

Islands Close to Bali

TRAVEL TIPS(/)

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For a visitor-friendly island of Bali, you can find a substantial budget and a variety of options in the United States -- so you might find it easier to visit Bali. This can be as easy as taking a day trip on a tour boat or as adventurous as making Bali the hub of an epic Indonesian island-hopping voyage.

Pulau Penida

Three islands to the immediate southeast of Bali, across the Bagung Strait, are Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan, known collectively as Pulau Penida. Of the three islands, Nusa Lembongan is the only one with an established tourist infrastructure, offering accommodations in the three main villages of Lembongan village, Jungut Batu and Mushroom Bay. The main attractions for visitors are white sand beaches and pristine coral reefs, as well as few people and a total absence of cars. A suspension bridge allows you to cross on foot or by motorbike to Nusa Ceningan, its tiny island neighbor. Although the hilly island of Nusa Penida has few provisions for tourists, it is a noteworthy destination for wildlife enthusiasts. An informal island-wide protective bird sanctuary has been established there by the nonprofit Friends of the National Parks Foundation (FNPF), in conjunction with the residents of Nusa Penida's 41 villages. Endangered bird species breed freely on the island under the protection of local communities, while the FNPF operates rehabilitation and release programs. The group also offers dorm-style rooms, guided ecotours and volunteer opportunities for visitors.

Java

Java, the world's most populous island and home to more than half the Indonesian population, is only about two miles west of Bali across the Bali Strait. Tourist destinations on Java range from Indonesia's capital, Jakarta, to the popular beach resort of Pangandaran, a string of active, lushly vegetated volcanoes and the surfing beaches of the west coast. Explore the historic cities of the island, namely Yogyakarta with its many eighth- and ninth-century temples; its sister city of Surakarta (also known as Solo), a center of Javanese culture where dance, puppetry and batik are preserved as artistic traditions; and Bandung, the 1920s colonial Dutch capital known for its outstanding tropical Art Deco buildings. In Central Java, visit the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Borobudur Temple complex. Built in the ninth century, it is the largest Buddhist monument in the world.

Lombok

To the east of Bali across the Lombok Strait is the island of Lombok, where visitors can spend days serenely wandering historic and lavish temples and palaces. These include Pura Meru, built by a Balinese prince in 1720, the largest temple in Lombok; the Mayura Water Palace, built in 1744 as part of the royal court of the Balinese Kingdom; and Pura Lingsar, an early 18th century temple complex considered the holiest place on the island. The expansive sanctuary combines a Balinese Hindu temple and a Wektu Telu temple representing the indigenous religion of Lombok. Visitors are welcome to feed hard-boiled eggs to the eels that hide in a pond dedicated to Lord Vishnu. Lombok's other major draw is the Gili Islands that lie just off its northwestern tip. Their warm, turquoise waters and coral reefs are inhabited by sharks, rays and turtles. The islands have no motorized traffic, and lodging in beachfront bungalows is the norm.

Komodo National Park

Geographically, Bali is one of the Lesser Sunda Islands, part of a volcanic archipelago that includes Komodo, Rinca and Padar, the three major islands comprising Komodo National Park. Another of Indonesia's UNESCO World Heritage Sites, the national park is best known for its 5,700 or so resident Komodo dragons, endemic giant lizards that prey on the Timor deer that also inhabit the islands' craggy landscapes. The national park also protects a rich marine environment where some 1,000 fish species, 260 kinds of coral and at least 14 species of whales, dolphins and sea turtles have been recorded. Dugongs, sharks and manta rays are also seen there. Visitors to Komodo National Park can take a flight or ferry from Denpasar, Bali, to the gateway cities of Labuan Bajo on Flores or Buma in Sumbawa, where local boat shuttles and private charters are available.

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