

Indonesia: Balinese Village Ecotourism Network

Step into the heart of the Balinese village with JED (Jaringan Ekowisata Desa), Bali's only village ecotourism network. The organization offers unique opportunity to experience Bali as only the Balinese know and love it. Local guides, local foods, community designed and managed, all the profits are contributed to community development and conservation activities in the villages. From the lush, earthy aromas of the forest to the rush of garlic and chilli in the kitchen... from floating silently above a seaweed farm to stepping through the gates of an ancient fortress... come and see what happens when tourism is really 'by and for' the people.



Mass Tourism in Bali

In a developing country like Indonesia, one might think that booming tourist trade on one of its prettiest islands could be only beneficial. There are certainly some pros. But mass tourism on Bali also creates some serious problems:

Economic: Tourism on Bali has largely been planned by the Indonesian government (far away in Jakarta) and by foreigners. Few Balinese have been involved in the planning and management of most tourism in Bali. Instead, they have become the tourist attraction! But a tiger in a zoo doesn't make much money from its visitors, and neither do most Balinese. Most profits from mass tourism on Bali go to wealthy entrepreneurs and corporations outside Bali, while the Balinese suffer the negative environmental and social impacts.

Environmental: All islands are fragile. Limited land means limited fresh water (among other

resources) and tricky problems with waste disposal. Demands for swimming pools and golf courses, beachfront resorts and air-conditioning put a huge strain on Bali's ecosystem.

Did you know that an average 500-room hotel uses as much water as could be used to irrigate 33 hectares of rice paddy? And on average each of these rooms produces ten times the waste of an average family home in Bali? Yet slowly the rice paddies in south Bali are giving way to more such hotel rooms, villas and tourist shops.

Social and Cultural: Balinese culture often loses its meaning. The sacredness of many rituals and dances are abused for the consumption of tourists. Religious festivals such as Ngaben, are made more ostentatious especially to impress outsiders. Buildings created for tourists often completely ignore the Balinese philosophies that dictate traditional architecture and planning. Balinese who work in the tourism industry often prioritize their duties in the tourist world to the detriment of their traditional and social obligations in their communities. Now the lives of some Balinese are completely lost in the tourist nightlife of alcohol, illicit drugs and various shades of prostitution.



Balinese Tourism for Balinese People

The village ecotourism network (JED) was launched in 2002 in response to the current tourism trends in Bali. It was designed and is owned by the communities of four Balinese villages - Kiadan Pelaga, Dukuh Sibetan, Tenganan Pegringsingan and Ceningan Island - with the administrative help of the Wisnu Foundation, one of Bali's oldest environmental NGOs.

JED is a strong statement from four communities who want to decide for themselves the future of their people, their culture and their environment. Inviting visitors to their villages is a way not only to raise funds for cultural and conservation activities, but also to raise community esteem for these assets. It is an opportunity for villagers to share their pride in Bali with visitors, and present Bali as they know and love it, to the world. The result is a unique chance for travelers to directly experience village life and see what Bali is all about...

A Visit to the Village

Bali is quite a different place outside the tourist centers. It can be beautiful, it can be dirty, it can be surprising, unpredictable, uncomfortable and deeply rewarding. By taking a JED trip you are accepting Bali on its own terms. Part of joining Balinese people in their villages includes being prepared for the following:



Accommodation standards will vary. If you choose to stay with a Balinese family in their home, you'll be living as they do. This includes having an Indonesian 'mandi' (scoops of cool water) rather than a shower, and in some cases a squat toilet. All this may be very different to what you're used to but your hosts will make every effort to ensure you're happy and comfortable. The food is Balinese food...although special dietary requirements (such as for vegetarians) can be accounted for in advance, there's no a la carte menu! Some of the food may look and taste unfamiliar, but if you're prepared to give it a try, you'll find some very tasty dishes. The food is prepared by local women trained in food hygiene (and get lots of reminders to go easy on the chilli). All drinking water is spring water or local water that has been properly boiled. You might find some interesting new wildlife out in the villages. 'Tokek' - colourful and noisy (but harmless) lizard - may be heard at night. You might find new insects or be visited in your room by little geckos. Dogs are common and often 'gong-gong' (bark), but rarely bite. There is little that can hurt you, but ask your guide if something worries you. English is uncommon among local residents. But with a lot of sign language and a bit of help from your local guide, you're sure to have some animated conversations with villagers. Most guiding will be done by one or more locals who can speak a little English and will meet you upon arrival in the village. Your Wisnu guide will also be available as a backup for translation and any other help you might need. The Balinese are not always mindful of timetables and schedules. Though your guide will endeavor to keep everything on track, you may run into the famous Indonesian concept of 'rubber time'. Relax and enjoy the opportunity this brings to

experience the unexpected...this is Bali!

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