

Leisure Travel

Page 56

The Surfer's Heaven 4D3N in Bali

Bali –located in Indonesia with majority of its population adheres to Balinese Hinduism. Its rich and diversified cultures have marked it as one of the most popular holiday destination on the map. Not only does their traditional dance have its unique flavours, but other cultures and arts such as sculpture, paintings, silverworks and handicrafts will make the trip very much worthwhile.

The Balinese believes that offerings are of utmost importance as they bring peace to those alive and deceased. Believers will perform a daily ritual of placing flowers with their offerings to the God on the table, in a temple, at home or the shop, or even at the dangerous curbs on the roads and the highways. Festivals are treated as one of the best opportunities to please God where women in their best traditional clothing, together with a towering hat full of flowers, fruits, rice and other offerings will walk towards the temple in groups. This is truly a very colorful and amazing sight that is not to be missed.

The gateway of good and evil is the entrance to most of the temples in Bali. These gateways are large intricate stone carvings of the two guardians, representing the evil and good, standing opposite each other, guarding the entrance to the temples. This ultimately translates how the Balinese view the differences between evil and good in their day-to-day living. The structure can also be seen in other buildings as well as residences, only much smaller and much less impactful.

Page 57

9.00pm - Upon arrival at the Ngurah Rai airport, after clearing from the customs, I saw a lot of people standing at the exit of the arrival hall with names in various languages written on boards and signs. After a quick search, I saw my name and went up to the guide and introduced myself. I just followed my guide as he carried my luggage and lead the way out to our car. There were a lot of taxi drivers sneaking up and asking if I needed transport to which I just ignored. Took us about 15 minutes in the car, after which we reached the Hard Rock Hotel on Jalan Pantai for check-in and what do you know? It's dinner time!

Poppies Lane 1 is lined with restaurants and you'll find a lot of tourists and foreigners dining here. Bamboo Corner is one of the restaurants on the street and it is approximately 10 minutes walk from the hotel. The offer a wide range of cuisine ranging local dishes to the western cuisines that tasted fantastic at a very affordable price! We decided to call it a day after the satisfying meal and headed back to our room. Poppies Lane 1 at night is pretty quiet as most of the shops closes at 8pm, with the exception of

the shopping centres, which close at 10pm, leaving only discos and pubs that will continue into the wee hours.

Tip: The alternative to a pre-booked guide is to approach the taxi services counter at the entrance to the airport. Their prices are fixed, ranging from Rp45,000 (approx RM18) for a trip to Kuta. Renting a car will cost approximately Rp250,000 (RM100) per day for 8 hours only (without a driver. If you need a driver, you will need to seek the hotel's assistance). Anything beyond the 8 hours will incur additional charges. Remember to haggle furiously!

Today's spending:

Ayam Goreng Kalasan	Rp12,000	(RM4.80)
Sirloin Steak	Rp17,000	(RM6.80)
BaliHai (beer)	Rp 7,000	(RM2.80)
BigAqua (mineral water)	Rp 2,500	(RM1.00)
Total	Rp38,500	(RM15.40)

Page 58

Day 2

We strolled around and had a good look around the hotel after our breakfast. The large, clear pool was practically waving and calling out to us to jump in...but alas, our guide was waiting at the hotel's lobby by 9am, which signals the beginning of my Bali exploration!

Page 59

Nusa Dua Beach

A 45-minute car ride brought us from Kuta to Nusa Dua. It is one of the more secluded areas with gentle rolling waves breaking the shore. This is one of the most popular spots for water sports as well as a romantic getaway as the beach is free of aggressive sellers that seem to be everywhere else. The strong sea breeze made it suitable for kite flying here. While we were there, the skyline was dotted with colourful boat-shaped kites, which is a pretty amazing and unforgettable sight.

Tip: This is an enclave of expensive high-end resorts. It is the best place for honeymoon and a relaxing getaway from the stress of work.

Dreamland Beach

On the way back, we detoured to Dreamland Beach as it was still early. Dreamland Beach is still under development and the entrance fee costs Rp5,000 (RM2). From the top of the cliff, you can see that the higher waves here are indeed very suitable for surfing. This goes unsaid with all the foreign surfers having a wonderful splashing time! There's a path of stairs down the slope to the beach. Almost as packed as Kuta Beach but this white sandy beach is more remarkable as it isn't only a surfer's dreamland and paradise but also to those who are seeking to relax as the beach is dotted with local massage parlors. Of course, not forgetting to mention that the scenery is magnificent and last but not least, pretty ladies clad in bikini made it all picture perfect. ☺

Uluwatu Clifftop Temple

After a short stay, we moved on to the Uluwatu Clifftop Temple nearby, THE place for the most magnificent sunset view. The entrance fee to the temple is Rp3,000 (RM1.20). The staff here helped me into a sarong as my pants were above knees. On the contrary, for those who were wearing long pants will have to wear a yellow strip on the waist as an act of respect to visit the temple. Caution: monkeys in the temple will snatch things off tourists, especially sunglasses and hats, so do make sure you keep all these valuables prior to entering the temple! (Rumours had it that the monkeys will snatch the visitor's properties in exchange for food☺) The view along the way after entering the temple is stunning and you will also get to see how the strong waves breaks at the wall of the cliffs.

The Kecak Dance (entrance fee of Rp50,000 (RM20)) will take place at the temple at about 6pm. This is a very unique dance, as it does not require any instruments or music. The only rhythm for this is through voices that goes ke-ke-cak-cak-cak! Don't miss this if you are here for the first time! Although the Kecak Dance can be found almost everywhere in Bali, but personally, I feel that there is an added extraordinary sensation to watch it on the Uluwatu Clifftop Temple's stage when the sun sets in the background as we dance into the night. The change from daylight to nighttime is simply breathtaking!

Dinner @ Jimbaran

After the spectacular Kecak Dance performance at the Uluwatu Clifftop Temple, the guide brought us to Jimbaran, which is around Kuta, for seafood dinner. One will be spoiled for choices, as there are hundreds of seafood restaurants to choose from. This beach is also another place to be if you want to enjoy a spectacular sunset dinner. The dining tables are all spread out on the beach, facing the sea and sunset while you enjoy

the tasty seafood dinner. Just imagine, thousands of candle lights, together with the lights emitting from the restaurants and the night sky painted with a blanket of shining stars.... it's simply beautiful, elegant and romantic too!

My day ended at about 9pm when the guide sent me back to the hotel after the wonderful dinner.

Note: Live seafood may cost double compared to the menu prices. Every restaurant has its own tablecloth be it in different colors or patterns, beware that you do not sit at the wrong tables. It is natural that the seafood prices are a little more expensive here as this is after all a tourist spot.

Restaurant of my choice: Sharkeys Seafood

Dinner Value Meal: 500gm of lobsters, 50gm of medium-sized live prawns (approx 3 prawns), 300gm of fish, 400gm of live crabs, 200gm of sotong, 200 gm of clams (approx 4 pcs) and Bintang Beer

Today's spending:

Dreamland Beach	Rp5,000	(RM2.00)
Uluwatu Temple	Rp53,000	(RM21.20)
Lunch – Own		
Dinner @ Jimbaran	Rp195,000	(RM78.00)
Beer	Rp22,000	(RM8.80)
Tax @ 20%	Rp43,400	(RM17.36)
Total	Rp3,184,000	(RM127.36)

Page 63

Day 3

Knowing that I'll be eating the famous Bebek Bengil Dirty Duck in Ubud, I didn't spend too much time on my breakfast at the hotel. Just like yesterday, we left the hotel at 9am and headed for Ubud. The journey took merely an hour and the scenic drive up North just eases you and makes you enjoy the trip all the more.

If you are passionate about arts, handicraft and cultural heritage, then Ubud is the place to be! This place has it all pouring in from all over Bali. We were briefly shown the candle workshop, silverware market, handicraft workshops, sculpturing factory and etc. The locals mainly make a living by doing artwork and handicrafts and it is usually passed on from generation to generation. All these sculpturing, handicrafts and artwork are very exclusive with a unique Balinese twist!

Breakfast + Lunch of the day – Bebek Bengil Dirty Duck

When you are in Ubud, the famous Bebek Bengil Dirty Duck dinner is a must try! The restaurant is built in between a rice field and a lotus pond. The moment you walk in to

the restaurant, you'll be thrown away by the design and decorations of the restaurant. The last seat in the restaurant is literally by the rice field. If you love a meal with a good view, the best time to come is during the day where you get to see everything that's surrounding the restaurant, the rice field and the lotus pond!

The duck feast is simply delicious! It is so crispy that you can even eat its bones. Top it all up with the specially made sambal sauce and viola! It's just heavenly! (Reservation is required if you wish to try out the smoke duck that's being offered. All you need to do is get your trusty guide to assist in making the reservation with Bebek Bengil 1 day in advance for a serving of the smoke duck and you'll be able to enjoy it. No sweat!)

Our next stop on the agenda is Kintamani Volcano, which is about 1 hour away. The Batur Lake looking calm and peaceful from afar and it looks picturesque right next to the lake. The restaurant here is designed with a view over looking the crater Lake set in the vast volcano caldera while you enjoy your coffee or lunch with a nice breeze from the lake. Make sure you are here between 12noon to 2pm; otherwise you might not be able to catch a glimpse of the volcanoes as the clouds might set a veil over them.

There are a lot of stalls setup along the way and they're very aggressive in trying to achieve sales. We suggest that you may want to purchase some bracelets here which will cost approximately Rp3,750 (RM1.50) each as souvenirs for loved ones back home.

Page 64

Tegalalang

On our way back, we stopped by the Tegalalang's rice terraces. This is another must see beautiful scenery for all tourists. Aside from the amazing rice terraces, there are all sorts of shops by the roadside trailing the way from Ubud. The shops range from lightings, furniture, home decors to wooden artwork and they are all very cheap! You will also see a lot of youngsters setting up stalls selling an assortment of things under the sun.

Next, how can we resist popping by the Pura Tirta Empul? This temple is situated at Tampak Siring and it costs Rp6,000 (RM2.40) to enter. It is built around the Holy Water and it is truly a not-to-be-missed spot for all tourists and locals alike. Believers from all over the world come here to pray and shower. It is said that drinking the Holy Water will bring good luck, so the next time when you are there, go on and give it a try with nothing to lose!

There are also a lot of stalls that sells the wooden artwork here and it is said to be the cheapest place in Bali to get them. But make sure you haggle furiously before you purchase anything as that can earn you up to 80% discount at times!

After that, we moved on to the Ubud Palace and Ubud market where you might want to pick out souvenirs for the friends and family at home (located diagonally opposite from the palace, which you can reach on foot). It is more difficult to haggle in the market as

the prices are pretty fixed. After a quick browse in the market, I've decided that it's time to relax, so Bali Spa, here I come!

Page 65

Zen Spa

After selecting the spa package and finishing the ginger tea which was served, I followed the masseur to the room for a change of clothes (disposal brief and bathrobe provided by the parlor). Lying face down on the bed and having the masseur to work on all my muscle was one of the simple pleasures which I have thoroughly enjoyed during my stay. My spa package was for 1 hour 45mins, and it only cost Rp115,000 (RM46)! It was worth every single penny of it!

(Note: Advanced booking is required for spa in Ubud)

Details:

Jl. Hanoman – Ubud – Bali – Indonesia

Phone: 0361-970976

Fax: 0361-974688

Email: contact@zenbalispa.com

Website: www.zenbalispa.com

After the massage, it's time for some food. I headed to the highly recommended Pizza Bagus for tea time / dinner. The pizza was fantastic but one has to have the patience for the food to be served.

I went back to the hotel by about 7pm and called it a day.

Today's spending:

Breakfast & Lunch – Crispy Duck	Rp61,000	(RM24.40)
Ice Lemon Tea	Rp8,000	(RM3.20)
Tax @ 15%	Rp10,350	(RM4.14)
Pura Tirta Empul	Rp6,000	(RM2.40)
Zen Spa	Rp115,000	(RM46)
Tea time / dinner – Pizza Salami & Pepperoni	Rp20,500	(RM8.20)
Small Bintang (beer)	Rp10,000	(RM4.00)
Total	Rp230,850	(RM92.34)

Page 66

Kuta Beach – Surfer's Paradise

Today is my last day in Bali and I felt heavy hearted the moment I woke up in the morning. I am determined to spend the remaining time to the fullest, down to the very last minute before catching my flight at 2.45pm.

Page 67

I woke early in the morning, at about 6am. After breakfast, I headed straight to the well known surfer's paradise – Kuta Beach! You will see people of all ages relaxing on the beach in various ways, be it surfing, sun bathing or simply just strolling. For those non-surfers, don't fret! The moment you enter the beach, you'll be surrounded by local women who will be trying to sell their products and services such as nail painting, foot massage, tattoo, hair pleating and etc. They tend to have a very high asking price and they will try to persuade you by following you around and taunting you in turns. Beware and don't get confused by them! Make sure you have agreed on a fair price by both parties before committing, otherwise you're on the losing end. Kudos to them for the effort and determination to achieve some sales!

Page 68

Tanah Lot Sea Temple

It's 9am and I still have some time left before heading to the airport so I called my guide and he brought us to the Tanah Lot Sea Temple. This temple is one of the most important temples in Bali, built in the 16th century, located on a huge rock by the sea. When it is high tide, the temple is seemingly built in the middle of the sea as the connecting land will be submerged under the water. There are a lot of stalls along the way on the mainland selling souvenirs, clothes, temporary tattoos and even postcards which you can buy and bring home as souvenirs. There's also a viewing deck on the mainland directly opposite the temple where one can have a magnificent view of the sunset...one of the major attraction in Bali.

Today's spending:

Tanah Lot Sea Temple	Rp15,000	(RM6)
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Page69

After that, I went back to the hotel, packed my bags and ended my trip with a heavy heart.

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| 1. Economy class airfare | = RM180.00 x 2 = RM360 |
| 2. Airport Tax | = RM25.00 = RM25 |
| 3. Administration fee | = RM22.50 x 2 = RM45 |
| 4. Fuel Surcharge | = RM85 x 2 = RM170 |
| 5. Hard Rock Hotel Bali (4D3N) | = RM518 = RM518 |
| 6. Car rental with guide | = (RM100 x 2) + (RM60 x 1) = RM260 |

Forex rate RM 1 = Rp2,500

If you are looking for cheaper airfare, then you'll have to watch out for the promotions