

TOURIST TAX IN BALI STARTS IN FEBRUARY



Bali is a highly desirable destination, not just for yoga enthusiasts and surfers. However, the "Island of the Gods" has been making headlines for the endless lines of cars and motorcycles that struggle through the narrow streets and the appalling amounts of garbage that ruin its beaches and rivers. Following the COVID-19 pandemic lull, Bali was inundated with mass tourism. To better regulate this influx and fund the preservation of its unique nature and culture, the government will impose a tourist tax on all foreigners entering the country. The implementation date has been set for Valentine's Day - February 14, 2024. However, the fee has sparked controversy and raised questions.

In addition to the 500,000 rupees (30 euros) for a 30-day visa, an extra 150,000 Indonesian rupees (about 9 euros) are due as a tourist tax. This tax will apply to everyone, including children, without exceptions. If you plan to visit other islands nearby, like the Gili Islands, Lombok, or Java, during your stay, you'll need to pay the tourism tax again upon returning to Bali. However, if you're taking a short trip to Nusa Penida, Nusa Lembongan, or Nusa Ceningan, you won't need to pay the tax again, as these three islands belong to the province of Bali.

Concerns about potential long waiting times at Ngurah Rai Airport when entering the country have been raised. During peak periods, even obtaining a visa at the "Immigration" counters can result in a significant loss of valuable vacation time. With two additional problems now looming, the situation is becoming increasingly problematic. The authorities are well aware of the challenges and have acknowledged the need to ensure that the process remains quick and efficient, given that Bali Airport can receive over 15,000 travelers daily.

Goal: Processing in seconds

The local tourism authority will dismiss 20 civil servants and introduce a credit card payment system. The head of the authority, Tjok Bagus Pelayun, stated that the payment processing time would be less than 23 seconds per person. It still needs to be clarified if online payment in advance will be an option.

While solo travel costs are affordable, many families with children may seek cheaper holiday destinations in Southeast Asia. Some regular visitors to Bali are considering alternative places like Thailand, where visas on arrival are still free.

Indonesian fans traveling to explore the island state from Bali also face high costs. Many enter the country via Bali, drive to Lombok for a few days, and then, after further stopovers in Bali, travel to the Komodo dragons on the Lesser Sunda Islands, orangutans on Sumatra, and the Borobudur temple in Java. For such island hopping, 150,000 rupees are now due at each stop in Bali.

Traffic chaos and waste problems

Authorities must take action against mass tourism's detrimental effects in the future. To achieve this, they need sufficient funds. Bali governor Wayan Koster emphasized that while tourism has brought positive changes to Bali and Indonesia, it has also resulted in significant negative

consequences. The biggest challenges include growing traffic congestion and improper waste disposal.

Bali is still known for its picturesque temples, lush green rice terraces, and magnificent beaches like Dreamland and Nusa Dua. However, reaching these holiday hotspots has become increasingly challenging. Even the journey from the airport can take hours during peak times. Congested streets being a common sight and a deterrent for many who see the island's traffic as anything but paradisiacal.

An underground light rail transit system could ease the chaos caused by increasing numbers of tourists. Investment Minister Luhut Pandjaitan recently announced plans to connect Bali's airport with tourist hotspots such as Canggu and Seminyak using the railway system by 2025/2026. This is a much-needed solution with an estimated surge of holidaymakers in the coming years. Governor Koster emphasized the urgency of a tourist tax to preserve Bali's rich culture and natural beauty.

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