

# About Bali

**What you have to know about Bali:**

## **Bali Facts:**

Bali is an island and the smallest province of Indonesia, and includes a few smaller neighbouring islands, notably Nusa Penida. It is located at the westernmost end of the Lesser Sunda Islands, between Java to the west and Lombok to the east, and has its capital of Denpasar at the southern part of the island.

Bali is Indonesia's favorite tourist destination, known for its natural attractions, perfect climate and relaxed atmosphere. This island of flowers, temples and friendly people is considered a real gem by travelers worldwide. The Island also featured by the complete tourist facilities, attractions and recreations that definitely make this island as the best holiday destinations in Asia.

With a population of 3.8 million in the 2010 census, and currently 4.22 million, the island is home to most of Indonesia's Hindu minority. According to the 2010 Census, 84.5% of Bali's population adhered to Balinese Hinduism while most of the remainder followed Islam. Bali is also the largest tourist destination in the country and is renowned for its highly developed arts, including traditional and modern dance, sculpture, painting, leather, metalworking, and music. A tourist haven for decades, the province has seen a further surge in tourist numbers in recent years.

Over the years, the grace and charm of Bali and its people have earned this tiny island numerous sobriquets of praise and homage: Island Of The Gods; The Last paradise; Land Of The Thousand Temples; Morning Of The World. Generations of foreign visitors, mesmerized by the placid lifestyle and fantastic

rituals of the gregarious Balinese, have sought to capture the island's spirit with poetic labels such as these.

And yet it is Bali that does the capturing. Covering less than 6,000 square kilometers, this lush, diamond-shaped isle attracts tourist, each drawn by the promise of a paradise on the earth. This is a land of startling geographical contrasts, of verdant rice terraces and sacred, mist-wreathed volcanoes, of white-sand beaches and dense tropical rain forest. and this is home to one of the world's most vibrant cultures; a society famed for its dance and music, it's lavish ceremonies and artistic achievements.

### **Bali Economic:**

More than 80 percent of the economy is based on agriculture, the other sectors being handicrafts, tourism, small trade, and professional services.

Economically and culturally, Bali is one of the most important islands of Indonesia. Rice is grown on irrigated, terraced hillsides; other crops include sugar cane, coffee, copra, tobacco, fruits and vegetables. Cattle and hogs are also raised. The Balinese are skilled artisans, particularly in woodcarving and in fashioning objects of tortoiseshell and of gold, silver and other metals. The Balinese are noted for their traditional dance, the distinctive music of the gamelan and for their skills in weaving cloth of gold and silver threads, Songket, as well as for embroidering silk and cotton clothing.

Bali of today is one of the twenty six provinces of the Republic of Indonesia, divided administratively between eight districts that take their names and boundaries from the island's old Hindu kingdoms.

### **Bali Climate:**

With sunshine shining throughout the year, Bali has a tropical monsoon climate, with pleasant day temperatures between 20 to 33 degrees Celsius or 68 to 93 degrees Fahrenheit. Rainy season starts from October to March, when the West monsoon brings heavy showers and high humidity. June to September is considered the driest season, with low humidity and it can be fairly cold in the evenings, the best time for any outdoor activities.

### **History of Bali:**

The first Hindus arrived 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, with some influence from 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 in 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*, occasionally battling off invaders from now Islamic Java to the west and making forays to conquer Lombok to the east, the north of the island

was finally captured by the 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 is 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”.

Bali became part of the newly independent Republic of Indonesia in 1945. In 1965, after the failed coup d’etat which was allegedly backed by the Communist Party (PKI), state-instigated, anti-communist violence spread across Indonesia. In Bali, it has been said that the rivers ran red with the reprisal killings of suspected communists—most estimates of the death toll say 80,000, or about five percent of the population of Bali at the time.

The current chapter in Bali’s history began in the seventies 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 magical island continues to draw crowds, and Bali’s culture remains as spectacular as ever

### **Culture of Bali:**

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*, or *sesajen*) 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 (But you better not step on one on purpose, because – as Balinese believe – it'll give you bad luck!).

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.

### **The Airport – DPS / Ngurah Rai International Airport**

Most visitors will arrive at Ngurah Rai International Airport (IATA Code: DPS), also known as Denpasar International Airport. Despite this misleading name, the airport is actually located in Tuban between Kuta and Jimbaran, roughly 30 mins away from Denpasar. Ngurah Rai is Indonesia's 3rd busiest international airport (after Jakarta and Surabaya) and a major hub well-connected to Australia, South-East Asia, and the rest of Indonesia.

The airport will not win any awards for style, but it is functional enough and has the usual complement of overpriced restaurants, duty-free shops and other services. ATMs which accept Cirrus and Plus cards for withdrawals are available in

airport departure and arrival areas and a range money changing kiosks including some operated by Indonesian banks such as BNI, BCA and Mandiri are available at the airport. Most ATMs for international arriving passengers are available right after exiting customs. There is one ATM to the immediate left of the customs exit, and another one a short walk away; near a restaurant.

Security protocols including passenger and baggage screening are similar to other large international airports in the region. Limitations similar to those in the EU and US are placed upon the carrying of fluids and other so-called *security items* in hand luggage. International passengers should be prepared for scrutiny of their baggage, including all carry-on items. When departing, you will likely pass through a total of three security checkpoints, and possibly a further one at the boarding gate, so be patient, particularly when things are busy.

Security protocols at the domestic terminal are similar to those applied at other Indonesian domestic hub airports, with baggage and carry-on screening, x-ray, metal detection, hand inspections and other security measures in place for departing passengers.

Be mindful of airport porters who may attempt to take control of your luggage either adjacent to or immediately adjacent to the baggage claim or in other sections of the airport. These porters may look quite similar to actual airport officials and may carry a name badge. If you do not wish to engage the services of a porter, then a firm but polite "no" should suffice. If you do accept their services then a payment is required with Rp 5,000 being the standard charge. Many of the porters demand money if they have been successful in picking up your bag, even if you tell them not to do so. Most certainly do not pay them if they do this and completely ignore any demands they make for payment or any other 'services' they may claim to be able to provide.

With the move to the newer international terminal (as of October 2013); porters usually will not take control of your luggage unless they either ask you or you request their assistance (depending on which one comes first). If you do utilize them; tipping is based on size of your baggage and the time spent helping you get through customs. In most cases, your baggage will be off of the conveyor belt and lined up on the side by the time you make your way to the baggage claim area.

When **departing from Bali**, you are subject to the airport departure tax which can be paid in cash in Indonesian Rupiah, or US Dollars with a surcharge, so save some bills for the trip out. The airport departure tax is Rp 200,000 for international departures (\$22 in May 2014) and Rp 40,000 for domestic departures. Infants under 2 years of age are exempted from departure tax (but not Visa On Arrival).

### **Travel to Bali:**

Before making your travel plans to any worldwide destination, we strongly recommend you authenticate important details regarding all applicable health, passport and visa requirements.





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