



Ubud & Around

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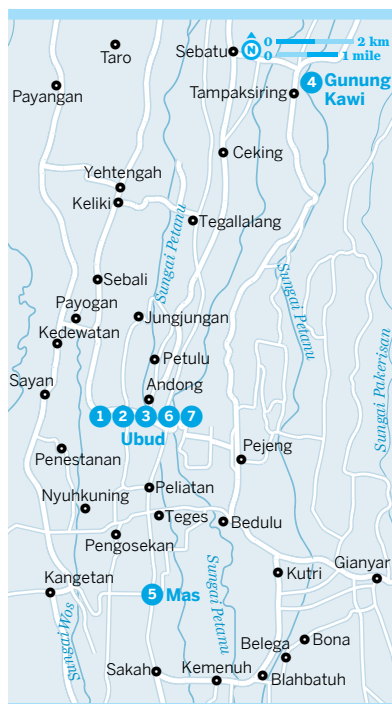
Why Go?

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 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 very popular 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, yoga and nearby villages of artisans and ancient sites only add to the appeal.

When to Go

- ➔ From October to April 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.
- ➔ Peak season: July, August and the Christmas holidays bring a huge influx of visitors and lodgings and restaurants are booked.
- ➔ In October, the Ubud Writers & Readers Festival is hugely popular.



Ubud & Around Highlights

- 1 Dance Performance** (p180) Feeling the rhythm of a traditional Balinese cultural event, one of Ubud's great night-time pageants.
- 2 Ubud Cafes** (p178) Whiling away the hours among new friends at a breezy idyll with excellent locally roasted coffee.
- 3 Cultural Courses** (p160) Refining your batik technique and sambal recipes by taking instruction from one of Ubud's talented locals.
- 4 Gunung Kawi** (p188) Making like Indiana Jones at these towering ancient wonders.
- 5 Traditional Villages** (p185) Exploring hamlets around Ubud, such as Mas, for artworks, crafts, ceremonial objects and other treasures.
- 6 Yoga** (p157) Finding your inner balance at one of Ubud's famous yoga centres.
- 7 Fine Dining** (p172) Enjoying the remarkable variety of restaurants in Ubud, where creativity and great taste are hallmarks.

UBUD

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, adding on the hoopla created by the bestselling *Eat, Pray, Love*. Tour buses with day trippers can choke the main streets and cause traffic chaos. Fortunately, Ubud adapts and a stroll away from the intersection of Jl Raya Ubud and Monkey Forest Rd, through the nearby verdant rice fields, can quickly 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

Central Ubud

Temples, art galleries, museums and markets dot the middle of Ubud. Some of the most important sit close to the main intersection at Jl Raya Ubud and Monkey Forest Rd.