

Client: Personal Project

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### 3 Reasons to Fall in Love with Ubud, Bali

Bali: more magical, breathtaking, and sweaty than I ever thought possible. For a lot of Australians, Bali is the island of childhood holidays, Christmas vacations, and even weekend getaways. A short trip, in Australian standards, from the East, and an even quicker journey from the North, Bali is a go-to for all sorts of breaks.

I recently experienced Bali for the very first time. Being from the U.S., Bali isn't at the top of the list for tropical holidays, but after moving to Sydney, I was determined to get to Southeast Asia, and where better to start than Australians' favourite holiday destination? After months of research and planning, both Liz and I thought Ubud would be the perfect introduction to Asia. I read, and daydreamed, over the idea of yoga among the trees, the colourful markets, and the nearby waterfalls.

We couldn't have been more spot-on with our choice. Ubud truly charmed me— something that I feel more deeply than being simply impressed by a destination. What first struck me about Ubud was how beautifully content it is. The entire town has this air of ease and by the end of my trip, Ubud had gifted me with peace, contentment, and inspiration.

#### The Soul

There are a lot of cities in the world that are known for having spirit and soul, and Ubud probably doesn't make the top ten. But for me, even the air I breathed in Ubud seemed quiet, peaceful, even spiritual. Small offerings made of leaves and flowers sat outside every place of business, giving off subtle scents. Temples are abundant both in and around the city limits. Heading just outside of Ubud, you can visit the Gunung Kawi temple, which we found to be free from many tourists, and beautifully exposed and a perfect spot to pause and reflect. No matter what mental state you enter Ubud in, you'll leave feeling more refreshed and uncluttered than you ever have.

#### The Surrounds

Some of the most charming things in Ubud... aren't actually *in* Ubud. Ubud's surroundings are simply stunning, and getting outside of the city gives you a welcome freedom from busy streets and taxi drivers trying a little too hard to give you a ride. The Tegalalang Rice Terraces are some of the most beautiful in the world. My breath was truly taken away by the shelves of rice fields and utter magnificence of the panoramic views. Another favourite was the Goa Rang Reng waterfall. You won't find this one in many tourist handbooks, but it's more than worth the drive. A local guide will take you through a holy pathway, help you participate in a Hindu ritual, and you'll be rewarded for the journey when you finally reach a wide, splashing waterfall. Our guide even acted as our photographer, instructing us to walk into the waterfall, sit in the pools of water, and just exist among the droplets. If I had to only recommend one outing from Ubud, it would be the Goa Rang Reng waterfall.

#### The People

I know it's been said before, but the people of Bali are truly some of the kindest I've had the pleasure of coming across. At first, you might be a touch overwhelmed by the amount of interaction you're bound to encounter in Ubud. Taxi drivers along every street will ask you if you need a ride, and restaurants will stand outside, inviting you in. After you get used to these little quirks of Ubud, you'll really notice how utterly helpful Balinese people can be. Locals stopped to help us on the street when we looked a little turned around, and our taxi drivers offered insider tips, and even went off-route to take us to a coffee plantation (tip: if you have the chance to visit a coffee plantation, do it! A free taste of Balinese tea, coffee, and culture). Servers in restaurants were kind and patient, and villa staff were full of humour and concern for our comfort.

Ten days, a thousand fresh fruit juices, and ten thousand beads of sweat simply wasn't enough for me, and I'm already eager to go back to the beautiful, charming Ubud.