



Central Mountains

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Why Go?

Bali has a hot soul. The volcanoes stretching along the island's spine are more than just cones of silence; their active spirits are literally just below the surface, eager for expression.

Gunung Batur (1717m) is constantly letting off steam. The otherworldly beauty of the place may overwhelm the attendant hassles of a visit. Danau Bratan has sacred Hindu temples and its shore is lined with strawberry farms. The village of Candikuning has an engrossing botanic garden.

The old colonial village of Munduk, a hiking centre, has views down the hills to the coast of north Bali that match the beauty of the many nearby waterfalls and plantations. In the shadow of Gunung Batukau (2276m), you'll find one of Bali's most mystic temples. Just south, the Unesco-nominated ancient rice terraces in and around Jatiluwih bedazzle.

Amid it all, little roads lead to untouched villages and the occasional hidden retreat where you can truly get away from it all. Start driving north from Antosari for one surprise after another.

When to Go

Bali's central mountains can be cool and misty throughout the year. They also get a lot of rain: this is the starting point for the water that courses through rice terraces and fields all the way to Seminyak. Although you can expect more rain from October to April, it can pour any time. Temperatures show few seasonal variations, although it can get down to 10°C at night at high elevations – it's no wonder locals wander around bundled up. There's no peak tourist season in the hills.

GUNUNG BATUR AREA

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This area is like a giant bowl, with the bottom half covered by water and a set of volcanic cones jutting out of the middle. Sound a bit spectacular? It is. On clear days – vital to appreciating the spectacle – the turquoise waters wrap around the newer volcanoes, which have obvious old lava flows oozing down their sides.

The road around the southwestern rim of the Gunung Batur crater is one of Bali's most important north-south routes and has one of Bali's most stunning vistas. Most people intending to do some trekking stay in the villages around the shores of Danau Batur and plan an early start to climb the volcano.

Even day trippers should bring some sort of wrap in case the mist closes in and the temperature drops to 16°C.

The villages around the Gunung Batur crater rim have grown together in a continuous untidy strip. The main village is

Kintamani, though the whole area is often referred to by that name. Coming from the south, the first village is **Penelokan**, where tour groups stop to gasp at the view, eat a buffet lunch and be hassled by souvenir sellers.

Penelokan is also where you can take a short road down into the crater. From here, a road loosely follows the shore of Danau Batur, linking the villages of **Kedisan** and **Toya Bungkah**. You can travel between the Gunung Batur and Danau Bratan areas using a beautiful mountain lane (see the boxed text, p215).

Dangers & Annoyances

The Gunung Batur area has a reputation as an avaricious place and many visitors leave vowing never to return. One travel agent told us that he gets more complaints about this area than the rest of Bali combined, which is a shame, as if properly briefed you can enjoy the stunning natural beauty of this region.



Central Mountains Highlights

- 1 Claiming your own waterfall while trekking around **Munduk** (p219)
- 2 Identifying each ancient variety of rice grown at the magnificent ancient terraces of **Jatiluwih** (p221)
- 3 Hearing the chant of priests at one of Bali's holiest temples, **Pura Luhur Batukau** (p221)
- 4 Luxuriating among the hundreds of rare plants at Candikuning's **Bali Botanical Gardens** (p216)
- 5 Beholding the otherworldly, lava-strewn side of **Gunung Batur** (p208)
- 6 Finding your own serenity in the lakeside village of **Toya Bungkah** (p214), in the shadow of steaming Gunung Batur
- 7 Exploring the region's maze of back roads, such as the one north from **Antosari** (p222)