



The Last Paradise

LIVE IN THE MOMENT IN THE ENCHANTING ISLE OF BALI,
WHERE HAPPINESS, GRATITUDE, AND WILD NATURAL
WONDER ABOUND **BY AMBER GIBSON**

A cultural kaleidoscope with an artistic influence that has spread across the globe to trendy restaurants and bohemian boutique hotels worldwide, Bali is one of the most beautiful places on earth, with secret beaches, lush jungles, dramatic mountains, and breathtaking temples hiding around every bend. The island's allure began to attract international tourists in the 1970s, and just half a century later, resorts and restaurants replaced many rice fields as tourism became the most important sector of the island's economy. Overtourism remains a concern, but a renewed emphasis on sustainability, preserving the island's natural beauty, and supporting local businesses has emerged following the pandemic.

Although Bali is a province of Indonesia, located in the center of the world's largest archipelago, it is unique from the rest of the Asian country, with a population that is predominantly Hindu rather than Muslim. With roots in ancient Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms, Balinese culture is deeply spiritual, and the meaning behind Bali's famous handicrafts, dance, drama, and sculpture often trace back to religion.

From ikat and traditional batik fabrics to hand-carved Barong masks, rattan handbags, and delicate silver jewelry, the options for souvenirs here are endless. And the culinary delights - including freshly roasted coffee, line-caught fish, tropical fruits, spicy sambal sauce, and single-origin bean-to-bar chocolate - are equally impressive.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

Bali is the most popular tourist destination in Indonesia, but getting here is not easy. There are no direct flights from North America to Ngurah Rai International Airport (DPS) so you'll need to layover in a city like Hong Kong, Tokyo, Singapore, or Manila. These layovers are often quite lengthy, but that gives you a chance to explore a second Asian city if you're up for it, or enjoy a luxurious hotel layover. For example, a stay at the Edsa Shangri-La Hotel during a 16-hour layover in Manila will provide an opportunity to shower, nap, enjoy a hot stone massage, and indulge in elegant Cantonese dim sum before heading back to the airport feeling completely refreshed.

Visas on arrival are available for purchase at the airport, but applying for an eVisa in advance could save you up

to an hour at customs. Uber and Lyft are not available in Bali, but you can use Indonesian rideshare apps Grab or Gojek. Alternatively, hiring a private car and driver is a great way to sightsee at your own pace. They drive on the left side of the road here and most businesses (even in smaller villages) will happily accept U.S. currency.

ATTRACTIONS

MUSEUM SAKA

This brand new museum celebrates Balinese art and cultural expression, including mysticism and religion, across eight different galleries, plus an archival library, screening room, and café. The calming space has a star-spangled ceiling, with architecture and design inspired by Nyepi, a Balinese Day of Silence meant for self-reflection, meditation, and prayer. Don't miss the collection of ogoh-ogoh, giant puppets made of paper mâché and wood. This contemporary community-based art would normally only be seen and enjoyed once a year as part of Balinese Day of Silence processions. Located in the heart of AYANA Estate in Jimbaran, the museum is free for resort guests and open to the public. [Jalan Karang Mas Sejahtera Jimbaran](#)

JUNGLEGOLD BALI

It's rare to find single-origin bean-to-bar chocolate made at origin, but Junglegold



is an exquisite example of Indonesian cacao at its finest. Rub elbows with monks while shopping for bonbons, chocolate drinks, and pastries at this chocolate café in Sanur. Chocolate cashew spread, chocolate-covered rosella and spicy pineapple, and dozens of different chocolate bars are available to sample, all inspired by local Balinese ingredients. Cool off with iced chocolate drinks paired with croffles, a croissant waffle mash-up, and stock up on bars and confections to bring home as gifts. [Jalan Bypass Ngurah Rai 25 Sanur, junglegoldbali.com](#)

WHERE TO STAY

MANDAPA, A RITZ-CARLTON RESERVE

There are only five Ritz-Carlton Reserves in the world, and this one is a magical jungle paradise. Gaze out over your thatched roof and terraced

rice paddy kingdom (every guest here is treated like royalty) from the open-air lobby while sipping an herbaceous healing elixir before your butler whisks you away. There are 35 suites and 25 breathtaking villas with private infinity pools and views of the rainforest or Ayung River. The resort is big enough to offer a sumptuous breakfast buffet, but small enough for exquisitely personalized, attentive service. Get muddy while planting rice and learning about traditional Balinese Subak irrigation before indulging in char-grilled rock lobster and a plethora of vegetables at Sawah Terrace. New lobby bar Ambar is the hottest perch in Ubud to savor blazing sunsets paired with sashimi and cocktails inspired by Indonesian flavors. [Jalan Kedewatan, Banjar Kedewatan, Ubud, Kabupaten Gianyar, ritzcarlton.com/mandapa](#)

FOUR SEASONS RESORT BALI AT SAYAN

A suspended teak foot bridge leads to an infinity edge lotus pond, welcoming guests to the serenity of Sayan. Although the resort celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, locally sourced limestone and teak structures still feel contemporary and harmonize beautifully with the moss-covered stone walkways and surrounding jungle. Villa entrances feature the same dramatic descent as the lobby, spiraling downwards from the rooftop to ultimate privacy in seamless indoor-outdoor living spaces. Wellness is imbued throughout your stay, from a floating





sacred nap, where you're lulled to sleep in a silk hammock by a singing Buddhist nun, to elaborate spa ceremonies to balance each of the seven chakras. Ground your muladhara root chakra with a Balinese kemenyan smoke ceremony and herbal poultice massage, or stimulate your ajna third eye chakra with meditation and a marma point facial massage. Daily yoga classes range from restorative hatha practices to laughter yoga at the lotus pond and anti-gravity yoga in aerial silks. **Jalan Raya Sayan, Sayan, Kecamatan Ubud, Kabupaten Gianyar, fourseasons.com/sayan**

THE LAGUNA, A LUXURY COLLECTION RESORT & SPA

Nusa Dua's original luxury resort has an elegant, modern new look after completing a year-long renovation. Seven swimmable lagoon pools and lush tropical gardens are as appealing as ever, while guestrooms, spacious suites, and public spaces feel brand new, blending traditional Balinese design with custom artwork and furniture. The Laguna boasts the best beach in Bali, and offers a suite of cultural activities from paper weaving to mask making for kids. Southeast Asian buffet feasts by the Malaysian-



born chef Alexander Chong and Sunday dim sum brunch with whole roasted Peking duck are highlights at Banyubiru restaurant. Experienced therapists at Lagoon Spa ease sore muscles with Balinese massage techniques and a deft touch. **Kawasan Pariwisata, Jalan Nusa Dua No.2, Benoa, South Kuta, Badung Regency, thelagunabali.com**

DAY TRIPS AND TOURS

TEMPLE TOURS

Temples are everywhere in Bali, including on the grounds of every resort and home. Although you may visit Balinese Hindu temples, or puras, without a guide, a knowledgeable tour guide will add more depth to your experience, explaining the different types of temples and temple ceremonies, the meaning



[TRAVEL]

behind daily offerings, and the various manifestations of the highest god Sang Hyang Widhi. Four Seasons Resort Bali at Sayan even offers a private tour to a small village temple not open to the public, along with an opportunity to participate in a melukat purification bathing ritual with a Balinese priest. Keep in mind that menstruating women are not permitted to enter temples.

fourseasons.com/sayan;
baligoldentour.com

SCUBA DIVING

Bali is considered one of the best scuba diving destinations in the world with colorful marine life, shipwrecks, and shallow, easily accessible coral reefs at the Blue Lagoon. There are dives for all levels, including a shallow wreck dive in Tulamben, which is also a popular snorkeling site, to explore the USS Liberty, a cargo vessel that was struck by a Japanese torpedo in 1942. Nusa Penida is another favorite dive trip, with advanced drift dives that offer a chance to swim with majestic manta rays, mola molas, and sea turtles. AquaMarine Diving is the most reputable company on the island, offering everything from basic recreational dives to PADI divemaster courses. [Petitenget Street No.2A, Kerobokan Kelod, Kuta, Badung Regency, aquamarinediving.com](https://www.petitenget.com)

DINE AND DRINK

ROOM4DESSERT

Dessert for dinner, but inspired by tropical botanicals and indigenous Balinese ingredients? Chef Will Goldfarb breaks all the rules of pastry with his unique brand of botanical modernism, creating a coconut meringue made without eggs, eschewing refined sugar for more deeply flavored palm sugar, and showcasing local cacao every which way on a single plate – warm, cold, soft, and crunchy. Diners begin with a tour of the restaurant's organic garden before enjoying five savory bites, followed by five intricately plated desserts and ending with five final bite-sized sweets on the terrace. Watch



Goldfarb's season four *Chef's Table* episode on Netflix to whet your appetite, and don't skip the cocktail pairings. Visit the Powder Room by R4D next door for daytime coffee and sweets, and shop the ceramics and plateware used in the restaurant. [Jalang Raya Sanggingan, Kedewatan, Kecamatan Ubud, Kabupaten Gianyar, room4dessert.com](https://www.jalangraya.com)

KUBU AT MANDAPA

Mandapa's signature restaurant is only open for dinner, and the nine bamboo cocoons overlooking the Ayung River are the most romantic, and most coveted, tables. The menu here is a departure from local Indonesian cuisine, in favor of European classics like lobster ravioli and beef Wellington executed with panache. There are plenty of vegetarian and vegan options to choose from, too, like vibrant beetroot tartare with honey mustard and fresh pasta with rich wild mushroom ragout. Opt for the tasting menu with wine pairings for the full experience – you won't regret it. [Jalan Kedewatan, Banjar Kedewatan, Ubud, Kabupaten Gianyar, instagram.com/kubuatmandapa](https://www.jalanraya.com)

AYUNG TERRACE

Chef Suta serves modern Indonesian and vegetarian Sattvic soul food at the Four Seasons Sayan's signature restaurant. From buntut oxtail soup and spiced rubbed pork belly to the most flavorful chargrilled cabbage you've ever tasted,

every dish here is an explosion of flavor. Save room for dessert: fermented cassava cheesecake and Java coffee chocolate cream are equally delicious. Ambitious home cooks can book a cooking class with the chef and learn how to use a mortar and pestle to make base genep, the turmeric, ginger, garlic, galangal, and candlenut spice paste foundation of many favorite Balinese dishes. Wrap marinated local fish in banana leaves and mold beef satay on sugarcane skewers to cook on the grill and enjoy by the Ayung River. [Jalan Raya Sayan, Sayan, Kecamatan Ubud, Kabupaten Gianyar, fourseasons.com/sayan/dining/restaurants/ayung_terrace](https://www.fourseasons.com/sayan/dining/restaurants/ayung_terrace) 1

