosophy".

With world-class diving and surfing, a range of natural, cultural and historical attractions, and plentiful accommodation options, it is one of the most popular island destinations in the world. Bali offers something to almost every visitor from the backpacking youth to the ultra-wealthy. Its majority-[Hindu](#) population also stands in contrast to much of the rest of majority-[Muslim](#) Indonesia.

## Regions

**South Bali**  
([Kuta](#), [Bukit Peninsula](#), [Canggu](#), [Denpasar](#), [Jimbaran](#), [Legian](#), [Nusa Dua](#), [Sanur](#), [Seminyak](#), [Tanah Lot](#))  
The most visited part of Bali by far, with Kuta Beach and chic Seminyak.

**Central Bali**  
([Ubud](#), [Bedugul](#), [Tabanan](#))  
The island's cultural heart and includes the central mountain range.

**West Bali** ([Negara](#), [Gilimanuk](#), [Medewi Beach](#), [Pemuteran](#), [West Bali National Park](#))  
Ferries to Java and West Bali National Park.

**North Bali** ([Lovina](#), [Singaraja](#))  
Quiet black sand beaches and the ancient capital city.



Map of Bali — [switch to interactive map](#)

**East Bali** (Amed, Besakih, Candidasa, Kintamani, Klungkung, Mount Agung, Padang Bai, Tirta Gangga)

Laid-back coastal villages, an active volcano and the mighty Mount Agung.

**Southeastern Islands** (Nusa Lembongan, Nusa Penida, Nusa Ceningan)

Quiet offshore islands in the southeast, popular for diving activities.

## Cities

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- **1 Denpasar** — a bustling city, the administrative centre and transport hub of the island but not a major tourist destination
- **2 Candidasa** — a quiet coastal town, the Bali Aga and gateway to the east coast
- **3 Kuta** — surfer central, by far the most heavily developed area in Bali. Lots of shopping and nightlife and the centre of lower-end party culture on Bali
- **4 Jimbaran** — close to the airport, seaside resorts, a nice sheltered beach and seafood restaurants south of Kuta
- **5 Legian** — popular beach town between Kuta and Seminyak; also the name of Kuta's main street
- **6 Lovina** — beautiful black volcanic sand beaches and coral reefs
- **7 Sanur** — seaside resorts and beaches popular with older families
- **8 Seminyak** — quieter, more upscale beachside resorts and villas just to the north of Legian, with some fashionable upscale restaurants and trendy designer bars and dance clubs
- **9 Ubud** — the centre of art and dance in the foothills, with several museums, the monkey forest and lots of arts and crafts shops

## Other destinations

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- **1 Amed** — a long strip of peaceful, traditional fishing villages featuring black sand beaches, coral reefs and excellent diving
- **2 Bedugul** — pretty lakes in the mountains, a golf course, the botanical gardens and the famous Ulun Danu Bratan Temple
- **3 Bukit Peninsula** — the southernmost tip of Bali with world class surfing, great beaches, and the can't-miss cliff-hanging Uluwatu Temple
- **4 Kintamani** — active volcano Mount Batur, stunning mountain scenery, cooler temperatures and fruit growing
- **5 Mount Agung** — highest mountain in Bali and the *mother temple* of Besakih
- **6 Nusa Dua** — an enclave of high-end resorts and a long, golden sand beach
- **7 Nusa Lembongan** — an island known for its surfing, diving and snorkelling; a great place to relax
- **8 Nusa Penida** — wild, rugged, untamed and as off the beaten path as you will get on the island
- **9 West Bali National Park** — trekking, birdwatching and diving in Bali's only substantial protected natural area

## Understand

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Bali is one of more than 18,000 islands (based on a satellite view) in the Indonesian archipelago, and is just over 2 km (almost 1.5 miles) from the eastern tip of the island of Java and west of the island of Lombok. The island, home to a little over 4 million people, is about 144 km (89 mi) long from east to west and 80 km (50 mi) north to south.

The word "paradise" is understandably used a lot in Bali. Friendly, hospitable people; a magnificently visual and spiritual culture; and spectacular beaches with great surfing and diving have made Bali the top tourist attraction in Indonesia. The vast majority of international visitors to Indonesia go nowhere else but Bali.



Preparing for a colourful *odalan* temple anniversary procession

This popularity is not without its bad sides—once paradisaical Kuta has degenerated into a congested warren of concrete, scammers and touts extracting a living by overcharging tourists. The island's visibility also drew the unwanted attention of terrorists in 2002 and 2005. However, Bali has managed to retain its magic. Bali is a marvellous destination with something for everyone, and though heavily visited, there are spots where you will be able to find serenity.

At peak season, before COVID-19, more than 400,000 foreign tourists flocked to Bali. A huge surge of domestic tourists arrived during school holidays (middle and end of year) & around the Ied season where it is practically quiet elsewhere in Indonesia. Fortunately, they can all be absorbed by a severe oversupply of hotels, which experts predicted will occur for at least a decade. Because of this however, a 4-star hotel room in Kuta, Legian and Seminyak can be reserved for just above US\$20 per day, and last-minute deals can produce rates of less than US\$20 per day!

As more travelers visit, especially due to the visa-free regime introduced by the Indonesian government, this small resort island has been striving to provide more modern attractions and facilities to travelers of different interests, while retaining the exotic traditional culture & spotless natural beauty that has always been the point of interest for visitors. Highly frequented areas such as the beaches in central Bali have been gentrifying.

Bali has many narrow streets and traffic jams are common in Bali throughout the year, especially Kuta, Legian and the Seminyak area, Central Denpasar city, Gatot Subroto Timur, access to Gianyar and access to the east. Streets in Kuta and Legian and Seminyak have been made one-way. For a 500-m journey in the opposite direction of a one-way street, walking can get you there in 15 minutes; if you take your car, it might take up to a half hour. Please take care to allow enough time to catch your plane.

## History

Hinduism first appeared in Bali as early as 100 BC, but the unique culture which is so apparent to any current day visitor to Bali hails largely from neighbouring Java combined with elements of Bali's distant animist past. The Javanese Majapahit Empire's rule over Bali became complete in the 14th century when Gajah Mada, Prime Minister of the Javanese king, defeated the Balinese king at Bedulu.

The rule of the **Majapahit Empire** resulted in the initial influx of Javanese culture, most of all in architecture, dance, painting, sculpture and the **wayang puppet theatre**. All of this is still very apparent today.

The very few Balinese who did not adopt this Javanese Hindu culture are known today as the *Bali Aga* ("original Balinese") and still live in the isolated villages of Tenganan near Candidasa and Trunyan on the remote eastern shore of Lake Batur at Kintamani.

With the rise of Islam throughout the Indonesian archipelago, the Majapahit Empire in Java fell and Bali became independent near the turn of the 16th century. The Javanese aristocracy found refuge in Bali, bringing an even stronger influx of Hindu arts, literature and religion.

Divided among a number of ruling *rajas* (kings), occasionally battling off invaders from now Muslim Java to the west and making forays to conquer Lombok to the east, the north of the island was finally captured by Dutch colonialists in a series of brutal wars from 1846 to 1849. Southern Bali was not conquered until 1906, and eastern Bali did not surrender until 1908. In both 1906 and 1908, many Balinese chose death over disgrace and fought en masse until the bitter end, often walking straight into Dutch cannons and gunfire. This manner of suicidal fighting to the death was known as *puputan*. Victory was bittersweet, as the images of the *puputan* highly tarnished the Dutch in the international community. Perhaps to make up for this, the Dutch did not make the Balinese enter into a forced cultivation system, as had happened in Java, and instead tried to promote Balinese culture through their policy of *Baliseering* or the "**Balinisation of Bali**".

In 1945, Bali became part of the newly independent Republic of Indonesia. After the 1965 coup d'état that ushered in the Suharto regime, state-instigated, anticommunist violence spread across Indonesia. In Bali, it is said that the rivers ran red with the reprisal killings of suspected communists. The death toll is estimated to have been about 80,000 people, which was roughly 5% of Bali's population at the time.

The most recent chapter in Bali's history began in the 1970s when intrepid hippies and surfers discovered Bali's beaches and waves, and **tourism** soon became the biggest income earner. Despite the shocks of the terrorist attacks in 2002 and 2005, the island continues to draw crowds, and Bali's culture is as magnificent as ever.

## Culture

Unlike most other islands in largely Muslim Indonesia, Bali is a pocket of **Hindu** religion and culture. Every aspect of Balinese life is suffused with religion, but the most visible signs are the tiny **offerings** (*canang sari*) found in every Balinese house, workplace, restaurant, souvenir stall and airport check-in desk. These leaf trays are made daily and can contain an enormous range of offering items: flowers, glutinous rice, cookies, salt, and even cigarettes and coffee! They are set out with burning incense sticks and sprinkled with holy water at least three times a day before every meal. Don't worry if you kick or step on one accidentally, as they are placed on the ground for this very purpose and will be swept away anyway.



Sunset at Tanah Lot Temple, built in the 16th century.



Ubiquitous *canang sari* offerings



Balinese Hinduism diverged from the mainstream well over 500 years ago and is quite different from what you would see in India and the rest of South Asia. The primary deity is **Sanghyang Widi Wasa** (Acintya), the "all-in-one god" for which other gods like Vishnu (*Wisnu*) and Shiva (*Civa*) are merely manifestations, and instead of being shown directly, he is depicted by an empty throne wrapped in the distinctive *poleng* black-and-white chessboard pattern and protected by a ceremonial *tedung* umbrella.

The Balinese are master **sculptors**. Temples and courtyards are replete with statues of gods and goddesses like *Dewi Sri*, the goddess of rice and fertility, as well as guardians and protecting demons like toothy *Rakasa*, armed with a club. These days though, entire villages like Batubulan have twigged onto the tourist potential and churn out everything imaginable from Buddhas to couples entwined in acrobatic poses for the export and souvenir market.

Balinese **dance** and **music** are also just as famous and a major attraction for visitors to the island. As on neighbouring Java, the *gamelan* orchestra and *wayang kulit* shadow puppet theatre predominate. Dances are extremely visual and dramatic, and the most famous include:



An empty throne of Sanghyang Widi Wasa, with *poleng* cloth and *tedung* umbrella, Ubud

- **Barong** or "lion dance" — a ritual dance depicting the fight between good and evil, with performers wearing fearsome lion-like masks. This dance is often staged specifically for tourists as it is one of the most visually spectacular and the storyline is relatively easy to follow. Barong dance performances are not hard to find.
- **Calonarang** — a spectacular dance which is a tale of combating dark magic and exorcising the evil spirits aligned with the witch-queen Rangda. The story has many variations and rarely are two Calonarang plays the same. If you can find an authentic Calonarang performance, then you are in for a truly magical experience.
- **Kecak** or "monkey dance" — actually invented in the 1930s by resident German artist Walter Spies for a movie, but a spectacle nonetheless. Up to 250 dancers in concentric circles chant "kecak kekac", while a performer in the centre acts out a spiritual dance. An especially popular Kecak dance performance is staged daily at Uluwatu Temple.
- **Legong Keraton** — perhaps the most famous and feted of all Balinese dances. Performed by young girls, this is a dance of divine nymphs hailing from 12th century Java. Try to find an authentic Legong Keraton with a full-length performance. The short dance performances often found in tourist restaurants and hotels are usually extracts from the Legong Keraton.

## Festivals

There are an estimated 20,000 temples (*pura*) on the island, each of which holds festivals (*odalan*) at least twice a year. With many auspicious days throughout the year there are always festivities going on.

The large island-wide festivals are determined by two local calendars. The 210 day *wuku* or *Pawukon* calendar is completely out of sync with the Western calendar, meaning

### The Day of Absolute Silence

**Nyepi** is a very special day to the Balinese as this is the day that they have to fool all evil spirits that no one is actually on Bali - hence the need for silence. If this is achieved, then it is believed that the evil spirits will go looking

that the dates of festivals and events rotate wildly throughout the solar year. The lunar *saka* (*caka*) calendar roughly follows the Western year.

- **Funerals** (*pitra yadnya*) are another occasion of pomp and ceremony, when the deceased (often several at a time) are ritually cremated in extravagantly colourful rituals (*ngaben*).
- **Galungan** is a ten day festival which comes around every 210 days and celebrates the death of the tyrant Mayadenawa. Gods and ancestors visit earth and are greeted with gift-laden bamboo poles called *penjor* lining the streets. The last day of the festival is known as **Kuningan**.
- **Nyepi**, or the **Hindu New Year**, also known as the day of absolute silence, is usually celebrated sometime in March or April. If you are in Bali in the days preceding Nyepi, you will see amazing colourful giants (*ogoh ogoh*) being created by every *banjar*. On the eve of Nyepi, the *ogoh ogoh* parade through the streets, a breathtaking sight not to be missed. There are good reasons to avoid Nyepi as well, but for many travellers these will be outweighed by the privilege of experiencing such a unique annual festival. Absolutely everything on the island shuts down between 06:00 on the day of the new year and 06:00 the following morning, including the airport and ferry harbours, though emergency services will remain on standby and get out as needed. Tourists are confined to their hotels and asked to be as quiet as possible for the day. Getting out will risk being reprimanded by the community police (*pecalang*). As the precise date of Nyepi changes every year, and isn't finally set until later in the preceding year, flights will be open for booking at first, only to be cancelled or moved accordingly. This also means altering all your travel arrangements to Bali.

All national public holidays in Indonesia are observed in Bali, although Ramadan does not have much of a fanfare here compared to the country's Muslim majority regions.

## Read

Bali's unique culture has been widely studied by anthropologists, both professional and amateur. Interested visitors and artists (some of whom made Bali their home) have also written about the island. Here's a reading shortlist:

- *Island of Bali* (Periplus Classics Series), Miguel Covarrubias. When the Mexican artist Miguel Covarrubias wrote his outsider's impression of Balinese life and culture in 1937, he surely could not have imagined that well into the next century his work would still be considered the most authoritative text on the subject. Absolutely *vital* reading, and it is

elsewhere for their prey and leave Bali alone for another year. Balinese people are very religious and life is full of ritual. Nyepi is one of the most important days in their calendar. All ports of entry are closed, although emergency services do still open, and literally **no one** may be outdoors or be seen doing anything indoors. If one does choose to observe, fire (which means cooking), entertainment, and anything that uses electricity must be **turned off**, as is travelling and doing work; they should instead meditate in silence from the sunrise on the day to the sunrise on the following day. While your hotel may give at least some exceptions (and may not check your rooms) on what you can do indoors, at the very least you will be asked to remain in your room most of the time and keep all noises and lighting at minimum.

Nyepi also serves to remind the Balinese of the need for tolerance and understanding in their everyday life. In fact, Hinduism on Bali is unique because it is woven into and around the original Balinese animistic religion. The two now have become one for the Balinese, a true sign of tolerance and acceptance.

### Nyepi Dates:

- Wednesday, 22 March 2023
- Monday, 11 March 2024

astounding how little has changed in Bali since this book was written. More on Covarrubias' time in Bali, including his wonderful paintings, can be found in the coffee table book *Covarrubias in Bali* (EDM Books) by Adrian Williams and Yu-Chee Chong.

- *A Short History of Bali: Indonesia's Hindu Realm* (A Short History of Asia series), Robert Pringle. The history of Bali from pre-Bronze Age times to the start of the current millennium, and an examination of Bali's importance and relevance to modern-day Indonesia.
- *Bali Raw: An Expose of the Underbelly of Bali, Indonesia* (Monsoon Books), Malcolm Scott. An Australian author, who lived in Bali for almost a decade, reveals the darker side of the island — the sometimes violent nightclub scene, rampant prostitution, the prevalence of AIDS and drug and alcohol-induced Western hooliganism.
- *A Little Bit One O'clock: Living with a Balinese Family* (Ersania Books), William Ingram. A whimsical, insightful, and at times very touching account of an expatriate American living with a Balinese family in the 1990s.
- *The House of Our Ancestors* (KITLV press), Thomas Reuter. Probably the most thorough and readable study of the Bali Aga, the pre-Majapahit indigenous Balinese.
- *A House in Bali* (Tuttle), Colin McPhee. A classically trained musician who was spellbound when he heard a recording of Balinese gamelan music, McPhee travelled to Bali in the 1930s and wrote this superb insight into local music, life and culture. Still very relevant reading.



Ogoh-Ogoh procession on the eve of Nyepi

## Climate

Daytime temperatures are pleasant, varying between 20–33°C (68–93°F) year-round. From December to March, the west monsoon can bring heavy showers and high humidity, but days are still often sunny with the rains starting in the late afternoon or evening and passing quickly. From June to September, the humidity is low and it can be quite cool in the evenings. At this time of the year there is hardly any rain in the lowland coastal areas.

Even when it is raining across most of Bali, you can often enjoy sunny, dry days on the Bukit Peninsula which receives *far* less rain than any other part of the island. On the other hand, in central Bali and in the mountains, you should not be surprised by cloudy skies and showers at any time of the year.



Rice paddies in East Bali with Mount Agung in the background



At higher elevations such as Bedugul or Kintamani, it gets distinctly chilly and you will need either a sweater or jacket after the sun sets.

## Time

Bali is in the UTC+8 time zone (known in Indonesia as WITA, *Waktu Indonesia Tengah*), the same as Western Australia, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, Philippines, China and Taiwan, and an hour ahead of Jakarta.

## Electricity

Electricity is supplied at 220 V, 50 Hz. Outlets are the European standard CEE-7/7 "Schuko" or the compatible, but non-grounded, CEE-7/16 "Europlug" types.

## Tourism information centres

- **Tourism information**, ☎ 166 (from a landline in Bali only), +62 361 166 (mobile).
- **Bali Tourism Board** (<https://www.balitourismboard.or.id/>), Jl Raya Puputan No. 41, Denpasar, ☎ +62 361 235 600, fax: +62 361 239200.

Some major destinations in Bali have their own tourism offices; contact details are given in the relevant destination articles.

## Talk

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The native language of locals is **Balinese**, which is related to but not mutually intelligible with Indonesian. Because all Balinese people are bilingual in Balinese and Indonesian, and Indonesian is used more, particularly in daily conversations, learning Balinese is not essential to communicate. Nevertheless, locals are proud of their language, so efforts by visitors to speak Balinese will be warmly received by the locals. In tourist regions, English and some other foreign languages are widely spoken.

## Get in

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### By plane

- **1 Ngurah Rai International Airport** (**DPS**<sup>IATA</sup>, also known as *Denpasar International Airport*) (*The airport is in Tuban, between Kuta and Jimbaran, roughly 45 minutes away from Denpasar*). Ngurah Rai is Indonesia's 2nd busiest international airport (after Jakarta and Surabaya) and a major hub well connected to Australia, Asia, the Middle East, and the rest of Indonesia. A number of International airlines serve this airport including several low cost carriers (LCC). The airport is the hub for island hopping tours to the Nusa Tenggara Islands. Garuda Indonesia (<http://www.garuda-indonesia.com>), TransNusa (<http://www.transnusa.co.id/>) and Wings Air operate propeller jets to the islands. 



See the [Indonesia](#) article for information about visa regulations.

## Get to/from the airport

Transportation from the airport is not too bad but is far from perfect too. Some hotels organise free transfers from the airport, and plenty of public taxis are also available: go to the ticketing booth, on the right side just after the exit, buy a fixed fare ticket and a driver will be assigned to you trouble-free. However, the ticketing booth closes after the last flight arrival for the day and re-opens at 08:00, so anyone wanting an airport taxi during this period should be prepared to haggle or seek the alternatives described below.

If you are travelling on a restricted budget, you can flag down a **Blue Bird Taxi** from outside the airport area (but now it will take at least 8–10 minutes walk from the new International terminal, more from the Domestic; there's neither clearly signed way out, nor are there many people using this way), or try and catch a taxi dropping off passengers near Domestic terminal departures. Blue Bird Taxis are safe and reliable, and their metered fares are cheaper than the prepaid taxi fare (especially for shorter rides, e.g. Rp20,000–30,000 to Kuta). Depending on how much baggage you have and how bulky it is, you might want to evaluate whether all that extra effort is worth it to save a few dollars.

If you do make the effort to walk outside the airport to the street, you can also flag down a **bemo** (local minivan). Most of the bemos in this area will be heading to Kuta (the road to Kuta heads to the left looking out from the airport gate), but don't absolutely bank on it, and be prepared for a hot, crowded journey. It should cost no more than a few thousand rupiah per person (ask the driver beforehand). And if you are a lone backpacker you can try an **ojek** (unmetered motorcycle taxi) in the first intersection outside the airport (3 to 5 minutes walk), for less than half of a taxi meter fare. If you are not sure if a taxi can reach your hotel because of narrow streets, or you are unsure of your hotel's location, an ojek is a good option: they frequently take narrow streets as shortcuts, use pedestrian paths and sometimes go against traffic on theoretically one-way streets. An ojek to Kuta costs Rp10,000 to Rp15,000.

Another option is **ride-share** companies such as GoCar from Gojek and GrabCar. You can go to Kuta for about Rp 30,000; if you are traveling light, both also offers motorcycle pick up for about a half price than using the car. However, as they are not allowed to pick you up from the airport, the driver may prompt you to tell the security that you already have pickup arrangements, if asked. Alternatively, they can text or call you to meet them somewhere at or just off the airport.

The public bus service, **Trans Sarbagita** is one of the two public buses allowed to enter the airport. You can catch the bus at both the domestic and international arrivals. Bus stops are shaded but small, so be on the lookout or ask for directions. The fare is Rp3,500 from the airport, although it only stops at major roads and intersections and does not go into main hotel areas, so you will either need to walk or get a taxi from the nearest bus stop. After several months of dormant, Trans Sarbagita reruns with limited schedule, 09:15 to Nusa Dua, 11:00 to Batu Bulan, 13:15 to Nusa Dua, 15:00 to Batu Bulan, 17:15 to Nusa Dua, and 19:00 to Batu Bulan.

### Prepaid taxi fares from Ngurah Rai Airport to main Bali destinations

--Subject to change--

- Kuta: Rp80,000
- Tuban: Rp55,000
- Legian: Rp95,000
- Seminyak: Rp110,000 to Rp135,000
- Jimbaran: Rp100,000 to Rp150,000
- Denpasar: Rp125,000 to Rp150,000
- Sanur: Rp150,000
- Nusa Dua: Rp150,000 to Rp185,000
- Ubud: Rp300,000 to Rp350,000
- Padang Bai: Rp400,000
- Candidasa: Rp425,000
- Amed: Rp750,000
- Lovina: Rp650,000
- Pemuteran: Rp850,000

Another public bus is called **Trans Metro Dewata**. The line or corridor 02 serves the route from the airport to the downtown of Denpasar with numerous bus stops might be looked at **Moovit** app. The bus is the cheapest AC transportation because it is free of charge. An electronic money card like **Brizzi**, **E-money**, **Flazz** or **TapCash** is required.

## By bus

There are direct bus services to Bali from all major cities on Java and Lombok that link with ferries for sea crossings. These are cheap and easy, but slow.

- **Perama** (<http://www.peramatour.com>) bus company is a good option for budget travelers. There are no Perama bus from Java, only from Mataram, Lombok.

Various executive buses with air conditioning are available from some cities in Java, like Bandung, Jakarta, Semarang, Surabaya and Yogyakarta. The ticket can be easily booked from **easybook**, **redbus** and **traveloka** app or website.

## By boat

Ferries cross from Ketapang on the island of Java to Gilimanuk in western Bali every 15 minutes, 24 hr every day. These are very cheap, and the crossing takes just 30 minutes (plus sometimes considerable waiting around for loading and unloading).

A number of speedboats and catamarans operate into Benoa Harbour near Kuta (~2 hr) and Padangbai (80 minutes) from the Gili Islands of Lombok. These are convenient for some travellers but are frequently priced much higher than the equivalent air crossing. Crossing times are subject to weather and other operational conditions and trip times can longer than those publicised. Benoa Harbour with 12 metre depth received more than 50 ships with more than 1,000 passengers and crew each a year.

Caution should be used in selecting a suitable operator and craft for a *fast boat* crossing to Lombok. Some of the operators on these routes use inappropriate equipment, overload the boats and have inadequate levels of crew training, personnel and safety equipment. The Lombok Strait fast boat crossing can be subject to inclement weather and equipment breakdowns. Boarding an overloaded craft or departing in adverse weather conditions may lead to serious disappointment. There are no operators offering craft suitable for open water all-weather crossings. Rather they are operating light duty hulled craft of fibreglass or aluminium construction powered by outboard petrol engines. On two previous occasions operators have introduced a more suitably specified and equipped craft powered by diesel inboard engines and with a more robust hull construction appropriate to open water use. Both these craft were withdrawn from service as operations could not be sustained in competition with the lower cost base alternatives. Several of these light duty craft have already sunk or been run onto a reef or beach to avoid foundering whilst carrying passengers. Fortunately they had not yet entered open waters at the time and nearby assistance was available. There have been no fatalities from these incidents.

There are also public ferries from Lembar, Lombok, to Padang Bai every few hours, with the trip taking around 3–4 hours. This service has notable safety, operational and equipment standards issues. Some ferries are better than others, or worse depending upon your perspective.

Delays are commonplace with public ferries due to loading and unloading issues. Services may be cancelled or postponed during periods of inclement weather, and sea crossings during the monsoon period can be uncomfortable or dangerous.

See the [Gili Islands](#) and [Lombok](#) articles for full details concerning travelling and arriving in Lombok and its nearby islands.

Cruise ships stop for tours, shopping, or to begin or end a cruise. Some ships still anchor off-shore toward the southeast side of the island and tender guests to shore. Modest sized ships can choose to dock at the port of Benoa not far from [Denpasar](#), [Kuta](#) and [Sanur](#). In 2018, 75 ships docked at Benoa Port. There the dock area is has an industrial pier with few amenities and no ATMs, but taxis and private car operators when cruise ships dock there. It also has a multi-purpose pier with an open-air terminal building. It has a currency exchange and modest concessionaires, taxis at the ready, and space for many medium buses for tours. At both piers, taxis for cruisers may have high fixed prices to popular destinations. They should instead use their meters, sometimes adding tolls when use of causeways necessary. Private cars for hire will often require patient negotiation on price.

Other ships also run from [Candi Dasa](#) and [Amed](#), and the operators can pick up at [Nusa Dua](#), [Ngurah Rai International Airport](#) and even [Ubud](#). But only few of the operators can serve flop destinations such as visiting 2 or 3 destinations. It should be arranged in advanced, because it's not easy to flop from one island of Gilis to the others and also to [Senggigi](#). Their "cruise" ship fees often include pick up at hotels or airport.

## By car

It is also possible to access Bali by car from Java's major cities, albeit a very long distance. For instance, you must spend approximately 18 hours (total, plus ferries and the overall duration from [Gilimanuk](#) to [Denpasar](#)) for a drive from [Jakarta](#) to [Denpasar](#). Through [Surabaya](#), which is much closer, lets you spend lesser time – 10 hours. From [Semarang](#), you must drive for 13 hours, and from [Bandung](#), 18 hours. Ferry costs at [Banyuwangi](#) cost around Rp.141,000 to Rp.159,000 for a regular passenger car.

From [Mataram](#), it is a 4-to-5 hour drive plus ferries; from [Lombok](#), also plus ferries, is a 5-hour drive.

## Get around

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Bali is a fairly large island and you will need a method to get around if you plan on exploring more than the hotel pool. Rapid, seemingly uncontrolled development and aging infrastructure mean that the roads struggle to cope. In major tourist areas the traffic is chaotic, and there are daily traffic jams. Particular blackspots are [Ubud](#), [Kuta](#), [Seminyak](#) and [Denpasar](#).

For different excursions around the island, it is common to join a tour via your hotel or at one of the many street agencies which are found everywhere in booths normally marked "Tourist Information".

Once you arrive at your destination you may encounter difficult walking conditions as sidewalks in most parts of Bali are simply the covered tops of storm-water drains and in many places only 60 cm (2 ft) wide. This makes for uncomfortable single-file walking next to traffic. Often sidewalks are blocked by a motorbike or a caved-in section, necessitating dangerous darting into traffic. Many of the island's conventional streets are simply not pedestrian friendly. Beach areas and major tourist areas are easier to walk around, and [Sanur](#) in particular has a wide beachfront pathway with many



Kecak dance performance at Uluwatu

cafes and bars. But although the walking conditions are difficult, they are by no means impossible. Lots of tourists and locals travel the roads by foot, and even the traffic is generally very accommodating to pedestrians if it is given time to react.

## By bus

The **Perama** (<http://peramatour.com>) bus company serves the budget traveller well in Bali and beyond, and they have offices in several major tourist destinations on the island. There are other scheduled shuttle buses between many of Bali's most popular destinations too.

A public bus service called **Trans Sarbagita** is a reliable option if you roam around Denpasar south towards Nusa Dua. TransSarbagita is similar to Jakarta's, but has no dedicated lane. The buses are comfortable and air-conditioned, in contrast with bemos that have been relied upon for commuting. These buses stop only at elevated bus stops on the road curb. All Trans Sarbagita routes operate from 05:00 to 21:00, every 15 minutes though expect that to extend to half an hour due to traffic around Kuta. Though at least 17 routes are planned, only 3 are running as of June 2017 alongside a couple of feeder routes:

- Line 1: Denpasar City to Garuda Wisnu Kencana, via Kuta (Dewa Ruci), Jimbaran
- Line 2: Batubulan Terminal to Nusa Dua, via Sanur and Kuta (Dewa Ruci or Sentral Parkir bus stops are both 1 kilometre away from the beach). Perhaps most useful for tourists. Fare is Rp3,500.
- Line 8: Pesiapan to Ngurah Rai Airport, via Mengwi
- Feeder Line 1: Round trip around Denpasar
- Feeder Line 9: Garuda Wisnu Kencana to Tanjung Benoa, via Nusa Dua
- Feeder Line 10: Kedonganan to Uluwatu, via Jimbaran & Garuda Wisnu Kencana

Another public bus service is called **Trans Metro Dewata** (<https://temanbus.com/bali/>) with fixed stops. The fare is Rp0. An electronic money card is required to take this public transport such as Brizzi, E-money, Flazz, and TapCash. The routes called *Koridor* (corridor) are:

- Corridor 01: Sentral Parkir Kuta to Terminal Pesiapan
- Corridor 02: GOR Ngurah Rai to Ngurah Rai Airport
- Corridor 03: Pantai Matahari Terbit to Terminal Ubung
- Corridor 04: Sentral Parkir Monkey Forest to Terminal Ubung
- Corridor 05: Sentral Parkir Kuta to Terminal Ubung

For the detail stops, you may use Moovit app.

**Kura-Kura Bus** (<http://kura2bus.com/>) is a public shuttle service that operates from southern Bali to Ubud, but oriented towards tourists as it stops at hotels and places of interest. Fares range from Rp20,000 for a single trip around Kuta, Legian, and Seminyak, to Rp80,000 for Ubud. A 3-day or 7-day travel pass would be much more useful if you want to see most of what Bali has to offer.

## By taxi

Metered taxis are very common in southern Bali as far north as Denpasar, but few and far between elsewhere. The starting flag fall charge is Rp5,000 for the first two kilometres and the meter ticks up Rp5,000 per km after that. Waiting time is

**Beware of scamming**



charged at Rp30,000 per hour. Trips outside southern Bali will incur an extra charge of 30%, as the driver has to go back empty.

- **BlueBird Bali Taksi** (<http://www.bluebirdgroup.com/about>), ☎ +62 361 701111. By far the largest and most reliable taxi company, they have a telephone call service for both instant taxis and advance bookings. If you are hailing a taxi on the street, Bluebird cars are sky blue with a white top light. The cars are modern and the drivers well informed with a decent level of English language ability. There are several other reliable taxi companies but these are not always easy to identify. If entering a taxi with no working meter, you are probably being deceived, you can negotiate a price with the driver but it is unlikely to work to your favour. Always insist on the meter being turned on, do not believe stories that the taxi has no meter or that it is "broken" and leave the taxi if the request to use the meter is not met. Bluebird has their own app for calling taxis, which works much the same way as Grab or Uber. You can also use the app to reserve a taxi in advance, which is helpful for early morning rides to catch a flight.

Due to a high competition of taxis, several scams have crept up. Tourists could end up paying about 10 times the normal price. The drivers use a taxi with a broken meter and threaten to call the police if passengers don't pay the visible fare. Use taxis from reliable taxi companies as the first choice.

If day-tripping, it is often cheaper and more convenient to arrange for your taxi to wait and take you back.

The rideshare apps **Grab** and **GOJEK**, which offer on-demand car and motorcycle taxis, are worth the cost of a SIM card: it is usually significantly cheaper than a regular taxi and has an upfront fare system with driver rating that eliminates scams. You'll be told the driver's licence plate in advance, and can see how far away they are. You can pay through the app or in cash. Coverage is more limited much north of Denpasar, but you should be getting one in less than 15 minutes.

Rideshare apps are controversial in Bali, with signs in some areas saying that they're not allowed. You may have success calling one anyway, but the driver may want you to be discreet. A couple of hotels and the airport prohibit them from picking up passengers; if you are confronted by the hotel or a regular taxi driver about this, saying that you have pre-arrangements with them for a day excursion may work. Requesting for pick-up a few metres away from your intended spot will also help avoid a confrontation. It takes 20 minutes to walk out of the airport and the convoluted road is not convenient for suitcases. Grab Car is available 24 hours at Kuta, Seminyak, Legian, Denpasar and Sanur.

## By bemo

Bemos are minivans which serve as a flexible bus service and are Bali's "traditional" form of transportation. However they have largely given way to metered taxis in the south. Fares on shared bemos can be very cheap, but drivers will often insist that foreign tourists charter the entire vehicle, in which case they will usually ask for a price equivalent to a taxi or even more.

## By car or motorbike

Driving in Indonesia is on the left. Car and motorbike rentals are widely available but think very carefully about your ability to handle traffic in Bali with its different traffic rules—both formal and informal. Consider hiring a car and driver as you can relax, be safe and not get lost.

### Words of warning when renting vehicles

A sizeable number of travellers seem to leave their brains at home when visiting Bali and think

If you wish to drive yourself you will find some international rental companies such as Hertz, Avis, Europcar and Sixt. A modern four door 6 to 8 seater Toyota Avanza or Daihatsu Xenia should cost Rp250,000-Rp275,000 per day and a rough Suzuki Katana from Rp90,000 to Rp110,000 per day. Avanza and Xenia Automatic Transmission should add Rp50,000 per day. The cheap 4 seater 2014 Low Cost Green Car Toyota Agya Manual or Daihatsu Ayla Manual is Rp150,000-Rp175,000 per day. You will also be given a vehicle identification number (**Surat Tanda Nomor Kendaraan**) that you can show in case something happens with your vehicle, and if the specifications the renters described matched with the official documents.

Some new surfing areas are only accessible by motorbike, and not all hotels have ample car parking, so you might be tempted to rent a motorcycle or scooter. This can be a frightening yet fascinating experience. Motorcycles are typically 125cc, some with automatic transmissions, and rental tariff is Rp50,000 or above per day (for a week or more, you can bargain for a cheaper price). In areas outside of the tourist enclaves of south Bali, a motorbike is a wonderful way to see the island, but in south Bali, with its crush of traffic, the chances of an accident are greatly increased. Keep in mind that the notion of paradise where everything is quiet and in harmony may not be true on the roads for many cases. Bali is no place to learn to ride a motorbike.

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is required for vehicle rental, with a motorcycle endorsement if renting a motorbike, the IDP must match the licence class of the home country of issue and must be appropriate to the vehicle being used; both documents must be carried. The IDP is seldom requested by the person renting you the vehicle but will be required (along with the vehicle's STNK registration papers). If you're stopped by the police typically a Rp 50,000 "fine" will allow you to keep driving but this strategy will quickly unravel if there is an accident involving damage or injury. An IDP is easily obtainable from motoring clubs in your home country such as the AA in New Zealand and the UK and the AAA in Australia and the US.

## By rental car with a driver

Rental car services owned by individuals or companies are easy to find in Bali and this is the best option for first time visitors. Using a rental car with a driver is certainly cheaper than a taxi and far more efficient than other public transportation. Drivers are usually English speaking, and can also act as informal tourist guides, recommending good destinations and restaurants. Renting from a large car company is naturally more expensive than from a private individual; ask hotel staff

it's acceptable to ride a motorbike through extremely busy streets in a foreign land without wearing a helmet or drive a car without wearing a seatbelt, perhaps with common stereotypes about scoff-laws in Indonesia uppermost in their minds. But obviously, **it's not**. You'd be showing both a great deal of arrogance as a guest in a foreign country by thinking you are above the law of that country, *and* putting yourself at risk. When you rent any vehicle, wear the provided safety kit for your life's sake!

Police have been on the lookout for helmet-less motorbike riders, and can fine them on the spot, whether foreigner or Indonesian. There are complaints of bribery or extortion, especially given the police officers' rudimentary English skills, but avoiding getting caught by obeying the law in the first place is the most sensible thing to do. If caught, show the required documents: the vehicle identification number and your IDP.



Motorbikes for rent in Seminyak

to recommend a good individually-owned rental car with a knowledgeable driver. Drivers should hold a licence to operate a tourism transport vehicle; if not, you can expect delays and inconvenience if stopped by officials.

Price varies between Rp 300,000–600,000 per day (usually defined as 10 hours, but some car rentals are also offered for 5, 6 or 8 hours) depending on your negotiation skills and the class/age of the car. Make sure the price includes petrol and driver for the day. Petrol costs, after the removal of some government subsidies have escalated dramatically (although they still very cheap by international standards) and the distance travelled is a factor if you have not fixed a daily price. Entrance tickets to tourist destinations and any parking fees will be charged to you, and it is good form to buy lunch for your driver. For those on a tight schedule, visiting most of the major tourist destinations in Bali will need about 3 days with a rental car and driver.

## By bicycle

Travel by bicycle is quite possible and provides a very different experience than other means of transport. You should bring your own touring bike, or buy locally—there is at least one well stocked bike shop in Denpasar, but with a racing/mountain bike focus. Bicycles are also widely available for rent and some of the better hotels will even provide them free of charge. While traffic conditions may appear challenging at first, you will acclimatise after a few days, especially once you escape the chaotic heavy traffic of southern Bali.

One popular bicycle route is Kintamani to Gianyar, 36 km of downhill or flat terrain through paddy fields, villages, and temples. Tour operators can pick you up at your hotel and take you to Kintamani where bicycles await.

## See

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### Temples

Bali's best known attractions are its countless **Hindu temples**. Each village is required by *adat* (customary law) to construct and maintain at least three temples: the *pura puseh* (temple of origin) at the *kaja* (pure) side of the village, the *pura desa* (village temple) at the centre for everyday community activities and the *pura dalem* (temple of the dead) at the *kelod* (unclean) end. Wealthy villages may well have more than these three obligatory temples, and additionally all family compounds have a temple of some nature.

The nine **directional temples** (*kayangan jagat*) are the largest and most prominent. These are at strategic points across Bali and are designed to protect the island and its inhabitants from dark forces. Pura Luhur Uluwatu (Uluwatu Temple), at the southern tip of Bali, is easily accessed and hence very popular, as is Tanah Lot. For the Balinese, the "mother temple" of Besakih on the slopes of Mount Agung is the most important of all and sits above the nine. The other seven directional temples are Pura Ulun Danu Bratan, Pura Ulun Danu Batur, Pura Pasar Agung, Pura Lempuyang Luhur, Goa Lawah, Pura Masceti and Pura Luhur Batukaru. All of these are on either rugged high ground or at the water's edge, and this is a clear indication of the likely source of dark forces as far as the Balinese are concerned.



Part of the Ulun Danu Temple complex at Lake Bratan in Bedugul. Note the eleven-tiered *meru*.

**Balinese temple design** is an involved subject and one that baffles many visitors. Local geography has a fundamental effect on design, and two temples are rarely the same. Everything you see, be it decorative or structural, has a specific, well considered function which may be of an earthly or spiritual nature. There are, though, general elements which are common to the vast majority of temples, which are always split into three courtyards: *jaba* (outer courtyard), *jaba tengah* (middle courtyard) and *jeroan* (inner courtyard). Each of these courtyards contains various structures and/or shrines of differing levels of importance.

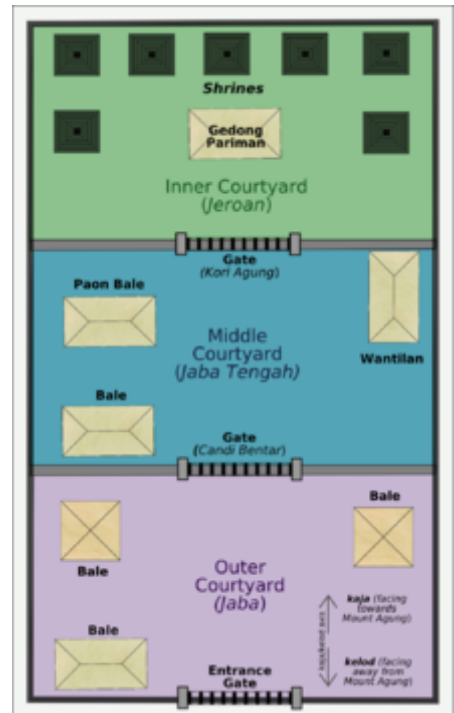
The tiered, black-thatched roofs that you see on temples are made from a palm fibre, and this material is not permitted to be used for any roof other than those on temples. The elegant, pagoda-like tiered structure is itself called a *meru* (named after sacred *Mount Meru (Mahameru)*, the home of the gods), and the most dramatic of them can consist of as many as 11 tiers. The number of tiers, though, is *always* an odd number.

The temple entrance is always on the *kelod* axis point (facing away from Mount Agung) of the compound and is usually a gateway of some nature. This leads into the *jaba* which is the domain of humans and all things earthly. The *jaba* contains only minor shrines, is where some celebratory dance performances take place, and during special ceremonies is where the foods stalls are set up. Non-Hindu tourists are nearly always allowed to visit this part of a temple.

A gateway called a *candi bentar* leads into the central courtyard which is called the *jaba tengah*. This is the intermediary point between our earthly domain and the realm of the Gods, and this is where daily offerings are prepared in an open pavilion called a *paon*. The *jaba tengah* also usually contains a large pavilion called a *wantilan*, which is used for special dance performances.

The *kori agung* gate leads into the *jeroan*—the inner sacred area. This houses the most important shrines to different Hindu gods and deities and is where serious rituals and prayers take place. Shrines are many and varied but usually include a *padmasana*, the throne of the supreme deity *Sanghyang Widi Wasa*. The large pavilion in this section is called a *gedong pariman*, which is always left completely empty to allow the gods to visit during ceremonies. Sometimes properly dressed visitors will be allowed into the *jeroan* and at other times not; it depends on the individual temple and the ceremonies that have been, or are about to be, performed.

The most common and practical architectural features to be found in virtually all temples are gazebo pavilions called *bales*. Each has a raised seating section and either an *alang-alang* (grass-thatched) or *tali duk* (black palm fibre-thatched) roof and has a myriad of social functions. *Bales* can serve as a place for the gamelan orchestra to sit, as a village meeting point, host dance performances or simply be a place of rest for worshipers. This part of traditional Balinese temple architecture has been copied by hotels all over the island and in the wider world. The open grass-roofed pavilions you see everywhere in Bali are all derived from this original piece of temple design.



Example of a typical Balinese temple layout



To enter any temple you must be appropriately dressed with a sarong and sash. These are always available for rental at the large temples which attract a lot of tourists (usually included if you're paying to enter, else a few thousand rupiah per set), but it's better to buy one of each when you arrive and use them throughout your visit.

## Landscape

Most of the coastline of Bali is fringed by **beaches** of some type, with the exceptions being some important areas of mangrove forest in the southeast, and certain parts of the Bukit Peninsula where high cliffs drop straight to the crashing waves of the Indian Ocean.

Unsurprisingly, given the volcanic nature of the island, black sand is the norm, but there are also some beaches in the south which have fine-grained white sand. Beaches that are especially safe for swimming include Jimbaran Bay and virtually all of the north coast. At all times though, obey local swimming safety markers—far too many visitors to Bali drown each year after ignoring these. Bali's popular southern beaches are sometimes not the cleanest you will find. This is particularly true during the height of the wet season (December to January), when the heavy rains cause extensive agricultural runoff and garbage to be washed onto the beaches.



Legian Beach in south Bali

Away from the coast, Bali is largely lush, green and fertile, and **rice paddies** are the dominant agricultural feature of the island. In some areas, paddies take the form of dramatic sculpted terraces which efficiently utilise every available acre of land for cultivation. Especially beautiful examples of terraced paddies can be found in the centre of the island north of Ubud and in east Bali around Tirta Gangga. Elsewhere, gently rolling rice fields make for very pleasing rural scenery. There are a number of rice field tours available, and these can involve staying at a resort in one of these areas.

All of Bali's mountains are **volcanoes**, some long dormant and some still active. At 3,142 m, magnificent Mount Agung dominates the landscape of East Bali and has not erupted since 1963. At the end of 2018, Mount Agung erupted, and as of August 2019 is still erupting, so there are 4 km radius of prohibited/safety zone from the crater rim. Much more active is Mount Batur, which permanently smoulders and periodically produces a large bang and plumes of ashy smoke as pressure is released from within. Taking only 2 hr to climb, Batur is one of the most accessible active volcanoes in the whole of Indonesia.

## Art

**Art**, both traditional and modern, is everywhere in Bali and impossible to miss. Ubud is the artistic capital of the island with several museums and a variety of informal workshops and retail outlets. Ubud's museums showcase the works of local artists, both living and dead, as well as works by many foreign artists, who either have a strong affinity to Bali or have made the island their permanent home.

## Monuments

A sad reminder of the modern world is the **Bali Bomb Memorial** on Jalan Legian in Kuta, which commemorates the 202 victims of the first Bali Bomb attack in October 2002. The site of the former Sari Club, obliterated in one of the blasts, lies adjacent to the monument and has not been redeveloped.

There are several monuments commemorating the *puputan* (suicidal fight to the death) of the Balinese against the Dutch colonialists in the early 20th century. The two most famous are in the town centre of Klungkung in East Bali and in Puputan Park, Denpasar.

## Do

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Bali's **Hindu culture and history** is both extraordinary and unique. Many visitors get so wrapped up in shopping, partying and beach life to miss the opportunity to understand and absorb at least some of this. You cannot fail to see temples, come across ceremonies and witness daily offerings, and those who take the time and effort to understand what is going on around them will find their visit very rewarding. The Balinese art of shadow puppetry (aka Wayang Kulit) is worth checking out during a visit to the island.

There are several **hot springs** to be discovered in Bali. One of them, on the north coast of the island near Lovina, is Air Banjar, where stone mouth carvings allow hot water to pass between the pools, which are set in lush gardens. Another good choice is at Toya Bungkah on the shores of Lake Batur, high in the north eastern mountains.

Bali is a paradise for spa lovers, and all sorts of treatments are widely available. The Balinese ***lulur*** body scrub with herbs and spices—traditionally performed before a wedding ceremony—is particularly popular. **Balinese massage** is usually done with oil and involves long, Swedish-style strokes. In steep contrast to exorbitant western massage fees, Balinese massage is incredible value, and visitors should definitely avail themselves of this luxury. In local salons, a one-hour full body massage will cost between Rp 70,000 and 100,000, and the 2 hr *mandi lulur*, which incorporates a body scrub and hydrating yogurt body mask in addition to the massage, will cost about Rp 150,000. The curiously named **creambath** is a relaxing scalp and shoulder massage, usually lasting 45 minutes, in which a thick conditioning cream is worked through the hair and into the scalp. A creambath typically costs about Rp 60,000. These same services in an upscale hotel will cost many times more.



The scented oil menu at a spa in Sanur

Bali is host to some of the finest **yoga** and well-being centres and retreats in the world. You can find an abundance of amazing yoga classes to suit all levels in most of the tourist areas. Look for the best yoga centres in Ubud and Seminyak. Bali is also now home to a number of renowned yoga teacher training centres. Good local resources for finding the best include Bali spirit (<http://www.balispirit.com/>).

**Weddings in Bali** have become very popular. Many couples who are already legally married choose Bali as the place to renew their vows. Full wedding-organising services are widely available: ceremony arrangements, photography, videography, flowers, musicians, dancers and catering. There are several wedding chapels available that are usually attached to luxury hotels, and the number is growing all the time.

There are many professional organisers to handle your wedding in Bali, and these are easily found through the Internet. Destination weddings, featuring all types of religious and presentation arrangements, are becoming increasingly popular, with large private villas being one of the island's many offerings for venues.

An excellent way to get to know and understand more of the country is to do some **volunteer work**. There are organisations that arrange work for international volunteers in Bali and other places in the region.

## Water activities

There are many interesting **scuba diving** sites around Bali. Particularly popular are the wreck of USAT *Liberty* at Tulamben in the east, the chilled out coral bommies in Padang Bai, the serene reefs around Menjangan Island in the northwest, and dramatic drift diving off Nusa Penida in the south. Bali is a major teaching centre, and there are numerous reputable dive centres around the island affiliated with PADI and SSI. For those who want their diving to make a difference as well, dive voluntourism has gain a foothold in Bali, such as in Sea Communities (<https://web.archive.org/web/20131205144659/http://www.divevoluntourism.com/dive-voluntourism-bali-sea-communities>) in Les Village, Tejakula, where divers could help rebuild coral reefs and learn to catch ornamental fish in a sustainable way.

Warm waters, crowds of young backpackers, cheap living and reliable waves keep Bali near the top of world **surfing** destinations. The southern coast at Kuta, Legian and Canggu, the Bukit Peninsula and Nusa Lembongan are the primary draws. Expert surfers usually head for the big breaks off the Bukit Peninsula, whilst beginners will find the gentler, sandy areas between Kuta and Legian to be ideal for learning. All Bali's surf beaches are described in the Indo Surf and Lingo surfing guidebook (<http://www.indosurf.com.au>). There are formal surf schools on Legian beach and Kuta beach. The more adventurous might like to try informal lessons from one of the many local self-styled surf teachers to be found hanging on any beach in South Bali. Regular surf reports are provided by Baliwaves (<http://www.baliwaves.com>).

There are a number of reputable **whitewater rafting** operators in the Ubud area, and the rafting is of good quality, especially in the wet season. If you want to go in non commercial area and feel more sensations you can also do **canyoning**.

Sport **fishing** is an increasingly popular activity with visitors to the island. Trolling, jigging and bottom fishing can all be very rewarding, with large game far from unusual. Charters are available from many coastal areas but the most popular points with a competitive range of options are Benoa Harbour and nearby Serangan close to Kuta, just to the north in Sanur and Padang Bai on the east coast.

**Waterbom** (<http://www.waterbom.com>) is a large water park in Jl Kartika Plaza in Kuta, supposedly the second best in the world, defeating Disneyland and Dubai.

## Other sports, adventure and family activities



Canyoning in Gitgit, Bali, Indonesia

Bali has become a famous destination for golfers. Most of the golf courses are international, with relatively cheap green fees and all-year play with convenient climate: "Bali Handara Kosaido Country Club" in the mountains near Bedugul, the "Bali Golf & Country Club" in Nusa Dua, a 9-hole course at the Grand Bali Beach Hotel in Sanur, the "Nirwana Bali Golf Club" near Tanah Lot, the New Kuta Golf Course at Pecatu on the Bukit Peninsula, and Bukit Pandawa Golf near Pandawa Beach.

Visitors can see animals at the Bali Zoo in Singapadu near Ubud, at the Bali Bird Park, at the Taro Elephant Park, and at the Bali Marine and Safari Park near Gianyar.

Many companies also provide adventure activities such as **Paragliding** at Nusa Dua, **Mountain Cycling** in the hills of Ubud or downhill cycling from Bedugul and Kintamani, cycling with **e-bikes** in Mambal (South Ubud) and the UNESCO World Heritage site of Jatiluwih, **Jungle Trekking**, **Bungy Jumping** on the beach in Seminyak, **Horse Riding** in Seminyak and Umalas, and **Hiking in the rice fields** near Ubud and many other places in the hills.

Nature can be observed while trekking in West Bali National Park, at the Butterfly Park (*Taman Kupu Kupu*) in Wanasari, or at the Bali Botanical Gardens in Bedugul. Inside the Botanical Gardens, visitors can also get a bird's-eye view of nature from the Bali Treetop Adventure Park (<http://www.balitreetop.com>). Hiking the Bali volcanoes is a popular option with visitors.

## **Buy**

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Whether it is simple trinkets, a nice statue or high fashion boutiques that turn you on, Bali is a shopper's paradise. A huge range of very affordable products are offered to the point where shopping can overwhelm a visit if you allow it to.

**Clothing** is a real draw. Popular sportswear brands are available in a multitude of stores in Kuta and Legian for prices approximately thirty to fifty per cent lower than you would pay at home. If the mass market is not your thing, try the ever increasing number of chic boutiques in Seminyak and support young local designers. Jalan Laksmana is a good starting point.

Bali is an island of artisans, so **arts and crafts** are always popular. Try to head to the source if you can rather than buying from identikit shops in Kuta or Sanur. You will gain more satisfaction from buying an article direct from the maker and seeing the craftsman in action. Bali has a huge range of locally produced crafts including paintings, basketware, stone and wood carvings, silver and shell jewellery, ceramics, natural paper gifts and glassware.

**Dried spices and coffee** are very popular items to take home. Most supermarkets have specially designed gift packages aimed at tourists, or, if you are visiting Bedugul, buy at the Bukit Mungsu traditional market.

Whatever you are buying, make sure you are in your best bargaining mode, as these skills will be required except in the higher-end stores that specifically state that their prices are fixed. And of course, bargaining is a lot of fun.

For more general shopping, Bali is home to a myriad of small shops and supermarkets and you will not be short of options. 24-hour convenience stores have mushroomed in South Bali with the Circle K franchise chain being especially prominent. The staff at these always speak English and the product lines they stock are very much aimed at visitors; everything from beer and magazines to western foodstuffs and sun lotion are available around the clock.

## **Eat**

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Bali has a huge variety of cafes and restaurants, serving both Indonesian and international food (see [Indonesia](#) for a menu reader). For better or worse, some American chains have established a presence here, although almost exclusively confined to the southern tourist areas. You will see KFC, McDonald's, Pizza Hut and Starbucks. Interestingly, the menus are often highly adapted to the local tastes. The menu at Pizza Hut looks nothing like one you find in Western countries.

Try the smaller local restaurants (called warungs) rather than touristy ones; the food is better and cheaper. Be sure to try the ubiquitous Indonesian dishes *nasi goreng* (fried rice), *nasi campur* (pronounced nasi champur, steamed rice with various vegetables and meats), and *mie goreng* (fried noodles). These dishes should rarely cost more than Rp 25,000 and are often considerably cheaper.

Some of the most authentic food can be found from roving vendors called *kaki lima*, which literally means "five legs": the three legs of the food cart and the vendor's own two legs. Go to the beaches of Kuta, Legian and Seminyak at sunset and find steaming hot *bakso*, a delightful meatball and noodle soup, served up fresh for a very inexpensive Rp 5,000. You can season it yourself but be forewarned: Indonesian spices can be ferociously hot. Go easy until you find your heat tolerance level!



A kaki lima food cart serving bakso, a typical streetside scene in Bali.

**Padang restaurants** are a good choice for both the budget conscious and those visitors wishing to experience authentic Indonesian (but not Balinese) cuisine. These are usually marked with a prominent *masakan padang* sign and serve food from Padang, Sumatra. The options are usually stacked on plates in the window. You choose what you want and it is served with steamed rice. The most famous Padang speciality is *rendang sapi* (spicy beef coconut curry) but there are always a number of chicken, fish, egg and vegetable options. Padang food is always *halal*, and you'll eat well for Rp 15,000–20,000.

## Balinese food

Actual Balinese food is common on the island but it has made few inroads in the rest of the country due to its emphasis on **pork**, which is anathema to the largely Muslim population in the rest of the country. Notable dishes include:

- **Babi guling** — roast suckling pig. A large ceremonial dish served with rice that is usually ordered several days in advance, but also often available at night market stalls and selected restaurants. A very notable outlet for babi guling is Ibu Oka's in [Ubud](#).
- **Bebek betutu** — literally "darkened duck", topped with a herb paste and roasted in banana leaves over charcoal. The same method can also be used for chicken, resulting in *ayam betutu*.
- **Lawar** — covers a range of Balinese salads, usually involving thinly chopped vegetables, minced meat, coconut and spices. Traditionally, blood is mixed into this dish but it is often omitted for the more delicate constitutions of visitors. Green beans and chicken are a particularly common combination.
- **Sate lilit** — minced seafood satay, served wrapped around a twig of lemongrass.
- **Urutan** — Balinese spicy sausage, made from pork.

Other Balinese specialities include:

- **Ayam panggang bumbu bawang mentah** — grilled chicken with sliced shallots, chillies and lime.
- **Ayam panggang bumbu merah** — grilled chicken with red chilli and shrimp paste sauce.
- **Ayam tutu** — steamed chicken cooked with Balinese herbs and spices.
- **Tum ayam/ketopot** — sliced chicken mixed with herbs and spices and steamed in banana leaves.
- **Ikan kakap bakar bumbu terasi** — grilled snapper in local hot spices.
- **Sudang lepet** — salted dry fish.
- **Pepes ikan laut** — sliced fish mixed with herbs and spices, grilled, and served in a banana leaf.
- **Pelecing kangkung** — water convolvulus with shrimp paste and lime.
- **Pelecing paku** — fern tips with shrimp paste and lime.



Satay lilit - minced seafood on a lemon grass stick, grilled over charcoal

## Dietary restrictions

Unlike Indian Hindus, virtually all Balinese eat meat, and **vegetarianism** has traditionally been limited to part-time fasts for some priests. Cows, however, are considered sacred, so Balinese traditional foods do not include beef but do include pork, which is not halal for Muslims. It's best to assume that all local food is non-vegetarian unless assurances are given to the contrary. In particular, the Indonesian spice paste *sambal* is a hot paste of ground red chillies, spices and usually *shrimp* paste. Always check to see if the sambal being served to you contains shrimp paste—you can find it without at a few places. Additionally, *kerupuk* crackers with a spongy appearance contain shrimp or fish. As an alternative, ask for *emping*, a delicious meat-free cracker made from bean paste—it resembles a fried potato chip in appearance. Restaurants catering to tourists do nearly always provide some vegetarian options, and in places like Seminyak and Ubud there are even dedicated vegetarian restaurants.

Halal restaurants catering to the Muslim minority exist, but may require a little searching for and tend to be downmarket. *Padang* restaurants (mentioned above) are a good option, and Muslims may also be able to eat in Javanese or Sundanese restaurants. Kosher food is virtually unknown.

## Prices

A meal in a basic tourist-oriented restaurant will be around Rp 20,000–50,000/person. In a local *restoran* or *warung* the same meal might be about Rp 15,000 or less. Simple warungs or sometimes small tables in pedestrian zones sell *nasi bungkus/nasi Bali* (a pyramid-shaped banana leaf/paper-wrapped parcel of about 400 g of rice with several tasty extras such as shredded chicken, pindang egg, noodles and chili to take away) for not more than Rp 10,000. One very reliable option is *nasi campur* (rice with several options, chosen by the purchaser) for about Rp 10,000-15,000. Rice is often served at ambient temperature with the accompanying food much hotter, this is common practice in Indonesia.

At the other end of the scale, Bali is home to a number of truly world-class fine-dining restaurants. Seminyak is home to many of the trendy independent options, and elsewhere on the island, the better five-star resorts have their own very high quality in-house restaurants with prices to match.

At all but the cheapest local restaurants, it is normal for 10% government sales tax and 11% service charge to be added to your bill. Some restaurants include this in the price, but most expressly state these *plus plus* terms.

July and August is the busiest season in Bali but the best deals can be had between October and April (apart from Christmas time).

## Drink

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Most Balinese have nothing against a drink, and alcohol is widely available.

*Caution should be taken in buying spirits as a poisonings and deaths have occurred, due to unscrupulous operators cutting spirits with cheaper alternatives like methylated spirits. Beer is seen to be safe.*

Indonesia's most popular beer is the ubiquitous **Bintang**, but the cheaper **Bali Hai** is nearly as widespread. Bintang is a fairly highly regarded classic light Asian beer, but Bali Hai is a rather bland lager, and despite the name it's actually brewed in a suburb of Jakarta. Another Indonesian beer is **Anker**. Foreign brands Carlsberg, Heineken, and San Miguel are all brewed in Indonesia as well, and widely available. A wide range of more expensive imported beers are available. Beer is relatively expensive in local terms, though still cheap by western standards; at Rp22,000 and up a small bottle costs the same as a full meal in a local restaurant. In tourist centres, happy hours are widely publicised before and after sunset, with regular bottles of beer going for Rp20,000-25,000 and the large bottles for Rp35,000-40,000. Today, formally mini markets cannot sell alcohol drinks anymore, even beer, but by Governor discretion, 'warung' and small vendors still can serve/sell beer with note they should be in a group/cooperation.

Bali produces its own wines, with **Hatten** (<http://www.hattenwines.com/>) being the oldest and most popular brand, available in white, red, rose (most popular) and sparkling varieties. Quality is inconsistent, but the rose is usually OK and massively cheaper than imported wines, which can easily top Rp300,000 per bottle. Wine aficionados are better off bringing their own bottle in with them. Most restaurants will let you bring your own bottle and some will charge a modest corkage fee. Smaller establishments may not have a corkscrew, so bring your own. The new popular wine is snake fruit wine from Karangasem with sweet and sour taste.

Bali also produces its own liqueurs and spirits, with **Bali Moon** being the most popular. They offer a wide range of flavoured liqueurs: banana, blackcurrant, butterscotch, coconut, hazelnut, lychee, melon, peppermint, orange, blue curacao, pineapple and coffee. Vodka and other spirits are also produced locally, with Mansion House being the most popular brand. Many of these local spirits are little more than flavoured rice spirit. Cocktails in Bali range from Rp30,000 in small bars to Rp100,000 in high end establishments. Bali Moon cocktails are available in almost every bar, restaurant and hotel in Bali. Liqueurs are available in many retail outlets; just enquire within if you wish to have fun making your own cocktails.

Bali's traditional hooches are **arak**, a clear distilled spirit that packs a 40° punch; **brem**, a fermented rice wine sold in gift shops in attractive clay bottles that are much nicer than the taste of the stuff inside; and **tuak**, a palm 'wine' which is often served at traditional festivities. Visitors should be *extremely* careful about where they purchase arak, as there have been a number of serious poisoning cases and even some deaths involving tainted arak.

Tap water in Bali is generally not drinkable, and when it is it's hard to ascertain its quality. Bottled water is universally available and inexpensive (Rp5,000 or so for a 1.5 litre bottle); restaurants usually use commercially purified water for cooking. The most popular brand is **Aqua** and that name is often used generically for bottled water. Filtered water shops are also common, providing on-site treatment of the

mains water to a potable standard. This is known as *air putih* (literally "white water"). These shops are much cheaper than retail outlets, selling water for about Rp5,000 per 11-litre reusable container, and they avoid the waste created by plastic bottles.

**Fresh fruit juices** cost from Rp10,000 upwards and their mixes may include watermelon, melon, papaya, orange, lime, banana or almost any other fruit you can think of. In Bali, avocado (*alpukat*) is used as a dessert fruit. Blended with coconut milk or milk, a little water and ice—and frequently use palm sugar rather than chocolate syrup—this is a beverage you will rarely find elsewhere. Almost all restaurant menus have a section devoted to various non-alcoholic fruit-based drinks.

## Sleep

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Bali has, without a doubt, the best range of accommodation in Indonesia, from US\$10-per-night *losmens* to US\$4,000-per-night super-homes.

Backpackers tend to head for Kuta, which has the cheapest (and dingiest) digs on the island, while many five-star resorts are clustered in Nusa Dua, Jimbaran, Seminyak and Ubud. Sanur and Jimbaran offer a fairly happy compromise if you want beaches and some quiet. Ubud's hotels and resorts cater to those who prefer spas and cultural pursuits over surfing and booze. Legian is situated between Kuta and Seminyak and offers a good range of accommodation. The newest area to start offering a wide range of accommodation is Uluwatu which now boasts everything from surfer bungalows to the opulent Bulgari and other high end resorts. Further north on the west coast is the district of Canggu. It used to offer many traditional villages set among undulating rice fields but is now being developed very fast and looks more like Seminyak.

For rest and revitalisation, visit Amed, an area of peaceful fishing villages on the east coast with some good hotels and restaurants, or head for the sparsely populated areas of West Bali. In Bali Popies Lane I and II at Kuta are popular among backpackers, for one room with fan, one person is about Rp 70,000, while when the room is used by two persons is only Rp 100,000, both with fried rice or egg sandwich breakfast. Very cheap, but to the beach should walk about 300 meters or more. Usually no booking in advance, and also no contact person, because the owner and also as the server prioritise whom sleep there first for extension day(s). Come at 10:00 to see maybe some backpackers have left the losmen.

Thanks to Bali's balmy climate, many hotels, bungalows and villas offer **open-air bathrooms**, often set in a lush garden. They look amazing and are definitely a very Balinese experience, but they may also shelter little uninvited guests and are best avoided if you have a low tolerance for critters.

Bali hotel prices may be given in **three different currencies**. Prices in U.S. dollars are most common, particularly away from the budget sector. Euros are sometimes used, particularly at hotels owned by European nationals. Lower-end places usually (but not always) price in Indonesian Rupiah. Some new local web hotels searches usually stated payment in Rupiah and also usually include tax and service payment, different with international web hotels searches which stated price exclude any tax and service. If you pay your bill by credit card, then the amount in the currency you agreed to when making the booking is converted to Indonesian Rupiah on the day you pay and your account is charged with that amount of Rupiah. This is because Indonesian banking law does not permit credit card transactions in any other currency. If you pay by cash, you can settle with the currency in which you were quoted the room rate.



A high-end hotel in Ubud, set in a terraced valley with infinity edge pool and rice paddies



It is generally best to seek a rate in Indonesian Rupiah and resist efforts by the hotels and villa owners to quote in a foreign currency unless you are able to make payment in the currency and it is agreeable to you to do so.

It is important to understand the tax and service charge that hotels are obliged to levy by Indonesian law. All high-end and mid-range (and a fair proportion of budget) hotels will levy a 21% tax and service charge on the room rate (the so-called "plus plus"). When you make a booking, you should always ask whether the rate quoted includes or excludes this. Simple budget homestays/losmen and informal accommodation are not obliged to levy these charges. The 21% consists of 11% sales tax which goes to the government and a 10% service charge which should go into a pool shared between the staff.

Be careful when you book/search three-stars hotels or below, because sometimes the hotels have uncommon rules. Different price of one, two or three persons stay. For the three persons sometimes has two options with extra bed (compulsory or not) or without extra bed (extra person). For three persons and more you can share a family room with bunk beds in some hotels and the hotel will provide you a 5 gallon drinking water and its dispenser. With and without breakfast. With breakfast means you have to eat in its small breakfast room. But if you want to eat in your room, additional charge will be added. Some hotels which have no breakfast room, will deliver your breakfast to your room after you telephone the front office or maybe they give a packet breakfast meal in a box or on disposable tray with thin plastic cover. Some hotels will charge you cleaning service charge (at least \$5) when your trash bucket is full with your own (rubbish) eat and drink are bought from outside the hotel, but it is not mentioned in the internet, but it is mentioned on the hotel guideline book in your room. Compulsory pickup charge from and to airport is also implemented by some hotels, the other hotels use big vehicle to pick up your group with more charge, but they mention price for small car.

The newest trend is for some big local companies in Indonesia to build bed and breakfast hotels to keep continuous earnings. The hotels claim to be 3-star, but they have no pool or spa, and their room rates range from Rp350,000 to Rp450,000. They are spread through Kuta, Legian, Seminyak and Denpasar near the Bypass and aimed at domestic tourists, though foreign tourists are also welcome. One advantage is the hotels are always near the crowd, which Indonesians prefer, with minimarkets and cheap/modest food stalls around the hotels. The locations are 1-2 km from the beach.

Like most of Southeast Asia, there are only a couple hotels in Bali that have family room, triple or quadruple room. The closest option would be to book two rooms with a connecting door, though it may be more expensive than one whole family suite. Most hotels count a kid over 2 years old as an adult, while others allow one child up to 10 years old accompanying the adults without extra bed for free.

## Private villas

Bali has become famous for its large collection of **private villas** for rent, complete with staff and top-class levels of service. Low labour costs result in single villas boasting staff teams of up to 30 people at the really high end. A private villa rental can be a great option for a visit to Bali, but it pays to be aware of the potential pitfalls.

Not every place sold as a villa actually fits the bill. Prices vary widely and some operators claim to go as low as US\$30 per night, which usually means a standalone bungalow on hotel grounds with little actual privacy. Realistically, costs will be upwards of US\$200 per night for anything with a decent location and a private pool. At the top of the range, nightly rents can easily exceed US\$1,000. The general rule of **you get what you pay for** applies here. There are, of course, exceptions, but a 4 bedroom villa offered for US\$400 and one for US\$800 per night will be different in many ways: the standard of maintenance, the number of staff and their English ability, and the overall quality of furnishings and fittings in the property.

Look carefully as to who is running the villa. Is it run by the owner, a local company, a western company or by local staff who answer to an absent overseas owner? And who you are renting through: directly from the owner, a management company, an established villa agent or one who just opened a month ago after his friend Nyoman told him how easy it was? Each path has its pros and cons. If it is an agency, see if there are press reviews. Ask how long the villa has been taking commercial guests, as villas normally take a year or so to get to best service levels. In the first six to 12 months of operation, great villas may offer introductory rates that are well below market value to gain awareness. In all circumstances thoroughly examine and query the security arrangements, especially if dealing with an apparently inexperienced or opportunistic operator to ensure you are not exposing yourself or your belongings to any unnecessary risks.

Many private villas are found in the greater Seminyak area (Seminyak, Umalas, Canggu), in the south around Jimbaran and Uluwatu, in Sanur and around the hill town of Ubud as well as Lovina in north Bali. They are rare in heavily built-up areas like Kuta, Legian and Denpasar.

## Long-term

For an extended stay, it is worth considering a long-term rental, which can be as low as US\$4,000 per year. Restaurants, shops and bars frequented by Bali's sizable expatriate community, particularly in Seminyak, Sanur and Ubud, are good places to find information about long-term rentals. Look for a bulletin board with property advertisements tacked up or pick up a copy of the local expat biweekly publication, *The Bali Advertiser* (<http://www.baliadvertiser.biz/>). With a year-round tourism trade, villas that have everything right are usually available for more lucrative short-term rental only. Long-term rental houses tend to be older and not as well maintained. If you are willing to be flexible, though, you can find nice house options over a wide range of budgets.

## Stay safe

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Bali is, in general, a safe destination, and few visitors encounter any real problems.

Bali was the scene of lethal **terrorist bombings** in 2002 and 2005, with both waves of attacks targeting nightclubs and restaurants popular among foreign visitors. Security is consequently tight at obvious targets, but it is of course impossible to protect oneself fully against terrorism. If it is any reassurance, the Balinese themselves—who depend on tourism for their livelihood—deplored the bombings and the terrorists behind them for the terrible suffering they have caused on this peaceful island. As a visitor, it is important to put the risk in perspective: Bali's roads are statistically far more dangerous than even the deadliest bomb. It may still be prudent to avoid high profile Western hangouts, especially those without security measures. The paranoid or just security-conscious may wish to head out of the tourist enclaves of South Bali to elsewhere on the island.

Bali is increasingly enforcing Indonesia's harsh penalties against the import, export, trafficking and possession of **illegal drugs**, including marijuana, ecstasy, cocaine and heroin. Several high profile arrests of foreigners have taken place in Bali since 2004, and a number have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms or (very rarely) execution. Even the possession of a small amount of drugs for personal use puts you at risk of a trial and prison sentence. Watch out for seemingly harmless street boys looking to sell you drugs (marijuana, ecstasy,



Behind the cuddly façade lies a cunning thief

cocaine, etc.). More often than not, they are working with undercover police and will try to sell you drugs so that they can then get uniformed officers onto you. The police officers will (if you are lucky) demand a bribe for your release, or, more likely, look for a far larger payday by taking you into custody. Just avoid Bali's drug scene *at all costs*.

The unfortunate people who are caught and processed will find there is little distinction between personal use and dealing in the eyes of the Indonesian legal system. 'Expedition fees', monies paid to shorten prison sentences can easily be US\$20,000 and are often a lot more.

There is a fair chance that you will be offered **magic mushrooms**, especially if you are young and find yourself in Kuta. Indonesian law is a little unclear in this area but with the whole country in the midst of a drug crackdown since 2004, it is not worth taking the risk.

If you see a **red flag** planted in the sand, do not swim there, as they are a warning of dangerous **rip currents**. These currents can pull you out to sea with alarming speed and even the strongest swimmers cannot swim *against* them. The thing to do is to stay calm and swim sideways (along the shore) until out of the rip and only then head for the shore. The ocean is not to be trifled with in Bali, and dozens of people, some experienced some not, die by drowning every year.



Don't swim near the red flag(s); swim between two yellow flags, if there are any

## Scams

Even though Bali is quite a safe place in which few tourists encounter problems, avoid scams and overpriced services this island can offer you.

Petty scams are not uncommon, although they can usually be avoided with a modicum of common sense. If approached on the street by anybody offering a deal on souvenirs, transport, etc., you can rest assured that you will pay *more* if you follow your new found friend. Guard your bags, especially at transport terminals and ferry terminals. In addition to the risk of them being stolen, self-appointed porters like to grab them without warning and then insist on ridiculous prices for their "services".

**Timeshare scams** and schemes are common in Bali with several high profile, apparently legitimate operators. If you are approached by a very friendly street canvasser asking you to complete a survey and then attend a holiday resort presentation to claim your 'prize' (this is inevitably a 'free' holiday which you end up paying for anyway), politely refuse and walk away. You may also be cold-called at your hotel to be told you have 'won a holiday' - the caller may even know your name and nationality thanks to a tip-off from someone who has already seen your data. If you fall for this scam, you will be subjected to a very long, high pressure sales presentation and if you actually buy the 'holiday club' product, you will certainly regret it. Timeshare is a completely unregulated industry in Indonesia, and you have no recourse.

When leaving Bali, if you have anything glass in your baggage (such as duty-free alcohol) the security guards may put some pressure on you to have it wrapped to keep it safe, and it can seem like its a requirement rather than a suggestion (it is Rp 60,000 a bag). Similarly, when arriving in Bali, some uniformed airport porters may offer to take your bags for you and walk you through customs, be generally friendly and helpful, and then demand a tip. The charge is Rp 5,000, a request for any amount in excess of this has no formal sanction, it is best to stop them from interfering with your bags in any way, just tell them you do not want their services unless you are sure you want to use them, if so clarify the price before they lift up your bags. These 'services' are best avoided.

The money changing rule is simple: **use only authorised money changers** with proper offices and always ask for a receipt. The largest is called PT Central Kuta and they have several outlets. If you are especially nervous, then use a formal bank. You may get a better rate at an authorised money changer though.

Avoid changing money in smaller currency exchange offices in shops, as they more often than not will try to steal money by using very creative and "magician" like methods. Even when you think you've watched the dealers every move, you're not unlikely to end up with far too low an amount in your hands, so just take a minute to recount your stack of notes at the spot. Often the rate advertised on the street is nowhere near the rate that they will give you in the end. Many times the rate is set higher to lure you in so that they can con you out of a banknote or two, and when this is not possible, they will give you a shoddy rate and state that the difference is due to commission. This even applies to the places which clearly state that there is no commission, of course any money changer charges a commission, they would cease to be viable if they did not and it is built into the differential between the purchase rate and the sell rate at any given time.

For many, *the* largest irritant will be the hawkers and peddlers who linger around temples, malls, beaches, and anywhere tourists congregate. It may feel difficult or rude to ignore the constant come-ons to buy souvenirs, food and assorted junk, but it can be necessary in order to enjoy your holiday in semi-peace.

Be wary around the **monkeys** that occupy many temples (most notably Uluwatu and Ubud's Monkey Forest). They are experts at stealing possessions like glasses, cameras and even handbags, and have been known to attack people carrying food. Feeding them is just asking for trouble.

Rabies is present in Bali and several deaths arising from rabies infections have been recorded in early 2011. Visitors to the island should avoid contact with dogs, cats, monkeys and other animals that carry the disease. If bitten seek medical attention.

Whilst eating **dog meat** is not illegal in Bali, some vendors are breaching animal cruelty and food safety laws. Dogs are being bludgeoned, strangled or poisoned for human consumption. Dog meat is filtering into the tourist food chain in Bali, sometimes unsafely.

## "Turtle Island" scam

A "Turtle 'Island'" in Tanjung Benoa is one of Bali's most infamous scams. Bali does possess a *legitimate* Turtle Conservation and Education Center (TCEC) at Serangan Island, also known as "Turtle Island", which is sponsored by the government (to be exact, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry [Kementerian Lingkungan Hidup dan Kehutanan]). However, when requested to go to "Turtle Island", many drivers, guides, and tour agencies will instead lead tourists to an unlicensed "conservation center" called Moon Cot Sari there. It is more of a mini-zoo than a conservation centre, despite its name. What's wrong with this place is that animals are kept in filthy, small habitat and subject to several forms of mistreatment. For instance, the snakes are kept there with their mouths taped, while the turtles (which *really* are solitary animals) were packed into several murky, small-for-turtle pens. Civets were kept in dirty cages which allows them to experience improper breeding and stimulation. Furthermore, tourists are subject to high-price services being offered on the departure spot leading there - that is, at BMR Watersport. There, you will be led into boats that take you to that place, which is actually not in an island - that is, it is accessible by land (not just water). These boat trips are generally expensive, and stop for a while at a very small coral reef situated offshore, where several boats also wait, before going to your final destination - the "turtle 'island'".

It is all part of a system - guides, drivers, and tour agencies gets a cut (commission) from the company when they bring tourists there.



If you have any concern about animal welfare, make sure that you visit the licensed (and government-funded) TCEC at Serangan. Do not support any tour agencies, drivers, or guides, that attempt to lead tourists and locals to the fake "conservation center" at Tanjung Benoa.

## Satria Agrowisata

Another scam in Bali involves a "coffee plantation" called Satria Agrowisata, which specialises on kopi luwak. In it, visitors are subject to luwaks that has been "drugged up" and exorbitant prices of their "tea"s and "coffee"s. Furthermore, while their "tea"s and "coffee"s are not really tea and coffee powder at all, but just useless sweet-tasting powder, with one review stating that it was just "kool-aid"; the ingredients are also not specified at all, with some claiming to be "sugar-free" but in fact it is sweet, so you will never know what are the actual contents of the product.

If you want to sample coffees, make sure that you go to Seniman Coffee Studio at Ubud. Also, do not support any tour agents, guides, or drivers that bring you into Satria Agrowisata or similar kopi luwak-based scams.

## Stay healthy

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The standards of **healthcare and emergency facilities** remain below what most visitors would be accustomed to in their home country. Whilst minor illness and injury can be adequately treated in the ubiquitous local clinics most overseas visitors would not be comfortable having serious problems dealt with in a local hospital, and insurance coverage for emergency medical evacuation is therefore a wise precaution. If a medical evacuation is required then patients are normally moved to Singapore or Perth in Australia. Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, does however have at least 5 international accredited hospitals, if you are seeking luxury medical attention at a closer location. Sanglah Hospital in Denpasar, though less luxurious, has also been internationally accredited since 2014.

Even if you have travel insurance, most clinics and hospitals may require payment in advance, or sometimes by incremental payment as various services are rendered. This may require access to a quite significant amount of cash to keep things moving. Any claim is then made to the insurance company upon your return home. This is almost always the case if the problem is one that can be dealt with on an outpatient basis. Make sure that your insurance company has an agreement with the provider or immediately establishes one, otherwise you will also be landed with a bill for an inpatient stay. Bali International Medical Centre (BIMC) has agreements with many insurance companies and is a well serviced hospital. This is however a relatively expensive option and even they ask for payment for outpatient treatments.

The major travel insurance companies may be slow to respond with appropriate assistance and equally slow to refer a claimant to a suitable medical service. Delays may also be experienced if the insurer is slow or indecisive in authorising treatment. Difficulties may arise from an insurer not authorising a *payment guarantee* to the local medical services provider. Delays in rendering appropriate treatment are a common outcome. Try to gain a comprehensive understanding of the policy terms and limitations of your travel insurance cover well before departing your home country. Trying to gain an understanding of the limitations of cover during a crisis is not recommended.

Some travel insurance companies and their *emergency response* centres may not live up to your own expectations of regional knowledge, appropriate case management and speedy response. Your best insurance is always common sense, some basic *pre-departure* research on your destination and the application of good situational awareness whilst travelling. Try to have your own plan in place to deal with any crisis you may encounter when travelling rather than relying solely upon a possibly inadequately

skilled and under-qualified person sitting in a distant call centre who may have their own role complicated by problems with language, communication and access to the insurers decision makers. You may wish to consider carrying the names and contact numbers of one or two of the major local medical and evacuation providers in your wallet or purse so that you know how to quickly obtain medical assistance should an emergency arise. Always ensure that you contact your insurer **as soon as possible** should an emergency arise otherwise you may find they are later unwilling to accept liability for payment for any expenses that arise. Always keep a thorough record of all expenditures and communications with your insurer and obtain full and detailed invoices and receipts for all services provided and any incidental costs. If you do not understand the detail of anything that you are billed for, ask for an explanation; if information is not forthcoming withhold payment or authorisation until such time as an acceptable explanation is given.

International SOS Indonesia (<https://web.archive.org/web/20100504214904/http://www.internationalsos.com/en/asia-pacific.htm>) (AEA SOS Medika) was founded in Indonesia in 1984 and has grown into an international organisation handling a round 9 million cases per year. It has a professionally staffed and operated clinic in Bali. They offer clinic services, hospital referral and emergency medical evacuation services. They have agreements or associations in place with many of the major travel insurers and are a principal medical service supplier in the Southeast Asian region, including Indonesia.

The midday sun in Bali will fry the unwary traveller to a crisp, so slap on plenty of high-factor sun protection and drink lots of fluids. However there is no need to carry litres of water as you can buy a bottle virtually anywhere. The locals tend to stay away from the beaches until about two hours before sunset, when most of the ferocity has gone out of the sun.

Travelling to Bali may expose you to some risks in contracting one of many tropical diseases that are present in the region. Bali is officially a **malaria-free** zone but **dengue fever** is a problem and all sensible precautions should be taken against being bitten by mosquitoes.

Take care in restaurants and bars; although it is very rare nowadays, some may use untreated/unsafe tap water to make ice for drinks otherwise made with clean ingredients. Tap water in hotels should not be used for drinking or brushing teeth unless explicitly labelled as safe.

Drink *adulteration* or contamination with methyl alcohol (methanol) and drink *spiking* in bars and clubs are not uncommon in Bali. Sensible precautions should be taken when buying and consuming beverages. During 2009/2010 a number of Indonesians and visiting tourists in Java, Bali and Lombok/Gili Islands were poisoned by consuming drinks containing methyl alcohol resulting in fatalities. Methyl alcohol or methanol (wood alcohol) and other contaminants are highly dangerous and have been found in some locally produced alcoholic drinks including locally made Arak. The initial symptoms of methyl alcohol/methanol intoxication include central nervous system depression, headache, visual distortion, dizziness, nausea, lack of coordination and confusion. If methyl alcohol poisoning is suspected seek medical assistance immediately.

The HIV infection rate in Bali is increasing, mainly among sex workers of both genders and intravenous drug users. If you engage in any risky activity, always protect yourself.

Finally, be careful around monkeys. They may be habituated to humans, but they are wild animals, and being bitten or scratched by a monkey could result in your contracting any number of maladies, possibly including rabies. So you are best off keeping your distance, especially if a monkey seems to be behaving erratically. If you are bitten or scratched by a monkey or bat, get medical help immediately, as rabies, if not treated before symptoms occur, is almost 100% fatal.

## Connect

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Unfortunately, it is very unlikely you will find a working public telephone on the street, which can be very frustrating in emergency situations. Depending on your circumstances, you may have to rely on mobile phones (local SIM cards may be used in unlocked phones with economical local and international calling rates) or phone/internet shops. Budget accommodation options are unlikely to offer telephone services to guests. Private rental phone booths (frequently together with internet rental) are available almost everywhere in Bali, mostly in Kuta and Legian, but the number is decreasing, because of cheap mobile phone prices which can easily be obtained for under Rp 300,000. Around Kuta and Legian, there are Biznet WiFi spots up to 100 Mbps which can be used easily from your devices. The voucher can be bought in Alfamart: Rp 10,000 for 500MB/10 days or Rp 30,000 for 2GB/30 days, and can be used in up to 2 devices.

It is worth investing in a SIM card for your own mobile phone, if only to use rideshare services like Grab and translate menus and signs with Google Translate. SIM cards are widely available at roadside stalls and phone service shops. Recent law changes means foreigners need to their passport to buy a SIM card; it will be photographed and registered in a database, but the vendor will fold a page over so your signature is not captured. A card alone should be just a few thousand; the smallest data package available to foreigners seems to be 6 GB for Rp 100,000.

International Direct Dialing prefix: 001, 007, or 008. (the three digits prefix means using non-internet phone, which the tariff is more expensive than the internet phone and sometimes up to 8x.)

- **International phone operators**, ☎ 101.
- **Directory enquiries**, ☎ 108. (if using a cell phone locally dial the area code you are in (e.g. 0361) and then 108)
- **Immigration office**, Niti Mandala, Renon, Denpasar, ☎ +62 361 227828.
- **Immigration office**, I Gusti Ngurah Rai Airport, ☎ +62 361 751038.

## Area codes

Bali has six area codes.

- **0361**: all of South Bali (Bukit Peninsula, Canggu, Denpasar, Jimbaran, Legian, Nusa Dua, Sanur, Seminyak, Tanah Lot) plus Gianyar, Tabanan and Ubud)
- **0362**: Lovina, Pemuteran and Singaraja
- **0363**: Amed, Candidasa, Karangasem, Kintamani, Padang Bai, Tirta Gangga
- **0365**: Negara, Gilimanuk, Medewi Beach, West Bali National Park
- **0366**: Bangli, Besakih, Kintamani, Klungkung, Mount Agung, Nusa Ceningan, Nusa Lembongan, Nusa Penida
- **0368**: Bedugul

## Emergency

- **Ambulance**, ☎ 118.
- **Indonesian Red Cross (PMI)**, ☎ +62 361 4872680282 (+62 361 48sanu0282). free ambulance service
- **Police**, ☎ 110.
- **Search & Rescue team**, ☎ 115, 151, +62 361 751111.
- **Tourist Police**, ☎ +62 361 754599, +62 361 763753.
- **Bali Police HQ**, Jl WR Supratman, Denpasar, ☎ +62 361 227711.

- **Badung Police HQ**, Jl Gunung Sanghyang, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 424245](tel:+62361424245).
- **Police stations:**
  - **Denpasar**, Jl Ahmad Yani, ☎ [+62 361 225456](tel:+62361225456).
  - **Sanur**, Jl By Pass Ngurah Ra, ☎ [+62 361 288597](tel:+62361288597).
  - **Kuta**, Jl Raya Tuban, ☎ [+62 361 751598](tel:+62361751598).
  - **Nusa Dua**, Jl By Pass Nusa Dua, ☎ [+62 361 772110](tel:+62361772110).
- **Hospitals with 24 hours emergency room (ER):**
  - **RS Umum Sanglah**, Jl Kesehatan 1, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 243307](tel:+62361243307), [+62 361 227911](tel:+62361227911), [+62 361 225483](tel:+62361225483), [+62 361 265064](tel:+62361265064).
  - **RS Umum Badung**, Jl Raya Kapal Mengwi, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 7421880](tel:+623617421880).
  - **RS Umum Dharma Usadha**, Jl Jend Sudirman 50, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 227560](tel:+62361227560), [+62 361 233786](tel:+62361233786), [+62 361 233787](tel:+62361233787).
  - **RS Umum Manuaba**, Jl HOS Cokroaminoto 28, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 426393](tel:+62361426393), [+62 361 226393](tel:+62361226393).
  - **RS Umum Surya Husadha** (<http://www.suryahusadha.com>), Jl Pulau Serangan 1-3, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 233787](tel:+62361233787).
  - **RS Umum Wangaya**, Jl RA Kartini 133, Denpasar, ☎ [+62 361 222141](tel:+62361222141).

#### Selected medical clinics with English language abilities:

##### South Bali

- **Bali International Medical Centre** (<http://bimcbali.com/>) (*BIMC*), Jl By Pass Ngurah Rai 100 X, Kuta, ☎ [+62 361 761263](tel:+62361761263).
- **Manuaba**, Jl Raya Kuta Nusa Indah Plaza BI IX, Kuta, ☎ [+62 361 754748](tel:+62361754748).
- **Nusa Dua Medical**, Nusa Dua Beach Hotel, Nuas Dua, ☎ [+62 361 772118](tel:+62361772118).
- **Surya Husadha**, Jl Danau Buyan 47, Sanur, ☎ [+62 361 285236](tel:+62361285236) (Jl. Kartika Plaza 9-X), [+62 361 752947](tel:+62361752947).
- **SOS**, Jl By Pass Ngurah Rai 505X, Kuta, ☎ [+62 361 710505](tel:+62361710505).
- **Siloam**, Jalan Sunset Road No.818, Kuta, Kut, Kuta, Kabupaten Badung, ☎ [+62 361 779900](tel:+62361779900).

##### Central Bali

- **Toyo Medika Clinic** (<http://toyamedika.com/>), Jl Raya Pengosekan, Ubud, ☎ [+62 361 971 264](tel:+62361971264).
- **Ubud Clinic** (<http://www.ubudcare.com/>), Jl Raya Ubud 36, Ubud, ☎ [+62 361 974911](tel:+62361974911).

##### East Bali

- **Klungkung Hospital**, Jl Flamboyan 40-42, Klungkung, ☎ [+62 366-21172](tel:+6236621172).

##### North Bali

- **Prodia Clinic**, Jl RA Kartini 12, Singaraja, ☎ [+62 362 24516](tel:+6236224516).
- **Kertha Usadha Hospital**, Jl. Cendrawasih No.5 - 7, Kaliuntu, Singaraja, ☎ [+62 362 26277](tel:+6236226277). Nurses and receptionists have English skills. Parking Rp5,000. (updated Sep 2020)



## West Bali

- **Kerta Yasa Clinic**, Jl Ngurah Rai 143, Negara, 📞 [+62 365 41248](tel:+6236541248).

## Cope

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### Consulates

Some countries have set up consulates or honorary consulates in Bali, all in the Denpasar area, and often with "Denpasar" in the consulate's name, even if the consulate is in a nearby town. The Australian, Austrian, Japanese, Swiss and U.S. consulates are in Denpasar; the Czech, Chilean, Finnish, French, German, Swedish and UK consulates are in Sanur; the Danish and Norwegian honorary consulates are in Jimbaran; the Hungarian and Dutch consulates are in Kuta; and the honorary Malaysian consulate is in Legian. Full listings for these consulates and honorary consulates are in the articles for those cities.

### Go next

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Boat services run regularly to Lombok, Flores and islands further east. Combined bus and ferry services will take you to destinations in Java such as Yogyakarta.

- Lombok is growing as an alternate to Bali with a majority Muslim population. Attractions include beaches, waterfalls and volcanoes. Reachable by boat from Padangbai.
- The Gili Islands are three tiny islands very close by to the northwest coast of the main island of Lombok. A backpacker favourite fast going upmarket and easily accessed by direct boat services.
- Flores the next star destination in Nusa Tenggara region where you can find the Komodo dragon, see 3-colour Kelimutu Lake, and explore the Manggarai and Ngadha cultures. Flight time 90 minutes from Bali.
- Yogyakarta for sightseeing of Prambanan and Borobudur Temples.
- Bandung, known for its textiles, Art Deco buildings and pleasant cafes, is near Jakarta but conveniently served from Bali using AirAsia service (flight time around 1+ hour).

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