



Ubud & Around

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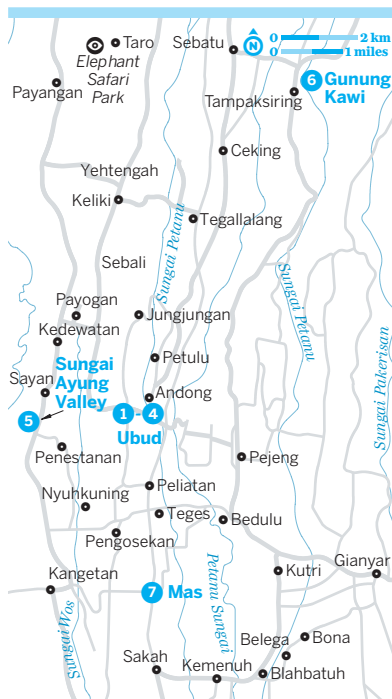
Why Go?

A dancer moves her hand just so and 200 pairs of entranced eyes follow the exact movement. A gamelan player hits a melodic riff and 200 pairs of feet tap along with it. The Legong goes into its second hour as the bumblebee dance unfolds with its sprightly flair and 200 butts forget they're still stuck in rickety plastic chairs.

So another dance performance works its magic on a crowd in Ubud, the town amid a collection of villages where all that is magical about Bali comes together in one easy-to-love package. From nightly cultural performances to museums showing the works of artists whose creativity flowered here to the unbelievably green rice fields that spill down lush hillsides to rushing rivers below, Ubud is a feast for the soul. Personal pleasures like fine dining, shopping, spas and more only add to the appeal.

When to Go

The weather is slightly cooler but much wetter than in the south; expect it to rain at any time. At night, mountain breezes make air-con unnecessary and let you hear the symphony of frogs, bugs and distant gamelan practices echoing over the rice fields through your screened window. Temperatures during the day average 30°C and at night 20°C, although extremes are possible. Seasonal variation is muted, given the prevalence of precipitation. The real factor in deciding when to come is peak season: July, August and the Christmas holidays mean a large influx of visitors.



Ubud & Around Highlights

- 1 Making like the ubiquitous ducks and wandering the rice fields in and around **Ubud** (p138)
- 2 Feeling the rhythm of a traditional Balinese **dance performance** (p166), one of Ubud's great night-time pageants
- 3 Making new friends and wiling away the hours at a funky **Ubud cafe** (p159)
- 4 Discovering your own hidden talents through an **art or cooking course** (p146) as you draw on the knowledge of talented locals
- 5 Exploring the green jungle and white water of the **Sungai Ayung valley** (Sayan; p151)
- 6 Making like Indiana Jones at the towering ancient wonders at **Gunung Kawi** (p173)
- 7 Exploring the myriad villages in the Ubud region, such as **Mas** (p177), for artworks, crafts, ceremonial objects and other treasures

UBUD

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Ubud is culture, yes. It's also home to good restaurants, cafes and streets of shops, many selling goods from the region's artisans. There's somewhere to stay for every budget, and no matter what the price you can enjoy lodgings that reflect the local Zeitgeist: artful, creative and serene.

Ubud's popularity continues to grow. Tour buses with day trippers can choke the main streets and cause traffic chaos. Being named the top city in Asia by *Conde Nast Traveler* only added to the hoopla from bestselling *Eat, Pray, Love*. Fortunately Ubud adapts and a stroll away from the intersection of Jl Raya Ubud and Monkey Forest Rd can quickly restore sanity. There's nothing like a walk through the verdant rice fields to make all right with the world.

Spend a few days in Ubud to appreciate it properly. It's one of those places where days can become weeks and weeks become months, as the noticeable expat community demonstrates.

History

Late in the 19th century, Cokorda Gede Agung Sukawati established a branch of the Sukawati royal family in Ubud and began a series of alliances and confrontations with neighbouring kingdoms. In 1900, with the kingdom of Gianyar, Ubud became (at its own request) a Dutch protectorate and was able to concentrate on its religious and cultural life.

The Cokorda descendants encouraged Western artists and intellectuals to visit the area in the 1930s, most notably Walter Spies, Colin McPhee and Rudolf Bonnet. They provided an enormous stimulus to local art, introduced new ideas and techniques, and began a process of displaying and promoting Balinese culture worldwide. As mass tourism arrived in Bali, Ubud became an attraction not for beaches or bars, but for the arts.

The royal family is still much a part of Ubud life, helping to fund huge cultural and religious displays such as memorable cremation ceremonies.

👁 Sights

Palaces & Temples

Ubud Palace (Map p153; cnr Jl Raya Ubud & Jl Suweta) and **Puri Saren Agung** (Map p153; cnr Jl Raya Ubud & Jl Suweta) share space in the heart of Ubud. The compound has many

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