

TRAVEL INFORMATION ON BALI

Bali, the famed Island of the Gods, with its varied landscape of hills and mountains, rugged coastlines and sandy beaches, lush rice terraces and barren volcanic hillsides all providing a picturesque backdrop to its colourful, deeply spiritual and unique culture, stakes a serious claim to be paradise on earth.

With world-class surfing and diving, a large number of cultural, historical and archaeological attractions, and an enormous range of accommodations, this is one of the world's most popular island destinations and one which consistently wins travel awards. Bali has something to offer a very broad market of visitors from young back-packers right through to the super-rich.



Main cities

Denpasar — a bustling city, the administrative centre and transport hub of the island but not a major tourist destination

Candidasa — a quiet coastal town

Kuta — surfer central, by far the most heavily developed area in Bali. Lots of shopping and night-life and the centre of lower-end party culture on Bali

Jimbaran — sea-side resorts, a nice sheltered beach and seafood restaurants south of Kuta

Legian — located between Kuta and Seminyak; also the name of Kuta's main street

Lovina — beautiful black volcanic sand beaches and coral reefs

Sanur — sea-side resorts and beaches popular with older families

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

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

Amed — an area of peaceful, traditional fishing villages featuring black sand beaches, coral reefs and excellent diving

Bedugul — nice lakes in the mountains, a golf course, the botanical gardens and the famous Ulun Danu Bratan Temple

Bukit Peninsula — the southernmost tip of Bali, with world class surfing, great beaches, and the can't-miss cliff-hanging Uluwatu Temple

Kintamani — active volcano Mount Batur, great mountain scenery and fruit growing

Mount Agung — highest mountain in Bali and the mother temple of Besakih

Nusa Dua — an enclave of high-end resorts and a long, golden sand beach

Nusa Lembongan — good diving, snorkelling and surfing and a great place to relax

Nusa Penida — wild, rugged and untamed and as off-the-beaten-path as you will get in Bali

West Bali National Park — trekking, bird watching and diving in Bali's only substantial natural protected area

Geography

Bali is one of more than 17,000 islands in the Indonesian archipelago and is located just over 2 kilometres (almost 1.5 miles) from the eastern tip of the island of Java and west of the island of Lombok. The island, home to about 4 million people, is approximately 144 kilometres (90 mi.) from east to west and 80 kilometres (50 mi.) north to south.

The word "paradise" is used a lot in Bali and not without reason.

The combination of friendly, hospitable people, a magnificently visual culture infused with spirituality and (not least) spectacular beaches with great surfing and diving have made Bali Indonesia's unrivalled number one tourist attraction. Eighty percent of international visitors to Indonesia visit Bali and Bali alone.

The popularity is not without its flip sides—once paradisiacal Kuta has degenerated into a congested warren of concrete, touts and scammers live on overcharging tourists, and the island's visibility has even drawn the unwanted attention of terrorists in 2002 and 2005—but Bali has managed to retain its magic. Bali is a wonderful destination with something for everyone, and though heavily travelled, it is still easy to find some peace and quiet, if you like.

A consideration is the tourist season and Bali can get very crowded in July and August and again at Christmas and New Year. Australians also visit during school holidays in early April, late June and late September, while domestic tourists from elsewhere in Indonesia visit during national holidays.



Sunset at Tanah Lot Temple (15th century) and rice fields near Ubud

Climate

Daytime temperatures are pleasant, varying between 20 and 33 degrees Celsius (68 to 93 degrees Fahrenheit) 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. 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.

Sun protection/Insect repellent

Keep in mind that you will have a sun burn really quick. Even when it is shady, taking a short stroll or lying under a beach umbrella: use a high sunblock (no. 30 and up). A hat can also be pleasant and both are of course for sale on Bali as well.

Insect repellent is recommended towards sunset, because of mosquitoes. Locally sold Autan works well.

Vaccination

Please check with your local health service which vaccinations are required.

Also check the necessity for malaria prophylaxes.

Water/food

It is recommended to drink bottled mineral water or drinking water that is offered in hotels.

At the restaurants you can use fresh fruit juices, salads or ice cubes without any risk. Even small local restaurants will be OK. Check if there are more customers, meaning the food will be fresh. Avoid eating at street vendors.

Language

Balinese is linguistically very different from Bahasa Indonesia, although the latter is the lingua franca in Indonesia and is spoken by practically everyone in Bali. In tourist regions, English and some other foreign languages are widely spoken.

Passport requirements/VISA

All passports must be valid for **a minimum of six months from the date of entry into Indonesia** and have at least two blank pages available for stamps.

The easiest way to obtain visa is at Ngurah Rai International Airport in Bali.

Pay **US\$ 25.00** on arrival at the airport, get a visa in your passport, get it stamped. The visa is valid for 30

days.

This may be extended later at the local Immigration office for a further once only period of up to 30 days. Exact change in dollars is recommended, although a selection of other major currencies including rupiah are accepted (the exchange rate is less good than at other locations), and any change will usually be given in rupiah.

The alternative is to obtain a visa at an Indonesian embassy before arrival.

Apart from the VISA tourists have to fill out an immigration form, which will be handed out in the aircraft. After baggage retrieval the luggage will be checked at X-ray checkpoints.

Carrying drugs will be sentenced with death penalty.

Citizens holding passports from Brunei, Chile, Ecuador, Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region), Macau SAR (Special Administrative Region), Malaysia, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam are eligible for the Visa waiver program and do not require visas to enter and remain for 30 days within Indonesia.

Departure from Bali: airport tax

When departing from Bali, you are subject to the airport departure tax which can be paid in cash in Indonesian Rupiah only, so save some bills for the trip out. The airport departure tax is Rp 150,000 (approx. € 12,50 or US \$ 17) for international departures and Rp 40,000 for domestic departures.

Money matters/ATM machines/Credit card

At the airport there are ATMs which accept Cirrus and Plus cards for withdrawals. After customs a large number of money changing kiosks including some operated by Indonesian banks such as BNI, BCA and Mandiri are available to change cash.

All over Bali you can change cash in banks or with money changers. There is no commission and the exchange rate is written on a board on the sidewalk. Sometimes they refuse old bills which are torn or have ink marks. Make sure to count your money before leaving the counter. The bills of 20.000 and 2000 Rupiah or 100.000 and 10.000 Rupiah are easy to misjudge because of all the zeros.

Shopping

The Balinese are master sculptors, wood carvers, painters, silver smiths, kite makers and real artists in many other fields. Some villages have even specialized themselves in distinctive art forms. It is likely that you will leave the island with some handicrafts, so make sure you have some space in your luggage!

Bali is a paradise for shoppers, but it is important to bargain!

Don't be afraid to bargain hard – start **low** – specially in Ubud Market. Start with 40-50% of the asking price. It's a way of life here and they **expect** you to bargain. Early birds get the 'morning price' for first of the day buyers.

If you walk away and they do agree with your bargaining price, you have to close the sale. It isn't good practise to walk away after having reached your price. Don't start bidding if you don't actually want to buy the item, just for 'testing'. You can always have a glimpse in the shops first before you go to the market. However: even fixed prices in shops are not so 'fixed'. Frequently they come up with a 'special discount price'.

In many touristic areas shop owners will often address you on the street to promote their merchandise. On the beach you will be frequently approached by salesmen offering massages, fake watches, sunglasses, kites etc. Just say: "Tida terima kasih"= No, thank you. It frequently helps andkeep smiling. Balinese people are very friendly, but sometimes persistent in a charming way, trying to sell you their merchandise.

By the way: they are also very curious and taxi drivers want to know all about you.

Time

Bali is in the UTC+8 time zone, same as Western Australia, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore, and Hong Kong, and one hour ahead of Jakarta.

Electricity

Electricity is supplied at 220V 50Hz. Outlets are the European standard types. American and Canadian travellers should pack a voltage-changing adapter for these outlets if they plan to use North American electrical equipment (although a lot of electronics with power adapters will work on 220 volts, check your equipment first).

Transportation

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. The traffic is chaotic and there are daily jams in Denpasar, Kuta and other major tourist centres. 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 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 cafes and bars.

By bus

The Perama 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, and these are cheap and reliable. Check locally advertised services (you cannot miss them) and book one day in advance.

By taxi

Metered taxis are very common in southern Bali as far north as Denpasar but few and far between elsewhere. The starting charge is Rp 5,000 for the first two kilometres and the meter ticks up Rp 5,000 per kilometre after that. Waiting time is charged at Rp 20,000 per hour. Trips outside southern Bali will incur an extra charge of 30%, as the driver has to go back empty. By far the largest and most reliable taxi company is Bali Taksi/Blue Bird; they have a telephone call service (+62 361 701111) for both instant taxis and for advance bookings. If day-tripping, it is often cheaper and more convenient to arrange for your taxi to wait and take you back.

Prepaid Taxi Fares from Ngurah Rai Airport to main Bali Destinations

Kuta Rp 50,000	Nusa Dua Rp 95,000 to 110,000
Tuban Rp 35,000	Ubud Rp 105,000 to Rp 195,000
Legian Rp 55,000	Padang Bai Rp 365,000
Seminyak Rp 60,000 to 70,000	Candidasa Rp 385,000
Jimbaran Rp 60,000 to 80,000	Amed Rp 400,000
Denpasar Rp 70,000 to 100,000	Lovina Rp 400,000 to 450,000
Sanur Rp 90,000	

In terms of transportation, Ngurah Rai is probably the most hassle-free airport in all of south-east Asia. Some hotels organise free transfers from the airport, but there are plenty of public taxis 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. If you are travelling on a restricted budget, you can flag down a Blue Bird Taxi from outside the airport

By bemo

Bemos are minivans which serve as a flexible bus service and are Bali's "traditional" form of transportation. They have, though, 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 self-drive car or motorbike

Driving in Bali is on the left-hand side. Car and motorbike rentals are widely available but you should think very carefully about your ability to handle driving in Bali with its lack of formal traffic rules. Consider hiring a car and driver as you can relax, be safe and not get lost. If you rent a car to drive yourself, a modern four door Toyota Avanza or Daihatsu Xenia should cost Rp 150,000 to 170,000 per day. If on a tighter budget, you should be able to get an old, rough Suzuki Jimny from about Rp 90,000 to 110,000 per day.

Renting motorcycles or scooters can be a frightening yet fascinating experience. They are typically 125cc, some with automatic transmissions, and rent for between Rp 50,000 and 100,000 per day. 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. Bali is no place to learn to ride a motorbike.

A word of warning when renting motorbikes. A sizeable number of travellers seem to leave their brains at home when visiting Bali and think it is acceptable to ride a motorbike through extremely busy streets in a foreign land without wearing a helmet, greatly putting yourself at risk. When you rent a motorbike you will be given a helmet, so wear it.

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is required for vehicle rental, with a motorcycle endorsement if renting a motorbike. The IDP is seldom requested by the person renting you the vehicle but will be required (along

with the vehicle's registration papers) if stopped by the police (typically a Rp 50,000 "fine" will allow you to keep driving). An IDP is easily available from motoring clubs in your home country (e.g., AAA and the American Automobile Touring Alliance in the United States provides them for around US\$15) and it is valid for one year.

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 taxis and far more efficient than using other public transportation. The drivers are usually English-speaking and they can also act as informal tourist guides recommending good destinations and restaurants. Choosing to rent from a large car company is naturally more expensive than sourcing from a private individual. Ask hotel staff to recommend a good individually owned rental car with a knowledgeable driver.

Price varies between Rp 300,000 to 600,000 per day (usually defined as 10 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 in recent years, have escalated dramatically (although 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.



Religion

Unlike any other island 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, work place, 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 no less than three times a day, before every meal. Don't worry if you step on one, as they are placed on the ground for this very purpose and will be swept away anyway. (Any ants enjoying the feast may not appreciate your foot quite as much though!)



Balinese Hinduism diverged from the mainstream well over 500 years ago and is quite radically different from what you would see in India. 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.



Balinese people are very religious and life is full of ritual - Nyepi is one of the most important days in their calendar. It is the Day of Absolute Silence, meant to fool all evil spirits that no one is actually on Bali - hence the need for silence. If this can be achieved, then it is believed that the evil spirits will go looking elsewhere for their prey and leave Bali island alone for another year. Police and security are on hand to make sure that everyone abides by this rule.

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.



Colourful temple procession

Clothing requirements for visiting a temple

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.

Dancing

Dances are extremely visual and dramatic, and the most famous include:

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, with up to 250 dancers in concentric circles chanting "kecak kecak", while a performer in the centre acts out a spiritual dance.

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.