



Feature



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Tuesday, 10 January 2012

The brighter side of Bali

By Claire Dunn

G Magazine

The notion of a Balinese sojourn is often met with the image of bogans, Bintangs, braids and bad sunburns. But it's time to embrace a new side of Bali that is emerging from the hills.

A vividly striped snake slithers out the salon doors of an outdoor bathroom as you take a long, hot shower while watching the sun set over lush, terraced rice paddies. The enjoyment is greater for being guilt-free, as a small hydro system on the nearby waterfall powers the indulgence. The wafting scent of dinner, freshly picked from the nearby permaculture garden, confirms the discovery of a Bali far from the fast-food style of travel for which the island is often known.

Bali is updating its reputation and fast becoming known as a global eco-tourism destination, with organic cafes, produce



The January/February 2014 issue of *Green Lifestyle* magazine is out 23 December.

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markets, permaculture farm stays and eco-resorts springing up faster than you can sprout alfalfa.

Owners of Bali Eco Stay, John and Cath, joined the burgeoning Bali green scene 18 months ago when they bundled their belongings and their young son, Hughie, on a plane bound for 'paradise island', with the dream of creating an eco-stay in style. Built on permaculture principles melded with traditional Balinese design, their resulting bungalow retreat epitomises the new, green, development boom.



Credit: iStockphoto

Cat Wheeler, a Canadian ex-pat living in Ubud who writes the popular 'Greenspeak' column for the Bali Advertiser, says the greening of tourism began in earnest a couple of years ago and has sparked a return to chemical-free methods for many Balinese farmers. "Lots more vegetable farmers are going organic now that there is a good market for their produce - previously the demand was not there," she says.

Wheeler urges visitors to do their homework and beware of greenwashing. "Many places are paying lip service to environmental sustainability. One solution is for travellers to demand sustainable accommodation and food, and ask searching questions about environmental practices. The market will adapt to demand, so demand it!" G makes your holiday planning a breeze with our pick of Bali's best eco-spots.

STAY:

Sarinbuana Eco Lodge

Owned by Australian permaculture leaders Linda and Norm vant Hoff, Sarinbuana is Bali's best-known and longest-running eco-establishment. Nestled at the foot of Mt Batukaru in central Bali, the four cosy bungalows are a perfect springboard to explore the largest remaining stand of jungle on the island, or choose from one of the many cultural workshops on offer. You will sleep soundly knowing your tourist dollars are supporting one of many of Sarinbuana's campaigns, including orangutan protection and rehabilitation of the endangered Bali Starling bird. www.baliecolodge.com

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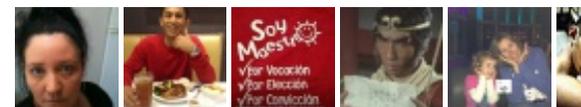
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Bali Eco Stay:

Designed with the help of the vant Hoffs up the road, Bali Eco Stay is one of Bali's newest and finest green options. The three exquisitely designed bungalows are proof that 'eco' doesn't mean deprivation. Wander through rice paddies and unexplored traditional villages, nourish your body with massages, sumptuous organic meals and waterfall swims. www.baliecostay.com

The Organic Farm

The Organic Farm in the scenic mountains of Munduk Lumbang is an organic foodie's paradise. Inspired by the concept of community-supported organic agriculture, garden plots are rented out to Balinese chefs to grow organic produce. Guests are invited to pick and choose their own fresh food, as well as bring favourite seeds from home to plant. With hot springs replacing showers, and bird song replacing TV, this is all about getting back to nature in spacious comfort. www.theorganicfarmbali.com

VOLUNTEER:

Willing Workers on Organic Farms (WWOOF)

Global organisation WWOOF links people wanting to learn and share sustainable ways of living. In return for volunteer help of between four to six hours a day, WWOOF hosts offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles. WWOOFers can choose from hosts that vary from small Balinese homestays to eco-resorts, and negotiate a length of stay. www.wwoof.org

Nusa Penida Bird Sanctuary

A short boat ride away from the popular tourist destination of Sanur lies the quiet island of Nusa Penida. Local not-for-profit organisation Friends of the National Parks Foundation has been helping to rebuild populations of endangered bird species on the island since 2004. Volunteers spend the morning tree planting or teaching English in schools, with afternoons free to explore the island's many untrammelled treasures. Costs are \$15 a day, with accommodation in a jungle-style bamboo bungalow. www.fnpf.org

Hands on at the Eco-Learning Centre

The Rivers, Oceans, Land, Ecology Organisation (ROLE) offers volunteer the opportunity to get their hands dirty in their Eco-Learning Centre at Nusa Dua. Incorporating permaculture, reforestation, animal husbandry, working with natural fibres and snail farming, the centre aims to educate, re-skill and create alternate eco-friendly employment for disadvantaged rural women. Day tours are available. www.rolefoundation.org

EAT:

Bali Buddha Café

Located on a quiet Ubud street, this establishment has been serving hearty organic meals since 1994. With everything from New York-style bagels to a traditional turmeric detox drink, a stopover at 'The Buddha' is a must for

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It's days like today that I feel furious about efforts

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BLOGS



New Year resolutions

Lesley Lopes tells us about the January/February issue of the magazine.



New Year health priorities

Six simple questions to help your New Year health kick last all year.



A baker's green conversion

La Madre artisan bakers took an unexpected journey to sustainability

any green-minded visitor. www.balibuddha.biz

Embun Life Café

A sustainable and organic concept cafe 10 minutes' drive from Seminyak. The grand, open-aired bamboo structure reflects the adventurous menu - enjoy the Grilled Aubergine Timbale stuffed with lawar (chicken and long bean salad with spiced coconut sauce) and tomato confit, knowing all produce is local and chemical free.

www.embunlife.com

Sari Organik Farm

The experience here begins half an hour before arrival - the time it takes to walk from downtown Ubud and stop for directions several times. The unspoilt view across rice paddies and mountains from a deck chair, enjoyed while contemplating the delicious organic and wholesome menu (don't miss the Rambutan pie), more than compensates. To get there, walk 800 m down the Abangan/Water Way, starting from Ubud Main Road.

www.ubudorganicmarket.com/market-members/sari-organik

SEE AND DO:

Green School Bali

Take a tour of one of the world's leading green schools, where students practice 'bio-intensive farming' over 20 acres of thriving permaculture gardens, as well as producing their own renewable energy, recycling greywater and composting their waste. Located 20 minutes outside Denpasar, tours are Mondays and Wednesdays at 3 pm and cost around AUD\$10. www.greenschool.org

Ubud Organic Farmers Market

Mingle with local, independent organic growers and related health and nature-based businesses at Ubud's twice-weekly Organic Farmers Market. Saturday mornings at Pizza Bagus, Pengosekan, and Wednesday mornings at Cafe Arma, Pengosekan. www.ubudorganicmarket.com

Bali Herbal Walk

Take time to smell the herbs on this three-hour tour of indigenous edible and medicinal plants growing wild around Ubud. Tours start daily at 8:30 am, cost US\$18 (AUD\$17), and include a stop at an organic restaurant.

www.baliherbalwalk.com

FACT FILE:

Getting there:

Fly to Denpasar via a number of airlines. Most destinations in this feature are between one and two hours' drive from the airport.

When to go/weather:

With a warm and humid, tropical climate, the most popular months for travel to Bali are during their dry season from April to October, with June to August being peak months. However the rainy season also has a charm of its own with afternoon tropical downpours.

Logistics:

Australians are required to purchase a 30-day visa on arrival for a fee of US\$25 (AUD\$24).

Carbon Offset:

According to Carbon Planet, return flights from Sydney to Denpasar create about 1.6 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, which costs \$36.80 to offset. To calculate from your own capital city visit

www.carbonplanet.com.

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