

Bali tip #1: You've already been told "don't drink the water" (even the locals don't, not without boiling it first). Bottled water is about 7000RP (\$1AU) for 500ml, but after a couple days of sweating and drinking lots of Arak it can really add up. Solution: Bring your own bottle (or just buy a bottle of water early on) and bring a funnel from home. Go to a supermarket (there are a couple, we found one in the ground floor/basement of Centro Shopping centre). Buy a 6L jug of drinking water for 10,500RP (\$1.50AU) and just refill your water from that :-)

[Edit: in Kuta, on Legian, next to the BNI Bank is a small supermarket which has 1.5L bottles of water for 2000RP (or 2500RP for another brand). 8000RP for 6L is pretty darn good.

Edit 2: there are a few of these small supermarkets around. All are good.]

Bali tip #2: Don't drink Arak. Arak is Balinese rice wine, much like Sake. It tastes a bit like really cheap vodka, is about 35%-40% and is only 5000RP (70 cents) a bottle (if you find it cheap). It is added to most every cocktail as a cheap way of getting foreigners pissed. And you WILL get pissed on this stuff. And then vomit.

Bali tip #3: Don't drive. Not related to the previous tip. In Australia and the USA you have aggressive, angry people driving aggressively. In Bali you have really calm, nice pleasant people driving aggressively. You have no street signs. You have one road rule, and that is only a guideline – beep your horn before doing something, to warn other people. Indicating, picking which side of the road to drive on, what speed you drive at – all optional. Get a driver, someone you can trust. It will cost about 350,000RP (\$50AU) a day for a good tour guide, or a fraction of that for just a driver. Petrol is very expensive here, about 5000RP (\$0.72AU) a litre, I think. Cheaper than in Australia, but the average wage is 500,000RP a month (\$70AU)

Bali tip #4: Haggle. Be =hard=. Do not feel guilty. They will start out stupidly high. Do NOT pay more than 50% of their starting price. I knew that, and I still got taken for a ride. After day 3 (yes, I'm writing this as a late edit) I got much, much better... but I suppose that brings me to...

[edit: feel free to start out at about 10%-20% their opening price.]

Bali tip #5: Don't shop in Kuta. The locals don't shop here, just tourists, so they gouge. Sure, there are a few things you can do around here, but for real prices, real Balinese and taste of Bali, leave Kuta and head north (like Ubud).

Bali tip #6: Don't buy/bring food/fruit into any monkey forest. Other tourists will do it for you, and get mobbed :-). This one was pretty good, but you have to stay calm.

Bali tip #7: There are only 4 first names on Bali.

1: Wayan Arbutu

2: Madi

3: nyoman

4: Ketut

These relate to the order of birth of the child. If a family has more than 4 children, they start from the top of the list again. These names are not sex dependant, much like "Kim". Our tourguide, Ketut, is married to Ketut and has two daughters, Wayan and Madi. Every year he travels from Kuta, where he and his wife work, with his wife and

two daughters and visits his parents and family in a village on the north coast of Bali (almost due north). It is about a 3+ hour trip, and all four of them ride a single scooter.

Bali tip #8: Exchanging money. Don't use street vendors. Very few are honest, and it will take work getting your money. Don't change it all in Australia. Australia offers some of the worst exchange rates. Go to a good, reputable place. I, like most people, recommend "Central Kuta". They offer about 7000::1 (sometimes slightly higher), and have several advantages: security guards out front. Parking out front. Electronic money counters, several helpful staff... it is just like a bank, with teller windows and uncomfortable couches for waiting.

If you insist on using a streetside vendor, use easy to work out denominations (ie \$50). They will count it first and then you. If the amount is right then give them your money. Never give it to them first. Don't use their calculators (this is why you use easy amounts, like \$50 = 350,000RP). Don't let them recount the money (they will remove notes). If they try to screw you, just leave. It's not worth it.

Bali tip #9: Mobile phones are all over the place, and your Australian GSM phone will work perfectly here. What has been recommended as one of the best mobile companies is "SimPATI", which is easily identified as 'the red one'. 25,000RP (\$3.60AU) will get you a simcard with 15,000RP of credit on it (\$2.15AU), which is perfect for SMSing, since SMSs are about 350RP (\$0.05AU). Lots of places can sell you simcards, but it's a little more annoying recharging. Most every place I went to only sold 50,000RP and 100,000RP recharge-cards. Getting 20,000 is really simple, but you have to go to a mobile phone stall (big or small, doesn't matter, just not a street vendor). Just give them your mobile number and they'll add credit via their computer or their mobile – it only takes a couple moments. They will charge about 3,000RP for this service (so, \$3.30AU for \$2.90AU of credit).

[edit: you can find some places which charge only 2000RP to put on 20,000RP of credit, but it's usually not worth the effort of finding them.]

Bali tip #10: Enunciate 'teen' and 'ty' with numbers. Be very clear, otherwise someone who thought you were going to pay them fifty will be sad / angry when you give them fifteen. Which leads me to...

Bali tip #11: learn the Indonesian word for 'coins' or 'change' or something similar. They don't use/really know the word 'thousand', so 1 always means 1000RP, but 200 and 500 can mean either 200 RP or 200,000RP. You'd think it'd be easy to tell the difference, but sometimes 500,000RP for a cheap thing makes you think you're getting a steal at 500RP. Apparently most people dislike dealing with coins at all.

Bali tip #12: Don't buy DVDs. Even if you buy from a good shop, which lets you check out the discs before you buy, even if they let you return dodgy ones... It's just not worth it. Long movies will be transcoded to fit onto a 4.5GB disc, assuming you didn't get a TS/Camrip. But the most annoying problem is that they use dodgy discs – the cheapest of the cheap. They skip, they stop, they have artifacts. Go get a nice fast ADSL connection at home and download DVD images off of emule or something. Sure they're cheap, but not worth being pissed off with a movie which keeps stuttering.

Bali tip #13: Bluebird taxis are metered taxis, which means no haggling. A taxi from Kuta to Denpasar will be 40,000RP plus change. Other taxis require lots of haggling. Be VERY clear before leaving exactly where you want to go, and how much you will pay. Honestly though – best just stick to Bluebird if you can.

Bali tip #14: I'll just say it again: shop at supermarkets, mini-marts and local supermarkets. Buy 1.5L bottles of water for 2000RP-2500RP (29c to 36c), which are better than 6L jugs – cheaper, and you can fit them in your fridge. Yakult is good for replacing everything after a bout of Bali Belly, and that's about 4500RP (65c), and lastly, if you plan to party hard – grab redbull or similar. The cheap stuff is 2300RP (33c), the expensive stuff is 3000RP (43c) (150ml bottles, smaller than we're used to). All damn cheap, and best of all – fixed prices. No haggling, no morning vs afternoon price and same price for locals and tourists alike. Much faster and fairer.

Some more info: cheap vodka or triple sec: 72,500RP (\$10.35AU), Jim Beam 162,000? (\$23AU) – anything name brand that we know in Australia will be about the same price, but anything else is dirt cheap. Large Bintang is about 10,500RP (\$1.50AU), but that's the same as in cheap restaurants, but in clubs... expect to pay up to 25,000RP (\$3.60AU) for the same beer.

Bali tip #15: In Bali there are two state languages: Indonesian (which every travel guide will inform you of) and Balinese – which the locals all speak, and speak before they learn Indonesian. Outside of the cities, especially so. Some words are similar, but most are very different. All of the islands have their own language – Lombok, Java, Jakarta, Sumatra – all are different. Since they joined Indonesia, it is expected that everyone speaks Indonesian, so that is fine to learn, but if you want to impress (or get rid of) the locals, speak a little of the local language.

Suk s'ma (sook ss mah) – thank you

Ma'al (ma-al) – expensive

Tidak (tidah) – no

Kude? (koo-deh) – How much?

Selamat pa'gi (sellahmat pah-gee) – good morning

Selamat jalan (sellahmat jih-lan) – good bye

Hello/Hi – Hello/Hi (they use the English words)

Bali tip #16: Living cheaply. You can go to upscale restaurants if you want, and pay ~100,000RP per person (\$14.30AU) and up, you can go to really nice moderately priced restaurants and pay about 50,000RP for a meal with a drink (\$7.15AU), or you can live on the cheap.

A large Bintang is 25,000RP at a club. Screw that, avoid clubs. In fact, avoid anything facing the main streets. A large Bintang is about 12,000RP to 15,000RP at a smaller restaurant (\$1.72AU to \$2.15AU for 620ML bottle of really decent pilsener beer). Or, for the truly cheap, go to a small supermarket (they're open until about 11pm sometimes), and pick up a warm bottle for 10,500RP (\$1.50AU), and leave it to chill in your hotel minifridge before you head out.

If you want to get a bit drunker, shots are good. Most expensive part of this, but still cheap. If you're with a friend or two, get a shaker of Illusions instead of just ordering shots. You should be able to get shots for 20,000RP (\$2.85AU) or under and a shaker for relatively less [per shot].

Dinner is the best part. There are a lot of places to choose from, especially once you pick a random alleyway (which are streets in Bali). Recommended first by the Bali Eight, and now by me is the Bali Brazilian Cantina. The most expensive thing on the menu is 25,000RP (\$3.60AU) and the average menu item is 10,000RP to 15,000RP (\$1.43AU to \$2.15AU). For a =main meal=. Entrées (and breakfasts) are about 7,000RP each (\$1AU), drinks are 4,000RP to 7,000RP each (58c to \$1).

Internet access is cheap at 250RP a minute, but you can find many places which charge only 200RP a min (both in 1000RP blocks). Expect to be using around Pentium-level computers, on a 128kbps or so connection, so keep it simple.

I had a bottle of Bali cider, two shots of illusions, a chocolate milkshake, a plate of chips and mayo, a plate of spaghetti cabanara and finished off the night (after walking along the beach) with 10 mins of checking my email. Total bill for the night: ~\$10AU (65,000RP plus the cider, which I forgot the cost of, but couldn't be more than a dollar or so). Even the poorest macca's worker can live like a king in Bali, if you know where to go.

Bali tip #17: There are two seasons in the tropics: hot and wet or hot and dry. If you surf, SCUBA or snorkel, or like beautiful sunsets then you want the dry season. If you want to do just about anything else then I recommend the wet season. The dry season requires a certain amount of... constitution to be comfortable in a location without proper garbage disposal systems, sewerage or hygiene. The rain is almost required to keep the place bearable. The best part of the wet season is that it doesn't rain all the time. Mostly at night, and it rarely rains for more than an hour or two. After you get up, you have breakfast, and by the time you finish it is clearing up, leaving a clean, clear country. The rain is rarely, if ever, hard. Usually it is light enough to walk around in without an umbrella (if you don't mind getting wet). The best way to describe the rain is 'refreshing'. Wet season good.

Bali tip #18: ignore all your retard friends and family who say "ooh, not Bali! Bali is too dangerous!". Firstly, they're idiots (if you want to be polite, use the word "ignorant"). Let's put this into perspective: hundreds of thousands of people came through Bali every year. Bali was hit twice by terrorists, and a couple hundred people died. But people still fly planes, which are potentially dangerous. People drive cars, which are even more dangerous. And people have sex, which is even more deadly still. Just forget about terrorists, because the Balinese certainly have not. This country is seriously pissed off about it. So many people lost their livelihoods – about 70%-80% of the country is just based around tourism. And the terrorists managed to decimate the one industry keeping this country together. Everyone should use Bali as a travel destination, but I personally encourage just for R&R, as the rampant pervasion of souvenirs and prostitution are... not things they should be proud of.

Bali tip #19: I think I've finally figured it out. When someone comes up in the street and says one of something for 10,000, what they really mean is 1 for \$10US – which is 96,000RP. Four of an item for \$10US isn't bad, but don't be fooled by their bad English. Don't let them get a hold of you – be firm but gentle in removing their grip. Don't let yourself get surrounded, and always – always keep a good humour about you. Once you know how much things cost, feel free to haggle up to a thousand or two more than the cheapest you can buy it for. You'll get a bargain, and they'll be happy too. Which brings me to:

Bali tip #20: A common trick is they will say they have no small change. This is a lie. But don't insult them by calling them a liar, an easier and better way is to always keep small (1000RP) notes with you. When you start haggling in 1000 increments, they will say "ooh, I no have change" say, "that is okay, I do" – and laugh on the inside as their face falls as they realize they can't 'get' you like that.

Bali tip #21: I'm not sure about this, but giving to beggars is a good thing. You will collect small change (50RP to 200RP [0.7c to 3c]) coins from supermarkets and the like. There are very few homeless and beggars around – I only saw one in my entire trip, but I wish I had had some coins at the time to give. Giving tips where not required is, like in Australia, a rare thing. You don't want to insult someone, so if you're not sure, don't tip – but do say thank-you in Balinese [Suk S'ma]. They seem to really appreciate a foreigner making the effort to learn.