

North Bali



The land on the other side, that's North Bali. Although one-sixth of the island's population lives here, the vast region, centred on Singaraja and the Buleleng regency, is overlooked by many visitors who stay trapped in the South Bali–Ubud axis. And that's ironic because the north was once the gateway to Bali, with Dutch steamers bringing the island's first visitors to the port in Singaraja. Only the really adventurous ones ventured as far as Sanur – or horror, Kuta.

Today, tourism in the north is focused on Lovina, the mellow beach town with cheap hotels and even cheaper sunset beer specials. To the west, Pemuteran charms all who discover the crescent of appealing resorts around a cute little bay. Diving is big here and all along the north coast. Although the sites at Menjangan in West Bali are the destination for many, the Buleleng reefs swarm with sea life day and night.

Getting to North Bali for once lives up to the cliché: it's half the fun. Routes follow the thinly populated coastlines east and west, or, you can go up and over the mountains by any number of routes, marvelling at crater lakes and maybe stopping for a misty trek on the way.

Once north, sacred temples, waterfalls and many other seldom-visited treasures await. Pick a back road for a ride or a drive, wave to the villagers and discover a new, more relaxed side of Bali.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring underwater marvels at **Pemuteran** (p267)
- Losing track of time at **Lovina** (p260)
- Getting dirty in the healthy mud of **Air Panas Banjar** (p267)
- Savouring Buleleng's rich culture at the museums of **Singaraja** (opposite)
- Marvelling at the carving all around the artful temple **Pura Maduwe Karang** (p260)



YEH SANIH

☎ 0362

On the coast road to the beach towns of East Bali, Yeh Sanih (also called Air Sanih) is a hassle-free seaside spot with a few guesthouses on the beachfront. It's named for its fresh-water springs, **Air Sanih** (adult/child 3000/1000Rp; ☎ 8am-6pm), which are channelled into large swimming pools before flowing into the sea. The pools are particularly picturesque at sunset, when throngs of locals bathe under blooming frangipani trees – most of the time they're alive with frolicking kids. It's about 15km east of Singaraja.

Pura Ponjok Batu has a commanding location between the sea and the road, some 7km east of Yeh Sanih. It has some very fine limestone carvings in the central temple area. Legend has it that it was built to provide some spiritual balance for Bali, what with all the temples in the south.

Between the springs and the temple, the road is often close to the sea. It's probably Bali's best stretch of coast driving, with water crashing onto the breakwater and great views out to sea.

Completely out of character for the area is a place run by quite a character: **Art Zoo** (☎ 8am-6pm) is 5.7km east of Yeh Sanih on the Singaraja road. Symon, the irrepressible American artist (who also has a gallery in Ubud; p178), owns this gallery and studio, bursting with his own creativity that's at times vibrant, exotic and erotic.

Sleeping & Eating

A few warung (food stalls) hover near the entrance of Yeh Sanih and do a brisk business with the local trade. Otherwise, options are few and scattered.

Pondok Wisata Cleopatra (☎ 0812 362 2232; r 100,000Rp) This modern budget place has nine clean, cold-water rooms with showers and tubs. The big, flowery grounds are about 1.1km west of the springs.

Pondok Sembiran (☎ 24437; r 300,000-450,000Rp; ☎ ☎) This inn is bifurcated: one is 20m from the sea and has a pool and four rooms, the other has seven bungalows and is located right on the seawall. All are large, good for families and have kitchens and hot water. The hotel is off the main road in Alassari, 1km east of the temple and 8.3km east of Yeh Sanih. It's popular with the frugal Dutch travellers.

our pick **Cilik's Beach Garden** (☎ 26561; www.cilikbeachgarden.com; s/d €40/60, villas €60-160; ☎) Coming here is like visiting your rich friends, albeit ones with good taste. These custom-built villas, 3km east of Yeh Sanih, are large and have extensive private gardens. Other accommodation is in stylish *lumbung* (rice barns with round roofs) set in a delightful garden facing the ocean. There's a real emphasis on local culture; the owners have even more remote villas further south on the coast.

Puri Bagus Ponjok Batu (☎ 21430; dishes 15,000-30,000Rp) This lovely spot 6.8km east of Yeh Sanih is next to Pura Ponjok Batu and overlooks the water. It serves grilled seafood in covered pavilions and offers an array of fresh juices. Call to confirm hours before making a special trip.

Getting There & Away

Yeh Sanih is on the main road along the north coast. Frequent bemo (small minibuses) and buses from Singaraja stop outside the springs (8000Rp).

If heading to Amed or Tulamben, make certain you're on your way south from here by 4pm in order to arrive while there's still some light.

SINGARAJA

☎ 0362

With a population of more than 100,000 people, Singaraja (which means 'Lion King' and somehow hasn't caused Disney to demand licensing fees) is Bali's second-largest city. With its tree-lined streets, surviving Dutch colonial buildings and charmingly moribund waterfront area north of Jl Erlangga, it's worth exploring for a few hours. Most people stay in nearby Lovina, however.

Singaraja was the centre of Dutch power in Bali and remained the administrative centre for the Lesser Sunda Islands (Bali through to Timor) until 1953. It is one of the few places in Bali where there are visible traces of the Dutch period, as well as Chinese and Muslim influences. Today, Singaraja is a major educational and cultural centre, and its two university campuses provide the city with a substantial, and sometimes vocal, student population.

The village of Beratan, to the south of Singaraja, is the silverwork centre of northern Bali. You'll find a few traditional pieces such as *cucuk* (gold headpieces) on display, but it mostly has uninspiring tourist jewellery. A