



From top: Hanging Gardens Ubud, a resort in the jungles of central Bali. The ancient Hindu temple of Goa Gajah, near Ubud. Dreamland, one of Bali's many sublime beaches, on the island's Bukit Peninsula. The Sunset Cabana at the hotel Alila Villas Uluwatu. An artisan trims a vase at Gaya Ceramic and Design in Ubud.



BALI BLISS

If you're in need of a spiritual recharge or just want a seriously sybaritic escape, few destinations beat the allure of this fabled Indonesian paradise

The crown jewel of the Indonesian archipelago, Bali is an island of rich artistic traditions, ancient temples, and verdant mountains surrounded by turquoise sea. "Bali is my favorite place in the world, my spiritual refuge," says designer Donna Karan, who enlists Balinese craftspeople to help create her Urban Zen home-goods collection. "The first time I went, I fell in love," she recalls. New York-based furniture designer Andrianna Shamaris, who has been producing her line in Indonesia for more than 20 years, calls the island, simply, "another world."

Flourishing artisan trades such as jewelrymaking, woodworking, and basket weaving are among Bali's biggest draws. "Craftsmen are valued members of the community here," says Elora Hardy, the founder of Bali-based architecture and design firm Ibuku and a 2013 *AD* Innovator. "In general people stay true to their customs and beliefs while being very receptive to visitors."

The inland town of Ubud, the island's cultural hub, comprises several villages that support these crafts. A 30-minute drive north of the southern city of Denpasar—Bali's capital and home to the island's only airport—Ubud offers a wealth of experiences, from admiring Balinese artwork at the **Museum Puri Lukisan** to sampling the roasts at nearby coffee plantations to seeking out the best handmade wares. For leather goods, cotton bags, and silver jewelry, Hardy recommends **Sisi + Nanan** on Ubud's stylish Jalan Hanoman street. A few blocks away, **Threads of Life** carries naturally dyed tribal textiles, while on the other side of town, **Gaya Ceramic and Design** has custom-made dinnerware as well as pottery classes.

When it's time for a break from shopping, Hardy heads to the **Sari Organik** café and farm, not far from the town center, for organic Balinese cuisine. "It's a beautiful 20-minute walk through the rice fields," she says. For a more upscale dinner, try Franco-American chef Chris Salans's seasonal fare at the tasting-menu-only **Mozaic**, or book a table at

FROM TOP: COURTESY OF HANGING GARDENS UBUD; MATT EDGE; VALENTIN WEINHÄUPL/WESTEND&1/CORBIS; COURTESY OF DESIGN HOTELS; COURTESY OF GAYA CERAMIC AND DESIGN



From top: The terrace at *Métis*, in Seminyak. *Threads of Life*, a shop in Ubud, carries a vibrant selection of traditional textiles.

Locavore, where Balinese produce is highlighted in a modern way.

Ubud is also an ideal base for day trips to the intricately embellished Hindu temples nearby, set among the abundant inland rain forests. **Tirta Empul** and **Goa Gajah**, each dating from a millennium ago, serve as fascinating links to ancient times, while **Ulun Danu**, a lakeside sanctuary, and the moat-ringed **Taman Ayun**, both 17th century, project a stately serenity. For accommodations, Karan favors the health-spa retreat **Como Shambhala Estate**—specifically, the Tirta-Ening villa, complete with its own Japanese water garden—and the eco-friendly 11-suite **Bambu Indah** boutique hotel, which Hardy's family opened in 2005. Another inviting option is the **Hanging Gardens Ubud**, dramatically perched above the Ayung River gorge.

Enchanting as the jungles of Bali's interior may be, the island's diverse beaches are some of the world's most beautiful. It's hard to go wrong with any on the Bukit Peninsula, Bali's southern tip. Shamaris frequents Padang-Padang, a cove dotted with theatrical rock formations, as well as Dreamland, a popular surf spot. For a beach-centric stay in the peninsula's eastern Nusa Dua area, try the ultraluxe **St. Regis Bali**. Or head a few miles west to the more intimate **Bulgari Resort Bali** or the tranquil **Alila Villas Uluwatu**. And make sure to plan an evening trip to the cliff-top temple **Luhur Uluwatu** for a phenomenal sunset and a viewing of the *kecak* fire dance, traditionally performed by an all-male troupe.

Just a few miles north of the peninsula is the fashionable Seminyak district, which features a high concentration of smart shops and restaurants. Start with the busy streets Petitenget and Batu Belig, home to **Carga**, a chic purveyor of gifts and housewares, and the ceramics studio **Kevala Home**, respectively. For an unforgettable meal, the restaurant and boutique **Métis** serves elegant French-Mediterranean cuisine at tables overlooking an idyllic rice field. Hardy's area picks include **La Finca** for Spanish dishes, **Mama San** for Pan-Asian fare, and **Sardine** for freshly caught seafood.

A 30-minute drive northwest of Seminyak is **Tanah Lot**, perhaps the most recognizable of Bali's shrines. From its west-coast position, it offers one of the island's best sunset views, and less than ten miles away is the **Alila Villas Soori** hotel, a favorite of celebrities seeking a secluded getaway.

Bali is always evolving, with a steady stream of new restaurants and hotels attesting to its global appeal. In fact, Ritz-Carlton is preparing to unveil two properties here in the coming months, while several other luxury retreats are slated to debut over the next couple of years. Alongside these sophisticated international developments, the island's age-old traditions and natural beauty continue to thrive, making Bali a uniquely captivating destination. —ALYSSA BIRD



BALI DETAILS

MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL SITES

Goa Gajah Jalan Raya Goa Gajah, Ubud.
Luhur Uluwatu Jalan Raya Uluwatu, Pecatu.
Museum Puri Lukisan Jalan Raya Ubud, Ubud; +62-361-971-159; museumpurilukisan.com.
Taman Ayun Jalan Ayodya, Mengwi Village, Mengwi.
Tanah Lot Tabanan; +62-361-880-361; tanahlot.net.
Tirta Empul Manukaya, Tampaksiring.
Ulun Danu Jalan Raya Candi Kuning, Desa Candikuning, Baturiti; +62-368-203-3050.

SHOPPING

Carga Jalan Petitenget No. 866, Kerobokan; +62-361-847-8180; cargabali.com.
Gaya Ceramic and Design Jalan Raya Sayan, Ubud; +62-361-745-1413; gayaceramic.com.
Kevala Home Jalan Batu Belig, Kerobokan; +62-361-913-7732; kevalaceramics.com.
Sisi + Nanan Jalan Hanoman Padang Tegal, Ubud; +62-815-570-8835; e-nanan.com.
Threads of Life Jalan Kajeng No. 24, Ubud; +62-361-972-187; threadsoflife.com.

RESTAURANTS

La Finca Jalan Subak Sari No. 77, Kuta Utara; +62-361-210-5080; lafincabali.com.
Locavore Jalan Dewi Sita, Ubud; +62-361-977-733; restaurantlocavore.com.
Mama San Jalan Raya Kerobokan No. 135, Kerobokan; +62-361-730-436; mamasanbali.com.
Métis Jalan Petitenget No. 6, Kerobokan; +62-361-473-7888; metisbali.com.
Mozaic Jalan Raya Sanggingan, Ubud; +62-361-975-768; mozaic-bali.com.
Sardine Jalan Petitenget No. 21, Kerobokan; +62-361-843-6111; sardinebali.com.
Sari Organik Jalan Raya Tjampuhan, Ubud; +62-361-780-1839; ubudorganicmarket.com.

HOTELS

Alila Villas Soori Banjar Dukuh, Desa Kelating, Kerambitan; +62-361-894-6388; rooms from \$650/night; alilahotels.com.
Alila Villas Uluwatu Jalan Belimbing Sari Banjar Tambiyak, Desa Pecatu; +62-361-848-2166; rooms from \$650/night; alilahotels.com.
Bambu Indah Jalan Banjar Baung, Desa Sayan, Ubud; +62-361-886-8807; rooms from \$145/night; bambuindah.com.
Bulgari Resort Bali Jalan Goa Lempeh, Banjar Dinas Kangin, Uluwatu, Pecatu; +62-361-847-1000; rooms from \$900/night; bulgarishotels.com.
Como Shambhala Estate Banjar Begawan, Desa Melinggih Kelod, Payangan; +62-361-978-888; rooms from \$760/night; comohotels.com.
Hanging Gardens Ubud Desa Buahon, Payangan; +62-361-982-700; rooms from \$435/night; hanginggardensubud.com.
St. Regis Bali Kawasan Pariwisata, Nusa Dua; +62-361-847-8111; rooms from \$390/night; stregisbali.com.