

Peace on Earth

Ancient temples, rolling rice fields and amazing beaches? Jenni Doggett tests out a tranquil twin-centre in Bali and Java

If you visited a different island in Indonesia every day, it would still take more than 40 years to see them all. Situated between the Indian and Pacific oceans, it is the world's largest archipelago, home to a vast and dazzling array of destinations spread over more than 18,000 islands.

For those whose annual holiday allocation is closer to four weeks than four decades, Java and Bali are a good place to start, and with their year-round

tropical climate, a warm welcome is guaranteed.

▶ YOGYAKARTA

Sell: The cultural (if not actual) capital of Java, Yogyakarta – or Yogja for short – is a vibrant and sacred city best known for its traditional crafts, elegant temples and performing arts. After a long-haul flight, the city's location, within 20 minutes of the airport, makes it the ideal introduction to Indonesia.



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See: At the heart of the city is the sprawling palace of Yogya, the Kraton, which is the home of the

sultan. Gently chiming gamelan music drifts through the sacred banyan trees, and regal portraits and fascinating artefacts line the rooms, while puppetry and local dance displays bring the palace to life. It's an enchanting welcome to the city and it's easy to lose hours between here and the glorious former royal garden of the Sultanate Tamansari Water Castle.

Moving up several gears, the fizzing markets of Malioboro Street are not to be missed. →

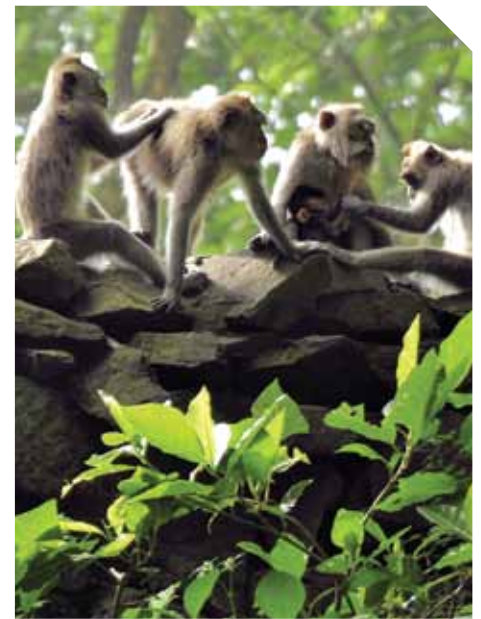
TOP TIP

Between May and September is the best time to visit, as the humidity is lower

RIGHT:
Ubud

FAR RIGHT:
Monkey Forest

BELOW:
Royal
Ambarrukmo
Yogyakarta



ASK THE EXPERT



Ashley Roberts, Customer service adviser, **Voyage Privé** “I’d recommend flying to Yogyakarta for a couple of nights to acclimatise, staying at the Plataran for luxury, and peace and quiet. Then move on to Bali for 10 nights or so, where there’s plenty going on, lively nightlife and lots to explore. I would particularly recommend the temple sunrise in Borobudur. It’s a well-known tourist stop but still felt quite exclusive to experience at sunrise. Consistent temperatures year-round are a great selling point, and the rainy season can actually be quite fun.”

➔ Twenty-four hours a day, they bustle with batik makers, silversmiths and every other craft stall imaginable, offering a gentle masterclass in haggling. Chew on delicious freshly fried banana fritters as you peruse the stalls.

An hour out of town is Borobudur, the world’s largest Buddhist monument and a Unesco World Heritage Site. The temple is an awe-inspiring sight, representing the spiritual journey from the life of desire, through meditation to nirvana, and an aerial view reveals the shape of a lotus flower. As the sun rises, a glorious tropical panorama comes into view. Even at 5am, the temperature hits 27C, causing the jungle to steam gently in the dawn light. This place is hugely popular with tourists, so the best way to experience it in peace is on a sunrise tour.

Stay: The Royal Ambarrukmo Yogyakarta is a grand but modern welcome to town. Set in what were



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once the grounds of the Royal Palace, its gardens in particular provide a soothing haven from the urban clamour. Popular with business people, the 247-room property also appeals to travellers starting their Indonesian adventures (rooms from £67).

To further embrace the zen vibe, the eco-friendly Plataran Borobudur features 19 traditional and modern villas with private mini-infinity pools and a luxury spa (from £277 a night).



Top-tier luxury and five-star service await at the 36-room Amanjiwo. The temple-inspired architecture has elegant minimalist design oozing out of every inch of its buttery limestone walls. Set in the central Javanese rainforest within a natural amphitheatre, it is a truly exclusive sanctuary (from £576).

BALI

Sell: The better-known island of Bali offers seriously glamorous resorts, sublime spas and heavenly beaches. From the happily hipster party town of Seminyak in the south to the rich green paddy terraces that stripe the island and the tranquil temples on every corner, there is something for everyone on the ‘island of gods’.

See: Ubud is probably Bali’s most famous town and Monkey Forest is a real highlight. Packed with mischievous macaques blithely pickpocketing ➔

Getting there

Garuda Indonesia flies non-stop from Heathrow to Jakarta three times a week (Tuesday, Saturday and Sunday) on a Boeing 777-300ER with a three-class configuration. Return fares start at £654 in economy or from £682 including a connection to Denpasar, Bali. garuda-indonesia.com

PICTURES: WILLY PRIATMANTO

→ tourists, it's advisable to hold on tight to your camera.

Seminyak, on the southwest coast, is all tropical cool and wide-open beaches. It's worth sampling the extravagant menu at Tiigo restaurant, just to experience the hiyashi somen noodles served on giant individual slabs of ice. Less than hour to the north, Bali's most famous temple, Tanah Lot, sits prettily in the sea. It's a big tourist draw, so try to avoid rush hour and time your visit to the tides, –so you can cross to the island.

Keep an eye out for the Kopi Luwak coffee stall, where fat civets sprawl lazily from rafters and an enormous dangling fruit bat sends selfie snappers into overdrive.

There are plenty of great local experiences available, including a privately catered lunch high in the emerald paddy fields of Jatiluwih, or learning how to cook authentic Balinese cuisine at the Bumbu Bali cookery school. Panorama Tours can help organise this and other bespoke excursions, including a gamelan workshop, batik lessons or tours of some of Bali's many



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temples. For inquiries, contact info@panorama-destination.com.

Stay: Simple sophistication strikes the moment you enter Alila Seminyak's dramatic Indian Ocean-front reception hall with its soothing seaside soundtrack. Just streets away from hipster heaven, this one's for the cool crowd (240 rooms, from £217).

Further north, the 278-room Pan Pacific Nirwana Bali Resort is moments away from Tanah Lot and caters for all tastes – high-energy families, couples in search of seclusion, golf nuts and surf-seekers. There is always a serene spot away from it all around the cascading swimming pools and in the spacious gardens (rooms from £106).

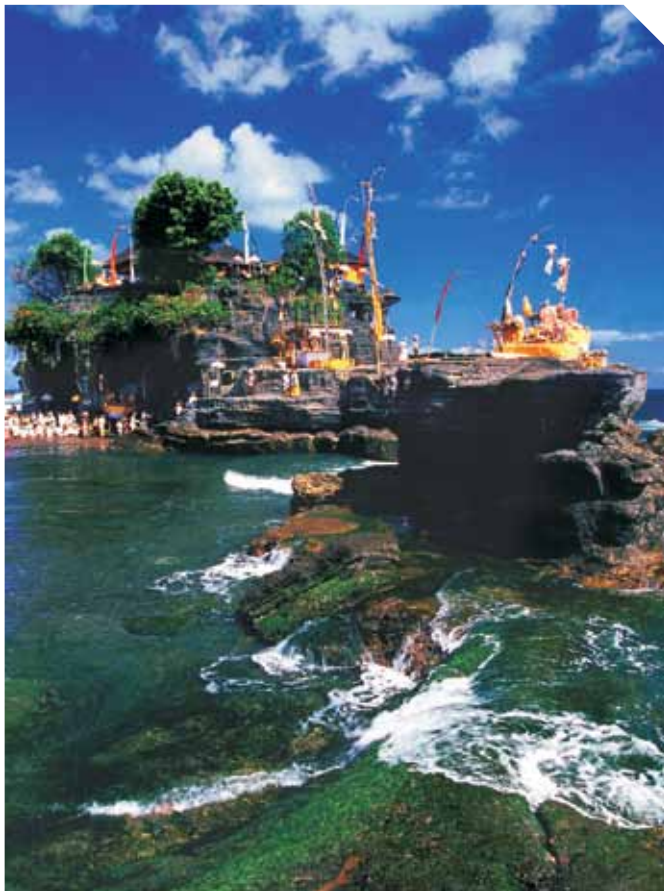
The Four Seasons in Jimbaran Bay is the ultimate in high-glamour stakes. Just minutes from the airport, the newly refurbished luxury villas are a rock 'n' roll retreat to bookend your trip (156 rooms, from £623).

For the easiest early-morning flight call, the Novotel Ngurah Rai Airport is a great deal and means you can spend your final pre-flight hours lounging by the pool (from £41). **TW**



Hayes & Jarvis offers a three-night Images of Bali tour visiting Lovina, Candidasa and Ubud, with a night before and after the tour at Meliá Bali Indonesia, from £1,799. The price includes Garuda Indonesia flights and transfers, departing June 9. hayesandjarvis.co.uk

Premier Holidays offers a week at the Griya Santrian in Bali and a night in Yogyakarta on a private escorted tour. Prices start at £1,999 in October, including flights with Garuda Indonesia from Heathrow, private transfers and an English-speaking guide. trade.premierholidays.co.uk



ABOVE: Meliá Bali Indonesia

LEFT: Tanah Lot, Bali

Find out more

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