

Bali - The Island of Gods

Religion and Culture

Though Bali is multi-religious, consisting of Christian, Muslim and Buddhist minorities, the predominant religion is Hinduism. It's not a strict religion, but rather a result of a spiritual lifestyle.

From the moment you arrive in Bali, it's difficult not to notice the *canang sari*. The offerings that are part of morning religious ceremonies are very important to the Balinese Hindus. At the villa, you will notice two shrines where the offerings are often placed. They will be put around the villa during the day and are "active" while the incense burns, so show respect by not disturbing them.



Balinese have a fantastic sense of humour and their easy-going nature is hard to ruffle. That's why we like Bali so much - the people, culture, art, music, offerings, architecture, temples and more.

Through their family temple, Balinese have an intense spiritual connection to their home. Many generations share a home. Grandparents, in-laws, cousins, aunties, uncles and various distant relatives all live together.



The Balinese take part in dozens of ceremonies held across the island every day to ensure balance between dharma (good) and adharma (evil). They involve anywhere from hundreds to sometimes thousands of people. Don't be surprised if on your very first day in Bali you witness or get caught up in a ceremony of some kind.

On top of all these ceremonies, there are 13 major rites of passage throughout every person's life. The most extravagant and expensive is the last - cremation.

Village life doesn't just take place in rural villages. Virtually every place on Bali is a village in its own way. Under its neon signs, traffic and tourists, the locals meet, organise, celebrate, plan and make decisions as is done across the island. Central to this is the Banjar (local neighbourhood organisation). Our Villa Manager, Oka, is a Banjar in his local village.

Be aware and respectful of local sensibilities, and dress and act appropriately, especially in rural villages and at religious sites. When in doubt, let the words 'modest' and 'humble' guide you.

Here are some guidelines:

- ☞ Overly revealing clothing is frowned upon, as is wandering down the street shirtless quaffing a beer.
- ☞ Locals are embarrassed by foreigners' gratuitous nudity.
- ☞ Don't touch anyone on the head; it's regarded as the abode of the soul and is therefore sacred.
- ☞ Do pass things with your right hand. Even better, use both hands.
- ☞ Beware of talking with hands on hips - a sign of contempt, anger or aggression.
- ☞ Beckon someone with the hand extended and using a downward waving motion.
- ☞ Take off your shoes when entering a home or sometimes even shop. It is rude not to.
- ☞ The traditional salute is *Sembah* - the palms are joined together and placed vertically against the chest.
- ☞ Balinese share the same names by birth order, Wayan, Made, Nyoman or Ketut, whether male or female.

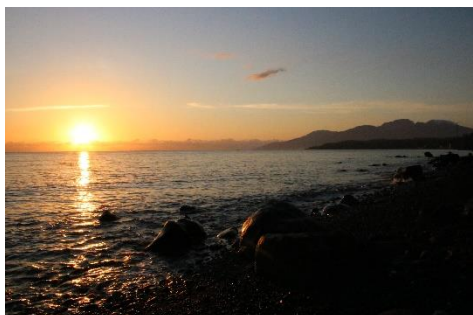
Visa Entry

Nationals of 169 countries can visit Bali visa-free for up to 30 days.

Make sure your passport has at least 6 months validity, and at least one blank page.

Weather

Bali is a great place to visit any time of the year.



It's located about 8 degrees south of the equator. Therefore, you can expect a tropical climate.

There are two main seasons: the dry from May to September and the wet, from October to April.

The average temperature hovers around 30 degrees Celsius (mid 80s Fahrenheit). This makes the ocean and pool water always warm.

Dry season is the high season, in terms of travel and when most tourists flock to Bali. The high season also means that prices on pretty much everything is higher, compared to the off-season.

Tulamben is somewhat in the rain shadow of Mount Agung, so receives less rain than other areas of Bali.

The wet season is still a stunning time to visit - warm, humid conditions broken by long, afternoon rainfall.

The sun rises almost daily around 6am and disappears around 6.30pm, after a very short twilight.

Bali Money

Rupiah is the currency of Bali. When you first arrive in Bali, you'll want to get some - it's best to avoid the airport and do this at one of the many money exchange places along the way to Tulamben.

Our Villa Manager, Oka will take you to a reliable place.

It will take you some time to get used to what seems like you're paying a lot for something. For example, you'll hand across a 50,000 note for meal and a beer, but that's about US\$3.60 or AUD\$4.60.



Tipping

In Bali, tipping is not expected but very much appreciated. The smallest amount will result in big smiles, so we always tip if the service is good. The only exception is restaurants geared towards tourists where a service charge is often automatically added to your bill.

Food In Bali

Food in Bali ranges from street food and cheap Warungs to five-star restaurants with famous chefs.



Traditional Indonesian dishes such as nasi goreng (fried rice), mie ayam (chicken noodle), mie goreng (fried noodle), gado-gado (vegetable with peanut sauce), sate and tempe (soy patty) are popular and available everywhere on the island.

Simple Warungs and street food carts are the keys to eating cheaply and some of them are as tasty as fancy restaurants.

It's possible to eat well on US\$10 a day. Western food is widely available but is generally very expensive.

Oka knows lots of safe, traditional places to eat, often with spectacular views.

Mobile Phones

When you're at the villa, using WhatsApp is the best, cost free way to use your mobile phone.

When you're out and about, you can always ask to use the local Wi-Fi, but it's best to get a prepaid SIM card.

SIM cards in Bali are very affordable. For about US\$15, you'll have phone and 4GB data service for 30 days.

Local SIM cards can be used if you have an unlocked phone.

You can buy SIM cards all over Bali and the service is instant.



Traffic

Your first introduction to Bali's traffic will be an eye opener, it's chaotic - but predictable.

Every type of vehicle shares the road with crazy overtaking manoeuvres a regular occurrence.

Your side of the road will be used by others that come from the opposite direction.



You don't own the road or have the right of way.

You will share the roads with dogs, chickens, cows, children, fallen coconuts and parked vehicles.

Using the horn means please notice me, it's not a sign of aggression.

Traffic is on the left side and the average speed is about 40km/h, so sit back and enjoy the view.

For long trips around Bali and to get to the Villa, it's best to hire a driver. Our Villa Manager Oka is a very cautious driver and a great tour guide for the journey.

If you want to rent a scooter it's safe and fun for shorter trips, but you'll need an international driving license.

Remember, all road users want to get to their destination safely.

Language

Since Bali is just a small part of the large country of Indonesia, many people predominantly speak Bahasa Indonesian.

English however, is spoken all over Bali so you'll have no problems communicating with the locals - but try to learn a few Indonesian words - the locals will appreciate it.

The Balinese will agree with you and nod and smile even if they don't understand, so you may have a misunderstanding and not know it! Smile as much as you can when interacting with locals.

Try the App 'Learning Indonesian', it's a good introduction.



Health and Safety

Bali is a safe place to visit, but be sure not to abandon your common sense.

This island is much more developed than most regions in Indonesia, and the main tourism areas match international standards when it comes to safety, hygiene and available healthcare services.

It's best to check what vaccinations you should have before travelling to Bali.

Remember, avoid drinking the tap water and ordering drinks with ice cubes.

In case of any type of emergency, or if you're needing advice, speak with our Villa Manager Oka in the first instance - he is best suited to guide and help you.

Electricity and Plugs

The voltage is 230V in Bali. If the standard voltage in your country is between 220V and 240V, you can use your electric appliances in Bali. But check first to make sure.

You'll need an adaptor if your device's plug isn't compatible with that in Bali which is a 2 pin, round socket and plug as used in most of Europe.



Costs

Compared to most of the world, Bali offers incredible value for money in everything. It's probably one of the best places when it comes to getting most out of your travel budget. Below are some indicative costs:

- ☞ Typical meal with a drink - US\$5 (this converts to about 50,000 Indonesian Rupiah).
- ☞ Can of soft drink – less than US\$1
- ☞ Beer - US\$2
- ☞ Scooter rental for a day, including helmet - US\$6.
- ☞ Full day car hire with driver - US\$50. Includes fuel. Our Villa Manager, Oka is a great tour guide.

Tours & Activities

The number of things to do in Bali will amaze new visitors and keep regulars coming back for more. Bali is a place that is both deeply spiritual and fun. Whatever your age or interest, whether you are travelling with family, loved ones or alone, you are certain to find mental and physical satisfaction.

You can let loose, stay fit and explore the cultural and traditional side of the island. In fact, with so many affordable and diverse options on offer, the hard work is often deciding what to do next. So do some planning in advance. What you do depends on how long your stay is, how active, or not, you want to be and your budget.

There is scuba diving & snorkelling, jungle walks, water-sports, magnificent waterfalls, animal parks, incredible nature, white-water rafting, surfing, canyoning, trekking up a volcano or through rice fields, temples, water palaces and bicycle tours, just to name a few. But there's also the body, mind and soul experiences.



When it comes to booking tours and activities, again we suggest you arrange these with Oka. He'll ensure the operators are reputable and you pay a fair price. He'll also provide options not in the tourist brochures.

We suggest that a day of activity or touring is then followed by a day of relaxing, otherwise you might feel a bit burnt out.

In this Villa Guide, there is more detail about things to see and activities you can do at the Villa, in & around Tulamben and further afar.