



Living la vida Bali

Many Australians fall so in love with Bali that they never leave. Ian Lloyd Neubauer gets the lowdown on three very different parts of Bali where expats choose to work, rest and play.



Every week, some 20,000 Australians fly to Bali on holidays. Some of them fall so deeply in love with it that they refuse to leave and instead make the Indonesian island their home. But they generally don't hang out at the restaurants and resorts of Kuta and Legian. Rather, they find their own little slices of paradise away from the crowds.

WORK CANGGU

Living in a villa nestled among rice fields – that's the dream many expats harbour when contemplating life in Bali. But as the more-visited parts of the island become increasingly developed, expats are migrating en masse to Canggu. A half-hour drive north of Seminyak, Canggu has retained a rural feel while at the same time emerging as a hub for fashion, design and health food.

"I moved here for the waves and the lifestyle and discovered Canggu was a bit quieter and nicer to live in than the touristy areas," says Perth-born Justin Masters of Betelnut Café (Jl. Pantai Batu Bolong No.60, Canggu), a treehouse-style eatery with rice-field views.

"It was the same for me," says Gypsy Wilson-Webster, whose vegetarian restaurant The Shady Shack is the new "it" cafe in Canggu (Jl. Tanah Barak No.57, Canggu; facebook.com/TheShadyShackBali). "I started out in Seminyak but wanted something a lot quieter so I moved up here."

Across the road from The Shady Shack is The Temple of Enthusiasm – the Balinese headquarters of Australian custom-motorbike manufacturer Deus ex Machina (Jalan Batu Mejan No. 8, Canggu; deuscustoms.com/cafes/canggu). In addition to the motorbike showroom, the temple houses a surfboard shaping workshop, retail space, barber shop, Italian restaurant, cafe, bar and an open-air event space where expats, tourists and locals rock to free live music every Sunday night.



Back towards the beach is Dojo Bali, aka Silicon Bali (No. 88 Jalan Batu Mejan Canggu, Echo Beach; dojobali.org), a co-working space where \$15 gives drop-ins unlimited daily access to a variety of desks and meeting rooms, bullet-fast Wi-Fi, Skype booths, a smoothie bar, a swimming pool and the opportunity to network with Bali's hottest digital nomads. "Think of this as an on-ramp to the expat community," says owner Michael Craig, a software wiz from Perth.

Come sunset, everyone in Canggu heads down to Old Mans (facebook.com/oldmansbali), an al fresco restaurant and dayclub set on world-famous Echo Beach – Bali's original surf mecca. The waves are well-rounded, the food and beer are dirt cheap and the views are as unobstructed as they were when travellers first started coming to Bali half a century ago.

"There will probably be a day when the big hotels arrive here," says Kelly Sturgeon, CEO of the Canggu Club (Jl Pantai Berawa, Banjar Tegal Gundul, Canggu; cangguclub.com). "But for now Canggu still has that rural feeling, so people are intrigued in learning what it's all about."

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INSIDER'S TIP

Love waterparks but hate queues and crappy food? The Canggu Club has a world-class waterpark with three nail-biting five-storey waterslides where you walk right through, plus a bistro that puts on an awesome Sunday roast. Entry is \$30 or \$18 for kids. cangguclub.com

REST NORTHERN BALI

Bali is renowned for its beaches. But for expats living there, not every day is a beach. They have jobs, chores and deadlines like the rest of us. When the pressure gets too much, the most in-the-know escape to Bali's north-coast – the least-visited and most untouched part of the island.

The road from the airport to the north coast meanders through verdant green rice terraces, ancient villages, colossal lakes and up mist-shrouded mountains before dropping down to Singaraja, Bali's northern port.

From Singaraja, continue west along black lava beaches for an hour to Pemuteran, a laid-back seaside village and hub for dive centres and resorts. Every morning, boats packed with divers and snorkellers depart from Pemuteran for a half-hour cruise through neon-blue waters to Menjangan Island. Part of West Bali National Park, Menjangan is surrounded by fringing reefs bursting with marine life – moray eels, eagle rays, grouper, snapper, parrot fish and lobster. "The water in this part of Bali is very calm, especially from April to July, so it's very good for beginners who've never been snorkelling before," says Saif of the Werner Lau Diving Centre ([facebook.com/WernerLauDC](https://www.facebook.com/WernerLauDC)).

Menjangan Island is also home to Pura Gili Kencana, a candy-coloured temple set on limestone rock. There are seven more Hindu temples around Pemuteran, including Melanting, a 15th century edifice on the foothills of Mount Pulaki; and Pemuteran, where Balinese dancers and xylophone ensembles can be seen practising their ancient art in the afternoon.

BALI'S UNDERWATER BEAUTY

Some of Bali's best diving is on nearby Menjangan Island.

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No trip to northern Bali is complete without a stop at Sembangan, a fairytale-like village hidden in the hills above Singaraja where locals are so happy they actually sing while they walk. Park at Shanti Resort and ask one of their friendly guides to take you to the Secret Garden, a real-life Garden of Eden with four different waterfalls. The largest, Aling-Aling Waterfall, is a roaring 35m cascade ensconced in virgin jungle and has a natural stone waterslide that drops into a crystal-clear pool.

"You should come to northern Bali because it's beautiful, it's peaceful and it's untouched," says Koman Yas Artika of Shanti Resort (Desa Sambangan, Kecamatan Sukasada, Singaraja; shanti-northbali.com). "We don't have bars or nightclubs. But we have peace with nature."

INSIDER'S TIP

Ever heard of Balinese wine? The largest vineyard is found on the north coast near the village of Seririt, where Hatten Wines has been growing wine grapes with specially designed overhead trellises for more than 20 years. Drop in from Monday to Saturday for free wine-tasting and vineyard tours. hattenwines.com





“Along with Mozambique, it’s also one of the top two places in the world to see manta rays”



PLAY NUSA LEMBONGAN

A half hour’s boat ride from the Bali but a million metaphorical miles away, Nusa Lembongan is a small island expats regard as their island playground. “This place was discovered by surfers about 10 years and it was very much a backpacker destination to start,” says Mark Smith of the Sandy Bay Beach Club (Nusa Lembongan, Nusa Penida, Kec. Klungkung; sandybaylembongan.com), a rustic, oceanfront eatery in the south-west corner of the island. “Now it’s booming here and the amount of weekend traffic we get from expats living in Bali is extraordinary. We’re also seeing a lot of travellers skipping Bali altogether and coming here directly from the airport. In Perth they call it Bali’s Rottnest Island.”

Nusa Lembongan has three offshore surf breaks: Playground, Lacerations and Shipwrecks. Surfers rarely have to share the waves there or at Secret Point, a massive right-hand break on neighbouring Nusa Ceningan island. “I’ve been surfing here for five years,” says Scott Davis of Western Australia. “It’s starting to get a little more crowded, but it’s far less crowded than the waves in Bali.”

SALUTE TO THE WAVES

Nusa Lembongan is a small island where expats do yoga and surf.

Apart from surfing, Lembongan is a renowned for two other activities: yoga, with new little studios popping up all over the island, and diving in the Nusa Penida Marine Park, a newish biosphere reserve protecting the technicolour reefs surrounding the island. “This is one of the top dive destinations in Indonesia,” says Andrew Taylor of Blue Corner Dive (Jalan Raya Jungut Batu, Jungutbatu; bluecornerdive.net). “Along with Mozambique, it’s also one of the top two places in the world to see manta rays.”

There are no traffic or push hawkers on Nusa Lembongan. But the one thing it does share with Bali is the range of delicious and affordable food. For breakfast, head to Tigerlilly’s on Jungut Batu Beach (tigerlillysnusalembongan.com) for the “healthy start”: a riot of poached eggs, smashed avocado, rocket and cherry tomatoes, mint, feta and lime served on gluten-free bread. For lunch, try Hai Bar & Grill on Mushroom Bay (Hai Tide Beach Resort; haitidebeachresort.com) for a wood-fired pizza or prawn-tail salad. For dinner, book a beachfront table at Indiana Kenanga (Jl. Pantai Jungut Batu No. 56, Desa Jungut Batu; indiana-kenanga-villas.com), a French brasserie that cooks up delicious Australian beef tenderloin.

INSIDER’S TIP

There are a dozen different cruise boats operating between Sanur in Bali and Nusa Lembongan, but Rocky Fast Cruises offers the fastest and safest transfer.
rockyfastcruise.com

Luxury Bali stays

For a special occasion, or splitting a luxe stay with a group of friends.



VILLA CANGGU

If the Rolling Stones were to visit Bali today, they'd probably stay at Villa Canggu. Available in two- to eight-bedroom configurations, this whitewashed palace only metres from the beach leaves no stone unturned in the pursuit of luxury. There's a surround-sound system guests control through their smartphones, thought-inspiring murals and sculptures, two swimming pools lined with daybeds, indoor and outdoor dining areas plus a phalanx of staff: chefs, butlers, spa therapists and babysitters.

Best rate \$360 as a two-bedroom villa until June 15 or from September to December 20

Vibe Rock star excess
elitehavens.com

MATAHARI BEACH RESORT & SPA

Imagine a tropical garden manicured to an inch of its life spotted with lily ponds, pools, water fountains, bougainvillea trees and statues of Hindu gods backdropped by towering mountains and fronted by a sparkling sea. A fantasy or the set of a Bollywood movie? No, it's Matahari Beach Resort & Spa, a 5-star resort in Pemuteran village styled after Bali's famous Tirta Ganga Water Palace. There are only 32 luxury bungalows featuring intricate hand-carved wooden doors, marble flooring, king-size four-poster beds, oversized bathtubs and outdoor showers with moss-covered dragon-head spigots.

Best rate \$375 until July 9 and throughout October

Vibe Balinese water palace
matahari-beach-resort.com



THE BEACH SHACK

It's called The Beach Shack, though it's anything but. With giant front doors, oversized living and dining area, open-plan kitchen, three double bedrooms and floor-to-ceiling folding doors that open up to a covered verandah, barbecue area, lawn and swimming pool with beachfront access to Sandy Bay, The Beach Shack is the perfect place to live like a king on Nusa Lembongan – if only for one day.

Best rate \$600 as a one-bedroom villa from September-June

Vibe Shabby beach-chic
nusalembonganvillas.com

FAR FROM ROUGHING IT

Despite its name, The Beach Shack is actually a luxurious Bali address.