



East Bali

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Why Go?

Wandering the roads of east Bali is one of the island's great pleasures. Rice terraces spill down hillsides under swaying palms, wild volcanic beaches are washed by pounding surf, and age-old villages soldier on with barely a trace of modernity. Watching over it all is Gunung Agung, the 3142m volcano known as the 'navel of the world' and 'Mother Mountain', which has a perfect conical shape you might glimpse on hikes from lovely Tirta Gangga.

You can find Bali's past amid evocative ruins in the former royal city of Semarang. Follow the rivers coursing down the slopes on the Sidemen road to find vistas and valleys that could have inspired Shangri-La. Down at the coast is slow-paced Padangbai and relaxed Candidasa.

Resorts and hidden beaches dot the seashore and cluster on the Amed Coast. Just north of there, Tulamben is all about external exploration: the entire town is geared for diving.

Best Places to Eat

- ➔ Gianyar's Night Market (p183)
- ➔ Merta Sari (p191)
- ➔ Terrace (p196)
- ➔ Vincent's (p200)
- ➔ Warung Enak (p209)

Best Places to Stay

- ➔ Turtle Bay Hideaway (p201)
- ➔ Meditasi (p208)
- ➔ Alam Anda (p212)
- ➔ Samanvaya (p188)
- ➔ Santai (p207)

When to Go

➔ The best time to visit east Bali is during the dry season – April to September – although recent weather patterns have made the dry season wetter and the wet season drier. Hiking in the lush hills from Gunung Agung over to Tirta Gangga is much easier when it isn't muddy.

➔ Along the coast there's little reason to pick one month over another; it's usually just tropical.

➔ Top-end resorts may book up in peak season (July, August and Christmas), but it's never jammed like south Bali.

Coast Road to Kusamba

📍 0361

Bali's coast road running from just north of Sanur east to a junction past Kusamba should really be named Beach Road. It runs past a whole swathe of black-sand beaches and has made it easy to visit all sorts of sandy places you couldn't easily reach back when the road east meandered through towns far inland such as Gianyar and Semarapura.

Efforts to widen the two lanes to four are nearly complete and are sorely needed. The road is lined with scores of warungs and trucker cafes along its length. Tourism development has begun in earnest and you'll see plenty of new residential villas aimed at foreigners.

The coast road (formally the Prof Dr Ida Bagus Mantra Bypass – named for a popular 1980s Balinese governor who did much to promote culture) makes Padangbai, Candidasa and points east an easy day trip from south Bali, depending on traffic.

👁 Sights & Activities

Bali Safari & Marine Park AMUSEMENT PARK
(Map p176; 📍 0361-950000; www.balisafari-marinepark.com; Prof Dr Ida Bagus Mantra Bypass; adult/child from US\$49/39; ☀ 9am–5pm, Bali Agung show 2.30pm Tue–Sun) Kids love Bali Safari and Marine Park and their parents are happy they love someplace. This big-ticket animal-theme park is filled with critters whose species never set foot in Bali until their cage door opened. Displays are large and naturalistic. A huge menu of extra-cost options includes animal rides and a night safari. Visitors should note that the park stages animal shows which include elephants: animal welfare advocates claim that these are unnatural and harmful for the animals.

One of the major attractions is the glossy stage show **Bali Agung**. For the 60-minute show, Balinese culture is given the Vegas treatment with spectacular results. It's not traditional but it is eye-popping.

The park is north of Lebih Beach; free shuttles run to tourist centres across south Bali.

🏖 Beaches

As you head east on the coast road from Sanur, pretty much any road or lane heading south will end up at a beach. Some will take you to quiet beaches, others will lead you

to beaches where development is underway and still others are already well-trod and lead to beaches where fun and frolic are established.

The shoreline is striking, with beaches in volcanic shades of grey pounded by waves. The entire coast has great religious significance and there are oodles of temples. At the many small coastal-village beaches, cremation formalities reach their conclusion when the ashes are consigned to the sea. Ritual purification ceremonies for temple artefacts are also held on these beaches.

Some key points:

- ➔ Ketewel and Keramas are top spots for surfing.
- ➔ Swimming in the often pounding surf is dangerous.
- ➔ Some beaches have no shade.
- ➔ Most beaches have a food or drinks vendor or two, at least.
- ➔ You'll need your own transport to reach these beaches.
- ➔ Locals will charge you an access fee – about 2000Rp to 5000Rp.
- ➔ Rubbish is a depressing fact at most of the beaches.

High-profile surf resort **Komune Bali** (Map p176; 📍 0361-301 8888; www.komuneresorts.com; Jl Pantai Keramas; r from US\$90; 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷 🍷) has erected light towers for night-surfing, which has proven hugely popular. Despite this, the hotel has actually done a good job of trying to blend into the existing landscape. It has a very attractive pool area and a cafe in the dune up from the high-tide line.

Unfortunately other new arrivals here have different attitudes. Wake Bali rents out all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) so people can screech around the beach. Worse, it has a pool with captive dolphins.

Pantai Ketewel

BEACH

(Map p176) One of the first beaches you'll encounter off the coast road, Ketewel is known for its surfing, which demands advanced skills; it's a tricky reef-rocky right. Come here to surf – or watch.

Pantai Purnama

BEACH

(Map p176) Small, but has the blackest sand, reflecting billions of sparkles in the sun-light. Religion is big here. The temple, **Pura Erjeruk**, is important for irrigation of rice fields, while some of Bali's most elaborate