

BALI

IMPRESSIONS OF PARADISE

SUGGESTED ITINERARIES AROUND THE ISLAND

EAST BALI

MOTHER TEMPLE

AND KINGS' WATER PALACE



Tirtaganga "The King's Water Palace"

By Jim Omi Cramer© www.baliadvisor.com

EAST BALI MOTHER TEMPLE AND KINGS' WATER PALACE

**Gianyar-Klungkung-Goa Lawa-Padang Bai-Tenganan
Candi Dasa-Tirtaganga-Ahmed Beach-Selat-Besakih
and Home**

Two days - Two weeks depending upon pace

This is a fun trip! I've traveled many times to see this most beautiful and unspoiled part of Bali. Eastern Bali is very different from the lush plains of the south. A narrow coastal strip of coconut and banana plantations alternates with areas of fertile rice fields behind which are foothills leading to Mount Agung. Deserted beaches face the islands of Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan and Nusa Ceningan.

The pace of life is quiet in the fishing villages and hillside communities. Little is disturbed by the fast paced 20th century. To get there, follow the road straight to the village of **Gianyar**, whether your journey begins from Ubud or the beach. This is a busy market town famous for its suckling pig, or Babi Guling. In the western region of town are a number of weaving and tie-dying factories, which are interesting to visit. Hand woven or hand dyed cloth can be purchased by the meter. New designs and ideas are created every day to satisfy the demands of tourists and visitors.

Villages of note near Gianyar are **Blahbatu**, which is famous for **Pura Penataran Topeng**. In the 19th century Blahbatu was famous for its court dancing. Inside the pura are Topeng dance and drama mask. Myth has it that these masks are the proto types for all Balinese dance and drama masks. Another village nearby is **Bona**, famous for it's "sanghyang jaran" or fire dance.

Next, head east towards **Klungkung**, the former seat of Bali's most powerful dynasty Dewa Agung or Great Deity. The great ruler Dalem Baturenggong unified Bali in the 16th century. Under his rule, the transplanted Javanese traditions of



language, literature, music, dance and sculpture took a firm footing in Bali.

Klungkung is the home of **Puri Semara Pura**, dedicated to the god of love. Only two pavilions and the entrance gate remain. Kertha

Gosa and Taman Gili, the Royal Courts of Justice remind one of Klungkung's glorious past with its beautiful painted ceiling and carved pillars. The scenes on the ceiling depict the evils of hell and the delights of heaven. The courts are worth a visit for those of you who are interested in 18th century Balinese architecture and history.

Klungkung is also famous for its "Wayan" paintings, the most traditional of native paintings. This style originated in the village of Kamasam, which is south of Klungkung. North of the main crossroads



is the **Pura Taman Sari** or Flower Garden Temple with a beautiful garden and moat around a central pagoda.

The Unda River borders Klungkung. After crossing the river on the East End of town you will continue along the coast. Here you'll see turbulent waves crashing onto black sand beaches, lined with palm trees. Six more kilometers will find you at **Goa Lawah**, "the Bat Cave". No Batman or Robin, but many Balinese hawkers trying to sell their wares. Many are bothered by these people, but heed my advice and retain a

sense of humor and patience and the Balinese will laugh with you. The cave, thick with bats and well worth seeing, is said to be the dwelling place of the mythological naga serpent, Basuki. Thousands of bats cluster at the cave's mouth, and their high pitched squeaks fill the air as Balinese make their offerings at the small shrines within. Considered a holy place, many islanders come here to complete their post cremation ceremonies for the souls of the deceased.

On your escape from the cave, trek along the coast to **Padang Bai**, a pearl shaped bay encircled by tiny coves and a rocky headland.



The village has several small hotels and restaurants. Here you will find Pura **Silayukti**, the abode of the Buddhist sage Mpu Kuturan, who lived there in the 11th century. Padang Bai is also the port of transit to Lombok and other outlying islands welcomes cruise ships and foreign yachts.

East of Padang Bali is **Candi Dasa**, a fast growing beach resort area. This beautiful once deserted coast, is home to thatched beachside cottages, restaurants and shops. Tourists are a common sight here, and are attracted to the village atmosphere and slow pace of life. This is an ideal place to stop for lunch or to spend a few days of sunning on the beach or a favorite water sport. Even though the existence of this beach depends upon the tide, it is one of my favorites. You may also wish to rent a boat for diving from Candi Dasa or visit the two small temples that overlook the lagoon by the beach.



An interesting side trip from Candi Dasa is to the village of **Tenganan**. Sheltered in a secluded valley, this walled village is the home of the Bali Aga people who, as the Tryunan

people, have resisted outside influences for centuries. The

women weave a rare double ikat cloth, the kamben gringsing, which is supposed to possess magical powers and protect its wearer. The process of weaving, unique to this village, can take up to five years for the completion of one piece. Once a year during the festival of Usaba Sembah, there is a ritual



tournament featuring local men fighting with thorny leaves to draw blood as a sacrifice to appease the evil spirits. This walled village is especially unique, and shouldn't be missed. The village is shaped in a rectangle

encircled by walls and natural boundaries and runs in a north to south direction and rises in terrace like fashion. Probably now on the tourist maps, an early or very late visit would help you beat the crowds.

Located only 10 minutes from the coast of Candi Dasa, the journey leads you up a beautiful road covered with tropical foliage.

The village of Tenganan still retains an unusual style today. In the center of the village stands the Bale Agung or long house where the north end of town, out the gate and up the hill, you will meet Koman Kari, who weaves beautiful baskets and sells them quite reasonably. Continuing on up the path to a clearing where once stood a great banyan tree felled by heavy winds in 1992, you will see the village temple, Puri Puseh. Nice souvenir shops are located on the west side of town. Mertha's has single and double ikat weavings.



When you are ready to leave Candi Dasa, a journey east will head you towards Amlapura, the main town in the Regency of

Karangasem. You will first climb Gumang hill and at the top are beautiful vistas of the sea and the Bahu river and the rice fields that border it.

Descending the hill you will cross a bridge to the town of Bugbug. This rice growing and fishing village is the administrative center for the sub district. Just east of Bugbug is the village of Perasi. From this village there is a nice walk through the hills to the beach. Ten kilometers further will bring you to Amlapura, noted for its water palace, built in 1921 by the late Raja Anak Agung Anglurh Ketut. **Puri Kanganan** on the main road to the market is a worth a visit.

For the purpose of this trip two kilometers before reaching Amlapura, take the road north those leads to **Tirtaganga**. Here are a series of pool and fountains also built by the Raja. The pools, fed by an underground spring, are refreshing and revitalizing and were completely restored after earthquake damage in 1979.



A dip in the pools is recommended to refresh from the day's journey. After swimming there is a restaurant above the pools with a restroom, but they won't let you use it unless you buy something. I found the attitude very un-Balinese, so in protest I won't recommend eating or drinking there. There are some homestays in the area, that are inexpensive but very basic. If you do stay, the sunrise from the viewpoint up the road is spectacular — with the sea and rice fields below and Gunung Agung above, truly one of the most beautiful sights in Bali. To really slow down to Bali

time, stay in Tirtaganga for awhile. There are some nice walks around the Tirtaganga .One can reach the village of Ababi by following the low hill behind the springs.

If your interest is snorkeling, take the road past Tirtaganga to Celuk, and turn right towards **Amed Beach** and Lipah. Amed, is a virtual oasis in this sparse vegetation of eastern Bali.

Here, you may rent masks and snorkels. You might wish to



stay the night and take the snorkeling trip to the shipwreck. This is a 4-hour trip leaving daily at 9:30 a.m.

If you have the time you can spend days in this most magical part of Bali. To get

back to you home base I suggest from Tirtaganga you head back towards the coastal road and journey west. After crossing the bridge, turn right to **Selat**. On this inland route on the back road to Besakih you will experience some of the most stunning scenery on the island, and venture through the quaint villages of Selat and **Sibetan**.

It was near the village of **Mucan**, that from my car I once heard gamelan music from a temple high on a hill. Stopping the car, I walked up to the temple and entered the grounds. There, three small girls were dancing Legong. It was a great honor to be hosted by the village, and greeted with smiles, little snacks called jajans, and of course, coffee.



Mats were offered to sit on, and share the entertainment. I will never forget the sparkling eyes of those girls as they danced for their gods. The humble surroundings were a splendid backdrop to

their golden hearts as they performed to please the gods and thank them for what they had in life. All the riches of the world could not match that beautiful evening. That touching experience is one souvenir from Bali that will stay with me and inspire me. Bali is full of such rich experiences. This is why people return time and again.



To return home, saving the visit to Besakih for another time, follow the back road through the village of **Iseh** and partake of a magnificent view of rice field terraces climbing upward toward the volcano. It was here that I met the Swiss painter, Theo Meier, and lunched at his home. The road will eventually get to Klungkung, and by retracing your steps will take you back home.

For those who wish to continue to Besakih, stay on the Selat and Sibtan road to the village of **Rendang**. Here turn right (north), descending through the Arca Valley before climbing to Pura **Besakih**, the Mother Temple of Bali.

This temple complex of 22 temples nestled on the slopes of **Mt. Gunung Agung**, is considered the focal point for the Hindu religion. The three major temples are Pura Penataran Agung, dedicated to the supreme god San Hyang Widi Wasa; Pura Kiduling Kreteg, dedicated to Brahma; and Pura Batu Medog, dedicated to the god Wisnu. On the full moon of the tenth month, the entire temple celebrates a visit from the gods. At this time the roads are crowded with



Balinese bearing offerings from every village on the island. If the weather is nice, climb the slope behind the complex to watch the sunset. Now that you have seen the spiritual home of Bali's highest gods, it is time to descend from Besakih's lofty heights, back through the Arca Valley and Rendang to Klungung towards home base

