



Bali

## Enchanted Island

**I**T'S BEEN CALLED THE "Island of a Thousand Temples" and the "Morning of the World," but my waiter at the Putri Ayu Café, a beachfront seafood restaurant in Jimbaran Bay, summed up Bali best by saying, "In Jakarta, political problems—but in Bali, everything okay." In short, the political mayhem of the Indonesian capital city might as well be a million miles away.

A standout among Indonesian islands, Bali makes for a nearly ideal adventure destination. The downside, of course, is the grueling travel time required to get to Bali—more than 24 hours from New York. Once you're there, though, the island offers relaxing beauty, coupled with exceptional art and culture. And did I mention the food or how ridiculously inexpensive everything is?

First things first. Think about booking your trip through an agency that specializes in Indonesian travel; many of these can be found on the Internet. Darshan Tours of Honolulu is a great place to start. You might also consider breaking up the long flight with a two- or three-day stopover in

Hong Kong. After a whirlwind tour of this Anglo-Asian metropolis, you'll be yearning for the tranquility of Bali.

Rice fields and farms dot the rural landscape, while shopkeepers touting handcrafted wood carvings fill the urban thoroughfares. Hinduism is the religion of all but a small percentage of Bali's 3 million people. You will notice within minutes of driving away from the airport in Denpasar, Bali's capital, that there is a temple on every block and "offerings" for luck and good fortune almost every foot of the way.

A typical day in Bali might include an early morning massage on the beach in Nusa Dua, for less than \$5. Then, consider a trip up north to Ubud, Bali's village of artisans, to observe painters, craftsmen, and silversmiths and goldsmiths. While in Ubud, you can also venture through the markets and try your hand at bargaining, Balinese-style. Choice souvenirs include handwoven sarongs, bamboo chimes, and utensils made from coconut shells.

Two other popular purchases for visitors are the professionally tailored leather jackets and the

world-famous Balinese indoor and outdoor furniture.

Purchasing virtually any of these, however, requires time and advanced planning. For the jacket, you should expect to attend at least two sessions with the tailor—one to take your measurements and to select the material and the other for the final fitting.

For furniture, not only will you need to select the type of material you prefer—teak, mahogany, or rattan—but you'll need to decide on the color of the material and the exact design. The decision-making process alone is sure to consume a full day. Still, you can



leave Bali having furnished your entire bedroom with unique furniture of the highest quality at a fraction of what you'd pay anywhere else.

If shopping isn't your forte, perhaps you'd prefer a trip to Sangh. The sacred forests there consist of nutmeg trees populated by beautiful gray monkeys. Aside from having the chance to watch, photograph, and feed the monkeys, you'll also be able to visit two temples in the middle of the forest and a third at the edge of it.

Then it's off to Tanah Lot, Bali's famous temple sanctuary, built in the sixteenth century atop a rock that during high tide appears to float in the sea. Try to make this trip at sunset—the silhouette of the structure against the auburn sky is unforgettable. Late spring is a particularly good time to visit, since it's the beginning of the island's dry season.

Snorkelers and divers should take a trip to Menjangan Island, off Bali's western coast, to experience some of the country's incredible coral reefs. And, if golf is your thing, Bedugul, a mountain resort up north, should be on your itinerary as well.

And, of course, there is the food. For traditional fare, try Kori Restaurant in Kuta, the area's haven for foreign surfers. A dinner of grilled fish or beef stew for two, with chicken satay appetizers and either soft drinks or a couple of bottles of Bintang beer, will probably run you \$20 with tax and tip (maybe \$23, if you decide to try the delicious apple crumb pie for dessert).

If you're looking for something a little out of the way, try the Living Room. With indoor and outdoor seating, the Living Room boasts Eurasian fare that will shock and delight your palate. And, as at Kori, \$25 will buy a fantastic dinner for two.

People complain that getting to Bali is the hard part. I assure you that leaving the island is even harder. Come to think of it, I must disagree with my waiter. Bali is not okay. It is extraordinary.

—ARI KAPLAN

### INFO TO GO

Where to stay:

Four Seasons Resort Bali at Jimbaran Bay (Tel. 62-361-70-10-10)

Novotel Coralía Benoa Bali (Tel. 62-361-77-22-39)

The Ritz-Carlton Bali (Tel. 62-361-70-22-22)

For More Information:

API Tours (Tel. 62-361-24-32-43)

Darshan Tours (Tel. 1-808-836-2600, [darshantours@hotmail.com](mailto:darshantours@hotmail.com))

Indonesian Council of Tourism Partners (Tel. 1-808-638-9659, [www.indonesia2001.com](http://www.indonesia2001.com))